

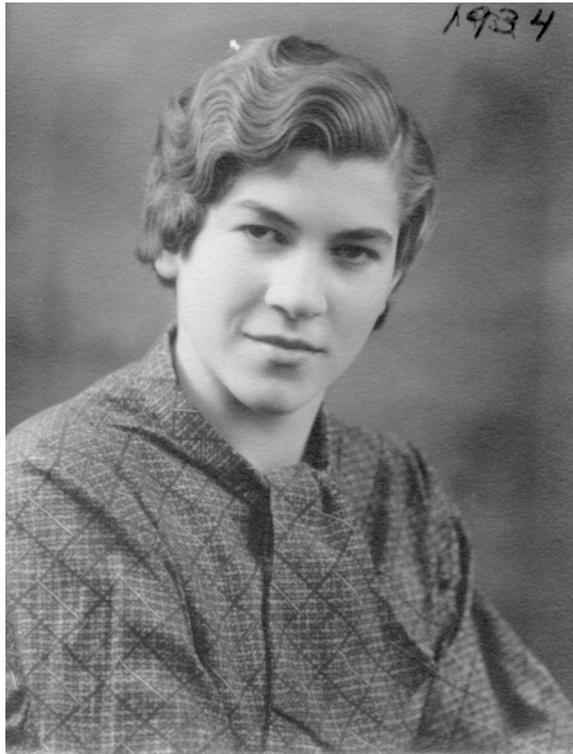
Norma Claussen Mikkelsen

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## Introduction

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Sometime ago Tim, my youngest son, approached me about writing my childhood so he'd know more about me. Don't know if this is a good idea or not. After all, going on 75 there's a lot I've forgotten, but this is about some of the things I remember in my own way. Some of the things may not be authentic, but it's the way I remember them. So here goes...



(Norma Claussen - 1934)

*This is dedicated to my sons, Tom and Tim, and their families.*

*June 1991*

### *Before 1928*

My parents. Claudius Harry Claussen (1888-1925) was the first child of John H. Claussen (1857-1919) and Anna Shoderbrockt (1866-1948). They were married in 1889 and both migrated from Germany.

They had five other children - Kathryn (married to Andrew Nelson), Albert (who married Alma Martins), Meta (who married Hans Damgarrd), John (who married Hazel Carlyle) and Amanda (who was married 3 times, the first time to Alfred Bartrug).

My mother, Emma Matilde (1891-1969), was the fifth child of Johann Plagman (1857-1939) and Wilhenia Ploog (1863-1949). Married in 1884, they too were immigrants from Germany.

The other children were Christian John (who married Meta Magaline Fahrenkrog), Doris (who married Henry William Holst), Alvena (was married to Charles Schnack). Anna Christina (who married William Henry Lippold, then Mom. John (who married Ethel Kingsbury Meyer) was next, Mary and Rudolph (who died about the age of one month), Ernest (who married Evelyn Miller), Lillie (who married Lyle Plumb), and Adele (who died at about two months after birth).

Dad and Mom were married September 25, 1912 in Shelby County and moved to a place about two miles from the home place (a place that Grandpa and Grandma Claussen had bought). It was west and south of Harlan and Ella and I were both born there. Grandpa and Grandma Claussen kept Ella when I was born and while with them, they took her to the Circus in Harlan. When they got home, Mom asked Ella what she saw. The answer was "Something that looked like Norma, only it had hair all over it's face."

Later Dad and Mom moved to the home place and Uncle Albert and Aunt Alma moved to our place. Grandpa and Grandma Claussen bought a place in Avoca to retire. They weren't there long till Grandpa Claussen died and Grandma couldn't stand it down there so Dad and Mom bought a place of their own about 3 miles straight west of Harlan. That was shortly after World War I, paying \$300 an acre which was high at that time. Then Uncle John Claussen, who was not married, moved to the home place and Grandma Claussen kept house for him until Aunt Kathryn died. Then she went to help Uncle Andrew. He had 4 children, the youngest being a baby. Uncle John Claussen married Hazel Carlyle.



(Ella and Norma)

There are just a few things I remember before Dad was killed. I do know he had some sort of rash and went to Rochester, Minnesota to find out what it was. He and Mom also went to Excelsor Springs, Missouri to take sulphur baths. They figured he'd gotten it from Barley thrash. (Thrash is the hull around the seed.) I remember he used to stand in the doorway and rub his back against the doorjamb. They found sulphur baths helped about as much as anything and in those days we didn't have bathtubs, but they bought a collapsible tub made of something like oil cloth that had crisscross legs like an army cot. Mom would get up and heat water on the cook stove so he could take a hot sulphur bath when the itch got too bad. Later he went to a Dr. Edgington in Omaha for some sort of treatment. Ella thought he was a quack, but in later years, Mom said they called it some sort of skin leprosy, not catching. It wouldn't kill him, but the itch would drive him crazy. About that time they discovered I had an enlarged liver (or said I had). So I went with Dad to Omaha for treatments (shots). I went in a Buick touring car. It took a couple of hours on the dirt roads. I remember one time the needle broke off in my arm. They told me to sit real still and look at the pigeons outside the window. His office girl must have had polio or something - I remember her one shoe was built up.

Dad always drove Buicks. He had a touring car with snap on side curtains. I remember when the side curtains were off I always worried about my hair blowing off.

Dad and Mom liked to dance. I remember one time we went to a masquerade dance in Corley. She'd made Ella and I outfits that looked like pansies. We really thought we were something. Can't remember what we did with Harvey (probably took him along like everyone else did with their kids).

Mom did all our sewing. In those days an 8th grade education was about it, so Grandpa and Grandma Plagman sent her to Avoca to apprentice with a seamstress and she was really good. Either you did that or you worked at the neighbors doing housework.

Dad always liked to celebrate the 4th of July. He'd buy a lot of firecrackers and we'd have people in for fireworks, homemade ice cream and watermelon.

I remember the day Dad was killed in an auto accident. A neighbor boy (who had an eye injury from a firecracker and was going down for treatments) was riding with him in the touring car when it went off a bridge over a deep creek near Weston (which is no more). The boy was thrown clear of the car, but Dad was pinned under it. Mom would have gone with him that day, but she was baking bread and decided to stay home with the three of us. When she got the message, Uncle John Claussen took us to the hospital where Dad was taken, but we didn't have the right information so we went to the wrong hospital. By the time we got to the Mercy Hospital, he'd died.

Uncle John had a Ford Coupe and I remember I sat on that little ledge in the back. It was still pretty crowded with Uncle John, Mom, Ella, Mom holding Harvey and me. When we got there Uncle Hans was there, too. Friends of theirs from Shelby had seen the accident and notified them. I remember when we got to the hospital and had located Dad, Mom lifted the sheet and kissed him.

Then we went to a cafe and had lunch. I think that was the first time I'd been to a restaurant.

Remember, I was 8 years old when he died. In those days they brought the body to the home - it sat in the dining room. People were there all day and night (what they called a Wake). The day of the funeral the yard was filled cars. They had a short service at the house and then the Church service was at Shelby, Iowa. He's buried in Shelby, as is Mom.

Mom continued to live on the farm with the aid of hired hands and Uncle John Claussen's help. After a year, she lost the farm. (They'd bought it after World War I and were paying \$300 an acre which was a high price for land at that time, and also, the way the hired hands were stealing blind). She had a farm sale.

Grandpa and Grandma Plagman had asked Mom to move in with them and she said no, that wouldn't be right with the three of us. Uncle John Plagman had bought the place across from Grandpa and Grandma and he asked Mom to move in with him and keep house for him in Corley.

At that time there were about 90 people and 50 dogs (ha) living Corley. There were 2 grocery stores, 2 grain elevators, a dance hall and a bank - and a lot of kids!

Uncle John had a horse that was real gentle. His name was "Dick" and was bigger than a pony, but not as large as a farm horse. Uncle John used to let us ride Dick and we really had a lot of fun with him. Would you believe we could ride 4 kids at once and slide down his rear and he wouldn't even get upset. One time Harvey and I had to go after the cattle which were in a pasture across the river. I'd gotten off the horse to open the gate (remember, Harvey was only about 5 1/2 or 6) and Dick started to run and Harvey fell off. Would you believe the horse stopped at once? That's how much horse sense he had - more than we had. Uncle John would never let us ride with a saddle, which was probably the best thing he ever did.

Uncle John Plagman also raised dogs. He had a police dog (Peggy) that had been hit by a car and had crippled her back legs. He would breed her with a Collie and whenever she was to have pups she'd get awfully cross, which was the temperament of police dogs, so Uncle John would put her up in the hayloft. It was Harvey's and my job to feed and water her. We'd climb the ladder and take her food up. For a while Uncle John had a load of hay outside the opening which they used to put hay in the loft and I would jump on the load of hay and slide down. Well, one day I didn't look and just jumped. Well, they'd emptied the rack and I went through the floor boards and I was half way to the house before I could get my breath. (Boy did it hurt!) That's why I have an extra floating rib - I broke one off.

