

Franklin Alexander Virts Family

The following story was donated by Jed Virts and Cindee VanDusen Thomas. Nedra Sarah Virts was Cindee's grandmother. Nedra was the granddaughter of Franklin Alexander Virts who was the son of Conrad and Elisabeth Derry Virts. Franklin left Loudoun County in 1851 for Illinois.

There were fourteen children in my Father's family. Some of them had died in infancy. Dad was the youngest of his family. It's amazing to think that my Father's mother, Sarah Jane, lived to be eighty-nine years old, having had that many children. I do not know how large a house they had. My Father used to say they had a double bed in the living room, it would take so many beds for that large a family.

Father said that his mother, Sarah Jane, was particular, she always wanted her house to look nice. In the old days, a white, candlewick bedspread was popular. A bed with this type of bedspread was in the living room, it had to be because of the space. My Grandmother, Sarah Jane, would put thorns along the edge of this bed, underneath the bedspread, so that people would not sit on her white, candlewick bedspread. Father used to say that and it probably was true. Sarah Jane was proud. She wanted her living room to look nice and if people would sit the white bedspread, eventually it would look pretty ratty.



Franklin A. Virts

I can remember her. She wore a black dress, the older persons wore black. She wore a blouse called a shirt-waist tucked into a long skirt, the skirt probably went to the floor. Often she wore a little white cap, as the Minanite people wear, but she did not have it on in the family portrait. Women wore an apron when they were home. They wore a white, starched apron when they received company.

I did not know my Grandfather, Franklin Alexander. He died six months before I was born. They used to have what they called a watch fob. In Father's family portrait you can see the chain and my Grandfather Franklin's watch was probably in his pocket. That was a popular pocket watch. We did not have wrist watches at that time. The glasses they wore had no rims. That's the kind of glasses Franklin Alexander wore. After my Grandfather Franklin passed away in Missouri, some of the children bought an old house in Kansas for my Grandmother Sarah to live.



Sarah Jane Taylor Virts

When I knew Sarah Jane she lived in this house in Minneola, Kansas, which was about five miles from where we lived. One year I went to school in this little town. She lived there with one of her eldest daughters, Molly. Molly's real name was Mary. The two old ladies lived there together. The different children probably helped support them, we did not have social security in those days and I do not know where they got their finances. I remember they had a Damson plum tree in their back yard, and they made such good preserves. The farm where we lived did not have any fruit trees at all. It was a treat to me to go there and eat the warm bread and the Damson plum jelly.

I can remember when my Grandmother Sarah passed away. I do not know when they embalmed the body. The first day someone died, the body stayed in the house and someone would sit up with it. They called this sitting up with the dead. Someone always sat there, one of the relatives, and everything was quiet, they shut the room off and the whole bit. After she passed away, I think they shipped her body back to Bogard, Missouri by train to be beside her husband. I believe my Grandparents, Sarah Jane and Franklin Alexander were middle class.

My Father, Virgil Edmond (people called him Edmond), and my Mother Elizabeth Bell (people called her Lizzie), were married September 5, 1906. They were probably married in Bogard, Missouri because my brother F.A. and I were born there. Father was twenty-six years old and Mother was twenty-three years old when they were married.

Farming's all I suppose Dad ever did. I do not know what kind of farming he did in Missouri, but he must have been a farmer, because he was a wheat farmer in Kansas. In Missouri they would not grow wheat, they grew corn. The way they harvested the corn was still old fashioned. We could see the people going along, driving a horse pulling an open bed wagon. They would go between the rows of corn, pull the ears off and throw them in the wagon. Later, when they would get back to their farm, they would pile all the corn in great, big piles. They would take the shucks off, and rub the ears together to get the corn kernels off. They let the corn dry. The corn was used for livestock feed, and for cornmeal to make corn bread. They took the corn to the mill to have it ground. Vern said, when he was young, he remembered they would give the mill one, two or three bushels of corn and the man that ground it into corn meal would keep a third. That was his payment, I guess you would call it bartering. In the summer we might eat the corn fresh, but it would be field corn. The kind they had was not like the sweet corn we have in Oregon. It isn't as good fresh. You would have to have it when it was quite young and tender.

We left Missouri, and moved to a farm near Minneola, Kansas, south of Dodge City. My parents decided to move to Kansas because my Father had Asthma. It was damp in the winter in Missouri, like Oregon. The doctor told him if he would go to Kansas, where the air is dry.

Father was a wheat farmer in central Kansas. We did not own the farm. He said that taxes or something was so high, that it was cheaper to rent. Farmers measured the quantity of land they farmed by sections. There would be 320 acres in a section and Father farmed 240 acres. Early on, Father did not have tractors, he used horses. At one time farmers used a steam engine with a big belt, that would cut the wheat. They had what they called header barges. They were great, big, wagon-like things that the horses pulled. The wheat would go in the header barge. Men had to pitch wheat to separate it from the straw. These were all separate, little processes. When it came time to harvest and plant, quite a few men helped. They had to pay them. I know it was in the summer when they had the harvest. It was critical around the last of June, first part of July. They worked Sundays then, because if the rain would come, the wheat would all flatten. It would ruin their whole crop.

