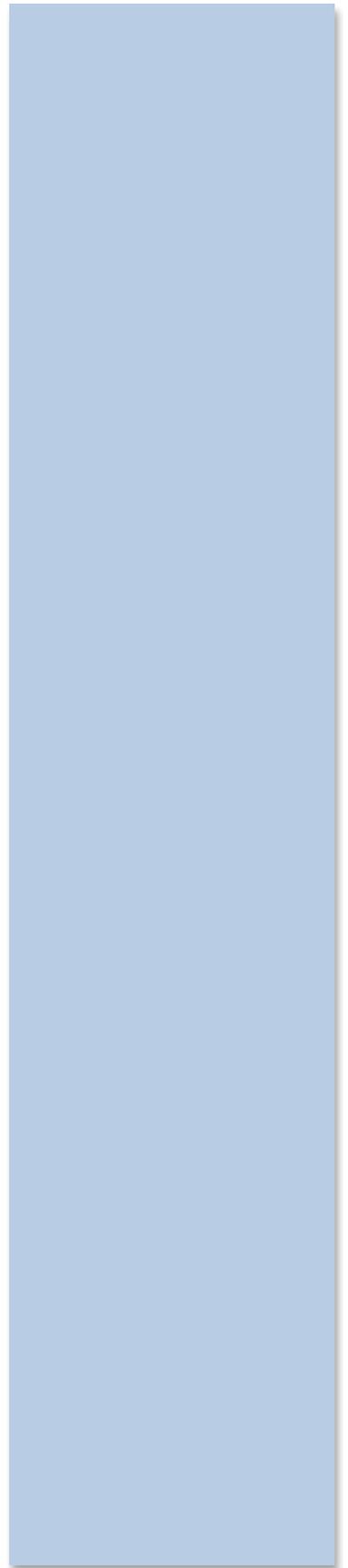


*A Legacy of
Ila Loretta (Johnson) Witwicky
& Family*



*By Ila Loretta (Johnson) Witwicky
2001*



I

I wish to dedicate these memoirs to all of my children: Eleanor, Frank, Doreen, Phyllis and Donald. I am very grateful for all their help and support over the years. I am also thankful to Rebecca and Shelley for encouraging and helping me capture these memories to share with all of you.



I was born on October 27, 1919 at Therien, Alberta, in a log house on a farm. Christened as Ila Loretta Johnson, my first name I have hated all my life. My Grandmother was Loretta Emery, and that's why I was given that name. She was always called 'Rett' as I remember. In Decorah, Iowa, my mother worked for a family who had a nice little girl named 'Ila'. That is how I got that name.

Somehow, as a little girl I do not think I lived up to my poor mother's expectations since I turned out to be a real tomboy and not the little lady she was expecting. My sister Ruby was 11 years older than I was and a real little lady, but scared of everything, even the chickens in the yard. My being a rough and tumble kind of kid came about I think because I had only brothers to play with. Ruby did not have much time for me or I for her. How times changed. In later years we grew to be very close and great friends. To this day I miss her.

I have a picture taken of myself in a christening dress and slip that my mother made for me. My Granddaughter, Shelley, had her picture taken in this dress, also her daughter Taylore who is my Great Granddaughter and our pride and joy was christened in the same dress and slip. We have the dress yet today.

I was born the year after the First World War. This was the year of the terrible flu that struck Europe and North America, killing thousands of families. My parents both had this flu but I don't remember her saying any of the rest of the family did. I do remember mother saying that I was in a crib across the room and she was too ill at times to get out of bed and care for me. Ruby was 11 years old at that time so I imagine she was a help. There were ten children in our family, six boys and four girls.

My mother came to Canada in 1907 with her parents Andrew and Loretta Emery, and her brother Lloyd Emery. My father came in the spring of the same year and took up a homestead of 160 acres, three and a half miles from my Grandparents. These homesteads of one-quarter section of land could be had for ten dollars, but you were required to clear ten acres a year in order to get the title to this land. Can you imagine the back -breaking labour, with only an axe and pick, and quite often a team of oxen.

My folks were married on August 14, 1907 in Vegreville, Alberta. I have the notice from the Vegreville newspaper of the wedding. This is either in one of Shelley's albums or Eleanor's.

They spent the first winter after their marriage at my Great Uncle Frank Emery and Aunt Mary's farm at Vegreville. In the spring of 1908 they moved up to their homestead at Therien, Alberta. My Grandparents, Andrew and Loretta Emery homesteaded at Therien as well as my Great Grandparents – Silas and Nancy Knight. I wish now that I had asked my folks why they decided to leave Iowa and move to Canada. There are so many questions I should have asked.

More rooms were added on to what was once a one-room log house as more children arrived on the scene. It ended up being four fairly large rooms and a built-on pantry. I can close my eyes today and see everything in that house. The boys shared a large room with three beds. Ruby and I shared a bedroom, much to her disgust I'm sure, as in winter I seemed to cry every night with either an ear ache or leg ache. My mother would then get up and heat oil over a coal oil lamp and put drops in my ears or rub my legs. Also, I'm sure I was not nearly neat and tidy enough to please Ruby. Ruby did not seem to like kids and years later when mom and I spoke of this, mom said she did not blame her as being the oldest all she did was look after babies until she left home. Years later when she had her own family – Joan and Richard – she changed and adored her own as well as any other children.

I cannot remember anything much up until I started school. I knew how to read when I started school. Ruby had taught me that. We walked through the fields to school for a shortcut one and a half miles. In winter, the big boys had orders from my Dad to walk ahead and break trail in the deep snow for me. I remember Harley and Darrel used to take tobacco from Lewis and Raymond's tin and on the way to school in the morning they would stop halfway by this granary and have a smoke. I would stand there and freeze but I never did go home and tattle on them.

I loved school and if it was very cold my dad would make me stay home. When I came home from school he would ask if I was cold and I soon learned to lie, even if I was frozen, and say no so he would not make me stay home the next day. Remember, those were the days when it was 30, 40 or 50 below zero for days on end, and blizzards. There were no snowsuits, ski suits or good boots in those days. You wore long underwear, which I hated, and long, thick stockings. In the spring there would be water all over but we were not allowed to come home wet so you were careful to avoid all the puddles. Sometimes we would get permission to stop and drown gophers on our way home from school, using our lunch pails to haul water. These were usually three-pound lard pails. You knew you had to take care of your lunch pail as they were scarce.

When I was born my dad was still working during the winter in Vegreville, boring wells with my Great Uncle Frank Emery. When he came home he brought a small pewter sugar bowl and cream pitcher and said it was for me. Years later when I left home I kept forgetting to take it and in 1946 when the log house burned it was gone also. I feel bad about it to this day.

Like all the rest of the homesteaders my folks had a hard life. My mother stayed alone for many winters when my dad was away working. He would walk to Vegreville, about 80 miles, with ten cents in his pocket to get across the river on the ferry, and then home again in the spring to clear more land and put in a crop on the cleared land. He would take a sleigh load of wheat 20 miles

to St. Paul to get ground into flour and cream of wheat. For a time that was where the nearest doctor was, then one came to St. Vincent, about six miles from our home. The nearest store was at St. Vincent also.

Eventually my parents had chickens and cows and my mother would trade eggs and butter at the store for bare necessities, as did everyone else at that time. Getting these products to the store at St. Vincent, six miles away, was a challenge when you also had to pack along two small children.

In the winter her mode of transportation was a dog hitched to a small sleigh. During this time in winter many comical things happened. At the time I'm sure these accidents were very traumatic to her as it meant no groceries when needed. Once she loaded Lewis and Ruby on this sleigh with her eggs and butter and started for St. Vincent. Most times she would stop off at her parents' (my Grandparents) Andrew and Loretta Emery, and she would leave Ruby and Lewis there and go on to the store. On one occasion they were sledding along merrily when the dog spotted a rabbit at the edge of the bush. Needless to say, he took off for the bush upsetting everything and everyone, breaking all her eggs. Ruby, of course, who was afraid of anything that moved, was screaming blue murder. This meant that she had to turn around and go back home. No groceries that week. I'm quite sure my mother at this point must have been in tears also.

Another time, Grandma Knight had come to stay with her for a few days so mom decided again to take her produce and walk to St. Vincent. There was a fresh skiff of snow over the ice and she lost her footing; eggs flying everywhere. Another week and no groceries. She also had a friend near Glendon, Ivy Smith, who used to come and stay for a visit before she was married. This was a great help with babysitting she said.

When my mother worked in Decorah, Iowa, she had bought herself a Singer treadle sewing machine, which she brought to Canada. She loved to sew and many, many hours were spent at that machine. Years later, when the house burned down, that sewing machine and a Maytag washing machine were saved. They happened to be near a door.

My mother washed clothes on a washboard until the ninth child, Dorothy, was born. To save money she sewed all the clothes she possibly could, even men's work shirts.

As I mentioned, I really do not remember anything before I started school. We went to what was called Old Therien School. Mr. Meunier had a store across the road from the school. When the CNR railroad went through a few years after I started school, Mr. Meunier moved his store building a few miles north to be nearer to the rail line. This eventually became the Village of Therien. Years later, the Old Therein School was closed when a school was built in the Village of Therien.

Recess at school was great fun. I loved to play softball. First thing in spring the girls played hop scotch. My best school friend was Helen Crowther. They moved out to Victoria, British Columbia. She joined the army for the Second World War. I have lost contact with her over the years.

I think my favourite teacher was Jeanne Marchand. A teacher's living quarters were attached to the school. The teacher would build the fire in the mornings. It was a very cold building. Our lunch pails had to be kept near the stove so our lunches would not freeze. They only taught to grade nine in this school and for grade ten I walked four and a quarter miles each way to Grassy Island School. Part of the way was down the railroad track. I still recall how bitter cold it was , leaving home in the dark and coming home in the dark.