Harvey and I would train those pups. At that time, we were selling milk to people in Corley, so Harvey made a harness for the dog. One of us would go ahead and coax the dog with a piece of meat and the other would ride either in the wagon or sled, whatever the weather would be - great fun.



(Harvey, Ella and Norma - 1927)

While living in Corley, we still believed in Santa Claus. Mom always had Christmas Eve supper and Uncle Bill's and Uncle Dick's always came. Mom would have oyster stew, jello salad made like a Santa's head with red jello, marshmallows and whipped cream and Date Nut Cake for dessert with whipped cream.

The house Uncle John bought had 3 big bedrooms upstairs plus a big bathroom. Downstairs was a big kitchen with pantry, big dining room, living room and front foyer. Also there was a smaller room that could be used either for a sewing room or bedroom and a full basement.

About the time we were thru with supper, we'd hear a noise in the living room, which was divided from the dining room by double sliding doors. Sure enough, there was the big Christmas tree with candles lit and all the packages. Santa had been there! I think Uncle Bill, Uncle Dick and Uncle John had as much fun with Harvey's toys as he did - Harvey being the youngest nephew at the time.

Ella, Harvey and I went to school in Corley. There were so many kids that we had two teachers and Mom boarded the teachers.

In 1926, with the help of Reverend Nelson from the Lutheran Church of Avoca, Mom started a Sunday School. Every Sunday many of the farmers would come to Corley to the grocery store for their Sunday paper or groceries or to just hang out at the store. It wasn't very long before there were over 40 kids coming to Sunday School from all denominations. I would go up to the schoolhouse and start the fire (furnace) and bank it so it would be warm on Sunday morning. That's when we had Sunday School. Then I'd bank the fire so it would be warm on Monday morning for the teachers. We even had Sunday School programs at the dance hall.

There were a lot of neat things during the years we lived in Corley. One year we got ice skates for Christmas. So on the nights it was moonlight, the kids living in Corley would go down the river (East Nishnabotna) and skate. The river wasn't very deep and there were open holes that didn't freeze over. We'd light a fire and skate. Of course, there were a lot of times we'd come home wet if we'd hit one of those open holes.

Then too, a bunch of us would go east of Corley where there was a long hill and go sleigh riding.

Grandma Plagman was a great joy to us, as she must of been to Mom, too. She was a small lady with white hair done up in a bun halfway up the back of her head. She had a great knack of keeping us busy - when the peas were ready to can, we'd sit back of the house under a shade tree and shell peas. She'd start a story and then pass it on to one of us and we'd make up some more and pass it on. She also taught us to make Indian jewelry out of beads and thin wire. We also made Easter nests in her yard because it was the only one fenced in and the dogs couldn't get at the eggs. At Christmas time when we'd write to Santa, there was always decorated sugar cookies where we'd left our letters.

Then in the summer time, she'd take us for walks down the railroad tracks. Yes, we had a train thru Corley. It would come up from Avoca and I don't know where else, go to Harlan every morning and come back in the afternoon. Sometimes we'd pick wild strawberries or flowers. One time we saw a pheasant fly off her nest and we touched the eggs. Grandma told us that the hen wouldn't come back because we'd touched the eggs, so we picked them up and took them home and found a setting hen and put the eggs under her. Had pretty good luck too - they hatched out and we put them in the orchard next to the house with the hen and fed and watered them. They were really funny. They were a little smaller than a young chicken and born with a wild natural instinct. Every time we'd go to feed them they'd hide under a leaf or something and be real flat. When they grew big enough to take care of themselves, we boxed them up and took them to the country and turned them loose as it was against the law to keep them.

Grandma loved flowers, too. I guess that's where a lot of her family got their green thumb. She had them all around her yard - we used to kid her a lot about the lawn. It kept getting smaller and the border kept getting wider. They also had a nice garden and

Grandpa would give us a penny for every 100 potato bugs we'd pick off his plants. He also made wine - rhubarb, grape and dandelion. It was good, too.

Ella, Harvey and I all went to the Corley school. When Ella graduated from the 8th grade, she went to stay with Aunt Alvena and Uncle Charlie since there was no way she could go to high school from Corley. (There were no school buses there.) She worked for room and board. Since it was a township school, they had a picnic for all the schools in the township in the spring and had an 8th grade graduation and program (big day). It was in Uncle Bill's yard.

Mom always worked hard. She had a big garden and grew a lot of vegetables which she canned, also fruits and a big strawberry bed, also. In those days we didn't have deep freezers so we had to can everything. She also did paper hanging (25 cents a roll). That meant pulling off the old loose paper, patching the cracks, wiping off the woodwork and cleaning up afterwards. We all took turns helping her when we weren't in school. She also did sewing - 50 cents a dress. Then during harvest time she'd go help the farmers' wives prepare meals for the threshing crew. She was always whistling and I never heard her complain. Life must have looked awfully bleak for her at times - with 3 children to raise and no resources except what she could earn.

### ***1928-1929***

In 1928-1929 they put the pavement from Harlan to Avoca and Corley being about halfway, a lot of the stuff (sand and etc.) was brought in there. During that time, Mom had 4 boarders. She had 2 double beds in the north upstairs room and they stayed there. She also fed a lot of the workers at noon since there wasn't any eating place in Corley. They worked 7 days a week. I remember that on Sundays a lot of the workers would have their families come out and have dinner with them and Mom would cook for them. Remember, I have her table and she'd have all the leaves in it and there would be at least 16 of them around it. Can't remember if she'd have 2 settings or not, but we had to help - all done on the old cookstove. She'd even fix twice baked potatoes where you took the baked potatoes out of the peeling and mash them and then fill the shell back up. Can't remember what else she fixed, but I'm sure they got their money's worth because they were back every Sunday. No dishwasher either, but us - ha. \$1 a meal.

One time when I was about 10, we'd gone to Shelby to see Grandma Claussen who was keeping house for Uncle Andrew, who's wife died and left 4 children, the youngest under a year old. It was right after the 4th of July and we were out playing with firecrackers and I was blowing on the punk (a Roman candle that had been used) when it went off in my face. They didn't tell me they'd been putting lady fingers in it the night before and one hadn't gone off. Well, I was a mess - had powder burns all over my face, my nose and around my eyes. Well, Mom put a towel around my face and called Uncle Charley who lived about halfway between Uncle Andrew's and Harlan and he drove us to Harlan to Dr. Bisgard's office. Dr. Davey Bisgard, who'd studied abroad, was working there for the summer. They scraped my face with a steel brush until all the powder marks were gone and some flesh was off, too (except for 2 black marks, which I still carry - one in the corner of my eye and one in the white). Then Mom took me home. I had both eyes

bandaged and they thought I'd lose the sight in my one eye. Can't remember how long I was kept in bed. Then after they took off the bandages, I had to wear one of those eye shades like gamblers wear. Again, I was fortunate 'cause I didn't lose the sight in my eye, but got rid of my freckles.

Then one time we were playing hide and seek and Harvey had an old pair of shoes on that had the sole loose. He slipped and knocked a tooth thru his cheek.

I didn't mention that after we'd moved to Corley, Grandpa Plagman thought it was silly for Uncle John to have to take him wherever he wanted to go, so he bought Mom a car. Then it was her *duty* to take him places when he wanted to go. Grandpa left the decision for the make, etc. to Uncle John since he didn't drive. Uncle John thought an Essex was a pretty good car and taught Mom how to drive. She really had a lot of guts after having her husband killed in an auto accident to learn to drive with 3 young kids with her, but it gave her a chance to be able to do other things like paper hanging, etc. that she needed transportation for. I remember if we ever went any place at night I'd never go to sleep on the way home. Ella and Harvey would, but I always thought if she had car trouble at least I'd be awake. Don't know if I'd been much help though. The car worked okay, I guess. We finally called it an ass-ache 'cause every time it would get wet, the damn distributor would get wet and it would stop. If it was raining, you'd wait til it would quit and then get out and dry the distributor off and go on again.

## 1929

Toward the end of 1929 Uncle John decided to get married, so we had to move. Mom scouted around and found an empty house about 3 miles straight west and 1/2 mile south of Corley. Rent was \$5 a month. It had been used as a granary and was really a mess. It had a lean-to kitchen with a small bedroom to the north, a dining room, living room and a bedroom off the dining room. It had a dirt basement with an outside door, an attic with an outside stairway and a back house. At one time, the skunks had gotten into the house and it really stunk. But Mom papered it all and aired it out good and it was quite comfortable.

