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THE BJELKE FAMILY

Acknowledgements

The following sources have been used for documentation of facts used in the following pages.

Alberta Provincial Archives, Edmonton.

National Archives Canada, Ottawa.

The Norwegian Immigration Centre, Stavanger, Norway.

Genealogical Library, Latter Day Saints Church, Saskatoon.

Genealogical Library, Latter Day Saints Church, Salt Lake City.

Vital Statistics, Province of Alberta.

Vital Statistics, Province of British Columbia.

Vital Statistics, Province of Saskatchewan

Vital Statistics, Province of Manitoba

Along The Burnt Lake Trail, Friesen

Red Deer Museum - Archives, Red Deer, Alberta

Sylvan Lake World, Weekly Newspaper

Red Deer Advocate, Newspaper

Glenboe Museum, Calgary, Alberta

Legislative Library, Edmonton, Alberta

Provincial Archives, Edmonton, Alberta

CHAPTER ONETHE BJELKE ROOTS

The Bjelke family finds its roots on a farm called "Bjelker", in Norway. The Bjelke ancestry is traced back in this area to the 1400's. It is unusual to be able to trace families back this far that are still living on the same farm. The farm dates back to the Viking Age. The "Bjelker Farm" is located about 90 kilometres north and east of Oslo. The nearest larger centre is the town of Skarnes, 13 kilometres to the south.

"Bjelker Farm" is on the edge of Lake Storsjaen. The countryside is a cross between Ontario rolling hills and the Alberta foothills; it is very beautiful countryside - heavily treed, with its rolling landscape. There are excellent roads that travel through the area. It is to this day a farming area - recreation does not seem to have caught on yet. "Bjelker Farm" is in the county of Hedmark, the administrative division of Odalen and in the parish of Nord Odal. Bjelker Farm is 140 meters above sea level, but within a kilometre there are elevations reaching three and four hundred meters above sea level.

When we visited the Bjelker Farm where Gustav's father was born and raised, we viewed the log cabin which they refer to as the "old house". The old log house is still in remarkably good shape considering its age. Arne Bjelker, a distant relative of ours owns and operates the farm today.

Chapter Two

Isak Olsen

Isak Olsen was the grandfather of Gustav Bjelke. His family had lived on the Bjelke Farm for many generations.

The family of *Isak Olsen* who had married *Ragnhild Gulbrandsdatter* on the 21st of January, 1824 is the earliest of the Bjelke families that we will examine in detail. The appendices contain ancestral information that take us back to the early (1700's).

Norwegian marriage customs go back hundreds of years and have changed very little by outside influences. For a long time, most of the population followed the custom that marriages took place in private. Therefore when a young couple and their families had agreed to the marriage, and after the engagement took place, they and the community around them considered them married. Because of this custom, the birth of the first child often occurred soon after the marriage was formalised by the church.

The Isak Olsen family is as follows:

1. Son, *Gulbrand*, born the 24th of July, 1824, christened the 8th of August, 1824.

This *Gulbrand* died in 1841, at the age of 17 years.

2. Daughter *Kirsti* born January 16th, 1826, christened on the 29th of January, 1826. This daughter died January 30th, 1827, only 1 year old.

3. Son, *Ole*, born 18th of January 1828, christened the 3rd of February, 1828. *Ole* married *Ingrid Nilson*, about 1860. He later died on April 21st, 1915, living to the ripe old age (for that day) of 77 years.

4. Son *Knud* born the 6th of January, 1830, christened the 16th of January, 1830. *Knud* married *Ingaborg Olsdotter*, and he died about 1881, in his 51st year.

5. Another daughter *Kirsti*, born September 25th, 1833, christened the 6th of October, 1833. This child has the same name as their second child, who died in 1827. It was the custom, to name the next child born of the same sex after the sibling that had died. This *Kirsti* lived for 46 years, dying in 1879.

6. Son, *Martinus*, born the 2nd of November, 1837, christened the 19th of November, 1837. *Martinus* married *Anne Knutsen* about 1860.

7. Another son, *Gulbrand*, born November 1st, 1842, christened the 20th of November, 1842. This is the *Gulbrand* who would be the father of *Gustav Bjelke*. As was the case with his older sister *Kirsti*, *Gulbrand* was born the year after the first born son

had died, and he took on the name of this deceased brother. Gulbrand married Thore Gundersdatter in 1868 and would die later in Sweden in 1901, at 59 years of age. More details in the following chapter.

8. Son, *Eli*, born the 5th of April, 1845, christened on the 18th of May, 1845.

With the death of the oldest son Gulbrand, the next in line, son Ole, inherited the farm.

The third son, Knud, married Ingeborg Olafsdatter. Ingeborg was 5 years his senior, born on November 13th, 1825. Their first of four daughters, Inga, was born in Norway on February 10th, 1858. About this time, Knud could see that there was no future there for his family on the Bjelke Farm. He left to work in the timber/forest work on the east coast of Sweden.

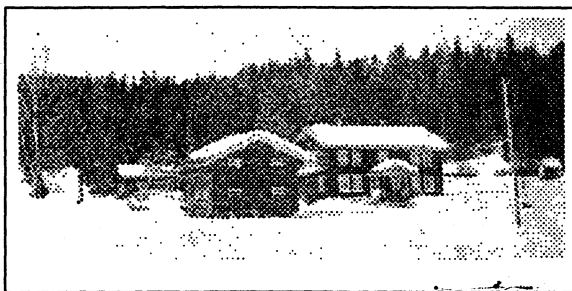
This event is critical, for it paved the way for his younger brother to join him in Sweden some 12 years later.

GULBRAND ISAKSON

CHAPTER THREE

Gulbrand Isaksen, son of **Isak Olsen** and **Ragnhild Gulbrandsdatter**, is the father of my grandfather, **Gustav Reinhart Bjelke**.

Gulbrand was born on November 1st, 1842, at the Bjelker Farm at Nord Odal, Hedmark, Norway. He was baptised November 20th, 1842 and on the 4th of December 1868 he married **Thore Andria Gundersdatter** (born June 17th, 1842), a bride who was four and one half months older than **Gulbrand**. She came from the neighbouring farm of Svarverud.



Thore's house at Svarverud

They had seven children, listed as follows (the first of the children is my grandfather):

1. Son, **Gustav Reinhart Bjelke**, Born April 12th, 1869; Baptized July 4th, 1869 and died February 21st, 1945. He married Lena Selstrom 1n 1904,

and they had 7 children - Gunnar, Dora, Carl, Ruth, Andrew, Arthur, Harold.

2. Daughter, **Klara Matilda** born May 8th, 1871, died July 28th, 1957 - 86 years old. She did not marry.

3. Daughter **Ingeborg Katarina** born December 7th, 1872, died May 8th, 1924. She married Matts Paulinus Erikson and they had two children, Marta and Bo.

4. Son, **Gulbrand Adolph** born December 20th, 1874, died 79 years later on February 26th, 1953. He did not marry, however he was father of a daughter named Guri.

5. Daughter **Mina Louisa** born April 27th, 1877, died July 8th, 1930 at 53 years of age. Mina married Erik Johannsen in 1900 and they had three children - Ellen, Olaf, and Tora. She later married Bengt Lindgren and had three more children - Kjell, Sune and Eva. (Check this out on Mina)

6. Son, **Arndt Teodor** born March 19th, 1879 and died at 61 years of age on December 31st, 1940. He was married to Ingeborg Nordstrom and they had three children - Stig, Bertel and Gudrun.

7. Son, **Otto Bernhard** born June 21st, 1880. The youngest of the Bjelke children died December 31st, 1939 at 57 years of age. He did not marry.

Gulbrand Isaksen was a sergeant in King Oscar II's army in 1869. While serving in the army he and his wife **Thore** lived at the Svarverud Farm.

The conscription of men into the army was based on the *ledg* system. A ledg was a certain group or number of farms in an area that were charged with the responsibility of providing, and maintaining, jointly 1 soldier. The size of the ledg varied somewhat, but usually it consisted of 4 full farms, 8 half farms, or 16 quarter farms. The detachments were on the whole connected with their respective districts. Regiments, battalions even companies and squadrons were named after the district the soldiers had been conscripted from.

Most of the army units consisted of conscripted men, although there were some enlisted men. Each unit of men consisted of a core of trained soldiers, that in case of conflict, would train others in the community.

We do not know if Gulbrand was conscripted, enlisted, was hired by a conscriptee, or was nominated by his farm to serve. The military training would, however, be an asset to him in his later years.

At this time Norway and Sweden were one country. The possibility to earn a good living for

"Sergeant" Isaksen and his family in this district was not good. **Gulbrand** and **Thore** decided to look for their fortune in some other "new" place.

The decision was made to follow Gustav's older brother into Sweden. By this time, Knud was a foreman working for a large timber company, and could find work for his younger brother and his new family.

Gulbrand and his family arrived to their new start in Sweden on June 1st, 1870. Their first home was at Gassjo, a small village south of Edsele. Edsele is slightly north of Sweden's halfway point, and is directly east of Trondheim, Norway. Gulbrand worked here for awhile as a Timber Foreman.

Their oldest daughter, **Klara Matilda** was born here on the 8th of May, 1871. **Klara** was christened by a **C. Naslund** and the certificate of baptism was sent to the parish at Gideaberg on the 23rd of May, 1871.

Later that year Gulbrand was transferred to Dynas, Sandviken, which is located 50 km from the coastal city of Harnosand. This is the location of the saw mills owned by the Sandviken Company. This home at Dynas, was where their second daughter (Ingeborg) and second son (Gulbrand Adolf), were both born. **Gulbrand** and his family's first

communion was taken on the 15th of August, 1871 in the local parish. *Gulbrand* and *Thore* initially lived in primitive workers' lodging. Then, on the 25th of November, 1873, they bought what is referred to as a "crafter's place", or a "workers' place", in the village of Dynas for 1500 krona.

When the contract for this house was written, the *Bjelke* name was used for the first recorded time.

In the early days, the Scandinavians took on "patronymic" names - they were identified by their christian name and their father's name. For example, Isak Olsen's oldest son was *Gulbrand Isaksen* (son of Isak). *Gulbrand Isaksen's* oldest son was *Gustav Gulbrandson*. Daughters would be named *Gulbrandsdatter*.

In addition, a third name was often used, usually a farm name. Thus *Gulbrand Bjelke* took his name from the farm "Bjelke". Most persons who left their home to live in lands far away, adopted their farm name. We are aware of several other families in the USA that are unrelated to this family but still share the *Bjelke* surname. The patronymic system was changed by law in the mid 1920's.

There were also strict rules for the naming of children. The eldest son was named after the paternal grandfather. The second son was then to

be named after his maternal grandfather. It was a similar situation for the daughters, being first named after their paternal grandmother and then their maternal grandmother.

When all the grandparents names were used up, great grandparents names were used. In some special cases, this process could be tampered with, such as when a child was named after a deceased sibling.

This recorded contract signing is the beginning of the *Bjelke* surname which is carried on until this day. *Gulbrand* did not sign this house contract himself, but rather the contract was signed by *Knud Isaksen*, *Gulbrand's* bolder brother, by proxy.

Fredrick Henry Versteegh, born to a wealthy Dutch family from Edam, Holland, arrived to Dynas on August 11th, 1870. *Versteegh's* family had been operating a lumber milling business in the area for a while, but now wished to expand their operation.

This new sawmill had been started at *Sandviken* only two years previous. Under the direction of *Versteegh*, the sawmill would see growth to 4 "frames" by 1882 when a completely new sawmill was built with 5 "frames". At its peak, the *Sandviken Company* employed over 160

permanent men. Versteegh & Gulbrand were almost the same age. They came to Dynas within a month of each other (July and August of 1870), and perhaps more importantly, both were foreigners to the country and to the area. Both of them would have some struggle with the language and perhaps even some of the local customs. A strong bond between these two men developed, which they would take to their graves.

Gulbrand Bjelke came to play a very important role as a valuable worker in this company and eventually he became a very close and trusted friend of **Versteegh**. **Versteegh** needed timber for his mill and **Gulbrand** was very successful in getting that timber to the mills for **Versteegh**. **Gulbrand's** background as a sergeant probably meant that he had a good practical education, as well as lots of practical experience to lead and handle people. As a son of a farmer he no doubt had some very good ideas about forestry and how to deal with farmers who controlled those forests.

The Sandviken Company mill was developed along the Angermanalven river, near the mouth where it enters the sea. Many other mills were located adjacent to the Sandviken Company. The logs were floated down the river to the

sawmill, and then the finished product was shipped by the sea to ports all over Europe.

The Swedish poet, Sehlstodt visited this region and made what is a well known remark in Sweden, "Saw by saw, I saw wherever I saw."

In the church records, during these early years, **Gulbrand** is called a crafter. It was about this time that the son, **Gulbrand Adolph** was born on the 20th of December 1874. This was the family's fourth child, and the first brother for **Gustav**.

Gulbrand soon moved his family further inland to Edsele, Sweden. Their house is eventually sold to the son of peasant **Nils Jonas Rostrom** for 1700 crowns on the 17th of April, 1876. This selling contract was signed by **Gulbrand Bjelke** and the official transfer takes place on the 23rd of October, 1876.

Gulbrand then rented a farm at Gideaberg, near Edsele. This farm belonged to the Company and **Gulbrand** paid rent to his employer. In a letter **Gulbrand** wrote to a friend of his on July 6th, 1876, he describes the trip that he had to take with his family:

" Thank you for your last. At last however we arrived to our destination, hardships and troubles but the journey was rather

troublesome as the steamboat did not fare any further than Holmstrand from where we had to carry on by land.

Remarkably fine weather.. for here it looks really beautiful, almost everywhere. I Believe that there will be plenty of hay this year.

Regarding the contentment or happiness, it will no doubt be all right with myself but it will be worse for Thore. But it will improve only as she gets acquainted. It was a horrible adventure with Rosfrom be no doubt will get a hard punishment as he has broken his father.

There is nothing new to tell except we are in good health and we are quite well and we are wishing the same to you. Remember us to your mother and father and Noch Johanna and last and first you are greeted.

Your true friend

G. Bjelke and wife

In Gideaberg, the family is written up in the church records as follows:

Bjelke, Gulbrand Isaksen, tenant; wife Thore Gundersdatter; son Gustav Reinhart, born 1869 in Norway; daughter Klara Matilda, born 1871 in Edsele; Ingeborg Katarina born 1872 in Gudmundra; Gulbrand Adolph born 1874 in

Gudmundra; Mina Louisa born 1877 in Edsele; Arndt Teodor born 1879 in Edsele; and then a dead born female child, the seventh child.

Gulbrand had a hired hand at this time living with them whose name was **Karl Edward Gundersson**, born 1849 4/2 in Nord Odalen, Norway. This was a brother of **Thore Andria Gundersdatter**, Gulbrand's wife.

In the Swedish Church records, the family is listed by their name and their ability to read. They were each required to have learned the Catechism and the explanation of it by memory; and further to that, (and more importantly) the understanding of it. **Gulbrand** and **Thore** are both listed as excellent readers - they have memorised the Lutheran Catechism to heart and they not only know all the explanations but they also have a full understanding of it. The records indicate that the children don't have the understanding but they do have the explanations memorised and they have committed the catechism to heart. Now this is quite a feat considering these children would be very young. **Klara**, at this time, would be no more than five or six.

Gulbrand has rented this house for some time. This was a common practice for tenants to stay in the company dwelling. It enabled **Gulbrand**

to be free from maintaining the company house and also free to move quite quickly and easily without the bother of having to sell his home. At this point he is still the "factor" or "foreman" at Sandvikens, working for *Versteegh*.

The last child (born dead) ?? occurred in 1881. The last communion at Gedeaberg was taken in 1881 and in that particular one, *Thore Andria* did not participate.

In 1882 the family moved onto a farm that *Gulbrand* had purchased further up the river, closer to the town of Edsele. From this point on *Gulbrand* is called an estate owner and referred to in the official records as "Estate Owner *Gulbrand Bjelke*, Factor". They lived in this place until the 20th of November, 1886, when they left for Asele. This last farm was called "Wanede".

CCHAPTER FOUR

ASELE

The family moved to Asele on the 21st of November, 1886. **Gulbrand** now obtained the title of "Inspector". He was given full Power of Attorney on the 4th of June, 1887 from **Versteegh** saying that he was in charge of the company's interests in Asele, Dorotea and Vilhelmina. It reads as follows:

"Power of Attorney:

HEREBY the Inspector G. Bjelke is authorised on behalf of Sandvikens to plead the cause of the Company at Company meetings, in bankruptcy's, sessions regarding the bounds and at land surveying performances and its rights of voting exercise. And in general see to the concerns of the Company within the Parishes of Asele, Dorotea & Vilhelmina. And I will approve on behalf of the Company what the proxy on account of this Power of Attorney legally makes and permits.

Sandviken

4th of June, 1887

F.H. Versteegh"

Gulbrand had very widespread powers to operate on the company's behalf in this area, in all activities of lumbering, timber floating, purchase of

timber product and so on. **Gulbrand**, as well as his sons **Gustav** and **Gulbrand Adolph** travelled a lot throughout the district - winter and summer. In the Dorotea district **Gulbrand** had an assistant named **Grols Naslund** who was married to **Hilda Kristina Alstergren**. It was considered quite important to be married if you were in a important position in the community. A Vilhelmina area man named **Vinter** was removed as an assistant in that area so that **Gulbrand** could deal for the company in that area himself.

Soon **Gustav Bjelke**, **Gulbrand's** oldest son, took over this position and **Gustav** moved to Vilhelmina on the 17th day of October, 1892. **Gustav** was in charge of the Vilhelmina area and the Dorotea area was looked after by **Erik Johansson**. **Erik** would later marry **Mina Lousia Bjelke** on the 23rd of June, 1901. This was **Gulbrand's** daughter and **Gustav Bjelke's** sister.

Gulbrand was now starting to have some problems with his health and in a letter to his boss **Fredrick Versteegh**, on the 9th of November, 1897, he says:

"With my health, it is not the best as my stomach is rather bad and I suspect that my smoking has caused the most part of it, what also is what the Doctor claims. I have now had to stop smoking."

In a letter of March 28th, 1898, ***Gulbrand*** mentions that his health lately has been, and is, bad. He is quoted as saying ***"And God knows what the end of this will be."*** A journey to Stockholm for an operation would be taken midsummer of that year. In a letter of June 15th, 1898, ***Gulbrand*** intends to go south. ***"And I think it would be best if Gustav could come home while I am away for the accounts sake and Johansson goes to Vilhelmina instead. I prefer to go by train and where it perhaps can be (inaudible) Mr. Consul could meet at Amundsgo, so we could go together to Langsile."***

Kindly bring also a thousand krone as all the money here will be spent this month. I feel rather poorly, I hope the journey will make me healthy again, what a happy day shouldn't I have then."

On the 19th of June a further letter is sent to ***Versteegh***. ***"Gulbrand will leave Asele the first day of July."***

The letter mentions that his intention had been to go by boat to Stockholm but his wife does not like the sea; she would like him to go by rail because then he can go with her as she travels back to Norway. Thore's mother has died recently and there is a small legacy for her to collect. (Get details on will) ***Gulbrand*** and ***Thore*** settle in Porla while he is taking his treatments. Porla is a famous 17th century spa located in central Sweden. ***Gulbrand*** answers a letter from ***Versteegh*** of the 22nd of June. In this letter ***Versteegh*** has mentioned that ***Gustav*** was back in Vilhelmina.

Gulbrand does not find Porla to be a place for pleasure and claimed it to be a very unpleasant place to stay. It seemed to be raining all the time, but he was willing to accept all this discomfort if his health could somehow be recovered.

On the 12th of August, 1898, ***Gulbrand*** again writes his friend ***Versteegh***. ***Gulbrand*** had been in Stockholm for eight days. An eye specialist there had examined his eyes and verified that he had cataracts in his right eye. The doctor did not believe that an operation at this time would be helpful. He also mentions that he suffers from Bright's Disease (a disease affecting the kidneys), which is now better after his treatment at Porla. He suspects that this could also cause trouble with his

eyes. His stomach has improved as well after the treatment he had taken in Porla.

Gulbrand received a salary of 4000 crowns plus an 800 crown subsistence in 1899 while he was journeying and staying at Porla. The Board of Directors for the Sandvikens Company record at their June 14th, 1900 meeting the following:

"To the former employee of the Company, Inspector G. Bjelke, Asele, who by reason of sickness, retired from his appointment the 31st of October 1899, is granted as grateful acknowledgement for his lasting, faithful and ardent activity, an annual pension of 3000 crowns to be paid during his remaining lifetime.

