

My Life Story



Adalyn Cravens, Storyteller



DeAnn B. Holt, Storykeeper

Acknowledgement

As we near the consummation of the Ethnic Life Stories Project, there is a flood of memories going back to the concept of the endeavor. The awareness was there that the project would lead to golden treasures. But I never imagined the treasures would overflow the storehouse. With every Story Teller, every Story Keeper, every visionary, every contributor, every reader, the influence and impact of the project has multiplied in riches. The growth continues to spill onward. As its outreach progresses, "boundaries" will continue to move forward into the lives of countless witnesses.

Very few of us are "Native Americans." People from around the world, who came seeking freedom and a new life for themselves and their families, have built up our country and communities. We are all individuals, the product of both our genetic makeup and our environment. We are indeed a nation of diversity.

Many of us are far removed from our ancestors who left behind the familiar to learn a new language, new customs, new political and social relationships. We take our status as Americans for granted. We sometimes forget to welcome the newcomer. We bypass the opportunity to ask about their origins and their own journey of courage.

But, wouldn't it be sad if we all spoke the same language, ate the same food, and there was no cultural diversity.

This project has left me with a tremendous debt of gratitude for so many. The almost overwhelming task the Story Keeper has, and the many hours of work and frustration to bring forth a story to be printed. I salute you.

To the Story Tellers, thank you for letting us share in your heart and soul. It is my prayer that some or many of the stories will influence many young persons to another level, to be enmeshed in the pursuit of learning of other cultures that make up our community and the world.

This has, indeed, been a project of "Many" for the Community. Thanks to the following who have played a role in helping to achieve the goal. The list is practically endless, first names only. You know who you are and what you did . . . sincere thanks to each of you:

Caroline, Charity, Charlotte, Bob, Dana, De Ann, Ed, Eric, Erman, Jim, Joha Oke, John K, John M, June, Kay, Kendall, Maria, Mark, Michelle, Myra, Norma, Pat, Rachel, Rob, Starr, Susan, Valerie, and special recognition to Jim Coombs, SMSU, Map Department.

Jim Mauldin
Coordinator
Ethnic Life Stories
'01 '02 '03

The Ethnic Life Stories Project....

...giving the Springfield community a window to its diversity through the life stories of ethnic elders.

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Liewe Se Storie Afrikaanse | Afrikaanse (2) |
| ŌSŌ GAY HĀY WŌ TAN | Apache |
| قصص من الحياة | Arabic (2) |
| Ga-no-du Ka-ne-he-lv-s-gi | Cherokee |
| 自傳 | Chinese (2) |
| Life Stories | English (5) |
| Histoires De Ma Vie | French (2) |
| Lebensgeschichten | German |
| סיפור חיים | Hebrew |
| Mayer rah-Khaan Knee-Hindi | Hindi |
| 生きてきた道 | Japanese |
| 나의 살아온 이야기 | Korean |
| DZĪVES STĀSTS | Latvian |
| ജീവിത കഥകൾ | Malayalam |
| OPOWIESC z ŻYCIA | Polish |
| Imanawangtanan Wawanaycasjas | Quechua |
| Povestea Vie Ţii Mele | Romanian |
| Жизненные истории | Russian |
| Historia De La Vida | Spanish (8) |
| പുഴയിൽ ജീവൻ | Thai |
| Kuwento Ng Aking Buhay | Tagalog |
| CHUY-N [◎] Tjĩ | Vietnamese |
| געשיחטע פון מאיין לעבען | Yiddish |

Birthplaces of the Storytellers

2001 2002 2003

Yohannan Abraham
Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India

Janet Akaike - Toste
Kofu, Japan

Tony Albuquerque
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Martha Baker
San Antonio, Texas

Grace Ballenger
Shanghai, China

Ruth L.V. Burgess
Poona (Pune), India

Sara Fajardo Calderon
Guatemala City, Guatemala

Olga Codutti
Rosario, Santa Fe, Argentina

Claudine Arend Cox
Boulay, France

Adalyn Cravens
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Taj Farouki
Wadi-Hunayn, Palestine