Back in those days students had to be well behaved during school. I know my parents told us that if we got the strap at school we could expect to get another when we arrived home. You had to hurry home from school also, no dilly-dallying along. Maybe that was to keep us from getting into trouble on the way home. My mother was nearly always there when we came home. She was a good cook and it was so nice to walk into the house and smell something on the stove. I especially remember the smell of real mincemeat being cooked on the stove plus her suet pudding and chicken and noodles or dumplings. She was the only one I knew who made 'shingle bread'. This was a large piece of dough that was rolled out and baked in the oven of a wood stove. It tasted a bit like the soda crackers you buy today, only better. If only one of us girls would have had the foresight to get the recipes. For most of the things she baked or cooked, she never used a recipe.

When we came from school, we each had our little jobs to do after we played a while. My job was to set the table for supper. After supper we had to do dishes. I would wash and Leonard would wipe. Then it was out to play ball for a while and do homework, if we had any.

In the area where we lived, the people were mainly French Canadian. In school, one of the last classes was French, and then from three to three-thirty there was catechism for the Catholic students. We did not want to take the French course as it was not compulsory, but my dad made us take it, saying "you must learn everything taught at the school." Our reason for not wanting to take it was that it meant more homework and that meant less time for us to play ball, etc.

Times changed over the years when people of all nationalities started to move in to that part of the country. I once had a teacher named Miss Calihoo. She told our class that the one who read the most books would get a new book. I won the prize and about that time she left a couple of months before the end of the term. I was sure she would mail it to me. Every morning for a couple of weeks I would walk three and a half miles down the railroad track to Therein to get the mail. The book never came to this day. This was my biggest disappointment in the school and a teacher.

Our library at school did not have many books and I always loved to read. The above incident bothered me for years. We had no books at home. We got the Winnipeg Free Press for a newspaper once a week and the Country Guide magazine. That was the extent of the reading material. I remember once my brother, Harley, got the book Ben Hur for Christmas. It was blue with gold letters on the cover. I thought this was just the greatest book ever and read it many, many times.

I was not a whiz kid in school but I really studied. The teacher skipped me from grade six to grade eight, and then I was in the same grade as my brother Darrel. He was a whiz kid who never studied more than he had to, but always had good marks.

I should mention that all of us were born at home in that log house, except for the last two children, Dorothy and Eva. They were born in Elk Point Hospital. Mom had a midwife to help deliver—either Mrs. Belanger or my great Grandma Knight. I do remember going to bed one night and the next morning there was a new baby, Delmas, in the house; and Mrs. Belanger was still there. I never questioned where this baby came from. He was just there. When my brother Harley was born my dad rushed to the barn to hitch up the horses to go for the midwife, and as he left the yard Harley was born. He did not hear my mother calling him to come back so she had to do the delivery herself. These women I call midwives did not have any formal training in midwifery, they just learned ‘on-the-job’ so to speak.

The old log house we lived in was very cold. My dad always got up at about four a.m. to try and warm up the house. The teakettle froze on the stove at night.

We always had a huge garden and mom planted lots of flowers. In those days ladies would trade roots and bulbs of different flowers.

Very little was bought in the store. We had many cows so cream, milk, and butter were plentiful. It was our job to churn the butter when we were old enough. In summer we ate mainly salt pork, lots of fried chicken, canned moose, and deer meat. Never did they buy any meat. In winter my dad and his friends, Leonard Kight and Enoch Haglund, would go away up north for a week or more of hunting. They would come home with a sleigh box full of moose and deer. I have pictures of them in the bush with their game. Plenty of wild fruit in those days also.

When I was about eleven years of age our neighbour, Mrs. Ambler, contracted tuberculosis, called ‘consumption’ in those days. She was a widow with grown boys and Irvine, who was only eleven. Mrs. Ambler was taken to a sanatorium in Calgary where she later died. Before leaving she asked my folks if they would take Irvine and raise him. They agreed to do that, which meant eleven kids around the table. He was a badly spoiled kid but soon learned at our house that his nonsense would not be tolerated. There was always strict discipline in our home. My mother was the main disciplinarian. My father was a very quiet man, but when we got too noisy he only had to look up over his glasses as he sat reading and we knew it was time to calm down.

Life was great for me when I was young. Anything my brothers and Irvine did, I would do too. We rode horses, Dan or Jip, every day in summer, climbed trees, walked rail fences, etc., etc. But life was not all play in summer. We had to pick strawberries, raspberries, etc., when they were ready. We had many strawberry shortcakes also. My mother canned hundreds of quarts of fruit, pickles, and meat every year. My parents would go away up north and pick pails and pails of blueberries, which she canned. At blueberry time she made blueberry pies almost every day. This was my dad's favourite pie. Years later, when they moved to Armstrong, BC, in the fall I would send them by mail enough blueberries for a few pies. They arrived quite intact, so they said. My folks never bought lard and yet my mother made the best piecrust I have ever tasted. She used no recipe and used the fat that was fried out from the salt pork. Year later, when I was making pies, I used the same fat.

By this time my father had four quarter sections of land. As kids we used to go up on the north quarter around the sloughs and get black bird eggs. We would blow the insides out and make necklaces. In winter, we would set snares and catch rabbits. Someone near Therien had a mink farm and bought the rabbits to feed his mink. I think he paid only five cents a rabbit or less.

Eventually the boys got an old second hand bicycle. With six boys to ride it was only a rare occasion when I was able to try and learn to ride. I never did really learn to ride a bike, which I regret. Every day in summer now I see seniors out, on a nice evening, riding around the block. We never did have skates either and would love to be able to skate.

My brother Harley celebrated his birthday on July 14, the same day as our Grandmother Rett Emery. Every year we all had to go out and help him pick a three-pound lard paid of wild strawberries and he would take it to Grandma Emery and she would make strawberry shortcake.

A few times a year I was allowed to go after school and spend the night at Grandma and Grandpa Emery's. I really looked forward to staying there. I also looked forward to my lunch the next day. I remember she used to put two soda crackers together with jam. I thought this was so good and it was a rare treat, as we did not have crackers at home.

My Grandmother was a tall and very stout lady. I'm quite sure she must have weighed three hundred pounds. In later years she had very bad arthritis in her knees and used two canes to walk. She was a very jolly person and laughed a lot. She would laugh about herself and the mistakes she made. Grandma once read someplace that instead of ironing your dishtowels you should fold them and sit on them. She decided to try this one day and the minister came to call. She wanted to get up and make a cup of tea but was afraid he would see what she was sitting on. She laughed till she cried when she was telling this story. Grandpa Emery was a more sober person with a loud, booming voice. They lived three and a half miles from us and on a clear morning we could hear him calling his pigs to the trough for feed.

Grandma and Grandpa Emery always seemed to have a house full of people. People from way up north would make that their half-way stop on the way to St. Paul to take grain, etc., and spend the night. In later years they always had a hired girl. First it was three dollars a month and then it rose to five dollars, and later eight, that I remember. For many earlier years Alice Blais stayed with them. Her mother had died when she was about twelve years old. Her dad was a brother to my uncle Delly's wife, Alice Emery. When Alice Blais grew up she left there and moved to Grand Centre and married Teddy Martineau. Rosie Boyko worked for Grandma for many years and then Pearl Sharpe. On October 18, 1943, Grandma Emery passed away after suffering a stroke. She was eighty years old. Grandpa Emery died in the house fire that destroyed their home on February 15, 1953. He was 92 years old.

I think Grandparents have an important role to play in their Grandchildren's lives. I know ours made a great impression on our lives and we really missed them when they were gone.

When I was about ten years old, the Canadian National Railway was built. The track was a halfmile north of our place. The men building the railway had a camp where they ate and slept. There were two lady cooks and one was a Mrs. Williamson who had a little girl, Betty, who was my age. I was allowed to go up and play with her and she could come down to play at our place. My folks sold milk, cream, and eggs to the camp. This railway helped to open up the country for many more settlers moving in. It was a lifesaver to farmers with grain, livestock, and other produce to ship. The U.G.G. and Searle soon built elevators along the rail line. Other little businesses started up and that made up the Village of Therien. Sad to say, there is nothing left there now. It is a totally deserted place.

When I was nine or ten, my dad got word somehow that his mother in Decorah, Iowa, was very ill. He took a train and went down to Decorah to see her. She recovered from that illness. I remember the night he came home he brought some treats and a camera that my Grandmother had sent. I think it was called a Brownie 'little square box' camera. This camera was to be used many, many times and was the best present she could have sent.

The day the depression started was called 'Black Friday', October 1929. Into the 1930's was what they called the Dirty Thirties. Those were the years of the Great Depression all over the world. Stock markets collapsed, causing many to commit suicide. The price of everything dropped to almost nothing. Pigs and beef cattle sold for two or three dollars a head. This must have been a great worry to my folks but, being only ten years old, my life seemed to go on as usual. We always had clothes and plenty to eat. Ruby remembers that was one year we never got Christmas presents. She said mom made popcorn balls that time. A very good book to read about the Depression is called 'Ten Lost Years' by Barry Broadfoot.

My folks had their crops wiped out for two years in a row with severe hailstorms. My dad was a very easygoing and slow-moving person, but I do remember him during the one storm when he was cutting grain already, and we looked out and saw him running into the barnyard, rushing to unhook the horses and get them into the barn. He had seen the storm coming and rushed home.

I can also remember going into our bedroom during the storm and Ruby was standing by the window crying. I wondered at the time why she was crying. I learned later how devastating that storm was to her. My folks had promised her that she could go to Edmonton to Alberta College in the fall to take a secretarial course. She would work for someone for her room and board but needed money for books and tuition. She desperately wanted to get this course and be able to work and earn money. She probably wanted to get away from the farm and all of us kids. She definitely was not a farm girl. Some time later she did get to go to Alberta College and got her course. She returned to St. Paul and worked for a lawyer, Mr. Buckley, for a short time before he was killed in a car accident. Jobs were scarce then, so back home she came until she got a job working in the Post Office in Glendon, Alberta for a Mr. and Mrs. Ed Kight. She worked there until she married Metro Nesimiuk.

