

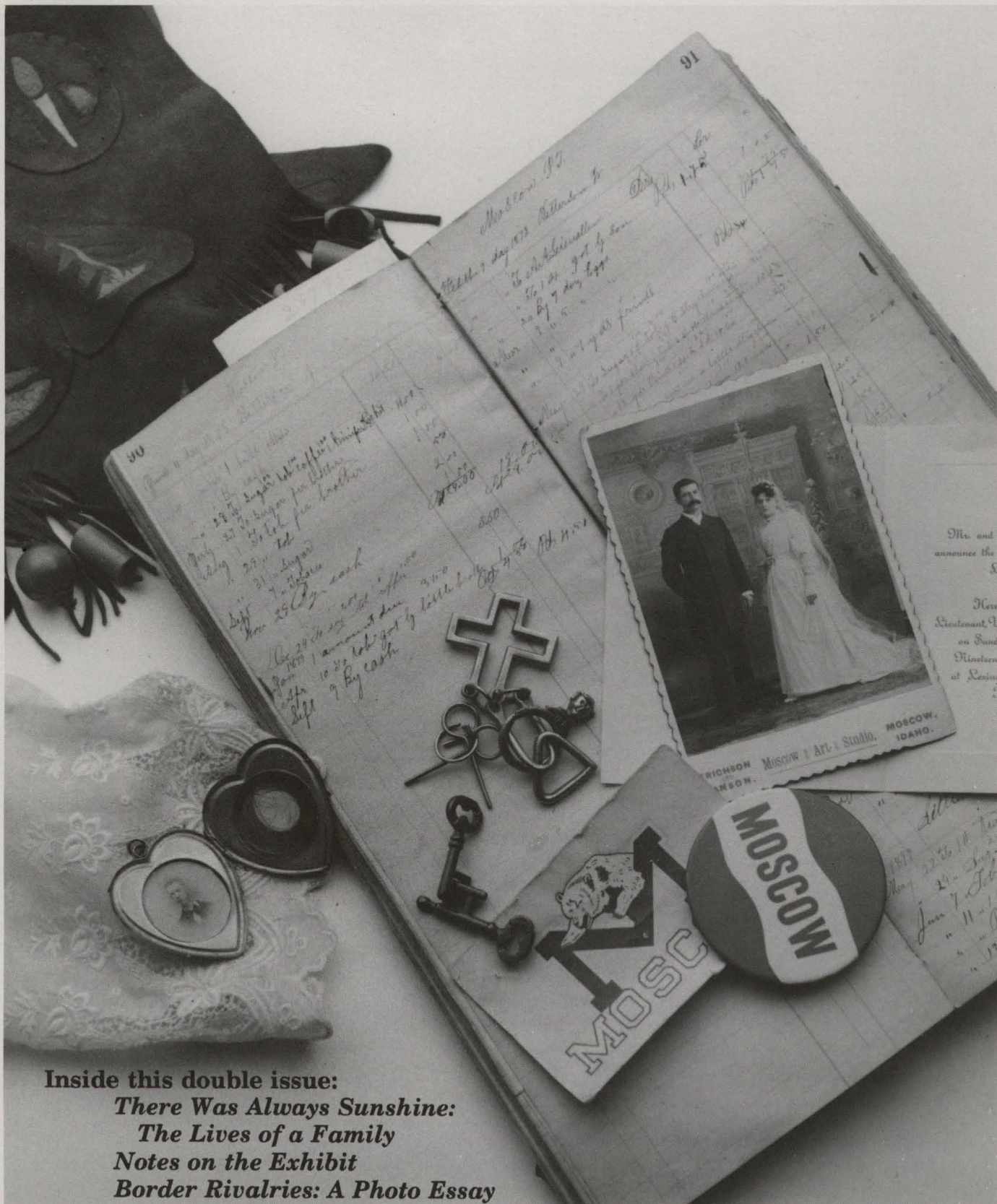
# LATAH LEGACY

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Inside this double issue:  
***There Was Always Sunshine:  
The Lives of a Family***  
***Notes on the Exhibit***  
***Border Rivalries: A Photo Essay***

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*The cover photograph is a sampling of mementoes from three generations of this remarkable family. At top left is the Campfire leather vest belonging to Lillian Woodworth Otness. The open pages of the ledger from the Lieuallen store lists purchases made in 1878. Lying on the page is a wedding photo of John Wesley and Nellie Smith Lieuallen; underneath is announcement of Lillian and Herman's wedding, sent by her parents Jay and Lillie Woodworth. A Moscow booster button and decal are Herman Otness's souvenirs from high school, while just above are a few of the trick rings and keys he used in his magic shows many years later. An open locket displays a photo of Jack Lieuallen, who died as a young man, and a lock of hair. The locket rests on the lace-embroidered sleeve of Lillie Lieuallen's wedding dress, the same dress her daughter Lillian is wearing in the photo on page 33 of this issue.*

The Latah County Historical Society, a non-profit organization, was incorporated under the laws of the State of Idaho in 1973 as the Latah County Museum Society, Inc. In 1985 the Articles of Incorporation were amended to change the name to its present one.

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# There Was Always Sunshine: Lives of a Family

## Keith Petersen

### Preface

*I can look at a photograph of Lillian Woodworth as a University of Idaho student, fit and trim (as she was throughout her life) leading young Camp Fire girls, and I am glad to say that I know something about her. I can view a photograph of Herman Robert Otness from the same period, nattily dressed, hair slicked, and it is important to me that I do understand something about him.*

*But how can a writer convince others, who might not even have known Lillian and "Ot," that somebody else's family history is significant? Indeed, how is it that I came to write a history of the Otness family before I wrote my own?*

*The quick answer to the last question is easy. When Lillian and Ot died in the 1990s, their son Robert hired me to write a family history. A pay check can be very inspirational. But it is tough to write unless you are drawn into the story, and the story of this family caught me. It was not so much because they were unusual. Rather, I think it was because they were so much like all of us. And as grist for the historian's mill, they were inveterate savers. Indeed, traipsing through their vacant house while working on the family history, I began to wonder if they ever threw anything away. Tucked between invaluable family photographs I would find gallon jars filled with rubber bands. Lying beside correspondence half a century old would be a corrugated box filled with pencils.*

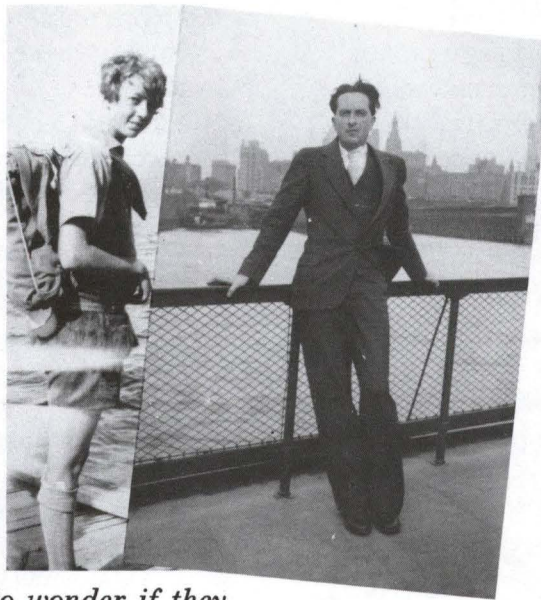
*There was, unmistakably, clutter in that house. But it was also a treasure trove. Thanks to the foresight of Lillian and Ot, who sorted and donated much before they died, and to the generosity of Robert, who donated even more after their deaths, the Otness collection at the Latah County Historical Society is probably the*

*most complete documentation of any Idaho family in existence at any public repository. There are three-dimensional objects and photographs and papers and memorabilia, all combining to tell the story of one family.*

*Whereas most donations come into a historical society an object at a time, the Otness materials literally came in by trunkfulls. Sifting through this rich collection I learned much about Lillian and Ot, about Moscow, about the development and lure of the West in the nineteenth century, and about American life in the twentieth. With a gift from Robert Otness and a matching grant from the Idaho Humanities Council, the Historical Society has completed an exhibit on the family, in addition to this special issue of Latah Legacy. Hopefully, this rich donation, which took place over several years, will inspire other families in the county to make similar contributions. For when we study the common families who live around us, we learn much about our place and about ourselves. At least that was my experience in sifting through the Otness materials the past few years. I hope it will be yours as you read their story.*

### Founding Moscow

In the 1970s, Lillian Gritman Woodworth Otness took up the hobby of family genealogy. She was luckier than most. She could trace her paternal Woodworth family line through fourteen generations, from Walter Woodworth, who arrived in America in the 1630s, to her grand-nephews, who still carried the Woodworth name. But family history isn't always easy, and Lillian had trouble tracking down her maternal Lieuallen family. After laboring for more than a decade, she had discovered little about her great-grandfather Peyton Lieuallen. However, you have to start with the Lieuallens



in order to know the history of Moscow's founding. Their story reads like a stereotype of the settling of America, but in their case the stereotype was true.

Peyton Lieuallen was born in the south, probably in 1799. He married Jemima Sarah Smith and together they had ten children. In the 1840s the Lieuallens migrated to Missouri. Jemima died in 1860, but the rest of the family still lived in Missouri as the Civil War commenced.