Signed Otto Gavelius."

Gulbrand Bjelke died six months later on January 13th, 1901. The cause of death was critical infection of the kidneys. **Gulbrand's** employer, and his very dear old friend, **Fredrik H. Versteegh**, died only ten days later, on the 23rd of January, 1901. It was only fitting that these two good friends who worked so close together should die within 10 days of each other.

The twentieth century brought on very important changes not only for the Company but

also for **Gustav Bjelke**, **Gulbrand's** son. A new Board of Directors was constituted after the death of **Mr. Versteegh** and a younger brother, **Arndt Versteegh**, took over as the head of the Swedish Sandviken operations. A group of five companies, the Sandviken Company being one of them, were all reorganized into one to become the Graingaraken Company.

In 1900 it was decided that the Graingaraken Company should stop buying any more forests. The forestry then was passed over to trained people instead of the apprentices that had come up through the system. Undoubtedly it meant a lot of changes to the tasks and to the Sandviken staff after **Gulbrand Bjelke's** death. The private owners of forests had become much more aware of the value of their forests. Many owners were regretting that they had sold their lumber too early and perhaps too cheaply to the large forest companies. Probably it was necessary for the companies to receive relatively cheap forest land in order to built up the large modern timber factories that had been set up so far inland in Sweden. Around this time, my grandfather, remained at his job in Vilhelmina.

CHAPTER FIVE

GUSTAV BJELKE LEAVES SWEDEN

Gustav's job was to be the "front man" for the Company and to deal with the farmers who were bringing the logs down to the river to be floated to the lumber mills. Gustav would meet the farmers and measure the trees that had been pulled down to the riverside. There, he would establish how many board feet of lumber were in each tree pay him, probably in cash, for the amount of lumber he had brought to the river. This was a responsible position as it left Gustav controlling large sums of cash held in trust accounts in Vilhelmina..

It was at this time that Gustav Bjelke lent 7000 kronas from the Company trust account to someone or to some group of individuals. An audit of the Company accounts revealed the shortfall and Gustav was immediately called before the board.

The minutes from the board meeting for Sandvikens Company held at Harnosand on the 10th day of October, 1902 read as follows:

"The representative for the company at Vilhelmina, Gustav Bjelke, has been found guilty of dishonest administration of the means of the company. Bjelke was accordingly,

through utterance of the Board at verbal conference immediately after the discovery, separated from his appointment and the management of the Vilhelmina District which was moved over to the administration at Asele. Bjelke immediately covered his deficit but as means for this are to be obtained by drawing a bill at six months date in the bank at Asele against security by persons with whom the Company had done business. The Board decided it was unworthy to throw the loss to innocent people to redeem the bill at maturity. Since the house in Vilhelmina belongs to the Company, through this it has become superfluous, and the Managing Director was entrusted to try and sell the same. The Managing Director reported that notification on Bjelke being dismissed from his office has been made by circular to former customers of the Company."

The 7000 krone that had been lent out by Gustav was paid back in part by deducting the 1200 krone due to Bjelke from the company. From this set of minutes a couple of things come to light.

Bjelke had probably lent the money to some of his relatives or friends in the community and when the audit was done and it was noted that the money was missing, there were enough people who immediately said that they would sign for Gustav and repay the money. This indicates quite clearly that the money was not for Gustav Bjelke himself but was for other debts by members of the community. Although the money was accounted for and could be paid back, the Company decided that Gustav Bjelke must be suspended from his appointment at Vilhelmina. It's likely that if Gustav's father, Gulbrand, been alive and had his good friend Versteegh been alive and still heading up the company, that this matter would simply have been dealt with and set aside. However, with the two old friends no longer around, Gustav was dealing with a new Board of Directors and a new Company President and he was let go.

While he was in Vilhelmina he got to know the Selstrom family. It was one of the girls, Lena, that had been born at Vilhelmina in 1881, that he would soon marry. He was evidently good friends with the Selstrom family and would have known Lena's brother Oscar Selstrom who had left for Canada in 1899. Oscar Selstrom's first job in Canada was working at the famous spiral tunnel at

Field British Columbia, just out of Golden. When Gustav was faced with leaving Sweden, it was natural to want to go to an area where he could get a fresh start and yet know someone. He chose to come to Canada. Just before Christmas, on December 22nd, 1902, he left Vilhelmina to stay with his mother in Asele.

A year later, on January 31st, 1903, he married Lena Margareta Selstrom. The marriage took place in the church at Vilhelmina. Gustav was 34 years old, and Lena was 22, 12 years younger than he.

Gustav then left for Canada on March 4th, 1903, leaving his wife in Sweden. Lena, his new wife followed him to Canada by herself on March 18, 1904, a year later. She landed in New York Harbour where she was met by her husband Gustav whom she hadn't seen for a full year! It was an exciting time for this newly married couple. .

CHAPTER SIX

SELSTROM

The Sehlstrom family came from the small village of Basksele. This is a beautiful little village, 13 kilometres to the north east of Vilhelmina, built on the east bank of the River Vojmsjon. The Vojmsjon is a wide river which was used for transporting logs, eventually flowing into the Angermanalven river passing through Asele, where Gulbrand Bjelke was living.

This village hasn't changed much in the last hundred years. The schoolhouse that my grandmother Lena Sehlstrom attended is still standing. When I visited the area we went upstairs where the old organ is still in the school house and we noticed literally hundreds of names written on the walls of the schoolhouse. I can only assume Lena's name and many of my relatives names are on that wall. We also saw the house in which Lena was born and we were able to visit with some of the other Sehlstrom relatives in the area. This area is in northern Sweden, and in the summer, the sun sets for only a brief period of time, and it never really gets very dark at night. In fact while we visited there in July, it was light enough to read a newspaper in the middle of the night. Because of

the trade winds that blow they do get snow but they don't seem to get the cold that we would from the Canadian prairie winter. The location is just a few kilometres south of the 65th degree parallel. In Canada, the 60th forms the northern border of Alberta and Saskatchewan, so Basksele is probably on a parallel line north of Yellowknife, N.W.T. Considering how far north it is the forests still contain large timber, something you would never find that far north in Saskatchewan, much less the North West Territories. The trade winds maintain a warm average temperature over this area.

Grandmother Lena, was one of nine children born to Christofer Christoferson. Christofer was born November 24th, 1844, and christened on December 1st of 1844. He died on August 17th, 1928. He was married to Gertrude Margareta Nilsson. Margareta was born on the 7th of July, 1848 (Died January 14th, 1923), and was one of nine children in her family. Lena's father Christofer was one of seven children born to her Grandparents, Christofer Ericsson and Inga Chasa Svensdotter.

Christofer Christopherson and Gertrude
Margareta Nilsdatter were married of the 5th of
September, 1835 and had a total of nine children.

1. Petter R. Sehlstrom.

Born: August 13th, 1869

Died: October 14th, 1935

Married: Anna Jonsson

Children: Svea; Ruth; Bengt

2. Christofer Alarak

Born: August 7th, 1871

Died: February 12th, 1945

Married: Nanny Ankvist

Children: Arnt; Gustav; Set

3. Oskar Agaton

Born: December 12th, 1874

Died: December 28th, 1948

Married: Bertha Erikson

Children: Hugo; Roy; Anna; Olga; Gordon;
Carl; Ruth; Levina.

4. Emma A.

Born: 1877

Died: 1947

Married: August Karlsson

Children: Hedda; Olga; Elsa.

5. Alma K.

Born: 1878

Died: 1951

Married: Kalie Lidberg

Children: Selma; Anna; Carin; Oscar; Tage;

Rut.

6. Lena Margareta

Born: February 12th, 1881

Died: June 10th, 1929

Married: Gustav Bjelke January 31st, 1903

Children: Gunnar; Dora; Carl; Ruth;

Andrew; Arthur; Harold.

7. Johan Konrad.

Born: 1883

Died: 1935

Married: Johanna Danielson

Children: Bojan; Kjell; Ingrid; Greta; Otto;

Maj; Nils; Sten; Harry; Melker.

8. Magnus Severin

Born: 1886

Died: 1928

Married: M. Molaander

Children: Ake; Henning; Inga.

9. Olga K.

Born: April 22nd, 1888

Died: 1941

Married: Johann Gerhard Johanneson

Children: Sven; Greta; Rut.

Christofer and his wife had three sons and then a
daughter so its not unusual that the third son,

Oskar, would have to leave the farm. The farm would not be big enough to support them all, so Oskar joined the Swedish Army.

In 1899, Oskar came to Canada to join the Scandinavian Regiment which was to fight in the Boor War. He discovered upon his arrival in Canada that the Regiment had already departed for the war before he even set foot in Canada! He had a good friend, Tem M. Mattson, who lived in the Burnt Lake District in central Alberta, and he decided to pay him a visit.

He ended up working for Mattson while he attended Burnt Lake School in order to learn to speak English. At age 26, he learned to both read and write English!

It was this association with brother-in-law Oskar Sehlstrom that prompted Gustav Bjelke to resettle in Canada after losing his job with the Sandviken Company.

We believe that there was Scottish blood on the Sehlstrom side of the family. Aunt Dora claimed that her great-great grandfather was a full-blooded Scotch man and that her cousin Hugo Sehlstrom said that they had a picture of this Scotsman on their farm all dressed up in his kilt. They also had a piece of the tartan of this man's particular clan. It was customary in those days to

give a piece of the tartan to each of the boys, (not the girls) and so each of the Sehlstrom boys in the old country were given a piece of the tartan from the kilt. Hugo remembers as a little boy, how they thought the men in the kilt looked pretty funny. They used to poke holes in the eyes of the man in the picture which they ended up ruining. This undoubtedly was true, in that there were Scottish and Danish logging firms that had set up businesses in Sweden. It could easily be that there was a full-blooded Scotsman married to one of the Sehlstrom ancestors. (Check this out)

CHAPTER SEVEN

DIAMOND VALLEY

Oskar Sehlstrom applied and was granted a homestead in the Burnt Lake District, the Northeast of 26-37-1-5. In order to make some extra money to operate the farm, Oskar secured a foreman job at Field, British Columbia, working on the spiral tunnel for the railway. His crew's job was blasting the rock in the tunnel. Oskar came back to the Burnt Lake area after finishing his job at Field, British Columbia where he married Bertha Erickson on June 23rd, 1904. He worked for Erik Johansson, as a carpenter, and he worked as a timber inspector for the Dominion Government inspecting ties and timber.

Gustav Bjelke (34 years old) had followed Oskar Sehlstrom to Canada. By this time he had married to 22 year old Lena Selstrom. She came later to America on March 18th, 1904 when he could afford to bring her over on the boat. Gustav travelled to New York City to meet her at the harbour.

Gustav had stopped for a short time in 1903 at Stockholm, Saskatchewan, and at Ernfold, Saskatchewan where he worked prior to joining his future brother-in-law, Oskar Sehlstrom, in British

Columbia. His first job was working on the spiral tunnel in Field, British Columbia. With Oskar as foreman, Gustav was quickly hired on. He was then joined by Lena in 1904 and it was here, in Golden, British Columbia on February 23, 1906 that they had their first son who was named Gunnar Reinhold Bjelke.

Lena and Gustav naturally spent much of their first years with Lena's brother Oscar, at Burnt Lake.

Lena and Gustav both stayed for awhile with Eric Johanson when Mrs. Johanson had her gall bladder operation in 1904. This was the first gall bladder operation that Dr. Parsons had ever performed and he stayed up all night reading materials on the subject.

Later Lena attended school at Swan Lake so that she could learn to read and speak English.

Gustav applied for a homestead in June of 1906. The legal description of the land is the Southeast of Section 4, Township 38, Range 3, West of the 5th, near the town of Evarts, in an area called Diamond Valley.

Diamond Valley was a beautiful name for a beautiful diamond shaped valley. In the early 1900's, most of this area was just getting settled. One of the earliest settlers was Frank Victor, who upon signing his name at the Hotel Register in Innisfail, used as his homestead location "Diamond Valley". The name just stuck!

The valley was tree covered, with the only road being the one from the town of Evarts. This trail crossed the Medicine River; went south for two miles and then west across the Torkas homestead to Billy Bishops place; crossing section 3 to Gingras. A trail also ran west past the spot where the Diamond Valley School was built, and then across section 8 and on to Canton's".

The school that they describe was a mile west and a mile north of Gustav's homestead, and it first started in the spring of 1911. The school year ran from May through to December, avoiding the coldest months of January through April. Time-off was always given to those students involved in the haying and harvesting operations.

They had some difficulty keeping the school open those first few years. In a letter from the Department of Education dated Sept/1914. the Diamond Valley School District #2154 was told that the Department expected to keep the school open

until Christmas and they would be required to advise what reason, if any, that they would not be open the following year. The Diamond Valley school had only been open 4 months that year, and had voiced plans to only open for 1 1/2 months that fall. The Department wanted them to take their role in education more seriously.

The children came to school "across country" and since this was a very low lying area they often arrived at school very wet. Many times they would come barefoot and put their shoes and stockings on at school.

The roads in the spring were terrible. For example, in April of 1917, the Bjelke children had missed a 1/3 rd of their school days. In May, they were again missing 1/3rd of eligible days. The note in the school registrar beside the absent Bjelke family reads as follows: "Bad Trails. The trails here are a disgrace to any country. Simply through road mending consisting of makeshift patching without going to the root of the trouble. Naturally in wet years the school attendance is very poor."

The teachers that would have instructed Gunnar (1912), Dora (1914) and Carl (1916) were:

Mr. John Acton	1912
Miss Carrie McMann	1913
Mrs. J.H. Sneddon	1914

Mr. H.J. Wilson* 1914 (4 Months)
 Miss Berthason 1915
 Miss Charlotte Clarke 1916
 Miss Dorothy Maxted 1917-1918
 Mr. Maurice Rookwood 1918
 Miss Bessie Burdick 1919

*Joined the Army and killed in action.

Dora remembers that the highlights of the year were the Christmas Concerts where all the children participated in plays and in singing.

The town of Evarts was located three miles south and 7 miles west of Sylvan Lake. When Gustav arrived in 1906, the town was booming. There were already two blacksmith shops in town! Many of the freighters made Evarts their stop as they carried goods and supplies west to Rocky Mountain House and the surrounding lumber camps. The return trip carried lumber back to Red Deer for its further distribution. There were 3 stores in town and two restaurants.

In the spring, and in the flooding seasons, it was difficult for Gustav to get to Evarts for his supplies. Even if he could get as far as the Medicine River, crossing the river could be difficult if not impossible. Eventually a secure enough bridge was erected which proved to be reliable all year round. The river was used to move logs down

from the Lobstick and Horseguard areas. The river also provided good trapping grounds for the settlers and provided good fish for the Bjelke table.

On the 16th of August, 1909, Gustav was granted Canadian Citizenship at the District Court in Red Deer, Alberta. This was a requirement for Gustav if he was to obtain title to his homestead. He lists his nationality as Swedish when he was actually born a Norwegian. Perhaps he had taken out Swedish citizenship at some later point. For a time, they were in the Burnt Lake area, where Lena worked for the Johansson's and looked after their son Axel. Axel was about eight or nine years old at that time, and would later marry Lena's oldest daughter Dora.

Gustav built his house and he, Lena and 7 month old Gunnar moved in on the 1st of October, 1906. He spent the first two winters working in Red Deer at a brickyard, trying to earn some extra money for the farm.. It is not clear if he took Lena and Gunnar with him to live at Red Deer at that time or if perhaps Lena and the child went to the nearby Burnt Lake area to live with the Selstrom's.

Gustav dug his well and got some shelters ready for his cattle. He had seven head of cattle in 1906; in 1907 he cropped six acres of the land, and he broke an additional one acre. In 1908 he

did no additional breaking of the land nor did he plant any crops that year. His cattle jumped from seven to thirteen head in 1908 and he now had two horses. The breaking that was done must have been hired out either to a machine or to horses. In 1909 he had 10 acres in crop, 11 acres broke, and his herd again jumps from 13 to 24 head of cattle along with five horses. This would be the year that he would "prove up"; in other words he would have done sufficient amount of work that the government would grant him free title to the land.

Looking back at 1908, where there was nothing planted, I suspect it may have been a very wet spring that year. The land is very low and heavy and it was very susceptible to spring floods.

Gustav's new home was a wood frame house and stood on the south west corner of the homestead near the road. The house stood until the 1950's when it burned to the ground. There were two stables built there as well. The value of the house is listed in the homestead documents at a value of \$200.00 with the outbuildings valued at \$50.00. The entire quarter section is said to have been fenced and the value of the fencing was \$100.00. Gustav then made his application for the permanent rights to the land on September 3rd, 1909. As was customary, they required neighbours

to testify as to the validity of Gustav's claim and in the homestead papers. There are sworn statement by Gust Nelson and Swan Bystrom, attesting to the facts as presented. The patent for the land was finally approved on the 5th of November, 1909. Gustav paid his first taxes in February, 1911.

Gustav farmed with horses, and to the amusement of the English speaking children, he spoke to the horses in Swedish. I suppose that they thought that Canadian horses only understood English!

Lena was very keen to learn the English language, and she received help from her neighbours. One friend lent her a magazine called "Needlecraft" which helped her with both her English and her handiwork.

When I was back there a few years ago with my mother, Ruth, we stopped to have a look at the homestead. There was a shaky bridge crossing a creek just before getting to the farmhouse. Mother had been so scared as a child in crossing the bridge that she would get on her hands and knees and crawl across it! Years later she never did warm up to bridges. Near the creek was a small grave that marked a stillborn baby daughter of Lena's. Ruth remembered coming across her mother, gently weeping as she kneeled by the

child's grave. Ruth also remembers that the low land was full of snakes that were not especially appealing to her as a child or in her later years. A creek runs from the northwest corner of the quarter section and exits on the southeast corner. From there it empties into the Medicine River, four miles to the east. Ruth remembered a swimming hole on their land and that they could catch fish every day!

After they moved to the homestead, Gustav and Lena would have six more children plus one child that died at birth at this place. The six children born at Evarts are as follows:

1. Tora Margaret Bjelke born October 24th, 1908.
2. Charles Carl Bjelke born August 25th, 1910.
3. Ruth Vahlborg Bjelke born April 27th, 1913.
4. Andrew Gordon Bjelke born February 5th, 1917.
5. Arthur Gustav Bjelke born 7th of May, 1919.
6. Harold Kristofer Bjelke born April 17th, 1921.

Lena was renowned for her rabbit stew and hamburgers. Groceries were bought in Evarts and flour was milled in Eckville. The hospitals were some distance away. There was a lot of work to do at the farm with cows to milk, knitting and food to prepare, and of course Lena had several children to look after as well. Gunnar and Dora and Karl attended the Diamond Valley School.

Church services were more often held in the homes rather than in the school. There were a number of Swedish people in the district and surrounding country, and Preacher Nelson from Burnt Lake would often hold services in one of the Swedish homes. The preaching and singing would be in Swedish, but for the benefit of the English speaking members of the congregation, they always sang one song in English!

The homestead was about two miles from the school - a long walk in the winter when it was cold. On one occasion, Karl froze his ears when he walked to school that day and at recess time his ears were all flopped over. School lunches would freeze and the school house wasn't that much warmer inside than outside! Dora remembers getting Rogers Golden syrup sandwiches (frozen) in her lunch and she always had trouble eating those kind of sandwiches in later years.

The family was never short of food. Gustav would fish in the Medicine River and he would snare rabbits. The land, as previously stated, was very low and not only did it flood often, but it also was very susceptible to early frost. Vegetable gardens were not much good there and Gustav and Lena would go to the Engman's, who lived in the New Hill area, to plant potatoes and

vegetables. It must have felt like heaven to them when they moved to Burnt Lake and were able to grow vegetables in their own yard as well as have a school right across the road.

Shortly after Arthur was born they would sell their land at Evarts and move to the Burnt Lake District. The land at Burnt Lake was better and all their friends, relatives and community of Swedish people were there.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BURNT LAKE

The land at Evarts was eventually sold with title eventually transferring on the 18th of September, 1923 to the SS Board. Gustav moved to Burnt Lake in 1920. Alice Engman - then a student in the Swan Lake School - remembers seeing a wagon full of Bjelkes and their belongings coming down the road to their new home during recess at school.

He purchased the Southwest of 10-38-1-5 as well as a forty acre piece of the Southeast of that Section 10-38-1-5. The land is presently owned by Melvin J. Johanson. It is 13 miles east and one mile north of the Diamond Valley homestead.

They moved into what used to be the old hotel or "stopping place" along the Burnt Lake trail. It was never a very good house, and always seemed full of bed bugs in behind the wall paper! (Ruth always hated wallpaper for that reason, and vowed that she would always have freshly painted walls in her house!)

