



Fourteen-year-old John waited quietly, watching his mother hold the precious letter from America close to her breast before slowly opening it. He wanted to scream, "Open it, quick!" but knew the few seconds more was nothing compared to the year they had been waiting for this news.

"To my beloved sister, Magdalena and her family,

It is with joy in my heart that I tell you America is everything we prayed it would be. It is a beautiful country, abounding with opportunities for those who wish to partake of them. The people who are your friends and neighbors, are just as we, immigrants, looking for a better life for their families.

The rolling hills, covered with a thick carpet of emerald green trees and grass, are truly a sight to behold. The streams and rivers bountiful with fish, are like silver ribbons rippling in the breeze.

We have managed to save the enclosed amount towards your passage to join us here. Hopefully, it is sufficient to add to your savings so your trip will be comfortable. However, whatever hardships, or sacrifices, you must make will be greatly rewarded once you are settled here.

We are most anxious for your arrival. May God be with you.

Your loving sister and family,"

Magdalena and John Conrad gathered their four sons and tiny daughter close and knelt to pray. At last, God was showing His infinite mercy in giving them a new life. Prayer and church were important. It provided them with the strength and humility to accept "God's Will" in their lives. Without it, they would not have been able to endure the hardships of the past years.

John Jr. walked out of the hut and sat on the bare, dry ground. As he ran his fingers through the lifeless soil and looked out over the spent land, he wondered how they had survived this long. Like the hands of a clock turned back, his young mind began to reflect on the past.

His parents, like he and his siblings, had been born in Norka, Russia, but of German decent. His father on March 12, 1861, just nine days after Czar Alexander II freed the serfs. His mother was born on November 10, 1862. They were 25 years older than John.

Though his parents were born as freed serfs (peasants), their land was not really their own. When Alexander II became Czar in 1855, he feared an uprising by the serfs and decided to take away half the land belonging to the



nobles, paying them for it and turning it over to the local village communities (Mirs) who in turn sold it to the peasants. Since so few could afford to pay for the land immediately, the mirs made arrangements for the peasants to make the payments to the government over a period of 49 years. It was stipulated that no peasant would be allowed to move away from his village until the land of the entire community was paid for. As families increased, the land was split into smaller parcels and there was not enough land to support all the population. Most of the peasants died in the villages where they were born.

John Conrad and Magdalena grew up in this huge country consisting of an empire of a group of nations governed by a mighty emperor, the all-powerful Czar. His millions of subjects, who represented 60 different backgrounds and ways of life, included Balts, Slavs, Jews, Georgians, Armenians, Uzbeks, Tartars, and Germans.

The cruel inequality of class revealed that 17 out of 1,000 people were of the nobility who had power, land and money. 120 of 1,000 were the middle class of merchants, townspeople, and property owners. The peasants made up four-fifths of the population and had very few rights under Russian law. Many were ill-housed, ill-fed and often hungry. Very few could read or write. Many of the peasants existed in log huts. Perhaps they had a huge stove made of clay on which they heated water for the simple pleasures of life.

John Jr. looked over at the sunflowers growing by the door of the hut. Their big, brown and yellow heads drooped heavy with seeds on the skinny, but sturdy, stalk.

"Dad will always grow sunflowers, for they seem to be a symbol to him of a living God who provides life, beauty and sustenance in even a simple flower", he thought.

Children matured early, for they were needed to help provide the family with the bare necessities of life. They met adult responsibilities early in childhood, being well aware of the hard life they were experiencing.

Magdalena and John Conrad shared with their sons the unrest they had witnessed under Alexander II's reign. There had been assassination attempts on the Czar's life after coming to the throne in 1855. There had been conspiracy for forming a democratic regime or socialistic state. Secret presses printed and distributed propaganda to discredit the government, and Revolutionaries infiltrated the government, killing Alexander II on March 13, 1881, the very same day he signed a document to establish a legislature.

Alexander II's assassination brought renewed loyalty to the crown. Things began happening for the good of the country. Along with great scientists coming to light, great books were being written and great music was composed.



Also, railroads were being built and industry expanded to provide jobs for former serfs. Thousands of peasants flocked to the cities as the industries developed in the late nineteenth century. Desperate people, looking for a better life, were herded like sheep into factories and slums where they earned about 300 rubles (\$150) a year. Unfortunately, children were exploited and subjected to heavy labor in factories.

