

## Chapter 1

### A New Land

Oskar stood on the bow of the steamer peering through the swirling mist of early morning. Only minutes before he had heard the cry, "Land ahoy!", had pulled on his pants in excitement, and crowded up the steps with the other passengers, just as eager for the sight of land again as he.

Sure enough, there she stood, veiled in fog, the symbol of freedom and a new beginning for many, the Statue of Liberty. Tears came into Oskar's eyes, and he wiped them away unashamedly. Some were crying openly. This meant the end of one life and the beginning of another, and after several weeks of travel, it was so good to be on the verge of a new adventure.

His parents, Carl and Johanna Larson, stood a short distance from him, among the members of four other families who had made the same decision. Their life in Skarsborg Lan, Vestergotlund, Sweden, while not all bad, certainly left a lot to be desired. Word trickled through about this land of plenty on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. The same rumors stated that life in the new land could be so much better that it almost sounded to the Larsons like the Biblical Land of Milk and Honey.

True, it meant leaving all their family and friends behind, and the decision had been a difficult one to make. Of eight children born to them in Sweden, their fourth, a lovely little girl, passed away before she was two. That same year, 1860, their second son, John Oskar, had been born. Leaving the grave of her little darling was most painful for Johanna, but Oskar was now seven, and she had three younger than he, so reluctantly she had agreed to making the move.

Selling most of their household items, they boarded this steamer for the long voyage, to their Land of Promise. Now crying openly, Johanna wondered whether the decision had been a wise one.

In bewilderment, the immigrants, knowing only the Swedish language, went through customs. After some time, they cleared and with the help of friends who had gone before, bought passage on a train for the state of Iowa.

This train took them to the end of the railroad track, to Chariton, a town in the south-central part of Iowa, in the month of October, just before a cold winter.

Having sent a man ahead in the spring to prepare a place for them to camp when they arrived, they were most surprized and disappointed to find only the floor laid to a shack. However, there was no time to spend in self-pity, and some boards were found and soon all were busy putting up walls and a roof to keep them dry.

They discovered the weather to be no more merciful in Iowa than in Sweden, and by the time they moved in, rains had started and it had turned most chilly. Many of their things were soaked from rain before they finally moved everything under cover. When everyone was settled, it appeared that they were packed more like sardines in a can, than a group of friends in a bunk house.

Carl went two or three miles in an effort to get some milk for his family, only to find that the people spoke English. He spoke nothing but Swedish but somehow made his needs known. The strain of the last few months took its toll, and as he waited for the milk, he fainted dead away!

They found times to be difficult in Iowa, too. Their move followed a time of great unrest, the terrible divisive Civil War, and the entire country was attempting to recover and make a fresh start.

They located inside a bend of the railroad, with a distance of nine miles to the track in one direction, and five miles in the other. It soon became obvious that they couldn't spend the winter in such close quarters, so the men found a Swedish man living nearby who spoke a little English, explained their plight to him, and he agreed to help them find some land and materials to build homes for each of the families.

However, it proved time-consuming, and three of the families lived there together for over two years, huddling around the one stove when the weather turned cold, and sharing the same stove for cooking their meals.

Carl located a piece of land five miles from the railroad, eventually bought lumber,



and built a small home for his family. While they lived in this "bunk house", Johanna gave birth to their last child, a little boy, and they moved into their own home when he was six months old.

The property they purchased needed a great deal of work before it could become the wonderful land of promise they had anticipated. The hilly country resisted their hard work. Rough land needed smoothing. Stones must be removed. At times it seemed that life involved nothing but back-breaking toil, and Johanna longed for her home-land.

However, they found that the hard work paid off, and from time to time they annexed adjoining acreage, putting all the hard work into it, until it, also, produced fine crops for them.

One thing that made their place valuable was a spring of good water. But blessings don't always come without curses, and they found it to be surrounded with quick sand. The quick sand gave them considerable trouble at first, as animals became trapped in it when drinking. Getting them out became a major operation, involving several of the family.

Occasionally a friend would step into the quick sand accidentally, and all work would come to a halt as the family raced to his aid. Eventually they filled the quick sand area with stones and other debris, making it quite safe and a very good watering place.

Winters were cold, summers were hot, but the entire family pitched in and helped with the work, winter and summer. One winter was an exceptionally hard one. The worst sleet they could remember hit them, making the road so icy that a neighbor boy skated to their place, a distance of about one-half mile. Fruit trees in the orchard were badly damaged, as well as some other trees, including some maples.

Damage to their property, severe though it was, still didn't equal that of the little town of Chariton, where telephone and power lines were a complete loss. Some of poles 14 inches in diameter were broken into three pieces, like match sticks. The wires were such a complete tangle that a person couldn't walk through the streets.

The storm occurred during the night, and when morning came, it was long remembered. It took some time to clear the streets of Chariton, and fruit crops were small the following summer.

Carl was a proud man, a man of character and good morals and principles. He trained his family in the same way. Johanna shared his pride in their family, and both watched their children grow. And how those boys grew! Eventually all of them exceeded six feet, with the exception of Oscar, who by now had changed the spelling of his name to a more Americanized way.

Carl told his children of their Swedish heritage, reminding them of their homeland, where most of their relatives still lived. He wanted them to remember, even if they lived in America, that his family was of royal lineage, and he expected them to live up to all that would be expected of them, as members of the royal family.

When time permitted, the boys worked for neighbors for wages, always trying to help meet the heavier expenses of a growing family. The older girls married, one at a time, but the boys contented themselves with farm work, being some younger.

Oscar loved horses more than anything and found work on a large ranch, where they raised and bred horses. When the farm bought one of the first binders in that part of Iowa, he proudly drove it behind a pair of pure-bred Clydesdales. At fifteen, that was a real honor.

Oscar enjoyed working on the ranch with the horses, little realizing how drastically his life would be changing in a short time.

## Chapter 2

### Westward Ho!

When he reached 21, Harry, or Axel, as some called him, decided to move farther west and homestead. The home farm, now producing well, kept Carl busy, but with the young people growing up and marrying, expenses lessened and this seemed to Harry a good time to start out on his own.

He and Oscar listened as tales were told of the West, and all the opportunities it offered. Homesteading sounded just great. Neither Harry nor Oscar were afraid of hard work, and when Harry made up his mind to move West, he asked Oscar to go with him.

While Oscar was only 17, he was capable of doing a man's work and had been doing heavy work for some time. It was with some slight trepidation that the two boys left home for the first time to be completely on their own, and Johanna's heart ached to see them leave.

Carl had taught them the Bible truths, as far as he knew and believed them, and the family was deeply religious. Oscar remembered the teachings of his father, as they left their home.

And so the two eager young men headed out West, feeling that surely somewhere out there they could carve a life for themselves, hopefully better than the one they were leaving. Greener grass, maybe, but they had heard of a Swedish colony in Kansas that was homesteading land, and it appealed to their spirit of adventure.

They went as far as Kansas, and Harry decided to stake out a claim near Oberlin. Oscar worked with him for a while, helping make a dug-out, and clear part of his land.

Dug-outs were the simplest and cheapest, and also the fastest and most practical dwelling. Most claims had banks or hillsides. They searched for a good place, then dug back into the bank the size of the room they wanted. When it reached that size, they put willow sapplings across the top and covered it with straw. When straw covered the entire top, they covered the straw with dirt.

They made the front wall of sod, with a door that led into the room. Considered home by most of the frontiersmen, it took no money, was easy to heat in the winter, and kept

reasonably cool in the summer. These dug-outs served as home to many for their entire lifetime.

With Harry settled in, Oscar began looking for a place for himself. After some time, he found just what he wanted about ten miles away and staked his own claim. This time, Harry helped him dig his dug-out, complete it, and break the first soil, but with his own claim to care for, he soon returned and the brothers were each on his own.

Time passed, with each busy with his own work. But Sundays were days of rest, and Oscar often visited with Harry. He had acquired a black pony he named Jack. Old Jack was not only his work horse, but also his mode of transportation, and when he visited Harry, it was on Old Jack.

On one of these visits he learned with interest that a new family had moved into the neighborhood. Homesteading was a difficult life, and while there were some activities other than work, very few girls lived in that neighborhood. Hoaglund was a different story. They had been blessed with eight girls and not a single boy, and best of all, they had chosen to settle near Harry's claim, where Mr. Hoaglund staked claim to a homestead of his own.

With no boys to help with the back-breaking work of a new homestead, the Hoaglund girls soon became accustomed to working in the field like men. However, they, also, were a very religious family, and Sunday was always a day of rest and relaxation.

Oscar visited in their home with Harry many times after the first meeting with this interesting family. While Harry and Oscar had learned to speak English, the Hoaglund had recently arrived from Småland, Sweden, and spoke only Swedish, although they learned that Father Hoaglund could speak a little English, as he had come to America some time before and worked in the Chicago area to earn money to pay for the fares for the rest of his family.

The Hoaglund home became the center of many a young man's fancy. With seven girls, and before, as one of the young men put it, "Women as scarce as hen's teeth", even the fact that half of them were not really old enough to be eligible for marriage didn't dampen the spirits and interest of the young men for miles around.

While visiting with them, Oscar learned that their oldest daughter, Emma, had come to America several years earlier, worked in the Chicago area to make enough to send for

her father, who with her help, finally saved enough to send for the rest of the family.

While Emma and Father Hoaglund worked to earn their fare, at home in Småland, Mother Hoaglund and the girls spent their evenings pasting together match boxes and gluing on the little papers. These they tossed up into a net slung above their heads to dry, before taking them back to the factory, where they were paid by the piece for their efforts. Certainly there had been no time for play, no time for enjoyment while waiting for their trip to America.

Finally the long awaited day arrived, they said their last farewells, and boarded the steam boat. They knew that they weren't going as first-class passengers, but they hardly expected to be going as steerage, down in the hold with the cattle and other animals. Poor Mother Hoaglund was violently ill the entire voyage, which lasted about two months.

The seven sisters had been planning what to take with them on the boat and saved little bits of candy and sweets for many weeks to eat on their voyage, but bilge water came in and ruined all of it. Food served to steerage class lacked any imagination, so that by the time the boat docked in New York Harbor, the entire family rejoiced as they disembarked and made arrangements to reunite with Father and Emma by train.

And what a reunion that had been! Before they made any decisions concerning their future in America, Oscar learned, they decided to change their name, which originally had been Gustafson to Hoaglund.

Mother Hoaglund couldn't understand why this should be necessary, but Father explained that there were too many Gustafson's already and that many people immigrating to America changed their names, indicating a new life in a new country.

They decided on Hoaglund, also a common name in Sweden, because "hoag" meant "high ground", while "lund" meant "forested area". Having come from a rather mountainous, forested area, their name reminded them of the homeland they already missed a great deal.

After a brief stay in the Chicago area, the Hoaglunds decided to move on to what offered them a greater challenge. They enjoyed farming, and Father Hoaglund wanted to get back to working with the good earth. Someone told them of this Swedish community in Kansas, as far West as that railroad would take them, and in a few short weeks they

boarded the train for Oberlin, Kansas.

Emma's job and friends helped in her decision to remain in Chicago, and shortly she married a fine young man there.

With each succeeding visit, Oscar learned more about this family so like his own in many ways. Both he and Harry were made to feel at home when they visited with them.

One night after a visit with Harry, and of course, the Hoaglund, Oscar mounted Old Jack and started riding toward home. Ten miles in the dark didn't mar his happiness in companionship after a week of loneliness and hard work on his claim, and he gave Old Jack his head and said, "Just take me home, Old Boy."

Putting his hand in front of his face, he discovered that he couldn't even see it. Yet, he didn't worry. Old Jack knew the way blind-folded.

Of course he did, but Oscar felt after some time that the pony seemed to be going in the wrong direction. Putting the reign to the side of his neck, he turned him with difficulty. Then, as he attempted to turn him even more, the pony stopped completely, and Oscar knew better than to urge him on.

Swinging down out of the saddle, he slid to the ground, walked to the front of the pony and started feeling to see what had stopped him. He felt absolutely nothing, and came to the horrible realization that Old Jack had stopped on the edge of an embankment. Had he urged the pony on, they would have dropped to the bottom of the "draw", as they called them, which was a good eight or ten feet down.

He got back on the faithful pony, gave him his head again, and the pony took him home safely. Never again did he distrust Old Jack's judgment when returning home.

During the busy times of the year, Oscar remained pretty close to his home spread, but whenever he felt he could take the time, he would spend the Sunday with Harry, and that often meant a visit to the Hoaglund home. Harry had made up his mind that one of the Hoaglund girls was just what he wanted for a wife and was actively courting Anna.

On these visits Oscar learned more about the Hoaglund family, and what he learned, pleased him. Each of the girls earned her own way, either helping Father Hoaglund on his farm, or working out.

Several years went by. Oscar's spread began paying off-and the Hoaglund girls grew up. He wanted to take a wife but felt that he must have a fit home for her, and the



dug out wasn't exactly what he had in mind.

He felt that the time had come to make some changes in his life.

### Chapter 3

#### A Soddy of His Own

One day when visiting Harry, Oscar asked him if he could take a few days and go home with him, as he had something important on his mind and needed some advice and help. Harry agreed, and when they arrived at the dug-out, Oscar showed Harry where he hoped he could make a "soddy", or sod house. He wondered if Harry thought the place would be all right and admitted that living alone left a void in his life. His farm was doing well now, and he hoped to be able to marry a wife very soon. A dug-out would never do as a home for a new bride, and Harry agreed with him. They planned a "soddy" with two rooms, a kitchen and a combination living-bedroom.

Harry teased Oscar a bit about who would be the lucky girl, but Oscar was tight-lipped about that part of it. How could he be certain that the one of his choice would have him?

Together they plowed the sod with a special plow without a mould board to lay back the turf. They first cut the grass with a colter, then plowed in straight rows, and the grass looked as it had before it had been cut.

Then they took a spade and cut the grass sod into lengths. It was about 2-3 inches deep, and the roots were solid and matted, holding it together. These lengths were used as brick, stacked one upon another, until the height of the ceiling was reached.

When completed, the soddy had walls two feet thick and could well withstand the cold winters, hot summers, and even the terrible storms that occasionally blew through the prairie lands.

He put glass windows into the holes left for them, half-way through the walls, leaving about one foot of sod on each side of the glass. Doors were put in the same way.

When the "soddy" was nearly completed, Oscar made another visit to Harry's home,

and although he felt a bit strange about this visit, how he hoped the Hoaglund girl he had kept his eye on for some time now would agree to marry him and cheer his lonely days and nights.

Apparently Josie, or Josephine Mathilda, found it no great surprize when he began courting her. A few eye brows may have lifted over a 33 year-old man courting a 16 year-old girl, but after a few fishing trips together and other times alone and with the family, getting better acquainted, Oscar finally asked Josie if she would share her life with his, and without hesitation she responded, "Yes."

Oscar felt a great weight lifted from his heart, and it was a happy young man that mounted Jack for his return trip home after getting a "yes" to his important question. Now he really had work to do. He completed the "soddy", built in a few extra things he hoped would make her happy, and planted a nice garden for her to help him harvest. All things intended to give Josie a warm welcome when she joined him in a short time.

Josie knew all about hard work. In addition to helping her father in the fields, she hired out to different families and had been doing this since she had first arrived on the Kansas prairie, at twelve years of age. Work was no stranger to her, and she welcomed the challenge of turning the soddy into a comfortable home.

The day before she turned seventeen they had a simple wedding, and Oscar took his bride home. Modern conveniences were unheard of. Light came from kerosene lamps, the heating stove was "powered" with cow dung, perferrably called "buffalo chips", and all water came from the hand pump.

Oberlin, the nearest town, was ten miles away, and the trip was made perhaps once a year to purchase supplies for sewing, quilting, and staples for cooking.

Josie did the laundry out in the yard, using a wash board in a laundry tub, scrubbing each piece of clothing or other laundry by hand, carefully checking to see that all the dirty places were clean ance again.

The laundry tub rested on a frame fashioned by Oscar over a fire-pit, and Josie kept a fire burning to provide hot water while laundering.

In the winter time, the cold of Kansas was much too severe to do the laundry out in the yard, so the entire operation was moved inside, with the hot water furnished by the water tank on the back of the cook stove.

Oscar worked even harder now, with a wife to care for, but with a joyful heart. He no longer returned to a cold soddy after work. Josie had meals prepared and waiting each evening, and life took on a new and wonderful meaning.

When Josie told Oscar that she was expecting their first child, he was over-joyed. Now he would be a family man, and nothing could have pleased him more. But he must take better care of Josie now, and so he installed a windmill to pump the water. What a wonderful thing, windmills were! Oscar was the idol of the prairie, with his windmill spinning in the breezes, doing all the work for him, and Josie enjoyed having to carry the water from the windmill, instead of having to pump it first.

Their first-born, Alma, brought them great joy. A healthy little girl, and cheerful, too. Mother and Father Hoaglund thrilled each time they saw her, but the visits to their home weren't frequent, as now Old Jack could no longer take them, and they used a horse-drawn wagon. Each trip took several hours over the bumpy prairie roads.

While both Oscar and Josie understood and spoke English quite well by now, they used only Swedish in their home, so when little Alma began to speak, Swedish was the language that she learned.

By then, another child announced its arrival. A boy this time, and they named him Joseph Emmanuel. Still very religious, Oscar was a charter member of the Swedish community Church, and Emmanuel had a very special meaning for them.

Time has a way of moving along. They added Albert to the family, and then Aaron. Each early learned the importance of working, and each carried his or her share of the work load as he was able. While Josie didn't weave or spin, her mother did, and her father prepared the wool for her by washing and carding it.

The children watched with great interest on the infrequent visits in the home of their grandparents as raw wool changed into yarn, and then was woven into fabric. How Grandpa could shear a sheep and Grandma would work such miracles with the wool fascinated them.

On one of these visits, when Alma was about seven, Grandpa Hoaglund surprised her with a China head for a doll. It didn't take much coaxing for Josie to make a body for it, and also some clothes. Such an extravagant gift! Toys were scarce, in fact, almost unheard of, aside from home-made playthings like corn husk dolls.

Visits were made with other relatives on occasions, and these were always the highlights of the week with the entire family. Winter sometimes curtailed visiting to a degree, yet Oscar and Josie still attempted to get their little family out frequently.

Of course, in winter, with its deep snow, the wagon couldn't be used, so Oscar invested in a horse-drawn sleigh. While he hitched up the horses, Josie bundled up the children warmly, because they were pretty much out in the open with temperatures down much too low to take any chances with their getting cold.

One Sunday they decided to visit Josie's sister, Hulda, and her husband, Gus. While they lived only about eight miles away, it would take the entire day to make the trip each way, with some time for visiting and a big lunch at noon.

As Oscar hitched the horses, Josie bundled the children especially well, as the weather was bitter cold, with just enough breeze to drive that cold all the way through. Oscar drove the team and sleigh to the front door, and between him and Josie, they loaded the children into the back of the sleigh, and then Oscar helped Josie and Aaron, the baby, into the front seat beside him, and amid much merriment, they started the horses on the way.

Their big feet broke through the crusty snow. Oscar and Josie talked as they drove on. Aaron soon fell asleep, but Alma, Joseph, and Albert chattered in the back seat, eager to visit with their cousins, about their age, and whom they hadn't seen in some time.

Time passed, and slowly the miles passed behind them. Suddenly, excitement grew as they looked ahead and could see the home of their cousins. Between them was a draw, and the snow lay in deep drifts.

Their fun was rudely interrupted when the sleigh stopped and fell over to one side, almost dumping them all out into the snow. Oscar gave the reins to Josie so that he could get out and do some investigating. He found one of the sleigh runners had broken, and there was no way he could do repairs where he was with no equipment with which to work.

Oscar pondered their situation for a moment, then decided to remove the back seat of the sleigh and place it beside the road for Josie and Aaron, and they sat there while Oscar took the team, drove it on across the draw, and got a wagon from Gus, and returned

to pick up the rest of the family.

In the meantime, the children had remained in the back of the sleigh, so well bundled for warmth that they thought the entire thing great sport.

After Oscar delivered his family to Gus and Hulda's home, he returned to the sleigh once more, this time with the necessary things with which to make repairs, and after some time had passed, drove the team and empty sleigh into the yard. The children's feeling that "Papa can do anything" was reinforced that morning. Their Papa could fix anything, of that the entire neighborhood agreed.

Fortunately, the trip home proved uneventful, but the trip remained etched in their minds indelibly, as the first trip they could remember in the sleigh--and then, the runner broke, adding only interest to the trip for them, but considerable trouble for their Papa.

While week-ends were eagerly awaited when trips were in store, there were other aspects of the week-ends not so welcome in the children's thinking.

One of these was the not-so-eagerly waited Saturday night baths.

Josie heated all the water in the boiler on the back of the stove, poured it into a wash tub placed on the floor in the middle of the kitchen, and one at a time the children took their baths, beginning with the youngest. Each knew better than to miss scrubbing behind the ears, etc. Josie had an uncanny way of knowing when the bathing left places untouched, and after a thorough scrubbing by her, the children were more than willing to take care of it themselves the next Saturday.

Oscar believed in everyone working hard, but he also believed in enjoying his family. Evenings were often story times, and one evening he told them of how he had built the horse barn.

The prairies grew bountiful wild hay. He cut much of this one fall, and had hauled many loads of it to their yard. Most of this wild hay was oats, so when it dried, he had the straw that he needed for making the barn.

This he tightly packed into a large stack, tamped it in hard and solid, and trimmed away to make the sides straight and true.

After deciding just where he wanted the door, he cut away the hay in that area toward the inside of the stack, then proceeded to cut away all the way on the inside of the well-packed stack, leaving a wall four feet thick.



When it was all trimmed out, rafters were placed on top, and they were covered with even more hay and straw, making a weather-proof barn for the horses. And by now, Oscar had an excellent team of work horses who were more than happy to go in for cover and their nightly ration of food, after a hard day at work. Old Jack, their beloved and oldest horse, was still the favorite of the children.

As the family grew, so did the expenses and responsibility. Now, they all went along when they collected the cow dung for fuel. The children went with Josie into the field, collected the chips into piles, and later, Oscar followed with the wagon and threw them into the wagon bed.

The depression of 1890 made conditions even worse, and the homesteaders felt fortunate if they had cattle to collect chips from. The lucky people burned cow chips, others did the best they could with whatever they could find.

One summer the corn crop did exceptionally well. It appeared that, after several years of short crops, the family would finally be able to get a few things, barest necessities, things they had done without. To their great disappointment, they found that no one could afford to buy their corn, and had they hauled it to Oberlin, ten miles away, they would only have received 2¢ a bushel for it.

Rather than go to the work of shelling it and hauling it to town, they shelled part of it for themselves and ground corn meal. They ate corn meal mush, corn bread, corn scones, and dried corn in every way imagineable, and what they couldn't eat, they burned for fuel.

One day when Josie went the boys for water to the windmill, they hurried back to the house to tell her that a yearling calf had somehow tried to jump over the pipe that ran the water from the windmill to the water tank, but it had lodged over the pipe, and there it dangled, completely off the ground, tipping precariously one way, and then the other, in vain struggles to get down.

Josie took one look at the heifer, shook her head, and said, "She weighs too much for me to move. There is no way we can get that calf off. We'll just have to wait until Papa comes home later this evening."

While the poor calf continued its frantic efforts to get free, the boys took the water to the house and set up a watch for Papa, hardly able to wait to tell him about the heifer

hanging by its belly over the water pipe, and certain that Papa would know what to do.

"On the water pipe, you say? How could it get up there?"

"We don't know, Papa, but it wants down terribly!"

With Oscar to the rescue, the calf finally went on its way, little worse for the frightening experience.

Entering the house one day, Josie looked up over the door and froze in her tracks. Hanging among the sticks and roots just above the door was a snake. Fortunately for her, a stick was near-by, and unfortunately for the snake, between her and the boys, they promptly disposed of it once and for all.

