

# **Our Father**

John Evan Evanson

18 Oct 1883- 7 June 1942

by Deana Moller

## **Where it began**

John Evan Evanson was born 18 Oct, 1883 on the Bench in Spanish Fork, Utah. His home was 2 blocks west of the home where our mother was born. Mom was 10 months old when she went with her mother to visit the new baby, our father. Mom leaned over and kissed our father, and he used to tell us, "I fell in love with your mother then, and I have loved her ever since."

## **Severe Croup**

When he was very young he had a bad cold with severe croup. Grandma had given up hope that he could live, and had gone out on the front porch where she prayed for help. She was prompted to give him a mixture of onion juice and honey, and went back into the house to fix it for him. It helped him immediately and he recovered.

He wasn't too healthy when he was young and missed quite a lot of school. It didn't slow him up one bit, and he always caught up easily. Mom says, "he was considered to be the most brilliant Icelfander on the Bench."

## **Move to Schofield**

When he was a young man he and his parents moved to Schofield, 60 miles up into the canyon east of the Bench. He and Grandpa did carpenter work in the mine there.

## **Explosion**

One day they worked a double shift, so didn't go to work the next morning. There was a terrible explosion in the mine that day with many men losing their lives. One man and horse were blown across the canyon.

They moved back to Spanish Fork to do carpentry work there. Here in this beautiful valley, the very centre of Zion that had "blossomed as the rose", our mother and father grew up, each born under the covenant to goodly parents, attending the same schools and the same church, sharing friends,.. sharing all the blessings of this promised land of America.

In 1903 when Dad would be 19 years old, he and his family moved to Canada by train, to settle in Raymond, Alberta. Our father soon moved to Tank 77, now known as Taber, and homesteaded south of the railway water tower. His father and mother soon moved to Taber in 1905, and built a home in the north because they were able to find a good well there. This home had a large front room, dining room, 2 bedrooms, a large kitchen and pantry. Hanging from the ceiling in the dining room was a coal oil lamp, with sparkling crystals that gleamed softly in the lamp light.

## **Carpentry**

They built many homes in Taber, including the Sanderson home with the pointed tower.

## **Basketball Alberta Champs**

Our father was always very interested in sports, and played basketball on the same team as William Valgardson and Charlie Edwards. They became the champions of Alberta during the winter of 1907-08.

## **Marriage to Hannah**

Our mother arrived in Canada 1st of April 1907, and their wedding was held in the dining room of their home, under the hanging lamp. After the wedding supper they had a wedding dance in the Social Hall. (10 April 1907)

## **Hard Times**

Dominion Day was the first holiday to come along, and Mom said, "we didn't even have 50 cents to go to the dance, but we didn't care.

The house became crowded with the additions of Harold, Edna and Virginia. A smaller home was built for Grandma and Grandpa a block east of their home. This home had a bay window, stained glass, and a fancy scroll work around the porch.

Our grandparents lived in this home until Grandpa's death 3 Oct 1917, and Grandma moved to Raymond soon afterwards. The little house with the stand glass and the lacy porch was moved to the dry land homestead south west of Taber.

## **Land Purchase**

In 1920 Dad bought a 1/4 section of irrigated land from Mrs. Edwards, and this home was moved onto the south east corner. Here Dad planted poplar and maple trees, lilac and caragana hedges. We had black, red and white currants, sand cherries, gooseberries and strawberries. The lilac hedge was especially beautiful- leading to an archway through the trees to the front gate.

We cleared a little room in the trees to the right of the archway, put a cot in there where it was cool and shady with the sun's rays filtering through the green leaves, and Harold slept here much of the time.

Our huge gardens were full of early peas, potatoes, carrots, turnips, beans, radishes, lettuce, green onions, parsnips, citrons, water melons, vegetable marrows, cucumbers, cantaloupe, red beets, ...corn.

## **Summer day fun**

What fun we had on this farm. We swam in the canal, played tennis, miniature golf, kick the can, cricket, duck on the rock....

We had ice in the ice house and made ice cream many times. We usually ate soda crackers and Empress strawberry jam with our ice cream, and it was delicious.

The boys made miniature farms in the corner of the yard, and made little buildings, wagons, fences from buffalo beans and little hay stacks from

grass. We made a miniature golf course north of the lilac pathway, and south of the house we had a tennis court with a binder twine net.

