

## **Forward**

By Dan Sanderson

*After Dad died, we thought it would be appropriate to find one of his quotes, maybe from a sermon of his, that we could print in the folder for his memorial service. So I went downstairs to his study and started looking through his sermons. Dad kept every sermon he ever wrote. Each one was dated and was noted with the location and the occasion. Cabinet after cabinet, notebook after notebook. Hundreds and hundreds of sermons. How was I ever going to find just the right quote from one his ocean of sermons?*

*I did eventually find something that I thought would be appropriate. It was a sermon about our journey through life. This sermon, like virtually all of his sermons, had three points. If possible, the three points of his sermon started with the same letter. This clever mental mechanism helped his listeners remember what he said. Dad used to joke about his parishioners having “roast preacher” for Sunday dinner. I don’t doubt that his sermons were frequently discussed by his parishioners over a meal, but I suspect they were always regarded as being great insights into our journey through life.*

*So, true to the Orville style, I want to share with you three reflections on Dad’s life and ministry, and, yes, they all start with the same letter.*

*First of all, Dad was a man of **humility**. There was no arrogance at all in Dad. He always said that he didn’t deserve God’s grace. He didn’t deserve all the blessings he had in his life. But they were given to him only because of God’s grace.*

*Secondly, Dad was a man of **harmony**. When people were hurt, or there was discord among family members, or congregational members, it grieved him, and he wanted nothing more than for believers to be at peace with one another. Maybe that’s why he liked classical music so much, because the harmonies of the music reflected his desire for harmony in the world.*

*And finally, Dad was a man of **humanity**. And I think the reason that Dad was such an effective counselor and pastor was because he understood his own humanness. He endured many sorrows and struggles in his life that made it possible for him to sympathize with us. During the last few months when Dad realized his time on earth was limited, he asked himself a lot of hard questions. Where is God in all of this, and, is there even a God, and if there is, will He take me home? And Dad always came back to the promise of Romans 8 that nothing can ever separate us from the love God in Christ Jesus. I don’t know about you, but if my dad can ask those kinds of questions, I don’t feel so bad when I ask those same questions myself. And with God’s help, may I come to the same conclusion that God loves me, He loves each of us, and in the end He receives us into His eternal kingdom.*

*When I was a young pastor my mother wanted to buy Dad something special for his birthday. Or perhaps it was for Christmas; I don't recall. She wanted to buy him a computer and she asked for my advice on what to get him. I told her to get him one of those new IBM PC's, with the dual floppy drives and 64k of memory. So she did. Shortly after that he started working on this autobiography using a DOS version of WordPerfect software. Originally it started out as a therapeutic exercise. He needed an outlet to describe who he was and what his journey through life had been. He continued to write this book and finished it only a few short weeks before he died in 2005.*

*He gave me a copy of the file, still in WordPerfect format. I converted it to something I could work with and decided to make it into a book that could be published. I have limited my editing to spelling corrections, minor grammatical changes, some formatting changes, and the addition of chapter headings. I omitted a small number of stories about families in his parishes to ensure that no confidential information was disclosed. Otherwise, this book is Dad's story. If you knew Dad when he was alive, you will certainly be reminded of him again as you read these pages. God bless his memory.*

## Earliest Recollections

I was born on a farm four and one half miles east of Jackson, Minnesota, on February 27, 1924. It was common in those days that a baby should be born right at home, and so I was. My parents, Howard and Ella Mason Sanderson married later in life, and so I was an only child. I was told by my mother that I was chubby and fat during my infancy and thrived on cow's milk directly from the udder. My father was a hard worker and developed a small dairy herd together with other livestock including a hog operation.

My earliest recollections of my childhood go back to the new farm homestead which my parents purchased in about 1925. I was age one and a half when we moved closer to Jackson -- about a mile and a half east, on a quarter section of land. A railway track with fast passenger trains roaring past our house cut through the south edge of the farm, and so we had to cross the tracks to get to the road which took us to town. The house was a large white frame structure with a cellar underneath and a small storage attic overhead. There were two bedrooms downstairs -- one for company and the other for my parents and myself. To keep warm during the winter, my parents chose this arrangement. My father and mother slept on a double bed and I slept on a single bed with a curtain separating the two. Listening to sounds in the dark gave me an early lesson in sex education.

The house was equipped with a water supply that was pumped through a hand pump, which pulled water from a cistern underneath the house. Almost every morning during the cold winter, the water pail was frozen hard. It was necessary to drain the pump each night so that it would not bust. The large kitchen was heated by a wood cook stove that stood near the bedroom door. As a young lad, I often crawled back behind it in the winter time to keep warm. Another wood burning heater was in the living room area on the south side of the kitchen. Two large rolling doors separated these rooms. The living room area was seldom used during the winter except when company came. As for disposing dirty dish water and other garbage, we had only a "slop pail" which my mother carried out regularly into the back yard area. Toilet facilities consisted of a "back house" which was located at the end of a path north of the house. Sometimes, my mother couldn't make it in time especially, when it was very cold, and so she used the slop pail for which my father scolded her.

Our laundry facilities were located in a smaller addition to the main house, which had been attached to the north end. In fact, it was evident that this was the original structure, and the larger building had been added to it. In this annex was located a large room where Mother washed clothes with a gasoline operated Maytag machine. She had to be sure that the exhaust hose was put out the door each time she used it. It made a great deal of noise after my mother managed to start it by using the foot crank a goodly number of times. My father often had to come from the barn and start it for her. After ringing out the clothes in a ringer on the machine, my mother carried them out into the back yard to hang them on the line winter and summer. I recall how in the winter, the clothes were all

frozen stiff when she brought them in again. She then ironed them by using flat irons that were heated on the cook stove.

This large room was also used for cutting up the carcass of a young fat hog, and then for canning the meat in a large boiler over another older cook stove fueled by corn cobs. I recall how my parents made sour kraut in that room too, and how the smell of it penetrated throughout the whole house.

There were two smaller rooms in the annex -- one which my father used for drying seed corn (there were no hybrids in those days), and the other which was a storage place for tools. My father kept a 12 gauge shotgun and a 22 caliber rifle there. During prohibition days, he also brewed home made beer in this room. I recall how he carefully calibrated the temperature and brewing time as he worked with this small crude distillery. The set-up consisted of a small tank and several tubes which flowed into tall glass bottles -- larger than the regular beer bottles which were to appear later after the prohibition era had ended. Sometimes he was pleased with the taste of it -- other times he wasn't.

My father also during the early spring time spent many hours in the seed corn room where he tested kernels from the open pollinated corn fields. He had chosen select corn ears, shelled them, and sacked them for testing and for seeding the following spring. Unlike today, farming in those days was a year round schedule of barn chores, home canning, machinery repair, and seed processing. My father was a hard working man who spent long hours out in the barn and in the field. When darkness came, the kerosene lanterns were lit to finish the milking operation. Meanwhile my mother took care of feeding the chickens and gathering the eggs, and she had the kerosene lamps lit and the supper ready when he came in from the barn.

My mother was a good cook and the food was tasty after a hard day's work. My father usually hired a man year round to help him with the chores and field work. He was usually a single man who slept in a small bedroom up in the attic area. Every other Sunday, they changed off doing the chores so that we as a family had a free Sunday night every two weeks. I recall one Sunday when the news came to us that our hired man had been killed. Coming home to do the chores, his little roadster car had been pulled off the road by loose gravel, turned upside down in the ditch so that the driver's neck was broken. I was about six years old then, and I recall the scene. The car had rolled to right side up with the top crushed in. A cold chill ran up and down my spine in my first real exposure to tragedy and death.

Field work on the farm was done with horse drawn machinery. My father had at least two to three teams of bay horses which were harnessed at the beginning of a work day. They powered such equipment as a two row corn planter, a single row cultivator, and a grain binder. I remember how they ran away one hot summer day pulling the binder when the flies got too much for them. My father had stopped at the end of the field to eat a lunch

which mother had brought out to him. The four horses ran sailing into the grain field with the binder reel spinning and the bundles of grain chucking out all over the field. I thought the binder would have been broken to pieces in that runaway. The catastrophe did end the grain cutting for the day. My father had to replace almost every wooden spoke in the binder reel.

My father was proud of his horses. All of them were gentle except one sorrel mare. She was unpredictable in her performance, often shying away from any unknown obstacle. In the stall, she was frisky and given to kicking. One day while he was trying to harness her, she kicked my father, fracturing no less than three of his rib bones. I recall how he came staggering to the house moaning with pain. My mother insisted that we must get rid of Princess, but my father never did. The horses thus gave all of us a sense of security. They could be counted on to power almost everything in the farming operation. My father harnessed them to pull the manure spreader, the hayrack, and the corn picking wagon. Many hours were spent currying them before the harnesses were strapped to their bodies. Naturally, it took extra time to hitch them up to the vehicle which they were about to pull. However, these animals had the advantage that they could pull a manure spreader through snow and mud where no tractor could go.

Harvest time was always exciting for me, especially as the threshing machine pulled by a steam engine chugged into our place. The farmers in the area did their grain threshing in a round robin arrangement in that they banded together as a "threshing round" to harvest the fields. This meant that as many as ten hay racks manned by neighboring farmers or their hired men came to haul bundles from the field to the rig. At our place, all the fields of oats and barley could be threshed in a short day, and the rig would puff its way to the next farm. As a six year old I was afraid of that noisy steam engine and kept my distance. Even for the night, this mighty monster was fueled with an ample supply of wood so that it would be ready to go the next morning. I remember how the rig was left at our farm for overnight. When all the men went home, I was intrigued by this steaming giant in our pasture that I wanted to get a closer look. As I moved toward it, even though no one was there, it suddenly spouted off a shrilling whistle in the echo of the evening hour. I ran for dear life thinking that this machine saw that I was coming. To me, the steam engine in those days was a real personality to be feared.

I did learn fear in those early years from my parents. There were special occasions when I received spankings. The earliest one was when I was about four. The chills and darkness of winter were closing in. When my mother one evening was about to go out and do the chicken chores, I protested. I wanted her to do something for me instead. What it was I do not recall. She firmly told me that she didn't have time to wait on me. When she left the house, I was angry. I pounded the window of the outside door so hard that it broke. When that happened, I feared her return to the house. Indeed, it was my time of judgment. Another early spanking occurred when once more my parents were outside doing the chores and I was alone in the house. As a young boy, I was intrigued by

the burning embers of the kitchen woodstove. Wishing to have a better look at the fire, I picked up the yard stick which stood in the corner and poked it through the holes of the draft door. When I saw that it ignited sufficiently, I drew it out and watched the flames burn off the end of the stick. Just then, I heard my mother come into the annex area. Not knowing where to hide the smoldering ruler, I thrust it into the chamber of the rolling doors between the kitchen and the living room. When my mother entered the kitchen, she could smell smoke and immediately pressed me as to what I had been doing. Then she saw smoke pouring out of the opening where out of desperation I had placed the yardstick. She dashed over to discover the source of the smoke and yanked out the burning object. It was obvious as to what I had done. I could have burned down the house! Instead, I had my seat thoroughly burned with my mother's firm chastening hand which I so justly deserved.

Another vivid episode of learning to fear my parents as well as the dangers of the outside world occurred when I decided as a five year old to take a stroll down the railroad track next to our front yard. As I walked between tracks westward, I could hear my mother calling for me. But I pretended not to hear her. It wasn't long until I saw my father quickly coming toward me from behind. As I turned to see him, I saw that he had a willow stick in his hand. Immediately, I rushed toward him hoping to be quickly absolved of any punishment. However, I felt the sharp stings on my behind all the way back to the house. No sooner had we arrived at the door when we saw the daily Milwaukee passenger train screaming by. I was never to wander down the tracks after that.

As a boy, I learned responsibility early. I was only six years of age when my father gave me a small milk pail for my birthday. I could now be like my dad and milk cows with him. Milking my first cow was not as glamorous as I thought it would be. When he put me on a stool under one of the gentlest animals of the herd, I couldn't squeeze anything out. I quickly learned that this chore was hard work. Added hazards were the sharp slaps of the cow's tail into my face and the animal's tendency to kick during the fly season. Such times tested my disposition. More than once for me, the cow's hind foot would find its way into the milk pail! Complicating the milking operation were the wet seasons when the cows would be called into the barn from the muddy yard. There they had stood in a puddle fighting flies, and now their udders were caked with mud. The task of washing them off before milking was a nasty chore. In the winter, the problem was the same. The herd was stantioned in the barn during the night to prevent the exposure of their udders to the cold. However, when the cows lay down for the night, they would often lay in their own feces. This again necessitated the distasteful task of preparing the animals for milking. These unpleasant chores I learned early in life.

Added to this, I learned the other chores of caring for the livestock which included slopping the hogs, feeding the horses and cows, and gathering, cleaning, and crating the eggs. One night during harvest, I had renegeed on my responsibility when my father came

home from the threshing ring. I had not even begun the chores. I was thoroughly scolded and told to shape up. However, when I was responsible, I received rewards. I remember receiving my first bicycle. I was seven years old then. Even though it was a used one, I was thrilled. It had 28 inch wheels and fenders which I soon learned would clog up with mud during the rainy season. Of course, I had to learn to balance myself riding it. Even though it was given to me for Christmas, I was out practicing how to ride it as soon as we had mild winter weather. When spring came, I would sometimes become angry with it when riding it to country school a mile away. The township road leading to it lacked ample gravel so that a shower during the day would immediately turn the road into murky clay. On such days, I would have to drag the bike on foot on stretches where the wheels clogged mud into the fenders. At such times, I had wished that I had walked to school.

Of course, Christmas was always an exciting time for me. Until I was six, I believed in Santa Claus. On Christmas Eve, he would always come when my father was out doing the chores. I never suspected that behind those white whiskers and red suit was my father. He would never speak even though I asked him questions. Actually, I was afraid of him. But he gave me a couple of toys, some socks and shirts from his gunny sack and then would walk off into the night. As a first grader, when I shared with the kids at country school how Santa Claus came to our house, some even in my class laughed at me and informed me that there was no Santa Claus. I refused to believe them but checked it out when I came home from school one day. I told my parents what the kids had said to me. They were silent. This confirmed the story I had heard at school, and I felt deceived. I even told them, "Why did you lie to me?" It was an embarrassment to me at school, and it seemed like a betrayal to me at home. However, I quickly learned that parents are human too. Unfortunately, I knew nothing of the real Christmas story, which I was later to learn.

Another important chapter in my early life was my relationship to my mother's sisters who lived on a farm near Alpha, Minnesota. One of them, Hannah, was married but had no children. The other, Anna, was single, in fact, never married and a very nervous person. She lived with Hannah and her husband, Christ (pronounced Chris -- his full name was Christian). Both of the sisters often drove to our house for an afternoon, and from there took my mother and myself into Jackson to shop. Usually, we stopped at the ice cream store for a large chocolate soda. My mother never learned to drive the car. So either Ann or Hannah would come in their car to take her places. While Hannah and Christ's car was a blue 1934 Buick, Aunt Ann drove a 1929 brown four door Chevrolet which she kept immaculately clean. It had disk wheels and a fancy radiator cap. There was even a small flower vase attached to the window pole between the front and back seats. I recall how nervous Aunt Ann was as she drove the car to town, and I wondered why she drove so slowly. She seemed to never get the vehicle out of second gear. Since I was an only child, these two sisters were the only relatives on my mother's side of the family, and they gave me much of their attention and love and were to do more so in the

years to come.

My parents on mother's side both died in the year before I was born. As to my father's family, he had three brothers, Charlie, Arthur, and John, and two sisters, Bertha and Meta. There was also another brother, Ben, who died in his teens. While my Dad's father died the year I was born, my grandmother, Meta, lived in a small home in Alpha, Minnesota. There we would gather for our family reunions and Christmas get-togethers and I would look forward to playing with cousins who were the children of Bertha and Meta. Charlie and Arthur, though married, had no children, and John who lived in Minneapolis had one daughter. It usually called for a family get-together when John and his wife, Vernell, and daughter, Eleta, came down from the Twin Cities which was only once or twice a year. My favorite cousin was Kenneth, Bertha's son. He was the same age and occasionally would stay overnight at our house. Meanwhile, our gatherings at Grandma's house were highlights of the year for me.

## **School Life**

As I mentioned earlier, my eight years of elementary school were spent in the country school house a mile and a quarter east of our farm. I recall the first fearful day I went to school. When my father dropped me off, I was afraid of the other children, especially the older ones. Because of my insecurity, I stuck very closely to the teacher. I even tried to follow her to the girls' out house at the rear of the school house. She had to politely tell me that I couldn't go with her there. Meanwhile, the girls giggled at my attempt. There were about 30 pupils of all grades who attended our particular school. The teacher was single and roomed at a farm home near by. To her was delegated the task of teaching all eight grades in time segments during the day. She would call classes to the front for various subjects such as "Sixth Grade Arithmetic" or "Third Grade Reading." Meanwhile, the rest of the students would do their assignments. There was never any homework.

The school building itself was a one room structure with an annex on the front where we kept our lunch pails, overshoes, and overcoats. The main room had a heater at the front which the teacher had to fire every morning and during the day. During the winter, hot lunches which we brought from home in jars were heated in a boiler on top of the stove. Blackboards were on three walls of the large room, and our desks each had compartments accessible by lids in which we kept our books. The students were seated according to grades with the upper grades sitting in the rear. Of course, whispering and writing notes were problems which the teacher had to deal with in maintaining order and a quiet environment.

Our days began at nine with dismissal at four and an hour recess for noon lunch. There were also two fifteen minute recesses morning and afternoon. Of course, recess was the favorite part of the school day. Games consisted of softball, anti-i-over, pum pum pull-

away, and a number of others. Such activities made for socialization within our school family. Our teacher was often out on the playground with us. She was the all-American coach and referee. Certain personalities stand out in my mind among the students who attended our school. Two of them had physical handicaps. Vernon had been born with a deformed shriveled right arm so that he had to learn to write with his left hand. This was not natural for him so that his penmanship was crude. Vernon, however, was not to be discouraged from participating in games with the rest of us out on the playground. He even managed to play softball. Swinging the bat with his left hand, he often slugged the ball out to right field. He also knew the rules and argued with the players like any other athlete, and he minced no words.

One incident lies in my memory. It was the last day of school, and all the parents with their children gathered for a family picnic out in the school yard. After the meal, the fathers decided to play a game of softball. My father was one of the players. While we as students watched, we sat in the sidelines. Vernon, not realizing that I was sitting behind him on the grass, suddenly made the statement to those around him, "Orville Sanderson's father sure doesn't know how to play ball." I immediately retorted, "What do you mean?" Not knowing that I was in hearing distance, Vernon was embarrassed and I was offended.

Dorothy was mentally retarded and was teased and treated by the other children in the most inhumane manner. Dorothy had the mentality of about a four year old and was not able to learn the three basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic. She suffered an additional handicap of having a cross-eyed condition so that when she looked at you, she had to turn her head practically sideways. However, Dorothy had definite emotional feelings of hurt and anger, and often the others would be chided by the teacher to be more kind to her.