When I was growing up it seems people were great for visiting each other. My folks were good friends of Leonard and Edith Kight. They had three girls, Mildred, Eileen, and Margaret. Margaret and I were the same age. We had great times playing together and I considered Margaret to be my best friend. She moved away to Stettler, married, and is now a widow in Red Deer, Alberta. She spends her time doing volunteer work. I still see her once in a while. Eileen grew up and married my brother Darrel. Darrel Passed away on October 21, 1986. Eileen still lives in a condo in Edmonton, and we meet quite often for lunch. Mildred is a widow and lives in Red Deer. I remember going with Edith Kight and the girls north of Franchere, Alberta, by Moose Lake, to pick blueberries in a horse and buggy. We were busy picking away when along came the farmer who owned the land and he told us to move on; we could not pick on his land. I was scared at the time.

They had lots of horseshoe tournaments at our place. The men had a great time playing horseshoes. We kids would play ball, and the women would visit while our poor mother would spend the time cooking to feed everyone. This was the plight of all farm women – continually cooking.

My dad was a worrywart and if you got a hangnail he wanted to rush you off to the hospital. I think I was about 11 years old when I had to go to the hospital and have my appendix removed. By this time a neighbour had lost a little boy in St. Paul Hospital and the parents blamed the doctor. My dad never trusted St. Paul Hospital or the doctor again, so we had to go to Elk Point Hospital, which was another 20 miles or so. In those days, after your surgery, they kept you in bed for a week with no food or water for days. I finally came home from the hospital and was told I had to behave. No rough playing or tree climbing. They forgot, I guess, to mention horseback riding and on the second day home mom looked out and I was coming across a ploughed field at full gallop. She ran out and stopped me and then kept me in the house. This was more painful for me than the surgery was.

One time Leonard, Irvine, Delmas and I were on Dan, our riding horse, and we stopped at a slough to give him a drink. Leonard, being the driver and having to sit up partly on the neck, went head first into the water when the horse put his head down to drink. Another time Lewis

was holding a block of wood and Raymond was to split it with an axe. He split the block alright but also chopped off Lewis' index finger at the second joint. Mom hooked up the horses, wrapped his hand in a clean pillowcase and drove 19 miles to St. Paul Hospital where they stitched it up and drove home. Today, folks would pick up the severed finger, rush to emergency and the doctors could sew it back on. Once, when Lewis and Raymond were young, they got into an argument. Lewis was older but he ran and climbed up a tree. Raymond could not get at him so he took an axe and chopped the tree down. Another day, when the boys and I were walking a rail fence, I jumped off onto an old straw stack bottom and landed right on a hornets nest. I let out a few blood-curdling screams while getting stung. This certainly brought all the grownups out of the house in a hurry. We had so many good laughs later in life but having to put up with all these things must have been hair-raising at times.

There was just too much of an age difference between Ruby and I for us to get along when I was young. Once, she went to a dance with her school teacher friend, Sadie Stanton. Sadie had loaned Ruby a necklace to wear. The next day when Ruby got up the necklace was gone and she said I must have taken it out and lost it. Mom made me come in and search high and low for this. Although I had never touched it, no one believed me. I could not find it but later Ruby found it in one of her shoes. It had dropped in, I guess, when she took it off. I remember being very hurt by the fact that no one believed me. Mind you, I did many things that I was not supposed to do, so they probably had good reason for not believing me.

Mom raised lots of turkeys, geese and chickens. We were scared of these geese and once a year it was our job to round them up in a shed and mom would pluck the down feathers off their breasts. We had to catch them and take them to her. Scary business. She made many, nice goose-down pillows from her geese. We always had roast goose for Christmas.

Christmas was nice. Each one got a small gift. No candy, but mom was great for making homemade ice cream, popcorn and popcorn balls. I got my first doll that opened and closed its eyes one year. A couple of days after Christmas I made a bed for my dolls on an old gramophone box, which was used for a sock box. This was between the two boys' beds. When I got up in the morning my poor doll had no eyes. Darrel had decided to see how they worked and pushed them in. I was heartbroken. I also remember asking Santa Claus for a doll one year and on Christmas morning there was not a doll under the tree. There was a note from Santa saying he did not get the doll made on time and would send it next week. There was another little gift under the tree but I don't remember what it was. I did get my doll in a few days. All clothes, gifts, etc., were bought from Eaton's, Simpson's, or Sears catalogues.

I can still see my mother in the fall after some grain was sold. She would look over the catalogues, ordering winter clothes for everyone. We wore lots of hand-me-downs and thought nothing of it. In time my mother gave up on making dresses for me as I tore everything climbing trees, riding calves, horses, and even pigs. She started making me jeans. It was almost unheard of then for girls to wear jeans. My play jeans were made out of the backs of men's overalls.

Once, she got some blue denim and made me a sailor suit with slacks and a sailor-type top in blue and trimmed with red. I really liked that outfit and only wore it to go someplace.

We went to church and Sunday school at Haglund's for a long time. Later a Baptist church was built in Mallaig and we went there. There used to be ministers who would come in the summer and go from house to house every Sunday to preach a sermon. One such minister, Mr. Duclos, came one summer and he took a liking to Ruby, and began courting her. One day when my parents were not home he came to visit Ruby and they chased us kids outside to play. To pester them we kept peeking and knocking on the windows. He eventually came out with a bottle of castor oil and started chasing us down. He never caught me but he did catch Leonard and Irvine and they each got a good dose.

Once time Edith Haglund took Helen Crowther, Margaret Gosling, and me, to their cabin at Moose Lake. I'll never forget how much fun that was. We swam in the lake, she took us fishing and over onto some island to pick blueberries. We learned to memorize all the books of the Bible that week. They also had a week of Bible Camp each summer but that was not nearly as much fun as the time I spent with Edith Haglund and the girls. Edith Haglund never married and in later years died of breast cancer.

Once when my dad was away working in Vegreville and my mother was still alone in this oneroom log house in the bush, Grandma Knight came to spend a few days with her. A strange man came to the door asking for food. They were a little afraid of him and he spoke very little English. Grandma Knight then noticed a Bible in his back pocket and she whispered to mom not to worry, he was alright. It turned out to be Mr. Haglund senior, looking for his homestead that he had applied for. We later called them Grandpa and Grandma Haglund. This was the same man who came down and did chores when my folks were too sick, with the big flu of 1919, to do them. He used to bring a pot of chicken soup and leave it on the doorstep. The Haglunds were good friends and neighbours of my family. I also remember Peter Witwicky telling me in later years that his father, 'Guido' or Frank Witwicky, hung a bag of garlic around his neck during the flu and went around helping the sick and burying the dead. He always claimed the garlic kept him and his family from getting the flu. Knowing the odour of garlic I guess it would ward off both man and beast. They lived at Wostok, Alberta at this time; later moving to a farm outside of St. Lina, Alberta.

I appear to be hopping around from one subject to another as I write this, which is a mistake I guess, but I write as I recall things.

My brother Darrel was born with deformed feet; his toes touched his ankles. Grandma Knight was there at his birth and she started taking warm oil and rubbing his ankles, trying to stretch the muscles and tendons. They kept this up for a long time and eventually his feet were quite normal. He was never taken to a doctor.

When Ruby was two or three years old my folks had poured boiling water over some ground grain (chop) for the chickens in winter. Ruby jumped off a chair and landed in this hot chop. Mom said that when they pulled off her long stockings the skin came off her legs as well. I never asked how they managed to heal the burns on her legs but they never took her to a doctor either.

My dad and five other neighbours bought a large Rumley tractor and separator for threshing their crops. My dad ran the tractor and Oscar Amyotte was in charge of the separator. This involved a large crew of men with horses and hayracks. For us kids it was an exciting time when they finally got to our place to thresh.

Can you imagine our poor mother cooking three large meals a day for her own family and a crew of ten or twelve men? She also had to serve coffee, cake and sandwiches at 10:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M. With all this cooking and baking and dish washing, my mother never kept me home from school to help. However, we did have to pitch in and help after school. I remember this might have been the one and only time when we got store-bought bread, if she happened to run short. We thought this was great. Always, she baked bread every week or twice a week.

Christmas concerts at our school were big affairs, at least in our minds they were. When I was about twelve, Ruby was working in Glendon at the Post Office and she gave me three dollars to send away to the catalogue for a new dress. Previously mom always sewed me a dress for the concert. This new dress was pink 'celanese' material, and a few days before the concert I decided to press out the wrinkles. I had the iron too hot and it burned a hole as soon as I touched it. Celanese material just melts with heat. I was so upset about this. Mom went to town and bought some wide beige lace and sewed it all round the skirt, covering the hole. It looked quite nice and I was happy with it.

When I think back now, it was nice of Ruby to buy that for me and I think the boys and I should not have been so mean, pestering her all the time. She used to come home on Friday nights, walking down the railroad track. To get to the house you had to go through the barnyard. Mom always made us go out to the road and sit by the gate to walk her through the barnyard when she arrived. There might have been a turkey, goose, or chicken in the yard, and she was afraid of everything. Having to do this upset us to no end. Thank goodness she never married a farmer.

My great Grandfather, Silas Knight, died June 25, 1915, and was buried on their farm. Years later his body was exhumed and moved to a graveyard outside of Glendon. Great Grandma Nancy Knight continued to live on at the farm with her Grandson Mordecai Kinnison. He was always called Mord. Sometime after that Mord decided to move north of Beaver River on a farm and great Grandma went with him. He, in time, married at a late age to a young Native Indian lady. They had three boys, Hugh, Harley, and David. Once my folks let Leonard and I go up to visit Grandma on horseback. On the way we got lost and stopped at Mord's neighbour, George Ward, for directions. I remember it was a very hot summer day and Mrs. Ward was outside in the shade of house churning butter. We reached Mord's finally, and Mord and Lydia and Hugh

were gone to a picnic, and Grandma was home alone. She made a late lunch for us and I remember her going out to the garden and digging out nice long, white radishes for us. We must have been about 13 and 11 years of age at the time.