Henry Conrad, who was born April 26, 1884 and John Jr., born September 22, 1886, were spared that experience for their parents chose to remain with the land. But the land nearly claimed John at the age of five. He was helping his dad with the plowing one day, riding on the tongue of the plow to add a little weight. He lost his balance and fell. As the disks moved forward over him, his small body was gently pushed into line with the furrows and covered by the soft dirt. His dad stopped the horses immediately, and was certain he would find his young son cut to pieces by the blades, but John came out unscathed, dirty and frightened.

John experienced another tragedy at the age of six when he and a friend were fighting over a stick. John won by pulling the hardest, but the force caused the stick to penetrate his left eye, causing the fluid to drain from it. It healed, but a cataract formed over it and he was blind from that day on.

Though John was only eight years old when Alexander III (1881-1894) died, he knew that people described him as clumsy, ungifted, obstinate, foolish, narrow-minded, and lacking self-reliance. He was said to have disliked reform and antagonized every class. During his reign, there was no peasant unrest, as they appeared very apathetic and allowed themselves to be subjected to oppression and exploitation.

There was a twelve month mourning period after Alexander III's death, before the coronation of his son, Nicholas II (1894-1917). Nicholas II's word was the supreme law of the land. He was well-meaning, but timid and weak. He was very religious and believed God had appointed him to rule Russia and to preserve the old ways. He was not too interested in reforms nor the welfare of the people. He was faced with the task of dealing with a man called Lenin, a revolutionary, who had vowed vengeance when his brother was hanged in 1887 for plotting against Alexander III.

When John was nine years old (1895), he heard about Lenin organizing a secret society in St. Petersburg to preach Marxism among the factory workers. Lenin was shipped to Siberia by the police. When released from prison, he went to Switzerland to meet a young idealist named George Plekhanov, who had organized a few fellow Russian exiles to work for Marxian socialism.

Lenin and Plekhanov's disagreement on things prompted a split in the



party. Plekhanov's party, the Menshevik (meaning minority) was to educate the Russians under a democracy so socialism would triumph. Lenin's party, the Bolschevik (meaning majority) was aimed at arousing the workers to immediate revolution leading to socialism. The result was a revolution.

During all this, European Russia was confronted with a full-scale famine which first hit in 1891-1892. Between 1891 and 1914, there were no less than twelve bad harvests. Exhaustion of the soil and over-burdening of the peasants caused chronic starvation, not only for the people, but their animals, which the peasants tried to keep alive by tearing the thatch from their roofs for feed.

Two more children had been born to Magdalena and Henry during this famine. Henry on July 28, 1893 and Elizabeth on December 1, 1898.

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Magdalena and John Conrad put the money from America with their meager savings of fifteen years. It seemed like a small fortune and was their only hope for escaping the desolate life they had been experiencing.

They began immediately to make plans for their departure. Obtaining passports was not a major problem. Because of the famine, the government did not object to the peasants leaving and overlooked the 49 year stipulation of paying for their land. The one exception was young men of 17 years, or older, for they were being taken into the army to help fight in the revolution. Since their oldest son, Conrad, was 16 and John was 14, it was imperative for the family to leave as soon as possible, or the boys would have to remain.

Their few possessions were packed into three containers. One long, wooden box contained what farm tools they owned. They knew these would be needed wherever they settled in America. A smaller, wooden box contained their few household items. The clothing for the entire family was placed in a large trunk. A small suitcase remained, to be used for whatever food they could find to sustain them on the long journey by boat.

The day of departure was met with excitement and anxiety, but was extremely sad, for John Conrad's 80+ year-old mother, Christina Marie (Green) chose to remain in Russia rather than die in a strange land. The choice was hard and difficult for everyone.

They were to travel to Bremen, Germany where they were to depart on an emigrant ship on March 4, 1901. When they reached the dock, they discovered they had missed the ship to America and there would not be another for four to six weeks. They knew they could not wait that long, for they barely had enough money to last the trip. John Conrad began asking around to see if there were other ships going to New York City. He discovered that a freighter was due to depart the very next morning! It would be a slower and longer trip, but they had



no choice.