Harvey and I rode the school bus to Tennant school. It was a consolidated school and had all 12 grades - two classes to each room. High school was on the 3rd floor. Ella came home and stayed with us the last half of the year. I was in the 7th grade and Harvey was about in the 3rd grade.

Mom had a garden and we had chickens and a dog. Uncle Charlie's lived about a mile west and north of us. Uncle Bill's lived about a mile and a half north east of us. Kaulbaum's lived about 1 1/2 miles north. One winter Alvin Schnack got skis for Christmas and moonlit nights, Alvin and Kaulbaum would come over and we'd go skiing and sleigh riding. Then before they went home, Mom would fix hot chocolate for us.

That was also the place I broke my leg. We (Harvey and I) had the dog hooked up to the wagon and I was riding in it. My legs were hanging out the side and the damn dog took after a chicken and I went down into the ditch. Remember telling Harvey to go get Mom

'cause I'd broken my leg. Sure enough - back to Dr. and he took ahold of my ankle and leg and gave a yank - hurt like the devil, but that put it back together, so on went the cast. It was summer time and so hot. Grandma Claussen came to stay with us so Mom could go work. That cast really itched and Grandma got a knitting needle so I could stick it down the side and scratch it.

During this time we were with our cousins, Irma, Mildred and Martha Lippold a lot. At one time we walked over, which was our main means of transportation. Uncle Bill and Aunt Anna had gone somewhere and Uncle Bill had made some wine which he'd put raisins in for aging. He'd bottled the wine and the raisins were just there, so we sat on the porch and fed the fermented raisins to the chickens and watched them get drunk and go around and around. At other times we also helped shuck grain.

### 1932

Then the Klindt's oldest son was getting married and wanted the house, so we moved again. This time Uncle Bill rented the land about 2 miles south of where we were living so we moved into the house. Since we were out of the consolidated school district again, Uncle Bill got Harvey a pony to ride to country school. I stayed with Aunt Alvena and Uncle Charlie to go to high school and worked for my room and board. Then on weekends I'd walk home across the field. The pony, Uncle Bill got, by boarding it for a friend in Harlan. She was quite small. In fact, I could put my legs around her belly and she'd buck and boy, could she buck! I guess that's a trait of Shetland ponies.

Ella was in nurses training in Omaha at Immanuel Lutheran Hospital. I continued to go to Tennant school. I entered declam contest, choir and was the maid in the Jr. class play. There were only 6 in our class - 3 girls and 3 boys. I wasn't too great a student. Guess I was too ornery or else the teachers had it in for me. Getting a D in deportment should tell you something. (Also flunked English) I wanted to quit school after my Junior year because I knew I wanted to go to Beauty School. At that time you didn't need to graduate from high school to go. There was always a big joke about being a beautician - "All you needed was a strong back and weak mind". I had both. But Mom and Ella wouldn't let me quit, so I finished my senior year in Harlan. Nothing unusual about those years. Mom was working as hard as ever.

### 1933

Uncle Bill and Aunt Anna bought an acreage in Corley so we moved again. This time to a farm owned by Uncle John Plagman's wife and he was farming the land so we moved into the house. It was about 1 mile west and 1 mile south. So again Harvey changed schools. He went back to Corley school and I stayed with Aunt Alvena's until the end of the school year. Harvey graduated from the 8th grade in Corley and I went to Harlan to school. I rode with another gal who was driving and I'd walk up to the main road, good and bad weather. This house was a big house. A big kitchen, back and front stairs, 3 big bedrooms upstairs, large living room and bedroom downstairs and even a bathroom downstairs off the kitchen - no heat and on the northeast corner of house and was it cold! Also had what they called a summer kitchen, a basement which you could enter from the outside and come into the house thru a trap door in the pantry.

While there, Mom took on 4H leadership, had neighborhood card parties, etc. That was during the depression so everyone entertained at home. The kids and all would come. They served beer. I remember Mom making home brew in a big crock. Can't remember how much it made, but do know we helped clean the bottles with bebe shot. Also had a capper to cap the bottles.

While there, we had a Halloween party. It was a lot of fun. Had them come up thru the basement and into the pantry and then up the back stairs where we'd put walnuts on the floor with planks over and on top of the springs and then down the front steps. Had skinned grapes and all - really fun.

At the beginning of our move, I was still staying with Aunt Alvena, but was supposed to go home weekends *if* I had my work done. But Aunt Alvena couldn't buffalo me like she did Ella. I'd be thru with my work and say I was going home and Uncle Charlie would say "Stay till morning and we'll take you home". I thought *to H---* with *that* and would walk home, about 3 miles. I did that a lot. Then I'd go back Sunday P.M.

There was a group of about 12 girls within our neighborhood, an age range from 12 to 16. In the Spring we'd get together and walk down the railroad tracks or something goofy like that - had picnics in an old abandoned house, etc. Alvers, our neighbors, had 3 girls. They also had an old blind team of horses and we'd hook them up to the wagon and they'd take me back to Aunt Alvena's when it was muddy.

### **1934**

I graduated from Harlan High School in 1934. Ella graduated from Nurses training and Harvey from 8th grade that year. We continued to live at this place awhile. I stayed home that year. Harvey went to Harlan High School and Ella became a night supervisor at Immanuel Hospital. Mom traded the Essex off for a used Chevy. Everything went pretty well. We boarded Mom's cousin Walter who worked for Uncle John. We also took care of the animals - a couple of cows which Harvey and I had the privilege of milking before and after school when Mom was working, while their Mom got sick and had an appendectomy in Omaha hospital where Ella was working.



(1934 Graduation: Harvey - 8th grade, Ella - nursing, Norma - highschool)

### **1935**

In the summer of 1935 Mom and Aunt Lil took me to enroll in beauty school, bag and baggage. They found me a room at St. Kathryne, a Catholic girls boarding house *with rules* and a 12 o'clock curfew. I walked about 10 blocks from school. There were other girls going to beauty school too, some to business school and some working girls. Breakfast and dinner were served and lunch was on your own. \$2.75 a week - can you believe? One week Mom would send me \$2.75 and the next week \$3.25. That took care of a few incidentals, plus my room and board. I really got homesick. I'd never been away from home for so long and the only way I could get home was by bus and that was expensive. I'd call home and reverse the charges and I couldn't even talk, just cry. The first holiday was Thanksgiving and there was only one other girl there during the holiday. They only thing on the radio was organ music. Sometimes we'd buy a loaf of bread and a jar of peanut butter and fix our own sandwich. You could buy a candy bar for 5 cents and that was our lunch sometimes. Sometimes we'd splurge and buy a pint of ice cream and eat the whole thing (25 cents). One time Mom said me to when I called that if I didn't have money to pay for the call, I better not call.

During the winter we had one of the worst snowstorms we'd ever had. I worried about Mom and Harvey out on the farm. They were all snowbound, but were ok. I got sick that winter and got to go home. I had a bad case of throat infection, but it sure was good to be home. Nothing else new.

### **1936**

I graduated from Beauty School in 1936, took state board and *passed*. I worked a couple of weeks in Des Moines and came home one weekend. Mom had talked to Mrs. Crouch and she said for me to stop in, so I did and she hired me.

I rode to work with Dorothy Plagman who was my cousin and had her own shop in Harlan. I continued to work there and Harvey was in High School in Harlan. In the meantime, Ella joined the Navy and went to California for a couple of years.

### **1938**

We continued to live in this same place until 1938 when Harvey graduated from High School and Ella saved up enough money to get back home, where she took a job as Dr. Bisgard's nurse. I continued to work at Crouch's. In the meantime, Dorothy taught me to drive, so we took turns driving to work when Mom didn't have to have the car.

In the meantime, Mom and Aunt Lil took Harvey to Missouri to see if that was where he wanted to go to business school. But he decided to go to Omaha to business school instead. With him in school in Omaha, we (Mom, Ella and I) decided we'd move into Harlan since Ella was on call part of the time. We moved into an upstairs apartment with 3 rooms and a bath. Then we found an apartment on the ground floor which was bigger, so we moved again.

In 1938, my Great Aunt Kate (Dad's Aunt) died and left each of us kids \$800. The Chevy was getting pretty old, so Mom and I went down to Hansens's Garage and ordered a *new* DeLuxe Plymouth 2 door. A lot of the gals were buying fur coats at the time, but what the heck - the car had a heater and radio - Hot Stuff! They didn't have what we wanted, so they took us to Omaha to pick it up and would you believe that was the first time I'd driven in the City. Mom was still driving that car when she died. We used to go for rides in the rain. (I got it back, or rather I said I wanted it after she was gone, so I brought it to Missouri Valley. We had no garage so sold it to Burhl B. for \$100.)