Our Father had helped to bring irrigation to this area, and the canal was not too far north of our home. What fun we had in the clear warm water, with mud slides down the banks, the sandy bottom, and just enough current to make us think that we could swim.

Edna would bathe Ba'ady, our pet lamb, in the ditch but usually made Thelma and I wash her tail.

Out in the centre of the yard we played basketball. Dad and the boys built one basket in the garage and another by the caragana hedge, and we played here for hours- our father played right along with us.

### **Self Defense**

He bought boxing gloves and taught the boys the manly art of self defense. He taught the boys to wrestle, and would laugh with pride as he told Mom, "Do you know that I could hardly hold Harold down- he is getting so strong."

### **Rubber Guns**

The boys made rubber guns 16 inches long, with heavy inner-tube elastic stretched to the limit. Ray was sneakily waiting one day to ambush Archie- with both guns loaded. When someone appeared around the corner of the house Ray aimed and fired. He got our Dad squarely in both eyes. If my memory serves me right he just gave Ray a steely look and staggered into the house.

One day Johnnie took a flying somersault off the roof of a high grainery to land on a straw-covered pig pen below. As he landed on the straw roof with legs and arms outspread, a sharp stick appeared out of the straw in front of him, narrowly missing his chin and nose.

### **Hey Look at Me**

One lovely summer day after a big rain storm, Ray was riding on a stone boat being pulled by Silver, going around the corner of the chicken coop through a big puddle. He called, "Hey, everybody, look at me." Just

as we all turned to look, the stone boat hit the corner of the chicken coop, and Ray flew high in the air, to land with a great splash in the water.

## **Faster than a hat**

Harold stood in the barn yard one sunny day, arms akimbo, watching as our Dad tried to catch a horse that was trailing a long rope. The horse galloped around behind Harold, the end of the rope wrapped around his ankles, and he was pulled through a manure pile before his hat touched the ground.

The boys found an old umbrella, black and rusty, and would run straight out of the big door in the loft of the barn with the umbrella open. Straight down they would gracefully float, only to land, climb back up to the loft to jump again and again.

## **Guardian Angel**

Once when the barn was full of wild horses, Johnnie accidentally fell through a hay chute in the loft, and fell down in the midst of these wild horses below. The startled horses kicked and stomped while Johnnie crawled around under them trying to find the door. His guardian angel must have led him out of there- alive and without a scratch.

Another day Johnnie fell into the pig pen, right on top of Chicken-Eater, a mean, vicious pig. He managed to jump out, barely out of the reach of snapping jaws.

## **Parade**

We watched the sky for days before the 1st of July, Dominion Day, hoping that it wouldn't rain. We led the parade many times because our Dad was the Mayor of Taber. I remember the year that we rode in our new 1928 Buick and won first prize for having the largest family. We went to the Fair in Lethbridge every year, and to the Chautauquas in Taber, where one year we met Vilhjalmer Stephenson- an Icelander who was billed as the Greatest living Canadian.

## **Saturday Nights**

We loved Saturday nights when we went into town to buy all kinds of good things... candy, peanuts, cookies... and the weekly paper. How we loved the funnies especially Barney Google and the Katzenjammer Kids.

## **The last ounce of energy**

Mom's sister, Aunt May, and her family, the Valgardsons, lived 1 1/2 miles east of our farm. Our cousins were Bill, Norma, Thelma, Larue, Howard, Ethel, Ronald and Gary. They spent much time at our place, and we at theirs. There was a bridge over the irrigation ditch about half way between our homes. Norma and Virginia would leave this bridge at the same time, on their bicycles, to race home to their own place. They were to see who could phone the other to say, "I won." Virginia would come flying through the gate, leap off her bicycle, and gasping for breath would crawl up the steps- to use her last ounce of energy in ringing the phone.

## **Work & Fun**

The family worked together putting up the hay. Dad and Harold pitched the alfalfa onto the hay racks, with the rest of us shaping and tramping the load- then into the stack with more shaping and tramping.

One day the horses ran away with a full load of hay. Ray was on top of this high load and as the horses turned a sharp corner on a dead run the load of hay tipped over. Ray flew through the air, to land on his hands. He didn't seem to be hurt, but couldn't sleep. Dad took Ray in to see Cappy Faulds, who said that both wrists were broken. While our father held Ray, Cappy Faulds set both his wrists. Our Dad said, "Ray didn't even whimper, and I was proud of him."

