

## **Reflections by Stanley Skoe - 1993**

Narrated by Stan Skoe, Big Bear, California, on 3 tapes in 1993, 78 years of age, for Gladys Skoe Barren. Gladys reserved the right to make some comments, ok'd by Stan. Edited again by Ralph Skoe.



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## **PA AND POLITICS:**

In the earlier years, I think Pa was a Republican. However, when Al Smith and Herbert Hoover were running for President, Pa was mad at Al Smith and the Democrats because they wanted to repeal the 18th Amendment, which prohibited the production, sale, and transportation of alcohol. Because of that, I'm sure he voted for Hoover in the election of 1928.

After the Hoover administration, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected in 1932. I'm sure that Pa converted to Democrat, and voted for Roosevelt at that time. As far as I know, he was a strong Democrat the rest of his life. The Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party was organized in 1918 as a third party, and joined the Minnesota Democratic Party to form the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party (DFL) in 1944. It was during the administration of Minnesota's Governor, Floyd B. Olson, elected in 1931; the Old Age Pension Act was passed. This gave older people a pension of \$30.00 or more per month. Olson ran as a member of the Farmer-Labor Party. A lien was put on the Skoe property for the amount of the pension paid out. After Pa died, Earl probably negotiated a deal with the county or state and paid it off at a discount.

I remember one time we were at a dance, probably at Birch Point, when word came that Floyd B. Olson had died. There was a room off the dance floor, where they served food. Pa and Andrew Nelson were in there bawling their heads off! They thought Floyd Olson was the greatest! However, there were lots of stories going around about Floyd B. Olson. It was said that he had a place on Gull Lake where they used to throw some pretty wild parties! Gladys-I remember a lot of talk about the Townsend Plan, I think emanating out of California when I was young.

## **PA USED to TALK to HIMSELF a LOT as HE GOT OLDER**

I can remember evenings when we would be outside doing chores, as he called them, milking and taking care of things in the barn. He'd be out there talking to himself. It seemed to be a private thing. He'd ask himself questions, answer them and maybe do a little swearing, but not swearing in an angry tone. We never ever heard Pa utter a swear word before Old Man Grilley moved next door. It was not very often, then. We noticed it because it was so rare. Grilley's swearing was not malicious, either, but unlike Pa, it was a part of his every-day vocabulary. (Gladys's comment-I wonder, does it really makes a difference, if you're milking cows or sitting under a tree chewing your snuff, if you reminisce quietly under your breath, or silently in your head? It seems pretty harmless to me. None of us ever heard our mother utter one swear word in her life. It would be quite safe to say, that none of the children ever swore in our house or outside, at least not within hearing distance of our parents. We probably would have had our mouths washed out with soap. It is called respect!

## **BARN CHORES, ETC., ALA PA**

Pa did all the milking early on and most of the barn work, but he expected us kids, when we got a little bigger, to clean the barn. We had to haul the manure out and help feed the cows. I remember we had to carry the manure out of the barn on an old scoop shovel. Naturally, we noticed that some of our neighbors, like Nesseths, had a wheelbarrow! We couldn't afford to buy a "boughten" shovel, or a wheelbarrow, so we continued to carry it out by hand. I'm not sure why we didn't try to make a shovel for manure out of a tree and fashion a wheel for wheelbarrow out of a block of wood. Could it be, that there were so many pressing things to be figured out, done or made by hand, that it was just one of many hundreds of other things to do?

Later on, the older ones also milked the cows. After we had kittens, it was great sport to watch the milker squirt the milk at the cats and watch them drink it.

Every summer our job was to herd the cows. Lady always came with us. She had a great sense for "herding" cows. Lady was our constant companion. It was sad when she got so old. She had large, bleeding growth areas on the under part of her body. I remember being told that she had cancer.

## **TURKEY or CHICKN, ANYONE?**

On special Sundays, and always at Thanksgiving, we had chicken for our Sunday dinners, but we never had a turkey as long as I can remember. Pa wouldn't have one on the place! I don't ever remember him saying why. Most of our neighbors around the lake, such as Nesseths, had them, but not us! We always wondered why we couldn't get a few young ones and put them in with the chickens. Pa could always find a chicken or two, but we never did have turkey. Ma, like all good cooks in those days, knew how to "make do." We remember fondly, Ma calling us to eat saying "Let's eat all that are here!" Gladys's comment-We were in Norway for over three weeks in 1997, and we were never served any chicken or turkey. We were surprised. I wonder if this turkey thing with Pa had anything to do with his early years in Norway.

## **HAIRCUTS**

For years, Pa would load all the kids who were old enough to get a haircut into the boat, and row across the lake to Charlie Johnson's house. Charlie was a barber, so when we came, Charlie would take out his clippers and cut our hair. There was a long time between haircuts, so there was a lot of hair to cut off. After the last head was sheared, we'd head back across the lake and wait another year for it to grow out again. Occasionally, another youngster would be old enough to go for haircuts so then we'd add another one to our boat. Pa must have gotten tired of that, or maybe he couldn't afford it, I assume he had to pay Charlie per head, or swap something, as was often done then. A third possibility is that the boat got too small. For whatever reason, Pa finally got a pair of clippers. We thought he was the world's worst hair cutter. The clippers he had were well worn, besides that, one tooth was broken off resulting in a lot of pulling and yanking, so we sure didn't like it when he cut our hair. It reminds me a little bit of my dog, Smokey, if I don't sneak up on him when I take his comb out, he runs and hides so I can't catch him. He probably hates his haircut as much as we hated ours. But when haircut time rolled around again, none of us escaped it!

## **PA, THE DRIVER**

Model T Ford Truck—I'm not sure what year it was that Pa had the old Model T Ford truck. In those days, the rear end of a Ford had a worm type gear. In other words, there was a worm gear turning on to a worm wheel, which in turn turned the wheels of the truck. There was something about those worms, if you put them on backward, the car ran backwards.

