

Mothers and Grandmothers

by George Jennings
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I would like to write a small tribute to my two grandmothers and my mother and illustrate the trials and tribulations these three women endured during their lifetimes, what they were subjected to while raising their families and caring for their homes. I don't want to discredit the breadwinners of the family, but with the arrival of the year 2000, I would like to illustrate the differences in our present-day lifestyles from those of the past - with all the modern conveniences that each home has nowadays and the easy way of life we have now, I wish to compare our trials with the trials these humble women went through in their lives while caring for and raising their families. Their lives involved emigrating to a new country and settling on homesteads in the often open prairie where no other people except the North American Indians had previously lived. These emigrant families left their familiar homes to arrive in an unfamiliar country, far from their new neighbours, and far from tiny isolated communities. The pioneer women worked along with their husbands in the heat and dust, building their homes, breaking the land, planting crops, and making a new life for their families and themselves.

Mary Ann Williams Jennings

My paternal grandmother, Mary Ann Williams, was born in Pennsylvania in February of 1858. Her family had fled the potato famine in Ireland. They emigrated to the U.S. and the men of the family obtained employment in the coal mines in Pennsylvania until the Civil War. As the men of the family expected to be drafted to serve in the Union Army, the family decided to move to Wisconsin, which at that time was still quite a wilderness. They felt they would be sheltered from the draft there because of Wisconsin's remoteness from the rest of the U.S.

My grandmother was married to John Jennings in Long Lake, Wisconsin, in 1887. She was a teacher by profession. When I was young, I stayed with Grandma quite a bit, and she often told me stories of when she grew up and also when she taught school before she was married.

After John and Mary Ann were married, they lived in Stillwater, Minnesota, and that's where their four children were born, three sons and a daughter. Then they moved to Houlton, Wisconsin, where my grandfather worked in a sawmill.

The family moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, in approximately 1900, and this was where the children grew up. They lived there for about 12 years. My grandparents often recalled events that occurred there. They lived in an African American area of St. Paul, and they always had a great respect for the African American people. Ironically, they always referred to their neighbours as "niggers"; that was how they were referred to in those days. I think this kind of engendered attitude was something that the colored people at that time had to endure. My grandparents never mentioned anything about the kind of employment their sons might have had when living in St. Paul.

In 1912, the family made the decision to move to Canada so they could take advantage of the homestead opportunities offered by the Canadian government to encourage settlement in the west. Life was hard in St. Paul and opportunities few for their sons. I also got the impression that the boys got into some situations that led their parents to believe it wasn't in their best interests to stay in St. Paul. They would not be without family in Canada, because Grandma's brother, Mike Williams, and a Rooney cousin had moved to Canada two years before and acquired homesteads. They also felt that the children's education wouldn't suffer because it wasn't very good to begin with. They had attended separate (Catholic) schools which at that time could only provide a mediocre high school education. They could read and write, but they never attended college or had any post-secondary education. Their ambition was to become farmers in Canada.

The family was familiar with the types of farming employed in Wisconsin as they had often visited their cousins who were farmers there. However, when they moved to Canada, the type of land and farming styles were quite different from the Wisconsin, and they were not experienced farmers in the least. My father would have been 19 years old at that time. His brother, Jack, was about 21, and his youngest brother, Charlie, was about 17.

My father's older sister, Eva, had married a piano player in 1920 and they had decided to remain in the United States. Her husband was a nightclub entertainer. The Jennings family had always been quite musical. Eva had taken piano lessons in St. Paul, and Charlie had taken violin lessons. Eva and Charlie were both quite accomplished musicians.

My grandparents and their three sons settled on a homestead near the village now called Aquadell. They obtained a $\frac{1}{4}$ section homestead and $\frac{1}{4}$ section pre-emption. The reason they came to this particular area of Saskatchewan was that, in about 1909 or 1910, my Grandmother's brother, Mike Williams, and our cousin had homesteaded land in this region.

In 1913, my grandfather started ploughing the land and getting it ready for seeding in the spring. Grandpa was thrown off the plough and sustained quite serious injuries. He didn't receive immediate medical attention because the trip to Moose Jaw was very difficult and the distance too far. His injuries would have probably been aggravated during the trip because he would have been carried in the back of a buggy over many miles of very uneven land. He never recovered from his injuries, and died that autumn. My Grandma was left a fairly young widow with three sons and only one year of experience in this open-aired country of Canada. She had to learn to carry on making a living on the farm and making sure her sons continued living in the manner that they had been raised. It was fortunate that her boys were old enough to continue the farming operation.

Life as a rule was hard for women at that time. Quite likely, the only professional medical care anybody received was from a local girl that had received some medical training before marrying and moving to a homestead with her husband. People would have been required to travel at least 70 miles to Moose Jaw to receive the professional care of a doctor. This entailed a trip by wagon of 15 or 20 miles to the train station at Chaplin and then the remainder of the trip to Moose Jaw by train.

From what I understand, Charlie, my dad, George, and Jack took care of Grandma's farming operation for the next year or so. Then they went out into the surrounding area to seek employment. My dad and Uncle Jack both worked for the Robertsons in the Lawson area until they obtained homesteads of their own. Their homesteads were also in the Aquadell area. Charlie was still too young at that time to obtain his own homestead, and when he eventually did obtain a quarter section of land, it was located a few miles away from the Jennings lands.

When I was young, I stayed with Grandma Jennings a great deal, and I have some very good memories of that time. I can remember being in their small home - it was just a two-room house with a flat roof. They never did have a good source of water. Their well was located in an area where there usually was a great deal of seepage. I remember my dad telling me that the first job my grandfather had to do upon arriving at his homestead was to build a dam to hold water for the animals.

The farm was located about 16 miles from Uren and about 18 miles from Chaplin. The family had travelled to Canada via railroad and then came over land to the farm. They did not have many conveniences then - the quantities of fresh game available and fresh produce from their gardens were probably considered conveniences at that time. There were no washing machines,

electric lights, or electric stoves—electricity was unheard of at that time. They probably didn't have radio then and mail delivery was slow. They led a more or less "hermitage" type of existence.

My dad was the first of the children to leave home. His homestead was 1 mile north of Grandma's farm. Dad married my mother, Esther Olson, in 1920. They started raising a family immediately. When I reached the age of 6, I began staying with my Grandma Jennings quite a bit. I was probably closer to her than any of the other members of our family, having spent so much time with her when I was small.

I can't remember too much about my Grandma prior to 1927. I was born in 1922. However, I remember one instance when they had a fire on the farm. Grandma was getting dinner ready and Charlie and Jack were out in the field. Apparently the fire in the stove got too hot and there was no chimney in their little house. Charlie and Jack happened to look towards home and saw smoke! They immediately unhooked the horse from the plow and rode home as fast as they could—the roof of the house was fully engulfed! They saved what they could, including a beautiful piano that they had brought with them all the way from the United States. I can still remember the hustle and bustle of that morning. I was still in bed at home, and I heard a lot of talking in the kitchen. The neighbours had driven by and told my mother that Grandma's house was on fire. That evening when we went down to Grandma's, the first thing we saw a huge pile of grain that had been moved as far away from the house as possible. When we circled the grain pile, we were confronted with a pile of ashes where the house had been. My poor Grandma, what trials she had to endure—coming up to Canada, a new country, in 1912, losing her husband in 1913, and then losing her home in 1927.

Grandma learned coping mechanisms in those days to carry her through life. She told my mother and I of one she used on her sons. As Grandma grew older, she slowed down, and sometimes she didn't have dinner ready when the boys came in from the field. However, she would always have the plates on the table because this gave the impression that dinner was imminent, even though it wasn't.

After the old house burned down in the spring, the uncles built a new house that summer. This house was a much better one - a four room house, with two rooms downstairs and two rooms upstairs. At that time, a house like that was considered very modern, and was quite luxurious compared to what they had been living in. They also planted trees in 1927, which beautified the yard.