Life was good. Oscar and Josie were happy, the children were well, and Josie discovered that a fifth child was on the way. Another time for rejoicing. Both she and Oscar loved children and welcomed the coming of another. Summer crops were in, and a large stack of hay put away toward their winter needs. All was well with their world, until the day of the storm.

## Chapter 4

### Family Man

One day as Oscar worked in the field with the team, he noticed a dark cloud traveling in their general direction. That could only mean one thing--trouble, perhaps serious trouble.

Hurriedly he turned the horses toward home, leaving the equipment in the field, but before he could get near the home and barn, he could tell that he could never make it ahead of the storm, and it continued racing across the prairie. He could see that his homestead was directly in the path of the storm, and when he neared the house, he turned the horses loose, hoping they could find their own way to the barn and attempted to find the corn crib, hoping for some shelter.

The corn crib no longer stood in its place, having been blown away by the winds, now of gale force. From there, the chicken house seemed to be the next nearest refuge, but when he reached where it had been, he decided to try to make it to the house.

Inside the house, Josie and the children worried about him, but more presently for themselves, as the wind whipped around the corners of their soddy. They had watched as the wind approached, after their mother called them back from an errand she hoped they could accomplish before the storm struck. Their bushel basket remained empty, and they barely made it into the house before they saw the windmill, so still all day, begin to turn as the edge of the storm neared them, and then spin crazily, frantically trying to keep up with winds of gale force.

Around and around it went, as the storm approached, bringing first dust, and then torrential rains, until they lost sight of the windmill and outside became totally dark, darker than the darkest night.

With much effort, Oscar reached the house and tried to get the door open. Never had it stuck so tightly! He pushed with all his might, and while it appeared to give a bit,

it appeared that another force pushed against the far side. He shouted for Josie and the children to open it for him, please help him get in out of the storm, but his voice blew away with all the other unattached things in the yard.

Finally, Josie realized the reason her efforts to hold the door shut against the storm wouldn't have been nearly as necessary had she only allowed Oscar to open the door and come in!

The entire time he tried to get in, she had even enlisted the help of the small children to keep the door closed, thinking it was only the storm about to blow it down and she couldn't bear to think about the consequences should that have happened.

After changing out of his wet clothes, Oscar attempted to get the children's minds off the storm that raged outside as he read to them from the Bible.

Evening came, it was bedtime for the children, and still the storm raged. Tucking them into bed, they prayed for God's protection, and soon Oscar and Josie also went to bed and fell into an exhausted sleep.

The following morning dawned bright and clear. But although the storm had passed, when they went out to survey the damage, they found their prized haystack completely blown away. Bits of it cluttered the yard, and straws had been blown with such force that they stuck several inches into the walls of the soddy.

This cyclone did a great deal of damage in that neighborhood, and Oscar and Josie knelt in thanks to God that their home had withstood the terrible blasts of wind that could drive individual straws into the light posts.

Christmas time they made another visit to Mother and Father Hoaglund, spending some time with other friends. These were special times, of great enjoyment to all.

Grandpa Hoaglund had a surprise for the boys, and while they watched, he made jumping jacks for them. Such a wonderful grandfather! How they loved him, and wished they could see him more often.

For Alma, a set of China dishes. Another big sacrifice on Grandfather's part, but he excused it by saying, "But we get to see them so seldom."

He showed Oscar some of his latest hand-made tools. A wooden scoop for dipping oats for his horses, and other improvisations to ease the burden of living.

So while the boys played with their jumping jacks, Alma played house with her set of

real China dishes, playing that she was serving tea to the King and Queen of Sweden.

Not all the time was spent with the children, however. Father Hoaglund

inquired all about Oscar's farm, and talked about all the usual farmer-to-farmer topics, and Oscar told him of the terrible storm that had visited them but missed the Hoaglunds, only ten miles away, while Josie and her mother caught up with all the family news.

All too soon the time came for Oscar and Josie to load their family back into the wagon for the return trip home. They tucked warm blankets around them to keep out the biting wind, and by the time they reached home, the children had long been sleeping.

Winter work consisted of getting things in shape for spring plowing and planting, feeding and milking the cows, and other routine things. Many things were put aside during the rush of spring and summer work, waiting for winter months, when the weather prevented getting anything done out in the fields.

Early in his married life, Oscar had made a soddy for the few chickens they kept. Not having taken the pains with this one as he had for his own home, rain and winter weather had melted it to the ground, leaving an unsightly mound in the back of their yard.

While it had served its duties well, now it was only an eye sore, Oscar decided that the door yard needed some fill dirt, and that the chicken house sod could be used to good advantage, so he and Josie dressed the children in their warmest clothes, and they went with him to the deceased chicken house, where he began the work of sifting out the dirt from the roots.

While still winter, the sun shone warm on their backs as the small children played in the yard, making small doddies, and playing other games.

Joseph and Aaron soon tired of building miniature soddies and went to see if they could help Oscar, while Alma and Albert played on, oblivious to their absence.

Oscar didn't mind their watching, but there was little that they could do to help. Finally he finished sifting another cart load and asked, "Joseph, will you please throw that spade into the cart for me?"

Pleased to be asked to help, Joseph picked up the spade and tossed it into the cart. He failed to notice that when Oscar asked Joseph to help, Aaron decided that he wanted to

help, too, and had stood at the end of the cart, reaching up to push. However, at three, Aaron was simply too short to reach high enough to do much good. Just as Joseph tossed the spade, Aaron's little fingers reached up over the side of the cart.

The spade flew across the cart, slamming into the far side, and Aaron let out a scream as it severed the end of one of his baby fingers.

Alma and Albert didn't hear anything unusual and continued with their play until Alma realized that Papa and the boys had been gone a very long time and decided to go to the house to see what kept them.

The first things she saw was a pool of blood in the wash basin, and it frightened her. She asked, "What happened? Who got hurt?"

Josie pointed at a very quiet Aaron sitting there with a bandage on his finger, and Alma asked, "What happened to his finger?"

Everyone started talking at once, and finally Oscar quieted them and explained that Aaron wanted to "help Papa", too, and how the spade had cut his finger off, so Josie had put it back in place, bandaged it, and they hoped it would heal nicely now.

Aaron still sat there quietly, although Alma thought he looked a little pale, staring at the white bandage on his finger.

As the days went by, he asked if he could take the bandage off, but Josie kept telling him, "Not just yet. Wait a bit longer."

At the end of three weeks, Josie removed the offending bandage, and to the delight of everyone, the finger had healed perfectly, leaving only a small scar to remind Aaron of the day that "Joseph cut my finger off."

With cattle needing to be brought in from pasture each day, Oscar decided that they needed a dog. They found one guaranteed to be just what they wanted, and named him Shep. Shep lived up to his reputation, helping a great deal with the cows. He had been trained to be a "heeler", going for the heels instead of the head of the cows, and when Oscar said, "Come Shep. Get the cows," he'd point out where the cows were, then he'd add, "Bring them in."

Shepknew just what to do. He trotted out to the field, circled the cows, and started them in toward the barn. If one started to stray, he would go to the heels and bring it around. He saved Oscar many miles of walking, and doubled as an excellent watch dog.



Shep became a member of the family, and his favorite sleeping place was just inside the door, which was set about a foot back into the two-foot sod wall. There he could watch everything that went on, yet be out of the way. And there he could sleep undisturbed as long as he pleased, providing the children didn't waken him to play with them.

Oscar worked his fields with a team, hand plows, and hand cultivators. He planted corn and wheat, and when the corn was ready for harvesting, he let the children help him with the husking.

He took out his big wagon and said, "You take your little wagon", and they all went to the field together. While he worked on his larger wagon, Joseph and Alma husked corn and filled the smaller wagon.

When it filled, he praised them, dumped it into his wagon, and told them to fill it again. Over and over again they filled their little wagon, proud to do this, as they were "helping Papa". This seemed like big business to them, and although they tired, they never complained. Everyone worked, and they were proud their Papa thought them old enough to be able to help.

Oscar found that it saved them a great deal of money if he did his own blacksmithing. Eventually he built his own shop, and the children enjoyed watching as he held the plow shear in the fire until it became red-hot, pounded it out to sharpen it, and then plunged it into a pail of water to temper it.

They shivered with delight <sup>when</sup> they heard the shear sizzle as it dipped into the cold water. Eagerly they stood as close as they dared, hoping that Papa would let them work the bellows for him. Those times they felt especially of value to their beloved Papa, and often Alma or Joseph worked the bellows until their arms ached and considered it an honor.

When they didn't help him, they still knew when he had been working in the smithy, as he always came in at evening with a black nose.

Neighbors learned of his skills in blacksmithing and came to him for miles around with work, so he made a little extra spending money in this way. His reputation went ahead of him, and some felt that he had missed his calling and should have been a smithy instead of a farmer. But Oscar's first love was the soil, and that is where it remained.

## Chapter 5

### Good News!

The fall that Josie was carrying Mable, when Oscar decided the corn was ready to harvest, he hitched up the horses to the wagon and drove out into the field. Slowly he made his way down the rows of corn, husking and putting them mature ears into the bed of the wagon.

As he neared the end of a row, he noticed a stranger walking toward him. Always hospitable, he worked a little faster as the man approached, meeting him at the end of the row. After greeting each other, the man joined him as they husked corn on their way through the field.

Oscar wondered about this young Swede who had introduced himself as Swin Mortenson. Obviously he had husked corn before. He kept up with Oscar easily when they each took a row. As they visited, Swin tactfully turned the conversation to religious subjects, and Oscar found himself most interested in what this young man had to say. Certainly not like he had been brought up to believe, yet something about the way Swin talked touched Oscar's heart.

At the end of the day, Oscar invited him to spend the night in their home, and he gladly accepted. Undoubtedly he must have been weary, yet he made no mention of it as they continued discussing various subjects of the Bible.

Oscar enjoyed Bible study and had faithfully attended church most of his life. This young man opened horizons that he simply couldn't grasp in one sitting, and he asked questions that let Swin know he had found an interested and well-read man. Little did he realize that Oscar had never completed more than three winters of formal education. He read his Bible well, and as Swin continued visiting the Larson family, he admired the way Oscar led out in family worship each evening, calling all the children to him and reading stories to them from the Bible. He discovered that some of their favorites were Daniel in the Lion's Den, Jonah and the Whale, and the Three Hebrews in the Fiery Furnace.

Josie wondered that first night where he would sleep. With only two rooms, and

one of them the kitchen, their only sleeping room was almost wall-to-wall beds. With four children now, Oscar showed his ingenuity when he made a trundle bed for the children, one that slid under the big bed during the day.

While they disliked having to put him there, they finally decided the only place for him to sleep would have to be the kitchen floor, and each of the many times he visited and studied the Bible with them he slept there, happy for a place to spend the night out of the weather.

They discovered that he had completed Swedish Seminary a short time before as an evangelist, and that soon he planned to start meetings, explaining even more Bible truths. Oscar decided that he must attend.

Throughout the entire series of meetings, Oscar faithfully attended. Josie remained at home to care for the children. Carrying her fifth, she didn't feel strong enough to go along with him and keep four small children quiet.

When Oscar returned home each evening, he explained what he had learned to her, and she listened but couldn't completely comprehend the new truths. At the end of the series of meetings, Oscar gave his heart anew to God, accepted the truth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and was baptized.

Josie didn't feel that she could accept all these new ideas so quickly, so Oscar continued helping her with the difficult points as they studied together. Time passed, and the few others who were baptized following the meetings began meeting in a home some miles away. No church existed for them at that time, and especially during the winter months, attending was most difficult at times.

Somehow, Oscar, as leader of the small company, managed to hold things together. He conducted everything in Swedish, and they had no musical instrument. Yet, when Oscar pitched a song, after humming a bit to himself, it always seemed to be just right, and their voices joined singing from their Swedish Hymnals, with words to the songs, but no musical score.

Usually they took the team and wagon, but in the winter they changed the wagon for a sleigh, bundling the children well against the cold air. No matter what kind of weather, church was important enough to make a real effort to get there. Only heavy snow or blizzards kept them home from this precious time with others who believed as they now did.

Mable was born, and still Josie couldn't decide whether to accept what Oscar believed. Her parents opposed them violently. All their family had been members of the old Swedish Church, and anyone leaving it was considered a heretic.

Finally, in March, she took her stand to join her husband in Baptism, and this posed a bit of a technical problem. Living on a prairie, with no lakes for miles around, and few rivers, where could they baptize this fragile lady?

When the children learned the answer, fear struck their hearts. Out in the yard they watered their horses in a large circular wooden trough that stood about 30" high. They scrubbed it out, filled it with fresh water, and this would be Josie's baptismal font. The boys remembered her repeated warnings to "Stay away from that trough. If you fall in there, you could drown."

On the crisp Sabbath morning planned for Josie's baptism, the minister arrived at their home. Other members began to arrive. Someone placed a chair beside the trough on the outside for her to step up onto, and another inside for her to step down inside, as Josie changed into appropriate clothing for the big event.

Albert watched with growing horror as his mother came out of their home, stepped upon the chair, and down into the trough. He noticed that as the minister stepped in just ahead of her, he brushed a thin scim of ice to one side before burying his mother in holy baptism.

He wanted to cry out, to stop them. He simply couldn't watch, yet he couldn't look away. His beloved mother, going to drown in the horse trough, and for what? He didn't understand very much about what was happening, but he felt a tremendous sense of relief when Josie stepped, shivering, out of the trough, and walked back into the house.

Oscar decided that Josie needed more time to learn as much as possible about their new faith. Opposition from her parents, even worse than they anticipated, made them no longer welcome in their home. The children felt this most keenly and couldn't understand the reasons behind the change in their grandparents attitude, although their parents attempted to explain that sometimes people have to suffer if they follow Jesus.

Even Harry, who had never really gone along with the traditional Swedish Church opposed them, and this perhaps hurt even worse than the antagonism of Josie's parents.

Oscar's thoughts turned more and more often to the second coming of Christ, and he encouraged his family to be ready, for "no man knoweth the hour of His coming."

Alma, as the oldest, needed new clothes more frequently, as there was no one to pass them down to her. Although times were difficult, indeed, the time came when she desperately needed a new pair of "Sabbath" shoes.

Oscar took her to town and bought a pair of shoes that would delight any little girl. The insets on each side were of blue velvet with white polka dots, and Alma could only think, "These shoes will last me until Jesus comes."

When Oscar learned about something the Adventists called "camp meeting", he decided this would be the place for Josie to learn more and get a little vacation at the same time. He offered to send her and Mable, the baby, and keep the children with him so that she could attend as many of the meetings as possible.

She agreed to go, and took along one of the older daughters of another newly-converted family to help with Mable. Spending time at camp meeting had more advantages than just attending meetings. Josie found that she knew very little about this faith, and even less about many of the people who believed in it. She met new friends, and they dispelled any reservations she might have had concerning her newly-embraced religion. She noted that these were God's people.

Among the people she met while there, one couple particularly seemed attracted to her. As they visited and became acquainted, they told her of a place in California where there was a church close enough to worship each week. They also told her of a school where the students were taught from the Bible, and operated by their denomination.

In their conversations they learned that Alma must soon start school. Already they had held her out one year, and Joseph should also be starting, but they hesitated sending them to the school near by because of a wild, rough element. When she learned that they intended to make a trip out to see if all this were true, she asked if they would write to her after they looked things over, letting her family know if it could possibly be as good as the rumors said.

They agreed, and at the close of camp meeting, Josie took Mable home, full of things to share with Oscar and the rest of the family.



In the meanwhile, Oscar learned a bit about trying to operate a farm and tend four small children. He found it to be a difficult chore. But work must go on, especially during the busy time of the year, so he took the children to the fields with him. He would go about his work, and they played at the edge of the field, picking wild flowers. The biggest problem involved a tiny stinging insect, and every so often he rushed to help the children, who were fighting them off and screaming at the top of their voices. He eagerly awaited the day of Josie's return.

He listened intently to the many things she told him. Especially when she mentioned about the church school in California. Their concern about schooling their children was of utmost importance right now.

Summer wore on. Oscar harvested his crops, but still no word from Josie's new friends. He continued his Bible study, giving the study to the small company of believers who still met each Sabbath. Many hours he spent, pouring over passages of the Bible, comparing them with each other, until he became a knowledgeable Bible student. His old Swedish Bible showed the large amount of useage, as he hungered and thirsted after ever more of God's Word. How he wished, at times, that he could have had more education. But his family had needed the help of each member to survive, and when it came time for spring farm work, everyone had to pitch in and do his or her part.

The day came when the long-awaited letter arrived. What a tale it told! Of a land flowing with all kinds of goodies, of fruit trees on every side, of winters so mild that a light coat was sufficient, and then the important part--indeed, there was a church school, and also a church.

The letter ended by suggesting that Oscar make a trip out to see for himself whether or not they would be as favorably impressed by the Land of Promise as they.

Oscar pondered this. Moving the entire family? That would be a big move to take, and yet, if they believed the Word of God, wasn't it their bounden duty to do all they could to see that their children grow up to love and serve the Lord? And how could they do that when they didn't even have a regular church to attend, and certainly no church school in which to learn more about the Bible?

He talked it over with Josie, and together they decided that she and the children could manage until he returned. He boarded a train to "spy out the land", and see first-



## Chapter 6

### Fond Good-byes

Josie and the older boys took care of the cattle, slopped the hogs, and all the other things necessary to keep a farm running smoothly. Yes, they still had hogs. They puzzled as to how they could manage without them when they were first baptized, but the minister told them that he felt for the time being they should keep them, and when it came time to get rid of them the Lord would show them how to make a living without them.

What excitement when Oscar returned! His suitcase smelled of apples, and not only apples, but other fruit as well were distributed to all. Alma couldn't help but feel a sense of envy when she saw what she imagined to be the largest apple in the world set aside for her beloved grandparents. Josie and Oscar still loved her mother and father very much, and they hoped that they might get back into their good graces before making the move they anticipated.

Then they visited the Hoaglund, Josie's parents, the first visit since they had become Seventh-day Adventists, and while the reception was cool, at least they were welcomed. Oscar told them of their decision to move out to California, and gave them that big, BIG apple. The children all understood that absolutely no one could touch it. How Alma wanted that apple!

While the grandparents hadn't changed their thinking about the new religion, when they realized that Oscar and Josie would soon be moving their family out to California their manner softened considerably toward them. They made over the children again, and Grandpa Hoaglund gave Alma a box of colored pencils, knowing that she would soon be starting school. Another treasure! She loved her grandparents so dearly and couldn't understand why they treated her parents in such an unloving way for so many months.

Josie tried to explain that she felt her father had once been introduced to this new religion and had decided against accepting it. She knew how he felt--if it didn't sound right to him, none of his family should have anything to do with it.

That Christmas they traveled again to visit with Grandpa and Grandma Hoaglund. Josie talked with the children before they went, warning them of possible unclean foods that would be served at the big Christmas dinner.

As the platter passed down the long table, Albert's eyes bulged. He saw some of Grandma's home made pork sausages, and suddenly he felt an irresistible urge to have some. Not even daring to look at either of his parents, he took an ample serving and passed the platter on down the table. Never had sausages tasted so good! Yet, he wondered just when he would be punished, because he knew he had done something wrong. Josie had decided not to say anything about it, and the wondering was far worse than if she had actually punished him and been done with it.

Crops had been unusually good the summer before, there was more money available than in several years, and it seemed that the Lord was telling Oscar to make the move while the time was ripe. As spring-time neared, he and Josie made plans to sell their homestead, all their furniture, livestock, and farm machinery, including the horses that meant so much to Oscar.

Talk got around their little community. People questioned the common sense of their making a move right when the going was so good. Neighbors came to call, asking if it were really true that the Larsons were moving away. While neighbors were two to three miles away, still everyone knew everyone else in the community.

The closest neighbors waited until they were certain that the Larsons were indeed going to sell. When they visited, they asked about the price on 160 acre spread. Oscar placed a fancy price of \$1500 on it, thinking he could always go down, and felt the Lord's hand leading once more when the man accepted it for the first price mentioned. Not only did he buy it, but he paid for it with good, hard cash, something almost unheard of during the depression, still so fresh in their minds.

Plans continued for an auction sale. Since money had been so tight, ~~one~~ one had attempted to hold an auction sale for years, and many thought it a foolish thing to do. Oscar thought otherwise, ordered hand bills printed, and placed an ad in the local news paper.

On the day of the sale, the friends, neighbors, and acquaintances crowded to their

yard. All of them jingled a little cash in their pockets after an unusually good crop, eager to spend it for things beyond their means for so long.

Somehow, Oscar felt that if the Lord could help them sell their farm for hard cash before they advertized it, He would guide in the auction sale, too, and it went very well, indeed.

At lunch time two of Josie's sisters helped her serve a hot lunch to the crowd. Soup, served in tin cups, along with crackers, bread, and hot coffee. So many people came that they could hardly believe it, and when the auctioneer finished selling the last item, they counted their money. An additional \$1500 for the sale! What a good God they served!

The following week, Josie frantically packed. Her parents, now genuinely sorry for the tough stand they took when Josie and Oscar first changed religions, now offered to keep the children while Josie and Oscar completed the packing and made final preparations for the big move.

The ages of the five children ranged between nine and three. They enjoyed their visit with their grandparents and for the most part, their differences were reconciled.

Josie warned the children once again about the probability of unclean meats being encouraged, especially crayfish. The children couldn't understand why it was all right for their grandparents to eat them and yet quite wrong if they joined them.

With Mable just three, and Josie feeling not at all well while carrying her sixth child, the children would have been nothing but a hindrance to the preparations for the trip to California, and the grandparents, who had attended the auction, hoped that in taking the children home with them it would be a great help to Josie. It would also be the last chance they would have of enjoying them in their home, at least for many years, and while they had been most bitter about the changes made in the lives of their Josie and her husband, they still dearly loved the family.

Sure enough, before the week was over, Grandmother Hoaglund served crayfish one dinner-time. Alma, the oldest, recognized them at once and spoke right up: "We can't eat that."

The other took it for the gospel truth, and although the grandparents applied some pressure, they all passed the plate without helping themselves to what they once con-

sidered a delicacy.

After Oscar and Josie watched the last sale item leave the yard, they completed the last minute packing and went for one last visit to Josie's parents. Several days had passed since the children had gone home with them, and they greeted each other warmly.

Oscar and Josie thanked her parents for their help with the children and the sale, and then they spent a few hours remembering the good times, and the bad.

The 1890 depression had left many scars on the homesteaders in Kansas, as it had on the many others who lived during that time. Now that things were some better, they could look back and chuckle about some of the inconveniences. Josie remarked that she hoped she would never have to eat corn meal mush again in her life, if it were because that was all there was to eat.

Oscar remembered the chickens so recently sold at auction, and how the price of eggs had now risen well above the three cents a dozen during the worst of the depression days, and so time passed, as each in his own way put off the final good-byes.

At last Oscar announced, "The time has come. We must go home, get our things together for tomorrow we will be on our way to California."

While the children remembered very well the oranges, grapefruit, and apples he brought back with him from that far-distant place, they clung to their beloved grandparents a bit longer than usual before telling each a sad good-bye.

Looking back as they drove off in the wagon, the children could see their grandparents standing in their yard, Grandma Hoaglund wiping her eyes with her apron, and Grandpa waving with his weather-beaten hands.

Driving the horses held Oscar's attention, but tears welled in Josie's eyes as she turned for one last look at the home she loved, and her parents growing smaller in the distance.

## Chapter 7

### California, Here We Come

Early the next morning Oscar and Josie waked the children, helped them dress, and ate a hearty breakfast. This was the big day, and since they had sold everything at the auction and delivered the horses and wagon the evening before, they wanted to be ready when their neighbor came by to take them to the nearest depot. It was the month of March, a time between winter and spring, and still very chilly.

The neighbor drove his team into their yard right on schedule. Behind the team, a wagon estimated to be large enough to take a family of seven and all their earthly belongings to the train.