As the story goes, Pa and his friend, probably Bullis, had a problem with the rear end so they put it in our garage. After the

rear end was torn apart, they over-hauled it and put it back together. After much to-do, they got it started but it wasn't running good, so Pa revved up the motor. He stepped on low gear, and backed it right out through the garage wall! I don't remember, but I suspect that there must have been a blue streak of four-letter words emanating from the garage that day. They probably sounded like Old Man Grilley. It took them awhile to figure out what went wrong. We laugh at that now, but a motorized vehicle in those days, was probably as difficult to figure out as our VCR's and computers are today!

Bus Drivers—Other bus drivers I remember include Fred Gunter, a bachelor who lived with his German speaking father on a place east of us, Elmer Anderson who drove the bus when Emilie, Ray and I each went to Northome part of our school years, my brother Earl, after he finished high school and Bill Bronner, who I think, took the bus route away from Earl.

At first, they used sled and horses and took a "winter road" through the tamarack swamp back from big drifts and wind that blew in off the lake in the winter. In the spring and fall. In spring and fall, we had ice, frozen ruts and mud. Sometimes it too quite a "run for it" to get through the seemingly unfixable sinkhole on the swampy flats below the Bergville Cemetery hill. Most of the men in our neighborhood had not learned to drive a car, or any other motorized equipment, until they were in their forties. Their kids, especially their sons, sometimes thought that they never did learn. That include Pa, and some thought Bill Bronner. It still tickles my brother, Ray, who took the wheel from Bill and got them safely into town.

The first car we had was a 1918 Ford— Pa went to Bemidji to get it-magneto-carbide lights on the running board, etc. I hear tell that Stanton had some trouble with it related to the spark plugs, and broke his wrist at a barn dance at Nick Johnson's. Someone used a board to stretch muskrats on to bind Stanton's broken wrist. Of the six Skoe boys, Stanton was the one that was most apt to have a broken bone, have a tree fall on him, or what not.

I was quite impressed with our 1928---The only other car I had had any experience with was an old 1918 Model T Ford. In 1928, I was about 13 years old, so I thought I was an expert on automobiles. Pa got the school bus route that year, and Old Charlie Peterson was selling Chevrolets. Lloyd La Brie was the salesman who sold Pa the car. I remember when Charlie delivered the car to the farm. Pa had never driven a car with a shift on it, so Lloyd was trying to teach Pa how drive it. Pa never did get to be a very good driver, but he got so he could handle it fairly well.

We hadn't had it very long before it started dying on us. In those days, cars didn't have gas pumps. The Chevrolet used what they called a "vacuum tank" which sucked the gas up into the car. It was only working half of the time, so we carried a gas can in the car. Every time the car died, we had to take the cap off the vacuum tank, which held about a quart, and fill it up. That way it would run about 6-8 miles more. When Earl and Stanton got home from Grand Rapids after graduating from high school, one of them got a used vacuum tank. They installed it in our 1928 Chevrolet. It worked well after that. In 1928, cars weren't what they are today. (Gladys-I've got news for you Stanley, in 1994, our Le Baron would run a few miles and quit, over and over and over. We had to wait for them to order electronic parts.)

The 1928 Chevrolet was used for a school bus for the Consolidated School District. If you bought a new car to use as a school bus, no one else would bid lower. It was the only way that anyone around the lake could afford to buy a car.

Our good friends, the Urnesses, had a fancy Overland-once it wouldn't start, so someone got Tom and Prince, our two horses, to pull it to get it started. I guess whoever was driving it, ran into the horses and one kicked a hoof into the windshield. Another time the family started to church. They got as far as Du Bois, and Stanton ran into the ditch and broke a wishbone. Ole and Margaret Hoiby camped at Du Bois. He worked for Minar Ford in Minneapolis. Ole's daughter married an Onan who Marie ended working for in Minneapolis. Ole either straightened the wishbone, or showed them how to do it. Coincidentally, Emilie's daughter, married Cush Minar from Minar Ford.

There was much discussion about what to do then. They were headed for church and the service was nearly over. Mother objected, but they went to visit the Hansons in Alvwood. The road was muddy and slippery, and Ma was scared.

Stanley remembers the first time he got to drive a car. It was in 1931 when he was about sixteen years old. He got to drive around the lake. He also remembers that Dr. Du Fort had the first snowmobile around there. It was a Model T Ford with extra wheels on it and a devised track.

## **PRINCE and TOM**

Prince was like a mustang horse, very lively, and full of vinegar. Old Tom was a slow old plug. He was so lame that Pa used to lead him into town, Northome, to have his feet "shod". He required made-to-order shoes. In looking back, I suppose that was six to eight miles to town, one way. It did not cure him, but we could use him sometimes when he was needed.

One time when Pa and Earl and Stanton were gone, Ma needed water from the lake. We had a dray that we used to haul barrels of water on from the lake to the house. She needed the water so that she could heat it for washing clothes. I had never harnessed a horse before, so I didn't know that you are supposed to buckle the collar at the top, and the names should fit over the horse collar and buckle together at the bottom. In this way, the horse can pull without getting hurt. Not knowing any better, I buckled it at the bottom. Prince managed to pull the dray down to the lake, but when I filled the barrel with water, Prince refused to pull! Finally, I gave up, unhooked Prince, and left the dray and barrel of water at the lake. When Pa and Stanton got home, they went straight to the barn to find out what was the matter. It didn't take them long. They re-harnessed Prince, went to the lake and brought the barrel of water up. >From that time on I knew how to harness a horse properly!

### **RUTABAGAS, A BISCUIT FOR RAY**

Pa raised a lot of rutabagas, which he fed to the cows in the winter, along with the hay that was "put up" and stored in the hay mow. Perhaps that was a carry over from the "Old Country" but I noticed that rutabagas were laid out to dry on the roof of log cabin that Pa built when he was "proving up" his homestead rights. The cows would eat so many rutabagas during the fall and winter months, that the milk would get a strong taste, making it unfit to drink according to today's standards. We needed the milk, so we drank it. We certainly would have been hungry without it. In the fall of the year, when the ground was frozen, the livestock and horses were "turned out" so they could feed on the tops. There wasn't much wasted then.

One day, I found a nice smooth "horse biscuit." I rubbed it around in my hands and showed it to Ray. He was quite a number of years younger than me. I told Ray it was a special kind of potato and that he should take it home and have Ma cook it for "supper, " as the evening meal was called then. Ray was skeptical, but I finally convinced him. Ma knew what it was right away, and frankly, I wasn't too popular with Ma or Ray for awhile.

