

WILLIAM and GRACE SEELEY

A LITTLE SEELEY FAMILY HISTORY AND A LOT OF GROWING UP RECOLLECTIONS

by SUE PARTRIDGE

My parents, William (Wid) and Grace Seeley and their first three sons left Wisconsin shortly after the birth of their still-born son in 1909. They came by train to the Hood River, Oregon area where Dad's sister and brother-in-law, Bertha and Albert Hibbard, were living. They lived in a tent for awhile and Dad worked in the orchards and any other odd jobs he could get. From there they moved to the Mt. Pleasant area up in back of Washougal, Washington.

Dad farmed, did carpentry and a variety of things to make a living for his family. He also loved sports and while in this area he played baseball on a team called the Green Mountain Boys. They even had uniforms, (see picture)

By this time the Hibbards had moved to the same area as had the parents, Earl and Louisa Seeley.

Dad's nickname of "Wid" was actually given to him by his sister, Hilda. Dad was 20 years old when Hilda was born. His parents and friends called him Willy which was the usual nickname for William in those days. Hilda could not say "Willy" when she started talking, it came out "Widdy". Widdy got shortened to "Wid" and that's what everyone called him, even mother.

I am not sure what year the move to Skamania was made. It was after 1913 and before August 1915, because Bob was born at Skamania in a house behind the post office. Apparently the Thomas Strong ranch, down by the Columbia River came up for sale shortly after, and the Seeley's bought it. It soon became known as "Seeley's Bottom" because of the river bottom land.

We had the usual farm animals, horses, cows, pigs and chickens. Dad had studied veterinary books and did most of the animal doctoring himself. He could also shoe horses and took care of neighbors' horses as well as his own.

Fred, Jiggs and I were all born on that ranch. I don't know for sure how Fred and I got there, but a neighbor lady brought Jiggs in a basket. I know because he wasn't there before Mrs. Sams came with the basket.

I was named after mom's best friend, Susan Runyan, but we were both called Susie. Jiggs got his name from a character in the "funny papers" whose hair stuck straight up just like his.

I remember climbing a plum tree to pick grapes. The grape vine apparently was planted too close to the tree and used the tree as a climbing post. There were two unusual apple trees on that place, too. One was called a Maiden Blush

and was a huge round, red apple. The other was a Blue Pyramid that was shaped similar to a Delicious apple and had a bluish tint when it was ripe.

The railroad track bordered our property and occasionally one of our cows or a neighbor's would get on the track. I can still hear the eerie, quivery whistle the engineer would use to let us know there was an animal on the track and possibly had been hit.

We had our own source of firewood. From time to time dad and the older boys would fall some trees on our property and saw them up into proper sizes and lengths for the wood heater and the kitchen range. Sometimes in good weather mother would make up a big picnic lunch and she and us younger kids would take it to where dad and the boys were working. I learned at an early age what it meant when you were in the woods and someone yelled "Timber"! The sound of the big tree crashing down was "awesome" and scary.

We would all have lunch together, sitting on the ground or on a log. I loved these expeditions because I could pick wild flowers to my heart's content. But Pat used to make me so mad. The woods were full of "Johnny-jump-ups" in the spring. They are a wild, yellow violet. Pat would ask me what I was picking and, of course, I would answer, "Johnny-jump-ups". To tease me he would say, "No, those are "Johnny-jump-downs". I would really get furious. That's the only time I ever remember getting mad at Pat. He was my second mother and so good to me.

The seining grounds where the commercial fisherman fished for salmon was on our river front property. It was quite a sight to see those big horses pulling in the nets full of Salmon. The only problem we had with the crew was their habit of making their own "hootch" at their camp site. Twice some of our cows found the mash, ate some and came home drunk. Some cows leaned on a fence post in order to stand up. Of course, dad couldn't sell the milk from those cows that day. When it happened the second time dad had a talk with the crew foreman and it never happened again.

Our big entertainment was the May Day celebration held at the Stevenson Fair Ground's site or an occasional program or dance at the Skamania Grange Hall. Our only transportation to these affairs was a flatbed truck. Dad made side-boards and removable benches for it. When the whole family went somewhere, the side-boards were put on, the benches set up next to them and everybody piled in. Jiggs and I rode in the cab with mother and dad and the "big" kids road in the back on the benches.

When Fred and I was either four and six years old or five and seven, we danced on the grass at the May Day Celebration as part of the entertainment. Charlie Wheeler and his dad, Ed, played harmonicas for us to dance to.

There was always music in our house. Dad had a violin that was passed down through his family. Bob still has that violin. Dad did not play an

instrument, but enjoyed music and loved to dance. Troy learned to play the violin by the time he was in his teens.

A new grange hall was built in the Greenleaf area — now North Bonneville. A grand opening party was planned and a band from Portland, Oregon was hired to play for the dancing. Everyone looked forward to the event, but opening night everyone stood around and wouldn't dance. I guess people were intimidated by the 'professional' musicians. Dad finally went to the manager and offered to have Fred and I dance, then came and told us what we had to do. We were scared stiff, but we waltzed because dad told us to. Everyone clapped so the band played a Fox-trot and motioned for us to keep dancing. That time people started throwing money at us. We didn't know what to do until Dad and the manager told us to pick up the money — it was ours. Wow! We'd dance a little, then pick up coins and dump them in mother's lap, then dance some more. What an experience for two little country kids! (We got well over ten dollars, a lot of money for that day and age.) It broke the ice though, and everyone started dancing.