LeRoy was also another personality that I remember. Not only did he suffer a learning disability and was slow in his class recitation, he was also large and coarse featured for his age and was consequently called the school bully. When the other children would tease and pick on him, he would lash out like a cornered lion and chase his attackers around the playground. Of course, this aggravated more harassment against him, and LeRoy was never able to win any close friends or even sympathizers. In retrospect, I have concluded that we were indeed mean to him and, no doubt, his self esteem was shattered for life because of how we treated him. In fact, little real love and compassion was demonstrated by the students at our little country school house.

There was the constant fear of ridicule and mental torture within our school family. I was the personal victim of this by one boy who was in the grade above me. His name was Eldon. Since he was stronger than I, he would often wrestle and pin me down on the ground and begin tickling me. His intent was to force me to give him some of the food out of my lunch pail which my mother had fixed for me. He would also threaten worse

things if I were to tell my parents on him. The situation must have become tortuous enough so that I finally told my father about Eldon's treatment of me. Since Eldon's father was a Mennonite pastor in a church in our area, my Dad went over to visit with him about his son. Although I was terrified at how Eldon might treat me the next day at school, I was relieved to discover that he was not to lay a hand on me after that. In fact, Eldon now treated me with respect. I then realized the influential impact that parents have on their children.

Two identical twin boys, Darrel and Delbert, were also sometimes victims of uncharitableness on the part of the other children. Although the two argued with each other like cats and dogs, when the chips were down, they stuck by each other like glue. One day during early spring when we were walking home from school, we stopped by a bridge which crossed over a creek. The water below had risen because of a spring thaw. However, because of a cold spell, it had now frozen over with a layer of ice on top. We debated whether the ice was thick enough to walk on. In fact, we dared each of the twins to jump down from the bridge to prove that the ice was safe. Darrel jumped down only to break through the ice into the water waist deep. Immediately, Delbert jumped down to save him so that both boys were thoroughly soaked. About that time, the boys' father who had come to pick them up drove up in his car. Again, we were afraid of the consequences of our act. Sobbing, both boys blurted out to their father, "They made us jump into the creek." I suspect that he concluded that his sons were passing the buck because after they drove away we did not hear any more about the incident. Nevertheless, there was always the constant fear within our school family that someone would tell teacher or parents on us. Actually, this rarely happened because no one wanted to be labeled as a "tattletale."

## **Home Life**

At home, things were not always peaceful. My parents argued a lot. Actually, my father was very demanding of my mother. He expected her to not only keep the house in order and to prepare food for the table, but also to do various outside chores including the care of the chickens and gathering of the eggs. She also was charged with canning of meat, vegetables, and fruits which meant packing the food in jars and cooking them in a boiler over a wood stove. The work was hard for a woman who was not a strong person. In order to get the various tasks done, the food was not always on the table in time. For this, my father scolded her when he came home from the fields after a hard day's work. She naturally reacted in anger. Also, my father was careful with money and did not want to buy some of the things my mother would have desired. Mother often questioned whether Dad loved her, and one thing would lead to another. Sometimes, my father would give her the silent treatment for days, and mother would say to me when she and I were alone, "Orville, do you love me?" and I would assure her that I did.

One day after a heated argument, my father went out into the annex to get a shot gun, and

he threatened to go out into the grove and shoot himself to which mother tearfully begged him not to. It was obviously his way of gaining her sympathy or winning the dispute that was prevailing. With terror I observed these incidents and longed so much that my parents would love each other.

This strained relationship between father and mother precipitated some of the things that I did as a ten year old in order to get their attention away from each other and their differences. Consequently, I did anonymous pranks around home. One favorite one was to let the air out of the tires of cars that came to our house. It seemed to divert my parents' attention from their differences. Another prank was to pour water into the gasoline tank of our hired man's car. I recall how he started the car and drove out the driveway for a date with his girl. He only got as far at the end of the driveway and the engine stopped. Removing the gas line, he was smart enough to see that there was water in the gasoline. When my father and I walked out to see what was wrong, he told my father of his misfortune. Immediately, the question arose as to how the water got there. I recall so vividly how my Dad asked me, "Do you know anything about this?" and of course, I promptly lied.

My mischief carried itself over into school life. I would secretly take the caps of the other boys from the shelves in the school annex where they had been placed for the day. I would then hide them outdoors and would later watch them search for the cap that was missing. The evidence pointed to me, and I was found out. I feared so much the teacher telling my parents, but she never did. The climax of my mischief came to a head after one rather desperate argument that my parents were having. I pretended that a prowler was on the premises. In the middle of their bickering, I would say, "There is someone outside sneaking around the house!" My father would go out to see, and of course, found no one. I then tried to prove my story by going down into the cellar and taking jars from the shelves and tipping them over on the floor. This was to substantiate my story that the prowler had gone into the cellar. Dad thought the matter to be serious enough to call the sheriff. When the sheriff came out to the farm and listened to my story and saw the evidence, he suggested to my father that the prowler might be myself. Again, Dad questioned me, and once more I lied. After the sheriff departed, both my father and mother pressed me and asked, "Are you telling the truth?" It wasn't too long before I confessed. My punishment was to go with Dad to the sheriff and confess my transgression to him, and then to receive a spanking every Saturday for six weeks. It may not have been the wisest form of discipline, but it all had the effect of mellowing my parents toward each other. They realized that they had a son to raise. My father and mother both reminded me that it would take a long time to live down the things I had done. For months I was ashamed to show my face to the people in our community.

In the fall of 1935, my parents decided to remodel our old house. The only improvement on the old dwelling had been carbide lights which had been piped into both the house and barn and provided better lighting during the dark months of winter. Electricity had now

come to the rural area through the REA, and my father questioned whether to wire the old house or do a complete remodeling job. Throughout the fall and winter, my father and mother worked with the contractor to develop a floor plan and to design the outside appearance. The main part of the structure was to be moved about 100 feet further west and raised over a complete basement area with cement walls. The cellar of the old house was just a small dugout and had nothing but dirt walls and floor. After the house was moved, the exterior was to be covered with a tan and brown brick veneer. The inside walls were to be torn out and new partitions built in to provide a goodly size kitchen with breakfast nook and pantry, a good size dining room, and a fair size living room and well lighted porch area. There were to be four bedrooms, two of which were upstairs including one that was to be mine. I looked forward to having my own room, and even before the house was finished the following summer I was sleeping there. Both Dad and Mother eagerly worked hard on the blueprints with the contractor who came out to the farm time after time making the changes that were deemed necessary. The contract was finally signed at a cost of \$4,000 for the total project.

The spring of 1936 saw the digging of the new basement, the cement work completed, and the main part of the house moved westward and mounted over the basement. Bricklayers were at work laying brick, and carpenters tore out old partitions and built new ones. With this, the wiring and plaster work began, and our new home was beginning to take shape. Meanwhile, we were to live in the small annex area which was formerly on the north side of the main structure and was left in the same spot when the main part of the house was moved. The seed corn room was converted into a temporary bedroom and the room in which my mother canned meat and washed clothes was used as the kitchen. The quarters were small and cramped indeed, and made for uncomfortable living especially during the hot summer days of 1936 which followed.

## **Deep Loss**

It was during this time that my mother went into deep depression. Not feeling well, she was convinced that she had cancer since both of her parents died of the disease. My father finally took her to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester where she received a complete physical. The doctors could not find anything organically wrong with her and sent her home with some new kind of tonic to take every day. Not much attention was given to the mental distress she was suffering. She lost her appetite and all hope of living in our new house. Repeatedly, she said, "I will not live long enough to enjoy our new home." My father treated her much more gently those days and tried to reassure her and motivate her. However, she spent her days lying in bed and with effort tried to prepare the meals.

On Sundays, my father, trying to get her out of the small shack in which we were living, encouraged her to go on a picnic to the lake or on a journey down to Arnold's Park, Iowa, where there was an entertainment center. But she simply responded, "I will never enjoy it." I have since learned that depression is a state in which one can no longer find

pleasure in the things that were once pleasurable. She would again lament, "I won't be here much longer."

Then it happened on a hot summer morning in July. I was twelve years old then. I was sleeping in the upstairs bedroom of our new house. My father had gotten up to do the milking out in the barn. He had come back to the annex and found my mother lying on the floor of the little room next to the kitchen which had been converted into a pantry. She seemed unconscious and my father was not able to rouse her. He promptly telephoned the doctor and came over to the stairway of our new home and called up, "Orville! Orville! Get up. Your mother is sick." I leaped out of bed not knowing what I might find. When I got down to the old annex, my father had carried her to their bed. Soon the doctor was there, and announced that my mother had shot herself through the chest. My father walked over to the pantry to examine the guns, and discovered that my mother after doing this had placed the gun back in the corner in its rightful place. She had used the 22 caliber rifle. Immediately, I wondered, "How could she do this? My mother has always been afraid of guns." Soon, a note she had written was found on the kitchen table. I saw the note briefly at the time, but have never seen it since. I recall that she had ended the note with the words, "I hope that God will forgive me." The doctor took the note with him to be turned over to the authorities. Soon, the ambulance was out to our farm to take my mother to the hospital in Jackson. It was a frightful sight to see this vehicle backed up to our house. In those days, the local hearse was used for ambulance service. It seemed that the angel of death had called at our door.

My mother's two sisters who lived on a farm near Alpha were immediately called, and we dashed to town and sat vigil at the hospital waiting for the outcome of this terrible thing that had happened. My stomach tightened up in knots as I saw my father together with my aunts weep for mother. I had never seen my Dad cry before. Repeatedly, they said, "Why did Ella have to do this? She had so much to live for!" After what seemed hours, Dr. Halloran appeared and told us that the bullet had not penetrated her heart but had pierced through her left lung and out of her back. Apparently, she had shot herself through the left side of her chest thinking that she would hit her heart. There was now hope that she might survive. However, for the next two days, my mother was between life and death. After all, she wanted to die. Why was she alive now? Having regained consciousness, she expressed her desire to die. After a period of two days, Dr. Halloran announced that infection had developed in her left lung and that she would need surgery to remove that part of the lung. The operation was performed with success, and my mother showed signs of improvement even against her will to die.

In the days that followed, my father felt guilt over what mother had done and expressed to me feelings of regret. He lamented, "If only I had been more kind to your mother. If only I had taken her back to the doctors to get more help." He then admonished me to pray for my mother. In fact, every night before we went to bed, he reminded me to pray for my mother in the hospital to get well. This request puzzled me since we were not a

church going family except on Easter Sunday, and the subject of prayer was never mentioned. The exception was that my mother did teach me the Lord's Prayer to be said every night before I went to sleep. However, when I did pray it, I mumbled it so fast that I didn't know what I was saying.

It was also during those days that Dad and I felt ashamed that my mother had attempted suicide. After all, that was the unpardonable sin. It was difficult for me to face my peers as well as my cousins. How could I explain this act to them? As the days passed, my mother improved and we were all encouraged. Dad and I went to see her every day. I observed that when her friends would come to see Mother in the hospital room, she would break down and cry and ask them to forgive her for what she had done. They tried to comfort and reassure her. Two weeks after the surgery, her nurses got her up so that she could sit in a chair and walk around the room. With each day, she grew stronger and now expressed her desire to go home and enjoy our new house when it was finished. Her depression had left her and she looked forward to being well. However, Dad kept reminding me every night to pray for her.

It was at this time that I began attending a Sunday School class at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Jackson. Dad took me when he went to visit Mother at the hospital which was next door to the church. On one particular Sunday in August, the Sunday School Superintendent came around to our 7th grade class and asked how many of us would like to enroll in junior confirmation class which was to begin in early September. With hesitation, I raised my hand saying that I would have to ask my parents first. After Sunday School was over, I ran excitedly to the hospital and told my parents about the invitation. When I begged them, "Can I go to confirmation class?", it was my mother who said, "Sure you can." Dad nodded. This was one of the happiest moments of my early life.

## **Seeds of Faith**

My desire to learn about God and the Bible dated back to my days at the country school house. On our walk home from school, the neighbor kids would often talk about Sunday School and church. Three of them were of the Mennonite faith and spoke openly about God. One afternoon as we were walking, I asked them, "What is heaven like?" They tried to describe in youthful terms the glory and brilliance of that place. I asked them, "What is hell like?" One girl replied, "It's a place of suffering where you want to die but you can't." This answer naturally alarmed me inasmuch as I had no active connection with the church. When I arrived home and went out to the barn to help Dad with the chores, I asked him, "Can I go to Sunday School?" At that time I wasn't even sure about what church I wanted to go to. Dad merely replied, "We have a lot of chores on Sunday morning so that we couldn't make it on time." In that moment I was very disappointed but I dismissed the matter from my mind. It was now, about two years later, that my parents saw the need for faith, and they, in a crisis time, wanted to see to it that I was

exposed to the teachings of the Bible. In fact, in light of the mischiefs I had done as a ten year old, they probably thought it would be good for me.

It was on September 1, 1936 -- six weeks after Mother had shot herself -- that we were to have silo fillers at our farm. Dad had told Mother the night before that we probably would not be coming to see her that day and she had said, "That's fine. You will be busy." Since she was doing so well, Dad thought it safe to go on with his work of filling silo for winter feeding of our dairy herd. It was at mid-morning that Doctor Ing, Dr. Halloran's assistant, drove out to our farm. I was the first to see him, and through the car window he asked where my father was. I pointed toward the barnyard area. By that time, Dad came toward the car and recognizing him asked, "Is something wrong with Ella?" He responded, "She's dead." In a state of shock, my father said, "That can't be true. I just saw her last night!" Dr. Ing went on to explain that she died of a blood clot that went to her heart. Ironic that it was not a bullet that pierced her heart but a blood clot from the surgery.

In a state of shock, Dad rushed to our new house and down into the basement where Aunt Ann was ironing clothes. Feeling numb, I followed. Ann had been helping with housework and cooking since Mother went to the hospital. Dad cried to her, "Ella's dead!" Ann responded, "Oh no!" My mind was whirling with confusion as I thought, "What now?" Among other things, Aunt Ann cried out, "What will Orville do without a mother?" Dr. Ing had asked what undertaker we wanted. Dad sobbed, "Sathe I guess."

From then on, in a daze we had to make arrangements for the funeral. Standing out in my mind was the decision of picking out a casket. As a twelve year old, death suddenly became very real to me. Dad cried and cried. I couldn't cry and Dad wondered whether I really loved my mother. But the anguish was churning inside of me. During the three day period before the funeral, neighbors and friends brought food to the house. The kitchen was now enough finished so that the stove and refrigerator were in place and we could eat there. Since it was the custom in that day to bring the body into the home and have a family service there before the funeral at the church, preparations were made to have the casket brought to the front closed-in porch of our new house and have the family service in the living room. On the day before the funeral, Mother's body was brought to our place and the casket was open through the whole night. I still remember vividly how Dad cried over her and how he wanted me to touch her cold hands. She was so beautifully dressed and her reddish hair was so perfectly set. I shall never forget the long evening when family and friends came to the house to express their sympathy and to share our sorrow.

On the afternoon of the funeral, the family gathered in the living room including uncles, aunts, and cousins. The pastor from Our Savior's appeared. Since we had no church affiliation, he was chosen because of my intention to go to confirmation class there. We wondered if he would be willing to officiate. This was the first time I saw him during

this awful ordeal. In fact, no pastor ever called on Mother during her six week hospital stay. He read some Bible verses and offered a prayer. Then we proceeded to the church where friends and neighbors had gathered. Dad and I and family were ushered in behind the casket. The pastor's sermon strongly implied that my mother had gone to hell because of what she had done. Since I was desirous at that time of having a church home, I was fearful of what the pastor's message would do to Dad in his attitude toward Our Savior's. Dad wept and wept, but I couldn't cry even though I pretended to. Dad had nudged me to imply that I was not properly grieving for my mother.

Following the service, the casket was wheeled to the back of the church, and the procession was begun to view the body. Friends and neighbors were ushered out first, then we as a family. The casket was closed and we followed the casket out to the hearse. People were standing all around to see us as we got into our cars. I felt the stares of those who had come peering upon us. I thought -- was I grieving enough to satisfy them? In the days that followed, Dad continued to weep especially when neighbors and friends came to visit us. It was as though a deep sense of guilt was eating away at him. No doubt, all the memories of the past were resurrected and time would be needed to heal the wounds.

Meanwhile, I began junior confirmation class. Dad saw to it that I had a ride every Saturday morning. Reverend Mannes was our teacher. He was a very straight stern man -- one whom I was almost afraid of. He had been pastor at Our Savior's for about twelve years. He was a dynamic preacher but stood aloof from his parishioners so that it was not easy to relate to him. His Sunday vestment was simply that of a black swallow tail coat. Somehow I had deep respect for him and his message. I was learning the Bible from scratch since I had not grown up with Sunday School training. In fact, I was constantly afraid that my ignorance would be exposed to the other students in class.

One warm afternoon in the fall, Reverend Mannes drove out to our farm in his shiny Chevrolet. Dad and I were raking leaves in the yard. When he walked out to where we were, he asked Dad how things were going. Dad again wept and said, "Not very good." Reverend Mannes tried to offer some consolation and comfort. Finally, he asked Dad if he and I would like to join Our Savior's inasmuch as I was going to confirmation class. I swallowed hard remembering his sermon at Mother's funeral. To my surprise, Dad agreed that he would like to do this. He explained that he had been baptized into the Lutheran faith back in Illinois where his family had lived. It was simply a matter of activating his membership in the Lutheran church again. It was then that Dad and I began going to church on Sunday morning. Dad, however, always wanted to sit in the back of the sanctuary, and this was all right with me as long as he was willing to go. I am sure that during those years my father was reaching for something to hold on to.

## Teenage Years

The next crisis chapter in my life was when I was fourteen. I had confirmed my faith in the church in the spring of 1938. I recall the fearful night of catechization. We as class members were lined up and down the aisle of the sanctuary where a goodly number of congregational members had gathered. Rev. Mannes asked each of us questions from Grimsby's catechism, and it was with fear and trembling that I tried to recite. It was now that I was in the eighth grade in our country school, and I looked forward to graduation from the elementary grades.

During the winter of 1939, I contacted a bad cold from a strep virus that was floating around. However, I continued to go to school, but my coughing and wheezing would not let go. One Saturday, I went ice skating on a pond in our pasture. The temperature was frigid, and I had to sit on the ice to put on my clamp-on ice skates. A couple of days later, I felt feverish and ill, and noticed my urine to be very dark. In fear of how I was feeling, I reported this to Dad. Seeing this in the toilet stool, he took me together with a urine specimen to the doctor. This was on a Sunday morning. When Dr. Halloran saw the urine specimen in the glass jar, he frowned and went immediately to the laboratory to examine it under a microscope. Soon he was back and told my Dad that I was a very sick young man. He asked me, "Did you sit on something cold recently?" Afraid that I might be scolded, I lied by saying "no." But I immediately thought of sitting on the ice to put my skates on. He diagnosed my case as acute nephritis of the kidneys. He said that I would have to be hospitalized and confined to strict bed rest. He took my blood pressure and noted that it was very high. When Dad asked him whether I would get over this, he responded by grimly saying, "I don't know." That statement was a death sentence to me, and in the days that followed I was afraid to die.

