Theodore

October 20, 1898 - 1963

Poland

Minnie Gabel

Alvin
Gladi
Kenneth

THEODORE KLAUSE

Theodore was born in Cholm, Poland on October 20, 1898. He immigrated to Canada with his parents in 1899.

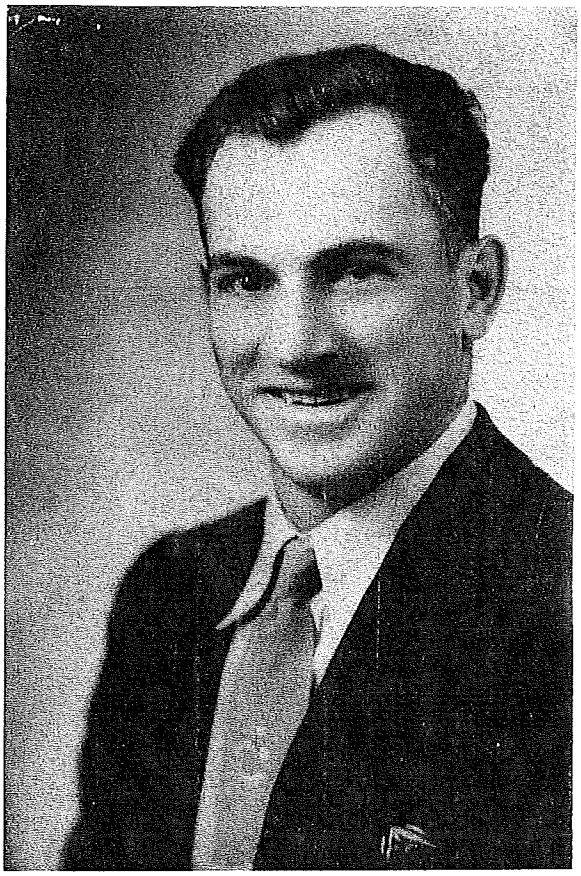
He grew up on the family homestead east of Springside, along with his other brothers and sisters. He attended Whitesand school to achieve a grade three education.

He married Minnie Gabel on April 3, 1923.

Their family consisted of Alvin of Winnipeg, Man, Gladiola (Smith) of Yorkton, Sask., and Kenneth of Flin Flon, Manitoba.

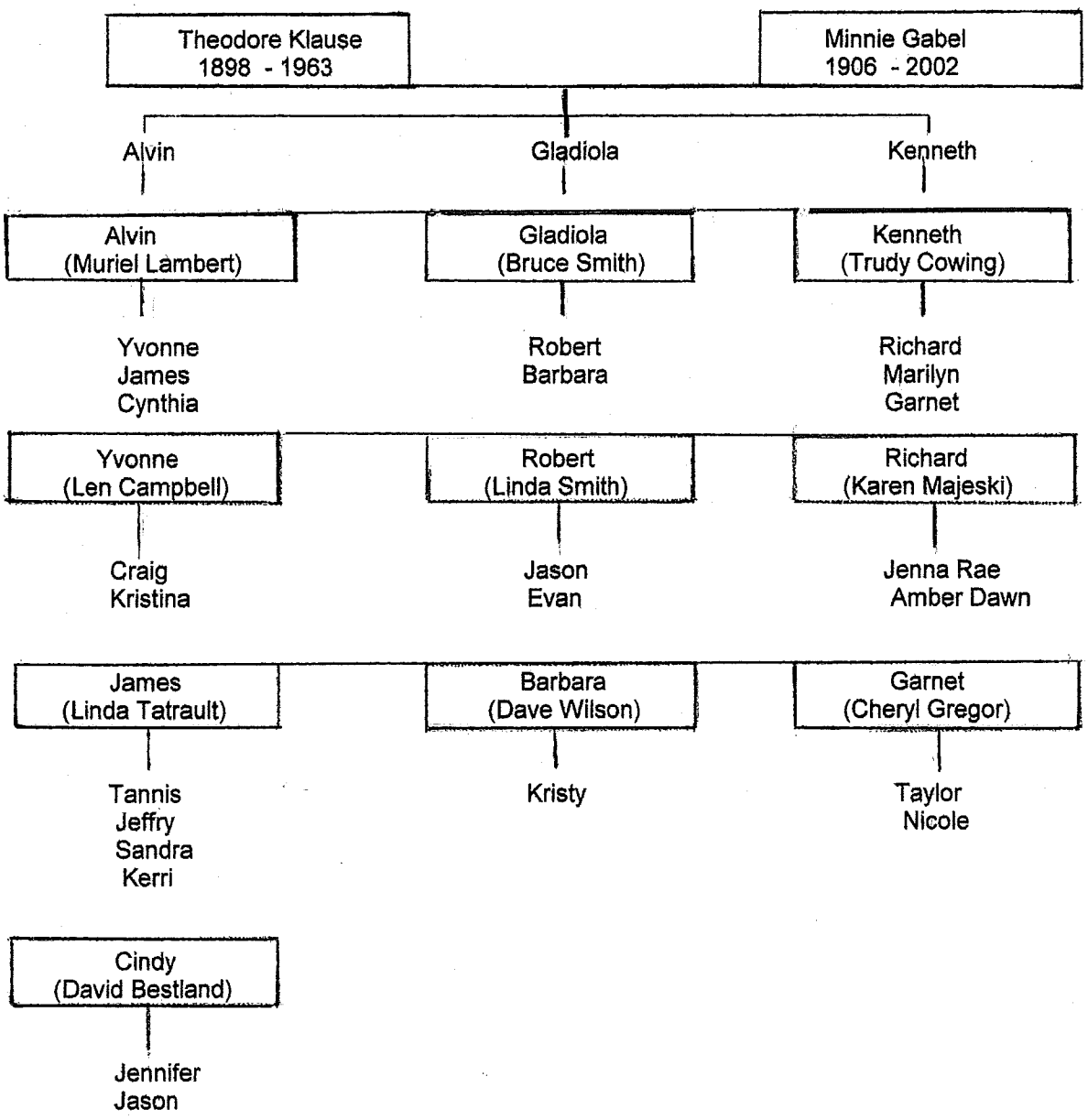
The family all attended the Whitesand school.