My Grandma Jennings had a great influence on my religious upbringing and education. I think it was her inspiration and her Irish way of teaching that made me the Catholic I am today. She taught me a lot about the Catholic Church which may still influence my thinking. The old Irish ideas were of fire and brimstone, and with the Irish people at this time there was a tendency of engendering fear. Grandma used to tell me some pretty scary stories. I wouldn't tell children these stories today because they are too frightening for them.

Grandma carried on living on the farm and the boys did the farm work. Jack got married in 1927. However, his story is a little too long to go into here.

Charlie more or less remained at home with Grandma and continued the farming operation. When I started school in 1930, I stayed with Grandma a great deal of the time as her farm was only a mile up the road from our farm.

I had two grandmothers that lived close to me, Grandma Jennings and Grandma Olson, and they were very different from each other. I never really looked at my Grandma Olson and saw a grandmother as she was considerably younger than Grandma Jennings and her younger children were the same age as me. My playmate was my Uncle Everett, who was the same age as me. Grandma Jennings was older and alone and she was so good to me; she had the qualities that a grandmother has - a nurturing nature, unconditional love, support and acceptance.

When I first stayed with Grandma, our only light was provided by kerosene or candles. When the kerosene was gone, Grandma would stuff a rag in some lard in a pot and set the pot on the stove. Then when it got dark, she would light the rag and that provided any light she had in the evenings.

Grandma was a very proud, stylish woman. She always tried to dress very elegantly. One fellow who ran the hardware store in Chaplin always remarked on the outfits she wore when she came to town in the early days - they were quite outstanding, and they were all home-made. She also never liked grey hair and of course she had lots of it. In those days, they didn't have hair dye like they have today, so she would place a little soot from the stove in her hair and comb it through. She always had chapped, cracked skin on her hands, which she didn't like. She really had quite a time keeping her skin soft and her appearance as she liked given the living conditions.

One of Grandma's great loves and sources of strength was her faith. I can remember staying there on Sundays and if we couldn't go to Mass, she would insist that Charlie and Jack kneel down, and we would all say the rosary. This

was to fulfill the obligation of attending Sunday Mass. I think she probably spent a lot of time worrying and praying about how me and my sisters and brothers would be brought up with regard to the church. She was a very strong, stalwart Catholic, and I am quite sure that all her prayers helped keep the faith strong in our family. It certainly shaped my thinking on my Catholic faith. Grandma attended Mass every opportunity she could, and she usually had Charlie take her to Mass on Sunday, although he did require a little encouragement in this area.

Grandma grew to be a short, grey-haired old lady. Being a child, I thought she was old as the hills. When Grandma died, she was only 73, which I now think is quite young. At the time of her death, she was still able to do her own housework and cooking. I remember visiting her shortly before she got sick. She must have had high blood pressure, because I remember her slicing the bread, and all of a sudden her nose started to bleed. In January of 1932, Grandma had a stroke.

In 1920, Aunt Eva's piano-playing husband had died. He had been in a sanitarium because he had tuberculosis and died in about 1920. Aunt Eva then moved to Canada and worked in the post office in Central Butte. Eventually she moved to Regina and worked as a salesgirl in a ladies' store. She was a young widow, and I don't think Grandma was very happy with her behaviour. She didn't think she acted like a widow, I guess. She had one boyfriend, and he would come out to the farm with her. He was a very good, kind man, but she never married him. He remained a good friend to the Jennings family, and would come out and visit occasionally. The store that Aunt Eva worked at grew so much that they opened a store in Calgary, and she was given the opportunity to move to Calgary and work in the new store there. It was unfortunate because she was a long way from home and from Grandma. She wasn't able to travel home too often, so when she did make it home, these occasions were always great fun.

After Grandma had her stroke, she was partially paralyzed. By this time, they had a radio for entertainment. Grandma's mind wasn't as good anymore, which confused me as I was quite young and didn't understand the changes in her personality. She wasn't the same Grandma that I had known previously, which saddened me very much. She was not taken to the hospital at the time of her stroke, but the doctor was called out and diagnosed her illness. Nothing could be done for her medically, and they cared for her the best they could right in her home. Aunt Eva left her job in Calgary and came home to care for her mother until she died. This woman took on a great task as she had no experience taking care of sick people. She had been a store saleslady for many years, and now she had to learn how to care for a woman who was partially

paralyzed, who couldn't speak, couldn't get around, and couldn't be left alone because she was not in her right mind. In February 1932, Grandma Jennings died. It was a sad day. I remember my father crying. I remember that on the day of the funeral my Aunt Eva became almost hysterical over her mother's death. I guess that was how she dealt with her grief. When I think of that time, I remember feeling sad that Grandma was now gone.

A little Ukrainian boy named Alex Husak used to come to Grandma's and play with me quite a bit. We had attended school together, and he lived one mile east of us. Alex always called her Grandma just like she was his grandma too. I remember after Grandma died I had to write Alex a letter and tell him that Grandma had died.

When I think of what my grandmother had to endure during her life, I can see no way for people to understand just what trials and tribulations these women went through.

Another occasion I remember took place in about 1930. It was the first time I attended church. We went into Riverhurst on this particular Sunday because the Bishop was there to perform the sacrament of Confirmation. In those days, the bishops dressed in full regalia for confirmation. He appeared quite comical to me, who had never seen anything like this. When I saw my grandmother talking to him, I thought "Why is Grandma talking to that funny dressed man?"

Father Shirley, a young priest, was stationed in Riverhurst then, and he attended Grandma when she became ill. When she was dying, he was called in to give her the Last Rites. She made her Confession the best she could in lieu of her illness. Father Shirley also said her Funeral Mass at the house on the farm. I remember that day - it was a very sad day but fortunately the weather was nice. The snow was melting, which made the trip of 16 to 18 miles to the cemetery where she was buried a little easier. My grandparents were buried in this cemetery, as it was the only cemetery in the area in 1913 when Grandpa died. The family rode to the cemetery in a buggy called a democrat. A democrat was a buggy with two seats.

Grandma had been a peace maker between Charlie and Jack over the years, and she often kept peace in the family. Her ability as a diplomat was missed after she died.

Grandma Olson - Hilma Christine Logstrom Olson

Hilma Kristine Logstrom was born in Sweden on November 16, 1879, at Halsingtuna, Gavleborgs, and emigrated with her parents, three brothers, and one sister to the U.S. in 1892, when she was about 12. She came from a large family, and her father worked in the lumber mills and as a woodsman. Christine



could both read and write. The rate of illiteracy was relatively low in Sweden at that time thanks to the Lutheran Church. The Elementary School Act of 1842 educated the youth of Sweden who were to emigrate to the new world after reading newspapers, popular books and pamphlets inviting them to make the move. The photo at the left shows Marta Persdotter, Martha Logstrom Hedvig, and Christine Logstrom.

In 1897, Christine married Ole B. Olson, whose family farm was in Willmar, Minnesota. The first years of their married life were spent on Ole's father's farm in Willmar. They lived there until 1905, at which time they already had 4 children. Walter was the oldest, Esther, George, and in 1905, when they emigrated to Canada to homestead, Eddie was just a baby. Loading up all their belongings, they travelled by train north to the Brownlee area. Ole's brother, Andrew, came to Canada with them as he had no family at that time. Both brothers acquired homesteads in Brownlee. They proved up on the land and farmed there for a time. This must have been a really primitive way of life. I wonder what kind of a house they had - the railroad did not go to Brownlee as yet when they moved there. The Olsons came to Canada by train to Caron, then they had to travel by wagon across to their homestead at Brownlee. Ole and Andrew had probably come up earlier to pick out their land, and then moved the family in 1905.

