

## Witte Family Account by Earl F. Witte

Dad came from South East Nebraska (I think around Friend) *(note by Thomas: Herman was born and raised near Kramer, Nebraska in Lancaster County. By 1920 census, he is married and living in Turkey Creek Precinct in Saline County, which is a short distance south of Friend).* His Dad and Family came from Illinois. I think from near Chicago. *(note by Thomas: Herman's Dad Ferdinand and Grandparents Frederick/Doretta arrived in the US on 14 May 1866 and they were in the Nebraska state census and the Nebraska Federal Census of 1870 in Lancaster County. Already in 1870 they had \$1200 in land. So their stay in Illinois was less than four years at the most.)* They moved into a German Community. That would have been normal. German, Irish, English, Polish, and Bohemian – all had their own communities. Dad said as a young man, if you really felt tough – go in another community and dance with the girls. Another note – Dad was big, big hands, big feet etc. – mom said he was a very good dancer, better than she. The German community that his Dad moved to spoke German – the school teacher spoke German in school. Dad went to school part of (1<sup>st</sup> grade) and his parents didn't make him go any more. He didn't speak German at all. Mom said she taught him how to read and to sign his name. When he signed his name it was almost as though he were drawing it. It looked the same every time. I don't ever remember him writing anything else but he was an avid reader.



Dad, I think, met mom when she was a secretary at the Land of Lakes creamery in Friend. She was from Crete, NE. A creamery was a business that collected milk, cream and eggs from the farmers in the neighborhood and made butter, bottled milk, some made cheese, later ice cream and sold eggs.

Dad evidently did well with his farming. He didn't farm with his dad. He had acquired land, fed cattle. I have no idea how he was financially when he and mom married but there was 5 kids by the time he came to South Dakota. All the farming was done with horses. I have no idea how he did that. He didn't work with animals at all well. He had a quick temper and didn't control it well at all. One of dad's brothers-in-law needed to borrow money and dad co-signed a loan. (mom's sister's husband.) He defaulted, dad lost his farm. They intended to go to Montana. The Gallatin River comes out of the mountains west of the Yellowstone. They farm there – mostly wheat. Their car broke down some where close to or on the Pine Ridge Reservation. They found some land to rent and to farm and stayed. Mom and dad were both so angry, frustrated, probably traumatized at losing their farm that they decided they couldn't stay there anymore. "They decided they would go far enough away it would take

a month for a letter to go back” Mom’s comment. Dad had sold his teams of horses and machinery so in South Dakota he bought tractors. So far as I know, they never owned a team again. A team of horses sold for enough money to buy a tractor. I was born the year after they came. 1929 – Depression.

To begin with the kids – Dale, Glen, La Verne and Phyllis went to school in Rapid City. Phyllis says she can remember walking to school in winter with card board to cover the holes in her shoes – probably not uncommon – about 7 blocks I think. I vaguely remember Pete being born – probably at home. I was sent outside to play – the others must have been in school. There were other women around. That’s all.

For a while after that they must have gone to school on the Reservation. I remember living in the log house on Grass Creek. It sat on a high (75-80 foot) bank that the river ran against in a long curve. The river moved away from that bank at the house to flow across the river bottom. There was a crossing there for livestock. It was spring and the ice was in the process of breaking up. The ice would break loose upstream and hit a frozen spot, make a dam and the water would carry blocks of ice as big as a car about 18-24 inches thick out into the area next to the main canal – about 60 – 80 feet. When the water got under the ice it would lift and go downstream until it made another dam. The kids had crossed the river on the ice on their way to school but even with the water about 3 feet deep the horses could come across – Dale and La Verne on one, Glen and Phyllis on the other. I don’t know how many years they did that, maybe only one, but I had to have been 4 – mom had Pet in her arms. Dad talked about going to Pierre to get the state to pay tuition to go to school in Nebraska. I don’t know how they managed in that log house. 12 x 24 maybe. Phyllis can remember dirt floors, I remember cement. One room - 7 kids, that’s when things changed. 2 reasons - #1. 5 kids in school. I don’t know when Dorothy started to school. I went to 1<sup>st</sup> grade in Rushville, NE. (note: later Dad remembered he went to 1<sup>st</sup> grade in Rapid City, SD). In 2<sup>nd</sup> grade we were in Chadron (W Ward). 3<sup>rd</sup> grade I went to the Academy. The other kids went to public school. I don’t know why. #2. My uncle Gust – we kids called him Gus but I suppose his name was Gustolf (*actually Gustav according to census records*). He was a bachelor, one leg was shorter than the other – he wore a shoe that had about a 2 inch sole on it. That helped I suppose but he still limped – maybe the shoe was heavy enough that he had to sort of swing it. I don’t know why but his brothers and sisters in Nebraska bought him a new car and sent him out to dad. That probably didn’t help the living conditions in that log house. Mom stayed in town most of the time then. Pete wasn’t in school yet either.



I thought of something else about that house on Grass Creek – Flies. In the summer, especially if there was extra cooking going on. All cooking was done on the wood range. There was a window on the west end. I think one on the east end where the cooking was done and the door. Those three places were the only ones to get air into the house. The windows had screens. The door had a screen door but everyone was in and out. Butchering was busy – the only way to keep meat was to cook it and much of it to be canned. One day a week was for baking bread. Big loaf pans that held 3 loaves. 4-6 pans. Flies accumulated in the house. Did you know you can drive flies? All of us kids each had a flour sack dish drying cloth. We'd start on the west end flapping those towels standing close together. The flies would move away from us. They would get thicker as we moved toward the propped open door and a lot of them would go out. We'd repeat the process about three times but someone would need to wave their towels to scare those outside away from the door so they wouldn't come back in and open the screen door when we were getting close. It made it tolerable for a while. Now even one fly is too many in the house. I had forgotten all about that.

When I was little, 5 years old?, snakes terrified me. If I saw one I'd just stand and scream. One day I was in the yard building fences out of sticks and the white string that tied almost all packages. I drove my posts with a hammer. All at once I saw a snake really close to me. I was ready to jump up to do my thing and then realized that the snake was only about 6 inches long. I don't know yet what kind of snake it was but by the time my hammer was done, he was no danger to anyone. It was light colored with grey markings so I suppose it was a baby rattler but it did a lot to cure my fear of snakes. (This probably should be back close to my watching the kids cross the river).

When we lived on Grass Creek Dad had hogs. He did have some pens that held them if he needed them there but mostly they ran loose. The only time he really wanted them penned was right at planting time for corn. There was a field on the river bottom that he planted for corn. After the corn was up and growing they wouldn't root it up to eat the seeds. After that they roamed up and down the river for a couple of miles. They foraged for themselves. There wasn't many Indians living close and if the hogs came around they just ran them away. I don't think they even considered eating one. I don't think they ate pork. Dad had hogs on Cuny Table too. When there were farmers up there the hogs were pretty well confined. Afterwards they roamed free. One time coming home we needed to open a gate in the middle of Cuny Table and there were 3-4 hogs out there 5-6 miles from home. Hogs have sort of a shuffling trot that covers a lot of ground if they want to get somewhere. I expect they needed to get home for water.

