

Winnie's Stories

1916 ~ 1943

First edition ~ December 2010

By

Winniefred Eastlund Arhelger





Grateful thanks to everyone for your encouragement. Special thanks to Mariann Ritzer a very patient teacher and mentor who somehow found something positive to say about my response to her assignments. To my offspring's for keeping me supplied with computer equipment. To Deborah for asking for stories as a birthday present. To Joan for spending weeks of her vacation to help organize this opus for publication and to Lee for years of technical support. To my classmates for their gentle positive critiquing and corrections. To the many librarians for their expert assistance. To my parents for their letters and diary entries. And to the unknown lady who crouched down at eye level and said, "Don't say that. We have feelings too."

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Montana Maps

Northern Montana

From Great Falls to Fort Belknap Indian Reservation.

Locations mentioned in these stories include:

Loma [near Fort Benton],

Havre,

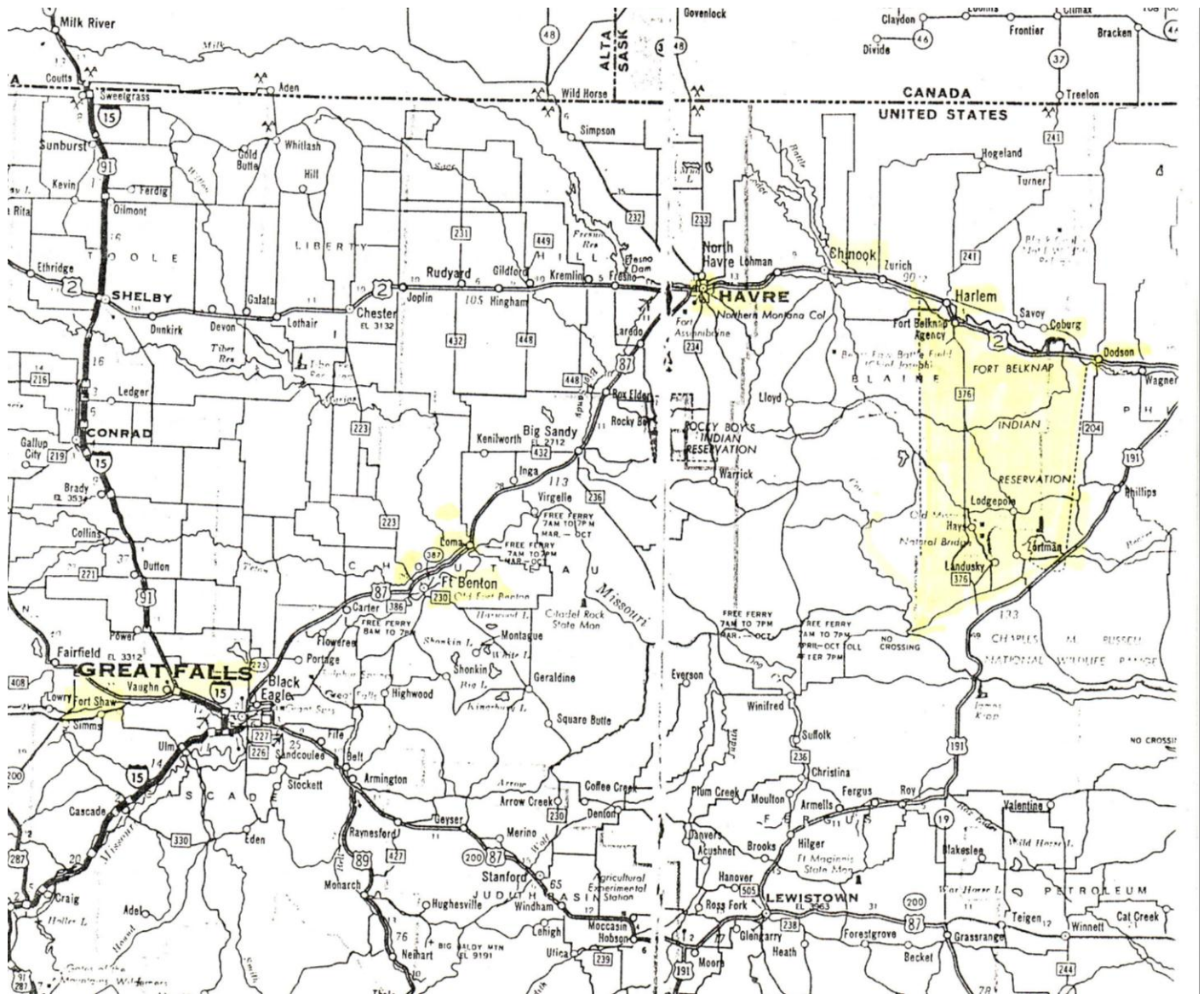
Harlem,

Coburg,

Harlem,

Dodson, and

The Fort Belknap Agency



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Montana Maps

Montana Map

Showing closer view of the locations the family lived.

Note the Milk River that borders the upper edge of the Reservation.

Note the Missouri River flowing past Loma. This view does not show how the Marias River and Missouri Rivers joined.

Note the location of Hays at the Southern end of the Reservation.

The red X indicates the location Grandmother Emma Solomon Larsen's allotment.

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Montana Maps

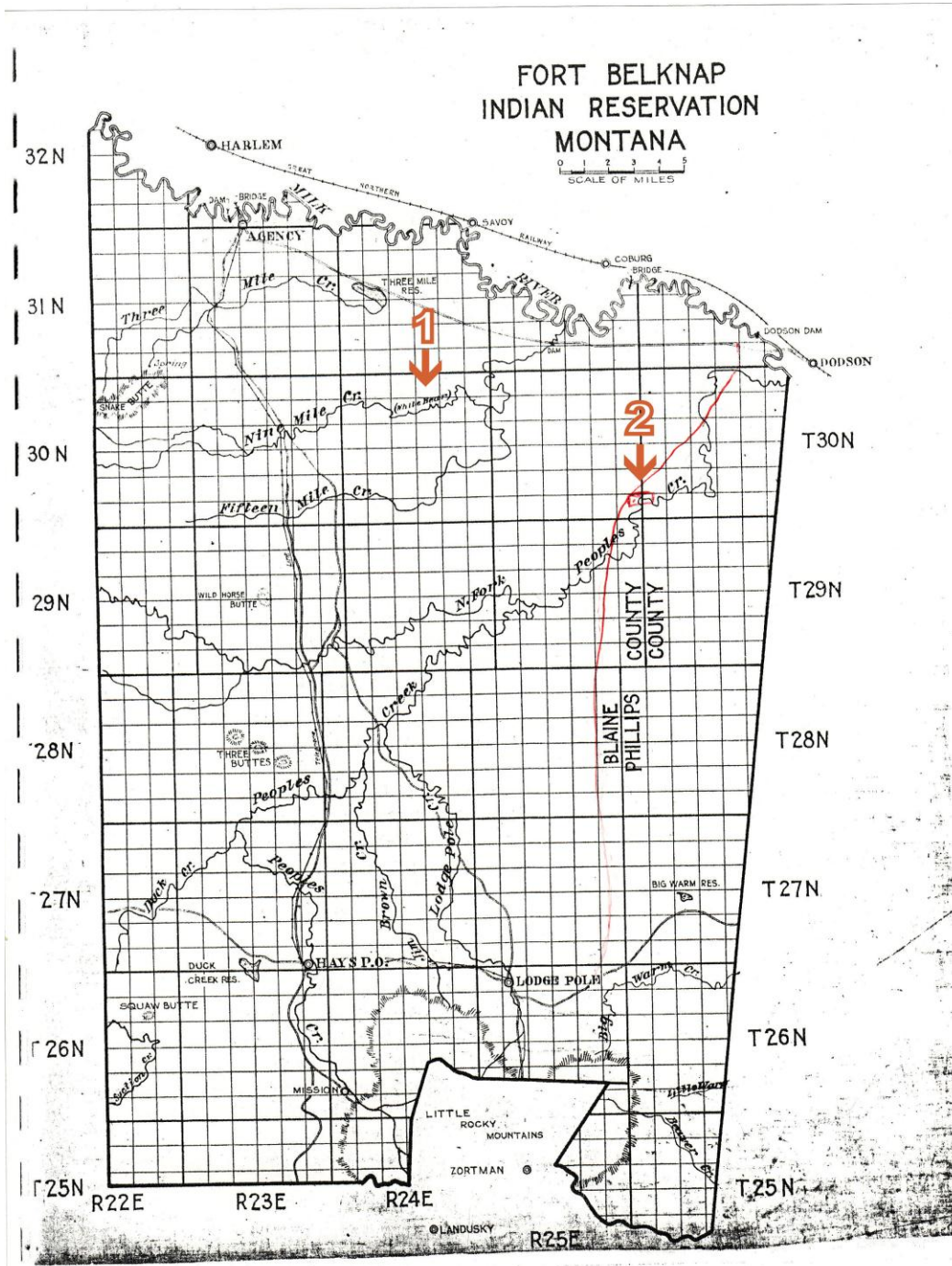
MAP: Fort Belknap Indian Reservation, Montana

This shows the boundaries of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation.
This has a better view of the Milk River.

Note the cut-out shape of the property of the land on the Southern edge. Apparently gold was found there and Mr Zortman got that land for himself.

#1 Is the location of White Bear where Eric Eastland erected a house.

#2 Is the location of the land that was allotted to Emma Solomon Larsen. #522



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Places the Eastlund Family Lived

This is just a brief outline of the places our family lived until we came to West Allis, Wisconsin. I have tried to list the places Dad went to visit and work without the family. This is compiled for the most part from the brief notes in Eric's diary.

After their marriage on the 28th of October, 1913, Eric and Esther moved into Eric's house on the homestead. It was about 6 miles north of Loma, Mont. Eric and his brother Ted had come to Montana about four years earlier in 1910. They staked homestead claims on adjoining land and tried their hand at dry land farming. They built a two-room house on the lot-line so they could batch together and fulfill, living on the land and making improvements, part of the requirement. Now that they had proved up on their claims, they were free to move Ted's part of the house onto Eric's property. That two room "shack" became our parents first home. Minnie was born there.

According to Eric's diary on the 6th of February 1916 he assessed his last years earnings. He must have decided he wasn't doing well enough and it was time to make a change. [Or perhaps what influenced him was the governments call to all the Gros Ventres and Assiniboine Indians to move to the reservation to get enrolled in order to be qualified for the final allotment of land that was about to take place.] He felt sure his wife, children, and in-laws qualified and were entitled to this land, for the Gros Ventres accepted us as their own. Grandma Larsen was born on the reservation when it covered all the land north of the Marias and Missouri Rivers. She lived with her Mothers people for several years when she was young. Or perhaps Eric thought he could do better on the reservation with more land than on his homestead where he had to haul in the water. Whatever his reasoning on March 15th he sold the steam engine and traded his horses, Tom & Dick. Then on March 28th to April 2, he and Esther's brother, Big went to look over the land on the Ft. Belknap Reservation. April 12 and 13: he packed up our things and went to help the Larsen's pack.

Eric's Homestead 6 miles north of Loma, Montana



Places the Eastlund Family Lived

Eric's STEAM ENGINE



Eric's HORSES (Pictured are Tom and Colie)



DATE OF MOVE

[Time spent there]

[Family on Homestead Near Loma, 2 y.6 m]

- 1916** Apr.16 They all left **Loma** and their homestead. Esther, Minnie and Eric in the auto; Larsens, and all their belongings in wagons. (See picture of Larsen's Horse team and box wagons in year 1921). They moved to North East Side of Snake Butte and camped on Carl **Grant's place**.
- May 1 (Eric got orders to move off Reservation).
- June 1 He sold his homestead to Firgy for \$5,000
- June 16 Two months after coming to reservation, Winniefred was born, at a nursing home in **Harlem, Mt.**
- [Grants place 2-3/4 m]*
- 1916 Jul 8 Moved to **Esther's claim** put up tent and camped all summer. There were two tents facing each other. They had wooden floors and sides about four

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Places the Eastlund Family Lived

- feet high. Canvas covered top with an opening for the cook stove chimney.
- 1916 Sep.25 Moved 10 miles east of where camped all summer.
Oct 4 Started to build house near **White Bear**, on Reservation

Eric's tar paper house



- 1916 Oct.24 Moved in.
Nov. 27 put up cook stove.
[Lived in this house two years and four months.]
- 1916 Dec 15 to Jan. 8 1917
First visit to **Moorhead**. Winnie Baptized
- 1918 Aug.13** Dad started to work for the Reclamation.
Note: Dates Eric moved without family are in red
Nov 21 Moved Family to **Agency**. Agency was north of Hays and just south of Haver.
[Lived Agency 13 months.]
[Total time on Reservation 3 y-5 m]
- 1919 Sep 11** Left Ft. Belknap for **Moorhead** on way to Arizona, and Eric's first job in Steel work since his marriage. While in Moorhead, on the 16th, he had an operation for Appendicitis. Uncle Ted left for Arizona on the 20th. Dad out of hospital on 29th. Minnie started Kindergarten there.
[Moorhead ~1 m]
- 1919 Oct.14 We left Moorhead for **Miami, Arizona**. It was a 5 day trip by train. On 16th we changed trains in Kansas City. Left El Paso Tex. 18th early morning and arrived Miami Arizona Late evening. Fred and family Ted and Bill were there. Dad started work on the 20th. *[Miami 5 Mo.]*
- 1920 Mar 4** Moved to **Warren Arizona**. Dixie was born March 26.
[Warren 1 y- 2 Mo.]
- 1921 May 5** Mother and 4 girls [Minnie 6 1/2 years old, Winniefred 5, Fern 3, and Dixie 14 months] left for **Dodson, Montana** by way of Denver. It was the first time back in Montana. We had been in Arizona a year and 7 months. We left because there was a rumor that the agency was listening to claims and we had to be there to get our land. We lived first with Agnes, then about July 22 moved in with the Larsens in their new house. Grandfather Zack Larsen died August 21.

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Places the Eastlund Family Lived

- 1921 Sept. 27 Dad left Arizona and took a ship up the coast to San Francisco. Visiting in Portland, Ore. and arrived in Dodson, Mont. the Oct 4. He purchased a typewriter (Corona portable) in Seattle.
[Montana 6 mo]
- 1921 Oct.30 Went to **Ironton, Ohio**. [Stopped in Moorhead and Milwaukee on way.] We lived in 2 places and left in the spring. There was a flood. 319 Chestnut St.
Dad's job: Bridge between Russel, Ky.
[Ohio 5-1/2 m.]
- 1922 Apr 13 Left Ironton, Ohio for Montana, Stopped in Moorhead 15 to 24.
1922 Apr 25 Arrived at Larsons.~ On Reservation near Hays
[2nd time back in MT.]
- 1922 May 11 Returned to **White Bear**, on Reservation where Mother's claim was and Dad had built the house. We were in Mont. about 7 months but Dad traveled a lot.
- 1922 Jul 10 Moved back to **Grandma Larsen's place**.
1922 July11 Dad: left for Eureka Kansas.
July12 Dad stoooped in Moorhead on way to Eureka Kansas.
Aug 9 Dad: Milwaukee, Wis.
Aug 25 Dad: Arrived Burlington, Iowa. Cascade Bridge.
Aug 27 Dad: Tonkawa, Okla.
Fall Esther and children moved to **Coburg, MT**.
We moved off the reservation so I could go to school.
I started first grade in a one-room school 1st to 8th grade.
Echo was born Oct.9
- 1922 Sep 10 Dad: Burlington, Iowa.
Sep 17 Dad: Tonkawa, Okla.
Oct 1 Dad: Phoenix, Ariz.
Oct 16 Dad: Albuquerque N.M.
Oct 18 Dad: Kansas City
Oct 27 Dad: Arrived Coburg, Mont.
Nov 21 Dad: Independence, Missouri, Janesville, Wis, Jackson, Wis.
Dec 22 Dad: Back to Coburg, Mont.
Dec 24 Dad: on way to Trimountain, Michigan. Stopped in Superior, Wis.
Dec 30 Dad: Arrived Trimountain, Mich Job is a 225-ton shaft house. Started the job with one man on Jan 1.
[Montana 7 m.]
- 1923 Jan 30 We arrived in **Trimountain, Mich**. Mother had begun getting ready to leave Coburg, Mont. on the 19 Jan. with us 5 girls. Echo 3 month old. It was cold and the snow was deep. Feb. 11 Dixie died. She was buried at Hancock South Range Cemetery on 13th. Fern started school Feb. 19th.
[Trimountain, Mich ~5 mo.]
- May 8 Dad started his next job in Mohawk, Mich. with Ed Mc Nelly.
May 18 Dad in Moorhead

Places the Eastlund Family Lived

- At Coburg Dad spent day with attorney Henderson, and next 10 days on trying to get us enrolled on reservation.
- 1923 May 31 Dad: Left for TriMountain
- 1923 Jun 26 Family moved to **Mohawk, Michigan**. (We had stayed in Tri Mountain until school was out.)
[Mohawk, Mi ~2 m.]
- 1923 Aug. 13 Dad got a call to go to Milwaukee for a day's conference to look over the Vernon, Oregon job.
- 1923 Aug 17 We left for **Vernon, Oregon**. Spent a day in Moorhead. Leonard, Minnie and Nettie were there. He hadn't seen Nettie for 11 years. Saw Agnes for 10 minutes at Butte. Arrived at Woodburn at noon. Dad's cousin Gladys Freeburg lived there. [Believe we stayed with Dad's brother Martin in Gervais.] On the 31st he rented two rooms over the Post Office. I went with him there on the 1st of September. Rest of Family came a day or so later. Glenn was born in Vernon, on April 27.
[In Oregon abt. 9 mo.]
- 1924 May 7 Moved to **Waverly, Missouri**. Glenn was 10 days old. Dad put up a highway bridge across the Missouri River.
[Waverly about 9 mo.]
- 1925 Jan 16 First time family lived in **Milwaukee**. Rented apartment from Dishnow: 913 Sycamore. Job for Federal Rubber Co. in Cudahy.
- Mar 31 to May 5:
Dad at Green Bay, Coal bridge for Hartbert coal Co.
- May 8 Washington D. C. and Arts at Planfield N.J., With lawyers on Indian claims.
- 1925 May 8 Mother and Echo and Glenn moved to **Homewood, Ill.**
Dads Job at Markham yard Shop building for I.C.R.R. was shut down. He waited around until 22 June then shipped tools to Paducah Ky.
- June 23 Dad went to Milwaukee, Moorhead and Montana where he was from June 27 to July 12: trying to get affidavits for our Indian claim and taking a vacation.
- 1925 June Minnie, Fern, and I left Milwaukee. We went down to **Homewood** as soon as school was out. Uncle Ted took us down in his open car. Two of us sitting on the hot black tin trunk in the back seat. "It was hot."
[Milwaukee 5 m.]
- July 14 Dad arrived at Leavenworth Ka. From Mt.
- 1925 July 18 We moved from Homewood, Ill. to **Leavenworth, Kan**: 735 Spruce St.
- 1925 Oct 31 We moved to 513-1/2 Delaware, Leavenworth, Kan.
Dads job was the longest he ever had. About a full year.
[Leavenworth, Kansas ~1 y]
- 1926 June 13 Dad in Cushing, Okla. July 2.
- 1926 Jul 6 Whole family left Leavenworth Kan. for **Dennison, Texas**.
1309 West Bond St.

Places the Eastlund Family Lived

- [Texas 1 mo.]*
- 1926 Aug 11 **Gorin, Missouri;** We went to school. Mother got sick. On 23 Sept. she had to go to a hospital in Ft. Madison, Iowa as Dad was working near there. She went in the baggage car on a cot. Minnie went along with Echo and Glenn. We school kids stayed With the hotel landlady until she got better and they found a house.
- Sept 2 Dad started job at Ft. Madison Iowa.
- [Goren 2 1/2 m]*
- 1926 Oct 23 We kids moved up to **Ft. Madison**, from Goren Mo. Iowa. Lived in house at 1112 Ave C. Paulina born there March 19, 1927.
- Oct. 26 Dad in Levenworth, repair job on Ft. Bridge. Finished on 29.
- Nov 7 Dad: Indiana Harbor, 11th Ted came from Rochester, Mich.
- 1927 Jan 16 Dad started Job in Milwaukee. Ferry Apron for G.T R.R.
- Feb 12 Back home in Ft. Madison. Expects a 2 Mo. lay off from W.B.
- Mar 1 to 9th: Dad made trip to Moorhead.
- Apr 10 Arrived Detroit Mich. Took bus to Job site at Gross Isle
- May 1 Dad moved to **Grosse Isle, Michigan**. Staying in a camp wagon batching at the building site.
- [Ft Madison 7 m.]*
- 1927 May 29 The family arrived at Grosse Isle, Mich. for two summer months.
- July 17 Dad's Job finished July.
- [2 m.]*
- 1927 Jul 19 Met Aunt Minnie in Chicago and we went to **Moorhead** with her. We older girls stayed there and Mother went to Montana with Glenn and Paulina.
- Jul 20 Dad started Job in Arlington Heights. Ill.
- [Moorhead 6 w]*
- 1927 Sep 3 Met Dad in Chicago and went together to **Kansas City:** N. 3040 Main St. We stayed until after Easter. Dad's job was to take down the 9th street Bridge and put up a new one.
- 1928 Feb 19 Ted and Dad drove to Louisiana MO to raise steel on a bridge over the "father of waters."
- Mar 17 Mother with Glenn and Paulina visited him there.
- April 3 Dad: Arrived in Alton, Ill. to work on Mississippi River Bridge. Finished on 22 May. Went to K. C. for 2 days then to Hewatha, Iowa, Omaha, Moorhead, Sioux City Iowa, and back to Omaha on the 3 of June. Job is with Fred at the Ash Grove Cement Co. at Louisville, Neb.
- [Kansas City 9 mo]*
- 1928 Jun 5 We moved to 3851 Grove St. **Omaha, Neb.**
- July 14 Dad: Job at Waverly, Mo. Finished on Aug. 4.
- [Omaha 2 mo.]*
- 1928 Aug 6 We all left for **Moorhead**. Eunice and Carl Sodergren were Married on the 8th.

Places the Eastlund Family Lived

1928 Aug 14 Arrived in **Milwaukee**. Found house at 1504 15th. St.
Dad's job was A. O. Smith Building 720 x280. He worked on the first
building for A. O. Smith in 1908.
We four girls started school on Sept. 6 but left Milwaukee on the 12th.
[Milwaukee 3rd time 1 mo.]

1928 Sep 14 Arrived in **Paducah, Ky**. Bridge over the Ohio River. House at 1010 6th
St.
Dad finished job on Jan 31.

1929 Feb 1 Dad left for Louden Tenn. Job at Verona and Niles Ferry.
[Kentucky 6 mo.]

1929 Mar 18 Dad came and got us. We drove 430 miles to **Louden, Tenn**. Dad was
working two jobs. Started bridge at Louden on April 6. It is a state toll
bridge. Cost about \$1,000,000 He had 35 men on the job.
We had about 6 weeks of school here.
[Tenn. 6 mo.]

1929 Sep 26 Left Louden for **Milwaukee**.
Oct. 2 Paid \$15 on some furniture at 320 48 St., West Allis, Wis.
Same house renumbered a few years later to 806 S. 57 St.
Oct 6 Dad left for Port Huron, Mich. home on 10th.
Oct 12 Dad: To Rendal Mich. Shop & Newburg bridge
Oct 21 Dad: To Rockford, Ill. Drop Forge Co.
Oct 25 Dad: Starting at Newberg again. It is 32 miles from Wisconsin Ave.
Dec 8 Started Contract with C. M. & S. P. Blacksmith shop at 32nd Ave.
And so it went with small jobs around Milwaukee and around Wisconsin
for the next years.