Oscar and the neighbor loaded the trunks and suitcases first, and then helped the children find places to sit on a blanket on the floor. By the time they spoke to the horses, telling them to "Get up!" the chill had become downright icy cold, and the sky no longer sheltered them with a blue canopy. Dark clouds skudded over, and before long they realized that a blizzard could strike at any time.

Although the children were tucked in snugly with blankets, the cold stung their faces as the horses trotted along at as fast a clip as their driver let them. Josie, not feeling well herself, attempted to comfort them as the terrible blizzard struck them full force.

The driver encouraged the already-running horses to increase their speed. In fact, the children bouncing around on the hard wagon floor imagined they were riding in the chariot of the Biblical Jehu. Still, in spite of the horses breaking all speed limits, it took them the better part of a day to reach the depot in town.

They found the depot to have one large pot-bellied stove. Someone had put in fuel until it burned red-hot all the way around. Everyone in the depot, including the Larson family, huddled around that one stove, each as close as he or she could get. But many people planned to leave by train that day, and some burned on one side and froze on the

other, if they were lucky enough to get that close. Most of them satisfied themselves by hanging around the fringes of the crowd, getting what little warmth as could get through. Everyone got in the way of everyone else. A few kindly adults gave their places to the children, or found a way of helping them to slip under ~~an~~ around some of the taller ones, and they warmed quickly.

Josie had a miserable night. Already sick carrying the coming baby, all the excitement did her no good, and coming into the cold depot seemed like adding insult to injury. Frequent trips to the rest room relieved her of what little was left of her last meal. At times she had some serious reservations about the entire trip.

Fortunately for her, Oscar now had time on his hands and took the children under his comforting wings. After they boarded the train for a transfer point north, in Nebraska, he often could be seen taking Mable for walks in the corridors of the train, attempting to keep her interest on things other than Mamma.

Knowing that a sixth child was on the way had helped Oscar and Josie make up their minds to make the move. They wanted more fruit and other things unavailable to them on the western Kansas prairie for the children, but the two-room soddy was over-crowded already, and where to put one more was an ever-present concern, to Josie, especially.

When they arrived in Nebraska, they were shown into another waiting room in the depot. Another pot-bellied stove, and another crowd of people. To compound their miseries, they learned that a bridge ahead of them had burned, so they spent the entire night huddled around this stove in the middle of the room. Benches and seats were around the room, but no one got much sleep, and by morning Albert burned with a fever, Josie's nausea was even worse, and the Larsons were a sorry family, indeed.

With a new track across an improvised bridge, the conductor called, "All aboard!" and everyone found his seat, this time really on the train for California. While the train to Omaha, Nebraska, was a passenger train, they now rode on a Pullman car, or an earlier version of the Pullman.

While the beds pulled down, there was no privacy. Still, with a bunk above for three of the children, they got a lot more sleep that first night than they had at the depot the night before.



Oscar's concern for Josie grew. He hoped for a better day for her but found that the constant motion of the moving train only aggravated her already-nauseous condition, and she was most grateful when Oscar took the children with him on walks in the corridors, showing them things he hoped would interest them and keep their minds occupied.

The next few days were miserable ones for Josie, but the children enjoyed all the new things Oscar showed them along the way. When they crossed the State line into California, he called it to their attention: "Now we're really getting closer. We're in California at last!"

Never in their short lives had the children seen so much greenery, and they could hardly believe that such rivers existed, or so many of them. The largest, the one Oscar called

the "Sacramento", caught their fancy because Oscar called them all over to watch as they crossed it.

What a thrill the boys felt as the train pulled slowly onto tracks on a large, heavily-constructed barge, then put on its brakes and parked while the barge built up a head of steam, then pulled out onto the river.

Shivers of excitement chased each other up and down the girl's backs as they realized that they were actually on a river, such a wide one, with nothing under their train but a flat boat. They jumped as the barge popped off its whistle, and their eyes grew large as they neared the far side of the river.

They all felt more at ease when they saw that the tracks continued on the far side, and as soon as the barge docked, the train slowly pulled onto the tracks and continued on its way.

Later that evening, well after sundown, the train puffed into the station at Escondido, their destination. A friend Oscar had made on his first trip out met them at the station with his buck board. With a little help, everyone managed to pile onto it, but it was greatly over-crowded, and they couldn't get any suitcases or trunks onto it.

First thing, when they arrived at the home they would be staying for the night, the boys wanted to go outside and "see California", but their parents told them that bedtime came first. Tomorrow would be time enough for them to see their new home.

Josie expected the children to waken early and put their clothes out and ready to go, and they lived up to her expectations of them. Bright and early they bounced out of bed, hurriedly dressed, and rushed outside. Oscar and his host, Mr. Kelly, were talking in the yard, but what took their eyes were the orange trees at the side of the house. Never had they seen anything like it before! The trees were covered with ripe oranges, and on the ground, oranges lay thick.

The boys would like to have raced to the tree and to begin stuffing their mouths with the luscious-looking fruit, but Oscar restrained them until Mr. Kelly said, "Let them have all they want. The fruit won't hurt them, and we have more than we can eat."

As they ate one orange after another, they found them to be as sweet as sugar, and right then they decided that they had reached the land flowing with milk and honey.

Later that day, the men returned to the depot to pick up the trunks and other baggage. Of course, a family of seven can't just move in with another family and expect to stay indefinitely, so Oscar started looking for a suitable house for them to rent.

The following day they moved into a place of their own, and again the children did a bit of exploring. Mable, the youngest, and the next older brother, Aaron, started out on their own.

In Kansas they knew nothing of fences. Aside from their home and farm buildings, they could see space in every direction. This completely bewildered them. They walked around the corner of the house and confronted their first fence.

Until that moment, they liked everything they saw, and at first the fence intrigued them. But when they walked right up to it, they found no way around or through it. First it bewildered them, as they tried to find a way through, then it frustrated them, and finally Josie heard them wailing and found them against the fence, too young to realize that all they would need to have done would be turn around and walk away from it.

She led them back to the house, explaining about a few changes they would need to make in their lives, now that they no longer lived on the prairies of Kansas.

Oscar immediately started looking for work. While they had a considerable sum in savings, he had no intention of spending it until they found what they wanted to buy for themselves. With no team or machinery, he felt lost, but farmers in the surrounding community hired him by the day.

While he had never been afraid of hard work, this certainly proved to be a different experience for him. Yet, he made a living wage, for that time, receiving about \$1.50 for a long nine hours of back-breaking work. He comforted himself with the knowledge that this would only be temporary, and that things would soon be better. After all, the Lord had led them this far. Surely, He would continue leading them.

One of the first things on his list of priorities was getting the older children into Church School. They knew not one word of English, and this posed a problem. Yet, he felt it not to be an unsurmountable one. Oscar visited the little school, talked with the teacher, and told her of his children, their move from Kansas to get them into church school, their ages, and how badly they needed to get started.

He suggested that he would pay the tuition for the rest of the school year and would expect only one thing, that they learn to speak as much English as possible so that at the beginning of the following school year they could really start classes with the other children.

The teacher agreed, and the following day Alma and Joseph held Oscar's large hands tightly as he walked with them to the little school. The warm greeting couldn't be misunderstood, even though it was in English, and while that day and the days that followed were difficult for them, the children found themselves learning to speak the language of their adopted country with the help of an understanding teacher and friendly children, who took teaching of English to these two new Swedes as a challenge.

Day after day new words were introduced to them, and gradually they learned many words that helped them in understanding more about their new surroundings.

At home things were no better. Oscar and Josie decided that if they were going to live in an English-speaking community, they would also speak English, and although it was quite broken at first, they spoke no more Swedish in their home and also forbade the children to speak in Swedish.

Mable, at her young age, learned quite readily, and between their parents, the teacher, and the students teaching Alma and Joseph, they soon used English acceptably.

At home, Alma and Joseph helped Aaron and Mable, as well as their parents with some they had learned, and soon the entire family was using English quite comfortably.

## Chapter 8

### The Land of Canaan

After living two or three months in town, Oscar and Josie found that they missed country living. Neither of them had lived in a town before, and they wanted their children out in "God's country".

One day Oscar took time off from his work and looked for a place of their very own out from the little town. As Josie's time drew nearer, they realized that the home they now rented would hardly be adequate for one more, and Oscar determined that if at all possible, they would be in their own home when she gave birth.

The boys needed more to do to keep themselves out of mischief, too. Oscar grew up under difficult conditions, working from the time he was little more than a toddler, as did Josie, and they felt that their children needed to be busy doing something helpful and constructive.

What he found went well beyond his wildest expectations. A bit over nine acres, and the man who planted it used imagination and fore-thought. Every known variety of fruit trees grew on that small parcel of land, and most of them were old enough to bear fruit.

He took Josie out to see it, and it was love at first sight! Many kinds of apples, several kinds of pears, peaches, apricots, figs, and olive trees, to name only a few. Twenty-two different kinds of fruit trees seemed like a dream come true to these people of the prairie, so starved for good, fresh fruit.

When Oscar contacted the owner about buying the place, he found it not only on the market, but at a price within their budget, and he lost no time in closing the deal. Now they owned their very own home, with a real house, about two miles out of Escondido. They moved out a short time before Maude made her appearance into the world, in June.

Not only did the place have many kinds of fruit trees, but there was ample room for planting more fruit and a vegetable garden. Oscar found cuttings of grapes, and as so often happens, when something is new and wonderful, planted twenty-two different

varieties, all of which grew.

Until now, Oscar had gone to work each day on his bicycle. All was not as he expected it, and instead of the friendly, hospitable families on the Kansas plains, where they invited him in to a nice, hot lunch each day he worked for them, when lunch time came here, he opened his lunch box and ate his cold lunch of sandwiches and fruit, all alone.

Although the purchase of a bicycle enabled him to get back and forth to his work in the orange groves, he missed his horses dreadfully, and when he discovered that he could make more money if he had his own team and some machinery to go with it, he shopped around until he found that he thought to be the best available and felt much more at home with his team than he ever did riding a bicycle.

And he did make more money! But it also provided a way for the family to travel to town for church and shopping during the week. It soon became a common sight to see the Larson family, Papa, Mamma, and all six children riding in to Escondido to church each Saturday morning, behind the team in their wagon.

Summer passed very quickly, and with the coming of fall, Alma and Joseph found themselves looking forward to returning to school. Their English had improved a great deal, and the teacher gladly started them in regular school. With Alma ten and Joseph almost eight, their minds were open and most receptive, and the teacher enjoyed watching them absorb learning so quickly.

The school boasted of only five or six other children, so each student received his share of special help when needed, and each student made good progress. On very special days, a man the teacher called Elder Ernest Lloyd visited their little school, telling them stories and playing with them during their recess periods. Children were instinctively drawn to this man of little stature but great faith and love of children.

Sabbaths were a very special time to the Larson family. Papa didn't go away to work, the children didn't go to school, and all enjoyed the church services in the little church in town.

However, the children also looked forward eagerly to Sabbath afternoons. Their parents, in their wisdom, attempted to plan something special to hold the children's interest. During the summer, they went for long walks around their little acreage, sampling first one fruit, and then another. Josie still called it her "little Heaven on earth."



Alma, Joseph, and Albert couldn't forget their first experience with ripe olives, fresh from the tree the first morning that they had arrived in Escondido. In the fall, when the olives ripened, they tried to introduce them to their friends, always enjoying the look on their faces as they frantically spit the extremely bitter fruit from their mouths.

Oscar and Josie felt a real sense of contentment in their home in the country. He still worked away from home for cash, yet kept their own small acreage producing for them.

One evening when Oscar came in from work, he found Alma and Joseph impatiently waiting for him. He enjoyed listening to them tell of things learned in school, as it also broadened his education. But what they told him this particular evening puzzled him. Joseph blurted out, "Papa, the teacher told us today that the earth is round."

Oscar never made snap decisions, but this one really took some deliberation. He knew the earth could not be round, yet he hesitated to undermine the teacher, so he finally said, "But doesn't the Bible teach that the earth has four corners?"

That ended their discussion, but it gave him something more to think about, and he continued studying ever deeper into the Scriptures. His church responsibilities began to weigh on him. While he hadn't been an Adventist too many years, the church was small and it needed all the dedicated help it could muster. Almost from the time he became a member, he served first as an elder, and then as head elder.

Elders were considered the church fathers, usually giving the Bible study for the 11:00 service for Sabbath mornings. Oscar spent hours many evenings preparing for those Bible Studies. Never would he admit to preaching, but the members of the little church returned faithfully each week for his inspirational talks.

Josie not only enjoyed the country atmosphere, but she reveled in their home. Never in her wildest dreams did she imagine that she would have anything so nice. Only twelve years old, the builder finished it with heavy redwood siding, trimmed with redwood trim, even to a square block in the corner of each door. Solidly built, and large, with three bedrooms, a large kitchen and sizeable pantry, a large living room, and also a bathroom, housing a zink bath tub.

The boys especially appreciated the wood box, which opened to the outside of the



house, making it possible for them to fill it from the outside and take it out on the inside, to feed the fires. Such a modern home for a family accustomed to a soddy with no bathroom facilities at all, excepting for a little path that led out back and a wash tub placed in the center of the kitchen floor at bath time.

Aaron missed living in town, and one day he approached his mother. "Can I go to town?"

He and Mable had been playing make-believe games in the yard, and Josie didn't even look up from her work. Assuming that this was part of his make-believe, she answered, "Oh, yes."

To Aaron this was not make-believe. He had his mother's permission to go to town, and off to town he started, walking right along. It didn't occur to him that it would be a long walk, just that he wanted to go, and now he could.

Mable didn't even miss him, thinking he had just gone into the house for a while, and Josie was certain that he had returned and was playing with Mable.

As he passed a neighbor's house, the man was surprized to see this little chap, much too young for school, walking along by himself, so he asked him, "Where are you going?"

"Oh, I'm going to town."

The neighbor was just completing harnessing up his team for a trip into town, so he said, "I'm going to town, too. You can ride with me, if you want to."

Aaron's short legs were tiring already, so this offer sounded pretty good to him. The neighbor helped him climb up and put him on the seat of the buck board wagon, right beside the driver, just as proud as he could be.

Alma and Joseph were on the way home from school when they met the wagon, and they asked, "What are you doing up there?"

"Oh, Mamma said I could go to town."

They didn't say anything. They knew they could trust the neighbor to look after him, but it concerned them a little about how he had gone off to town by himself. That certainly wasn't a common thing in those days.

After a while, Aaron returned home. He had taken no money with him, and even if he had, would have had no concept of how to spend it, but when he returned home he had a

card board box, and he really felt proud of his accomplishment. Josie learned a valuable lesson, and never again answered so quickly or absent-mindedly when one of her children made an unusual request.

That school year ended with Alma doing especially well in school. At the age she started, she learned very rapidly. Joseph also made good progress, and after another summer working on their miniature farm, Albert joined them when they returned to school in the fall.

## Chapter 9

### The Peanut Era

In every community there are well-meaning people who want to be helpful, and so it is in every church. When the Larsons arrived in Escondido, the Adventist Church was just entering the era of the health message. Several of the Escondido families had embraced vegetarianism, replacing meat with the almighty and versatile peanut.

Some of these good people felt it their Christian duty to "educate" this new family with so many children in ways of more healthful living. Peanuts, the newest fad, seemed to enter into every discussion. These dear ladies proceeded to tell Josie of the value of peanuts in providing protein in the family diet, far better than the meat they then used.

Josie respected these Adventists, so much longer in the truth than she and decided to make changes in their eating habits. No more meat of any kind, but peanuts in every shape, form, and fashion showed up on their table.

Peanut soup in the evening, peanut butter on the bread, in place of the harmful cow's butter, peanut roasts,---peanuts, peanuts, and more peanuts.

Oscar found a place in Loma Linda where he could buy peanuts by the 100 pound bag. They bought their own mill and made their own peanut butter. Josie tried peanut in almost every possible way, stretching even her imagination, trying to make them palatable.

The children soon tired of their diet of peanuts, and became even more tired when they turned the crank of the mill, making peanut butter in large amounts.

The family was also encouraged to use olive oil, which was good for the stomach. While Josie had never completely removed butter from the table, if olive oil was better for them, they must try it.

The children didn't join her in enthusiasm over food fads, but they did as they were told, and when she asked them to find olive trees and see if they could get permission to pick the olives, they went out each fall, picked olives, and then took them

to a factory where they made olive oil.

The factory squeezed the seeds as well as the pulp, and the children returned home with a five-gallon can of olive oil. The factory was on the way to school, so they picked up the oil on the way home from school one day, and then tried to decide how best to use it.

The bitter taste repulsed them, but with those ladies applying pressure on Josie, all six of the children, and Oscar, submitted to the indignities of using the bitter olive oil on bread, in place of butter.

The boys found that if they sprinkled it liberally with salt, they could get it down. In fact, they came to enjoy the taste of the salt and didn't mind the olive oil so much.

Poor Josie! Her stomach rebelled, and the church people couldn't understand what had happened to the formerly robust lady, now feeling poorly so frequently. They took their condolences to her, puzzling over her problem and certain that it must be the diet she fed her family. The children wholeheartedly agreed. All was well until they tried accepting a diet they had no way of fully understanding.

The Larsons became well-known and much loved in the community and church in Escondido. About two years after they arrived there, the Kelly's, who had befriended them upon their arrival, needed to make a business trip to San Diego. This meant that they would need to be gone for at least one night, and they had a little Spitz dog that would need care while they were gone.

The children were acquainted with the little dog, and when they came in from school and found it tied to their wagon, their first thought was about food. The only thing they could think of to feed a dog was rabbit. Of course, the best way to catch a rabbit would be to let the dog run it down, so they headed for the house to ask permission to take the little dog hunting.

When Josie heard what they proposed, she reminded them that if they untied the dog, it would promptly return home again, and they might not be able to catch it.

"Then how can we get a rabbit for it?"

"Why don't you call the cat?"

Why not? Kitty hunted mice, rats, squirrels and rabbits, so they called, "Here

Kitty, Kitty", and she came on a hard run.

She followed them as they walked through the orchard. No rabbit. On the other side of a fence at the back of the orchard, their cow grazed contentedly. When they reached this fence, they got down on their hands and knees and crawled under. In crawling under, they flushed out a rabbit.

Kitty did her best. She ran like a chetah, caught it after a short chase, grabbed it, and with one bite, broke its neck, killing it instantly.

But if they thought their troubles were over, they just didn't know. They tried to take the rabbit away from Kitty, but she would have none of that. Possession is nine tenths of the law, and she had the rabbit. She had run it down and killed it, and no way would she let them have it for a dog or for anything else. That rabbit belonged to her.

She started following them back to the house, dragging the huge jack rabbit between her legs. The rabbit measured longer in inches than the cat, and finally the children grabbed the hind legs of the rabbit, exciting her greatly.

One big jerk, and the rabbit no longer belonged to the cat. As the children carried the rabbit home, poor Kitty followed them eagerly, hoping for at least a part of it. She didn't know that they intended to do just that, and after cutting the rabbit in two pieces, the little Spitz and Kitty each began their feast. While neither of the animals had enough to eat, it satisfied the children, and at that point, satisfying them was all-important.

## Chapter 10

### School Capers

As the school years rolled by, Aaron also started to school, and a year later, Mable. They went to school in the front part of their church, a fine brick building. The children walked the two miles or so each way, but occasionally they caught a ride with a neighbor driving along the road.

One morning a man picked them up in his wagon and they rode with him most of the way to school. Apparently he planned to work with dynamite. Loose on the floor of the wagon were some caps for setting off the dynamite, which was in an open box in the bed of the wagon.

Albert saw these caps and thought they they looked interesting. In fact, so interesting that he picked some of them up and put them into his pocket before getting out of the wagon.

As they walked the rest of the way to school, his conscience began to bother him. He knew that he really shouldn't have taken them, but now that he had them, he didn't know how to get rid of them. As he entered the schoolroom, he saw the perfect solution to his problem.

The stove that warmed the room was burning, and he quickly and unobtrusively tossed the caps into it. Before long the daps started going off, one after the other. The stove danced all over the floor, and the teacher was up-set, putting it rather mildly.

When she traced the culprit to Albert, he had to go to the front of the room and confess to all. He learned his lesson well. Never put dynamite caps into the fire, but if you do, don't get caught!

Their church was located in a rather poorer part of town. Homes were poorly constructed, and children and dogs were abundant. One dog in particular, insisted on going onto the school grounds, probably to play with children, whom it loved. But these children, especially some of the boys, attempted to drive them away.



This one dog really bothered some of the older boys. It interfered with their games, but mostly it just didn't belong to the school, and they began discussing what they could do to discourage it from pestering them.

One recess the teacher over-heard them talking of various means of ridding the school of this dog once and for all. The words that she over-heard, "Tin-canning", struck her as inhumane, and she sternly warned them against ever tin-canning the poor dog. She mentioned that cruelty to animals is not a Christian virtue, and she thought the issue closed.

On the way home that day, the dog joined these boys as they sauntered along, and one of them decided that now teacher had nothing to say about what they did, as long as they were not on school grounds.

It didn't take very much talking for the other boys to join in the plan. Albert and Aaron were among the group planning to rid their school of the dog, and they helped hold the dog while one of them found a can and put in some rocks. Another produced a piece of string from his pocket, and before the unsuspecting dog realized what had happened, the can weighed down its tail, rattling in a menacing way, and the dog was off in a flash.

Running wildly, it headed for the only place of refuge it could think of, straight back to the school yard, and finding the door to the school open, darted inside, heading for the teacher, who stood there terrified of this wild-appearing creature fleeing from the ever-present rattling can.

The teacher suddenly realized that the dog was running right up to her, and she was galvanized into action. In one flying and undignified leap, she landed up on her desk, yelling for help.

Someone went to her rescue, managed to calm the dog long enough to get rid of the noisy tin can, and no more was said that night. However, the following morning most of the children were amazed to find that school didn't start on time. The boys involved realized one thing--they were in for trouble.

As the rest of the students waited outside playing games, the teacher gave them a thorough discourse on the evils of tin-canning dogs and meted out due punishment, and opened the doors for the rest of the children to go in.

When all were seated, the teacher opened school for the day, and after the usual

formalities during which the boys waited miserably, she said, "These boys have something to say to you."

Albert, eager to get it over with, was first to his feet, and made his way to the front of the room and blurted out, "Sorry I tin-canned the dog," and returned to his seat.

Aaron followed the lead of his older brother, stumbled to the front of the room and repeated, "Sorry I tin-canned the dog", and returned to his seat while the others involved each made his way to the front for his "confession".

Of course, not one of them meant a word they said, but whether or not they meant it, the punishment had its desired effect, and never again did either of them even assist in tin-canning a dog.

## Chapter 11

### Special Guests

Excitement ran high when word filtered through that Sister Ellen G. White would be visiting their church for an entire week-end. Josie's bad stomach still plagued her, but when word went ahead of the small group traveling with Sister White requesting accommodations for her and her son, Willie, Josie listened intently as the various ladies of the church found excuses for not keeping them.

"Not enough room in our home. We can't have them with us", one lady commented, and another, "I'm so afraid that she would not approve of our eating habits. We can't keep her", and still another, "Our home isn't nearly good enough for her!"

While Josie didn't feel at all well, she couldn't understand these ladies, so helpful in telling her how to improve her family's diet, yet so filled with personal concern and pride that they would turn Sr. White away. She well-understood how the members held her in awe, yet someone must keep her, and finally she spoke up, "She's welcome in our home."

"But you still use milk and eggs, and sometimes even put butter on your table! What will she say? Surely you won't put those on your table when she is in your home, will you?"

"We are what we are," responded Josie, "If she comes to our home, we will not change our habits of eating. If we eat anything that she feels is wrong, I hope she'll tell me about it."

Although all the bedrooms in the Larson home were filled, as far as Josie was concerned, that was the end of it, and when Sister White and her staff arrived, Josie and Oscar made her and Willie welcome in their home. Indeed, they considered it a privilege having them stay with them.