The trip was rough. The food lasted longer than anticipated because everyone was so sea-sick most of the time and didn't feel like eating. When the food was gone, John Conrad took the suitcase onto the deck one night and threw it overboard.

The ship's crew compassionately provided free milk to nursing children, so every time they came around, Magdalena would pretend to nurse two-year-old Elizabeth so they would get some milk. Elizabeth also carried a favorite toy, a little monkey, about 12 inches tall, with a furry body and moveable arms and legs. However, that favorite toy, was really a whiskey flask which John Conrad brought along for medicinal purposes.

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Upon their arrival in New York Harbor on April 1, 1901, they stood on deck to get their first glimpse of this new, and beautiful, country. They noticed another ship pulling into the harbor, and to their horror, saw it tip over onto its side, dumping hundreds of people into the ocean. It was later learned that all those people had gathered onto one side of the ship to see the Statue of Liberty and for some reason, the weight caused the ship to flip over.

Magdalena and John Conrad had not anticipated a customs inspection and didn't understand what was happening as the men, women and children were sent to separate inspection stations. Magdalena thought they were all being imprisoned and became hysterical. An interpreter finally calmed her down, explaining that it was necessary for all immigrants to be checked for physical or medical problems.

John Jr. panicked when he saw the vision test being given. Immigrants were told to close one eye and tell how many fingers the examiner held up. Then close the other eye and repeat the question. Being blind in his left eye could mean deportation for him, and he would have to return to Russia alone. He watched and listened carefully to those being examined ahead of him. There seemed to be a pattern. Every third person was answering "Two", for the right eye and "One" for the left. It was his turn. He was told to close his left eye. The examiner held up two fingers. Good start, thought John. He was told to cover his right eye.

"How many?" asked the examiner, holding up one finger.

John's heart seemed to be in his throat.

"One", he guessed.

"Passed", said the examiner.



When the family was reunited, they proceeded to the area for claiming their belongings. Much to their surprise, there was the suitcase that John Conrad had thrown overboard! How it got there, and how it ended up with their things, was a mystery.

They had heard about the great Transcontinental Railroad that had been completed in 1869, crossing the entire United States. They were, in a way, pleased that they could board the train in New York and not have to leave it until they arrived in Portland, Oregon.

John Conrad paid the lowest fare possible. The ten or twelve days journey was quite boring, and the uncomfortable, narrow, wooden benches they had to sit on made the trip seem even longer. The railcar was sometimes coupled with freight cars and often put on a siding to allow the express trains to pass. The constant thought of a better life made the trip bearable for the family.

Their savings was dwindling. Their only source of food now was the vendor who came through the train car periodically. Since John Conrad could not speak English, and did not understand the American monetary system, he would indicate what he wanted to purchase, then hold out his hand with the money to let the vendor take what it cost. He had no choice but to trust the vendor's honesty.

Since hard work had always been a part of life for this family, they lost no time finding jobs to earn a living and to repay the loan to Magdalena's sister and brother-in-law. John Conrad's various jobs over the years included working at the Dornbecker's Door Factory, in the shop for the streetcar company of OWR & N, as a garbage collector and as a Janitor for Lipman & Wolf until he suffered a stroke.

The thrill of owning their first home came in 1903 when they purchased a house at 7th and Montavilla for \$800.00. They lived there for two years before moving to 801 N.E. 10th Street in 1905.

Two more children were born. Margaret on March 20, 1905 and Joe on June 8, 1907. It was their responsibility to care for the five milk cows the family owned and to deliver milk in their little wooden wagon to their regular customers, while Magdalena did housework for other people.

After 15 years on 10th Street, they moved to the corner of 13th and Fremont, where they lived until their deaths, Magdalena on December 21, 1946 and John Conrad on June 11, 1947. They were laid to rest in Rose Hill Cemetery in Portland, Oregon.



My father, John Henry Yeager, stumbled into his life's vocation quite by accident and somewhat out of desperation. He was working for the Portland City Water Department. The winter rains and cold had set in. He was down in a ditch, laying pipe and very wet and cold. As he left for the day, he passed a bakery and saw a sign in the window, "BAKER WANTED". He went inside, took the sign from the window and stated that he wanted the job and was willing to learn everything the baker had to teach him! He later went to work with his Uncle, George Spady, who started a bakery business in Sundial, Oregon then later moved it to (30th-40th) Belmont Street in Portland, Oregon.