1930's

Minnie entered high school in West Allis. Fern, Echo and I entered
Roosevelt Grade school. Later all the younger children went to
Roosevelt, Horace Mann Junior High, and West Allis Central.

We attended the Methodist Church at first. It was a two-mile walk so we
soon went to the closer Presbyterian Church.

1940 They bought the house at 1212 S. 57th St.

This ends the outline of the Eric and Esther's first 16 years.
Eric's story of the depression years and his children marrying and leaving home are stories for
another time.

Compiled By Winniefred Eastlund Arhelger Aug. 6, 1991

1916 My Birth

Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana

I, the second daughter, was born on June 16, 1916 at a time when my parents had given up their homestead near Loma, Montana and were in the process of establishing themselves on land at the Ft. Belknap Reservation. This, I always felt, entitled me to a tongue-in-cheek claim to be more Indian than my sisters and brother.

That summer my parents lived in a tent while dad built a house and began to cultivate the land. Mother was always quick to add, "It wasn't just an ordinary tent. We had two such tents facing each other making two rooms, each with a wood platform for floor and walls about four high, a pointed canvas top, and framed screen doors." She would go on to describe how the one used for a kitchen had a wood-burning cook stove with a special opening for the chimney. Those days mother believed dad could do anything and as always did her part to make a home, under whatever strange conditions they moved into.

Well I wasn't actually born in the tent but in a midwives home in Harlem, then a railroad town on the northern edge of the reservation. But who else can say they had a tent for a first home? Our family's move to this tent-home came about after several years of drought when many dry-land farmers had to give up their homesteads.

This move coincided with news that the government was going to allot land on the reservation to the Indians to encourage them to become farmers. Dad thought it would be done in the same way the homestead land was granted. Stake a claim and then go and have it registered. That is what he did. Well the government's dealings with the Indians were never as simple as that. They stalled, contested and had people literally camping at their doorsteps waiting for a chance to be heard. It was the government agents who opposed us and other families of mixed marriage, who had not always lived on the reservation. The Assiniboine and the Gros Ventres would vote us in, for they recognized those with tribal birth blood. However, the government agents struck our names off the rolls three times. (Now a day much less that our one-half, one-quarter and one-eighth blood is acceptable. In fact we have now received an allotment through inheritance from our grandmother [Emma Larsen], I've been told we can go there to live.)

Among those who managed the Indian affairs there were those of a mind set for assimilation and the eventual closing of the reservations. At that time some strongly opposed anyone who had a possibility for citizenship. Years earlier Grandmother Larsen had been informed by other agents she would not have to move onto the then reduced reservation to receive land when allotment would be made.

Dad went ahead built a house, tilled the soil and planted a crop of potatoes.

It was twenty months later, just after Fern's birth, when the agent ordered us off the reservation.

~

1917
Winnie's Baptism



Eric Holding Winnie

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1917
Winnie's Baptism



Godparents

Winnie (6 mo.)

With cousins Harold Eastlund and Eunice Anderson: Godparents
Picture taken in Moorhead, Minnesota

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1917 Pictures



Loma, Montana about 1917 at Larsen home

Back Row: Ed, Esther with Minnie behind, Big, Grandpa Larsen holding Ruth,
Grandpa Larsen, Little, Agnes
Front Row: Jack, Emma, Tillie



1947 Picture taken at Ruth's funeral: Tillie, Agnes, Esther, Little, Emma, Reba

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1917 Pictures



Eric's tar paper home on Fort Belknap Reservation at **White Bear**
Eric, Minnie, Irene, Esther, Winnie



This shows another version of the tar paper house.
This picture was titled by Esther: "This is Eric's Prize Feb 1917"
In this "staged" photo are Minnie and Winnie.

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1918 Fern's Birth

Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana ~ Havre, Montana

Extreme cold left heavy snows in the mountains and thick ice on the rivers. It was Eric and Esther's second winter on the Fort Belknap Reservation in the two-story house Eric built near White Bear Creek. Esther's parents, (Zack and Emma Larsen) came to urge her to go to the hospital early while it was still possible to cross the river. They warned that a sudden thaw would create ice jams and flood the land.

This is the story of Esther's ten day hospital wait alone in Havre, Fern's birth, and the aftermath told through Dad's diary and Mother's letters.

[Dad's four line daily notes were concise, non-descriptive, penciled in a hard to decipher script.]

Eric's Diary March 1918

Sat 16: Zack took Esther and me to Savoy. We went to Havre.
(by train) I came back to Harlem at midnight.
Sun 17: I walked to Agency. Rode home with Zack.

(That Dad valued and saved Mother's letters written in her neat round easy to read script, makes this story possible.)

Havre Montana

Sun March 17, 1918

Dearest Hubby:-

I have been wondering if you had to walk home, and how the kiddlets have been so far. I didn't sleep a bit last night, so I didn't go to church but I took a long walk this afternoon. I hope I'll go to church next Sunday. They say Dr. Houtz is the best baby Dr. in the country. He brought in a Dr. Hamton this evening and said if he should be away when my time came that Hamton would see me thro. Houtz will examine me tomorrow. There was another baby born this morning. There was several asked me what I was here for. I told them a "boy".

(Monday) They have been busy all morning operating (6 cases) so I haven't been examined yet. Now I am going for a walk and will mail this. We have breakfast after 8 a.m. I don't know who the cook is, but know he or she isn't very good at it.

It was so windy this morning but now it is nice. I have talked with one lady she is real nice and she left here this afternoon. The house is still full yet. Houtz comes in every a.m. and evening. I have felt good so far, but still have pains at times. I haven't got your card yet. I'll ask if they recd. one for me. How long have I been here Eric? These days are weeks. I'll surely have to get something to do.

I would like to know how you and the kidlets are today. I know you will write the first chance you get. I think of you three every minute.

*Your Wifie
Esther*

Winnie's Stories: 1916-1943

First Edition December 2010 Rev D.

1918 Fern's Birth

Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana ~ Havre, Montana

*Havre, Montana
Tue March 19, 1918*

Darling Hubby:

I just recd. the card after dinner, but had to get it myself. Yesterday I spent most all of my money. I couldn't get a blanket for less than \$6.50 so got the goods and am making one today for \$2.00 and couldn't wear my shoes any longer so got another pair for \$3.50.

I have met and talked to most of the women here and am just scared out. They have one nurse for this floor. She is run to death and just does things half. The poor babies get no care at all. One baby is sick now and Houtz has ordered a special for the mother and baby. That comes to \$55 a week besides the \$1 a day for board. If I get 1/4 the care I got at Mrs. Stubblefields I'll be lucky. You can imagine how things are when they have Mrs. Everson and sister for nurses. (They are the ones that ran the hospital at Harlem while Winnie was born) Of course I may get along all right but I think it is a pretty risky business. I am ready to go to the Falls if you just say so. Every patient is kicking and the bells are ringing all the time. One lady wanted the bedpan she rang & rang, they didn't come so when they did they had her bed to clean up. Those that have rooms opening to the hall can holler at the nurse when they go by so get what they want sometimes, but here they never would come.

Houtz has been so busy he hasn't examined me yet. I have to get someone to do my washing. No one can tell me where to send it either and that is extra. Most of the people here are out of Havre. The lady that had the baby when we came up is talking of being moved to her sister-in-law's house and she is in pretty bad shape. She hasn't had a bath yet and her room just smells awful. I hope I don't get sick until I hear from you.

It rained here last night but has been a lovely day today. I didn't take a walk today as I had a foot-ache and was trying to help that poor woman with her baby. It just cries all the time. The nurse & sisters got mad when they heard she was going to have a special nurse and haven't went near her all day. Her nurse hasn't come yet.

I didn't sleep good last night, but feel fine. I am anxious to hear from you and wonder how my poor babies are. It's a blessing to have good strong babies. I know I won't be so cross to mine any more.

I haven't been lonesome today as I have been from one room to the other all day. I am going to take a bath tonight. It seems queer that you are not here and I am writing letters. I am expecting you to call up Sat. I know this is lots of worry and expense but it can't be helped. If we only get a good strong boy I'll be satisfied. Yesterday & today I carried trays, got glasses of water and took care of

1918 Fern's Birth

Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana ~ Havre, Montana

babies. Several asked me if I was one of the nurses. I feel sorry for those that can't wait on their self.

I'll close now am very anxious to hear from you and babies. I want you here more than ever when I am sick.

Your Wifie Esther

Wed. 20, 1918 [Same letter]

Last night they got another nurse, so I had my wash water and your letter brought in before I was out of bed this morning. That's the first time I was waited on. I was so glad to get your letter. I hope you don't miss me very much and hope you do get thrashed.

Last night I was talking to the banker's wife from Chinook. She doesn't get any better care than we dry-farmers wives. Her Dr. said she would have to be here a week, so she is going to be moved to her friends house tomorrow.

If one wants any care at all they should have a special nurse. The head nurse said she wouldn't have a baby in this hospital. Since you are going to be so busy this week I don't know what to do. I hope you can phone up. I wrote to Mother today.

I'll get this ready to mail so will stop now. Give Minnie and Winnie a big kiss for me.

Esther

Thur. March 21, 1918

Dear Eric:

Another week just about over; these days are so long. I just had a bath and took a long walk this afternoon, so I should sleep fine. The baby and mother that wasn't feeling very good are fine to day so I feel better too. I found a nurse I like better than the trained nurse that works up here. She is on second floor, so I am going to try and get a room there. They don't have time to clean up the rooms from one patient after the other. It's certainly a busy place.

I have to get alcohol, Lysol, powder and a few more things; so today I cashed the check for \$10.00 at a drug store. Haven't used any of it yet. I didn't get any sewing or reading. It's hard to tell how long I'll be here so the dollars may come in handy sometime.

If you could only be here when I need you it wouldn't be half so bad. I wish I could have my kiddies with me. I have been so nervous all day, but not so bad tonight. The river is so high here; I can see part of it from my window. I hope you don't try to cross it while it is up.

1918 Fern's Birth

Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana ~ Havre, Montana

I came near getting into a scrap today. The nurses here don't like Mrs. Everson and I told one of the ladies I knew her from Harlem, but I'll tell you about it later. I'll go to bed now. Good Night.

Fri 22, This is morning I asked for another room. There was some empty on second floor but the Sister said they were all spoken for. I thought she seemed real cross; she said she would rather I would go to the Hotel and wait because they need the rooms. I felt like leaving the place just then, but am going to keep after them till I get another room.

I just had a long walk. Went so far I was so tired when I got back. I got some crocheting cotton so am going to try to learn. I hope I hear from you tomorrow. Sent the kiddlets some cards yesterday. I haven't seen a newspaper since I came. I do wish you could come up I miss you so. I wonder how your bread is lasting? Be a good boy.

Esther

Sat. morning 23 I am going to mail this, this morning. I am not expecting you in today as I hear the river is so high. Woke up with pains this morning but can't tell yet if they are the right ones or not. I wish I could hear from you more often. Have been wondering if the kiddlets are out to the Mountains yet.

Wish you could be here Sunday. With Love and hope I hear from you soon.

Esther

Havre, Mont.

Mon March 25, 1918

Dear Eric:

Have had only one letter from you, and have been so worried. I know the river is high, hope you haven't fooled around it. I miss you and my dear babies more each day. I have tried to remember how they look and talk but can't. I hope I don't have to stay up this week.

Yesterday was such a fine day. Went to church in morning. His sermon was "Partnership with God." It was good. Wished you had heard it. Then I went in the evening. Bro. Van comes Thur. and will stay till over Sun. I wish our boy was old enough so he could be baptized then, as there will be lots of children baptized on Easter. I met two girls from the reservation here; they work in the kitchen. Their names are Marry and Anna Flax.

Tomorrow is the day. Everybody says I'm going to have a girl. I think I'll have to go home if I don't hear from you soon. The folks haven't written yet. I am learning to crochet. Feel fine only my feet swell and I still have pains at times. I

1918 Fern's Birth

Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana ~ Havre, Montana

hope you are getting along all right and the kiddies stay well. But write and tell me everything as soon as you can. I'll be almost gray when I come home.

Your Wifie Esther

Eric's Diary March 1918

Mon 18: I went to Harlem after oil.
Tue 19: Came home.
Wed 20: Little and I went after thrashing machine.
Thr 21: Came home with the thrashing machine.
Fri 22: Fixed up thrashing machine. Thrashed a little.
Sat 23: Thrashed all day but with poor luck.
Sun 24: Made a box so the folks could have something to go home in. They left and took the kids with them.
Mon 25: I put new chain on engine. Worked on separator and thrashed a little.
Tue 26: I went to Harlem, Savoy, and Haver. A baby came to us at Sacred Heart Hospital. May God bless her. (7 1/2 lbs)
Wed 27: I stayed with Esther and baby all day came back to Harlem at night.

New England Hotel
Harlem, Mont.
Thur March 28
Darling Wifie

I just got up and had my coffee and toast. Am about ready to start for home. I slept all the way down on train and slept good the rest of the night here. I didn't see any thing of Big or Bill. So I guess you will. Big said he would stop and help me thrash. I may go out to the kids Sunday. The day is so nice. I hope you slept well last night. It will be lonesome for you for the next ten days. I wish I could stay with you. Well be good and make the nurses take good care of you and our dear little girl. A hug and kiss to you both.
Hubby

Thr. 28 I came home Bill and Big came at about 6 p.m.
Fri. 29 The boys helped me thrash.
Sat. 30 We went out to Hays [Grandpa and Grandma lived there]
Sun. 31 [Easter Sunday] Laid around with the grip all day.

April 1918

Mon. 1 Came around by Crocrans and brought fanning mill home.
Tue. 2 Fanned flax all day.

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1918 Fern's Birth

Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana ~ Havre, Montana

Havre Mont.

Sat. March 30, 1918

Mailed Mon. April 2, 1918

Dear Eric:-

I did intend to write a few lines every day then mail them Sun. but, Oh how sick I was the day after you left. The morning of the 28th I woke with chills and had them with a fever all day and every muscle ached so bad. This morning I feel better and am glad too as I was so worried. I still ache a little. The nurse said I had La-grip. The Dr. said I just had a little cold. I am taking two kinds of medicine with castor oil in between. They raised the head of my bed about 2 feet higher than the foot so far I haven't had a very good appetite, but I know I am lots better so don't worry. Mrs. Tripp quit a couple of days ago, so the nurse on second floor that I like so well is taking care of all the babies. Last night about 9:00 "Billie" cried for over a half hour. She had a touch of colic, but after she was taken care of she didn't wake up till 5:30 this morning.

Big and Bill didn't come up here so they must have taken the train that night.

Dr. Houtz was just in. When he saw I was better he said he thought I was taking smallpox because my fever was so high. He said there is lots of it here in town. I hope you found every thing O.K. at home and this week will go by as fast as it can.

I got a letter from Ma, Agnes, Big, and Minnie. They said Winnie calls them all a "bugger" and Minnie calls grandma "maemma". They said they were all going to church Sunday.

Sun 31 A joyous Easter to you. Hope you won't be alone and know if you go out to see the kiddlets they will be so glad to see you. Yesterday was cloudy, windy and it rained but today is as nice as it can be. I heard music and bells the first thing this morning, and each patient got quite and Easter gift. A card, rabbit, 2 colored eggs, and some egg candies, in a plate of straw. They have a new general nurse and she seems real nice. I still feel better this morning, but "Billie" cried till 3:30 a.m. She had colic again. So I didn't get much sleep. I don't have those awful pains anymore. I think it's the medicine I take that hurts the baby. I don't take but one kind now. There was twins born last night but one died. Miss Lang comes in and gets the baby many times a day to show her to her friends. She sees that the baby is kept clean and I get my medicine on time. She has surely did all she could for us.

1918 Fern's Birth

Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana ~ Havre, Montana

5 p.m. We had ice cream & cake for dinner. It was good. The W.C.T.U. brought baby a white carnation and me a red one. Rev. Huston said he was coming up to see me.

Sister just said I had a little more fever this evening. They say it's caused from the milk coming in. They took off the bandage this morning but don't worry yet. When you go to Savoy probably you had better phone up and have them ask me if I want you to come. I hope they will tell me this time. Miss Lang left to day. I hope the baby stays well to night. I only had about 3 hrs. sleep last night, but slept this afternoon.

Boys are playing baseball out in the schoolyard. Two were just fighting. Maybe it's good we haven't a boy. I know I would want him to be a man right away.

Mon. April 1 I don't feel any worse this morning so maybe I won't be so bad this time. Baby slept fine last night. I did too but sweat so much.

The sisters wait on me together. So I get a bath pretty early in the morning. I took med every two hours last night. It's going to be another nice day. I hope you got along all right with the flax. I'll be home Sat. 4 more days in bed. I'll mail this now so you can get it tomorrow if you go to town. Write and let me know how the kiddlets, yourself and every thing is.

Don't get lonesome.

Your Wifie Esther

Eric's Diary April 1918

Wed 3: Worked on engine & fanned flax.
Thur 4: Doc. phoned down for me to come to Haver. I left Harlem on a freight at 10:30 p.m.
Fri 5: Arrived at hospital at 2:00 a.m. found Esther improving Seen Doc. at noon his report didn't sound so good.
Sat. 6: Stayed with Esther and hung around the Doctors office all day. Wm Frame drilled me in Lodge work from 7:30 till 10:30 p.m.
Sun. 7: I went to the Methodist Church in the morning and evening. Stayed with Esther the rest of the day.
Mon. 8: Stayed with Esther all day. Had supper with Mr. Wm. Frame. Left Haver at 10:30 p.m. for Harlem.
Tue. 9: Walked to Agency. Was ordered by Monroe to leave the reservation.

[In 1918 there were many war-wounded men at Sacred Heart stressing the staff of the small Hospital. When mother's time came and she needed the doctor he was busy operating on a man's foot infected with gangrene. When finished he left the man and came right to mother without washing his hands. The nurses were so appalled by the lack of sanitary practices that

1918

Fern's Birth

Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana ~ Havre, Montana

the head nurse quit a few days after Fern was born, and Miss Lang, the nurse that was so good to mother, left on Easter day. They called what happened to Esther blood poisoning. Thankful that telephone technology had reach Montana, in that pre antibiotic era, it was possible for her Doctor to listen in on a three-way-hook-up while a specialist, in war wound infections, spoke via phone from New York to a symposium in California.

To treat her, two large bottles of warm water colored a deep pink with *Lysol* were put on a stand at the foot of her bed to irrigate the infected area. She said she began to feel better right away as she lay there watching the level of water gradually descend in the bottles.

When Eric got the Doctors message he hopped a freight train from Harlem to Havre arriving about two in the morning. Esther recognized his footsteps echoing on the wooden sidewalk and told the nurse her husband was coming. The nurse thought she was having a dream and urged her to go back to sleep. Soon he was knocking on the hospital door. The nurses reluctant to let anyone in at that hour tried to send him away. He insisted saying the Doctor had sent for him and his wife needed him. His persistence made them unlock the door.

Dad didn't just attend church as recorded in his diary, He also asked the minister and congregation to pray for Esther and wrote to his sister with the same request. His Masonic Lodge friend William Frame distracted him in the evenings by coaching him in lodge work.]

Western Union Telegram
Harlem April 9th

Dearest Wifie

I didn't get home yet. Too much business. Will go tomorrow. Bill bought a team but they didn't come down yet. Bill Bunt was out to our place yesterday. Everything was O.K. as far as he could see. I am wondering how you are now. It's 11 p.m. so I am going to bed. I will call you up Thursday or Friday. The roads are still bad. But one can get from Agency to Chinook on that side of the river. I hope you will be ready to come home Sunday. So be good and get well.

Eric

Wed. 10: Walked to Agency came home in car and worked on engine.
Thr. 11: Worked on engine and fanned some flax.
Fri 12: I went to Savoy after mail. Bill and Agnes came.
Sat. 13: Worked on engine all morning. I went to Hays after the kids after dinner.
Sun. 14: It looked too much like rain to go after Esther.
Mon. 15: Bill took me to Savoy I went to Haver brought Esther and baby back as far as Harlem. Stayed there overnight.
Tue. 16: Bill met us at Savoy. We got home about 6 p.m.

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1918 Fern's Birth

Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana ~ Havre, Montana

[One day about seventy years later Mother told about their crossing of the Milk River after they took the train from Harlem to Savoy. She said, "When we came to the river it was up high, so very high. There was a little bit of a boat about this wide (She spread her hands about 28 inches.) and the boat was flat. We had to cross the river there was no other way home. Eric rowed the baby across first. The water looked like it was going to overflow the boat. The Milk River is so swift, you know! It is narrow and deep. I was so scared I just couldn't look. Eric had the man from the store come down to the river with us. He wanted him to stay with me while he took the baby across so I wouldn't be standing there alone. And when I got in the boat to go over I was holding onto the boat like this," (She spread her arms out so rigid with her fists clenched iron tight one could just visualize her life-clinging grip on the sides of the boat) She went on, "The boat rode so low in the water my hands got wet. So you know it was really dangerous." Pride replaced the fear in her voice as she continued, "But he took us across, he was strong but he still had to pull so hard on the oars. In summer the river is so low it can be forded in a wagon."

Mother had been away thirty-one days. When she came home her "kiddlets", her parents and all her sisters and brothers were there, but 21-month-old Winniefred, didn't recognize her mother and hid behind the stove. Years later her sister Tillie said, "No wonder you didn't know her the big black circles around her eyes looked like two huge black saucers and she was so thin. She felt so bad when you didn't go to her she cried."

Everyone loved the baby and soon forgot about a "boy called Billie." Given the name Betty Fern, but always-called just Fern, she became mother's only bottle-baby raised on *EAGLE BRAND* sweetened condensed canned milk.

First draft Fern's Birth Dated: Feb / March 1998

1918
Fern's Birth

Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana ~ Havre, Montana



~

1919 and Beyond My Childhood

Part of my childhood seems now like a glorious summer of endless sunshine in which we sisters can be seen hanging by our knees from tricking poles, climbing trees, turning cart-wheels, playing hide and seek in the tall weeds, sitting in the clover weaving clover chains, or in the cool of a Waverly Missouri shade tree sewing doll dresses. In Kansas City we rolled down a velvety grass covered hill in our Sunday best white dresses; and in West Allis we took the long streetcar ride to McKinley beach with all the kids on our block. What a picture we made for all our neighbors watching from their porch as we trudged the four blocks to the streetcar the little ones hanging tightly onto the hands of the older girls, each one clutching a swimsuit, a sandwich, and if we were lucky a nickel for a holiday sucker.

These activities all have different settings as our family moved approximately every three to six months for about ten years. We grew up at a time when children had the leisure to be children, innocent in our ignorance of most adult concerns, expected to be “seen and not heard.”

Minnie, Fern, and I, were new comers in southern Arizona (fall of 1919) when we saw our first circus: the Al G. Barns Circus. We were as vividly impressed by the many species of the huge prickly cacti under the open bleachers as we were with the bears and horses walking in circles on their hind feet.

Minnie and I were dark brunettes Fern light brown. Our hair was parted in the middle brushed straight with bangs cut well above the eyebrows. On March 26, 1920 blond curly haired Dixie Jean joined the family, sharing her birthday with Fern.