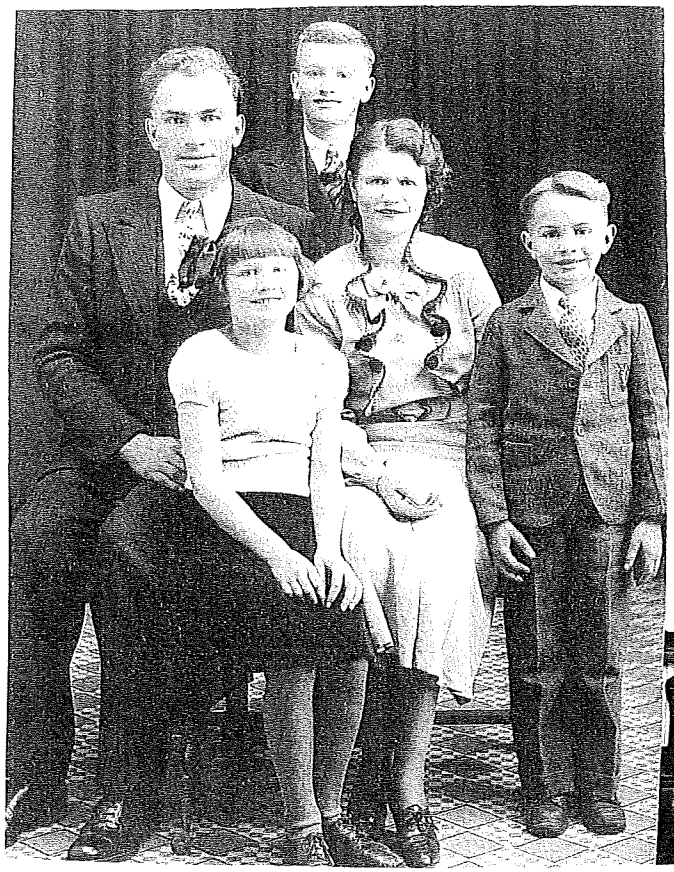
Deceased: Theodore in 1963 - Kenneth in 1980 - Gladiola in 2000 - Minnie in 2002