About 1903, John and his brother, Conrad (usually called Cooney) opened a bakery in Montavilla, Oregon. It was through his delivery route to the Sundial Ranch in Fairview, Oregon that he met my mother, Bertie Lee Mashburn. Her parents were working there after her father, Wade Hampton Mashburn lost his job with the railroad in Stockton, California and they moved to Oregon to supervise this ranch. My mother was only 18 years old and Daddy was not only attracted to her outward appearance, but was much impressed with the fact that she was such a responsible person and hard worker. She had to be, as she was the oldest of five children and expected to carry her share of the responsibility for their family to survive.

My mother's story claimed that her little sister, Vernetta, was actually the "cupid" in bringing them together. She happened to be out in the yard one day when Daddy came to deliver the bakery goods. Vernetta struck up a conversation with him and he was so delighted in her that he wanted to find out more about the family. He lingered longer than usual, met my mother, and kept coming back!

After they were married, they moved to Grand Mound, Washington where her parents lived on the prairie. They built a small cabin. Daddy made their table and bed so they could be pulled up to the wall, out of the way, during the day.

Their deep love for each other overpowered their bleak existence, until their first child, John Raymond was born on January 12, 1912 and died a few days later due to complications. They managed to remain on the prairie until Leslie Wilbert was born on January 16, 1913, and decided it was time to try to make a better life for themselves.

They returned to Montavilla and the bakery business with Cooney. Another son, Elwin Leroy, was born on March 16, 1915, but died shortly after.

When Cooney died during the flu epidemic in 1918, Daddy's brother,



Henry, and their brother-in-law, Pete Walters, took over the bakery. My parents moved to Brush Prairie, Washington where another son, Leonard, was born on March 12, 1917. After his death in October, 1919 from complications of pneumonia, my parents gave up the farm life and returned to the bakery business by opening a shop in Molalla, Oregon.

After their fourth son, Donald Edwin was born on March 26, 1920, my mother became very ill and the doctor advised them to move from Molalla as it was just too damp and cold there.

They decided to try farming again and moved to Liberty Bond, Washington where their first daughter, Mae Madalene, was born on February 4, 1923. On the day she was born, four foot long icicles hung from the roof of the house to the snow.

Daddy told the story of how a wild stallion came one night and "stole" the two work-mares for his "harem". Daddy took a lantern and set out on foot to find them. He managed to get them back, but it was truly a miracle that the stallion did not attack him.

The cold weather, isolation, and inability to provide properly for their little family was too much, so they moved back to Oregon, this time to Beaverton, where they opened another bakery in January, 1925. They purchased the Freeman residence on Broadway street, added a store to the front, used part of the house for the bakery and the rest for living accommodations. Daddy was quite proud of the revolving oven he had installed. It was considered as "the latest word in scientifically correct machinery for such an institution".

Two more sons were born, Glen Elwood on December 10, 1925 and John Wade on March 28, 1927.

Evelyn (Hite) Holland was about 17 years old when she worked for my folks in the bakery. She was "trained" in the shop before she started clerking. She said she remembers the good butterhorns that came out of the oven on Saturday afternoon, so flaky and delicious and topped with powdered sugar frosting with malt. She met her future husband, Bob, while working there and they went on to establish the successful Holland Feed Company.

The Beaverton Bakery is still in operation and still going strong as it was when Daddy decided to sell it and try the restaurant business in Portland. After a few, short months operating the Green Parrot restaurant on 23rd and Lovejoy, it was evident that this was not going to be a paying proposition to support their growing family, so they sold it and moved to Sunnyside, Washington to start another bakery.

I was born on June 19, 1930. My Aunt LaNora named me Gloria because I had a dimple in my cheek, which she said was "glorious". My middle name,



Joan, was chosen for my dad's name, John. Mother said that the day I was born, my brother, Wade, brought his favorite pillow to give to me. How sweet! A couple of years later, however, he pushed me off a settee and I bit a hole in my tongue.