### **CHRISTMAS AT BERGVILLE**

Each year, at Christmas, we had a Christmas program at Bergville. Every kid in school had a part in it. I recall, while I was still a "dyed-in-the-wool" believer in Santa Claus. Santa always came to our program and we received an apple and a small bag of candy. When we neared this time, our eagle eyes noticed that the snow was not on the roof. We got all excited. We were sure that Santa had come down the chimney on the wrong night.



## OUR FIRST RADIO

As I remember it, Earl and Stanton bought the first radio. Radios were crude then, especially battery radios. They had 3 batteries, A, B and C. I guess A, B and C batteries are the same, the only difference was that they had different voltage. Today all the radios make there voltage from one battery. When the radio was new, it worked well, at least we thought so, but what did we know? We "kids" were never allowed to turn the radio on or off. Pa did that, and as I remember, about all that we listened to was the news for Pa and church on Sundays for Ma.

When the batteries went dead, they didn't last very long, we usually didn't have money to buy new ones right away. The second problem was that we didn't know how to hook them up. When we finally did get new batteries, there was quite a commotion going on while we all tried to figure out what to do, but hook it up we did! Later on we had a wind charger

## C. P. ELLINGSON'S LOGGING CAMP

C. P. Ellingson had a logging camp at Buboes, back in the woods a couple of miles. He brought all the timber and logs to Du Boes landing and dumped them near Du Boes, across the lake from Bay View Farm. When the ice went out in the spring, the logs were hauled across the lake in the water to the sawmill. Somebody at the school came up with the great idea that we should all skip school and hike over to the logging camp. When we got there, the camp cook made quite a fuss over us. He gave us cookies and all kind of goodies. We had a great time and we sure thought that they had a good cook! When we got home, we were expecting real trouble! It caused quite a stir around the school, but to our surprise, not much came of it, probably because so many of us had skipped. Even Pa seemed to take it in his stride!

## FLOUR SACK UNDERWEAR

Through the years each Jill and Jack

Wore this sturdy garb of sack.

Waste not, want not, we soon learned

Penny saved, a penny earned.

Bedspreads, curtains, tea towels, too,

And tablecloths were all reused.

But the best beyond compare

Was our flour sack underwear!

Shared by Dianne Slama, Lincoln Nebraska

### **MOUSE UP MY SLEEVE**

When I was quite young, I was, sent out to the barn to feed oats to the horses, a nightly chore. I was wearing a coat and when I put the pail down in the oats bin, a mouse ran up my sleeve. I was so terrified that I grabbed the mouse, which was under my armpit, and squeezed. I stayed out in the barn for some time, not daring to let go of it. I finally took my coat off and got rid of the mouse. To this day, I remember that night! Rose used to get mad at me because she always had to empty the mousetraps in our house!

### **MA'S VEGETABLE GARDEN**

The garden, of course, was an absolute necessity and our mother's pride and joy. Some vegetables, notably carrots, cabbage, onions, rutabagas, potatoes, pumpkins and squash, would last nearly all winter if they were stored in the cellar, or better yet, in the root cellar, which was carved out of a hill close by. The root cellar had two doors, and woe be on to the poor soul who left either of the doors open. By spring, the vegetables in the cellar would get pretty soft, you might say rotten, so it wasn't much fun to clean the cellars out each spring. When the newly planted garden started coming up in the spring, we kids spent a lot of our time weeding and thinning. It was not always by choice. However, we didn't mind thinning the carrots as much because we'd eat the small ones as we went along, wiping them off with the carrot tops, or on our pants. Bena and I had heard, and I don't know where the idea came from, that carrots were good for us because they would "thin our blood." From that time on we were chomping on carrots every chance we had. I'm not sure it would have been beneficial, even if it had worked, but we were convinced it would!

### **MAS'S RASPBERRIES**

Picking raspberries was quite a chore, one that was fun at first, but a real drag after awhile. It was usually hot out, there were many bugs, and the thorns were hard on our arms. In the fall when the berries were ripe, the entire family, with the exception of Pa who had too many other chores to do, went "raspberrying." At first we picked wild ones, for our own use or to sell to tourists. Later on, we picked mostly tame ones from Mother's raspberry patch. Mother probably had the

best raspberry patch around the lake. Besides all the raspberries that we ate, gave away, and sold, we canned them in two quart-jars, and stored them in the cellar the long winter months ahead. Earl was a pro in the berry patch. He could pick more berries than anyone, and he always had a clean, neat pail. We never could figure out why he was so good at it, but he certainly took after our mother when it came to picking berries. Many were crushed, so her pail of berries didn't look so good. A "clean" pail was prized because they were much easier to "pick over." It was essential to remove the "stink bugs" that might have gotten into the by accident, if you have ever eaten one, you'll know why! We didn't know at the time what Bena's problem was. She couldn't see what she was picking! I'm not if her picking got better after she got her glasses or not.

### **BENA'S GLASSES**

After Bena had had her glasses for awhile, there was some question about having to take her back to Dr. Garlock in Bemidji to have her eyes re-checked to see if her lens needed to be changed. Bemidji was 45 miles away, and the next closest place was Grand Rapids, 65 miles away, no small trick in those days, both time-wise and expense-wise, About this time, a "fly-by-night" peddler appeared in the area and stopped at Urnesses, good friends of ours who lived near by. He told Mrs. Urness that he was an "eyedoctor" and he could change eyeglasses without having to go to Bemidji. Annie Urness thought that was a pretty good idea so she called up Ma and told her she was sending him over. Well, he came right over! I remember I was pretty small, all eyes and ears, and taking it all in. We didn't get to see many strangers in those days! He had a case full of all kinds of lens and glasses, a very impressive looking set-up as far as I could tell! He sat Bena on a chair and had her trying them all on. He kept asking her how each one was. I remember all Bena kept saying was "I can't see very good, they're worse than my old ones!" All the time, Earl was watching what was going on. He was older than I was, and he figured out that this guy was nothing but a shyster. He was trying to get Ma to run the guy off the place! Ma was so anxious to save some money by not having to make that long trip to Bemidji, that she went ahead and paid the guy and let him take Bena's old glasses. Earl kept saying "Are you dumb Ma?" Are you dumb Ma? Don't do it!" The guy pocketed his money and made a beeline for his car. It was obvious that he wanted to get out of there in a hurry! About that time, Ma must have been getting second thoughts, because she hollered out the door "Hey, what's your address?" He hollered back "I'm the only Heinz in Duluth" and off he went. That was the last time anyone ever saw or heard of him around Island Lake! It didn't take long to find out, after everything settled down, that the glasses this guy hung on Bena were worse than her old ones. They had to make the long trip to Bemidji to get new glasses, anyhow. I'm sure a lot of people learned

a lesson that day! Comment by Gladys: When I was young, I always heard the phrase "I'm the only Heinze in Duluth," but I had no idea what it meant until now.!