Missouri was a tough place in the 1860s. The state bitterly divided into opposing armed groups, and guerilla warfare continued throughout the war. None of the Lieuallens fought in the war, and some took the opportunity to escape to Oregon. In 1864 John Wesley Lieuallen wrote to two of his brothers, describing just how bad things were in Missouri, a situation that catapulted thousands of people to the West, including a half dozen of his brothers.

*You thought times were bad when you were here, and so they were: but nothing to what they are now. At the present time great excitement prevails about the Presidential election, which comes off tomorrow. It is conceded by all in this part of the country that Lincoln will be elected. On the strength of it there have already been many lives lost, and on tomorrow it is expected that there will be many more. O! Terrible; terrible times. When I say terrible, I mean it in its full sense; I have never seen trouble before.*

*[Things] get worse every day, my language fails me to tell how low and degraded the people have got, mind cannot think of anything too mean for them to do. They kill and rob the blind, the deaf, and the dumb, the widow and orphan.*

Thomas T. and Almon Asbury—the Lieuallens' youngest son, then just nineteen years old—pioneered the family trek west, traveling the Oregon Trail to northeastern Oregon in 1862. The following year brothers James and Josiah migrated,

and in 1864 William and Noah moved west. William's journal of the trip records a few cattle straying from the train ("Had a rite smart hunt for the cattle"); otherwise their trip was uneventful with "plenty of dust," lots of "ruf country," and some uncomfortable days without water.

By the time William and Noah arrived in Oregon, they found their four brothers well established. Indeed, the Lieuallens were to become the leading citizens of Umatilla County, Oregon. Almon built a home near Centerville (later renamed Athena). Thomas laid the foundation for the town of Weston. He became the community's first postmaster and leading citizen, being elected to the state senate. James, Josiah, William, and Noah homesteaded nearby.

Almon Asbury raised stock and operated a freight line. According to one account, he handled as many as twenty freight outfits, carrying supplies from The Dalles to Idaho mining camps in the 1860s. He married a woman named Mildred, a marriage that ended in divorce. They had one child, Amanda Jane.

In the spring of 1871, Almon drove a herd of cattle from Oregon into Paradise Valley in what would become Latah County. He had traveled there before, camping southeast of what was to become Moscow. Some accounts claim his herd had a value of \$40,000 and that, when many were killed in a harsh winter three years later, he lost as much as \$30,000. Although the figures are probably exaggerated,

Lieuallen brought a considerable number of cattle to the valley.

Local legend claims that Lieuallen was the first person to settle in Paradise Valley, but he might not have been the first. Some reports state that when Lieuallen returned with his cattle in March or April 1871 he moved into a shack already constructed by Loretus Haskins. Within a short time the area that came to be known as "Haskins Flat" became the residence of some of the area's earliest pioneers. George Washington Tomer, Silas Imbler, Henry Warmuth, and Almon's brother



A. A. Lieuallen

Noah lived in this region which extended north from present day Moscow.

In the spring of 1871, Almon filed a homestead claim in Haskins Flat. He spent a busy summer preparing the land and a home for his new wife, Sarah Ann Good, the stepdaughter of Loretus Haskins. Almon and Sarah married in Lewiston on July 4, 1871 and lived with the Haskins family until they completed their own house in the fall of 1871. It did not amount to much: a one-room log cabin with a window and a door.



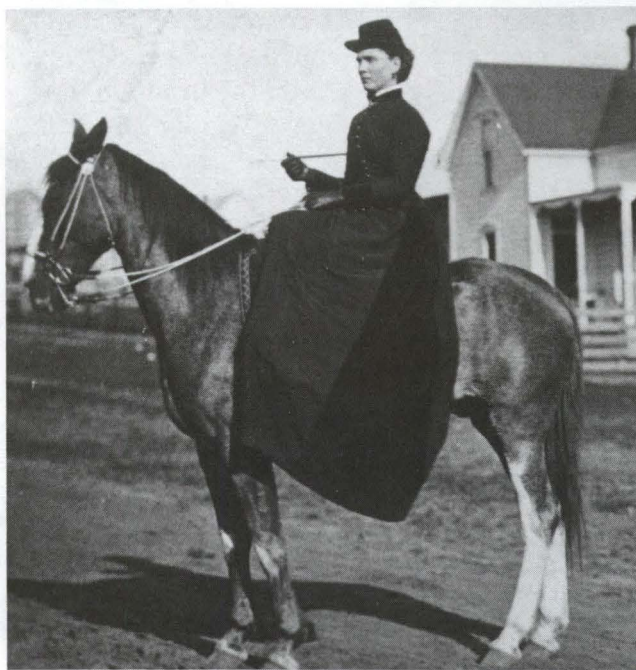
*Almon and Sarah with their children  
John, Lillie, and Burton*

The next spring, the Lieuallens had their first child, Mary Ann, who lived until the age of five. Lillie Irene was born in 1874; John Thomas in 1877; and Burton W. in 1880. Burton died at the age of eight. For a year or so, Almon's other daughter, Amanda, came to live with Almon and Sarah.

A person cannot read far in Latah County history without running across Almon Asbury Lieuallen's name. Although I have for twenty years researched the county's history and spent hours talking to Lillian Otness about her grandfather, I never learned or heard of Almon's first marriage, his divorce, or his unpleasant separation from his oldest daughter. [The one exception to this sanitized history is a typescript at the Latah County Historical Society, "The Story of Lillie Irene Woodworth, Pioneer of Moscow, as told to Louise Trail,

1965." Although Lillie does not mention her half-sister, Louise did include a genealogical chart which notes her.] Every family, even pioneer families like the Lieuallens, has a few skeletons, and we do a disservice if we do not tell the whole story.

Eventually, Almon sent his daughter to live with his brothers' families, and the estrangement between father and daughter grew so intense that Almon demanded that Amanda not even visit their house. At one point Almon told his daughter "his home was made so unpleasant by letters that he received from me [Amanda]." The difficulty lay in the fact that Amanda's mother always harbored suspicions that Almon and Sarah had not been legally married because Almon had not been legally separated from Mildred. This suspicion apparently turned Amanda forever against her stepmother.



*Sarah Lieuallen*

Almon also had some questions about the legality of his marriage to Sarah, but his concerns centered on the day they were married. According to Sarah, Almon had read a newspaper article about "marriage being a business contract or business transaction, therefore if solemnized on a . . . legal holiday, it would be illegal." Concerned because they had been married on the fourth day of July, Almon insisted upon marrying Sarah a second time. One spring day in 1873, when Almon, Sarah, and Mary Jane were visiting Noah

Lieuallen, Almon insisted that Noah, a Baptist minister, remarry them. Sarah remembered how she shrank from that idea.

*It was humiliating for I had lived with him two years and borne a child and I would not consent . . . to a ceremony and subject myself to the public gossip. And then when my brother-in-law came down . . . [he] said to me, it will aid [Almon's] happiness and set his mind at ease that he thought we better have it done, and thereupon I consented . . . to be re-married.*

Both Sarah and Almon agreed that they did not “need to proclaim [the second marriage] from the house-tops,” and held their quiet ceremony in Noah’s house.

Yet the squabble was not over. When Almon died in 1898, Amanda vigorously protested against Sarah serving as administratrix of his estate, claiming that her father’s property should rightfully go to her on the grounds that Sarah and Almon were never legally married. Both women hired lawyers, and Sarah’s lawyer attempted to “strike out the objections of Amanda McAtee [she had by then married David McAtee] . . . [because] such are scandalous.”

After a fight in probate court in 1899, the

court ruled in Sarah’s behalf in all matters. She remained as administratrix and inherited Almon’s estate. From that point on the family lost track of Amanda and little is known of her, except that she married twice and had four children before she died in 1921.

The Lieuallens remained in Haskins Flat until 1875. In 1871, Almon and Noah helped construct the area’s first school, and Noah served as the region’s first school teacher. In 1875 Almon purchased a log cabin store (on what later became the corner of Mountain View Road and Hillcrest Drive) from Samuel Miles Neff. Shortly afterwards, Almon moved the store to what became Main Street in Moscow. There he reopened the store, with the family living in quarters in the rear. The building also served as the post office where Almon was Moscow’s second postmaster.

Almon Lieuallen donated land for the first church in Moscow, the Zion Baptist Church, where his brother Noah served as the first minister.

Almon was intimately involved in the town’s growth. He gave away town lots to encourage settlement and business construction; he became the town’s first attorney; he built the first blacksmith shop; and he constructed some of Main Street’s earliest brick buildings. But success came with financial setbacks. Robbery



*Sarah Lieuallen on the right. Almon, in the background, is on the porch of their new house.*

of the local bank included notes from some of Almon's debtors. Unable to collect on the notes, he was forced to sell his corner lot to Dorsey S. Baker, who constructed Moscow's first brick building on the site of the Lieuallen store.

Almon then concentrated on selling—and occasionally giving away—lots in what was known as Lieuallen's Addition in Moscow. The plat for his section of town eventually included four streets named for the family: Almon, Asbury, Lieuallen, and Lilly, a misspelling of his daughter Lillie's name.