Dad's work was going just great. His employers the Wisconsin Bridge and Iron Co. were impressed with the way he managed a crew and got the job done. They gave him larger jobs and more responsibility. He worked with his brothers Fred and Ted and Fred's brother-in-law, Fred Lynch, building the above ground steel structures for copper mines in the Warren, Bisbee, and Miami area.

We had been in Arizona about eighteen months when word came from grandma Larsen on the reservation that the government was about to make a settlement with the Indians and Mother needed to be there for her allotment. Mother made that five-day train trip with her four daughters. Dixie was just fourteen months old. In a letter to Dad of the trip mother writes "Everybody was so willing to help me, so we got along fine, and you should have heard all the nice complements I got on the children's good behavior. Even the cranky manager of the dining car spoke of their good manners."

When writing about staying at her sister Agnes' she writes “We are so crowded here; we all five sleep in one bed.”

~

**1921
Arizona**

Arizona



Minnie, Winnie, Esther, Dixie (held), Fern

Winnie's Stories: 1916-1943

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1921
Aunt Agnes and Uncle Bill Stickney
Fort Belknap Reservation

I remember the vivid red upright combs and fleshy wattles on the white leghorn roosters as they one-eyed me and strutted about so aloof. The hens strolled calmly with a cluck-cluck and a jerk of their heads at every step, pecked at the ground, scratched, clucked and took another step. Whenever Aunt Agnes scooped chicken feed in her apron and headed for the chicken yard she called out, "Here chick come chick-chick." My sisters and I scrambled at her heels to watch how all the fowl would come on the run to scratch and peck as she scattered the cracked corn.

Mother and her older sister Agnes were close and had been through hard and good times together. Aunt Agnes had a big heart but no children of her own. She welcomed us warmly. Uncle Bill however, was a taciturn fellow who did not like children. He surveyed the four of us with a scowl. Then told mother she better not let her girls tease his prize geese. He would go about his work then return to the house and grouch about one thing or the other. I kept out of his way as best a child could.

As for the geese they could very well take care of themselves. If ever our path crossed they would run squawking after us with their broad flapping wings spread high, necks stretched out a mile, and yellow bills opened wide ready to bite. It became my habit to cautiously stick my head out of the screen door for a careful inspection to be sure no geese were lurking around before I dared to step out to play. His geese acted like it was their job to guard the path to the outhouse. Many a time I ran back to the house crying in terror, calling Mama, with a squawking goose flapping at my heels. They never bothered the baby though. Thirteen-month-old Dixie could toddle right up to them and they wouldn't ruffle a feather.

One day I didn't run fast enough the big gander bit me leaving his mark on my behind and tearing my coveralls. Mother, very protective of her brood, decided it was time to speak to Uncle Bill. She began, "Could you keep the geese fenced in the pen they are becoming such a nuisance?"

"I told those brats not to tease my geese," he snapped. His glare told her she was trespassing on his sacred ground.

Name-calling inflamed her motherly passion of protection. That gander had raised her dander. She knew better but continued to irk and infuriate. "Just look at the yard! There is not a blade of grass left. Not a place to step between the droppings. When it rains the yard becomes a sea of mud and all that mud gets tracked into the kitchen."

Speaking this way about *his children* she realized she had worn out her welcome. Both ceased to regard the other with affection.

~

1921
Montana
On Fort Belknap Reservation



Dixie, Winnie, Ruth, Jack (with head cut-off), Fern with wheelbarrow, Minnie, Reba

The Eastlund girls are wearing the rompers that their Mother, Esther dressed them in which would take the hard wear of children playing. Winnie wanted to be dressed in pretty dresses especially when other girls were wearing them.



Uncle Little, Grandma Larsen
Dixie, Winnie, Ruth, Minnie, Fern, Reba

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1921
Montana
On Fort Belknap Reservation



Dixie, Winnie, Ruth, Minnie, Reba, Fern



Dixie, Fern, Reba, Minnie, Winnie, Ruth

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Circa 1921
Grandfather Zack Larsen and Grandmother Emma Solomon
Larsen



Winnie's Stories: 1916-1943

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Larsens

Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana

Grandpa and Grandma Larsen had hauled their log house up from White Bear and were in the process of rebuilding. Although not completely finished we left Agnes's place and moved in with them about mid July. I was very impressed with the surroundings. They had a covered well in the yard; a water trough for the horses, and a chicken coop. Near the door on a wash bench stood a pail of water, next to a grey enameled wash basin and a saucer holding blue and white strong smelling soap. I remember grandmother standing in her long-skirted print dress showing us the routine of washing up before going in to eat. A woodpile and lumber for the house lay about and a plank balanced over a log for a teeter-totter. Best of all there were children to play with. Mother's youngest sisters Ruth and Reba were our age and Jack just a few years older. Tillie and Emma nine and ten years older were not on any pictures I found of that summer. (Tillie said that was the only summer they got to go home from government Indian school in Kansas.)

One day I was on the teeter-totter with Reba when she got very excited, she said, "My Father is coming home." She had heard the horses and wagon before they came around the hill and stopped near the house. Several men went into the house. Reba jumped off of the teeter-totter and ran to the house. I followed slowly behind. Mother met us at the door and said we should stay outside and play. The adults were going to eat and she would call us when the second table was set and ready for the children. That didn't bother me because it was more fun to be outside than having to be "seen and not heard" around adults, but Reba was sad. She said there was an Indian Fair at Hays and she wanted to ask her father if he would take her.

I have only one recollection of ever seeing my grandfather Zack Larsen. It was a shy look that went no higher than his vest where an ivory toothpick hung from the center of a chain that went from pocket to pocket. I know a gold watch was in one pocket because he pulled it out, opened the cover and looked at it before snapping it shut returning it to his pocket as though he was anxious to be on his way. I also saw him use the ivory toothpick as he walked restlessly back and forth beside the table where he and the other adults had just left, and at which we children were now seated. He said to my mother "So, Esther, these are your children!" Why didn't I look at his face? Or am I just unable to recall anything above the vest? How could I know it was the last chance to see my grandfather for he would die the next evening?

Later when the wagon was loaded with camping needs and our grandparents were about to leave, thinking "Indian Fair" would be like the circus, I asked mother if we could go too. Her answer was "No, all you children are going to stay home with me."

We didn't know that someone had come during the night with a message for Mother so we were quite surprised early the next morning when mother awoke us and told us to put on our white dresses then urged us to hurry along and get in the wagon.

"Why?" "Where are we going?"

"To Hays?" Our hopes rose. "Are we going to the fair after all?"

Larsens

Fort Belknap Reservation, Montana

"No."

"Are we going on the rides?"

"No."

"Why are we going then?"

"Just sit down in the wagon and be quiet!"

So we lay stomach down on the blanket covered wagon box watching the road disappear behind us. We exhaled slowly letting our breath make undulating ah-ah sounds as the wagon bounced over the rocks and ruts of the dirt road. Minnie holding the baby, sat up front on the wagon seat between Mother and Jack.

After a while, a man on horseback appeared, coming toward us in a cloud of dust. Wagon and horseman stopped opposite each other. He spoke briefly to Mother. The horses were whipped and we hurried on. (He had come to tell Mother where she would find her Mother.)

Soon we could see tents and tepees. Beyond them we saw the gay colors of what I thought was a Ferris wheel with flags and banners. Stopping near the tents Mother hurriedly jumped to the ground. We were told to stay where we were in the wagon. Her brother Jack immediately jumped out and in a streak ran off toward the tents. A little later Ruth and Reba got out and disappeared. They seemed to know where they wanted to go. After a time of restless waiting in the midst of all the exciting things going on around us, I thought if they could get out of the wagon I could too. Fern followed and Minnie still holding the baby called after us that we should not go very far. Holding hands Fern and I wandered past the tents to a tepee. Standing in front of the opening we looked in. There we saw men sitting on the ground in a semi-circle. The man in the middle had on a bonnet of feathers. After taking a puff on a pipe he gave it to the man next to him, and looked at us with a steady although not unkind gaze.

It was there Mother found us. She scolded us quietly with, "Come away from there. Don't bother those people. Didn't I tell you to stay in the wagon?"

We left and my memory of other events fades. It wasn't until I became an adult that I realized that we had gone to Hays because Grandpa Zack Larsen had suddenly died of apoplexy (stroke). If we grandchildren were told of the death, funeral or burial I have no memory. However, frequently through the years a whiff of smoke from burning leaves has reminded me of the odor coming from that tepee and I would recall the circle of Indians smoking their pipe together and remember the eyes of the Indian Chief; but grandpa I see no higher than the gold chain above his waist.

~

1921
Winnie Being Teased
At White Bear on Fort Belknap Reservation



Winnie's Stories: 1916-1943

First Edition December 2010 Rev D.

1921
Discipline Father's Style
Ironton, Ohio

“If you... You'll get a spanking that you will remember for the rest of your life”... was the threat. I did the forbidden, couldn't help it, got spanked. Soon forgot the sting of the strop on the skin but clung to a feeling of being unfairly caught in a trap.

This happened in the olden days, when children were still expected to be “seen and not heard” and punishment by spanking had not yet become stigmatized.

We were invited to the home of dad's working partner for an evening visit. Together they were erecting a bridge over the Ohio River. Mr. Christnelly and his crew had already started on the Kentucky side when we arrived in Ironton, Ohio. He was older than dad and a relative of the company's president. Dad was anxious for his family (of just four girls then) to make a good impression and cautioned us to be on our best behavior. Before leaving home he sent us older girls up to use the bathroom. Then he addressed me, the one with the bladder that must be obeyed without delay, when he made that threat.

In our house the toilet tank was high up on the wall close to the ceiling. It had a long chain. When the chain was pulled the water roared down the pipe and swished around circling the bowl like white water rapids making loud sucking sounds before it quieted down like a beast licking his chops. At first Fern, my next youngest sister, and I would pull the chain and dash out of the room afraid we could be caught in the swift current and get sucked down into that black hole.

Christnelly's home was sparsely furnished like most ironworkers who know they will be in town just a short time. A bare ceiling light bulb bounced a stark light on to the walls. At the far end of the room by the fireplace our hostess seated mother and the baby in a wooden rocker and dad in a chair with arms. Facing them were two straight back wooden kitchen chairs where our hosts would sit. Their home without a knick-knack, picture or a vase was absolutely clutter-less. Turning to us girls she said, “Come with me I have just the place for you.” She led us around the corner into a hallway between kitchen and living room saying: “This child's table and chair set are the only things I have from my childhood. We take them with us wherever we go. And here are crayons and coloring books just for you.”

Remembering toys we had to leave behind, I thought, “What a smart woman and she doesn't even have children.” Minnie, Fern and I paid no heed to the adult's conversation as we eagerly brought the pictures to life with color. The table was up against an outside door that appeared to be boarded up with apple green wainscoting. It certainly looked too flimsy to be a storm door. After coloring several pictures Fern went to play with Dixie on the floor by mother. I said to Minnie, “Do you think they have an inside toilet?”

“Do you have to go?”

1921
Discipline Father's Style
Ironton, Ohio

“Not yet, but I can't figure out where their bathroom is. I see only one inside door. The open one across the kitchen is their bedroom. I can see the bed. The only other place for a bathroom is behind this drape here in the hall next to me.”

“Bathrooms usually have doors. I think they have an outhouse.”

“Well if they have an outhouse they'd have a galvanized tub to bathe in and I don't see one anyplace. Besides they'd have to go out this side door and they'd have to move this table every time they need to go out.”

“Maybe they hang the tub outside.”

“A tub would blow in the wind and make a lot of noise. I don't think they do that in the city.”

“Well, it could be behind that drape.”

I reached over and pulled the rose printed chintz drape aside. Inside shelves were packed solid with neatly stacked linen, clothing, and boxes leaving no place for a tub. “Maybe they go through the bedroom to get to the bathroom. I am going to peek.” I tiptoed across the kitchen. Saw only the bed, dresser and one window.

“Winniefred what are you doing?” Called mother who sees around corners.

“Nothing.”

“Well don't go wondering around in there.”

I hurried back to my chair, picked up a crayon but couldn't concentrate on drawing. Flashing through my mind were the ghost stories I heard that summer, about things that come out of dark shadows and get-you in the night. I told Minnie, “I'm not going out side in the dark.”

“What will you do?”

“I'll just have to wait until we get home.” I picked out another picture to color. When I began wiggling from side to side in my chair Minnie said, “You'll just have to go and tell mother.” So I circled timidly around the back of the chairs in the living room to whisper in Mother's ear.

Our hostess over heard me and said, “Come with me I have just the thing for you, and you won't have to go outside.” From the floor of the chintz-draped closet she pulled a ceramic commode camouflaged in a rose covered cotton print. Even the lid was padded with chintz. Alas! So close, but too late.

1921
Discipline Father's Style
Ironton, Ohio

Walking home dad let me know how I embarrassed and disgraced him. He said, "I'm a man of my word, so now I'll have to give you that thrashing."

We were sent straight to bed. Too soon he called up the stairs, "Are you in your nighties?" Minnie on my left and Fern on the right pulled on their flannel gowns and jumped into bed pulling the covers up over their heads. I was still pulling off my long stockings when Dad's shadow preceded him coming up the stairs razor strop in hand. He said, "This will hurt me more than it will you." As he put me over his knee and brought the strop down. I howled as loud as I could and kept it up long after the real crying ceased. After a while mother called up, "That is enough of that, be quiet now and go to sleep."

At age five I lacked words to articulate why this seemed unfair. Fifty years later books were published on transactional analysis and how to set up win-win situations that clarified and confirmed my childhood indignation. Don't think Dad and I spent any time at odds with each other. To me he's remembered as a kind gentle father who whispered while walking down the aisle on my wedding day. "If anything should ever go wrong remember you can always come home."

Reoccurring dreams on the same theme are said to be the result of unfinished business. Some of my dreams might merit analyzing. One occurs sporadically like a serial involving a first suitor. In another I hang precariously on a ladder with broken or missing rungs, unable to go up or down. In the third I'm looking for a public restroom and find the most bizarre, phenomenal, and unbelievable accommodations.

Winniefred Arhelger 8-15-2000

~

1921
Mother's Discipline
Ironton, Ohio

I'm not too proud to pick up a penny. I consider the exercise a little reward, like the tidbits tossed to a dog in training. It keeps me sharp-eyed and gives an edge to the power of observation

I remember when I found my first penny. I was five and my sister-playmate, Fern was three; but we were the same size so people thought we were twins. It had become a long tiresome time for mother having three pre-school children inside all winter. On this day she said, "It is warm enough for you to play outside today while I wash my hair. With all that running around and clatter you'll wake the baby before I get through. Now stay on the side of the house where I can see you."

Finding ourselves outside without any toys and our game interrupted we wondered what to do. I began kicking at the pebbles in the drip line of the house when I found a dull copper penny. Still disgruntled Fern said, "What can you do with that?" I had once been in a penny-candy store so I said, "The drug store on the corner probably has gum. Let's go there and see if we can buy a stick."

The druggist, a kind gray haired man looked at our penny and said, "People usually buy the whole pack." Never the less he removed the outer wrapper of the five-stick-pack and let us buy one stick of sweet smelling Juicy Fruit. I quickly tore it in two and gave Fern half. Out on the sidewalk I recalled the hardware store was just around the corner and I wanted to show Fern the little red chair that I had longed for, but Santa Claus didn't bring. To my disappointment cleaning supplies, garden tools, and bicycles occupied the neat rows where the Christmas toys had been. Before we could sit on one of the tricycles a slim elderly woman came from the back of the store and showed us the door saying, "Don't come back unless you are going to buy something. I am tired of wiping up children's finger-prints."

On the sidewalk again I realized that we had been away from home too long so we took the short cut down the alley. Behind the hardware was a big storage barn with doors wide open. We peeked in and there hanging high on a wall were three little red chairs. We loitered there admiring the chairs until a burly man came and closed the doors saying, "You better go home your Mother is probably looking for you."

As we hurried down the alley we heard mother calling. Just as we reached our gate we saw her come out of the back door and go around the other side of the house. She had been brushing her hair dry and it hung down over her shoulders to her waist. The hairbrush was still in her hand. We knew we were in for it. But child-like we thought we could avoid the punishment if we ran inside and hid. I crawled under the stove and Fern across the kitchen under the table. Looking at Fern I said, "She will see you there." Then I realized my hiding spot was just as obvious so I ran to the bedroom and crawled between the bed and the wall. Fern scampered after me. Of course Mother heard us and lost no time in hauling us out and administered the brush.

To this day a penny is just a penny.

~

1921
Ironton – Russell Bridge
Ironton, Ohio



~

1922

From Ironton Ohio Back to Montana

From Ironton, Ohio back to Montana, it seemed the train didn't travel very far before we saw water from the river creeping up quite close to the rail-road tracks. The train slowed down and crawled along for a while before it stopped. Because a river from the north was cresting we needed to wait to see if it would get so high to take out the railroad bridge.

Mother knew how to keep us entertained on trips. She bought out new coloring books and crayons while we waited. I was so preoccupied I didn't notice when the train started to move again. Then the passengers on the far side began to stand in the aisle to peer out the windows at the swiftly swirling brown water. Dad taped me on the shoulder and said, "You must look at this, it's something you will remember all your life." We saw all manner of debris bobbing and twisting around as it was swept down with the raging current. We also saw buildings at the river edge crumble, fall and break up as the rapid churning, muddy-brown water ate into the river bank taking everything down stream with it. This was in April of 1922 that the heavy rains caused so much destruction.

Dad had just finished building a bridge over the Ohio River between Ironton, Ohio and Russell, KY; and with his family was going back to the Fort Belknap Reservation in Montana. There were rumors that enrollment and allotment was going to take place that spring. The Great Northern went right past dad's boyhood home so a stopover in Moorhead, Minnesota was always included when we went that far north. There was always a warm welcome from his Mother (Our Grandmother Eastlund) and sister Minnie. We spent Easter Sunday at the home of his brother Leonard where Aunt Ellen prepared a wonderful dinner and found room for all. This visit allowed the girls to get reacquainted with their cousins Harold, Gladys, Alice, Ruth, Goody, and Philip.

We Left Moorhead at 6 p.m. We girls looked forward to sleeping in the Pullman and watched the porter as he pulled down the upper bunk and made up the bed and one on the lower seats. Then he pulled the heavy green drapes out that curtained the compartments. After we washed up in the compact neat dressing room with its tiny stainless steel round sink and its curved straw sized faucet that let out a thin trickle of water, we took a drink from the folded paper cups. Then we children returned to where the porter was waiting with his brass ladder to help us climb into the upper bunk. The porter showed us a button to push. He said, "I'll come back with the ladder whenever you need to get up."

After everyone was settled and the Pullman quieted down I found a way out by climbing down through my parent's bunk, instead of bothering the porter. Finding my way back was not so easy, all the drapes were closed the entire car was curtained in green all the way up and down both sides of the aisle. Where could the third compartment be! The ever watchful porter didn't let me peek into many compartments before hustling down the aisle with his ladder and showed me where the numbers were high on the drapes. The click-clack of the rails and rocking rhythm of the train lulling me to sleep became a soothing memory that is still with me.

It was a 26-hour trip to Grandma Larsen's place on the Reservation. Grandma had been a widow for eight months. Living at home with her was her eighteen year old son, Ed and her two youngest girls Ruth and Reba. Uncle Little, the oldest son was working for

1922

From Ironton Ohio Back to Montana

farmers in the area so was gone most of the time. Her other children were attending Indian boarding schools. Aunts Emma and Tillie were at Haskell in Kansas, and Uncle Jack at the Agency on the Ft. Belknap Reservation.

The first thing dad needed to do was to go out looking for his horses that he had turned loose to range and forage for them self. Then go back to Dodson for the trunks. Then Little and Dad made the four day trip on horseback to the Agency stopping on the way at the house Dad had built six years earlier on White Bear Creek.

Minnie remembers that she was helping mother unpack the trunk when they found five candy Easter eggs left over from the baskets they received at Grandma Eastlund's in Moorhead. Five pieces of candy and six girls! What to do? There wasn't enough to go around. Generous Minnie offered to go without. Then Mother suggested that Minnie go for a walk while she gave the candy to the others girls so that they would not feel sorry for Minnie while they ate their piece. Minnie went for a walk and felt very proud to be part of a secret.

Soon our family moved to our house on White Bear Creek. Dad planted potatoes and put in a garden. The horses Fly and Pet came back with new born colts. On July 11 a telegram came telling dad he had a job at Eureka, Kansas. So he moved the family and one load of our belongings back to Grandma Larsen's. Mother was six months pregnant. It was not a good time for her to be alone among strangers so we stayed in Montana. Dad left the next morning alone. Their letters tell the rest.

This is a list of the places where Dad worked in the next six months: and why their letters didn't reach each other very promptly.

July 11 Dad left Mont. For Ericka Kansas
Aug 10 Dad in Milwaukee
Aug. 25 Dad in Burlington, Iowa working on the Burlington Cascade Bridge
Sept. 29 Dad to Phoenix Ariz.
Oct. 15 Dad on way to Albuquerque, NM
Oct. 18 Dad arrived Kansas City got too homesick to finish job.
Oct. 25 Dad left for Montana
Oct. 27 Dad arrived Coburg; stayed home 20 days
Nov. 17 Dad left for Janesville, WI
Dec. 20 Dad left for Montana
Dec. 22 Dad Arrived Coburg - For Christmas
Dec. 27 Dad left for Trimountian, MI
Jan. 30 1923 Family arrived in Trimountain
Feb. 11 1923 at 5p.m. Dixie died

~

1922

The First Four and Room For More

In this still picture
Mother captured
with a Kodak camera
do you see joy?
After a long summer
separation from our dad
we are on our favorite horse
ready for a carrousel ride.
Do you see the action,
bucking up and down
up and down

spun around and around?
Do you hear
our din, our shrieks of
gleeful hilarity,
creating our own calliope
clamoring for more?
Do you hear Dad answer?
(I was saving room for you.)
When the next four asked,
why is your leg up like that?



Minnie – Fern – Winniefred -Dixie

1922

What My Father Taught

On his lap I learned the alphabet by poking pinholes
in every “e” while he held the newspaper.
Temperance, tolerance and balance
were his favorite words.
He taught me to turn a cartwheel like
an expression of extreme exuberance.
Once distracted by my noisy footsteps, he
stopped calculating rivets and man hours needed
to build a bridge, to show me how to take
quiet steps like an Indian approaching a rabbit.
Another time he watched my determined stubbornness
As I bend nail after nail trying to hammer into hard wood.
Then he showed how drilling a pilot hole
like making a path for the nail is easier
Seek the best in every religion, he encouraged,
for we all are God’s people.
He warned, no matter how great your skills
you’ll never earn as much as a man.
That was the way the world was then.
Irrked I kept my ire quiet, for experience had taught
it’s best not to create disturbances.
As other bolder women make their entry holes
and penetrate into the male kingdom...
my heart turns cartwheels for them.

1922 - My First Teacher

First Grade

Coburg, Montana

My first school experience lasted for 3 ½ months in a first to eight grade school room at Coburg, Montana. How we happened to be there is part of the story.

Two weeks before I was born and after my dad gave up his homestead and dry-land farming because the Bureau of Indian Affairs announced it was going to begin again allotting land on the reservation to the Indians. All non-reservation Indians were urged to move onto the reservation to get on the rolls and be on hand when the allotment would commence. Convinced his wife and children were entitled by blood to the land, Dad moved us to the Ft. Belknap Reservation.