I remember Grandma Olson telling me about three items they brought to Canada: fried pork, flour, and oak fence posts. They must have just butchered and in this early era one way of taking care of pork was to fry it and cover it with lard. It would stay fresh, and not spoil for quite some time. The flour they brought from the States was never used up because they much preferred the flour in Canada. It was milled from hard wheat and was so much better than the flour that was milled from soft wheat, as was done in the U.S. They also brought these oak fence posts, which they left on the homestead in Brownlee.



After 1913, they decided to move to another homestead. Andrew had married, and he and his wife decided to move to Minnesota, having proved up on the land in Canada. Ole was not in a position to buy Andrew's land so they had no option but to sell their land in Brownlee and go further west to find new homestead land again - taking up a pre-emption, a purchased homestead. By this time, they had 3 more children, Martha, Earl and Ernie, so with 7 children ranging in age from 3 to 15 the move was on again.

They took all their material possessions and again faced the task of starting a new homestead, breaking the land, building a house, the whole ball of wax. As far as I know, they came in the spring and during that summer they lived on another man's farm. He had a house they could stay in - it didn't matter how big it was, as long as everybody could get in. They lived there all summer while the house on the farm was being built. Grandma's brothers, the Logstrom boys, had come to Canada as well, and as they were all carpenters, the building jobs fell on their shoulders. By fall, the house was finished and they were able to move onto the new homestead. The house that was built on the Olson farm was a four-room house, with two rooms downstairs, which included a large kitchen and a small bedroom, and two bedrooms upstairs. The next big event of that fall, on September 27, 1913, was Art's birth. Now there were 8 children. Ole was able to purchase another $\frac{1}{4}$ section, which gave them a $\frac{1}{2}$ section of land to farm. A few years later, when Walter and George were old enough, they also acquired homesteads.

There were certainly no conveniences for the mothers of that time. There was no railroad that travelled north in 1913, so they had to travel to Chaplin to purchase their supplies, which was about 25 miles away. There were no roads then, either, and it was just as well because there were no cars either. The health care needs of the community were met by the midwife. When babies were born, Mrs. Heiei, another pioneer women who had come to the area with her husband, attended the births. She was responsible for a good many babies born in the country from that era.

They never had a good water system. Most of the water came from shallow wells or sloughs. The wells would be dug close to a source of water, but there was always a danger of seepage into the drinking water. However, this was their only source of water, even if it wasn't as clean as it should have been.

In the early 1900's, a trip to town by wagon was an all-day endeavour, for business and social purposes. By 1917, the C.N. line had come into Riverhurst, which brought the railroad a little closer to the farm. By this time, there were established businesses throughout the area to care for the needs of the local people because the population had increased significantly - there was a

homestead on every ½ section. In this era, people certainly depended on their neighbour - their neighbour was their greatest asset. The atmosphere was one of cooperation and being helpful to one another.

The years 1914 or 1913 would have been pretty bleak years because of the move to the new homestead. As they settled in, however, they got the garden established, they had beef, they always raised chickens, turkeys and vegetables, and probably at that time there was continual supply of berries, such as Saskatoon berries, chokecherries, and gooseberries. These early pioneer people made great use of everything - canning was always a big part of the livelihood, and this no doubt was one of the jobs the mothers and grandmothers had to do.

In the fall, the family had to store up their winter supplies, so of course this entailed a trip to the local grocery store. Items they would purchase were coffee, sugar, salt, pepper, and other things that could not be produced or stored on the farm. Grandma did a lot of canning of vegetables in the fall. One other way to preserve food was to dehydrate it, and she also preserved food this way. Two ways to preserve pork were frying it and packing it in lard, or salting it. By salting pork, it seemed to cure the pork and keep it from spoiling and it could be kept for quite a length of time. The only way to preserve beef was to can it, and there isn't anything better than canned beef. These were all slow processes, and added greatly to the work of these women.

Fuel for the stove came in many forms, one being "buffalo chips" - dried cow manure. These were used quite extensively in providing fuel for cooking. Brush and dry wood was also collected, chopped and used for fuel.

In 1914, Walter Olson would have been 16. As men usually had to leave home to earn their livelihood, he probably wasn't living with the family by now. My mother would have been 14, and quite likely she was learning all the ways to care for a family, such as washing clothes, baking, cooking, etc., plus any other jobs that went with raising a family. There were neighbours quite close, and many of them were relatives, which was a great help. There were also settlers in the area from Ontario, England, and from many parts of the world. Each one of these families had different ways of doing things, but they all contributed to the culture of this new era.

The work for the women of these times was phenomenal - baking bread, washing clothes and diapers (no Pampers and no washing machines), heating water (there were no water heaters in those days). Entertainment was scarce; many people were without radios at this time. Probably the only world news came from a newspaper, and as they only were able to buy newspapers in

town, and these trips were made only when necessary, they probably didn't hear much of the world news. However, this would have changed after people started driving cars. The trip to town was much faster, so was made more often. About this time, radio was available to people in the area.

Music was also a great source of entertainment in the Olson family. They had many musical instruments, including an organ, violin, guitar, banjo, harp. Eight of the children played different instruments. Four of them never acquired this skill, but they still enjoyed music very much. Music was always a big part of social gatherings at this time, which included singing and dancing.

By 1919, Walter was 21 and had acquired a homestead. He was married so was the first to leave home and start building a farm of his own. Sadly, in 1920, his wife died in childbirth. This was a great setback for him at the time. It wasn't all that rare for women to die in childbirth in those days. A great number of women living in rural areas, in particular, and even in the city didn't receive the necessary health care that would have led to a successful childbirth. Many cemeteries around the area have gravestones marked with 'Mother and Baby' or 'Susan and Baby'. Today we take good health care for granted, but then there was no such thing as Caesarian sections or inducing labour ahead of time. If things didn't go well, the inevitable happened. Many times women who were very young came out to homestead, and because of the changes in their lifestyles, they weren't able to cope with the hardships that came their way, and many of them got sick and passed away.

Many ailments led to early death during those years. One such condition that very easily could lead to death was appendicitis. There are many stories on the prairies of people developing appendicitis, and when the doctor finally came, he would have to perform surgery on the kitchen table, using only lamplight. Many times the appendix burst, and the patient died. These were the hardships that these people had to face. By about 1915, the number of doctors in the area had increased somewhat, but professional health care was still not readily available.

Every year Grandma Olson raised turkeys, so always had a big flock which tended to wonder throughout the area. The neighbours who lived $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile away had moved to the area from the United States, where wild turkeys were common. The man of the family went out one day and saw this large flock of turkeys and thought he had struck gold. He ran and got his gun and started shooting at them until someone told him, "Those are the Olson's turkeys". Unfortunately these things happen, and people tried to settle these disputes themselves, so there were usually no hard feelings over an accidental

happening such as this. The main result of this occurrence was that the Olson's acquired a nickname - "Turkey Olson".

As well as being quite a talented musician, Ole B. Olson was also well-learned in other areas. He repaired organs and clocks, he castrated bulls, and he fixed shoes. A great many of these jobs added to the income of the family. Because of the family's musical ability, they were able to play for dances throughout the area, and this made for another source of income. All these extra ways of making money certainly helped in order to purchase the family's necessities.

By 1919, after Walter left, there were 10 children in the family. In 1920, my mother married George Jennings, and they moved to their homestead. My mother was the second one to leave the family home. Many young girls left home as well to work as hired girls for a women in the area who were expecting and needed the additional help. Even if they only worked there for a week or 10 days, the extra source of income helped. As soon as the boys were old enough, usually they also ventured out into the world, particularly in the fall, as manpower was always needed during harvest.

In 1920, Marion was born, the 11th child in the Olson family, and in 1922 Everett came along. By this time, I was also born. Ironically, I am the same age as my uncle, as we were both born in 1922.