I can remember Aunt Hilda and Uncle Jack coming to Skamania to visit. They would pitch a tent in our yard for sleeping quarters. Heaven knows there were no spare beds or spare rooms in our house. Cousins' Frances and Bud thought it was quite a lark to see all the animals at our place. They lived in Portland, Oregon at that time. Aunt Hilda had a big Pit Bulldog named Mickey that we weren't very fond of. He killed some of our chickens and some kittens. I remember being teased because I couldn't say bulldog very plainly. It came out "booldog". I guess I made no bones about not liking that "booldog"!

Dad sold the ranch in 1925 and bought a bigger one in Cathlamet, Washington. When mother found out the dairy cows on the Cathlamet place were all Holsteins, she insisted on taking our little Jersey cow with us. She said if she wanted a drink of water she'd get it from the well, not a cow. I guess that pretty well tells you her opinion of a Holstein's milk. We did take

"Jersey." That's all we ever called her, and attempted to take Bill's little mare, Kelly. The means of transportation was just that flat-bed truck and Kelly absolutely refused to board it. Bill wanted to ride Kelly to Cathlamet, but dad said a definite "no" to that. Kelly stayed behind with Bill's best buddy, Clarence Runyan.

Dad had been to Portland and bought a 1923 Nash touring car. It had two jump seats, in other words fold-down seats, between the front and back seats. Dad, mother, a passle of us younguns' and our big Collie dog all were in the car. Troy and the older boys were in the truck, and off we went.

We drove to Vancouver on a so-called highway and crossed the Columbia River on the fairly new Interstate Bridge to the Oregon side of the river. (Before that it was a ferry boat or swim -ha!) to Oregon. This was necessary because

there was no road into Cathlamet on the Washington side of the river. It was an all day trip in those days. We crossed back across the Columbia River by ferry at Westport, Oregon to get to Cathlamet, Washington. Cathlamet is in Wahkiakum county. When we were growing up there it was pronounced Wah-kee-aah-kum, but now I hear people pronouncing it Wah-Ki-uh-kum.

Our new home was a few miles from town in the Elochoman River valley. In fact, the Elochoman River ran through our property.

Besides the dairy cows, we also had white Leghorn chickens and sold eggs. Once again mother insisted on having a small flock of Rhode Island Red chickens for our own personal use. Both for the brown eggs and more meat on the bones for our chicken dinners.

There was also a huge registered Holstein bull on the ranch called King of the Valley. We were constantly cautioned to never go into the same pasture with King — and I didn't. He looked as big as an elephant to me. Among the horses that came with the ranch was a blind mare called Dolly. The former owner, so the story goes, had beat her about the head and blinded her. She knew the grounds well, so was allowed to roam wherever she wanted. Once, shortly after we moved in I had to go to the out-house (out back), and while I was in there Dolly came and stood with her nose against the door. I couldn't open the door to get out and yelled and yelled before someone heard me and came and led Dolly away.

I wish Fred was here to tell a story about he and Bob out looking for one of our cows and her newborn calf. Fred was probably nine or ten years old and Bob, eleven or twelve at the time. Dad cautioned them to be careful, because sometimes an otherwise gentle cow can be mean when she has a new calf. They found the cow and her calf and sure enough, the cow started after them. They were running as hard as they could go, with Bob in the lead, when up popped a one strand wire barrier. Bob was going so fast he didn't even see it and the wire hit him on the forehead. Fred swore that it knocked Bob flat on his back, he popped right back up like a Jack-in-the-box, his legs never stopped moving, and he was off and running again! Fred was short enough to go under the wire and, anyway, the cow had quit chasing them by then.

Back to the love of music and our family. I guess, the love of music came from both sides. Mother always hummed as she worked, whether it was hanging clothes on the line, doing dishes or whatever. Usually it was a hymn. I believe her brother, Bill, played the violin. I mentioned Dad's old violin before and that Troy learned to play it first. I seem to recall a mandolin that Burr was learning to play before we left Skamania. While in Cathlamet dad would bring home a used instrument from his trips to Portland every once in awhile and somebody would start learning to play it. Bob started with a banjo, Burr was still playing mandolin and also the banjo. Troy still just played the fiddle. Dad wanted in on

the act so badly that he finally brought home a drum set and learned to play them. This group played for a few dances in Cathlamet, Skamokawa area (Skamock-a-way), but mostly for our own entertainment at home. After my Grandma Seeley passed away, Grandpa had dad bring the truck to Portland to bring back grandma's pump organ. Bert and I both learned to chord on that. Fred had learned to play a harmonica by then, too.

Pat never learned to play any instrument, but loved to dance and was a good dancer. If anyone asked him if he played an instrument he always answered, "I can play the phonograph real well".

