

Marlene's Notes from June, 1996

Our first "get together" was in Kearney in 1988, and we all realized that we had pictures and other memories to share. Time passes quickly and again Donna got on the telephone to call us together again. I know I should take advantage of this chance to learn more about my immigrants family from those who are a generation nearer to them than I am.

This occasion was the 110th Anniversary of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Emerson and the dedication of the newly remodeled kitchen and fellowship hall (my words) and the connection of this area to the church. Before, one had to go outdoors to get from the church to the second building.

Those there were:

Luthea Root, from Omaha, Anna's (Dahms) daughter
Donna Carlson, from Sioux City, Lena's (Carlson) daughter
Betty Zeisler, from Emerson (Henry's daughter)
Marlene Plambeck, from Kearney, (Tillie Laase's granddaughter)
Aunt Lena Lueth from Emerson, Charlie's wife.

This church, not this building, was the church my grandma Tillie Lueth Laase was confirmed in as were all of her siblings except Caroline. Caroline never learned to speak German so she was confirmed in the Salem Lutheran Church in Emerson, even so her name was listed in the newspaper as a member of St. Paul's. Even my mother, Opal Laase and her brother Leigh were baptized and confirmed in this church. I did not know this until recently when I really looked at those old certificates stored in my basement. I am sure that when Leigh came to live with Grandpa and Grandma Lueth to attend high school, Grandma Lueth began to insist that they be baptized and confirmed, and they were. In 1929 Leigh and Opal received both sacraments at the same time. I do not think the Laase's were "church goers." Mom would have been 20 and Leigh was five years older.

A picture of the workers during the construction of an earlier wooden church building around 1906 has both Andrew and his son Henry identified. The current brick church was built in 1950. The congregation was established in 1896 soon after the Lueth family moved to Emerson from Iowa in 1892. I was told that the altar from the original church, said to have been carved by a Danish carver who lived in the area, is still the one in the current sanctuary. (See the Emerson Centennial Book.)

In the fellowship area they have group pictures of the children's confirmation classes. These begin about the time of the building of the first church and are too late for Grandma in 1898, but there were pictures of most of her nieces and nephews there. Leigh and Mom would have been special cases since they were older.

Three of us Luthea, Donna and I spent Saturday night in a motel in Pender, since Emerson does not have one. The church affair was on Sunday. Betty came over from Emerson to eat with us at the Haskell House in Wakefield. This is an old Victorian house, now a steak house that is just east of the house that Donna Carlson's Grandpa Carlson owned when she was little. Betty went back to Emerson and we back to Pender to share and identify pictures and postcards mailed to Lena and copies of some mailed to my Grandma. From these "postal cards," we learned that these six girls were often called upon to help with new babies for their sisters and sisters-in-law, help with sewing for themselves and for others, came to help when someone was sick and at harvest to help cook for these crews of men threshing, picking corn or any other farm group work.

Donna said her mother Caroline, Lena, went to help her sister Marie Utemark and that is where she met Albin Carlson. When Donna was young they lived on a farm near Laurel. Donna went to Laurel High School and then on to college in Wayne.

"Bets" Betty Lueth went to Emerson to high school and she graduated at age 16. She is the one who told me about the disease Rosacea. See the note in the section about Bill Lueth.

I always feel that I must explain that my grandma was the oldest daughter, second child in a family of nine children and so I have second cousins who are nearer my age than they were to my mother, who was actually their first cousin. I guess I am officially their First cousin, once removed.

I asked them what they could remember about their Grandma Caroline Lueth, my great Grandma. They remembered how quietly she walked. A skill we guess she learned young while working for the Graf in Germany. Servants like children were to be seen but not heard. They said many times she just seemed to appear in a room. She was a lace maker and often served as a midwife to other women in the area. She spoke almost no English nor could she read or write it. If she wrote any letters to her children, none seem to have survived. More often her younger children were called upon to write for them. "Mama says or Papa says _____." The only thing we have and apparently all of her children had one was one of her German so called "Heaven's Letter." I seem to be the only one who has a partial translation done by my grandma. It seems almost more like a superstition or omen than a religious writing. I think that Tillie told me Grandma Caroline got it from her mother which would date it back to the early 1800's at least.