We were working in the hay one summer when our cousin, Thelma, came to visit. She was helping with tramping the hay, and it was so much fun to have her with us. We had left a full load of hay drawn close to the stack which was about the same height as the top of the load. Our dinner was delicious, with new potatoes, little carrots, peas with a cream sauce, meat,- with cake and dip for dessert. After a rest we came back to the hay

to go to work again. We all climbed up the back of the wagon of hay so that we could get over on the stack. Thelma was worried about getting from the load safely across onto the stack. I said "Huh, watch me." I stepped over, but didn't quite make it. I can still feel the hay brushing up against my face, and combing my hair straight up, then I landed on the ground with a thud. I felt quite subdued as I slowly climbed up again. I didn't have the strength to hurry.

Almost the whole family thinned beets. Dad and Harold spacing them with a beet hoe, and the rest of us thinning with little home-mad tools. For the first few years we did all the thinning, hoeing, topping, loading and hauling. As the boys helped to fork the beets onto the big beet wagons our father would say, "They work just like machines."

As the years went by we hired beet workers to thin, hoe, and top most of the beets, but the family still worked in some of the acreage.

Archie was the youngest beet worker, but was such a good, fast worker that Dad named him the Straw Boss.

Eventually Dad had Joy Glover come to help build a beet loader and 3 little carts. Ray, Archie and I drove these little carts, and proceeded the beet toppers down the rows until we had a load, to take it to the beet loader, where Johnnie, Dad, and Joy Glover loaded the beets- through the new beet loader into beet wagons. These carts looked like small Roman Chariots, and as Ray, Archie and I went in for dinner, we would stand up in the carts and make the horse run as fast as they could go. What fun it was going over the plowed-in ditches, as our feet chattered on the floors of the carts we tap danced all the way home. Harold was kept busy hauling huge loads to the beet dump, where Edna weighed them.

## **Diddy**

We owned a lavender grey Shetland pony named Diddy. We loved her, and she loved us. It's a good thing that she did love us, because she was boss. She loved the big purple flower of the Canadian Thistle, but knew that long thorns guarded the purple blooms from underneath. She would approach the flower cautiously, curl her lips back from her teeth, and daintily snip the bloom.

One bright summer day I was riding her on a pathway in the field south of the ditch. We were going after the cows, and she was galloping for a change. I rode on her round smooth back, dreamily contemplating the beauty of the fields and sky, when suddenly she wasn't under me any more. As I hit the ground with a thud I saw her about 20 feet off the path, about to chomp a big purple bloom. She turned as she chewed, and looked at me. I had the feeling that she was laughing to herself.

## **Happy Years**

We picked, shelled and canned many peas, and also many cans of delicious corn. The large cans were used for the beef- beef that had been fed on grain, grass, and beet tops. Dad and the boys built a smokehouse, and smoked the most delicious ham and bacon.

What fun it was to go picking chokecherries every fall. Tubs and buckets were filled, and Mom made gallons of chokecherry jelly.

We used only 2 quart jars to bottle boxes of peaches, pears, apricots, with jam made from the purple plums.

Every fall we stoked grain. Dad or Harold drove the binder with 4 horses pulling it, and when they began the 3rd round Edna, Virginia and I stocked up one side and across the end. Johnnie, Ray and Archie stoked the other end and side. We raced to see who could finish first, to be able to rest in the shade of a stook where we had hidden lemonade, an apple, peach or pear, and a favourite book to read. It wasn't easy to read with Ray singing, "Lip, lip the Shabon, shave, Shave the Sharon Lip..." ..his own original composition.

Stooking brings back fond memories of working together under ideal conditions. The water was lovely, the big sky a deep blue with fluffy white clouds, and the fields, stooks and stubble golden and beautiful. Always we worked with a sense of accomplishment, with laughter and great fun. They were happy years.

## **School Tumble**

We started each new school year at the Barnwell school, 2 miles west of our home. The first few years we walked, but soon were able to



ride in a van pulled by 2 horses. One lovely fall day we were peacefully riding home in the van when Sterling Engleson climbed out of the side of the van onto the roof. This frightened the horses and they started to run. We became so frightened that we ran straight out the back door, down the steps and onto the road. The momentum flipped us one by one onto the backs of our heads. For approximately 1/4 mile, quite evenly spaced, covered with dust and tears, we limped slowly back to the van. Our driver, Wendell Asplund, had stopped the horse by climbing onto their backs, and then patiently waited for us. The back of my head was sore for a week.