Something else dad told me was that at one time he considered being a professional baseball player. He had offers – no big leagues yet – but the pay wasn't much. He was a catcher. He was built right, he could have been good. Don't know if it was before or after he met mom. My guess - before.

It was about the time that I went to the Academy that Dale lost the fingers on his left hand. He must have just been out of high school that year or the next. He was working on a combine with the machine running, something jarred the machine, Dale lost his balance and put out his hand to catch himself and the chain cut the fingers off going over the sprocket. He went to Rapid City to the doctor – I don't remember seeing it bandaged.

I didn't know until after Dale died that he wanted to be a priest. Glen's wife Jane said she had asked him if he had ever wanted to be something other than a farmer or rancher and that is what he said. That

really surprised me. That also makes sense out of something dad said the day I was ordained a deacon. We were standing next to each other watching some pictures being taken and he said, "Well this is number 2." At the time I had no idea what that meant and I didn't talk to him enough to find out. Maybe having only 2 fingers on one hand might have been enough to keep him from that or else that dad needed him so bad as a mechanic on the machinery that he didn't try. Glen would never have stayed to work with dad.

Dad farmed on Grass Creek until about 1940. He had always wanted to be able to buy or even rent some land on Cuny Table. Agriculture hadn't recovered from the depression yet. He got credit mostly from a letter of recommendation from a banker he had borrowed from in Nebraska. The fact that he had lost his farm through no fault of his own and had paid the debt of another was as good a demonstration of his worth and honesty as he knew of. He bought the land. He got one crop off of the land and the US government bought the gunnery range.

I can remember discussions about what to do. I don't know how they came to the conclusion that they could stay and run cows on that land. Everyone else moved away but they were farmers. They talked about what breed of cattle, horned or not? Herefords only bulls with horns. They just moved the house to a rented piece of ground. There had been a well on the place they had bought – this place had a little spring with not much water. They carried water again.



Uncle Gus was gone before the move to Cuny Table. Mom said his family expected that the new car had bought him a place to stay and retire. Not to be.

Clarification of school sequence – When Dad and Mom came to S.D., Dale and Glen had to have been in school – Dale probably thru 4<sup>th</sup> grade; Glen thru 2<sup>nd</sup>. Phyllis thinks Mom taught them for a couple of years, then Rushville, Nebraska for 2 years, 2 years in Rapid City, then to Chadron, Nebraska. My first year in school was the last year spent in Rapid City, I didn't go to school in Rushville.

Phyllis said that she didn't go to school the day the ice went out. She watched the other three come across the river too. I don't remember either her or Dorothy being there but I suppose they were.

I also remember Mom saying Phyllis could play Rummy when she was 4 years old. Card game. Everyone dealt seven cards. Object was to lay down all your cards. Lay down 3 of a kind, 3-4s i.e., run of at least 3 (6-7-8 same suit). After deal the deck was put in the middle with a card face up. Person on left of dealer could take that card or draw off the deck, keep it or discard it or one from main hand. She knew the numbers, the sequences, etc.

The only thing I remember about my second year in school was that we were playing marbles at recess. A couple of fourth graders came over and asked if they could play. I didn't care so we played. I think they thought they were going to take all our marbles, but they didn't take mine. One of the biggest kids won some but so did I. Then my teacher came over and told the big kids that they couldn't play with us. Her name was Miss Curry. Don't know where that came from but that was her name. I don't remember 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade at all. My next memory was when I broke my arm. Don't know who was in the game, but we were playing some kind of tag game. I was standing on the front porch of our house. No rail on it. Only about 24-30 inches off the ground. Someone came to chase me and I took a step to start running only the porch wasn't there. I fell on my arm across the edge of a narrow sidewalk that ran to the back of the house. Dad and Mom were both out in the country but they did for some reason come to town the next day. The doc said it was not too serious (green stick break). The other kids didn't know what to do. It was probably summer – Dale and Glen were out in the country and La Verne would have been 13. I was 7.

Another note about marbles. We played marbles in the fall and spring. Glen taught me how to play. I practiced a lot. The kids in the neighborhood played in our back yard. Later in the spring Mom hired a man with a horse to plow up the back yard for a garden. Our marble spot was so packed his horse could barely pull the one bottom plow thru it.

I don't know if I went to school at "West Ward" public school for 2 years. I do know we lived on Lake Street after I started at the "Academy." At noon I ran those 8-10 blocks to eat and then ran back. That was true until I met my friend Jim Quinn. He had a bike and he would let me ride on the back going most of the way home. It was mostly down hill but he was really good to have done that. I ran back. We spent a lot of time together after school and on weekends. He had pigeons - the kind that live wild around most towns. It got to the point that I had some too. His dad got a part Shetland pony (bay mare) that would pull a cart or a sleigh. When the cart broke down, occasionally he would hitch her to the sleigh if there was snow. A time or two he attached some roller skates to the runners, when there was no snow.

Dale, Glen, La Verne and Phyllis went to public school. I'm not sure about Dorothy. In school about the only thing I remember was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade there was a young nun teaching her first year. I don't know that we were particularly bad but she had a really hard time with us 4 boys. We set in a row and if one of us did something wrong, she got out her ruler, we held out our hand and she hit us. It didn't hurt but

she was a nervous wreck by the end of the year. Even then I felt sorry for her. The next year we had a different, older nun. She kept better discipline and was a really good teacher. She taught 6, 7 and 8<sup>th</sup> grades so I had her for those years. In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade years, I stayed after school and with another kid cleaned the classroom. Friday's we cleaned and polished the whole room. That probably helped pay my tuition. I learned to be an altar boy then too. There was an older priest who celebrated mass at the church every day. The younger one celebrated mass at the school for the nuns. I liked serving mass with the older priest (Fr. Dolon) and did most days during the school year. I had the impression that the younger (Fr. Miles) didn't like to be in Chadron. Those days if a priest was assigned to a parish, he probably would be there until he retired (rarely) or died.

The ninth year in school I went to public school. I started two weeks late. Something must have needed to get done at the farm. We lived on Cuny Table then. Fall 1941.

I don't know when Dad started dealing with the people at the Air Base. We didn't move the house until they realized we were still there. The year after it became a gunnery range, they used it pretty hard. Dad had cut and stacked hay on some land and didn't move the hay. That made ideal strafing targets. It all burned. They limed out ship outlines to drop bombs on. The bombs were not big (100lbs?) and only had about a quart of black powder in them so they could see where they hit. The main body was filled with dirt. Some of the bombs didn't explode so if Dale found one, he would take the tail piece most of the time it broke free from the rest of the bomb, and take out the powder. I know he had a 5 gallon bucket full of it. He stopped doing that when one blew up while he was working on it. He was very fortunate that it only burned his hand a little. I have no idea where that bucket went.