My brother, Daryl Lee, was born on November 12, 1933, which completed our family.

The depression years were tough while we lived in Sunnyside, but Daddy's good business sense, and his compassion for those less fortunate, made it possible to have a comfortable lifestyle. He was generous with bakery goods, giving left-over (and sometimes even fresh) goods to the down and out. There were a lot of "hobos" at that time...educated and skilled men who had left their families in search of work so they could send money home for them to survive. Daddy would always ask the men to do something around the place, such as sweeping the sidewalk, a little repair work...anything to maintain their dignity so they wouldn't feel they were begging.

The challenge to start another bakery lured them to Prosser, Washington where it was necessary for Mother to help Daddy in the bakery all day, giving our older siblings the responsibility to "baby sit" Daryl and me. It seemed we were always in the way.

At one of the neighborhood back-lot ball games, I got too close to the batter, who was using a club with a nail in it for a bat, and got struck in the forehead. Daryl was getting into the way of the hockey game the guys were playing one day, so they placed a big metal ball in the seat of his pants to keep him on the sidelines. He didn't like that very much!

My brothers dug a cave under the neighbor's driveway and used it for their hideaway. It was a great retreat until the weight of the neighbor's car caused it to cave in. Luckily, the guys weren't in the cave at the time!

It was also in Prosser that Donald, Glen and Wade wanted to find out if the light goes out in the refrigerator when the door is closed. They attached a string to the handle, all three climbed in, shut the door, and sure enough, the light went out. However, when they pulled on the string to unlatch the door, the string broke! When their cry for help went unheard, Donald suggested they start pounding in rhythm together. Mother heard the noise and found them just in time.

My first bike riding lesson was in Prosser. Donald and Glen put me on the bike, sent me down the hill and one of them was to stop me at the bottom, as they didn't tell me how to use the brake. The only problem...I was going so fast that there was no way anyone was going to step out in front of me!! I managed to turn the corner onto main street, right into the path of an approaching car. The driver saw that I wasn't going to stop, so he put his car into reverse. I still



bumped into him, picked myself up and ran into the bakery and up the stairs to hide in the coat closet, as I just knew I was going to get a good spanking!

Our next move was to Arlington, Oregon where I started the first grade.

The building for the bakery was a former drug store, I think. It still had the soda fountain, which was a real thrill for all us kids. The shop, with the huge oven, was in the back of the building next to the stairway that led to our "home" upstairs.

One winter day, I came downstairs and found some strange men sitting by the oven, getting warm and drinking coffee and eating pastry. I thought nothing of them being there, as it was typical of my parents to "hand out" to strangers in need. What was strange, my dad told me to go out into the store and sit, ~~completely opposite of the "rules"~~. We later found out that the "Matson Kidnappers" were believed to be in Oregon or Washington and my parents were so afraid that these men might be them. I don't think they ever found out for sure, but it was pretty exciting!!!!

This building also had a huge basement and an enormous pipe leading from it, under the street, into the basement of the building on the other side. We would go down there to play and crawl through that pipe. We were told that the pipe had something to do with flooding in that area. We would pretend that pirates, or other unsavory characters, used it for smuggling or something else as exciting.

We had a German Shepperd dog for some reason. He was with us constantly and seemed to understand everything our parents said to us. He knew we were not to cross the street...which Daryl did one day. Mother told "Duke" to go get him. He did, pulling on his shirt sleeve, and practically dragging him across the street, Daryl crying and screaming all the way. Traffic stopped and people were watching, enjoying the show!!!

I learned my first lesson in cheating at the town's Fourth of July celebration. There was a bingo booth next to the bakery and one of the prizes was a darling, little, blue wicker doll buggy with a tiny doll in it. I wanted that prize SO BAD!! I spent my money for bingo cards, but didn't win anything. So I thought I could just say I had a Bingo. However, as they checked my numbers I was exposed as a cheat. Talk about major embarrassment!!!! I was so humiliated. The next morning however, my mother brought the prize to me and told me that someone had left it for me the night before. I never did know who that someone was, but I was so appreciative of their generosity and loved that little buggy and doll.