Malca Flasterstein
Holon, Israel

Edgar Galinanes
Mayaguez, Puerto Rico

Reynaldo Gumucio
Cochabamba, Bolivia

John Hernandez
San Antonio, Texas

Yung Hwang
Okjong, Kyungnam, Korea

Madge (Jackie) King
London, England

Edward P. Ksara
Tangier, Morocco

Hyman Lotven
Kapulah, Russia

Regina Lotven
Nancy, France

Sterling Macer
Mason City, Iowa

Gwendolyn Marshall
Jackson, Mississippi

Maria Michalczyk-Lillich
Sandomierz, Poland

Edith F.L. Middleton
Glasgow, Scotland

Loan Vu Nigh
Thai Binh, Vietnam

Jorge Padron
Pedro Betancourt-Matanza, Cuba

Ruth Penaherrera-Norton
Archidona, Ecuador

Eric Pervunkhin
moscow, russia

Ioana Popescu
Bucharest, Romania

Josefina S. Raborar
Manila, Philippines

Juan Salazar
Tuman, Peru

Eligio Sanchez
Mexico City, Mexico

Tong Trithara
Audhaya, Thailand

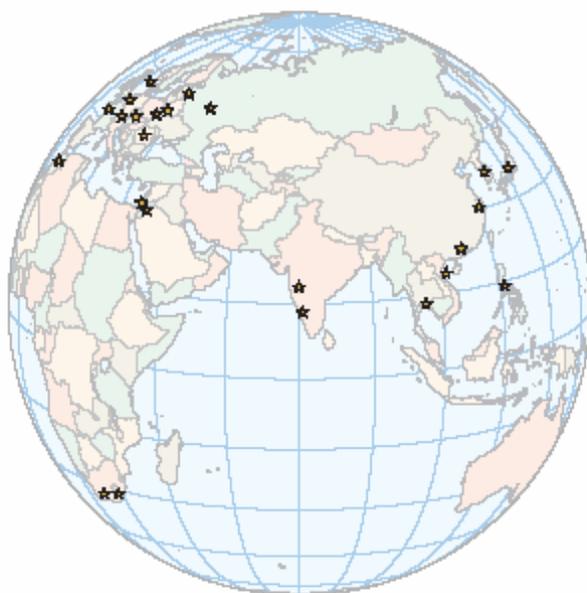
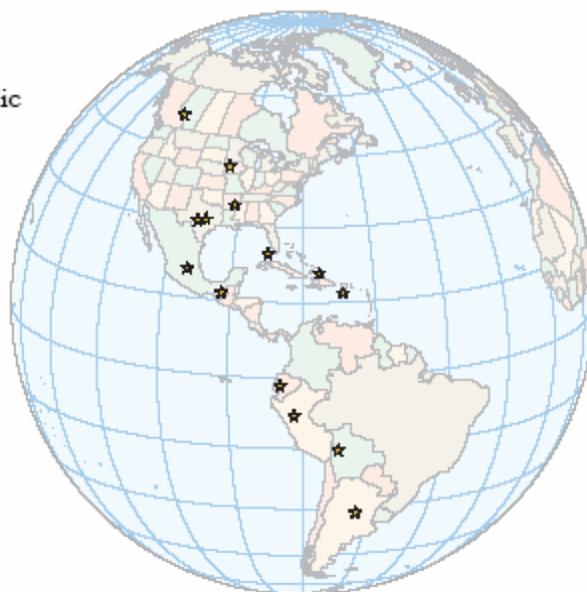
Cyril Vermooten
Beaufort West, South Africa