Things didn't go very smoothly. Although we had been accepted by the Gros Ventures and voted into the tribe, the local government agent contested all of mixed blood. Then there was delay after delay on the allotments. After building a house, planting a crop and being ordered off the land Dad returned to steel construction. In 1919 we moved with him from Montana to Arizona. In spring of 1921 Mother with girls went back to reservation after hearing allotments were to begin again. Then late in October we all went with dad to Ohio where he built a bridge over the Ohio River. At Easter time of 1922 we returned to the Reservation as rumors were again circulating that the allotment would start again in the spring. Dad left us at Grandma Larsen's to be on hand when called for our hearing and so Mother wouldn't be alone among strangers when time came for her fifth child's birth. [Echo]

Again stalling, delays and postponements lasted all summer. Mother then made arrangements to buy a house in the town of Coburg so Minnie and I could go to school. While at the General Store she overheard a couple of men airing their biases. (The prevailing sentiment toward Indians had changed that by that time from annihilation to assimilation.) They were talking about the "half breed" families who had petitioned the school board to allow their children to attend the public school. One man said "I don't know about the Browns and the O'Brian's but those Eastlund kids have just about enough white blood to make them good citizens."

The late summer hospitalization of Fern and Dixie delayed our move to town and caused us to start school several weeks late. With all the extra cooking and cleaning while living with multiple families that summer, Mother had no time to prepare me for school.

My first school day finally came. In a one-room school with grades one through eight, I met my first teacher. She had dark hair pulled up into a bun, a white blouse, dark skirt and a look of dismay, apparently either upset by the school-board's decision to allow us Eastlund's to attend, or because she didn't plan on teaching first grade until all the first-graders were present. She told me to take the second seat by the windows. She was saving the first seat for a girl who had been sick and was still under quarantine. I was to sit still and learn what I could while she was teaching other grades, as she did not intend to start teaching first grade

1922 - My First Teacher
First Grade
Coburg, Montana

until the sick girl came. There was no one sitting in front of me, no one behind and no one directly across the aisle.

I looked out the tall windows reflecting a bleak sky, then back to the middle of the room where my sister Minnie sat with the third graders, then beyond her to the kids in the last row who became shadow figures blending into the black board covered wall, then at the closed door in the corner that led to outside and home.

I was an obedient child and knew how to sit still and be quiet, but ten days with nothing to do! I began to dream of the summer's fun making mud pies with my younger sisters and aunts. Looking for something to play with I took the crayon shavings from the bottom of the box and with a bit of spit began to try to stir up a pie mix on my desk. The oily crayons and spit didn't mix. Miss Ish's heels thumping on the hardwood floor did not arouse me from my puzzlement. But her white cloth wiped away my slimy experimental spittle. Her words shaming me and accusing me of spoiling a newly varnished desk did catch my attention.

Then with disgust she emptied a box of green letters upon my desk and told me to make words. Make words! What did she mean, make words? Well after I turned all the letter right side up I got out of my seat to see what the second graders were doing with their green squares. From across the room her voice bellowed "Get back in your seat and do as you were told". So trying to copy what I had seen, I pushed the green squares into two columns of three and four letters, hoping some combination would be a word. Suddenly from behind my shoulder critical accusations echoed, "Why! You don't even know the alphabet!" "These letters are upside down and you haven't made a single word!" Pushing my work aside she picked out C A T, D O G, & B O Y and told me to copy them.

It turned out that the teacher boarded during the school year with the family of the sick girl, and that girl's father was president of the school board. Miss Ish had been coaching her since late summer. We would get daily reports on how smart she was, how far she could count, that she quickly learned new words and that she could write her name.

Finally the day arrived when the awaited girl was ushered to the front of the room to be introduced to the class. She stood there in a ruffled white pinafore, over a plaid dress, and long braids tied with small ribbons. I think I envied her pettiness, and certainly the pinafore, but mostly I felt glad for now the teaching could begin. With a complete change of expression, Miss Ish found time to pull up a chair beside our desks and with a big smile began the first lesson using flip cards with pictures.

We left that school in January. Besides learning that oil and water won't mix, the other thing I remember from first grade is my first Christmas verse. I had such a hard time learning it, because I wasn't ready to know the truth about Santa. My whole family helped me by chanting it with me all the way to the Program.

1922 - My First Teacher
First Grade
Coburg, Montana

*I know there are no fairies
And there is no Jack Frost they say,
But I am going to believe in Santa till I'm old and grey.*

~

1922

Summer to Christmas

Coburg, Montana

We were the most forlorn family on the face of the earth when our father was away. In July of 1922 he left us at Grandma Larsen's on the reservation, for his jobs were too small to take the family along. When fall approached Mother bought a cold bare two-room house in Coburg, a small railroad town on the north edge of Ft. Belknap.

Mother planned to move into town on the first of September so Minnie and I could attend school; but the younger girls, Fern and Dixie came down with summer complaint. They were so sick they couldn't eat, had spasms, and Mother was afraid they were going to die. A neighbor took them in his horse and buggy the thirty miles to the nearest hospital at Dodson. Mother was so distraught she wanted to wire Dad asking him to come home, but she wasn't sure where to send the telegram. The doctor advised her to wait. She worried alone, never leaving their bedsides the entire two weeks, while she comforted, entertained and spooned rice milk into their mouths when they could tolerate it. She wrote to Dad often, but her letter with the good news of their improvement reached him before he received her first night letter¹ describing their sickness and her extreme concern.

Grandmother Larsen had brought our things to town, made the beds, and tidied the house so Mother was able to take the train directly to Coburg when they left the hospital. Then Mother got busy turning that house into a home. However, she was too frugal to spend money on a used cast iron stove for cooking and heating the kitchen. She did send to Montgomery Ward for a Congoleum,² curtains, and the galvanized tubs needed for the wash and our Saturday baths. Then she started us in school, canned fruit, sewed for the expected baby and worried about the time she would spend in the hospital away from her girls.

In a letter addressed to Dad in Phoenix Mother wrote:

"October 8, 1922

Dear Eric, It is nice and bright this evening. Such pretty nights make me so lonesome. Mother is at Agnes's and hasn't come back yet. I take the 9:00 am train tomorrow. When I told the girls I was going to the hospital Dixie and Fern cried. Fern wanted to know if I was going to drink all kinds of water like they had to."

(At the end of the letter she wrote this P.S.):

"It's now 2:30 am. Am ready to go to Dodson. Mother got here after midnight."

What she didn't write was that when she went out earlier she was looking for her mother who was to come that evening to stay with us girls, and it was getting late. Grandma had been at Aunt Agnes's house canning pickles all day and was tired. Her young daughters were asleep in the bed of the wagon and she nodded off too and missed the turn; of course the horses went straight ahead. When she awoke she was confused about where she was so it

¹ *night letter: A telegram sent at night when the cost of the telegram was cheaper.*

² *Congoleum :linoleum flooring in this case with a floral pattern*

1922
Summer to Christmas
Coburg, Montana

was well after midnight when she got to our house. Mother also didn't write that she couldn't wait for the morning train and had to call her neighbor, the banker, he took her in his car at that early hour arriving just an hour before the baby was born at 4:00 am.



*Grandma and Grandpa Larsen with Jack and Ruth in their wagon.
(Grandpa Larsen died in 1921.)*

During this time Dad had been working in eight states, from Wisconsin to Arizona. He was finishing a job in Phoenix when he got the doctor's telegram saying it was a girl. (Their fifth: Echo) From there he was sent to Albuquerque and on to another job in Missouri. Letters were not catching up with him. He became apprehensive and hopped a train for home. We were all waiting at the station when he arrived, and there again when he left. Forever after feeling sad and lonely, whenever hearing a departing train's whistle its lonely woo-woo. While home Dad was able to get land on the reservation and he helped repair the banker's car.

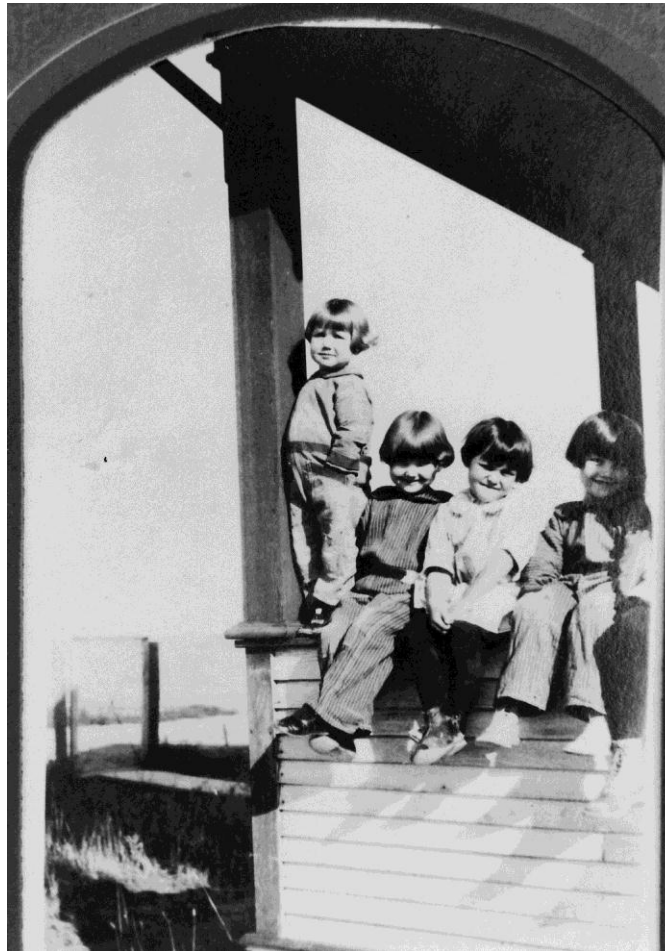
The weather turned cold. The snow was a blessing when we needed clean water, after a mouse was pumped up with our well water. The snow was a trial when it had to be shoveled before we could get to the coal-pile. Mother again had the responsibility of both the inside and the outside chores.

That winter sticks in my memory like damp snow clings to woolen mittens then soaks right into the bones to freeze and stiffen the fingers. Cold penetrated just like that as my sister and I pushed against the strong icy wind that blew across Montana's flat land on our

1922
Summer to Christmas
Coburg, Montana

way home from school one afternoon. The sleet pricked and stung our faces and caused our eyes to tear, so we turned our backs to the wind and tried to walk home backwards. We knew Mother would be worried as she watched at the window fearful of what was taking us so long. Then she came out to meet us and hurry us home. She soaked our hands in cold water and rubbed life back into our toes.

As Christmas approached we worried if Dad would come home. In a letter Mother wrote: *“Dixie waves at the skidoo every day and wants to know, Is my Daddy on there?”*



Dixie, Fern, Reba, Winnie

In a letter from Janesville, WI Dad says: *“I have such a nice place to stay. Wish we had a home like this. Hot air heat, nice bath, carpets all over, everything one could wish for as a home. I feel just a little ashamed when I think of the comforts you don’t have. I would a hundred times sooner live closer to you and the children. I can just see all the children standing around watching you make the baby laugh.”*

Winnie’s Stories: 1916-1943

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1922
Summer to Christmas
Coburg, Montana

Mother responds: *“It is going to be a blue Christmas without you. Some way I don’t believe you can come. I want to send for a doll apiece for the kids as they would rather have dolls than anything.”*

Dad answered: *“Last night I bought some things at the Ten Cent Store, but I don’t know whether to send them or not. I would like so to come home but I could only stay for two or three days. I would lose five days traveling plus the R.R. fare. The difference to our family just in my coming home is at least \$100. Can we afford that much? Why with one hundred dollars you could buy a cook stove, sewing machine, washing machine and have some Xmas money left.”*

Mother wrote: *“I asked the kids and they all said, “Come.” I think you should too. It wouldn’t be Christmas without you. We can manage someway. Hope you can get here in time for the school program Friday.”*

He was on his way before receiving her last letter. When he learned I was having trouble memorizing my piece he had the whole family chanting it before we left the house.

The program was held in the largest building in town, the tavern. The entire town’s people soon occupied Rows and rows of chairs. On a stage of freshly cut lumber stood a scrawny tree decorated with paper chains and bright white burning candles. The only other light came from the lamps along the wall. Each child climbed the steps and stood by the tree to recite their piece. After the Christmas pageant, which included stubborn live lambs that had to be carried out, we hear a jolly ho-ho-ho. There was Santa in his red suit handing out candy boxes to the children. But our attention was quickly diverted to a man running down the outer aisle. Then our dad jumped up and sprinted to the stage where the candles had set the tree ablaze. Together they threw the flaming tree out the back door before it caused serious harm. We were hustled into our coats and quickly ushered out of the darkened smoky room. Someone at the door made sure every child got a box of candy and an apple.

Grandmother surprised us when she arrived on Christmas Eve with her children. Uncle Jack was ten and our Aunts Ruth and Reba were our age. Because the dirt roads developed deep ruts in winter and the ride by horse and wagon was long and cold, Mother didn’t expect or prepare for company. Presents had to be shifted around and retagged so all would have one nice gift.

After the excitement of opening the presents, Dixie wanted to play with Minnie’s new doll. Minnie wasn’t about to let that beautiful doll leave her arms. Mother called Minnie into the kitchen and quietly explained, *“I want you to let Dixie play with your doll because if Ruth and Reba hadn’t come and needed presents that doll would have been Dixie’s and the doll Reba has would have been yours.”* Minnie liked the life-like baby doll better than Reba’s girl doll and became very gracious in sharing her treasures.

1922

Summer to Christmas

Coburg, Montana

Jack got the harmonica. Mother played several lively tunes on it and taught him a few chords, which he experimented with at intervals all Christmas Day. We so seldom heard music of any kind that Jack's day long huffing and puffing out random chords was a fascinating sound to our uncritical ears.

Our world was like a beautiful moment. We were able to bask in a warm glow of family togetherness. Daddy was home; We were all happy in our innocence for we did not know then that in a month we would leave Montana and most of us would never see our Grandmother Larsen, Jack, Ruth or Reba again. Nor did we know that our little sister Dixie would die just ten days after that move.

After Christmas Dad took the train to Trimountain, Michigan. We stood on the depot platform, waving goodbye to him again until the train and its trail of smoke disappeared at the vanishing point. This time his job would last three months. Once there he wrote that the snow was three feet deep and it snowed every day. The men came to work on skis or snow shoes. He had six railroad cars of steel under snow to unload. But the houses in town had water and electricity, and he asked her if she was able to make the trip would she come so they could be together again?

Mother ended the year in the hospital at Great Falls with an eye infection that kept her in bed for ten days. She must have been so lonesome for Dad that she agreed to make the three day trip that needed three transfers and two stopovers with delays of eight and ten hours and to arrive at five-thirty p.m. Dad met us at the depot in Trimountain and had Mother and the little ones wait in a furniture store where it was warm while we three older girls walked with him to the empty house to build fires and make the beds. We walked on a crust of snow and didn't know until spring that there was a three-foot high fence around the yard. He told us to dance around the potbelly stoves to keep warm while he went back for mother and the babies.

We all caught colds. Dixie developed pneumonia. She was two and a half years old and had learned the alphabet when I did. We thought she was going to be the smartest one of us all. My parents called in two doctors, but they couldn't save her. The community people rallied around as if we had been long time friends.

If it weren't for their warmth, I would still be shivering.

~

1924 – Glenn
Born: April 27, 1924
Vernon, Oregon

"We were blessed with a ten pound boy at 6 a.m. God bless our son". That is all dad wrote in his diary on the day his sixth child was born. Dad's usual entries were about his work, such as: Raised so many tons of steel, or drove so many rivets. The four daily lines in the diary allowed little room to express the joy he must have felt. A son at last! Five times he had entered "A girl, God bless her." Now he had the son he longed for.

My memory of Glenn's birth was that the weather suddenly turned to spring. On the hillside there was an abundance of wild flowers for the May-baskets we made for Mother. But first we found our summer sox in the trunk where Mother stored them. Mindful that we were forbidden to take off our long johns, we rolled the long legs up into big round bulges above our knees and put on ankle sox. Then with our baskets went to see Mother and our brother at the birthing-home.

Mother was not pleased to see our bare legs and made us promise to wear long stocking until she came home. She was not having a good time because the woman in charge of the nursing home was such a sound sleeper. Mother had to get out of bed and crawl to the baby when he cried during the night. When they came home she had another disappointment. The lady taking care of us girls had not done any cleaning or any wash, not even Echo's diapers. Mother had to do two weeks wash going up and down steps as we lived on the second floor above the post office. She said she felt the best she ever did after child-birth.

Dad in his forty first year was proud of his family. He was wrapping up a job in Vernon, where he had built a sawmill, smoke stack, log slides, and conveyor to a burner. We had been there since September. The steel workers left on the eight of May. Dad's next job, a bridge across the Missouri River would not begin for two months. We had time to visit relatives.

Dad's brother Martin and Aunt Edna and cousins Una, Lyel and Rollin lived in Oregon. So did his niece Gladys Freeburg (his oldest sister, Ida's daughter) and her children Hazel, Dorothy, Jean and Raymond. Also Gladys's sister, Irene and husband Fritz. Uncle Ted had worked on that job too and Uncle Herman stopped by once to visit. It was the only time we have seen some of these Cousins.

We left Vernon on May 16th visiting the Oregon relatives and on the 25th took the train to Harlem, Montana where we rented an open car and started out for the Mission where Grandma Larsen lived but it rained and we had to turn back. Mother went without us older children the next day and Dad took us to see "his" land on the reservation.

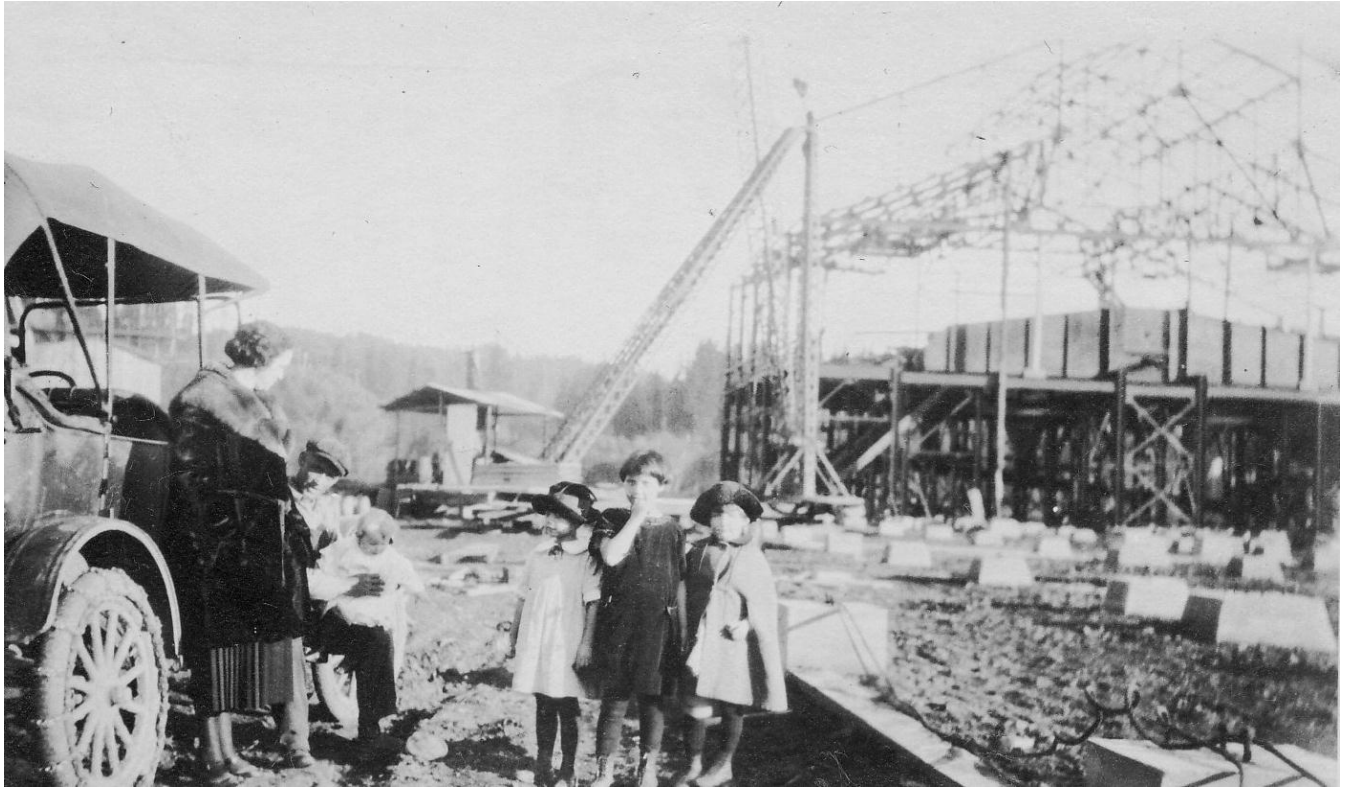
We arrived at Grandma Eastlund's in Moorhead on May 30. Ted came on June 15. Ten days later he and dad started painting the house. Fred, Gertie and Hope Ann came for a week. Grandma Eastlund enjoyed having her family home and often spoke in Swedish to her

1924 – Glenn
Born: April 27, 1924
Vernon, Oregon

sons. I remember Grandma no longer had teeth. She was seventy-five years old and to eat an apple she scraped the fruit out with a spoon.

~

Visiting a Sawmill Where Eric Worked
Oregon



Esther, Uncle Ted holding Echo, Winnie, Minnie, Fern

1924

Things I Never Told my Parents

Crossing the Nehalem River

Vernon, Oregon

“Recent heavy rains caused landslides that blocked the roads and flooded the mountain timber town of Vernon on the Nehalem River in northern Oregon. The Air National Guard brought inflatable rafts to evacuate the residents from this disaster.”

Hearing of this reminded me of another tragedy that happened when we lived there.

Vernon was in its hay-day in the mid 1920's. We were there because my father was building a log slide for the sawmill. Minnie and I were in our second year of school. We walked on new wooden sidewalks and crossed on the Nehalem River Bridge daily to get to school. One day we heard about a boy who climbed over the handrail and crossed the bridge on the outside and he was going to be down at the bridge after school challenging everyone to try it. Sure enough when we got to the bridge there he was, bragging that he was the only person in town brave enough to do it. He claimed he tried to get his best friends to do it, but everyone is too afraid.

Well our father was a bridge builder and walked on iron girders much higher up in the air than this. So we felt obligated to show this boy that there is nothing special about this feat.

Under the road surface this bridge was supported by large timbers spaced evenly apart like railroad ties that extend a bit beyond the rails. One could step from one timber to the next and still hold onto a low rung of the handrail. Minnie went first and I close behind. After we completed our outside crossing Minnie told me very secretly she was really scared, the water seemed so swift and close. As for me at that age of strong aversion to boys my thoughts ran along the line of, “ugh, boys always flexing muscles suggesting super strength, I guess we showed him.” Like brushing dust from my hands I thought, having done that once there is no need to ever repeat it. By the time we got home I had forgotten all about it.

One evening in early spring dad came home quite upset. He told us that town people were out dragging the river for a boy who fell off the bridge. Shaking his head he went on to say, in that swift current the body could be miles downriver. Then he added there is also a rumor circulating that children have been crossing the bridge on the outer side of the railing. Both mother and dad looked at us with stricken faces when he asked, “You girls wouldn't do that would you?” My head moved slowly from side to side as I thought, “No, never again.” Neither of us was brave enough to confess, we did that...just once.