Moving to Hermiston, Oregon the next year brought another near-fatal lesson from my brothers. They decided I should learn how to swim since there were so many irrigation ditches around. They did not choose the conventional



method of teaching however. Instead, they just threw me in and told me to paddle. I'm not sure how many times I went under before they finally realized I hadn't learned the lesson at all!!!

My lesson in compassion came this year also. My brother, Glen, had broken his leg. When he was finally able to return to school, he had to use crutches to get around. Some bigger boys started to tease him and took his crutches away from him. Being the "peace-lover" of our family, he chose not to argue with those boys and tried to get to the building on his own. Somehow, he fell, or was shoved, and fell in such a position that his leg had to be re-set. It was so hard for me to comprehend how people could be so cruel and take advantage of someone's situation like that.

Our dad very seldomed got upset, or showed how he felt about injustices and tried everything to get along with people, especially our neighbors. However, we had a neighbor who kept some big dogs and would turn them loose when they were not at home. The dogs kept getting into our chicken pen and killing the chickens. Despite Daddy's repeated requests to keep the dogs tied, or penned up, they were let loose every day. Finally, Daddy had enough, caught the dogs and placed them in the neighbor's fancy, new car which was sitting in the driveway. By the time the neighbor found them, they had completely demolished the inside of the car. They never ran loose again!! So much for peaceful negotiations.

Daddy raised his chickens for our Sunday dinners. He would chop off their head and bring them into the kitchen and place them on the kitchen table for Mother to pluck and clean. One time, Mother was busy at the sink when he brought them in and wasn't paying too much attention. She heard a funny noise, turned around and saw one of the chickens walking off the edge of the table!! I don't know which was funniest....her reaction..or the chicken walking off the table!!

My dad used his nightly ritual of counting the day's receipts and doing the bookwork as a learning experience for me. I'd help him count the change, stacking it neatly then counting and adding the totals of each denomination. One evening, I was tempted to "accidentally" drop a few pennies into my lap as I slipped them off the table while counting. When we finished the tally, Daddy casually mentioned for me not to forget the pennies in my lap. He didn't even look at me and I was so thankful, for I was so humiliated and on the verge of tears. Another lesson in honesty, consideration of feelings and trust.

The town summer celebration offered a talent show, of sorts, and I was encouraged to participate by tap dancing. I wasn't really interested until I was told I would get a huge peanut brittle bar if I did. I actually danced twice and received two bars. However, I didn't get one bite of them as my brothers ate them that night while I was sleeping.



That summer celebration also featured a fairly unknown trumpet player named, Doc Severson, who later went on to be quite famous on the Johnny Carson show on television.

Moving to Stevenson in 1939 was hard for me. I was just old enough to know that I would miss my best friend, Marjorie Hughes, and our big house on a one-half city block was so much more comfortable than the five rooms we were now going to live in above the bakery.

We moved as soon as school was out for the summer, and I was facing my birthday in a strange place, with no friends. My parents knew how I felt, so Mother made a chocolate cake, putting it on her pink, cut glass cake plate. She prepared a great dinner for all of us and we told jokes, sang and had a great time. When it came time to serve the cake, I did the honors. After a few pieces were removed from the plate, my dad said, "What is that under the plate?" When I looked, I found the biggest, brightest silver dollar I had ever seen. I think that was the best birthday I ever had, as it showed me that the love of family and being together is more important than anything else in this world.

It was necessary for everyone in the family to shoulder part of the responsibilities of making the family business a success. I learned to wrap bread, my brothers fried doughnuts and maple bars, using the turning sticks like drum sticks as they waited for them to turn golden brown. We would sing and tell stories as we worked. They helped with the baking and I finally, at the age of ten, started clerking in the store. What a thrill! As I look back, I can't believe that my parents trusted me to make change correctly.

There was one job that I really disliked. The inside of the glass showcases had to be washed with a vinegar solution once a week, and since I was the smallest of the bunch, it was my job. To this day, I do not like to wash windows!!!!

My brother, Donald, had the job of frosting cakes occasionally. One day, my sister's friend, Vicky Melonas, was in the shop, teasing Donald. He was really getting aggravated and told her to shut up and leave or he'd smash a cake in her face. She dared him to do it, so he added a little extra frosting to the top of the one he was holding and shoved it right into her face!