During the 1920s, George and Walter had both left home. A number of boys started leaving home and going to different parts of the country. In 1925, George moved out to the west coast of Oregon, Walter remarried and settled in South Dakota, Esther was already married and settled, but there were still quite a few people living at home, the majority of them being young people. The Olson's was a great gathering place, and the youngsters had many friends who would come and gather there to visit - both young men and women - particularly on Sundays. Sometimes I wondered how Grandma coped in those days, what with the lack of conveniences and shortage of money. They always made a trip to the flour mill in the fall to trade their wheat for flour, so they always had this in abundance. They always had vegetables from the garden, milk from the cows, and plenty of meat. Coal and wood had to be purchased but were available. The Olson's were very hospitable people, and visitors were always welcome in their home.

In the fall, any of the youngsters who had been able to get summer jobs would return home as their jobs ended. They took whatever jobs in the area became available, however, in order to help finance the family's needs, and to help purchase the great number of things that otherwise the breadwinner of the family would not have been able to provide.

Radio came to the area in the late 1920s or early 1930s. Cars also became available to the general population as Henry Ford had begun mass-producing the Model T, which made it affordable for most people. The price of grain had risen, giving people a little more disposable income. Then the crash came in 1929, and the Depression of the 1930s hit. The price of grain plummeted, the crops were poor, and there were a lot of times when the only money available was relief. Gardens wouldn't grow because of the drought, and if they did grasshoppers would clean them out. Potatoes and vegetables had to be brought in, as did feed for the cattle. These were bleak times. Programs were set up by the government where young men would go out to different farms to work; the farmer would pay the hired man \$5.00 and the government also paid him \$5.00. The farmer would be required to board his hired man.

Grandma Olson always worried, worried, worried! I wonder if that wasn't her blow-off valve. She would always say "I worried, I worried." Believe me, these early women who came up as homesteaders and went through all this era of raising families, they had lots to worry about. God certainly gave them strength, though. They had to be strong people to survive. The area that they lived in certainly had to be a community of people who were willing to help one another, and God was right along there helping them all.

In the early 1930s, when the Depression hit and the economy was so bad, people didn't blame anybody. They accepted things as they were. Those people who had cars and couldn't afford to drive them would put them up on blocks and store them until times were better. Some people even took the motors out, placed a wagon tongue on the front of the car, and used them as a means of transportation - a rubber tire car was nicknamed the "Bennett wagon". When times improved, the cars were taken down, air was put in the tires, and they started driving them again. For a great deal of the time, the main form transportation was by horse.

By the beginning of the 2nd World War in 1939, the Olson family's numbers living at home dwindled quite a bit. Martha had gotten married and moved to Portland. Margaret was married, and was living in the area. Earl was playing with an orchestra in Swift Current. Ernie was working here and there, wherever he could get work. However, at home, there was still Eddie, Art, Lawrence, Everett and Marion. The war began, and Everett and Lawrence both joined the Air Force. Earl and Ernie also joined the Air Force and Navy, respectively. By this time, the economy had started to pick up, as the price of grain had improved because of the development of the Canadian Wheat Board. Prices still weren't high, but at least they had improved somewhat. The war also created employment, as many people were involved with the war effort in

various capacities. As the economy improved, there was more money floating around.

During the war, food was rationed because of shortages, mostly in the area of manufactured goods. However, this didn't cause too many disruptions in people's lives because they were used to living under austere conditions because of the Depression. They were accustomed to saving what they could and efficiently using whatever was at hand.

When the war ended in 1945, conditions slowly went back to normal. Many people were still not debt-free, as a result of the depression. This was one of the things that the Olson family had to contend with - there was some debt that had accumulated on the farm. They had strong convictions pertaining to borrowing money, and a seriousness about paying off their debts, so every effort was exerted towards this endeavour.

After the war, Art and Eddie continued the farming operation with their Dad, and they were kept very busy at this. Marion also had remained home to help her mother take care of the family.

In 1955, Grandpa Olson died. This left an extremely large hole in the family and the community. He had been the breadwinner for all these years, and now Christine was on her own, although she had Marion, Eddie, and Art to see her through these trying times. Later, Everett, who had been working in Alberta, returned home and joined the farming operation with Art and Eddie.

Life continued in a quiet way, and economy was steadily improving, and the family was able to purchase a few modern conveniences that were available. Telephone lines had been improved throughout the area, so they now had a dependable telephone. They did have telephone service earlier, from about 1917 on, but sometimes it wasn't reliable. In 1955 or 1956, electricity was also provided in rural Saskatchewan in their particular area. For the first time the family farm enjoyed the modern conveniences associated with having electricity, such as radio and even television. By 1955, the television had been introduced in the province, not only in the cities but also in the rural areas. For the first few years, reception wasn't good but people enjoyed watching television anyway. Reception depended largely on where the farmstead was located and how much interference there was between your television aerial and the transmitter. Refrigeration was also possible now in the rural areas, something that we take for granted nowadays. Running water was also available in the rural areas. They could use electric washing machines now, because they had both running water and power. Along with the running water came sewers, which were a big improvement over the backyard biffy that was

so common during those years. Prior to this, the only kind of lavatory system that was ever known on the farm was the little square house out in the backyard.

As the economy improved and farm machinery was made more efficient, farming became much easier. With the installation of electricity throughout the province, all the conveniences that we enjoy today became available. The early pioneers could not even imagine some of these modern conveniences when they first settled the west. As a matter of fact, looking back at that period now, even though I can remember what it was like, I can't really imagine what it meant for these people. Even though we wouldn't want to live back in that time again, we always look back on that period of time when there seemed to be more smiles than today, even with all the conveniences that we have. Maybe these conveniences have isolated us from each other, because the "help thy neighbour" attitude has fallen very short.

In 1963, Grandma's daughter, Esther, was killed in a car accident. My Mom and Dad, Esther and George, were in a car accident while travelling to Outlook, Saskatchewan, to visit my sister, Helen. Esther was killed immediately as the car rolled over. Grandma seemed to accept this even though it was very hard. In 1965, Eddie, the baby that was born in the U.S. and that she carried in her arms into Canada when they emigrated to Brownlee, died due to a heart condition. This was the second of her children to have had passed on. In 1966, Earl passed away from a stroke. Although she was getting on in years, by this time she was in her mid 80s, and I think probably that for grandmothers or mothers to outlive their children adds to their sadness and remorse, even though she always managed to accept the inevitable. Marion continued to live at home, and she took over the role of running the household, although Christine was still quite able to bake bread, one of her prime achievements. As she grew older, Grandma's teeth had decayed. I can remember that she had one tooth in front and the rest were gone. She used to joke about whether she could get a set of false teeth with a place to fit this one good tooth that she still had. One of the other things she used to enjoy in her later years was a little drink of scotch whiskey. For her birthday we would bring her little 2-oz. bottles of scotch whiskey, as she always said she enjoyed a little drink of "Yonny Valker" to help things along.

Christine never liked writing. She liked to go places, but she was always a little leery of cars. I am sure that she enjoyed her life. She could tell stories of the early days in Brownlee and the roughnecks, the bars, etc. She remembered every minute of the depression she came through, all the sicknesses in the family, all the company they had over the years, and that were always welcome at her house. She was always glad to have company. She was a great

hostess, and always welcomed everybody and offered them everything she had. In January 1968, when she was hospitalized, she still had the same sense of humour she had all her life, and it stayed with her right up to the day that she passed away.

During her last few years, she had several bouts with skin cancer and had to go to the clinic and have certain growths taken off. She asked the doctor if the procedure was necessary, and he said "Well, you wouldn't want it to get away on you.", so she consented to the surgery, which was successful. She was a person who accepted things to the best of her ability. She was always glad to have company come to the house, and she always treated everyone the same. She didn't expect a great big bouquet in return. Because of her generous nature, she just always wanted to be good to everyone, and although she always said she worried a lot about her family. I am sure that all mothers do that.