We stayed up past 2:30 a.m. looking at all this stuff but the best thing of all was a small padded photo album that we are sure Caroline brought with her from Germany when she came to the U.S. in 1882. All the pictures were taken in Germany but only a few of the people were identified. Luthea and I took some of these to Kinko's for laser copying after we got back to Omaha. She to her home and I to Alison's.

Luthea tried to remember some of the old stories she had heard. And several items did come to mind as we looked to these old pictures. Grandpa Andrew's brother Henry had died in Iowa chasing after some cattle. He just collapsed. He was buried in Mineola, Iowa. She had a picture of a family taken outside their home in Iowa and they were identified as the Chris Vohs family, Chris was Caroline's Uncle. The brother of her Mother Marie Vohs Horn. We think Aunt Martha Kruse that we have all heard about and who is on one picture with the Grandma Caroline and the Henry Horn family was also a Vohs daughter.

One picture taken in Emerson has Andrew who appears to be wearing an old Army wool uniform while standing in the yard of his farm house near Emerson. Luthea and Donna are reasonably sure that Andrew was in the German army at some time (Franco-Prussian War? The time would be right.) and that he had a sore leg or at least a limp connected with that. I never asked my grandma. I only knew her brother Bill was in the army and now they tell me that Bill was stabbed with a dagger during one of his army tours. I am inclined to think it was when he was in Cuba.

Luetha had one more recent story for me. She went to a post high school college in Omaha and while she was in school she thinks it was in 1946 or 1947 my Mom came and stayed with her. She thinks Mom was at a meeting of some sort. Luthea had no coffee pot so when Mom returned home, Mom mailed one to her. I guess Opal thought that no matter how small an apartment, everyone needed a coffee pot.

One other story of hers. Her father Otto and his brother Carl were in the army during World War I. As sons of German immigrants they were used as translators. They had continued to speak German in their homes as children as did the immigrant Lueth children. Luetha remembers that her mother, the Anna Lueth daughter did not remember very much German after her marriage in 1920, but Otto and his brother continued to speak German during their farming operations. Finally in frustration Annie told them if they did not begin speaking in English she would no longer be able to assist with the work because she simply was unable to understand. She must have made a strong argument and was important to the success of the farm because Luetha does not remember her parents speaking much German when she was growing up between the wars.

Betty said she always remembered that my Grandma, her Aunt TILLIE, would come to help them with the cooking during harvest and Aunt Tillie could not stand to see anyone idle. It seemed to Betty that she manufactured a job for her to go out and pick up cobs from the barn and sack them into gunny sacks for storing to be later used. Betty was not at all happy with her assignment. I don't blame her. I had many such chores assigned to me when she lived with us. I was always the chief dish drier. I do remember that my parents never had a chance to have a second cup of coffee after eating because Grandma was usually finished first and was already up to her elbows in hot dish water before Dad was through with his dessert. Actually Dad called it "sauce" unless it was pie or cake and he did expect to have something sweet after his meal. We had home canned fruit most of the time, "sauce." When Grandma canned and we all canned, sometimes even Dad had to cast his lot with us especially when we canned peaches. Those skins were easy to remove after the fruit had been scalded. It took both Dad and I to keep up with those two...Mom and Grandma. My mother always loved to can fruits and vegetables. That too could be another story.

Betty laughed after I mentioned this coffee bit because she confesses to the same habit. In her own defense, however, she said, "When one farms, eating is often done in a hurry because there are always three or four more rows of whatever to be done before it gets too dark or before it rains."

I can remember many instances when my Grandma Tillie would start a major project when she lived with us without consulting with Mom. Then Mom would come from work only to find that Grandma was at "it" again and had started something she could not finish. More than once these projects spoiled plans that my parents had made. My Dad never seemed to be upset or angry. I think Mother was, on more than one occasion, but she could not do much about it by then. What Grandma had started had to be finished. I think that Grandma had this need or feeling that she just had be busy and or helpful and this meant doing "something...anything."

Please all of you. Write your own stories growing up, falling down, moving away, staying put. I would be happy to include whatever you do with your families. **NOBODY'S FAMILY IS PLAIN OR BORING... LEAST OF ALL OURS! IF WE DON'T DO IT, WHO WILL?** I am still working on Tillie but you have to remember in my lifetime she was not a red-head. The first birthday of hers that I can remember, she was 64. Marlene

Since the above was written, I have written about the summer I was 4 years old and I went to spend several days with my Grandma Laase on her Antelope County, Nebraska, farm. My parents took their first vacation without me.