Minnie and Theodore

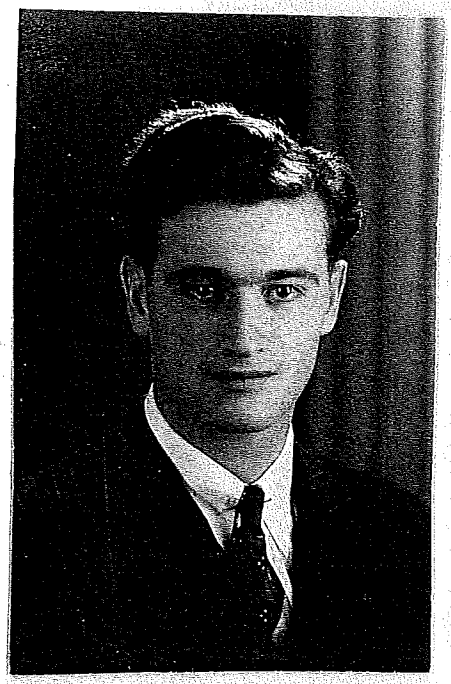
THE FAMILY OF THEODORE KLAUSE





Ted and Minnie's family
Gladi, Alvin, Kenneth

Min's "95th" birthday party at Anderson Lodge
July 10, 2001

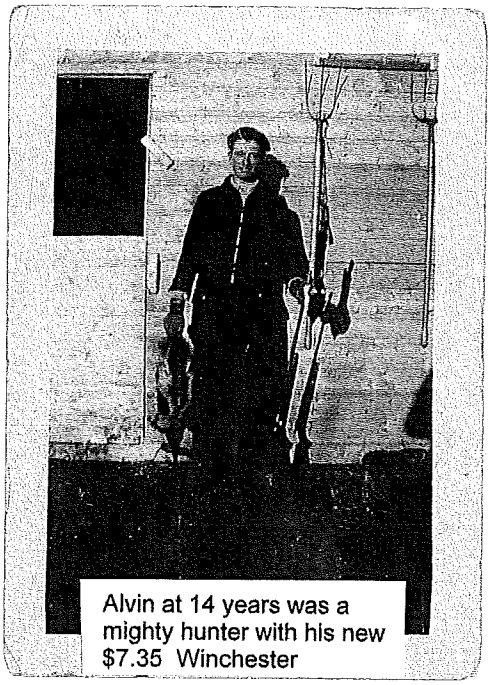


Alvin and Gladi

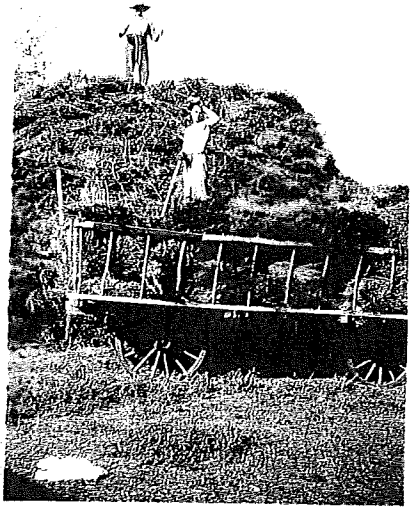
Alvin and Gladi were always very close all through school years and until the time we left home

Ted, Alvin and "Jipp"
Min made the matching jackets.
The rocking chair is presently
In our family room

Ted with his prize catch.
He enjoyed going to
Flin Flon to fish at
Beaver Lake



Alvin at 14 years was a
mighty hunter with his new
$7.35 Winchester



Alvin and Ted stacking green feed
for next winter

A Sunday outing at Devil's Lake
Ted Klause family in front of
central park and flag pole.
In background , see Bert Cummings
Ranger office with huge stone
fireplace and barbecue at rear
behind the 1928 model car

Alvin and Ted
breaking the back 40 acres

Alvin with his wheels
1921 Ford Model T Coupe
showing off his gun collection

From Horse and Buggy to High Tech Equipment and Computers
Submitted by Alvin

My Earliest Recollections - Growing up on the farm during the "Dirty Thirties"

July 9, 1929 - I was 5 years old. Gladi was 3 and remember awakening in the morning with a great commotion going on in the bedroom and kitchen. Mother's bed was curtained off between us kids and theirs. Father was heating water on the kitchen cookstove and the neighbor lady seemed furiously working with mother. Later that morning, I heard a baby cry and my brother, Kenneth, was born. The doctor was summoned and four days later, he visited by horse and buggy to see that everything was ok.

The foregoing is typical as to how Alvin, Gladi and Ken were born. You will see by the copy of my birth certificate, communication was not fast. My birth date was May 16; registration was June 6th.

We were raised by our parents in a two room log house, with an add-on lumber dining room and parlor. It was fine in summer because the cookstove in the kitchen made it so hot and uncomfortable for eating, it was a relief to either eat in the dining room, or even outside. During the '30s, summers were hot and dry to the point of being unbearable. The opposite was true in the winter. I remember often the thermometer reading 50 degrees below; the lowest I recall was 59.

The dining room was rarely used because it had no storm windows, only single glass, and frost and ice built up so thick, you could not see out; no insulation, and everything froze. We lived in the kitchen and one bedroom, heated by the old wood cook stove. Pop would briefly rise early and light the fire, and go back to bed while it warmed. Gladi was usually up first to jump on the oven door to dress. Ken was next and called to Mom "kick mac pottage." Mother knew she must make our breakfast of porridge.

Dressing was quick and easy for us kids. We each had 2 pair of fleecelined underwear, worn for one week each and not taken off until the weekly Saturday night bath in a washtub in front of the kitchen stove. Mom would wash clothes with the same washtub and a washboard. She used rainwater in the summer and melted ice or snow in the winter. The water from the well was so hard, it curdled the soap. You must remember, in the thirties, there was no electricity or running water. You ran to the well for a pail of water. The plumbing was a pot under the bed in winter and the outhouse in the summer. The lights were either a candle or coal oil lamp. Pop bought a gas lamp that was used only on special occasions or when visitors came. Refrigeration was out in the porch in the winter, and in the well in the summer.

We did have a battery operated radio. It was a Philco of enormous size with batteries that weighed a ton. It was used sparingly, only to listen to certain programs. I remember every Sunday night at 6 p.m., and suppertime, we would listen to the Jack Benny program. We all thought this was hilarious, and then there was Hop Along Cassidy, Tom Mix and Fibber McGee and Molly. I recall the Orphan Annie program, advertising Postum. I believe in 1937 was the Great Joe Louis and Max Schmelling fight. Schmelling beat The Brown Bomber, first time. The second fight lasted 1 ½ rounds, when Max was knocked out.