### **Moving Day**

What fun it was on moving day, when we packed up our beds, bedding, chairs, and dishes. The stove and table weren't moved, since we had them in both homes. We always ate Corn Flakes, salmon, cheese, sardines, and bread from the store. What a treat they were, and this food became traditional on our moving day.

### **You must have swallowed it whole**

One fall when I was about 15 years old Mom and the younger children had moved back to the house in town, with our Dad and the older boys still on the farm to finish the last of the harvesting.

Virginia and I took turns cooking for the men at the farm, with Mom baking large batches of bread in town for the whole family.

At this time we still drove the 1928 Buick. It had a starter inside the car, but if the motor failed to start the car could be cranked at the front. It had 2 accelerators, an ordinary foot pedal gas feed, with the other being on the dashboard. This one on the dashboard could be pulled out before cranking so that the engine could be speeded up as soon as it started.

The driver of this kind of car had to be sure that the gear shift was in neutral, otherwise the car would start to move, sometimes chasing the owner, or backing away.

One night I went with my Dad to the town house to get a batch of newly baked bread. It was dark by the time we were ready to leave for the farm, and I was tired, so I got in the back seat of the car so I could stretch out and rest. I was eating a thick crust of warm bread spread with melting

butter and honey. I was enjoying myself immensely, chewing slowly, adoring every mouthful, and languidly dreaming of pleasant things. I half noticed that the car wouldn't start, so my Dad had pulled the dash accelerator out to the limit, turned on the headlights, and got out to crank the car. With a mighty roar the engine started, and the car jerked violently into action plowing straight backwards onto the prairies. I also jerked violently into action, and with a mighty leap flew over the back of the front seat to stop the car. I can still see my father, running madly in the flare of the headlights, waving the crank over his head, and yelling, "Get it, Deana, Get it." When he caught up he was full of praise for my quick action, and we were both relieved and thankful as we again prepared to leave for the farm.

As I languidly, but somewhat shakily stretched out on the back seat again I remembered my bread and honey. This had been no dainty morsel and should have been easy to find. We searched and searched, but it had completely disappeared. We even searched the next morning in bright sunlight, but it was never found. "Oh well," said my Dad, "you must have swallowed it whole."

## **Winters**

Our winters in town were full and busy. Here we attended the Taber Central School, and became re-acquainted with our town friends.. Sandersons, Halls, Bachs, Christiansens, Renners, Shultzes, Jensens, Murdocks, Potts, Barton, Coopers, Belutzes, Stewarts, Johnsons, Valgardsons, Hardings, Easthopes, Kirkpatricks, Guinards.... We attended school programs, band concerts, operettas, shows in the Rex Theatre, skating, sleigh rides... parties, but our special time to play was after supper. The boys would go outside and signal to the neighborhood that it was time to gather. With their hands cupped around their mouths for a megaphone they would face north, then east and south, and signal "OO-oo, oo-oo, oo-oo." The signal would be returned one by one, and the clan would gather. We played No Bears Out Tonight, Blackberry Patch, Anti-I-Over, Steal Sticks, Cricket, baseball, hockey, Run-Sheep-Run, and anything else we could think of.

The boys and their friends dug many tunnels and caves in our lane lot in town. One fall they dug a long under-ground hole like a gopher hole, and 5 or 6 boys would line up, run for the hole and dive in. Number 1 boy scrambled madly deeper into the hole to make room for number 2 boy, and so on until the underground home was full of boys. They would back out, change positions, and do the same thing again.

One Sunday, with the house full of company, we were sitting around our large kitchen table, talking about things of the past. Dad said, "Hannah and I were married in this house," and pointing to the dining room, "We were married in that room." "I remember that," said Archie, aged 5, "All us kids were outside playing."

At about the same time a program was held in the Social Hall. Archie was to play The Prisoner's Song on the mouth organ. Mom had told him to play it over 3 times. He stood up there in the centre of the stage, looking so small, and he played The Prisoners Song, and played it, and played it.... 6 times.., then walked off the stage, looking very satisfied with himself.