When everyone moved off the gunnery range, it was summer. The Air Force bought the crops in the fields. The next year there was a good stand of volunteer wheat. Dad got his combine working and we harvested some of that wheat. I must have been about 13 then but I drove the tractor while Dad rode the combine. I tried to dodge the holes left by the bombs. The wheels on the tractor were standard width, the front wheels on the combine were narrower (3 feet??), the rear wheels on the combine were wide. One followed the tractor wheels, the other was off to the left where the main part of the combine was. Sometimes one of these wheels would drop in a bomb hole, not big 18-24" by 12" deep, it sure shook the combine though. Dad was lucky it didn't throw him off.

The only building they did move off the land was a big grainery. It had 3 bins on each side with a drive-in alley between. Dad didn't sell his grain, he harvested it and hauled it to a place on the west end of Cuny Table where Lawrence and Sadie Cuny let some of the farmers put things temporarily. The next Christmas vacation from school Dale and I emptied that grainery. We hauled 3 loads of grain every day to Chadron. We were there when it opened at 7am, back at 1pm and again at 7pm. He would come back to work to let us unload. The truck only held about 200 bushels of wheat. I used a smaller scoop than Dale but we could fill the truck without stopping to rest. The scoops were steel then, not aluminum.

After Dad had reached some kind of agreement with the Air Force about leasing the land, there were other ranchers who wanted some of it too. Most of the gunnery range on the west end (our end) was north of Cuny Table, a rough badland area. The east half of Cuny Table was involved. The Witte's used that part on Cuny Table. When the area north (the badlands part) became available, a rancher west of us on the Table wanted some of that range. A rancher north of the gunnery range wanted a big pasture north of our end on the Table but didn't have the cattle to fill it. It was assigned a carrying capacity of 1500 head of cattle for six months. A cow and a calf were counted as 1 unit. Witte's would lose some

range on Cuny Table but would gain more carry capacity in the badlands. Each rancher could bring 700 head of cattle. Land area was more than 27000 acres – more than 42 square miles. It worked well. The rancher north usually took his cows home a little earlier than we did, about a week, and the cattle mostly separated themselves. They knew where winter range was. Ours came south his went north we only had to sort a small percentage that hadn't done what came naturally. We helped with their roundup and then we only had to gather what was left. The Witte cattle did need to increase though.



Many other things were happening then too. My brother Glen died when he tried to land his Navy plane in a pasture in New Jersey (Note from Thomas: Glen's Death certificate specifies the place of death as Montross, VA and that he died on 17 February 1944. Perhaps the base he was assigned to was in Montross, VA.). He and a few others went up to fly and a fog closed in. That pasture seemed to be the only place that was clear enough to land. The ground was soft enough that he nosed over and died in the wreck. (No one in our family had ever even been seriously ill. It was hard time.) He had always been my ideal. The war had started and he was to go to the south Pacific on an aircraft carrier. He was in for a promotion but hoped he wouldn't get it because there were only so many of each rank that could go.

There were times on the Reservation that individuals or families could get a patent on their land. Indians were allotted land on a reservation similar to a homestead only they didn't have a clear deed. The tribe, with the approval of the U. S. government, could or would give them a patent or clear deed to their land to do with as they wanted. Dad and Dale managed to buy in scattered pieces about 3000 acres along White River east of Cuny Table. That became the area where they raised sheep.

Another lease became available on the Northwest corner of the gunnery range. It wasn't as big as the other leases, ± 5000 acres, but the north boundary was the Cheyenne River. There was more grass and

less bare ground. It was used for winter range for cows. It would allow them to keep cows there until almost calving time and then take them to Cuny Table where they might get better care.

This herd expansion also required more help. Dad was not a cowboy. I didn't ever see him on a horse. Dale rode but he didn't enjoy it. The help was mostly local men. They were all Indians if you asked them but some of them were down to 1/16 Indian blood. They were good men and excellent cowboys and could and did anything and everything that needed to be done. Working with the sheep was the only exception. They would help if the need arose for a day or two but that was as far as they would go.

There were new pastures rented on the Reservation too. One was on the west edge east of the Smithwick, SD community. Less than 20 people lived there but they had a stock yard at the railroad that ran between Rapid City, SD and Chadron, NE. Our steer calves were held until they were 2 years old. That pasture was where we held them until they were sold. They were taken there as yearlings after wintering on the Table, sold 18 months later as 2 year olds weighing 900-1050 lbs. The buyers would feed them corn etc for 100-120 days and would grade out as high good-choice beef. At that time prime beef was best. Now, because of the fat content, no beef is fed to that grade, they're butchered at choice. Rarely are steers raised on grass for 2 years. Now the quality of cattle is better. Some go in the feed lot as spring yearlings weighing  $\pm 700$  lbs. They gain  $\pm 2 \frac{3}{4}$  lbs daily and sold 120-150 days later. I digress!! Our steers were to go to Sioux City, Iowa to be sold. They decided to trail them to Smithwick, load them in RR cars and send them that way. It's about 18 miles from our pasture to Smithwick. That's not a long walk and we could take our time so the steers wouldn't lose much weight. I was one of the cowboys and can't remember who the other two were. There was about 100 steers. We started about daylight and got to Smithwick shortly after noon. We had stopped outside of town near a dam so they could rest, water and graze. We ate a lunch (Mom and Dad traveled with us in a car) and then corralled the steers. When that was done Mom asked me if I would like to see how far they had gotten building Angustora Dam. We drove to a high overlook. It was really impressive. Cables strung across to carry concrete in large buckets, and a busy place. We watched a while and went to Hot Springs (more lunch – then back).

The way we heard it was that the steers were quiet in the corrals. Some hay had been brought and scattered for them to browse on. A train came by. Since there were cattle there they didn't hurry but the steers did get nervous and were all standing up and moving around. When the engine was even with the pen someone released a jet of steam that shot out towards the corral and then they blew the whistle. The corral fence didn't even slow the steers down. They ran. The cowboys had to saddle up but they wouldn't have been able to stop those steers anyway. They ran a good mile before they could be stopped. With the help of some local men and more to get some of the corrals standing up again they were back in the corral by the time we got back. I've never seen Dad so mad. He didn't even swear, hardly even talk but you could tell he was about to explode. We loaded the 4 cars of steers. Dad said he tried for months to find out who was on that train but no one would tell. He was friends with many of them but no one would admit to knowing who ran that train.

Another lease was in the southwest corner of the Reservation. Nebraska was on the south, Fall River County, SD was west. We didn't know it at the time but there is an element called selenium in the soil there that is absorbed by the plants that grow there, grass included. The problem is that if it's eaten by a susceptible animal, horses or cattle and not all are. It will cause a break in the growth of their hooves. With cattle it seems to harden the hooves so they don't wear normally. Their toes grow long rather than wear off as is normal. It requires trimmings or the cattle became crippled. With horses there is a break in the growth of the hoof. As it grows out, it's like a fingernail, the break comes down the hoof.