## **LUTEFISK**

Lutefisk was a favorite of mine when I was on the farm. I've only had it once since coming to California, and of all places I found it in Garden Grove at a place called "Little Saigon." A Vietnamese merchant was selling Norwegian Lutefisk! The next time I get back to Minnesota, if the time is right, I'm going to hunt around and find some lutefisk.

## **ROLLING TIRES**

There were always lots of old tires around our place. In those days the tires were small, but they were wide. A favorite stunt, some were better at it than others, was to crawl inside the tire and hold tight while someone rolled the tire down the hill. I remember Al St. Louis could roll the tire further than anyone. Once in a while we would roll into a rock or a tree, but the tire gave us enough protection so that we never got hurt.

## **POLE VAULTING**

In high school, in Grand Rapids, we all had to take track in the spring of the year. Pole vaulting was part of it, and new to all the "country boys." I got pretty good at it and really enjoyed it. After graduation, I fixed up a couple of stakes, put nails in them so I could put a bar across, and measured to see how long a pole I would need. One quick trip to the woods produced just the spruce pole I needed, so I dried it out, cleaned it up, and used it to practice pole vaulting at home. I got so I could clear 8-9" which I thought was pretty good for those days, at least Emilie and her friends were impressed! Well, they weren't the only ones, I thought I was great, too! Pole vaulters can clear 20-30' nowadays, using fiberglass poles that bend, enabling them to almost throw themselves over.

## **FISHING IN POPPLE RIVER, ETC.**

In the spring of the year, when there was a lot of water going over the dame, no pun intended, we kids used to run across the dam at the "outlet," splashing through the water when the current was at its highest. One time I slopped and fell, and I was pulled under the bridge by the strong current. I was certain that I was going to drown. What a relief it was when I finally popped out on the other side. It was a long time before I tried that stunt again.

We used to do a lot of spear fishing in the spring. Many of the town

boys, Floyd Ball, Lenny Beach, A.K. Aaberg and other's, would come out for spearing. Being younger, I could only stand around and watch, those "city" kids were something else!

A favorite place to spear fish when I was older, was by the Neary cabin in the grass and weeds. In the spring of the year, a lot of northerns spawned there. With an old pair of boots and socks on, we would wade around in the icy water, armed with our spears. Pa used to get pretty mad about it and try to stop us. He kept telling us we were going to pay for it. Maybe so, I don't know. I don't have much rheumatism, but it was his theory that the ice cold water would "get us" in our old age.

Sometimes we used to headlight from a boat when we were out spearing. We would hand a nail keg on the boat with an old gas lantern inside. One guy would row and the other one would do the spearing. At that time pretty visible, so we were careful to watch out for the game warden. Sometimes we would sneak into Moose Bay where we wouldn't be as visible. We didn't use a light very long, so if a game warden saw our light, he couldn't catch us. It was illegal, and they took a dim view of it, but they didn't seem to mind if we speared in the river as long, as we didn't use lights.

Later on, someone came up with the bright idea of hooking a car battery up to a light bulb, and then putting the light bulb under the water. This made it easier for us to spot the fish without being too visible ourselves.

I understand that Earl was the only Skoe boy who ever got picked up or arrested for spearing. I hear tell that he paid a fine and couldn't get a fishing license for awhile.

### **JOE LOUIS-MAX SCHMELLING FIGHT**

I do remember one incident about Joe Louis's fight against Schmelling. Koppenhavers had the L.T. Grilley place, and on the day of the "big fight," Earl, Stanton, Leo Graff and I went over to Koppenhavers to borrow a boat to go fishing in. We knew when the fight was starting, and we weren't going to miss it! The fish were biting hard, but nothing, not even fishing, would stop us from hearing the fight!

We intended to listen to the fight on Koppenhaver's radio. To our regret, we waited until the last minute, docked the boat and raced up the hill just as the fight was starting. It was Leo Graff, I think, who got left behind to tie up the boat. Joe was fighting Schmelling, it was over in about 30 seconds. We missed most of the fight and poor Leo Graff missed it all.

BAREFOOT IN THE SPRING

It was quite a day in our life when Ma would let us take our shoes off and go barefoot. She was fussier about it than some of our neighbors. We used to envy the Knaeble kids because it seemed that they were allowed to go barefoot anytime they wanted to, even when there was snow on the ground. We couldn't figure out why Pa and Ma wouldn't let us do it. Finally Ma would give in. It was a great day when we were finally allowed to take our shoes off! Thank God that we wanted to go barefoot, because by spring our shoes were either worn out or we had out-grown them. In those days we were lucky if we each had one new or used pair to start school with in the fall.

Several of us were over at Knaebles playing one day, as we often were, probably Marie, Ray, Emilie, and I. We were down on the Popple River bank. Knaebles had bought some hay that had bailing wire in it. We were running along the riverbank, chasing each other, when both ends of the bailing wire, which was buried in the sand, got caught between my toes and tore up my foot pretty bad. There wasn't much I could do, it was bleeding a lot, leaving a trail of blood on the road as I ran home. All Ma did was wash the mud, sand and blood off; cover it with Watkins salve and tie a clean "rag" around it. In a few days I was back to normal. That was par for the course, in those days, when we hardly ever saw a doctor. If this had happened today, I'd probably have ended up in the Emergency Room, with a dozen shots, stitches and who knows what else! In addition, our hapless parents would have gone home with a hefty bill.