The next six weeks saw me in the hospital with a diet of orange juice and toast for each meal. I was not to get up even to the bathroom. During the first part of my hospitalization, I was so sick that I didn't care. My eyes were puffy and my pulse was racing madly. Dad came to see me each day and did not grieve over Mother as much. As the days passed, I noted that I was not passing as much blood as I initially was. And I was feeling better. Maybe I wouldn't die after all! After five weeks, Dr. Halloran seemed pleased and said that I could now get out of bed. I recall how weak I was and had to learn to walk all over again! At the end of six weeks, I was released from the hospital. However, Dr. Halloran said that I would have to come to him regularly for a blood pressure check. It was continuing to be high, and he was concerned about this.

I recall when I got home that I was able to attend only a few days of school before eighth grade graduation that spring. I still did not feel well and was not able to regain full health again until my senior year in high school. In fact, during my freshman year when I was fifteen, I was very thin and my blood pressure reading would not come down. At times, I ran a low grade fever. Dad's sisters advised him to take me to another doctor. One in Minneapolis was recommended. When Dad and I arrived in Minneapolis, the doctor ran

me through all the tests. My blood pressure was sky high and I was running a moderate fever. The doctor told Dad that I was a very sick young man and admitted me to the hospital. Once more I was given to think that I was going to die. In the hospital, more tests were made and X-rays were taken. No serious illness was detected, and it was decided that I had a badly infected tonsil which had grown back after my tonsil operation when I was six.

(Incidentally, as a six year old I had learned some fear of doctors and hospitals. It was then that a doctor in Fairmont, Minnesota, to whom my parents had taken me, advised them that I should have my tonsils removed, which was a common procedure in that day. I fought against this vehemently. One Sunday afternoon, my parents told me that we were going on a drive to Fox Lake, a popular recreational area. However, instead of going there, my parents drove on to Fairmont where I was to be admitted to the hospital for surgery the next morning. I cried angrily as I watched them through the hospital window drive away. Who were they to leave me all alone?! From that time on, I dreaded all appearances of doctors and medicine. I associated with them pain and death.)

In Minneapolis the surgery was performed and in a few days I was home again--feeling somewhat better. My blood pressure continued to be in the high range, however, and I developed an acne problem. In fact, my high school years were not the happiest because of my health problems.

Graduating from grade school and entering high school in town was a traumatic change for me. During my freshman year, those of us who had gone to country school felt that certain teachers were biased against us. After all, the town kids were known by the faculty, and we came in as virtual strangers. One teacher, Miss Jones, seemed to be especially prejudiced against me. She taught an English class. One day after I had given an oral book report, she thoroughly laced me in front of the class because I had chosen a book which was not to her liking. On another occasion, when I took two steps at a time in going up a stairway to our class room on the second floor, she stood by the banister at the top watching me. She then ordered me to go back down and walk the stairway properly. For this I strongly resented and almost hated Miss Jones.

I had great difficulty with my self image during high school days. I was not popular among my peers and I suffered a first class inferiority complex. When a "slam book" was passed around in the study hall, I shuddered to think of what the students might write about me under my name. Fortunately, I did not see my name at the top of any of the pages. My feeling of inferiority was accentuated one day when class election was held in the study hall. When nominations were called for, one of my friends nominated me for vice president. Hearing this, the other students snickered. In the contest between another far more popular student and myself, I received only one vote -- and that from the person who nominated me. This was pretty much my lot in life all through my high school years. Others were chosen for this and that and I was left out.

Of course, there were the normal student cliques, and I was not included. My friendships consisted of two or three boys from the rural Alpha area who felt pretty much the same way I did. Prior to high school days, my cousin, Kenneth, and I used to have good times together, and since he was in the same class, I sought friendship with him. But he simply told me, "Keep away from me." He had found his friends among the more "worldly" crowd. Indeed, there were different classes of students at Jackson High as is true in every school environment. There were the sophisticated students who were scholarly and outgoing -- most of whom participated in extracurricular activities. There was the rough crowd who spent the noon hour in a "hide out" room in the basement of a local clothing store. There were the so-called backward students from the farm of which I was a part. And there were the popular athletes and others active in sports, including cheerleaders and team managers.

Because of my physical limitations, I did not participate in sports. In fact, I asked to be excused from physical education classes partly because of my health problems and even more so from my fears of exposing my incompetence in sports activities. I had not learned to play football and basketball such as the town students had. Thus, those of us from the farm were disadvantaged. I did join the Jackson High School Orchestra. My mother had wanted me to learn to play the violin, and so I had taken lessons at home from the local theatre manager who came out to the farm each week. It was now that in order to be active in something that I try out for this musical group. I was placed in the second violin section and took lessons each week from our director, Mr. Alstad. I never did become an accomplished violinist, and so in the second violin section I remained all through high school. But it was through this medium that I learned to appreciate good music. We played such classical selections as "Finlandia" by Sibelius and "Tales from the Vienna Woods" by Johann Strauss. We presented a spring concert each year on a Sunday afternoon.

Scholastically, I did quite well during my senior high school years, and managed to regularly get my name on the honor roll. Consequently, I was chosen to be a member of the National Honor Society. I also joined the journalism staff as a reporter, and wrote articles with my byline for the school news which appeared in the Jackson County Pilot, our local newspaper. Since photography had become a hobby of mine and I had purchased a used 35mm camera and darkroom equipment, I took candid shots of the students and was asked to be on the Annual Staff in which I was to take a number of group pictures for the class annual. Of course, all the photos were in black and white in those days. All this helped me not to feel the outcast that I did when I was a freshman.

At home, things were unsettled during high school days. Dad saw the need to hire housekeepers to cook the meals, wash our clothes, and clean the house. The first one, Edna, was in her middle 30's and unmarried. She was a woman of few words. However, at the dinner table one day, she slapped me in the face when I reached across her plate. The second one was a divorcee with an eight year old daughter. She expected me to let

her daughter ride with me on the bicycle to school each day. The third one was the wife of our hired man. She was pregnant and was to work for us until Elsie came into our home.

## **Step Mother**

I have never been sure of how Dad met Elsie. She lived with her parents in Underwood, Iowa. Her father was a lumber yard manager, and she worked for him as secretary and bookkeeper. Dad once suggested that he became acquainted with her in response to a Danish newspaper ad which either he or she placed expressing his or her desire for male and female companionship. I am not sure which was the case. At any rate, it was after that that Dad made regular trips into Iowa for a Sunday. I knew that Dad was lonely and lost without my mother, and he was seeking a new relationship to counteract his grief. It had been five years since Mother died. I was fifteen.

One Monday morning when we were washing our hands after chores, Dad told me about Elsie and wondered if I would mind if he chose to marry her. Knowing how much he had grieved after the death of my mother, I assured him that it would be fine with me. I thus hoped Elsie would bring life back into our home again. One weekend, Dad journeyed to Iowa saying he would be gone for a few days. At a small wedding service out of town and I believe out of state, Dad and Elsie were married by a justice of peace. After a brief honeymoon trip, Dad brought her home to the farm. My first meeting with her was awkward. I wasn't sure whether to call her mother or by her name, and so I asked her. She preferred to be called Elsie, and I did from that day on.

Elsie was taller than my mother. In fact, she and Dad were about the same height. She had dark brown hair speckled with gray, carried herself well, and had nice looking features. I anticipated that she would be like my mother in cooking the meals, cleaning the house, and making our home a pleasant place in which to live. As an adolescent, I enjoyed hunting. I recall the day I shot a pheasant rooster in the back grove, and brought it to the house for Elsie to dress like my mother used to do. Elsie sharply replied, "I'm not going to clean that thing. Take it away from here!" Almost immediately, I learned that Elsie was not going to be a second mother to me, and I was disappointed. And she resented me for referring to what my mother used to do. Naturally, this was a threat to her.

Another problem arose in my relationship to Elsie. On Sunday afternoons, I would often visit my mother's sisters near Alpha. Since I was their only blood relative to my mother, they were very good to me and were always happy when I came. I took pictures of them, finished the prints in my self made dark room, and gave them the photos. I also took colored slides of them and showed them the results with my slide projector. For this Uncle Christ would give me generous money gifts. Elsie was immediately jealous of my relationship with them. This was especially so when Anna, Hannah, and Christ

expressed their feelings about Dad's marriage to her. They told me, "We don't object to your father getting married. What hurt us was that he didn't tell us until he brought her home." In fact, when Dad first introduced Elsie to them, there was an obvious coldness, and Dad sensed this. I suspect that privately they expressed their feelings to Dad. This alienation was accentuated when I would come home from their farm and report the things they had said to me. In fact, I was a first class tattletale! Of course, this was unwise of me but somehow I took pleasure in gleefully widening the wall between them. It gave me a sense of importance. From that day on, Elsie was not to set foot in their house.

I am mindful that my teen-age behavior in those days was something that Elsie had difficulty accepting. I expected the same of her as I did my mother, and I was no doubt sassy and selfish. However, Elsie tried to adapt herself to a new home and family. Often, she expressed her dislikes of her new environment. Of the weather in Minnesota, she said, "It's just as sultry here as it is in Iowa." She objected to Dad's long hours in the field and urged me to help him. She sometimes had "sick" spells and was not able to carry on the work load that my mother carried.

Elsie also had difficulty relating to my Dad's side of the family. At one family reunion, one of my cousins had made some remark about how she and Dad had met through a want ad, and this made her furious. She threatened not to go to any family reunion again, and when she did, she afterwards said unkind things about Dad's sisters and nieces.

Dad was more and more being prejudiced against his family and even against me. However, we had our good times together too. Elsie had her good moods and was able to tease me about girls and other things. She also chose to take a membership class for adult confirmation at Our Savior's Lutheran inasmuch as she had never confirmed her faith in the church. She expressed her approval of Rev. Mannes and boasted of his dynamic preaching. Naturally, I was happy as was Dad that she joined the church.

After a couple of years of marriage, Dad one day told me that Elsie was pregnant, and that I was suddenly to have a half brother. However, it was not to be the happy event that Dad and Elsie had hoped for. Before the due date, it was learned from the doctor that the baby was dead in the womb, and the child was to be still born after a hard delivery. Since Elsie was still in the hospital, Dad and I together with a few relatives stood by the little casket for a graveside service at the cemetery which was conducted by Rev. Molberg, the visitation pastor at Our Savior's.

My high school days saw me drifting away from the church. I found myself enjoying more going fishing on Sundays, particularly since I had my own car, which was a 1938 Ford coupe. Since I had been using Dad's car on Sunday afternoons, he decided to buy this maroon colored vehicle for my high school graduation. It was agreed that I would pay him back from the earnings of a couple of hogs that were mine to sell from his herd

and which were my salary for helping him with farm work. The car cost \$400.

One Sunday morning, I had driven to Alpha and was waiting in my car for a friend to join me, and my grandmother walked by on her way to church. When she saw me, she said to me rather sharply, "Aren't you in church?" I happily informed her that I was going fishing at Fox Lake. She then chided me, "You ought to go to church", and then walked on. Those words from Grandma made me feel guilty. The guilt of my waywardness was manifested in other ways. One summer morning when I was downtown Jackson to do some shopping, I saw Rev. Mannes walking down the street toward me. Seeing him, I dashed across the street to avoid meeting him. I was fearful that he might ask me how things were going with me spiritually. Again I felt guilty. One Sunday when I did go to church, I felt that Rev. Mannes was speaking to me personally. In his sermon, he stated, "Our young people know the names of more movie stars than books of the Bible!" Since I had become an avid movie goer, I was convinced that he was looking directly at me from the pulpit. When we went home, I was angry, and I told Dad and Elsie that I was never going to that church again. I said, "He saw me in the pew and said that!" I further argued that there was nothing wrong with movies. I certainly did not have the right understanding of Christian growth and sanctification.

Meanwhile, Elsie did encourage me to go to church and to attend Luther League too. But I held back. My high school graduation was a fearful time for me. It was the spring of 1942 and World War II had broken out. The young men in our area were being quickly drafted, and many of the boys in my class were enlisting before the draft got them. Of course, at age eighteen, I was required to register for the draft and was anticipating having to go into the military. Meanwhile, Dad had appealed to the draft board to defer me because I was needed on the farm. I was placed in class 4-F or farm deferment status. However, I felt deep guilt in seeing many of my peers going into service while I stayed home. At graduation time, my second cousin, Thomas, who was in our graduating class enlisted into the navy. Our family had visited his parents many times, and Thomas and I had an ongoing but not real close friendship. Thomas seemed happy in his patriotic decision, and I felt like a coward. Thomas was to go directly to boot camp, and from there sent to sea. Word came of his death in action from an enemy torpedo while on ship. When his body was shipped back to this country for the burial service, I had difficulty facing his parents because of my deferment. They said that I was needed to raise food for the military, but I never quite believed that they really felt that way about me.

## **Young Adulthood**

It was during the period after my high school graduation that I was brought back to the church. One evening, a girl from the youth group at Our Savior's called me on the telephone and informed me that I had been elected vice president of the Luther League. I was astonished because I had never attended a Luther League meeting. Reluctantly, I accepted just for the honor of it but asked Elsie what she thought I should do. She

encouraged me to accept the office, which I did. When I went to my first planning meeting of the Luther League officers, I was to meet young people I had never known before. One of the officers was Jerome Johnson who was to be my spiritual counselor in the months and years to come. It was obvious that he had a deep perceptive Christian faith and yet was unpretentious about it. He openly confessed his own weaknesses and so identified with the rest of us. Jerome was deeply respected for his sincere Christian witness, and in fact, I felt very inadequate and inferior in his presence. Since Jerome was manager of a local variety store in Jackson, he had his office in a small space up in the balcony area. To him young people of the congregation would go for counsel and reassurance. I was to walk up to that little nook many times when I had problems. More than once, I wept as I shared and as he responded.

After a year of serving as vice president of the Luther League, I was elected president. I began to feel more at home with a group of young people who accepted me and included me in their activities. Actually, the Luther League in those days consisted of not only the high school youth but also all the older single young people in the congregation. This included Jerome who was ten years older than me. In other words, while I was only nineteen, he was twenty-nine. Thus, the Luther League was an inclusive group regardless of age. It was through this medium that I was invited to the Fellowship Bible Study group in our community. This included Christian youth from all the churches in the area and met in different homes once a week on a given evening. Each would take turns leading in a study of a book in the Bible. During the hour, different ones would then share some Christian experience or some new spiritual insight. The hour was followed by some refreshment served by the host home. At first I felt uncomfortable in this group of witnessing Christians. One evening one of the girls said something negative about social dancing. Since I had gone to dances, I went home that night determined not to go back to Fellowship Group. However, when one fellow called the following week offering me a ride, I went again. What intrigued me was their interest in me. On another evening, two of the older girls let it be known to me that they as Christians loved me. This had a magnetic effect upon me so that soon I became an active part of the group. The dance floor no longer appealed to me. Actually, from this I was to fall into the trap of becoming a legalist.

As World War II raged on, I continued to feel guilty over not serving my country in the armed forces but remaining home on a farm deferment. Other young men from our community were being wounded and killed in action on the front lines. Quite frequently on the street I would hear the remark, "You're lucky to be home" or I would have to answer the question, "How come you're not in the military?" The argument that I was helping to produce food for our soldiers did not really give me that much comfort.

Meanwhile, at home, I was now being made fun of for getting so religious. Elsie often accused me of going to the Fellowship Group for the wrong reasons. Rather, I was there to be with a certain girl whom I had met in church and became better acquainted with at

our Fellowship meetings. My father as well as Elsie strongly disapproved of my interest in Ardyce. She had the misfortune of being the daughter of a father who had filed bankruptcy during the Great Depression years. After doing so, he had placed his farm and all his acquired property in his wife's name so that no one could later make any legal claim on debts prior to his bankruptcy. For Dad, this was dishonest especially in the light of the fact that Ardyce's father had now become nominally well to do and still had not made good his debts to certain people in the community. Dad felt that he still had a moral responsibility to them.

Ardyce was their only child, and of course, she carried the stigma of this attitude and action by her parents even though what they had done was "legal". Dad insisted that he did not ever want to associate with a family who in effect were thieves. He even threatened to disinherit me if I were to ever marry their daughter.

Of course, marriage was the furthest thing from my mind in those early years when I was only 20 plus years of age. Ardyce was only 16. However, Ardyce was a sincere Christian, and I enjoyed being with her, and in fact, dated her in secret. When I was found out, both my father and Elsie made things pretty unpleasant at home. This ongoing storminess aggravated my desire to escape from the "prison" in which I felt myself to be. At this point in time, I contacted the office of the local draft board informing them that I would be willing to be called into the military. It was at a time when the need for more young men in uniform was crucial. And this was to be my personal escape.

The day arrived when the "Greetings" letter appeared in our mail box, and the notice was set for me to appear for my physical in St. Paul. Actually, a bus load of us were transported to the military base there. During a two or three day period, I had a brief taste of army life – the vulgarity and profanity of the sergeants in charge – the moral looseness so rampant among the draftees – the greasy foods in the mess hall. In mass production, we were put through a battery of tests to determine whether we were healthy enough to serve in the army. I was given some extra tests because of my bout with acute nephritis when I was 14 years old. Somehow, I was passed, and sent home to wait my call to duty.

Meanwhile, Dad was hurt that I had made this decision, and went to the local draft board asking them to reconsider my staying on the farm. Somehow, they agreed to let me stay home since I was the only one who could enable him to continue with his farming operation, and the production of food was still very necessary in the war effort. To this day, I have still felt guilty over my not serving in the military during World War II.

Inasmuch as my extra additional tests for my physical delayed my return home, I was sent home on a regular bus line a couple of days later. I called home to let my father know when I would be coming. I recall arriving in Jackson in the early evening. Dad was there to pick me up, and proceeded to scold me for not letting him know as to why I was late. He told me what he had done in meeting with the draft board and persuading

them to allow me to remain on the farm. Although I had previously explained why I had “enlisted” because of my guilt (but not sharing my desire to get away from home), I was now quiet over the whole ordeal, and was in a way relieved that I could remain on the farm. In the days to follow, not much more was said at our house over my attempt to join the army.

Meanwhile, I continued to serve as president of the Luther League. One project that I proposed was to publish a special news bulletin for the youth of our church. We had to print it on a gelatin duplicator which was messy to use, and occupied a great deal of time to put together and send out. Margaret was the secretary of the Luther League, and assisted in the logistics of the project. We would sometimes work into the wee hours of the night to get the job done. I would then take her home afterwards to the farm where she lived. Apparently, I had been seen with her in my 1937 Ford coupe, and it was assumed by someone that I was dating her.