*The name "Lieuallen" can be seen on the building next to Creighton's in this 1917 photo.*

Despite the financial setback, Almon again prospered by selling real estate. That prosperity is reflected in the grand home the family constructed in 1884 on Almon Street. This house of twelve rooms did not necessarily please Sarah Lieuallen, who did not want to take care of such a large place, but Almon constructed it in an effort to entice other homebuilders to Lieuallen's Addition. Sarah lived in the house until she died in 1907, and many years later, in 1978, the Lieuallen home was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

### Converging in Moscow

In 1620 an advance guard of 102 English Puritans set sail on the *Mayflower* for the New World. Over the next dozen years, 20,000 additional people came to New England. Among them, probably arriving in 1630, was Walter Woodworth, who helped lay out the town of Scituate, one of the earliest communities in America. Nine generations later, one branch of the Woodworth family had migrated to Ohio, where Rhodolphus, or Ray, Woodworth was born in 1838.

In 1860, Ray Woodworth moved to Montana, following news of gold discoveries in that

territory. There he farmed and freighted supplies to the mining camps. In 1867 he married Martha Snyder, and that year they had a son, Jay.

In 1876, the Woodworths left Montana for the Palouse country, living first in Pataha, then on a homestead north of Genesee. On July 4, 1878, Ray established the first mercantile store in Uniontown, where he is considered one of the founders. In 1886 his son Jay left home to take a job as the first telephone operator in Lewiston. When Jay moved to Moscow in 1889, his father and stepmother (Martha died in 1880) moved to a farm at the end of Sixth Street where it intersects with Mountain View Road.

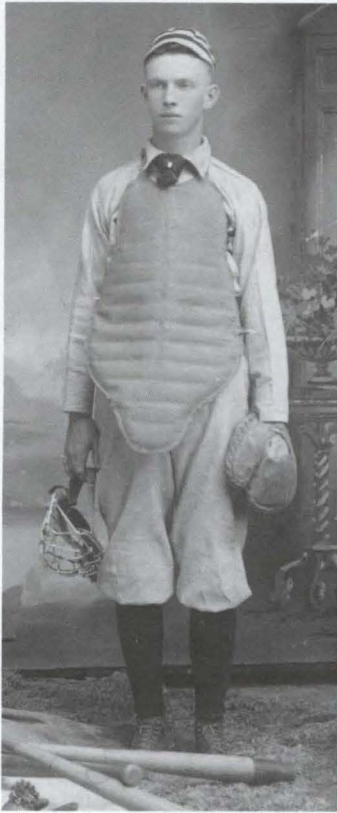
Jay tried several professions, but spent most of his time in Moscow operating a title office. He was not one of the earliest pioneers to Moscow, but he knew a lot of them. "He grew up in the area," recalled his daughter Lillian, "and then became a young businessman and interested in politics. . . . And I think he just knew everybody that there was locally. He knew a lot of the prominent early men. After all, Moscow was pretty small."

Certainly, it would not have taken Jay Woodworth long to make the acquaintance of Almon Asbury Lieuallen, still one of the primary movers and shakers in Moscow, and to meet his daughter, Lillie Irene.



*Jay Woodworth*

Of Almon and Sarah Lieuallen's four children, only Lillie lived to adulthood. Mary Ann and Burton died as young children, and Jack (John) died of cancer at nineteen. During his short lifetime he became one of Moscow's finest athletes. According to a family story, while Jack was enrolled in the University of Idaho, President Franklin Gault asked him not to win too many events in an upcoming track meet against neighboring Washington Agricultural College.



Jack Lieuallen

When Jack refused to slack off, Gault expelled him from school for a while.

Although that story is probably exaggerated, Jack excelled in every sport he tried, until his death. The *Moscow Star* recalled his athletic prowess in its front-page obituary:

*What a splendid specimen of young manhood he was. From the time his mother discarded his pinafores he has been an athlete. He has been easily foremost in all sports and games where the physical activities predominate. As a*

*sprinter he almost outclassed the amateurs. As a ball player he could have held his place among professionals. There seemed no limit to his powers of physical endurance.*

Lillie Irene was just the opposite. Frail and often sickly, she appeared unlikely to outlive him. Yet she would live to a grand old age.

In 1893, Lillie Irene Lieuallen married Jay Woodworth in the Lieuallen family home on Almon Street. She was eighteen and he was nearly twenty-six. She only had a few months left to go before she would have received her high school degree.

As they began their new life together, Jay and Lillie found themselves literally surrounded by Lieuallens. When the six Lieuallen brothers traveled the Oregon Trail to eastern Oregon in the 1860s, they left behind in Missouri their brother John Wesley. But four of John Wesley's sons caught the Western fever as young men, particularly after hearing promising news from their uncle Almon about opportunities in the town he helped found. They moved to Moscow and became prominent residents.

Clinton Lieuallen came first, establishing a business on Main Street in 1886 to market candies and fruit. Over the years this expanded into the Moscow Grocery Company, and although Clinton moved away to Montana, he retained his interest in the store until at least the end of the century.



James, Clint, Grant, and John Wesley Lieuallen

Grant, James, and John Wesley Lieuallen, Jr. followed their brother to Moscow. All three became teachers. Grant was also an early employee in the Moscow post office and eventually moved to Washington, D.C., where he became librarian of the Senate. James served in the Latah County recorder's office and then returned to Missouri. But John Wesley remained in Moscow and had nearly as much influence on the town's development as his uncle. "No man worked more enthusiastically for the upbuilding of Moscow than did he," reported the *Moscow Idaho Post*.

J. W. Lieuallen was superintendent of Latah County schools, Moscow's city clerk, deputy sheriff, and sold real estate. In 1890 he constructed a two-story brick building on south Main Street which housed his grocery store on the main level and Erickson's photo studio above. He also became a prominent merchant in Troy and Wardner. When he died in 1916, the *Moscow Star-Mirror* described his funeral



as "one of the largest assemblages ever" in Moscow.



*John Wesley and Nellie Smith Lieuallen with their daughter Beatrice. The photo was taken at the Erickson Studio.*

### **Immigrants from Scandinavia**

Surely another of the Moscow elite who Jay Woodworth met was William W. Watkins, one of the town's earliest doctors and a University of Idaho regent. It is possible that Woodworth might have visited Dr. Watkins at his home. If he paid such a visit, he might have made the acquaintance of the Watkins's maid, Christina Sether. William and Caroline Watkins, along with their maid Christina, were all immortalized in one of the finest novels ever written about Idaho, *Buffalo Coat*, by Carol Ryrie Brink, the Watkins's granddaughter.

If Jay Woodworth occasionally saw Christina Sether at the Watkins house, it was probably the only time their lives crossed paths in those early days in Moscow, for the story of how the Sethers arrived in Moscow and their lives once they got there is considerably different than the Woodworth and Lieuallen tale.

Although Carol Brink characterized Christ-

ina as the "little Swede girl," the family actually came from Norway. Herman Sether and Karen Erickson married in Norway and moved to Jackson, Minnesota, in 1870, where their eight children, including Christina, the second oldest (1875), were born.

In 1899 the Sethers joined a large migration of people with Scandinavian backgrounds trekking west. By 1900, people of Scandinavian ancestry made up by far

the largest ethnic group in Idaho, and more lived in Latah County than any other county in the state. Thirty-two percent of Idaho's foreign-born Norwegians and 19 percent of its Swedes lived in the county, where they worked in the woods and sawmills, farmed, and were trades people. Moscow boasted an entire section in the eastern part of town known as "Swede Town," heavily populated by both Norwegians and Swedes.

We don't know why the Sethers chose to move to Idaho at a time when Herman and Karen were both over fifty. Probably the move had much to do with greater opportunity for their large family. The Sethers were no doubt lured to Idaho, just as they had been enticed to Minnesota, by glowing accounts of the area received from friends and hired agents sent east to recruit new residents. Once they arrived they, like most of their Scandinavian neighbors, joined the local Lutheran Church, the steward of traditional Scandinavian life in the new world.

The Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church at Cordelia was the first Swedish congregation in Idaho. In Moscow, Swedes and Norwegians formed separate congregations, which did not merge until 1961 as Emmanuel Lutheran Church.

The Sethers moved to a house at Eighth and Lynn, in the heart of Swede Town, and farmed



*Karen Sether*

on land outside of Moscow. The family was well regarded, and "a great throng of neighbors and friends" attended Herman's funeral in 1915. Karen continued to live in the family house until she died in 1939. "She was a tough old gal" who "read her Bible an awful lot," recalled her grandson LaVerne Nelson.

Seven of the eight Sether children spent their entire lives in or near Moscow. In 1901 Christina, the Watkins maid, married Robert Otness. That was the same year that Dr. Watkins was killed by a deranged man on Main Street.



*Robert and Christina Otness*

Like the Sethers, Ole and Guri Otness moved from Norway to Minnesota. In the 1890s, five of their six children joined the Scandinavian migration to Latah County. Robert came to the county in 1895 and farmed in the Blaine district south of Moscow. He married Christina Sether in 1901, and in 1907 they held a public auction to sell their farm and all equipment.