As it nears the bottom the outside of the hoof won't support the weight of the horse. The horse has a hard time getting around. A horse doesn't walk on the inside of his feet, just on the outside of his hoof. It takes about 6 months for that hoof to grow out, about 6 weeks – 2 months for that last inch. After that the horse seems to be as good as ever. After we knew what the problem was, we tried to be careful when we brought horses down there. They did get immune to it if they stayed. I brought a horse down, used him a day, fed him hay over night, left the next morning. There was enough selenium in the hay he lost his hooves.

When I was to enter High School, Mom decided that I should go to the public school. That really didn't matter to me. I didn't get to make many decisions in my life. I do know that I started 2 weeks late. I have no idea what needed to be done that required my help. I know that I went out for football. Dale and Glen both played and were good at it. I was expected to play too. It seems to me that freshmen mostly stood around and watched the rest practice. We got in on the laps and calisthenics but most of us didn't even have all of the uniform. By the third week I had stopped going to practice. I don't know of any freshmen who stayed. Like most schools then, this one only had one coach. He taught at least one subject and coached three sports – football, basketball and track – no assistants.

Me – I've always known this but I grew up as a loner. Jim Quinn has been my friend since the early grades. We spent a lot of time together. It seemed to me though that I stood at the edge of any group where I was involved. I liked to read – mostly westerns, (Zane Grey) I called them "killum quicks" if someone didn't get shot in the first 2 or 3 pages it was slow. I would check 3 or 4 out of the library and have them read by the end of the week. I got good grades in school. The superintendent had a policy that if a student's grades were 90 or above, they didn't have to take the semester exams. I took 3 exams in my 4 years - 1<sup>st</sup> semester freshman history, typing both semesters sophomore. They gave me passing grades in typing for effort I think. Math and Science were easy. Got away in Spanish because I think she liked me. I got along with everyone but as now I really hated confrontation. Maybe that's why I was class president my junior and senior years. I think Dorothy and Pete were a bit like that too.

Uncle Gus was gone or he stayed in town with us kids. La Verne said that Uncle Gus had asked the folks if he could marry her – that he had tried to catch her when she was alone in the house. That was probably why he went back to Southeast Nebraska. I wasn't aware of that at all. Uncle Gus almost always sat in a chair by the door going into the kitchen from the dining room. The telephone hung on the wall behind him. Just inside the kitchen there was a little hallway with a linen closet in it and on to the bathroom and a couple bedrooms and another door back into the dining room. La Verne used that route so she wouldn't need to go past Uncle Gus even if we were there. This had to have happened about the time she was a freshman or sophomore in college. Uncle Gus was older than Dad I think. (Note from Thomas: Uncle Gus was born in 1881 and Grandpa was born in 1893. He would have been about 60 at this incident.)

Dorothy told me once that she thought I had abandoned her. Dale and Glen were buddies, LaVerne and Phyllis were buddies, Pete and I could play together but she was all by herself. Pete suffered through the same thing. Mom spent a lot of time in town until LaVerne started college. Pete would have been in about the 5th grade. When Uncle Gus was in town, mom went to the country. Pete liked sports and that really helped him. I don't know how he got along but thinking about it now, dad and mom both lived in town then. It had to be when he was in the eighth grade that he ran away from home. He and another kid his age ran away – it had to have been September because they hitch hiked to the potato fields north of Alliance Nebraska and picked potatoes for 2 days. I got home from school and they were in the house finding something to eat. They started to run but I yelled at Pete and he stopped. I had the

impression that he really wanted to stop. This running away wasn't such a good idea. This happened before dad and mom moved to town. This might have had something to do with it. I do think that three of us were "negatively affected" by mom being gone a good part of our early school years. Mom said some years later when we talked about it that we thought she was always in the country and dad thought she was always in town that she had to spend a lot of time between the two. It had to have been hard on her too. I can imagine that it was always a case of catch up. She went to one place and had to do all the things that had been neglected while she had been gone and then went to the other place and did the same thing. She did her best at trying to hold the family together.

Dale accepted his lot as the oldest son. Glen hated the country. I don't know what he would have done if he had not joined the Navy – probably taught school (subject?) so he could coach sports. Phyllis seemed adaptable. I doubt if she would have been a teacher – she was smart, learned quickly, if she had not married Tom McDill she still would have done well. Dorothy wasn't as outgoing as her sisters. She married before she graduated from college to a man that didn't appreciate her for who she was. She wasn't as driven as much as he was. I probably would have been a math teacher if I had completed my college courses rather than went back to the ranch. My prospective students were lucky. I can't imagine Pete doing anything other than ranching. He was good at it. He worked well with horses – he could do much more with his than I could with mine except maybe cut cows. He was a better judge of cattle than I was, smarter at business too.

When I went back to the ranch before the first semester ended of my freshman year, I lived on Cuny Table, most of the time. When there were cattle to take care of I did that which was most of the time. I did spend some time helping with the hay down on the White River. Dale had bought a baler that put out small round bails – approximately 16" in diameter and 40" long. He could windrow and bale but needed help picking them up. He would bale for a few days and then me and the cowboys would need to come down to pick them up, load them in the truck and haul them to where they were to be stacked. It didn't take long to learn that it was a good idea to kick each bale before it was picked up. Not often but once in a while there would be a rattle snake laying in the shade of the bale. Once there was a raccoon. As soon as it started to run someone yelled "Let's catch it." The race was on. One of us would get close but then didn't know what to do next so we would slow down. Someone else would catch up and do the same. We just got tired running and stopped and laughed at ourselves. It was a break from a hot and boring job. We would be glad to get the job over so we could go back to being cowboys. We didn't even get to feed the hay it was feed for the sheep.

In the process of hiring some of the local young men to help with the cattle, we, Pete and I, became acquainted with more of them. At one celebration at Rockyford post office and store, there was some kind of party going on. One of the friend's families had made some beer. It really wasn't mature enough but they decided the "time" had come to drink it. I know we didn't drink much of it but the next morning Pet and I really felt bad. We were in the process of building fence around a little piece of ground in the badlands. We went out and dug post holes in the hard ground with the sun reflecting off the white ground and lasted until noon. The sweating was probably good for us but we didn't work in the PM but felt alright the next day. No more green beer.

We had a number of young men hired as help that were locals. All were good hands. They usually moved off the reservation to find better paying jobs but remained friends.

One, who no longer worked for us, was found dead on a neighbor's ranch. He was sitting against a wheel of his pickup with his rope uncoiled nearby. His horse saddled was some distance away but that

would be normal (less than a mile). No autopsy was done but there was no sign of violence. He was a really good young man. We could be working in really difficult weather, cold, hot, snow or rain, and he always was eager to help, good humored and able. The harder it became, the better he became.

Dale brought us one that LaVerne had sent up from New Mexico. He wanted to work on a ranch. He was legally blind. Dale had him help with the sheep for a time and then brought him up to us. He had no experience with horses but he was willing so we put him on a gentle horse to help us gather some cattle. After we had bunched some of them, I saw a few less than a quarter of a mile away. I told him to go get them and to bring them back to the herd. He couldn't see the cows. I asked him how far he could see and he said a little more than a hundred yards. Did he want to see if he could get the cows? Yes ride that way, they should show up soon. When you come back the sun should be on your right. He did all right but when I saw Dale I told him I was afraid to let him out of my sight. The country was too big, too easy to get lost in by a city kid with good sight. Dale sent him back to New Mexico.