Fortunately, for the most part, she remained physically healthy until her death. If there was a car going somewhere, she would always like to go along. She was always happy when the family came home. By this time quite a few of the family had moved quite far away but whenever they came home she was happy. Walter lived quite far away, and when he came to Canada, he usually stayed for a couple of weeks, and this was always a great time for her.

This woman was tiny in stature but huge in nature and heart. She gave birth to 12 strong children and raised them to be good parents to their own children, good citizens, and contributing members of society. These children went on to raise their own families, passing on her legacy down through the generations.

Esther Olson Jennings - by George Jennings Jr.

My mother, Esther Elizabeth, was the second oldest child born to Christine and Ole Olson. She was born at Atwater, Minnesota, on March 30, 1900, and married George Jennings on August 1, 1920. They were married in Marquis, Saskatchewan, in the rectory of the Catholic Church. My Uncle Charlie had a Model T at the time, and he drove them to Marquis for their wedding. Marquis was about 75 miles away. Mom and Dad weren't able to go on a honeymoon after the wedding. After their marriage, they moved onto my father's homestead.

The young couple lived in a small shack built on the hill which had a little cellar underneath in which to store the vegetables they grew. Their room was 12' x 14'. This particular section of the house was built by a fellow who had moved to the area, proved up on his land, and then sold the improvements he had made, including this one-room shack, to my dad before moving away from the area. Dad added a kitchen, which was 10 x 12 feet. This was the honeymoon home of George and Esther Jennings when they began their life together in 1920.

In 1921, their first baby was born, a boy. Sadly, this baby was stillborn. There was no cemetery close by, and they built a little box, put the baby's body in this box, and buried him on the highest hill in the nearest pasture. His grave is still marked with a white stone, recognizable to the family only.

In June 1922, I, George Jr., was born at the farm. Mrs. Heiei, who was the local midwife, lived about 4 miles down the road, and she came and delivered me. At that time, there were no doctors in the area, and tests like we have today were unheard of. There were no ultrasounds or x-rays to make sure the baby was healthy. The food that the expectant mother ate was healthy food, and everybody was in good physical condition because of the exercise that was a part of their everyday lives in the form of daily chores and farmwork. At that time, when a woman became pregnant, she waited and hoped for the best throughout the nine months of her pregnancy, then when she went into labour the midwife was called and with the help of God a healthy baby would be born.

My dad, George, had a quarter section homestead and a quarter section pre-emption. This totalled 320 acres of land. All the land wasn't level, so some could only be used for pasture. My father had stock because at that time farming was done with horses, so the pasture was certainly needed. My parents were fortunate to have a shallow well, and when they first started using it, it contained very good drinking water. My mother's parents lived 4 miles up the road, and Grandma Jennings and my Uncle Charlie lived only 1 mile south.

In January of 1924, my sister, Helen, was born. My parents went to stay in Moose Jaw for this birth. It is not known why, but perhaps they were apprehensive and worried something would go wrong with the birth, as it had once before. Maybe my mother sensed a similarity between this pregnancy and her first pregnancy, where the child was stillborn. In any event, they rented a room in a home in Moose Jaw and lived there until Helen was born in January at the Moose Jaw hospital.

My mother didn't find it too difficult to care for 2 children, as she had grown up the eldest girl in a family of 12 children, and she was used to caring for her younger sisters and brothers. Her mother had also taught her how to care for a house, so she was well prepared.

In 1925, 18 months later, my mother gave birth to Raymond. For this birth, the midwife attended the birth. She was Mrs. Gander, an English midwife, who had moved to Canada from England with her family. By this time, the Heiei family, Mother's former midwife, had moved to Uren, a town 15 miles south, and set up a type of clinic, where she tended the sick in the area. Mr. Heiei, her husband, was a Norwegian blacksmith, so he set up a blacksmith shop in town. By this time, a doctor had located in the area as well.

The family still wasn't too large yet, with 3 children. There were no washing machines invented yet, and all the washing had to be done by hand and hung on a clothesline to dry. If the weather was good, it could be hung outside, where it dried very quickly if there was a slight breeze and good sunlight. However, when it was rainy, it was hung inside. The smell of freshly dried clothes from outside was incredible - fresh and clean. Nothing can replace that smell in our modern methods of drying clothes. In those days disposal diapers were unheard of, so there were lots of diapers that had to be boiled on the stove, washed by hand in a large tub, and hung out on the line to dry. The sun helped bleach out the diapers, and they were usually nice and white. All the housework was done strictly the hard way - using a lot of muscle and no machines.

In 1926, the Jennings experienced a quiet year. Another room was added to the house, a bedroom which would have been 12 x 14 feet. The family now had three rooms - the 12 x 14 foot living room, the 10 x 12 foot kitchen, and the 12 x 14 foot bedroom - oodles of room for that day and age.



In late 1926, Mom became pregnant again. That year Dad had a Model T, which Mom could drive quite well. I can remember an

event that occurred in the spring, when Mom was getting close to the time of her delivery. Dad was busy doing the farming as it was seeding time, so Mom had to drive over to the midwife's herself for a check-up and to discuss the birth. She loaded the children into the car and drove to the Ganders' farm, which was about 6 or 7 miles away. Mrs. Gander was the English midwife who was going to deliver her baby. I can remember a particular part of the trip when we were about halfway to our destination. We were travelling along a prairie trail (it was only a road allowance that had been beaten down by traffic) and we came upon a hill. Mom started up the hill and the low band in the Model T came loose and Mom couldn't move forward. At that time, there was a low band and a reverse band in cars. Every once in awhile, the bands had to be tightened or they came loose and started to smoke. Mom solved the problem handily. She turned the car around and backed up the hill! The power in reverse was just as strong as the power in low, except you were going backwards. She continued on to the Ganders, where she made arrangements for the birth, and then got the children home safely. Dad tightened the bands and everything was back to good working order again.

On June 2, 1927, my little sister, Muriel, was born. I turned 5 years old the day after Muriel was born. I can still remember the night that Muriel was born. Mrs. Gander came to deliver the baby, and Grandma Jennings was also there to help. They moved the mattress out into the living room and this was where we, the children, were supposed to sleep. We were put to bed, told not to make any noise, and to go right to sleep. I could feel the excitement, and decided that, as I wasn't sleepy, I was going to investigate. I waited until the adults left the living room. I heard my grandmother say, "We've got to get some water for its eyes." I quietly sneaked into the bedroom and crawled under the bed frame, where I immediately got caught. I was promptly taken back out into the living room, put back on the mattress and told to go back to sleep. That was the end of my adventure for the night!

In this era, it was quite common to have a hired man. The farm work was too much for just one man, especially during harvest. Horses were used extensively for the planting operation and had to be cared for. Farmers also raised cattle for meat and milk. At the least, most farmers required hired help in the busy season. Dad hired one man during the busy season, which happened to be my Uncle Eddie Olson. By 1927, farming was a pretty successful endeavour. Dad had as much of the half section broken that could be broken, so his acreage in production would have been about 200 acres. At that time, he rented another quarter section from an old German fellow who had broken only a small portion of it and then had left the area.

The one event that occurred during May 1927 which was very stressful for the whole family was the loss of Grandma Jennings' house to fire. After the old house burned, a new house was built over the summer. That house was a much better house - larger and more modern. Trees were planted, which beautified the yard.