The son of our local doctor, "Doc" Harris, liked to help in the bakery. He especially liked to make cookies. Daddy had made a cooling rack that folded up to the back of the table which held all the baking pans. The rack was opened, secured, and the pans were placed from bottom to top. "Doc" was removing the cookie pans from the revolving oven, the rack was full and he turned to place the last pan on the table when he hit one side of the rack, causing it to fold up, and all the pans went sliding onto the floor. He had forgotten to secure it!!! I don't remember him having to pay for all those cookies, and I don't think Daddy really got angry with him. Maybe he just didn't get to help anymore?



The Second World War brought many changes to our small community and our way of life. My brothers, Donald and Glen went into the army, rationing stamps became almost more important than money, purchasing savings stamps and bonds showed our patriotic support, and doing without a lot of things which we took for granted, made everyone economically equal. It didn't matter how much money you had, if you couldn't get what you wanted, you did without.

Air raid drills at school were a monthly ritual. Since a good share of our students came by bus, it was necessary for those of us in town to take two or three home with us during the drills. Kids liked coming home with us as we ended up with a sweet treat to eat on the way back to school.

Black out drills were always frightening to me. When the siren went off at night and we had to pull all the shades and turn off the lights, I could imagine what it would be like to hear the roar of big bombers overhead and the scream of bombs dropping through the sky. To this day, I do not like to watch war movies.

Many of the townspeople were employed at the Vancouver Shipyards during the war years. My parents were asked to run the bus depot since their building was in the ideal spot for busses to stop. They added a small lunch counter to the store and our days turned into a flurry of activity from early morning until late at night.

One day, some official looking men in suits came to the shop to talk to Daddy. It seems that Daddy had never taken out his citizenship all the years he lived in the United States and the government was looking for illegal aliens to deport. Mother became hysterical as she was sure that Daddy was going to be sent back to Russia. After several days, and much investigation, the men were satisfied that Daddy was not a threat to the government, but it didn't take Daddy long to get his citizenship papers!

We spent one year in White Salmon, Washington. Daddy would bake all day, then take the bakery goods to Stevenson to what he called a "cold spot" which my brother, Wilbert, and his wife, Doris, managed. Though business flourished, the long, hard hours were just too much, so we moved back to Stevenson.

Lots of things happened that year in White Salmon. We lived in a big house on the South end of main street. There were some steps leading from the street to the house. During the winter snow, my brothers packed those steps to make a run and when Daddy came home, he slid all the way to the house.

One wash day, Mother prepared her usual lunch menu of beans and baked potatoes when in came Daddy with Mr. Gray, the owner of the company which had sold equipment to them over the years. Mother nearly died of humiliation.....inviting a millionaire to a washday lunch of beans!!!!????



The people living in the house next to us were really very strange. We rarely saw them and they did not speak to anyone. One night, Daryl and I thought we heard a clicking sound, like morse code, coming from their house. We just knew these people were enemy spies and we were so scared and excited!

The first, and only time, I ever got into trouble at school was in White Salmon. The boy in front of me kept turning around and bothering the things on my desk and talking. I repeatedly told him to stop and he wouldn't. Finally, I just hit him and since he was sitting sideways in the seat, his fanny hanging over the edge, he slid right off, onto the floor. Naturally, it was all my fault. Talk about injustice!

~~This was also the year that I experienced a near rape, but was too~~ innocent and ignorant to know it. A "family friend" had come to visit us at the bakery. He suggested we go get some ice cream. On the way back, he asked if there was a short cut up to the back street. We went down a little alley and started up a ladder in the wood storage shed to the street above. He grabbed me, I laughed and managed to scurry up the ladder. When we got inside the back door of the store, he grabbed me again and I screamed. Daddy came bounding through the door from the shop and told me to get out of there. The guy didn't stay for ice cream, even though he paid for it!

After moving back to Stevenson, Daddy managed to stay in business for one more year when failing health forced the sale of the bakery to Luther Morgan in the summer of 1944. We moved up on the hill where Daddy pursued his love of animals by trying to keep up a mini-farm. Somewhere along the line, a mule came to share the farm. He was very tame, and fun to have around, but was always getting out. His escape route was always the same.... down our road, up Vancouver Avenue and past the county sheriff's office. The guys in the office would call and say, "Hey, John, your a\_\_\_ is out again!" I wonder what ever happened to that mule?