~

Circa 1925
Looking For Something To Do
A Visit to Grandmother Eastlund's in Moorhead Minnesota

The first time I played the game I lost my new patent leather shoe. It was a day nothing went right.

Our parents with the babies and all our aunts and uncles squeezed into two black cars and gaily drove off to an Independence Day celebration. We three older girls were left with our strict Swedish grandmother. She took advantage of a quiet house to take a cool bath and put on a fresh starched stiff dress. Then handing me her big sewing shears said, "I can't reach my toes. Will you cut my toe nails for me?" I sat on the floor took hold of her foot and saw for the first time old nails grown hard and thick like peanut brittle.

Scared I begged off, "Grandma I am afraid I'll cut your toes off." She scolded, "Doesn't your mother teach you to do anything? You are no use to me. Take your little sister and go outside." Poor Minnie got the nail cutting job.

Fern and I walked around the house counting the windows. We named the room each window was in until we came to the garret window. Against it there was a tall ladder. For us it was a ladder of opportunity. We could satisfy our curiosity about the room at the top of the stair. It was a room with a tiny door in which Grandmother disappeared at night, because she was crowded out of her bedroom by so much company. Without hesitation I scrambled up to take a peek. I saw trunks, hanging clothes, other storage but couldn't see the bed. Fern in her turn got only half way up when grandmother spied us. Out she dashed admonishing and chiding, "You will break your necks falling from that ladder." "Get down here." "Now go stay on the other side of the house."

No games to play with we made up our own. We would let our shoe dangle on the end of our toe to see how far we could kick it. Fern went first and did very good. Vying to out-do her I kicked as hard as I could. My shoe went flying high in the air right through the open door of the out-house and right down the hole.

Grandma saw us in there trying to figure out how we could reach it. This time she threatened, "Just you wait until your dad gets home." "You are such naughty children." "Now go sit on the grass in the front of the house." Never before had anyone intimidated us with a punishing father. We sat making clover chains discussing what dire things might happen. I asked, "Do you think Daddy can get my shoe out?" "What will I wear if he can't?" "I think Mother threw my old shoes away."

Soberly Fern said, "He might spank you."

When the folks came home they all filed into the house. Fern ran to hear the tales of their adventure. I stayed behind hiding around the corner standing on one foot now mindful of green grass stains on white stockings. After a while I was missed and the story of our misdeeds came out. When I heard a door open I took a quick peep and saw Dad leave the house and go to the woodpile where he picked up a very long stick. Next time I looked he

Circa 1925
Looking For Something To Do
A Visit to Grandmother Eastlund's in Moorhead Minnesota

was walking toward me wiping my shoe. He asked, "What did you think I would do to you?" In admiration I cried, "Oh Daddy! How did you get it out?"

Unruffled, my dare devil dad and his brothers told their mother climbing ladders was to be expected of ironworker's daughters.

~



Emma Eastlund
Eric's Mother, Winnie's Swedish Grandmother

Winnie's Stories: 1916-1943

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Circa 1925
Looking For Something To Do
A Visit to Grandmother Eastlund's in Moorhead Minnesota



Grandma Eastlund's house in Moorhead, Minnesota

Out-house not in picture!

In this picture Aunt Minnie (Eric's sister) is taking her chair back into the house after a sit in the yard.

Iron Workers

Picture taken in 1905

Eric Eastlund's First Job (age 19)



Eric is seated lower left. He worked for his brother Herman (with vest and pocket watch).

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1926
Ironworking Uncles
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas



On the left Uncle Ted, a tease,
and I his frequent target.
If his glasses he's holding over my face
focused to future-vision I'd have known
then we were approaching a turning
point, choosing a road less traveled.
Next Fern smiles
in pleasure at Uncle Herman's gentle hands,
resting on her shoulders. He a mentor,
was the first to go into steel construction with
all its dangers. He hired brothers as they came
of age. With future-vision I'd have seen
his fatal fall five years later.
Behind Minnie, Cousin Ed who won
me over with a tall chocolate soda. To solve
a problem he asked my dad to hold his
paychecks and not yield, even if he begged.
Dad stood firm. Ed got mad. Quit work
when thirst prevailed.
On the right blond Echo
and Dad at forty, in the peak of his career
boss of the job, able to hire, brothers included.
Herman advocating that the healthiest life
is based on a meatless diet. Dad willing to try
took our family on a lifelong journey.
Today you would see four white headed
Octogenarians, three non-proselytizing vegetarians
and a well trod path no longer lonely.

Winnie's Stories: 1916-1943

First Edition December 2010 Rev D.

1926

Father Never

I have heard that among the various occupations, ironworkers have a reputation for the foulest language. I can't vouch for that. For my father, who worked thirty years or more in that business never used a dirty word. He'd say *oh-gee-hosy-fat* in sympathy of our childish troubles. Even the hardest of men who worked for him said they never heard him swear.

He grew up in a family of nine boys and three girls. Their father, Sven Eric Eastlund was a reverent man, a deacon in the church, who was happiest working with other newcomers from Sweden, building their church and collecting donations to build Hope Academy Normal School. At farming the elder Eastlund was not so successful. For him it was a constant struggle to pay his bills, and he died when my dad was only ten. The older brothers shared their earnings with the family and when the younger ones came of age they took their turn. The third oldest brother, Herman, became the first to go into ironwork, and the three youngest, (Fred, Eric, and Ted), worked for Herman as they came of age.

Dad's turn came at age nineteen and by the time he was twenty-one the company gave him his first job, putting up a bridges on his own. On one of his early jobs, while still very eager to prove his worthiness, something slipped while raising the steel and the span fell into the river. Shamefaced he telegraphed the company asking what he should do. They wired back with just three words, "Get it out." So he did, and finished the job in the allotted time. I wonder if that incident might be why, whenever a knotty problem or something bad occurred, he'd spend no time wringing his hands or uttering disparaging words, but almost immediately he'd begin sizing up the situation and figuring out how to get to the root of the problem. He'd soon set the incident right again. With the earned reputation of being a troubleshooter, the company sent him to help other foremen if they got in trouble.

Although his gentle father was only alive for the first ten years of my dad's life, Sven Eastlund's influence on my father lasted a lifetime. Once, a neighbor sat out on the back stoop cursing his bad luck. I heard my father say, *just don't listen, don't hear it and never let such words come out of your mouth.* (Mother always backed him up.)

~

1926

Ten weeks in Gorin, Missouri

We came from Dennison, Texas on the midnight train in mid August of 1926. It was a very dark night. The train ran way past the depot before it stopped to let us, and our baggage off in the gravel on the side of the tracks. Dad parceled out something for each of us to carry then with a bag tucked under each arm he picked up a suitcase in each hand to lead us over the gravel and railroad ties. Mother carried the baby and our four-year-old sister hanging onto her skirt as we trudged our way back to town. The young ones unaccustomed in having their sleep disturbed were cross and whiny. I couldn't hold the cover shut on his typewriter case and it fell open and spilled the contents out in the gravel. We felt around in the stones for all the paraphernalia. Then Dad tucked the typewriter case under his arm and gave me a different bag to carry.

Two Inns were just across the tracks from the depot. We had to wake-up the Innkeeper. Next day we found there wasn't a house to rent anywhere. The innkeeper at the other hotel gave us a room with a private entrance to use for a kitchen and two bedrooms on the second floor. We three older girls ages seven, nine and eleven, started school in September. Then Mother took sick, couldn't eat, too weak to get out of bed. The Doctor said she has to go to a hospital. The hospital closest to where dad was working was in Fort Madison, Iowa. Dad asked the innkeeper to look after us school girls until he could come back for us. The agent at the depot said. "The train won't stop here to pick you up. This isn't a regular stop on their route." Dad answer was, "I'll make them stop;" and he did.

Mother was carried to the depot on a cot. Before being put into the baggage car Mother said to me, "Be good and don't do anything I wouldn't let you do." He had Minnie³ ride with the two youngest, Echo and Glenn, in the passenger car while he rode with mother in the baggage car. Mr. & Mrs. Black, who had no children of their own offered to take care of Echo and Glenn, met them at the station.

Wherever we lived mother had always asked us to come right home after school and stay in our yard where she would know where we were and what we were doing. The landlady kept our clothes clean and pressed and gave us our meals but with her other work we saw little of her. Now, up the street from the hotel were several families with a lot of children. A girl in my class, asked me to join her and her friends in some pre-Halloween fun. They planned to razz the village bachelor who had a garden and didn't like kids. She said he had accused them of raiding his garden and one boy on his way to school saw a big ripe tomato near the garden edge and now he planned to swipe it. She said, "I'll come for you right after dark."

The plan was to go down and hide behind bushes while her brother would sneak up to the house and attach a rosin-coated string to a nail in the siding. On signal some one on the other side of the house would rap on the windows and we would rub on the taunt string with

³ Minnie came back alone on train to be in charge of Fern and me.

1926

Ten weeks in Gorin, Missouri

a stick creating a rasping noise in the house, while others in or around the garden would make catcalls. If the man came out and yelled at us we would just keep

up the clamor. But if he came out with his gun everyone was on his own and should run down to the hollow. “Don’t worry,” she said, “He has just a bb gun.”

Well when the noise began he stepped out on his back porch with his gun and fired up in the air. Everyone scattered. My new friend disappeared. I realized I had trespassed beyond the parameter of mother’s permission and had no idea where the hollow was. I ran back to where the houses and sidewalks were and around several blocks before I circled back to the hotel. Then I sat on the cold step waiting for my thumping heart to calm down to a normal beat so my sisters wouldn’t ask questions and tell on me. Still when I slipped up to our room Minnie looked up from a book she was reading to Fern and said, “You look like you have seen a ghost.” So much for tricks!

A week before Halloween dad came back to get us. Four years later in Wisconsin was first time someone knocked on our door suggesting Tricks or Treats.

~

1926
Family Picture
Fort Madison



Back Row: Esther, Minnie; Middle row: Winnie, Fern, Eric seated with Glenn, Echo in front

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1927
Winnie



Winnie's Stories: 1916-1943

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1927
On Way to Dirigible Hanger
Grosse Isle, Michigan

Proud when allowed to carry Dad's lunch
That summer on the island of Grosse Isle
Pail swinging I skipped down the overgrown path disturbed
Grasshoppers and startled birds from their secluded sanctuary.

At a marshy bend where tall weeds flourished I froze rooted
In fear as the biggest snake I ever got near slithered from
Reeds right in front of me. He was long. He was fat.
He stretched the whole width of the two-wheel car path.

Like a scared deer I spun and loped back home. No sympathy
There as Mother reasoned "Snakes are more afraid of you
Your Dad will be hungry." Reluctant I returned heart pounding
Cautious now choosing each step with care.

Dad proud of his family introduced me to his
Time keeper but vetoed my appeal to wait and walk
Home with him. Too dangerous for a kid hanging around
With all that heavy steel moving around.

No choice had to allow courage to overpower fear as
I crept down that crawly path alone again
Proud when allowed to carry dad's lunch
That summer on the island of Grosse Isle.

~

1927
Blazing Inferno
Grosse Isle, Michigan

I saw hell once
just like Hades right out of the Bible
through ten year old eyes.

On an Isle surrounded by wild life,
our only neighbors, two brutish bachelors with
boozier habits, for Fourth of July excitement
set fire to a rotting tree stump,
home to a den of snakes.

One big fat mamma uncoiled and disappeared
deep under a root. Fierce fire blazed into
roaring red tongue flashing flames.
Small snakes, twined together, struggling to slither away,
were raked back caught with a forked stick,
held in fire wriggling and writhing until
metamorphosing into glowing crimson
before falling into the fire's heart.
Like the red devil himself claiming vipers,
the men probed deep into the pit of broiling
scarlet volcanic ash until nothing wiggled.

Morning dawned on a hollow black-earth scar.
In stillness of first light I probed the powdered ash
for life and pondered at the silence in the men's cabin,
Who truly are the evil ones?

Witnessed at Grosse Isle, MI 1927

1927
Jack-O-Lantern
Kansas City, Missouri

Our Jack-o-lantern really scared the janitor's boy.

3040 Main Street was our address in the hilly town of Kansas City, MO. The steps to our front porch went up along the side of the hardware store. If we climbed over the porch railing we could stand on the roof of the hardware building. Next door, on the corner, was a two-story bank. The bank's second floor windows were level with our living room window. From our window we could watch the janitors when they worked in the bank. A black couple with a young son came like clockwork every evening to clean. We got to know their routine as lights went on in one room after the other.

On Halloween Fern in her coat with a cape, collar and broad brimmed hat and I carrying the Jack-o-lantern crept quietly across the flat roof of the hardware store to hold our hand carved pumpkin up to the washroom window. Really we just wanted to give an innocent little scare to that young boy. He had climbed upon the white ceramic vanity to polish the mirror above it, as our candle lit pumpkin flashed in the window.

He turned scared, eyes and mouth open wide in terror, arms and legs spread like a frog, he jumped, and ran screaming out down the hall calling for his parents. The thrill of successfully accomplishing the trick tickled our tummies, but we didn't mean to scare him that much. We waited by the window to explain to his parents that it was only we girls, but no one returned to investigate the ghosts in that second floor washroom.

Boy-o-Boy; I still feel that thrill creep into my stomach and I am sorry we scared him that much.

~

1927
Banking
Kansas City, Missouri

In school I was pretty good at math and very bad at spelling. Although if we ever had a word like allowance I am sure I would have learn its meaning and spell it correctly, but it wasn't a word I ever heard then.

In my fourth year, starting school among total strangers again, I was still too uncomfortable to raise my hand to ask or answer any question. At this school they thought we should learn fiscal responsibility by teaching us to save money. Once a week on Bank Day we were to bring pennies we earned or change our parents could spare to put in a savings account. Everyone's tan bankbook was kept in the teacher's desk. No one dared to forget or come without a few pennies. Bob the boy who sat in front of me was the most excited about saving and always had the most money. He'd brag about the chores he did in his father's butcher shop to earn it. One Friday he asked our teacher if he could deposit his money early because he was going to be absent on the next Bank Day, and she put his 18 cents in the bank bag and forgot about it.

After the collection was made on Bank Day she couldn't figure out why she had more money than she took in. She asked the class if they had any ideas to help her. Some kids made suggestions but before I could sum up courage to raise my hand to say, maybe it was Bob's early deposit that caused the problem, she passed out a math test and told us to work quietly while she figured it out.

I couldn't concentrate on the math. I kept looking at her hoping she would look at me then I could ask the question. After a long time she did look up saw me and scolded, "Keep your face down on your paper, stop looking around the room." Too shamefaced to do multiplication I got a zero in math that day.

Over time our saved pennies grew into dollars. Three years later the banks went boom and busted. When the dust settled the banks would only give us back about a third of our total deposits. When dad went to get our money he told the banker that was a very terrible thing to do to schoolchildren. After that Dad had to keep our money because so many days he didn't have a job to go to and because the baby needed new shoes.

~

1928
Omaha, Nebraska

DOG PILE



Top: Echo, Glenn, Winnie, Fern, Minnie, Cousin Hope Ann on bottom

Note how steep the hill is. The hill we tried to coast down was steeper.



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1928

Two Summer Months in Omaha and On to Wisconsin

Dad was excited about his work and gladly went wherever the company sent him. For our family, relocating two or three times a year interrupted our schooling, and we could not accumulate many personal possessions.

Mother and Dad lived as thrifty as they could, saving for the day they would buy a home of their own. To keep the freight expenses down the rule was: anything that does not fit into the three trunks must be left behind. As we never owned any furniture there wasn't any thing to crate. An exception was the baby's white iron crib. There was always a baby. Each move required that they find a furnished house or light housekeeping rooms available to move right into. Sometimes things were not as Mother would have liked. She would express her thoughts but never nagged at Dad about the inconveniences.

The summer of 1928 became tedious for Mother. Dad's small jobs kept him away from home for weeks at a time. We made few friends for there wasn't a church within walking distance and Mother kept us in our own yard. Our furnished house was on a long hilly street in the outskirts of Omaha. There was an ice box, and a Victrola with four jazz records that I played to Mother's distraction. There was a smooth cement floor in the basement, good for roller skating when the hot sun sent us looking for shade. We also huddled there at night whenever a Nebraska wind-storm frightened us into believing the house would blow away.

One hot day we ran out of ice. Mother worried the milk would sour. It took a bit of convincing before she agreed I could borrow a wagon and go after a small piece of ice. She sent Fern along for company and I promised to be careful and take good care of her. We walked down our hill and up the long steep hill to the little crossroad store. The man put a twenty-five pound block in our wagon saying this is the last piece I have. No one would buy a little piece if I cut it down to fifteen pounds. "Are you sure you can handle this big chunk?" I was. Starting back we were weary from the heat. I suggested to Fern that if she sat in the back of the wagon and I on the side we could coast down that long hill and up the other like we saw the big boys do.

We started out fine. Our coaster picked up speed. We were going fast when I saw a building block in our path right in the middle of the street. To avoid hitting it I turned the coaster wheels too sharp and tipped the wagon over, spilling us out onto the street. Fern got bruised and began bawling. I knew by the blood all over my arm that I had skinned myself; but I was worried about getting the ice back into the wagon. It was wet, heavy, and slipped every time I tried to pick it up. A woman came to her screen door, looked out to see what the commotion was about, and then turned and went back in. I asked Fern to go and ask her to come and help us; but Fern was shy and hurting too much. Finally I wrapped my skirt around the ice, which gave me a firm grip to lift it into the wagon. Walking home my arm began to smart. I could see that I was skinned on the ring finger, knuckles, wrist, elbow and shoulder. Hurting and ashamed that I had let Mother down I began to cry too.

1928

Two Summer Months in Omaha and On to Wisconsin

Mother scolded as she tended the wounds. She saw under the blood that the finger nail had been scrapped off all the way down the center. Years later she said scolding was the only way she knew to keep herself from crying. Dad came home that weekend and took me to a Doctor. On the way we stopped at a hardware store where Dad picked up a small nipper, took my hand and cut my ring off the injured finger. He thanked the clerk and gave him a tip for the use of the tool. I hated to lose that keepsake ring. Uncle Ted had made it for me out of a silver dime.

On the day he finished his last job working with Uncle Fred; Father came home and said, "The Company has a job for me in Milwaukee. If you can get ready so we can leave tomorrow, we will be able to swing by Moorhead and attend Eunice's wedding. Mother immediately gathered the soiled clothes and washed them. Together they got out the trunks and began to fold and separate the things to be shipped, from the things we would need to take with us.

As they packed Mother said, "The children are so disappointed when their toys are left behind, I think we can take this doll, this time," as she put a life-sized baby doll in a trunk. Dad, calculating the high cost of freight, took it out. Mother persisted, "The girls are getting older and may not get any more dolls." She put it in again. That was the way it went for them: Mother would put the doll in and Dad would take it out. Then it became like a game. He would hide the doll and she would find it. When Mother came back to the trunk with the ironed clean clothes, the doll was missing again. She found where Dad had hid it in an empty dresser drawer. She thought I'll outsmart him; if he can keep that box of pictures of his old girl friends the kids can keep this doll. So she hid it at the bottom of the trunk under the winter underwear and packed the trunk to the top.

The freight company came early the next morning and picked up the trunks. Dad tied the suitcases onto the car's running board by making a rack with the baby's dismantled iron crib. Meanwhile Mother made a thorough search of the house, to be sure things she needed were not left behind. We went to Milwaukee by way of Moorhead, Minnesota. We were well on our way before Mother thought of the doll and said, "I outsmarted you this time. I hid the doll in the big trunk." He looked at her with his savvy smile and said, "I wouldn't be so sure. Did you look in the ice-chest?"

~

1928
My Mother Never Wore
June-July 1928, Omaha Nebraska

...

... She never wore it after that one time. The navy dress of rich georgette crepe; her young daughters loved it and her husband thought she looked great. High fashion in those "Charleston days", the three tiers of pleated ruffles, below a straight-line bodice, flit flirtatiously just above the knees needed only a single long chain of beads to set it off.

Dad and his brother had come home after several months work in a far away town. It was Fred's idea that they treat their wives to new duds and give them a evening out on the town. Mother protested "You know I'll come home with something awful if I go shopping with Gertie." Dad, pride involved, encouraged "You know this is Gertie's town, she has lived here all her life and she can show you around." "I want you to get something nice."

Mother never ever sanctioned her sister-in-law's extravagant ways or, how she spent her days reading magazines and romance novels or, playing Victrola records dancing with friends while paying little heed to homemaking duties. They were in deed sister-in-law's that shared little in common. In contrast Mother at her portable sewing machine spent many a late night thriftily sewing for her daughters. She never had many store bought dresses. With Dad away so often she felt a need for just a few housedresses, an apron or two, and a Sunday dress for church or the Ladies Aid Society. This new dress wasn't suitable for those occasions.

Now Mother was never prudish nor did she disapprove of dancing for she and Dad first met at a country schoolhouse square dance. She could promenade, sashay or do-si-do to any fiddle. It was more like she left her dancing days behind her when they left ranch life in Montana and Dad returned to more lucrative work in steel construction. Along the way they had become parents of six. She never thought of herself as a knee knocking, heel swinging, pointed elbow, Charleston dancing flapper that might wear that dress.

Banished to an attic trunk the dress stayed for years until after the Great War when a call went out for the refugees, the displaced, and the homeless in their great need for clothing. The closets and trunks were searched and emptied of all unneeded, usable garments. Seeing the navy silk georgette in the pile her girls begged to keep it for dress-up or a costume party. Afraid someone might mistake one of her teen-aged daughters for a hussy it was sent along with all the other outgrown dresses. I'm sure Mother never expected anyone, even in great need, to wear it.

~

1928
Aunt Gertie and Uncle Fred Eastlund

(Eric's brother)



Winnie's Stories: 1916-1943

First Edition December 2010 Rev D.

1928
Mother Always Patient, Never Complained
9/14/28 ~3/18/29, Paducah, Kentucky

We were the symbolic rolling stones unencumbered with possessions because we moved two or three times almost every year. Dad often said, "Home is where the heart is." We were the happiest when Dad had work close by and he could come home every night. Mother longed for a home of her own. A place she could decorate and make beautiful with things of her own, a place where we knew the neighbors and didn't always feel like strangers. Yet Mother never complained.

The only piece of furniture small enough to bring with them was a collapsible baby bed. A necessity as our family welcomed a new member almost every other year. Mother also had three pretty, hand-painted, china plates made by her first landlady. She wrapped them very carefully between linen when she packed the dishes and her few cooking utensils. When the trunks arrived something was always broken. She would just sigh and say, "I'll never have anything nice." Only one of her cherished plates survived ten years of being shipped around in a trunk and dropped off of trains.

I was in the fifth grade before I became aware of how Spartan our house sometimes was. If my parents couldn't find a furnished house to rent they made do with the bare necessities, beds, table, and chairs. That year (1928) we had moved from Kansas City to Omaha, spent some time with Grandmother in Moorhead, and started school in Milwaukee before moving to Paducah, Kentucky where Dad built a bridge over the Ohio River.

Twin sisters were the first to greet me on the way to school. They let me know if I wanted to get along in the community I had better wear a button supporting Al Smith for President, and saw that I got one. In the spring they invited a few girls to form a sewing circle. In their living room was an overstuffed couch, shiny mahogany tables, doilies under lamps and even pictures on the walls. When I asked Mother if I could take my turn to entertain the club she pointed out that we didn't have a place for them to sit.