The house had been built at the turn of the century by the Mattson family. They had run a good business out of the home, catering to the freighters and travellers of the day. In 1907, the Mattsons

moved on and the McDonalds moved in. They moved on and the house took on the Logan family and then the Wilsons in 1910. The Hill family took over until they moved to the Evarts area in 1916. It was likely empty until the Bjelke family moved in in 1920. The Bjelkes would claim this as their home until the property was sold in 1951. (The house was destroyed by fire in 1964)

Their house was right across the road from the town of Stockholm. This was a town that was organized and laid out believing that the railway would soon pass this spot. The railway did not come, and so even though the town was divided into streets and lots, very little building was done. There was a blacksmith's shop, a schoolhouse, Seventh Day Adventist Church, a Swedish Baptist Church, a Mission Covenant Church and two or three houses.

The south east corner of this south east quarter section was carved out for the Burnt Lake Cemetery. (2.68 acres) Later, in 1924, Gustav would help to transplant trees from the Fred Shoquist quarter and plant them around the Cemetery perimeter. Gustav hauled water by the barrel for over a mile and then faithfully hand watered the trees until they had firmly rooted.

There were a lot of trees on the homestead, and Ruth remembers walking with her mother in the woods, picking Bluebells, Tiger Lillies, Lady Slippers, Wild Raspberries, Saskatoons and Rhubarb. Lena told her daughter "This is surely what heaven is going to be like!" She wrote further: "She (Lena) was sure that there were going to be lots of flowers and pipe organ music in heaven! She played organ for the Mission Friend Church.... Gunnar, Dora, Carl and I (11 years old) were all confirmed at the same time in the Swedish language. The minister didn't ask me any questions. I remember that one boy (Alvin) had a brand new suit and the pant leg would stick to his leg and everytime he got up he shook his legs to get his pant legs down! When I sat in a big church in Stockholm, I was thrilled at all I remembered of my Confirmation!"

As far back as the Indians could recall, the peat and the moss at the nearby lake's edge burned the year round, mostly as a low smudge. For this reason, the lake became known as Burnt Lake, and the surrounding district adapted the name. This was in spite of the official name of Cygnet Lake (Little Swan) as indicated in the official records.

The Gustav Bjelke family was active in the church. Lena Bjelke played the organ for both the Lutheran Church and the Mission Covenant Church. Ruth Bjelke was later active in the Swedish Baptist Church teaching Sunday School. Ruth also played the organ, organised programs, acted as the Secretary-Treasurer and taught Sunday School classes.

Gustav Bjelke sat in the same pew by the window each Sunday, Perhaps the window was much needed relief when the sermon dragged on too long. Johnny Lindmen remembers on warm spring Sunday when they were with some boys behind Gustav. The big "house" flies were buzzing around, and were trying to use Gustav's bald head for a landing strip! Mrs. Lindman answered the guffaws from the boys by lifting young Johnny by the ear and carrying him to the front pew where he could be better supervised.

One of the quarters of Gustav's new land was treed. Gustav was a good man with an axe and anxious to clear the property. The land was cleared over a period of years. One of Bjelke's methods was to send son Carl to climb up the tree. He would tie the cable or rope around the tree as high up as possible, and hook the other end behind his team of black horses. The team would stretch

out the rope, bending the tree backside. Gustav would be at the base of the tree, chopping the roots so that the tree would fall, uprooting roots and all. On one of these occasions, the tree twisted and swung around hitting Bjelke on the head. He went down, giving every indication that he was badly hurt, or even dead. Falling trees killed a lot of good men. The other men and boys rushed over to him, removing the hat from his balding head. There was a large gash on the top of his head where he had been hit, but he was unharmed and eventually regained consciousness.

Once the trees had been cut down and the stumps were dynamited and piled and burned, Gus hired Frank Dallaire to come in with his big steam outfit and plow the land. The roots had to be picked and burned and eventually the land could be seeded.

Gustav was a very close friend of his brother-in-law, Oscar Selstrom. Even though it was 3 1/2 miles across country to the Selstrom home from Gustav's place, he would be there - two or three times a week - before the children had even left for school! The coffee pot was always on at the Selstrom home. Gustav was a man of few words. He would quietly sit and drink his coffee, drumming his fingers on the table, and then promptly get up

and leave. His sons, Gunnar and Carl spent a lot of time with their cousins at the Selstrom farm.

It was a Christmas tradition each year for the Bjelke family to travel the three miles north to the Axel Lindman farm. They would eat and enjoy themselves each year at this get-together. The families were often together at other times in the year, singing and laughing long into the evening. Florence and Olga Lindman were good friends of Ruth Bjelke, who would occasionally spend the night in their home. Carl Bjelke and Johnny Lindman were like brothers, and enjoyed eachothers company right up to Carl's passing.

For some time, Lena cared for a homesteader neighbor, Mr. Carl Asplund, in her home. Carl had severe arthritis which rendered him quite helpless. When they had found him in his house, the mice had been eating at his toes. The County of Red Deer had sent him to a home in Vancouver, which had not worked out. Arrangements were then made to have Lena care for him, which she did until his death in the spring of 1927. Carl was a highly educated Venizwalian who spoke fluent Swedish.

Gustav was a Trustee of the School Board from 1930 - 1939, and Lena was a charter member of the Burnt Lake WI. Some teachers from the

Burnt Lake School boarded at the Bjelke home. Lena often made soup for the children that were at the school during the long winters. The neighbours would drop off vegetables at Lena's house which she would cook up into a good thick bowl of soup. Alice Engman remembers how good this treat tasted on cold winter days. Most of the children took their turn as janitor of the school. This meant not only cleaning, but tending the fire as well.

The Bjelke children were taught by the following: Mrs. Olga Johnson, Mrs, R.A. Plummer; Miss Edith Cody; Miss Helen Smith; Miss Magnusina Einnarson; Mr. Norman Pickard; Miss Helen Standerwick; Mr. J.H. Cody; and Miss Phylis Steward.

When the school was started, it was called Swan Lake School, after the official name of the nearby lake. In 1934, a new school house was built and it was then named Burnt Lake School.

Lena's niece Lovina Poteem (Selstrom), recalls that whenever the Bjelke's would get a treat of fresh apples, Lena would put an apple for each of the Selstrom children in a bag and have their cousin Arthur deliver it to them at school.

Lena's mother died January 14th, 1923 in Basksele, Sweden. The end of the decade would be even worse for the Selstrom family. Lena's

father Christofer, died August 17th, 1928 and her younger brother Magnus died later that same year in a train accident, while he was on his way to collect his legacy from his father. And finally, in June of 1929, Lena becomes ill and dies. This was not a good decade for the family.

Lena Bjelke was a wonderful and kind woman, loved by the entire community. She was a talented and gifted musician.

CHAPTER NINE

Lena Bjelke Dies

One morning Lena had developed pains and a fever. Her son Gunnar was very close to her, and had gone up to her room to check on her. She told her twenty-three year old son that she was not going to live. Carl went over to Swain Swainsons farm to telephone the doctor and an ambulance was sent out from Red Deer to get her. Gunnar went to the Hospital with her, as Lena would need someone to interpret for her. She spoke some English but she certainly wasn't comfortable with it. When she had come down the stairs to go to the hospital, she said that she suddenly felt better. This was likely an indication that her appendix had burst.

On Monday, the 10th of June, 1929, Lena Margereta Bjelke died. She had an appendicitis which ruptured and there was simply nothing to do for her. She died in the Municipal Hospital in Red Deer. Cause of death is listed as "Perforated Appendicitis"

She was forty-eight years, three months and 29 days old, too young an age for anyone to die. The undertaker was Cline & Nelson out of Red Deer and she was buried in the Burnt Lake

cemetery, very close to where she lived. She had been attended by Doctor Backus from the Municipal Hospital in Red Deer.

The funeral service was held at the Bjelke home. (Check this out) One of the hymns at her funeral was "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere", which never failed to wet the eyes of her daughter Ruth when it was played or heard. Ruth had always been afraid to walk past the Burnt Lake Cemetery at night before her mother was laid there to rest. She felt no fear of the cemetery once her mother had been laid there to rest.

The following obituary appeared in the local paper:

Mrs. Lena Margaret (Gus) Bjelke died at the Red Deer Municipal Hospital on June 10th, 1929 following an operation for appendicitis at the age of 48 years. She was born at Vilhelmina, Sweden on February 11th, 1881 and was married to Gus Bjelke in 1903. In 1904 they moved to Canada, living for two years in British Columbia, and they finally settled on a homestead at Evarts, where they resided until 1920, when they moved to the Burnt Lake district. Besides her husband, she is survived by 5 sons, Gunnar, Carl., Andrew, Arthur and Harold, and two daughters, Ruth and Dora.

She was a sister of Oscar Selstrom. Shhe is buried in the Burnt Lake Cemetary.

Mrs. Axel (Mary) Lindman went to stay with the family when she heard that Lena had died. She stayed on for a few days until the family was settled. The Lindmans were close to the Bjelkes, and were very sad at the loss of Lena.

Gustav was a quiet man, and became even more reserved after the death of his wife Lena. He was sixty years old, and they had celebrated their 26th anniversary. Sometimes he would come into the house and call out her name. Realizing that he had made a mistake, he would turn and go outside, or upstairs to his room. He spent a lot of time in his room reading to himself.

Sixteen year old daughter Ruth was going to school at Sylvan Lake at this time. She stayed with the Reverend Mr. and Mrs. Lindquest for one year, as she worked for her room and board and attended school in Sylvan Lake. Lindquest was the Lutheran Pastor for the area. With her mother's death, Ruth would have to come home and take care of the family.

Ruth writes: "My mother died of a ruptured appendicitis in 1929 and the lights went out in the house. I tried in my poor way to cook. I had to learn how to make bread, and wash clothes for my five

brothers and father. Dora had her teaching certificate and so it was best for her to go teaching and to bring in a little money. We were then at the beginning of the great depression."

Gustav was left with seven children and the great depression which was to break out that fall. Dora was twenty-one years old and had finished Normal School. She was able to go out teaching and earn a living. The other children were younger and with Ruth being the only other girl in the family, the job of taking care of the house sort of ended up on her shoulders. She was just sixteen years old at the time, just about to finish her tenth grade at school.

Her sister Dora writes: "My sister Ruth, who was going to High School at the time went home to look after the family which she did very nobly. We'll always be eternally grateful to her for what she did. Ruth was very gifted musically and otherwise, so it was quite a sacrifice for her to make".

The neighbour's helped Ruth a lot as she cared for her father and siblings. Ruth and Lovina Selstrom, Ruth's cousins, would occasionally stay with the family and help out with the work around the home.

CHAPTER TEN

GUSTAV BJELKE'S LAST DAYS

On the 21st day of February, 1946, Gustav Bjelke died from a severe heart attack. Place of death is listed at the Red Deer Municipal Hospital, Red Deer. He was seventy-six years, ten months & nine days old the day that he died. Attending physician is listed as G. Hancock and Duffield from Sylvan Lake was the undertaker in charge. Place of internment was Burnt Lake cemetery.

We don't have a lot of things in writing from Grandpa Gustav other than one letter, dated the 26th of April, 1943. It is written in Swedish and addressed to his daughter Ruth.

April 26, 1943

"I have received your letter today saying that Harold has come there. Hope he is some help for you. We have cold weather here and have not set out any seed in the garden. They are still threshing around here. Carl is helping N. Halvorson with some threshing. I have no news to tell you. Greet everyone at Loreburn."

Love Gustav

Gustav enjoyed visiting with my Grandfather, Gustav Tastad, and with Uncle Ludvig Aadland. He made at least three trips out to Loreburn where he would visit with his daughter
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and the Tastad family. On one trip to Saskatchewan, he walked down to visit with Ludvig. He asked him to come back to his daughter's house for dinner that evening. He told Ruth to have her brother-in-law, Ed Tastad, go down and pick up the poor old ageing Ludvig, who should not have to walk over to their home. They all smiled at this, as Ludvig was not only already at the door, but he was a far younger man than the ageing Gustav!

One of the other letters we have was sent by Gustav to his brother Gulbrand in Sweden. It appears that he has not had any contact with his brother for forty two years.

"RR#3, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada

1st December, 1944.

Brother Gulbrand:

Thanks for the letter that I have received. It was very nice having a letter from you after a forty year silence. I see that you are well. I also feel well after my age. Up till now I have been good in health. Soon I am seventy-six years so I am getting rather old. As you may know, my wife died in 1929. We had seven children, five boys, two girls. The girls are married and are doing very well. Two of the boys are in England at the Shafers. I have two boys on farm, only one at home who manages the

farm that I own. I must say that I am all right in my old age and that means a lot. I am very grateful that I came away from Vilhelmina. Certainly I do not want to change place with any Inspector in the old country.

I have two hundred acres of arable land and I got a good crop this year and was well paid. We also have quite a number of cattle and pigs and horses. We have fine weather here, not very much snow. If you see Naslund sometime, remember me to him. I have not had any letter from Vilhelmina for years so I do not know if they are alive or dead. I do not have very much to write about that could be of interest to you so I will finish with a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year greetings to you and your wife.

Brother Gustav Bjelke."

It's hard to say whether there were some bad feelings between the brothers or just what the reasons was for the forty some years of silence. The letters don't seem to indicate the reason for it.

Gustav had been in Red Deer Hospital in early February of 1945. He had been visited there by Ruth's brother-in-laws, Byron and Walter, who were in the area visiting with the Hallvorson relatives. Later that night, on Thursday, February 21st, 1945 Gustav died at the hospital. Carl

telegraphed his sister Ruth in Saskatchewan that evening of their fathers death. (10:10 p.m.)

The funeral was held in the Burnt Lake Baptist Church, with Ruth's brother-in-law, Ole Olsen leading the service. The grave was hand dug by their friend and neighbor, Carl Engman.

The following obituary appeared in the local newspaper:

Old friends will regret to learn of the death at his home at Burnt Lake on Thursday, February 21 1945 of Gustav Bjelke in his 77th year. He was born in Norway and came to British Columbia early in the century. He homesteaded at Evarts in 1904 and lived there until 1920, when he moved to Burnt Lake, which has been his home ever since. He served as a Trustee of the Burnt Lake school for about 12 years before the district was included in the Rocky Mountain School Division. and was one of the best known and respected men in the district. Mrs. Bjelke died in 1929. Surviving are two daughters, Mrs. Peter Tastad, Strongfield, Sask. and Mrs. Axel Johanson, Burnt Lake, and 5 sons, Andrew and Harold, Edmonton, Gunnar, Bingley, Carl, Burnt Lake, and Arthur, just back after service overseas with the Canadian Army. He is buried in the Burnt Lake Cemetery.

After the death of Gustav, Carl took the unused and full snuff boxes over to their neighbour, Mr. Oscar Norby. He and Gustav often enjoyed a good chew. Norby had a habit of taking an awful big chew out of the snuff box when offered. To counteract this, Gustav would hold his thumb over half of the box so only a regular amount of snuff could be taken out. All the while Gustav would not let on of anything unusual in the offering. With their father's death, the children sorted out the personal effects of their father. There was no question that the 2 ½ boxes of snuff should go to Gustav's neighbor Norby. Carl took them over to Norby's house, and when he handed the boxes of snuff over to Norby, Gustav's old friend wept.

With the death of Gustav Bjelke, Carl became the administrator of the estate. There was no will. The deceased had his estate divided amongst his children, Gunnar, Dora, Carl, Ruth, Andrew, Arthur & Harold. The total value of his real estate at his death was \$1,697.00. His schedule of debts ran at \$3,189 so the net value of his asset was nil.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

GUNNAR REINHOLD BJELKE

Gunnar Reinhold Bjelke was born in Golden, British Columbia on February 23rd, 1906. He was the first child of Gustav and Lena Bjelke.

His name was taken from his father (Gustav Reinhold) and from his mother's father (Gunder Anderson). Gustav was only 7 months old when he moved with his parents into their homestead farmhouse west of Evarts.

At six years of age, he started school at Diamond Valley School, two miles from his home. He attended this school until the winter of 1919, when he completed his 7th grade at the age of 13.

The school records show that Gunnar had the job of both cleaning and the important job of tending the fires.

The school year was from May through December, taking off the coldest of the winter months and the wettest of the spring months. Gunnar was excused from school during the haying and harvesting seasons so that he could help his father tend these farm duties.

Gunnar became a Sawyer in the Forest Industry. It was quite common for the men of that area and era to be involved in the lumber business.

The young Bjelke family was very involved in sports in the community and helped construct an outdoor hockey rink across the road at the school.

The boys enjoyed playing on the various hockey teams. Carl, Gunnar, Andrew and Arthur all were excellent hockey players. They also enjoyed playing ball and often their sister Ruth would warm up the boys. (The girls had a community team, and Ruth made a pretty good catcher and first baseman. Irene Peterson would pitch for the team.)

One of the favourite umpires at that time was Carl Engman who married my father's cousin Alice Halvorson. Carl proved to be an able umpire and called a lot of ball games for many years.

Gunnar was only five years old when he was involved in a runaway. He was thrown onto a barbed wire fence and he broke his collarbone. It took two days to transport him to hospital in Red Deer just to receive treatment because he couldn't be moved that quickly. On their way to the hospital they stayed at the farm which they ended up actually buying and moving to in 1920.

When Gunnar and his cousin Hugo Selstrom were still young, they were worried about

their oncoming baldness and had heard that the condition could be arrested if they would shave their heads. That evening their mother and sister Ruth were walking up to the house when they saw the two shiny heads looking out at them from the upstairs window. "God have mercy" Lena blurted out in Swedish. Then she put her head back and laughed!

Gunnar worked in the foothills for various companies as a Sawyer. He soon found a bride, Irene Annie Ojala. They were married on the 26th of August, 1937, at the Presbyterian Manse in Rocky Mountain House by Reverend R.R. Peer. The witnesses were Richard McDougall of Bingley and Irja Sophia Ojala. At this time Gunnar's residence was at Bingley, Alberta. Irene was the daughter of Jacob Ojala who has a Finnish background.

Gunnar and Irene were blessed with three children:

1. Harold Melvin, born June 30, 1941.

Harold lives in Edmonton.

2. Catherine Ann, born September 9, 1946

Catherine married, lives in Calgary and has three children:

i) Deanna

ii) Christa

iii) Trevor

3. Howard Arthur, born March 11, 1948

Howard is married and lives in Fort Saskatchewan.

Gunnar Bjelke died on July 25th, 1991. The following is his obituary taken from the local newspaper:

BJELKE-

Mr. Gunnar Reinhold. On July 25th, 1991, Mr. Gunnar Bjelke of Drayton Valley, Alberta formerly of Rocky Mountain House, passed away at the age of 85 years. Mr. Bjelke leaves to mourn his loss: his loving wife, Mrs. Irene Bjelke; two sons, Howard of Drayton Valley, Harold of Edmonton; one daughter, Catherine Meyer-Nielson of Calgary; three grandchildren, Deanna and Christa Martindale, and Trevor Meyer-Nielson; one sister, Dora Johanson of Sylvan Lake. Mr. Bjelke was predeceased by four brothers; Carl, Andrew, Arthur and Harold; and his sister Ruth. Funeral services will be held on Jult 29th, 1991 at 2:00 pm in the Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, with Pastor Tim Richold officiating. Internment to follow at Pine Grove Cemetery in Rocky Mountain House. If friends so desire, donations would be gratefully accepted to the Extended Care Unit of the Drayton Valley Health

Complex, or the charity of one's choice. Drayton Valley Funeral Service, Tinnant Funeral Directors in care of the arrangements.

CHAPTER TWELVE

DORA BJELKE

Dora was registered at birth as Tora Margaret Bjelke. She was born on the 24th of October, 1908 at Evarts, Alberta but the birth was not registered until the 28th of December of that year in Red Deer. She took her name from Gustav's mother (Thore), her grandmother (Gertrude Margareta), and from her own mother (Lina Margereta).

Dora started her education at the Diamond Valley School at six years of age. She had completed her fifth grade there when she was ten years old, just before the family moved over to Burnt Lake. At the most, Dora had only one other student in her grade for those years. Her teachers were Jessie M. Burdick, Mrs. Scott Hastie, and Mr. Maurice Rookwood. She took her grade nine by correspondence, living at home. Her grade ten was taken in Sylvan Lake. She stayed at Fred Appleton's home during this time, working for her board and room. She was a very good student, and made the front page of the "Sylvan Lake World" weekly paper when her teacher, Mr. A Pauly, advised that Dora had achieved a 73% average on her Easter exams that year. (April 23, 1926). It was one of the higher marks recorded amongst her peers.