I went through many years in Kansas where my father would borrow money from the bank. One year we had hail before the crop was harvested. Then one year we had a grasshopper plague. The grasshoppers go through and eat all the grain and the stalks. That was before insecticides and they could not control insects in that era of

time. One year, in the spring, we had dust. They would have these dust storms and it would just cover the whole field with dust. It was flat country with nothing to stop it, no hills. The dust would just go right straight across and than you would not get a crop that year. It's a gamble now to be a farmer, but not as much as it was then. If they would have diversified and raised some other crops, it would have been smarter. The only way they had to live when the crop was ruined was through their cattle, milking and selling their cream, their eggs and their pigs. It did not leave much money for clothing, it might pay for the food.

There were four of us children. I was born in Missouri, in a little town called Bogard. I was second to the oldest of the children, my brother, F.A., was five years older than me. F.A. was named after our Grandfather, Franklin Alexander Virts. F.A. was probably born in Bogard, Missouri, December 2, 1907. Then I was born, October 19, 1912. Jay Edmond was born December 22, 1919, near Mineola, Kansas. My youngest brother, Samuel Simpson, was born February 7, 1924, also near Minneola.

The doctors would come to the house and deliver the babies at home. They would have to sign the birth certificate. I can remember when my youngest brother, Sam, was born. We had a neighbor that lived a mile and a half away. My Father took my other brothers and me there. We stayed all night at this neighbors house and the doctor came to my parents home and delivered the baby.

I think people in that era were very strict in discipline, they had to be, someone had to be boss. With that many kids, there would have been chaos otherwise. Parents could not have taken care of the kids unless they both were good at disciplining. My Father's mother Sarah Jane, was a strict disciplinarian and my Father was very strict in disciplining too. Mother was more calm and relaxed. She was very easy going, very sweet. She did not force us kids to do too much. I think we got away with a lot. Mother did not say much. Father was kind of loud, noisy and moved fast, that type of disposition. He had a strong voice and sturdy body. When we would sit, three brothers and me, at the dinner table, Mother and Father would do the talking. At the table, children were not really allowed to talk and they had to be very polite, they never just reached for anything. We would say thank you, and we were not really supposed to giggle too much. Kids always find something to giggle about. It was terrible. Father would say, "Well, either settle down now, or else leave the table."

The house where we lived in Kansas was rented. It was not insulated at all, just a cheaply built house. I do not know what houses were like in Missouri. In Kansas there was no lumber because it would have been so expensive. Kansas did not have many trees and all the wood had to be imported. The house had just one layer of wood and then the inside would be plastered. Our house was one story, but there were lots of two story houses, people could afford them. I cannot remember if our house had two bedrooms or three, but the rooms were large. There were two double beds in one room. Mother and Father had their own bedroom. It was a smaller bedroom. They just had a bed and a chest of drawers. We did not heat the bedrooms. We had a coal-burning heater. We kept the kitchen warm and we ate in the kitchen, the kitchen was a large room. In the living room, they did not have so many sofas and chairs as we have now. They used more rocking chairs.

People heated with coal and we had a coal stove. I do not think there was electricity until after I was married. There was electricity in the city before they had it in the country. They would have to put a line out in the country. For lighting we had

Kerosene lamps and something they called an Aladdin. The Aladdin put out pretty good light. They were an improvement over Kerosene.

We did not have indoor plumbing. We had an out-house, and it was not too close, I will bet it was 150 feet from the house. We had a slop jar, or whatever they called it, a pot in the bedroom at night. You would empty it the next day. That was standard procedure at that time. When you live on a farm, the source of your water is at least a hundred feet from the house. It was not piped in. we did not have a sink. We had a windmill and it was good tasting water. You had to carry the water in galvanized buckets and it sat on a wash bench, then carry it out the same way. They had a big bucket where you put your waste water. You would then take it out a way from the house to dump it.

When we washed clothes, we had what they called a big, copper boiler. It would be about three feet long and about two feet deep. That's where people heated water to wash clothes. It was placed on the wood stove. People burnt coal, they did not have wood as we have in Oregon. A coal and wood cast iron range. Washing clothes involved a lot of lifting water, putting it in the washing machine. People usually washed the clothes in the kitchen. A drain hose was then hooked on the washing machine to drain the water out.