One night after one of our Fellowship meetings, Ardyce expressed her jealousy over the time Margaret and I spent together in doing this project. I reassured her that I had no personal feelings for Margaret, and she seemed to be satisfied. I had continued to take Ardyce home from our home Fellowship meetings for about a year and a half, and had done so in secret. Dad and Elsie would often quiz me as to why I would sometimes get home late, and would assume that I was still “going steady” with Ardyce. I was continually accused for my dishonesty of which I did no doubt deserve.

One day, an anonymous letter came in the mail to me about the fact that I was being a poor Christian example to our church and community, and accused me of hypocrisy in my relationships with the youth at our church.. The letter ended with the words, “You can be sure that your sins will find you out!” Naturally, I wondered who could have authored this “epistle” since it was not in Ardyce’s handwriting.

In hurtful desperation, I was determined to learn the source of this accusation. I first showed it to Elsie, and she concluded immediately that it had come from someone in Ardyce’s family. I even went to Jerome Johnson and asked him who it might be. He was uncertain, but assured me that the truth would eventually come out. I even showed the letter to Margaret and accused her of writing it. Of course, she denied it. A few evenings later, she produced some kind of greeting that had been written to her family for Christmas, at which time we compared handwriting. The letter had been written by Ardyce’s mother! From this disclosure, I learned the hard lesson of not making false accusations. I could so easily be wrong as was true in this case.

I confronted Ardyce with the letter her mother had written to me, and she seemed utterly ignorant of the matter. I even talked to her mother one Saturday night in Jackson. She was sitting in the family car while her husband was shopping. I expressed my regret over her feelings indicated in her letter. But she showed no remorse and said little.

From then on, my relationship to Ardyce cooled, and although by this time, I had strong feelings for her, I told her that it would be better in view of the circumstances, we would be best to break off our so called “steady” dating, and be free to date other friends. I sensed that she was deeply hurt, and she would write me letters of apology. Each letter would have the stamp pasted crooked on the envelope which revealed her anger towards me. At this juncture, I must admit that my feelings for her did not easily subside. My father and Elsie would reassure me that they were plenty of fish in the sea.

Eventually, Ardyce enrolled at the Lutheran Bible Institute in Minneapolis. There she met Allan whom she married. Sadly, their first son, David, was born spastic, and required perpetual care in their home. At the advice of her pastor, she refused to have him placed in any kind of a care center. For a goodly number of years, she cared for David until he became too heavy to handle. He was probably about 14 years old when she and Allan decided to have him go to a care center in Worthington, Minnesota. The couple, meanwhile, had three other children who were normal. The family lived on the home place where her parents had lived. Her mother had died first, and they were burdened with caring for her father until he died. Upon this writing, Ardyce is now in a nursing facility after breaking her hip bone and having a stroke during the surgery for it. Allan had been trying to care for her at home, but it became too great a burden for him. I was one day told that she had become cranky “like her mother.” Theirs has not been a happy marriage. Today, I am grateful to God that He led me to marry the girl that I was to one day to meet.

World War II was now coming to an end. By July of 1945, service men were returning home. Attending college had been on my mind, which was impossible as long as I had a farm deferment. I had been encouraged to consider the holy ministry as my life’s calling. However, my father wanted me to take over the farm operation as he was nearing retirement age. I dreaded the thought of telling him of my aspirations to leave the farm for a college education.

In the summer of 1946, I began writing short stories depicting the Christian life. The *Lutheran Herald* was the official publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of which Our Saviour’s Lutheran in Jackson was a part. I decided to submit one of my stories entitled, “The Richest Man in the World”, to the magazine, which at that time was sponsoring a short story contest for young people throughout the ELC. I sent my manuscript in with tongue in cheek. To my great surprise, I won first place! Later I wrote another story entitled, “Dared to be Different”, which was also published in the magazine during the summer of 1947.

Members of our congregation who read the stories felt that I had the talent for doing Christian ministry. Jerome Johnson was one who especially encouraged me to consider college and possibly seminary.

From then on, I lost interest in farming, and expressed my thoughts to my father. He asked me what I might prepare myself for in life. When I reluctantly suggested that I might go to the seminary, he vehemently told me, “You will never make a preacher!” Then he mentioned all kinds of hurdles which pastors face in the church. I piously argued that according to the Bible, all who live godly in Christ will be persecuted. He was not impressed but to say that I would have to pay my own way if I were to enroll in college.

Fortunately, I had saved money in the bank from the sale of hogs which Dad gave to me each year I was on the farm. At this juncture, I must commend him for his generosity, for what I received was substantially more than he would have had to pay a hired man. Of course, there were no men to be hired to do farm work during the war years. It was for this reason that he was depending upon me to continue as his “hired man.”

As I contemplated college, I wondered which one to attend. Jerome suggested to me that Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, was known to be one of the more “spiritual” Christian colleges in our ELC. I made my application and was accepted for the following fall. Meanwhile, I was still wrestling with guilt fearing that people would say of me that I stayed on the farm during the early 40's just to get out of the draft.

## **College Years**

I shall never forget the day when I packed my things in my 1937 Ford coupe to leave on my journey of 300 miles to Moorhead. My Dad wept as I left. Elsie stayed in the house instead of coming out to say goodbye. She may have felt that in her jealousy of me, she was happy that I was leaving home. Meanwhile, Dad had told me that he would have to rent out the land since he would not be able to do the farming operation alone. This hurt me and intensified my guilt.

I arrived at the campus of Concordia in time for freshman orientation. In one of the presentations given by a member of the college staff, we were told that “some people come to college to get an education; others come to get married.” As I examined my own heart, he was speaking to me as I had inwardly hoped to find a wife during tenure there!

I was assigned to a freshman dormitory room in Brown Hall where four of us were to bunk together. There were two rooms in the “suite”—one with four study desks and the other with stacked bunk beds. Reuben Mellum from Jackson had arranged to be in the same room, and the two of us were roommates for the three years that I was there. The other two fellows were from North Dakota towns not too far from Moorhead. Since our study habits differed, some strained relationships developed. One fellow who was a pastor's son whose father would stop by and dictate to him what courses he should take in order to be eligible for the seminary. However, he was completely disinterested in becoming a pastor like his father, and he would come in at wee hours of the night.

Actually, all four of us, including myself, had a chip on our shoulder and in our self righteous spirit expressed our irritations with each other. One night, we agreed that in order to have better harmony in our room, we should take turns in telling each other exactly and honestly what we thought of one another. This was a humbling experience for me. I needed to see myself as others saw me. It also created a better relationship between us.

Here I must admit thinking that in going to a church college, all of the students would be Christians. I soon learned that there were those who violated college rules in having their drinking parties. There was enough profanity floating around too. In this I was disillusioned. I concluded that the “Christian” college campus was a mission field too!

Adjusting to college life was not easy. The cafeteria food was not that appealing, and health wise, I was not feeling as well as I did on the farm. No doubt, lack of exercise was a factor. Course assignments consumed most of my time out of class. In fact, I spent much time studying in the college library for my research work where it was quiet. The winters were also severe in that northern Minnesota town which made it difficult to get around from building to building to our various class rooms.

One day, I was studying for my history course in the library. At the other end of the room, I saw an attractive girl having a good time visiting with some other guys. Instinctively, I said to myself, “Someday, I am going to marry that girl.” From that day on I kept my eye on her whenever I saw her on campus.

One noon hour as I stood in the cafeteria line, I saw her sitting with another fellow at a table engaged in deep conversation as they ate their meal. Since I knew the fellow sitting with her, I thought this to be a good opportunity to meet this girl. And so I carried my tray over to their table and invited myself to sit down. Out of politeness, he introduced me to her as Carrol Olson. The fellow who made the introduction was Carrol Tollefson who one day was to be my best man at our wedding. However, that day, Carrol Olson paid no more attention to me than the man on the moon. The two Carrols proceeded to talk about a philosophy test they had just taken. It was obvious that she had no interest in me, and I left the cafeteria that day dejected and rejected.

A couple of weeks later, my roommate Reuben and I decided to go to an outdoor ice skating rink on the south side of the campus. It was winter time, and the ice was nice and smooth. It would be the only time during the year I would go there. When we arrived, who should be there but Carrol Olson who had one of her girl friends along. Incidentally, it was to be the only time she would go there too. I noticed that she had some difficulty with her skating skills, so I offered to skate with her to help her. I can recall the tight grip she held on to my hand in order to stay on her feet. But all this gave me opportunity to ask her about herself and where she was from. I learned that she was a sophomore at Concordia, and that her interest was science and social studies. She roomed with her

sister, Marilyn, and another girl at Fjelstad Hall. This was my first opportunity to make a date with her to some event on campus, which she accepted.

My next concern was as to whether she was a Christian. I still retained my judgmental and legalistic attitude toward fellow students on campus. During our time together, she expressed her fun times at the “square games” which the Lutheran Student Association sponsored on Saturday nights in the campus gymnasium. To me, this activity was simply square dancing, and of course I had retained my opposition to any form of dancing from my home congregation. She invited me to come with her to this activity which I declined. I told her that I felt it was sin! Nevertheless, she saw no harm in it and went with her girl friends and had fun!

However, I was still attracted to her and we maintained a dating relationship to the various campus activities, including ball games and plays. In fact, I recall the part she played as a Norwegian girl in one of the 3 act plays which was sponsored by the Drama Club. It was a leading role, and I was impressed by her talent in speech and drama.

I observed, too, how well liked she was by her fellow students on campus. She had an outgoing personality which made me feel inferior. My feelings for her intensified and I detected that she was interested in me too. The fact is that I took her for granted, and would go over to Fjelstad Hall to pick her up at the last minute to go to some activity on campus.

One night when I arrived “late”, she announced to me that she already had a date. She had been invited by a pre-med student to go to a basketball game that night at the Moorhead Civic Center. I knew this fellow to be a good looking guy, and so suddenly I knew that I was faced with fierce competition.

Reuben and I went to the same game, and we sat across from where Carrol and her escort were sitting. I paid little attention to the game, but noted the “good time” she has having in her conversation with my competition. The green eyed monster of jealousy ate away at me, and I feared losing her.

When I later confronted her, she plainly told me that she did not want to be taken for granted and that I should show the courtesy of calling her early enough if I wanted to date her. From that time on, I always called early enough to be sure she had not accepted a date with someone else.

I still retained my legalistic spirit. Somehow, I anticipated that the girls who wore lipstick were “worldly” and were not Christians. In those days, the lipstick that girls wore was for the most part bright red in color. Carrol usually wore a substantial amount of lipstick, and I feared that the “Christian nucleus” on campus would assume she was not “spiritual” as other girls who were active in Christian Crusaders and other prayer organizations. Subsequently, I would sometimes chide her that our dress code should be

natural in the matter that God created us.

One Sunday afternoon when we were sitting together in my 1937 Ford coupe, I had the gall to take out my handkerchief and wipe off the red lipstick from her lips. Then I asked her to look in the mirror to see how much more natural she looked. Carrol in anger promptly got out of the car and made her way to the dormitory. I called to her and told her that I was sorry. But she was oblivious to my apology. At that moment, I concluded that God was telling me that Carrol was not the one for me.

Meanwhile, my feelings for her did not subside, especially when I did not call her for a date for almost a month. One day, during classes, we met each other in the stairway of Old Main, and I stopped and told her that I was really sorry for my foolish behavior and that I would like to date her again. There was a tear in her eye as I spoke to her, as was true with me. After that nothing more was said about the lipstick issue. Actually, she ceased to use it as substantially from that day on. I personally learned from this experience how judgmental I had been in my understanding of the Christian faith. I later realized how I had become one of those foolish Galatians! I had not yet experienced the grace of God in Christ, and here I was classified by the college as a “pre-sem”. I was trying to save myself by works! What irony!

Carrol’s popularity on campus was manifested in her being chosen by the Lutheran Students Association to go as a delegate of the LSA to a national “Ashram” conference in the Blue Ridge Mountains of the Carolinas. A group of 5 students set out on a ten day car trip to the east. There were three girls and two boys in the car who as she afterwards told me had a good time making the journey. Sad to say, I was somewhat jealous of her having fun with other fellows on that excursion.

Our courtship continued. Carrol now went to Mission Crusaders with me on Sunday evenings. This group was a special group interested in mission work, and some of those who came were aspiring to become missionaries. We went to church together on Sunday mornings, and spent Sunday afternoons together. It was now known on campus that we were going steady. Our feelings for each other deepened. I had shared my early years with her including my mother’s suicide, my father’s remarriage, and my father’s desire that I remain on the farm. She seemed to accept me in spite of early childhood experiences.

The first year of my Freshman year was coming to an end. I had come to Concordia feeling quite proud of my abilities, but I had learned that I had to work hard to get good grades. I managed to get some A’s and a goodly number of B pluses. As I attended classes, I realized that there were many “smart” students, and I began wondering if the ministry was for me. I still thought I had the option of returning home to take over the farm operation. Since I was committed to a girl who hopefully would one day become my

wife, this thought was in the back of my mind as I returned home for the summer months.

Meanwhile, Carrol and a girl friend on campus signed up to teach Vacation Bible School in a two point parish west of Grand Forks, North Dakota, for at least four weeks. We promised to keep in touch through letter writing. Carrol admits to this day that she is not a “good” letter writer, but only writes the facts. She was not one to share a lot of emotion in writing. It was a long summer!

When I went home in the spring of 1948, I knew that Dad was still milking a few cows and raising some hogs, even though he had rented out the land to the neighbor across the road who was a big time grain farmer. His name was Virgil Jones and his son Verlon was helping. Incidentally, as I was growing up, Verlon and I played together a lot. He had a pony that we took turns riding. We also played ball in the farm yard, and we would get into a fight over whether the batter was safe or out. If Verlon didn’t get his way, he would run home saying, “I’m not going to play with you anymore!” But he was usually over the next day, and all was forgotten. It was interesting that Verlon had gone to school in town instead to the country school house which I attended. Consequently, he had a sort of superior attitude toward me during our early years as neighbors. Both he and his father maintained that spirit.

One day at the dinner table, I suggested to my Dad that I might still take over the farm if he wanted me to. His reply was startling. He said, “I’m sorry, son, but I have rented out the land on a three year contract.” It was as though God was shutting the door in my face, and I concluded that I should continue my studies at Concordia. Sharing this experience with my friend, Jerome Johnson, he agreed. God has a way of opening or closing doors in our decision-making.

I spent that summer working for different farmers including shocking oats in the harvest fields. During July and August, it was hot. I learned how out of shape I was physically, and I recall going to bed sunburned and with aching bones. However, the farmers I worked for complimented me on my ambition, and I felt more encouraged to pursue my studies.

I earned some extra money that way too, more than what the farmers had initially offered.

When I returned to Concordia in the fall, I received a letter from Elsie one day that the renters had beaten up on my Dad. Apparently, they were not happy about my father being out in the fields during corn harvest trying to “boss” them around. I did fear that Dad might interfere with their farming methods, since Dad was very meticulous about caring for his land. He, in fact, had worked hard improving the quality of the farm. I recall the hours in the early 40's helping him dig tillage into the ground in order to have good drainage of the land. All of this work had to be done by hand!

When the letter arrived in the mail, I piled into my 1937 coupe the next day and drove 300 miles home and back the same day to find out what had happened. Both Dad and Elsie seemed to appreciate my concern. From that day on, less tension prevailed between us.

Meanwhile, Dad and Elsie journeyed that winter to Tucson, Arizona, where they purchased a home. The house on the farm was to be rented out, and although the Joneses farmed the land for the next two years, Dad afterwards found another farm renter with whom he seemed quite satisfied.

I was now a Sophomore at Concordia, and Carrol was a Junior. We now had to pick our majors in preparation for our life's work. Carrol took Social Studies and Education which would qualify her for Social Work and teaching. I signed up for three years of Greek plus Latin in preparation for the Seminary. In one of her courses, Carrol did internship work in a home in Fargo for unwed mothers.

Carrol shares a couple of experiences during her class work on campus. Religion was a required course, and Dr. Sidney Rand was the professor. When classes began that fall, role call was taken. Dr. Rand called out, "Mr. Olson." No answer. "Mr. Carrol Olson." Still no answer. "Mr. Carrol Odell Olson". Carrol finally replied, "Here." To which Dr. Rand replied, "Well, it wasn't your fault."

The "man's" spelling of Carrol's name had caused confusion on campus earlier. She had been assigned to one of the boy's dormitories, and placed on the boy's baseball team. She could have had it made!

Another experience was in Latin class where Dr. Skalet was the professor. He would call off names of students to translate the work assigned. Carrol's sister, Marilyn, was also in the same class. When Dr. Skalet asked Miss Olson to translate, Carrol would oblige. Then when he would request the other Miss Olson to continue to the translation, Marilyn, sitting next to her and having not studied her lesson, would nudge Carrol to do that translation too. Dr. Skalet never knew the difference since their voices were much the same.

The Thanksgiving break gave Carrol opportunity to invite me to travel to her home in Souris, North Dakota, to get acquainted with her family and home town in the north central part of the state. Souris was located over 300 miles from Moorhead at the foot of the Turtle Mountains just south of the Canadian border. Souris was only 5 miles from the Canadian line. Carrol's father was a John Deere dealer in that small town of about 450 people. Oscar L. Olson was a hard worker and sold a great deal of big machinery to the farmers who harvested the wheat fields of that part of the state. Carrol had two brothers and a sister. Her oldest brother, Kenneth, and youngest brother, "Bud" (Oscar M.) had both been in the military, and consequently for at least two years, Carrol's father was supporting three of his children as students at Concordia. Fortunately, Kenneth and Bud

were getting some help from the GI bill. Kenneth was destined to be a genius in developing the computer system which was a new thing in that day. Bud would one day take over the John Deere Implement business after the shop was moved to Bottineau which was a town of about 3000 population located about twenty two miles southeast of Souris.

The Olson's lived in an old frame house located just across the street from Trinity Lutheran Church where Carrol and myself as well as Marilyn and her husband, Bill Barge, were one day to be married in a double wedding. My first visit to Carrol's home wasn't exactly a happy one. Shortly after arriving, I became ill with a high fever and was confined to bed for the three days we were there. I still was not feeling well on the way home and so consulted a doctor in Moorhead. He diagnosed me as having the measles, and so I was ordered to go to a detention home in Fargo until the fever broke, which was about two days. This was the first impression Carrol's parents had of me. They probably thought I was a sickly hypochondriac.

I need to digress here and summarize the Olson and Haugen families from which her heritage came. Carrol had written her own autobiography at Concordia for a psychology class in which she summarized her family life in these words from Scripture: "Yea, I have a goodly heritage." (Psalm 16:6) Initially, when I read it, I assumed that she was being a bit boastful, and had wished that she could have written, "Yea, I have a godly heritage." But that was not what the Psalmist had written. I later learned that indeed, she has had a godly heritage and have thanked God for her family roots.