By the way, Pat got his nick-name from a friend of dad's back in Wisconsin, I think. Pat was very red-headed and very freckled as a little boy. The friend saw Pat (Harold) for the first time and couldn't get over his red hair and freckles. He told Pat: "You look as Irish as Paddy's Pig" and somehow the name Pat came out of that.

While we were living on the ranch in Cathlamet we became acquainted with a young couple by the last name of Miles. Ed, the husband was a 6 foot beanpole and for some reason he and Bill, 5' 1", became special friends. They even learned to do the Russian Bear Dance together. One winter there was a Christmas program being put on at the grange hall. Our family went, as did most everyone in the valley. Much to our surprise when the curtains opened to start the program, there was Bill and Ed doing the Russian Bear Dance, Bill barely keeping out of the way of Ed's long legs. They had been starting to "celebrate" early, and needless to say this was not a scheduled part of the program.

I remember seeing mother can food in the summer and fall each year. No matter how hot it was outside she would have a fire going in her wood range to cook the meat, fruit or vegetables and scald the jars. The jars had a bluish tint to them and some were a two quart size. I haven't seen one of those in years. Dad did our own butchering and this was before freezers so mother canned the meat. Dad cured the pigs into hams and bacon. There was a small building called the "Smoke" house in which this was done. I can almost smell the curing hams yet.

We ate a lot of chicken for our Sunday dinners, and it took several chickens for a meal. It seems like there was always company for Sunday dinner so mother would be cooking for anywhere from eleven to fifteen people. She had a huge aluminum kettle with a bail on it that she cooked the potatoes in. Pat usually mashed the potatoes for Sunday dinner. We had chicken and dumplings sometimes or home-made noodles. We called the noodles "doobies", but I don't know how that got started. If we had company and there were too many people to sit around our big dining room table, mother and us younger kids had to wait for a second sitting.

One of the things us kids liked to do for fun was to take a gunny sack - fold

it lengthwise once or twice and roll it up as tightly as we could, using binding twine to tie it and hold it. That was our football. "Collie", our big dog, always got in on the game and if he got to the 'football' first, the chase was on.

One Thanksgiving as we were eating dinner a telephone call for help came in. The creek that flowed through the logging camp further up the valley from our place had overflowed. The small dam across the creek had given way too, and people were being flooded out or trapped in their houses. We had the only tractor in the valley with cable drums on the front end. Dad, Troy and I can't remember how many others left the table and headed for State Camp as it was referred to, taking the truck and tractor. They were gone all night in the pouring rain. Dad was brought home the next day with a badly swollen hand. He had been pulling cable by hand off the drum on the tractor when a broken strand of cable wire went through his left glove and poked a hole in his first finger. He kept on working until his hand became too swollen and painful to use. Mother prepared hot packs with Epsom salts and had dad soak his hand also. He walked the floor in pain all night. The next morning he started walking to town to get to the doctor. Somewhere along the way a neighbor, who had transportation, took Dad into the doctor's office. Dad had a very bad case of blood poisoning and eventually wound up in the hospital in Astoria, Oregon. He was lucky he didn't die or at least lose his hand. While at the doctor's, Dr. Fritz asked dad how Troy was feeling. Dad was puzzled, but said Troy was okay the last time he saw him. It seems that while dad was trying to get into town Troy had been brought in with a broken leg. He had slipped in the mud when he was cranking the tractor to start it and snapped his ankle. (No automatic starters in those days.) Dr. Fritz had set Troy's ankle, put a cast on and sent him home before dad got there. Although the flood did not affect our ranch with water damage, it surely did in other ways. Dad's blood poisoning took months to heal and left that first finger completely stiff. He eventually had the finger removed at the middle joint, just to get it out of his way. Mother always cut the first finger of dad's left glove off to fit his hand whenever he got new gloves. Year's later Jack and I gave him a nice pair of leather driving gloves for Christmas. Mother, as usual, cut the left glove to fit. One night at one of our dance parties someone stole Dad's gloves. He laughed and laughed thinking about the expression on the thief's face when he tried to put on the left glove.

Unable to make ends meet on the ranch, Dad bought a piece of property closer to town and built a house there for us. The ground sloped toward the road, but there was level ground on one side for a garden and to play ball. Sometimes dad parked the truck along side the house on the sloping side, usually backing it in. Once when Jiggs was about five he got up in the seat of the truck behind the steering wheel and pretended to drive. Then he jumped down to the floor boards, released the emergency brake, and climbed back up

behind the steering wheel. The truck started rolling and the rest of us kids started screaming. Dad came running out of the house, saw what was happening and yelled at Jiggs, "You put that emergency brake back on young man!" So Jiggs hopped down and pulled the brake back on. Fortunately, the truck slowed enough that dad could get in and completely stop it. Talk about a scare!

That slope got us four younger ones in trouble another time, too. Bill had an old motorcycle that had seen better days and would no longer run. Bob, Fred, Jiggs and I would push it up the slope as far as we could, then all climb on it. Bob was the oldest so he sat in the seat to steer, with Fred on behind him. Jiggs and I sat on the gas tank in front of Bob. I don't know what we hung on to. Bob would pick up his feet and away we'd go, down the slope to the road. We would get off, push the cycle back up the hill and away we'd go again. Dad came home one day and caught us so that was the end of our joy-riding.