Maybe a couple of years later, my folks drove up with a team and buggy to visit Grandma, Mord and Lydia. Life was hard for her there, in her nineties, and she was left alone a lot. My folks convinced her to come home with them and live with us. She was always a very tiny person and now at this age I'm quite sure she weighed less than ninety pounds, more like eighty. She always wore long dresses and a gathered apron around her waist. Her grey hair was done up in a bun. She could still hear quite well but was nearly blind. She had to share a bedroom with me. Because our house was so cold, My folks bought a coal oil heater to warm the room in winter. It did help a bit but it was still cold. She sat by the wood stove heater in the rocker chair, rocking and humming to herself. She would sing old songs to us. 'This Little Frog Went A-Courting' is the only one I can remember. We all dearly loved her and would do anything we could for her. She sat next to my father at the table. She loved butter, especially my mother's good homemade butter. We thought it strange that she put butter on her oatmeal porridge. No cream or sugar, just butter. Sometimes she would reach out, take a spoonful of butter and eat it. I remember my dad used to tease her about getting fat. She really liked my dad, as he was very quiet and soft spoken. One year for Christmas, mom made her an apron, stamped a pattern on it and I embroidered it.

Life was hard for Silas and Nancy Knight, coming here from Iowa to start over on a homestead. They lost four children. One as a toddler fell into a tub of hot water. One died in infancy; he was a Downs Syndrome baby. She had one boy who always wished he had red hair. He contacted Scarlet Fever and lost all his hair, and mom said when it grew back in it was red. He went away to the First World War in 1914 and was killed. Then Silas and Nancy's son, Herbert Knight, died January 28, 1916, leaving his wife Alta and six children. In November of 1938, Great Grandma Nancy Knight was still living with my folks, and Leonard, Delmas, Dorothy and Eva were still at home. One day she tripped over something, fell and broke her hip. She was taken to Bonnyville Hospital where she died a couple of days later at 97 years of age.

When I was at home people had their own forms of entertainment in winter. They had lots of dances. Usually these were held in someone's home if they had a large living room. The ladies would bring cakes and sandwiches for a midnight lunch. They just had a pick-up orchestra of a violin, banjo, and guitar. When I got old enough I went along with my folks and my brothers. Eventually a dance hall was built in Glendon where they held weddings and dances.

I finished grade ten at Grassy Island School. They only taught up to grade ten at that school. I then went to Vegreville and took grade eleven. I worked for my room and board for a Mr. and Mrs. Rafe Walker. They had two little boys, Terry and Donald. I was not treated very well there and was always so homesick. We had relatives in Vegreville and at Warwick. I used to go to visit my great uncle Ernie Emery and his wife on Sundays sometimes. They convinced me to leave the Walker's home and come and stay with them. My great aunt was badly crippled and

could not walk. Uncle Ernie and I cooked the meals and I cleaned the house on weekends. I really enjoyed staying with them. My wish was to finish school and be a nurse. My aunt passed away then and I'm sorry to say I never did go back there to finish school. I have wished many times that I had been able to continue with an education.

Ruby had married Metro Nesimiuk, a businessman, and lived in Glendon, Alberta. Ruby and Metro had two children, Joan and Richard. Metro died on October 8, 1998. Ruby died at White Rock, BC on December 25, 1993.

Lewis had gone to Stettler one fall to get a job and met Ruth Morgansen. They married the next year. Lewis and Ruth had one son, Wayne, who died in 1984 with a malignant brain tumour. Lewis died at Apache Junction, Arizona on January 20, 1989.

Raymond had gone to British Columbia, looking for work; joined the army and went overseas to England. He married Ellen Cann over there. They had one daughter, Karen, and came back to Canada after the war. Raymond and Nellie lost their only child also. Karen was killed in a car and train accident in 1982. She had two children, Michael and Stacy. Raymond died at Red Willow, Alberta on January 5, 1992.

Both Lewis and Raymond farmed at Stettler.

Harley went to BC, married Mona Cowell and had one daughter, May. Harley died at 100 Mile House, BC on July 10, 1992.

Darrell had married Eileen Kight and they had three girls—Darlene, Joyce and Donna. Joyce and Donna live in Edmonton, and Darlene lives in Kelowna, BC. Eileen lives here in Edmonton in a condo. Darrel passed away on October 21, 1986.

Leonard and Irvine Ambler went to BC to work. Irvine came back to Therien after a time and Leonard got a job building roads. He married Ollie Johns and they had one son, Chad. Leonard passed away on May 22, 1997. Irvine Ambler died of a heart attack on March 23, 1983.

Dorothy had one daughter, Alana. Dorothy died in her sleep on January 27, 1992.

Delmas was born on April 17, 1925 and was killed in a vehicle accident in BC on December 5, 1956. He had only been married to Verna Forsland for a couple of years and there were no children.

My father was born on June 1, 1880 and passed away on November 6, 1962 in Armstrong, BC with cancer. My mother passed away on May 22, 1974. She was born on April 22, 1887.



1919 ~ Ila Loretta Johnson
3 months old in christening dress



1921 ~ Ila Loretta Johnson
2 years old



1953 ~
Ila's Parents ~ Jonas Kjerringvold Johnson
& Theresa "Tressa" Alice Emery



Left ~ 1945 ~ Jonas and Theresa (Emery) Johnson
Above ~ 1898 ~ Jonas at 18 years old
1908 ~ Theresa at 21 years old





1927 ~ The Jonas & Theresa Johnson Family
taken at their Therien homestead
Rear ~ Raymond, Harley, Theresa, Jonas, Lewis, Ruby, Darrel
Front ~ Delmas, Leonard, Ila



1953 ~ The Jonas & Theresa Johnson Family
Rear ~ Lewis, Delmas, Raymond, Darrel, Leonard
Middle ~ Eva, Dorothy, Ruby, Ila, Harley
Front ~ Jonas, Theresa



Left ~ Ole & Gertrud Johnson
Right ~ unknown



The Ole & Gertrud Johnson Family
Seated ~ Guri (Ole's mother), Ole, Gertrud
Standing ~ Maggie, Anna, Martin, Gena, Clara, Issac, Jonas, Oliver, John, Otilla
The portrait of the young boy is probably Jonas' brother Gilbert (1878-1889).
The portrait of the older couple is Ole's parents, John and Guri Kjerringvold Olsen



c. 1912 ~

Theresa Johnson with friend Ivy Smith Spencer and Theresa's children, Lewis & Ruby



1914 ~ Theresa Johnson with her mother and Theresa's children
Lewis, Loretta Emery holding Raymond, Ruby



3 generations plus ~ Ila's mother grandmother & great grandmother:
Sophie Haglund (friend), Theresa (Emery) Johnson, Edith Haglund (friend), Nancy Knight, Loretta (Knight) Emery, children unknown



Silas & Nancy Knight
Taken at their homestead near Therien



Phoebe Short & Silas Knight Sr.



The Omri & Martha Emery Family
Rear ~ Andrew (And), Ezra Milton (Zeb), Ernie, George, Ida
Middle ~ Lilly, Aaron, Omri (Old Prophet), Martha, Leonard
Front ~ Esta, Frank, Mattie
Addie (inset) was mad and would not sit for the picture,
so they had to put her in later.



4 Generations of the Emery Family
Omri Willey R. Emery, Del Emery
(with son Robert), Andrew Albert Emery



“Hattie & Rett”
Harriet (Knight) Kennison Kinyon
and sister Loretta (Knight) Emery



Andrew Emery, 91 years old with
Great Grandson Frank Witwicky,
13 years old
on their December 4 birthday



c. 1891 ~
Standing ~ Francis with son Charlie & Zeb Emery
Seated ~ Loretta (Rett) Knight & Andrew Emery
holding daughter Theresa,
son Adelbert seated in the middle

II



When I was just past eighteen years old I married your Grandfather Peter Witwicky, and moved to a farm five miles east and north of St. Lina. The reality of married life hit me soon after. The responsibility of running a house now fell on me. I had to learn by trial and error. I no longer had my parents around for any advice or guidance. They lived thirteen miles away. My mother always lacked the time or the patience to show any of us how to cook, bake, etc. I had never baked bread, a pie, or cooked a meal by myself. You learned only by observing. How I ever thought I could manage a home I'll never know. Your Grandfather was ten years older than I was and had been living with his aged parents. He had gone to Andrew, Alberta and bought his folks a house in town. Their other nine children all lived more or less in that vicinity. To buy this place for his folks he had borrowed money from Mr. Sutton, a well-to-do local farmer. He mortgaged a one-quarter section of land for this. This meant scrimping and saving for the next couple of years to repay the loan.

Your great Grandparents were very nice people and accepted me into the family. The same cannot be said for eight of his brothers and sisters. One sister had the audacity to tell your Grandfather that he should have married a nice Ukrainian girl. He made the mistake of telling me this and as a result I never felt comfortable around any of them with the exception of one sister Julia and her family.

Back in those days there was very little intermarriage between different nationalities. The Ukrainian people are very hard workers and tended to think English speaking people were lazy. Believe me I think I have proven them wrong.

After being raised in a house full of brothers and sisters, I was quite lonely for a long time. In fact if your Grandfather went to town with grain or pigs to sell I was downright scared to stay alone. We had quite a big house up on a hill and it seemed to be just bush all around. We had land right across the road with a few log buildings on it for chickens, pigs, etc. Once when I was home alone a strange man came to ask for something. He spoke very little English. I was terrified. It turned out to be our neighbour to the north, Mr. Svanda, who was a very nice man and a great neighbour. Another time a strange man, another neighbour, came to buy some seed grain. When I looked into his face to talk to him I noticed he had one blue eye and one brown eye. That was the first and last time I have ever seen anyone like that. A couple of weeks after I arrived there a group of the neighbours got together and came up to visit us one evening – the Tymko's, Ralston's and Katzmarчук's. They were all very nice people and good neighbours. We grew to be great friends of Bud and Edna Ralston. Bud died a few years ago and Edna lives in a nursing home in St. Paul. I see her occasionally when she comes to Edmonton now and then to visit some of her family. We still write to each other.