Dora attended highschool in Red Deer for her grade eleven and twelve. The first year she stayed with D.C. Folk and the second year she stayed with the school principle, Mr. R.L. Whitney. The Whitneys were especially good to Dora, and she enjoyed her stay very much.

Dora then went on to take her teacher training at the Calgary Normal School in Calgary. Upon graduation, she was lucky enough to get a job teaching at First Chance School, 8 miles south of Lamond, Alberta. The school was in the "bald prairie" and Dora missed her family and the trees back home.

The next year, she was able to get a teaching position much closer to home at Poplar Ridge, where she taught for the next four years. For the first three years, she stayed with the MacEachern family, and then with the G.W. Christian family for her last term.

The weekends were spent at home with her family and with a certain neighbor friend who was soon to be her husband.

Dora first met her future husband when young Axel Johanson would stop with his Dad at the Gustav Bjelke farm south west of Evarts to feed their horses. The two were freighting lumber from the Petepher Mill to Red Deer. Dora took her high school in Red Deer and Sylvan Lake and then took Normal School at the Calgary Normal School. From there she practise taught at Pine Hill.

Dora then taught at a few different schools until her marriage to Axel Johansson on the 18th of July, 1934. They were married in the Church of The Nazarene, in Red Deer, Alberta, and the witnesses were Ruth Bjelke and Axel's brother Oscar Johanson. (Peder Tastad, Ruth's future husband had just arrived in the neighbourhood prior to the wedding. Dora had come down to the Engman farm to buy eggs from Peder for her Wedding Cake!) At this time Dora was twenty-five years old and Axel was thirty-seven years old. The Pastor that day was Reverend L.E. Chauvel. On the registration of marriage, both Axel and Dora give their religious affiliation as Nazarene. She still spelled her name as Tora on the Marriage Certificate, instead of the Dora as we know her. Dora and Axel first lived on the West half of Section 6-39-28-4, in a very small house built from lumber taken from an old green farm house, or as they called it, "the old haunted house." This house served the family well until 1950 when a larger, more modern home was built. Initially the times were not that great. The first year they were totally hauled out and the times were very difficult on the farm. The recession certainly was not good but the Alberta people did not suffer as badly as those who came from Saskatchewan. Many of these Saskatchewan farm hands were paid \$5.00 a month by the government and in addition to that, the Alberta farmer was given \$5.00 a month to keep them. In effect they got free room and board plus \$5.00 a month. This is about the time in 1934 that my Father, Peder Tastad, found his way out to Alberta.

Dora and Axel had for children over the span of their marriage:

1) Margereta Lina, born October 30th, 1937. She was the first Bjelke grandchild and was named after her grandmother who had died in 1929. Margaret died suddenly on _____, 1984. She had married Jim Rendall and was living at Burnt Lake at the time of her death. She was a school teacher working at the H.J. Cody School in Sylvan Lake at the timme of her passing.

2) Harriet Thora, born June 11th, 1941 She was named after her mother and her great grandmother (Thor). Harriet married Nico Vander Giessen and they have three children:

i) Garret

ii) Nico

iii) Michael

3) Klara Thorgrud, born May 26th, 1943 She was named after one of the families favorite aunts (Klara), a sister to Gustav Bjelke. Klara married Bert Bystrom and they have three children:

i) Todd

ii) Sandy

iii) Pauli

4) David Axel, born January 20th, 1950, named after his father. David married Jamie _____ and they have two children:

i) James Axel

ii) _____

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CARL HELGE BJELKE

The third child, Karl Helge Bjelke was listed as being born on the farm, the Southeast of Section 4, Township 38, West of the 5th Meridian. The name given to him, and registered to him, was Charles Carl Bjelke. His date of birth was given as the 25th of August, 1910. The birth was registered in Evarts on the 8th of November, about three months after he was born. You have to wonder just how accurate some of these birth dates are when they are not registered for several months. At a very young age, Carl's second name became his first name and Charles was dropped in favour of Helge. The reasons for the choices of these names is at this point unknown. Early school records always refer to him as Carl.

Carl attended school at Diamond Valley School, starting at the age of six. He completed his grade 1 and 2 with teachers Burdick and Rookwood. Gustav returned to the district for a week in May, 1920 after moving to Burnt Lake, as Carl was put into school from May 25th to May 28th of that year. Likely Gustav had some spring cleanup work to do for that week and little Carl was

with him. His older brother and sister did not attend school that week.

When they returned to the Burnt Lake area, Carl attended the Swan Lake School across the road from their home.

In the December 12th, 1922 issue of the Sylvan Lake World weekly newspaper, it was noted that Carl Bjelke, age 12 years, entered the Burnt Lake talent contest and won 2nd prize for his oratory address "The Newsboy's Address".

Carl was quite an athlete when he was young. He was a hard working goalie on the hockey team, and an excellent catcher for his brother on the ball team. He dated many of the local girls and was engaged to be married twice, but chose (or was chosen) to remain a bachelor. Peggy Gummow was one of the nice girls to which Carl was engaged. Peggy stayed with Carl and Alice Engman for a while. The two Carls, Alice and Peggy loved to play cards and drink coffee. A close friendship with both couples developed.

Later he was engaged to a school teacher from Burnt Lake School and he even dated Phylis Steward (Bert) a few times.

Carl Bjelke sort of worked around home for the county, helped his Father and worked on odd jobs as they were available in the area.

For a while, Carl ran a stationary baler for Johnny Lindman. Johnny had contracted feed for the horses up in the lumber camps. Carl ran the crew and outfit for the "wire tie" machine and Johnny hauled the bales of feed up to the camps. Often the camps had no money, so lumber was exchanged for the feed and then sold or bartered back home. Oscar Johanson's lumber for his barn was secured with this trading system. Johnny said that Carl was a very hard worker. Coming from the hard working Johnny, that was a complement. These two were more like brothers than just good friends.

Carl was the road foreman for the Municipality for many years. He drove the graders and did some minor road repairs. Carl would often hire Johnny Lindman for temporary work because of his skill with horses.

Carl was also a helper on the Frank Dallaire "saw outfit" when they cut the lumber out of Fred Shoquist's farm.

Carl was extremely good natured and had an excellent sense of humor. He participated in all the community affairs and was liked by all. If Carl had a fault it was probably that he had trouble saying no to anyone, and was occasionally taken advantage of by his friends.

After his Father died, he quit farming and sold the land to pay the debts and got work with Assiniboia Construction where he worked for many years until his death on January 16th, 1957, of a heart attack. He did a lot of the work around the airport at Penhold, and built a bridge going up to Mitchner Hill in Red Deer. He worked several years in Calgary as well. He was noted to have been a hard worker. The harder he worked, the more he grinned.

Carl used to call the train that travelled across Burnt Lake the "Muskeg Special - with square wheels". It must have been a rough ride! Carl loved music and he liked to sing. Sometimes he would forget the words and then he would just make them up as he sang along. Ruth remembered one that went "Ah! Sweet mystery of life at last you got me!"

Carl was one to get involved in his community. On January 23rd, 1939 29 year old

Carl was elected School Trustee for the Burnt Lake District.

Carl was a founding member of the local Credit Union. "On June 28, 1943, another meeting was held at the schoolhouse to discuss credit unions. Most of those in attendance belonged to the local Social Credit study group. ...At the end of the evening, an application to incorporate a credit union was written up over the signatures of Dwight and Hilda Sawyer, John and Molly Lindman, Frank and Edith Dallaire, Levi and Astrid Erikson, Jim Paulson, Jorgan Gronnestad, and Carl Bjelke."

Carl wrote letters to his sister Ruth when he was working in remote areas. Sometimes he broke forth in dramatic prose such as in the letter that began " Its cold on the banks of the Beaton River this morning!" The following is a letter that Uncle Carl wrote to Ruth from Fort St. John, British Columbia, where he was working for 2 ½ months prior to his death. They were building a bridge over the Beaton River near Ft. St. John, and so he sat down on Christmas Day, December 25th, 1956, to write this letter. This would be about three weeks before his death. It reads as follows:

"Dear Ruth

I received your letter Christmas Eve. Thanks a lot. We had a very nice Christmas, quiet but lots

to eat. Kathleen & the boys are sure growing up, aren't they? Harold & Barbara were out to Red Deer last summer too. The little fellow, he looks just like Harold when he was a baby. They sure take good care of them don't they. We only get Christmas Day off and will have to pour concrete again in the morning. It's nice & warm today but it will soon turn cold again & it sure can get cold here on this river."

He finishes the letter on January 1st, 1957

"A New Year. It's taking me a long time to mail this letter. We've had some really hot weather since Christmas, the river flooded on us and we have had quite a time getting everything salvaged. All our pumps got covered with water and they had to dried out before we could get them going and we have them on rafts now so they can go up and down with the water. It's a little cooler today so maybe our troubles are over. Must close now and wish you a Happy New Year.

Love Carl"

That is the last correspondence we had from him until we were notified that he had died. It was several days after his death that the family was notified of his death. An autopsy was held by Coroner G.H. Kearny who established that Carl had died from heart failure (Arteriosclerosis giving rise

to Coronary Occlusion and heart failure) Funeral arrangements in Ft. St. John were looked after by Reynars Funeral Home in Dawson Creek with Carls working friend G.H. Ainsley overseeing the affair. This is the obituary that was in the paper.

"Funeral services for Carl Bjelke who died at Fort St. John, B.C. on January 16th, 1957 were held at the Mount View Lutheran Church on January 25 with Reverend A. Rasmussen officiating. Karl Bjelke was born in the Diamond Valley District on August 25th, 1910, and at the age of 10 years moved to Burnt Lake with his parents, the late Mr. & Mrs. Gustav Bjelke. Here he farmed until 1951, carrying on farming operations after his parents died. He took an active part in all community activities, being Secretary-Treasurer for the local School Board for many years and holding a similar position with the Burnt Lake Credit Union. He took a keen interest in sports and was a valuable member of the Burnt Lake Hockey Team when they were first organised and was always ready for a game of baseball. He was President of the district Track Meet and did not spare time or effort in making it function smoothly. Of a gentle, retiring nature, Carl was very popular with children and was a steadfast friend to those who really knew him. Since 1951 he has been Foreman of a crew

of men for the Assiniboine Construction Company, first in Penhold and then in Calgary and since last fall he had been at Fort St. John when his sudden death from heart attack came as a sudden shock to his relatives & friends. He is survived by two sisters; Mrs. Axel Johansson (Dora) of Burnt Lake and Mrs. Peter Tastad (Ruth), Strongfield, Saskatchewan, and four brothers; Gunner of Rocky Mountain House, Andrew of Vancouver, Arthur of Red Deer, and Harold of Edmonton. Pallbearers were Einar Einarson, John Silver Berg, Karl Engman, Andrew Miller, Frank Dallaire and Swain Swainson."

Carl was 46 years and 5 months old when he died. Carl lived a good honest life and had more friends than he had heart for.

Carl had listed his last address before Ft. St. John as #4005 39th Street, Red Deer, Alberta. Arthur Bjelke, his brother was the administrator of the will. Carl's assets were primarily tied up in his 1956 one-ton mercury truck which was valued about \$1,800.00 and some other miscellaneous assets for a total of \$2,341.00 and then also a bit of cash and a life insurance policy of \$3,549.00. So his total assets were \$6,042.37; after they deducted funeral expenses of \$441.60, left a net value of the estate of \$5,600.00 which was divided equally

amongst the six surviving brothers & sisters with
each child receiving a cheque for \$933.46.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ANDREW BJELKE

Andrew Gordon Bjelke is registered as being born on the 5th of February, 1917, with the place of birth given as Evarts. The birth registration is dated at Evarts, Alberta on the 19th of March, 1917. Andrew took his primary education at the Swan Lake School from 1923 to 1931 getting his Grade 8. Then he went to the Dickson School from '31 to '33 getting his Grade 10.

The Dickson School was located 13 miles south and 10 miles west of the Bjelke farm. It was a boarding school organized by the Finnish Lutheran Church Community. The records show that he paid \$10 tuition in May of 1933. It is assumed that this was to cover his board and room. Quite a sum for the family to put together in the midst of the depression. The fifteen year old Andrew took 6 subjects in 1932-1933. (The only year that records were found) He obtained a 77% average that year, excelling in History and Algebra. He pulled off a 74% in Latin that year! He was taught by Miss Gundersen, with her sister acting as assistant.

The Bjelke boys could be as full of trouble as any others in the community. There are stories of them chasing skunks on the way to school and

having to sit in the corner all day because they smelled so bad, and stories of the boys sneaking snuff from their father's store and sharing it with the others at school!

The "Sylvan Lake World" weekly newspaper recorded the results of the school fair held in Sylvan Lake in 1925. Eight year old Andrew, received third prize for Flowers - Crayon. I'm not sure if he developed his artistic talents beyond this in later years!

Andrew Bjelke undoubtedly had the best sense of humour of any of the Gustav Bjelke children. He liked to crack jokes with those around him. He was always chewing gum, working it with his finger. He could sit in a group of people not saying a word, and all of a sudden let loose with laughter.

Peder remembers Andrew learning to drive in the Bjelke yard. Each time that he would pass under the clothes line with the car, he would duck his head!

From 1933 to 1940 Andrew helped with the farming and then in July of 1940 he took some technical training at the Youth Training School in

Edmonton. It was a four month course training as an Air Frame Mechanic and then he worked for Edmonton Aircraft Repairs Ltd. as a welder from 1940 to 1941 before he left that place to enlist in the RCAF. He did some odd jobs between '33 & '42 working on a lumber truck, as a truck driver and a little bit of work in a garage.

Andrew played a bit of baseball with his brothers and neighbours. He played defence on the local hockey team, and few could ever get past him. He dated several of the local girls. After his mother had died, he used to tease his father (who he liked to call Gust) in Swedish, saying that if he could only get as much encouragement and co-operation as his brother Karl, he would have had a cook for the Bjelke household long before!

Andrew loved animals, and had an excellent cattle dog that he trained to carry his pail home when he was out berry picking!

On the 9th of October, 1940, he enrolled in the Calgary Highlanders, a regiment of the Canadian Army. His physical description is listed in the Military Records as being 5'10", 146 lbs., blue eyes & brown hair. He lists as his employer in Edmonton, McKenzie Air Service Limited, where he was employed as a metal worker and welder. His hobbies, he states, are skating, baseball,

basketball and swimming. He joined the 422 Squadron, St. Angele, RAF Unit.

During his training, he spent time in Mountain View, Ontario and Halifax, Nova Scotia. He went overseas on March 17th, 1943 and he received his A Group and Rank of Corporal, April 1st, 1945.

When he was in B.C. at the Ucluelet Base, they were putting a practice smoke bomb into an aircraft when it exploded, causing several multiple abrasions and lacerations on his thigh, his left wrist and right hand and quite a few first degree burns on various parts of his body. It must have been a fairly serious accident. He was off duty from the 26th of October, 1942, till the 3rd of November, 1942, recovering from this accident, spending eight of these days in the base hospital.

In 1943, the 26th of September, he attempted to take training as a airman pilot but he was not accepted because of his Rheumatic Fever (or maybe Jaundice?).

It is difficult to follow where Andrew was stationed in England, but we do know that he spent time in Port Ellen, Edinborough and Penbroke, South Whales. He was trained to arm the bombs as they were loaded onto the planes.

When he was in England, Andrew met a British girl named Mary Lillian Cooper. Andrew had met the 19 year old Mary (a typist) in June of 1943 while he was on an 18 day leave from the 422 Squadron. Later, in September he spent another 11 days courting her when wedding plans were no doubt made. Mary lived at home with her parents at #10 Sherard Road in Etham S.E. 9, London, England. Etham is a suburb of London. Mary's father, John Hazelwood Cooper, was a Denturist.

Andrew and Mary were married 7 months later by Frederick Woodcock (A marriage registrar in the District of Woolwich in the Metropolitan Borough of Woolich) on the 21st of December, 1944 while Andrea was enjoying a 12 day leave. Witnesses of the event were J. Bowley and J.F. French. I don't know where their honeymoon was spent, but Andrew was 19 hours late in getting back from his leave, and was docked one day's pay and confined to base for three days! At this time, Andrew was stationed at Eniskillen, in Northern Ireland, a long way from his new bride.

Over the next 19 months that Andrew was in England, he and Mary were never able to make a home with eachother. He only occasionally saw her on leave (7 days in September of 1944; 7 days in December of 1944; and 7 days in June of 1945)

and then only when he stayed with her at her parents home.

When Andrew obtained his embarkation leave to return to Canada in July of 1945, he and Mary discussed the possibility of her returning to Canada with him. She was unable to break away from her home and family and Andrew was forced to return without her.

Mary was a beautiful knitter and sent sweaters over to her sister-in-law Ruth, for her child Kathleen. She wrote several letters to Ruth & Peder throughout the war. Ruth's brother-in-law Norman Tastad had met her in England and stayed at there home.

Andrew stopped Montreal on the way home to see his brother Harold for a few days and later at Strongfield to see his sister Ruth. Kathleen was only five at the time but she remembers her mother's excitement at being able to see her brother again. She was happy - and crying all over the place. It was strange for Kathleen to meet this stranger - her uncle - for the first time.

Andrew received the Defence Medal on his discharge and he received his Honourable Discharge on the 25th of September, 1945. In total, he had been with the RCAF for 1455 days (almost

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

ARTHUR BJELKE

Arthur Gustav Bjelke's birth is registered as the 7th of May, 1919, at Evarts, Alberta. The official registering was done by his father Gustav Bjelke on the 6th of June, 1919, almost a full month after he was born. Arthur took his second name from his father.

Arthur obtained all of his education at Swan Lake School, across the road from his Burnt Lake home. He was the only Bjelke to be able to take his grade nine at this school. All of the older siblings needed to travel to Sylvan Lake School.

Arthur Bjelke was one of the best athletes to come out of the Burnt Lake area. He was a good hockey player, (he played right wing) but was also an excellent ball player. Peder said he first saw him play when he was only fifteen years old. He was a pitcher, and had a breaking ball that was hard to catch.

His pitch was slow wicked curve ball that dropped off just as it hit the plate. He was such a good pitcher that only his brother Carl could catch for him. Many time a batter would swing at a ball that Carl had to reach far out of the stricke zone to

catch. He was good enough to have moved up into better leagues had the war not started.

Even after he started working in the Willowdale District for Bert Cody's parents in 1936, some fifteen miles east of Red Deer, the ball team would go and get him for their games. (A round trip of some 60 miles - and in spite of the Depression!) Bert Cody was married to Lillian Bystrom, an aunt to Bert Bystrom.

Periodically, the Burnt Lake team would play a hockey team from Elspeth. The team was made up of big Finnish boys, good natured with a good sense of humour. They were not good skaters however, and the Burnt Lake team could skate "rings around them". Peder remembers them yelling in their broken Finnish - "Somebody blow the whistle -I've four bare (pair) of bants (pants) on" and "For five minutes I stand at the plue (blue) line and not one bass (pass).

In 1936, Arthur, his brothers, the Swainsons and the Norbys built an outdoor ice rink beside the Burnt Lake School with regular hocky rink boards. Water was hauled in barrels from the Bjelke farm to flood the ice surface.

Arthur worked for D.M. Sawyer out of Red Deer as a truck driver & mechanic from 1935 to 1942 when he went overseas. His weekly wage was \$20.00.

Arthur and his friends Ed Norby and Roy Swainson, travelled to Calgary in the early part of August, 1940 to join the Navy. Arthur, and the others, for whatever reason were not accepted.

We are able to tell quite a lot from Arthur's war records. Arthur Bjelke enlisted on the 15th of February in 1942 in Vancouver, British Columbia. He had two years of high school and had been, as of late, farming. He also showed at that time some interest in motor mechanics. Initially, he was recommended in training to be a Driver - Mechanic "C". Arthur had been a member of the reserves from April of '41, so when he enlisted on February 15th, 1942, he already had some training by this time. He enlisted at first in the First Battalion of the Rocky Mountain Rangers. He gives his build at the time of enrolment as being 5'8 1/2" in height, 146 lbs., hazel eyes and dark brown hair with no identification marks. Some of his training was taken in Dundurn, Saskatchewan (Vickers Machine Gun) in 1941 before he was transferred to the Rocky Mountain Rangers. While in Dundurn, he was able to visit with his sister, Ruth, at Loreburn.

He was based then for a short time at Camrose, Alberta where he received rifle training. After he joined the Rangers he took up training in Kamloops, B.C. Arthur indicated in the Military Records that he speaks, reads and writes, in Swedish.