Every place we lived hadn't been as bare as this. I remember a summer in Texas where we rented a house for a month from a family while they were away on vacation. Among the nice things in their house was a grand piano and Mother played her favorite song, Redwing, and read stories to us from their children's books. Well, we moved to Tennessee before Easter and before my turn to entertain became an issue.

Dad built three bridges there, before the Depression stopped new construction. In September we made our last move to be close to the Wisconsin Bridge and Iron Company, should any job come up. Here, in West Allis, we rented a house from the bank and bought all the hard used furniture from the former owner, who had been forced into bankruptcy. From then on Dad went alone to wherever he could find a job.

Ten more years went by, with dad working away from home most of the time, before my parents were able to buy their own house and at last Mother could replace other people's

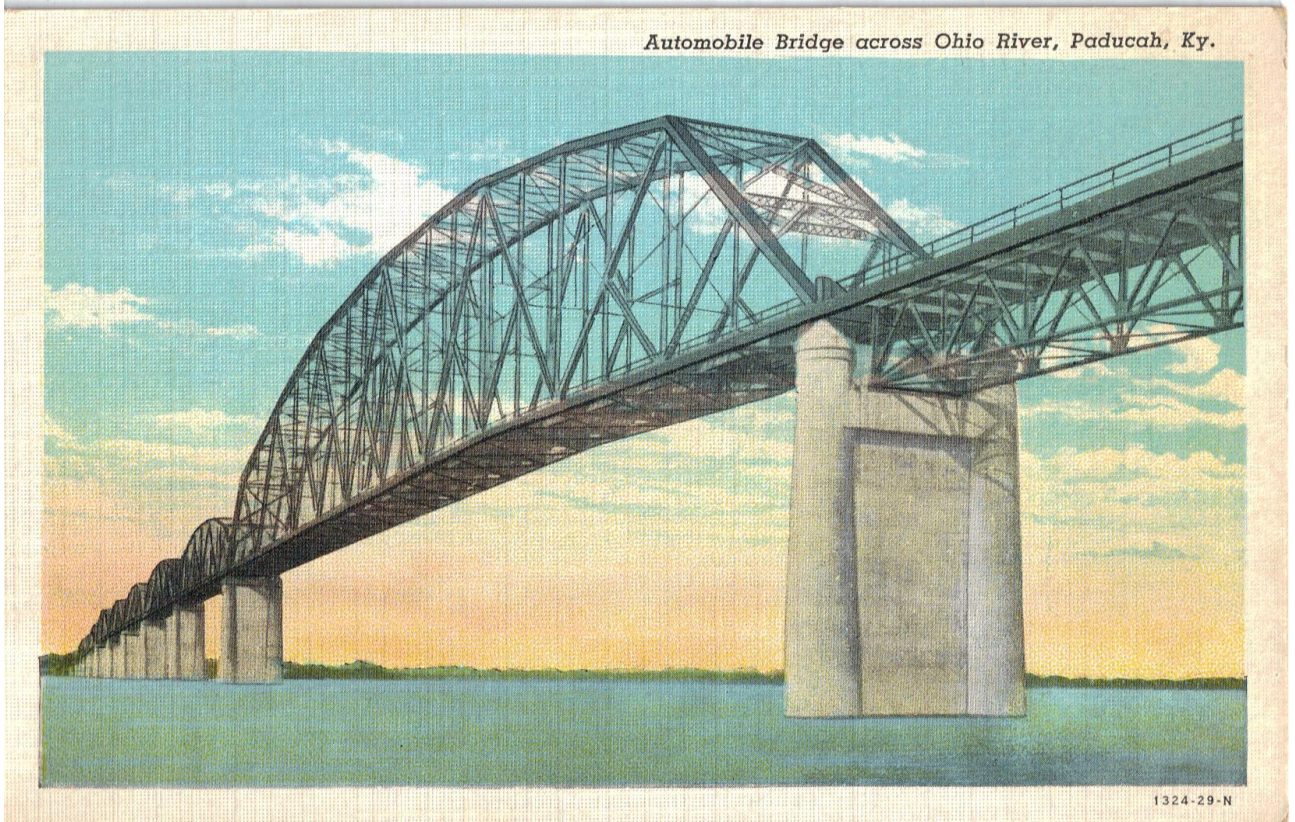
1928
Mother Always Patient, Never Complained

9/14/28 ~3/18/29, Paducah, Kentucky

furniture with pieces of her own choosing. We became part of a community; established roots made lasting friends, and gradually felt less and less like rolling stones.

~

1928
Automobile Bridge across Ohio River
Paducah, Kentucky



~

1929 West Allis

We didn't know when we left Loudon, Tennessee, that our trip to Milwaukee would be our last move as a family. We would no longer go with our Dad wherever his work would take him. These travels started ten years earlier in September of 1919 when Mom and Dad with three young daughters left Montana for a job in Miami Arizona. At that time Dad thought it was just temporary. He hadn't considered giving up homestead farming completely to return to steel construction. He just turned his horses loose to forage and put his steam tractor in the barn, sure he'd find the horses when he returned. He never went back to farming.

Here we were ten years later, on September 30, 1929 a family with six kids looking for a house in the Milwaukee area. We wanted to be near the home office of Dad's major employer, the Wisconsin Bridge and Iron Co. Dad for the first time at the end of those ten years was now without a job of any size to look forward to. The depression, caused by the crash in 1929 like a wolf, was now clawing at our door.

We didn't know then that for another decade Dad would travel alone, sometimes working on jobs he'd find on his own, before his work for W.B. & I. CO. would play out completely.

Our parents rented a bungalow from a bank in West Allis. The former owner had gone bankrupt and now had to double up with relatives. Rent was forty dollars a month. Our parents bought the furniture owned by the former tenants for three hundred dollars. Friday evening Dad fumigated. Saturday we cleaned. Sunday Dad left for a few days going to Detroit. Monday three of us started school at Roosevelt Elementary, and Minnie walked the 26 blocks to high school. A week later mother was hemming diapers. She made her first trip to the West Allis Farmers Market, and made friends with Mrs. Cresson our next door neighbor. Dad came home on the weekend and took us to the Methodist Church up near the high school, and to the Museum. Uncle Ted came to work with Dad. They stayed weekdays at their job in Newberg some thirty miles away. They didn't make it home for Thanksgiving. Instead they worked all day on Thanksgiving so that the job would be finished by the end of November.

On my first day at school I, a late comer again, was assigned a desk in the back of the room. The first time my teacher, Mrs. Jerabeck, called on me I stood up beside my desk and drawled, "Yes Ma'am" The whole class giggled including the teacher. Red faced I sat down and vowed never to perform that Tennessee courtesy again. After that the whole class thought I came from a foreign country.

In the mean time we kids were getting acquainted with the neighbors. Virgie and Leona would get us to sit on the curb in front of Smith's house to talk. They delighted in listening to our southern accent. Customs were different here. It was considered too bold a gesture for a child to step up and ring the door bell. Kids stood in the yard and hollered out

1929 West Allis

their friend's names until they came out to play. Sent with a note for Mother one little boy stood on the porch and called out "Oh Paulina's Mother" Halloween trick-or-treating was new to us, as was St. Nick's candy stockings, and the important role God-parents played while lavishing gifts on their God-children.

As we explored the larger community we noticed Germans and Catholics seemed to predominate. Never before had we lived where so many people had close ties to foreign countries. We saw it in their speech, gestures and faces like something intangible that even an American styled hair cut could not erase. For some it was as though a haunted hard past was etched on their faces. Others had the rosy robust red cheeks of people who worked in the sun close to the soil. Most all had been attracted to live here in the shadows of West Allis' numerous factories. The city even got its name from a factory founder---Allis, of Allis & Chalmers. On our short dead-end block there was for the most part first and second generation Germans, Irish, Polish, and Scandinavians. None of that really concerned us kids.

.....

On the third day of Christmas vacation I woke to discover Dad alone in the kitchen making breakfast and packing his lunch. To my surprise he said, "I took Mother to the hospital last night and you have a new baby sister." As he poured coffee into his thermos he added, "While mother is gone Minnie is in charge. You and Fern must mind her and help her look after your brother and sisters. Do you think you can keep the house tidy just like your mother does? He pulled on his heavy coat and the cap with earflaps. As he went out the door he said, "I'll try to knock off a little early but I'll go around to the hospital to look in on Mother so I'll be late for supper."

Left in our charge was petit two- year-old Paulina who never caused any trouble. It was our curious five-year-old brother we had to keep an eagle eye on. Our seven-year-old sister Echo had blond stovepipe curls that needed to be brushed around the middle finger. No one could brush her hair as neat as she was used to. Our greatest concern was how to make a real Christmas for them without Mother. We talked about celebrating on New Years Day when Mother and the baby would come home. But Dad said, "Mother wants us to have Christmas as usual or the little ones will be disappointed when the neighbors get presents and they don't."

One day Minnie's friend came over to help her with the cooking. They decided to make their first a pie. The dough stuck to the rolling pin, and began to turn gray with so much handling so they wrapped it in wax paper and put it out to chill in the snow on the back porch. When they went to get the dough it had disappeared. We questioned our brother and his friends and they all blamed the neighbor's dog. I never felt sure about that.

Although every Christmas I could remember had been celebrated in different states, we had a few traditions of our own. Dad liked to have Swedish rice pudding for Christmas Eve super, just like he had as a child in Minnesota. After super we usually went to the church

1929 West Allis

pageant and Santa Clause would come while we were gone. When we were young it was a mystery how that happened when no one was home.

Mother always ordered a special gift for each of us from Montgomery Ward or Sears and Roebuck and Dad shopped the last minute on Christmas Eve. This year he came home at noon and took Minnie shopping with him. She bought things for the children at Woolworths' dime store, and Dad went to the jeweler and selected a Bulova wrist watch for Mother.

Dad set up the tree and we decorated it together with ornaments that had been carefully wrapped and stored in a tin soda cracker box. There were only a few plain ones from last year because all the ornate ornaments from Mother's eight-year collection got smashed by Glenn, when he received a wooden hammer on his third birthday. Tinsel wasn't on Minnie's shopping list so there was minimal glitter, but Dad did allow us to light a few white candles as long as we understood they would be put out before we forgot about them while opening our presents.

When I try to picture what the tree looked like in the corner of the room with the family around it, I just see gray like dark sunless shadows slanting through a drab winter day. I think that's the way life is when your mother isn't home.

~

1929

Meeting the Neighborhood Boys

One dark evening sent on an urgent errand to the drug store
Mother advised: when you come to the corner
where boys congregate just keep walking,
look straight ahead and pay no attention to them.

She said this because I perceived boys as the enemy.

With no let up in my footsteps when I approached
that corner there were boys of all sizes, some
in the shadows, others sitting on the curb and
a dozen or so in the street-light bouncing a ball in
a chaotic form of keep-away.

The tallest boy clutched the ball, cuddled it under his arm
and stood like a sentry ready to halt trespassers.

He called out, "Who goes there."

Boys gawked some made cat-calls, others
shouted no girls allowed.

A clownish wiry joker jogged up and jabbed my left shoulder
demanding, "What's your name?"

Without a break in walking rhythm or a turn of the head I
reacted as automatic as swatting at the sting of a mosquito.

My hand landed on his cheek.

He dropped back howling, "She slapped me."

On the way home I circled blocks around that crowd
to avoid another encounter.

How could I know then, that in a decade these boys
would all be dressed in uniforms to face real enemies.

And I would need to be nice to the tall one named Elroy
as he became my brother-in-law.

~

1929

The Table With Many Coats of Paint

West Allis

The center of my childhood house was the expandable kitchen table. In the fall of 1929 the depression made its first impression on our family. There were no more construction jobs for my father, no more the need to uproot and transplant the family, no more interruptions in our education. We became part of a community when we moved into the last house on a dead-end street in the far northeast corner of West Allis. It was around that round table that everything of importance took place. Mother kept a multi colored oilcloth cover on it that made an easy to clean working surface. Over this she spread an ironed linen tablecloth for eight, or when Dad was home, nine supper places were set.

Imprinted in my mind is a day shortly after Christmas. We six siblings stood in awe around that table watching as mother made preparations to give the new baby a bath. First, to keep out the draft, she closed all the doors and put the teakettle on to boil. Then she set out clean-smelling Castile soap, baby oil, scented powder, pins, and cotton swabs. On one side of the oval enameled tub she layered a clean receiving blanket, a nightgown with tie strings, a wrap-around under shirt, a wool flannel bellyband, and a diaper. On the other side padded with towels was where she laid the baby to undress her. First she lathered the tiny head then held her over the tub to rinse the soap away while telling us to be careful of baby's soft spot. That Mother had contented babies one must give credit to the economy and smoothness of her movements.

"Oh! You are a little sweetie," she cooed to the baby as she undressed and soaped her little body, clucked her under the chin, and ran her soapy fingers into all the tiny fatty creases. She tested the temperature of the water with her elbow then balanced the baby on one arm gripping firmly a slippery leg she slid baby Jeaneen into the tub to rinse off all the soap. To every sound or grimace the doll-like baby made we responded in adoration with ahs! And ohs! With a soft white towel she blotted baby dry, oiled, powdered, dressed and wrapped her snug like bug in a cocoon. Then they had a quiet time together while Mother sat in the rocking chair to nurse her and we cleaned up the table.

Tantalizing fragrances greeted us when we came home from school. We would find mother at the table. She might be fitting a pattern like a jigsaw puzzle on a pretty print designing a new dress for one of her six daughters. Or she would be rolling out cookie or pie dough, or perhaps she would be sitting there with a neighbor lady sipping tea.

In the evening after supper the table was quickly cleared, the dishes washed and put away so the table could become an arena for playing games. When Dad came home after weeks, or months, or one time a year away, the three younger children would vie for a place at the table beside him. Having only two sides he whispered in the youngest child's ear. "You sit next to Mother so her feelings won't be hurt. When you are across the table I can see you better." During the meal he winked at that child and she felt special because they had a secret. Her thoughts were, "Daddy loves me best."

1929
The Table With Many Coats of Paint
West Allis

It was to that table we wheeled Mother in her ninety-ninth year. Until one evening brought to the table she said, "I can't eat anything. Please take me quickly to bed." She fell into a comma. Never again to return to the table.

That table like a magnet drew our family together. Around it we bowed our heads, said our prayers. It was there where we shared our joys and our sorrows for so many years. It was the last thing to be removed from the house. "I can't let this table leave the family," the youngest daughter said. "I will find room to store it and save it for my granddaughter. I'll give it a new coat of paint." Perhaps someday in another family it will again become the fulcrum of all their activity.

~

Depression Years Depression 1929 +

When people ask what life was like for me during the great depression. I usually say, I didn't know how poor we were. The year before it hit our family I was in the fifth grade attending schools in Kentucky and Tennessee where my dad as construction engineer erected three bridges. Then most municipalities ran out of funds for new steel construction.

In September of 1929 we moved to Wisconsin to be near the company dad had worked for. Our parents rented a house from a bank that had foreclosed on a family that had gone bankrupt and now had to double up with relatives. We also bought their household furniture.

At midyear two girls in my sixth grade class were urged by their fathers to quit school and find jobs. The following winter when it came time to pass down winter coats Fern got Minnie's and I proudly wore a heavy wool sweater with a cowl collar that Mother had before I was born. It was warm enough until December's wind blew cold and bitter. One morning I overheard the teacher, who monitored the entrance at Horace Mann Junior high school, say she saw kids in that cold weather coming to school wearing just sweaters. I felt a kind of kinship with them.

That first year Dad took whatever work he could find like painting water towers in Wauwatosa and West Allis. In 1934 he heard about a WPA project building an earth dam at Ft Peck, in eastern Montana. He and his brother drove out and got hired on. Dad worked a night shift grading and building a railroad track. There wasn't any housing provided that first year so they backed their cars up together and used one for cooking and the other for sleeping. He came home for Christmas and stayed through January, as it was too cold to work outside in Montana. We girls got new jackets called Campus coats that we wore during the rest of our school years.

Most of the men on our street worked in factories or for the railroad, often just a few days a week. Mr. Meyers the man who lived in the big house on the corner was the only man who had steady work and was able to afford a telephone. The Myers let us give their phone number when we applied for work and sent message to us if we got a call. There was a spirit of helping each other, as one was able. We shared our newspaper with a neighbor directly across the street.

Before he left home Dad made a deal with the neighborhood grocer, to allow mother to charge for the food she needed and with handshake he agreed pay when he got his first paycheck. That was the year mother discovered store bought mayonnaise. If we didn't have tomatoes she made mayonnaise and lettuce sandwiches. We always had a piece of fruit. A girl who sat at our table in the high school lunchroom must have had some hungry days. One day she said "My dad worked a few days this week and we had a roast for supper last night. It was so good! I hope there was enough left over for my sandwich today." She peeked between her

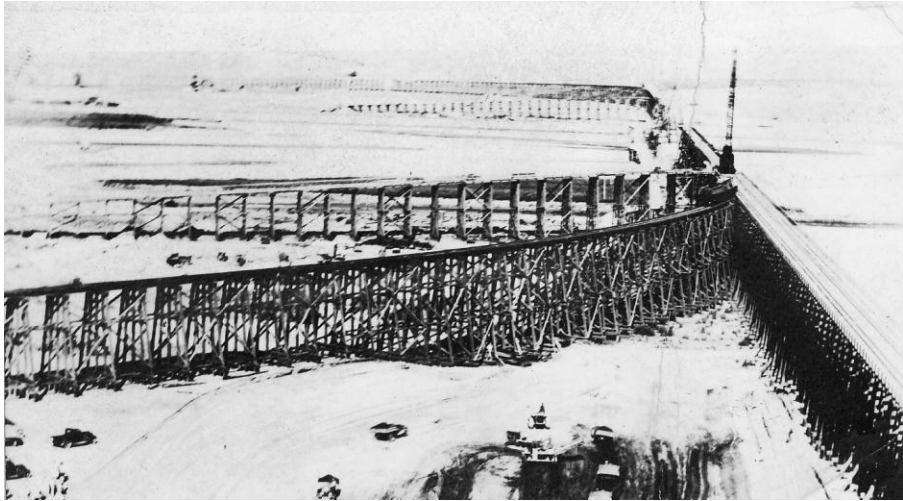
Depression Years Depression 1929 +

slices of bread to see just grits there was no meat left after her mother packed lunch for her father and brothers.

Minnie graduated in 1933. It was the only year the school didn't have funds for a yearbook. Housework was the only jobs she could find. Late in the summer of 1936, the year I graduated, we both got jobs at Allen Bradley my job, winding coils, good pay. I thought things would pick up. I hoped I could work a year then go to College, but in three months the company went on strike. The strike lasted a long time and we never got called back. After many odd jobs and lots of job hunting, I got called work at Allis Chalmers in the printing department for eighteen dollars a week, and worked there three years until I got married. The week I quit I learned rules had been relaxed for working-married women; I could have worked there during the war years.

~

**Depression Years
Depression 1929 +**



Depression Years Welfare

Our dad had to go out of state to find work. To avoid having his family go hungry he went to the grocer gave him a handshake promise of payment so the grocer allowed mother to buy whatever she needed on credit. Because dad wasn't at all sure he would find work he also went to the welfare depot with my brother's coaster wagon and pulled home the standard rations of flour, navy beans and rice. Mother was so ashamed that all the neighbors would see him and know the state we were in. (Sixty two years later, after mother's death, we got a welfare bill for those items [approximately \$67] and gladly paid it. Wish she could have known that.)

~

1930
Beginning Seventh Grade
West Allis

Thirteen times I had started school late or in midterm, always the "New kid on the block". Now, for the first time, I began the new school year on the first day with people I knew from the previous year. The difference this time was that we all were having a new experience. We felt strange among the older eighth and ninth graders at Horace Mann Junior High. We were to go from room to room with a different teacher for each class, keep our books in lockers, and bring our lunch. There were one hundred and thirty five of us from all over the city divided into four classes. How would we find our friends? After finding my homeroom I chose a seat way in the back, the last seat in the last row, knowing that later when seat assignment were made I would be put up front with all the short kids.

Our first class, English, was also in our homeroom. Miss Whipp, a kind teacher, needed time to work with enrolment records so she asked the class to write an article, about our first day at school, for the school newspaper. The articles would be read aloud and the class would vote for a representative to be class reporter assigned to write a monthly item for the school newspaper.

As the articles were read the first, third, and eight seemed to set three themes that the others all followed, with a few variations, as though all were on similar thought waves. By the twenty-fifth the readings became dull and repetitious. It would be hard to pick an outstanding one.

I began to feel my article would be chosen unless someone had a new theme. I wrote about first day feelings in a new school, which I had experienced so many times. Feelings I knew others were experiencing that day. I wrote about apprehension, fear, and loneliness as we wound our way around looking for classrooms and friends. My hands became damp and clammy as I rolled a pencil between my fingers. I was hoping for the honor of being chosen by my classmates and already dreading the responsibility if chosen. Feeling like someone in a swimming meet pulling stroke by stroke ahead of the others and knowing you were in the lead. As I tried to squelch premature thoughts of crawling out of the pool a winner.

Three more to go, and a big swelling formed in my stomach, jiggling like trying to suppress a giggle. At last, very nervous, I stood struggling to be calm, trying to control my voice so I wouldn't sound proud or smug. Knowing my words reflected common thoughts and out of boredom my article would be chosen.

The whole class clapped in a unanimous vote. I was one of them on the first day of school! That was the best beginning of all my school years. Oh! It was a great day and the start of better grades.

1930 School Lunches

School lunch conversation centered on what was in everyone's sandwich. I hated that because mine was often the center of their curiosity. I had to answer a lot of questions of "How come you never have meat?"

The lunches mother packed included a sandwich of whole wheat bread and lettuce, a piece of fruit and frequently a cookie, carrot sticks, or raisins. She was strong on good nutrition. Sometimes if she didn't have a tomato or cheese, we'd get just lettuce and mayonnaise wrapped neatly in waxed paper. It was during our first year of packed lunches that she discovered store bought mayonnaise that she credited for warding off colds all that winter.

It was also the year the depression hit our town the hardest. Occasionally some of the girls at our table brought only a sandwich of white bread spread with lard, and the grist of meat from the previous night's supper, wrapped in the paper from *Wonder Bread*. With them we could share a cookie or section of orange but never ever spoke of their lean lunch. They took the paper home to use over and over until it got limp and soggy. We all folded our brown bags to use another day.

Hard times improved slowly yet every year there would be different people at my lunch table. I'd have to endure for a while being the center of their attention when someone noticed my sandwiches had something alien to them, like dates and nuts between slices of brown bread. Now I was shy and never intended to convert anyone to vegetarianism, but discussing it helped define more clearly the merit in this diet for me. Yet lunching with new people made me feel like I was explaining a scar on my face.

~

1930 Found Money

I spied ten dollars on the green market
floor, back when bread cost ten cents a loaf
and everyone was poor.
It was folded in half and in half again
creased so sharp and flat it must have been
pressed in a purse so long sweet perfume
penetrated the paper. "Not mine." said the clerk
behind the cucumber counter.
No one else to ask in the entire isle.
As money has no name or address
we say finders-keepers, losers-weepers,
Yet, I worried for the weeping woman.
Was this her rainy day fund?
Did she have hungry children?