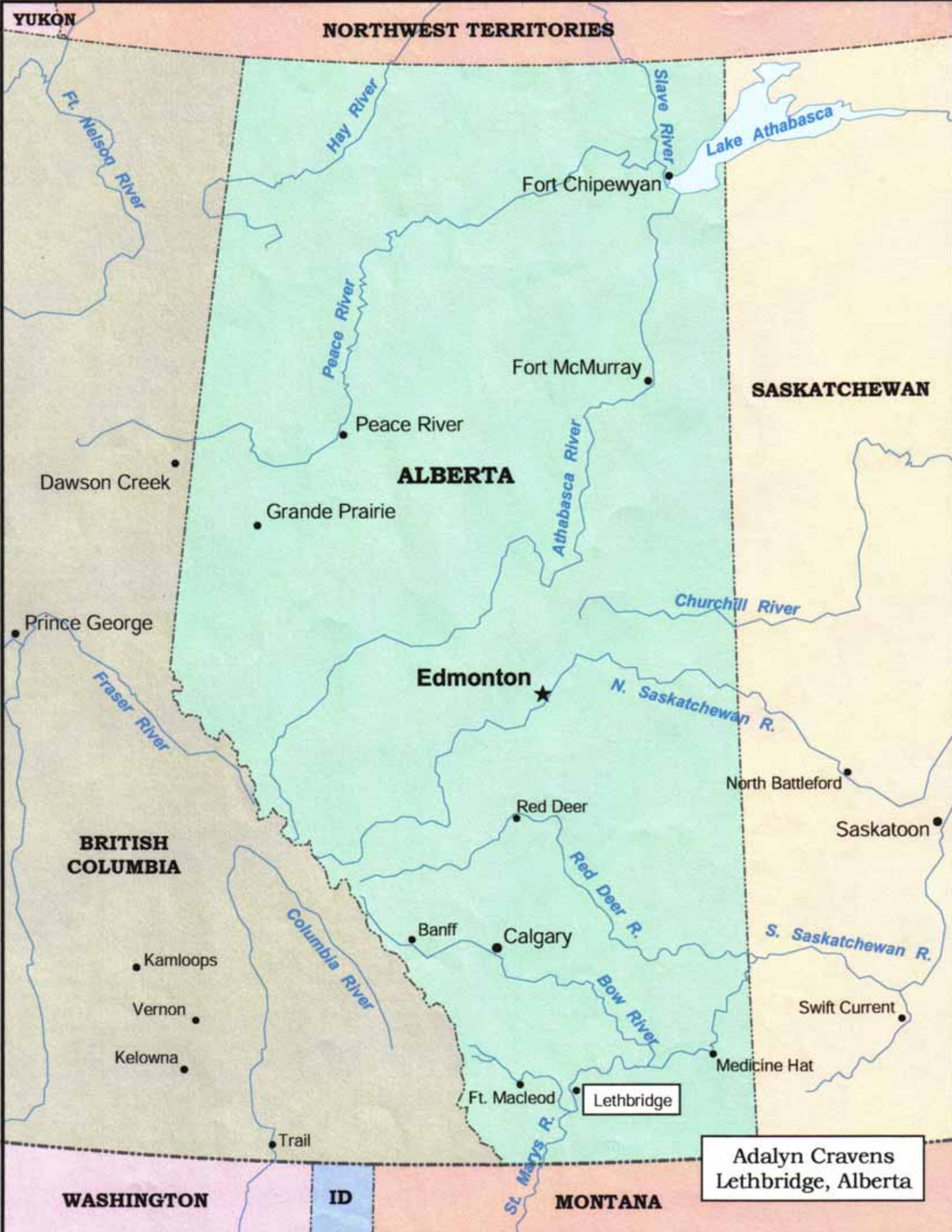
Joy Vermooten
Nqaberie (Natal), South Africa

Ilga Vise
Riga, Latvia

Hiltrud M. Webber
Domnau, Germany

Tobby Yen
Chung (Zhongshan), China





YUKON

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

Ft. Nelson River

Hay River

Slave River

Lake Athabasca

Fort Chipewyan

Peace River

Fort McMurray

SASKATCHEWAN

ALBERTA

Peace River

Athabasca River

Dawson Creek

Grande Prairie

Churchill River

Prince George

Edmonton

N. Saskatchewan R.

North Battleford

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Saskatoon

Red Deer

S. Saskatchewan R.

Kamloops

Banff

Calgary

Vernon

Swift Current

Kelowna

Ft. Macleod

Lethbridge

Medicine Hat

Trail

St. Marys R.

Adalyn Cravens
Lethbridge, Alberta

WASHINGTON

ID

MONTANA

DEDICATION

I dedicate these accounts of my life to my deceased husband, Robert Smith Cravens; and my dear daughter, Donna Lee Cravens Strothkamp; her husband, Thomas Patrick Strothkamp; their children, Deborah Lynn Strothkamp and Catherine Jo Strothkamp Beck; her husband, James Edward Beck; and their Children, Patrick James Beck and Carly Jo Beck. Thanks to Jim Mauldin, who planted the seed for the Ethnic Life Story Project, and to Dr. Moore at Drury University for providing the space for these stories. Thanks to my new friend, DeAnn Holt, for her many hours transcribing and deciphering my thoughts. Without all of these people this story would not have been told and they made it all meaningful.

FOREWORD

Getting acquainted with Adalyn Cravens has been delightful. She is a kind and considerate woman who has willingly shared her interesting life experiences. Recording Adalyn's life story has been especially easy because she is so well organized. In spite of being almost 90 years of age she has a sparkle in her eyes and a love for life that has made her a pleasure to work with. She is very dedicated to her family and actively involved in her church and community.

Thanks to the dedication of Jim Mauldin these stories are placed in the libraries of Springfield so all of us can become familiar with these folks whose presence is so enriching our city. We can each expand our perspectives by reading these life stories.