### **BENA AND THE BIRCH TREE**

I remember one time when Bena and I were playing over at Neary's cabin, as we often did. Both of us climbed a small birch tree in the yard. I got down all right, but when Bena was coming down, she slipped while she was still quite high up, and fell, landing on her back across a small windfall on the ground. She was out cold as a cucumber! Neither of us were very old, so I didn't know what to do. I wanted to run home to get help, but I didn't dare leave her. I was one happy boy when she started to move and get up. Apparently nothing serious happened, but we were so scared that we didn't dare tell anybody about it for many years.

### **SWIMMING WITH EMILIE**

None of us knew how to swim very well, we mostly dog paddled. Emilie was very young when some of us older ones, Bena, Marie and I, were down at the lake, helping her learn how to swim. After awhile, we tired of it and went up and sat on the bank. We left Emilie in the water practicing her newly learned skill. We could see her splashing away, and every one was saying "Oh, look at

Emilie, she's finally learned how to swim!" After awhile, it dawned on us that something had gone wrong, so we went tearing out to get her. She wasn't swimming, she was panicking and would have drowned if we hadn't gotten her out. Emilie had swallowed some water, but after we got her ashore, we found out that she was just fine. That was a close call. We were fortunate, living by the lake and spending as much time swimming as we did, that none of us drowned. We didn't have any swimming lessons but the younger ones were supervised by older brothers and sisters, at least as much as possible. I'm sure, that when most of us look back, we felt pretty lucky. It was very risky! The Good Lord must have been with us.

### **SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS**

Earl, Stanton, and I all slept upstairs in the same bed in the "boys" room. Because I was the smallest and youngest, I had to sleep between them. The mattress sat on springs but it sagged in the middle. As you know, in those days our beds were make-shift, we may even of had a straw mattress. Sleeping in the middle of the bed in the wintertime wasn't so bad, except when either Earl or Stanton would roll over on top of me. I never got cold, because I had two warm heaters on either side of me. In the summer, it was another story, I slept between two sweaty bodies. In those days we were lucky if we got a bath on Saturday nights. Bathing in the summer usually meant taking a bar of soap along with us when we went swimming and we would wash our hair at the same time in the nice soft water. In the summertime, however, after a long day's work with no bath, it wasn't very sweet smelling at night. When it was hot and humid, it was almost unbearable!

### **LIMBURGER CHEESE**

I came home from town one night with Limburger cheese, but no one would let me keep it in the house because it smelt so bad, just like "toe jam." The only place I could think to put it was on the back steps, under a pail. After Ma passed away, Beatrice and Stanton had moved their trailer house into our farmyard to be near the family. Evidently Beatrice and Stanton's dog, Wimpy, must have liked it because he ate the whole thing! This must have let an impression on Gladys, because she asked me if I remembered it.

### **STANTON AND STANLEY'S BIG FIGHT**

Stanton and I got into a fistfight one day, but I don't think either one of us were great fighters. All I remember about it is that we were really going at it, at least we thought we were. Ma was scared to death and so were the younger kids. It finally died down, probably because we just plain got tired. To this day I don't have the faintest idea what we were fighting about.

## **NEWFOUNDLAND**

Newfoundland was a good deal for me. I found out that there was an outfit in Bemidji hiring construction workers for Newfoundland, A Base Contractor, as they called themselves, told me to get on a train and come to New York. In New York, we signed up, and took a train to North Sydney, Nova Scotia, Canada. From there we took a boat to Newfoundland and arrived on Sunday. This was during the war, and the German submarines were quite prevalent in the area. That's where the convoys were formed, and from there they went to Europe. They formed the Convoys in Sydney, Nova Scotia, and then convoyed them to Great Britain. The Sunday after I got to Newfoundland, was the big day that the ship would come into the Port of Basque, Newfoundland. Construction workers and some new troops were to come in on the train from Porta Basque to Corner Brook, but the train didn't show up. We found out later that it had been torpedoed and sunk with a terrible loss of life. That was the same ship that we came in on the week before, so I guess the good Lord was with me on that trip! Newfoundland, in those days was very backward, one of England's poorest colonies. The people lived very different from the way that we did, conditions were much worse than on the farms around Island Lake. They drove on the left side of the road, but they really didn't have many roads to speak of around Corner Brook. Towns, what there were of them, did have a few roads. An airport was being built in Stevenville, called Harmon Field, located between Corner Brook and Porta Basque. Because of my experience driving trucks, I was assigned to drive a large old chain-driven 10-ton Mack, some of which were Sterlings. There were not enough American Drivers, so the boss asked me if I would train some of the Newfoundland boys to be truck drivers. I said sure, I'd try it, but I found out it was much more difficult than I thought it would be! Most of them had never seen an automobile, or a truck, to say nothing of having driven large ones like they had up there. They gave me 2-3 days to get each one ready, so I'd ride with them the first day or two. When I thought they were ready, I'd turn them loose. They had a tough time learning. More than once I had to bail them out when I'd see two trucks bearing down on each other, and neither driver seemed to be able to figure out how to stop or turn aside. It's possible that they just panicked and couldn't remember what to do. This was good experience for me, and I'm glad I had the opportunity to go.

## **CALIFORNIA**

After I got out of the army, I went to California. Times were good, and you could get a job almost anytime you wanted to. The only problem I had, was to decide what kind of job I wanted. I had all the truck driving I wanted, and I knew that I didn't want to get



into factory work, putting square pegs in round holes or other repetitive work. I put in an application for a job at the Ralph N. Brodie Company. They manufactured meters, control valves and equipment for meters and valves. They sold parts to the major oil companies, pipe lines and chemical plants. I hoped this job would eventually let me get out where I could do field service, which is what I really wanted to do.

It worked out well for me. I stayed with Brodie for almost 40 years, although we didn't have the same name for all those years. The company was bought out twice, once by Rockwell Manufacturing and the second time by Brooks Instrument Division, Emerson Electric. I stayed on with each transfer. When those buy-outs occurred, I had two choices, one was to go with the company that bought us out, the other was to quit and go look for another job. When Rockwell bought Brodie, the company went out of business so that was no problem. When Emerson bought out Rockwell, I stayed with Emerson, and have had no regrets since.