When we were married your Grandfather had a nice new green Plymouth car, which he had bought a couple of years before. There was only a narrow dirt road for three miles south, leading to the main highway, which was also just a dirt road and not much better. If it rained you could not get out, and when it snowed a lot you were also stranded and had to use a horse and buggy or a sleigh. We had the car for a few years, when he decided to sell it and buy a Cockshutt tractor.

By this time we had two children, Eleanor and Frank, and I guess he could see where we had to get into serious farming to provide for a family. He was a very good farmer and a very hard worker. We gradually got into more cattle and had quite a few nice horses. All his animals were fat and sleek as he hated to see a skinny animal. We milked cows and sold cream. The nearest creamery was in Bonnyville or St. Paul, Alberta. We used to take a horse and wagon and the cream can three miles down to the main road where the man who hauled the mail to St. Lina would pick it up and take it to Therien, where it would go on the train to Bonnyville.

Once when Eleanor was about two years old we came in from milking and set the pails down on the floor. She backed up and sat down in one of the pails. It looked rather comical so we had to laugh but she was not amused. It did make a fine mess, with milk flying all over the kitchen.

The first time I made bread, believe it or not, it turned out to be quite edible. As for my first piecrust, it would have made great shoe leather. I did learn to make a good piecrust using fat from salt pork as my mother did. Once Mrs. Sutton came to visit and I had just made a lemon pie. She remarked how flaky my piecrust was and said I must have used 'Crisco'. She could not believe I had just used the rendered pork fat.

We had no electricity, just wood stoves. Our refrigeration was an old abandoned well. In winter your Grandfather would fill this well with blocks of ice and it would last all summer. Ropes were tied onto the cream can, milk container, and salt pork crock, and you pulled these containers up as needed.

I raised chickens and a few turkeys. One of my turkey hens had a nice flock of little ones and wandered about the barnyard. She wandered off into the bush one day and I guess a coyote got her and her wee ones as we never saw her again. We raised a number of hogs and one of our sows had a bigger litter than she could feed so we brought them into the house, made a pen, and I bottle-fed them day and night. I was to get the money when they were sold. When they got big enough we fenced them off a place in the yard with a hut. I locked them in at night. One night when we came home late from someplace they had gone across the road to sleep with the other pigs. In the morning we found two of them dead. They were smothered. In time we sold the other three and I bought a linoleum rug for the living room. I sold turkeys and bought a linoleum rug for the kitchen. Before that I scrubbed bare, unpainted wood floors. After getting the linoleum rugs I painted the space on the edges and it was far less work to keep clean.

Like my mother, I spent much time alone, especially in the fall. Once your Grandfather and a neighbour bought a tractor and separator to thresh grain. They would do ours, then the neighbours' crops. I was then left at home with the chores to do, etc., with little kids in the house. I often think the Good Lord was looking after the kids and me. Some of the cows were mean and real kickers. If I had been hurt in the barn, what would have happened to these little

ones in the house? I can recall milking one or two cows and then running to the house and peeking in the window to see what they were doing. If I went into the house they would all start crying when I left again. This was an unsafe and terrible way to raise children but you did not have a choice then. Money was scarce and all your neighbour women were going the same thing. Three kids at that time, about fourteen months apart, should never have been left alone in the house.

When the children were small we built a fence around the house so they would not wander away, and when Frank was about three he got out of the yard and was running north on the road to follow his Dad on the tractor. I just happened to go to the road and look that way and see him just climbing the hill. I was afraid he would wander into the thick bush on the side of the road.

One time they were playing hide-and-go-seek and Frank and Doreen could not find Eleanor. I happened to go out and start calling for her and after what seemed hours she finally answered and came crawling out of an over-turned barrel. Unless you're a parent, you can't realize the fear you have when one comes up missing.

Eleanor never got into any trouble. She was a very fussy little thing and did not like to get dirty. She was just little and expected to watch the others. Frank and Doreen were different – they often got into trouble. They both seemed to like to play with fire. Once when they were four and five and Eleanor was staying at her Grandparents going to school, I went down to get her, leaving your Grandfather to look after the kids. While he was doing chores they took some sticks and put them in the firebox of the heater and lit a curtain on fire. This curtain was over the wood box, which was built under the stairway. We never found out how they put out the fire; there were just a few shreds of the curtain hanging.

Another time we had just finished threshing our crop and your Grandfather and Paddy Bourgoin were on the road going to Svanda's to thresh when I heard a roar and saw the brick chimney on fire. I took the kids out on the road and stood there screaming and waving a dishtowel for them to come back. They just happened to look back as they were going over the hill and rushed back. We had a long ladder at the back of the house, Your Grandfather went on the roof, I pulled water from the well as fast as I could, and Paddy took the water up the ladder. They finally got the fire out but can you imagine the mess. We had a little cupboard with shelves built under the chimney; there was black soot and water all over everything – in the cupboard and all over the floor. I had to clean up that mess, wash up the lunch dishes and then do the chores after that. We ate a cold supper that night as I was afraid to light a fire.

I always had a nice garden up on the side hill behind the house. I had just planted it once and the horses broke through a fence and went up and rolled on it. I was very upset about this but as it turned out, wherever they rolled was where the seeds came up first.

I picked blueberries and high bush cranberries about a mile from home whenever someone was around to keep the kids. There were lots of wild strawberries at that time also. Once Ruby and my mother came up and took all of the kids home with them so I could pick and can different fruit.

We were always short of water on that farm. They dug so many wells but never had a good one. Once we hired a man to come and bore a well that cost a pile of money. We had a pump put on that was run by an engine before we finally had water for the house, cattle and horses. This well lasted for a year or so and one day just quit. The same man came back and tried to fix it but with no luck. I can still see your Granddad hauling water in a sleigh box from a lake up on the school section. He would be covered with ice.

I washed clothes on a washboard and wrung them out by hand. After a time Mom got me a hand wringer from someplace. We saved every bit of rain water we could, and in winter I melted snow to wash with. We finally bought a huge tank with a tap at the bottom from a neighbour – Mrs. Monvoisin – who had an auction sale and moved to St. Paul. Your Granddad built a nice big platform to sit the tank on at the back of the house. This was heaven. Now I could have lots of nice soft water for washing in summer. One day when Frank was three or four, he went back there and turned on the tap and let all the water out. This to me was a tragedy. In 1945, just before Phyllis was born, I got a gas washing machine. This was wartime and washing machines were scarce. Ruby and Metro had a store in Glendon at the time and he ordered one for me. When it came they had it come to Mallaig as he had a list of people who wanted one and had they found out that we got one I think he would have been in big trouble.

The first time I went to use the washing machine we could not start it. Your Granddad was going to Mallaig that morning so he brought back a new spark plug and it started. It was a noisy thing but it saved a lot of hard work. When I was still washing on the board I had my white clothes on the line, and since they were not dry I left them on overnight. During the night the horses got into the yard, broke the clotheslines and walked on my clothes down into the mud. That's another time I felt like shooting the horses.

During the Second World War we were issued ration books to get certain groceries; sugar being one thing. There was a scarcity of many things. Since Ruby and Metro had a store they would come and bring us certain canned goods, etc. They had two children – Joan and Richard – who were just older than Eleanor and Frank, so Ruby passed down their clothes for our kids to wear. Ruby and Metro were always so good to me, helping in so many ways. One nice spring day I decided to dress up Eleanor and Frank and get them out in the sunshine. Frank was probably seven or eight months old so I sat him in a cardboard box. My old turkey gobbler kept coming near the kids by the back door. Finally I took the broom and chased him, whacked him on the head and knocked him out. There he lay with his legs in the air and my heart nearly stopped as I was afraid I had killed him. No gobbler meant no turkeys in the spring. He soon got up and staggered away.

There were a lot of partridges and prairie chickens in those days. These were fairly tame and so good fried. One fall day about a dozen landed in the yard. I took an old vinegar decanter that had a thick heavy glass bottom and was outside on a bench. I threw this at one of them and killed him, then cleaned it up and we had prairie chicken for supper.

Your second cousin – Doris Lupaschuk – worked for us one fall stooking grain. She was as strong as a man. She taught me how to make perogies, borscht, and cabbage rolls. Not ever having had them before I was not too fond of the taste, but in time I learned to like them.

Eleanor was born in Elk Point Hospital. Dr. Millar was my doctor. We sold a horse to pay the hospital bill as there was no Blue Cross or medical plans then.

Frank was born in the Duclos Hospital in Bonnyville, which was run by the United Church. Dr. Houghtling was the doctor when Frank was born. The fee was \$1.00 per day. A few years ago (about 1996) when Frank was visiting here from Perth, Ontario, he went to Bonnyville and visited the old Duclos Hospital, which has now been made into a bed and breakfast by some people who bought the building.

Doreen was born in Cold Lake Hospital, Alberta. Ruby and Metro drove me to Bonnyville but the doctor had moved to Cold Lake so we had to go there. Dr. Houghtling was still my doctor. It was necessary then to go to the hospital and wait for a birth, as we did not have a car. Even if we did have a car, if it rained or snow-stormed our road to the highway was impassable. For four of our children it fell to my poor mother to keep them when I was away. As if she had not had enough raising her ten children.

When Doreen was born we did hire a neighbour girl but she sat and read while the kids ran wild, so your grandfather fired her and took them to my folks again. I came home from Cold Lake Hospital with Doreen on the Greyhound bus. My parents met me at Beacon Corner on the highway with Eleanor and Frank. In my excitement of getting there and seeing every one I forgot to get my suitcase off the bus, and so did the bus driver. There went my clothes and baby clothes. A couple of days later the bus driver dropped off my suitcase at the store at Beacon Corner and Metro picked it up and brought it to me. My folks drove us home the next morning and at about noon 15 or 20 in-laws from Andrew came to visit, including 'Guido' (Frank Witwicky). Thank goodness they did not expect me to cook a meal for them. They went back to my brother-in-law's place – Carl Witwicky – who lived about three miles away.