People made their own soap in those days. They used a can of lye and they saved their bacon grease, which they had a lot of. That's about all home-made soap is, bacon grease and lye. They had big iron kettles, and they would have a fire underneath the kettle to heat this soap mixture. It had to be hot and cook until it was a certain color. Then they would put it all out in a card-board box or something square, till it started to congeal, cool down. They would then cut it into squares and it made pretty good soap. At one time I think they even used it for hand soap. They used it for dishes. When they washed clothes with it, they would shave it up and put it in this wash boiler with hot water to wash clothes. They did not buy soap. All the mothers could sew and they made all the clothing. They did not have patterns in those days. Vern said his mother would take one shirt, lay it down on the floor and use a newspaper to cut out around the shirt and make a pattern. That's what they wore. They would buy the material by the yard. Mom sewed all our clothes, coats and everything. She was an especially good seamstress and enjoyed sewing. Men did not change their jeans every day. They did not have that many clothes. You may have had two pairs of jeans if you were lucky. I wore a pleated, wool skirt, navy blue with what they called a midi-blouse, as the sailors wear, that collar, square in the back. It had narrow, white braid all around the collar. It had a little red tie, a silk scarf, that was knotted in front. I did not have too many clothes. The skirt came about mid-calf in length. I wore high top shoes that came above the ankle. I think they laced, but I cannot remember.

My Father's mother, Sarah Jane, was like most the mothers in that era. They sewed the boys' underpants out of flour sacks. The flour sacks had writing on them, brand names and such, which made for some very interesting looking underpants! There were many jokes about those underpants. However, Father's flour sack underpants did not have the writing on them. Sarah Jane took the time to bleach the writing out of the sacks before sewing them into underpants. I guess the fact that Father's underpants did not have writing on them made them desirable to the other boys. So desirable, in fact, that after skinny dipping with some of his friends, he returned to

where he would leave his clothes to find his underpants gone and someone else's, with writing on them, in there place.

I hated the winter, it was cold and we had to wear long underwear that was fleecelined. We wore long, black stockings over the long underwear. We kept the stockings up with a garter. Clothing then was bulky because things were made out of wool. We wore over-shoes on top of our shoes because we would walk in the snow out to the school bus. The over-shoes were kind of plastic and they had buckles on them.

Life for the country people and life for the city people was quite a bit different. We probably ate better living in the country. We could grow our own food whereas in the city, they had to buy everything and probably could not get as much. My Father would kill a pig, a nice big one, and cure it. We had home-made sausage. To make the sausage, Father used a big, clean, galvanized tub and would grind up different parts of the pork, the parts they did not want for roast or chops. It's funny how I can remember this, it evidently was good. He mixed it all up and tested it, to see if he had enough sage, pepper and salt. He would make a little patty and fry it on the old coal range. He had to test it because he made such a large quantity. Mother would sew tubing out of flour sacks to stuff the sausage in. You would stuff the sausage in and then sew the tops shut. They would hang the sausage up fairly high, so cats, dogs or anything could not get it. They fastened the sausage up on the windmill and it would freeze. The first steps of a windmill are pretty high up, maybe twenty feet. I do not ever recall cats, birds or insects getting it. It was cold, in the winter time, and the sausage would stay frozen. That was a treat, we had sausage several months of the year for breakfast, or ham. My Father cured those big hams and I got so tired of it. We had oat-meal about every morning or cream of wheat. We did not know anything about cholesterol then.

We had home-made bread, of course, if you bought bread, it was a treat! You did not get bakery bread very often. Everybody bought flour in fifty pound sacks. They would buy it every two or three months. They did not buy cakes or any bakery things at all, they could not afford it. They saved their yeast, as they do for sour-dough bread. It was a little on that order, but they made bread often enough that it never was sour.

We would bring the milk in, several pretty good sized buckets because we had two or three cows. We would strain the milk through metal strainers, with real fine mesh, put it in the separator, and the cream would come out one spout and out the other spout would come skimmed milk. We gave the skimmed milk to the pigs and chickens. The cream would be a high content of butter fat. We kept several gallons of milk out that did not go through the separator to drink. We would put some of the milk in five gallon cream cans, and take it to town and sell it with any surplus eggs that we had. Sometimes we would have as many as twelve or twenty-four dozen eggs to sell, it would depend on the time of the year. At that time, I think if we got ten cents a dozen, we were doing good, but everything else was comparable in price.

We kept the milk and eggs in a cool place so they would keep. We did not have a refrigerator, instead we had a little house built beside our windmill that was set up to keep food cold. Water would run continually from the windmill. It was cold water because the well was 125 feet deep. The water would run through this little trough lined with metal. We would put our milk in gallon jars, cover them over with a plate

and place them in the trough. The water ran and kept the milk cold. The water would go on to the stock tanks, two big tanks where the livestock went for their water. The surplus water from the tanks would just run down a little hill when the tanks overflowed. We had to keep our butter and anything we wanted to keep cold suspended in the water.