The year 1928 was a banner year for farmers due to the great crop. It was a dry spring, and then it rained at just the right time, and everything grew beautifully. For the farmers of the area, it was the first and last 40-bushel per acre crop they would have for quite a number of years. The prices were also high in 1928. It was the pinnacle of the roaring 20's, and the best year for prices they had ever had. That year Dad bought a new car, a 1928 Chevrolet sedan, with a gearshift. He decided it was time for a modern transmission, time to get away from the old Model T. However, no new appliances were bought for the home, and Mom was still using the old washboard, a hand wringer, and a much-used, somewhat stretched clothesline hanging outside the house. Besides caring for small children and doing housework, these pioneer women also had to milk the cows, do the gardening, and carry the water quite a distance. This water was used for cooking, drinking and washing, so there was quite a bit to haul.



In 1928, Dad had the opportunity to obtain more land. A quarter section became available from the government. In every township, there were 2 sections set aside by the government for the Department of Education, who often sold these lands in order to finance the construction of schools. A "school section" close to our farm became available, so Dad went to Regina and purchased the southeast quarter of Section 29, Township 19, Range 6, W3M by auction. In the fall, he also bought a 12/24 tractor and Uncle Charlie bought a separator. Thus, they were able to do a bit of threshing for the neighbours. Dad also bought a 2-furrow plow, which he could use with his new tractor. Much of 1928 and 1929 was involved with breaking the new quarter section, and Uncle Eddie worked for Dad at that time.

In October of 1928, Norma was born, giving Mom five children to look after, quite a task in these days of few conveniences. These were the responsibilities of the pioneer women. Dad was probably involved in the gardening to some extent, but usually the men's time was allotted to field work, looking after the cattle, etc. With the chores and working around the farm that the men had to

contend with, the garden was more or less the responsibility of the women in the family.

When we look back at the responsibilities these women had, it is hard to understand just how they could have managed to do all the things they did. A lot were not able to cope - the stress was too much for them.

These were busy times. Dad would be out on the tractor breaking the new land and Uncle Eddie would be picking rocks. All day long, I rode on the tractor with my dad. I used to think that Dad took me with him for the company; however, in retrospect, probably the main reason was so there was one less child at home for Mom to take care of.

In 1929, the big stock market crash occurred, and the price of grain dropped significantly. There was a fairly good crop in 1929, but the price of grain went from about \$1.00 a bushel to \$0.25 a bushel. Even with the low price of grain, Dad bought another new car, a 1929 6-cylinder Chevrolet, a little speedier car. Dad loved cars. Mom had only driven the Model T, so she now had to learn to drive a car with an entirely different gearshift, and Dad was not the most patient teacher. I can remember Mom driving and Dad doing the instruction. When driving the Model T, the driver always had his foot on the brake or the low pedal. As a result, Mom kept her foot on the clutch quite a bit, and Dad was always yelling, "Get your foot off the clutch! Get your foot off the clutch! You'll burn the clutch out!" Finally, Mom gave up on her driving lessons, and she never drove after that.



Through the 1920's, Mom experienced a lot in her life. The Jennings family had an orchestra; Charlie played the violin, and Aunt Eva, for the time she lived in the area, played the piano. Dad played the drums. There were many times during those years when Mom was left home with all the children to look after, and Dad toured the surrounding area in order to make a few extra dollars playing the drums at dances. This was a common occurrence in those days. The wives and mothers were often left at home, while the husbands went about the country making extra money to help support the family. This meant that the men were gone a deal of the time - to town on business, hauling grain, buying supplies, etc. In the winters, the mothers were often shut-in with their small children from early fall until spring. To travel any distance with the family was pretty well an impossibility. We often went down to Grandma Jennings for Sunday supper, and I can also remember going to Grandma Olson's to visit. We enjoyed going to Grandma Olson's because her children were closer in age to us, and we always enjoyed playing together. Imagine the noise and hustle and

bustle. There was always entertainment in the form of music because the Olson family were all musical. This was a common form of entertainment in those days that was really enjoyed by all. The musicians would play the "old time" songs that were so popular in the 1920's and 1930's, and those songs can still be appreciated today.



In 1930 and 1931, there were crops but by this time, the price of grain had dropped to practically nothing. In July of 1930, Mom gave birth to William in the small Victorian hospital in Central Butte, about 20 miles away. In October of 1928, the situation with the midwife had changed, so Mom had her babies

in the hospital after that. Even though the price of wheat was low, Dad bought another new car, a 1930 Chevrolet with a trunk . It was a sleek, dark car, a real beauty. Dad bought the car when he took Mom into town to have her baby. Grandma Jennings came to the farm to care for us children while Mom was in the hospital. On the morning after Bill's birth, Grandma told us that we had a new baby brother and a new car; however, we didn't get to see the new car because Dad had already left for town. Grandma Jennings explained what a beautiful car it was.

When I was 8 years old, Mom had 6 children to look after, ranging in age from infancy to 8 years old. The family was getting larger and how could Mom ride herd on all these children. Dad was out in the field or away much of the time and Mom was left on her own to care for all the little ones. Mom was a worrier, especially in the summer if there was a lull in the farming, and the horses were loose in the pasture. On a hot summer day, they would come right into the yard where the granaries were located. They would stand there and twitch their tails, trying to keep the flies away. Mom had to keep all the little children away from the horses or they'd get trampled. Mom was innovative, however, and she did come up with a solution - she would tether the little ones to a post so they couldn't go too far, and then she could do her milking or other chores and know that they would remain safe. I remember the first time my mother showed me how to milk a cow - what a thrill. I was quite proud of my ability to squeeze the cow's teat and get milk out of it. Being so young, I didn't quite realize just what this meant but once I was able to milk the cows, that became one of my chores. All the children had to do chores in those days.

There were always problems cropping up which were a result of the lack of money. With small incomes at this time, fencing was just too expensive and most people couldn't afford it. A result of this was that when Dad brought the cattle up by the house at night and tied them up, sometimes they would break loose and get into the garden and eat the vegetables.

When I was young, I stayed with my Grandma Jennings quite a bit. We also spent many Sundays at the Olson's. There was always a large troop there, and it must have been quite a job for my Grandma Olson to feed all those people. Nobody ever went home before supper. Everybody stayed to eat, and it was a picnic every Sunday. There were always lots of people visiting, the girls' boyfriends and other family friends. When we think back, we always remember those days as being great fun, and I have many fond memories of those times. The main form of entertainment at these gathering was music, and there were many jam sessions held and singsongs conducted.

One season during the year that we always became exciting about was chokecherry season. The chokecherry is a nice berry that can be used for making either chokecherry juice or jelly. There was a large grove of chokecherries in the neighbour's pasture, and, as there were no chokecherries growing near home, Mom would often load all the children up and go to the neighbour's to pick chokecherries, an event we always enjoyed. As we went along on our way, Mom would load the wagon with any dried wood she came upon as this was ideal kindling for building a fire in the old cook stove. Another excellent fuel was cow pies, and it was the children's job to go out into the pasture and pick these cow pies. Pioneer women used everything they had at their disposal - how talented they were as they could bake the most wonderful bread in an old stove fired by wood, coal, or cow pies. They had no temperature gauge on the front of the oven but they could always bake bread or pies without burning them. Mom used to wet her finger and touch it to the side of the oven. If it sizzled, the oven was hot enough to put the pie or cake in to bake. Tricks like these were learned through experience.

When the railroad eventually came into the area, a Pool elevator was built at Aquadell and Dad was able to purchase some of the left-over lumber after the elevator was completed. They built another room onto the house with this lumber. This room was smaller, probably about 10 x 12 feet. This was the boys' bedroom - Raymond, Bill and me. This room did double duty, as it also contained the cream separator.

Every year to prepare for winter, a trip was made to the Herbert mill to trade wheat for flour. The farmers loaded up their grain either on wagons or trucks. Some put their wheat into bags and loaded the bags into their cars. On

occasion, one person would take a large load of wheat and get flour for everybody. At any rate, another use for the boys' bedroom was as a storage area for 8 or 10 100-pound bags of flour, which were piled at one end of the bedroom. The bed was placed right up against the flour bags, and there it remained for the winter. Mom was always happy when there was lots of flour for baking and lots of good potatoes stored in the vegetable bin in the cellar. She knew that these were the only basics she needed to provide her family with good meals over the winter.