When you came home from the hospital in those days you had no choice but to start right in on your usual work. There was no such thing as Pampers in those days. You just washed diapers every day. Your babies were fed with plain cows milk, unpasteurized. Today, mothers buy fancy jolly jumpers for their babies. My mother made a jolly jumper for her children, as well as for me to use for our babies. I still think they were better than the ones you buy today. I was hed baby clothes every day on the washboard, partly because there weren't many clothes and partly because I did not like dirty clothes lying around.

The first crib we had for Eleanor, Frank, and Doreen, your Granddad made from an oldfashioned white single bed. We bought a real crib, finally, before Phyllis was born.

When Frank was about eight months and Eleanor not yet two years, your Granddad became very ill one day while out working in the field. He came in at noon and went to bed. The next morning he was no better and in a lot of pain. Finally he asked me to go and get our neighbour Paddy Burgoin to take him to the hospital. This was about a mile and a half from our place. I remember I ran most of the way there and back. He was operated on that same day for perforated appendix. Dr. Decosse said had he been a fat man he would have died as there was so much infection there. They did not have the antibiotics back then that we have today. He was in hospital for ten days and I was alone on the farm with the two babies and chores, etc., to look after. Ruby came up and stayed for a couple of days with me, which was nice to have some company.

We faced a big problem when the kids were ready for school. We had tried to get the school board to build a school on the school section of land joining our land to the north. The neighbours' kids were then going to Beaver River School, which was about three miles to the west. You had to have ten pupils to start a school. Their children were older and able to ride horses to school or drive in a sleigh or buggy. The neighbours refused to have their children change schools. Eleanor was only six years old and being five miles from St. Lina School, it was just impossible for her to get there. That fall we started her on correspondence classes at home. This was fine until Christmas. She managed all her lessons that had to be mailed weekly back to Edmonton, and new lessons arrived weekly. We knew Phyllis was to be born in February and I would be away from home, with no-one to help Eleanor with her daily lessons. In January, after the holidays, my folks took her to their place and she went to school every day with my youngest sisters – Dorothy and Eva – at Old Therien School where the rest of my family and I had gone to school.

One day in March 1945 my parents had gone to Therien to the store for groceries. Eva came home from school, lit a fire, and a fire started in the chimney. She tried to pack water and put out the fire but was unable to. She rode to a neighbour's and he came but was unable to put out the fire. That night Eleanor was staying with a school friend – Joyce Bracconier – across the road from the school.

My parents had a large one-room building not far from the log house so they bought some furniture and moved in there; planning to build before winter. My Dad had not been well and was then told by his doctor that he had to quit farming.

That spring, in 1946, we hired a man – Bobby Sutton – to help work in the fields. He was told not to give any of the kids a ride on any machinery. One day Frank and Doreen wandered down the road to where Bobby was seeding grain and he let them sit in the standing board and started driving. The wheel on the Seeder dropped in a hole, Frank fell backwards and his foot went into a gear. Had he kept his shoes on I don't think it would have turned out the way it did, but he had new shoes and had taken them off so he would not soil them. The gear split his foot between the toes. They then walked through the dirty field. When we looked out and saw them Frank was crawling down the road on his hands and knees. Your Granddad rushed off for Paddy again and

they took him to St. Paul Hospital. What a mess his foot was with all the dirt and grease in the cut. He ended up losing two toes and part of the side of his foot. Bobby Sutton went home that night and never came back to work. Again, Frank was lucky the doctor could save his foot, not having the antibiotics of today.

That summer we sold the land we lived on and bought a place on the edge of Therien, Alberta. With Frank ready to start school in the fall, we could not ask my folks to keep two of them (both Eleanor and Frank). Also, in the fall of 1946 my folks sold their land and moved to Armstrong, BC. They rented for the winter and bought acreage on the edge of Armstrong. In September of 1946, Eleanor and Frank started school in Therien. The Old Therien School eventually closed in the fall of 1949. Eva kept Eleanor and Frank in the house we had bought during school days, and on weekends they went to my folk's place. We could not move until we had our crop threshed and had an auction sale. My folks had an auction sale that same fall. Paul Tymko bought the quarter section of land our home was on at St. Lina and we kept the remaining two quarters of land across the road. The property we bought in Therien from Joe and Jean Bouchard was on eleven acres of land with quite a nice house, barn, pig barn, and large chicken house. I never escaped the chores when we moved as we still kept cows, pigs and lots of chickens.

Keeping livestock in Therien meant a lot of work, and hauling of grain and hay to feed them. Your Grandfather bought a large, three-ton truck and we used that to haul feed from the farm. A few years later we kept quite a herd of beef cattle on the farm and farmed the land also. Your Grandfather started a hauling business around Therien, Mallaig, and St. Lina; hauling livestock to Edmonton, and then on the return trip bringing freight for the stores and different businesses.

We lived just two doors down from the school at first so the kids did not have far to go to school. In time they built a new larger school on the far end of the village, which would have been probably three or four blocks from our house. I can remember some of the kids lamenting about how far they had to walk to school. Spoiled.

Mainly French-speaking people populated the village and surrounding area of Therien. At first the teachers in the school were all Catholic nuns. There was a fair amount of animosity between the English and French. The French did not want their children associating with the English or Ukrainian kids. I remember Eleanor had a good friend, Rita Guilbault, and the nuns told Rita not to play with Eleanor or as she was neither French nor Catholic. Needless to say this raised my hackles more than a little. Fortunately Rita's Dad said she could play with anyone she liked. Years later Mr. Guilbault sent all his children to Ashmont School. When the kids were ready for high school they took a bus to Glendon High School.

The skating rink was right across the road from our house, which made it nice for our kids when they wanted to go skating. They had hockey teams also – Therien, Mallaig, and Glendon. Since the French people did not want their children associating with the English children, they built a rink at the other end of town near the Catholic Church. It was never much of a success as kids will be kids and will play together and get along well if adults do not interfere.

We had two big garden areas, one for a potato patch and the other for a garden. There was lots of lawn area around and I did not have a lawn mower so we used to cut it down with a scythe. Meanwhile, Ruby and Metro had sold their house in Glendon after their store had burned down and they moved to Edmonton. They bought a house at 11146 – 69th Street in the Highlands District. One fall when lawnmowers went on sale Ruby got me a lawnmower at the Hudson Bay store. This was so nice for me to keep the yard neat and trim. It was a very good mower and lasted for years.

We had nice neighbours when we lived in Therien. Steve Rosichuk, Alphonse Loch, and Albert Miniely each had a general store at one time. They were all in a row, situated next to each other. One winter, at six or so in the morning with a blizzard on, a fire started in one store and spread to eventually burn down all three stores. That really proved to mark the end of Therien. Alphonse Loch rebuilt his store but soon sold it to Harold and Cecile Blower, and the Loch family moved near Edmonton. Albert and Pearl Miniely and their boys also moved to Edmonton after selling their store a couple of years before the fire to a Mr. Corbière.

At first our next door neighbours were the Zarowny family. They had a garage and service station in Therien. Then Amelia and Casey Knapp, and their daughter Margaret, moved in. Casey ran the U.G.G. grain elevator in town. Then the Knapp's left and Edward and Annie Bachoffer and their two daughters – Lorraine and Selma – moved in. Edward then ran the U.G.G. grain elevator. They were all wonderful neighbours to have. Pete and Lily Watamaniuk ran the post office in Therien. Annie, Lily and I would go in the fall up to my Cousin Grace (Knight) Feland's old homestead and pick blueberries. We took our lunch and always had such a nice day, picking and visiting. In later years Frank and Phyllis were my best berry pickers.

We moved to Therien in the late fall of 1946 and my folks moved to Armstrong, BC that same fall. I sure hated to see them go.

On March 5, 1947 Donald was born in St. Paul Hospital, with Dr. Decosse, Sr. Your cousin Esther Witwicky came and kept house and looked after the kids while I was in the hospital. We milked cows and sold cream, eggs, and milk around town, and had lots of chickens for the first few years. We also raised and sold pigs.

On February 15, 1953 my uncle Lloyd Emery and Aunt Lora came up to spend the day and he cut and wrapped a pig we had butchered the day before. While we were having supper that night their son Glen came rushing in to say that my Grandfather Andrew Emery's house was on fire and he was in the house. This house was in the same yard as my Uncle Loyd's house. At this time my Grandfather was 92 years old and unable to walk without assistance. This was a sad time for everyone. My Grandmother – Loretta Knight – had died of a stroke on October 18, 1943. t

Not too many years after that my uncle and aunt and family moved to Armstrong, BC. I really missed them when they left. They both died there a number of years ago. Their family – Glen, Bert, Edmond, Ruby, Blanch and Della – all still live in different parts of BC and are doing well. I hear from Glen and June, who live in Vernon BC, quite often and they have visited me here in Edmonton a number of times.



1943 ~ Ila (Johnson) Witwicky and
Doris Lupaschuk (niece to Peter Witwicky)



1928 ~Peter Witwicky at 19 years of age



1928 ~ Peter Witwicky, 19 years old



1939 ~ Ila & Peter Witwicky with Eleanor.
Taken at their farm near St. Lina, Alberta



Ila & Peter Witwicky
Taken at Cold Lake, Alberta



Peter Witwicky's parents ~
Franciscus Witwicky & Maria Bozahora



1940 ~ Peter Witwicky



1944 ~ at the Witwicky farm near St. Lina
Rear ~ Eva Johnson holding Doreen, Dorothy
Front ~ Joan Nesimiuk, Eleanor Witwicky,
Frank Witwicky, Bernice & Dorothy Ralston
(neighbours), Richard Nesimiuk (in front of
Dorothy)



1948 ~ Ila & Peter's children at home in Therien
Left side (top to bottom) ~ Frank, Eleanor, Donald
Right side ~ Doreen, Phyllis



c. 1952 ~
Doreen, Eleanor, Donald, Frank, Phyllis

III



After all the family departed, and the Village of Therien was getting smaller all the time, I made a decision in about 1963 that I needed to do something for myself. I decided that I would go to Edmonton and take a Certified Nursing Aide course. Since my parents had not registered me when I was born, I had a lot of trouble getting my birth certificate, which I needed to take the course. Also, I needed all of my immunization shots. I remember walking down the railway track to Glendon School to get these shots. They used to have a mobile clinic that went to the different schools to vaccinate the children.