Sister White! The girls helped get the house spic and span, and on the day of their arrival, they helped Josie prepare a nutritious meal for their guests, including some home-made bread and a big slab of home-made butter on a dish near Josie.

Friday evening, when they sat at the table, and after the blessing was said, Sister White looked the table over and exclaimed, "Home-made bread!" as she helped herself to some

of Josie's butter and put it on the nourishing bread.

That was some week-end, and one long to be remembered. Sister White walked over their small acreage, marveling at the number of fruit trees in their orchard.

While in their home, she talked with Josie concerning some of the controversial food subjects, as Josie lay resting. Her stomach simply couldn't take all those peanuts without rebelling, and at times she almost became an invalid, unable to leave her bed.

As Josie expressed her feelings that without meat occasionally her system simply didn't work well, Sister White told her that far better she eat meat occasionally than be bed-ridden because of a lack of nutrients due to this new diet they weren't ready for just yet. She explained that meat eating was no cardinal sin, but it was better for people to wean themselves from it slowly, as they grew accustomed to using other foods that could take their place in the over-all nutritional program.

Josie felt much better in her mind after listening to these words of counsel. Following her visit, Josie decided to do more study for herself and listen less to the well-meaning but mis-guided ladies of the church, and finally decided, after reading John 2:1-3, where it states, "I wish above all things that you prosper and be in good health", that it didn't sound to her like she was in such good health. Certainly not as good as before she went on the peanut butter binge.

When she changed her diet, she was able to be up and about again and her health took a decided turn for the better.

Sister White's visit at this time involved attempting to develop an interest in Paradise Valley Sanitarium, and to raise money to help pay for it. She visited various churches in behalf of the Sanitarium, and found good response in some of them. Oscar felt impressed to give as much as he was able at the time, and many lesser amounts enabled the purchase of the property.

Camp meeting time arrived, and Josie remembered back to the first one she attended, several years before, so far away that only she and Mable could go. What a difference! Here, the entire family attended, and one year the camp meeting featured dear, elderly, beloved Elder Loughborough. Although of small stature, and rather feeble, he spoke on Daniel 2, his favorite subject. His enthusiasm made a real impression on the minds of all who heard him and deepened their desire to be ready when Jesus came.

Five years after Maude's birth, a little brother joined the family. They named him David, in honor of one of Oscar's brothers.

Josie was very ill with the flu when he was born. Sickly from the very start, it was some years before he gained any kind of robust health. Perhaps because of that, he was a much-loved little boy, and with six older brothers and sisters, Josie had plenty of help when he cried--which seemed to the family to be most of the time, at first.

Josie was just regaining her health from the "peanut era", and still had her ups and downs. One time she was quite ill, and Oscar called the local doctor to make a house-call. Most families still drove the conventional horse and either buggy or wagon for transportation, but the family doctor was among the first to drive a car. The noise not only frightened horses in the streets, but children, as well.

David, who was just a toddler, played in the yard at the foot of the driveway. As the automobile started down the slight incline, David looked up and began to scream. Nothing anyone could do could stop the screams that came from deep within him, uncontrollable screams that sent shivers of fear through those who heard him.

The car finally parked, and David's screams subsided into sobs, and finally he became quiet, but he complained of pains in the abdomen, and when they examined him, found that his incessant screaming had left him with a double hernia.

Doctors preferred not operating on hernias excepting as a last resort at that time, so he ordered a steel truss. When it began to deform his hip, Josie made a home-made support, and eventually he out-grew the hernia, and it gave him no more trouble.

One day the children came home from school with exciting news. The following weekend, Sister White would be speaking in the church at San Pasqual, about fourteen miles from their home. Ever since her visit in their home, she held a very special place in their hearts and that evening they discussed the possibility of their being able to drive over to hear her speak again.

Their transportation was a spring wagon with two seats. It also boasted of a top, and a fringe around the edge. With a family of nine, even though David was quite small, they couldn't all ride in that one wagon, and they were faced with a dilemma until Joseph and Albert came up with what appeared to them, a brilliant idea. They would ride their bicycles! If they could go in that way, the rest of the family could crowd into the wagon.

Their parents contemplated this idea. The boys rode them often, and if they stayed close by the wagon it would be all right, but could they really get the others all in for such a long ride?

They looked the wagon over, planned where they could put boxes for extra seats, and decided that they would plan to attend on Sabbath morning.

Going by horse-drawn wagon is a slow process, but after getting a very early start and encouraging the horses to walk as fast as possible, they finally arrived for the 11:00 preaching service. Joseph and Albert rode along with the wagon, sometimes ahead, sometimes behind, but always within viewing distance. When the younger children tired of sitting on the hard boxes, they stood for a while.

The going was rough, and the four-to-five hour trip tired all of them, but they sat as a united family through the preaching service enthralled with the message, taken from John 15, verse five, which reads, "I am the vine, and ye are the branches."

At the close of the service they lunched in the church yard. Josie had prepared a dessert, special for Sabbath dinner, a lovely bread pudding, and after a brief rest and some visiting with members of other churches and seldom seen, they again loaded into their wagon and started for home, another five hours of bumping and jouncing on roads that left a great deal to be desired, yet with their hearts warmed by having seen Sister White again, and hearing her message.

Sr. White's reason for making this trip herself was to continue her fund-raising for Paradise Valley Sanitarium. They could tell that she had aged some since the visit in their home and over-heard someone remark that the trip had been very difficult for her, and that they doubted that she would ever again travel so far from a railroad.

She had a very real burden for this Sanitarium. When looking for a site for it, she had been shown a place with existing buildings. She exclaimed, when they went to look at that piece of property, "Brethern, this is the exact building that I saw in my vision. I urge you to buy it."

She discovered that the faith of the brethern was weak indeed, so decided that she would do some soliciting on her own. She found two or three others who were willing to help in a substantial way, and they set to work raising the \$8000 necessary to purchase the then existing buildings and about 30 acres of land.



Between the efforts of the three of them, they raised the money and made the purchase. Oscar had donated a large sum, considering the times and circumstances under which he lived, when Sister White visited in their home. Many others sacrificed to make the purchase possible.

After buying the land, they discovered that water was very scarce. The fact was, there was no water on the land, and rain was scarce. The question that loomed in the minds of all concerned was, "What are we going to do about getting water so that we can develop this Sanitarium Sister White has been shown we are to build?"

Many skeptics said it couldn't be done. Just money down the drain, just a waste. But Sister White urged them to drill a well, and told them that she had seen ample water in her vision.

They hired a man to dig this well. He lived in Escondido, and the Larson family knew him well. His method consisted of one man digging with a pick and shovel, and another at the surface who drew up the dirt in buckets with a windlass.

After he dug down to a considerable depth, he had the man at the surface lower a bucket, and he stepped into it and was hauled to the top of the large, dry hole. He went to speak with Sister White, who left the room where she rested, and met with him in conference. He told her how deep he had gone, and that in his opinion, it was useless to put any more money into digging any deeper. She must have misunderstood. The hole was dry, completely dry, and he had no hopes that he could ever reach water.

She asked him to return and continue digging, and that she would go back to her room and pray. He accepted her advice, returned to the well, and as he was being lowered into the well, heard a little sound that interested him. It almost sounded like a tiny trickle of water, and when he stuck his pick into the side of the well, a stream of water gushed through the hole and into the well. He called for help, for the man at the top to pull him out quickly, and this well continued to be a source of good water for many years for the Paradise Valley Sanitarium.

## Chapter 12

### Albert's Miracle

The years sped by. Alma finished the eighth grade and began working in homes to help increase their income. Oscar found that even with his team and machinery, \$3.00 a day didn't take care of their growing needs. Joseph and Albert worked out for different farmers after school and on Sundays, and during the summers while Alma cut apricots, they worked for poultry farmers and other ranchers, doing odd jobs, living away from home during the week and returning home for week-ends.

Eventually, Alma found permanent live-in work for the Marcus family in San Pasqual, helping in the home with the house work and also caring for the children.

Joseph and Albert also lived-in during the week, and one Friday afternoon while walking home, they got caught in a heavy rain storm. Arriving home, they were both soaked to the skin, but the heating stove soon warmed them up, they dried their clothes, and after they prepared for the Sabbath, they felt more human again.

The following day, Sabbath, after attending church services in the morning, the boys walked back to the church in the afternoon for their young people's meeting. Oscar walked with them, as it gave him a chance to talk with his older boys, nearing man-hood.

As they returned home, Albert got a sharp pain in his side, a pain so severe that he could hardly continue walking. Even resting at home didn't ease the unbearable pain, and when his parents finally decided they had better call a doctor, he diagnosed the problem as pneumonia.

Albert was desperately ill for well over two weeks. His fever raged out of control, reaching 105, where it remained for almost two weeks, going up to 106 for a short period of time.

He was delirious most of that time, having horrible nightmares. At times he became violent, even viscious, tearing the bedclothes from the bed. At other times, although still delirious, he quieted down but picked cherries from the bed, saw snakes going up the bed post and stare down at him. He felt helpless, yet unable to do anything about it.

The very worst nightmare of all involved Aaron, the brother next to him. In his delirium, it seemed that Aaron had had a terrible accident, although just what it had been was unclear, and he stood at the side of Albert's bed with his head completely opened up and his brains showing through the break in the skull. This nightmare returned to haunt him repeatedly, driving him even more out of his mind.

The doctor did all that he could, but nothing seemed to be of any value. At the end of the second very bad week, he told the family that they needn't call him again. "This will be my last visit. I won't come back. There is no need for me to come. There is no more that I can do. His fever has been too high too long, and the human brain simply can't stand that. Even if he recovers, which I doubt, you can't expect his brain to ever be the same again."

It was a very worrisome time for the entire family. Josie nursed him day and night, but she refused to give up on him. Finally, after the doctor left saying that he wouldn't return, they decided to call the minister and ask for special prayer.

The minister arrived, and he requested that the entire family join him in prayer. As he prayed, he anointed Albert and claimed the promises of God, and asking that if it be His will, Albert be restored to his family and completely healed.

As he completed his prayer, the fever broke, Albert opened his eyes, and recognized the entire family standing around his bed, including Aaron. The awful nightmare still haunted him, and he felt special pleasure in seeing Aaron standing beside him in good health.

Once the fever broke, the family called the doctor again. At first he refused to see Albert, insisting that it would only cost them another house call, which had nearly broken them financially as it was, but when they persuaded him that Albert's fever had broken, he seemed alert, and seemed to be thinking rationally, he returned and could hardly believe his eyes.

By the time the doctor arrived, Albert was ravenously hungry. It had been over two weeks since he had even been conscious, but the doctor said, "Don't let him eat. Don't feed him, it will kill him."

Poor Albert! But the doctor told Josie how to provide just enough to keep him going until his stomach could do its job again. A little apple, a little other fruit, like dried

figs, ever so little at a time.

Albert could have eaten a cow, and small pieces of fruit didn't in any way satisfy his craving for food, but he was at the mercy of the doctor and his mother, so he chewed each tiny piece of fruit thoroughly, savoring every drop of juice.

His extreme weakness when he re-gained consciousness surprized his family. Where before he had been uncontrollably violent at times and needed restraining, now he was as weak as a kitten, unable to even lift his hand from the bed.

The doctor assured that this was quite normal, and that it would probably be a long time until he would be strong again. Both his lungs were completely filled with fluid, with the exception of one small spot in one lung. However, in time this cleared, and Albert joined the family in giving praise to the Lord for miraculously returning to him his life, which had been just hanging by a thin thread.

His lungs were badly scarred, and the scarring remained to remind him of the miraculous healing. "Surely," his parents said, "The Lord must have a mighty work for him to do."

## Chapter 13

### New Frontiers

Joseph and Albert still attended the little church school winters. During the year that both Joseph and Albert took the ninth grade, Oscar and Josie did some serious re-evaluating of their circumstances. They wanted a good education for their children, yet it appeared that while Escondido had been the place for them to settle in, perhaps the time had come to move on.

They began hearing rumors of new land being opened up to settlers farther north in California. Several members of the Escondido congregation became interested and went up to investigate. They liked what they found. Raw land, mostly flat, with abundant wild grasses growing on it. Fertile soil, ample water for the digging, and they wondered what more a family could want.

The first town they heard of was Modesto, but when they looked into that, the land was already much too high for them to think of buying. Someone read an advertizement in a Los Angeles paper about land being opened up in Madera County, and this interested them in going up to see for themselves if it were as good as the others reported.

While this was being done, excitement began building again around Escondido. The annual fair had become quite an event. Josie and Oscar didn't feel that much time needed to be spent there, but it was only about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from their place, and each year they spent half a day looking at the many things on display, and the children looked forward to their "day at the fair".

While strolling around the grounds, they learned that this year something new had been added to increase the interest and attendance at the fair. The man in charge promised to give a washing machine to the family with the most children. Josie didn't pay much attention. Never before had she won anything, and surely there were other families with as many and perhaps even more children than they.

The next day the washer would be awarded, and as they walked to the various displays, the man in charge saw them and made a point of speaking with them about trying to win.

It appeared to him that the interest was so low as to be almost non-existent, and he feared that no one would show up to claim the washer. "Won't you please dress your family up and come over, just in case? You would like a new washing machine, wouldn't you?", he asked, turning to Josie.

She pondered that last. How would she know whether or not she would like a new washing machine? The only thing she knew was scrubbing the laundry on a wash board, but she heard herself agreeing to at least get the family there in time for the contest the next afternoon, and the official left feeling much better. At least one family would be there!

Poor Alma! She was no child, yet she happened to be home. Joseph and Albert didn't feel much better about it, but obediently they dressed in their Sabbath best and walked the short distance to the fair grounds.

The boys had watched the horse race earlier that afternoon from the front porch. Admittedly, it was frustrating when you could see everything but the finish line, but it was better than not being able to watch at all.

They arrived just in time to hear the man telling about what a wonderful washing machine it was, and ask who would be the lucky family. Who had the most children?

Dead silence fell over the group of people standing around him. He waited, and waited, and continued waiting, but there was not one family that showed up to run any kind of competition, so he announced that the prize went to the Larson family, with seven children.

Children! Alma wished a hole would open up and swallow her, and the older boys would gladly have gone along with her, but when they saw the look of pleasure on Josie's face when she really saw the wonderful machine, they felt ashamed of their feelings and were happy for her. Included with the prize was a huge fruit cake, frosted prettily.

Advertized as fully automatic, when they got the washer home they soon found out what "fully" automated it. It had a handle, and someone had to push-pull the entire time it took to do the washing. Albert took his turn, then it went to Aaron, who in turn gave it to Joseph, who soon found other pressing things to do, and even the girls took their turns at working that washing machine. If they worked too slowly, they were late for school.

The washing machine proved a real blessing for them, and had an added bonus--a wringer, which worked with a hand crank. Sometimes one worked at it, sometimes two, but between



them they got the laundry out each week with the new automatic washing machine, won for being the family with the most children in Escondido.

The fruit cake served as dessert in lunch pails for many weeks, weighing around fifty pounds. A real treat, when it took everything Oscar could make just to keep the barest of necessities on the table.

Oscar's cattle herd now numbered four, so they had all the milk they could drink, cottage cheese, and butter. In fact, Josie had long been making her good, sweet butter and selling or trading it to a local merchant in town. The children were well-acquainted with the churn, also "automatic", only instead of going back and forth, as with the washing machine, it went up and down.

Several ladies in the community made butter, and each had her own distinctive mold. Some would prefer one butter over another, and when customers asked for butter, they always put a name in front of it, hoping that the kind they liked best would be available.

Partially due to this demand for her butter, Oscar had always had at least one cow, and usually more. There was a little pasture for them at the back of the property, and after they were milked, the cows were returned to their pasture while the milk was put into tin pans for the cream to rise.

These pans were taken to the stone-foundation tank house, where the milk cooled. After the cream rose to the top and the milk clabbered, Josie skimmed the cream from each pan, putting it into the churn. Then the children went to work, churning the soured cream into butter.

When she had enough butter, she usually also had a few extra eggs, and between the two it helped in trading for groceries and staples at the local grocery.

Josie preferred the butter form with the pretty design in it, but when she traded butter for supplies, she used the square one, more uniform in size. One form full weighed exactly one pound, and sold as a full, square block.

Alma continued working out, usually making about \$2.50 a week, and living in. Not big money, but she was proud of her contribution to the family's limited income. While still in school she became acquainted with a boy a couple of years older than she by the name of August Hemme, a good German boy. He saw in her the makings of a good, thrifty wife, and decided to see more of her, if possible. When he heard of a possible move to

Madera County, he also became interested, as he had no intentions of letting Alma get that far away. He wanted to keep in touch with her, for sure.

They saw each other socially occasionally, and while his motor cycle terrified her at first, he even persuaded her to ride with him a time or two.

On advice of some who had gone up before, one of the Escondido members made a trip up to the Great Valley, to the County of Madera, and liked the land so much that he bought a parcel immediately.

Letters reached his brother, who talked with Oscar and another member or two, and they decided to make the trip themselves and see if it did hold promise for them.

They went up by train, found the former member, who showed them around and introduced them to the land agent. He showed them around some more, trying to encourage them. He explained about the beautiful road planned one day to be lined with palm trees on either side and go for miles out through rich farm lands. With a bit of imagination they could see the tiny palms, already planted, growing up a bit, but the beautiful road took a bit more imagination, as it wasn't much more than a wagon trail at the time.

The agent thought he would hear from them again in a very short time, but some time passed as the men talked with their wives and families about this new place with the Indian name of Chowchilla. Land was fertile, but also the price was higher than they had anticipated. Moving a family of growing children from a lovely home, from all the fruit and garden in their own yard, to a place where there was nothing but prairie grasses and no homes took a lot of consideration.

When the agent didn't hear from them in some time, he made a trip to Escondido, looked the Larson place up, and made them a deal for trading their place in on one up north. He offered them a good price for their place, \$4000, much more than the \$1500 they paid for it, and that looked tempting, on the surface. But the rest of the deal looked a lot like a mighty big gamble. The condition of the sale depended upon their buying three or four times the value. They would have no cash to get a new start, as the cash from their Kansas property had dwindled to almost nothing.

They made it a subject of prayer, and the answer appeared clear when a friend from Kansas days approached them, saying, "My family would like to go along with you to Madera County. We have our place for sale in Kansas, and when it sells, we'll pay you cash and

buy one of your parcels if we can go up now and work on it, and begin proving it."

They had been good friends in Kansas, in fact, the little Seventh-day Adventist Church had met in their home, and Oscar had no reason for not trusting them completely, so on the strength of this promise, they agreed to the agent's proposition, signed the paper and made plans for their second major move.

The first one took them to a land of plenty, and where this move would take them, they didn't know. They only knew that they needed more land for the boys to work, to make more money to put their young people through school, and they felt that the Lord must be leading them once again, as He had led them in the past, toward that goal.



Home and Family, Escondido, 1914







Oscar and Josie Larson and family, 1900



Oscar and Josie Larson  
1916



Father and Mother  
Hoagland

## Chapter 14

### Beginning Again

They handled things entirely differently this time when they made their move. They sold very little, keeping all their furniture, farm machinery, and the livestock. They rented a box car and loaded everything into it, even a wash tubful of plants that Josie hoped would grow when they arrived. In fact, she took a sample of all different kinds of plants and flowers out of their garden and stuck them into that wash tub.

Oscar told her of the growing conditions there, as he had lived there several months before they made the final move, attempting to get something fit for them to live in temporarily, and starting a nice garden, including water melons.

Josie had a few misgivings about roughing it again. Before she left the house for the last time, she told the agent, "How I wish I could take the house with me!" to which he replied, "Go ahead."

That really hurt, because he already had plans for tearing the house down, leveling all the land, and starting a new development. When she heard that, Josie decided to take along the old zinc bath tub, and none of them ever regretted that decision.

Oscar selected Joseph, as oldest of the boys, to ride with the livestock and furnishings in the nine-foot box, or furniture car. First loaded on were the cattle and horses, faithful and dearly loved Kate and Sue. Knowing that they would be making a move, Oscar had purchased some half-grown calves, in addition to the cows they already owned.

These were loaded into sort of stalls, so that Joseph could get to them and water and feed them, as well as milk the four cows each day. The other furnishings were loaded later, making it difficult to get in and out.

Above the cattle, they built a platform, or second floor. On this they put things like barbed wire and other smaller things. Everything they would need, they must take. On top of the entire load, clear up just under the top of the car, they fixed a place for Joseph to sleep. Each night he pushed himself back into the narrow place, with not even enough room to turn over.

Another friend of the family, Mr. Millison, also moving up to Madera County, rode in



the box car with Joseph, as they shared the same car. It was farming all the way, with the livestock to feed each day, as well as take care of their needs concerning water and feed, and milk the four cows. At seventeen, that was a lot of responsibility, but Joseph was accustomed to hard work, as was the entire family.

As a precautionary measure, they loaded on extra barrels of water, as well as more than enough feed to make the trip.

The rest of the family left earlier the same day on a passenger train, leaving Joseph completely on his own, so far as the Larson's worldly goods were concerned, when they pulled out of the station at Escondido around 8:00 am. The spur took them to Oceanside, and it seemed that they wasted a lot of time before finally getting on the main track and starting north to San Bernardino, the first check-point.

Darkness enveloped the country-side when they arrived in San Bernardino, where they weighed the box car and found that they were very much over-weight. That meant they would have to pay extra demurrage before they could unload, but they allowed them to continue the trip. "If only they had known," Joseph thought, "So much of the stuff we have in here isn't worth what we will have to pay to unload it when we get there."

After the indeterminable waiting time for weighing, they rolled the car out to the cattle yard. The passenger train had not made the lengthy stop-over, and between the time it had gone ahead, and this freight train prepared to go over the pass, a flash flood had washed out the railroad tracks for about 150 feet, and repairs must be made before they could make the trip over the Tehachapi Pass.

The yard man went down the long line of cars, telling everyone that they must unload all livestock until they could get the train under-way again. Joseph said, "No, we can't unload. Come, and I'll show you why."

He showed the man that their entire load would have to be taken out to get to the cattle and horses. He also showed him the extra barrels of water and abundance of feed they had on board in case of an emergency, and this appeared to him as an emergency.

The man seemed quite impressed with the fore-thought and agreed to allow them to keep their livestock in the car while track repairs were made. There were times, however, that Joseph rather wished that they could unload them, as the heat was most oppressive.

He watched as the other cars unloaded their cargo of cattle and sheep. One car, in

particular, interested him, as it was a two-decker and loaded on both decks with sheep.

The stock yard attendants knew just how to get sheep unloaded, and set about persuading the sheep to leave the car. Sheep just don't move by themselves. They have to have something to follow, like dragging one of them out. Then the rest would follow. But that is the difficult way to do it, and the stock yard had solved this by training two Nanny goats, and training them well.

When they called, "Here, Nanny", one of the goats went running to the car, up the ramp, and jumped across the backs of the crowded sheep to the back side of the car.

They called her again, and this time when she went to them, all the sheep followed her out of the box car and down the ramp into the stock yard. After the first deck had been cleared, they sent the second goat up the ramp to the deck above, and when they called her down, all the sheep up there followed her, and in a very short time the car was completely emptied.

Two days had already gone by. Joseph knew that the passenger car with the rest of his family had crossed the Pass ahead of the flood and hoped they wouldn't worry too much about him.

Early on the morning of the next day the train loaded again and pulled out of the cattle yard at San Bernadino, and from there the trip took only a matter of hours. When the train reached the Pass, the engineer wouldn't allow Joseph to ride in the car with the stock as it was considered too dangerous. He didn't object, as the height that he rode accented every little movement until it sometimes felt that the car would topple over. After caring for the livestock, he rode in the caboose.

To cross the mountains, the train had one engine in front, another in the middle, and a third at the rear. There were eighty-five cars, and as they climbed the mountain-side toward the top of the Pass, the tracks circled the side of the mountain. At one point, looking out of the back of the caboose, it appeared that the lead engine of another train was heading right for them. At first he didn't realize that it was their train, on a different level of tracks.