DeAnn B. Holt, Storykeeper
August 2003

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPETER ONE: FAMILY HISTORY

My Name
My Country
Fond Memories
My Family

CHAPTER TWO: EARLIEST MEMORIES AND CHILDHOOD

Other Activities in Manyberries

CHAPTER THREE: THE TEEN YEARS

CHAPTER FOUR: ADULTHOOD

My Husband
My Daughter
Our Home

CHAPTER FIVE: LIFE MISSION

CHAPETER SIX: LATER YEARS

CHAPTER SEVEN: MY SPRINGFIELD EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER ONE: FAMILY HISTORY

My Name

My name is Adalyn Constance Cravens. My maiden name was Nowak. Adalyn was made up by Mama from two aunts, Ada and Lynn. The Nowak name is Bohemian. My grandmother on my father's side was French-Portuguese. Grandpa was Bohemian. My other grandfather was from Scotland. His name was Dowell. I don't know about my grandmother on Mama's side because she died when Mama was twelve.

I was born on December 28, which was a Sunday, 1913. I was not born at home. I was born in what was known as a "lying-in hospital." Because of the weather Mama went a month early to stay at this facility. The doctor's name was Dr. McNally. The town where I was born was



Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada. When I was born Mama was 17 and Daddy 24.

My Country

Alberta abuts Montana on the north. The terrain is flat prairie with sage brush. It was wheat country where most people made a living by farming. The population were mostly Swedes, Finlanders, Norwegians, and Danes. We lived in Manyberries my early years and then in Medicine Hat for 19 years. The weather was cold in the winter with snow and 30 degree below weather with blizzards. The summers were hot - 100 degrees or more but a dry air and cool at night. We had lots of mosquitoes. In winter we skated on creeks, snow would drift over fences, and Daddy would keep a shovel on the back porch in order to get to the outside bathroom facilities. We had no water in the house except for a pump in the sink from the cistern filled by rainwater. We had a pump in the back yard where there was a dug well.

Fond Memories

I have great memories of our summers at a lake called Elkwater or Cypress Hills. We spent July and August there. We swam, fished, picked berries, and played. When we came to the gate to enter the property, Daddy let us out to smell the pine trees. It was so wonderful coming off the prairie! We would stop at



a small spring for a drink of water, then go down a big hill. Sometimes Daddy would have to back the car up the hill because the gas would not go down into the engine going forward. We would get out and walk. Our car was a Model-T. It was so loaded with summer supplies that we three children sat with our legs straight out because the back of the car would be so packed. The running boards would be packed also.



My Family

My father's name was Connie Irvine Nowak. My mother's name was Minnie Pearl Nowak. Daddy was born in White Hall, Illinois. Mama was born in Tekoa, Washington. As young children they went with their parents to Canada and settled at Seven Persons, Alberta. They moved to Canada to take advantage of the "Homestead Act" which allowed people to be given a plot of ground to work.

My father had black hair and brown eyes. Mama was a blond with blue eyes. Mama was small and Daddy was about five feet five inches tall. They started out on a farm with my grandparents. They were hard working. The house, I can remember very well, was two stories with two rooms upstairs and two rooms downstairs. I can remember going with Grandpa Nowak to the well to get water. It was a big water hole with bricks around it. He

pulled water out with a bucket. He had a spring wagon with two horses. One, I recall, was named Freckles.

Mama was very talented. She crocheted, sewed, made all of our clothes, painted, played the piano, guitar, and mouth-organ - all self-taught. Daddy hunted, golfed, and loved to show us card tricks.

Grandfather Dowell had race horses and traveled a lot. After Mama's mother died she went with him so she had very little schooling. She spent some of her time with her aunts but until she went with her parents to Canada she didn't get to go to school very much. Mama taught herself arithmetic by doing multiplication tables and division. I can remember seeing those on a piece of paper. She took her piano lessons through the U.S. School of Music. She would send for one lesson and play it on piano, then send for the next lesson when she had accomplished the first one. Mama was a leader in the community where we lived. She was the first one to



cut her hair. When other women saw her they wanted their hair cut too. Some husbands weren't too happy when their wives cut their hair! When Bertha collars came in style, Mama crocheted them for all the women who wanted them.

My dad died in 1942 at age 52 from a stroke. Mama was 75 when she died. She had heart trouble and died in 1970.