Dad advised save for something
important but, I longed for curly hair.
I could splurge on one of those
permanents that had become so popular.
I offered it to mother. "It's yours." she said.
Yet, one day she borrowed it to pay a bill
and returned a five, four ones and change.
Gone the sweet fragrance. The spell broken.
it slipped away like pennies down a wishing well,
without a wishful extravagance. Still,
I worried about the woman's children.

In better times at another farmers' market,
I found a wad seven times as large.
No doubt, dropped by someone
able to stuff bills in his pocket, who
lived an easy-come, easy-go life style,
like people who are generous tippers.
This money acquired a name and address,
and went worry free to the food pantry.

~

Our 56th Street Neighbors In the 1930's

BLANKENHEIMS

I remember the most insignificant things about the people on our dead-end street. Take the Blankenheims for instance, second house from the corner on the west side of the street. They were the only people I know who ground their own horseradish. Mr. and Mrs. would take turns in the kitchen turning the hand grinder. Then they would rush outside wiping their eyes to sit on the front stoop in the fresh air until the tears stopped streaming down their cheeks, before going back to spell each other.

We counted their daughter Henrietta among the oldest girls on the block, out of high school and dating. Henrietta rolled her lisle hose below her knees and wore very short tight skirts for those days. After spending a day on the water, while her young man rowed her around the lake, she showed us her burnt knees and five inches of red skin above the knees where her skirt rode up. My dad said, "She is a provocative flirt. I hope my daughters will be more modest."

After their daughter married and moved away Mrs. B. developed a health problem. Minnie, I, and sometimes Fern, were called upon to help with her cleaning and sometimes spent the night with her. Mrs. B. whittled one half of a clothespin into a point and had me put a wet cloth over the point to dig into all the corners of her sunroom windows. The upper parts of the windows were divided into small panes. I figured, including the glass doors, there were 328 corners to poke that pointed pin into. We washed with vinegar water and dried the panes to a glossy shine with crumpled newspaper. She was pleasant and easy to work for. The only thing I didn't like was ironing her heavy muslin sheets, because she sprinkled them with so much water I had to push the hot iron over and over and over them to dry them enough to fold and not have them mold. I thought she did it on purpose just to keep us there longer wanting our company.

When I scrubbed the basement steps I saw along the floor rail about half dozen flat irons. All were different. Some were cast in molds that had flowers or decorative scrolls, and one had a removable handle. One day she saw me admiring them and later gave me the plainest and probably the oldest one saying; "Now you can't say I never gave you anything." I thought that a strange thing to say, but I enjoyed her gift. My only genuine antique and I used it often as a doorstop.

As a wife of a railroad man she spent many nights alone. The fifty cents earned kept me from having to ask my dad for spending money and he in turn never asked for my earnings. Today you never see a fifty-cent piece. The coin has become that insignificant.

SMITHS

The Blankenheims lived directly across the street from the Smiths, a family with three children in Parochial School. Mr. S. was a railroad man too. Because Mr. B. had the most seniority he could "Bump" Mr. S. The railroad union tried to piece out work so all employees worked at least a minimum numbers of days every week. There were times when Mr. B.

Our 56th Street Neighbors In the 1930's

heard that Mr. S. had a three or four day run he would call in and ask for that job. It seemed unfair to me but someone senior to Mr. B. would on occasion bump

him too. The Smith children were, Leona, my age but often quarrelsome, Violet of the shrinking kind, and Edgar called Eggy often on his short wave radio appeared to be a loner. One day he bought a bicycle from the rag man and fixed it up. The first day he brought the bike out all the kids on the block were standing around admiring it when our Dad happened by. Dad asked if he could try it out. How could a kid refuse an adult? Dad peddled off, no hands. Then he coasted in a hand stand with his feet in the air. Coming back he was standing up on the seat. Poor Eggy was scared his bike would be wrecked took hold of the handle bars and walked the bike around to the ally and into the shed behind his house.

MEYERS

In the big house on the corner was the only family whose father had full time work during his depression years. After we had to give up our telephone they let us use theirs to make and receive important calls, when we were job hunting. Virgie the oldest girl was my age but she skipped two grades so she most often traveled with Minnie's crowd. Betty was Echo's age they were Shirley Temple fans. Billy, the youngest was Polly's age. When they were four or five they vied like sister and brother for the biggest piece when an apple was divided between them. Their mother was the first woman in the neighborhood to hang her wash out on the line on Monday mornings.

JANSAZKS

Raymond their only child lived right across the street from us. He played with Billy and Polly. With trees and bushes so convenient in the empty lots north of our house those little boys saw no need to go home when nature called. One day Polly followed their example and squatted down. Raymond saw her and reported to his mother; "Polly must have done something very bad because her mother has already cut hers off."

CRESSONS

Their small house was set back close to the alley in the reasoning that some day in better times a bigger house would be built up front in line with the other houses. Dad helped Mr. C. build a wall at their lot line, which was a couple of feet above our driveway. Dad also invited them to Church and they went together for a while. I baby-sat for them. When Phyllis the oldest girl signed up to take violin lessons at the same place as Fern and I we went down town together. One day Phyllis left her violin on the streetcar when we got off at Wisconsin Avenue. I shoved my violin in her hand as I said, "Wait here." I turned and ran the two blocks to the next car stop. The doors were about to close but I climbed on telling the conductor we left a violin on here. He said, "how did you get here so fast?" It was no big feat as this was a busy street and the streetcar couldn't go very fast.

The youngest girl Jeannine, was our Jeaneen's age. When they became older Jeannine C. urged our Jeaneen E. to learn to ride a bicycle. There were spills at first until she strapped her lame foot to the pedal. After that Jeaneen had the best time of her young life. Later she bicycled with a group of Hostlers long after Jeannine C. lost interest in biking.

Our 56th Street Neighbors In the 1930's

Jack the only boy was Glenn's friend. One day Phyllis, Jack, Betty Meyers and Glenn took off together. When they didn't come home for lunch their mothers worried. I was sent east to comb the Solders Home looking for them and then west through West Allis to the State Fair Park. When I returned Mother and Mrs. C. were having a go to. While I was away a relative of the Cressons' had phoned to say Jack and Phyllis had taken them out to an Uncle's farm in Waukesha. When the Uncle got home from work he would bring them home after supper. Uncle said they were going to have supper then he would bring them home.

Relieved that the children were safe, but still with nerves on edge, it seem Mrs. C. blamed it on Glenn and called him a Ring-Leader. Mother could be feisty in protecting her children. The neighbors let it be known that they were rooting for our Mother as they all had it out with Mrs. Cresson before we arrived. The Mothers never reconciled but Jack and Glenn were best men at each other's weddings and the two Jeaneens are still corresponding.

~

1930 Christmas

West Allis

My sister and I were in Junior High School where the principal kept a wooden paddle hanging in plain view in his office as a symbol of his no-nonsense disciplining methods. One day in English class a person entered with a note for the teacher. She read it and said Winniefred get all of your books and go to the office.

Unable to conceive of any infraction of school rules I may have broken I slowly opened the door to his outer office to see my sister sitting there. I asked her why she was there and she said, "I don't know, why are you here?" The principal came into the room and said, "I got a phone call from your father, he said you should take all your books and go home. That is all I know."

We the only kids out on the street in the crisp air of a November day felt very bewildered. I recalled other times when Dad came home and said we are going to Kansas City, Paducah, or Ironton, Ohio and so on. In less than a week we would be in a different classroom staring at thirty new faces.

I asked Fern, "Do you think Dad got a job someplace and we are going to move again?" She said she overheard Mother and Dad talking about taking the baby to the hospital today. We couldn't see how that would cause us to drop out of school. So we walked on in silence. When we got to our porch steps we saw a colored sign tacked next to the door in big black letters QUARANTINED – 6 WEEKS – and a warning: Do not enter and the consequences if you do. The doctors had diagnosed our eleven-month-old sister, Jeaneen, with infantile paralysis⁴ as it was called then. Mother very concerned said, "What am I going to do with seven kids cooped up in the house for six weeks."

The worst day came when it snowed and the little kids went from window to window watching the neighborhood kids playing out in the snow with their sleds on the hill behind our house. Mother said, "Never mind" to their why can't we go out questions. "Just wait until it gets dark and everybody goes home. Then I'll let you out; no one will be there to see you and I won't get arrested."

We didn't have a sled. I went to the basement and searched through the woodpile next to the coal bin until I found a couple of boards that would do for runners. With a saw and a rasp I chiseled and nibbled a crude curve on the ends of the two-by-fours and filed them smooth. With the boards fastened to an apple box and a rope pull cautiously cut from Mothers clothes line we had a sled to pull them around in. What fun the little ones had that star-lit night being pulled around on the soft fluffy snow in the forbidden outdoors. My brother a carpenter now, with an eye of a six year old, still says, "It was a pretty good sled."

⁴ infantile paralysis: now called polio

1930 Christmas

West Allis

As Christmas approached I remembered the woodpile and set to work making a dollhouse for little four-year-old Polly. Our schoolbooks were seldom opened on the excuse that we weren't able to see our teachers to get home work assignments. Instead I spent many happy hours making doll furniture, painting and decorating that dollhouse. When set under the tree it was received with true appreciation. Sisters Echo, Polly, and Jeaneen and their friends played with that house for many years.

~

1931

Girls in Boys' Clothing

West Allis

About 1931 all the stores in our town were selling slacks for girls and young women. Pants became the rage. Mother said, "It's just a fad." She viewed girls in boys clothing as quite indecent. I had to plead and beg. I argued that I had to tuck my skirt into the elastic legs of my bloomers when I wanted to turn a cartwheel. Her firm response was, "You are too old to be playing like that. It's time you acted like a lady."

Dad encouraged us in our tomboy antics yet he never intervened in Mother's decisions. When all the girls on our block were wearing pants she finally relented.

Minnie chose a flowered print flowing wide at the bottom like a long skirt. Critics of this new trend said they look like pajamas. Echo and I choose white with red accents on the pocket and a vee shaped red wedge in the lower side seam which flaring out like sailors trousers, and Fern chose blue in a longer lasting style although the fabric wasn't denim then. Mother got out the Kodak camera and lined us up on the wooden side walk to snap a picture of her entire family in pants. Paulina and Jeanne are still wearing those ugly rompers. The kind we all wore as little kids.

No one then would believe that women would ever wear slacks on every occasion as we do today. I suspect that most women still have, as I do, a few skirts or dresses hanging in their closet that they haven't worn for years.

I credit Katherine Hepburn in the casual serene way she wore slacks in a movie to create dignity and approval for all women.



1932
Family and Neighbors
West Allis 56th Street House

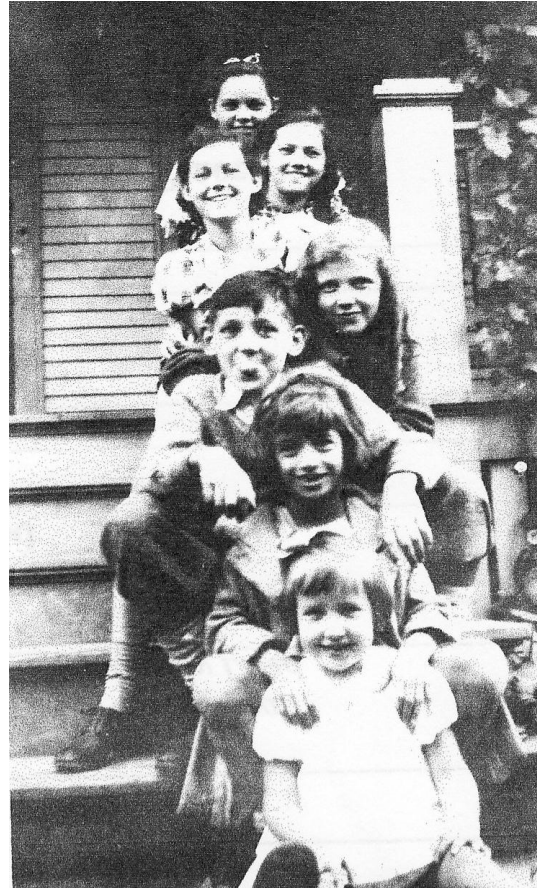


Top row: Leona Smith, Winnie, Jean Watsh, Fern
Next row: Glenn, Minnie, Echo, Paulie
 Jeaneen

1933 or 34 West Allis Roots

After a few years with roots in West Allis
we blossomed like the morning glories
that twined up string and shaded the porch.
Mother took this picture to send to dad.
as he didn't get home very often then.

I imagine in her letter she wrote;
The three older girl are becoming good
helpers, they prop up a song book
on the kitchen faucet and sing while
washing the supper dishes.
Echo now a very fast runner is chosen
first for neighborhood games because of
the clever way she can heckle opponents.
Boys flock to Glenn's tree house and swing
from the rope yodeling like Tarzan.
Polly is still so sweet and petite and the
baby accepts her weak leg with grace.



1934 Prom

The truth is if I had to do it all over again, or if Leona hadn't skipped school that afternoon, I would have escaped from a humiliating junior prom night. I have since learned to say with conviction "Thank you for asking but no I'm sorry I can't." Then add if necessary the little white lie, "My father won't let me."

This day of embarrassment started early for me, a freshman, on my way to band practice before classes. Approaching six corners I saw Johnny Latter a boy I knew in Junior High School. He was two years ahead of me. He was standing there with his paper bag on his shoulder looking around like he was waiting for someone. One December holiday while still in Junior High School he had slipped a box of cherry chocolates in the milk chute at my house and we went ice-skating together once, but I haven't seen him again for almost two years.

When he fell in step with me I wondered why and had trouble initiating conversation as I felt very awkward during the next fifteen-minute walk to school. He followed me to my locker and waited while I hung up my coat and stowed my books. Just before reaching the band room he asked. "Will you go to the prom with me?"

"You mean the dance that is tonight?"

"Everybody knows when the prom is."

I had heard a bit of talk about it but hadn't paid any attention thinking it was just for juniors and seniors. Nor had I yet developed an interest in boys or dancing.

"I don't know how to dance."

"Really? Oh you will pick it up easy enough."

"I don't have a prom dress and there is no time to get one."

"Couldn't you borrow one?"

"I don't know anyone who has ever been to a prom."

"Oh there must be someone. I've got the tickets and corsage."

I shook my head rapidly sideways and found my seat in the semicircle and began to assemble my clarinet. Much to my embarrassment he followed me in and stood behind my chair and begged; "Please."

"Why are you asking me so late? I whispered."

"The girl I was going to go with ditched me the last minute to go with someone else. I really want to go to the prom."

The band director a young practice teacher came into the room and taped for attention. He looked at Johnny, whom he recognized from senior band and looked at me, but he said nothing. I was hoping Johnny would be sent out of the room freeing me from this humiliating situation. Every time there was a pause in the music Johnny taped me on the

1934 Prom

shoulder and pleaded. "Please say yes." until I realized the only way to free myself from this embarrassment was to give in. He said, "I'll pick you up at seven."

All during my morning classes I schemed about how to get out of this situation and wondered why he didn't ask Leona they knew and liked each other. Leona was dying to go to the prom. She had shopped for a dress and found one she would buy if asked. Leona, a junior, had said she was going to skip school that afternoon with all the girls who had appointments to get their hair done-up, so that people in her classes wouldn't know she hadn't been asked.

"It will be easy to persuade Leona to go in my place," I thought. "Out of school Leona would have the whole afternoon to get a dress and primp. If she stays through lunch hour I'll find her in the cafeteria." Leona wasn't there she left school early.

At home discussing it with my mother I said, "I really don't want to go. I only said I would, so he would go away. I suppose I have to go now." With understanding and perhaps a bit of, there is a lesson to be learnt in this, my mother asked, "What will you wear? With a little more notice I could have made you a dress."

"I know! The only dress we have that might do is the graduation dress you made for Minnie's graduation and it is just street length, only a few inches below the knees."

So the pale green georgette print was freshly washed rolled in a towel to dry and pressed right after supper. Before the doorbell rang I said, "I wonder if anyone else will show up in a dress this short?" Delbert driving his father's car and his date Ellie greeted me cordially with just a slight raise of the eyebrow. Before entering the gym we stopped to admire Ellie's yellow organdy dress. She had made it herself in sewing class and the teacher let her take it home to finish. It had a rolled hem that swayed out in graceful ripples a near inch off the floor like a ball gown should.

Feeling as out of place as a horsefly swimming in green pea soup my only thought was will thi

1934 Prom



s night ever end. To top it off they stopped for something to eat at Kegels, a tavern in my neighborhood that had been boarded up during probation. It was a forbidden place for my mother's girls to go. If I had been told of this I could have said a firm NO. So I suffered another hour worried that someone I know might see me; and word would get back to my mother.

~

1936

Firm Not Rigid

In this memory, clear as a photo, I see a man come in the door from some place far away, and the three little children who rush to hug him, cling to his legs as he drags them across the kitchen to embrace his wife at the stove stirring something savory in a steaming pot. There are deep black grooves in every crease of his hard calloused hands. His shoulders seem to have broadly expanded and his arms bulge with pronounced muscles. His body is strong as the steel he works with.

At the time of this memory everyone's life had experienced some sort of disruption due to the stock market crash and this family could no longer tag-along to wherever his Company sent him. Now he is responsible for nine hungry mouths. He always wore a dark grey brimmed hat that was set straight and severe on his forehead, but pushed high on his head when he played with children. If he could have his wish he would have a job close to home.

Several years before this he had vowed no pig, cow, fowl or fish would be killed for his nourishment. He was passionate in this conviction and collected many pamphlets to persuade other people to participate in debates on healthy diets. He often engaged his children in thoughts about what they might do to improve the world, and his children accepted his reasoning on vegetarianism, but avoided the debate if his points became too far out or redundant. He never admitted to desire when passing a White Tower where the aroma of hamburger and onions wafted out so enticing. He was like a powerful flashlight lighting the way and then allowing his children choose their own path. Everyone should have such a father. Yes he was firm, but not at all rigid.

~

1937
Alterations
Evanston, Illinois

I was on trial in the alteration department of a Woman's clothing store near the Northwestern University Campus called The Hub. My supervisor Mrs. Mc Nelly was kind and exacting in her training and soon acknowledged that my stitches met the high standard of the exclusive shop. After finishing a first hem Mrs. Mc Nelly said, "You are doing just fine, now do this next one in half the time." The second week Mrs. Mc Nelly took me out on the floor to teach me how to mark hems and sleeves. She said, "If any other alterations are needed call one of the senior seamstresses." The third week was like a blast of wind that blows fall leaves all around. Students returned to check on their classes and they swamped the stores buying new clothes. All the staff was out in the fitting rooms except me, when a call came from a sales clerk saying, "Mrs. Mc Nelly said everyone else is busy so you will have to come and mark the alterations. The girl's father is getting impatient and I'm desperate to make this sale." I knew clerks worked on a commission as well as their small salary and at times were ruthlessly competitive. I picked up my black cushion of pins and a yardstick to hurry to the fitting room where tension was bouncing between the four people like electric sparks.

The father paced in the manor of one who was used to having things happen at a snap of a finger. He said, "Let's get this fixed so we can get out of here." The mother who put excessive value on status symbols said, "I asked around and learned camel hair coats are the thing this year. We just have to have this coat." The sale clerk, desperate to make a sale, grasped the coat's shoulders four inches deep and said, "See it just needs a little tuck here and there." No one was paying any attention to the pitiful petite girl lost in a size fourteen coat overwhelmed by all that pressure. I thought, I have never seen anyone do as much altering, as this coat would need. We are not allowed enough time for a complete makeover, but if I don't do it the parents and the clerk are mad enough to complain and I'll be fired.

I reached for the sleeve and looked in the girls pleading eyes that seemed to say, "I don't want this coat."

I wavered. It's too big a project for me to tackle. I remembered hearing Mrs. McNelly say to an experienced seamstress who put a lot of pins in a gown. "You pinned it; you alter it;" and I had never seen anyone remake an entire coat. It will always look like a hand-me-down on her petite figure. Other people will be mad. I'll be fired for sure. So I turned to the parents and said, "I can take up the hem and shorten the sleeves, but you will not be happy. It is just not her size."

As expected the clerk complained. Mrs. Mc Nelly scolded, "You cost the clerk a sale. I am sure I could have made it fit." I replied, "It had raglan sleeves the size of foot ball pads and the pockets were down at her knees and couldn't be moved." Mrs. Mc Nelly just said "Oh" and walked away.

~

1938
Night School
West Allis

Feeling like I had entered a Men-Only-Club-Room I took a seat rear of center in the class on salesmanship. I noted the men's ages seemed to span two decades. Probably they were men who had experienced in their job-hunting, that industry was beginning to pick up and better jobs were opening up for people who were good in sales.

After the second class the young man occupying the seat in front of me asked, "May I walk you home?"

I learned a good deal about him in that half hour walk. Conversation centered on his prospect of working for an uncle who owned a hardware store. His personality was that of a man's man; and his division of labor between men and women was too archaic for me.

The next class assignment was to make a presentation to the class in selling a product. This young fellow volunteered to try to sell a hammer to a woman, if the only woman in class would act the part of the buyer. I felt obliged; so I faced him and said, "I'm looking for a hammer." He presented two hammers. Taking one in his hand he said, "This carpenter's hammer is designed to give a solid blow to a nail and has a claw that gripes the nail very well when you want to remove it. It is great for planks and heavy labor, but it is probably too heavy for you." Then he said, "Now this tack hammer would suit you better, it is great for hanging pictures and is light weight enough for a woman." Then he brought out a brush and a can of paint saying, "Look you could paint the handle and it would look pretty hanging in your pantry with your kitchen utensils. We also have plaster crack-filler to hide the holes."

Well, I had already learned the hard way about needing to remove bend nails when trying to pound them into hardwood and I knew the value of a good claw on a hammer. My thought ran in many directions. "He is stereotyping me as a helpless female. Why would I be attending this class if I weren't trying to break out of that mold? I am looking to do big things, build big things, and earn a man's bigger wage. Why would I buy a hammer just to paint a rose on it and hang it on a wall?"

Of course I chose the carpenters tool. He didn't understand. Neither did the teacher who praised his salesmanship for introducing other products. I took that fish right off the hook and tossed him right back into the pond; and he didn't ask to walk home with me again.

~

1939
A Turning Point
Before Youth Hostelling

It is so lonely out here all alone. I wish I had a friend who likes biking. Louise could, her brother has a bike, but she will never use it. Alice is too dainty. Eunice only thinks of boys, and Gertie won't let her hands get dirty. Fern would but she has no time, she is in nurses training. Not a girl I know really enjoys biking or hiking. As for the boys, Fred drives his father's car and the rest keep their heads under the hood of some rusty junket. Now there is Vern. When I asked him to bike to a park concert, his grandmother said, "There are bugs in the evening air and you might catch something."

I know I'll never earn enough to own a car and I do so want to see the world out beyond the end of the street-car line. I saved a long time to get this blue balloon-tired Schwinn. I still don't know a sole who would like to bike out to a lake? I feel so sad . . . so lonely.

Even the weather is grey and drab not a blade of grass has turned green yet. Houses are much neater on the street where I live. No one has an extra cent so they vie with each other to keep their yards neat and tidy. Here it looks like it has gone to seed and weed. Just look at that yard I am coming to. So unkempt, all that clutter lying about reminds me of "poor trash in the south:" people too poor and too tired to do anything about it. Oh look! The door swung opened, a little girl ran out onto the porch. Just look at that poor child. I can tell by the fit her tattered dress is a hand-me-down from a bigger sister.