Not long after I left school Dale sent out a young man from Chadron. He had no dad, no idea what he wanted to do with his life but was willing to work. He had a speech defect – he stuttered. He must have stayed about a year. It was fall when he came and we spent the winter together feeding the cattle on Cuny Table. Sometimes he helped Dale with the sheep and haying. I don't know how he managed but he found a way to go to Michigan State in Ann Arbor and became a lawyer. When I saw him some years later that defect was gone. He had gotten help and found a way to control it. He became a judge in the New Mexico state court system.

Bert and I made a trip to New Mexico to see LaVerne. She took us to Santa Fe to see him. Bert and I are sort of bird watchers and noticed some colorful birds outside one of his windows. When we asked him what they were he stated that they were sparrows. There were two kinds in New Mexico. If they were brown or grey, they were American. If they were colorful, they were Mexican. These birds were painted buntings, very colorful.

When I first took charge of the cattle there were cowboys to help. The one that helped most, I think, was Louis Twiss. He didn't always work full time. He had some cattle of his own but a little money coming in helped. He did other things but he shined as a roper. He "rodeoed" at the local shows and did well. When we, and many of the neighboring ranchers branded calves in the late spring, always had Louis as our roper. He would "heel" the calves – rope both hind legs and drag them to the wrestlers – cowboys or the local upper grade school or high school kids that were available.

They turned the calf by the tail so the correct side was up for the brand and one would hold the head down and the front legs for leverage while the other held the top hind leg pulled back and pushed the bottom leg forward with his boot so the calf wouldn't struggle while the branding, dehorning and castration and vaccination and ear-marking took place. All this took place in about one to two minutes. The rope was off as soon as the calf was turned on its side. Heifer calves didn't take as long as the steers. Louis went to rope another calf. He could keep 3 sets of wrestlers busy. Three or four men did the work on the calf. Early days the fire to heat the branding irons was a wood fire. Someone needed to tend that too. Later propane heaters were used.

The Witte's used a mechanical chute when they became available. Some ranchers still do it with the cowboys. It is sort of a social occasion. We had five or six hundred calves to brand and we thought we could take care of our calves better if we did it in smaller bunches.

Back to Louis Twiss. When we moved cattle any place, Louis always had his rope out. He practiced heeling, the cattle usually were just walking. He tried to catch their tail, anything to use his rope. If he caught their heels he only pulled it tight enough to see that they were caught then gave slack so the rope fell off.

In the summer we branded colts. Then he caught their front feet. The horses would be in a corral. As they ran by Louis would throw his rope so that the colt would run into the loop, he would pull it taut and pull their front feet out from under them. When they fell, our job was to be on their head, knee on their neck with the head pointed up. The other cowboy caught a hind leg to keep the header from getting kicked and to hold the colt to be branded.

As yearlings, we caught them the same way to castrate the male colts. As two year olds they were caught and held down so a halter could be put on. The halter was usually a rope tied around his neck and his nose so it wouldn't draw tight but wouldn't come off. That was the beginning of making a saddle horse.

Louis was really good at catching the front feet. It seemed to me that he could flip that rope out and make it stand there while the horse came to run through it. I'm sure the timing was more exact but I was never able to do that. As he became older, as soon as he pulled the rope tight, I would take the rope and pull the horse's feet from under him. That took timing too but I couldn't throw the rope like he did.

Another thought about Louis Twiss. It seemed to me that I was so inexperienced when I came out to the ranch that I was more than a little timid in telling real cowboys what I wanted done. If there was something Louis saw that he thought needed doing, he would bring it up but always as a question.

Another cowboy that I learned a lot from was Fred Wilson. He was old when Dale brought him out from Chadron. He had been a cowboy all his life and had last worked in California looking after the horses of a wealthy lady. His job was to gather strays that might have gotten of our pasture. Bert would fix him a sandwich and he would start early. He wouldn't be home again until 3-6 pm. He talked a lot about his experiences working with cattle and there had been a few changes, mostly technical or mechanical, but men and the cattle were the same.

We had never taken the time to break our own horses to ride. We would take them to some Indian "bronc" rider and have him take the rough edges off them. There were various degrees of success doing that. When we decided to train our own we started them as two year olds as I said earlier. As soon as they were broke to lead, about two days, we took about two more days saddling them and riding them around the corrals and holding pens. This usually took place a few days before we planned on gathering or driving cattle to some other pasture. We weren't all riding these "green" horses but Pete and I usually were. Pete was better at this than I was. He was more aggressive in what he expected his horse to do than I was. If everything was new to the horse, it accepted anything. My horses learned slower because I didn't expose them to enough soon enough. Louis (Twiss) would keep telling me that I could do all kinds of things if I wanted to and eventually I would and usually could. New things were not normal to a horse that thought he knew what was expected. He resisted more.

It seemed to me that I ended up with the horses that the other cowboys saw as one that was going to need some extra time or special care. I ended up with some problem horses but also with some very good ones. Sometimes the problems were my own doing.

Just before my twenty first birthday I was given my draft notice. World War II had been over for three plus years, but the draft was still in place. The Korean conflict had been started and the military needed people to replace those that had gone back to civilian life after WWII. I didn't want to go into the Army even if it would have been for less time so I enlisted in the Air Force – 4 years. As long as I was going I decided to just do what I needed to do and see what I could of the country where ever I was sent. I was sworn in the week between Christmas and New Years in 1950.

I was sent to Lackland AFB in Texas (San Antonio). There was some drill, some KP (I had none) but mostly we set up tents for the recruits that were coming in after New Year. Eight weeks and I was sent to Sheppard AFB in Texas Panhandle area I can't remember the name of the town (Wichita Falls). I saw neither town. There was more drill, classes, we fired a weapon for marksmanship but that's the only time we had a weapon. (Question for Dad from Thomas: Am I wrong or didn't you say that you finished your basic training at Sampson AFB in New York?) Six weeks later I was sent to Hamilton AFB, California (San Rafael), north of San Francisco. I was assigned to a electronics maintenance squadron for a time. I'm sure they just found a place to put us. There were too many people coming in at one time. Their schools were full we needed to make room for those coming after us.

I knew nothing about electronics so I didn't earn my pay there (\$72 monthly). After a time we, many who had come there just like I was were sent to a school (Biloxi, Mississippi). It didn't take long to learn how to track planes on a radar scope. Eight weeks later and I was back in California.

In Texas I never left either Base. We were kept pretty busy. California was really nice. A friend had a car so we saw some country, went to some big name wrestling matches. They were pretty much staged even then. I don't know how they decided who got to win. This happened before I went to radar school. Duty was boring – I didn't know what I was doing. Off duty was good.