I had one sister, Marguerite Mae Davis, and one brother, Collyn Evans Nowak. They are both deceased. I was the oldest of the three of us. My brother died in 1989 in St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada, where he lived. My sister lived in Colorado Springs and died in July of 2000.



My folks lived with Daddy's mom and dad in the early years, later Grandmother Nowak lived with us. We always had two school teachers living with us during the school year. Our school year was ten months long from September to July.

I guess I most identify with Mama because she was the one who taught us to embroider and to cook. We used to have to come in from play to sit and embroider tea towels. We had a Fair every year in our little town where we entered the tea towels and hot pads we had stitched. I admired both my parents. They were hard working and wanted the best for us.

CHAPTER TWO: EARLIEST MEMORIES AND CHILDHOOD

We moved from the farm to Manyberries when I started to school. Daddy took charge of a pool hall. They had game tables and places to play cards. We lived over Dad's business on the one street in town until our house was built. We used to take our lunch and watch the carpenters. It had three bedrooms, kitchen, dining room, living room, back porch and front porch, full basement with the furnace and our supply of coal and where we could play.



We had a cook stove and coal oil lamps so everyone had to help in cleaning the lamp chimneys and filling lamps with oil. I helped with the ironing with a flat iron heated on the stove. We washed dishes, pulled weeds in the garden, and helped Mama with canning. She made jellies and canned fruit and vegetables. There was butcher shop where we bought fish and beef. We had games to play and read books. We played outdoors a lot, games like Anti I Over, Run Sheep Run, and ball games. The boys played marbles and I played basketball. In the winter we skated and sledded. The horses drew the sleds. Some children were transported to school by sled. Some of the Finlander kids lived in caves.

Everyone had to be present when a meal was ready. We were not allowed to talk at the dinner table when the adults were talking. If we had company the children ate at a second table. I shared a bedroom with my sister and brother during the school year when the two teachers that roomed with us used one bedroom. During the summer my sister and I had our own room. We had seven people in the house at one time. It was difficult to keep everyone bathed. We bathed once a week in the kitchen in a big tub. Daddy was always the last one to take his bath and I always felt sorry for him because he got the dirty water! Mama heated the water for our bathing on the cook stove .

We had a little dog, Trixie. She was a terrier, white and black. She used to follow us to school and we had to take her home. Daddy finally gave her away.



I started to school in a one-room school house. Mrs. White was our teacher. She had recently gotten married so she would take us to her house to give us some of the icing from her wedding cake. We walked to school. It was an interesting school house with a big-bellied stove. The janitor made cocoa at noon if you stayed for lunch. Mama would occasionally let us stay but most of the time we walked home for our lunch. I had a nickname when I was in school, Adie, probably because my name was hard to pronounce.

My sister and I took piano lessons and we got to where we could play a duet. But we fought when we were practicing so Mama made us quit taking lessons. Mama taught my sister and me to sing songs. We sang at a baby's funeral once. We had

community bonfires where we all sang.

The one-room school house was converted into a church once a month when Reverend Stickings, an Anglican priest, came to town to have services. We had an elderly Englishman, Mr. Johnson, who made an altar and furnished the linens. Reverend Stickings always had dinner with us. He had a big red dog that lay under the table and thumped his tail on the floor.



Our Christmas presents were ordered from a catalogue. A big box would arrive and all of a sudden everything disappeared! The train came through our small town about once a week. We celebrated the Queen's birthday which was in June (but I think they have changed that date now) and we sang, "God Save the Queen." I can't remember having gifts except at Christmas. I'm sure Mama made us a birthday cake but we never had presents.

One winter day my friend and I went to a coolie to play in the snow. It was snowy but just beginning to thaw. We waited too long to come home and got stranded on an island

surrounded by water. When it got dark we huddled together crying. Then we heard voices and saw flashlights and our fathers coming after us. They were so glad to find us that we didn't get whipped.

I had a best friend, Beatrice Green. She was Jewish. Her folks had a grocery store. We stayed overnight and went on picnics. When we moved I lost track of her and never heard from her again. I did see her once when she was grown and she was very heavy.

Other Activities in Manyberries

We had a lady, who with her husband, ran the hotel. She had an older daughter, Helen, and twin boys, Bill and Dick. The boys were the age of my brother, Collyn. Mrs. Holdershaw was interested in the arts and she put on an occasional play with us kids. She was a leader for the C.G.I.T. which was the Canadian Girls In Training. We went to camp at the lake and hiked.

CHAPTER THREE: THE TEEN YEARS

In Manyberries I started out in a one-room school house. Then we had a new school with two rooms and the grades were divided. I remember getting to read to the first graders while the teacher taught the older classes. In Medicine Hat schools were elementary and high school. We walked to school.