The house that Dad built! I'm referring to the second place we lived in Cathlamet. It was a two story house that never got finished on the inside. It was shingled on the outside, I remember. The downstairs was all one room. Our kitchen range and the big wood heater stood back to back, sort of screening off the kitchen area. The stairs leading to the upper floor were against the back wall of the house with the back door right at the bottom of the stairs. Dad never got around to putting a railing on the other side of the stairs. Upstairs was sectioned off into three rooms. The folk's bedroom, and Bert's and my room were not very big. The rest of the area was one big room with three beds for the boys. Troy, Bill, Burr, Bob, Fred and Jiggs were all at home at that time.

It was at this house that I broke my right arm. I don't remember now whether it was in the Fall of 1928 or Spring of 1929. I know I was in the third grade. Jiggs was always waiting for me to hurry and change my clothes when I got home from school so I could go outside and play "cars" with him. I had changed my clothes, came running out of my room, tripped at the top of the stairs and rolled end over teakettle all the way down. My right arm and my head banged on the floor and knocked me out for a few minutes. Of course, I had to go to town to see Dr. Fritz. Dad took me in and Bert went along to comfort me. Dr. Fritz was out on a call (they made house calls back then), but his nurse examined me and told dad my arm was broken. I had a big knot on my forehead, too. The nurse put me to bed. They had two or three beds where they could keep seriously ill or injured people until they could be taken to the hospital in Astoria. There was no hospital in Cathlamet I don't think there is one there even now. Bert stayed with me while dad went back home to report to the rest of the family. Later he came back to pick up Bert. Dr. Fritz wouldn't be back until the wee hours, so the nurse said she would sleep there to keep an eye on me. I was scared to death, of course. She gave me a sedative so I could sleep. The next morning dad came back to be there while Dr. Fritz set my arm and put a cast on, then dad took me

home.

When I went back to school after a few days the teacher would have me come up to her desk and she would give me my lessons orally. I think she got tired of this and one day asked me if I could write left-handed. I said that I didn't know so she gave me something to take to my desk and try to copy with my left hand. Wanting to please the teacher, of course, I did my best. Much to my surprise it was quite legible. Needless to say I had to write my lessons left-handed after that. (Dad was quite ambidextrous and could work with his left and right hand equally well.)

One funny little side-light to the story is that when I fell, Bill was sitting in a straight-backed chair, tipped back against the side of the stairway. He saw my clothes flying past him and thought I had knocked the dirty clothes basket mother kept at the head of the stairs down the stairs. He said had he known it was me flying by he could have caught me before I hit the floor and possibly saved me from breaking my arm.

When Burr was still in high school he worked as a mechanic at Fred Crystal's garage in the summer months. Through his work he met Jay Whidby, the State Highway Engineer, who was the head of the road building crew. Mr. Whidby took such a liking to Burr he offered Burr a job and Burr could live with them on the next job. He would continue to teach Burr all about engineering. Dad finally consented so Burr left town with the Whidby's. Burr's high school friends gave him a "Surprise Going Away" Party. True to his word, Mr. Whidby took care of Burr and kept him working for the State Highway Department for years. Later, "on the side" Burr drafted business building plans and remodeling plans for himself and others while he was the outside plant supervisor for the General Telephone Company.

There was still no road into Cathlamet from "outside" and one really cold winter the Columbia River froze over so there was no boat traffic. We had no way to get supplies. Finally arrangements were made to have a small plane fly in and drop supplies by parachute on the school grounds. It was an exciting day for all the school kids. Most of us had never seen a plane up close let alone a parachute and we got to go outside the building and watch.

The following weekend we heard sleigh bells and a lot of whooping and hollering coming down the road. Pretty soon two fellows in a big sleigh, pulled by a mule with sleigh bells on, came into sight. They had some supplies for the town baker and had come over the logging roads from the Stella area. They also brought whiskey with them to help keep them warm they said, and were feeling no pain.

I guess Pat's first "cab driving" so to speak was at Cathlamet. A man by the name of Lou Welles had a big passenger car he called a "stage". He hired Pat to drive passengers from State Camp to town and back.

When the State finally started building a road out of Cathlamet to the Longview-Kelso area, Troy, Pat and Bill all worked on that project as truck drivers.

Dad had a moving and hauling business going with his own truck. He moved furniture, animals, whatever people wanted to move. His “hauling” ad still ran in the local newspaper long after we left Cathlamet.

William (Bill) met Hazel Gorman in Cathlamet through her brother Andy and mutual friends. Hazel and Bill got married while she was still in high school. She and Bill lived in a houseboat on the Columbia River near town. While she was pregnant with Wilma she had caught a cold and wasn't feeling well so mom sent Bert in to help Hazel for a few days. On the evening Bert was to come home, Troy and I drove to town to get her. As we were waiting for Bert to get her things gathered up, Bill disappeared into the bedroom. In a few minutes he came back out dressed in one of Hazel's dresses. He also had on her hat, a pair of her high-heeled shoes and carried her purse. He had rolled his pants legs up so they wouldn't show, but his long underwear sure did. He teetered over to Hazel on those high-heeled shoes, introduced himself as Mrs. Smith, a neighbor, and said “she” had heard Hazel wasn't well so came over to cheer her up. He chattered on and on about all the babies “she” had and the things that had happened at various births. I don't know if he cheered Hazel up or not, but he certainly had the rest of us in stitches. I had never seen Bill on a silly streak before so it was doubly funny.