They reached Chowchilla about the middle of that day, a very hot day in mid-June, and it was with eagerness and a little reservation that Joseph unloaded his trusty bicycle and, following his father's instructions, started out the long, dusty ride to their

land just off the main road out of town, a road called Robertson Boulevard. Oscar had told Joseph that it was named after one of the men that started opening the land development in that part of the country.

Joseph noted the young palm trees along the Boulevard, just as he had been told, and could see that, although they were still young, it showed promise of being a beautiful drive some day in the future. Many things interested him as he rode along. One man was operating a combine with thirty-two horses working at one time. The combine had an extension on it so that it cut twenty-six feet at one swath. Never had he even thought of anything so wonderful! How he envied the man who sat there and said, "Gee", or "Haw", and the horses obeyed without hesitation.

By mid-afternoon, it seemed that the heat became almost too much to bear. Surely he must be nearing the place to turn off the main road, but he could see nothing that looked like the landmarks his father had told him to look for. The roadway, prepared for paving, made riding a real chore. Rocks covered the roadbed, many with sharp edges, forcing him to watch carefully as he rode along, sweltering in the afternoon heat.

Finally he came to a place where some men were working. They had a well there and were building a tankhouse out of concrete. He stopped and asked if he could have a drink of water, and after refreshing himself, he asked if they knew anything about the Larson group recently moved in. One of the men laughed and said, "Why, you're not even half-way yet!"

Certainly not the most encouraging words he had ever heard, but he mounted his bike and continued riding out the apparently endless road. The hot wind burned his face, and soon his entire head and body felt the effects of the baking heat. He realized that he must get out to their claim and let them know that the cattle had arrived, and the sun dropped quickly, ever lower in the west.

How the family rejoiced as Joseph wearily rode his bicycle up the dusty road that evening! But their relief and joy was no greater than that of Joseph. Immediately they took two teams and wagons and started back to the station. They made much better time with the teams, and after the sun dropped below the horizon the temperature dropped somewhat but it was late evening by the time they reached the depot, paid the extra demurrage, and drove the horses and wagons as close to the train as possible. Everyone pitched in and

helped with the unloading, so it took a short time to unload the few things necessary before they could get their own wagon out. They loaded the wagons, eventually getting to Kate and Sue, and later to the cattle. While one of the men harnessed the horses, the others unloaded the furnishings and tools, machinery, and other supplies onto the farm wagons. Next came the house hold furnishings, and when the team pulled the last wagon from the box car, they had three wagons full of household and farm supplies.

The live stock remained to drive down a ramp prepared for them. After being cooped up in that box car for so long, it took little urging to get them out. In fact, the liberty they felt as they walked into the cool evening air and the smell of the breezes inspired them to take off a bit faster than anticipated.

Between the two hopeful families, they had four milk cows, three heifers, and one calf. The evening dusk still lingered as they left town. The cattle started out fast enough, but soon they tired, and as darkness dropped, they began straying from the road. The men and boys found it difficult, trying to keep them together on the road, and it neared 9:00 pm when they finally arrived at the place they would call home for a while, at least.

By the time they got the animals fed and watered, milked the cows, and bedded them down, it was well past their bed time, and all dropped into an exhausted sleep. Riding out of town on a bicycle in the heat of the day, chasing cows and their young completed a very wearing day for Joseph. How he wished he could have time to get a good look at the property they must now develop into a farm and home, but that would wait until tomorrow, when there would be much to do.

## Chapter 15

### Building a New Life

Joseph found his family sharing a large, square tent with three other families. The tent measured 15' X 15', with one pole holding up another, which in turn, held up the sides and center of the tent.

All they had taken with them was their suitcases, expecting Joseph to arrive within a day or so with the rest of their belongings, so they had moved into this tent on a very temporary basis, and now that their furnishings had arrived, they moved them into a barn Oscar had built before they moved up. He intended using it for a calf shed later, but for the time, it served as their 14' X 36' home. He hadn't expected the bath tub, but all were pleased that it was numbered among their furnishings, and to one side they added a lean-to, installed the zinc tub, and frequently used this after-thought convenience.

While the family didn't make the move until June of 1914, Oscar had moved up in February and spent most of his time on their new ranch, waiting for school to let out so that the rest of the family could follow him.

He divided his time between preparing his own land, leveling, a little planting, and working out for others to make enough cash to dig a well. He hired a Mr. Bennett to dig this well that would be used for irrigation of the crops, and watched with interest as he set up his little derrick to haul out the dirt.

However, he dug the well by hand. The square shaft had a wench on it and a pipe on the wench, so that two men could walk around and around and around. They went down about thirty-five feet, but it took only fifteen feet of drilling to find water. He insisted on a sand base, and Oscar agreed that it would make a better well.

In addition to these simple tools, he had a simple pipe-cutter, and equipment to lower the casing as the well became deeper. How the Larson boys wished for this simple equipment when they decided to save money and dig the well for domestic use themselves! Their equipment consisted of a post hole digger, but it did the job, aided by a lot of hard work on the part of the boys.

At the time Oscar went to Chowchilla in February, several other families made the same



decision. One man took his wife, and she cooked for everyone, but most of the families had children in school and waited for early summer to make the final move.

Each of these men built a dwelling of a fashion for their families, as well as drilled wells and planted gardens, so that, when their families joined them, they would have fresh produce.

They pumped all water by hand, even for their gardens. None of those who made the move had enough money to build proper houses, but each did the best he could with what he had.

The Land Company sold 108,000 acres in this area within a few months, adding more to it later. They deliberately over-sold, fully expecting to re-possess part of it when it had been improved. While some may have lost their property in this way, the Larsons worked hard as a family unit, and while the going was extremely rough for a couple of years, they stuck it out and fooled the local agent.

One of the first things considered by the small group of Seventh-day Adventists that went up in February was a place to worship. No church buildings had as yet been constructed in the area, even in town, so they began meeting in the home of the Husted's, knowing that it mattered not to God whether the place be shanty or a cathedral, if they loved Him and gave of their best efforts to Him. Husted's house had the largest living room, and they felt the presence of the Lord as they worshipped there from Sabbath to Sabbath.

Oscar had been elder in Escondido, and when they started the little company in Chowchilla, they elected him elder there, so for a very brief time, he was technically an elder in both the Escondido and Chowchilla places of worship. He became one of the charter members of the Chowchilla Church, which officially organized in April, and as soon as it was organized, he requested that his membership be moved from Escondido to Chowchilla.

Land in the Chowchilla area appeared to be level until they tried irrigation. However, it was very fertile, and just before Oscar returned to Escondido to harvest crops previously planted there, he cut 20 acres of wild hay, composed mainly of filaree and clover. This made excellent supplemental feed for the cattle, when they arrived.

Oscar's return to Escondido shortly before school turned out for the summer marked the end of their present life-style and the beginning of another. One of the biggest reasons for making the move was to further educational opportunities for their children. They realized that schooling would be even more limited in Chowchilla, but they planned on



farming and making enough money to send them to boarding school as they reached that age. And already Joseph and Albert should have gone on to school, but it soon became apparent that no one would be able to go away to school that first year. Joseph and Albert didn't mind at all. They enjoyed the hard work of the farm, and even Aaron, not yet finished with elementary school, decided not to return to school that first fall.

Their first job was to gather in the wild hay Oscar had cut before returning to Escondido. They were thrilled to find that it averaged  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tons to the acre. Using it as a supplement for the cattle, they fed from that stack of hay for two years.

Alma stayed home that June, too, helping out in the field when needed, pumping water by hand, and helping her mother get the living quarters in order. In July she found work in the home of the Thornton's, in the little town of Chowehilla, helping with housework and caring for their children while Mrs. Thornton helped her husband operate their little store.

August Hemme renewed his efforts to win the love of this quiet young lady, and before the summer was past, they announced plans for their wedding, which they wanted on Thanksgiving Day, November 26.

Josie and Oscar had mixed emotions about losing their eldest daughter, but while he was not Swedish, August was a hard-working young man and a fine Christian, and they comforted themselves in that thought.

With the arrival of the "Adventist Movement", as some chose to call it, other problems arose. While the living room of the Husted home had served adequately before the families of the men arrived, it suddenly became most cramped. A board meeting was held and plans began to get under-way for the building of a suitable church for their needs.

The Land Company was approached and generously agreed to donate one acre to them in the heart of the community where most of them lived, to be used for the building of a church.

After plans were laid, they discussed the names of several for supervising the building. Bancroft seemed the logical man for the job. He had brought his carpenter tools along, and had a limited knowledge of the building trade. With much planning and hard work on his part and the capable help of other members as they were able to get free from working on their

ranches and farms, the church slowly began to take shape.

However, by September, when school was to start, it had not yet reached completion, so school started in the same living room that served as a church on Sabbath mornings. Each child took melon crates, orange boxes, or anything that could possibly be used as a seat or table, and while it started in a very humble way, to them it was their school, and they were proud of it.

The Husteds must have felt a sense of relief when the church was finally completed. No longer did they have to move boxes and crates to one side each Friday afternoon and install benches, which had to be moved to the side on Sunday to make room for the boxes and crates for another week of school. Yet, they never complained, and their home was used in a mighty way for the services of the Lord.

As soon as they could get free from their own farm, Oscar handled it alone and the three oldest boys, Joseph, Albert, and Aaron found work on a demonstration farm, carried on by the Land Company. They earned \$1.00 a day each, and while it didn't count up for very much very fast, they proudly carried their money home each pay day.

They proved to be good workers, honest, not shirking even the hardest, dirtiest tasks, and soon their services were in demand among other farmers. One man, recently from Imperial Valley, planted a large acreage to canteloupes and needed lots of help at harvest time.

He gave each of the boys a burlap bag which they hung from their shoulders. As they filled the bags, they emptied them into wagons that stood waiting. The hard work, and the use of muscles unaccustomed to bending and carrying such loads, proved too much, and all three of them contracted pleurisy which incapacitated them for several weeks. While the back-breaking work might not have been of their choice, they still missed being able to work in the fields they already had come to love.

Even as they worked out, they still helped with chores at home as much as they were able. All irrigation water must be hand-pumped and hauled in barrels out to the garden and newly-planted orchard. The cows must be milked each morning and again in the evening.

Their days were long and tiring. Up by 4:00 am, they fed the cattle, and started milking around 4:30. After finishing the milking, they separated the cream, ate their well-earned and hearty breakfasts, and worked in the fields all day, with time out for a brief lunch.

At 4:30 each evening the entire process started again, and by the time they had finished the evening chores and eaten a nourishing meal, they were tired enough to sleep the sleep of the very weary. To be sure, they had no time or energy for getting into mischief, although they spiced up some of their jobs with a bit of tom-foolery.

However difficult the work was, the boys enjoyed it. The entire move had been of great interest to them, as none of them had ever worked in the fields to this degree. They soon found that while the work was back-breaking at times, there were rewards that more than compensated for their efforts. Like eating watermelons that Oscar had planted in the early spring, before the family made the move.

After getting in his few garden things, he planted about an acre of land to watermelons, then took a train back to Escondido to harvest crops there, leaving things to grow as best they could in Chowchilla.

The melons did exceptionally well. Water, at that time, was so near the surface that the roots extended down to reach the moisture, and by the time the family made the move in June, they found watermelons close to a foot long.

Oscar and the family were elated! Such a wonderful crop, their only cash one, and the very first year, at that. As the melons ripened, the family ate all they could, then sold a few around, but too many others had similar ideas, and they found that there was no market near-by.

They couldn't let all those luscious melons go to waste, and another neighbor or two also had good crops, so they chartered a freight car and shipped out a load to sell. The train company finally told them that the market had dropped out of watermelons, and instead of making money on the deal, they ended up paying for the freight of taking them.

They boys felt especially badly about it, because they had made special trips to Chowchilla, a drive of an hour or more, and felt that they had a bit invested in them, too. They remembered the year, not too long before, when their father had heard of an abandoned watermelon field in Escondido, had driven his team and wagon out to the field, and when he returned with his wagon loaded with good melons, had sold them as he drove through the streets of Escondido to the people hungry for melons, before taking the rest home for the family to enjoy.

But that was all behind them, and now they were faced with a good crop of melons and

no market for them at all.

Then they over-heard someone mention that a tribe of Indians came down to Minter, a place they had heard of about two hours drive away, to pick wine grapes each summer. The suggestion, that of taking a wagon load over to try to sell, appealed to the boys, and one Sunday morning they loaded up the wagon bright and early in the morning, and started driving toward Minter.

As they neared Minter they noticed many vineyards of wine grapes and remembered hearing of a winery doing business there. But Minter was a long ways from home, and they had never been over that way.

Sunday was their day off from working out, and it also was the day the Indians rested from work in the vineyards. As they turned from the main road, they had decided to sell them for 10¢ a piece, and as they crossed the railroad tracks, they were startled when half a dozen or more young Indians rode up on their horses, yelling, screaming, making terrible noises that frightened the boys out of their wits, at first.

Joseph held the reigns tightly in his hands, and it took all his strength to hold the terrified horses and keep them from bolting.

After things had settled down a bit, the boys began saying, "Melons, 10¢ a piece".

The Indians all dismounted, leaving one man holding all the reigns, and looked the melons over. Oscar told the boys to take only the very largest and finest, and now they were grateful for his good advice. The melons sold well, and when the Indians bought all they wanted, Joseph drove the team on down toward the Indian camp, where they met the squaws and older men.

Again, the Indians surrounded the wagon, although more quietly this time, talking among themselves, and Albert did a good business selling the melons for 10¢ each. But with Joseph holding the team, and Albert only able to be in one place at a time, he noticed that some of the Indians were taking melons from the back of the wagon and walking away with them. There seemed nothing he could do about it, and shortly business slowed somewhat.

The afternoon was waning, and soon it would be time to milk. They didn't want to take any melons back home with them, so they decided to lower the price to \$1.00 for a dozen, expecting the rest to sell quickly, but the Indians couldn't seem to understand that it was a bargain, and while they continued buying slowly for 10¢ each, none of them would pay any-

more than that, so the boys stayed on until the last melon sold, then headed the team back toward home, convinced that they could make pretty good money each Sunday, if they continued delivering melons to the little camp. In fact, when they counted their money, they felt they were rich, with several dollars in their pockets. That was big money for those days.

For several Sundays they continued taking the tasty melons to the Indian camp at Mintern. On one of these trips Mable persuaded them to take her with them, and she saw for herself what these interesting people were like.

As she watched the back of the wagon for Albert, she noticed one older squaw eyeing her suspiciously. Mable became interested, and she watched as the squaw nervously changed positions, relocating her bag of valuables. Finally she decided that Mable had no intention of looking away, so she carefully put her bag on the side away from Mable, and dug deeply into it until she pulled out an old stocking with her money in it. They she bought her melon for 10¢.

Oscar felt great pride in his boys so willing to take their Sunday's off and drive the two hours to Mintern to help make a little more money, but all the Larsons worked, and Oscar worked right along with them.

Oscar began to have another interest that involved most of his spare time in the evenings. True, as the elder of the little church, he prepared his Bible study for each Sabbath morning, but he felt a real burden for those in the community that had no church home. In his mind, a plan began to take shape, a plan to expand the services of the little church he loved so dearly.



## Chapter 16

### Questionable Guests

The more he thought of some of his neighbors, good people, but not having any church to attend on Sunday, their day of worship, the more he considered his plan. He couldn't get their need out of his mind for some kind of religious service in the community on Sunday for those who had no place to attend. Finally he approached the church board with an idea totally new to them, yet they endorsed it whole-heartedly. He proposed holding Sunday services in their church, using the same Sabbath School quarterly they studied from on Sabbath.

With board approval, he started opening the little Seventh-day Adventist Church each Sunday morning, and people began attending. When they left for their homes again, they had received a spiritual refreshing that carried them through-out the week ahead.

Oscar continued these meetings for about one year, faithfully encouraging the people to attend, until a community church was built at Bethel, a short distance away, and the need no longer existed.

One man who attended, did so only because of his wife. He ridiculed religion in any form, but continued attending with her. Oscar discovered that his Sunday School classes were doing some good when the wife told him that one time, as her husband reached for a pack of cigarettes, she said, "You don't really need them, do you?"

"No, I guess I don't really NEED them," and he put the pack back on the shelf and stopped his smoking as of that day.

One evening as he was studying, getting his Bible study ready for the following day, Oscar heard a noise under the house. The cats were fighting with something, but he didn't know what it could be. Just as he went out to investigate, he found out. The cat pounced on a skunk, who retaliated by straying not only the cat, but the entire area under the floor. The odor penetrated up through the cracks in the floor, saturating everything in the room.

Even opening all the windows didn't seem to help for a while, and sleep came very slowly that night. By morning, most of the offending odor had evaporated or blown away,



but when Oscar went to get his leather-bound Bible, he found that the leather had absorbed the odor. It smelled so terrible that he couldn't take it to church that Sabbath, borrowing one of the children's Bibles, instead.

This was their first introduction to their skunk friend, who undoubtedly thought that mouse-hunting under their home was the best ever.

When the church was finally finished, they invited the Conference President, Elder N. P. Nielsen, to meet with them. He accepted and stayed in their home, which by now had additional rooms available, so that they weren't as crowded.

Conference headquarters at that time were in Fresno. Even so, forty miles was a long drive, but the Chowchilla congregation eagerly looked forward to his visit.

On the Friday night that he stayed with the Larson family, he was rudely awakened by a rattling around in the small wardrobe, or closet, that Oscar had made for keeping clothes. While he was puzzling as to what it could be, Oscar also had heard it and quickly made his way into the room, explaining that it was "only a skunk that comes up into that closet occasionally. If you don't disturb it, it won't bother you."

Only partially reassured, Elder Nielsen desperately hoped Oscar was right, and lay tensely in his bed, not wanting to disturb that "critter" in any way. Fortunately, aside from a bit of odor that wafted in on a way-ward breeze, the skunk went on its way, and Elder Nielsen finally fell into a restless sleep, probably dreaming of skunks spraying him and his things, and wondering about what kind of family would take so kindly to having skunks living under their floor and able to enter their closets.

However, the warmth of the greetings of the small congregation the following morning quickly dispelled any doubts that he might have had about visiting this little pioneer church.

Even before the church was completed, the Sabbath School Superintendent announced plans for a Sabbath School picnic and appointed a committee to look into a likely place to hold it. So far the members took little time out for fun, so the entire congregation entered into the plans energetically. The committee suggested a small place called Mintern, several miles from them, and this was agreed upon.

Transportation posed a problem for some of the members. Mintern was about two miles out of Chowchilla, and some of them lived five to seven miles out of Chowchilla the other

way, so it meant a long drive by horse and buggy or wagon.

August Hemme, who had settled about three miles from the Larson family, lived near a man who operated a camp and owned a string of mules. At the time of the picnic this neighbor was leveling some land next to the Hemme place, so August approached him and asked if he could borrow a team of his mules for the picnic.

Permission was granted, and bright and early Sunday morning he arrived at the church grounds with this team of mules and a wagon large enough to carry many of the church members.

Alma, his date for the day, looked with dismay when she saw the size of the wagon and the height of the wide front seat, where she knew August expected her to sit, beside him as he drove the team to the picnic site. Never could she climb that high! No amount of coaxing on his part could change her mind, and in utter humiliation she allowed him to help her into the back with the rest of the church members for the trip to Minter, about seven miles away.

The ride may have embarrassed her, but the day was a lovely one, long to be remembered by all those attending, and set a precedent unbroken for many years. Church and Sabbath School picnics became synonymous for many years, with long-time residents, having moved away, returning year after year for the fellowship of these happy gatherings in the hills.

The trip to Minter took two long hours by horse or mule and wagon, but later, two hours by auto took picnickers many miles up into the hills. The distance changed, but the fellowship continued.

Soon after the church was finished, the school moved into it during the week, with the same processes continuing as had been done in the Husted living room. Benches used for Sabbath were pushed to one side, boxes and crates installed, and school began on Monday.

Friday afternoon, they reversed the procedure, replacing the boxes and crates with benches. However, it soon became obvious that holding school in the church was removing some of the sacredness of the church for the children. Many of those attending were not of their congregation, but it was the only school in the community at the time.

The nearest public school was in town, and while a few of the community children rode a railroad spur into town each morning, and home again in the late afternoon, it solved a lot of problems if the parents simply sent their children to the little one-room school

near-by.

After a business meeting one evening, the members decided that it would be far better if they constructed some kind of a school for the children, apart or at least in a separate room, from the church.

Again, they called on Mr. Bancroft, who planned a small lean-to shed on the west end of the church, and soon the children proudly met in their own little school room.

Both the church and school lean-to were built of board and batten. The church roof was a thing of consternation to a few. Sometimes many hands make for a mistake, and someone shingled an area twice, making shingles two-deep. Those who knew of it could always spot it, but no one dared complain very loudly, as everyone had done his best.

## Chapter 17

### Fire!

As the small congregation grew, it appeared that enough seed had been sown to call for a minister to hold some meetings and reap some of the harvest ready in the community. Elder Richard Breitigam accepted the call, but a problem arose as to where he and his new bride would be housed.

Finally the John Brown family volunteered to pick them up at the depot and agreed to keep them until they could find something suitable.

Their home was made of thin boards with gauze pasted on the wall and wall paper over the gauze. Quite effective, and it looked very attractive. However, before winter something more must be done, as it was already beginning to feel quite chilly in the evenings.

After everyone had cleaned up for Sabbath and were seated in the living room studying The Bible and visiting, Mrs. Brown decided that a little fire would take the chill out of the evening air.

She had cooked a bountious meal on the cook stove, which doubled as their heating stove. She felt that surely the fire had gone out by now, so poured a little fuel oil in to make starting the fire easier, and the stove exploded in her face.

Instantly the entire interior of the house was engulfed in flames. Everyone rushed for the door, then realized that Mrs. Brown hadn't come out, so some went back in for her.

After a very difficult time, they managed to get her out, but she was badly burned about the face and hands, and in extreme pain. Elder Breitigam rushed in to see if he could salvage any of their things. All of their wedding gifts were in that house, as well as all their clothes, and after frantically searching and finding very little, he found his wife's new wedding hat, put that on his head, grabbed a few other things, and made his way out.

His wife worried the entire time he was inside, for fear he wouldn't be able to get out again, and the humor of his appearing wearing her hat was completely lost on her. All they owned was lost in a fire that lasted only a few minutes. And all because they had answered a call from the Lord. Yet they still put their trust in Him, although it was a

very trying and expensive experience for them.

Some of the Brown's children slept in a separate room outside the home, and it was saved, so the family managed to find beds for the night, and the following morning John Brown showed up in church dressed in a pair of clean blue overalls. The children fared little better, although some of them were in Sabbath clothes, because they were cleaned up after the week's work, and they were ready to greet the Sabbath after their weekly baths.

It was some time before Mrs. Brown could do very much, and she never healed well. Her face and hands were badly scarred the rest of her life, a grim reminder of taking a short-cut when building a fire.

The meetings that Elder Breitigam conducted were quite successful. The members took turns keeping the Breitigams in their homes for the balance of the meetings, and it was a time of spiritual growth for the small church, a time never forgotten by many, especially the Breitigams. Who could forget a honeymoon that started like that?

Alma and August were married on Thanksgiving Day, as they had planned. How she longed for the home they had left behind in Escondido! But looking back didn't help, and they were married, as she later put it, "In a barn"--the place her parents called home for four long years.

They drove to Madera after their wedding, and upon their return home, they lived in a cabin on the place August was buying. As soon as possible, they added a tent-house and contented themselves there.

August's one extravagance was the purchase of an iron bedstead before their marriage, a fine one for his bride-to-be, one they used for many, many years and is still in the family.

Later they added a cart to their top buggy, two means of transportation, and soon they discovered that the wooden wheels must be soaked in water over-night before they could ride in it to church on Sabbath.