In summer, we had a big garden. We canned green beans and tomatoes. We did not have fresh fruit like oranges, transportation being what it was, they were too expensive and we could not afford them. We had a root cellar, just dug out of the ground and we kept our apples, potatoes, cabbage, carrots and things in this root cellar. It was to one side of the house, maybe fifty feet away. It was not lined with concrete, it was just dug out in the ground. It had a wood door, with a rope so you could go down the steps and pull the door down after you. This was because of cyclones and they had them quite bad. I do not know how my Father knew a cyclone was coming, maybe, he would see something in the evening, in the sky. We did not have cyclones in Missouri. Mother would get all us children out of bed, and down to the cellar where we would go with an old cold-oil lantern. We would stay until we thought it was safe and then we would go back to the house.

We had our own cows, we had our own butter, we killed our own pigs for pork and made cabbage in sauerkraut. The food was monotonous, because it was the same, day after day.

I think I was spoiled because I never learned how to cut up chicken. On the farm we had many chickens, but I did not know how to kill a chicken. I helped Mother cook, wash dishes, set the table, and make the beds. The brothers were younger, so I helped look after them. When you are on a farm, there is so much work to do. In the summer, when the boys were older, they would plow, we had a tractor then. My brothers were also expected to feed the horses and cattle. They also would have to bring the cattle in from the pasture to milk. I fed the chickens and gathered the eggs. I did not like gathering eggs, because in the summer, bull snakes would occasionally get in the chicken's nests, trying to eat the eggs. There was always plenty of work, taking care of livestock, cleaning out the barn and the chicken house. I can recall doing a lot of reading and probably did not help Mother as much as I should have.

I do not know where I got the books to read. I can not recall Minneola having a library. We must have exchanged books, with friends. In that era of time, we had Zane Grey, who is a western author. There was also a series of books about nursing. I read those books, they were mostly romances that took place in the West. One of them was called Shepherd of the Hills, it was about people that lived in the country and their life style.

My Father took us to a little town called Bloom where we went to Sunday school. Bloom was about one mile closer to our farm than Minneola, but Minneola was a slightly larger town. Father did not go to Sunday school. He would drop my Mother and all of us kids off and then just waited there in that little town till church was over. We would go to church, come home, have a big Sunday dinner and then our parents would take a nap after the big meal. On Sundays we kids would get so restless.

I was raised a Methodist, and girls did not go out with bare legs; that was a sin. We always wore hose. I was what you might call a rebel. I had a girlfriend who lived in Bloom, which was about five miles from our farm. Sometimes I would go with her

and her older brother to Bloom. I would go out of the house with nylons on and when we would get out the door, I would just take them off, probably put them in my purse or whatever. It was too hot to wear nylons, ninety-five degrees! When I got back home, I would put them on before I got back in the house. People also thought it was wicked to play cards. We could play Dominos, that was fine, but not Pitch, that was a card game. They thought it was gambling.

Mother and fathers played with their kids. They would play baseball and go to games in the afternoon. Saturday evening, most little towns had what they called band concert. A band would play and people would sit out on the lawn and listen to them. We also went on Sunday school picnics. In the winter we had taffy pulls at Sunday school parties. We went on hay rides. A farmer would have a hay wagon piled high with hay and we would ride it, ending up at somebody's house, having popcorn or fudge. It was togetherness and that was fun. We did not even listen to the radio much, it was run by battery and our parents thought it would run the battery down. My parents listened to the news every evening and took a daily paper.

Another popular form of entertainment was square dancing. I never really learned how to square dance. I used to hear my Father talking about calling square dances. He evidently went to square dances when he and Mother were young, but to my memory, I could not ever remember them going. The square dance would be held in big barns or peoples homes if they had enough room. The parents would square dance, maybe until midnight, wake the children up, take them home in the wagon and put them to bed. At one time we had a neighbor about half a mile away from us, people socialized quite often. They were friendly.

We also went to movies. You could go to a movie and it cost you a dime, in Dodge City. I think they were silent movies. The first movie I recall seeing was an Al Jolson picture. He was white, but he had black face on and he sang. We had Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy and all those types of movies. When we went into town, I used to go into the theater at one o'clock and stayed in the movie while my parents shopped. I would spend a dime for candy. I used to like a type of candy called orange slices. I would buy a great, big sack of orange slices for a dime and than pay a dime for the movie. You have probably seen these silent movies, how shaky and flickering they are. I would sit there for four hours of the flickering screen, eating a whole sack of sweets and have a headache every time I came out. I never could figure out why I had headaches, but it's obvious now.