As time went by, I became an outside Field Service Man for Brodie, covering most of California and much of the West Coast, which I like very much. It was about 1955 when I took my first commercial airline flight on a job, going to Brookings, California, on an old Pacific Northwest Airlines. There was an old DC Three, which was my first commercial experience. Going up was ok, but there was no smog or fog controls for taking off in bad weather. The plane was grounded in Eureka, California for a couple of days. The only way to get home, was to take a Greyhound Bus. There were lots of problems, the bus broke down a couple of times, and the roads were terrible.

After Rockwell bought out the Brodie Company, I continued on and was promoted. They changed my title to Service Engineer, which really didn't mean much, the work was still the same. It included a small raise and entailed traveling in the western half of the United States into Texas, Colorado, Utah and other states. At that time we sold a lot of meters for fueling rockets and space products. We also sold metering systems for fueling the Gemini Systems, and of course they were very specialized meters.

We could no longer work on them in our shop. We had to go into a laboratory they officially called "clean rooms," everything had to be cleaned in those rooms by government inspectors. Martin Baltimore was one of the big space inspectors. Martin Baltimore was one of the big space companies. They bought a lot of our meters for the Gemini. Another place where they did a lot of cleaning was Wyle Laboratories. In Denver, there was a place where the Titan Missiles were made. A number of times, I was working on them, sometimes in Denver, sometimes in Wyler Laboratories, and here in California. Later on, probably in 1965, Rockwell closed down their Measurement

and Control Division, which I was a part of, and sold it to Brooks Division of Emerson Electric. I opted to go along with them. After working with them for awhile, I was elevated to Regional Service Manager, which again was a nice title. I had a few men working under me from time to time, so I could sometimes pawn off some of the dirtiest jobs to them. That didn't hurt my feelings, in fact, it felt pretty good to a "poor old country boy like me."

## **EUROPEAN TRIP**

Rockwell was manufacturing hydraulic motors and pumps, and we were supplying them for the super tankers that were being built in Norway, Germany, Japan, and other countries. I was sent to Bremen, Germany, where they were building a super tanker. Bremen was on the Weser River, some 60-65 miles from the North Atlantic. The main part of the ship was built there. We went down the Weiser River to Bremerhaven where they completed the work on the ship. While we were told that this was the largest ship ever built in Bremerhaven, Germany. Many places in the river were not wide enough, so there were a lot of navigation problems. People were lined up on the riverbank the entire trip, waving at us.

When we got into Bremerhaven, they finished whatever work had to be done on the ship, and we tested our hydraulic systems to make sure they were working. Hydraulic systems were used to lift the anchors and all the deck equipment, a very difficult job. If I remember right, there were two anchors on the bow of the ship and one on the aft. Those anchors weighed around 18 tons each. The ship was longer than a couple of football fields, and I'm not sure how high. When we were on sea trials, we were told that it took seven miles to stop the ship when it was traveling at it's normal rate of speed. I found that hard to believe. We left Bremerhaven sea trials and headed for Lisbon, Portugal. On the way to Lisbon, we ran into a storm in the North Sea. According to the papers Rose read when I was gone, it was the worst storm in the North Sea in 30 years. The ship was about a hundred feet high. The waves were breaking clear over the top of the ship, almost all of the crew was seasick, so there wasn't much work going on. Fortunately, I don't have any problems getting seasick, so I kind of enjoyed the storm. Most of the guys were in sick bay, so sick that they didn't even bother to come up to eat. That's sick!

When I arrived in Lisbon, the engineers and all the instruction people went through the ship, looking for problems caused by the sea trials. They found out that there was a lot of damage, both from the sea trials and the storm, requiring a great deal of structural repair. We completed our work on the pumps and motors for the deck equipment. That was the end of my job on the ship, so I came back to the states. The ship continued on somewhere into the gulf, probably hauling oil around the world. It's still in use, for all I know.

We had been selling a tremendous amount of equipment to the Koreans and the Chinese in Taiwan, on the Island of Formosa. They were having a lot of problems because they didn't have competent maintenance people or engineers. The company sent me first to Taipei, Formosa. I spent about a week or so working for the Chinese. All the petroleum was nationalized in Formosa, China, so I went to the refineries, spent time with their engineers and maintenance people, showing them how to operate and repair their machines. Of course, the main reason I was there, was to take orders for spare parts for all the equipment they had laying around that was not working. I made out long lists, amounting to thousands of dollars, more than enough to pay my expenses, and to make a nice profit for the company. This also helped the Chinese and the Koreans get their equipment back into shape.

While I was in Taipei, I spent time at the Chiang Chai Chek Museum and some of the government buildings. Chiang Chai Chek brought many of the Chinese National symbols back from mainland China.

Taipei was a fair sized city, but it didn't have a good sewage disposal system. The sewer pipes ran into a large holding tank in the neighborhood, so I smelt Taipei long before the plane landed! After I was there for a few days, I didn't notice the odor as much. By now, they most likely have a more modern sewage system, at least I hope so!!

The farmers hauled their produce into town on ox carts, bicycles and small three-wheeled motorized trucks. A very common sight, in the early morning hours, are the farmers pedaling into town with their bicycles piled about 18 feet high with goods, going to the market. Looking at them, you couldn't help wonder how they balanced them so perfectly. After unloading their wares, they would go to the sump, load as much material as they could pile on their cart, and haul it back to use as fertilizer for their gardens. I didn't know too much about this when I first came, and I was glad I didn't. I probably wouldn't have been able to eat many vegetables, if I had. We were warned to be careful of fresh vegetables, especially lettuce. I must have had a ironclad stomach, because I never got sick!!

From Taipei I flew over the Pacific to Korea. We landed in Seoul, Korea which was a city that had been almost totally devastated during the Korean War. When I was there, it was a thriving city, the population approached 10 million. This was not very many years after the war, and I was surprised to see so few traces of it. It had been almost completely re-built, and what wasn't leveled, was in the process of being re-built.

In Korea, as in Taipei, everything in the petroleum industry was nationalized, so we worked with the Korean government officials and spent some time at the refineries, etc. We got to within 10 miles

of the 38th parallel. There were American troops wherever you looked, and I guess they're still there. Strangely enough, there were very few Korean troops.