### **1939-1940**

We moved again to a house on 12th Street. While we lived there, Grandpa Plagman had a stroke. With Mom being a widow, all her brothers and sisters thought she should go to help Grandma take care of Grandpa, so she did until he died. In the meantime Ella went on a vacation to Utah to meet Burhl whom she had been corresponding with. He was interning at Immanuel when she was working there and they were married. She'd promised Dr. Bisgard she'd give them a month's notice, so she came home and worked a month. Then they didn't think Grandma Plagman should be alone so Mom and I moved down to Corley and I drove back and forth to work. Things went on as usual.

We got up a bridge club - Mrs. Crouch, Irene Forbes, Kathryn Carmical, Nina Kelley, Florence Meyers, Elma Petersen, Grace Butler and me. We weren't too good a bridge but had fun. We worked from 8 A.M. till 10:30 P.M. somedays and on Saturday we always had to stay open on Saturday night. That's when all the farmers came to town so we took appointments whenever they wanted to come. Then when we got thru, we'd make reservations at either the "Evergreen Inn" or the "Chicken Hut", the two night spots in Harlan. We'd eat, drink and dance. At that time they didn't have to close at 1 A.M. on Saturday like they do now. Sometimes it got a *little* late when we got home. Also used to go to the "Evergreen Inn" and play pitch. Nobody had much money, so you could sit and play pitch and drink one bottle of beer and spend the whole evening. Also dated other fellows there. Mike was working for REA (Rural Electrification Association), so we'd get together and go to dance in Omaha, Defiance, Corley, Atlantic and Walnut. Also double dated with the Zastrows and we'd go to Hockey games, etc. in Omaha.

Things got pretty rough for Mom, so a lot of Sundays we'd take off for Omaha to see Harvey. Grandma treated Mom like a maid and that's about the only time Mom could get away. Everyone would come for holidays and Mom would do the work.

Then came World War II.....

### 1942

We gals at the shop folded bandages and did knitting for the Red Cross. Ella and Burhl were living in Oregon. Mike enlisted in the National Guard, as most of the fellows around Harlan, so they could get their year in the service over. Burhl, being in the reserves, was sent to Maryland. They were expecting their first child, so Mom went to visit them. Mike was sent to Louisiana for a short time. We were making plans for Harvey and Doris' wedding when Pearl Harbor was blown up, so he enlisted too. (They were married February 8, 1942). Then started the rationing. We got along pretty well for a couple of years. Then one day Grandma accused Mom of taking her shoe stamps. That's when I blew up. Grandma was always sending to Sears for things. Mom hadn't gotten any new shoes for ages, so I said she didn't take it and I didn't have it so "maybe we should move". She said o.k. Then I asked her "how soon?". "As soon as possible" she said. So I went to work that morning and found Mom and I an apartment and we moved again. It was 3 room- kitchen, living room, bedroom and bath. It was right off 7th Street behind the old Lutheran Church. Mom continued to do paper hanging and also some babysitting. We were still living there in 1944.

### 1944

Burhl was to be sent overseas so Ella, Burhl B. (who was 2 1/2) and Gene (who was 6 months) came home. Burhl brought them home and since the apartment wasn't big enough, we started looking for something bigger. I'd heard at the shop on Saturday of a house that was going to be sold. So about 2 days after they got home we went to look at it on Sunday and bought it. I cashed what savings bonds I had and Mom went to Uncle Ernest to retrieve a dab of money she'd loaned him years before. It still wasn't enough so we went out to see Grandma Claussen and she loaned me the rest. We paid \$5500 for the house. It was on a log and a half so Mom had room for a garden, a double garage. The house had a small kitchen, dining room, living room, bedroom and bath downstairs and 2 bedrooms upstairs, which Ella made into a living room for her and the children and the other room a bedroom. It had a full basement with a shower and stool down there. The house was only 2 years old, so got along great. That way Ella could be alone with the children when needed be and had privacy. Mom was really pleased. This was *her* house, after 13 moves, she finally had a home of her own again.

By this time Burhl, Mike and Harvey were all overseas. Burhl was in England in Medical, Mike in England in billeting and Harvey with Patton as a 1st Lt. with the 5th Army. Doris and Jack (Harvey Jr.) were living in Omaha with Doris' mother living with them. Nothing unusual during these rationing days and listening to the news. Mom had her garden, Burhl B. and Gene kept growing, and I kept knitting and working and we visited the Aunts and Uncles around. Then came the end of the European War.

## **1945**

Burhl got home first. He took a job in Vinton with a doctor who intended to retire, so they moved to Vinton, Iowa. But Burhl soon found out the old doctor didn't want to retire. Every time Burhl got new patients, the old doctor took them over. So in 1946 they moved to California and he was Health Doctor in San Diego.

Mike got home in September of 1945. I got so mad at his mother. He'd come on the bus to Harlan and called me at the shop, so I walked over to meet him and we walked to Mom's where he called his folks. His mother said "We'll be in Harlan tonight", which I thought was terrible. After all, he'd been gone about 3 years and was anxious to get home. So he took Mom's car and went on out. She really never showed much affection. After a couple of months we were engaged. I wouldn't give him a definite date until he had a job (nasty), but his folks would have liked nothing better than to have us live with them (on 40 acres) and they already had a hired man and I knew that wouldn't work. He got a job in Omaha with Wilson and Co., a meat packing company and was eventually going to be a meat salesman. Well, in November we were invited to his Aunt Lena's for Thanksgiving (and I met the rest of the family). Well George, Lena's husband, talked to Mike after we left and offered him half interest in the Valley Hotel for \$10,000. Mike called me and I went out to his folks and asked his Dad to loan us money, which he did. So Mike quit his job in December.

In December, Bernice and Lyle (who'd gotten married out west) came home on the bus. We met them and did their faces ever fall when we told them we'd bought half interest in the Hotel. They'd thought they'd talk George and Lena into letting them open the restaurant there, so they bought a restaurant in Wahoo (with the folks' money, I'm sure).

## **1946**

Mike started to work in the Hotel in January. We were married in Omaha on February 20, 1946 with Mom, Anton and Martha (Mike's folks) as attendants. We had our wedding supper at the Blackstone Hotel. Not having a car, Mom let us use her's and she went back to Harlan with Martha and Anton. We spent our honeymoon at the Paxton Hotel (2 days) and then came to Missouri Valley for the Firemans Ball, an annual event at the KC hall. Had a great time. First time I remember going to the "Smokehouse" across the street for drinks (Ha - pool hall), but I didn't care. Everybody knew Mike and I were the new part owners of the Hotel and we didn't know very many people so didn't give a darn - just had fun.



(Wedding picture - February 20th, 1946)

We spent our first night in our new home. Had very little furniture, not even a bed, so George and Mike went to the basement and brought up a box spring. That's what we slept on and we did have some dishes, etc. The next morning I made coffee. We threw it out and Mike made the next pot full. You see, I'd been living at home for about 10 years and Mom really spoiled me. She did my washing, fixed my meals and did practically everything for me - no wonder Ella felt left out.

The hotel was really run down and needed a damn good cleaning. So shortly after we got there, Lena and I started making drapes, etc. George hated to put money back into it, but could go out at night and spend money like a drunken sailor, but wouldn't buy anything the next day. He and Mike only worked 4 hours a day each, either from 7 to 11 A.M. or 11 A.M. to 3 P.M. The rest of the time they hired help. There were about 26 Greyhound buses thru there a day.



(Valley Hotel)

The basement was full of junk. It had been a restaurant until World War II and George closed it up. There were booths, fruit jars, old rugs (and moths) down there, so we cleaned it out. Then in about May of 1946 I got bored so decided to open a beauty shop down there. That was fine with George and Lena until George thought I was spending too much time there and not helping at the Hotel. I had two operators besides myself and it was going well - even made money. But with their hours they'd want to party, so would start at 3 P.M. and by the time I'd worked at the shop all day I wasn't in the mood to party, but would go along with it. Many a night I'd drive home 'cause they were too stoned.

It got to be a regular hassle so I sold the equipment. About that time, Mike and I talked George into letting us clean up the rooms. We started on the 3rd floor and painted the walls, threw out the old rugs, washed the windows, varnished the woodwork and painted the floors (the rugs were worn out). We made new drapes and repaired the furniture, etc.

### **1947**

Mike didn't work at the office during that time. I can't remember how long it took us to do 36 rooms, but it was a job. Then in September of 1947 I had a miscarriage. We also joined dance club, Masons and Eastern Star so we had other things going for us.

The last of December 1947 I got pregnant again. I took shots so I would not have another miscarriage. In the spring, a fellow who had a shop downtown called and said he'd just

fired one of the girls I'd had working for me in the shop before and would I like to come down and work. So I did for awhile.