Every year Mom raised chickens, and it was an quite an ordeal when the hens started setting. In the spring, the chickens would enter the molting stage when they wanted to set. Mom would get eggs that had been fertilized, and these would have to be incubated. She would put 15 eggs under each chicken. She marked these eggs with blueing so that when the other chickens sneaked into the nest and laid an egg, she knew which were to stay and which had to be removed. To keep these 15 eggs in place under each hen for three weeks was quite an achievement. After three weeks, the eggs hatched and out came the little yellow chicks. Today when you raise chicks, you feed them chick starter. However, that kind of feed was unheard of in those days. The farmer had to boil and chop eggs and feed them to the chicks by hand until they were old enough to go out into the yard. Then an adult hen would lead them around the yard and see that they picked up food from here, there and everywhere. Turkeys were raised in much the same manner except they weren't kept in chicken coops. One problem associated with this was that when turkeys molted in the spring, and the gobbler, or male turkey, had fertilized the eggs, the female tended to hide in sloughs or clumps of trees to lay her eggs. If the turkey and her eggs weren't located in time and moved to a safe place during the setting period, which was 4 weeks long, a coyote or other predator would find the turkey and kill it and the eggs would be left behind. Just another thing to watch for. If you were able to successfully raise turkeys, it meant a little extra income in the fall.

In the early 1930's, Mom finally got a washing machine, which cost about \$9.00. It was a hand-operated washing machine, and consisted of a tub with a gyrator and a handle on top which was moved back and forth. This was certainly a big improvement over the washboard. A technique that the early pioneer used to whiten the clothes was boiling them. This could be dangerous, though, because the large boiler would be placed on the stove, which contained boiling water and clothes. With small children around, you always had to be so careful that they didn't get burnt. Children were sometimes called upon to act as the engine on the washing machine - they would move the handle back and forth so that it would wash the clothes.

Raising turkeys was only one way of supplementing the family income. There were others, such as selling cream to the creamery. After the cows were milked, and the cream separated from the milk, it was stored in a very cool place so it would not sour quickly. Then it was taken to town where it was shipped to the purchasing creamery, which would mail a cheque to the farmer, at the same returning the cream can. If the creamery did not purchase the cream, then butter would be made from it in a butter churn. The churn was a crock with a hole in it containing a plunger. A cross-shaped mechanism on the end of the plunger splashed the milk/cream when you pulled the handle up and down. After much churning, the butter would separate from the cream. After this was accomplished, the butter fat would be removed. Mom would churn the butter further to work any remaining milk out of it. Then she would salt the butter to taste, place it in a butter form that shaped it into 1-pound bars, and wrap it in butter paper. This butter was stored in a cool place so it would keep for as long as possible, then it was taken to the store on the next visit to town and traded for groceries. The price the farmer usually received for the butter was about 10 to 25 cents a pound.

Eggs were another source of income. These could either be sold to the storekeeper or shipped in crates to the creamery, where they were graded and sold. The farmer received payment based on the grading of the eggs. There were many ways to supplement farm income.

One food item farmers always had in abundance was meat - poultry, pigs, or beef. When pigs were butchered, pork was salted to cure it, or it was fried down to lard to be used for cooking. Sometimes meat was canned. Without refrigeration, fresh meat would not last very long unless it was treated in some way. On the Jennings farm, the pig that was slaughtered was usually pretty small. The large ones spoiled before they could be eaten, so it was more efficient to butcher a small one that could be used up quickly. Thus, the family would have fresh meat on a regular basis. In the winter, the meat could be frozen. Beef or hogs would be butchered in the fall and stored in large portions where it would freeze. A quarter beef would be frozen and brought into the house as it was needed. This method worked very well as long as the weather stayed cold. However, when the weather warmed up, the meat would get a little soft and it wouldn't be quite as good. Because it may have thawed out around the edges and refroze, the taste was affected, and even though there was nothing wrong with it, it wasn't quite as tasty. Sometimes meat would be placed in grain to freeze. If a granary full of wheat got really cold, the grain would insulate the meat and it would stay frozen even if the weather got mild.

During the summer, when Mom prepared dinner, she would go to the garden and dig potatoes or pick some peas or carrots for the meal. These would have

to be cleaned and prepared for dinner. In the fall, the remaining vegetables were dug up and stored in root cellars to be used over the winter. These women must have been in good physical condition considering the amount of work they did in their gardens or just doing their daily housework.

During the 1930's, many families relied on relief cheques for their livelihood. Crops were poor, prices were disastrous, and the strain on the women of the family was great. They had to find a way to feed and clothe their children, and there were many innovations in those days. For instance, clothes were made out of flour sacks. The flour sacks were bleached to remove the label, and the cloth used to make many different items of clothing for the children. Today, these flour sacks are treasured by collectors, just as family quilts are.

There weren't many outings for these young mothers during the winter months; however, there were some social gatherings at the local schoolhouse, which was a gathering place for the whole community. Many social evenings or dances were held at prairie schools. The parents would bundle up their children and go to the schoolhouse, where they would enjoy a game of cards or a dance. Great numbers of children from the whole area would play together, and at the end of the evening, they would lay their tired heads down on blankets that had been placed on the floor for them and sleep there until it was time to go home. It seemed that people were more sociable during those times, perhaps because people depended on each other more then, and this created a stronger bond between them. If your neighbour needed help, you always did whatever you could to help them.

Winters were hard for everyone because families were often snowed in for weeks at a time, so the Sundays that we could hook the horses to the sleigh and go up to Grandma and Grandpa Olson's for dinner were always great fun. However, the visits were never long enough, as the trip home had to be made before dark because the cows had to be milked and fed and chores done.

Summer activities included farm work and Sunday baseball. Most men in the rural areas played baseball, and every Sunday afternoon there would be a baseball game. Even if the family didn't get to church that Sunday, the children would be gathered and dressed and the excursion to the local ball game made, whether it was at Calderbank or Rolling Prairie. The men would play baseball, the women would visit, and the children would play ball or other games. This was a great form of enjoyment.

The country opened up more after the railroad came through. We lived only 1 mile from the grocery store, and as travel was made easier due to the train system, there was usually people in the store or elevator who needed milk, so

the Jennings could sell their milk quite easily. There was no milk delivery from the dairies to the stores in those days like there is now.

By 1935 or 1936, five of the children attended school, so Mom found it easier to do her work in the relative quiet during the day. When the children got home from school, all the chores that they were responsible for would be done. By this time, they were called on to milk the cows and feed the chickens. This made it easier for Mom and Dad, because they no longer had to do these chores.

The price of grain stabilized after the Canadian Wheat Board came into existence in 1935. The price started at about \$.52 per bushel and increased to \$.62. For the first few years after the Wheat Board took over the sale of wheat, the farmer still had the option of selling wheat on the open market. In 1936, there was a good crop, and the price of a bushel of wheat rose to over \$1.00 a bushel. Dad had a fairly good crop that year and he sold the wheat



early at a good price. He had been driving the 1930 Chevrolet until this time, so he decided it was time to buy a new car. Like everybody in those times, he had found it hard to make the car payments up until 1936.

There were a great many vehicles repossessed during the first part of the decade. Many people couldn't afford to operate their cars even if they could afford the payments, so they were placed up on blocks in the garage until times improved. However, with the improved economy, cars became a part of everyday life again.