Carrol's father was one of ten children. Otto Olson was a farmer near Souris. Raymond ran a service station in Bottineau. Ingwall worked for Oscar in the John Deere Implement shop as a mechanic. Alfred was a dentist who practiced in Gilmore City, Iowa.

Elisha lived in Souris and was married to Cam Carlson who was retired. Elisha was ill much of the time from a heart condition which she acquired from rheumatic fever in her early years. She had been a nurse.

Three other unmarried sisters were teachers of the deaf. They included Jo who died of cancer at a relatively early age. Christine lived with Millie (Millie eventually married one of her students who also is deaf, namely Mitchel Kalal. Millie and Mitchel are still living.)

Millie is into her mid 90's and they live in Jacksonville, Florida. Inga cared for their father who was almost blind. They lived in a home in Bottineau, and he was still living when I first met Carrol. His name was Knute Olson.

He had been a farmer near Souris, and his wife, Marit, died suddenly at a relatively early age. In the Olson family, four were college graduates, and one was trained as a nurse.

Carrol's mother was Clara Haugen. She had two brothers on farms near Souris, Bennie and Melvin. She had another brother Selmer who was in the oil delivery business in a town about 40 miles south of Souris, and died relatively young from a heart attack. There was also a sister, Sina, who was married to a farmer, Andrew Berg, near Souris. Another sister, Selma, lived on the west coast in the Portland, Oregon, area. I never got to know her real well. Clara's mother, Marie, was still living and was living in a home in Souris. There were seven children in the Haugen family.

Clara was always a hospitable person, and would always invite company for coffee during the times we would travel home after our marriage.

It was my turn to invite Carrol to come with me to Jackson to meet my father and Elsie. During Easter in the spring of 1949, we journeyed southward to my home town and farm. Dad had always taken good care of the farm buildings and kept the yard clean. It was my task during her visit to take her on a tour of the farm acreage at which time I showed her the barn, chicken house, machine shed, and hog house. Dad was still raising some hogs to be sold for slaughter in the fall. They were of the spotted Poland China breed (black and white in color). When we went in for dinner the following noon hour, Carrol made the comment to my father, "You have some real nice red pigs out there." Dad grunted, "I don't have any red pigs!" This was to be one of Carrol's most embarrassing moments (and mine too) during our visit there. Happily, Dad and Elsie seemed to accept Carrol as a "nice girl." They were probably happy, too, that my earlier courtship with Ardyce had definitely ended.

At Concordia, one of the activities that Carrol and I did together was to teach once a week at the release time school at a church in Woverton, Minnesota. Since this gave us some teaching experience, it was incumbent upon us to teach Vacation Bible School that summer.

Carrol and a girl friend taught four weeks at a large congregation in Valley City, North Dakota, about 100 miles west of Fargo. I committed myself to teach four weeks at a two point parish in Cooperstown, North Dakota, about 30 miles north of Valley City. On weekends, I would drive down to see her, although I preached two Sundays in Cooperstown when the pastor was on vacation. The first Sunday went well, but the second Sunday was a dud. God was continuing to humble me!

During the summer of 1950, Dad and Elsie had a farm sale to dispose of household goods. They were to move to Tucson, Arizona, in time for winter. Prior to their move, I was home for a few days. Dad had decided to trade cars at that time, and offered to give me his 1949 Ford two-door, if I would be willing to trade in my 1937 Ford coupe on his new car. I would have to pay nothing for the transaction. This was one of the nicest things Dad and Elsie did for me.

Meanwhile, Carrol and I returned to Concordia for the fall classes. Carrol was a senior. I was a junior. Carrol did her practice teaching for her educational courses at Moorhead High. I was taking courses in English and Psychology for my major. In one course, English composition, Freda Nielsen was the instructor. It was a course designed to teach us how to write and compose stories and essays on different subjects. I assumed myself to be a good writer, so I submitted some rather complicated and wordy writings for my assignments. Miss Nielsen proceeded to scribble all kinds of red markings on all of my writings insisting that I “keep it simple.” Again, it was good for me but humbling! And I thought initially that I was a good writer! After all, I had written stories for the *Lutheran Herald* before I ever went to college! God was preparing me for ministry. My pride had to be put down again and again!

## Engaged

That fall I proposed to Carrol, and she accepted. From then on, we considered a wedding date and other plans. Meanwhile, Marilyn, who had graduated from Concordia the previous year and was teaching school in Arlington, Minnesota, met a man working in the local bank there by the name of William Barge. Somehow, Marilyn got together with Carrol, and they mutually decided on a double wedding. Since all four of the Olson children had been supported to go to Concordia, they thought it might be appropriate for them to have a cheap wedding. It might take the edge off when their parents were to get the news.

The time came to announce our plans to Carrol’s parents. As I recall, it was Easter break in the spring of 1951. Carrol and I, plus Marilyn and Bill, had come home for the holiday, and we were to celebrate Easter with the Olson family.

Bill and I were sitting in the living room of that old two story home in Souris, North Dakota, and Carrol and Marilyn were out in the kitchen where they were to make known to Carrol’s mother our wedding plans. Bill and I overheard that the conversation that followed was rather heated.

Carrol’s mother immediately told Carrol that she hadn’t worked and that she was too young to get married. (Carrol was 21). Carrol informed her that I was 27 years old, to which she retorted, “You’re marrying an old man!” Marilyn was informed too that she hadn’t worked very long either after her expensive education.

Bill and I sat rather stunned at what we were hearing. Soon, Carrol’s father, who had quietly listened to the dialogue between mother and daughters, soon appeared in the living room and remarked, “Don’t worry. She will soon be making wedding plans.” And she was. Questions such as “Who will be your attendants, etc.” were discussed. And everyone

was more relaxed. The worst was over!

Meanwhile, my plans to go to seminary were on my mind. Back at Concordia, I discovered that I had enough credits so that by going to summer school, I could still graduate in the year of 1951. That summer, since one of my majors was psychology, I took the necessary courses in that subject and got straight A's. The wedding date was planned accordingly, namely on August 8. Carrol had graduated in May, and I was to graduate in early August.

Happily, during July, I was accepted to enroll at Luther Theological Seminary in St. Paul, provided I completed the necessary credits from Concordia to earn my BA degree. Carrol and I managed to find time to journey to St. Paul in order to find housing and also a possible job for Carrol. It was also rumored among pre-seminarians at college that marriage by seminary students was frowned upon. In order to be sure that I would be in good graces with the administration, I went to see the president of the seminary, Dr. T. F. Gullixon. As we visited, he solemnly cautioned me. In his shaky voice, he said, "You know, it takes \$2000.00 a year to live in the Twin Cities." This warning sent a chill through my spine. But I explained to him that we thought we would have adequate funds to finance my seminary courses. He offered no words of encouragement, but at least my application was not revoked.

From the seminary bulletin board, we searched for housing possibilities and for possible jobs for wives of seminary students. We found a place to live at 432 Wheeler in the Midway part of St. Paul. It was an old frame house owned by another seminary student who was in his second year of studies. He was Kermit Roisen who was married and had two sons. He had been in the military, and was now doing part time construction work in the Twin Cities area.

His family was to live downstairs, and Carrol and I were to live in an upstairs apartment with two rooms, a kitchen and a small living room. Actually, we were to sleep on the roll down sofa which was a part of the furnishings. Carrol and I met with Kermit and his wife, Marillyn, and we accepted it at a rental cost of \$45 per month! There was another small apartment unit upstairs (smaller than ours) that was to be rented out to another newly married couple, Bill and Judy Ostroot, whom we had not yet met.

There was also a job possibility for Carrol as a parish worker at Immanuel Lutheran Church in the Midway area (within walking distance from where we were to live). Immanuel was a part of the Augustana Synod, and the pastor who served the congregation was Pastor Arthur Olson who had been there for 12 years or more. He was a tall man, rather bulky in build, and he seemed very friendly and congenial. He explained what Carrol's duties would be, including printing work in the office plus youth work and some parish calling. I, too, was to be a part of his team part-time to go out and make calls on certain people,

especially the inactive members. Happily, he hired us, and so we would be beginning work responsibilities in September.

## Early Marriage

August 8, 1951, was a gorgeous day weather-wise in Souris, North Dakota. The wheat fields were ripening beautifully. The question of who would escort the brides came up. Since Marilyn was the older, it was insisted that according to etiquette that the father would usher her in. (Oscar L. Olson was not about to usher in both daughters which would necessitate his going to the back of the church again). Carrol, meanwhile, chose her uncle Palmer Russeth, a banker in Minot, North Dakota, to usher her in.

Bill and I waited in the sacristy of Trinity Lutheran Church for the processional to begin.

I cannot recall the soloist, but she was a friend of both Carrol and Marilyn. She proceeded to murder “O Perfect Love.”

Pastor Roy Malde was the pastor who married us. He used the text, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8) He emphasized that though we would change as the years went by, Jesus would be our same Savior forever. Pastor Malde had recently returned from the mission field and was well liked in the Souris parish.

The reception followed after which both of us couples were loaded on a flat bed wagon pulled by a John Deere tractor and pulled up and down the main street of Souris as well as the side streets. (The population of Souris was only about 250 residents.) Meanwhile, our 1949 Ford was thoroughly soaped, rocks were put into the hubcaps, and limburger cheese was smeared on the engine.

Dad and Elsie did not come to the wedding since we had promised them that we would come to Tucson for our honeymoon, rather than their having to drive that far north. This was made known to the guests. Carrol and I spent our first night together at a hotel in Minot, Dakota. We were both very tired after a long day. (It had been a 3 o'clock wedding).

The next morning, we started southward. The hotel we stayed at had generously washed our car of all the soap. I had taken off the hubcaps and removed the stones. We never did smell the limburger cheese on route. Carrol's brother, Bud, had been the responsible person to “deck” out our car.

Our first breakfast was at a truck stop. I insisted that truck stops were cheap places to eat and the food was good. Immediately, Carrol concluded that she had married a stingy man!

On our trip to Tucson, there were many stops including Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado, the Thompson Canyon, and the Carlsbad Caverns of New Mexico. We stopped often in order for me to take pictures. Carrol concluded that she was also married to a camera! She was learning more and more about me, and wondered if she had made a mistake in marrying me.

We stayed in motels for about three nights. To save money, we bought cereal boxes with which to eat our breakfasts before we started on our way for the day. At one motel, we had placed the boxes on the "kitchen table." so we could get an early start the next morning. When we got up, the boxes were covered with ants! This ended our motel breakfasts for the entire honeymoon. It was obvious that we were in desert country. As we neared Tucson, it was getting hotter and hotter. Since we had no air conditioning in our car, we had with us an air cooler which one of Carrol's aunts gave us to use. It was mounted on the car window on the passenger side, and water had to be poured into it every so often. The outside draft as we drove was supposed to cool down the car as we travelled. The temperatures were in the high 90's or 100's outside. They were almost as much in the car.

We finally arrived at Dad and Elsie's home in Tucson on Water Street. It was a modest one story home with two bedrooms, kitchen, family room, and living room. There was a built on open air port garage. There was no air conditioner but a water cooler mounted on the south side of the house. The grass was of a different variety for that hot climate. Dad would have to mow it with a hand push mower! He also had a garden in the back yard with some carrots and tomatoes. He had planted yellow desert daisies in the corner of the yard.

Dad and Elsie spent the two weeks showing us the orange and grapefruit groves and an old Catholic monastery which was now vacated. We also journeyed to Mexico, and as we crossed the border in Nogales, we saw an entirely different culture. The Mexican natives had set up their booths where they "bargained" to sell us leather goods and jewelry. We did buy some beautiful leather handcrafted by the people there -- an etched satchel for myself and a hand bag for Carrol. I also purchased a turquoise wrist band for my watch. The Mexicans wanted so much to sell their products so that we acquired them at below cost price. For them, it was almost highway robbery. But the Mexican economy has such that they kept begging us to buy, and we succumbed. As we were to cross back over the border where we had left the car, the rear window of Dad's Mercury had been thoroughly shattered from the heat.

The desert country was beautiful with its cacti and desert flowers. The sunsets were magnificent. Again, as a camera bug, I took many colored slides.

After a two week stay, we left Tucson for our new home in St. Paul, Minnesota. As we

settled in to our apartment, we met Bill and Judy Ostroot who were to live in the adjoining apartment. We were to share the bathroom upstairs! We always had to be careful to schedule our bathroom duties. Both Bill and Judy were very friendly and likable, but they had their frequent quarrels. Kermit, Bill, and I would pool rides to the seminary about five miles away from our apartment. On some days we were to pick up Judy who had a job on the farm campus of the University of Minnesota which was on the way. One cold winter day, Bill was so engrossed in a theological discussion on the way home that he forgot to pick up Judy. He then returned in his own car to the corner where she was waiting for an hour thoroughly chilled. I recall to this day how angry she was. We soon learned that Bill could be very absent minded at times.

## **Seminary Life**

It was time to start classes at the seminary. Carrol started her job at Immanuel. Since on most days I was to spend at the seminary for classes, I took with me my noon sack lunch. I was soon exposed to courses like Old Testament, Church History, Apologetics, Dogmatics, and Homiletics. Some of my professors included Dr. Warren Quanbeck, Dr. George Aus, Dr. Herman Preus, and Dr. E.Clifford Nelson and the aged Dr. Iver Iverson. I soon detected that there was an ongoing theological tension between what was referred to as the subjective and objective positions regarding the way of salvation. Dr. Aus was an advocate of the subjective position which emphasized the need for repentance and personal faith in Jesus. The objective position leaned in the direction of emphasizing the work of Christ on the cross which God made possible through His grace and mercy. There was really a fine line between the two. My seminary courses made me more mindful of the need of God's grace and mercy for salvation. It caused me to re-evaluate my legalistic and "good works" spirit. However, my seminary studies still did not thoroughly "cleanse" out this spirit in my mind. I was to learn this as the years went by in my parish ministry.

Meanwhile, at Immanuel, I was assigned part-time by Pastor Olson to make calls on inactive members of the congregation which totaled about 500 in membership.. I soon encountered people who were critical of Pastor Olson's ministry. Having heard him preach a few times, I felt that some of his sermons were repetitive and empty. I wondered if he had made ample preparation. One of his favorite expressions given in an announcement of a death of a member in the congregation was, "The young can die, and the old must die." He also supposedly had conflict with his church council. I made the serious mistake of not supporting his ministry or suggesting that they pray for him. I was asked to preach from time to time on Sundays when Pastor Olson was gone for the weekend. I was handed bouquets of roses by those people who insisted that Pastor Olson should resign. I was gaining a following! Pastor Olson must have detected this happening. This is probably why when Carrol was hired, he had insisted on our support of him as pastor at Immanuel. And now he wondered if we were committed to do this. I must add that he would

occasionally preach a powerful sermon (without notes) to his congregation, but with a tone of anger. How easy to take out our anger against a congregation in the pulpit!

I was much later to learn a lesson from all this in my retirement years as a visitation pastor. It made me mindful that it is important to always support fellow pastors even though I may not have always agreed with their theology or behavior. I was to grow much in Christian maturity.

I need to return to our experiences in our apartment. Bill Ostroot had a compassion for the down and outs and would preach at the Gateway Gospel Mission in Minneapolis, which was a mission to those addicted to alcohol on Washington Avenue. One night, he brought home with him a man who had been “miraculously saved” by his message. Bill promised him a place to sleep until he could get a job. With Kermit’s permission he was put up in another upstairs bedroom next to our apartment. Bill saw to it that he got well fed. He had brought home a bucket of chicken after he was given a good bath in “our bathroom.” He then was put to bed during which he tearfully promised that he would look for a job the next day.

Meanwhile, after I had finished my seminary homework for the evening, Carrol and I went to bed on the roll out couch in our “living room.” About midnight, we heard stirring in the next room, and detected the new convert slipping down stairs and out the door. I proceeded to go next door and tell Bill of his friend’s departure. Bill was convinced that he would return in a little while. “He probably went out to buy a newspaper or something.” Toward morning, we again heard the front door open, and our convert friend returned upstairs, after which we heard the rattling of paper. The man had gone out to buy a bottle of liquor, and now was entirely intoxicated. When Bill suggested that he could stay only for the night, the man tearfully repented crying out, “I will stop drinking. Just give me another chance.”

Carrol and I didn’t get much sleep that night for fear of what may happen next. Early the next morning, the man left the house never to be seen again. Bill was to learn to be “born again” involved more spiritual depth.

My interest in electronics began during those years of our early marriage. In my love for classical music, I purchased our first tape recorder. In a more gleeful moment, I decided the play a trick on Bill. I had brought home from the church a large speaker which was used with their movie projector. I did so on a temporary basis in order to amplify the sound from my recorder. While Bill was still at the seminary one day, I planted the speaker in Bill and Judy’s closet, and ran a wire over to our apartment. I recorded on my recorder the message in a very spooky voice, “I am the spirit of the living ghost, and I have come to haunt you!” When Bill came home and was settled in his apartment, I played the tape. Carrol was in on the act.

There was a long silence. Then there was a gentle rap at the door, and as we opened it, Bill

stood there with his face as white as a sheet. He remarked that he had just been reading in the seminary library the story of John Calvin struggling with the devil. He said, "When I first heard that voice from our closet, I thought it was the devil. Then I thought it was the Holy Spirit speaking to me. But then I realized it was Orville!" Soon thereafter, Judy came home from her job, and it suddenly dawned on us that she was pregnant! Both Carrol and I were glad that she was not home prior to that.

In the spring when classes were over at the seminary, Bill and Judy committed themselves to summer intern work in a parish in Foston, Minnesota. Carrol and I were mindful of the empty bedroom next door, and we approached Kermit to ask him if we might use that room for our bedroom for some extra rental money. (There was a door between our apartment and the bedroom). He agreed to that arrangement, and we were now paying \$55 a month for our apartment rental!

My summer job was at the Amour and Company Packing Plant in South St. Paul. The wage was good, and I applied. My job involved transporting processed meat on trolleys into the freezers. In this large plant, I was again exposed to "the world" in hearing profanity and vulgarity and filthy jokes from fellow workers. I recall one man, however, who had learned that I was a seminary student. He apparently had respect for the church, and was open to my Christian witness.

The work went well for the first two weeks. However, since the Meat Packing Union was powerful in those days, I was pressured to join. This involved paying dues which would be withdrawn from my wages. I held back for a few days, but when I was placed in a dangerous situation by having a trolley of meat almost crush me against a wall, I gave in and felt safer. Fortunately I survived the summer, and made some extra money.

In the fall, Carrol and I decided to have our first child. When she became pregnant, she thought it only fair that she should tell Pastor Olson. Upon hearing the news, he said, "What did you have to go and do that for? You weren't supposed to get pregnant. You agreed to that when I hired you." Carrol came home from work that day very upset. I suggested that she should not have to live under such tension in the office. She decided to quit and find a job temporarily elsewhere.

The next day or so, she resigned her position as of a certain date, and sought another job close by. Since we lived close to the midway area of St. Paul, she applied for a bookkeeping job at Montgomery Ward which was the catalogue center for the company. It was about a mile walk from where we lived. She was accepted on an hourly wage basis, and worked there until it was time for the baby to be born.