### **1948**

Early in 1948 we got our first car, a new Buick. Before that we went by bus. We took Mike's folks on a vacation (our first) to northern Iowa and Minnesota to see relatives. I was PG but was still wearing my regular clothes at 5 months.

Tom was born September 27, 1948 in Harlan. We didn't have a hospital here in the Valley so I went back to Dr. Bisgard. Everything went well and I stayed with Mom a short time. Of course being *older* (32) when I had him I knew there was something wrong. He'd cry so much that I was a wreck. After a couple of months of that, they decided he was born with a hernia. So we didn't let him cry, which really spoiled him.



(Tom at 10 months)

On New Years Eve we were called to Mike's folks. They were getting ready to go to a dance and Anton had a stroke, so we dashed over there. He was conscious, but had a terrific headache. The doctor came and stayed all night, as we did. He passed away Sunday evening, January 2nd. Funeral services were on January 5th in Harlan.

**1949**

Then the 20th of February, 1949 Mom slipped on the church steps and broke her ankle. They called us and my brother, Harvey, Tom, and I went right over. Mom wouldn't go to the hospital so Tom and I stayed. That was the year the Willow Creek broke out and everything in the Valley was flooded. There was no gas, but did have heat (steam from the city). I guess it was a good thing I was over there. Our apartment had an old electric stove so Lena did their cooking at our place. Most of the farmers from the bottom land south and west were staying in town some place because the roads were impassable or covered with water. After about a week at Mom's, I decided I needed more clothes for both Tom and I so I think I came over with Aunt Lil and Uncle Dick while Aunt Hazel and Uncle John Claussen stayed with Mom and Tom. Mom was bedfast and Tom was fussy, so all I got done was cooking, washing and taking care of them. Mom's leg would hurt so bad at night that many a night she and I were playing pitch at 2 A.M. Finally figured out she couldn't stand the weight of the covers on her foot, so took a peach box long side up and made a tent for her foot. She also had some sprained toes and with the cast on didn't help. Can't remember how long we stayed over there, but when she was able to travel we came home. She was with us for several months until she got the cast off. I'd take her back to Harlan to see the doctor whenever she needed to go.

We were still living in the east apartment that we'd moved into when we were married and I decided we'd redo the cupboards and take off the paint and leave the natural wood. I got it all scraped off and it looked horrible so I painted them again. Tom was just walking good and reaching for everything. We were painting away when he reached for a can of paint and spilled it all over himself. Well, I panicked as usual and wiped off what I could with rags and turpentine and dumped him in the bathtub. He had paint in his nose, eyes, ears and all over. After we got him cleaned up I called Mom and asked her to come over and take care of him till we finished the painting and she did. Even his BM's were covered with paint. It was a wonder he didn't die from lead poisoning.

Things went along as usual till one night we were over to Mike's Mother's and Tom got real fussy. He wouldn't even take his bottle so we called the doctor and took him to the office in Harlan. The doctor discovered his hernia had popped out and they had to put him under anesthetic to replace it. The doctor suggested a truss, so that's what we did but it was a hassle. He was still wearing diapers and would just wear the truss during the day. When we had our appointment with Dr. Clock we asked about surgery. Since we were planning a vacation to Oregon to see Ella's that fall, we decided to have it done. We took him to the Hospital early one morning and I noticed the other side was swollen, so I mentioned it to the head nurse and asked her to have the doctor check it. Well, he had a double hernia. Felt real bad about leaving him in the hospital overnight, so went down early the next A.M. He didn't see me, but I watched him eat breakfast. The doctor released him that morning. I asked the surgeon if I'd have to keep him quiet since the only bandages were 2 little folded bandages with a piece of tape over it. He said not to worry 'cause he wouldn't do anything that would hurt. Would you believe in 2 days he was climbing across a chair.

The middle of June we (Mom, Aunt Lil, Tom, Mike and I) took off for California. We went to California first then up the coastline and visited Burhl, Ella, Burhl B, Gene and Bill in Rosebury, Oregon where he was with the Veterans Hospital. We helped Gene celebrate her 6th birthday while there. Things got along pretty well.

### ***1950***

In February 1950, Mike and I bought the other half of the Hotel and moved to the west side apartment. George and Lena went to Waynesville, Missouri and bought a motel.

### ***1951***

We were *really* busy then. We remodeled a lot, inside and out. George and Lena were really unhappy at Waynesville so we went down to see them. George cried on Mike's shoulder (in the woodshed) and wanted to buy back in. Our lawyer said "Don't do it" so we offered them a 2 room apartment with bath on the second floor. They moved back and lived there until they bought 1/2 interest in a hotel in Crete, Nebraska with Marion and Margaret Bartlett. That proved to be as much of a disaster as our partnership with George was. So they sold and moved to California.

### ***1952***

Had another flood in Missouri Valley so were real busy again. The hotel was full and we opened up the basement for those that didn't have any place to go. It rained and rained - we'd go to the top of 3rd Street and see the whole bottom covered with water. It took a section of pavement out west of the Valley and south of the Valley pavement was all covered. There were no buses and cars were parked all over town. People wanted to get back to their homes and scoop out the mud. The Red Cross came in and stayed at the Hotel so on apartment was like Grand Central Station. I got PG again in November.

### ***1953-1954***

Tim was born July 27, 1953 in Harlan delivered by Dr. Bisgard. Tom stayed with Mom while I was at the hospital. Tim wasn't nearly as fussy as Tom was when he was a baby. Maybe I'd learned a little bit by then.



(Tim and Norma - 1953)

Tim celebrated his first birthday with the mumps. Tom had visited Bernice in Omaha and was exposed so he got them. Then earlier when Tom started to Kindergarten, he brought home everything, first it was chicken pox. Tim wasn't hardly over those till he had the measles. Don't think you could beat that to have chicken pox, measles and mumps by the time you were a year old.

### ***1955***

We stayed in the west apartment until the middle of the year when Mike hired Alma Larsen to do the 3 to 11 shift. She and her husband moved there and we moved back to the east apartment. I used to kid Mike about moving. I'd tell him "when I needed to clean house we'd just move to the other apartment". It was a great way to clean everything up but I don't remember a time when I got it all done 'till they'd come in say this is the day we're moving. Of course it was just across the back yard, so by night we'd be all in.

## *1956-1959*

In 1951 Mike's Mother sold the acreage and moved to Harlan. In 1956 she developed cancer of the liver. She got along pretty well until the summer of 1958. She stayed with us about a week and Bernice came out with her 2 boys to help care for her. I was working in the shop. Bernice was no help and her boys were stinkers. Mike and Bernice had words so Mike's Mother said that she and Bernice had better go to Harlan. Bernice kept up her running around - out for coffee, taking the boys swimming, etc. She stayed a week and I had someone come in and work for me at the shop. Mom took the boys to her house and kept them and I went over and took care of Martha. By that time she was bedfast. I wouldn't call the doctor until I had Mike and Bernice's consent, after all I was just a daughter-in-law. They did finally drain 1 1/2 gallon fluid off and eventually had to go to the hospital. She passed away on August 5, 1958.

During the years of 1955-56-57-58-59, time just passed. I had a Cub Scout group that met at our house every week. I taught Sunday School, belonged to Eastern Star and had an office. Mike was in Masons with an office, was taking flying lessons, in Chamber of Commerce and Lions Club. Our dance club we had and just general party get togethers. We'd applied for a liquor license and got it so we made a bar in the basement. We also took a room in the back and had a beauty shop *again* when Tim was 3 years old. We made the other room down there for the boys' playroom. With a TV, davenport, etc. (right next to the Beauty Shop), they made a Den under the stairway and spent many hours there - kind of like a couple of little "pack-rats".

Then Tom got sick so we took him to Dr. Trainer (eye, ears and nose) and he decided he needed his tonsils out so had him take a look at Tim and he said his were worse than Tom's, so took them both to the hospital and had them out. They got along fine and brought them home the next day. They wanted tomato soup with crackers. I think I could have fed them that 3 times a day 'cause they and Mike loved it. I couldn't and *can't* stand it.

### 1960

In 1960 things were going pretty good and a big square house north of the hotel came up for sale. Mike had always wanted a *big square* house. So, again, we borrowed money and moved into it. It was great. It had 2 rooms (divided by sliding doors) an outside entrance that had been an Osteopath's office. I made that into the Beauty Shop. The house had an open stairway (winding) in the foyer, large living room, dining room, small kitchen and another little back room, full basement (dirt walls), 3 big bedrooms, one small one, bath upstairs and an attic. The first time the boys had a room of their own.

I had someone come in and clean for me once a week, which helped. I had another Beauty operator in the shop. The boys had a dog and we fixed up the basement for their playroom. We finally had to replace the dirt side walls in the basement.