With their two daughters, Clara and Gertie, Robert and Christina moved closer into town. They rented a house on Lincoln Street until 1909, when they purchased the house on Monroe Street that would remain in the family for nearly ninety years.

In Moscow, Robert and Christina had two more children, Herman Robert and Ruth. For most of his life, Robert Otness sold real estate from his office on the corner of Third and Washington streets, specializing in farm lands. Christina never worked out of the house again after her marriage, but was well known in town as one of Moscow's finest cooks.

## Growing Up in Moscow

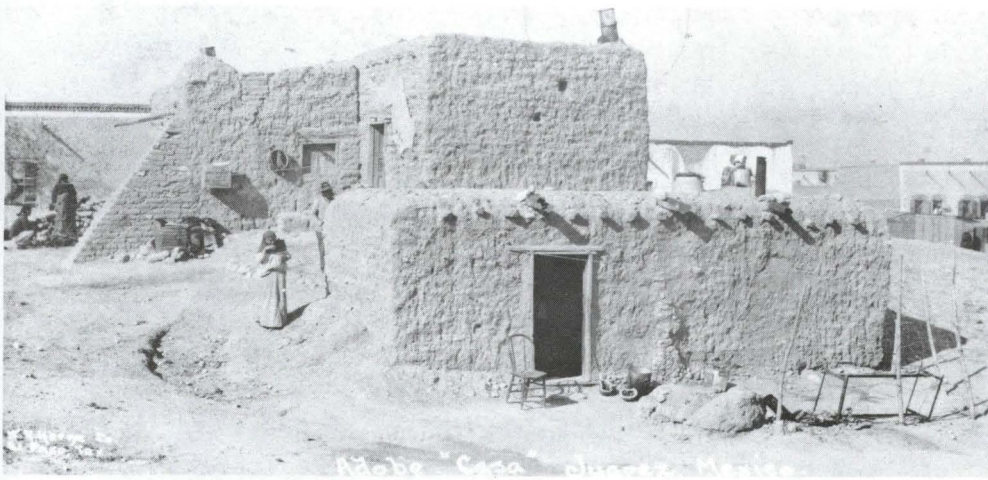
Lillie and Jay Woodworth had two children, John (Jack), born in 1902, and Lillian, born in 1908. The family lived for a while at Emma Edmundson's boarding house on Third Street in Moscow, the same home where Olympian Clarence "Hec" Edmundson had grown up. Because Lillie suffered from poor health in those years, the family decided to move to a warmer climate. Jay Woodworth also saw this as an opportunity to gain the financial success that had eluded him in Moscow. "Jay Woodworth and family have gone to Long Beach, Cal., for the winter and may possibly make that place their future home," noted the *Moscow Star-Mirror*. "Mr. Woodworth and son, Jack, went via auto while Mrs. Woodworth and daughter, Lillian, will sail from Seattle on [a] steamer."

Jay had gained a nickname around Moscow as "Buick Woodworth" when he purchased one of the community's first cars. He once raced his Buick against an airplane around a track at the fairgrounds where Ghormley Park is now located. "I can remember sitting in that grandstand," Lillian recalled of her father:

*and for this particular county fair they had a barnstorming aviator who was here doing exhibition flights. They had an oval track there at the fairgrounds. And Dad would drive his car around this track and the airplane would fly above him. And it was billed as a race and the announcer would announce it as being between Buick Woodworth and whatever the aviator's name was. And of course the plane always won.*

Jack remembered how they drove the Buick to California in 1914:

*Dad and I travelled in the Buick roadster. The roads were poor in those days and to average 20 miles an hour was very good. Tires were short-lived and we wore out two sets as I recall. As we approached the hot areas of California we had to carry many cans of water because the car radiator would boil. Started across the Mojave desert at 4 AM to avoid the intense mid-day heat and barely made it.*



*Jay sent this postcard to Lillian Woodworth in Los Angeles with the message, "On the Rio Grand near El Paso. Love, Dad."*

The family lived in Long Beach for about a year while Lillie's health continued to deteriorate. Then came a combination of factors that Jay Woodworth could not resist: The opportunity to move to a drier climate to aid his wife's health, and the chance to make money. As Lillian recalled, "While he was down there somebody sold him on the idea that he could homestead and raise wheat in New Mexico." So the family moved to a tiny community hard on the Mexican border.

Jay Woodworth could not have picked a worse time for a move to southern New Mexico, which had been plagued by raids from Pancho Villa's guerrillas for months. The troubles came to a head in March 1916, probably shortly after the Woodworths arrived, when Villa made his famous raid on the nearby village of Columbus, New Mexico, killing eighteen people. "My mother decided that was no place for her children," remembered Lillian. "So we left." By August 1916 the Moscow newspaper reported that they had returned to Idaho to live.

By the time the Woodworths returned, Moscow's population stood at nearly 4,000 and the town boasted three public school buildings, electric light and telephone service, two hospitals; two weekly newspapers, and three railway lines. It was a town on the move, and here Jay and Lillie Woodworth decided to remain to stake their claims to prosperity.

The University of Idaho was also growing. When Sarah Lieuallen died in 1907, Lillian and Jay inherited the grand house that Almon and Sarah had constructed on Almon Street. The Woodworths promptly rented out the home

to Kappa Sigma fraternity. When Kappa Sigma constructed its own fraternity house on campus, Jay, who was still in California, got the idea of converting the Lieuallen home into an apartment house. "It was, I think, the first one to have electric ranges and to have shower baths and folding beds," noted Lillian. "There was always a waiting list" to get an apartment. In this, Mos-

cow's "choice" apartment house, Lillian and Jack would spend the remainder of their youth.

Jack's consuming interest was radio. "I would say he spent most of his time outside of school on that," Lillian remembered. "And he used to make quite a bit of money during the summers building radio sets for people here in towns for quite a good price. He was really a pioneer." Jack received a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Idaho and spent a career with General Electric.

Lillian's main passion as a young girl growing up in Moscow was Camp Fire. By the 1920s Camp Fire was well established in the town and in 1922 Camp Sweyolakan opened on Mica Bay on Lake Coeur d'Alene. The next summer Lillian made her first trip to the camp, a site she was to visit annually through her university years as both a member of Camp Fire and as a camp counselor. On June 26, 1923 she described camp life in a letter to her mother:

*Well, of course, we got here all safe. Things here are much different from what we expected. I am sleeping in "The Barracks" as the unit in which we are to have our quarters is not yet quite finished. We expect to move this afternoon. Our unit will be one of three in the building. There are twelve beds to a unit, two tiers. Have enrolled for classes in nature lore, hiking, basketry and rowing. Took morning dip today. It was great. Not very cold. Went in at 11:30 again and expect to go at 4:30. Am on K.P. today. It's not bad. Am in with a lot of strange girls. That is they*

were strange once. Not now. Only one Moscow girl with me. Don't know what I'd do without my knickers. I wear them and save my bloomers for dress up day.

Lillian took to camp life and to Camp Fire. Her diary entries for 1927 show her enthusiasm had not waned even when she moved on to college. "Mrs. Humbird here tonite," she wrote on February 1. "She wants me to go to camp as a councillor this summer. Will I?"

Camp Fire "really became an absorbing interest," Lillian later recalled. Here a girl could try new things then not generally accepted as the norm outside of Camp Fire. "I got into swimming and just a lot of activities that I never had a chance at before." By 1925, she had become a "Torch Bearer," the highest rank in the Camp Fire program. She also impressed a lot of younger girls with her camp abilities. Patricia Kennard attended Camp Sweyolakan in 1925 when she was eleven years old. More than



sixty years later, in a letter to the Latah County Historical Society, she still remembered Lillian: "Someone, please tell Lillian Otness that she was my 'ideal' Camp Fire Girl. She had heavy braids, and always had more honors and knew all there was to know about anything to do with Camp Fire."

Like her Uncle Jack, Lillian Woodworth had been blessed with a unusual gift, a natural athleticism. Unfortunately, in this era there were few opportunities for girls and women to find outlets for such athleticism. Lillian found one in Camp Fire. And she availed herself of the other limited athletic opportunities.

As a Moscow High School senior, Lillian served as president of the Girls General Association where she proved instrumental in

beginning a fledgling girls' athletic program. In that year the school introduced hiking, basketball, baseball, and tennis for girls. Lillian participated in all and especially enjoyed basketball and hiking. A spoof in the Moscow high newspaper on books Moscow High School students might write listed her as the author of *Lessons on Basketball*. And walking became a lifetime pleasure. Her diary entries regularly record hikes of eight miles and more, to Paradise Ridge, along the railroad tracks, and to other areas around town.



When Lillian entered the University of Idaho in the fall of 1926, she again found herself a pioneer in women's athletics. Not until 1919-20 did the school organize athletics for women. Then, in line with similar actions taken by other colleges following the women's suffrage movement, Idaho offered a variety of intramural sports for women, including basketball, tennis, hiking, field hockey, baseball, and horseback riding. In 1923 the University formed a women's athletic association, which began awarding "I" sweaters to women. Three years later the University fielded its first intercollegiate women's athletic team, the rifle squad. Not until the 1950s would it support another intercollegiate team (in field hockey) for women.