For entertainment after supper in winter, we would all play cards, or simple games. The popular one was Parcheezie or Snakes and Ladders (father liked Checkers). Later on, we got a Monopoly board. In the later thirties, every family had a Crokinole board. This tested everyone's skills at shooting a wooden button, to take out your opponent or drop into a center slot to score 20. Counting was similar to curling. There were challengers in the neighborhood, with Uncles Emil and Johnny being the champions, and I was right next, or a little behind. The ladies were less skillful. While the men played their game, the ladies started a whist drive that mostly occurred once a week. There were prizes and a lunch after. I even cashed in on a few. A team of 2 were required; 1 man, 1 lady.

Once a winter, a box social was organized at the Whitesand school. Boxes were auctioned off to the highest bidder. The men each bought an unknown maker's lunch box and was then required to eat with that lady. Usually, it went for 10 or 15 cents for the ordinary. An extremely decorated box would fetch up to 40 or 50 cents. Sometimes it was comical or embarrassing when each man found out who his partner was.

Then, of course, the annual Christmas concert was given by the teacher and pupils at school. There were weeks of preparation for this event that ended with Santa giving out gifts. That meant the last day of school until March. We were given our school holidays in winter, because of the severity of the weather, with many blizzards and deep snow. The schoolhouse was always cold. It had a great old barrel camp stove that took 2-foot lengths of cordwood to keep the stove red hot most times. Seasoned poplar wood was laid in at $2.00 per cord. I recall one of the Dutz boys starting the fire early for a fee of 10 cents. We went to school all summer.

In late fall, after harvest, Mom & Pop would make out an Eaton's mail order. This would go on far into the night. They would be careful to budget exactly how much money was left over from the summer's cream cheques and egg money after groceries. I remember one particular time, the much anticipated parcel arrived C.O.D. at $34.00. Father brought it from Springside by horse and buggy or cutter. It was a cardboard box about 3'x3'. Many items were shuffled aside to go into hiding until Christmas. The ones we anxiously waited for the try-on were: 2 pair fleece lined underwear, 2 pair denim overalls, 1 pair leather mitts, 1 pair felt boots with rubbers, 1 heavy outer coat or jacket. This was each issue for your winter wear.

Mother usually got some printed material to sew into shirts, blouses or dresses, as required. She was an expert seamstress. Flour sacks were always used for linings or sheets and towels. After this shipment arrived, the Singer foot pedal sewing machine would hum far into the night, after supper dishes were washed. We children usually completed this chore. Most of the time, it was Gladi's, because the boys' chores were outside. The ash can needed to be emptied, wood and water brought in, ice into the cookstove reservoir, empty the slop pail and feed the dogs with table scraps. Mother was also an expert at knitting, making us socks, mittens, sweaters, etc.

In winter, father was kept busy with chores looking after all the livestock in the barns. He would feed and water every animal and bird. The amount of stock was limited to the room available in the stable. Usually, I remember about 6 horses, 8 or 10 cows, 2 or 3 pigs, several geese, 3 or 4 turkeys and a gobbler, 20 to 30 chickens and several roosters, 2 dogs and a number of cats (a must to keep the mice and rats under control).

When I became of age, maybe 8 or 10 years, I was designated to help father. My job was to bed down the animals and clean the barns. I hated cleaning barns and the longer I procrastinated, the more it piled up. After winter set in, Father and I cut and hauled ice for mother's washes. We would also be required to restore the next winter's supply of seasoned poplar wood for the cookstove. We would go out for the day for a sleigh load of green pole length poplar. After 10 or 12 loads were piled in a long row, we would summon the neighbors, maybe 6 or 8 men, for a wood cutting day. Each of them, in turn, did the same.

Before spring, the seed grain must be cleaned. Pop turned the fanning mill and I put the grain in the top and the cleaned grain into a new corner of the bin. Feed for livestock was always in short supply. Oats and barley had to be chopped and designated and measured for each animal. There never was much hay. It was mainly saved for the horses when working the fields. Usually, there was greenfeed stored, then a cutting machine or hammermill was employed to cut and mix all types of hay, oats, straw, clover or greenfeed, a mixture that fed all animals in winter.

Mother was a good cook and we all ate very well. Each summer, a great big garden and potato patch was grown. The whole family participated in the potato planting, cultivating and harvest. May 24th was Queen Victoria Day, and time to plant the potatoes. July 1st was hilling and cultivating time. Potato bugs were always a problem. A day had to be set aside to brush each plant with Paris Green mixed with water. Labour Day in September was usually potato digging time. This was an enormous task. Father would proceed to dig them with a fork and spread the tubers on top of the soil for the sun to dry. The kids were designated buckets and rows. Poor Ken was five years younger and could not keep up. An empty wagon with grain box was placed in the center. If it was a good year, the small potatoes were left for the cattle to clean up. They loved getting into the garden. Most years, the grain box was level full. This was our yearly supply. It was transported to the cellar under the house. Access was through a trap door in the center of the kitchen floor

The cellar was storage for all of mother's preserves of pickles, tomatoes, fruits, jams and jellies. The fall was time to make sauerkraut in a wooden vinegar barrel, as well as a barrel of dill pickles. The jams and jellies and fruit were acquired during berry picking where the whole family went out for Saskatoons. That was our favorite fruit. A very good location was in the flats of Cussed Creek. Raspberries were not so plentiful in our area. To find good raspberry patches, we would often team up with the Paul Klause family to go north of Canora, somewhere along a river or ravine. One year, Cousin Bea and I got lost. Bea, even at that age, was always aggressive, but always level headed. She said, "let's just sit under this bush and let them find us." It wasn't until near dusk that they did. By this time, we had eaten all the berries we had picked. High bush cranberries always were a must for making excellent jelly. They always grew with abundance at the sand hills around Devil's Lake. This was an all day outing and all Klause families in the area participated, often coming home with several grain sacks full.