The folks "shared" two more sons with their beloved country. Wade served during the Korean conflict and Daryl served in the Naval Reserves.

The love of being in business, around people, prompted my folks to make another change. They purchased a place in Skamania, Washington, right next to the highway, and made it into a cafe, with living quarters above. That lasted until some "skinflint" talked them into trading for a country store in Fargo, Oregon. After the papers were signed and they moved, it was discovered that the crook had taken nearly all the stock (which was included in the sale) and had drained the gas pumps. I don't know how they got out from under that deal, but they went back to Skamania and purchased a place that had an old diner and tried that for a while. When that didn't pan out, they were asked to managed the Skamania Store for Mr. Nelson, as they were moving into Oregon.



After another short retirement, they went back into the bakery business with brother, Daryl, and his wife Jeanine, in Stevenson. When that got to be too much for them, they sold it and retired again. He later helped Daryl start a bakery in Bonneville, Washington.

When Daryl and Jeanine bought their place in Stevenson, they moved a mobile home onto it for the folks to finally retire. They lived there until Daddy fell and broke his hip, necessitating another move, to the basement apartment of our home in Washougal, Washington. About three years later, gangrene invaded one of his big toes and it was necessary to amputate his leg to just above his knee. A few months later he had a stroke, developed pneumonia and died on April 28, 1972.

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## EPILOGUE

Our dad seemed to have a drive within him to start a business and then when it got too big for him to handle alone, he sold it and moved on to a new location. His reputation followed him. Even after we settled in Stevenson, Washington in 1939-40, the down and out came.

"Are you the John Yeager who used to be in such-and-such a place?" they would ask.

"We heard you'll let us work for a loaf of bread." Daddy would ask who sent them, converse with them a few minutes, put them to work to help them retain their dignity and tell Mother to sack up some bread and pastry.

When our parents were forced into retirement the first time in 1944 due to Daddy's ill health, they had spent thirty-five years in a profession they found very fulfilling. There was no gold watch, special recognition for services rendered, or retirement plan when they left, but that didn't matter to them.

Daddy did not die a wealthy man as far as money or possessions go, and his eighty-sixth year was not easy healthwise. He was practically blind, lost a leg due to diabetes, had a slow, encompassing cancer and suffered a stroke. Though he couldn't speak because of that, he squeezed our hand and mouthed our names as we left him at the hospital the night before he died. His mind was sharp right to the end and he died with dignity, knowing he'd led a good, full, independent life.

His wealth came in the form of hundreds of people who loved and respected him. People his age, and older, came to share his self-taught knowledge of life and his sense of humor. Two of his favorite expressions were, "I may be dumb, but I'm not stupid!" and "Does a duck like to swim?" when asked



if he would like something to eat. Young people came to hear about how he loved this country and how proud he was to be a United States citizen. They respected his wisdom. He was never ashamed to profess his faith in God and was always thankful for the blessings bestowed upon us as a family.

He and Mother brought ten children into the world, and though three of them died in infancy, they were remembered as part of our family. Their oldest son, Wilbert died August 11, 1969 while Daddy was in the hospital. It was extremely difficult for him and Mother to be seperated at that time.

Our parents regarded life and work as the same thing. He enjoyed being a baker...creating, and satisfying people's taste with those creations. He had tried farming three times and he had a way with animals, but the bakery business gave him the opportunity to be with, and help others.

Mother was his love, friend, and partner. She was a loving mother to us and made sure we were well cared for and had enough to eat. How did she manage to be a wife, mother, partner in business and keep a home functioning? As parents, they taught us how to accept responsibility by working in the bakery, and expected us to be honorable individuals and tolerant of others.

Mother worked with Daddy all those years he was fulfilling his desires and took loving care of him right up to his death. They had been married 61 1/2 years, and though she lived ten years longer, a part of her died with him that day in April. When her "broken" heart finally gave out on June 3, 1983, we closed another chapter in our family history book.

Now, we are the "older" generation and it is our turn to share whatever talents, strengths, wisdom, etc. we have with others. But most of all, we MUST remember the greatest of all to share is LOVE!!