Arthur had a very difficult time in the war. He was a machine gunner, rangefinder and rifleman. On more than one occasion had all his company virtually wiped out and being either alone or with very few survivors. He fought heavily in Italy and there on August 22nd, 1944, contacted Infectious Hepatitis, which would be a plague on him. He had trouble digesting fatty foods from that point on. Arthur was admitted to the hospital on the 26th of August for his hepatitis and spent 14 days there, being discharged on the 9th of September, 1944. At this point he was a Corporal with the Westminster Regiment in Italy. Arthur had been sent overseas on the 12th of May, 1942, as a Private in the Westminster Regiment. On the 10th of June, '44, he was given the rank of Corporal which he, on the 27th of August, '44, asked to be relieved of and returned to being a Private. The record for Arthur shows that he was in the service in Canada from the 15th of February, 1942 to the 1st of May 1942, for a total of 76 days. From the

2nd of May 1942 to the 14th of November 1943, he was in England for a total of 562 days. On the 15th day of November, 1943 he went to Italy, where he remained until the 26th of February, 1945, for a total of 470 days. Arthur was awarded the Defence Medal, the 1939/45 Star, the Italy Star and the France & Germany Star.

On the 31st of October, 1945, Arthur made application to marry Phyllis Putman, address 120 Upper Louis Road, Brighton, Sussex, England. Phyllis's nearest relative was her mother, Mrs. Beatrice Christine Putman. He had known Phyllis since June of 1942, only one month after he had arrived in England. On the 5th of November, 1945, permission then was given to marry Phyllis on or after the 5th of January, 1946. The recommendation of the Commanding Officer is as follows:

"In view of the anticipated early repatriation of this unit I recommend that this marriage be approved effective the 20th of November, 1945."

He applied and received 30 days leave in order to marry Phyllis at that time. The leave was from 2:00 p.m. the 5th of December, 1945, until 2:00 p.m. January 4th, 1946. The marriage did proceed on the 17th of December, 1945. The documents suggest that Mrs. Peder Tastad from

Strongfield, Saskatchewan, is going to make arrangements for the care of Phyllis once she comes to Canada. The Immigration Branch, Government of Canada, notes that "the proposed migrant's sister-in-law, Mrs. Pete Tastad, Box 78, Strongfield, Saskatchewan, has indicated her willingness and ability to provide suitable settlement arrangements. She is aware of Mrs. Bjelke's advanced pregnancy".

Arthur returned to Canada ahead of his wife, and Phyllis came after their daughter, Marilyn Phylis, was born. Arthur was finally discharged on the 20th of March, 1946. After Arthur's discharge there was a lot of red tape involved in getting his daughter and wife over to Canada. While waiting in England, she stayed at 120 Upper Lewis Rd. in Brighton. With some persistence, Phyllis Doreen Bjelke and baby Marilyn received clearance to get on the boat for Canada. Their estimated arrival in Halifax was to be the 11th of September, 1946. Arthur went down to Halifax to meet her. Marilyn, was on the seriously ill list at the RCN Hospital with a severe ear infection.

Arthur had dreams of opening up a service station with one of his brothers when the war was over. He also had a standing offer of a job from D.M. Sawyer at Burnt Lake, when he was released.

The family did finally get back home to Red Deer. They stayed with Carl for some time until they moved to the little house on the farm, just across the road from Pete Ilcisin. The home was just ½ miles west of the Bjelke farm where he worked with his brother Carl. That first winter home after the war was spent baling up straw piles with Johnny Lindman. The straw was hauled over to the Penhold air strip where it was used to burn the runways.

Arthur farmed with Carl until he retired from the farm and moved into Red Deer in 1955. He sold the farm to Andy Niemczyk.

Kathleen remembers when the Peder Tastad family travelled to Burnt Lake to spend Christmas with the family in 1947. They had Christmas dinner at the old Bjelke farm house. Freda had made a delicious dinner for them. Kathleen especially remembers the lovely traditional English Pudding that Freda had made. She had packed it full of money, which was more incentive than was required to have a second portion. Freda had brought it to the table with the brandy all aflame.

While they were at the farm that Christmas, Ole Olson, a brother-in-law to Peder, came down to visit with them. He was the pastor at the Lutheran

Church in Donalda. While he was there, he baptised young Marilyn, and Allan Engman, son of Carl and Alice Engman. After the visit, the Tastads travelled back to Donalda with Ole to visit Evelyn and her family.

The war had been very hard on Arthur. He visited his sister Ruth shortly after his return from Europe. He would talk to her and Peder for awhile in the kitchen, and then go into the living room. They would find him sitting quietly in a chair by himself. His brother Gunnar did not get to see him until their father's funeral. He later told Ruth that Arthur was like a "Stone". Arthur had seen many horrible things on the front lines.

One of the interesting stories I remember of this English wife who came to Canada was on their trip out west. Not knowing too much about Canada or about farming at all when she arrived; she was looking at a cream separator at our house. She was clearly fascinated by how you would turn the crank and the milk then would be separated into skim milk and into cream. She was told that this was a separator. Her and Art then continued to travel on the train then to Red Deer. She noticed a large machine out on the field and she asked Arthur what that was. He told her it was a separator, which is another word that was often used for a

large threshing machine used to thresh grain. Her response was "My, they certainly must have a lot of cows."

When Freda arrived at Strongfield on her way to her Alberta home, her new sister-in-law Ruth had taken her son Dick's rompers that he had outgrown and remade them into little dresses for baby Marilyn.

Ruth remembers Freda helping her in the house. Freda folded all the diapers and piled them on one of the dining room chairs. She then sat on them and proceeded to bounce up and down on them. When Ruth asked her what she was doing, she replied, "I'm airing the nappies!".

She had never seen a wood burning stove before coming to Canada. When she saw the old wood box at Gustav's house at Burnt Lake, she thought that she would spruce up the kitchen by placing some curtain materials around it!

There were many things that endeared Freda to the family. Her customs were different than the familiar Swedish traditions, but she brought a fresh face to the family. She was an excellent actress. Kathleen remembers seeing her perform a skit at the Burnt Lake School. They were celebrating someone's 25th Wedding Anniversary, and Freda was the mock bride. She was hilarious in

the sketch, breaking everyone up when she would bend over during the ceremony to pull out a summer sausage from her rubber boot and chew on it!

When they moved to Red Deer, they opened up a grocery store. Later he would go to work for the local dairy.

In 1956, Arthur and Freda had one more daughter, Myrna Valborg, (her Aunt Ruth's second name) who was born to them in Red Deer, Alberta.

Arthur died at the Red Deer General Hospital on November 11th, 1965. He was only 46 years, 6 months, and six days old when he died. The last three years he had been employed at the CADP In Red Deer. He had suffered a stroke before he had died, and his speech was slightly impaired.

The following notice appeared in the Red Deer Advocate:

Red Deer Man Dies At 46

"Arthur Gustav Bjelke, aged 46 of Red Deer died in the Red Deer General Hospital Thursday. Funeral services were being held today from Trinity Lutheran Church with Rev. O. Pederson officiating.

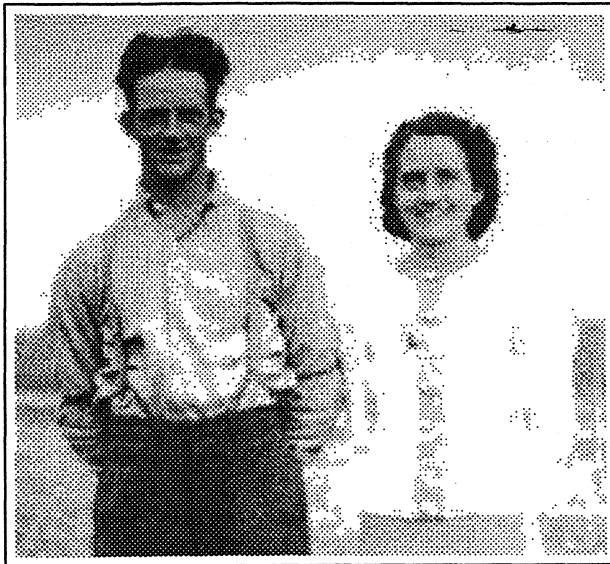
Mr. Bjelke was born in Evarts, May 5, 1919. He was employed by the Central Alberta Dairy Pool

in Red Deer for the past three years. He enjoyed fishing and was an active bowler.

Mr. Bjelke was predeceased by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. G. Bjelke; and a brother.

He is survived by his wife, Freda; two daughters, Mrs. M. Smith and Miss Myrna Bjelke, both of Red Deer; one grandchild; three brothers, Gunnar of Rocky Mountain House, Harold of Edmonton and Andrew of Vanncouver; and two sisters, Mrs. Axel Johanson of Burnt Lake and Mrs. P. Tastad in Saskatchewan.

Burial was to follow in the Red Deer cemetery. Eventide Funeral Chapel of Red Deer was in charge of arrangements."



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

HAROLD BJELKE

On April 17th, 1921, a new son and the youngest of the Bjelke children was born. That was Harold Kristopher Bjelke. Kristopher was the name of Lena's father.

Lena had come into contact with German Measles while carrying her new son, and this child, Harold, was born as a deaf mute. He was accepted and loved as a special child by the family and the Burnt Lake Community. He was an excellent sportsman and very bright young man.

Harold received his early education at Swan Lake School, across the road from their home. His last day of school was May 11th, 1934. At that time he was 13 years old and completing his grade 5 education.

Harold's teacher Phylis Steward (A very close friend of Ruth Bjelke) arranged for Harold to stay at the home of one of Gunnar's girlfriend's sisters, who lived near Rocky Mountain House. This woman had some experience in teaching the Deaf sign language.

In 1940, he took some of his early education at the School for the Deaf in Winnipeg. In 1940-1941, he travelled to the Deaf School in

Montreal. He was an excellent craftsman and we have one of his tables that he built and his daughter Sharon, who lives in Davidson, Saskatchewan now, has the other. They are beautiful pieces of furniture.

In 1943, Harold went out to work on his sister's farm at Loreburn, Saskatchewan. He worked there for 7 months and was a very good "stooker" at harvest time.

Harold worked at McGavins Bakery in Regina for a while and then he went back to Edmonton where in the spring of 1950, at the Dainty Cakes Bakery, he met his future bride Barbara Bourne. A year later they were married on June 16th, 1951.

The marriage of Harold Kristopher to Barbara Bourne was listed as a Bakery Assistant was held at Saint Patrick's Church in Edmonton. The witnesses were Douglas Ferguson and sister of Barbara, Pauline Bourne, who at that time was living in Lloydminster. Harold was 30 years old and Barbara was 23.

Harold's sister Ruth and 10 year old Kathleen attended the wedding at St. Patrick's Church in Edmonton - it was a beautiful wedding.

Harold gave his sister Ruth a corsage because she had been like a mother to him when his mother had died. That meant a lot to Ruth - she was pleased and honoured to be remembered in this way by her brother. Ruth and Kathleen were staying with Harold in his apartment. He looked so handsome that day in his light blue suite. Douglas (Harold's best man), drove Ruth and Kathleen around Edmonton while they were there. He was a very fast driver and scared Ruth spit less as they raced the streets of Edmonton!

In 1952, Harold and his new wife Barbara, left with another couple on a holiday to Salt Lake City. Near Claresholm they rolled their new Volkswagen car. Ruth & Peder were already visiting friends and relatives at Burnt Lake at the time. They stayed with Arthur and Freda that first night. The next day they left for Claresholm. Barbara had some head and liver damage. Harold's injuries were more serious. He had broken ribs, a chip off his spine, a punctured lung and was bruised badly. He was in shock, and at first he just laid in his hospital bed, not responding to anyone. Part of the difficulty was that Harold could not hear and the Medical staff was not aware that he was deaf. By the time Peder and Ruth arrived, Harold was beginning to recover. They stayed for a bit

then, helping to interpret for him and taking four hour shifts looking in on both Harold and Barbara. They stayed with them for about a week.

Peder and Ruth had left their three children at Axel and Dora Johanson's home. That weekend was the Centreville annual picnic. In the rush to get away, they had left no money with the three children. Kathleen remembers eyeing up the ice-cream, but not daring to ask Auntie for any money. She and Dick entered some of the races and managed to win some money! Kathleen says that she had never run so fast before or since that day! Ice-cream can be a great motivator! Dick and Kathleen were looking for Garth, now intent on buying all three a cone. Ahead they saw Garth, happily licking his own cone! When questioned on how he got his cone, he replied "A lady that looked like Grandma Tastad had felt sorry for him and had purchased him an ice-cream cone. As it turned out, the four year old was describing Grandma Tastad's sister, Lydia Hallvorson!

Harold was worked as a presser at a dry cleaner plant on Jasper Avenue & 114th Street. He and his wife lived in a small two room suite for four years and then bought a place in the Mayfield District.

While living in the Mayfield District of Edmonton, Harold and Barbara had two sons. One Dennis and the other Karl. Harold then started to work at Trudeau's Cleaners until the plant closed. In 1958 this house in the Mayfield District was sold and they bought a new three bedroom home with a basement in the Youngstown District. There two more children were added to the family, Gary & Sharon. Harold was a very good carpenter, he built a rumpus room and an extra bedroom and a shower in their new house. He also built a garage, carport and fence. He left Trudeau's Cleaners for a better paying job at a cabinet making plant but after two years he was then laid off. He found work as a janitor at the Krochler Manufacturing Plant which he held until he died of a heart attack on February 24th, 1983. Place of death is Misericordia Hospital in Edmonton. His home in Edmonton was at 10526-163 Street. He was laid to rest at the Holy Cross Cemetery in Edmonton and the Funeral Director was Connelly-McKinley Ltd., address 10011-114 Street, Edmonton, Alberta. His funeral was held on the 1st of March, 1983.

At one of the schools the Principal, Mr. E. MacKay, presented the Most Outstanding Vocational Student for Senior Boys to Harold Bjelke.

Harold's family is as follows:

1. Dennis Harold born October 27th, 1955.
2. Carl Melvin born August 4th, 1957.
3. Gary James born August 28th, 1962.
4. Sharon Ruth born June 21, 1965.

Sharon's second name came from her Aunt Ruth who was very close to Harold. He had been raised and cared for by his sister Ruth after his mother Lena had died. Carl is named after Harold's brother who had died in January of that year.

(Obituary)

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

RUTH BJELKE

Ruth Valborg Bjelke was born on April 27th, 1913 in Diamond Valley, Alberta. Her given name Ruth is very common amongst the Selstrom cousins, however we are not able to find any connection with the name to an earlier generation.

Valborg is the name given to the first day of spring, May the 1st. On the eve of Valborg, the Swedes make big bonfires in the meadows and greet spring with singing around "May Poles" dressed in green leavers and flowers. Valborg is a day of great celebration.

Ruth was six years old when she left the Diamond Valley district for their new home at Burnt Lake. Her first schooling took place at the Swan Lake School, across the road from their home. All of her public school training was taken there, with two years of high school in Sylvan Lake.

There is not much information in school records for this period, however some details show up in the local "Sylvan Lake World" weekly paper. One such event was recorded in the September 1925 issue which related the results of the District School Fair held that year at Sylvan Lake. All schools in the district were represented, and the

Swan Lake school was no exception. Twelve year old Ruth Bjelke was entered in no less than 9 events. The following is gleaned from the clipping of that day: Carrots - 2nd prize; Turnips - 2nd prize; White Bread - 4th prize (She was robbed!); Slip-over apron - 7th prize; Hemmed patch on cotton - 1st prize; Knitting - 2nd prize; Landscape, pencil - 6th place; Booklets (Grades 7 & 8) - 7th place; Map of Canada - 1st place. She was not lacking in ambition!

Another picture and clipping detailed Ruth and her sister Dora's participation on a float in the Sylvan Lake Regatta Parade held on July 31st, 1925. Their entry won first place in the "Farmers Float Category" They were sponsored by Brodies Creamery, and their decorated wagon carries Mr. & Mrs. Stockman, Hilda Halvorson, Dora and 12 year old Ruth Bjelke, Bertha Swainson and Barbara Bell.

A very close friend of Ruth's was Freda Smith. Freda was twenty years older than Ruth, but they became very close over the years. Freda was quite musical, playing a guitar, piano and organ. She would sing soprano and Ruth would sing alto at community functions. They seemed to

be called a lot for singing at funerals. Ruth also sang duets with Lillian Bystrom. Peder remembers hearing them sing "That Little Brown Church in the Wildwood" on at least one occasion.

Ruth was also very close to Alvina (Babe) Delaire, a sister of Frank Delaire. Alvina was very musical, and she took lessons from her mother and sisters. She and Ruth would play the piano and encourage each other in their practise. Alvina died at the age of 15 years, in July of 1929 from a ruptured appendicitis. The death was very hard on Ruth, not only because it was her best friend, but because she died of the very same thing that her mother died from, only one month previously.

Other ladies in the neighbourhood were good to Ruth as well. Mrs. Swainson, Mrs. Engman, and Mrs. Grimmson. Oscar and Bertha Selstrom, her aunt and uncle, helped her out as much as they were able. All of them were very kind to a sixteen year old girl who now had to assume the role of housewife and mother. He was often called upon by the neighbour ladies to have their hair done.

Ruth had always felt badly that she had not learned to cook and bake under her mother's watchful eye. She was much happier being outside with the boys, playing ball, riding horses or just

walking in the woods and picking berries! She did a lot of the milking as father Gustav claimed he did not know how to do "woman's work". Ruth took up her family's role in the community. On many occasions she held WI and Social Credit meetings in the Bjelke home. One of the newspaper clippings which described a recent WI meeting at the Bjelke home ended with "Miss Ruth Bjelke delighted her audience with a solo, with guitar accompaniment".

The Swedish Baptist Church operated for a period of time in the area. Gustav and Lena Bjelke were there for a time, with Lena playing the organ at services. The Church had organised a Sunday School and regular church services were held only occasionally. The Burnt Lake History Book says "There were many helpers during this time. Ruth Bjelke took an active part and carried much of the responsibility prior to her marriage in 1940. She played the organ, organised programs, acted as secretary-treasurer, taught a class, etc. We owe Ruth a great debt." Oscar Johanson was the Superintendent from 1923 until 1961, what an incredible record of service! He had a tendency to be a few minutes late for the start of the Sunday School, so Ruth would gather the children and get them singing. There were some smiles the day

Oscar rushed in to the singing of "Hold The Fort, For I Am Coming"

Ruth was an excellent athlete. She loved to play ball, and frequently would practise with the men's team and practise with her brothers. They also had a girls team that played a bit. Ruth was the catcher for Irene Peterson. Ruth had an excellent arm, for throwing. Once she had gone to the Centerville picnic with Peder Tastad, wearing a fancy dress and hat. She had Peder hold her coat as she took a chance at the ball throw event. After taking a few short steps she let go with a long ball. Samantha Butler spent a good part of the remainder of the day trying to equal Ruth's mark. She never did! Ruth sprained her arm with that throw, and claimed that it never did get any better over the years.

Neighbours of the Bjelkes were the Andrew Hallversons. Andrew's wife was Lydia Halvorson (Syhre) who had moved to the Burnt Lake area from Strongfield Saskatchewan, in 1919. Lydia's parents came from Skudesness, Norway, and had moved to Pierpont South Dakota in the 1880's. After her parents died, she left for the Strongfield, Saskatchewan area with her sister, where she would later meet and marry Andrew Halvorson. In 1919, they moved to their new farm south of Sylvan

Lake, Alberta. Lydia and her sister, Hannah, continued to keep in touch through their letters. Sometime through the winter of 1933/1934, it was decided that Hannah's oldest son Peder, would leave his home in Loreburn and join his extended family in Alberta.

Peder Tastad had developed a heart condition. His heart would for no explainable reason begin to race. He had seen a Doctor in Regina and Dr. Burwash in Saskatoon, who had diagnosed the problem, however they held out no cure for him at that time. His father, Gustav, had previously taken out Life Insurance with a disability clause as part of the policy on his son. It had been contracted with Manufacturer's Life just before the crash in 1929. As long as Peder was unable to work, his premiums would be paid and he would be paid the huge sum (for its day) of \$10.00 per month. Peder had seen many different specialists (A Chiropractor Dr. L'ami in Saskatoon seemed to do more for him than any of the other's) The main reason, however that he went to Alberta were his allergies.

Peder had started to collect on the policy sometime in 1933. Every three months or so, the company would cut him off and they would again require that a doctor certify that he was unable to

work because of his condition. This would again start the monthly payments. This money helped the family during that difficult time.