One by one, at the age of 8 years, we were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the Old Man River north west of Taber. There were many trees on the south side of the river, but on the north side, and a little to the east was a huge poplar tree, called the Mormon Tree... standing alone. Many were baptized in the river running beside The Mormon Tree. It was a beautiful, quiet, peaceful spot. Ruth and Richard were baptized in the church font. When she was 10 years old, Emma Renner went swimming there with her sisters. She waded out a little further, fell into a deep hole, and drowned.

## **Truth**

We have always known that the Gospel is true, just as our grandparents in far away Iceland and Denmark knew that it was true. According to a great plan they were gathered to Zion, to meet and marry there, so that we could come to this choice land in these last days. They prepared the way for us, just as Dan the Proud, Odin Sigurd Ring, Harald the Fairhair, Melkorka, Olaf the Peacock, Egil Skallagrimsson.....all the hosts of our ancestors... all.. these played a part in our destiny.

Our hearts are full of gratitude to them, but to our Saviour we are the most grateful of all. He was the supreme example: wise, kind, forgiving, dignified, who gave his life that we might live. As he suffered for our Sins in the Garden of Gethsemane, as he carried the cross to Golgotha and suffered great physical pain on the cross, he walked alone..nobody to help. He was our elder brother, our Saviour, and our friend.

Because the Saviour was born after sundown on 5 April his birth date was proclaimed to be April 6th

A festival of light was held 25 Dec during the ancient days of the Roman Empire, and this day was declared to be the official birthday of the Savior. We always looked forward to the holiday of Christmas with great anticipation. Mom made a Christmas cake and pudding, sometimes Harold made chocolate pie, (his favourite food) we made mince meat, apple and lemon pie, jello, cake, candy..

## **Christmas**

We roasted big fat chickens, stuffed with dressing, creamed potatoes and gravy, carrots, peas, corn, cranberries in a cut glass dish that matched the large sugar bowl...peaches beside every plate in lovely little cut glass dishes.. Our father bought a huge wooden bucket each Christmas from Eaton's in Winnipeg- full of chocolates, creams, gum drops, ribbon candy, caramels, satin pillows, soft centre, and many other delicious kinds.

We covered the hanging lamp with red tissue paper, then hung twisted red and green streamers from the top of the lamp to the edges of the room. The whole ceiling was hung in a graceful canopy, and we loved it. A picture hung on the wall of a lady angel hovering over a hillside below. Shepherds looked up in fear, and underneath the picture these words were printed:

Luke 2

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

- 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which  
is Christ the Lord.
- 12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped  
in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
- 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the  
heavenly host praising God, and saying,
- 14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward  
men.

After dinner we went outside, into crisp sunshine, to skate, or play in the snow drifts that surrounded the house to the west. We skied on barrel staves, went sliding down the long slope of the hill on the north side of the house on every kind of sleigh. Our Dad sat in a huge scoop shovel, and as we pushed him down the hill we twisted the handle so he would go swirling to the bottom. He enjoyed himself so much, and laughed along with the rest of us.

What fun to troop back into the warmth of the house, with so many good things to eat, then to play tiddlywinks, snakes and ladders, crokinole, or parcheesi, or to attend the Christmas dance or the show in the Rex Theatre.

## **China Cabinet**

Our Father and Grandpa had built a combination writing desk and china cabinet, with fancy scroll work across the top, and here Mom's beautiful dishes and our treasures were kept. I remember a little red clear glass coal shuttle, a small red clear axe, and other fancy dishes to match - all printed in gold with the words TABER, ALBERTA. There were peach petal cups, a small white glass car with cherries on the front which had been on top of our parents wedding cake, a silver horse drinking in a well, a large fluted orange bowl, a blue glass slipper.....

Our Willis piano also stood in this room, and we had a button accordion, banjo, guitar, mouth organs, and a piano accordion that Johnnie bought.

## **Well Hello**

Our first cabinet radio brought us so much pleasure, and on Saturday nights Dad and the boys drew chairs up to the front of it, held their heads down by the speaker which was turned up full blast, and listened to the hockey game. One day it wasn't working so Dad asked Johnnie to try to fix it. As we stood around, silently waiting, Johnnie knelt in front, adjusting the dials. All of a sudden a voice from the radio blared out, "Well, hello, Johnnie!"