I do not know if my parents went to school, many people stopped at the eighth grade in that era of time. It depended on where they were living, how far from school. I know all about my brother's education and they were not little angels. Jay was expelled in the Spring, about ready to graduate. My Father had to go to the school and he was so mad. Knowing the teachers, they probably let him go back to school so he could graduate. My Father believed in education. At that time, people thought men needed to have the education. My Father obviously did not believe that, I had a lot of schooling. I walked a mile to a country school with my older brother F.A., when I was in he first grade. We probably went to that school until I was maybe ten. Then my Father moved to another area, maybe five miles from there, and got a different farm. The country schools were consolidated and we went to school in town. The town, Bloom, had maybe 500 people in it. There was a high school and a grade school. Bloom was in central Kansas, about twenty-five miles south of Dodge City. To us, Bloom was a big city. After the schools consolidated, we had school buses,

quite similar to our school buses today, except they were not heated. You would get on the bus, early, maybe a quarter of eight, than in order to pick up all these students, the bus would go twenty miles.

The education we received in Bloom was adequate. The schools were stricter at that time in the equivalency standards to graduate from high school. I was taking a college preparatory course, so that I could eventually go to college. I had Algebra, Geometry, Biology and History. That was required in order to graduate from high school. I had a year of Spanish and two years of Latin. Eventually we had hot lunches at the schools. That was relief from taking a cold lunch. We did not have thermoses to take a hot drink. I graduated from high school in Bloom, quite a small school, I think there were six, maybe seven in my graduating class.

When I was in high school, my family had a car. Everybody drove Fords at that time. The car we had was called a touring car. It was a two seater, with black leather like seats. The seats were not vinyl because they did not have vinyl in those days. They also had what they called icing-glass curtains. You put them on the car in the winter. They were made out of leather and the icing-glass was clear, like plastic. The icing-glass curtains snapped on and fit all around the car to keep it warm in the winter. The tires on those early cars were very bad. They were made out of a kind of cloth and fiber. The tires were always having a blow-out. One time a neighbor took me to Dodge City that was about twenty-five miles from our farm. We had to get out and change a tire often, the weather was hot, about ninety-five degrees. That's when they had to crank the motor to get it going. You did not go anywhere very often. The cars were gasoline powered.

Before cars, people used horses and buggies. I do not think I rode a horse very much, I never did really like horses. I was afraid of them. We had a buggy that had two seats. They would hitch two horses to it. We had riding horses and we had work horses to pull the machinery. The work horses were big draft horses, sometimes even mules.

My Mother, Elizabeth, died in the Spring of 1927 on March 3 in Los Angeles, California. She never thought that anything would come to happen to her, and that she would not be able to care for us. She had Hodgkin's Disease, a type of cancer. The doctor's first suspected it in the summer. Her glands were swollen under her arms, and I think, or her neck, under her chin. At that time the doctors believed that if you moved to a warm climate, it would help. In Kansas the winters are severe. They would have snow on the ground quite a big percentage of the time and they would have blizzards. So, we left Kansas in the Fall in September.

Our aunt Mollie, she lived to be ninety-four, went with us. She was second to the oldest of the children in Father's family. After Mother passed away, she came and lived with us for a while. Mollie had divorced years before. She had two daughters, May and Helen. They were grown and married by the time aunt Mollie came to live with us. It was kind of rough, in those days, especially to find work and bring up two daughters, so Mollie would live with different people. When her brothers or sisters needed help, she would stay with them awhile. I do not know if her sisters and brothers paid her, they might have paid her enough to buy clothes.

Father stayed on the farm and planted the wheat. My oldest brother, F.A., was eighteen, and he could drive. We went in a small car called an Overland. We drove

from Kansas to Los Angeles. My Father had two married brothers in Los Angeles. Tom and Jim. Jim was a dressy, he loved to dress nice. I cannot remember what he did for a living, but he must have made a pretty good salary. People would call him a stuffed shirt. He just loved to dress. He was married to a little, short fat lady of French nationality, named Nellie. When Mother was so ill, Aunt Nellie gave my Father a list of bible verses. She went to the Unity Church and believed in faith healing. In order to console my Father, she gave him this list of verses from the bible telling about healing. Aunt Nellie later became blind. Jim and Nellie owned a house in Los Angeles, it had many orange trees at one time.

We rented a house that was furnished. My oldest brother, F.A., went to the university. He was a freshman and I was in junior high. Mother's health was slowly getting worse. She was getting so weak that she could not care for us. That's why Aunt Mollie took care of us. Mother passed away in the Spring, we went to Los Angeles in the Fall. I think she lived about six months. In 1927 they did not know what to do as they do now. My mother is buried in Los Angeles.

We stayed in Los Angeles, after Mother's death, until school was out. We stayed in the same house that we rented when we firsts got there. Aunt Mollie continued to stay with us because Father had to go back to Kansas to plant the wheat. He went home by train. After school was out, F.A. drove us back to Kansas. He stayed on the farm that summer and helped out. The following Fall, he went back to Los Angeles to college. I was little older and could do the cooking and wash dishes. We had cows to milk and the usual work of a farm. Father could not be inside to take care of my little brothers. We just got along. I am not sure how long Aunt Mollie stayed with us.