Lydia Hallvorson had told Gustav and Hannah about a sister-in-law of their community friends, Mons and Kijaa Langager, a Mrs. Faltina Johnson. She had been recently spending one week at Hallvorsons at Sylvan Lake and then the rest of the summer at Rimby. She had severe Hay Fever, and found that the climate helped her greatly. Peder had severe allergies as well, and it was thought that perhaps this change of climate might have a positive effect on his heart condition.

So then, between his mother and his Aunt Lydia, it was decided that Peder would spend some time at Burnt Lake.

On Wednesday May 23rd, 1934, twenty one year old Peder purchased a \$12.50 one way ticket to Sylvan Lake Alberta. He would not return in the next 19 months. The first leg of the trip only took him that day to Outlook, Saskatchewan, thirty miles away. There he stayed with Pastor and Mrs. Peter Overlid that night. The afternoon of the 24th, he again boarded the train and headed west. The train passed through Macklin, on through Hardisty and up to Wetaskiwin and then to Red Deer.

Near Hardisty, the train picked up a number of partiers, on there way home from a Sports Day. The train really got to rocking back and forth. The Conductors eventually had to throw one of the drunks off the train. Peder wisely kept his eyes closed and attempted or at least pretended to sleep.

After reaching Wetaskiwin on Friday morning, he transferred trains to one which would pass through Red Deer. He transferred again to a train which stopped at Sylvan Lake on it's way to Rocky Mountain House.

Peder got off at the station on the south side of Sylvan Lake. There was no one there to meet him. He talked to one of the kids at the station, asking him if there was a town near-by. The boy pointed to a path through some trees to where the town of Sylvan Lake was hidden. He picked up his bag and guitar case and headed to the town. He was surprised at the size of the town and the cement sidewalks! He walked downtown searching for his Aunt & Uncle. After talking to several of the townsmen, he headed back to the station on the south of town.

A Mr. Brown was there at the station with an old truck that he used as a dray. Peder hitched a ride back downtown with him. As they passed an

old man driving a team of horses, Brown suggested that he hitch a ride with him to his Uncles home, as the man would pass within 30 rods of the Halvorson house. Brown stopped the team and Peder had his first meeting with Oscar Norby. Brown asked him if he would mind dropping this young man off at the farm, and he replied. "Well, that would be all-right if he ain't afraid of messing his North Dakota suit!" Peder was wearing a suit, and Oscar knew that Andrew Halvorson had relatives in North Dakota, and therefore assumed that was Peder's home.

Then, just as he was to get his bag and guitar to throw into the back of the Democrat, he spotted Andrew and Lydia at their Model T Truck. It was parked in front of the Creamery, where they had just delivered their can of cream. They had been expecting Peder that day, but were not sure what time the train would bring him there.

The suitcase and guitar bags were thrown into the back of the truck and they headed south, out of town to the Halvorson farm. It had been Howard Halvorson's birthday the day before. He was Peder's first cousin, and had just turned sixteen. Peder slept the first few nights on a cot in the living room before going to stay with his married cousin Alice Engman. The climate immediately agreed with Peder's allergies, and that first night's

sleep was one of the best he had in years! Alice and her husband Carl lived just off the Burnt Lake Trail east of the Hallvorsons. Their home was just south of the Burnt Lake School, and they had Alice's younger brother Arthur staying with them as well while he was going to school.

Peder's first meeting of Carl Engman was at the Halvorson home shortly after he arrived in Alberta. He had come over on horseback for a dinner that night. Introductions had been overlooked, and it was only later that he realised that this was the man who had married his cousin. Carl's first impression of this visitor from Saskatchewan was not good. Some time later Ruth Bjelke would relate the story to Peder:

We lived across the road from the school. Carl Engman would often walk up from his house to the mailboxes by the road across from our home. He knew that the coffee pot was always on at the Bjelkes, and if he had time he would stop in at there home. He would sit at the table, drink his coffee and smoke. He rolled his cigarettes extra thin, not much thicker than a straw. He and the Bjelkes would discuss the comings and the goings of the day. Ruth said, "So Alice's cousin is here?" "Yup" was Carl's reply. "Well what's he like?" pressed Ruth. "Well to tell you the truth, Jimmy (Ruth's

nickname), I've seen dead men look better. They're so hard up in Saskatchewan, he's just walking around to save funeral expenses!"

Well, for such a shaky start, Carl became one of Peder's closest friends, a friendship that would stretch out for more than forty more years.

The climate seemed to be helping Peder's health. He had come to Alberta weighing only 135 pounds, and he was now gaining weight. His allergies too, seemed to favour this new climate. He remembers being able to walk south of Carl's house down to a muskeg slough surrounded with huge black poplar trees. He walked and hardly felt any effects of his hay-fever. With the air in Saskatchewan he would not have been able to do so as comfortably.

Peder continued to collect his \$10 per month. He would report to the Insurance Company on a regular basis, telling them of his location and confirming that he still could not work, but that he was doing chores and light duties around the farm to pay for his board. In the middle of the Depression, this \$10 could go a long way.

The crop that Carl had planted that spring was later hailed out. With not much to do on his farm, Carl then decided to go out to Newhill, where his mother and brothers lived. There he got on with

a threshing outfit. Peder stayed on with Alice, taking care of the chores. That fall, Leonard Hacker came through with his threshing outfit and threshed for Carl. The little crop of oats that survived the hail was cleaned up in a matter of hours. Carl was still at Newhill, so Peder oversaw the work and hauled the grain from the thresher shovelling it into the granary. Hallvorson's had sold their threshing machine earlier that year for \$1000.00, and had used Hacker for their crop as well.

Carl returned home when the threshing crew shut down that fall. He was home that winter with this new guest of his that would be spending his first ever Christmas away from home.

One evening Peder and Carl came up from the barn after finishing the evening milking. There, on the porch step, was the neighbour girl, twenty one year old Ruth Bjelke. She had been cool that evening, and had put on Peder's beige jumbo knit sweater, as she played his guitar. She and Alice were singing songs out of the book the Langager girls had given to Peder shortly before he left. It's unlikely that Ruth came over to romantically check Peder out, as she wouldn't want to get too close to someone who was about to die! Little did they know that some six years later they would wed and spend the next fifty years together. One thing that

Alice did tell Ruth did stick in her mind and arouse her interest - Alice had told her that the family was "awful religious".

Ruth writes: " Among the suitors that came to the door was a very good looking blonde young man who came into our district. Our likes and dislikes were the same and we became engaged."

Well they did - but not right away!

Carl and Alice had some good friends, Einar and Edna Einarson, who lived nearby. One night that fall, they were taking the team and rubber tired wagon into Watkis McGreggor's Uptown Theatre in Sylvan to see a show. Peder found Ruth and asked her, "Why don't you come with us to the show?" She agreed, and went home to get ready. She came out of the house, "...walking like a queen." They watched the movie that night, but it wasn't eventful enough to remember over the ride back home! Einar had a team of Belgium sorrels, and he let them have their head as they rounded Cobb's store, tore down to the Hotel, turned around and came back to Cobbs again. This was all at a tight gallop, with everyone hanging on for dear life! I guess the driving habits of our young people have deep roots. It was pitch black that night as they left the town, and they let the horses feel their way home.

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In the summer, a ball game could usually be found in the bushes around the Grim Grimson farm on a Sunday afternoon. After on of these games, Peder was invited back to the Bjelke house for supper that evening. It was the first meal that he would have had in the Bjelke house and the first meal he would taste of his future bride's. Axel and Dora, who were not married at the time, were there for supper as well.

That winter, Peder took apart all Carl and Alice's furniture, chairs, dining room table and all. He scraped them, refinished them and glued them all back together. It was a good way to pass the time.

Christmas was spent away from the family that year. Peder, went along with Carl and Alice to spend the Christmas celebration at Andrew and Lydia's home.

A late snowstorm that next spring found Peder driving a team of horses, hauling Carl's large black sow into Sylvan Lake for market. The big snow had covered cars and made the roads impassable. Leonard Hacker was ahead of him, with 11 pigs jammed into a sleigh box. His sleigh slid to the side of the road and upset. A tied down top on the sleigh box was all that was holding back 11 pigs from running out into the deep snow. His

horses were panicking and Hacker knew he was in trouble. Peder had a chain around the box holding his black sow captive, so he tied two halter shanks together as a substitute for the chain. He removed the chain, unhooked the team, and moved the horses up to the overturned sleigh. There was a terrible racket going on, with spooked horses and upset pigs! They fastened the chain over the side of the box and pulled the sleigh over. As soon as they were upright, Hacker pushed his team ahead, not wanting to slide off the road again. A couple of years later, Peder and Gordon Joel were dealing with him on a Model T Ford radiator, and Hacker remember the help that Peder had been. He gave them a good deal too.

The next spring (1935) Peder was able to get a job with Pete Ammeter, helping him put in his first crop. (Ammeter was a Russian who had immigrated first to British Columbia, and then to the Burnt Lake area.) Peder drove four horses, pulling a two bottom plow. They were good strong animals, and he was able to plow up to 5 acres per day. With plowing complete, the land was harrowed and then wheat and oats were seeded with a drill. Ammeter was a hard boss, but he paid well. (12.50 per month plus board)

Ammeter had a relative come to stay with him that spring, so Peder was needed for only the one month. One story that stands out for me was Peder's first introduction to eating brain. Ammeter had sold one of his dried up cows to the butcher in Sylvan Lake. He butchered the animal in the yard, and had agreed to save the tripe (stomach) and head for Ammeter. The stomach was emptied and put into a tub that it all but filled. They took it to the pump house where it was washed and cleaned. The stomach was then soaked in soda water and salt. After this treatment, the inner part of the stomach could be easily scraped off the inner lining. What remains then, is almost like leather. It is cut into strips and canned to make Tripe Noodles.

Then came the head. All the good meat was removed, and then Ammeter cut it open with an axe. The brain was removed and placed in a wash basin, which it all but filled. That evening Freda cut the brain into chunks and fried it up. It looked a lot like scrambled eggs, as she served it on a large platter. This was to be a first time experience of brain food for young Peder. With hindsight, he should have perhaps kept that fact to himself, as then Ammeter insisted that Peder eat it all! It wasn't all that bad, but he felt uncomfortable

eating the food which was an obvious treat to the family, while they received none.

Gordon Joel, a friend from Elbow Saskatchewan, worked for Ammeter in 1938, the year Freda died. Ammeter wasn't fussy about giving a stubble jumper a job. He had recently cleared more land into windrows. He needed help to pull the trees out of the pile, trim them, and pile them into neat rows to be sold for rails. He was paying 75 cents per day, plus room and board. He later told Peder that he would be happy to take on more men like Gordon.

Jorgen Gronnestad had heard that Peder was almost finished with Ammeter and asked if he would come and help him finish his seeding that spring. Jorgen was known to the family, as he had worked for Andrew Hallvorson and Gustav Tastad back in Saskatchewan, and had married Emma Gregorson, also from Strongfield. He stayed for two weeks with the Gronnestads, and helped finish their seeding. Jorgan was an interesting man who played the violin and loved to listen to classical music.

On one of the last days with Jorgen, Peder was moving the seeding outfit down the road to Gronnestad's yard, when he met a car carrying Dora Johanson and her brother Gunner Bjelke. At

that time, Gunner was working for Axel (Dora's husband) and he had just gotten a call to go into Golden, British Columbia, to work as a sawyer in a mill. This was Gunner's trade, and he was good enough to have a reputation that he had lumber companies vying for his services. He was happy to return there to work, as this was his birthplace.

If Gunner was to leave, then Axel would need help taking care of the cows and pigs. They hoped that he could come right away, but would wait if necessary. It was early June 1935 then, that Peder moved in with the Johansons.

Gunner and Axel had finished putting in the crop that spring. Axel wanted to fence the rest of the home half-section. The first task was to send Peder down to some land that Axel owned on Burnt Lake. Their job was to take the wire off the posts which were starting to rot. Peder laid all three strands on the ground and rolled them up in the same spool. The wire was hauled back to Axel's and strung out on the future fence line. By stretching the wire out before the posts were dug in, the wire could be used as a guide to make sure that the line was installed straight. They started in the south east corner of the half-section.

The previous winter Axel had put four horses on the sleigh with eight foot bunks. He

travelled west to Red Raven, where he picked up sixteen foot Tamarack poles. Returning the next day, the poles were cut in two, making two eight foot lengths. Each length was sharpened and placed on a wagon. Peder's job was to go ahead with a shovel and a bar. A hole was cut through the grass roots and the bar would sink the hole down two feet. Axel would come along on a flat decked wagon, put a post in the hole and pound it into the ground. Axel had made a post maul from the piston of a one cylinder, and it weighed a ton! Axel was an extremely strong man.

With the fencing completed some two weeks later, Peder settled into the routine of regular chores. He milked never less than nine cows, and had up to eleven cows needing to be milked each morning and night. The milk was hand separated in a room set up inside the barn for that purpose. Each night Peder would disassemble and rinse the cream separator after use. After usage in the morning, he would take it up to the house where Dora would clean and scald the pieces. The cream was taken to Red Deer and sold to the Creamery. The prices were very low, probably not enough to pay for Peder's wage. The milk that was separated was fed to the forty some pigs that Axel had on the farm.

The milk and cream for their own use was kept in the pump house at the one end of the car garage. It also doubled as a Bath house for the hired men. One day, Peder had gone up to the house to get a pail of hot water from the reservoir in the wood stove. He took it down to the pump house and pored it into the wash tub, mixing it with enough cold water to make a comfortable bath. He had just settled down into the tub when he heard his future sister-in-law, Dora, at the door. She was backing into the pump house, shooing away the cats that were wanting to get at the cream. Shutting the door, she looked up and saw Peder sitting in the tub. She immediately went out. A few seconds later, Peder heard her again at the door, shooing away the cats. The door opened, and Dora stuck her head back in the room. "I'm sorry", she said, closing the door again. She must have told Axel about it because he was grinning when Peder came up to the house. It wasn't until several years later that she got the courage to tell Ruth what she had done. As she started to recount the event, Ruth said "I know all about it", and Dora's face turned crimson.

Peder slept in the granary, as was the custom for most hired men. It had a door in one end and a couple feet of wall in the other. The rest

of the wall was open. A wire stretched across the bin held the clothes he had on hangars. Axel would call him before five or six in the morning, telling him that the coffee was ready. After a quick feed of layer cake and coffee, they would head out and start the chores. After the horses were fed they would come in for a breakfast of porridge and pancakes or perhaps some baking powder biscuits. After breakfast they headed back to the barn. Axel would take the team of horses out to do the fieldwork and Peder would finish milking the cows and feeding the pigs. They continued to fence some sloughs that summer, probably fifteen acres of them.

Peder would occasionally borrow the old "Mail Horse" from Axel to take his girl Ruth out or just to take her home. Ruth would ride in the saddle and Peder would sit on behind. Each time the horse came up to a roadside mail box, the horse would stop, and require several kicks to get going again. This often would cause the horse to buck, so that it was just as easy to get off the horse and walk along beside. Ruth had a horse of her own, but it travelled much too fast, not giving the couple as much time to themselves!

Before Peder went back to Loreburn for Christmas, the neighbours went together to

purchase some lumber to make an outdoor rink. Peder did not have his skates that year, but when Phyllis Stewart came down to Engmans she encouraged him to come for a skate. Phyllis was the school teacher, and she said that there were several pairs of skates at the school that he could use. Phyllis had asked her best friend Ruth Bjelke to come skating as well. She later told Peder that she had been a bit jealous of Phyllis that day, watching her glide across the ice on Peder's arm. Ruth could hardly stand on her skates, and despite her slightness, Peder could barely hold her up.

Phyllis Stewart had been staying with the Stockman's while teaching school at Burnt Lake. While Peder was working at Axel's, Phyllis moved in to stay with Carl and Alice Engman. Peder stayed with them again the week before he returned back to Saskatchewan. Phyllis became one of Ruth and Peder's closest friends. Even after their lives separated them, they wrote letters to one another, and a return trip to Alberta would almost ensure a visit with Phyllis at Rocky Mountain House.

Here is an excerpt from Phyllis's letter of September 17th, 1990, written after Ruth's death:

"Jimmy, as I always called her, was the best friend I ever could have had when I started

teaching. A town person who had never lived on a farm or been in a rural school, I desperately needed someone to help me through the multitude of problems I faced, and there was Jimmy, bless her heart. She saved me from falling flat on my face several times."

On one of the first times Peder took Ruth for a walk, they decided to head up to see Freda Smith. Carl Engman and Carl Bjelke were headed into Sylvan Lake, and they stopped to pick them up. They dropped them off at Freda's lane. As they came up to the house, Freda was just coming out, on her way to the barn to milk the cows. She told them to go in and make themselves at home. There was a guitar, and they played and sang until Freda returned.

A highlight of the summer was the Centerville Picnic. Peder remembers taking Ruth there one year. She entered the ball throw, and no one could even come close to her throw, although Samantha Butler (nee Fitch) tried as she could to do so. Ruth had a dress, heels and a hat on that day. In an effort to look ladylike, she had thrown her elbow out - she claimed that it never did get completely better. They later went over to the concession booth to treat themselves. The drinks and ice cream were gone so the server pulled out a

chocolate angel food cake. As Peder ate his piece of cake, he commented "I want to find out who made this cake. I want to marry her!" Ruth went home and practised making angle food cakes until she could make them as good as the one they had tasted that day at Centerville. (Peder later found out that the cake had been made by Delia Bystrom)

Peder returned to Loreburn, to spend Christmas with the family. Shortly after he returned to his home, a Christmas present came in the mail from his new friend from Burnt Lake, Ruth Bjelke. It was a book, titled Treading the Wine Press. Peder continued to correspond with her, and was known to get a bit touchy if a letter was not received each week.

Peder farmed in Saskatchewan in 1936 to 1939. In the fall of 1939 he and his friend Gordon Joel drove out to Alberta in Gordon's Model T Ford. They stayed at Engman's at first, while they could look for work. Carl and Gordon went out to Rocky Mountain House to look for work, but returned when their search was not successful. Gordon found his job at Amaters, and Peder later found work in the spring with Frank Delaire.

Delaire had set up his saw outfit at Fred Shoquists farm. Fred had marked the trees he wanted to be cut, and Carl Engman and another

man would take down the tree. Fred would saw the trees into the proper lengths, and then Peder would come along and chop off the branches. Dwight Sawyer was taking all the lumber, and did tail sawing. He used all the lumber, even the boards with bark on them. They saved it all, as long as it measured at least two feet. He was using a lot of the lumber for building sheep sheds. When they got to the sawing operation, Peder was the "Canter", clearing away the sawdust.

Peder would be up early at Carls, milking the cows and then catching a ride to work with Dwight Sawyer.

Fred Shoquist and Peder became good friends over the years. One night a week, the neighbours would gather at a home to listen to William Aberhart speak on the radio. This was the local Social Credit Club. Aberhart was both a radio evangelist and a politician. People who would never darken a church door, would never miss an evening listening to him. After the radio program, there was usually a short program. Ruth often played the piano and the group would sing "Oh God Our Help In Ages Past". Frank Delaire was the Chairman of the Club. Ruth Bjelke was the secretary for the district. Mrs. Delaire was there, along with Ruth's sister Dora. It was a social

evening, and gave the people an inexpensive evening out during the Depression. On a few occasions, a mixed quartet of Gunnar Bjelke (Bass), Peder Tastad (Tenor), Ruth Bjelke (Alto) and Freda Smith (Soprano) sang at these events. The group must have been pretty good as they were asked to sing at the Christmas Concert that year.

Peder's first meeting with Gustav Bjelke was at Carl Engman's home one morning. He came to the door asking Carl for some .22 shells for his gun. It was the first time Peder had heard anyone speaking in Swedish. Gustav was going to butcher a pig that day, and when he went to look for his shells, he discovered that his son Andrew had shot them all up. The Bjelkes were good workers, but farming was not necessarily their best suited profession. Gustav Bjelke was a man of few words, who loved to read. In the evening he would take his lantern upstairs, set it by his bed, and read. It must have been Swedish books and magazines, as he never got good at English, and almost always talked in Swedish.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
ENGAGEMENT AT LAST

In the summer of 1939, Peder was back in Loreburn on the farm. He and his brother Ed had purchased a farm truck with a gravel box, and were hauling gravel on #19 highway. Peder had the night shift, and he took a few minutes at the start of his shift to sneak into Strongfield and telephone his friend Gordon Joel out in Red Deer. Mrs. Francis ran the "Central" phone office in Strongfield. He left a message at Gordon's house that night that he would call again the next evening at a specified time.