When I came back I was assigned to an outfit that calibrated (verified the radar coverage) the radar units up and down the west coast. We didn't see many cities but we did see the scenery and mostly from a high place. It was interesting and fun.

The problem with that job was that we didn't have much to do for a few days before we went to the next site, different friends too. I spent too much time in bars. Wasn't serious but it was a start. I don't know where it would have gone if I hadn't gone to Korea.

The trip to Japan was mostly uneventful if you don't count the storm. The sea was never calm. The waves were high enough that this troop carrier was always going up and down or sideways. To get away from where we bunked (three high) where most of the troops were sick, I spent a lot of time at the prow. The water was a pretty green, aqua marine? The second or third day out we hit the storm. I couldn't go outside anymore. I don't know how high the seas were but it sounded like the propellers came out of the water – maybe only part of the way. There would be an instant when you could tell the screws were running free and then the drop back to the normal sounds. There was about two days of that. The worst part was the sour smell of vomit and not being able to get away from it. After the storm it wasn't calm but I could get back on deck.

We docked at Yokohama but took a train ride a base. I think that's where I say how a three-man shovel worked. The rice fields were all under water. I think it must have just started that part of growing rice. Their fields were small and terraced. They had a wash out. Two men were on the upper bank pulling

and releasing on ropes tied to the neck of the shovel. The other man was down below maneuvering the position with the long handle of the shovel so that the blade dug mud or carried it up to where it was needed. They really worked fast. Everyone who has irrigated knows how that works. Except for a couple of days of R and R in Tokyo that was the limit of my tourist sights. It's hard to be a tourist if you don't know what to see, not many people spoke English and everyone wasn't as friendly as they might be.

I was a radar operator so we flew to a base in Korea. Really small, just a staging area (K-18) to supply this radar station on the top of this mountain. It seemed to me about like the Black Hills only the trees were all leafy trees instead of pine.



Our duty was to keep track of our aircraft flying in our area. Sometimes there would be eight or ten B-29s coming one right after the other. Each would identify itself and keep going to their target. In a couple of hours, sometimes more, they would check back out.

North Korea didn't have an Air Force. The only kind they had was really small planes that would harass the ground troops. Once in a while we would pick one up and we would call it in but they told us to ignore them. Our fighter planes were so fast that those little planes could duck into canyons or valleys and they weren't worth the effort to try to get them.

Sometimes a catholic chaplain would come to our mountain. The only place to hold mass was in the Airman's Club. It was a small Quonset hut. It takes something away from Mass when the dominant odor was stale beer. Our main leisure activity was playing double deck pinochle and drinking. Each pay day there was a poker game going for a couple days. One of the kids in our Quonset sent home five hundred a month for four or five months. His pay was less than a hundred. One time he came to us and asked us to stake him since he had lost his pay. We gathered about seventy five dollars and the next day

he paid us back and still sent money home. I don't play poker. If I have a hand it sort of ruins it when I have a big grin on my face and can't wait to bet.

I did drink a lot. Summer was bitter. They hadn't settled their armistice yet but they had pretty much quit fighting. We got to go tramping in the hills around camp. At least we got some exercise.



The enlisted men were pretty much doing the job they were trained to do. One of the guys I was friends with volunteered to become a truck driver to get away from being a radar operator. All he did was drive a water truck. He hauled water to us from the base down below. There's a trick to shifting gears when you've got water sloshing in the tank. He knew how. His name was Jerry Seip. He was the only friend that I had that we stayed in contact after we moved to South Dakota. He and his wife were stationed at Moody AFB in Georgia when we came back from Korea.

The officers in our station in Korea were different. Most of them seemed to be pilots that had goofed up in some way and were grounded. They were sent to us to give them something to do. Some of them accepted it gracefully, others were really angry and frustrated. One major started out really taking an interest in his new job. Soon he got bored and came to work with too much to drink and either slept or passed out. As crew chief I was supposed to record the planes in and out and relay that information on. One night I missed writing down one plane while I was checking them in. They called me on it but that was all. The major was never aware of any of it.

I was glad to leave Korea. I've always thought it was a political war anyway. It seemed to me that following war that there was an adjustment period of dealing with a lot of GI's coming home looking for work, the war industry laying off workers, etc. and that causes an economic downturn or a recession. I thought the war industry convinced the press and congress that they needed to stop communism from taking over Korea so they could stay in business. Maybe??

On the way home the sea was really calm. The rise and fall of the ship was barely discernible. I got so sick I felt like I needed to die to get better. Don't understand that but that's the way it was.

It was a thirty day leave and then down to Louisiana to a base outside of Alexandria. (Info note from Tom: I think this was probably Alexandria Army Air Base – name changed to England AFB in 1955?). While I was home I used the money that Dale had put in the bank from the cattle he had sold that were mine and the few dollars I had sent home to buy a car, \$2500 1953 Chevrolet. Those calves bought with

the Pete Lemley loan were steers and heifers. When the steers were sold, they paid the loan. Now I had wheels. We didn't stay long in Louisiana, a month or six weeks. We were given a chance to make a preference, stay there, go to some place in Massachusetts, I think or to go to Moody AFB in Georgia. I chose Massachusetts but my orders said Georgia. God knew what he was doing. Bert was in Georgia. I am convinced that was the only reason I had to go to the service at all. I had to meet Bert.

Note: I was sure that I went to Korea in the spring. I got back in time so that I was in Louisiana at the time of Marti Gras, the beginning of Lent. I wanted to go but no one would go with me.

Jerry Seip came to Korea after I did and came on my crew for a while but we stayed friends. Not long after I got to Moody AFB he came there but he was in the motor pool now. He changed his job designation number. When he came to Moody, he was married to Wilma.

With that time line I had to have met Bert not long after I got to Moody. I know it was in Lent. That year was an exceptionally dry one in Georgia. The swamps were drying up. Cypress trees that were usually standing in water were on dry ground. The Cypress knees, that usually were underwater or barely above now looked like odd shaped stumps. I bought a saw and collected some of them. Bert's dad planted some corn and it had grown tall enough but with hot, dry weather during silking, it made no kernels. I hadn't seen that before.

Bert did take me out to see her folks. He rented or crop shared a farm not far from Hahira, Georgia. It was a small town but a fair sized school because there were lots of farms like his. Bert was closest to her two older brothers. They are the ones who shortened Bertha to Bert. She was like their little brother. She did everything they did. She could climb higher or further out on a limb because she didn't weigh as much. Bert said she hardly knew she was a girl until her mother told her she couldn't climb trees anymore and had to wear dresses. She was 11 or 12. I am sure she wore dresses to school. She was closest to Warren. He was 2 years older.

Sometimes her dad chewed tobacco. When he worked in the fields he would have their mother send them to where he was and bring him his plug of tobacco and a knife. One time on their way home they decided to see how it tasted. They cut a little bit off and chewed. The tobacco plants were pretty tall, it was hot, and they had no water. They really got sick. They snuck into the house, left the knife and the tobacco. They took some water and laid in the shade until they felt better. They knew they really weren't well by supper time but no one said anything about it at all. No more tobacco though.