Lillian Woodworth was a member of that first University of Idaho rifle club and earned her "I" sweater. Indeed, athletics became a consuming interest, as her freshman diary reveals. Few days go by without mention of participating in some sports activity, such as hiking, rifle, swimming, baseball (she was on the freshman team that won the campus championship), tennis (again, the school champions), horseshoes, even squirrel



hunting. The May 30 entry reads, "Went to Potlatch. We took the gun and shot some squirrels." Sometimes even Lillian had enough of sports, such as on April 13: "Swam from 9:30-11, tennis 12:30-2, swimming 2-3, baseball 4-5:30. Almost enough exercise for one day."

Lillian also played basketball and in 1928 her team placed seventh nationally in the "World Free Throw Tournament." By 1929 she was playing on the volleyball team. She typically was one of the top point scorers in inter-class swim meets and maintained one of the highest scoring averages in rifle. When the University formed an "I" Club for women in 1928, Lillian was one of twelve charter members, and served as secretary and president. In 1930, she was one of two women to receive an "I" blanket, an exceptional award given for distinction in athletics.



Of all the sports in which Lillian participated, perhaps dance—then taught as part of the physical education department—captivated her the most. She performed in some of the earliest dance demonstrations, in addition to helping with the staging and lighting of dance productions. Indeed, her name is found in programs of the first four dance concerts ever presented at the University. Given Lillian's influence in establishing the early athletic and dance programs at the University, it is little wonder that the school's Division of Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance recognized her as its first Distinguished Alumna in 1993.

While sports consumed much of Lillian Woodworth's time, it was just one of many interests during her extremely active growing up years in Moscow. Although Lillian later withdrew from organized religion, in her formative years she was active in Moscow's Presbyterian Church. She regularly attended

Sunday School, and in high school and college frequently read scriptures during services.

There was one volunteer activity Lillian began early and retained during her lifetime. In the 1890s Dr. Charles Gritman moved to Moscow and there, along with his wife Bertie, established Latah County's first hospital, the hospital where Lillian was born.



*Bertie Gritman is seated in the middle with Lillie Woodworth on her left.*

It was probably soon after the Gritmans moved to Moscow that they established a friendship with the Woodworths. The bond between the families could hardly have been closer. In the 1920s, Jay Woodworth spent part of each year in Canada working on a ranch the Gritmans owned. Lillie Woodworth and Bertie Gritman visited each other nearly every day. When the Woodworths' daughter was born in 1908, they gave her the middle name of Gritman, and Lillian Woodworth became almost a daughter for Bertie Gritman. They, too, visited frequently during the years Lillian lived in Moscow. And when Lillian moved away, the two corresponded regularly.

In addition to the close friendship between the Woodworths and Gritmans, Lillie and Lillian became two of the earliest and most regular volunteers at Gritman Hospital. Lillian's dedication as a hospital volunteer remained with her throughout her life. By the 1990s, she had given hundreds of hours of volunteer time at the hospital.

Once Lillian Woodworth entered Moscow



Lillian, left, serenades a friend

High School, the opportunities for new activities greatly expanded, and she took full advantage of the school's extracurricular programs. She belonged to the Players Club and participated in nearly every dramatic presentation. She accompanied the girls' chorus on the piano, served on the school newspaper and annual staffs, and sang in the glee club. When the students voted for the "most popular girl" in Lillian's senior year, she won in a landslide.

She maintained this high level of extracurricular activity at no detriment to her scholastic achievement, graduating as class valedictorian. The school newspaper asked humorously during her senior year, "When will Lillian W. flunk?" And answered with, "We'll say never."

Lillian later said that she just took it for granted that she would attend the University of Idaho after high school, and it is little wonder that the sororities courted her so diligently. She combined their ideal blend of personality, social status, and scholarship. After being a regular dinner guest at various sororities during her senior year, she pledged Delta Gamma.

In college, Lillian maintained her high level of academic achievement, graduating in 1930 with Highest Honors. Despite her academic accomplishments, she was critical of the education she and other women of her generation received. She had Lena Whitmore as a sixth grade teacher, a woman who left a long legacy in Moscow as a teacher of hundreds of children, and one who had a school named after her. But Whitmore's teaching did not impress Lillian:

*There was no provision at all for adapting to individual differences or anything like that. Everybody did the same thing as the same*

*time. And it was mostly a matter of learning what was handed out to you, and there was very little participatory activity.*

Lillian, always outspoken when she felt it necessary, didn't think much more highly of her education in high school and college.

*I can't remember ever being in a class where we were asked to form our own opinions, to evaluate and look at evidence and draw conclusions. What we got was somebody else's opinion and you were supposed to parrot it back on an examination. Probably some of the worst teaching in the country went on in colleges. I felt as I got older that I was vastly undereducated, and that I had been cheated by not having the kind of teaching that would force me into some kind of independence of thought.*

This problem was compounded by peer expectations of girls and women, as Lillian recalled. "I felt it as early as high school and later too—that if you had brains it was well to keep them hidden, if you wanted to be popular. And I felt in general that the boys I knew did not care for someone who could outdo them scholastically."

Because academic work continued to come easy, partially because expectations for women students were so low, Lillian continued to participate in many extracurricular activities, in addition to athletics and dance, while at the University. She appeared in plays and worked on play production crews. She was an officer of Mortar Board (a national honorary society for women) and the Women's Athletic Association. She was in the English Club, The Curtain, and volunteered as a Big Sister. In addition to all of this, she enjoyed an active social life, frequently going to movies, dances, fireside chats, playing bridge and pinochle, and dating. Often, Herman Otness was her date. Theirs was a relationship that went back a long ways.

### High School Years

On the surface the Woodworth and Otness families seemed to have had little in common.

Still, they were not as different as initial appearances—such as social and economic status—would indicate.

Almon and Sarah Lieuallen's wealth has always been greatly exaggerated by local historians. In reality, they had little wealth other than land, and Almon gave away much of the land they owned in an effort to entice settlers to Moscow. When Amanda McAtee challenged Sarah Lieuallen's right to serve as administratrix of A. A. Lieuallen's estate, she estimated that her father had property valued at nearly \$50,000. That would have been a considerable sum, but hardly the makings of wealth. In actuality, however, Almon's estate was much smaller. All his property went to his wife. When she died in 1907, the county treasurer estimated her estate as having an appraised value of \$8,825.

Jay Woodworth loved to hobnob with the social and economic elite of Moscow. But he spent much of his life chasing rainbows—in California, New Mexico, Canada, and Idaho—never finding his pot of gold. He was a gregarious fellow who loved politics and had many friends, but he and Lillie were never among the community's financial elite. It is significant that when Lillie was asked to join one of Moscow's women's clubs, she became a charter member of the Historical Club, known for its good works, its democratic procedures, and its openness to all who wanted to join. She was not asked to join the much more exclusive Pleides Club, despite her father's status as town founder.

The distinction between the Lieuallen/Woodworth and the Sether/Otness families is not due to differences in wealth, but to Almon's reputation as town founder and Jay and Lillie's close ties to Moscow's most prominent families. Still, it is true that the Woodworth and Otness families never mingled socially. The two families were connected by Lillian and Herman, who formed a very early bond.

Herman Robert Otness was born in the house the Otness family rented on Lincoln Street after they moved from the family farm in Blaine where his older sisters Gertie and Clara had been born. In 1909 the family purchased the house on Monroe Street where Ruth, the last of the four children, was born.

Herman's mother Christina was very active in Our Savior's Lutheran Church Ladies Aid.

Shortly before she died in 1950 she was honored with a life membership pin for thirty-nine years of service in the Ladies Aid. Like his mother and other siblings, Herman was active in church. He attended the Norwegian Lutheran Sunday School and was confirmed in 1922. Like Lillian, when he grew older he dropped out of the church, and to a greater extent than Lillian became openly critical of organized religion. "I don't know where he got so bitter all at once," Ruth later said.

Herman spent his first two years of school at the Lincoln School (also known as Ward School) in Swede Town. Most of his grade school years were at the Irving school, on the corner of First and Adams. He attended high school in the building much later known as the Whitworth Building. He later recalled, "I wasn't very active in high school because I was busy working," but he was more active than he remembered. The senior year annual noted that he was secretary/treasurer of the Signa Club and vice president of the Players Club; he appeared in school plays; and he was photographer on the newspaper and yearbook staffs.