In Cathlamet, when Bob was in grade school, football was an important sport for him. The high school had enough students to form two teams - an “A” team and a “B” team. The “B” team often played the grade school team (8th graders) after school. Bob and Art Monroe were the stars of the 8th grade team. Their team often beat the “B” team, much to the delight of the spectators. Bob was a football star, not for his size, but for his speed. Once he got the ball, and Art ran interference, nobody could catch him! The high school coach wanted Bob to stay in Cathlamet and live with his family so he could have Bob on the high school team when he found out that we were moving to Vancouver. But Bob was too shy or dad was not ready to give up another son just yet.

After moving to Vancouver in 1930 Bob became interested in the violin and taught himself to play. By this time Troy was having a lot of trouble with his hands swelling, especially when he tried to play the violin. He gradually took over the drums. In the early thirty's Bob had met a guitar player and an accordion player and formed a country-western band. He played fiddle, Troy the drums, Jim Hebert played guitar and Roy Dahlstrom the accordion. They played for dances all over Clark County and Fred and I not only got to go to the dances, but got to dance all evening on orchestra practice nights at our house.

We hadn't lived in Vancouver very long when my grandpa (Earl Seeley) came

to live with us. Aunt Bertha and Uncle Albert lived out in the Felida area by then and grandpa was staying in a little one room shack on their property. I never understood why he wasn't in the house with them because they had a large, lovely home. Dad had tried to get him to come live with us as soon as we moved here, but he always said, "No, Grace has enough to do without taking on any more." One day dad gathered up our garbage (there was a garbage dump out in the Felida area then), took Jiggs and I with him and headed for Felida. We stopped to see grandpa first and dad said, "Pa, I'll leave the kids with you to visit while I go dump the garbage. I won't be long." Dad barely got out of sight when grandpa pulled his suitcase out from under the bed and started putting his clothes in it. When dad got back he saw the suitcase, grinned and says, "Well, is everybody ready to go?" We all nodded, including grandpa, dad picked up the suitcase and we headed for home. That's how grandpa came to live with us. Unfortunately, he only lived about another year, but we had him for awhile, at least.

He enjoyed the music at our house even though he didn't play an instrument. I think seeing grandma's organ being used gave him pleasure. He was a quiet, soft-spoken man, but once in awhile we could get him to tell us stories about when he was a young man. I remember one evening in particular that he told us funny incidents he had seen happen to ladies in their hoop skirts. Us younger kids were practically rolling on the floor, laughing.

Grandpa liked to walk down town and window shop, mostly. He always had pink mints or wintergreens in his pocket and once in awhile shared them with us younger ones. It was a treat because we didn't get much candy. Once he brought home two small plates (8" diameter) with designs on them. He gave one to Jiggs and one to me. I still have mine. It is now hanging on my dining room wall with the rest of my collection. It is now 67 years old.

Many, many evenings were spent at home with Bob playing fiddle, Fred the harmonica and me chording on the organ. If Burr or Troy came by they could play banjo with us. Dad liked to go to bed and listen to the music. Mother hummed along with us while she played Solitaire or she and Jiggs played Rummy. Later Jiggs learned to play banjo and even the saxophone. But that's a whole 'nother story.

One orchestra practice night at our house we were all enjoying the music as usual. At that time a fellow by the name of Chet Castle was playing banjo with the group. He, his wife and two children, were there as well as a young friend of theirs, Lloyd White. Lloyd was very shy and not very talkative. Bob's girl friend, Rena, was also there. During the evening, Fred, Rena and I went to my bedroom and Fred put on a dress that had been given to me, but was too large for me. Fred was about sixteen at the time. He rolled up his pant legs so they wouldn't show and wore Rena's shoes. We combed his hair all to one side and

put my beret on the other side. With a little lipstick he looked pretty cute.

Fred slipped out the back door and went around to the front door while Rena and I went back to the living room. He knocked on the door and Bob opened the door since he was closest to it. The look on Bob's face was just killing. Fred was making signals to him not to give him away. Fortunately, Bob caught on and invited Fred in. Fred came in talking in a high voice, saying how much he was enjoying the music — looked at Lloyd and says, "Ohhhh, who is this handsome young man?". Walked over and plopped down on Lloyd's lap. Poor Lloyd was as red as a beet. He half-way knew it was Fred, but he wasn't sure. Of course, the rest of us were howling by this time. I don't know if Lloyd ever forgave Fred or not.