In the 1930's, during the summers, the Jennings were able to attend church about once a month. For awhile, they attended Mass in Riverhurst, which was about 20 miles away, then began attending a little church in the valley at Thunder Creek, which was about 17 miles away. The children were always dressed in their finest clothes for Sunday Mass. Attending Mass whenever possible was very important in our family. This nourishing of our faith was a great source of strength that brought us through the years of the depression with a better understanding of our dependability on God's help and on the help of our neighbours when we needed it. Looking back at this period of time now, in this day and age with all the services we now have, I don't think the stresses of today are anything compared to the stresses that these people experienced. These people accepted things as they came, did the best they could at the time, didn't blame anybody else for their problems, and did a lot of praying.

After having such a good year in 1936, the year 1937 was probably remembered as the most drastic year for farmers. There was a great drought, and a great many farmers lost their crops because the seed either didn't sprout at all or it

blew away in the wind. One of the most notable characteristics of the late 1920s and 1930s in Saskatchewan, aptly called the "dust bowl", was dust. Houses in those days weren't sealed and were extremely hard to keep clean. The wind would start blowing in the spring, and the fields would blow until the end of June. Farming techniques have changed over the years, and the problem of wind erosion has diminished quite a bit in the Canadian west.

In January 1938, Mom gave birth to another child, Mary Ann. Bill, the next youngest was 7 years old and going to school, so the only one home with Mom now was Mary Ann. In 1939, the price of wheat improved somewhat, but the political situation in Europe and the rumblings of war were major concerns for everyone. By the end of the 1930's, life became a little easier for Mom because the children were now old enough to help her with the work. Raymond and I did many of the chores outside under Mom's direction, and the girls helped with the housework. I can remember a few times in the fall or spring of the year when it got dark and I would have to go look for the cows. If I didn't come home by a certain time, Mom would go looking for me on foot. Of course we never met in the dark, and when I got home and was told Mom was out looking for me, I would have to go back out and look for her.

The youngest of the children, Florence, was born on May 12, 1941.

One humorous incident I can remember from my childhood occurred one evening in the summer. The cows had to be tied up so they would be close by in the morning; however, on this particular day one of the calves got loose and his mother started bellowing for him. Mom quickly picked up a post before the calf could get away and whacked him over the head, whereupon he fell flat on his back. Horrified and thinking she had killed him, Mom prayed he was alright. Thankfully, she had hit him in just the right spot and he was just knocked out cold.

When the war came along, there were many changes at the Jennings home. Firstly, I quit school because the local school only went to Grade 10 and I would have had to go away to finish Grade 12. Also, war had arrived. There weren't too many job opportunities locally. There was some building of airports going on, but I was not trained for this type of work. Eventually I joined the Canadian Airforce and went overseas. Helen completed Grade 10 and wished to continue her education, so she attended Sion convent in Moose Jaw. Students were able to board at the school and receive their education from the sisters in exchange for farm produce, such as eggs, meat, etc. This was a source of joy for Mom, as she was assured her daughters would receive a good education and also very good religious instruction.

In 1943, Helen had finished teachers' college and was teaching school. Muriel was now attending Sion in Moose Jaw. Helen had taught school for a year, then she entered a convent intending to become a nun. However, she left the convent at a later date, married and returned to a teaching career. After the war, Muriel attended secretarial school and worked as a secretary until she was married in 1948. Norma also attended teachers' college and then taught school. Bill went to Campion College for awhile and then also attended teachers' college. The number of family living at home had dwindled to a minimum. Mary Ann and Florence were still quite young right after the war, and were attending school in the area. Raymond had decided on a career in farming, and when I came home after the war, I also embarked on a career in farming.

In the fall of 1946, Mom and Dad went on their first holiday away from home. The only vacation they usually had was when they attended the Regina Exhibition on August 1, their wedding anniversary. They traveled to Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, British Columbia. Florence was only 5 at the time, so she went with them. The following year, they travelled to Vancouver on the train and visited relatives for awhile. These trips were probably the only trips they ever went on during their whole married life.

The house was enlarged over the years. As the economy improved, the family was able to buy a gas-powered washer. This was a big improvement for Mom. In 1953 or 1954, Mom and Dad had the opportunity to move to Moose Jaw for the winter, which they took advantage of. They stayed with a gentleman who wished to have some company so provided board and room at a reasonable cost. They started to think about retirement and a more permanent move to the city. However, they still wished to be involved with the farming operation. They lived in Moose Jaw during the winter only for about 2 or 3 years, then in 1957 they purchased a lot and built a house of their own. This was a wonderful experience for them. Mom had a much easier way of life. They lived in a great community, and she was able to socialize, which she enjoyed. Dad found it harder because he had to be continually active, particularly in the spring, and he got bored in the city. When they first moved to Moose Jaw during the winter months, they still lived on the farm in the spring, summer and fall, and he could continue his farm work. However, after they built the house in Moose Jaw, they never returned to the farm to live. They would come out to the farm and stay for a few days and help the boys, then they would return to Moose Jaw.

Now that Mom and Dad were no longer living on the farm, Raymond and I were two bachelors who had to look after ourselves. Mom had always done the cooking and cleaning for us, but now we were on our own. Helen at this time

was living in Outlook with her family, where her husband was employed in the building of the South Saskatchewan River Dam. She was having some health problems which were a big concern for Mom. Norma was married and living in Taber, Alberta. Muriel and her husband, Bob, had moved to Moose Jaw and Bob was working for Imperial Oil. In 1958, they returned to Regina, and this left Mom and Dad somewhat alone in Moose Jaw. Mary Ann finished her Grade 12 at the convent and took nurses' training at the Grey Nuns hospital in Regina for three years. After completing her training, she returned to Moose Jaw and nursed for a very short time at Providence Hospital, then went into public health. She travelled throughout the Central Butte area as a public health nurse. Florence finished Grade 12 at the convent, worked in Regina for a short time, and was married. The children had all left the nest, but Mom and Dad were still involved in the farming operation during the busy times. They would come out to the farm during the week in the summer. Mom would cook for the men, and Dad would help the boys with the farming operations. Then on the weekends, the family would gather at their parents' home in Moose Jaw.

Mom enjoyed an easier life as far as work goes after they retired, although Dad had some problems filling his free hours. This resulted in his getting into the bottle a little too much. Other than that, their time was spent in a quieter but easier way. With the social structure around her, Mom really enjoyed the few years they lived in the house in Moose Jaw. She had flowers and a vegetable garden, which she enjoyed, and she was still able to come out to the farm and take care of her two bachelor sons. Unfortunately, her retirement years were cut short by a car accident. In April 3, 1963, while travelling to Outlook to visit Helen and her family, Mom and Dad were involved in a car accident, and Mom was killed. Her death was a great blow to the family - "certainly a great loss for us - the Mom we knew, the Mom who took such good care of us, the Mom who brought us up in the best way she could". I think the one that missed her more than anyone was Pa - he was injured in the accident as well and he only lived for two years. One day he sat very mournfully on the chesterfield, and he said to me, "You know, I didn't know I would miss her so much."

When Mom did eventually join the church, she was confirmed at the same time as me, and she became very involved in the Catholic Church. Her faith was very strong, and I am sure her teachings, her way of life, and her direction had a great deal to do with the way the family has matured in their sense of faith. I think we can all say that strong faith is still instilled in us today as we get older. We certainly miss Mom. I think its like the old saying, you never miss the water until the well runs dry. Its probably a human failure, that we never appreciate what we have until we lose it. I think that Mom through her lifetime had many ordeals and concerns with the family, many times she sat alone, waiting for Pa to come home, and I think we don't really know what she

actually went through, in hoping and no doubt praying that Pa would come home safe.

Its unfortunate that Mom died so young, at 63 years old. She never had a chance to know her grandchildren, and to enjoy them as they grew up. God bless her.

I wanted to write a tribute as best I could to give these mothers and grandmothers credit. They were the ones who pioneered this country. They came here, experienced problems of every kind that was known, and still completed their lives on this earth in a good way. God bless them all.