In Kansas, we could not get adequate house keepers to come and stay in the country. We had many of them and they would stay maybe two weeks. It was too lonesome in the country. We lived five miles from the town of Minneloa and in that era of time we used horses for transportation or old model-T cars. I think Vern said that anything over twenty-five miles per hour was really speeding along. So you can see that it was a big issue to go into town.

It was kind of sad, my Father needed someone to take care of us. So, in winter, my two younger brothers and I stayed with our Aunt Cora, one of Dad's sisters. We stayed with Aunt Cora in Hayes, Kansas for two winters. Then Dad re-married so we could stay at home then. Hayes is about 150 miles north of Minneola. Father drove us to Hayes in the car. In the summer, he would come and get us and bring us home. The reason we had to stay with Aunt Cora was mainly because my youngest brother, Sam was only three at the time and since all us older kids were in school all day, no one was at home to care for him. In the summer, I could take care of him. My brother Jay was eight and I was fourteen. My oldest brother F.A. was in Los Angeles attending the University of Southern California.

There is a teacher's college in Hayes, Kansas and Aunt Cora ran a boarding house where college students stayed. She fixed the meals and fed about eighteen students. It was a big, three story house. She was married to a man named Leslie Snow. I think her husband must not have been too good at working. He was from Kentucky. He was very good at entertaining people, singing and playing the piano, it was a musical family. Hayes probably had a population of about 10,000. I was in high school. The reason Cora and Leslie moved to this town was so that one of their daughters could go to the state teacher's college and live at home. They would not

have had enough money to pay transportation for their daughter if they had lived someplace else.

Aunt Cora worked hard and I was supposed to help her. She cooked and I was to set the tables, wait on the tables and make beds. When I think of her, and all the work she had to do, she was a good hearted woman to take us children in.

My Father re-married two years after Mother passed away. The lady he married, Beulah, had two children, Lowell and Maureen. Maureen was a pretty girl. She was two years younger than me. I was so pleased to have a sister. She and I would take walks Sunday afternoons. Just walk on the country road, because we were bored. We were not afraid in those days to walk on the country roads. The only people on them were farmers and we usually knew them. When my father re-married, I was about sixteen. I never could feel close to my step-mother, it just was not the same. I enjoyed her daughter and that was fine. I think my step-mother certainly tried.

I could communicate with Mother quite well, I never would communicate with my Father, because he was such a stern person. That's why it was hard after Mother passed away. At fourteen, I really needed a Mother, to discuss things with that I just would not with anyone else. When my Aunt Mollie was there, I felt as I could talk with her some, but she was so much older than I was. It would be altogether different from talking to my mother.

Somehow or another, my Father must have made enough money that my brothers, all three of them, had college degrees. My brothers must have had a selling instinct as my Father seemed to have. My oldest brother, F.A. took business administration in college and he worked in selling. He graduated from the University of Southern California. I understood later that my Father's brother Tom, that lived in Los Angeles, put out a lot of money to help F.A. through college. Some of my brothers said that Dad did not have any idea how expensive it was to go to college, because he lived in Kansas on the farm. Tom did not have any children of his own. He made a good living, he worked for an oil company there. I guess it was just something Tom wanted to do.

F.A. had a degree in business administration and education. I lost touch with F.A. He did not write and I never new his spouse. Her name was Zelda. They later divorced and F.A. never re-married. At the time of his death he was a district manager for Manley Transfer Line, a trucking company. He died June 26, 1965, in Kansas City, Kansas at the age of fifty-seven. He must have made a pretty good salary. Vern and I went and visited F.A. once. He lived in Kansas City, in a nice big apartment building. He had one daughter, Sharon.

Jay graduated from Kansas University in Lawrence, Kansas. His wife also graduated from there. She was a teacher. Jay was in the Air Force when the war happened in 1941. At one time he worked for J.C. Penny store in Modesto, California, as a buyer. After he worked for Penny's, I think he worked in a Sears store, selling and buying. Jay and his wife had three children, Jed, Robyn and Nedra. Nedra is my name-sake. Jay later divorced his first wife and married a woman named Patricia. He did not have any children with his second wife. Jay and Patricia are now living in San Jose, California.

My brother Sam, majored in English and public speaking. At one time he was on the commercial end of announcing. He has a nice voice, deep and husky. That's what he majored in college at Chicago Northwestern. He was also an administrator at a catholic hospital. He was head of personnel. The hospital was in Santa Clara, California. Sam was not originally Catholic but he admired the sisters and their dedication he later became Catholic. They had five children, Ted, Jay, Ellen, Anne and Maureen. Maureen was later killed in an auto accident when she was in high school. Sam and Mary live in Santa Clara, California.