While living in this same house in Fruit Valley a lot of summer evenings were spent playing horseshoes by the adults. We had met a family by the last name of Brehm who were also avid horseshoe players. The family consisted of the parents, Gus and Susan (Susan was an invalid who couldn't speak due to a stroke) and they had six children. And, oh yes, a housekeeper, Minnie. The children's first names all began with the letter "V." The boys were Victor, Vincent, Verle (whom we called Jack), and Virgil. Virgil used his middle name Albert or Ab for short. The girls were Vera and Verniece. Vera had died at an early age before we knew the family. Usually it was just Gus, Vic, Jack and Verniece who came. Verniece and I played and giggled (we were 12 and 13) while Dad, Troy, Pat, Gus, Vic and Jack played horseshoes. They played night after night and when it got too dark to see the pegs anymore they drove their cars up so the headlights shone on the horseshoe court so they could continue playing.

A story about dad that Bob likes to tell happened in the late 30's. Bob and dad had been somewhere together in dad's old car, a coupe. The folks lived at 908 "U" street by then. As they were coming south from Fourth Plain Blvd. on East Reserve Street toward home dad shifted gears and as he did so the gear shift lever broke off at the floor boards. He just handed the gear shift lever to Bob without a word. They coasted as far as they could, the car was in neutral, then Bob walked to the folk's where his car was parked. Taking his car he went back to push dad's car on home. Everything went fine until they got to the driveway. There was a little raise from the street up into the driveway so Bob gave dad's car a little extra boost to get it up over that. All went well, but as dad sailed into his garage his foot missed the brake and he plowed into a stack of wood that was piled against the back wall. Not a lot of damage was done, but it certainly was not dad's day behind the wheel.

I've mentioned before that dad loved sports and was quite athletic. He used to tell us about boxing in amateur boxing matches when he was a young fellow back in Wisconsin. And I know at one time he worked as a "River Rat" on the

Kickapoo River back there. You really had to be athletic to do that. It's the art of being able to roll the logs, after they are in the river, into place, with your feet and a pole to form a raft. And believe me, you'd better be quick.

Bill was probably the only one of the boys in the family to equal dad's quickness. He never boxed that I remember of, but loved to wrestle. He would take on both Bob and Fred, after they were in their teens, in a wrestling match and the two of them together could not pin him down.

I don't remember Troy being very athletic. He was the stockiest built one of all the boys. He loved horses, though, and apparently knew how to handle them well. He drove the team in the woods pulling out logs and also doing plowing and farm work. While in Cathlamet he got a big straw hat to wear on hot, sunny days while plowing. Even then his hair was thinning. A friend saw him and told him he looked like "Farmer Cy." The nickname stuck and we called him Cy for years.

Apparently, while we were still in Skamania, Pat and Troy were pretty good baseball players. Pat pitched and Troy was catcher. I don't know if this was just for school teams or some organization. I know that years later, after moving to Vancouver, when we met someone from Skamania they invariably asked if Pat had ever become a professional pitcher, so I guess he must have been pretty good. I just remember Pat umpiring our Sunday neighborhood ball games on East 16th and "E" streets in Vancouver. Seems like there was always baseball and music at our place.

Things were really tough in the 30's before the world began gearing up for war. Dad, mother and Jiggs finally moved to LaCenter where dad operated a small saw mill. Troy's family and Bill's family were there, too. Jack and I were living on our friend, John Redman's, place in Barberton. John decided to build a barn of rough lumber so he ordered it from dad. A lot of it was heavy planks. Years later after John had passed on and Alice, Jack's niece, had inherited John's place, Alice and her husband decided to tear down the barn. Jack went to help, and they gave him some of the lumber for pay. We got a lot of planks to use as flooring in the garage we were building. Lo and behold — one of the planks had "W. E. Seeley" written on it in dad's hand writing. Dad had been gone for years by then so it was something special to me.

Most of us remember Bert (Bertha) best for talking backwards. (Also, known as talking Pennsylvania Dutch.) She didn't try to do it. It just came out that way. A water bucket became a "bater wucket" and a cigar box a "cibar gox". Once, while working as a waitress, two men came in and one ordered a bowl of chili and one a bowl of stew. She yelled the order to the cook as a "chew and stili". So, if you talk backwards sometimes, it's just your Pennsylvania Dutch showing.

We did a lot of giggling when we got together even after we were supposed to be grown-up. She and I got stranded in Camas one evening when I wasn't

quite thirteen years old. I had been visiting Burr and June and Bert and her first husband, Walt Slawson, in Lyle, Washington. Walt would not get paid until the night of July 3rd and there was going to be a dance out at Bee Tree (near LaCenter) that same night that Bert and I just had to get to. Walt made arrangements for Bert and I to hitch a ride on the bread wagon that came from Vancouver area every day. He told the driver that neither one of us was big enough to take up that much room. The driver said he'd be glad for the company. Walt would drive down on the 4th of July to pick Bert up. On the way to Vancouver the bread wagon broke down in the Cape Horn area. The driver and another fellow managed to get it running enough for us to get on in to Camas, to a garage, which was closed by then. Bert had enough money to get us each a hot dinner sandwich and to check our suitcase in at the train station to send it down to Vancouver.

Then we started walking to Vancouver. We were offered rides a couple of times, but were too scared to accept. Bert had a little flashlight with her, and if a car came we turned it on so they wouldn't run over us. The old Evergreen highway was the main road then and it was dark and scary with all those trees.