We took advantage of the opportunity, by spending quite a bit of time in some of the Korean museums. The restaurants were unique and the food was good. I would have to say that the Chinese and Korean food did not seem to resemble the food we eat in Korean and Chinese restaurants in the states.

When I was through there, I had some work to do in Hawaii, so I hopped on a Korean Airlines and went Honolulu. I stayed in Honolulu for four or five days, spending most of my time sightseeing. I did have a job to do on the "Big Island," so I flew over there, along with our agent from Honolulu. The hotel that I stayed at was the same one where singer, Don Hoo, appears. The place was booked up, but the management found a spot for me, about the size of a good-sized bathroom, not very large, but adequate. Other places visited were, Standard Oil, Union Oil, and a friend or two that I knew from the states. From there, I took a flight back to Los Angeles.

STANLEY OLIVER SKOE 39917 97th Street West

Leona Valley, CA 93551 (805) 270-914

## **1995 RETIREMENT PARTY**

I stayed with Rockwell until I retired in 1981. My retirement party was quite an affair, a grand old celebration. It was held in a local hotel with food and booze catered. Jerry Long, our Regional Sales Manager, and Janette McMahan, our receptionist and secretary with the company at that time, did the ground work and sent the invitations out to all the division offices and management back east and around the country. Strangely enough, the President of the Company even came from Pittsburgh, and others from Hatfield, PA; Statesboro, GA; Denver CO; Seattle and all over. They must have used my retirement as an excuse for a business trip. Invitations went to all the major oil companies and personnel that we worked with. Many of them attended, so it was on big party. The food, and booze flowed freely, and everyone had a good time.

First thing was a poem by Brandy Boyer. He's still a friend of mine, so we keep in contact. He's now in business on his own and is now a factory representative for several companies. He's one swell guy.

Bill Haikkon, Seattle agent and a very good friend, read this poem about me.

## **OUR MAN STAN**

"THE SQUARE HEADED NORWEGIAN"

You know we hoped as the days passed by

those days would drag instead of fly.

But here we are and the days have gone

now it's time to cheer a friend so fond.

Stan's a husband, a father, a hell of a man!

a great worker, a master, a guy with a plan;

A rock hound, a builder, a mechanic of note,

if he ran for President he would sure get our vote!

Often with tools that were wrong

or parts that were gone;

With seals that would leak

and gears that are weak<sup>7</sup>

Through days that were hot

and engineering ideas that were not;

The job always got done

with an ease that looked fun.

From Alaska to Korea, all the states of the west,

Stan's work will always be known as the very best.

It's time now to stop, your work's about done.

lay back, relax and pursue your own fun.

Start and finish jobs only your own,

sleep late, feel great, walk away from the phone.  
Head for your cabin in Cambria Pines, forget your tools and long traffic lines.

But when it comes to fishing we don't think you're that great!  
so get out on a boat, take your rod, cut your bait; Drop your line in the water and give it a try, for as you already know, what you don't catch you can buy! We know you will always have a concern for customers with problems and nowhere to turn. So those you have trained will pick up the slack until you are willing and ready to come back. And back you must come to help us along, ^cause as long as you live you will never be gone. WE WILL MISS YOU

The mayor then commissioned me to present to Stan this Norwegian Legion of Honor for getting round with the world.

The point of this story is that Stan is smarter than the average Norwegian and was always willing to help. I think we can all attest to that.

Now I'm going to ask all of you to stand and drink a toast to Stan and Rose for a happy and healthy retirement.

SKOL!!!!

## **RETIREMENT**

After the retirement party was over, Rose and I stayed at the hotel, and the next morning we went home. I didn't have to go to work again, ever!! My first thought was that it would be difficult, after over 30 years working the job, but it was not difficult to give up. I enjoyed going back for consultation and training of some of the new employees, but I have never regretted retiring. After retirement, I bought a lot of used equipment, old meters, valves and control systems, brought them home, rebuilt them in my garage and re-sold them. For two or three years this worked well, and it made up a little for not having a paycheck. Around 1984, I dropped that completely.

## **BARBARA - MYSELF - THE GRAND KIDS AND GREAT GRAND KIDS.**

It was 1953 when Rose and I were married. At the time, I was working for the Ralph N. Brodie Company, living in Berkeley. Rose was living in a little flat in Alameda. Right after we were married, I moved into the flat with Rose and Barbara. Later we added another room, as it was only a one-bedroom flat.

This worked out pretty good, but within a year we decided to buy a house. We found a nice one in San Leandro and bought it, less than a mile from where I worked. It had a nice lawn and landscaping.

In the interim, Barbara was there. It was right after that she went to Michigan, where the Air Base was located. She married a fellow named George McConachee. George was a neighbor and friend who had lived across the street from us for years. He was in the service, probably less than a year.

George was then transferred to another base in Greenland. There was no space there for wives, so she came back to California. I think she stayed with her father for awhile and then got her own apartment.

After George got out of the service, he went to work for the Air Traffic Control. It paid good money, and they lived there for quite some time. In the meantime, the opportunity for a transfer came to me. We sold our house in San Leandro, bought a house in Anaheim, and moved there. George transferred to Palmdale, which is 85 miles from Anaheim, so George and Barbara also moved to southern California. George was promoted to a good job in management. In the meantime, they had several children, in fact, I think all five of the children were born in Palmdale, Tracy, the oldest, is now 36; Craig, 34; Glen is probably 29, Diane, 25; and Mike, 22.

Later, George was transferred to Washington, D.C. They hadn't lived in Washington very long, when something went wrong in the marriage. Apparently, George became involved with another woman, and moved out, leaving Barbara alone with her five children. Because she didn't know many out there, she wanted to come back to California. When I heard this, I hopped a plane, flew out to Dulles, and helped her move back. The oldest boys, Craig, Glen and I drove her car back. Diane, Mike and Barbara flew back. They stayed with Rose and I for several months. Craig went up to Palmdale to attend college there, working part-time and staying together. Somehow, it was best thing that ever happened to Barbara and me. We became very attached to each other. We really bonded and the grand kids accepted me as both father and grandfather.