## **Coal Digging**

During the cold winter months our father and the boys would go to the river banks straight north of our home to dig coal. They would dig into the hillside, shore up the cave, and blast out the coal with dynamite. They had many close calls with cave-ins, and Harold narrowly escaped quite a few times. One frosty morning when they arrived at the coal site they found it to be completely caved in. Another day Dad heard the timbers creak and called to Harold to run. The moving rocks and earth pinned him against the wagon wheel and slightly injured his knee. We would cook huge tender beef roasts every day at home, and mounds of mashed potatoes, gravy, and all the trimmings. We could hear them coming from quite a way down the road because the metal wagon tires would squeal in the snow. The coal was in huge chunks, and as shiny and smooth as black satin.

## **Food and Clothing**

Every fall our Dad filled the cellar under the kitchen with many boxes of apples. Every big wooden box contained a different kind of apple, red, yellow, many different shades of each, with each apple individually wrapped in fine paper. Our special time of the day was in the evening, after the dishes were finished and the boys back in from doing the chores. We took turns going down the cellar- down the ladder beside the kitchen table- to bring up an apple for each of us. Never did we have 2 apples each day, just one apiece. Many times we cut our apple in half and scraped out the fruit with a spoon. We all looked forward to this special time together.

Our father just loved Vinegar Candy, so we made it often. It was hard, clear, and yellow. We also made fudge and divinity. For more special occasions we made Butter Fondant, and Virginia was the expert with this candy. She seemed to know just how long to boil it, and when to start beating it.

These are the recipes we used:

#### Vinegar Candy

3 cups white sugar

3/4 cup of water

3 tablespoons of vinegar (or more)

Boil together until candy is hard and brittle enough to break  
when it is cold.

#### Butter Fondant

4 cups white sugar

1 cup of corn syrup

1/4 tsp salt

1 tall can of Borden's St. Charles Milk

1/4 lb butter

Mix sugar, milk, syrup and butter. Add salt. Place over slow flame, stirring constantly, and boil until it forms a soft ball in ice cold water or 238 on a candy thermometer. Remove and pour onto a platter which has been lightly sprinkled with cold water. When cool to touch beat with a wooden ladle until the whole becomes creamy and firm.

Mom made many quilts, mostly from suit samples sewn together for the tops, with dyed sugar or flour sacks for the lining, and sheep's wool between. Dad would help by washing the whole hide, then by cutting off the wool. Each of us took turns fluffing the wool and carding it. When the quilt was all set up ready to quilt Mom invited friends and neighbours to come over, and we had a quilting bee.

## More Food

Her lunch was delicious. She boiled and ground lovely tender beef, mixed it with home-made salad dressing, and used our fresh bread. She also served jello fruit salad, peaches, cake, punch or hot chocolate.

### Mom's Salad Dressing

2 scant tsp flour  
1 tsp mustard  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/2 tsp salt  
3 eggs, well beaten  
1 1/4 cups water  
3/4 cup vinegar (or less)

Beat eggs well. Mix flour, mustard, sugar and salt. Beat into eggs. Add water and vinegar and cook over medium heat, stirring often until thick. Last, to see if any adjustment should be made in sweetness or in seasoning. When using it can be mixed with cream or milk, if a milder flavour is desired.

## Tony

Edna had a race horse named Tony. He and Diddy were friends. They were so clever, and could open most gates, with their nose and teeth. One night we had a grain tank full of wheat in our yard in town, along with 6 big work horses that our father had brought home for the first time. Diddy and Tony were with them, and they had all been fed for the night. Tony discovered, during the night, that he could lift the little endgate at the lower edge of the back of the tank. He curled his upper lip around the handle and pulled, lifting the sliding door to release a little wheat onto the ground. The large horses would then chase him away and eat the wheat. This happened enough times during the night that 6 of these new, big, beautiful horses died. Tony was fine, and couldn't realize that his cleverness had caused their deaths, and that their size prevented his.

Diddy went into the house one day, ate sugar from the sugar bowl, tipped the washbasin over, and spilled a jug of cream. When Mom ran over



to visit Mrs. Christianson one morning she talked for a while, then returned home to mix bread. Diddy was standing in the kitchen, and had eaten the sponge, so there was no bread baked that day. Edna used to take Diddy to the Fair Grounds during our Dominion Day celebration, and people fed her popcorn, candy, peanuts, ice cream and apples. She loved it, and also enjoyed giving children rides for 5 cents each. Edna made \$2:00, and gave it to Mom to buy a white skirt.