Summer recreation, most Sundays, were spent at Devil's Lake. All the Klause families gathered there to swim and have picnics. All of us detested the thought of going home in time to milk the cows. Often, they did not get milked 'till late in the night. The great occasion was when the Paul and Ted Klause families pitched a 10x14 tent in the park. Paul and Ted went home to tend the farm. Minnie and Emma had 2 weeks frolicking and swimming with their children. These are times I shall never forget.

Devil's Lake

History tells us that before 1860, the area was sand, soil and covered with prairie grass. From 1860 to about 1880, a great dry spell and drought occurred with high westerly winds. The arid sand started drifting and piling up on the eastern side. Today, we have a lake roughly ½ mile wide by 4 miles long, with mighty sand dunes on the eastern shore, some ranging to 50 or 75 ft. high and about ½ to 3/4 miles in depth. While a youngster, we all went to the sand hills for picnics and wiener roasts or frolicking. The wet years came in early 1900 and filled the basin with water. It is a very shallow lake, ranging from 8 to 14' deep. The shoreline is very shallow, making it safe and enjoyable for swimmers, young and old.

In the '30s, however, along came another very dry spell. The water receded to about 1/4 mile back of the shoreline. This was all pure white sand. Transportation to the shoreline was on foot. Many autos of the day tried to navigate the loose sand. They always had to be pulled out by a team of horses. The boys at Gunn's beach made easy spending money. Gunn's beach was the first access to the lake, situated at the southeast point of the lake where an overflow creek was. As the waterline receded, this location was much too far for walking. In the '30s, the present beach was established. The first Park Ranger, Bert Cummings, built a log cabin, where his family of 4 children lived in summer. We became good friends. This was when "Good Spirit Lake" was born.

In the fall of the year was the time to stock the larder with meat and flour for the winter. Father would load a wagon with wheat and make the long trek to Yorkton, to the Levi Beck grist mill. Next day, he would return with about 10 or 12 sacks of flour, 1 bag of cracked wheat and 1 bag of farina for porridge (now called Cream of Wheat), along with several bags of wheat bran. This was all stored in the attic to keep dry. Because money was very scarce, he always bartered with Levi Beck, to give him ½ the wheat for processing. No money changed hands.

Meat was almost always secured once winter had set in, so that it could be buried in the snow and/or the grain bin, where it kept frozen all winter. Chickens were thinned out to save about 20 hens and about 3 roosters. These were left for eggs and for reproduction in the spring. The heads were cut off by axe on the chopping block. Once bled, they were dunked into a bucket of boiling water to loosen the feathers. These were easy to pluck. They were eviscerated and cleaned and packaged for storage in the great outdoor deepfreeze.

Turkeys were a little more difficult. Father had a great technique. He strung them up, live, by their feet. He would hold their head in one hand and squeeze open the mouth, then with his razor sharp stockmans' knife, would reach inside and pierce the blood vessel and brain. While bleeding, they would give a shake and one could see the feathers loosen, and then plucking would begin. The turkeys were sold for extra cash.

The biggest and fattest old sow was next. Usually 2 or 3 sows raised a litter of young anywhere from 8 to 12. Weanlings were sold for $5.00 per pair and only enough were raised for market as feed was available. The morning of the butcher date was active. A 45 gallon steel drum of water was heated to boiling. A tripod with block and tackle was made ready. Knives were sharpened. Because I had by now become an expert marksman, I was designated with the 22 rifle. Father had previously explained to me that there was only a 1/4 inch spot on a pig forehead that had a soft spot, so the bullet could penetrate the brain. I never missed. Father then was quick with his long sharpened knife to lift the left front leg and sever the heart and jugular vein for bleeding. The 300 to 400 lb. pig was now strung up by block and tackle and dunked into the boiling water to soften the hide and hair. Next, it was laid on a platform for scraping, and a clean shave. The carcass was again strung up and butchering began. Nothing was wasted; my father used to say, "only the squeal."

Meat was cut into portions and stored in our great outdoor freezer. The off cuts and scraps were hand ground into hamburger. The intestine linings were scraped and cleaned and stuffed for sausage. The head and feet were cleaned and made into headcheese (still a favorite of mine today). All fat was trimmed and fixed to make lard for cooking and baking. Mother did also make laundry soap. The supper after the butcher was always fresh liver and onions, with mashed potatoes. Mother always saved the bacon and fried pork drippings. This was cooled and used as a spread for our bread with salt and pepper. We all preferred this to butter. We called it "schmaltz."