At Fifth and Main Street in Vancouver we asked a cab driver how much it would cost to go to Fruit Valley where the folks lived. He said, "50 cents" — Bert looked in her purse and found that much so we jumped in the cab before he could change his mind and rode home from there. Besides, Bert had a big blister on her foot. It was after midnight by then, so we quietly sneaked into my bedroom. Then we got the giggles. Pretty soon dad's voice came loud and clear from their bedroom, "Sue, is that you?" I said, "Yes" and that Bert was with me. He asked how we got home and I said, "We walked from Camas". I heard dad's feet hit the floor and around to my room he came, saying, "You what?" We explained what had happened and he asked why we were so anxious to get home right then. We said we wanted to be home so we could go to the dance at Bee Tree the next night. Dad was so disgusted he suggested we keep on walking and we might make it out there in time for the dance. That started the giggles again.

All that giggling got us into trouble more than once. Bert was married to Chuck then and they lived out near Manor. Bert and I had gone into town for a day of shopping. When we got home we went into the bedroom and kicked off our shoes and flopped across the bed. When Jack got off work and came out to get me he heard us giggling and snuck into the bedroom and saw our feet hanging off the edge of the bed. (We both were notorious for our ticklish feet.) So, naturally, how could he pass up a moment like that? He ran his finger down the bottom of Bert's foot and she kicked out in surprise and her foot caught Jack's collarbone and broke it. We all had a fun time explaining that one to Chuck when he got home.

I wish I could still walk like I used to. When we lived on 39th Street and Fruit Valley Road mother and I walked to 12th and Main Streets twice a week to buy groceries. There were no stores any closer. We usually both carried two large bags of groceries home. I don't know how mother did that on top of all the cooking, washing by hand and everything else she did. Many times in the summer time she and I would go for walks in the evening. A couple of times we walked clear to Vancouver Lake and back. By the way, that grocery store, The Vancouver Food Store, is still located on 12th and Main Streets in downtown Vancouver.

In the 30's when times were so hard, if Bob and the group weren't playing for a dance on Saturday night, everyone gathered at our house or a friend's house for a party. It was mostly dancing, but some played cards. Everyone brought food, nothing fancy. Just sandwiches, cake or cookies. The whole family came so there were all ages and we had a lot of fun.

Now, I'm going to tell the 'saxophone' story. When Jiggs was about 16 or 17 Bob loaned him his saxophone and showed Jiggs the rudiments of playing the instrument. And told him to practice, practice, practice! A short time later Bob and his family, and Jack and I met at the folk's house one evening. The folks still had the old organ, so, of course, there was a "jam session". Bob never went anywhere without his fiddle and Jiggs was joining us on the Sax. Bob's theme song for the dances was "The Texas Plains" and that's what Jiggs had been practicing. He took a deep breath and away we went. Suddenly I realized the fiddle was getting weaker and weaker and only hitting a note now and then. I looked up at Bob and there he stood, the fiddle under his chin, his eyes as big as saucers and gasping for breath. It scared me and I said, "Bob, what's the matter?" He was staring at Jiggs and he gasped out, "Jiggs started playing and hasn't come up for air!" It was killing Bob, but Jiggs was doing fine!

The folks lived out in the Sifton area in 1949 and dad was having several health problems. He wasn't always up to driving the car so we decided to try to find a house in town for them. Years before, in the late 1930's they had lived at 908 "U" Street. A young couple, Herman and Mabel Beise lived across the street at 909 "U" Street and became well acquainted with the folks. We all got to know and like them very much. After the folks moved from 908 "U" Street the Beise's moved to the country, but kept their house at 909 as a rental. Since that neighborhood was familiar to the folks I called the Beise's to ask if their rental might be available. Mabel said it was actually up for sale and wondered why I was asking. I explained about the folks and Mabel said for mother and dad they would take the place off the market and mom and dad could live there as long as they wanted to. They even did some painting and wallpapering in the house before the folks moved in. Jack and I and some of the rest of the family helped get the house ready. There was one drawback however. The bathroom was

upstairs. Herman and Mabel worried about that so Herman bought the material for dad to enclose the back porch off the kitchen and make a bathroom there. Once again our family helped with the work. They were such wonderful people and truly loved mother and dad. That was the last home the folk's had.

By the 40's we had designated the Sunday before Labor Day as "Family Reunion" day. A couple of times we gathered at Skamania and after lunch, some of us climbed Beacon Rock. In the 50's we formed a caravan a few times and drove to the beach for our picnic. Usually in the Cannon Beach area. Eventually, we started renting a grange hall in the Vancouver area, usually the "Manor Grange" hall. So many friends asked to join us we needed more room. We would have a big 'family only' dinner early evening in the hall's kitchen and dining room, then start dancing around 8:00 pm. The friend's who came were asked to bring sandwiches or cake for "intermission" at 11:00 or 11:30 pm. The turn-out was unbelievable and so much fun. It got to the point where people started calling Bert and I by late summer asking when and where the annual party would be.