I did teach Bert how to drive a car. Not entirely, she had driven a little at the farm but didn't have a license. She practiced with my car until she thought she could pass the test. Everything went well until they were pulling into the parking lot where they started. She turned too soon and scraped the rear fender on my car on the bumper of a parked car. Hardly any damage, the patrolman, a friend, said, "I won't tell if you don't." She got her license. She also really felt bad about putting the first mark on my car.

When Bert's folks were convinced that we really were going to get married, her dad found a piece of ground that could be rented if I would stay there and run cows down there. I couldn't understand how it was possible to run a cow all year long on two acres of ground – sometimes even less. I told him that I really needed to go home. I knew how to raise cows there. Dale told me later that while I was overseas that the cattle prices were good and he almost sold my cows. If he had done that, I probably would have stayed in Georgia. I could have bought more cows than he sold. Prices weren't as good.



During that dry summer there were a lot of fires that burned around the swamps. As the water dried up it was about like peat moss. There wasn't so much flame but it would smolder and smoke until there was enough rain to raise the water level. The radar site where I worked was near a swamp away from the base. One day on our way to work some of the guys had to walk by the front bumper so they could tell the driver how close he was to the shoulder of the road because of the smoke. We rode a truck to the side and the crew we replaced rode it back. I expect that there were days that planes couldn't fly because of it.

Bert and I were married 8 August 1954 in her apartment by a justice of the peace. Not like we wanted but we couldn't marry in the Catholic Church because Bert had been married before. Bert didn't have a church that she went to. Her dad and mom belonged to different churches and neither would change. I think none of her siblings went to any church until Chris married Eston and Richard married Joyce.

We talked to the priest in Valdosta about the annulment process and they tried but it was denied. The grounds for annulment were pretty restricted then. We were married thirteen years before we were married in the Church, in Manderson South Dakota.

Right after we married we started the adoption process so I could be legal father to Tom and Harold. We had a good lawyer and he hurried the process along. There biological father found out that if he wanted to stay father to his kids that he better start paying child support. He didn't want to do that and relinquished his rights. The only thing that I remember the social worker asking and I know there were unknown word, was after she found out we were going to South Dakota and would raise cattle, "And I suppose you will raise your boys to be cowboys too." I didn't see that as being a bad thing but I told her that I had not long ago decided that was what I wanted to do. When the time came, they could decide what they wanted to do. I wish it was that simple.

The lawyer we had was also part of a family that ran a paper mill. He said if I wanted to stay in Georgia that he would see that I had work. All the time I ran cattle, there were a few months that I wasn't in debt, most times worried if we could make it another year. In spite of that, I've felt that I've been truly blessed. God is good and merciful.

On Cuny Table the church was located just off the hill on the west side. That's where they put it when everyone moved off when it became a gunnery range. We didn't miss mass often. In the winter, Lawrence Cuny would start a fire in the heater so at least the priest could celebrate mass without his gloves. Lawrence and Sadie lived about a mile and a half from where the road went down the hill. The priest came from Holy Rosary just north of Pine Ridge. We were his third mass. Not always but many times the priest would come to our house for lunch. We were friends with many over the years. The one who come the most, I think, was Fr. Gentle. He was a photographer. When Joy was 2-3 years old he took hundreds of pictures of her. He would develop them and bring us the pictures.

I think we were the first ones to donate money on a regular basis. They did have collections on special occasions. Bert and I talked about it and decided or recognized how blessed we were. This took place after Rusty was born. We didn't make much money but we tried tithing. We've done it ever since. When we put money in, the collections started every week, or as often as mass was held and then the other people started putting in their offerings too. All of it probably didn't do much more than buy the gas to come out there.

Bert made all of our shirts, Joy's clothes and most of her own, all on a Singer treadle machine. The shirts were almost all snapped. If I could, that was my job. We bought snaps by the gross from a western ware store out of Denver. Bert could make a shirt in three hours if I snapped it. We almost always bought some kind of material when we went to Rapid City or even Chadron.

The house we lived in on Cuny table was originally a two room house, both rooms about 12 x 14. An addition was added to make two more rooms, 12 x 14. The addition was on the north side with the door on the east side. The living-dining room was on the southeast side with an outside door – also east side, the kitchen on the northeast side. Both rooms on the west were bedrooms. When the house was moved off the gunnery range a porch, enclosed, was added that covered both the kitchen and living room doors. That's where the wash machine and winter coats and whatever were kept. The south bedroom was also divided. Two by two framing so there was room for a bed in each. When we lived there, Bert and I used the south bedroom, Joy in the next and the boys in the bedroom off the kitchen.



When the house was moved to a piece of ground that Dad and Dale managed to buy west of where it was, it was remodeled. Before that there was an eight drop going into the addition. When we moved, we put it all on the same level. The arrangement of rooms changed too. The addition became the kitchen and dining room. The other part was bedrooms. It took a while, a well and electricity, but part of the porch became a bathroom and made a little more room for beds when more kids were born. Paul was born the day they turned on the power and the well pump worked. No more hauling water, nor more white gas or kerosene lamps.

There was a spring fed little creek that ran past the house, called Sand Creek. It made it a good place to live. Tom and Harold liked to go fossil hunting. One time they came home with some bones that they were sure were dinosaur bones. We had a hard time convincing them that they weren't really too old since there was some sinew still attached. They had spent a lot of time getting them uncovered and out of the dirt.

On Sand Creek was also where my brother and sisters came in the came in the summer time, all their kids were sent to our house. They mostly entertained themselves but it made a lot of extra work for Bert. Once when they were all there, Bert caught a hen, killed it and made a meal around that hen. The next day the kids were deciding what to do but, Spence, Dorothy's youngest, wanted to stay home if Bert was going to "murderize" another chicken. He wanted to watch.

Tom was big enough by then that he was interested in breaking horses. Our usual process was to start as a two year old. I'm not sure about the age of this colt but maybe it was a yearling. I think all the help I could manage was to get a halter on that colt. Before long, Tom had him broke to lead and was riding him. On the day he was going to ride him home to show the colt to us, he and Harold were running their horses toward home when the colt fell and both it and Tom, we believe, was under the summersaulting colt. The colt broke his neck and died but Tom, though he wasn't under the horse was unconscious for a time. Harold came to the house and told that Tom was "acting funny". We went to where he was and he was still confused but had no broken bones and with Bert's ministrations he was soon back to normal. It was scary for a bit. It didn't stop his interest in working with horses though.

It had to have been soon after that he got a sorrel colt, Copper, that he broke to ride. He would practice getting his horse to come to a sliding stop when he would dismount while the horse was running. Pete was impressed with the horse enough that he traded Tom's first car for that horse. Tom was good with horses, better than I.

Maybe I'm wrong but I think all of our boys except Rusty would have liked to become ranchers. That would have been fine with me if I could have found a way to make it happen. It was always year to year with the bankers and sometimes I was sure we wouldn't make it, somehow we did. Getting cattle wasn't a problem; getting control of land was the hard part. That was about the time when people with money started buying land as an investment. Cattle couldn't pay for the land and land was a good investment.