We had gone to a three hour Good Friday service in Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in St. Paul on April 3, 1953. That late evening Carrol was in labor, and in the early morning hour, we

journeyed to Swedish Hospital, St. Paul, where Ruth Clarice was born on April 4. For both of us, she was a beautiful baby. Her doctor was a Christian obstetrician who practiced in a clinic in east Minneapolis. He reported that she was a normal healthy child.

In the summer of 1953, I was offered an opportunity to do summer intern work at Badger, Minnesota, in the far northern part of the state. The pastor was Pastor Vincent Mostrom. It was a four point parish, and Vincent and I would take turns preaching alternately at the Sunday services. It meant that we would both be preaching the same sermon twice each Sunday. I was also to teach Confirmation classes at two of the congregations. Confirmation classes were held in the summer because of the severe winters in that north country plus the distance between churches.

Carrol, Ruth, and I stayed at the parsonage and slept in a small bedroom with Ruth in a crib in the corner of the room. The Mostroms had three sons, and our coming meant a house full for the time we were there. One night when I came home from teaching a Confirmation class, I discovered Carrol and Vincent's wife, Vivian, standing on chairs while Vincent holding a broom was trying to kill a mouse which had gotten into the kitchen. The whole experience was quite hilarious.

On Sunday mornings, Carrol and Ruth would always accompany me to the church where I was to conduct services. The people in that wasteland were very poor. We would pick up one family on the way to the service each Sunday. Although the father never went to church, the wife and her three children wanted to go to worship and appreciated the rides which we offered them. One of them, a son, was in my confirmation class. The mother would send home with us a jar of cream in a cooler to put on our strawberries back at the parsonage. On one of the last Sundays we were in the Badger parish, the mother gave Carrol a gift wrapped package. It contained a beautiful croqueted sweater woven by the mother for our daughter, Ruth. We felt so guilty taking it inasmuch as we knew that two of their children had to sleep in the barn at nights where the rats would nibble at their ears. It would hurt that mother if we were to refuse the gift. We had to learn to be gracious recipients. Also we realized what sacrificial giving really was.

Pastor Mostrom was a deep theological thinker, and I learned to appreciate him as a pastor who was willing to minister to the people of a parish located in such a poverty stricken area. I recall one message he gave at the cemetery for the Memorial Day observance. He had as his theme, "Going beyond the call of duty." As he commemorated the young men who had given their lives in service for our country, he related this thought to what our Lord Jesus did when He died on a cross to save us. Indeed, his was a Christ-centered ministry, and I learned something about grace during the time we were there.

Upon our return to the seminary in the fall for my senior year, we were to live in a different apartment just across from the seminary on Como Avenue. Since Kermit Roisen had

graduated the previous spring, and he and his family had gone to the mission field in Madagascar, the move became necessary. And we were fortunate to find this apartment which had also been occupied by a graduating senior. The rooms were small, a kitchen and living room on the second floor, and two tiny bedrooms on the third floor. Since we were so close to Luther Seminary, it was not necessary to drive to classes but simply to walk across the street. God was opening doors each step of the way. The owners of the three story home, the Swansons, were very gracious, and members of St. Anthony Park Lutheran a half block away. Milo Swanson was a professor at the Agricultural College of the University of Minnesota. Hazel Swanson would often accompany Carrol in taking Ruth for rides in the stroller along Como Avenue. I would take scads of photos of her as a one year old, and send them to our family and friends. My last year at the seminary was a good year, and we as seniors were anxious about our first parish call.

A friend, Einar Unseth, was preaching every other Sunday at a two point parish in northern Iowa. Fertile Lutheran and Ellington Lutheran would have called him as their pastor, but Einar felt called to the mission field in Japan. Einar asked me if I would fill in the other two Sundays of each month, which I did. Carrol, Ruth, and I travelled there on every other weekend on Saturdays, and would stay in different homes overnight. We often stayed at the Roy and Beverly Calgaard home who were very friendly and hospitable. On Sundays, I would have the early service at Ellington, the country church located about ten miles from Fertile, and the late service at Fertile Lutheran in town. We also often stayed at the Otto and Geneva Anderson home in the country, The Andersons belonged to the Ellington church. They had one son, Orville. We felt a kind of kinship inasmuch as his name was Orville Anderson, and mine was Orville Sanderson. It was to this parish we were eventually to get our first call into parish ministry at a salary of \$4000 with no car allowance

On one of the last nights before seminary graduation, the Unseth and Ostroot families had a “party” at our apartment. Bill had gotten a call to northwestern Minnesota, and Einar would be on his way to Japan. So we celebrated. Some gifts were given out. I recall that I received an envelope from “the Fertile Parish.” I opened it to find a check of \$100 for the purchase of furniture. I was overwhelmed until it was made known to me that the signature of the check was written as “Fertile Ladies Aid,” but with no treasurer’s name. One of the fellows had written it as a trick. Again, because of my pride, I was hurt, but said nothing. It was obvious that I was still “a babe in Christ.”

## **First Parish**

The time came to furnish our first parsonage. The most expensive piece of furniture was a dining room set which with six chairs was priced at \$75. Carrol’s Aunt Inga encouraged the purchase of the mahogany drop leaf table and chairs which we still have to this day, and looks as new as the day it was purchased. It has proven to us that we get what we pay for.

All of our other furniture has worn out!

Our first home was a large frame parsonage on the north edge of Fertile. It had a stoker furnace which required the removal of clinkers every other day. However, fuel efficiency was hindered by the fact that the windows were so drafty that the curtains floated into the room on a cold windy wintry day. It was necessary to buy a kerosene stove to be installed in the kitchen so that we could eat our meals in comfort. My office was also located in the parsonage which was the first room off the front entryway. I was to learn that study was not easy with crying from Ruth and later from Dan in the next room. As Dr. Gullixson used to say of pastors who had an office at the parsonage, I became a roaring lion around the house!

Before my installation at Fertile, I was to be ordained in my home congregation, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, in Jackson, Minnesota. This was on May 23, 1954. Dr. Reinertson, the district president, ordained me, with area pastors participating. It was with some disappointment that Dad and Elsie did not choose to come to the service all the way from Tucson, Arizona. I had mixed feelings about this. (We were however, to journey to Arizona for about a three week period before I was to begin my ministry at Fertile.) Meanwhile, my aunts Hanna and Anna did much to host the occasion.

We did enjoy our second trip to Arizona with Ruth. Before graduating from seminary, we had purchased a new 1954 six cylinder four door Ford, red in color. In a way, it was a lemon inasmuch as a cracked crankcase had to be replaced before we left St. Paul. The antifreeze had leaked into the oil pan! On the last leg of our journey to Tucson, the car stalled on a dark night in the desert. A kind truck driver stopped and fixed the engine temporarily with a hair pin. We made it to Tucson, but the car would not start the next morning, and the car had to be towed to a Ford garage. The problem was a bad repair job by the garage in St. Paul. Fortunately, all of these problems were under warranty. Meanwhile, on our 3 day trip to Arizona, we stopped to see the white sands of New Mexico and the Grand Canyon of northern Arizona.

Our second child was to be born while we were in Fertile. On graduation night at the Fertile High School up the street, Carrol was in labor, but refused to go to the hospital until all the traffic had subsided. For some reason or other, she did not want anyone to know that she was in labor. After considerable persuasion, we took off to Park Hospital in Mason City, Iowa, where Daniel Orville was to be born on May 19, 1955. As a result of his birth, Carrol continued to hemorrhage until she had to return to the hospital for a D and C. Because she was nursing, she had to take Dan with her into the same hospital room, which initially, the nurse on duty refused until she got a firm word from the doctor.

I will cite a couple or three memories while serving as pastor in the Fertile parish. I recall one Sunday when I had preached a hard sermon on the subject of stewardship, reprimanding the congregation for not giving a proportionate amount of their giving to world missions.

After the service, one elderly gentleman shook my hand rather loosely at the door and glared at me exclaiming, "I didn't know that we were that bad." My heart sank, and I began to realize that my sermons were too heavy on the law and too light on the Gospel. I also erred in my preaching on Easter Sunday by scolding the people for not coming to church on the other Sundays of the church year. When one man was asked later in the week what my sermon was about, he replied, "Same old thing!"

I recall at the Ellington church telling the people a true story told by my confirmation pastor in years previous. He made reference to a farmer during his boyhood days. It had rained and rained during the spring season so that the farmer could not get his crop into the ground. One afternoon, in the middle of a rain storm, the farmer shook his fist into the sky at God, and God struck him dead. My confirmation pastor was trying to impress upon the young minds of the confirmands that God is not to be mocked.

As I told that story to the Ellington members that Sunday, it was raining and lightning outside. When I drove away from the church to go to the church in Fertile to have the service there, it happened that lightning struck the steeple of that small frame church so that it had to later be replaced. I have been told that my sermon that Sunday sparked fear in the minds of the Ellington people.

I am mindful of one young family in the Fertile congregation. Donald and Norma lost a son six months after birth from an open spine. A second son, Bruce, had been born. At age six, he began to stagger and fall as he walked. After conferring with doctors in Mason City, he was diagnosed as having a brain tumor and was referred to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester. On the day that Bruce was to have his surgery, Carrol and I were there when the doctors came out and reported their findings. The tumor was located on the brain stem so that they were unable to remove much of the tumor but to create some space in that part of the brain so as not to press on the nerves. Bruce lived for about a year after that surgery, but eventually became totally bedridden. One day when his grandmother was caring for him at home, Bruce blurted out, "I want to go home." His grandmother told him that he was home. To which Bruce elaborated, "I want to go home to be with Jesus."

Incidentally, when Carrol and I journeyed to Rochester the day of Bruce's surgery, a lady in the congregation offered to stay with our two young children while we were gone. When we came home, I half-heartedly offered to pay her for her babysitting. To our surprise and disappointment, she asked for \$5.00. To Carrol and me, it clouded her Christian witness to us.

Don and Norma were to have two more sons after the death of Bruce. Since Donald was in the excavation business, they moved to Ames, Iowa. One day, while Donald was working on an excavation site, there was a cave-in with two men in the hole below. Donald jumped in to try to rescue them, but all three suffocated from the dirt which covered them. At his funeral

in Fertile, the text for the sermon was based on the words of Jesus, “Greater love has no man than this than that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Our Lord, of course, was referring to himself as he addressed Himself to his disciples, but it was still an appropriate text for Donald’s memorial service.

I had my first taste of a building program at the Fertile congregation. It was decided that more room was needed for Sunday School space and office facilities. The front part of the sanctuary was torn down, and a new pulpit area plus a two story brick addition was built. At last I was to move my office out of the parsonage! Money raising for this project was generous, and a lot of labor on the part of members made this program possible. My greatest apprehension was that the members might cut their offerings to missions in order to pay of the new building. As I recall, this was my concern in the sermon I preached to the congregation when the elderly gentleman boldly confronted me.

One Sunday in 1957, a call committee appeared at the Fertile church for the morning worship services. I was preaching a series of sermons on the life of Jonah. It was obvious that the five gentlemen were searching for a pastor for their parish. They asked if they could make an appointment at the Fertile parsonage for an interview. A date was agreed on, and Carrol had baked a pie for them at their coming. After the interview, no assurances were given for a call. It was necessary for the congregation to vote on their recommendation.

The committee came from Trinity Lutheran Church in Ellsworth, Iowa. Meanwhile, before any call came, Carrol and I out of curiosity journeyed down to Ellsworth to look over our possible future parish. The parsonage was a two story home with a fireplace which had recently been built. The church was of modern day architecture designed by Sovik and Co. of Northfield, Minnesota. Indeed, it was an attractive call in a small town located about 20 miles north of Ames, Iowa. The town was about 600 population, and its main industry was a cooperative turkey processing plant. Thousands of turkeys were being raised by each farmer in that area as a productive source of income.

The letter of call came to me about three weeks later offering a salary of \$5500. This was an increase of \$1500 which we were currently receiving. (We were unable to buy a new car at Fertile because of lack of funds).

## **The Ellsworth Parish**

Trinity Lutheran was a part of a two point parish with Salem Lutheran near Radcliffe, Iowa, as a sister congregation. However, Trinity had decided to go on their own, separating ties with Salem, which disgruntled the district president. Trinity was being served by Pastor C.J. Naglestad who had ministered for 38 years as his only parish. And now he was to retire. We were told that while he carried on a rich spiritual ministry in the parish, often walking up

and down the streets of Ellsworth at nights praying for his members, it was time for a change. We met him and his lovely wife before accepting the call, and sensed that he would be very supportive of a new pastor who would come. He was later to move to Ames into a home which the Trinity congregation had contributed \$20,000 for its purchase.

I was at peace in accepting the call, and when we moved into the parsonage, it was like moving into paradise. The parsonage was located a half block from the church.

The people at Trinity were most supportive of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and its mission, which was a sweet taste in my mouth to me after coping with the negative spirit of the Fertile parish toward the ELC. The people of Trinity included our family into many of their social activities, and we spent a great deal of time accepting invitations to birthday parties and other occasions. We have a special memory of the custodian couple at the church in the persons of Perry and Nellie Peterson. They went out of their way to make things pleasant for me in the church. The church property was kept spick and span at all times.

At that time, Ellsworth still had its own elementary and high school. I recall visiting with the superintendent in his office one day at which time he asked me the question, "What is your attitude toward dancing?" Apparently, my predecessor had made it known to the congregation his opposition to dancing, movie going, and card playing. The question stunned me, and my theology still adhered to the spirit of legalism. I was yet to grow in my understanding of the meaning of grace.

Ellsworth High School was known throughout the state for its basketball teams, especially among the girls. Even after a consolidation with what was to be the South Hamilton High School, the girls before each game would gather in a circle on the playing floor for a moment of prayer.

One tragedy stands out in my mind at Ellsworth. I had planned a trip to Minneapolis for the confirmands of our church to visit the seminary, Augsburg Publishing House, the Gateway Gospel Mission, and the hospital for the mentally retarded at Fairbault, Minnesota. We were to leave on a certain weekend. I had set up the schedule at these various places. However, the girl's basketball team coach came to my office to see me about changing my plans since the girls needed the practice for an upcoming game. I was frustrated at his request and tried to explain to him the priorities that our youth needed to have. No promises or changes were made on my part which I sensed caused the coach to leave my office with anger.

Later that morning, I received a desperate telephone call from someone north of town telling me to come out to the scene of a terrible accident which involved three of our members. I immediately drove out to a country intersection where two cars had crashed together. In one car was a father and two of his daughters, both of whom were star basketball players.

The father, Elston Danielson and his daughter Rae Jean were lying dead in the ditch with their bodies covered. Elston was one of our church trustees. His other daughter, Mary, was being transported to the Ames hospital critically injured. A young man driving the other car had hit them broadside, and received only minor injuries. He and his family had been friends to the Danielson family. Apparently, he had entered the intersection at excessive speed. I sat on the ridge of the ditch with my heart pounding. How would I minister to this family in such a crisis?

Arranging for a double funeral at the church was a painful experience for me with two caskets at the front of the sanctuary. And I tried to convey a message of comfort to the family and friends. I did receive commendation for my words from many people including the sports newscaster from Des Moines who was there for the service. This tragedy, of course, cancelled out our trip to Minneapolis, and I wondered what the coach of that girls' basketball team thought.

Fortunately, Mary survived the accident, but upon my calls upon her, she could not remember what had happened. In fact, to this day, she cannot recall the circumstances of the accident. Today, she and Paul Hill, her husband, have three children.

Some years later, Arlie, Elston's widow, married a man whose wife had died of cancer. He has since deceased. And Arlie is now about 86 years old.

At Ellsworth, we had next door neighbors, the Olson's, with whom we spent much time. When we first came, we learned that Merlyn never attended church. I suggested to Thelma, his wife, that through her prayers and love for him, the Holy Spirit would speak to him, even if it took some catastrophe to bring it about.

The very next day, Merlyn was driving to Webster City, a town northwest of Ellsworth, and somehow rolled his car with him in it into the ditch. He was taken to the Webster City hospital. Afterwards, he remarked, "What if I had been killed, I wouldn't have been ready!" From that day on, Merlyn changed in his spiritual attitude toward God and His church. We were to enjoy many trips together to various places in Iowa.

One early morning, Carrol became very ill with severe pain in her abdominal area. I called our local doctor at Jewell, Iowa, Dr. Carl Heise, and asked him what I should do. He sleepily suggested I give her two aspirins and call back in the morning if the pain were still there. By morning, the pain was gone, but I persuaded her to go and see him to rule out any serious problem. He responded that "she probably just had a good gut ache." However, he took a blood test, and learned that she had a 28,000 white blood cell count. Immediately, he referred us to Mary Greeley at Ames, remarking that she probably had an appendix that ruptured, and she needed immediate surgery. He exclaimed, "I have had a lot of appendicitis cases but hadn't lost one yet."

We quickly journeyed to Ames. Since I was to have a funeral that day, I dropped her off for the surgery, and told her that I would come down as soon as possible after the funeral. Dr. Bliss was the surgeon. He asked, "Where is your husband?" to which Carrol replied, "Oh, he has a funeral scheduled for this morning." Indignantly, he said, "I will not operate unless you have someone with you here." Carrol suggested that Verna Thoreson be called to be there with her during the surgery. Fortunately, gangrene had not set in, and the operation was a success. We were thankful to a gracious God who saw her through this ordeal. By the time I came down, the surgery was over, and she was to remain in the hospital for several days.

The people were very generous to our family especially at Christmas time by bringing flowers and food. One specialty which was popular in their gift giving was a frozen turkey. Often we would receive as many two dozen turkeys during a single Christmas season for our freezer. One day, a man brought about the 20<sup>th</sup> turkey that year, and our daughter, Ruth, answered the door. She was about age 4. When she saw it, she placed her hands on her hips and shouted by to her mother, "Another turkey, Mom, another turkey!" The man told me later that he was the man who brought it and had heard Ruth's words. He was Curtis Johnson. Curt and his wife, Carolyn, were very supportive of our ministry at Trinity.

Another highlight of my ministry at Ellsworth was to take a group of boys to the Wilderness Canoe Base in northern Minnesota and over the border into Canada for about ten days. We were to portage from lake to lake carrying our canoes, food, and gear. We were expected to catch enough fish for our meat supply, which we did. On one trip, we camped below a dam, and two of our boys were in a canoe trying to run up to the dam as closely as possible. One of them was not wearing a life jacket! The canoe capsized and we who were on shore did not see them for about three or four minutes. Fortunately, their heads bobbed up, and they were hauled into shore. I thought of the possibility of having to bring two corpses home from that trip. It sobered our boys for the rest of the journey, and they took seriously as to whether they were ready to meet their Lord. On each trip we had a Christian Cherokee Indian guide who helped me to control the boys. However, after tough days of exercise, there was no need to get the boys to bed in their tents at nights.