I was about nine when we moved to Medicine Hat where we lived in the hotel that Daddy managed. It had a basement with several rooms that were no longer used where we could play. It was like a tunnel. There were two

little Black boys and their sister that lived near whose father was a porter on the Canadian Pacific Railroad. They would come to the hotel and dance the Charleston for the guests.

When we first moved to Medicine Hat, because we were from the country, the boys picked on Collyn, would take a garment of his clothing, and not give it back. Mama had always told him not to fight but she said, “Now I want you to come home with all your clothing.” He got the message and apparently cleaned up on all the boys because he came home grinning with everything intact!

My brother loved to get up early and go with the milkman to deliver milk. When the circus came to town, Collyn would go early in the morning to help water the elephants and in return he would get a ticket for the circus. One time when we were at the circus the tent blew down and the animals got loose. They were able to get them all back and we were issued tickets for a later show.

After my parents were divorced when I was twelve, I lived with two different families. The first one, named Bannan, had three children. The second, named Lindsey, had a little boy, McGregor. I didn’t have much of a chance to date but I did have some friends who lived on a ranch and had three boys. We had fun riding horses. I lived with the Lindseys until I was through the twelfth grade.

We went to some movies. The first colored movie I saw was “The Nutcracker Suite.” My sister and I went to evening services at our church. We skated in the winter time and swam in the summer. I love to read and Zane Grey books were my favorites.

My closest schoolmate was Jenny Bell. I haven’t kept in touch with her. Keith Ellis, a nephew of Mrs. Lindsey, was very close. We kept in touch and visited each other even after we married. He became a pilot, moved to Florida, and is now deceased. I never had

an opportunity to go to a class reunion. I worked as a teenager for my room and board and didn't receive any compensation but the family was good to me. I had a room, plenty to eat, and wore hand-me-down clothes. I used to ride the train to visit a family in Red Cliff, Alberta. It cost twenty-five cents to ride and took about an hour.

As a teenagers my sister and I would be invited by our minister, Reverend Western, and his wife for tea and scones. The families I lived with, I am sure, had an influence on my life. Mrs. Lindsey was a teacher and helped me with my homework and taught me to cook.

My sister and I were baptized and confirmed in the Anglican faith and made members of the St. Barnabas Church.

CHAPTER FOUR: ADULTHOOD

After high school I went to live with a family who had a little girl, Gwen, and were expecting a baby. I stayed with them for about two years. I always leaned toward helping others and wanting to be a nurse so I went to Calgary, Alberta, to go into nursing. Because of finances I didn't finish. Then I went to live with my dad, but that was interrupted when my father remarried and it was necessary for me to make another change in my life. My dad and his new wife soon had two sons, Donald and Irvine, so there wasn't room for me in their home. I have only had contact with the boys one time after they were grown.

When I was in nurses' training in Calgary we went to the Calgary Stampede and rode the rides. It was like the Ozark Empire Fair. I loved to travel.

I came to the United States in 1938 to live with my mother and stepfather, James McCoy, whose nickname was Tod. He was a well-known bowler in Springfield. Mama came back to Missouri, where her father lived, and remarried. They had a little farm northwest of Springfield. I went to Draughan's Business College taking typing and shorthand.

I had a visa to go to school in the United States for one year. When that year was up I had to go to Canada to renew it. My birth had not been registered so I had to find someone on a farm near where we lived to verify it. When he did I was able to get a permanent visa. As long as Daddy was alive my sister and I hated to change our citizenship but Mama wanted us to. Besides we couldn't vote or take part in anything political without citizenship. Mama and Tod had to vouch that I wouldn't become a burden to the U.S. or commit any crime. We received our citizenship papers in 1970. Judge William Collinson was the judge. We had to study a book on the constitution. My sister came to the United States when she was about 17 and lived with our mother. My sister married and had one daughter, Bette Mae.

When I was first out of Draughan's Business College I worked in a law office for Jasper Smith for three dollars a week. Then I worked for Judge A. P. Stone who gave me \$90 a month. There was so much difference in the salaries of the two positions because Jasper Smith was a young attorney, just starting out, and shared an office with A.P. Stone, Cy Bates, later Ted Beasley. I enjoyed all the things that I did. I learned to use a dictaphone with the skills I had learned. I also worked part-time in a flower shop

My Husband

I met my husband, Bob, through a friend I was dating. We all went to Branson for an excursion. Needless to say my friend bowed out but he married and we remained friends. We were married in St. John's Episcopal Church by Reverend Lewis Anschutz. My sister was my matron of honor. We were married in January of 1940. We were married 48½ years when my husband died in 1988. Bob was six feet tall, brown curly hair, and blue eyes. He was a good father and a good provider.