Particularly in drama and on the editorial staffs, his path often crossed Lillian's. Although their high school classmate Mildred Axtell Hensley later recalled that they were not a steady couple in high school, they were close enough friends to be teased, as a joke



*Robert and Gertie Otness*

column in the school newspaper made evident:

**Lillian:** *Do you really love me?*

**Herman:** *I love you, I love you, I love you. I lie awake wondering which stars are looking down on you and envying them. I love you, I tell you, I love you, I love you, oh Lillian.*

**Lillian:** *I'm so glad.*

**Herman:** *(tickling her under the chin) Oh! You darling.*



*Lillian and Robert are the couple on the left at this outing in the Potlatch area.*

A long story later in 1926 headed "Senior Prophecy" has Herman married to Lillian. And then there was this story in the May 14, 1926 edition of the paper, headed "A Sailor's Sweetheart":

*May 1, 1996. M.H.S. Woscomonian News Item--Sir Ole Olson, collector of antiques for the national association of Swedes, recently discovered an old, warped, unpainted derelict on the banks of the Potlatch river. . . .*

*Sir Olson, upon exploring the wreck found several things of great antiquity. Among them was found an Eastman Kodak, two battered tin cups, the remnants of a package of "Lifesavers," half a cigarette and a green middy tie. A short distance away he found a small black object. Evidently it was a relic of the dark ages of 1925-26. The top came off! There were several layers of paper—why, it was a sailor's log book or diary. He found the following:*

*Page 1--there was a picture blurred and indistinct. Below it was written "Sailor"*

*Otness and "Elgy" Woodworth. Page 2 consisted of a picture of a young maid dressed in the fashion of 70 years ago. Below this were several lines of writing the gist of which was: "Oh, Sweetheart, I love you so! I love you so! Every night I think of the stars that shine on you and I envy them. Oh, I love you so! I love you so!" Page 3 contained writing the first of which said, "April 25, 1926. Well, tomorrow is the Senior Sneak . . ." Finally came: "April 27. Gosh, I am just dead! I rolled in about 12 p.m. It sure was some exciting day. Whew! I never took so many baths in all my life. I bet I swallowed half the Potlatch river, and Elgy swallowed the other half. We started about 5:30 and after rattling around for a couple of hours came to the forks of the Potlatch. Being a 'Sailor' I picked up a sweetheart and we went for a 'wide around' on the raft. Sailing is sure some wet occupation. 'Elgy's' green tie faded until she had the appearance of a Sicilian; her knickers took a 'clinging' fondency for her as likewise did her middy (and I suppose her P.D.Q.'s) while her legs became ornamented with fifty-seven varieties of bumps. The sweetest music of the day was the squash, squash, squash of her dainty pink toes in a pair of sodden oxfords. Of course I admit that I'm no 'Venus' in the water but then—what bathing beauty is? Of course we could have been drowned if a package of 'Lifesavers' had not been thrown us from the good ship M.H.S.S." (This evidently stands for Moscow High School Sneak).*

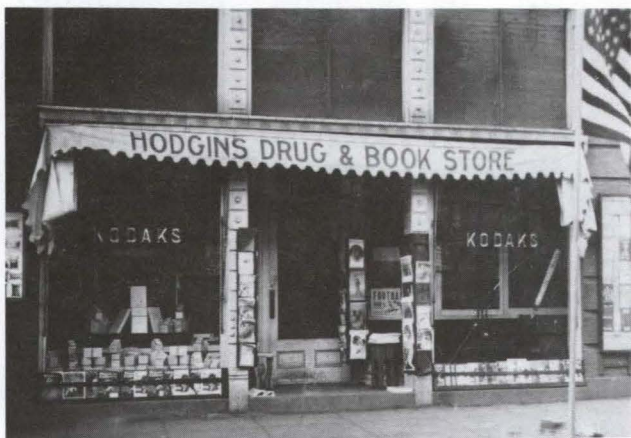
Herman's personal note written in Lillian's senior yearbook reads: "Our school days in MHS are numbered now and then the entire class will scatter—and where we do not know—never to again assemble as they are now. But I shall never forget you in our many quarrels because there was always sunshine afterwards."

Mildred Axtell remembered Herman as one of the biggest teasers in the Class of 1926. He participated in extracurricular activities as he had time, but during his high school years he also had to work. His first job was at Sherfey's Book and Music Store on Main Street, the best place for school supplies and books, along with photography materials and records. Herman began with cleaning and sweeping but soon



was promoted to sales. Eventually, he got a key to the store and opened the business every morning. Upstairs, the record department had a phonograph connected to a horn pointing down at Main Street. Herman enjoyed playing music for the street's passerbys during the noon hour.

While his work at Sherfey's initiated a lifelong interest in recorded music, the store's owner proved difficult. "Sherfey irritated me," he later recalled. "Never paid me very much and I always had to ask for my money. I quit. About that time I was learning to frame pictures. I had heard that Hodgins' was looking for some help."



So Herman, the high school photographer moved down the street to Hodgins' Drug Store where he worked the remainder of his high school and college years. He began selling college text books, but soon moved into the "Kodak department" where he worked alongside well-known Moscow photographer Charles Dimond. In addition to helping Dimond print and occasionally hand tint photos, he ran the music department and decorated the store windows.

At Hodgins' Herman met friends and mentors who were to become nearly as significant in his life as the Gritmans were to Lillian. They included people like Mr. and Mrs. Roland Hodgins, Gerald Hodgins, Charlie Dimond, and John Talbott. He later remembered his last day at the store, before heading off to New York for graduate school:

*I shall never forget the night I left Hodgins. I worked until 6 PM—and my train left at 7 PM. Believe me it was hard for me to make that decision. I could not say good-bye.*

*However, I tried to make it short and snappy as it was really getting me down. I had never been away before. Then, I recalled how dear Mr. Hodgins followed me to the back room—since I left by the back door. He had tears in his eyes and yet wished me the best of luck. Seeing him like that remained with me always. He was a dear—and to me a golden nugget studded with diamonds in my memories of a wonderful man. I never saw him since—and he is no more.*

Like Lillian, Herman attended the University of Idaho after high school. His work at Hodgins' curtailed his extra-curricular activities, although he occasionally participated in plays. Unlike Lillian who won election into Phi Beta Kappa national honorary in 1930 based upon her undergraduate grades, Herman had to wait until 1951, when the University of Idaho chapter of the honorary elected him as an alumnus member, in recognition of his scholarly achievements.



Herman did find some time for fun. He took Lillian on dates in his Model T Ford, and he often drove over to the Woodworth home to play cards.

Herman Otness earned his undergraduate degree in 1930 and his master's degree in psychology and mathematics the following year. After graduation he taught high-school level algebra and physics classes at a private school in Moscow while continuing his work at Hodgins'.

During the hard years of the Great Depression, both Lillian and Herman moved away from Moscow, the town where they had been born and the town where their families had lived for generations. They would eventually return, but not until they had spent nearly two decades away.

## The Years Away

Immediately following graduation from the University of Idaho, Lillian joined the faculty of Klamath Union High School in Klamath Falls, Oregon, where she remained for three years. She taught English and physical education, coached girls' basketball, baseball, volleyball, and tennis, and advised the Girls' Athletic Association and the Girls' Letter Club.

Returning to Moscow each summer to attend school, in 1933 Lillian received her first master's degree from the University. That fall she moved to Pocatello to teach at the Southern Branch of the University of Idaho. There Lillian taught physical education classes ranging from beginning dance to gymnastics. She coached a variety of women's intramural sports, including archery, hockey, basketball, ping pong, volleyball, and softball. She directed the Women's Athletic Association and for a while was president of the faculty women's club.

The 1934 Southern Branch yearbook gave Lillian the nickname "twinkle-toes." During her years in Pocatello Lillian taught dance, sponsored dances, and originated and organized an annual dance program called "Dance Varieties," in which she also occasionally participated.

Dance has remained a vital part of the University of Idaho curriculum because of the influence of Lillian's friend and mentor, physical education teacher Lillian Wirt. Under Wirt's leadership, the school became one of the pioneering universities in the nation at incorporating dance into the curriculum. Lillian Woodworth took this idea with her to Pocatello, and the fact that dance thrives on that campus today is primarily due to her pioneering work.

Lillian Woodworth reached a significant turning point in her development as a teacher of dance in the summer of 1934. She outlined her plans for that summer in a letter to Her-

man: "Has anybody told you that Miss Wirt and I are driving to Vermont to attend a six weeks' summer session in dancing? I'm terribly thrilled over the prospect."

Herman was probably less thrilled, realizing that Lillian would be gone most of the summer. He would not only miss her, but, while she was advancing her professional career, he would remain "stuck" in Moscow. For Lillian, however, this was a unique opportunity. During the 1930s the summer sessions of the Bennington School of the Dance gained a national reputation and, as *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Ballet* noted, "were destined to become one of the most important platforms for modern dance in the U.S."

There is apparently no record existing of the long cross-country journey by auto that Lillian Wirt and Lillian Woodworth made in that summer of 1934, but the six weeks of intense training under dance masters such as Hanya Holm and Martha Graham must have been idyllic and refreshing for the young woman who had chafed under rote learning in high school and university classes. The instruction at Bennington encouraged imagination, and Lillian eagerly incorporated this approach into her modern and interpretive dance

classes at the Southern Branch. In the summer of 1935 Lillian journeyed to Mills College for additional work in modern dance, apparently again under the tutelage of Hanya Holm.

Lillian lived a rich life during her years in Pocatello. She kept a pet English Bulldog; she attended plays; she made friends—both male and female. Yearbooks from the 1930s describe her as "energetic and vivacious at all times," and one noted that she was "shapely, often mistaken for a co-ed." At least one yearbook photo shows her arm-in-arm with a college man, and others show her in the latest fashions for young women in the 1930s.