Things went along o.k. for a couple of years. We had our usual amount of company, Goose Calling Contestants visiting and Shrine parades, opening up the bridge between Missouri Valley and Blair to a free bridge - we had the Governor of Iowa and the Governor of Nebraska as afternoon guests at our house at the time. Tom was confirmed while we lived there so we had a brunch for the occasion with friends and relatives there. We also had *a* rule. The boys got a *little* careless with their coats, so we (Mike and I) decided that anytime they left them laying around, you could tie the sleeves in knots. That went real well 'till one of the boys found Mike's coveralls and they tied the legs and arms both in knots. They were also supposed to keep their rooms picked up and beds made. I told them that if they didn't help, we'd sell the damn place. They didn't believe me and I got tired of yelling at them, so had a chance to sell and did. We moved back to the hotel again. By that time Rath's Motel in the Valley, Hillside, Sunnyside and Rath's were building outside of town and people were getting more oriented to Motels, so business was slow. We still had our regulars, but with the Interstate, companies were making it so their salesmen could be home the same night.

However, before we moved, we took out a wall in our hallway in the east apartment and gave us two extra rooms so the boys again had their own rooms. By that time we'd put in air conditioning on all the first floor - bar and the rooms with baths and 1/2 baths had window units. Alma's husband had died and she had hip surgery so she had to quit work. The boys helped at the desk (Tom took the night shift when Clarence had his vacation, he'd done that when he was 10 years old) and the 11 to 7 shift in the summertime. In fact, they were really both good. By that time we'd put in our own laundry and since the maids (2) didn't work holidays or Sundays, we did it - so they *really can* make beds and clean. Even when they were younger, they weren't allowed to *run* downtown. I tried to impress them that clerks were in stores to sell, not for them to be bothering them. Guess that's why they spent so much time in the basement tinkering.

Tom was always wiring up something and one day I went into Mike's workshop and he had a coffee can with some electric light wires fastened to it. Don't know what he was making, but I called Mike. He put on some insulated gloves and plugged it in to show Tom what would happen. Of course it blew a fuse, but I think it taught Tom something. After Mike's Mother passed away, we got her old TV set. Tom and Ted Shannon hounded the TV station in Omaha and eventually made a closed TV set at the hotel. Then later he and Everette Wohlers took an old sports car that Mike bought from a couple that were going thru and it quit running and were staying at the Hotel. The boys finally got it to working and sold it.

Tim, in the meantime, was doing drawing of electrical circuits and soldering those little things together. They both spent most of their money at Radio Shack on stuff, but I guess that was better than in a pool hall.

Tim was having trouble with his eyes that year, so took him to the eye doctor and found out he was near sighted. I felt so bad. After he got his glasses, he said "Oh, that's what telephone poles look like". He was taking confirmation classes and also in Cub Scouts.

## **1966**

Tom graduated in 1966. That year George passed away in California so Mike flew (his first plane ride) out to be with Lena and help her with things. One morning when we were eating breakfast, Tom was asking about a graduation present. Mike said "How would you like to go to Europe?" and Tom said "I'll buy that.", so we got busy and got passports and tickets, etc. Can you believe they had a special on air flights - Mike paid full price, me 1/2 price and the boys 1/4 price. Our tickets out of Omaha were about \$1500 for all 4 of us. We didn't have a pot to pee in so we charged it to American Express. We made the boys take \$100 for spending money out of their savings. I had a cousin and her family whose husband was in the service stationed right out of London. They met us at the airport and we stayed with them 3 days and toured London. Then we took an 8 day bus trip thru Dover (ship to Ostrand), Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, France, Germany and back to England for \$90 a piece. That took care of board - room and transportation. It was an experience none of us will forget. We visited a family Mike had met during the War and rented a car and drove to Coventry, Nottingham and Warwick.



(Trip to Europe 1966)

I marvel at the things the boys have done both in radio, TV and computers. Don't tell me they don't inherit brains from their ancestors. Mike always liked electrical things and was so proud of Tom when he was teaching at Technical High School in Omaha and had his students do radio things and when he taught at Berk High and had his class do TV things. Then Mike's Dad was a carpenter and both boys like working with woods. They sure inherited those traits from their father's side. Me - can't say they inherited much from me except spending money. Tim does like to cook though. He used to go to the library and bring home cook books and try different recipes. That was his favorite trick when Mike and I would be out for the evening. (Didn't always clean up the dishes, though.) But their Dad would be so proud of them for their accomplishments in both TV and computers as I am. I only wish I could understand their work. But I can't seem to get it through my head.

### **1969**

Tom went to Peru, Nebraska to College and was home almost every weekend. He met Mary Lee Jordal in Council Bluffs and they were married June 22, 1969 in a small ceremony at St. John's Lutheran Church. I'd always told the boys I wanted them to wait until they were 21 to get married, that I'd be damned if I was going to support their wives when I was working. Well, it didn't work out that way. We did continue to pay their tuition and the equivalent of his room and board, but bless Mary Lee (a graduate nurse) worked and they got thru his graduation and they moved to Auburn, Nebraska.



(Tom and Mary Lee's wedding)

In 1969 Mom was sick for a while and I took her to Omaha to an internist. He decided she needed more extensive tests. This was on Tuesday and Mike and I had planned on going to a Shrine Convention in Des Moines over the weekend and Mom was going to stay at our place with Tim. I said I'd take her back to Harlan and then pick her up again on Thursday. Since we made an appointment for her to enter the hospital next week, she said "no, she'd just stay at our place". She'd even mentioned going to a Nursing Home since she could hardly take care of herself. I'd told her she wasn't ready for a nursing home, that we'd make an apartment on the first floor for her with a bedroom, living room and bath and she could eat meals with us. She always fussed that she was chasing the boys out of their room.

Well, on Thursday A.M., I'd gone to work, Tim to school and Mike to work. She didn't get up when we did but I didn't worry about that, there was no reason for her to get up so early. Well, she finally got up, fixed her breakfast and then came down to the shop to see if she could help me. She was sitting under one of the dryer chairs watching me work when I noticed she looked funny and passed out. I dashed over to Dr. Gamble and he came over and took her pulse, etc. By that time, she'd regained consciousness and he said to just leave her sit there. She'd had a light stroke. So I kept on working and watching her. In the meantime, I'd gone to the office and called the rescue unit for oxygen and then noticed she'd passed out again. I held her hand and told her oxygen would be there soon, but by the time Everett Gochenour got there, she was gone.

I think she and God had a pact, since she was at our place. I'd often worried about that happening in Harlan and she'd have been alone. I called Aunt Lil and Uncle Dick right away and they came right over. Ella and Burhl were in Rochester Minnesota and were to come home that day, in fact Ella had already checked out of the Hotel. Burhl had had brain surgery for Parkinson's Disease, so she had her hands full. I told her I'd take care of things at this end, but instead of going to Grand Island, to have Bill bring them to Missouri Valley. Then I called Harvey and since he wasn't working at the time, he and Doris flew in.

Things got a *little* hectic at the hotel. Then Tim came home for lunch. By that time Aunt Lil and Uncle Dick had gotten there so we fixed him a hamburger and he asked "Where's Grandma?". I felt so bad that I hadn't told him when he came home. I made him go back to school. Then we (Aunt Lil, Uncle Dick, Mike and I) went to the funeral home to make arrangements and I did Mom's hair. Then we went to Harlan and got some clothes for her. It was amazing how many people came to the funeral home that night to see her, she'd met so many people in the Valley. The body was taken to Harlan Friday morning with visitation Friday night and the funeral was Saturday, September 27th (Tom's birthday, but that couldn't be helped). It was the first funeral in the new Lutheran Church, which she worked so hard with.

Things went on. I was made co-executor since Harvey was out of state, so that meant a lot of trips to Harlan. I couldn't stand to spend Christmas in Iowa so Mike, Tim and I drove to California and spent a couple of weeks there with Harvey's, Lena and Aunt Mabel's. Tom came home and took over the hotel since he had Christmas vacation. Mary Lee couldn't be with him because she was working.

We sold the house to Dean Claussen and had an auction for the things that were left.

### 1971

Tim graduated from High School in 1971 and decided to go to Ames to college. Things were getting slower at the Hotel. We remodeled the west apartment with carpeting, new cupboards and paneling. I had the shop in the basement again and moved back. Eric Jon was born June 15, 1971. Tom and Mary Lee and Eric were living in an apartment in Council Bluffs. Tom was teaching in Omaha and Mary Lee was working too.