Bob's family consisted of his mother, Daisy, and father, Robert Oscar. He had one sister, Frances. His Grandfather Cravens was Jeremiah. He was a lawyer in Springfield and became a judge. He fought in the Civil War. They had nine children. On Bob's mother's side his grandfather was John Stevens who had a boys' school on Short Benton. There is a plaque about it on a building in that area. His wife was Parmelia. After her husband was shot during the Civil War on the porch of their house on Mount Vernon Street, she became post mistress of Springfield. They had six small children. There is a plaque on Jefferson Avenue telling about that.

Bob served in the Navy during World War II. When he went into the service we went with him while he was training for three months at Bay St. Louis, Mississippi. We rode the train all night and slept in a berth. Donna Lee took some snails in a match box that got out in the night and we couldn't find them the next morning! We lived the three months in a two-room house on stilts. Our landlady lived in the adjoining room. We walked to the library every day to get books to read.



My husband was always interested in working with wood. Before we were married, he worked for Ralph Klann, sanding and finishing floors. We decided to have our own business and bought the equipment. We called our business, "Cravens Floor Sanding and Finishing." Bob worked hard and was very meticulous. He could never find anyone to work for him who could do the work like he wanted it done. He worked until he was 64 before taking his retirement.

When Bob retired, my brother and his wife Fredina, we called her "Freddie," had a winter home at Panella's Park in Florida. We visited them in 1988 because by brother's health was bad. While we were in Florida we drove to Miami to visit my friend Keith Ellis, then went down to the Keys. We rode an airboat on the Everglades. It took us back into an area where there was a little farm owned by Indians who were selling things. We also saw an alligator. We went to Disney Land and Epcot before returning home. It was a wonderful trip. My husband had never been to Florida before. He died soon after we returned home.

My Daughter

We had one daughter, Donna Lee. She is married to Patrick Strothkamp. They have two daughters, Deborah Lynn and Catherine Jo. Catherine is married to James Beck and has two children, Patrick 4 and Carly 2. They live in Charlotte, North Carolina.



When Donna was 17 months old, my sister with her daughter Bette Mae and I with Donna went to Medicine Hat to see my Dad who had a stroke. We went on the train. When we crossed the border into Canada at Minot, North Dakota, we hadn't taken our passports. They were permanent ones that allowed us to stay in the United States as long as we wanted. We had to get off the train and go to the Consulate's office. While we were off the train it moved to another station. Bette was seven and trying not to cry while keeping Donna Lee from crying. They were two happy children to see their mothers back on the train! I stayed with my friends, Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Lindsey, one of the families that I had lived with. Daddy was paralyzed on one side and his hearing was gone. His hair had been black and now it was white. We stayed about two weeks. Donna and I came back before my sister. It was snowing and we had to stay in the station in St. Paul for 14 hours because the train couldn't move until a snow plow came to remove

the snow. There wasn't any food in the station so I went to get food for us at a small restaurant across the street. The conductor on the train said it wasn't safe to go too far. While we rode the train back to Springfield, Donna and I spent a lot of time in the restroom washing the mirrors that were all around the room. I would give her a wet towel and she had a ball washing mirrors! It was hard keeping a 17-month-old occupied and not running around! The conductor always knew where to find us.



When my daughter was in the 12th grade I took a nursing course at the old St. John's Hospital on Main Street. When I graduated I took a position in a dental office as an assistant and worked there for five years.

I have been a member of St. John's Episcopal Church since 1938. I have been a director for the Altar Guild since 1970. I have served as president of St. Anne's Guild and the Episcopal Church Women, a member of the Memorial Committee, and active in all functions of the church.

Our Home

After I married we lived in an apartment until we built our little home at 1327 South Fremont in Springfield

where I still live. When we built our house Bob's dad gave us the lot. He had four acres and a dairy of Jersey cattle. Bob and his sister Frances delivered milk in a horse and buggy. They still had a cow when we built our house. The house that they lived in is still there on the corner of Fremont and Bennett. It is a three-storied house with a rock wall around it. The rocks were picked up from the four acres. It is built up around my house now. When we built our house, Sunshine Street was the city limits. Bennett Street didn't go thru to Glenstone. There was a Country Club and lake just off Glenstone.