I feel for her. I'll wave to her. Did you hear what that lovely child called out to me? "Oh! You look so pretty." She sang that out like a robin bursting into a spring song. Well! Now how can I be sad, feeling sorry for myself when I can be glad? Suddenly it seems the earth has begun to flower. New life is budding. I hope it will bloom for her. I know it is blooming for me.

~

Circa 1940

A Place to Hide

I overheard my sister's friend tell this on herself. It happened during the days mothers boiled the white clothes and rubber elastic suffered. It seems she and a good friend had gone to the prom; and was sitting around visiting until the music began. When couples moved to the dance floor he nodded to her and as she stood up her panties fell down around her ankles. Not wanting anyone to see them she scooped them up as fast as possible and hid them in his coat pocket. He was more embarrassed than she was about dancing all evening with her panties in his pocket.

I've often wished for a place to hide my embarrassment. I've even wished for a black hole that will remove me from the picture. I can feel the hot blush that begins as though a gallon of hot red paint was dumped on my head and the heat trickles down over my whole body. I've forgotten most everything that caused that red blush. But there is one story that raised an awareness factor.

We were sitting on a grassy knoll admiring a lake view with another couple. It was the first time I met this charming woman. Her black hair had a stylish cut, and her skin was a smooth even shade of tan sunbathers long for. She looked at us with calm steady eyes and told us she was about to graduate from a Milwaukee college and return to her home on the Oneida reservation in New York. Later conversation led her to relate an embarrassment she had recently experienced. I responded with something that had happened to me. I can't remember the story. Most likely it was about catching someone, or being caught, at doing something one does only in privacy. Anyway, in telling this I concluded the anecdote by saying, "and my face got as red as a---." While I groped for an original non offending metaphor she finished the sentence for me, "Indian's." All I could do was chide myself. As I with a small trace of *red blood* in my veins had never recognized this cliché for what it is.

There's just no place to hide from ones stupid self.

~

1942

Bidding Goodbye to a Room

My parent's living room of green and rust colors (so prevalent in their day) had a large open archway that adjoined the dining room and the big table where all our celebrations and fun took place.

It was there we gathered to wait for our ride to church. My dad in his best suit, three sisters in long skirts of striped taffeta with burgundy velvet tops, I in simple white and veil, all of us holding fall flowers bound tied with long satin streamers.

Mother, our youngest sister and brother had gone on ahead. Our brother-in-law who was to take the bridesmaids had a well earned reputation for being late, which we failed to take into account and plan around. The best friend of the groom arrived in his small convertible to pick up my father and me. But I sent the girls on ahead instead, not wanting to wait in the church for my attendants to arrive.

With everyone gone this cozy room seemed to grow big and dark, filled with a strange emptiness. I felt, really felt, for the first time I'm leaving home. Dad must have had similar thoughts, for he took my hand and said, "If things don't work out I want you to know you will always be welcome to come back home."

Although late for my own wedding I still appreciate the minutes Dad and I had together.

~

1943

Draft Registration

From time to time I looked up from my knitting to see Wayne sitting at the oilcloth covered kitchen table struggling over questions on the 101 form. When he finished, he carefully reread everything he had written. Satisfied, he folded the papers and slid them into the envelope addressed to his Draft Board. He tongue licked the glue and sealed the flap with both hands. Then he rotated the envelope between his fingers as he looked long at the address. He flipped it over, stared at the back and at the front again in deep thought, anticipating the unknowns of how his life would change once that envelope was dropped into the mail box.

I knew what he was thinking. It had been an ever present topic in our conversation since we first met; and we had hashed out all the pro and cons with our friends. Some people challenged Wayne's beliefs just enough to strengthen and confirm his conviction that he could not kill and therefore could not take part in war in any way. Others said "I don't agree with you but I'll fight for your right to believe as you do."

As I watched him I thought, the way his hair is combed into a pompadour emphasizes his high forehead; and with those arched eyebrows and those charming dimples on his face he looks as open and innocent as a young boy. How could a Draft Board deny his sincerity?

Finally he stood up stretched and broke the silence. "Well that does it. It's up to the Draft Board now. I wonder if they will give me a hard time like some other fellows have experienced."

"I'll mail this and ask my folks to come here tomorrow. Telling them won't be easy. You heard how proud Aunt Liz was when she talked about my cousin in basic training at Ft. Bragg. Well now mother won't be able to boast about me with her relatives because they regard all COs as slackers and yellow bellies."

When Mom and Dad Arhelger arrived we greeted them warmly at the door and directed them upstairs through the unfinished attic room of our bungalow flat. We went through the kitchen into the tiny living room. Dad sat in the grey chair that matched the couch. Mom sat on the couch and Wayne took the straight back chair in the other corner. To give them time together I busied myself popping corn in the kitchen. I heard Wayne as he began "You know I no longer have a work deferment so I have applied for a conscientious objectors classification. If I get it I will soon be sent to a Civilian Public Service Camp.

"Where will you go?" asked his mother, concerned as other mothers when the eldest son ventures far from the home nest.

1943 Draft Registration

"I don't know. It could be quite far as there aren't any camps in Wisconsin. But it will be someplace where I will be able to do work of national importance. I hope you are not disappointed in my decision."

His dad stiffened as he said, "Where is your loyalty to your patriotic duty? You could join the army as a noncombatant."

"No. Even 1-A-O's have to carry guns and I can't do that; but I am willing to do alternative service."

There was a long pause then Wayne went on. "I hope the draft board doesn't give me a hard time. You know our neighbor Mrs. Decker is on the board but I haven't heard of any one else in this district applying for IV-E status so I don't know how the board feels about Conscientious Objectors."

"What will you do if they classify you 1A?" his dad asked quietly.

"I will refuse. You know if the Board doesn't grant me an IV-E I will have to go to jail."

"You would disgrace us by doing that?"

"I would rather be in jail than kill anyone."

Horrified his mother said, "Come Dad let's get out of here."

They stomped out of the room just as I came to the door with the tray of refreshments. "I suppose you encouraged him to do this." she accused as they went through the kitchen, out through the unfinished attic then down the steps unescorted. Wayne put his arm around my shoulder and said "Don't worry I am sure they will come around in time."

~

1943
Going to Williston, N.D.
Civilian Public Service Camp

My car wobbled to a stop on the shoulder of the road for the second time in just an hour. I got out and saw a rear tire almost off the rim. Now I was in real trouble. Thirty or forty miles back I had the first flat somewhere in the middle of Minnesota. I tried to avoid driving extra miles looking for a garage to have the flat mended because, a pompous man at the Rations Office took ten percent off my request for the gasoline coupons I needed to make this thousand mile move. "Everybody pads his mileage estimate," he said. Not being so worldly-wise I had not done that, nor did I talk back to men then.

My sister Echo, took a week of her vacation to accompany me on this four-day trip. We had left Wisconsin riding high on the hope that I had enough gas coupons to get to the Civilian Public Service (CPS) camp in Trenton N.D. where my husband Wayne had been sent two months earlier.

As I looked at the flat tire I thought like Pollyanna. "Well at least there is no need this time to unpack all my worldly possessions just to get out the jack from under the back seat. Because that first flat tire is still flat, and is mounted on the spare wheel rack. So I have nothing to replace this tire with."

Looking around I saw chimneys and a grain elevator, the calling card of a small town. I guesstimated it was two or three miles away. I considered pushing the wheel in, but decided it was not wise to try to roll a soft unwieldy wheel that far. So I set out walking confident I would find a garage man who would come out and help me. A half-hour and two miles later the town didn't look any closer. The first car going my way stopped. The driver said he had stopped and talked to my sister, and looked around to see if he could help but without a spare there was nothing he could do. He offered to drop me at the only garage in the area. Grateful I accepted. The town was still five miles away and I was now hot and weary.

At first the garage man refused to do anything because I didn't bring in the tire and he was working alone. Scared now, no longer able to control the tears I asked, "What shall I do?" "There is no other place to go and the next town is twenty miles away."

"Yeah! And on account of the war an' rationing that fellow has closed up too." He mused then relented. "Well if you will wait, I have a fellow who comes for gas at five then I'll see what I can do. But first I will go to eat the hot supper my wife always has waiting on the table. She don't like for me to be late. She is cooking it now. Can't you smell the wonderful aroma coming out of that window?" He turned and waved affectionately to a shadow behind a black window screen.

True to his word he came back. He threw an extra wheel in his truck and we drove out to the car and Echo. He put his wheel on my car and I drove back to his garage. In no time he patched the good tire but we had to junk the shredded spare. No longer gruff as at first he asked where we were going to spend the night. Then he directed us to a house where

1943
Going to Williston, N.D.
Civilian Public Service Camp

a widow took in tourists saying, “If you talk real nice to her she might even make you a supper.” It turned out the lady was his mother. He also warned me like a father, “Buy a new tire in the very first town you come to.” We drove on to Aunt Minnie’s in Moorhead. I thought we might do better with a relative’s recommendation. As an out of state person I still had to argue very hard to buy a used tire and a new tube. Every community had a limited quota, as tires were the first things to be rationed to conserve gasoline. Everyone with a car or truck had to register their tire numbers. People were allowed to keep only one spare and everyone was required to turn in any other tires they owned. *(A pile of those tires lay in a low spot out by Bluemound Road at Gerkie’s Corners for years)*

We reached Trenton using up all our gas coupons and had only fifteen miles of gas left in the tank. Echo made quite an impression on the single camp fellows. The highlight of her trip was riding home on the train.

Trenton is south of highway 2 and about fifteen miles from the Montana state line. Williston, the only close town where it was possible to find work, is fifteen miles east of camp. Wayne hadn’t been able to find a place for me to live. So peddling my bike I went up and down every street looking for ‘For Rent’ signs. I saw mostly basement rooms reserved for high school students from country farms, who spent the school season in town. I rented a one room apartment, one of two in a little cottage behind the land lords house on the east side of town. Not wanting a misunderstanding I was frank with the landlady and told her that Wayne worked out at the CPS camp and would come to town on weekends. She assumed Wayne was a government employee because the camp supervisor, John Mardis a former minister employed by the Bureau of Reclamation, lived in town and earned their respect.

Independent for the first time and entirely on my own to support my self and provide a bit of pocket money for Wayne, I knew in a small town like Williston, without industry I could not earn the wages paid in places like Milwaukee.

The first job I found was at the local newspaper in the bindery. The work was familiar but the pay only fourteen dollars a week and furthermore they didn’t offer a full weeks work. Then I took a job at Montgomery Ward.. They too did not give me a full week so I kept looking until I found another job selling china at an independently owned store. My landlord would be my supervisor and the pay would be sixteen dollars for a full six-day week. On Saturday I told the assistant manager at Wards that I had to take the other job because I couldn’t live on only three days pay. He said, “Monday the Manager will be back from his vacation and I’ll see what we can do.” Fortunately I did not burn that bridge behind me, for when I got home there was a telegram under my door stating tersely the china shop could not use my services. A few minutes later another telegram came from the landlord telling me to be out of the apartment in a week. My landlord had come to realize Wayne was a CO and not a government employee as they thought, and they no longer wanted anything to do with us. With such a letdown I felt depressed. There were so few places to look for work and apartments were very hard to find.

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That evening I dawdled over supper and got a late start on the hour long bike ride to camp. It got dark. I knew Wayne would worry but I could not hurry. I had biked about twelve miles when truck lights came toward me. The truck stopped, fellows from camp jumped out of the truck saying, "Can we give you a lift?" Before I could say anything they had my bike in the truck and had me in the cab. When they turned the truck around I realized they had come out looking for me. One of the fellows was in charge of the trucks and another had the keys to the gas pump. Without telling anyone they had formed their own search party, risking reprimands for illegal use of government equipment.

I placed a blind ad in the news paper for an apartment with no more information than that. A kind, sympathetic lady of the Jehovah Witness religion came to my place at work and offered me her basement one room efficiency apartment. That is the way things work in small towns where everyone knows everybody's business. We became good friends.

One Monday morning after a visit to camp I got a ride back to Williston with David Christopherson. He was a lean, lanky fellow affectionately nick named Stubby. He had the job of going after supplies and groceries every Monday morning. On Saturdays farm families flocked into town to shop and visit. The young men dressed in clean western shirts and jeans spent their time hanging around the cars and trucks parked on the main street. So it was very unusual to see a bunch of husky tanned farm boys lolling by their trucks on a Monday morning.

As Stubby maneuvered the truck into a parking space we heard the hostility in the voice of one brawny fellow as he asked, "Are there any of them Yellow-Bellies in this part of the state?" As we got out of the truck and walked toward them we heard the response of a local fellow, "Yeah there are some around Malta and there's a camp out by the Indian town on the border. Sometimes they come in town for supplies. Here comes one of them now!" They stood with their feet apart, arms folded as they flexed over-sized muscles made hard by tossing heavy hay bales. They stared Stubby up and down as we came abreast, our eyes straight ahead. I walking on the inside eyeing the rough brick building was thinking, "If they tie-into Stubby he will fall against me and I will tumble like a domino against this hard solid wall." I tried to estimate how badly I was going to get hurt.

At the store entrance Stubby said, "Whew! I thought for sure those fellows were going to take a swing at me." I believe they would have if he was alone that day.

~

Stories of our CPS experience still need to be written

1943
Wayne & Winnie

1st Anniversary ~ September 19



Winnie's Stories: 1916-1943

First Edition December 2010 Rev D.

My Name

WINNIEFRED ESTHER EASTLUND ARHELGER

Second daughter
Born June 16, 1916 Harlem, Montana

I answer to Winniefred, Winferd, Winnie, Ferd, or Win and Mom. It is a comfortable name. To also have mother's name Esther, has been a cherished honor. Mother's grandfather named her after his favorite sister. Dad called me Winferd with emphasis on the Swedish sounding ferd while Mother said Winnfred, and it is spelled Winneferd on my baptismal certificate. I was confused about the spelling until one day while reading a comic strip called "Winnie the Breadwinner" I saw her full name in print for the first time. With the logic of a third grader I reasoned things in print are correct and adopted Winniefred as my choice. Most people are comfortable calling me Winnie

A long name can be a handicap. I regretted the 19 letters once back in 1958. It was when I was a member of the School Board for the Brookfield Elementary School. In order to finance the building of an addition I had to sign my name one thousand times on coupons worth a million dollars.

The meaning behind a name can give direction to ones life. Esther means star. I was glad to discover both Fred and Ferd stood for "friend of peace". At my confirmation ceremony we were each assigned Beatitude to recite. Mine was "Blessed are the peacemakers...." I accepted that as a directive. In those pre-War days while developing personal values and contemplating how to live a Godly life some of us questioned our governments' right to ask us to kill. I knew then, like girls counting the buttons on their coats to see what kind of a man they would marry, that I wanted a man of peace. Blessed I was to find such a man. I took his name, Arhelger. At times genealogy research promotes a need to identify with the Eastlund clan so then I retain my maiden name in my signature.

WINNIEFRED ESTHER EASTLUND ARHELGER

~

Second Oldest Sibling Relationships

Second born is a good place to be in a family of seven girls and one boy. I felt this gave me a special relationship with Dad. I first noticed this after Dixie was born. I was about four. Minnie, the first born had already become Mother's helper and it follows that the second child should be Father's companion. Or that may have come about because one child out of the house provided a bit of relief for Mother. Being somewhat of a surrogate son to a father, proud of his daughters, was an adventure. I liked going with him to the hardware stores the best. The tools excited my imagination, as did finding nuts and bolts to screw together. I probably squirmed in church a lot. But when we stopped at the grocer and Dad paid his weekly bill the grocer would give me a sucker or a bag of candy to share with my sisters. Sweet advantages for a second born. Years later I learnt Dad had a way of making each one of us feel special to him.

The adults were more concerned about my short stature than I was. When Fern caught up and surpassed me people began asking if we were twins. I remember the time Minnie marveled that I could run under a barbed wire without ducking. Praise from her made me feel to be short was ok. I started school the fall Echo was born and had to learn the alphabet. Fern and Dixie learnt it along with me. Dixie, only two and a half years old was so sharp. Later that year Fern started kindergarten. She was a better student and caught up to me so that we graduated from high school together. We shared many experiences and enjoyed the same group of friends from church.

Mother didn't allow any fighting among her children. Rivalry between us was mild, although we did tease each other. There was a time when if we got Fern's goat she could deliver a swift kick. One evening while doing the dishes, Minnie washing Fern and I drying, the aluminum colander reminded me of a shield. Feeling safe I said the words that triggered a kick and lowered the colander to protect my thigh. Fern skinned her shin on a sharp colander leg and her howl of pain brought mother scolding. I pleaded innocence but mother was too wise to be fooled. We both got a tongue-lashing. I probably instigated other trouble for us. When we were younger and one of us got a spanking the other one would cry also. Was that empathy taught unintentionally?

When Dixie died it left a gap of four-and-a-half years between us three older girls and those who came after. That gap labeled us as the "big kids" and the "little kids". As Mother adjusted her asking for help with household chores according to our abilities; we "big kids" got the best of her training.

The year I turned eight, (Glenn was the baby) Minnie, Fern, I, with June and Marion Engle played with our dolls in the shade all summer. At Christmas I asked for a doll-buggy. The catalog showed three sizes. I made a point to let Mother know the biggest one was the right size for me. She tried to dissuade me. Saying, "I don't have a buggy for the baby. How can you expect a buggy for a doll? We will move soon after Christmas and a buggy is too big to take with us. And aren't you getting too big for dolls?"

Second Oldest Sibling Relationships

On Christmas Eve a little buggy was under the tree. I had to bend over to push it. Nevertheless at breakfast on Christmas morning, I announced I was going to take my doll outside for a ride in the buggy. First I had to find my shoe and get my coat. When I got back to the living room Echo, age three, in her white coat was going out the door with my buggy. I was indignant. A family rule was being broken. The owner was supposed to be the first to play with any new toy. Mother and Dad stood in the doorway admiring her. Dad said, "Doesn't she look sweet." I had to agree, with her long blond curls and white coat she cut a cute picture and the buggy was just her size. I waited a while, then created a ridiculous scene when I decided it was time to assert my rights and began tugging the buggy away from her. Growing pains!

Having a brother was a different kind of challenge. He wasn't about to be bossed around by sisters. To get him to do something we would first have to say "Don't you dare" and then be very creative in reasons why he shouldn't do what we wanted him to do. When Glenn was six and I about fourteen and weary of little kids tagging along, I said to Glenn "Go get in a bushel basket and pick yourself up by the handles and carry yourself off." A little while later I saw him in the back yard standing in mother's clothesbasket experimenting with that idea. That like a snapshot has been a cute memory. We never heard of an allowance in those depression years but in the families where the fathers were working the boys got a dime to go to a matinee on Saturday. As there were a lot of boys Glenn's age on our block Mother didn't want him to feel left out and managed to set aside a weekly dime for him.

Paulina fine boned and petite was my pet. There was just enough difference in our ages for me to enjoy taking care of her. After a scare from snakes while swimming in the river she became afraid of hairs in the wash bowl. To her they were snakes. Once mother sent one of the younger kids to take the hair out of the bowl for her. She called out, "No Winper will, Winper will." She was afraid that Echo or Glenn would tease her with the hair, while I was beyond that kind of kids' stuff.

When Jeaneen was born I was eager to take care of her. She had colic. Although I was allowed to walk the living room floor with her head on my shoulder she preferred Mother's touch. In the summer it was fun to take her out riding in the buggy and show her off to the neighbors. A baby in a real buggy was better than dolls.

The sweet nature of our oldest sister set an example for the rest of us to follow. It seems Minnie inherited a natural aptitude to nurture. She was molded after Mother who in her youth as second oldest of fourteen siblings was assigned to take care of the babies while her older sister helped with cooking and cleaning. Mother had intuitive perception and exceptional resourcefulness in child raising. Mimicking Mother, Minnie would rub my legs at night when I woke up aching with "growing-pains". When we shared the same bed she'd make me turn over when she turned so we wouldn't breathe in each other's face. She learnt about hygiene as a Campfire Girl and began early advocating and imposing her latest good

Second Oldest Sibling Relationships

health solutions on the rest of us. The times I remember with great pleasure are when Minnie would prop a hymnal or the One Hundred and One-Song Book up on the kitchen faucet and lead us in singing as we did the dishes.

~ WINNIEFRED ESTHER EASTLUND ARHELGER ~

1970
Visit to Loma, Montana Home

On the banks of the Marias River



Loma home in 1970 ~ view from the river side looking up toward the hills.



Sisters Tillie and Esther stand next to their Loma childhood home. Picture taken in 1970

Winnie's Stories: 1916-1943

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1970

A River-Stone Souvenir or Icon

Every cleaning day I heft and dust a flat four-pound stone the size of a big mans hand. It has brown and tan layers like growth rings in wood and its surface is smooth as if sanded and polished. I selected it for its paperweight quality from many similar stones found on top of the hill. I don't need to hold it to my ear like a conch shell to hear how the hill and the valley where the Marias River flows played a part in the stories of mother's childhood.

The hill story I most often heard happened in late spring of 1906. After many days of heavy rain the dam at Helena broke causing the Teton and Marias rivers to backup flooding the low lands. News those days came via horseback if it came at all. So on this day they had no clue why water was creeping up stream onto their land. Their father, Zack, a cook for the cattle-round-up, had already left for the summer and was somewhere in the middle of the state. Fearful that their lumber for a new barn might float away, their mother, Emma, with her oldest daughter and sons went out to move the lumber to higher ground. Mother, about age thirteen, was left in charge of the baby.

When the water crept close to the house she pushed the baby in a buggy, through wet ruts in a newly plowed field, to tell her mother. Emma couldn't believe the river was rising that fast and sent the boys back to check. They returned yelling, "It's almost coming in the door." By the time they got the horses harnessed and hooked up to the wagon for loading necessities they were ankle deep in water. Mother gathered the young chicks in a tub. The boys caught the hens, and with the livestock they climbed to the hilltop and set up a tent. At evening the discontented hens wanting to roost in the chicken coop flew off one by one and drowned.

When news of the flood reached Zack he returned with friends. They shouted from across the flooded land but couldn't be understood so Emma had everyone line up in a row, easy to count, so that Zack would know all were safe. It took three days for the men to find a safe crossing and return. They stayed on the hill two weeks before the water receded and the house was cleaned.

My mother, Esther Eastlund, was in her seventy-ninth year the day I stood with her on that hill looking across the valley, at the curve of the river, and the five coolies on the other side. Below us, still intact, was her childhood home; a sod roofed two-room log building, and also the white two-story home of the present owner almost hidden in a tower of trees. As I listened to mother tell how different the valley looked when she was a girl, I rubbed the stone in my hand and wondered how did these river-stones get on top of a hill so far from the river. Then I tried to imagine how different this part of the world looked when ice and then a lake covered the land and shaped it like a shallow saucer to create an unobstructed full circle view of the horizon so that the sky stretches broad and immense. Many call it The Big Sky Country. Mother called it God's country.

1970

A River-Stone Souvenir or Icon

On that Montana hill I felt as humble as a small dot, connected to the past, to the universe, and still somehow belonging to the scheme of all things.

~

In another of her hill-stories Mother told about the innocence of children. On a day when her parents Zack and Emma were away, she and her brother took a new spool of sewing thread up on the hill and unwound it to measure how long fifty yards is. They thought they could rewind it and no one would notice but, found rewinding like new, an impossible task. So they dropped it there only partly rewound when their parents came home earlier than expected. They avoided punishment by keeping quiet when the spool was missed, to suffer guilt ever after.

~