My mother came out for a visit in the summer of 1964 and she sewed a few clothes for me.

In those days the government paid a small amount for anyone to take the course. I had planned to find a suite in someone's house near the school. Meanwhile, Frank was teaching school in Edmonton and he phoned to say he had rented the ground floor of a house on 106th Street and 81st Avenue, and I could stay with him. On Thanksgiving Day in 1964, Frank and his friend came out to Therien with a U-haul and they moved me to Edmonton. When we arrived, the owner was still moving her things from the house so Frank took me to Darrel and Eileen's, and later that evening we started settling into the house.

The course at school was not starting until February so I needed to find something to do and earn some money in the meantime. An old friend from Therien – Rose Chartrand – phoned and asked me if I'd like to do some baby sitting through the Mother's Aide Bureau. You needed a reference to work for them so Rose went along with us. This was a good job as the people had to pick you up at your home and bring you home. I remember baby sitting for many of the doctors at the University of Alberta, ones I often saw a few years later when I went to work at the University of Alberta Hospital.

I also had a job babysitting a senior who must have been about 90 years old at the time and very, very senile. This was in a dark basement suite downtown off 109th Street someplace, as I remember. The daughter had never married and always looked after her mother. She worked for the government and I'm sure had never been late for work a day in her life. One morning there was a terrible blizzard on and since Frank drove me on his way to school, we were caught in the heavy, slow traffic. The lady was quite irritated when I arrived late and when she came home from work that night she told me that my "services were no longer required". In other words, I was 'fired'. I took the bus home that night for the first time and remember being scared stiff I'd never make it home. You have to remember that I had only been in Edmonton two or three times in my life and always with someone who knew the city. I ended up getting off the bus far too soon and had to walk many blocks to get home. Frank was out cleaning sidewalks when I

arrived so I told him I had just been fired. I remember he laughed and seemed to think it was rather funny, but I failed to see the humour in it. In fact I was quite devastated. But life went on and I got a day job babysitting for two university professors. The house was on 83rd Avenue near the University Hospital. I still did babysitting at night.

In February of 1965 I started to school. The RNA school was near the University Hospital. That first day was a very hard thing for me to do. I was scared out of my mind. Back in those days I was a green country bumpkin without much gumption. I have improved considerably over the years. Today, no-one can push me around and not get an earful. I was so sure that the school would be all young girls and I would be the only oldie there. Lo and behold, there were a number of ladies my age or younger. I quite enjoyed the school even though I had not been in school for many years.

After five months at the school we had to go to two different hospitals for practical training. I was sent to Red Deer for two-and-a-half months on Pediatrics and two-and-a-half months at the University of Alberta Hospital on Obstetrics. In Red Deer I stayed in the nurse's residence. I did not much like the idea of having to go to Red Deer. One good thing about it was that Mildred and Ed Mulford, and Margaret Bruyca, lived there. They were girls I had grown up with; my sister-in-law Eileen's sisters. One weekend Lewis and Ruth drove over to see me, and since it was my weekend off I went home with them for the weekend.

When my time was up in Red Deer I came back to Edmonton to spend two-and-a-half months at the University of Alberta Hospital. I remember being very afraid of getting lost in that big building. I found the practical part of the training much harder than at the school.

In November of 1965 we all came back to the school for final exams and graduation. I was quite pleased with my results, as out of about 30 classmates I came in the second highest. My good friend – Mobra Rankin – came in first place. Frank suggested that I not start working until after Christmas and New Year's and he paid my ticket to go out to Armstrong, BC, to visit my mother. I had applied at the University of Alberta Hospital and had a job on Pediatrics starting on January 4, 1966.

Phyllis and Melvin and their daughter – Shelley – moved to Edmonton in 1965 and Phyllis and I both started work at the University of Alberta Hospital on the same day. It was a bitterly cold day.

I worked there for 17 years, always on Pediatrics – first on a medical ward, then on a surgical ward – with children from four to sixteen years of age. I hurt my back on this ward, lifting heavy patients, and had to take three months off work. It was hard work all those years at the hospital with long, twelve hour shifts. I can say though that I really liked it there and enjoyed my work. I worked with a lot of nice people and met a lot of nice parents. Some of the parents must have thought I was alright as I received quite a number of gifts, such as flowers, chocolates, etc. One couple even brought me wild blueberries, which was nice as I really like a fresh blueberry pie. I

also had a chance to go to the operating room once and see open heart surgery and a new baby being born.

In 1966 Frank left Edmonton for Trinidad through CUSO to teach school. There he met his future wife, Earla Millar. I stayed on in the house on 6th Street for a time until the landlady sold the lot and moved the house to 97th Street and 80th Avenue. A number of apartments were built along 106th Street and I moved into a new apartment basement suite on the corner of 107th Street. It was not a bad place but, after living in a house all my life, I did not care for apartment living. After five years I asked them to paint the place and they refused. Donald came to take me out for Mother's Day breakfast and he suggested that I buy a house with a basement suite to rent for revenue to help pay the mortgage. We looked for about a month and in May we found this little house at 9652 – 83rd Avenue, which required a lot of renovating and cleaning. The yard needed a lot of care also. I moved in June and we started the work, with the kids and I living there. At this time we all had day jobs and would work late into the evenings on the house. In fact, Phyllis and I worked shift work at the hospital, which meant night shifts.

They started on the basement first as I had a nurse friend who wanted to move in. Ursula Richter was her name, and she stayed with me for five or six years. She now does missionary work in Brazil. Then, Dwayne Rosenkrantz moved in for seven years. After he left I never rented it again as it was nice to have the extra space whenever I had visitors.

The upstairs was a lot of work. In fact I have renovated and worked on it up until five or six years ago, when I decided I was not spending any more money on this place. I had a 20-year mortgage on the house and paid it off in ten years. I was quite proud of myself that day as I was not earning much money at the time so it took some scrimping. I have had two new furnaces installed, the latest just two years ago. In 1985 I had vinyl siding put on the house and garage, plus new shingles and windows. At that time the government was giving out grants to seniors to fix up their homes and avoid going into nursing homes. I decided to take advantage of this grant. In total it cost me nearly \$8,000. Before that Donald had scraped, sanded and painted the house and I did the garage. Three or four years later, Phyllis and Donald painted it once. With the aid of paint remover and scraping, I did the outside window frames. So much hard work has gone into this place. I just wish we had taken pictures of the place when I moved in and again now. I really like my home and have enjoyed living here. I paid \$32,500 for this place and about three weeks ago, an agent told me that I could now get considerably more for it.

I believe I have come to an end of my life story. I am sure I have forgotten many, many things. I will end by saying that I think I have had a good life; lots of trials and tribulations and hard work along the way, but that is no different than all others of each generation. I want to say that I am so proud of my five children and their mates. They have all worked hard and have been such a help to me and continue to be.

I am also proud of my seven Grandchildren; all good, hard working kids. I am especially pleased that they all have or are getting a good education. I am also especially pleased with my three Great Grandchildren. Now I am patiently waiting for a few more Great Grandchildren.....



1989 ~ Ila & Peter Witwicky's children ~
Frank, Phyllis, Eleanor, Donald, Doreen



Ila and 'Tressa' in Armstrong, BC

FAMILY RECORD

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Birth</i>	<i>Place of Birth</i>	<i>Date of Death</i>	<i>Notes</i>
	Ila Loretta Johnson	Oct 27, 1919	Therien, Alberta		
Spouse	Peter Witwicky	July 13, 1909	Wostok, Alberta	Nov 10, 1966	

OUR CHILDREN:

	<i>Name (Children)</i>	<i>Name (Grandchildren)</i>	<i>Name (Greatgrandchildren)</i>	<i>Date of Birth</i>	<i>Married to:</i>
	Eleanor Jean Witwicky			Aug 23, 1938	Stuart Carlisle-Smith
	Frank Peter Witwicky			Dec 4, 1939	Earla Mae Millar
		Lisa Anne Witwicky		Apr 6, 1974	Michael Wenger
			Sarah Beverley Wenger	Oct 15, 2002	
		Rebecca Lynne Witwicky		July 4, 1976	
	Doreen Hope Witwicky			June 29, 1941	A. Thomas Shelford
		Bryan Thomas Shelford		July 15, 1975	
		Colin Hugh Shelford		Sept 1, 1977	
	Phyllis Ann Witwicky			Feb 3, 1945	Melvin Smereka
		Shelley Lynn Smereka		Mar 10, 1964	Gary Golon
			Taylorae Rae Golon	July 31, 1992	
			Spenser Lee Golon	Dec 28, 1999	
	Donald Gary Witwicky			Mar 5, 1947	Janet McLean
		Erin McLean		Jan 14, 1976	
		Sheila McLean		June 24, 1977	

MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS:

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Birth</i>	<i>Date of Death</i>	<i>Married to:</i>	<i>Spousal Notes</i>
	Ruby Gertrude Johnson	Aug 24, 1908	Dec 25, 1993	Metro Nesimiuk	b.May 12, 1905
	Lewis Ole Johnson	Sep 16, 1910	Jan 30, 1989	Ruth Morgenson	b.Mar 6, 1913
	Raymond Lloyd Johnson	Sep 12, 1913	Jan 5, 1992	Ellen Cann	b.Dec 9, 1917
	Harley Andrew Johnson	July 14, 1915	Jul 10, 1992	Mona Cowell	b.Aug 26, 1916
	Darrel Wayne Johnson	Nov 19, 1917	Oct 21, 1986	Eileen Kight	b.Oct 10, 1922
	Leonard Emery Johnson	Dec 9, 1921	May 22, 1997	Ollie Johns	b.Oct 8, 1925
	Delmas Jonas Johnson	Apr 17, 1925	Dec 5, 1956	Verna Forslund	b.Jul 5, 1935
	Dorothy Maxine Johnson	Mar 16, 1929	Jan 27, 1997	Walter Luklan/Jack Potheary	
	Eva Doreen Johnson	May 22, 1931		George Smith	Nov 10, 1928 – Jul 7, 1986