CHAPTER FIVE: LIFE MISSION

I feel that my mission in life has been to help others. I feel I was a good wife and mother. During World War II I volunteered for the Red Cross. I worked in the office keeping records of the blood bank. When they offered some courses for being gray ladies and staff assistants, I took the course to become a staff assistant and worked at O'Reilly Hospital for Captain Marks in pediatrics.

When my daughter, Donna, was in the second grade I was a Camp Fire Girls' leader. I had 22 little Bluebirds. We took hikes, had hand craft sessions, and made cookies in my kitchen one time. I served as PTA president and worked in that group until Donna was in high school when she said, "Mom, do you have to go to PTA now?" It wasn't fashionable apparently! I had a Sunday school class at St. John's Episcopal Church. I taught teenagers who kept me on my toes! We had many church projects and wore friendship rings.

Another thing that I did is belong to a bowling team. Our sponsor was R.C. Cola. We won the State Tournament in Kansas City in 1972.



My accomplishments in life were keeping my family together and enjoying each generation as it came along. Right now it is my two great-grandchildren, Patrick and Carly. Helen Steiner Rice said it so well, "Time is not measured by the years that you live, but by the deeds that you do and the joy that you give."

The lowest point in my life was when my Mom and Dad were divorced and each of us was put in a foster home. That was a sad time. My brother was in a convent for five years. He said that the sisters were good to him but I missed seeing him.

The high point in my life I think was the day my daughter Donna was born. I was the happiest Mother ever! She was so little. She kept us up for three months with the colic but since then she has made up for it in sweetness and kindness. I spend nearly every Sunday after church with her and Pat and Debbie.

A rewarding aspect of my life was raising my daughter and helping her and her husband when they were raising their two daughters.

I have had many people in my life who have influenced me. Each family I lived with taught me to be tolerant and loving.



CHAPTER SIX: LATER YEARS

I am not employed at the present time. I retired in 1962 or 63. It wasn't much of an adjustment as my husband and I had some apartments that I managed. We built a cabin on Lake Table Rock and wanted to spend more time there.

Bob spent his retirement years in refinishing furniture and having a garden. He also did a lot of rock work around our cabin at the lake. He loved to water ski and was very good at it. We all learned to ski after we had our lake home. Pat's dad Bill Strothkamp had a boat and was the one to pull everyone. We had many good years of retirement before my husband had macular degeneration so couldn't see well enough to work with his hands. We are all avid fishermen and I love to catch blue gill to eat.

After my husband died I went with a friend on some cruises. One to the Barbados and one to Venezuela and Aruba. My sister Marguerite, who was also a widow, and I drove to Canada to see our brother. He found out that he had cancer and needed treatments. He took chemotherapy and lived about six months after he first became ill.

In our community I am one of the oldest members of St. John's Episcopal Church and still have volunteer work that I keep doing. I exercise three times a week at the Senior Center on South Fremont. I play bridge several times a month. I love cooking, especially baking. I give some of it to my neighbor and my daughter. This story is my first published work.

I have two granddaughters, both grown. Debbie lives at home. Cathy lives in Charlotte, North Carolina. Cathy and I did a lot of sewing when she was in college. She majored in fashion merchandising. She is now a flight attendant for U.S. Airways. Debbie had health problems from birth and has stayed at home. She helps with housework and laundry. She has two cats Starsky and Honey, a dog Angel, and a horse Dewdrop which keep her busy.

I have had several best friends. Freda Kennedy and I became very close after our husbands died. She is now deceased. In friendship I think you value integrity most. Someone that you can talk to and keep secrets.

I am very content with the way I live now. I don't think I'd like to live any of my life over again. My hope for the young people of today is that we have peace so that they can make plans for their future.

CHAPTER SEVEN: MY SPRINGFIELD EXPERIENCE

I came to Springfield on a train to be with my mother and go to school. I was very welcomed. My stepfather, who never had children of his own, welcomed me with open arms. Yes, I feel very welcome now. I don't think that there is much difference between Canada and the United States.

My daughter was born in Springfield and went through school here. She lives here now with her husband, Pat, and daughter, Debbie.

The message that I would like to give to the Springfield community about welcoming minorities into its life and work, "The United States was developed and settled with people from other countries. We are a mixture of many cultures. If we could love one another and put our differences aside everyone would be happier."

I feel that I have had a good life. Some bumps along the way but I have been blessed with good health, many loving family members, and a world of wonderful friends.





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