The greatest formative impact of those years,



however, came from her long association with other single women, both students and professionals. "There was quite a group of single women on that campus," she later recalled. "And it was a rather sociable group. We did lots of things together. And that is something that I have missed all of my married life. I just didn't have friends of that particular kind as much as I did then."

Many of the attitudes that came to characterize Lillian in her later life were shaped by her independent years at Pocatello. For example, here is her comment on trying new things:

*I have always felt that [saying] "we've always done [things] the other way" is about the poorest reason [to do] anything. . . . It's just an attitude of resistance to change. I was on a commencement committee once down at the Southern Branch, and we got into a big hassle over how people were going to march in. And some people thought they saw a more efficient way to do it, and it was finally resolved on the basis, well, "we've always done it the other way." And I think this has been, in the attitudes toward women, has played an important part—resistance to change.*

Lillian speaking on equality of work and pay for women:

*I can remember being burned up when I was on the faculty at the Southern Branch because the executive dean . . . made no secret of the fact that given two applicants equally well qualified, one a man and one a woman, he would take the man anytime. And I felt this was grossly unfair. And I also thought that if a woman happened to be interested in something like women's physical education or home economics, that this was to her advantage because those were jobs for which men didn't ordinarily compete. But I felt it was just very unjust that it should be so.*

And Lillian on independent thinking, reflecting on her school days in Moscow and how events in Pocatello helped transform her views:

*I think as far as . . . questioning anything that was handed down as the word of wisdom, you know, I didn't do it. I wasn't*

*trained that way. I had to come to that later. And it seems to me that it shouldn't be that hard to get there.*

Lillian's time in Pocatello was broken only by an eighteen-month leave to serve as a program director for the United Servicemen's Organization (USO) in Texas and Utah in 1942-43. Following that duty, she returned to Pocatello until 1945.

### Across the Continent

When Herman Otness left Moscow on the 7 p.m. train in September 1935, his life, too, was about to change. In the summer of 1935, Herman received word he had been accepted to the graduate program at New York University and would receive a partial scholarship. Leaving Moscow "on a shoestring," he also left with some misgivings. On the one hand, the small Idaho town provided few professional opportunities. On the other, it was the only place Herman knew, and he later admitted that he left Moscow "with a lot of mixed emotions," and that his "heart [was always] in the Palouse country." A handful of letters and a few diary entries from this period also indicate that Herman's affections for Lillian at this time in their lives was greater than Lillian's for him, and when Lillian left town for Klamath Falls and then Pocatello, Herman had one less reason to stay home.



*The Judson Hotel*

When he arrived in New York City, Herman took up residence in a city landmark, the former Judson Hotel, recently taken over by New York University for student housing. The

Judson dominated the southern side of Washington Square in Greenwich Village, and the sights Herman saw from his seventh floor tower room windows could only have been imagined in Moscow. "I could look up 5th Avenue—and there it was!" he exclaimed.

Always a bit of a loner, he had a single room, which he enjoyed. "It was so nice and so quiet—just what I wanted. It couldn't have been any better." He was to spend all of his time while at New York University at The Judson.

Having left family behind in Moscow, Herman made family-like friends at The Judson, where he worked at the desk in exchange for free room. He especially befriended the head residents, and five years after leaving the hotel, they still kept some clothes for him to wear when he returned to the city.

Greenwich Village, a center for artists and writers, was also home to many Italians and their colorful street festivals with dancing, singing, and food. Herman's few surviving letters from this time describe a life rich in sampling the treasures elsewhere in the large city: taking in operas, plays on Broadway, and concerts in Carnegie Hall; concerts in churches and band performances in theaters; dining out; riding the elevated; visits to Times Square; stage shows at Radio City Music Hall.

There were also forays into surrounding areas, such as his Thanksgiving 1935 trip to Boston that "was worth every cent of the \$5.70 round trip fare plus a few incidental expenses." The bus made a short stop in New Haven, where he visited Yale, finding it "grand." In Boston he toured the *Christian Science Monitor* Publishing Company and the Museum of Fine Arts where "it was so thrilling to actually see so many original paintings on canvas."

Harvard University also impressed him. "I have had dreams of seeing this place all my

life. . . . Here is the real Harvard School of Business, the place I have talked so much about during the past years." One gets the impression he wished he could have gone there. Eventually, his son did.

New York changed Herman just as much as Pocatello did Lillian. Indeed, it was here that he began calling himself Ot instead of Herman. "To all my friends I was . . . known by my last name alone—which dwindled down to only part of my last name—hence the name Ot." For the rest of his life, most of those who knew him before New York continued to call him Herman, while later acquaintances called him Ot. Formally, he began referring to himself during his New York years as H. Robert

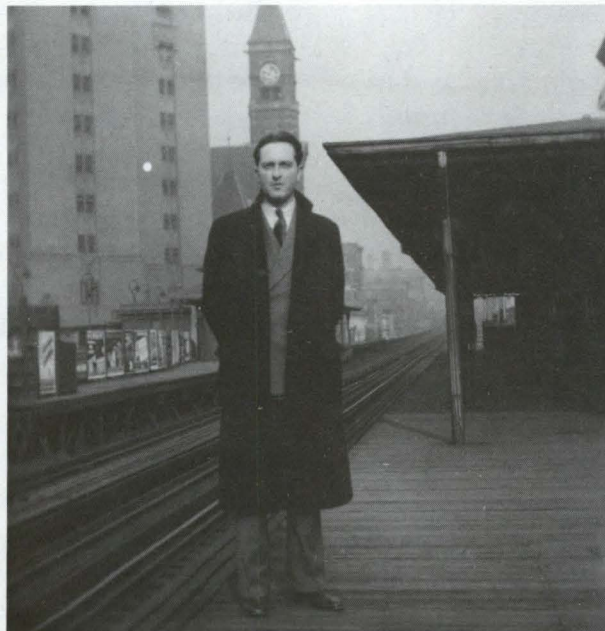
Otness, his formal moniker of choice for the rest of his life. He sought advice on how to legally make that his name, but family attorney Adrian Nelson advised him from Moscow to "simply go ahead and constantly sign your name that way," which is what he did.

New York also changed Ot professionally. In 1937 and 1938, before receiving his doctorate in psychology in 1939, he held a temporary teaching position at Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. A student newspaper feature story

found him "entirely too modest to be a feature-writer's delight," but did learn that his most interesting hobbies were "photography and music. Sports? Oh, yes, the spectator variety."

Following graduation, he took a job as psychologist at the New York State Training School for Boys. "It was strenuous," he later recalled. Some of the boys were robbers and even murderers—"pathetic fellas." Ever the sympathizer with the underdog, Ot stated that, knowing where they came from, "I think I'd do the same thing."

As important as was New York to Ot's personal and professional development, it was to pale in comparison to what was to come



*Herman Otness standing on the elevated train tracks in New York.*

next: three and a half years as the clinical psychologist at The Training School in Vineland, New Jersey. Ot initially only intended to visit the school in order to learn more about the facility. "Way back, for a long time, I had heard about the Training School," he later recalled. "I always wanted to go there to see the place because of its prestige." He made arrangements to meet Edgar Doll, director of the research laboratory, who "took me all around the school and laboratory." Doll and Ot struck a friendship that was to last a lifetime, and Doll soon offered Ot a job. "I had no idea of ever working there and did not know there was a vacancy," Ot later wrote. "In about two days later I received a letter offering me the position of Chief Clinical Psychologist in the Research Laboratory." This was truly heady stuff for a young Ph.D., for Vineland was world famous for its work with exceptional children. And Vineland was to shape Ot's career.

In the early 1900s, Vineland attained its reputation as a cutting-edge research facility when Henry Goddard introduced the Binet Tests in the United States from the Training School. During his years at Vineland, Goddard wrote some of the most influential books in the history of American psychology. And while later scientists have come to question Goddard's methods, there is no question of his influence. His most significant book of the Vineland years was *The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-Mindedness*.

In his effort to prove that feeble-mindedness was hereditary, which later was seriously questioned, Goddard discovered a stock of poor "ne'er-do-wells" in New Jersey and traced their ancestry back to the illicit union of an upstanding man with a supposedly feeble-minded woman. The same man later married a "worthy" woman and started another line composed wholly of upstanding citizens. Since the man had fathered both a good and a bad line, Goddard combined the Greek words for beauty (*kallos*) and bad (*kkakos*), awarding him the pseudonym Martin Kallikak. Based on observations of "Deborah Kallikak" at Vineland, Goddard's book became an instant scientific classic, a "study . . . as widely known as any

research project of the period," according to Arno Press, when it republished the book in 1973.

During World War I the American Psychological Association met at Vineland to devise the Army Intelligence Tests used during both world wars. In 1935, under Edgar Doll, the school published the *Vineland Social Maturity Scale Manual*, which was to serve as the national model for measuring the capabilities of the mentally deficient.