We had a chance to go to Denmark in the fall with the Danish Brotherhood. We heard of it thru Bernice and a friend of hers. So we went. Tim was home from college and took us to the airport. Mike asked me if he was dragging his leg and I said "no, why?". He said his right side was numb. I tried to talk him out of going, but he wouldn't listen. Tim had wanted to go along and I wished later I'd have let him. I told Mike alright, we'd go. (Decided since it was something he'd always wanted to do, we'd do it. I could always bring him back on a stretcher if it came to that, but he was not to touch the luggage.)

We flew to Minnesota. This flight was thru some sort of army connections, so we were royally entertained by the Army up there and got pretty well stoned before we got on the plane. It was a long ride and had a 5 year old sitting behind us that was a regular pain. We finally landed in Copenhagen and got to our motel. I called the tour guide and she contacted a doctor that came to see Mike. He checked his blood pressure and told him to rest and continue with his pills. Thank goodness there was a restaurant right there and we spent 3 days there. Then Mike decided he'd feel just as good at his cousins, so called them, made reservations for the shuttle plane over and took off. They were great people. We stayed with Mona (a first cousin), as did Bernice and her friend. Mona's daughter, Lona, whose husband was an interpreter at one time both spoke English. They had 2 little blonde girls, so either Lona or Hans went with us. Lona took Mike to the doctor and he prescribed other pills. We met relative and relative, ate and drank wherever we went. After we'd met most of the relatives and ate too much, Bernice was getting on Mike's nerves so we decided to go back to Copenhagen. We rented a hotel room and did things Mike wanted to do. We took bus rides around the city, ate little Danish sandwiches, took an air foil boat to Norway and spent the day. He rested in between times.

When we got home I made an appointment with the internist and found he'd had 2 strokes and suggested he have the arteries in his neck cleaned out. We made an appointment for after Thanksgiving but talked it over and decided to have it done now. He'd just worry about it longer. They did the first one which they thought was the worst. Well, after the surgery he acted just like he'd had a stroke. He couldn't move one arm or couldn't think clearly. I was sick - later found out that surgery had taken 10 minutes, but the doctor assured me that blood was getting to his brain at the time. I was working all the time but would fix a sandwich and a bottle of coffee and go down every night and stay till 11 P.M. since he was in a private room, go home, check out the bar, get it ready for the next day, go to bed, get up at 5 A.M., do the bookwork for the Hotel and then go to work at the

shop. I would spend all day Saturday and Sunday at the hospital, even took my meals up to his room. He finally snapped out of it and they did the second surgery. I stayed all night that time 'cause it had snowed and it was a good thing too as he woke up and there was blood all over, the IV had come out and instead of fluid going in, it was draining blood back out. They also found out the first vessel only had a pin hole opening and the other was completely clogged. He finally got home and got along pretty good. He'd take walks, etc. They thought he should have another surgery eventually in the groin area.

### **1973**

We finally got a nibble on the hotel to sell it to Darlene Messer and we moved to a rental house on 7th Street. I rented the shop from Darlene a couple of months and then she decided she wouldn't rent to me. So, again I moved the shop. I checked with the state inspector. The house we rented had a walk out basement but was a mess. I bought vinyl and tacked it to the boards on the ceiling, painted the walls and floor and put in a sidewalk from the front. It really didn't work too bad. Of course, we couldn't paint the boards on the ceiling or get all the cobwebs down, so I found a sign which I put up so when customers were getting a shampoo they could read it - "Madame Sophie's Massage Parlor".

After we moved Mike and Lyle Jones would go fishing or just bum around. He steadily got worse and would be in the hospital every now and then. It was harder for him to walk and I got a wheelchair for him at home. I'd have somebody help him into the car and we'd go for rides. It got so he couldn't sleep in bed so he slept in the lounge chair.

Christin Ann was born November 15, 1973 and Mike was at the Bergan Mercy Hospital. Christin, being a premature baby, had to stay in the hospital. Being close to Thanksgiving, Tim was home and Mike called to say he could come home in the morning if we could cope with it. I told him we could but he'd have to help. It was raining and predicting sleet so I called the doctor to see if he could be released that night. He could, so we went down to get him. He'd asked to stop at Tom and Mary Lee's. Since he'd just gotten out of the hospital and it was beginning to sleet, I talked him out of it. Got along ok and he got along alright. He'd still been in the wheelchair, but on Friday Ed McFerrin came with a new pick-up to visit him and Mike walked to the door to see it. That was the first time he'd done that. We'd planned on going to Council Bluffs on Saturday to see Tom's. That night we had a call from California saying Lena was in the hospital so we talked to her. The next morning I got up early, had breakfast and fixed Mike some orange juice. It was hard for him to talk and I said he'd probably slept with his mouth open so I fixed his breakfast. A little later he got worse and I had Lois Budats check his pulse and decided he'd had a stroke so called the ambulance and took him to the old St. Joe Hospital. I rode down with him. He had oxygen all the way but was conscious. I'd called the hospital and the Dr., but it seemed a couple of hours before they got him to the room but they didn't put oxygen on him. By the time he got to the room, he was unconscious. Tim drove the car down and he stayed with him in the room. When we weren't there (to come home to get clothes), Ella and Bernice were there. This went on till the following Thursday, December 13. With IVs, oxygen, etc. he passed away early (5 A.M.) in the morning. Later I was called from California to tell me his Aunt Lena had

passed away at 4 P.M. the same day. Masonic Services were Friday night. Funeral services were held at St. Paul's Lutheran church on Saturday at 11 A.M. with noon lunch at the Church and burial at Harlan at 2 P.M. and lunch at Uncle John and Aunt Hazel's home after the funeral. It was so cold that day (13 below zero).

## **1974**

On January 5, 1974 Bernice and I flew to California since Mike and I had inherited George and Lena's apartment (which didn't sit well with Bernice). Since she'd been out later than I and knew what was where, I paid all expenses. I had to get the estate things going. I appointed Mike's second cousin administrator, hired a lawyer and then went to Modesto to see Aunt Mable. We also saw Harvey and Doris at Santa Maria.

In February 1974, Anna Marie Gunderson and I took a cruise with with Standard Beauty Supply to the Caribbean - and so life goes on. I continued to work, spending a lot of time at Tom's who lived in Council Bluffs and at Ella and Burhl's who'd moved to Omaha into the Masonic Manor.

In August Tom, Mary Lee, Tim, Virginia and I drove out and cleaned the apartment from top to bottom. We painted and washed windows and put it up for sale. I paid their expenses and we drove straight thru, taking turns driving. Mary Lee's folks took care of Eric and Christin while we were gone. We left on Saturday, got to California noon Sunday (bought paint, etc. and rented rooms at a motel as the water wasn't working at the apartment) and started in. We got thru ahead of schedule so we drove to old Mexico Wednesday P.M. and then on to Disneyland the same day - really travelled, and stayed there till it closed. We'd made reservations in Las Vegas for Thursday night and a show and spent part of Friday going thru MGM Hotel, then on home Saturday - a bunch of pooped people.

Tim and Virginia were married on November 23, 1974 in Christ the King Catholic Church. He continued his schooling and Virginia continued to work.



(Norma, Virginia and Tim)

### ***1976-1977***

In 1976 they moved to Oregon to work for Tektronix for 6 months. They didn't like it and he came back to finish his schooling. He graduated (Masters) in 1977 and moved to Fort Collins to work for Hewlett Packard. I had visited them in Oregon in 1976.

### ***1977***

In the meantime, Tom and Mary Lee and family moved to Millard, Nebraska. Then I bought the house on north 8th Street. Before Mike died, we'd been looking for a house. Marcita showed us hers and he said he'd like to have that one. At the time it was not for sale, so when it was for sale, I bought it. Mildred Dewaele and I took a bus trip thru Chicago, Detroit, Niagara Falls and up into Canada - Nova Scotia and to Maine, New York and home again.

### ***1978-1979***

In 1978 Tom's family moved to Bettendorf and he worked for Channel 8 in the Quad Cities.

In February 1979 I took Aunt Lil, Uncle Dick, Ella and Burhl to Fort Collins and on down to Arizona for 3 weeks. We saw Mildred and Keith Finley, Martha Blair and Aunt Anna. I drove our 1972 Buick and did all the driving. In the fall of 1979, Mildred and I took another bus trip to the South thru the Ozarks - Arkansas, Louisiana, Florida, Kentucky, Missouri and home again.

Amanda Lee was born December 27th, 1979.

### ***1980***

Ruby Hoyt, Mildred Dewaele, Mary Briggs and I drove out to Colorado and stayed with Tim's. We even took Mandy to the mountains all day while Tim and Virginia were working.

Tom's and Tim's families were both home at the same time.

In between times I worked and gadded a lot, mowed the lawn, etc. and visited the two families and Ella and Burhl in Plattsmouth, Nebraska.