Gordon was working as a trucker for a man named Chislow. Gordon had just recently sold his Model T Ford to Carl Engman, and had purchased a truck to bring back to Saskatchewan. Peder reached him that next evening. He asked Gordon if he would mind if Ruth caught a ride to Loreburn with him. "She's coming with me" he replied. This was a bit of a surprise to Peder as he hadn't asked Ruth yet!

Ruth stayed about a week in Loreburn, visiting her soon to become in-laws. Gustav and Hannah made her welcome in their home. And what a house full it was! Two other families were

temporarily living there at the time. Evelyn & Ole Olson and their children (Peder's sister) and Jennie and Jonas Ferkingstad and their daughter Helen (Peder's sister) were all there. Ruth pitched right in, washing more clothes and dishes than she had seen for some time.

The Luther League meetings were being held in Elbow that week, an event the whole family took in. Ruth and Ole sang a duet there one evening. Both Gustav and Kasper Knudson had remarked to Peder on the singing talents of his future wife.

Peder remembers one particular walk they had, along the prairie trail north from the "Lonesome Tree". It was during this visit that the two of them started to seriously consider marriage. They were both 26 years old and it seemed time.

Peder was working on the last two days of Ruth's visit. He drove her to Hawarden to catch the train back to Sylvan Lake. She rode the train as far as Hanna, Alberta, where she caught a ride back to Burnt Lake with some relatives.

That next January, Peder ordered a set of wedding rings from Shaffer, the local storekeeper. When they came in, Peder showed them to his brother Ed. Then, as he was wrapping them to send out to Ruth, Jenny saw what was happening

and had him show the rings to his mother. Other than these few family members, the engagement was quite private.

Ruth hadn't believed Peder when he had told her that he was going to get her a ring. He had asked for her finger size, but she wouldn't give it to him. So Peder had guessed at a size 8, when she needed a 6 or 7. She wore the engagement ring with her finger bent at the knuckle so that the ring wouldn't fall off.

Peder and Ruth wrote each other each week. He used to get up early in the morning to avoid having family members peering over his shoulder. He kept all of Ruth's letters until the late 40's, when daughter Kathleen started to peek at them. This was a difficult time to consider marriage. They had just come through ten years of depression. Peder's father had just had a stroke, and he and Ed were in the middle of starting out their own farming business, as well as taking over for their father. Three of Peder's brothers and two of Ruth's brothers had been called up for the armed services. Ruth was the homemaker in the Bjelke house and the caregiver for her father. In spite of the many obstacles, they decided to marry.

Peder said that he felt guilty about taking Ruth away from Gustav and Carl. They had

promised they would get a hired girl or a housekeeper when she left, but they never did. Ruth (and later with her daughter Kathleen)did return each year home each year so that she could and spend some time visiting and house cleaning from top to bottom for them.

Aunt Lydia wrote to her sister Hannah that winter, telling Hannah that she had seen Ruth at a WI meeting that day. Ruth had shown her the ring and told her the good news. Peder wondered if she had told every one in the country? He was still having difficulty believing that this wedding might happen!

Peder thought that he had better get out there, so he wrote Ruth and told her that he was coming. He also wrote his cousins, the Halvorsons, asking them to pick him up in Red Deer. Gordon and Howard were there when he got off the train. When Peder got his suitcase off the baggage wagon, he ran into Ruth. She had been given \$40 from her father to purchase clothes in Calgary, and was taking the same train out. Ena Sveinson, wife of Ellis, had agreed to accompany Ruth on this trip.

Peder left for home with the Halvorson boys. No one mentioned his engagement to him. Later that evening they all went over to Axel Lindmans for some meeting. Gustav Bjelke came in

and when he saw Peder there, he came over immediately to him and shook his hand. This was unusual, as Gustav rarely spoke to him in public.

Ruth was only in Calgary over the weekend. On Sunday she went to hear William Aberhart preach. The collection plate came around and she dropped in a written greeting. Ruth knew that everyone would be listening in to the broadcast back home. Everyone was excited when greetings were extended from "Ruth Bjelke to all the friends at Burnt Lake".

The locals in Burnt Lake were not happy to lose Ruth from their community. They organised a huge farewell for her at the Burnt Lake School. The following is a clipping that appeared in the local paper of that event:

"Burnt Lake Bride Honoured By Friends: A farewell party held at the school for Miss Ruth Bjelke was attended by about 80 people. Miss Bjelke and Mr. Tastad had been invited to spend the evening at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Karl Engman and were wholly unaware of the surprise which lay in store for them until they were bodily carried to the school to meet their friends who had gathered to honour them. Mr. Oskar Johanson called the meeting to order and under leadership Mrs. B. Bell, with Mrs. Alice Sveinson at the piano, and Kurt

Trachsel, violin, several community songs were lustily sung. The program which followed was heartily enjoyed. Those contributing to the program including Mrs. B. Bell, solo; Mrs. J.O. Johnson, reading; Misses Freda & Elsie Smith, duet; L. Hacker, violin solo; Mr. & Mrs. Kurt Trachel, duet; Frank Dallaire, solo; Dwight Sawyer, address; Mrs. E.W. Louis, solo; Kurt Trachel, violin solo. G.S. Grimson then presented Miss Bjelke with a purse of money with the best wishes of the community for her happiness in her new home. Mr. Grimson paid tribute to Miss Bjelke for her willing & efficient help at the Sunday School and the children's' concerts where her musical ability had always been of such great assistance. Her friends would always remember her services with gratitude and her place would be hard to fill in the district. After lunch the meeting broke up by singing Auld Lang Syne & For They Are Jolly Good Fellows"

The purse that had been collected was some \$25.00, a handsome sum in depression times. Earlier, the ladies had gotten together at Mrs. Oscar Johanson's home for a farewell. Again, the local paper reports:

"A delightful afternoon was spent by the ladies of Burnt Lake, Shady Nook and Centerville

at the home of Mrs. Oskar Johanson on February 21. The occasion was planned in honour of Miss Ruth Bjelke whose marriage takes place early in March, and of Mrs. Clifford Duffield, Sylvan Lake, who as Miss Lillian Byers, was a popular teacher here two years ago. After several amusing contests, Mrs. B. Bell gave a solo and Mrs. J.O. Johnson, a reading "Man", which gave the young ladies some sound advice. Mrs. S. Svenson then made the presentation to Mrs. Duffield, a picture and a silver dish from the ladies of the district. Mrs. Duffield was taken completely by surprise but in a kindly speech, thanked the ladies warmly for their presents and assured them she appreciated their friendliness both now and when she had lived in the district. Mrs. Kurt Trachsel then presented Miss Bjelke with a huge daisy with instructions to remove the petals one by one to discover where her presents were hidden. When the last of nearly 50 presents had been found, and exhibited, Miss Bjelke thanked her friends for the gifts and for their companionship which she would never forget. Preparing lunch, Miss Bjelke and Mrs. Duffield were seated at the head of the table which looked very attractive with candles and a miniature bride and attendant, making a most appropriate centrepiece. At Sunday School, Miss Bjelke was presented with

a picture with the good wishes of the Sunday School. In making the presentation, Mr. Oskar Johanson thanked Miss Bjelke for her many years of faithful work and wished her happiness in her new home." The picture is of a tree, done in soft pink, and hangs in Peder's house to this day.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

THE BIG DAY

They had planned to marry on Saturday, March 2nd, 1940. The family, however had different plans. A hockey tournament was scheduled for that day in Red Deer, and it would not be possible to have both events the same day. Something had to go, and so the date was changed from the 2nd to the 1st! Peder's brother Ed, told Sam Platt, the Strongfield Station Agent, that they moved the day ahead because they just couldn't wait.

Shortly before the wedding, the two of them borrowed Carl Engman's Model T Ford (The one he had purchased from Gordon Joel) and drove into Red Deer. Ruth visited a while with a teacher from the Pine Hill School, and then Peder dropped her off downtown to do some shopping. He carried on to the Courthouse to get the marriage licence. "Well where's the young lady?" the man had asked. Peder had not realised that they needed to see both of them in order to get the license. He went back to get Ruth from the store, they had lunch and returned to the Courthouse. Alberta did not require a medical examination or bloodtest to get married. However there were plenty of oaths to swear (including kissing the Bible) before the license was

granted. They paid their \$2.00 and there was no turning back!

They headed over to H.H. Hamber Jewellery to check out Ruth's wedding ring. She had taken her rings there previously to have them resized and she had picked up her engagement ring some time before, leaving the wedding ring there for safe keeping. They were now going to get the wedding ring, which could no longer be found! He had another ring of the same red gold which he offered as a substitute. They had no choice but to accept.

Peder dropped Ruth off at the stores again and went up to meet the preacher. Ruth had been Confirmed as a Lutheran, but there was no longer a Lutheran Church in the Burnt Lake area. She had gotten to know Dr. Thompson at the Nazarene College in Red Deer and liked him very much. The two of them discussed the wedding plans, including their desire to have a ring ceremony, if they could ever find a ring. It wasn't common for Nazarenes to have the rings as part of the ceremony, but he did agree.

(Note: Is it true that Peder had Ole Olson check her out to see if she had strayed from her Lutheran roots?)

On Friday morning, March 1st, Carl Bjelke and Peder picked up Ruth and her sister Dora in the Chev car and struck out for Red Deer. The following is a clipping that appeared on the front page of both the Sylvan Lake and Red Deer local papers:

TASTAD-BJELKE

"A quiet but interesting wedding was solemnised at the Northern Bible College Manse recently when Mr. P. Arthur Tastad, of Loreburn, Saskatchewan was united in marriage to Miss Ruth Vahlborg Bjelke, well known to many friends in the Burnt Lake District. Reverend Chas. E. Thompson officiated in the presence of Mrs. Axel Johanssen, sister of the bride and G. Bjelke, brother of the bride. After the ceremony, the party drove to Burnt Lake where a reception was held and a buffet lunch served at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Axel Johanssen. The happy couple left during the afternoon for their future home at Loreburn."

The wedding had gone off just fine, despite the groom's "most nervous day of my life", with the exception of the ring ceremony -which was left out. While Dr. Thompson was out in the other room getting some papers for them to sign, Carl waved his thumb to Peder, showing him the wedding ring.

Peder took it off and placed it on Ruth's finger before the minister returned.

They drove out to Dora and Axel Johanson's farm for a light lunch and reception. They were joined by Andrew and Lydia Halvorson, Alice and Carl Engman, Gustav Bjelke, Carl Bjelke, Arthur Bjelke and Dr. Thompson and his wife. Ruth's other brothers were not home at the time. Ruth got a kiss from all of them, except Peder, who still hadn't kissed her that day!

Peder paid the minister \$5 for his services that day (Now they have \$7 invested in this wedding). This was more than her wedding dress and shoes combined! Carl drove the new couple and the Thompsoms back to Red Deer, leaving Peder and Ruth off at the Buffalo Hotel. It was a new hotel and pretty fancy for a young couple just out of the depression. They had been doused with confetti by the family that afternoon. Someone had put confetti in her hat, and a week later, Ruth would still be finding some of it in her thick long black hair. The rooms were clean and new, but their room was directly above the entrance, which contained a nickelodeon. The booming noise went on to the early hours.

Peder was up early the next morning. Ruth had torn her only pair of nylons the day before, and

he went to find a small sewing kit to repair the stockings. It was his first purchase as a married man! The rest of the day was spent watching the hockey tournament. The Palm Bay hockey team finally won out with the first prize. Three of Ruth's brothers played on the Burnt Lake team: Carl, Andrew and Arthur. Other neighbors and friends on the team were: Halvorson; A. Swainson; R. Swainson; Norby; Rosse; Johnson. So it was pretty exciting to watch. Between games, in the afternoon, they took some time to get their wedding pictures taken.

They were both played out. With the pressures of the day before and all the walking from hotel to the rink to pictures and back again, they were anxious to get home. They were having a hot chocolate at the Eatons store when they spotted Emma Gronestad. They asked her if they could catch a ride to the Bjelke home with them. They agreed, and loaded up themselves and their suitcase into Jorgan's car. They only got part of the way home when the car blew a tire. Luckily, Oscar Johanson came along and took them the rest of the way.

The boys came home a bit later from the tournament. They were tired, but still had to milk 14 cows. Actually 15 cows, as another of the cows had

a calf that day. The boys would milk, and Gustav would separate the milk and feed the pigs.

That weekend, Gunner had been working for Hay-wire Morrison, at a sawmill north and east of Rocky Mountain House. They worked seven days a week. Carl Bjelke was about to join them the next day. (Sunday) Peder, Ruth and Carl Bjelke struck out the next day for Gunnar Bjelke's farm. They had supper at Irene's parents house and then drove Gunnar and Carl out to the sawmill. They stayed that night with Irene, and drove Carl's Model A Ford back to Burnt Lake the next day.

On the return home they decided to stop off and visit Einar Einarson. They met him on the road, a short distance from his farm. He had just taken his father-in-law to Eckville, where he was starting his trip back to his native Finland to fight the invading Russians. They had a good visit and returned later that day to the Bjelke farm.

The next few days were filled with packing. Peder had bought two trunks from Carl Engman. One had been purchased locally, but the other had been shipped over from Sweden. The Swedish trunk was home-made, with square nails. Ruth was kept very busy with last minute visiting. All of her possessions went into those two trunks, both wedding gifts, keepsakes and personal items.

When all was packed, Carl Engman took the trunks to the train station in Red Deer for their trip to Loreburn. The boys made a later trip back to the train station with the new bride and groom. The train pulled out near supper time for the long trip back. There were train switches at Wetaskiwin and Macklin before they arrived in Loreburn. (The March 18th weekly paper says it was last Thursday)

CHAPTER TWENTY

LOREBURN

As they pulled into Loreburn Station, Peder could see his brother Ed running to the station carrying a brown bag. He knew what would be in the bag, and so when they stepped out the door of the train car and were showered in rice, he took Ruth by the arm and through into the next train car. house as Jennie, Jonas and daughter Helen were there at that time.

There were several of the family there to greet them. They loaded their trunks and bags into the back of the truck. He got to drive, as the only other space would have been standing in the back. Some of the brothers rode in the back of the two ton truck, as they headed across the frozen snow covered fields to Gustav Tastad's farm.

That first night was busy, as a party had been organised at the Tastad house. A sleigh load of friends came from the Pleasant Ridge area and the Bright area as well as from the immediate Wildon area. Gordon Joel had come up from Elbow as well. All were anxious to have another or even their first peek at this new bride.

Peder came down with the flue shortly thereafter, and so the new couple stayed with Gustav and Hannah for the first week. It was a full

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE PAGE PLACE

Section 3, Township 27, Range 5, West of the third, was originally Granted to the Canadian Northern Railway Company on June twentieth, 1908. The land was sold to Isac Benson Lucas of Markdale Ontario, on January 26th, 1911 for a purchase price of \$4,231.00. The land was sold to James Page on August 27th, 1925 for the handsome price of \$12,000.00. I can only assume that Page farmed and broke the land before he bought the farm. Page paid \$3000 down and financed the remainder through George and Isac Lucas. He farmed it with his two sons, Bob and Percy. James retired and let his boys take over the farm. They split the farm, with Percy looking after the North 1/2 and Bob farming the South 1/2. There were some good years and then the crop failures of the "Thirties" came on, as well as the Depression and its deflated farm prices. As happened with so much land in the area, the Lucas family took the property back on February 3rd, 1936. Bob Page had left already left for the west coast in '33 or '34. When Bob left, Percy farmed the whole section of land.

While Peder was still at Burnt Lake, he received a letter from a lawyer in Regina, a Mr. H.E. Sampson. Andy Harrison, the Rural Municipality Secretary, had given him Peder's name, recommending him as someone who would be able to take over "Section Three", or the "Page Place". Percy Page had been a good neighbour of theirs for years, and they didn't want to take the land from "under him".

Peder wrote back to Sampson, telling him that they would like to farm more land, but they didn't want to do so at the expense of their neighbour. He also wrote his brother Ed, telling him about Sampson's letter. Ed went down to see Percy. He told Ed that he was past running the farm and had quit. With that, Sampson wrote the contract and the two brothers took over the farm.

There were two farm houses on that farm, one on the north east quarter and one on the south east quarter. The large house on the north east had been built by Joe McLean in May of 1915. It was eventually sold by the Lucas Estate to Roy Johnson, who had it moved to his farm west of Strongfield.

The other house which Peder and his bride would move into was a package home by Aladdin. It was erected by Percy's brother, Bob Page. This would be the house that Peder and Ruth would use as their "Honeymoon Shack".

Ruth writes: "We lived on section 3 in a nice little aladdin house - I loved it!"

After Bob had left, Percy, his wife and two daughters moved into this newer house. He stayed with the farm until his selling out sale in the spring of 1939.

Lars Olson had left for Prince Rupert to establish himself on the west coast. He had temporarily left behind his wife Gunda and their boys and girls until he got established. They stayed in Percy's house until their sale that fall.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

GETTING ESTABLISHED

The interior of their new "Honeymoon Shack" had been plaster-boarded but poorly caulked. It was full of bed bugs and needed a good painting. Peder had gone into Loreburn to see Dr. Monkman. He purchased about a half a dozen coffin shaped mercury tablets. He picked up some calcimine powder and mixed it with water. The mixture was applied the entire house. Doc Monkman had told him that each one of those tablets had the potency to kill the whole town! It did the job though, and there never was a problem again with bed-bugs. The woodwork and the floor were all varnished wood.

Upon entering the porch, you could go left to the cellar or go directly into the kitchen. There was a living room beyond, with two bedrooms off to the left. In a small room in the middle, Jonas Ferkingstad had built them some cupboards, making an excellent pantry.

Prior to getting married, Peder and Ruth had sat down in Alberta with the 1939 Eatons Winter Catalogue and ordered the furniture and necessities for their new home. Peder's brother,

Ed, had received all the goods in Loreburn and hauled them out to the new home.

A new bed and mattress (\$16), dresser with mirror (\$9) and a new kitchen set were ordered. The chairs were shipped broken down, requiring gluing and assembly. The bottoms of the chair legs were straight cut and had to be re-cut on an angle so that they would sit solid on the floor. All of that furniture is still around and is as sturdy and solid as ever.

Later, other memorable pieces of furniture were added. The wooden high chair came from Alma Tjosvold. They said that it was the baby chair used by Marie Aadland (Joel). A stove was purchased second hand from Saul Sokolofsky. It was a large stove, really too big for the small house. Jenny and Jonas Ferkingstad had a smaller stove, so they used theirs for a period of time. The big stove was taken out and moved into the basement of Skudesness church. Ruth's brother Harold had given them a beautiful dining room table that he had made. It has finally found a resting place in Harold's daughter Sharon Barlow's home near Davidson, Saskatchewan.

Friends and relatives brought gifts of pots, pans and other necessities to fill in their home needs. They purchased a leatherette davenport (which would fold down into a double bed) from the Bird family in Loreburn. Bird was the Pool Elevator Agent in Loreburn.

One summer day in 1944, their hired man - Olaf Mier - had just returned from the "Fair" in Saskatoon. He was staying with the family that summer. Ruth was having a bath when she heard him come in the yard. Panicking, she got up from her bath and started running for the bedroom. It was then that she tripped and slid right under that Davenport. She had a terrible time scrambling out from under it before Olaf came in the house! It was not very funny at the time for Ruth, but years later she was able to recount the story with a twinkle in her eye.

Later, when they moved to Strongfield, they bought the present dining room suite and china cabinet and buffet (sideboard) well as a chesterfield and chair. They had purchased it from a second-hand store on Broad Street in Regina. It came from the Champs home in Regina. The family owned the Champs Hotel in Regina, right across from the Train Station. It had come from a fine home and they paid a handsome price for the set.

(\$225.00) It was properly packed and shipped home to Strongfield on the train. They picked it up with the big truck and eagerly hauled it home.

In the fall of 1940, Peder attended a sale for England Hayes where he purchased a fancy wicker carriage to hold the baby that was due that winter.

There were always people dropping in for visits - Bill and Gladys Lillemo; Nils and Helen Langager; Ferkingstads; Jonas and Olga Langager; brother Ed and his company; Hattie and Mearl Vollmer; Marie and Ruby Aadland; Gay Knutson. Peder used to cut hair on Saturday nights so there were most always people dropping in that evening.

That first year of marriage brought visitors to their new home from Alberta. In June, brother Harold Bjelke stopped for a visit on his way back to Burnt Lake from the Deaf School in Winnipeg. In early August Axel Johanson broght out Ruth's sister Dora and hher brother Harold for a weekend visit. This was Harold's second visit in only two months! Later, in August, brother Arthur and his pal Howard Hallvorson (Peders cousin) stopped for a short time.

There was no well on the Page farm, so drinking water was hauled from Aadlands by the

barrel. Wash water was hauled from the dug-out, located just east of the house.