The Hemme place boasted an artesian well which flowed the year round. Because of the continuous flow, a large pool, or lake, had formed about it. To keep down the mosquitoes, they planted this pool with carp.

One day as they worked in the field, a terrible wind blew up. As they looked up from their work, they saw the tent half of their tent-house blow away, and household effects

literally scattered with the wind.

They hurried home to recover what they could find, and among other things floating on the pool, they found Alma's wedding hat, still afloat but dreadfully water-logged.

This tent-house served as their sleeping quarters, and they were left out in the weather with no roof over their heads.

Evening came, and they still pondered as to what they should do. Finally, they took what bedding was still on the bed and moved it under the table, where they slept that night, in the event that it should rain.

That fall when the trees shed their leaves, many of them fell into the pool. They felt badly when they discovered that the leaves obviously contained some kind of poison that affected the carp, and they all floated to the top, quite dead.

While Oscar and Josie realized that they were getting in over their depth in buying the 60 acre spread, they relied on friends, whose property was for sale in Kansas to pay for one of the twenties..

They became concerned when they learned that the property had sold, but they weren't approached about the purchase of the twenty acres for cash, as promised. As time passed, it became apparent that the cash would not be forth-coming, and while Oscar intensely disliked the task, he finally talked with the family and asked them to move on.

God looked after them, and within a very short time the land agent showed up with a couple, cash in hand, who desired that property, and they quickly closed the deal. And so it was that the John Fry family became their neighbors on the north.

The second spring, Oscar again planted an even larger plot to watermelons, hoping for another good cash crop. The plants came up well and grew as before, but this year seemed to be a bumper year for jack rabbits.

Just before the melons were ready to pick, the rabbits seemed to beat them to the most of them, eating them in the field, or opening them so they would spoil, even before they ripened.

A friend suggested taking a nicer one, cutting it into many pieces, eating some of the best part, yet leaving enough red to show, and lacing pieces liberally with strychnine.

Oscar decided to use this good idea, but he had no good melons. Finally, he went to town and paid \$1.50 for a really nice one, and that evening, after eating the heart, he and



the boys put the strychnine on each of the pieces cut, took them out to the melon patch, and left them in different places around the field.

The following morning when they checked the melon patch, they were astonished to find how well the plan really worked. Dead rabbits littered the entire patch. Everywhere they looked, they found more dead rabbits.

Finally, they piled them all together and made a shock about three feet high and four or five feet across, but not a single coyote nibbled their bait. They weren't as concerned about the coyotes anyway, as they didn't do much eating, just slashed them and ruined a few--not nearly the kind of damage in one night with the rabbits.

Each night they put out the poison, and each morning they found less and less of the dead rabbits, until eventually they weren't bothered any more.

One morning as they picked up the dead rabbits, they noticed a skunk standing between a couple of them. Not wanting any trouble with it, they decided to pick up the other rabbits first, hoping the skunk would move on its way.

When it didn't move on, Joseph walked slowly toward it, fully expecting it to start walking at any moment, but it just stood there without moving a hair. Bewildered, Joseph continued moving slowly, until he realized that the skunk was as dead as the rabbits. The strychnine had killed him so quickly that he didn't even fall down. So it joined the pile with the dead, to be taken away and buried before the neighborhood dogs or cats found any of them.

About a year after they settled in as a family, they learned of lumber selling very reasonably in San Francisco, lumber still left following the big 1906 earthquake. They were able to get some of this lumber and build a barn and another small building they used for living purposes.

To accommodate sleeping quarters for all, they built a loft over-head and this was sleeping quarters for Mable and Maude. The girls enjoyed climbing the ladder to their private bedroom, which opened to the living room on the front side.

One night shortly after they started sleeping there, Maude got up in her sleep, walked right to the edge of the loft, and dropped with a thud at the foot of her parent's bed below.

They picked up a very confused and frightened little girl and helped her back into her

own bed in the loft above, and never again did she wander over the edge.

Oscar realized that Sabbath must mean more to his children than restricted activities. He and Josie encouraged their young people to invite their friends in on Sabbath afternoons, and with Maude at the pump organ, everyone stood around it, looking over her shoulder as they all joined together singing hymns, with Maude leading them with her melodious voice.

Saturday evening, after a worship service led by Oscar, they often had taffy pulls or just played games, but whatever the activity, it included the entire family and as many of their friends as they could get to their home.

Alma and August proudly announced that they would soon be parents, and their eldest daughter, Della, was the first baby in the Chowchilla congregation.

## Chapter 18

### Back to School

Aaron, having completed the seventh grade before leaving Escondido, decided that if Joseph and Albert could stay out of school and work, it must be the best thing for him, too, and worked the first school year in Chowchilla. He felt that farming was the life he had always wanted, and now that he experienced it, he wanted nothing more from life.

Miss Violenty Rider, their teacher, felt that while farming could possibly be his calling, he owed it to himself at least to complete the eighth grade, and he returned to school during his second winter in Chowchilla, although a bit reluctantly.

Joseph had now been out of school for three years, and farming not only satisfied him, but it was instrumental in helping keep the four who really chose to further their education in a church-sponsored Academy.

David had started school the fall before that. Somehow, learning came very hard for him, possibly as a result of Jessie's illness before his birth. He joined the other students in rejoicing when the small church school at Winton offered their desks to the struggling school at Chowchilla, after the Winton School decided they could no longer afford to continue.

The men took Brown's team of horses, hitched them to a large wagon and started for Winton well before day-break. Traveling as rapidly as possible, they reached Winton, loaded the desks onto the wagon and made the return trip, arriving back in Chowchilla late into the night.

These desks were double, seating two students, and were used that way for a year or so, until the teacher felt that better quality of school work could be performed if each student had a desk of his or her own.

The church called a work bee. By then other families had come to join them, and between Bancroft and T. P. Hansen, each desk was sawed in half and fitted with a wooden end that extended to the floor for greater stability. This was a sure sign of progress, and everyone pitched in to help in any way they could in bettering their little school.

After a few years, some in the church decided that the school would be more centrally located if it were moved farther out Robertson Boulevard. After locating a site near the Hemme place, they built a small school and teacherage on the property. School opened there one fall, and continued in that location for two or three years, when it seemed more appropriate to move it back into more commodious quarters built on the same property with the church, where it has remained until this time.

The farm continued to produce under the capable encouragement of Oscar and the boys.. Joseph and Albert continued working out while the younger brothers and sisters were in school.

The day Oscar drove home in their first car, a model "T", vintage 1917, created great excitement in the Larsen home. All the boys wanted to learn to drive at the same time, and while others in the community already owned similar vehicles, many still drove their teams. The Larsen family felt a sense of accomplishment and also that the Lord was caring for them and blessing their efforts on the farm.

About this time, two rather important changes came into the Larsen home. For some time Albert had felt a strong urge to continue his education. Mathematics and figures intrigued him and had always held his interest. He still enjoyed the farm, but he realized that each passing year meant putting off getting the business training that he really wanted.

He also realized that he could now go on to school without putting an impossible financial burden on the rest of the family, so he went to Josie and opened his heart to her, telling her of his desires.

She immediately consulted with Oscar, and they put the wheels in motion for relieving him of his duties on the farm. After receiving his acceptance from Lodi, he started the following school year there, taking the subjects in business that would prepare him for doing what he liked best of all, keeping books and business management.

With Alma marrying some time before, she really left home first, Yet, living only a short distance away, they really felt more like having gained a son than losing a daughter. With Albert going to Lodi, the entire family felt the loss. Now, as they stood around the organ and enjoyed their Friday evening or Sabbath afternoon sings, Albert was no longer there.

Word came home by letter and other messages. All went well for him, although he missed home and family. But they were happy to know that he enjoyed the classes he was taking and knew that eventually, if all went as planned, more of their family would soon be leaving for Lodi.

In September of 1918, what they had hoped would never happen finally did--a letter from Uncle Sam, with the famous words, "I need you!"

It was addressed to Joseph, and within a very short time they lost the second of their boys. His leaving left an even more vacant place in both their home and their hearts, as with the "Big War", World War I, in full swing, no one knew when or even if they would ever see him again. True, rumor had it that the war was about over, but this was their son, a member of their own close-knit family going to war, and they missed him and prayed constantly that the Lord would keep him safe and close to Him.

And so it was that Joseph joined the thousands of frightened and bewildered young men called into the service. While all hoped the end of the war was near, no date could be set.

At his time of induction, they classified him, at his request, as a Conscience Objector and sent him to Camp Kearney. That title only meant that he would not be required to carry arms. Getting Sabbath privileges were up to him and his superior officer.

He requested relief from Sabbath duties, and the response was far from re-assuring, but his first Sabbath was several days away, and he took it to the Lord in prayer.

Basic training kept him more than busy for a few days, with little time to get acquainted with the other new inductees. At roll call on the morning of the third day, the top sergeant made a strange and frightening order. "All those who request relief from duties on Saturday, take two paces forward!"

Joseph, feeling entirely alone and frightened beyond words because he had no idea what awaited him, swallowed very hard and without hesitation took his two steps forward, looking neither to the right nor to the left.

Farther down the line another man stepped forward. They later met and became friends. They also discovered that there were several other Seventh-day Adventists in camp already, meeting together on Sabbath.

While the weeks were difficult, they really cherished those Sabbath mornings when

they could study God's Word together.

Week-days were spent in marching and drills, which Joseph enjoyed. His sympathy went out to the few who couldn't keep in step.

Pay didn't amount to much. \$30.00 a month to him, but the army fed and clothed him, so most of it he sent home to add to the \$65.00 they received from the army.

November 11, 1918, Armistice Day, created excitement all over the world. Only two months in the army, Joseph didn't know what it would mean for him, but to thousands it meant returning home and trying to pick up their lives once more.

With no more need to send soldiers over-seas, most of the army posts just spent time waiting to muster out their men. December came, and still no discharge papers. The flu, putting a few into the hospital, escalated into a full-scale epidemic, and one morning Joseph awakened to all the classic symptoms. Much worse than he could have anticipated, he somehow managed to reach the infirmary where they confirmed his own diagnosis and put him to bed.

The military claims no record for speed, and shortly after they found a bed for him, he lost consciousness and knew no more.

He awakened some days later, aching all over, and one of the first faces he saw was that of his father as he walked through the door and into the ward.

While his mind was clear, his strength was totally gone. As he and Oscar visited briefly, he learned that the army had given up on him, moved him into the death ward, and wired the family of his condition.

Oscar and he thanked the Lord for His protection and miraculous return from near death. When his fever dropped, the hospital moved him back to the regular ward, where he regained his health and strength. His double pneumonia responded to treatment, and he did not become a statistic--150 deaths each night for some weeks.

The army lost so many men to illness and death that winter that almost before he was well enough, they had him on his feet, serving trays to others in worse condition than he, all of them in the contagion ward. In his weakened condition, it was another miracle that he didn't succumb to further illness.

The army assigned all the Sabbath-keepers and non-combatants to this demeaning chore.



The label given to this group, "The Development Battalion", applied not only to noncombatants, including Seventh-day Adventists and Mennonites, but also second-class soldiers and military mis-fits. They shared the same rest room facilities with men suffering from syphilis and gonorrhea. Needless to say, Joseph was much relieved when the military transferred him to the Quartermaster Corp, where he issued uniforms, shoes, and other necessary items to the men still in the service.

Then the good news filtered through the grapevine. Soon they, too, would be mustered out, and while the actual time in the army had been brief, every man in the Development Battalion eagerly waited for the day they would be civilians again.

Excitement ran high the morning they were alerted and told to pack their gear for what they hoped would be the last time. Still mid-winter, they still wore their winter uniforms, and fortunately, for them. They found the Presidio in San Francisco even colder than Fort Kearney, in San Diego. Added to the low temperatures, the moisture aided in the penetration of the cold.

They stood in line for several days, waiting for their names to be called, wearing their heaviest overcoats, so heavy that by evening their shoulders ached.

By the time they called Joseph's name and processed his mustering-out papers, it was January 29, 1919. After the long wait, it was almost anticlimatic.

Joseph caught the first bus for home, a more mature young man, and eager to get back to the farm and farm work he had missed while serving his country. He made one stop-over, and spent a night at Lodi, where he visited with his brother, Albert.

It was about this time that they were able to save enough to build their first real home since they had arrived four years earlier. It was a fine house, to them, boasting a large kitchen, a screened-in pantry, a dining room, and a parlor. The two large bedrooms had a real bathroom between them, for easy access from either.

Built-in closets in the bedrooms, a built-in China closet in the dining room--a home Josie had dreamed about ever since leaving her fine home in Escondido.

But Josie had other dreams and hopes, and she felt the time had come to begin making plans to take a journey, a long journey, and she began to make definite plans.

## Chapter 19

### Dream Come True

With Joseph home to operate the farm, another of Josie's dreams could come true. Life, while fulfilling, had been lonely at times. How she missed her family, and Oscar also would like to have seen members of his family. Time had passed, fifteen years, in fact, since they had left Kansas, and much, much more since they had seen some of their family.

Their children, now young people, encouraged them to make plans while they could be free, and in the summer of 1919 they made their trip all the way to Chicago, stopping in Iowa and Kansas for visits along the way. Emma still lived near Chicago, and Josie hadn't seen her since her first arrival in America, almost thirty years before.

Between the boys at home from school and the girls to keep house and help with the chores, time passed very quickly for them, and Oscar and Josie relaxed on the train that sped them farther and ever farther away from their beloved family.

While getting re-acquainted was most enjoyable, and visiting with friends and relatives of long ago a real pleasure, the time came to board the train that would take them back home again.

Josie wrote almost every day she was away, telling of all the things that happened to them, wonderful, exciting things, but almost always she would end the letter by mentioning that days were fine, although hotter than they were accustomed to, but if only they could be home to sleep at night, their trip would be just perfect!

They were accustomed to the evenings turning cooler in Chowchilla, and found the constant heat and humidity fatiguing. They slept nights under a sheet, sometimes wetting it and wringing it out, hoping to get some cooling effect from the moist sheet over them. At times it helped, at other times it only served to increase their discomfort.

They were welcomed royally upon their return and found that the farm had fared quite well during their absence. In addition to keeping up with the housework, they found the girls busy sewing and making plans for attending Lodi that fall.

With the immediate work caught up on the farm, the boys continued the routine chores and worked out to make money for school. This summer was a big one. Of course, Albert had already been at Lodi one year, but with Aaron staying out one year, and Mable and Maude in the same grade, all had decided to go to Lodi the coming fall, so in addition to their other chores, all were making plans for the coming school year. Albert's stories of Lodi had sparked their interest, and they could hardly wait for the announcement of the date they were to leave for school.

Transportation posed somewhat of a problem with the four of them, and when they returned from their trip, Oscar decided to buy a later model "T" and let the young people drive the older one.

And so they became a two-car family! Unheard of, perhaps, but both cars were put to good use, and when the school term began, the trusty old model "T" transported all four of the young people, plus their suitcases and boxes the long drive of ninety miles, to the boarding school.

Because of the distance, even though they had the car, they didn't make the trip very often, and their all leaving at the same time left a real void in the Larson home.

Perhaps David felt the loss more keenly than the others. Joseph was still home, but he worked long, hard hours, and while David's hernia problem by now seemed cured, and while he could pitch hay with the best of the men, evenings became very lonely for him.

To Albert, returning to Lodi was like returning to his second home. By the end of the first year, the school recognized that this young man knew about books, was conscientious, and when he returned that fall, they offered him the job of keeping their books. This he gladly accepted, enjoying the work, gaining valuable experience, and earning his own way.

With the younger three, work was hard to come by, and they needed to work as much as time permitted. Aaron, well-used to farm work, soon found that with the grape harvest in full swing, there were plenty of jobs just waiting. He worked after school and on Sundays picking grapes, making not only his entire way but was also able to help out some with his sister's expenses.

Having four in boarding school in Lodi caused considerable expense. Of course, in comparison to these times, the amount per student would sound minimal. But in comparison to the percentage of income, there were very little difference. Albert keeping books help-

ed a great deal, and Aaron found that he could make good money in the grapes. With what Oscar and Josie could supplement from the farm, they completed the school year out of debt.

At the end of the school year, all four piled their things and themselves back into the Ford and like a homing pigeon, it headed toward Chowchilla, and home.

They all worked hard again that summer. Albert had only one more year to go and was assured of a good job again the following school year, but he pitched in and did his share of the work to make it possible for all four of them to return to the school they had all come to love.

Summer appeared a bit dull, after being in boarding school where something is going on most of the time, but they were all so happy to be home that this summer passed very quickly, and almost before they knew it, and certainly before they were ready for it, they re-loaded the old model "T" and returned to Lodi, where Albert began keeping their books, and Aaron returned to the grape vineyards.

The girls also found work, and once again, they were all busy and deep into their school work. This particular year Mable took some classes in hydrotherapy. Girls were encouraged to take these classes, as rumor had it that there was an epidemic of influenza in some parts of the country and it could spread nation-wide.

She became very adept at this, enjoyed it, and the teachers enjoyed watching her as she eagerly learned all that she could.

Aaron became involved with some extra-curricular activities this year, also, some that kept him quite busy on Sabbath afternoons and sometimes ran into Sundays. He, Francis Millard, and Paul Stuyvesant started a sort of branch Sabbath School. After a Sabbath or two, when the faithful old Ford took them to their destinations, they decided that if they could find some girls to go with them and tell stories to the children, they could be more effective with the adults, so they asked Mable if she would like to accompany them.

She enjoyed children, felt that she could use the fresh country air, and quickly agreed. Sometimes the group included other girls, and sometimes new young men went along to gain inspiration and assist.

This became an every-Sabbath afternoon affair, with five or six young people loading into the car, driving up into the mountains where several families waited for them in a private home.

While the girls told stories to the children and taught them songs about Jesus, the young men gave Bible studies and even preached. The people enjoyed it, and the study continued for an hour and sometimes even more.

These meetings were voiced around among the people living in that remote mountain community, and they received invitations to spend the night and hold further services on Sunday, sometimes even two services in the homes of two different people.

Rumors of a flu epidemic became fact. Lodi had its share of cases, but these young people had their hearts up in Valley Springs, where medical help was almost impossible to get, and where the mountain people were much too poor to afford it, even if it were available to them.

So while Mable took care of some patients in the Lodi area, when they made one of their Sabbath trips up to Valley Springs and found one of the older ladies very ill, she had the fellows put on a wash boiler to heat water, and she began giving fomentations every three or four hours all day long, and when her condition was not improved, she continued through out the long night.

They called a doctor, who approved of what she was doing but felt that she should have relief, as it had been a couple of days already. When he arrived with a replacement for her, the woman, although very weak, refused to let the new girl near her, insisting that Mable remain.

Finally, the family placed a mattress on the floor for her, and between fomentations she lay on the mattress for some much needed sleep, asking to be awakened so that the fomentations could continue regularly.

Although she did all humanly possible, the patient passed away, so they let Mable sleep. And sleep she did! Right through all the commotion following her patient's death, including the undertaker coming.

After the undertaker declared her legally dead, Mable felt that she had somehow failed the family. When the doctor heard of her feelings of guilt, he made a point of telling her that she had done all humanly possible. Her lungs had cleared up, but her system was so weakened that she was unable to live, even though the primary cause had been taken care of.

The lady's husband took Mable back to the dorm. She was rooming with Maude, and she dropped into her bed in total and utter exhaustion. Maude worried when she seemed unable



to waken her.

Finally she went to the dining room and took a tray to the room, roused Mable enough to eat a little, and she dropped back into a deep sleep. This continued for over a week, and when she finally got over her complete exhaustion, she found that she had missed almost two entire weeks of school. With Maude taking trays to her, she finally regained her strength and resumed her regular routine.

Later she learned that while she was sleeping off her fatigue, Aaron and the group who had been going up and studying with this family drove back to the home, and while some of them prepared the lady for burial, they went out on the back side of the farm, dug her grave, and these school boys held an informal funeral for her there, making a vivid impression on the minds of the remaining members of the family.

While this wasn't the only time that Mable assisted families in this manner, staying for several days in their homes, this was the most impressive one, the one where she felt she had given her all, and yet lost.

Following the flu epidemic, the dean of girls suggested that Mable consider becoming a nurse. Why not? She enjoyed the things she had already learned to do, and the idea had crossed her mind, also. All it needed was a little encouragement, and she made her decision to become a nurse and save as many lives as she possibly could.

Christmas that year they all returned home for a much-needed vacation. And a memorable one it was. Alma and August's oldest, Della, was old enough to understand about Christmas, and Oscar and Josie had decided for the first time to have a Christmas tree in their home.

Gifts were exchanged by all, but Della spent many hours working on small pin cushions, using her mother's hair as fillers. These items were cherished by those who received them. There were gifts of love, the real spirit of Christmas.



## Chapter 20:

### Two More Weddings

At the end of that school year, in 1921, Albert graduated from Lodi with honors, ready for greater things. And greater things followed shortly. St. Helena Sanitarium and Hospital invited him to work in their book keeping department. While he could have made much more money in some other place of business, one of the things Oscar had taught his young people was the reason for higher education. Working for the Lord was to be the ultimate goal for each of his children. Without hesitation, Albert accepted the invitation to work at St. Helena, and he made the move soon after his graduation from Lodi.

Aaron, Mable, and Maude drove the model "T" home for that summer, where each worked as best they could to put away some cash for the following, and last, school year at Lodi. Each had enjoyed their Junior year, and by now, Aaron's eyes had been opened to some of the possibilities of further education.

While that summer may have seemed far from exciting after another busy year at school, Albert found that working for a lower salary had its own rewards. In fact, his summer was anything but boring!

The office staff had several picnics during the weeks shortly after he arrived to work at the San, and among those attending was a young lady by the name of Lois Rice. Of course, the last name was most familiar to him. Her father was the hospital administrator at that time.

After they met at the first picnic, he found himself thinking about this young lady, and when he learned that another picnic would soon be held, he made plans to attend that one, also.

After getting better acquainted with Lois on the second picnic, they found a great deal in common and frequently met, just to enjoy each other's company. Lois worked at the switch board at the time, and he worked in the office, so they had many opportunities to visit a bit while passing in the halls, etc.

In one of his letters home he mentioned that Elder Loughborough, now retired, lived

up there and they renewed their brief acquaintance. He wrote of how privileged he felt as he watched this godly man at his typewriter in his room, still doing what he could for the Lord.

Another letter told of his promotion, to that of secretary of the corporation and chief accountant. Oscar and Josie were proud of their boy, working for the Lord, and so privileged to be able to get better acquainted with Elder Loughborough.

Letters continued arriving at home, and they began seeing a name unfamiliar to them. While he didn't say a great deal, the name of Lois entered more and more frequently in his letters when telling of places he had gone and things he had done.

At the end of another busy summer for the young people at home, the car, a year older now, and well-loaded, valiantly made its way back to Lodi, with Aaron at the wheel, and Mable and Maude as passengers, eager to begin their final year.

Again, each found work and entered into the school activities. The witnessing team once again drove the car to the mountains and had Branch Sabbath Schools with the dear people there, and school was well under-way when they heard that Albert and Lois planned to be married before the New Year.

When the news reached Oscar and Josie, they had mixed emotions. Certainly Albert was old enough, and Lois sounded like a nice girl, but it meant an even more final separation. However, they lost no time on regrets, and the entire family began making plans to attend that wedding.

St. Helena was almost 200 miles from Chowchilla, and over 100 miles from Lodi, but as many members of the family as were able made the trip to witness the wedding of Albert and Lois, the second wedding in the family.

It was a simple, but lovely wedding held in the home of Lois's parents, and life took on a new sense of meaning when Albert had someone to share it with.

He learned at his wedding that Joseph, also, was courting a young lady by the name of Dorothy Allen, whom he had met at church one Sabbath when she visited with her sister, Abigail Cook. Josie invited the Cooks to dinner, as they lived many miles from the church and were good friends of the family. Joseph gave their meeting very little thought for about six months, when he decided that he would like to know more about her, and wrote to her at her home in Templeton.