I graduated from high school when I was eighteen and then the following fall, I went to Dodge City to learn to be beauty operator. I thought at that time that this was what I wanted to do. When I left home, I stayed with a sister of my step-mother. I lived with her for quite awhile, then an opening came up and I started baby-sitting in exchange for my room and board. The couple I baby-sat for belonged to a church, and they would go to church meetings in the evenings. When I would get off work from the beauty parlor, I would baby-sit for them and sometimes I would cook supper. This situation helped my folks out financially. They had been paying my step-mother's sister for my room and board. They bought my clothes.

I apprenticed to a beauty operator for what was supposed to be one year of hands on experience. The instructor spent an hour a day teaching all about the skin and hair. When the year training was completed, you took a state board test to get your license. I went so far as to take my state test to be a beauty operator. The test was in Topeka, Kansas. We had a written test and than a practical. I think I passed the exam, but I got married. I took the test in the summer, and was married in the fall. I was never really interested in following it up. I do not know what I would have liked to do, in fact, it's interesting, now that I think of it. The job opportunities women had at that time was few. Women could be a teacher, a nurse, a secretary or work in a store, and that was about it. Women were expected to stay home and raise the family.

I was about two-thirds of the way through beauty school when I met Vern. A close girl friend of mine and her boy friend needed a car. He knew Vern, and he had a car, so they decided to set me up as a date for Vern. Usually when dating, two couples went out together. The first time we met, we went to a movie and we just kept seeing each other after that. I think I probably was the only girl friend he had. I had another boy friend, but I think maybe Vern had more money or something, anyhow he was top priority.

Vern was working as a mechanic in a garage when we met. He was making ten dollars a week. In 1932, those were not bad wages. His family lived in town and he lived at home. Whatever money he had besides a little spending money he gave it to his folks for food. Vern was the third oldest in his family. From the age of sixteen, he had to work to help support his parents, because they had so many children, the father could not make enough money. Seem as he had fifteen or sixteen brothers and sisters. I always thought that was kind of rough. I think he was resentful, because he never had a chance to go to high school or onto college. Before we married, Vern changed jobs and began working in an auto parts store.

We met around May and we probably dated for six months before we were married. When he proposed to me, he did not get down on his knee, he just was not that type of person. The proposal was kind of a surprise. My birthday was on the 19th, and I

kept thinking he would get me an engagement ring, but he did not. We were out together, and I do not know how the thought came up. I think he said "Well, winter is coming on and why didn't we just get married?" I said "Well, that was all right.

We were married October 21, 1932, in St. John, Kansas. We eloped. St. John was about sixty miles east of Dodge City. I packed up my things and away we went. We bought a ring and were married in the parsonage of a Methodist Church. The minister's wife stood up with us. We did not have an extensive honeymoon, just about one weekend. Vern had to go back to work. There was not really a wedding shower. Some of my relatives gave us gifts, the usual things, dish towels, pans and such. When we got back from the honeymoon, we rented an apartment in Dodge City and bought a few things. I quit baby sitting and became a housewife and than a mother.

It was about fourteen months before our first child was born. We were married in October and Bob was born the following December. Bob's full name was Robert Vern, after his Father. He was born on December 5, 1933. We were still living in Dodge City and Vern was working in the parts store. Vern was in the hospital when Bob was born. It was a Catholic hospital, in Dodge City. I had a cousin who was a registered nurse. She worked in the same hospital. Vern was in the delivery room when Bob was born, the doctor allowed him.

When Bob was about a year old, around 1935, the people who owned the part's store decided to move to Colorado and buy a parts store there. We decided to mover there too, and so we drove to La Junta, Colorado.

An old man and woman owned the parts store. The man was pretty old, and they just got so they could not run the store anymore. They old lady had worked in stores like Penny's. She would do that kind of work, but she did not know anything about parts.

When World War II came along in 1941, all the men were drafted. You could hardly get young men that were decent help. They had one young man working at the parts store that was so slow and in such poor health, they had to let him go. They had to hire women and that's what people did. Vern had to teach the women to work in the store. Vern did not get drafted, because by the time the war occurred, we had four children. If he would have been one year younger, he probably would have had to go anyway, he was that close to being drafted.

George was born, November 9, 1935. His full name is George Byron. I wanted to call him Byron for a first name and Vern did not like it. After George came Gloria Elizabeth on May 24, 1937. Carolyn was born on January 16, 1940.

In La Junta, we lived in a rented house. Each spring we would go around, trying to find a better house to live in. About 1946 we bought an acre of ground and built a house out of cement blocks. We just put up partitions, no real walls. We never did do too much finishing on that house, just enough so that we could get along.

Gloria had asthma. The doctors in Colorado told us that she would need antihistamine shots about three times a week to control her breathing. It started as hay fever, but the doctor said it would get worse. He knew Vern did not make that good of wages, and these shots were expensive. The doctor said if we moved to a

damper climate, like Oregon, she might get rid of her asthma. In Colorado in the fall of the year there is ragweed and it was real bad for her. She missed a lot of school the first year because she had to stay home so much of the time for her breathing. She had to take first grade over. We came to Oregon in 1948, and it seemed to be the answer, she was not bothered by the asthma anymore.