The other grandpa was not involved with the family very much at

that time because he was 500 miles away. Barbara went to trade school, brushed up on her typing, and went out and got a job. Actually, she took two or three jobs before she finally found the one she wanted with the firm of Pete Marwick & Mitchell. She's been there ever since, make good money, likes her job and has been very successful.

In 1981, shortly after I retired, Rose passed away. We were living in Anaheim at the time. It left me in a quandary. I was here alone, and didn't know what to do or where I wanted to go. Barbara was very close to Rose and me, probably even closer to me, than to her mother, in some ways. We went out to dinner, and sat down and had a nice long talk. We both needed each other, so I decided to stay in California. Barbara and I kind of adopted each other, and our friendship has remained very strong since. Neither one of us has ever regretted the decision we made. If I hadn't done that, I probably would have gone back to Minnesota, settled down around Northome, and ended up hanging around the Northome Liquor Store. At least I'm here, Barbara and I are still together, and we still love each other. That makes me very happy!

Diane, the oldest girl, was married a couple of years ago. We went all the way on everything, so she had a beautiful wedding. She asked me to walk her down the aisle. I had some misgivings about it, because her father was still alive. He was pretty sick with cancer. George attended the wedding, but I walked Diane down the aisle and had the pleasure of giving her away. She informed her mother and everybody else, that it was me or nobody. The wedding was the first time I had seen George since the divorce. George and I had been good friends and we still remain friends, so we sat down and had a long talk. He thanked me for what I had done, for helping Barbara with the children and being there for her during all those years. For me, it was not a chore, it was pure pleasure! George probably felt bad that Diane asked me, rather than him, to walk her down the aisle, but he really was a great guy in many ways. It was a lovely wedding!!

## **BIG BEAR**

I stayed around Anaheim for awhile and finally bought property in Big Bear, California, not sure what I wanted to do with it. Eventually, I built my house up there, about 1150 square feet and sold my house in Anaheim in 1983. Big Bear has been my home ever since, and it is a beautiful spot to live. My house is at around 7008 feet elevation, but when I go "down the hill," as we call it into the LA area, I have to go over Onax Summit which is 8500 feet high, and then drop down into the valley below. Many times I'd take one look at the smog hanging over San Bernardino and LA, and feel like turning around and heading back. Once down in the valley, however, the smog is not nearly as noticeable.



I might add, that Big Bear is a beautiful mountain community with good trout fishing. We have the Santa Anna River, and Mojave River, as well as several other lakes at Big Bear. I had never done much trout fishing before, but have done quite a bit here. Trout fishing is an art. I never got very good at it because it's a sport you really have to work at it. You can't just throw a line in and land a trout. When you are fishing for smaller trout, you can use a two-pound leader, but for the larger ones you may have to go as high as a four-pound leader. If you use a two-pound leader with some of the larger trout, you had better know what you are doing. If you don't, you' never land it in the boat.

## **RETIREMENT HOME-LEONA VALLEY**

After 10 years up on Big Bear, and with "old age" creeping upon me, I guess I'm about ready to move. My house is for sale. Hopefully, it will sell this spring or summer, so this will be my last year at Big Bear. My intention is to move down to a place called Lancaster, which is near Palmdale in a little area called Leona Valley.

My grandson, Craig, bought property there, approximately 18-20 acres, and that's where he's planning to build his home. Craig is going to build an elaborate home, between 3,000-4,000 square feet. We will have to have our own sewer, our own wells and propane gas for heating. That won't be too bad because it doesn't get so cold there. It will cost more to keep the place cool as it gets blistering hot in the high desert. I don't know about my dogs. Big Bear is a "dog heaven" because there are no fleas here. When Smokey goes down the hill, he gets loaded with fleas, but when he comes back up to Big Bear, the fleas are all gone in a few days.

Someplace nearby, Craig will build "Grandpa's House," which will probably be my house for the rest of my life. It's in a beautiful little valley outside of Lancaster. Right now there are a lot of chicken farms and ranches there, but gradually nice homes are being built, mostly on acreage.

My house on Big Bear will be sold with everything in it, except my redwood tables, a bedroom set, and few other items. I made them all myself, including 5 end tables, bookcases, and TV stands, etc. If Will wants some, he can have his pick. When my new place is built, I'll refurnish it.

I have spent a lot of time fishing with friends next door, Pat and Carol, except for the last year, due to my back problems. Hopefully, I can do more this year.

My motor home has been re-called finally and repaired. They put in a complete full-floating rear end, springs brakes, etc., at no

charge. When I move down to Lancaster, I'll be able to come up to Big Bear, park my RV at Pat's place, and get some fishing in. There's also a lot of good fishing around Lancaster, especially trout and striped bass, and it's not too far from the ocean. Craig has a beautiful Four Winns boat with a Chevrolet engine in it, it's quite seaworthy so we can fish in the ocean or on the lakes.

## **SMOKEY**

Of course you know about Smokey dying. I guess I was pretty shook up about it when I called you, Gladys, and I still am. I got Smokey after Rose passed away. He has been my constant companion, my only live-in since that time. Things are pretty hard, and I'm taking it badly. I still have Little Dollar, so I guess I'll recover, but it's not easy.

When I was visiting one of my neighbors, she was telling me that she knows a guy up the street who has a big tomcat. He goes around bragging that his tomcat is a killer and kills most anything. By the wounds on Smokey's neck, just a couple of teeth marks, and no tearing or blood, I have a feeling that his cat attacked Smokey in our back yard. Smokey couldn't see very good, so all the cat would have to do is make one move and hit the jugular. I can't prove it, though.

I can't believe the weather in Big Bear. I've been here 10 years, and I haven't seen anything like it. We've had something like 50 inches of rain, it's still continuing and there is supposed to be more on the way. The floods and destruction in California have been horrendous. In Big Bear, we've had some flooding and some damage, but nothing to get excited about. In a state as big as this, with 20-30 million people, maybe the percentage of people that are flooded and in trouble, is no greater than any other place. But is sure was a rough one! DONE

Today I finished taping my third micro-cassette. The weather has finally changed; yesterday we had sunshine. Today we have sunshine, and sunshine is forecast for the rest of the week. This will be the first decent weather we have had in 2 months. Say hi to everyone!

1993