### ***1984-1986***

Tim and Virginia have a son, Benjamin Everett, born on March 28, 1984.

Ruby Hoyt, Mildred Dewaele, Ella and I took a Princess Cruise to Alaska on the inside passage.

In 1986 I fell and broke my pelvis when I went down to Iowa Western to renew my license. I was in the hospital 11 days and finally got home. It was a while before I got back to work. It postponed my 50th Anniversary being in the Beauty business, so I had it in September. Over 150 guests attended - it was a great day.

### ***1987***

In February of 1987, Dean Dewaele asked me if I'd like to move into an apartment if he built it. I slept on it and decided to sell the house. I sold it to the first people that looked at it, but kept it quiet 'cause they were in a rental house. The apartment hadn't even been started, but Dean had it done so I could move in by June and I really like it.

In August Ruby Hoyt, Mildred Dewaele, Ruth Erickson and I took a trip to New York. We saw 2 stage plays and then on around the city. We saw the Statue of Liberty and our tour director drove us to Long Island and then on to Atlantic City. Did a little gambling, saw a show at the Trump Hotel and then back to New York and a flight home.

### 1990

Mildred Dewaele, Ruby Hoyt and I took a trip to Hawaii thru People State Bank. I hadn't been feeling too hot and probably should have not gone. I went to the doctor and my blood pressure was 80-50, so I really didn't enjoy it too much. The flights over and back were terribly long 'cause I couldn't sleep either way. I'd been losing weight and not hungry and was going thru all kinds of tests. I finally went to Dr. Jon Thomson at the University of Nebraska Hospital and they found I had cancer of the colon. I went in the hospital on September 27th. The boys were both here when I had surgery on September 28th. They took my whole colon and I was in the hospital one week and then spent a week with Ella so I could be close to the hospital. Then I came home.

### 1991

I'm fine and finally working half days again. I just had my 6 month check-up and everything looks ok. So, here I am - enjoying working part time, doing a little oil painting, having a nap now and then and gadding around. I hope I haven't bored you or offended anyone with this. Some of the dates might not be right, but it's the way I remember things or can't remember them. *Now if* I get to the point I can't take care of myself, put me in the nursing home 'cause I'm going to *bitch* wherever I am.

With all my love,  
Mom



## Mike

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There's a few things that Mike told me of his childhood. He'd been riding a horse with saddle when he was young and fell off and the horse drug him quite a ways. Then, too, he used to say he never smoked 'cause his mother wouldn't let him carry matches - one time about the 4th of July, he and some other kids accidentally set a haystack on fire. (The only time he'd have a cigarette was if he was real tired driving or be drunk.)

He attended grade school in the country and started to high school in Harlan when he was in the 10th grade. He was staying with his Aunt Lena and got real sick. She put him in the hospital and they found out that he had brights disease that affected the urine, made it almost like egg white. He'd tell about the nurses bringing in his pills and he'd keep them in his mouth until after she left, then he'd spit them in the wash basin.

He always did like to tinker with electricity. He'd hook two car batteries and have kids hang on to the wires and shock them and he'd also kill bugs that way.

He was forced to quit high school because of his illness and 'cause his folks didn't think it was necessary. So he stayed home and helped on the farm. Bernice was always the apple of his folks' eyes and it showed in many, many ways.



## Marion and Norma Mikkelsen

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*This is an excerpt from the Harrison County book published in 1990.*

Marion, son of Anton and Martha Mikkelsen, was born near Walnut, Iowa. He had one sister, Bernice (Mrs. Lyle Eckley).

Norma, daughter of Harry and Emma Claussen, was born near Harlan, Iowa. She has a sister, Ella (Mrs. Burhl Gilpin) and a brother, Harvey Claussen.

Marion and Norma came to Missouri Valley, Iowa as newlyweds in 1946 having bought half interest in the Valley Hotel from George and Lena True.

They became sole owners in 1950. They resided in and operated the hotel, Lounge and Beauty shop until Marion's ill health forced them to sell in 1973.

They have two sons, Tom who is Director of Engineering for WTMJ in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and with his wife, Mary Lee and two children, Eric and Christin live in Brookfield, Wisconsin.

Tim who is employed by Hewlett Packard as Development Engineer and Computer Scientist live in Fort Collins, Colorado along with his wife, Virginia and children, Amanda and Benjamin.

Norma continues to live in Missouri Valley.



## John H. Claussen

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*This is apparently an excerpt from a Shelby County book from the early 1900s. John and Anna Claussen were the grandparents of Ella, Norma and Harvey.*

When we consider the habits of the German citizens who have cast their lot in our midst, we are not surprised at their almost uniform success in whatever line of activities they chose to enter, for they do not permit adversity or obstacles to thwart them. They observe a proper economy and yet at the same time believe in having the necessities of life. They are loyal to our institutions and are ever willing to assist in the general development of the community in which they locate, thus becoming most desirable citizens in every way. One of the large number of German citizens who have settled in Shelby county, Iowa, is John H. Claussen, a prosperous farmer of Lincoln township and a resident of this county for many years.

John H. Claussen, the son of Claus John and Kathrine (Tauck) Claussen, was born in Germany in 1857. Claus John and wife were the parents of five children, three sons and two daughters. One daughter is deceased and the other daughter lives with her brother in Shelby. John H. came to the United States in 1881. Peter and Kate followed in 1882, and four years later the parents and the other children came here. The father is now living in Shelby, while the mother passed away in 1900.

John H. Claussen was given a good common school education in his native land and when not quite twenty-four years of age, came to this country in order to find a better opportunity for advancement. Many of his friends had previously come to this state, and when he settled in Clinton county he had no difficulty in finding work upon the farms. Mr. Claussen worked as a farm hand for four years and then rented land in Shelby county. He continued to live upon a rented farm until 1893, when he bought a quarter section of land in Lincoln township, section 27, on which he has since resided, since increasing his holdings to three hundred and four acres. He set out a fine grove of fruit and forest trees and takes a great deal of pride in their cultivation. He has made many improvements upon his farm since acquiring it and has thereby added to its value. In addition to the raising of all the crops common to this section of the state, he is making a specialty of the handling of graded live stock and has found by experience that this is a profitable adjunct to agriculture. He is a progressive farmer and does not hesitate to use the latest methods when he feels they will add to his annual income.

Mr. Claussen was married in 1889 to Anna Shadebrocht, who was born in Germany in 1866, and to this union have been born six children. Harry, Kathrine, Albert, Meta, John and Amanda. Harry is farming in this county and and Kathrine married Andrew Anderson, a farmer of this county. The four younger children are still living with their parents and attending the public schools.

Mr. Claussen gives his support to the Democratic party, but has never been an aspirant for any public office nor taken an active part in political affairs. He and the members of his family are loyal adherents of the German Lutheran church and are interested deeply in its prosperity and contribute liberally of their means to its support. Mr. Claussen came to this county with practically no resources but a stout heart and willingness to work, and in the course of a few years he has acquired a fine farm and has a modern and attractive home. By perseverance, honest dealing and the employment of the best principles he has forged to the front and is now one of the substantial and influential men of his township.

## Valley Hotel

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*This is an excerpt from the Harrison County book published in 1990.*

The Valley Hotel was one of those small town institutions known familiarly as a "railroad hotel".

It sprang up about 100 years ago when rail travel and commerce were king, like most hotels of its era it was built within easy access of the main line.

The Valley Hotel, like others of the times, specialized in serving the "travelin man". Salesmen from all over, as well as other rail travelers, made it their home away from home. In the early days the hotel was a community center as well. It not only sported sleeping rooms, but a first class dining room as well as the services of Western Union and Greyhound Bus.

One of the early operators was Alex Tamisiea, at that time it was known as "Oxford Hotel". He sold it to Charles Stout who sold it to O. B. True in 1909.

O. B. True ran the establishment from 1909 to 1935 and renamed it Valley Hotel. True's son, George, went into business with his father in 1923 and became sole owner in 1935. O. B. True died in 1940. During the True's ownership two additions were built, the first in 1923, (middle section) and the second in 1931 (east side).

In 1946 Marion and Norma Mikkelsen went into partnership with George and Lena True and became sole owners in 1950.

In 1952 they applied a unique Cast-a-Stone exterior to the west section. They also provided space for a bar and beauty shop in the basement.

In 1973 they sold the business to Darlene Messer who in turn sold it to John Brewer, who made it into 13 apartments.

He later sold it to Fran Obadal and her son Gary Brown who renamed the Lounge, Fran and Gary's.

In 1986 Fran Obadal sold it to Bea and Frank Podhaisky of Council Bluffs.

They became residents and operated the hotel until the spectacular blaze, which started in the electrical wiring in the basement, that ended an era of small town hospitality, when it burned on the 16th and 17th of February, 1987.