Vern's parents had moved from Dodge City to Harrisburg, Oregon. Vern's sister, Marjorie and her husband, Gordon, moved also.

Vern bought an old truck to haul all our furniture in. He left room for the kids in back. He piled it so they could have a place to sleep at night. The four kids took turns riding in the back of the truck. We pulled the car behind, just like in the movie the Grapes of Wrath. It was an old truck and it would not go too fast.

We had always owned a dog up until the time when we came to Oregon. We did not bring a dog with us, but we brought a pet chicken. On our way to Oregon, we would stop for lunch on the side of the road and let the chicken out for exercise. After one of those lunch stops, we got ready to go and could not find the chicken. George cried and cried, because that was his pet. We went on, finally stopping again in the middle of the afternoon and we heard this noise. It was the chicken, it had ridden under the truck for nearly sixty miles.

I felt sad about leaving Colorado and going to a new place. We had lived in Colorado for a long time and I cried a little. Vern was sorry we did not move sooner. During the war, his sister, Marjorie, had worked in the ship yards in Portland, and the wages had been good.

We would have been in Oregon two weeks when Vern's brother, Dale, told Vern there was a job opening working for Rosco Hurd. Dale was working in a filling station in Harrisburg at the time. Vern was interviewed for the job. Rosco hired Vern and Vern stayed with Rosco for twenty-five years. While working for Rosco, Vern helped invent and build machinery. I know that Vern helped invent a piece of equipment they called the Swamp Buggy. It has huge tires so it can go on muddy roads and in the fields. Vern was a welder and I think that is what damaged his lungs.

When we first arrived in Oregon, we did not live with Vern's parents very long. We rented a house and it was located on Coburg Road, and it was a tenant's house. Carolyn, Gloria and George all went to a little country school on Coburg Road. Bob rode the bus and went into Harrisburg to the high school.

Vern then built a house in Junction City. The foundation and frame work were already up when Vern bought it. He worked about five and half days a week. Weekends Vern would work on this house. In the summer, after work, he would work on the house also. He would work all day at Rosco's, go home, get me, and then we would go and work on the house. We had to get a small house built in the summer so the kids could go to school in September. Much of the interior woodwork was not done when we moved in. He built the house gradually, doing all the plumbing and wiring himself.

Sometimes people wondered why we did not have more bed rooms, but the house had been started with two bed rooms, so that's what we had. Vern and I had one

bed room, and the boys had one room. I had a davenport that would fold out and make a bed in the living room for the girls.

Bob went through this wild stage. He would run around with this gang of kids, we worried about him. We would send him off to school in the morning, but if he would happen to meet up with a bunch of kids that wanted to skip school, he did.

George did not give us any trouble in going to school. He ran around with Gayle Lee, Paul Movay, whose dad owned the Chevrolet dealership, and Bill Paullard, whose dad was a doctor. Some of these kids' parents were pretty well fixed financially. We had four kids and had to distribute our money, feed the family, and try to get the house finished up, we just did not have that kind of money. George worked at the drug store, it was called Brown's. He worked in the fields before that, picking beans. He worked so he could have clothes as nice as the rest of the kids.

At that period of time, we had to iron everything, it was all cotton. I had an ironing board set up in the kitchen. I think it set there about two-thirds of the time. Carolyn and Gloria's skirts were starched, full skirts. Everything was starched cotton. They did not wear jeans as they do now, they all wore blouses and skirts.

Gloria was not an out going girl in school. When Gloria came home from school, she enjoyed baking. She also enjoyed sewing. She was not an outstanding student, but she made average grades in high school, she did not really enjoy reading. The only books Gloria really seemed to enjoy were a series of books on nursing. She wanted to become a nurse, but she could not handle the chemistry. We went so far as to ask our dentist to give her a recommendation at one of the places where people trained to become a nurse. Chemistry was too big of a road block, and maybe it's for the better. She is too sensitive of a person to be a nurse. After she graduated from high school, she saved her money by picking beans, and went to San Francisco to study being a dental assistant. She went down to San Francisco with a girlfriend. Vern's brother Tom, lived there and helped find her an apartment, gave her a few dishes and kept an eye out for her.

I think Carolyn enjoyed school. She was quite the reader. She enjoyed reading from the time she was in the second grade. She went around with a nice group of girls, that were well respected. Carolyn was involved in the Rainbows, a girl's club. Vern had a sister, Maxine, who's husband, Art Jones, was a Mason for the club. Art and Maxine lived in Oklahoma. Maxine is still active in the Eastern Star, they are associated with the Masons. It's an honor to be a Mason, my Father had been a Mason. Art signed Carolyn up to the Rainbows. She was not so interested in cooking, but she was in the band and played the flute.