### **Public Affairs**

Our father was very interested in public affairs, and served on many committees. He was president of the United Farmers of Alberta, president of the Cannery Growers, president of the Beet Growers, he was a delegate to Ottawa trying to convince the federal government to buy beet sugar instead of cane sugar. He was the mayor of Taber for 4 years, and was a Justice of the Peace.

Edna once met a woman who had been night clerk in a hotel in Edmonton when a Farmer's convention was held there. She told Edna that most of the delegates would drink and step out on their wives, but Dad would buy a Western magazine, a bag of peanuts, and stay in his room.

Told Christian told Edna that he was "the cleanest minded man" she had ever known, and would never allow any vulgarity or rudeness around women.

In the words of our uncle, John Christian, our Dad was a very "brilliant" man, and he could compose poetry as fast as he could talk. He was on many programs reading his poetry about the people we all knew. When we asked him one day how he could do this he said that he had received this gift from his ancestors in Iceland, who spoke to each other in poetry every day.

It has been very interesting to find that this is literally true, that our ancestors did indeed speak to each other in poetry. A classic example is our 28th great grandfather, Egil Skallagrimsson. (see pages 41 and 46.)

### **Service**

He was active in the Church and often went on 2-week missions to other areas of Southern Alberta, while other missionaries came to Taber.

When they visited our home we always held a Cottage Meeting, after a lovely supper cooked by Mom. Each of us had to speak, even the children.

Dad would lead the way, and stand so tall and straight as he would tell us how his mother was healed through the power of the priesthood. He loved the Gospel, and knew that it was true.

## **More Truth**

One day when Mom was putting loaves in the pans to bake. Dad was sitting in a chair watching her. They were talking about something, and then I heard him say to her, in a teasing voice, "You know very well, Han, that I always tell you the truth." After a slight pause, "You know that you have never caught me telling a lie." Another pause, then with his voice full of mischief he said, "I'm too smart for you." I heard them laughing and peeked into the kitchen. Mom was waving a loaf of bread dough around above her head, while he held his arms in front of his face trying to protect himself, begging for mercy. This cute and funny picture of them often comes flashing back to me, and is one of my most cherished memories.

## **Ice House**

Our next door neighbours, to the north, were Mr. and Mrs. Fred Christianson. He was Taber's Iceman, and had a huge Icehouse at the end of his lot next to our barn yard. Dad and the boys helped him cut blocks of ice from the Old Man River, haul them with a wagon and team to the Icehouse, and bury them in layers of sawdust. How beautiful these big blocks of ice were, blue and crystal clear, and how we enjoyed them from our own ice house on the farm. One day the boys were sliding down the roof of this huge ice house in town, and Johnnie was stopped suddenly as he slid into a large sliver. He couldn't move, so the other boys ran for help. Our Dad had to climb up onto the roof and pull Johnnie back up off the sliver.

## **Water Tank**

To the north west of our home the town water tank towered into the sky, with our friend Pete Hickery living in a tiny house at it's base. He laughed much of the time, and we loved him. He had a long beard, bald head, and a rich sense of humour. He used to recite poetry to us, and I remember this poem that he composed about himself.

There was an old crank  
Lived under the tank  
His head was bald and his whiskers were grey  
He had no money his debts to pay  
No credit in the bank.

Even though he told the boys in the neighbourhood the bears lived up in the tank, they swam there anyway.

One fine spring day Harold and the Cooper boys tried smoking dried manure wrapped in brown paper, up there high in the sky. They became so ill that they couldn't manage the backward climb down the long steel ladder until evening. We used to climb to the top of the tank at night, and it seemed as though we were almost up to heaven- with the stars gleaming and sparkling all around us.

## **Prairie Beauty**

We loved our neighbourhood in town. Prairie surrounded us, except to the north, and wild flowers grew here in the spring. Alberta's flower, the wild rose bloomed, also yellow buffalo beans, prairie cactus, a miniature purple sweet pea, a sticky white daisy, a small tomato-red flower with a yellow centre and gray-green leaves.... Taller clumps of a dark green plant with mauve purple blooms- often protecting a meadow lark's nest... small dainty May flowers, one inch high, square white yellow centred flowers looking straight up into the sky.... All carpeted with short, pale green prairie grass.