Mother baked bread once a week, 10 or 12 huge loaves. She was adept at making many kinds of dishes from available vegetables, meats and cereals. She would make and dry noodles for soups, bake pies and cakes and cookies. There would be excellent perogies. When I was about 14 years, I remember eating 24 perogies at one sitting. That kept her busy.

The Cattle Drive

In the fall of the year, a cattle buyer would visit our community to purchase enough cattle for shipment to market. Each farmer had to assess the amount of feed on hand for animals to survive the winter until spring, when they go back to pasture. On an appointed day, each farmer rounded up his stock. The herd was banded with all others and we had a cattle drive. From our farm, I was always designated, because by now, I was an expert horseman. My pony, "Bert" and I were classed as cowboy.

I became fairly good at throwing a lariat. I always rode bareback because we could not afford a saddle. In about the mid thirties, I remember Pop receiving $5.00 for an old milk cow. A prime 2 year old steer would fetch $12 - $15.00. We never did butcher beef for our own use. They were shipped to get a little extra cash.

Transportation was simple. In winter, it was by horse and cutter or sleigh. The country roads were only lightly graded and usually ran over prairie or through bushes that piled high with snowbanks during the many winter storms. In summer, it was horse and buggy. Later, the buggy broke down and Pop made us kids a gig for our school horse, "Flory" to take us to school (see my tribute to Gladi for details).

I vaguely remember my father having a 4 ninety Chev, about 1918 vintage. I think the "4" meant 4 wheel brakes. This was used solely to go to town on Saturday and to church on Sunday. In 1928, during the good times, came a great occasion when Father had $1,100.00 to buy a brand new Super 6 Essex baby blue sedan. It had upholstered blue velvet seats and was his pride and joy. We now were able to travel as far as Yorkton for a day of shopping, to Springside on Saturday night and to Devil's Lake on Sunday. This could only be used in the summer. I do know I remember a trip to Trochu, Alberta, where Dad's brother, Henry, had moved and married. We were 4 days on the road, each way. The trip was made by Mom and Pop and I. Along for the ride came Uncle Edmund, Martha and Morvel.

I also remember Edmund and Martha with the Model T Ford touring car of 1920 vintage, stuck crossing a creek behind our barn because the culvert on the road was washed out (see copy of photo).

We always had two different family gatherings. Christmas and Easter were always at the Gabel's, west of Springside. Easter was by car and a one day event. Christmas, however, was in winter and being 7 miles away, it was at least 2 or 3 days. Mother and kids bundled up in 2 heavy feather ticks on the floor of the sleigh. Along with this, was a foot warmer with live coals from the cookstove. Father drove the team dressed in his heavy bearskin coat and huge gauntlet sheepskin mitts. On our way home, one time, the sleigh upset, with all of us in the snowbank and Christmas presents spread about.

In the winter, all had to be in the house. This was crowded, to say the least. A great feast was always Osha's delight. She was accustomed to feeding large settings - the adults at one table and the children at another. There were few chairs, so long benches were made up for most of the seating. I especially remember her poppy bread, "moe kuchen", my favorite. Most of the visiting and eating was done in the kitchen. I don't remember the exact number of people there at one time - my guess would be anywhere from 15 to 30. There was no room in the dining room. In the middle stood the monstrous old baby grand piano. I remember the lid was held up by a stick or post and would watch the hammers fall onto the strings as it was being played. It was so out of tune, the sounds coming out of the old beast were hideous.

As kids, we played hide and seek, with young people running through a crowded room, testing the ladies who were helping prepare meals or washing dishes. A favorite hiding place was in the pantry, or upstairs, in the attic, under the eaves, through a little door we found. Osha soon put a stop to that, as it stored everything from soup to nuts. She warned us that is where "dea bluttecher katter voint", meaning, "that is where the bloody cat lives."

Summer was much better and roomier for us kids. We played cowboys and indians. I was always the cowboy. We played hide and seek with a lot of room to run. It was most unfortunate for the younger ones that could not run so fast. They were most always caught. I was fortunate to be nimble and quick. At school in my age group, I always won the races.

The most memorable times were when the Livingstons from Oakland, Calif., arrived, usually for a week or more. Gordon was older, but Earl and "Twiggy" (John) and Dorothy and our age group, always had good times, especially when Osha made us our favorite snack - fresh cracked wheat bread with caraway seeds, fresh butter, poppy seed bread and cookies, along with a glass of milk. We always lined up for picture taking.

Other times, whenever Gladi and I stopped in on our way from school, Osha would be in the yard, carding raw wool, and at her famous spinning wheel. Opa was blind and sat in his old rocker, humming a tune. Whenever he opened his mouth, only one large tooth was visible. We called it the donut maker.