There was one hobby which I began doing at Ellsworth. With my photographic skills, I would take black and white photos with my 35 mm camera, and blow them up into murals. I would develop the large sheets of paper on the basement floor with sponges, and then wash them in the bath tub. I would then give them a sepia tone, after which I would mount them on poster board and oil paint them. I made a goodly number of these of our family and of other families in the parish and succeeding parishes. I also made large color prints of the churches we served, and they were hung on the walls of their Fellowship Halls. Some still hang there.

We bought our first and only camping fold-down trailer at Ellsworth. It was a used unit for which I paid \$400. Our first experience in using it was at Clear Lake, Iowa, parking it for two nights at the public camping area there. The first night, it rained five inches, and the tent

leaked and we were all thoroughly soaked. We had to take all our bed clothing and such over to a family from Ellsworth who were renting a cabin on the lake.

I became involved in another building program at Trinity. We were in need of space for more Sunday School rooms. An addition was built south of the church including a Fireside Room where the youth had many of their meetings, and where mourners gathered for a family service before a funeral. The cost of the project was paid for in a short time, inasmuch as our Trinity members saw the need to extend our facilities for Kingdom work. Better yet, the congregation continued to support our mission efforts on a regular basis.

Another opportunity which the Trinity congregation was to grant me was a brief sabbatical for three months to attend a pastoral clinical training course at Fairview Hospital in Minneapolis. Our chaplain supervisor was Gus Nelson who discussed with us the various types of mental disorders, and also carried on an ongoing examination of ourselves in relationship to ministry. The course was so intensive that I developed severe stomach problems for which I went through a battery of tests at Fairview. The problem was psychosomatic, and I continued to have stomach aches for quite some time. One of our responsibilities in this course was a part time chaplaincy ministry to patients at the hospital, and we were to write out a verbatim of each of our visits to them. It taught me to learn how to listen to their distresses so that I could better know what spiritual prescription to give them.

Our next two children were born during the time we were in Ellsworth. Miriam came during the girls' basketball tournament in the year 1961 on March 7. After her birth at Mary Greeley Hospital in Ames, I immediately journeyed to Des Moines to attend the game in which our Ellsworth girls were competing for the state championship. When people saw me there, they inquired about Carol's whereabouts. I announced that we had a new baby girl, and soon the news spread throughout the Veteran's Auditorium where the game was being played.

Our fourth child came less than two years later. Rachel was born on November 23, 1962 at Mary Greeley. A week after she was brought home from the hospital, my Dad died in Tucson, Arizona, from a sudden heart attack! He was 74. Elsie's sister-in-law who lived with her husband in Tucson called and gave us the news. Dad had died in her husband's car on the way to see a doctor because of chest pains that morning.

We had spent almost all of our vacation time during the summers travelling to Arizona. Dad and Elsie had come to our home every fall, and Elsie would bring pretty clothes for Ruth and Dan. However, the previously summer, we had not taken the trip to Tucson. I personally felt remiss about that.

After Dad's sudden death, Elsie had insisted that I fly to Tucson in time for a memorial service there the next evening after which the next day they were to fly the body home to Jackson for another service and burial. I contacted the airport in Des Moines for possible purchase of

tickets, but I could not make connections in time to attend the evening service in Tucson. I called back and suggested that I journey to Jackson to make funeral arrangements there. Sadly, Elsie was not happy with my decision inasmuch as she wanted me to fly to Jackson with her. I reasoned that with a new born baby in our home, there would be problems for Carrol to come to the funeral in Jackson. It was a very confusing and frustrating time for us.

She finally agreed to my plan, and the next day after the Sunday morning service, I journeyed to Jackson. I had announced to the congregation my father's death. In fact, they wondered how I could preach that day. That afternoon, I journeyed to Jackson and did my best to make arrangements with the mortician, Sathe and Son. I stayed at the Backmann home.

Dad's body was airlifted to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and Dad's sister and husband, Meta and Henry Ebeling and I journeyed to Sioux Falls to pick up Elsie. Elsie's sister-in-law had come with her. It was an awkward time for all of us. I regret to this day that I had not flown to Tucson to accompany Elsie back to Jackson, although I could not have made it to the memorial service there.

On the day of the funeral, Carrol was able to come to the funeral service with Curtis and Carolyn Johnson bringing her. After the service, we invited Elsie to come to Ellsworth and stay with us for Christmas. There were some tense moments during this period. Elsie then wanted to take a train to Minneapolis where her sister, Lena Bondo, lived. I then took her to Iowa Falls to meet the train to the Twin Cities during which time, as we later learned, her baggage was placed on another train. This experience aggravated our relationship even more. In retrospect, I should have driven her all the way to Minneapolis, but my parish duties were a priority! Again, I admit regrets over my lack of concern for her feelings and loss. All of this was to lead to sad memories later.

A month or so later, I was billed by Elsie's lawyer for my father's estate taxes. Dad had willed the 151 acre farm near Jackson to me for life estate, but Elsie was to receive the income from it for the rest of her life. At that time we did not have enough money available to pay the amount of the tax. In re-reading the will, it was stated that all taxes were to be taken out of the estate. Again, in frustration, Carrol and I with our two babies journeyed to Jackson to meet with her lawyer, and I showed him the terms of the will. He apologized and promised to notify Elsie of his error. Somehow, Elsie learned that I had been to see her lawyer, and was furiously angry. The next day or so, I wrote the lawyer and suggested that he should pay the bill for his error, which he refused to do. Again, I have regrets. I should have made arrangements to pay the tax on the installment plan. Consequently, my relationship to Elsie from that day on became cold, and she refused to have anything to do with our family.

Meanwhile in spite of my weaknesses, while we were at Trinity, the worship attendance grew. I sensed that the Holy Spirit was at work in the hearts of people. We adopted two Sunday morning services at which often a total of over 400 worshipers attended. Membership was

about 600. I have always regarded Trinity as one of the most supportive congregations that I served during our almost 8 years of ministry there.

One Sunday, another call committee appeared. They came from Bricelyn Lutheran Church in Bricelyn, Minnesota. The following week, the committee met with us at the parsonage. They had just lost their pastor whom they esteemed in high regard. When the letter of call came, I had more apprehension. Bricelyn was a town of about 800 people with a more progressive business district than Ellsworth. The main industry there was a corn processing plant. Consequently, farmers raised reasonably large fields of sweet corn. The church was beautiful, and the parsonage had just been built with the previous pastor having lived in it for only about six months.

## **The Bricelyn Parish**

We made our move in the winter time. The day we moved, an elderly gentleman had died, and I was asked to come back to Ellsworth for the funeral after our move. It made for a stressful time when snow and ice on the roads were a problem. It did create a sermon theme for the funeral service three days later, "Moving Time!"

The Sunday came for my installation at Bricelyn Lutheran was to take place. The president of the Southwestern Minnesota District was Dr. Edward Hansen. He was to install me. His wife, Shirley, was Elsie's niece by marriage, and during the course of the day, in my office, he confronted me with the alienation that had taken place between Elsie and myself. I sensed that he was more in sympathy with Elsie's position, and this made for a tense day for me and my family. In my effort to explain what had transpired after Dad's death, he seemed reluctant to pursue the matter any further. Nevertheless, we parted on a friendly note before the day was over.

The congregation sponsored a reception for our family on the Sunday afternoon of my installation. Neighboring pastors were invited, and each of them brought a greeting. I recall one of them remarking, "You will have big shoes to fill." My predecessor had been Pastor Elder Bentley who had received a call to Immanuel Lutheran in St. Paul, Minnesota. This statement frightened me even as I was to begin my ministry there.

Carrol and I soon sensed that the spiritual life of the Bricelyn congregation was not as deep as we had experienced in Ellsworth. Alcohol problems prevailed amongst its members. And I spent a great deal of time dealing with families who encountered this struggle within their families. One social problem was that the local American Legion sponsored a liquor bar in their local building.

Church attendance was good, however, and I enjoyed a sizable adult class on Sunday

mornings. One weekend, a Lutheran Youth Encounter group came from Waldorf College and met with our young people. They had such an impact upon our youth that the Bricelyn Lutheran Luther League perpetuated their own singing and sharing group. Ruth and Dan were a part of the group, and it revived the spiritual life of the whole congregation. They presented programs not only in the Bricelyn church but in neighboring congregations as well. At one program, one boy made the remark that their group had made their pastor "smile."

Since we were closer to lake country, we purchased our first run about motor boat, a used Silverline with a motor of the Scott family which has become obsolete today. Although it gave us some problems, we spent very little money on repairs. The cost of the boat was originally \$1,000. During our summer vacation time, we would journey to Clamshell Lake which was a part of the Whitefish chain near Pequot Lakes, Minnesota, and rent a cabin for a week. It was there that Ruth and Dan both learned how to water ski. And of course, Dan and I went fishing together. It was on Whitefish that I caught my first 15 lb. northern pike!

This happened when Dan and I were fishing in the bay at Clamshell. Both of us were casting, and the lure Dan was using out of my tackle box hit my chin and wedged its way all the way through my flesh so that the barb was sticking out. It was necessary to go into the doctor at Pine River and have him clip off the barb so that the lure could be released from my chin. I lamented the loss of my daredevil lure.

Prior our purchase of our runabout, I had bought a green 12 foot wooden boat from Carrol's brother, Bud, for \$25.00 which we carried on top of the car, and I had a small old 5 horsepower engine I carried in the trunk. After spending our week at Clamshell, we would journey up to Bottineau, North Dakota, where we spent two and a half weeks with Carrol's parents who had moved there from Souris. In order to get our family out of their small home, they would rent for us a cottage on Lake Metigoshi in the Turtle Mountains where I did a lot of fishing. In those days, the fishing was good, and we had plenty to eat.

One day while Dan and I were fishing, I hooked a large fish, and in my attempt to bring it in, the line broke. Dan tells people that when I lost the lure, I complained about my loss because I was so cheap! However, the next day or so, we were fishing in the same spot again, and again I hooked onto a big northern, and this time landed it. In its mouth dangled the lure I had lost the previous day. It was one of those fishing miracles.

Another fishing memory of fishing on Lake Metegoshi prior to any boat purchase was the fact that I was catching a lot of fish that I could not identify. I suppose I had at least a couple dozen on my stringer. When I pulled ashore to the boat dock where I had rented a boat from an elderly fellow, he told me that they were walleyes, and that they had just stocked the lake with them, and if I didn't want to be caught by the game warden, I should get out of there. He could see that throwing the fish back into the lake would have been too late since most of them would not have survived. I confess here that I was a recreational lawbreaker!

Going back to Bricelyn , I recall Robert in our congregation who was an alcoholic. His wife had died of cirrhosis of the liver shortly after we arrived in Bricelyn. I had called on her, and she was very thin from her disease. When she died, he was left with three young daughters. The oldest daughter I had confirmed, and the middle one, Roberta (we called her Bobbi), stayed at our house a lot to be with Ruth who was in the same confirmation class with her. She almost became a part of our family since her father was seldom home. The younger daughter spent her time in the homes of friends who were her age.

One Sunday I was to have the regular Sunday morning services. Robert would always bring the girls to Sunday School and church, but would go home. After the service that particular Sunday, we saw from the parsonage the three girls waiting for their father. Our family ate our noon meal, and then Carrol and I feeling uneasy about the girls still waiting for their father drove over to the church to take the girls home. It was common for their father to be with some of his drinking friends on Sunday mornings, and we had hoped that he had not had the presence of mind to pick the girls up that day.

When we arrived at the farm that day, Robert's car was parked in the yard, but he was no where to be found. The girls looked for him in the house and in the farm buildings, but he was not there.

Carrol and returned home apprehensive about his whereabouts. We agreed to contact the local chief of police and return to the farm to further search for him. We spread out as we walked through the surrounding grove area. It was I who found him lying on the ground near a gun propped up on the fence. He had shot himself through the head.

As I approached him, I realized that he was still alive, breathing heavily. The ambulance was immediately called by the police chief, and he was taken to the hospital in Albert Lea. When the doctors saw that they could do nothing for him there, he was transported to Rochester. As I attempted to visit with him, there was no response. He was to live about four weeks.

The tragedy spread throughout the whole community, and Bobbi continued to stay with us. Her older sister stayed with an aunt in Albert Lea, and the youngest sister was taken to stay with in aunt in Illinois.

Meanwhile, vacation time came, and with Roberta with us, we journeyed to Clamshell Lake. About three days later, Robert died in Rochester. I was called home for the funeral, and of course, Bobbi, was to ride home with me. I told her of my own mother's suicide.

The funeral service was difficult. Prayerfully, I spoke of the grace and mercy of God in Christ, and how Robert's mind was dulled when he made his decision to take his own life. For him, it was his escape from his own misery, and his way to alleviate the unhappiness he was causing his three daughters. After the service, Bobbi went with her aunt to Illinois, and I returned to our

family at the lake. It was an experience I shall never forget, for it resurrected old memories for me.

It was at Bricelyn that Carrol was asked by the local superintendent to teach school. Because of the shortage of teachers at that time, he begged her to teach half days (mornings) in two of the secondary high school classes. She taught biology, and had a course in psychology. Inasmuch as three of our children were in school, except Rachel, she accepted the position. Meanwhile, Rachel was to spend her mornings with me at the church. Our church custodian, Racine Lura, did much to entertain her so that I could study in my office.

During the time we were in Bricelyn, Bill Ostroot served a two point parish at Frost, Minnesota, which was about eight miles west of Bricelyn. Bill had served at Fertile as my successor. And we have humorous memories of our times together with him and his family. When he was still in Fertile, and we were in Ellsworth, they would come down to see us. One day, he brought his tape recorder and explained that he couldn't get it to work. Knowing that I was supposed to be an "expert" in electronics, I tried it out and found nothing wrong, whereby I recorded the message, "There's nothing wrong with this machine. It's the fool that's running it—he needs fixing."

He took it back to Fertile, and on the following Sunday morning, he turned it on for the recording of the service. However, he pushed the "play" button instead of the "record" button. Thus, he started the machine, and proceeded to go to the altar. When my message was heard, the members snickered recognizing my voice. He told of how he practically jumped over the altar railing in order to turn the machine off.

He told of another experience he had at Fertile of how he learned the lesson of not tampering with the liturgy. In the old order of service, the opening absolution included the words, "He who believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Then the pastor would turn to the altar and pray, "Lord, grant this unto us all." One member of the congregation suggested that he wasn't using the whole verse from the Bible. It should include, "He who believeth not shall be damned."

Seeking to please this parishioner, he next Sunday stated the absolution this way, "He who believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He who believeth not shall be damned." Then he turned to the altar and prayed, "Lord, grant this unto us all." Bill and I would often laugh at the boo-boos we made in our ministry to people.

In the fall of 1972, another call came -- from Immanuel Lutheran Church in Harlan, Iowa. It was a larger congregation in a town of about 5000 population located in the southwest part of the state. The call committee interviewed me at the parsonage, and we learned that Immanuel was of Danish background, and I had distant relatives on my mother's side of the family who lived in the area.

My decision was one of the most intense in my ministry. Sad to say, I was attracted to the prestigious nature of the congregation. It had built a beautiful new church on the west edge of town. When Carrol and I visited the church council at Harlan, I was impressed with the design of the sanctuary together with a beautiful chapel and an array of Sunday School rooms.

Incidentally, when we left early that Friday morning to meet with the church council, Dan had left a note on the steering wheel of the car, hoping that we would make the move there.

However, the parsonage was old, and we could not foresee our living there. I suggested that the congregation consider giving us a housing allowance so that we might purchase our own home. To this they agreed.

After accepting the call, we returned to Harlan in search for a home. But there were no suitable houses for sale. Harlan was experiencing a housing shortage! During the course of our search that day, I experienced a dizzy spell and pain down my left arm, and Carrol felt that I should go to a local doctor for fear of suffering a heart attack.

Harlan had a clinic and hospital in the central part of town. I was referred to Dr. Larsen who was a member of Immanuel. Upon checking me over, he felt that I was being stressed out from our search for a house, and referred us to a man who had a home for sale in the older part of town. It had been remodeled but unbeknown to us, it was to have many problems. I offered a price of \$29,000 for the home in order to be sure to get it, since the renter had priority in buying it first if he wished. The deal was made upon that condition.

Carrol and I returned to Bricelyn apprehensive about the situation. On Saturday night, the renter called me on the telephone, very angry that he had to move out, and indicating to me that the house was not worth the price we offered. The tension for Carrol and me grew more intense. Was God trying to tell us that this move was not His will for us?

The next morning, Sunday, I was to begin the worship service at Bricelyn. Inasmuch as I had resigned as pastor of Bricelyn Lutheran in order to accept the call at Harlan, my heart was pounding, and I became very dizzy. I learned later that I was hyperventilating. After uttering the first words of the liturgy, I announced that I had to sit down.

Immediately, the local ambulance was called, and I was transported to Naive Hospital in Albert Lea. The cardiologist checked me out and put me on a medication program. A heart attack was ruled out, and our local family doctor at Frost, Dr. Hanson, suggested that making a move at this point in time might be too stressful for me. After three days, I was dismissed from the hospital.

Meanwhile, the chairman of the Bricelyn congregation came to me and on behalf of the church council offered to rescind my resignation. Of course, this would have to be approved by the

congregation. I conferred with the presidents of both the Iowa and Southwestern Minnesota Districts, and they both urged me to follow through with my decision. Carrol had urged me to allow the Bricelyn congregation to rescind my resignation. However, I felt guilty backing out on my decision, and agreed to what the district presidents recommended.

Carrol was not in favor of my accepting this call. She loved her teaching job in Bricelyn, and, in fact, the superintendent would not replace her until the day we left town. This was the biggest test of our marriage. I was stubborn, and aspired to a congregation of prestige! How foolish it was of me—indeed, this was not of God’s Holy Spirit.

Before making our move, Carrol and I flew to Mesa, Arizona, where her parents were now spending the winters. Her father and mother refused to give any advice on the matter of our moving, and our marriage relationship continued to be tense.

## **The Harlan Parish**

Upon going home, we moved! After the van loaded and took off, Dan went with me with our family cat to Harlan. I tried to supervise the moving process which was definitely a downer from the house we had been living in. Carrol and the girls came a day later in our newer car. (We had bought a second car while in Bricelyn, so I was to travel in that one). Both of them were Pontiacs!

The Harlan ladies helped us unpack and get settled. We did have a nice kitchen area and family room. The living room area was reasonably furnished, and there was a bedroom and bathroom downstairs. The bedrooms were upstairs with lower ceilings and one bath. We learned later that the roof leaked even though it appeared to have a new roof. I contracted construction workers to fix the problem, but it was never fully resolved. The old air conditioner went out, and I tried to purchase a new one down town. The dealer would not sell me one if it was to be billed to the former owner, and so I paid for that.

The former owner owned a lot of older homes in town and was renting them out. I confronted him about the problems we were encountering. He made partial payment of the expenses but not all. We were later asked by an Immanuel member if the Immanuel church council had advised us about the reputation of this man. The lady told us that “he was so crooked that they would have to build a crooked casket to bury him in when he died.”