Later, Joseph told Albert of Dorothy's warm response, and of a trip he had made to Templeton, and that he hoped that he could persuade her to marry him in the near future.

Albert rejoiced for this older brother who worked so hard on the farm at home, still helping some of the younger ones with their school bills and hoped that Joseph could find the kind of happiness with Dorothy that he had found with Lois.

After he settled down to working after his wedding, Albert began taking some night classes to improve his education and shortly had a second promotion, to that of assistant administrator. As his letters home reflected his happiness in his marriage, and his joy in serving the Lord, his parents rejoiced for him and felt more than ever that no sacrifice was too great to see their other young people through school.

When the time came to elect officers for the graduation class at Lodi, Aaron was elected class president, and on graduation day the Larson family proudly witnessed a first for Lodi--three members of the same family graduating together.

Joseph and Dorothy, now engaged and about to be married, attended the graduation and presented each of the three graduates with a leather-bound Christ in Song, with each name lettered on the front in gold, as a present from their parents and themselves. These hymnals meant a great deal to the students who had worked so hard, yet knew that their parents had worked even harder to help them reach this mile-stone in their lives.

Aaron, Mable, and Maude rushed home in time to attend the wedding of Joseph and Dorothy, in the home of her sister, in the near-by community of Fairmead, on May 30, 1922, where she had made her home following the loss of her mother.

Before the wedding Joseph had a bit of a dilemma. Before he and Dorothy had agreed upon a date for the wedding, he had begun building a home on acreage he was buying from his parents. The building went slower than expected, and the wedding date was almost upon them.

He and Dorothy went to talk with Josie, wondering what they should do. They didn't want to put the wedding off, yet they had no place to live. Josie had some pretty definite ideas on the subject. She had the room and knew that she could offer them a place to stay, but in her years she had seen too many unhappy homes when this continued for some time, so she suggested that they could live with Oscar and her until their home was completed. However, "No roof is big enough for two wives under it at the same time," They agreed, and

this arrangement took care of their temporary problem.

After the wedding, Joseph and Dorothy prepared to leave for their honeymoon in Yosemite. Everyone wished them well as they drove away. Albert and Lois, having been married only six months, took a delayed honeymoon at the same time, and they enjoyed a double honeymoon in the beautiful valley of Yosemite.

The model "T", still vintage 1919, made the trip in fine fashion. Parking the car, they rented a mule and hiked out toward Glacier Point, letting the mule carry their supplies.

That early in the season, there was still much snow on the ground, but after they had hiked a couple of miles, they found a hillside with no snow, built a campfire, and spent the night there, dressed in all their clothes to keep warm.

After that little jaunt, they decided not to rough it quite so much and spent the rest of the time in a house-keeping tent down in the valley.

After the honeymoon, they returned back to the farm, and found much to be done. Joseph helped Dorothy move her limited belongings into the family home, Albert and Lois returned to St. Helena, where he picked up his job where he left off, and everyone returned to the normal routine of every-day living.

## Chapter 21

### College Shenanigans

While the newly-weds were away on their honey moons, Aaron, Mable, and Maude returned to Lodi, packed all their things and drove up to St. Helena. Here, they all found work for the summer, and when fall came, Aaron and Maude made the trip on up the hill to Pacific Union College, while Mable stayed on at the San and started her nurses training.

Aaron and Maude both enrolled as first-year students, with Aaron taking the ministry and Maude taking a course in secretarial work.

David had finished school in Chowchilla, too, and decided that if the rest of the family was at Pacific Union College, he would prefer trying to finish his Academy work there. His difficulty in learning had continued, and if anything, increased, and he found the work to be beyond what he could handle, so left before the year was out, going to the Bay area in search of work and to try to find out what he really wanted out of life.

Aaron thoroughly enjoyed college life and threw himself into all activities with a zest for life acquired on the farm. The young men in the dorm admired his courage when he discovered that the big vines that grew behind the dorm were strong enough to bear his weight.

Crossing the ravine, he grasped a vine, swung out over the depths and across to the other side, where he dropped safely to the ground. Soon others tried it, and the school fathers had to put a hasty stop to this most attractive activity--attractive to the young men.

In fact, at times the college fathers hardly knew what to do with this obviously dedicated young ministerial student who was so irrepressible. While they put a stop to some of his monkey acts, he seemed to come up with others as bad or worse to take the place of the ones already banned.

While Maude started her course in secretarial, her heart was still in Lodi, where she had met a certain Jake Eberhardt. She realized her parents feelings about getting

an education and put hard and diligent work into her courses. Letters passed between P. U. C. and Lodi at an ever increasing rate, and at the end of her first year, she graduated from the one-year secretarial course taught then.

Central California Conference knew of her good work and accomplishments and offered her work in their office, which was still located in Fresno. The pull was strong, but the pull from Lodi even stronger, and Maude married Jake Eberhardt in the family home, with Elder Elmer Farnsworth officiating, the following September 12th, 1923.

They made their home in the mountains of the Kelseyville-Placerville area, and while she didn't use her secretarial talents in the organized work of the Lord, she helped out with local church functions and enjoyed serving the Lord in her own way.

Aaron returned to school the following fall. Oscar still operated the farm, putting long hours into its operation. With all of the family on their own, Josie spent long hours working in the yard, keeping the weeds out of the garden and enjoying the time spent growing vegetables and lovely flowers.

Joseph and Dorothy were grateful for a pleasant roof over their heads but were certainly thankful when their own home was completed and they could move into it a few months after their marriage. . . He operated his own farm with a few dairy cows, a few acres of apricots, and some grapes.

When Aaron returned to college that fall, he soon started some of his old tricks again. He tried his best to persuade the faculty that if they would only allow him to attach a cable well up the side of the hill and fix a basket to a rope that went over a pulley at the top, it would make an excellent and innocent sport for the students. While their reasoning escaped him, they denied his request and wondered just how this fun-loving minister-to-be would ever develop into a dignified gentlemen.

His work at the college that final year was stoking the boilers for the laundry, and seeing that they kept going. He also kept the boilers going at another location. They furnished heat for the buildings during the week. However, on Sundays, he some times found some leisure moments, and then he would climb the stairs to the laundry to see how things were progressing in that department.

As he became better acquainted with the laundry and personel, he frequented a certain



mangle, stopping to help the young lady operating it shake out the sheets for mangling.

He learned her name was Lela Wood, but didn't give his name, so she asked around and learned the name of the big blond Swede. In her notebook she wrote "Aron Larcen".

As his interest increased about her, so also did hers concerning him, and she found herself picking out his shirts. Aside from these few incidents, they watched each other from afar.

Both attended Missionary bands each Friday night. Each band chose a different country, and somehow they both chose China.. One unforgettable evening he even walked her home, something unforgiveable in those days.

Picnics they saw one another, and when school closed for the summer, he asked if he could write to her. Her response didn't raise his hopes very much, as she answered, "I guess you can."

His first letter almost beat her home, but she kept it almost two weeks before answering it. His was much more prompt in response, and again, she waited about two weeks before answering him.

His third letter asked if he could go to her home to visit over the 4th of July, and there was no time for her to wait two weeks. If she wanted him to come, she must respond immediately, and her welcome was most hearty.

When his friends asked him where he was going for vacation, he responded, "Oh, I'm going to the coast to see the Woods."

After this visit, letters were more frequent, and when he visited in her home a second time, they became engaged.

By this time he was employed with the Central California Conference as Colpuerter Leader. They set a date for their wedding, and on his third visit to the "Woods" they were married in her parent's home on March 4, 1925, a memorable day--the same day President Coolidge took his seat in the White House.

Mable continued her training in nursing at the San and had one more year to finish. Aaron made a trip up to the San to pick up Mable, so that she could attend the wedding. He drove a pickup because Lela had a piano that she wanted moved to their little home in Oakland after the wedding.

They also picked up David, from his place in the Bay area, and drove on to Arroyo

Grande, to the "Woods on the coast", for a simple but lovely wedding.

Aaron and Lela made their home in Oakland for six months, where he enjoyed his work. But they both wanted something more, and at the end of those six months, they received a call from the General Conference to go into mission service, not in China, as they had hoped, but to the Inter-American Division, with the first appointment in Panama, where Aaron continued his colporter leadership.

Lela worked as secretary for the President of the Panama Conference, so kept busy, but Aaron's days at home were most limited. Most of the time he spent out in the field, riding on the back of an ox, delivering books to the people hungry for the gospel.

Even when he returned home for a few days, he spent most of his time making out his reports in the office, catching up on back work, and then he would load up either the ox or an ox cart drawn by an ox, and leave again with some colporter. He would be away from home and the office for from one to six weeks at a time.

On one of her lonlier days, Lela figured up the days he was home that first year and came to a grand total of about six weeks. Quite a life for a bride of less than a year, alone in a foreign country.

Electric storms were frequent, and Lela had never been through anything like one of those tropical storms in her life. They so terrified her that, because she had heard that if a person is on feathers the electricity wouldn't hurt them, she put two pillows together in the middle of the bed and just huddled there until the storm passed.

Mission life in those days meant really roughing it, and they did their share, but neither complained, as they had willingly given their lives to do as the Lord led them, and even in adversity they could see the Lord's hand guiding them along the way.

## Chapter 22

### Tragic Accident

Mable graduated from nurse's training at the end of that school year. Her dean of girls prediction came true--she was a natural at nursing, and while she enjoyed her training, she enjoyed nursing even more when she finished school and moved to Sacramento, where she worked for a short time before returning to Chowchilla. Once home again, she worked for a local doctor.

While working for this doctor in Chowchilla, Mable lived at home. She enjoyed her work, worked fairly regular hours, and felt that she was making her contribution to the world.

Joseph and Dorothy lived on the farm next to the home spread, Alma and August not too far away, and she enjoyed being near the family again. Alma and August now had three girls, adding Leeta and Thelma to Della, and Mable enjoyed spending time with the little girls. She also could get her hands into a bit of farm work again, gardening, which she really enjoyed, and life looked good to her.

Maude wrote that they had a little girl, Ivanette, and she and Jake visited occasionally. But life in the mountains proved to be a difficult one for them, and while she wouldn't have changed it for anything, adjustments had to be made, so while the miles that separated them didn't seem very great, distance can only be measured by length between visits, and it appeared much greater than it actually measured by miles.

Oscar enjoyed having Joseph as close by as he lived, and they worked together a great deal, doing field work. Oscar also had a few acres of vineyard, and in the fall had it planted to a cover crop of barley.

In the spring he pastured the cattle on the barley before the new leaves began to grow on the grape vines. After the cattle finished the barley, it was March and time to get into the vineyard to begin working it for the next season. Earlier in the winter they had pruned and tied the vines up,

To be able to get the equipment into the vineyard, they must first take up the fence put there to contain the cattle. Oscar and Joseph had taken the wire down and rolled it up in several rolls, and then they pulled the fence posts and put them in a pile to be picked up later with the wagon.

They hitched the horses to the wagon and went into the vineyard to pick up the rolls of wire and fence posts. Neither of them thought to take gloves, and the barbed wire dug painfully into their hands.

Time ran short, but they didn't want to stop until they had everything cleaned up, so they drove the team and wagon into the yard about 20 minutes late for starting evening chores. Calling "Whao" to the team, they stopped beside the place they planned to unload the wire and posts.

Joseph said, "Papa, if you want to throw off those posts, I'll run to the shop and get a pair of gloves so that I can better handle the wire."

Even as he spoke, he started off on a run. The team was skittish, and he had to be careful not to frighten them, as he started for the shop about one hundred feet away.

Just before he reached the shop he heard a strange sound, and turning, discovered that his father had fallen from the wagon and lay in a very precarious position.

He knew instinctively that something very terrible had happened to his father, or he would have moved or stood to his feet, so he turned back toward the wagon. Again, he must be especially careful not to frighten the horses, because Oscar lay right in front of one of the wheels.

He reached his side and tried to straighten him out, but as he did so, he heard a strange noise, a terrible noise, and one that he never forgot the rest of his life. His father began to turn black almost immediately. He tried to say, "Cold water."

Joseph tried to get him to breathe, but he knew when he straightened him out that his neck had broken. As he worked with him, his color seemed some better. He couldn't call for help, as the entire family had gone to visit some neighbors.

After what seemed like an eternity, a neighbor, Mr. Forgey, drove in with his buggy, and Joseph asked him to go to Bancrofts and ask Mr. Bancroft to drive to town for the doctor, and this he did as speedily as his horses would take him.

When Jessie, Dorothy, and Mable returned home, Joseph was still working over his father,

desperately trying to get some sign from him that he still lived. Mable took over immediately, and as she worked over her father, remembered seeing Mrs. Bancroft, in the Bancroft's 1914 model "T", pass them on the way to town, driving lickety-split. She remembered wondering why she could be in such a hurry, never dreaming that she would find out all too soon.

Mable knew immediately that there was no hope, yet she also, worked on desperately, hoping that some kind of miracle could be worked and their father would be restored to them. How could the Lord allow him to go now? Her father, head elder, first in Oberlin, Kansas, again in Escondido, and now for twelve long years in Chowchilla, her father, somehow the symbol of everything good and solid to the family.

Yet, in spite of her prayers, and the prayers of the others gathered around watching helplessly, she found no response in this man she loved so dearly, and when the doctor arrived, he immediately pronounced him dead and helped them move him into the house.

Of course, all the routine things had to be done, and in due time the coroner arrived. After he and Mr. Powell examined the body, they called Joseph aside and asked if a verdict of Broken neck would satisfy the family. Remembering the sickening sound when he moved his father, Joseph quickly agreed to their decision.

Word went out to each of the family members. Albert, Lois, and their two children, June and Gerald, were close enough to return home for the services. David, of course, came, and Joseph and Dorothy, as well as Alma and August and their girls, who lived near by.

Mable was a comfort to her mother, still living with her at the time, but Maude's doctor refused her permission to make the trip, as she was about to give birth to her second child, and Aaron and Lela could only weep together when they heard the news many weeks after the funeral.

After the services, the presiding minister, Elder Shaw, and the one in charge of the Chowchilla church at the time, told Joseph, "Now that your father is gone, you will have to take over being elder in his place."

In spite of his feelings of inadequacy, Joseph shouldered this responsibility and continued as either head elder or one of the associate elders for a period of fifty years, making Elder Shaw's suggestion a reality.

Life for Josie changed completely, as life does in this kind of situation. David

lived at home with her now, and Mable, also, for a time, Yet, she leaned ever more heavily on Joseph, and he accepted more and more of the responsibility of operating the ranch.

She continued working in her yard, raising tasty and nourishing gardens, and beautiful flowers. Yes, life went on, as it always does, but it could never again be the same for her.

Mable found better employment in Merced, about seventeen miles to the north, and decided take the job, which meant that she would need to move to Merced. This work, in a hospital, she found more challenging, and she enjoyed her work there.

While working in Merced, she met a young man that decided that he wanted her for his wife. As they became acquainted, she discovered that he had a few habits that she could never approve of, and when she realized that he was seriously interested in her, she let him know from the beginning that while he might be a friend, she could never marry him as long as he chose not to drop his bad habits and become a Seventh-day Adventist. This he pondered for a while, but finally decided if that was what made her such a sweet, lovely lady, maybe he had just better look into it for himself. Chester Lee Webb knew what he wanted, and one at a time, Mable could see changes coming into his life that encouraged her.



## Chapter 23

### Life Goes On

When Aaron received the news of his father's death, there was no way that he could go to his mother's side. The second year he and Lela were in Panama he was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Panama Conference. This gave him more time at home, but even so, he put in long, long hours, often returning to the office after his evening meal to clear off his desk for the following day.

A few months after he settled into his new job, their first child, Marvin, was born, about a year after Maude and Jake had Merlin. Josie was beginning to count her grandchildren, and the number was increasing almost monthly it seemed, for a while, because Joseph and Dorothy had announced the birth of their first, Gail, just thirty minutes before the year 1926 said good-bye.

After Norman was born to Aaron and Lela in 1928, they were sent home on a furlough. Feelings were mixed for them. Happiness at being home again, yet mingled with sadness, because they had not yet accustomed themselves to seeing Josie without Oscar at her side.

While they were on furlough, the Larsons had a family reunion, and what fond memories they shared over more of the good Chowchilla watermelons, sweet corn, and other garden goodies.

By this time, Lee Webb had renounced his old life, had been buried in baptism, and he and Mable had married. They continued living in Merced, but they were able to see Josie and the rest of the family occasionally.

Albert and Lois continued with their activities in St. Helena, where he was now the assistant hospital administrator and dearly loved by all who knew him, not only for his business abilities, but his caring for others and their needs, yet his sense of humor always so near the surface. Josie took pride in showing them her garden and sharing its bounties with them.

They, in turn, told her of their work up at the San, and she always asked about dear old Elder Loughborough. Ever since she had heard him speak at the Los Angeles Campmeeting,

Since their first meeting, he had held a soft spot in her heart.

One story that greatly interested her concerned him and his interest in trees and landscaping. On one of his trips to Australia, he spotted some eucalyptus trees that he thought would look well on the Sanitarium property. When he returned to the San, he took some small specimens of these trees and planted them on the campus, tenderly caring for them until they began to take hold and grew into splendid specimens.

After several years of good growth, the San needed to expand their facilities. Some of these trees needed removing in order to make room for the new buildings.

Elder Loughborough went out on the 2nd floor balcony and watched the operation with quite a little interest, and a great deal of regret. Tears rolled down his weather-beaten cheeks as he watched his beloved trees come toppling down, trees that had taken years to reach their stature, killed in a moment.

Lois joined Albert in reminiscing, as she remembered waiting on Elder Loughborough's table in the dining room at the San. For a year or more, he always sat at her table, and she knew without asking just what his evening meal would be, because he always ordered grape juice egg nog.

As he became more feeble, more and more frequently someone would have to take a tray up to his room, until he was unable to leave his room even occasionally for meals. "A righteous man in Israel, that is for certain," Josie thought, as she heard stories of this pioneer of the message, especially in the interpretation of Daniel and the book of Revelation.

All good things come to an end, and when Aaron, Lela, and their small boys returned after their furlough, they were sent to Spanish Honduras, where Aaron served as the President of the Spanish Honduras Mission, and also as secretary-treasurer. The work load was sometimes over-whelming, but he courageously spent long hours, taking care of all the administrative details.

Lela contracted typhoid fever while there and dropped in weight from 140 pounds to 90 in about six weeks. The Division advised them to return to the States so that she could get better food and build herself back up before returning to Mission service. Honduras was in such a state of turmoil and revolution, with the men out fighting instead of growing crops, that food became very scarce.

In addition to her physical condition, sometimes the battle would be raging close to the capitol, where she and the boys were, and Aaron would be separated from them on the other side of the battle. There was no way they could keep in touch. When the battle drew too close for comfort, Lela and the boys would find refuge in the church down in the baptistry, which was below floor level, to escape flying bullets. With the two boys,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  and 4, her hands were full enough without either the fever or constant worry of battle.

They had lived there only a short time, so they had few friends. One day Aaron heard of a threatened siege. Questioning the source, he was told that probably that night it would become a reality and it could be months before any more food could be brought into the city.

He hurried home, quickly greeted Lela and the boys, and rushed down the trail to the closest market place. Yes, they still had some food, and he bought two 100 pound bags of rice, found a carrier, who had two men help lift the sacks of rice to a carrier on his head.

They stumbled up the trail together, Aaron leading the way for this heavy-laden carrier, told him to just dump the bags on the floor, and they both hurried back into the village.

The carrier was most tired, yet agreed to stay with Aaron and carry any other items he could purchase. But when he went to the market place, the rice was all sold out.

In a corner of the warehouse, Aaron spotted some sacks of corn. He knew it to be a poor variety, but it would provide food, if things became as bad as predicted, so he asked about the corn and was told that he could buy some of that.

Again, he paid for two 100 pound sacks, again the tired carrier was loaded with both sacks, and again they stumbled up the trail, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile, to the house. The carrier agreed to make one more trip with him to the village, and again they started out on a run, knowing that their time was running out.

Back at the market place, he found that all the shelves were bare, every sack of corn had sold, that there was nothing left to buy, so he thanked the carrier, paid him well, and walked the trail home, wondering how the Lord would provide for them in the coming weeks or perhaps months ahead.

Their home was on the same lot as the church, and it had an eight-foot high two feet thick adobe wall around the entire property. Aaron soon found how the Lord would provide for them.

The first evening of the seige a man called at the gate of the compound. When Aaron responded, he saw a man leading a goat that he wished to sell. Aaron first told him that they didn't have any use for a goat and no feed to keep it, but the man persisted, and Aaron felt that perhaps he should buy this goat. The price was high--\$5.00, but he paid the man, who went happily on his way.

The following morning when Aaron went out to look at his goat, he found not only one goat, but also two kids she had given birth to during the night. Now they could have milk. The big problem of how to feed her was solved when Aaron cut a hole in the adobe wall just large enough to push her through, after restraining the kids.

She foraged all day long, eating what grass and weeds, and when she returned in the evening, he helped her back through the hole, where he let the kids nurse, then milked the balance for his own boys.

For sixty-two days this seige continued, and somehow the Lord stretched out the rice and corn, supplemented by the milk, and aside from Lela's poor health making no improvement, the family survived.

When the kids were old enough, they were sold, and then Aaron's family used all the milk enough for cereal in the morning for all, and extra for the boys for other meals, as well.

After the seige ended, Aaron and Lela agreed with the Mission that the only way for Lela to regain her health was to take the recommendations of the Mission doctor and return to the States.

During the ten months that they were getting their "R and R", the States went into depression. Instead of sending them back, the denomination was having to bring workers home due to insufficient funds to keep them in their fields of labor.

When no call came for them, they went back on a self-supporting basis. They spoke Spanish fluently by now, and working among the Spanish-speaking people was in their blood. For a year and a half they served the Lord, earning their own way and doing whatever they could to further his work.

During this time they received word that David had married Opal Rice, the daughter of one of the Chowchilla Church families. They rejoiced when they read this letter, telling about the little wedding, and that David was making plans to settle down in Chowchilla. He had become a bit of a wanderer, working from one job to another. Now it hardly seemed

possible that the youngest brother had decided to settle down on twenty acres in the Chowchilla area and try farming on his own.

Meanwhile, <sup>Josie</sup> learned that Albert had been advanced to administrator of St. Helena Sanitarium. This was a real honor, although certainly not undeserved. He had put in 14½ years of faithful service for the San, and his 1½ years as administrator went quickly and successfully. In fact, St. Helena San was home to them, and it was with certain misgivings that they received a call from the administration at Paradise Valley Sanitarium.

They weighed everything in the balances. St. Helena was on a sound financial basis, Paradise Valley needed an administrator who could make a valiant effort to get it on its feet financially, and after prayerfully considering the request, they agreed to make the move.

One thing that bothered them was a promise they had made to Alma and August. They had managed to get Della through the Academy, but when it came to college, they didn't see how they could afford it, with the other two girls in Church School, too.

It had all seemed so simple at the time. Why not have Della live in with them at the San? She could probably even find work there, and they knew they could find a ride up the hill to Pacific Union College for her each day, as many lived at the San and attended the college.

When Alma and August arrived at their home with Della and all her belongings, the move was still so new that they hadn't had time to let them know. They were away from home when the Hemme's arrived, and when they drove in, Lois felt so badly that she just sat in the car and cried, partly for them, and partly because it had been a difficult decision to make.

However, Albert and Lois were able to make the initial arrangements; Della entered P. U. C. and was able to remain in school there.

As they usually managed to do, Albert and Lois made a stop in Chowchilla on their way through, to their new post of duty, which was much farther south in California than the San was to the north. As many of the family as could gathered again, and much fun and good fellowship followed. In fact, Albert had never forgotten how much he loved farming and wanted to expose Gerald to it as frequently as possible, taking him to the field when he went with Joseph, and introducing him to the kind of life he had once lived and still loved.