About 1934, on one of their visits, Cleve and Ted had some serious discussion about our struggle to survive on the farm. Minnie was also present. Cleve made a proposal to my parents to move to Oakland. He would arrange for Ted to be the caretaker and maintenance man in the school where he was the principal. My parents were ecstatic, and we were making plans for the move. However, when Osha found out about the deal, she really objected, saying in German, "you have meat and potatoes and plenty to eat." She talked my father out of it. Mother never ever did forgive him for that. She forever reminded him of it whenever anything went wrong and arguments became more prevalent. To me, this was the beginning of their marriage breakdown. Father passed away of a heart problem at age 64, but I say he died of a broken heart.

All the Klause men enjoyed a smoke. Osha objected strenuously. To compromise, they started chewing tobacco, only outdoors. When they came into the house, they always cleared their mouth outside the door. Plug chewing tobacco was very messy whenever it oozed out and down the chin. They all then converted to snoose or snuff. Copenhagen was in a pill box and was on our shelf, always. I remember Edward with the large lower lip, where they all stored their snuff. He always packed in a little extra so it would last longer. Outside, they would practice spitting to see who could go the farthest. All except Paul - he never spit, so he could sneak it indoors.

Ted used to say he swallowed it and it will eat up his stomach. I don't believe that did happen. My father did smoke "Ogden's fine cut" outdoors. I remember 10 cents per package and along came enough cigarette papers to roll your own, and lasted about 2 weeks. Periodically, he would buy a 10 pack of "Turret" cigarettes for 10 cents. This would only be for special occasions. He later gave up cigarettes for a pipe. This was a nuisance when at milking time, a cow's tail would swing by and knock his pipe into the milk pail.

Gladi and I came home from school one afternoon, Mother was away, and found Pop on the bed. His head and mouth were all bloody and swollen. He could barely speak. We found out he had a runaway team upset the wagon box he was in and it hit him under the chin. This caused a severely bitten tongue. He indicated he needed a chew of snuff. It hit his lacerated tongue and with screams and unmentionable language, he flung away the snuff box. It dried up on the shelf and he never touched it again. Gladi and I tried all of the above, to the point where it made us turn green, with upset stomachs and left a horrible taste in our mouths for days. We said, "who needs that" and we never ever did smoke.

At about age 8 to 10, I was introduced to cultivating the land with horses. My first chore was to walk behind 4 horses and sets of harrows (16' wide). The soil was dry and dusty, to the extent of not being able to see the horses ahead. My father, the same as all Klauses, was adverse to try anything new. " What was good enough for my father is good enough for me." I got tired of walking and having seen one of the neighbors with a harrow cart, I would build one. Pop relented and we did find buggy wheels in the junk pile and together with my ideas, we built one. Because of weed control and moisture preserve, crops were rotated into three - 1/3 summerfallow, 1/3 wheat, and 1/3 coarse grain. Ploughing was the most boring of all, except where it was stony. Many times, I got jolted and landed between the horses. One strip ½ mile long at 2 ½ miles per hour for an 8 hour day, about 35 ft. wide, ploughing the summerfallow took all summer.

One lesson I learned was while the horses rested for 10 minutes, I laid down beside the plough and had my power nap. This habit is still with me today.

Hay making and stooking, I detested the most. You never got a rest. At age 14, I got promoted to run a team and hayrack at Pop's threshing machine. I was excited to work with the men. The first day, towards evening, I played out and sat behind a stook and cried. Emil came to my rescue and sent me home. After that day, I developed enough muscle to keep up and eventually was able to load up faster than the others, which meant a rest while waiting for the others to offload. These were long hours - up at 4 a.m. to feed and harness your team, then a man-sized breakfast, usually fried pork and eggs and potatoes, bread with schmaltz (no toast in those days), then out to the field if it was dry. Coffee and baloney sandwiches (lunch break) at 9:30, dinner at 12 noon and coffee and baloney at 4 p.m.; supper was after dark, usually 9 o'clock. Then, the horses would be bedded down for the night, and into your bed roll in the loft. All this for $1.50 per day and all you could eat.

I spent 8 full seasons threshing with my father. A season lasted 20 to 30 days, depending on the yield of the crop. 1937 looked like a bumper crop because we got some rain at the right time. The Marquis wheat that everyone grew had lovely long heads. It turned out to be rusted and could only be sold as feed at a few cents a bushel. All oats and barley was used for feed. Only wheat was sold No. 1 hard northern red, as it was classed, sold at 40 cents to 50 cents per bushel. Oats was 18 to 24 cents and at one point, barley was down to .08 cents per bushel. The farmers now cry at prices of $6.00 to $8.00. One winter, my father took in a hired man. The government gave him $5.00 a month to spend and gave $5.00 for his keep. Father gave him his share, so he got $10.00 a month spending money. Tobacco was 10 cents a package and a pair of coveralls was $2.50.

Our main source of income was a 5 gallon can of cream, delivered once a week for $2.50. Eggs were 5 cents a dozen. Butter sold for 17 cents per pound.

On Saturday night to Springside, we each received 10 cents to spend on anything we wanted. A double decker ice cream cone was 5 cents, a bottle of pop was 5 cents, as was a chocolate bar. When we got to Yorkton, a matinee show was 10 cents for kids. Father would treat the family at a restaurant to a full course dinner - soup, entree, beverage and pie with ice cream, for 35 cents. My first show was "Tugboat Annie."