Cuny Table was a good place to live though. It was isolated which was hard on Bert. She had no friends, the neighbors were friendly and they all really liked Bert but the women were all old. She saw Pete and Betty some but not regularly and then there was so much to do that there wasn't much time to just sit and visit. The same was true with Dale and Phyllis. I think it was a good place for the kids to grow. Now that I think about it, Tom and Harold are the only two that have very many memories about that place. I think Steve started second grade in Oral. Harold's memories were so good, or got better as he aged, that he wanted to be buried out there. There was a small cemetery in the middle of the Table where the church used to be that is still in use. I am not attached to the graves of those I care about. That is where they are buried but that isn't where they are. Bert and Harold are buried in the National Cemetery and so will I be, the graves will be taken care of but it will not be a burden to anyone. Hopefully we will one day be together again praising God.

My feeling about burial is pretty practical. Graves are not meant to be shrines. It seems to me that God pushed burial because it was unhealthy. We are a loving breed – image of God – but if we don't carry our loved one in our heart then it's all right to forget. Like the lessons of life they need to be stored in our hearts and minds. Enough of dying.

I never saw any tepee rings at the Sand Creek house. There were some near the corrals at the original place where the house set. What did seem to be there was a lot of chips of flint rock. We didn't find any complete arrow heads but many broken pieces that looked like they could have been the efforts of

making them. Flint rock wasn't common on Cuny Table. There was a small gravel pit near the corrals too and a little flint was scattered through that rock but was more common in the badlands north of Cuny Table in the agate beds. I thought maybe Sand Creek was a place where arrowhead makers went to get away from everybody so they could concentrate on their craft. It would require a lot of concentration.

Christmas on San Creek or just on Cuny Table was special. That was mostly Bert's doing. She made everybody something, mostly clothes, of course, but special. She also encouraged the kids to do that too. Our wages weren't much more than the other hired help so we couldn't afford too much. We would all go to find a Christmas tree – usually cedar. No lights 'til later but we had or made decorations. Usually there was a midnight mass somewhere within driving range. When we got home we ate breakfast and then the kids could open one present. They could pick it out. The rest had to wait 'til morning. In spite of being up really late, morning came early. They would be up as soon as it was light enough to see. "Come see!" "Show us how it works!" "Can we go outside to try it out?" Many of the presents were made at home. Bert was the most imaginative so she had given the kids ideas about what to give to each other. It was a good time. Bert didn't have arthritis then. She sewed a lot, her clothes and Joys; we could count on new shirts. No one wore shirts as good as hers.

Bert's sister Christine married a man named John Eston Wynn. He and Chris were the only members of her family that came to see us on a regular basis. They came the first time in the winter. There was snow on the ground. John was good at following directions and found Cuny Table but when he came to our end of the Table there were tracks in the snow so he decided that surely they would lead him to our house. He had seen no other tracks on the road. He said he followed those tracks for an hour and they didn't go anywhere, when then came back to where he first saw them, they had led him to our house. He had followed our tracks as we had taken feed to the cows. He just turned the wrong way the first time he followed the tracks.

The first time he came up – winter – he drove to the road that led down the hill where our closest neighbors lived. This was off the Table. The hill was long and steep. He stopped at their house and found out his mistake but they were really skeptical about his chances of getting up that hill again. There was snow on the ground and some frost in the ground. He said it took him six or eight tries but he did get to the top. Then he arrived at our house. We did have electricity but no telephone yet. They didn't get phones until after we left there to go to Oral.

John always wanted to be involved in everything that we did. I can understand that but one time, fall, we needed to gather some cows from a pasture north of Cuny Table and bring them home. This was an all-day ride, 35 miles straight line not counting gathering the cows. He insisted that he go so we mounted him on a horse that we thought he could ride, Sandy, and we went. Getting there was mostly straight line so it was a case of walking a half a mile and trotting a half mile. Gathering was a little of everything, walk, trot, or gallop. The drive home was almost all walk especially for John, he had to ride drag – make sure the end of the herd kept up. That made a day of about six to six. I felt sorry for John but he would have really been mad at me if I had told him he couldn't go but he spent about three days in bed after we got back. Ranching is much more than riding a horse, probably the most enjoyable part though, but we never felt sore or uncomfortable after a ride even if we hadn't been on a horse for four or five months. I suppose part of it is comfort. We were at home in the saddle and it was all new to John. All the other times he came, he never asked to go riding with us again.

Mostly John was a good man. I think he was honest; he could talk to anyone wherever he was. I envied him that. He did didn't treat Chris as well as I thought he should. He expected to be waited on by her. She got up first, if he got up right away he sat down and she brought, if he didn't get up, she brought it to him in bed. He never helped her around the house. I wasn't much better but Bert knew and did ask me to do things she needed help with. Part of my problem with John, I think, was simply his attitude toward her. There was no doubt that he really cared about her. There seemed to be some things that were, womanly, that he couldn't, wouldn't do. I think a man can do anything. That isn't what makes a man. His attitude was only restrictive.

Bert lived with my parents in Chadron the first winter we came home from the A. F. Tom was in the first grade and there wasn't a house for us to live in at the ranch. I stayed with Dale and Phyllis on Cuny Table. They were in the process of building a house – they had bought a building at Ft Robinson, near Crawford Nebraska and were remodeling it. They drilled a well ran electricity to it. It wasn't ready until school was out. Dale's kids were all small then.

When school was out Bert and the boys moved to Cuny Table. Bert must have had a real culture shock, no electricity, no running water or sewer system. We had a small spring below the house but it didn't run much water. The water it did run tasted sort of stale. We hauled water from a stock spring about three miles from the house. Waste water brought into the house had to be taken back out. No bathroom, kerosene lamps, white gas – unleaded – lamps later that gave better light. Washing machine that ran with a one cylinder engine that was temperamental – kick start. I didn't even have enough sense to recognize how hard it had to be for her. She was pregnant that first summer too.

Steve was born on August 9, one day after our first anniversary. I don't know how I happened to be in town. Bert had been there a few days, probably about ten, and we knew it wouldn't be long after she stayed so I suppose I would have decided it was time. Bert told me that the baby was coming and we needed to go. Mom said go, so we did. The staff at the hospital seemed unconcerned when we got there. They took their time about filling out forms etc. I could tell Bert was getting nervous but when registration was over I went back to see if the kids were all right. The hospital had called and Steve was already born. I had four blocks to drive.

When Joy was born it was fall and we were just moved out of summer pasture (1 Nov). We were weaning calves when we had (4 Nov) a blizzard – wind, ten – twelve inches of snow. We had planned to go to town to buy groceries but we could barely get to the cattle – calves to feed them. Pete was there, I don't know who the help was, maybe Stanley Cook and a man, Maurice Brophy, that lived on Battle Creek east of Hermosa that had summered cattle.