Beside the road to the south we found a saucer-like depression that we felt had belonged to the fairies. Even though the surrounding prairie would sometimes fad and dry out, our little fairy home remained green and lovely. Here we found many four-leaf clovers, little purple

violets, and other wild flowers. We often just sat there, secure and snugly sheltered from the west wind, feeling that it was a spot where good things happened.

As the warm Chinook winds came and melted mounds of snow, wide, deep ponds formed in all the low places... in front of Furmans, Bachs, Walt Valgardson's. Sometimes we had such deep puddles of brown water, almost a block long. The boys made little sail boats to launch onto these lakes, and the south-west wind blew them out onto the waves, to be pulled back by long strings, or rescued from the far shore.

This chinook wind that melted the snow could be damp and chill, and we loved the sheltered spots in the lee of the trees and solid board fences. Here we would see the first green of spring, and feel the warmth of the sun's rays.

## **Large brick-red sponge rubber ball**

When I was about 10 years old I found a large brick-red sponge rubber ball, one of the nicest I had ever seen. One lovely spring day in May my brothers and sisters, and myself were playing anti-I-Over, throwing the ball over the top of the house to each other. Our house was a large one with gables, and the ball must have bounced on one of these, for it completely disappeared. We all searched for quite some time, but couldn't find it anywhere. One by one the others abandoned the search, but I kept on. I searched and searched, but it seemed to have vanished entirely. I began to realize that I probably wouldn't find it at all.

I decided to pray and ask for help, so to be alone I went past the row of trees, through the gate, across the road, and out on the flat prairie to the west. I bowed my head, closed my eyes and prayed to our Heavenly Father, asking him to please help me find my ball. As I prayed I kept walking with my eyes shut and my head bowed, so that if anyone happened to see me they would think that I was searching for the ball. I walked slowly for quite some time on the flat prairie, and as I finished my praying I opened my eyes with the intention of going back to search again in the yard. The first thing that I saw on the grass in front of my two feet

was my beloved ball. I was completely amazed. I couldn't believe that it had bounced out so far, and I knew that I had been guided to it.

Such a feeling of wonder, reverence, gratitude and happiness came over me that I stood very still. I remember to this day the blue of the sky, the fleecy white clouds, the pale green of the short prairie grass, and the lovely little May flowers under my ball.

At this unforgettable moment when I felt God's presence close to me, a meadow lark, sitting on top of a telephone post, burst into song, again and again... I have loved the meadowlarks ever since, and I have never forgotten how I seemed to stand close to heaven that day.

## **Where have they gone?**

While visiting Taber in 1977 I went, all by myself, to the lot where our home used to be. Two of the ash trees were still standing, but the third was on it's side, with bare branches reaching into the air. New growth from the roots looked green and healthy. The lot was bare of buildings, but I could see where the garage and house had been. I walked over the lot, and looked to the south and west where the prairie had once been. There is no prairie left now, and it was amazing to see all the homes filling the area to the south, north, east and west.

I went over to the water tank and climbed a few steps up the ladder. I found a vacant lot across the road directly south of the tank, and went over to search for the wildflowers that I used to know. I found the sticky white daisy, a purple flower, and many wild rose bushes about 4 inches tall. I searched for May flowers and couldn't find any plants at all. Where have they gone? Do they need uninhabited prairie to flourish? I asked a neighbour if she had seen any May flowers bloom in May. She said, "No."

With everything else gone I felt especially grateful for memories and for the need to record in pictures and stories the things of the past. I felt so thankful and so full of gratitude for having been permitted to come as the sixth child to our parents, and for the happiness we have found in each other's company down through the years.

We grew up having the best of both life styles- winters in town, and summers on the farm. When I think of our summers on the farm I

remember swimming, work, picnics, gardens, trees, stooking, water melons and ice cream. When I think of our house in town I remember how the light from our windows beckoned across the prairie from the end of the board sidewalk, inviting us to hurry home. We would find warmth, vinegar candy, apples from the cellar, home-made bread, security, fun and happiness.

One by one we were married, but we always loved each other very much, and gathered as often as possible to reminisce about the old times. With the passing of the years all the negative things seem to fade, but the good and glorious times seem to brighten, bringing us such pleasure in the remembering.

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