There were a goodly number of sincere Christians at Immanuel who were very supportive, and included us in many of their social activities. However, hospital calling occupied much of my time inasmuch as I had to journey to the Council Bluffs and Omaha hospitals to make them. The distance was about 60 miles one way, especially to the inner city of Omaha. Locating them, initially, was a project in itself. One day when I was parked near a corner intersection

and had gone into a store to make some purchase, I came out to find the back of our 1974 Pontiac rear-ended. The lady driver felt badly and had insurance to cover it, but it became a matter of time and effort to get it repaired in Harlan.

Carrol applied for substitute teaching at the local high school. She had a number of opportunities. However, she was experiencing a piercing pain in her abdominal area together with nausea. The local doctor was not able to pin-point the problem, and she insisted that we see her doctors at the McFarland Clinic in Ames. This was a distance of about 100 miles one way.

Eventually, it was discovered that she had gall stones, and it was necessary for her to have gall bladder surgery. She was in the hospital for this for about 10 days. Our ministry at Immanuel was being tested constantly.

An interim pastor had been serving the congregation prior to our coming. I was told that he was aspiring to be my associate pastor. He had been the associate of the previous pastor. However, the president of the Iowa District again intervened. He advised me not to have him on our staff. I was never told the reason.

Eventually, we contacted Pastor John Mohr who was at that time serving in Sumner, Iowa. After flying over in a Piper Cub owned by one of our members to get him and his wife and showing them the layout of the parish, he accepted. They moved into a small newer home near the church and were very supportive of my ministry. He was also a powerful preacher.

We have good memories of our ministry at Immanuel. Certain families were most supportive of our work there: the Ralph Nielsen's, the Willard Olson's, the Pat Pattison's, and the Robert Ahrenholtz's (Marge was our organist). A new pipe organ was installed while we there, donated by one couple in our congregation.

Dan was happy with the school system in a larger high school. (Incidentally, Ruth had enrolled as a freshman at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota). At first Rachel was most unhappy when we first arrived at Harlan. One afternoon, she decided to ride back to Bricelyn on her bicycle to be with a close friend she had there. We told her to go ahead. She took off.

As I recall, I got into my car and checked how far she had gone. She was on her way home. When we asked her why she came back, she said, "I wasn't sure which we to go. Besides, I'm hungry." Eventually, she and Miriam made some friends and were able to accept our new location.

One highlight at Harlan was the youth group. Dan together with a friend, Kent Larsen, helped to spearhead a singing group in our church which included not only the young people in our congregation, but the youth of our community. The group was designed much like the one we

had in Bricelyn. It was an inspiring experience to see this group develop and share their Christian witness.

Carrol experienced frequent eye problems about this time in her life. She was especially afflicted with painful sties, for which I would take her to the eye specialist at the McFarland Clinic in Ames. One day, I drove her over for an especially serious eye infection. The doctor who treated her was of foreign extraction, and he pressed hard against her eye (for some unknown reason), and she went into a severe dizzy spell for which she had to be hospitalized flat on her back for two weeks. She was diagnosed as having labyrinthitis, an infection of the inner ear probably spread from the eye. She suffered from this for two or three years or more for which she had to be hospitalized no less than twenty times. Upon our move to our next parish, I took her to Mayo at Rochester for which she was hospitalized for ten days or so. Since then, she has not had to be bedfast for this as long if she doesn't get too tired. Today, she has been free of this problem.

In 1975, I contacted the new district president and informed him of the stress and health problems which we were experiencing at Harlan, and wondered if a smaller parish would be better for me at this point in my life. I had gotten over the ego trip that motivated me to want a prestigious congregation. Soon a call came from a two point parish in Eagle Grove, Iowa, to where we were called to interview. The parish was of the Haugean background, and the church council was looking for a Bible centered preacher and teacher. Ultimately, the call came. Dan had graduated from Harlan High School and was headed for Concordia College with his sister. Prior to his high school graduation, I agreed to buy him a car on the condition that he would pay for it in due time. It was a Ford Pinto.

When the call arrived, we laid out the fleece, and prayed that if the house in Harlan were to sell without putting it on the market, this was God's way of telling us that it was time to move, even though we had been in Harlan for such a short time. We allowed two weeks for the house to sell. To our surprise (and in answer to prayer), a new high school coach moved to town and purchased the house for the same amount that we paid for it, namely \$29,000. Carrol's father later told us how fortunate we were to get rid of the home since the foundation itself was in such poor shape. This had been our first experience in house purchase, so we learned the hard way.

## **The Eagle Grove Parish**

We moved into a parsonage at Eagle Grove. It was located in the west part of town, not far from the church, and close to the Al Jacobson's who had a swimming pool in their back yard. It was fenced in, but our children were invited to swim in it whenever they wanted, but always requested that an adult be beside the pool. Al and Betty were very supportive of our ministry there, and would invite us to their house for family occasions. Al has since died of cancer, and Betty who is now blind from macular degeneration sold that home and is living in a small house

near where her son and family live.

The parsonage was not new but nice. It had three bedrooms, a small family room,(which was cold in the winter time), and a suitable kitchen with an eating area close by. The living room was small, and the carpeting was a shag rusty color. As I recall, we had a dishwasher installed. I think that we paid for it with the permission of the parish. The one congregation owned the parsonage with the other paying a “rental” fee each year for their share of the housing.

The Eagle Grove parish consisted of two congregations: Samuel Lutheran in town and Holmes Lutheran near Clarion, Iowa. The two churches were about ten miles apart, so that I had an early and later service on Sunday mornings. Samuel was not used to vestments, but the congregation decided that I should wear them. Holmes Lutheran chose not to have me wear them so I wore only a clerical collar. Their church was an old frame church located in a little town called Holmes just west of Clarion. The church attendance was excellent there. It had a membership of about 150 and we averaged up to 100 people each Sunday. Samuel, on the other hand, had poor proportionate attendance. The church was a brick structure built by Al Jacobson who was a building contractor.

I had one interesting experience while serving this parish. Lake Cornelia was located east of Clarion, and frequently, I would pull our runabout boat over to the lake for some fishing. One day when I arrived, two other groups were unloading their boats ahead of me. The first was an elderly couple who had forgotten to bring their life jackets. I loaned them a couple of my own which were in my boat, and they were able to take off. The second boat was put into the water, but their battery was dead. Fortunately, I had jump cables in the trunk of my car, and we were able to get it started, and the group of two or three men took off. I finally managed to unload my boat, and started off into the lake. Soon, a boat with two men came chugging over to mine.

They were from the DNR. They checked my fishing license, my life jackets, and then informed me that I had broken an important lake rule. I had taken off too fast too soon from the shoreline. The rule was a speed limit within 300 feet from the dock. I was issued a violation ticket for \$65!

The next week when the local newspaper came out, my name was first on the list of police violations! It was to my embarrassment that the people in my congregations should know that their pastor had broken the law.

The Bible text for the following Sunday lent itself to our attempt to be saved by works. I shared my experience at the lake (to the amusement of the parishioners who had read my name in the paper), and told how I had done two nice things for two groups of people—lending life jackets to a couple, and helping another group start their boat motor, and yet I was convicted as a lawbreaker. In the same manner, our good works do not nullify the judgment of God for our sins. Telling this as an illustration seemed to ease my guilt over my misdeed.

Since we left this parish, the frame structure of Holmes Lutheran, has burned down, and a new brick church has been built with the congregation still quite active.

Both Miriam and Rachel were confirmed at Samuel Lutheran during the time we were there. The girls had made friends at school, but had no real friends at Samuel since it was relatively a small congregation. I fear that Miriam and Rachel did not have their hearts solely in their confirmation studies. Their classes were small, and the students were not as enthusiastic as I had encountered in former parishes. As for the program at Holmes, I drove out each Saturday morning to teach two classes, each having from two to four students. Somehow, Samuel and Holmes were unwilling to come together for the confirmation program. In fact, it was difficult to convince the two churches to have worship services together, including Lent, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and any special series of services during the year. Both congregations were supportive of the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement. Speakers from this inter-denominational Lutheran ministry were invited each fall for a week of evangelistic services. Attendance was always better at Holmes than at Samuel.

One blessing that we received from the Holmes congregation was the “surprise” food shower which the women of the church did for us every Thanksgiving season. It was a generous gesture for our family, and we received a lot of tasty grocery items for our pantry shelves.

It was during our time at this parish that Carrol continued to have her labyrinthitis problems and was hospitalized at Mary Greeley Hospital in Ames no less than 20 times. There would be periods of two to three days that she would not be able to stand on her own two feet. Finally, I took her to Mayo Clinic in Rochester where they were able to remedy her problem.

During the time we were in Eagle Grove, Miriam graduated from Eagle Grove High School, and enrolled initially at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. She then transferred to Iowa State University at Ames, Iowa, where she was to meet her future husband, Martin Carlson.

Meanwhile, Ruth and Dan served as counselors at Riverside Bible Camp near Story City, Iowa, during the summer. Ruth also served on an LEM team one summer which was not the happiest experience for her. Eventually, she graduated from Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, and became a parish worker at a Lutheran Church in Ortonville, Minnesota. There she met her future husband, Robert Hoel, who was a member of that congregation. During his time at Concordia, Dan met Naila Johnson who later became his wife. Rachel was the only one at home when we made our next move. She was now a senior in high school.

One Sunday in 1980, a call committee from Immanuel Lutheran Church in Story City, Iowa, visited our Samuel Lutheran service. It was Confirmation Sunday, and since I had been informed that this call committee was coming, I was very nervous. It was doubtful to me that I would hear from Immanuel again. However, they called me down for an interview. For my wife and me, this was a stressful session. Immanuel was a congregation of about 800 members

at the time.

Their former pastor, Clem Gizzelquist, had died from cancer and was well respected, and I was asked a lot of questions about theology and my stance on certain issues in the church. Our denomination had become the American Lutheran Church at this time which was a merger of Norwegian, Danish, and German origins. The Swedish segment, the Augustana Synod, merged with the ALC two years later.

We were shown the church facilities on Broad Street. The choir was rehearsing that night, and we heard their pipe organ. The church was a large brick cathedral like structure with an educational wing on the north side. Next door was the Soderstrum Funeral Home! We did not get to see the parsonage located east of the church since the former pastor's widow was still living in it. But we had been in the home when Pastor Harold Masted had served the congregation back in the 60's while we were still in Ellsworth.

After about three weeks, the call came. After about two more weeks, I sent a letter accepting the call. About that time, Carrol's mother died of a stroke out in Mesa, Arizona. Carrol flew out there to be with her father along with the rest of the family. She lived only several hours after she was stricken. I informed Immanuel of the death of Carrol's mother, and asked that we be given extra time in our move. They graciously agreed.

The funeral and burial for Carrol's mother was to be in Bottineau, North Dakota, which was their home. Meanwhile, Carrol flew home, and we drove to North Dakota for the service.

## **Story City, Iowa**

We moved into the Immanuel Lutheran parsonage in Story City in January of 1980. The congregation had laid new carpeting in the stairway going upstairs and the second floor level. The living room was large, and the dining room was just off the kitchen. The kitchen was roomy enough to accommodate an eating area, and there was a single car garage through a doorway just outside the kitchen on the east side of the home. It became necessary to park one of our cars on the street.

There was one downstairs bedroom plus an office just off the front entryway which we made into a den. My office was at the church next to a secretary's office. Mildred Egemo was the office secretary when I came on the scene, but she was older and had promised to do the secretarial work until the next pastor came. In a way, she was a pack rat who had stored dozens of old files in the cabinets, and it became necessary for our succeeding secretary to sort through them and dispose of a lot of stuff that was out of date.

Members of the congregation greeted us generously by bringing food to our house when we

moved in. The people were gracious in their support, and I found it easy to work with our organist plus the various boards. We had regular monthly board meetings, and an attempt was made to coordinate the decisions made by the boards.

Rachel was in her senior year of high school when we moved to Story City, and she found it difficult to feel accepted by her fellow classmates at school. She had been an active player on the girl's basketball team in Eagle Grove, but she chose not to go out for any sports at this point in her life. In fact, she had enough credits to graduate at mid-term, and she aspired to go to college. After attending two quarters at Iowa State University in Ames (just ten miles south of Story City), she felt called into the nursing field. The next fall, she enrolled at Grandview College in Des Moines. She took the basic courses and then went into their nursing program. She worked summers at Bethany Manor, the local nursing home, as a nurse's aide.

Pastor Enoch Hall was chaplain at Bethany Manor, and we maintained a friendship with him and his wife Grace, who was working as supervising housekeeper in the home. After about six months, Carrol was asked by the administrator of the home to be a geriatric social worker for the home which she did for eighteen years.

When I started serving Immanuel, my priorities were preaching and visitation, which I had sought to do in previous parishes. I spent much time in sermon preparation, and attempted to call on all the member homes of the congregation within the first year. After about three years, our church membership increased to about 1000 baptized souls. Members of the congregation felt that I needed pastoral help, and so congregational meetings were held to call an associate pastor. In 1983, accepting a letter of call, Pastor Stephen Anenson came. He and his wife, Sandy, had a small son and an infant boy. At this writing, Pastor Anenson continues to serve as senior pastor at Immanuel after 22 years of ministry.

When Stephen came, we had the option of buying a home in order for the Anenson's to move into the parsonage. We purchased a five level home on Edgebrook Drive, and enjoyed living there for about eighteen years.

## **Retirement**

In 1988, it was my decision to retire from full time ministry. In my letter of resignation, I let it be known that although we would still keep residence in Story City that I not be asked to officiate at any pastoral acts in the congregation such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Inasmuch as I did not want to be a threat to my successor, the congregation respected my wishes. The congregation gave my wife and me a tearful farewell on a Sunday afternoon. Among those invited was Jerome Johnson who gave a little talk as well as representatives from the different organizations which I had worked with in my ministry there.

I did some pulpit supply in neighboring congregations, and did some local fishing mostly in the Des Moines River near Boone and at Big Creek Lake. Virgil Hanson, a member of Immanuel, had a boat and would invite me to go with him for crappies. I also tried to make some house improvements.

One day, I was on a step ladder painting some trimming on the southeast corner of the house, and the small ladder tipped, and I fell to the ground and couldn't get up. I managed to crawl into the house and call Carrol at Bethany Manor, and she took me to ER at Mary Greeley Hospital in Ames. It was learned from X-rays that my right heel bone was shattered. The doctor wrapped it with a plaster cast, and I was compelled to use crutches for a month followed by walking cast for another two weeks or so.

All this precipitated a period of depression for me accompanied by stomach problems. I admitted myself into Iowa Methodist Hospital in Des Moines in the mental health ward for about ten days. There were group sessions with other patients. I suspected that some of my problems dated back to my mother's suicide, and I shared my life's story with the others. Meanwhile, the psychiatrist who attended me put me on a high dosage of antidepressants. My stomach problems cleared up, but for the most part, I still did not feel well, although I did have occasional mania episodes.

After a year or so, I consulted another psychiatrist, and he changed my medication regime. I began to feel better and tried to resume my retirement activities.

One day after my retirement from Immanuel, I received a call from Pastor Les Gyllstrom of Bethesda Lutheran Church in Ames asking if I would come on staff for a year or so to serve as visitation pastor. Bethesda had recently lost its other pastor to another call, and I was to fill in on a temporary basis. I graciously consented, and after I came on staff, the congregation asked me to stay on for an indefinite period of time even after they got their next pastor. Sadly, after twelve years of ministry, Pastor Les Gyllstrom accepted a call to Edison Lutheran Church in Chicago. After about three years there, he became ill with colon and liver cancer, and has since died. He was only in his mid 50's.

At this writing, I have served sixteen years as visitation pastor of Bethesda, which has been my longest ministry, although it has only been part time. Initially, I preached occasionally, and officiated at funerals, especially of those I had visited. My main task was to make hospital calls as well as calling on the homebound and residents in nursing homes. I have since reduced my work load because of my own health problems, including major bladder surgery in 1991, an angioplasty in 1993, and diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1999 for which I received radiation treatments (35 in all), plus hormonal therapy, and at this writing oral chemo therapy. It has now spread to my bones. I see an oncologist regularly for treatment and blood transfusions.

On June 13 of 2004, Bethesda hosted my 50<sup>th</sup> ordination anniversary. I preached at both

morning services. Members from congregations I have served were there. In the afternoon, a reception was held in my honor with many giving tributes and extemporaneous talks about my ministry through the years. Ironically, the man who hosted the afternoon program is my oncologist. The congregation also compiled a huge scrapbook of photos and communications of former parishes.

Carrol and myself have been blessed to make several overseas tours during my retirement years. We did go to the Scandinavian countries in 1985 prior to my retirement, and have since made journeys to Germany and Austria, England and Scotland, Australia and New Zealand, France, Italy and Ireland. We have also spent at least 12 winters down at Fort Walton Beach, Florida, and became involved in the activities of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church there. We first stayed at Pirate's Bay (at the urging of Jerome and Ardess Johnson), for two week periods, and then stayed at Seacrest on the Gulf Coast for as many as two months at a time. We formed a nucleus of friends, mostly from Minnesota, and often gathered for card games during the evenings we were there. I also did some golfing along the bay mostly at a 3 par course.

## **In Closing**

It is difficult to write a closing epilogue to my autobiography. I am now 81 years old and realize that my days on earth are numbered. Carrol and I have tried to "set our house in order" with regard to our wills, living trusts, power of attorney, durable power of attorney and, most important, living wills. Both Carrol and I have agreed to donate our bodies to science upon our death and have chosen not to have a casket or burial at a cemetery. We have requested simple memorial services with no eulogies.

After all, we are not saved by any good works of our own but only by the grace of God in Christ.

"Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am chief." I regret that this autobiography has been about me whereas it should have been about God who has blessed us through the years. Carrol and I are blessed by our four children and their spouses plus thirteen grandchildren. I have had the privilege of baptizing all of our grandchildren in their respective churches. I also am pleased that our four children have asked me to officiate at their weddings.

I thank God for a supportive family who have encouraged us through the years, and whose careers have not been only successful, but have been engaged in serving people.

My prayer is that all of our family will one day be reunited in the place God has prepared for us in heaven. I know that I myself am totally unworthy for what our Lord has in store for us, and I continue to ask God daily for forgiveness and mercy.

## Epilogue

*Late in August of 2005, I was at the hospital on a Saturday morning in Dad's room. He was quiet. We chatted a bit. Our conversations never were particular animated. This day there was little more to say. Dad knew the end of near.*

*His doctor came into the room and asked Dad, "So, Orville, where do you want to die?" He replied, "What are my choices?" The doctor told him. "You can stay here or you can go to the hospice house." Dad thought for a long time. He finally replied, "At the hospice house, I guess."*

*Four days later, on Wednesday, August 24, 2005, Dad died at the Israel Family Hospice House in Ames, Iowa. He was 81 years old. My mother, my wife, and I were at his side.*