Mondays at the exhibition was Kids' Day and everything was 5 cents - shows, rides, you name it. We each got $1.00 to spend and were played out by day's end.

Before I started school, I was sickly and very scrawny. My mother said I had Rheumatic Fever when young and she did not think I would live. I did not start until I was 7 and Gladi was ready at 5 (see tribute to Gladi for details). Whitesand School only taught to Grade 8. That was Gladi's extent. I, however, wanted more, so my parents ordered a correspondence course for Grade 9. Study at home was almost impossible because there was always chores and work that was more important. Mother wanted for me to get my education. We made a deal with the teacher at school to let me study there and he would help me. I am forever grateful to Peter Holowaty for helping me to get my Grade 9 and 10.

Next, I was off to Yorkton Collegiate to take my Grade 11. Arrangements were made with Grandma and Grandpa Gabel to sleep in their attic and make my own meals with produce from the farm. School started Sept 1st, but I was unable to go until after harvest was completed. A new school system, new courses I had not been trained for, and two months behind. I was dumbfounded and ready to give up. However, a very cute little blonde in front of my seat, Eleanor Tripp, felt sorry for this dumb farmer and did help me with my studies and to catch up. We became good friends. Mr. Baldwin, the principal, also saw my predicament and was very helpful. At that time, exams were set up so if you did not have a failure in any subject for the season, then any subjects over 85%, you would be exempt from writing. I did not write my exam for geometry, mathematics and physics.

These were three subjects that were a breeze for me because I enjoyed them. I say that was the catalyst for me to do very well in my career in the construction industry for over 60 years. I always had trouble with chemistry, mainly because this was a new subject and a lot of memory work involved. I have trouble to memorize anything that I cannot work out on my own and arrive at a sensible answer. History, with dates, were also a problem. However, chemistry was my most difficult at exam time. I concentrated on studying chemistry and on the final exam, I got 60, but only 56 in history. I failed my Grade 11 and my parents were disappointed.

The following summer, I became 17 years old and World War II was on. Conscription was in effect. My notice to the forces came. I wanted to join the Air Force. I constantly watched the training planes overhead, coming out of the flying training school at Yorkton. Mom and Pop did not want this. I may go overseas and not return.

At the same time, Uncle Harry contracted tuberculosis and was committed to a sanatorium. They got a postponement for me to work at Harry's farm. Aunt Katie and I did that for 2 years. It was extremely hard labor, as no help was available. Winters were easier, with only the stock to feed and tend. I did run a trap line, catching weasels in winter and muskrats in spring. Jack rabbits were also plentiful. I made myself good spending money, enough to buy my first car, a 1921 black Model T Ford Coupe. A Ukrainian farmer had it, but could not afford the gas. It was kept in a shed and sold it to me for $75.00. Now I had wheels!

Farming was not for me. By this time, I had a bit of experience in carpentry, working with Uncle Alf Pedde. We built our house on the farm, the Tabernacle at Cussed Creek, 2 hip roof barns and Uncle Johnny's house. I became an expert shingler because in each case, I did most of it. While shingling Johnny's house, Peter Holowaty helped me on the roof. I was nervous of him because he was too cautious and afraid to move. I had my running shoes on and ran all over the roof. He told me I was very good at that and found a course for me at the Saskatoon Technical Collegiate. There, I did take carpentry and blueprint reading. Upon graduating, I immediately got a job at Logan and Black millworking shop in Yorkton. With the war over, I helped a senior tradesman by the name of Jake Streck, make from scratch and manufacture all the windows for 125 wartime houses. Later, we also installed the doors and all the stairways. At a wage of 54 cents per hour, this was good! That took the best part of a year.

I then teamed up with two other young chaps by the name of Gordon Vanderburg and Collin Young. We went to Swan River to start a sash and door factory. We were green and with no business experience, it failed. I did my first real estate deal in my life. There was for sale a whole city block that was a cow pasture. Twenty lots at $100.00 - $2,000. With very little collateral and a lot of energy, I found the town financier that lent money at 10% interest. Bank rate was 1 ½%. The deal was a promissory note to pay him $2,200 in one year. He was blunt and said that's it - "if you don't pay, I take it away." He was famous for taking away farms. He was wealthy. I immediately went to work and staked out the lots and started selling for housing. At $250.00, I paid off my debt, doubled my money and had three lots left for myself. On that, we built the woodworking shop.

In the meantime, I met and married this cute little farmer's daughter, Muriel Lambert. We had built a little car garage behind the shop and converted it into our house. While this was happening, my brother, Kenneth, came to live with us to finish his Grade 12 schooling. He stayed with us for about 1 ½ years, then went to Flin Flon, where his family is today. With our family starting and the shop not paying off, I started contracting buildings. I had a crew of 3 or 4 and did quite well. Muriel and I decided to turn the shop into suites for rent. I had a good credit rating with all wholesalers and ordered all materials for the conversion. I had enough to pay the wages of my crew. Muriel was now a landlord. There was no waterworks in Swan River and she was kept busy keeping the toilets clean until the honeyman came once a week to empty the buckets.