One of the "modern" conveniences of the neighbourhood was a "Fence Phone". This phone connected Kerneys, Aadlands and the Peder Tastads. It consisted of a telephone receiver or earplugs connected to the wire fence line with one wire and the ground with the other. It worked too, and was slightly better than yelling. (The farms were less than a mile apart)

Peder and Ed were busy with farming right from the start. They farmed the Page section, the Stuart section, and the north 1/2 of Section 4 Township 29 Range 5, West of the 3rd. This land is what we referred to as "Ma's Land", as it was titled in their mother's name. At this time Gustav Tastad's brother Lauritz was farming and living on the original Tastad Homestead. When Lauritz bought land east of Hawarden, Peder and Ed farmed that land as well. They then picked up the Baxter Farm (a 1/2 section) and the East 1/2 10-26-5 West of 3rd and were helping to farm father Gustav's land at Loreburn. For a period of time, this all totalled 14 quarters of land. For extra help, they relied on brother George - when he could get harvest-leave from the Air Force, and from brother Walter when

he was not in school. Norman and Byron were overseas at this time.

On April 2nd, 1936, Peder and Edward Tastad applied for the purchase of a new John Deere Tractor Model "D" with rubber tires (#116) and a #807B discer with 16 - 22" "Special Alloy Blades" and Van Brunt Seeder Attachment. They required a cash downpayment of \$676.60 and three equal payments of \$451.15 thereafter, with the final payment to be on October 1, 1938. This tractor on rubber tires, was one of the first rubber tired tractors brought into the area.

In the fall of 1939, Ed and Peder were making plans for the Harvest. They were getting a lot of requests for custom work that year. They felt that it was time that they purchased a modern combine and set their thresher aside. Far fewer men would be required for harvest with the modern combine.

They contacted Elmer Thompson in Strongfield about a new Minneapolis-Moline unit. Minneapolis was the only major machinery Company to break with the "30's" depression mentality of cash only. They would sell equipment on time to qualifying farmers. Thompson and the blockman could find a G-3, 12 foot combine, however they could only find it on steel wheels.

Peder and Ed wanted one on rubber tires. Thompson suggested that they could bring it in on steel and then change it over to rubber later that fall.

They made no immediate decision. Then, in late August 1939, Bert Peardon gave Peder a call. Peder occasionally drove with him on trips to Regina and Moose Jaw, picking up twenty four barrels of fuel at a time. This time he needed to pick up his combine motor that he had taken in for repair. It seemed like a good opportunity to check around for combines on rubber in the south. They picked up Peardon's motor and then travelled over to the Minneapolis yards. They confirmed that they had a unit, but that it was on steel. They phoned around for him and found what he wanted in Moose Jaw.

It was already late in the day. Peder drove the truck and they headed out on #1 highway to Moose Jaw. The paved road was a mess. It had been raining a lot that week, and there were deep potholes all over the road. The traffic was heavy with large trucks hauling big loads. By the time they got to Moose Jaw that night it was eleven o'clock. They stopped at a service station and phoned over to the dealership. The man who answered was by himself and was leaving shortly. They would have

to spend the night in Moose Jaw if they wanted to get this combine.

Peardon got into the driver's seat and took them over to a house surrounded by a number of trucks. They went up to the door and banged on the door. A woman came in a house-coat and showed them to a large room full of beds. There were men sleeping and snoring all around them. They asked the woman to be wakened at 5:30 A.M. and also to have breakfast for them. The next morning, they were up and had their breakfast. (25 cents for bed and 25 cents for breakfast) They got in the truck and headed for the Minneapolis Warehouse. There was still no sign of life at the site. Finally they showed up. They backed the truck up to a ditch, and the combine was finally loaded. After finally picking up some cases of fresh fruit they started their trek back to Loreburn. Gene Roe came out that afternoon from Loreburn to help them set up the machine. The new M-M Model "G" Harvester was Serial #81807. The note they signed, allowed them until September 15th, 1940 to repay the loan, however it was paid in full on September 5th, 1939.

The John Deere "D" was used to run the threshing machine so they began to look around for a smaller tractor to pull their new G-3 Combine. In the meantime, their brother-in-law, Jonas, took the

"D" and the Threshing Machine, to take off whatever crops were in the neighbourhood needing a thresher. They got a hold of Saul Socolofsky on a Saturday. He phoned around and located an "AR" in Saskatoon. They had phoned back late in the afternoon to tell them that they had a unit, and that they would roll it out on the loading dock for them to pick up later that evening. Peder and Sofus Tjosvold got in the truck and headed for Saskatoon. By the time they were organised and on the road, it was dark.

They arrived at the Saskatoon Depot late that night, and they backed the truck up to the dock. The "AR" starts a bit differently than the "D", and it took a minute to start the new tractor in the dark. It started, and Peder drove it on the truck. It should have perhaps been backed on, as it hung over the back of the box slightly. They had some blocking with them, but they stopped at Steve Gessler's Garage for some additional blocking. They headed out into the night on the all gravel highways. The road was not in great shape - there was a lot of washboard - and soon the tractor was shifting to the side. They stopped and placed some additional blocking on the sides, no easy feat in the dark. It was a slow trip home. They finally pulled into the yard at four in the morning. Peder slipped

up to the house and tapped on the window at Ed's bedroom. Ed got up and helped them back the tractor from off the truck and onto the hill embankment.

By this time, of course, it was early Sunday morning. Later that day they had a bunch of company come over after church. A few of the men took turns driving the new tractor around the yard. The next day, the unit was coupled with the 12 foot combine and went to work.

After 1939, they started to farm the original Tastad homestead. Lauritz Tastad had moved east of Hawarden to some land that he had purchased. With this additional land, they gave up the "Stewart Place" to their brother-in-law, Jonas Ferkingstad. They were still farming the land south and west of Loreburn for the Manufacturer's Life Company.

CHAPTER TWENTY THREE

FAMILY

Ruth soon found that she was going to become a mother. The baby was due in December. They had decided to have the baby born in Davidson, rather than Outlook. There was a good hospital there and she liked the doctor. There was only one problem - the roads. The road between Loreburn and Davidson was not open in the winter months. They had considered going to Moose Jaw or Outlook (both accessible by train) but in the end it was Davidson.

Ruth liked to walk. It was no doubt lonesome for her out on the prairies. She would be missing her family, friends and the familiarity of her Alberta home. She often walked south to the Aadland Farm where she would meet and talk with Ruby and Marie.

When the time was nearing for her to have the child, Ed and Peder drove her in the truck over to Davidson. As roads were blocked with snow, they travelled around through Kenaston to get there. The first two nights she stayed at Mrs. Blackmore's in Davidson. Then she moved out to the Dodds home just out of Davidson. They turned

the heat on to the upper level, and made Ruth very welcome.

Early on the morning of December 12th (at 3:00 A.M. to be precise) Mr. Dodds harnessed his team of horses for the short drive into Davidson Hospital. It was -35 Degree on the Farenheight thermometer! Later that morning, they phoned over to Gustav Tastad's home to get a message to Peder. Byron had come over to tell him - "She was in the Hospital". Feeling a bit helpless, Peder proceeded to haul out the washing machine and was washing out every piece of fabric he could find, from clothes to blankets!

Ruth gave birth to a beautiful girl at three o'clock that afternoon. The news was again brought over to Peder by one of his siblings. Two days later, Peder borrowed a team of horses and a sleigh from his father, and struck out across country to Davidson. After a short visit, he returned home. They had decided to name the baby girl Kathleen Vahlborg, with both mother and daughter sharing middle names. By the time Ruth was ready to be discharged from the Hospital, it was Christmas Eve. She had ben in bed for ten days as was the custom

of medical practice in those days. She was allowed to get up the day that she went home! How tired and weak she must have felt!

Peder again borrowed the horses and sleigh from Gustav and headed back over to the Hospital. It was cold, but they had lots of warm blankets and clothes. A make-shift crib was formed from a "Jumbo" toilet paper box for the ride home. They stopped off at the Roy French Farm east of Volmers on the way home, to rest the horses. Mrs. French was a nurse, and she had them stay for a delicious turkey dinner!

Now the first child often seems to be the most difficult, as parents get used to being saddled with their new duties, and break themselves from the peace and quiet of no children. Kathleen, however, broke her parents in with a passion. There are rumours that she cried and slept for the first year of her life. Peder remembers her first day in church - she cried. He was walking her back and forth down in the basement. As soon as she got back in the open sleigh with her parents for the ride back home, she stopped. A little fresh air and some movement did the trick!

Kathleen was baptised at Grandpa Gustav's house by Pastor Rue on _____,

with her Uncle Ed and Marie Aadland as baptismal sponsors.

(Need inf. here from Kathleen's baby book)

CHAPTER TWENTY FOUR

THE ALTON FARM

In 1944, Oscar Alton had contacted Ed Tastad, wondering if he was interested in purchasing his farm. Peder was away at Watrous at the time, having a short holiday with his family. When Peder returned, the two brothers struck a deal to purchase the farm west of Strongfield. The deal was signed on the 31st day of July, 1944. It was originally School Land, that is land which was set aside in each township to pay for the school in that area. Albert Oscar Alton had purchased the land on July 9th, 1923. They were selling out and moving to New Westminster, B.C.

The house was much bigger than what Ruth was used to at Loreburn. They moved all their belongings from Loreburn in the One-Ton-Ford truck. Some items were added from the auction sale that year. Kathleen remembers that she was feeling very sad to have to leave the farm at Loreburn, especially in that it was so far from her Grandma and Grampa. Mr. Alton tried to cheer her up by telling her that she could have the bird house, the dog house, their rat terrier, "Trixie" and "Sparky" the cat! When they finally moved, she

was disappointed to find that the dog house had been mistakenly sold in the auction sale.

The cook stove was purchased, saving the trouble of moving the one from their house. This stove was used for a few years until they purchased a new coal and wood "Renfrew". This Renfrew was used until it was finally sold, and a new electric stove was purchased, when the "power" came in.

Peder also purchased a Holstein cow (\$60) and a gunny sack full of gunny sacks. Later, when they needed a sack to hold a chicken that they had caught, not one sack was in good enough shape to contain the bird!

Ruth was pregnant again. She had been seeing the doctors in Outlook this time, and Peder had taken her there a few days before the baby was born. Murray Sinden was in the Hospital at the time, recovering from some serious burns. In all, he was in the Hospital for nine weeks. Peder took him on his first outing from the Hospital that summer, when he took him downtown for a haircut.

Peder was busy disking around the oat straw piles west of the house when the rain started

and the lightning struck so close to Peder that he could feel it. He headed back to the house before he the rain hit him. When he got into the house, Ed and Muriel Helde were standing there grinning. They had called from Outlook -Ruth had gone to the Hospital to have her child. Peder left shortly thereafter for the Hospital. This was the original two story Outlook Hospital, not the subsequent building that has since been torn down. This building still stands, near the new modern Hospital. That evening, a son Richard Grant was born. He was a bit of a runt with narrow shoulders (just kidding). When the nurse phoned that July 25th, 1945, Mrs Chambers (The lady where Peder was staying) told Peder "Glory be, you've got a son." When Peder got to see her that night, she was holding their son and Ruth's face was just "beaming". She thought that it was just the best work that she had ever done. To have a girl, and then to have a son - well it just couldn't get better than that. Well, little did she know -it could get better! Peder took five year old Kathleen with him to pick up the mother and new baby. First they stopped and picked up a carriage at the store downtown. They had purchased a small bed from Dorothy Kerney (Kathleen or Dick?) Or was this the original crib that had been used for Byron as a child?

Three years later, in the spring of 1948, Ruth was again to give birth. Peder had taken her to Outlook for the birth, but a couple of days later, the Hospital called Peder telling him that he should take his wife home again. She just wasn't ready to have her baby. The call came late in the evening, but Peder got in the car and headed up to Outlook. As he and Ruth were leaving the Hospital, Miss Thauberger told them "If you come back to-night I'm going to shoot you!" They got home that evening around 10 PM that evening. When they got into the porch, she noticed that the eggs hadn't been washed for several days. (They sold eggs to the neighbours and to the wholesalers at that time) "Well I know what I will be doing to-morrow!" she said.

Well, she didn't quite make it to the next morning. She woke around two o'clock the next morning and told Peder that she had to go back to the Hospital. When they got back to the Hospital Ruth went ahead and told the nurse, "Don't shoot!" Peder went back outside and fell asleep in brother Ed's coupe car that they had borrowed. He was awakened a bit later by what seemed like a baby crying for all it was worth. He got out of the car only to discover that it was a couple of cats on the fence! The mosquitoes were eating him up in the

car, so around six in the morning, he told the nursing staff that he was going home. He and Ed were still not finished their seeding that spring. On the way home, it started to rain. Driving home, he got to the hill by Ezra Homlunds, and found that it was too slippery to get up the other side. He had to back down and drive on the prairie grass by the side of the road. By the time he reached the farm, the Hospital had called to announce that Garth Peter had been born. Another son for Peder and Ruth on that May 19th, 1948 morning. It was too wet to seed, so they spent the morning changing oil and servicing the tractors. Normally, the mothers were kept in the Hospital for at least ten days. Ruth was tossed out a few days earlier, because the hospital beds were all full, and her sister-in-law, Eunice Tastad needed a bed so that she could give birth to her baby.

That first night out of the hospital, Ruth and baby Garth stayed at the home of Reverend & Mrs. George Evanson in Outlook. Norman, Eunice's husband, took Ruth and baby Garth home from the hospital a day later.

Of the family, Ruth was to later write "The children have been so good to us. We are so proud of them and so thankful to God for each one of

them and pray that they will learn to love the Lord and do His will.

The relatives in Sweden did not forget their Canadian nephews and nieces. On July 25th, 1967, Aunt Klara's estate was settled with each of the Canadian cousins (6) receiving \$195.01

APPENDIX - HIRED MEN & EQUIPMENT

Some of the men that worked those years for Ed and Peder were:

- 1941 Bob Green* - 8 Days
- Jack Hayes - 5 Days
- Walter Tastad - 11 Days
- *Bob was killed in the war. Green Lake was named after him.

- 1942- Leonard Sogee, Loreburn - 14 Days
- Leonard Anderson Strongfield - 8 Days
- Alvin Amrud Strongfield - 13 Days

- 1943- Harold Bjelke Sylvan Lake Alta. - 7 Months

- 1944- Fred Smith Lydiatt, Man. - 7 Weeks
- E.W. Willoughby Smith Falls - 6 Weeks
- O. Meier Loreburn - 7 Months
- George Tastad R.C.A.F. - 2 Months
- Pete Scheibel Vancouver - 2 Weeks
- Thresher & Teams Local - 1 Day

Pete Scheibel had a bit of trouble with swearing. Finally Peder took him aside and asked him if he would kindly not swear in front of his wife and children. He replied, "Hell no, I'll never swear in front of them again!"

- 1945- Olaf Meier Strongfield - 5 Months
- 1946- Odin Storebo Strongfield - 4 Months
- Hans Storebo Strongfield - 4 Days
- 1947- Odin Storebo Strongfield - 4 Months
- Raymond Johnson, Hanley - 15 Days
- Lloyd Anderson Strongfield - 17 Days
- A. Amrud Strongfield - 5 Days

- 1948- Mickey Stone Strongfield - 3 Months
- Rudolf Tjosvold Strongfield - 1 Month
- Ian Frazer - 1 Month
- Mickey Stone stayed at our house when he

worked there and went to school. He used to drive the kids to school in the old "Chandler" car.

- 1949- Ted Hays Loreburn - 5 Days
- Mandius Akre Strongfield - 4 Months
- Ole Aadland Strongfield - 2 Weeks
- 1950- Fred Morris Strongfield - 19 Days
- Mandius Akre Strongfield - 36 Days
- Ted Haugan Strongfield - 5 Months

Ted Haugan was a special friend of the family. He loved to tease Ruth, and she enjoyed having him around. I remember two stories about Teddy; First he used to tease Ruth about serving

up old boiled eggs. He would take a knife and crack the top portion of the egg. Holding the egg in his two hands, he would peel back the top slowly saying in a high pitched voice "Peep, peep!" The other story is about when Ruth found a sealer jar of plumbs far back in the lower cupboards one day. When she opened it in front of Teddy, she discovered it had fermented. From then on, he used to tease her about keeping her own little bottle of wine in the cupboard!

- 1951- Olaf Meier Strongfield - 5 1/2 Months
- George Francis - 7 1/2 Months
- Mandius Akre Strongfield - 6 Days

- 1952- Melvin Hetland Prince Rupert-11/2 Months
- George Francis Strongfield - 9 Months
- Mandius Akre Strongfield - 10 Days
- Garry Stone Strongfield - 10 Days

When I was only 4 years old, I would absolutely drive George Francis crazy with all my questions. He was one of my favorite men that worked at our house.

- 1953- Gary Stone Strongfield - 26 Days
- W. Dudgeon Erlton, Ont. - 18 Days
- J. Gillet Erlton, Ont. - 9 Days

- 1954- Orin Sather Strongfield - 3 Days
- Mandius Akre Strongfield - 4 Days
- Olaf Rostad Southey - 1 Week
- George Francis Strongfield -21/2 Mos
- Paul Greggerson Strongfield -21/2 Mos

- 1955- W. Hutchinson Markdale, Ont - 1 Month
- Gary Stone Strongfield - 12 Days
- Eldon Stone Strongfield - 6 Days
- Chas. Miller - 6 Days
- Paul Greggerson Strongfield - 20 Days

- 1956- Mandius Akre Strongfield -21/2 Mos
- J. Nygaard - 10 Days

- 1957- Mandius Akre Strongfield - 40 Days

- 1958- Leonard Butcher - 8 Days
- Merrill Olson Hawarden - 1 Month
- Gordon Olson Hawarden - 1 Month
- Mandius Akre Strongfield - 1 Week

1959- None

1960- None

Equipment Purchases

1936 Disc Tiller (One-Way) incl. below

1936 John Deere "D" Tractor \$2029.75

1939 Minniapolis G-3
12 foot Combine \$1580.00

1939 John Deere AR TTractor
\$1163.00

1942 16 foot Combine
\$ 300.00

Minneapolis Moline (Ector)

1943 3 Ton Truck
\$1350.00
Purchased from J.E. Johnson
Contractor, Elbow, Sask.

1943 Grain Loader
\$ 150.00

1943 Feed Grinder
\$ 75.00

1944 5K Cream Separator
\$ 90.00
Renfren Model #450 Serial
#346102

Purchased from W.E. Steffensen on July
20th, 1944, Hawarden.

1945 Swather
\$ 400.00

1945 Lighting Plant
\$ 600.00

1947 One-Way
\$ 580.00

1947 Plow
\$ 540.00

1947 Combine
\$3872.00

1947 Tractor
\$1350.00

1948 Swather
\$ 629.00

1948 1/2 Ton Truck

\$ 204.32

1948 Car

\$ 900.00

1949 Car

\$ 200.00

1949 Tractor Model "GTB"

\$1800.00

1949 Cultivator

\$ 400.00

1950 Tractor

\$3300.00

1951 Discer

\$1292.00

Purchased From Norrish &

Snustead May 23rd, 1951

1951 Truck, Box & Hoist

\$4811.30

Purchased from Reid Motors, Outlook
Saskatchewan. The 1939 Chev truck was used as
trade-in.

1952 Loader

\$ 450.00

1952 Packers

\$ 420.00

1953 One-Way

\$ 790.00

1953 Self Propelled Combine
& Pick-up

\$6430.00

1953 Tractor M-M Model UTS

\$2760.00

Serial #01211023

1953 Noble Drill

\$ 880.00

1954 Discer & Packers

\$1240.00

1954 Tractor Hydraulics &
Wheel Weights \$

290.00

1955 Noble Press Drill

\$ 500.00

1955 Truck

\$ 100.00

1955 Self Propelled Swather

\$1850.00

1956 Tractor

\$1956.00

1957 Tractor \$

480.00

1957 Discer & Packers

\$1100.00

1958 Harrow Weeder \$

200.00

1958 Feed Roller

\$ 370.00

1958 Grain Elevator

\$ 450.00

1958 Baler MM

\$1398.00

1959 1959 Volkswagen

\$1807.65

1959 Water Tank

\$ 125.00

1959 Tractor 1958 M-M GBD Diesel

\$4800.00

Serial #09001887 15x34 tires

Purchased from Farmer's Supply

Watrous, Sask. (Stokke)

Trading in one M-M 1949 GTB +

\$2800.00

1960 Side Delivery Rake

\$ 100.00

1960 Self Propelled Combine

\$3000.00

1961

Hydraulic for Swather

\$

100.00