During World War II a need for experienced carpenters to work at the Portland Air Base was broadcast. Dad was getting close to seventy by then, but applied anyway. He was hired and happily went to work every day. One late afternoon while at work the foreman asked for volunteers to go to Klamath Falls on a cargo plane to work a few hours. Since dad had never flown before, he thought it was a good chance for a new experience and jumped at it. The volunteers were flown back late that night and dad never got over the thrill of seeing all the city lights from the plane as they came back in over Portland.

Mother and dad celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on February 17, 1950. None of us had much money to do a lot for them, but we did give them a party at the old Manor Grange Hall. All nine of us "kids" were together with most of our spouses and family. We had a huge family dinner at the hall first, then friends started arriving to honor the folks. The folks were so happy and pleased it was well worth all of the effort Bert and I put into organizing it. Of course, the evening ended in dancing. (There is a picture of the entire clan from that occasion enclosed.)

Here are some interesting facts and family traits you may want to compare with your families: January 19th seems to be a traditional family birthday. The first I know about was my Grandpa Boyer. He was born January 19, 1844. It seems to have skipped the next generation, but Troy was born on January 19, 1901. Pat's son, Chuck, was born January 19, 1935 and Gorky's son, Jimmie Coffield, was born January 19, 1951.

It is interesting to note that so many of the male members of the family were and are driving for a living. Troy, Pat and Bill have all driven gravel trucks on road building projects. Bill has also operated a Cat. Jiggs was a fork lift operator

at a couple of different mills. Pat later drove cab and then a bus on the Evergreen Stage Line.

Now Dick has his own long-haul truck, Roy has driven for U.P.S. for years and Bill Truitt has driven one kind of a truck (Ovaltine was the name of one) or another all his adult life. After twenty years in the Navy, Chuck started driving cab in the Chula Vista, California area.

During World War II nearly all the newly built housing projects around Vancouver had their own fire departments. Pat, Burr, Bob and Fred all worked in some of those as firemen.

Later, after retiring and moving to Ocatillo, California, Burr became the chief of that city's volunteer fire department. Jiggs also was a volunteer fireman at Klamath Falls, Oregon for many years.

John Seeley seems to have picked up dad's carpentry skills, both building houses and now furniture too. Also, Dick's boys, Buzz and Rick have been building custom homes for quite some time.

Another family trait that seems to effect the male members, mostly, and that is eating sugar on tomatoes, lettuce and cottage cheese. That's the way dad liked it and most of the boys did too. Mother ate salt and pepper on those things and I know I switched to salt and pepper when I was still quite young.

Dad taught my girls to eat peanut butter and syrup on their pancakes, and probably taught all the rest of the grandkids the same. Sharon and Gail only stayed over night with the folks a couple of times, but came home demanding peanut butter and syrup on their pancakes from then on. Dad also fed his dog, Little Joe, pancakes with peanut butter and syrup.

Speaking of Little Joe, how many of you remember him? He was a little black and white dog, built awfully close to the ground. He apparently was part Dachsund and who knows what else? Long bodied and very short bow-legged front legs. But long-haired. He went everywhere with dad.

The folks also had a big yellow cat that was just called "Tom". He had come to them as a scrawny kitten someone dumped off when they lived in the Sifton area. Of course, Tom moved to town with them. He was the most unflappable cat I have ever seen. I never saw him show fear of anything. Big dogs got their noses slapped if they tried to chase him. Tom never moved a muscle or batted an eye until the dog was right up to him, then, Zap! The dog always yipped, turned and ran.

We would bring Tom to our house to stay when the folks would go to Hood River for a few days. I worried he might run away — but it never fazed Tom. He made himself right at home, put our dog, Curly, in his place right off the bat and everything was just fine. The first time I vacuumed I thought the vacuum cleaner would really scare him. Mother didn't have one. Not Tom! I could run the vacuum right up to him and he wouldn't budge. As I said, I don't think Tom

was afraid of anything on earth.

How many of the grandkids remember their house at 909 “U” Street. Sitting on the stairs eating potluck in the dining room because there were too many of us to sit at the table. Many times an unplanned gathering wound up with 13 for dinner. The big heavy sliding pocket doors between the dining room and the living room. Sitting on grandpa’s lap or at his knee while he told us stories that always started out “Back when I was just a tad”. Much later we learned that was the equivalent of “Once upon a time”. Did grandpa let you use his little black comb and ‘style’ his thick, silvery white hair for him? Do you remember grandma’s hair always up in a little bun on her head during the day and then one long, long braid down her back at night? How about playing ‘Ghost’ and “Hide ‘N’ Seek’ until it was so dark we were falling all over ourselves? Or in the house playing “I Spy” with grandma’s thimble? Or, grandpa still so nimble that he could get on the floor and ‘fold’ his legs the way you fold your arms across your chest and then getting up and walking around the room on his knees with his legs all ‘tied up’? *(editor’s note: this paragraph unsolicited and added in by the typist not the story writer.)*

There are probably other areas that I have missed and you are all welcome to add your own personal histories to this ‘story’. Our family never had much money and saw some mighty lean times during the 30’s. But some of the things that always were at our house were fun, love, music, playing ball and a horseshoe court. Who could ask for anything more?