They found that Paradise Valley Sanitarium needed some changes made, and as judiciously as possible, Albert proceeded to accomplish these goals. Eventually the amount in the red diminished, a building program got under-way, was paid for, and at the end of ten years, when Albert received yet another call, he rejoiced to see everything in the black.

They added yet another member to their family while in Paradise Valley. In 1941 they learned of a baby that needed mothering, and Lois missed having a tiny baby in the home, so she adopted Arlys, and the entire family took her into their hearts, loving her from the start.

Each time they returned to Chowchilla, they found more and more changes had been made. Joseph and Dorothy had six children, by now, Alma had a fourth, a boy, Earl, and Mable and Lee had a girl and three boys. The times that Maude and Jake were able to join the family, they took their seven, and Josie almost lost count, as children seemed to be everywhere at once.

On one of their infrequent visits, Maude had her youngest boy in the house with her. He became so restless that she suggested that he go outside to play. He agreed, went out the front door and they heard no more from him for some time. He finally walked in the back door and announced, "I can't find out doors!"

He was looking for the mountains that their family loved so much, with tall pine and fir trees, and gurgling streams. None of those things were in this yard, so he didn't associate it with his kind of outdoors.

Mable and Lee had moved to a farm in the Chowchilla area, where they both worked to make the soil produce. Their four children early learned the value of hard labor, too, and their farm flourished.

David and Opal had one daughter, Louise, and after finding that farming was not what he excelled in doing, David had moved his little family up to Gridley.

When Josie counted her grandchildren, she often wished that Oscar could have enjoyed them, too. As she counted them, she thought, "How blessed I am! 27 grandchildren born to my seven children. Two of them working for the denomination for the Lord, and others working for Him each in his or her own way in their home church. How very blessed I am!" And she would thank the Lord for a family such as hers.

Albert was still eager for Gerald to get his hands into the soil, and on one visit he



found Joseph harrowing with a team of horses. Albert felt certain that surely Gerald could do that. Joseph hardly knew what to say. He knew that Gerald had never handled horses before, but after Gerald watched for a while, he said, "I can do that all right."

Joseph agreed to let him try it, and went on the first round with him. Gerald seemed to know what to do, and Joseph felt that perhaps he would be able to handle them alone, so he let Gerald take the team alone on the next round.

Albert stood with Joseph and visited as they watched Gerald guide the horses to the far end of the field, then started turning them around. From that moment on, it was total disaster. He pulled them in too close, they turned into the harrow, and turned the harrow up-side-down on top of themselves. Quite naturally, they ran away. Gerald couldn't begin to keep up with them, although he made an effort to do so.

They were so frightened that they ran until they got to a fenced-in corner and didn't see any way out, so they just stopped and waited for Joseph to come after them. Poor Gerald--while they didn't scold, his twelve-year-old dignity was badly injured. The horses were none the worse for their ordeal, even though one was a young one Joseph was just breaking in, teaming it with its mother.

## Chapter 24

### Tragedy Strikes Again

One and one-half years after Aaron and Lela had returned to Central America on a self-supporting basis, Aaron was called to Columbia, in South America, again as president and secretary-treasurer for the Conference headquarters, at Barranquilla.

Again they found food to be scarce and poor. They raised some papayas and ate rice and beans. The weather did very little to lift their spirits, either, as the humidity gave them the feeling of being suffocated.

From Columbia, they were moved to Caracas, Venezuela. Here the fruit and vegetable market offered a much greater variety. Also, this was a much larger conference, so they asked Aaron to be secretary-treasurer only. This was still more than a full-time job, but he handled it in his usual capable way.

Josie still lived in the family home. It was a lonely life, but still there were aspects of it that she loved. The home was less than one mile from her church, and each Sabbath morning her solitary figure could be seen making its determined way to the church for morning services. And never was she late!

Sometimes she would walk home, and sometimes if the heat was too much for her, she accepted a ride. But, while she never learned to drive, she always preferred her independence whenever possible.

She knew that David and Opal had been having problems, but it came as a terrible shock to her when she heard of their separation. And hardly had she become accustomed to this, when she learned of his sudden and tragic death. David, her youngest, and the one for whom her heart had gone out so often in prayer, was gone forever, and it was a very difficult thing for her to accept.

After discussing arrangements with Joseph, August, and Lee, she agreed for the three of them to go to Gridley and bring his body back for burial in the family plot, with his father.

Another terrible shock for Aaron and Lela, because again it was weeks before they

heard of this second death in the family. Mail didn't go very quickly in those days.

After his death, Josie came to the decision that she had better sell the farm. Joseph had expressed interest in buying it when she was ready to sell, and they came to terms, reserving a small lot for her to build a home and live as long as she chose.

She built a tiny home, large enough for herself to be comfortable, but not extravagant. A small kitchen, living room, and bedroom, with a tiny bath was adequate for her needs, and when she moved into it, she felt at peace with the world.

The question arose about renting the original home. They couldn't consider just anyone off the street. About that time a new pastor moved to Chowchilla and needed a place to rent, so Joseph offered to let him rent the family home, and all were delighted. It had room for a small garden, was close to both the church and school, and seemed all they could desire, and for many years the old Larson family home became known as the church parsonage.

After Josie had lived in her small home for some time, she walked to church one Sabbath morning, as usual, and sat in her regular place, beside Mable and Lee. Everything appeared to be as usual, until she felt rather dizzy and excused herself, saying to Mable as she left, "I feel sick and am going out."

She had no way of knowing that anything was seriously wrong, but it was totally unlike anything she had ever done in all her years of church attendance, and Mable felt apprehensive and shortly followed her out.

When there seemed to be no improvement, Mable and Lee took her home, but the dizziness persisted. When they consulted a doctor, he diagnosed her problem as having a clot in the brain and it made everything look up-side-down to her. He felt that if she stayed quietly in bed for a while, she would recover, but somehow, that recovery came very slowly. In fact, Joseph, Mable, and Alma were afraid for her to live alone, and Maude's oldest, Ivanette, needed a place to stay to attend the 10th grade.

When they found that she would be willing to live in and keep an eye on her grandmother as well as attend the 10-grade school, it appeared to be the perfect solution, and Josie agreed that Ivanette move in with her and keep in eye on things, helping her as needed, and attend the Junior Academy near by.

By the end of that school year, still there was very little change, and Mable and

Lee talked with the rest of the family, who agreed that if she could be persuaded to go to Paradise Valley Sanitarium, Albert would be able to see that she received the very best of medical help available.

Persuading her was not easy, and the ride down even more difficult for her. When she left her little home, she said, "I'll never see my home again."

They tried to laugh it off, telling her that she would soon be home again and as well as before her long months of illness.

Lee and Mable stayed to help get her settled in at the San, and when they were ready to return to Chowchilla, she told them to give this message to the others there: "Tell them that I got here in good shape and that I'm all right."

The doctors went, one by one, to see her and try to make an accurate diagnosis of her problem. Tests were made, and finally they decided that she needed surgery. They had found another blood clot lodged in the intestine, leaving a large portion of it gangrenous.

The doctors removed a large section of the intestine, and when Mable and Alma drove down to be with her following the surgery, she had some things she wanted to say.

"I've lived a long, full life. I just want to die. I'm of no value to anyone like this."

They tried to reassure her, telling her that she was talking nonsense. The doctors told them she was making an excellent recovery, and they all felt that she would soon be all right again. On the basis of that judgment, Mable and Alma drove back home, confident that she would be with them on their next trip.

One evening, soon after their visit, while the doctor was on rounds, he visited with Josie. She told him of plans she was making. She would travel again, she would go back and see some of her relatives still living, and her spirits seemed excellent.

Before he left her room, he asked her, "Mother, how would you like to go home tomorrow? How does that sound to you?"

Home, of course, for the time being, would be Albert's home, and she appeared most pleased. She went to sleep, secure in the knowledge that on the morrow she would be leaving the hospital. Sometime towards morning, a third blood clot struck her in the lung, and she didn't even waken from her sleep. That day she did leave the hospital, but cer-

tainly not as she or anyone else expected.

Again, sad messages were sent out, shocking, as all had expected the next news to be so much better. She, also, was laid to rest in the family plot in the Arbor Vitae Cemetery in Madêra, to await the call of the life-giver.

After this,

## Chapter 25

### Their Good Lives After Them

Joseph continued farming the old home place, although by now all of the apricot trees had been replaced with pasture and Alfalfa. The grapes he also replaced with some pasture, but more with a family orchard, putting in a large variety of peaches, apricots, plums, apples, pears, prunes, persimmons, oranges, grapefruit, and tangerines. On the other side of the house, many varieties of grapes, perhaps going beyond the twenty-two he remembered as a boy in Escondido, when Oscar did the same, and certainly reflecting a bit of heaven on earth. In addition to all these fruits, he had more than enough berries to feed his family of six children, and put up some for winter use.

He even remembered the Escondido days and put in an olive tree, and many a mouth puckered as they tasted their first olive "right off the tree", as he chuckled.

Aaron and his family returned for furlough again, and again, as many of possible of the Larson family turned out to visit with them again. A portion of their stay was with Joseph and his family, and at the time they were raising approximately 30 orphan lambs on the bottle. Marvin and Norman had such fun helping feed the lambs, and after they left, two of the lambs were named for them--Marvin and Norman. Joseph asked which was which and had to explain that Norman was a boy's name, while the lamb was a girl lamb. This posed no great problem, as the children responded, "Then we'll just have to call her Norma."

Furloughs have a way of passing very quickly, and soon the Aaron Larsons were off for yet another field of labor. The Division had asked Aaron to head the publishing work in Canal Zone. So he found himself manager of the Canal Zone Pacific Press Publishing Association, and at a time of great difficulties. World War II was raging, and shipments were uncertain. At one time they prayed most earnestly that the Lord intervene. They were on the very last stack of paper, and it appeared that there would be no more indefinitely. Yet, miraculously, just when they had almost given up all hope, a shipment of paper arrived, and enabled them to continue printing God's Word.



While Aaron and Lela and their boys served in the Canal Zone, Albert suffered a serious sun stroke. Still at Paradise Valley San, he soon returned to work thinking that he had fully recovered, when he received a call to work at the Florida Sanitarium, in Orlando. He and Lois accepted. Gerald and June had both completed their schooling, Gerald as a doctor, a general practitioner, and June as a registered nurse, so they felt no obligation to either of them.

Arlys was still young enough to make the adjustment, and June moved with them. They enjoyed the work there. Aside from being excessively hot and humid at certain times of the year, the climate was ideal. The Sanitarium flourished under his capable administration.

His sense of humor never abated, and while at Orlando he enjoyed a playful prank with one of the secretaries, encouraging her to fly for the first time, then calling her office with almost hourly reports on poor weather, giving her alternatives in the event of problems while flying.

When he had her talked into parachuting down over the city in preference to flying to a point as far beyond her destination as she started from in Orlando, she came into his office to get his reaction to her conversations with the "airport", as she had been doing after each new report.

However, this time he couldn't keep a straight face, and she finally learned that he was at the bottom of all the weather reports, etc. She felt a great deal better about her trip after he confessed all.

When the Central American Union chose their next president, Aaron, or A. V. Larson, was their first choice. Well-rounded in his experiences, it seemed fitting that president of the Union would be his last appointment in the Mission field. From colporter to Union President, he and Lela completed their 28 years of mission service in 1956, when conditions at home and Lela's growing concern for her aging father brought them to the realization that they could also serve their Lord in the United States, and with regrets, they said their good-byes to a field where they left a goodly portion of their hearts, just as they had given a goodly portion of their lives, and returned to California, where they took care of her father in Arroyo Grande for some time.

Albert continued at the Florida San, and he enjoyed his work. Each institution has it

own challenges and rewards. However, before he had worked very long in Florida, he began noticing a health problem that had never before presented its self. Not one to worry unduly, he continued his work, but his family became concerned and finally persuaded him to seek medical advice.

After tests were run and all the data in, the recommendations were to move to a cooler climate. The almost constant heat and high humidity at times of the year that made Florida a vacation spot for many caused the return of problems brought about by the sun stroke he suffered before he left Paradise Valley, and after a brief five years of service at the Florida San, he agreed that a change was imperative.

Receiving a call to the New England San, he didn't hesitate to accept, and they made the move, leaving their June behind. She had married one of the staff doctors while they lived in Orlando. Arlys made the move with them, but Gerald had settled in Iowa in his own medical practice, and letters home sounded full of happiness and promise of better things to come.

The visits to Chowchila were farther between now. Somehow, while it was still home, in a way, with Josie gone, there wasn't quite the pull that there had been while she still lived in her little home.

On one of his visits, he was astonished to learn that Joseph had been having some rather shaking and most expensive problems with his milk cows. Several years before, the State of California had begun mandatory testing of all cattle for tuberculosis. On the first time around he lost most of his milking herd. This hurt him badly, financially, although the cows were mostly sold for meat, so he didn't completely lose all he had in them.

One of the older cows didn't react to the test, so they let him keep her, and as heifers were moved into the main pasture and freshened, he began to build up his herd again. The heifers had been fine when they were tested, but were pastured a few miles from the home place.

When the State returned and again tested, Joseph felt fairly secure in the knowlege that his would all be fine this time. However, he found that once again, almost every one of them reacted to the test, and again he was forced to sell them, and again most of them went to the slaughter house for meat. Strangely enough, the older cow did not react to

test, as she remained the core of his dwindling herd.

Again, the heifers out on pasture were tested, and all were healthy. When their freshening time came close, they were moved to the home place, and as they freshened, his milk cans became more plentiful again. Things were looking better for him, until the State sent the men out a third time to test the cattle. For the third time, almost all the cattle reacted to the test, and again, all had to be sold at a fraction of their value as milk cows, most of them going again to the slaughter house.

This time, however, there was a change in the routine. The older cow, always appearing free from disease, reacted so strongly that they sent her to what was then known as "the tank", meaning that no portion of her meat could be sold.

Joseph didn't believe that she could be that bad. After all, she hadn't reacted to the test the other times, so he decided to follow the truck as it hauled her away. Sure enough, they took her to the "tank", and he followed them as they tested her carcass. They found it completely filled with tuberculosis.

When Joseph asked why she hadn't reacted to the other tests, they told him that occasionally they found one that was so bad that she didn't react, but remained in the herd and infected all the other cattle. They called her a "carrier".

Apparently this must have been the case with her, because after he got rid of her, all the tests were positive, with no further trouble with T. B. in his herd.

As he told Albert about it, he mentioned that after seeing what the butcher industry did with most of his cattle, known to have T B, he and Dorothy had decided that the time had come for them to discontinue eating of meat of any kind.

After a good vacation, visiting with as many of the relatives as possible, and taking in some scenery going and coming, Albert, Lois, and Arlys, returned to the New England San, but Hinsdale needed a good man and after five years at the New England San, Hinsdale, Illinois, called "A. C. Larson", as he was known, to help them out in a difficult time. Again, they made the move, realizing that probably it would be his last position as administrator. Most men retire when they reach 65! He had but a few years to go, and moving is no fun, so he hoped they could stay at Hinsdale until time for his retirement.

While Aaron and Lela had retired from Mission service, they continued in the Lord's work. For a while they stayed on in Arroyo Grande, caring for Lela's aging father, but when he remarried, Aaron was called to Central California Conference as Director of the

Association there. As he traveled around Central, he kept his eyes open for a good place to retire someday, a place where either there was a small church or none at all, where they could still continue furthering the Cause.

He took Lela with him sometimes, and they found just what they were looking for in Mariposa, driving distance to Chowehilla, yet up out of the valley, and they were able to find a small acreage there and start the wheels in motion for buying it.

In the process he learned a rather startling fact. As he looked over the records in the County Clerk's Office one day, he discovered that all properties owned by Seventh-day Adventists were labeled as such. He could find no other notations concerning other denominations, and when he asked as to the reasons, the answers were rather vague. He left with a feeling of unrest, thinking about the time of the end, and wondered how many other county offices also had all properties owned by S. D. A's marked so that they could be sought out when the time of trouble arrived.

Aaron capably served Central California Conference in this capacity, building up their department, increasing a great many wills and trust agreements in the four years that he served there, and finally decided that the time for retirement had come.

He and Lela built a lovely home on their property in Mariposa. Lots of room for garden with one big problem. If the rabbits didn't get it first, the gophers made a try for it, and what was left the deer always managed to do a pretty thorough job of eating. Fences helped keep out the deer, scare-crows discouraged the hungry birds, traps solved part of the gopher problems, but they tried many things before they finally managed to keep most of the rabbits away.

With much effort, they finally were able to have fruit trees, grapes, and lovely gardens, living almost in God's out-of-doors.

Both were most active in the little church there, and their efforts were much appreciated. Souls were won by their studies, and the work in Mariposa flourished because the Lord blessed the efforts that they and others put into His work.

When retirement time rolled around for Joseph, he decided that he wanted no part of it. Dorothy's health had been deteriorating for some time. What began as "nerves" developed into a heart condition aggravated by atherosclerosis, and for many years she had suffered from bouts with arthritis and gout.

One day while alone at home, Dorothy suffered a massive heart attack. She called for help by telephone and the family rushed her to the hospital, but all the modern miracles of medical science couldn't save her, and she passed to her rest the day before her 57th birthday.

At first the loss seemed unbearable. All the family had married, excepting the youngest, Maxine, and she was in her final year of Academy. Friends encouraged Joseph to take a real vacation, and get away from it all. He scoffed at them. Vacation? He had gone on his share.

Each year he had taken one entire week with the family as they grew up. Then, as they grew older, he and Dorothy had one with Alma and August to Florida in 1949. Two years later, when Aaron and Lela were home on furlough, Aaron wanted to get away from the heat of the tropical Americas, and he and Lela had persuaded Joseph and Dorothy to pull their trailer and travel with them to Alaska.

Never would Joseph forget those roads, or the fine time they had. Especially never was he allowed to forget the bitter taste of dandelion greens, cooked at his and Aaron's insistence, by their wives. They insisted that the problem was that the dandelions were a bit older than they appeared, but never had they seen dandelion leaves of such proportions!

But friends now felt he should join an Adventist group and go to Hawaii, and finally he agreed. Somehow, without Dorothy, the trip didn't meet his expectations. In fact, it turned into a terrible disappointment for him, and he returned home disillusioned about what would soon be the 50th State.

Aaron's boys completed their education in Mainland schools. Marvin married a daughter of missionary friends in Central America, as he was, and they returned for a time, as second generation missionaries. Norman, in his way, dedicated his life to working for a medical institution, the White Memorial Hospital, although he could have made better money elsewhere, and spent most of his life working in their laboratory there.

Alma's girls all grew up and somehow managed to finish college, each finding a place for herself in the work. Earl chose to live closer home and in other areas.

Mable's were all going to school, and the strain on their pocket book visibly showed. But they made the sacrifice to get as much education as each needed to do what they felt was best.



Maude's young people were no longer as young, and with seven of them, the burden of Christian education fell heavier on their shoulders, but they struggled through it and their family made them proud and happy that they had done so.

Joseph and Dorothy's six also went through Church Schools. After all, there was no thought of their ever doing anything else. Each was allowed to decide what he or she wanted to do with their life, and Joseph could now feel pride as he saw them mature into fine workers.

Albert began to feel that perhaps he should consider retirement. His services were such that the institution didn't encourage him in that direction, but after serving nine years at Hinsdale, he felt that he had the hospital on a sound financial basis, and that it was time for a younger man to take over the operation.

In their travels, he and Lois had also been looking for just the right place to retire, and they felt that North Carolina would be the ideal place for them. June still lived in Florida, Gerald had settled in Iowa, and Arlys, now also married, had moved around a bit but currently lived in Oregon, so there was no place they could be near all of their scattered family.

In 1963 they made the move to Hendersonville, North Carolina, but with 42 years in hospital work, mostly in the administrative field, and being well-known in the denomination for his work and most dearly respected and loved, the Adventist Hospital Association asked if he would continue serving on their board as executive secretary on a part-time basis, working out of his home.

He agreed, and for twelve years more worked in this capacity, traveling to many of the institutions, counseling with the leaders, advising them, and it made him feel good to keep in touch with the work he had devoted his entire lifetime to serving.

Maude and Jake continued in the Placerville-Camino area until it seemed wisest for them to slow down a bit, too, and they made several moves before finally settling back in Cleveland, Georgia, near the doctor son, Myron and his family.

Alma, also, found that her health necessitated her retiring from active management of their farm. August had fought a good fight with cancer and had won many years added to his life, and when she lost him, she carried on alone for some time, with the help of Earl, leasing out the farm land, now much larger than the original twenty acres of



virgin soil.

Even after her retirement, she lived on the home place, welcoming the relatives when they came for visits, and always having a home for her family to visit when they returned for short times.

When she discovered that she also had cancer, the most dreaded black melanoma, she refused to give up, encouraged the use of relatively new and powerful drugs and returned to her home for many additional years, before finally giving in to the urging of her family to retire and leave the farming worries to those younger and more capable of handling them.

Meanwhile, Aaron and Lela found that while retirement had its joys, they missed working with the Spanish-speaking people of Central America. They solved their semi-retirement winters vacationing in Mexico, where they visited churches they had known in their infancy, strengthening the believers, studying with others, and doing what they could to speed the spreading of God Word there.

In their spare time, they spent many hours working on their Investment project, that of collecting shells, cleaning them, and each spring when they returned to the States, they took the shells to places that gave them good prices for their number one shells. What better way of vacationing than working for the Lord, and enjoying every minute of it?

On one of these trips, Aaron began to experience some problems, health-wise, that concerned them both, and as they drove toward home in their motor home, they stopped for extensive testing at the White Memorial Hospital, staying with Norman and family.

The verdict struck terror to their hearts, yet they continued smiling, trusting in the Lord and knowing that His will would be done. The doctors told him that he had lymphatic leukemia, that if he readjusted his living habits and took certain kinds of therapy and medications, he could live for quite some time, although at a slower pace.

After some extensive treatments, sadly Lela drove their motor home on up through the State of California, stopping by Chowchilla for a visit with those living there, before driving on up to Oregon, where they had moved at that time. Aaron rested on the bed most of the trip.

Leukemia plays games, it seems, giving the appearance of great improvement, then lets down, and the realization comes back that it is a deadly opponent, one not to give up easily.

He continued treatments in Oregon, and at one time the doctors gave him a very short time to live, ordered rubber suits to prevent fluid accumulation, and let him leave the hospital, where he had been for some time. After a day or so in one of those suits, he decided that he would rather die sooner than suffer longer, asked for special prayer and anointing, and took the suit off declaring that he would never put it on again.

Following the prayer and anointing, nothing sudden or flashy followed, but gradually he improved. When he visited the doctor the next time, the doctor showed great surprise at the improvement in his condition, admitting that there was no need to wear the hated suit if he continued as he was.

Aaron never claimed that the Lord healed him, only that He saw fit to prolong his life, and this proved to be the case. Other trips were made to Mexico, encouraging the believers there. True, his activities were slowed down, but he still felt that he lived a productive life.

When he realized that the recession was over, plans were already under way for a grand celebration of his and Lela's 50th wedding day, something he vowed not to miss. However, by the time of the celebration, there was no doubt that he had little time left.

Even so, no one would ever have realized from his smiles and happiness for the day that he had but six weeks left to live.

Back in Chowchilla, among friends and relatives, he chose to spend his remaining days, letting the one nurse take care of him who knew and loved him so well, his own sister, Mable, who had buried Lee not too long before.

One at a time, they all retired and are leaving the work to their families. Albert and Lois celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, as did Maude and Jake. Each family has one or more working actively in the Lord's work, some serving in their home churches, and some in far away places.

On the resurrection morning, what a joyous awakening it will be for Oscar and Josie! When they learn that their sacrifices were certainly more than worth-while, when they learn of the valuable work done for the Lord by their children because of their having the foresight to move their brood to a place where they could get a Christian education, even though it meant leaving both of their families behind--Oh, what a day that will be!