MY PARENTS:

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Birth</i>	<i>Place of Birth</i>	<i>Date of Death</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Father	Jonas Kjerringvold Johnson	June 1, 1880	Winneshiek County, Iowa	Nov 6, 1962	
Mother	Theresa (Tressa) Alice Emery	Apr 22, 1887	Winneshiek County, Iowa	May 22, 1974	

Grandfather (paternal)	Ole Kjerringvold Johnson	June 22, 1851	Norway	Feb 22, 1906	
Grandmother (paternal)	Gertrud Magdlene Borren Anderson	Sept 5, 1856	Hesper Township, Iowa	Apr 12, 1935	Stuart Carlisle-Smith

OLE'S PARENTS:

Great Grandfather	John Kjerringvold Olsen	Apr 10, 1820/21	Heskedalen (Ålen), Norway	Oct. 1890	
Great Grandmother	Guri Johannesdtr Lillegjerdet	Aug 6, 1822	Thronlyem (now Trondheim)	Apr 18, 1910	

GERTRUD'S PARENTS:

Great Grandfather	Ole Borren Anderson	Nov 12, 1826	Heskedalen, Norway	Aug 16, 1901	
Great Grandmother	Ingeborg Simensdtr Drøivold	Aug 15, 1835	Haltdalen (Ålen), Norway	Jan 30, 1896	

Grandfather (maternal)	Andrew Albert Emery	Dec 4, 1861	Winneshiek County, Iowa	Feb 15, 1953	
Grandmother (maternal)	Loretta Knight	July 14, 1862	Winneshiek County, Iowa	Oct 18, 1943	Stuart Carlisle-Smith

ANDREW'S PARENTS:

Great Grandfather	Omrie W.R. Emery	Sep 27 1830	Astabula Co., Ohio	Mar 9, 1918 nr Decorah	Emery records have been traced back to 1598 in Romsey, Hants, England
Great Grandmother	Martha McIntire	Jan 31, 1837	New York State	Aug 14, 1920 nr Decorah	

LORETTA'S PARENTS:

Great Grandfather	Silas ² Knight	Nov 2, 1836	Near Lake Erie, Ontario	Jun 25, 1918	
Great Grandmother	Nancy Ann Dennis	Mar 20, 1844	Mount Pleasant, Ohio	Nov 6, 1938	

SILAS² PARENTS:

Great Great Grandfather	Silas ¹ Knight	1802	New York	1867, Winneshiek Co.	
Great Great Grandmother	Phoebe Short	1804	New York	1867, Winneshiek Co.	

NANCY'S PARENTS:

Great Great Grandfather	(Frank) James Dennis	Mar 17, 1812	Dayton, Ohio	Sep 6, 1886	Dennis records have been traced back to 1727 in Donegal, Ireland
Great Great Grandmother	Mary Ann Clark	Dec 28, 1813		Mar 23, 1895	

MY SPOUSE'S PARENTS:

Father	Franciscus Witwicky	Aug 12, 1863	Biala/Czortkow, Ukraine	1942	
Mother	Maria Bozahora	Oct 10, 1865	Biala/Czortkow, Ukraine	1947	
Grandfather (paternal)	Johannes Witwicki				
Grandmother (paternal)	Helena Kassiniski				
Grandfather (maternal)	Andreas Bozahora				
Grandmother (maternal)	Eudonia ?				

TRIBUTE TO MY MOTHER

by Donald Witwicky

February 2001



My recollection of Mom is that she was the best Mom in the world and has always been supportive throughout my entire life. She has always been there for me with open arms.

I could always count on her as she provided structure. By that I mean, the meals were always on time and delicious. For lunch I can recall that we always had a full meal, the same for dinner and of course breakfast. I do remember one instance where she tried to poison me. I would have been suspicious if she had not become ill herself. We had some fried pork for lunch and both of us ended up with food poisoning and we were both very ill. You have to remember that we had no refrigeration and that was somewhat of a problem. One thing you could always count on when you returned from school is that there was always fresh bread, just out of the oven, or cinnamon buns. You could always count on the best-fried chicken every Saturday. I can still see her today going out to the chicken coop and selecting some poor rooster that would be that evening's dinner. The poor devil never had a chance, with axe in hand and a big wooden block, off would come the head. I remember always being amazed at how much life that rooster had in him without a head, but that was short lived. And then, off come the feathers and the cleaning of the chicken. For the pinfeathers she would light a page from the Winnipeg Free Press and burn those little devils off. We always had milk gravy with the fried chicken, which, was the best I've ever had.

Mom always did her laundry on Monday. Would you believe she was washing clothes at 4:00 o'clock in the morning? She had to be the first one in town with the laundry out on the line. Probably the only time she missed was when I decided to start the tractor which was in gear, down went the clotheslines amongst several other things. Let's say I was not the most popular kid in the house that day. The washing machine was gas operated and it's a wonder how any of us got any sleep on Monday mornings. I think I got mine in school.

Now let me share with you about our berry picking days. Mom and all of us, save Eleanor picked every berry that grew in the area. Mom would can hundreds of jars and make all sorts of jam. Doreen and I were not exactly star berry pickers. We had the reputation of either finding a tree to sleep under or filling our pails with odds and sods and then adding a few berries on top. I think we only did that once as there were consequences for our little trick. Darned if I can remember Eleanor ever picking a berry. I must ask about that and if I'm correct there was obviously some discrimination in the family. Phyllis and Frank were the best berry pickers. Thanks to Phyllis's efforts we had many great strawberry shortcakes, which Mom always made when Phyllis returned with her treasure.

Speaking of discrimination, every Saturday was bath night and guess what the sequence was based on—age—the eldest being Eleanor down to the youngest being me. At that stage of the process I think I come out of that little tub dirtier than when I went into it. I maintain to this day that Eleanor had something to do with this sequence.

I recall poor Doreen with having a serious health problem. It seemed that she was fine until a meal was finished and then she would develop this severe headache, which of course sent her to bed. But miraculously she recovered when the last dish was put away. I and everyone else believed it was an allergy to dish soap!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Mom worked very hard, she milked cows, fed pigs (not us) looked after chickens, hauled hay, cleaned barn, pig house and chicken coop. We had an immaculate yard because of her. For those that complain about cutting grass with a lawnmower they should have watched my Mom. She cut acres of grass with a scythe just so our yard would look nice. She also planted a garden; my recollection is that it was 22 acres. She planted enough potatoes to feed Therien and Glendon. I know that as each fall we had to haul out the old potatoes from the cellar and bring in the new. Once again I don't recall Eleanor helping with this task or picking the new potatoes. Now I'm not intending to pick on Eleanor, as I'm sure it must be related to my loss of memory. All of the produce from the garden had to be picked and canned. Mom did it all save all the shelling of peas. I swear that is the reason I have such short thumbs. Again, I don't understand how Eleanor has long thumbs, could it be that she never shelled a pea?

Once Mom took me to Armstrong to visit Grandma and Grandpa Johnson. We took the train and it seemed like we were going to the end of the world. I can't recall much about this trip but I seem to remember that I was six years old but had to tell the conductor I was five as that way there was no charge for kids under six. This may not be true but it is my recollection. Many of my cousins were there and I can recall one incident where it was either Alana or Joyce that asked the question on the top of the stairs "WHO OWNS THAT KID?" Poor Mom had to own up to the fact that she was the owner. I, of course, was not at fault. It was those darned girls!!!

One of the proudest moments I can recall is when Mom graduated at the top of her class for becoming a nurse's aide. Imagine the transition she had to go to in achieving this success. Leaving Therien, moving to a big city full of strangers, and going back to school after so many years must have been very traumatic. In spite of this she made it with flying colours. Mom was and still is a very intelligent person. Frank was always there for her and without his support this part of her life would have been very difficult. We all owe Frank a debt of gratitude for how he helped Mom in this very difficult period.

The first Grandchild arrived on the scene, that being Shelley. You have never seen such a proud and good Grandmother. Shelley was certainly the focus of Mom's attention and the rest of the family. She was then blessed with more Grandchildren, Lisa, Rebecca, Bryan, Colin, Sheila and Erin. She loved them so much and was so proud of all of them and for very good reason as they were all such wonderful and good children. They are all grown up now and she is as proud of them today as she was when they first arrived on the scene.

Then along came her first Great Grandchild, Taylore. I don't think there was a happier moment in her life. She must have a thousand pictures of Taylore and I swear to this day the only reason she went to Bonnie Doon Shopping Center was with the hope that someone she new was there so she could show them pictures of Taylore. She loved Taylore with all her heart and so did the rest of the family. When Spenser arrived on the scene she went through the same experience as she did with Taylore and once again there are at least a thousand pictures of Spenser. She used to ask me every day about whether or not Shelley sent any new pictures. When they arrived she would spend the whole day looking at them and always saying how cute they were and how much she missed them. I don't know today if Shelley or Gary fully realize what a gift she and Gary gave to Mom. Colin, who loves to tease Mom, remarks each time he visits, which is often, how the other Grandchildren pictures have been relegated to the back rooms. He makes a point of checking to see if his picture still exists somewhere in the house.

When Sheila and Erin arrived on the scene she treated them no differently from the rest of the Grandchildren. Mom loved them the same as she loved her other Grandchildren and Great Grandchildren. When Sheila became a diabetic at the age of eleven, Mom was there with open arms to do anything she could do to help. As you know diabetics require four snacks a day in addition to their three regular meals. Mom was the one that made all the snacks for Sheila. She baked continuously and with great variety so that Sheila always had something she liked. In addition every meal that we had with Mom was made with Sheila's special diet in mind. Words can't express what this meant to us but it certainly reinforces my earlier comments about how Sheila and Erin were treated no differently than her natural grandchildren. Mom is a very special person and I love her dearly.

Thanks Mom for being The Best.



Me at 6 years of age