Vineland also attracted the attention of common and famous people who found it a humane place to send family members with mental deficiencies. One was Nobel Prize-winning author Pearl S. Buck, whose daughter Carol lived at Vineland from 1929 until she died in 1992. For many years, Pearl Buck kept silent about Carol, but in 1950 she wrote perhaps her most influential book, *The Child Who Never Grew*, her story about her daughter. "The book was a landmark," wrote Buck's biographer Peter Conn. "Specifically, it encouraged Rose Kennedy to talk publicly about her retarded child, Rosemary. More generally, it helped to change American attitudes toward mental illness."

For years, and long after she had ceased doing voluntary work for other organizations, Pearl Buck served on the Vineland board and was the school's chief fundraiser, enticing notable Americans such as Eleanor Roosevelt to lend their time to assisting the Vineland fundraising cause. Little wonder that in 1987, when Ot received a certificate of recognition from the American Psychological Association, he mentioned Pearl Buck, whom he had met on his very first visit to Vineland, as one of the individuals who had the most influence on him. Others Ot noted as being particularly influential included Henry Goddard, Edgar Doll, and "Deborah Kallikak."

Doll was particularly critical in Ot's professional development. At Vineland, Ot had the opportunity to work on a daily basis with Doll, who was by then considered one of the leading psychological researchers in the world.

Ot thoroughly enjoyed living and working at Vineland. Here was an opportunity to "do good," which Ot always sought to do. In addi-

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*In about two days later I received a letter offering me the position of Chief Clinical Psychologist in the Research Laboratory.*

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tion, Vineland provided an intellectual stimulus that would never again be duplicated in Ot's life. He might well have remained there for years had World War II not intervened.

Learning that the Navy needed assistance examining recruits, Ot volunteered, entering the service as a lieutenant in 1943, stationed in Norfolk, Virginia. Ot found himself a pioneering clinical psychologist in the Navy, which had little experience in this field. His primary responsibility at Norfolk was to screen new recruits to help determine their qualifications and assist the Navy in making job assignments. He also screened returning veterans, and assisted those suffering from combat fatigue in finding rehabilitation centers. In addition, he worked with Navy recruits who violated rules and with survivors of ship disasters. "This has brought the horrors of war into my office from all corners of the world first hand," he wrote. "And what stories to have to hear from a world that professes to be civilized!"

At Norfolk, Ot was part of one of four naval training stations in the United States. In the early summer of 1945 he transferred to another, Farragut Naval Training Station, which at that time represented the largest city in his home state of Idaho. There, Ot worked largely with offenders, many of whom were facing long sentences before they would be able to receive discharges. He also worked with combat personnel, screening them prior to their release from the service.

Moving to Farragut toward the end of the war, Ot stayed on as one of the last naval officers at the site. In 1946, he watched as the flag came down, officially closing the base. "There might have been ten or twelve gathered around the flagpole," he later recalled. He left the service with the rank of lieutenant commander.

## Return to the West

For Ot, the return to the West came with some ambivalence. "It seems that my professional opportunities are here in the east and my heart in the Palouse country," he wrote. More poetically, he wrote to Edgar Doll from Farragut expressing his mixed feelings:

*As I look out the window where I am sitting this evening, I see the tall pine covered mountains with the heavy clouds sinking down over their peaks. Such sights were my boyhood sights,—so it is a pleasure to be able to have them so close in my life again. Beautiful—is the word to describe the country here and it is no sales talk on my part. I missed all of this so much while I was in the east. However, I have a love for both the extremes of the good ol' USA—and either place can well feel like home to me.*



Ot returned to the Palouse in the spring of 1945, while still stationed in Norfolk, one of his rare trips home after his move to New York. He rode a train from Virginia to Moscow and stayed a few days. "It was not a fun trip," he later remembered. "It was kind of stressful.

My mother was rather broken up." The stress came because his father was in his final illness. He died of cancer in June 1945.

Ot was unable to attend his father's funeral, but just days later he again rode a train to Idaho, having been transferred to Farragut. Waiting at the train station in Sandpoint when he debarked was Lillian Woodworth. Less than two weeks later they would be married, culminating a whirlwind engagement for a relationship that went back to childhood.

Ot and Lillian had apparently seen each other only twice in the years after Ot moved east. In 1938, Lillian attended summer school

at New York University and the two visited New York sites together. On a train trip to Moscow from Norfolk, apparently in 1944, the train laid over for a brief time in Pocatello. Ot called Lillian, "and lo and behold, she answered the telephone . . . She jumped in her car and speeded down to the depot and we met there at the station, oh, I'd say maybe about five minutes, maybe ten. I think we exchanged addresses and telephone numbers and that was what started it all over again."

In the fall of 1944 they met for a holiday "half way" between their homes, in Evanston, Illinois. There they became engaged, Ot presenting Lillian "a beauty" of a ring, as Lillian later described it. While the engagement came suddenly, it was not really a surprise to their families, for the two had been so close years before while in high school and college.

Both Lillie and Jay Woodworth were happy about the renewed relationship. "We were always pleased over your's and Lillian's friendship and are happy that you have resumed it," Lillie wrote Ot. "Lillian has written us about . . . your new found happiness. Or is it new? As I look back over it, it seems to me it was always there and that a kind Providence was taking care of you both and saving you for each other. You found the bluebird in your own back yard. Mr. W and I were always pleased to have Lillian go with a young man who had such fine principles, ambitions, resourcefulness and personal appearance."

Ot's family also welcomed the news of the engagement. His mother wrote to him (in her imperfect English), "the last 2 letters we have got from you was kind of suprise letters. You alwas said that Lillian was the onley girl that you cared for. So I think it is fine that you get to gether and want a home of your own. It seems natural fer every one to think that way. Dad thins the same."

Ot and Lillian were married in a private ceremony in a chapel at Farragut. Ot later recalled why there were no relatives nor

friends at the wedding: "We didn't want them. We weren't really great visitors." Following the simple ceremony, the two lived in a simple log cabin on the shore of Lake Pend Oreille in Sandpoint. Here Ot split wood for their two stoves and the two had a quiet life for several months, as Ot described in a letter to Edgar Doll:

*Lillian and I took a nice hike to the top of one of the mountains near our cottage and had lunch. The scene below and the lake were wonderful . . . I recently bought a casting line and have tried to fish from the beach. It has been a lot of fun—but no fish. Soon we will have access to a row boat—and maybe our luck will change. . . .*

*Lillian is such good company—such a good little cook—that going home at night is a real pleasure. We have so many interests that our days are really not long enough. My life here is on the rural side. Last week I churned over two pounds of butter!*

While Ot was able to maintain his professional work at Farragut, marriage brought a more dramatic change for Lillian. Although the time at Sandpoint no doubt was romantic and peaceful for her, too, the "good little

cook" had made the greater sacrifice. "I had been independent for a long time," and the marriage required many adjustments, "being a housewife with no job, no outside commitments and so on." On the other hand, marriage was the accepted norm, and Lillian felt fortunate to be able to find someone like Ot that late in her life:

*[Marriage] was the accepted thing, but when you wait that long you get to the point where all the interesting men your age are already married. And you just don't meet very many eligibles. And I felt that I wouldn't be satisfied to marry somebody that didn't have pretty much the same educational and intellectual background that I had had. I just*

Mr. and Mrs. Jay Woodworth  
announce the marriage of their daughter  
Lillian Guitman

to

Herman Robert Otness  
Lieutenant, United States Naval Reserve  
on Sunday, July the fifteenth  
Nineteen hundred and forty-five  
at Lexington Memorial Chapel  
Farragut, Idaho

*didn't think it would make a good marriage. So it was quite a while.*

After a few months, Ot and Lillian moved from their cabin in Sandpoint to a "nice cabin" at Farragut, where they remained until 1946.

### **A Career Choice**

By working "during my evenings and spare time" Ot managed to have several articles published based upon his Navy research. He hoped this would help him land a job following the war, and he began to seek other employment as soon as Japan surrendered.

Edgar Doll hoped he would return to Vineland: "While it is true that we cannot offer you a very large future here," he wrote, "I should think that there might be many mutual advantages in giving serious consideration to the possibility of resuming your work here for at least a few years."

In the meantime Washington State College, just across the state line from Moscow, asked him to serve as an associate professor in the department of psychology. Ot was not sure about accepting his first-ever teaching position, but the prospect of being close to Moscow proved convincing. Lillian once again got to return to professional life, serving as a student activities counselor. But Ot and Lillian remained in Pullman only a year before Ot received a job offer that allowed him to once again return to helping children with special needs.

The Rainier State School in Buckley, Washington, hoping to establish a psychology clinic, wanted Ot to begin the program. To the Otnesses, the school and situation looked "just ideal," with a fine house and "everything was furnished, and a pretty good salary, too," a better salary, in fact, than the one at Washington State College. So Ot and Lillian loaded up their few possessions, including the piano from Ot's family home in Moscow, and moved to Buckley.

The Rainier School occupied 1,265 acres about twenty-five miles east of Tacoma. The state legislature created the school in 1937 at a time when the only other state facility for mentally deficient children was at Medical Lake. By 1947, the school had a population of about 1,000.

At the Rainier School, Ot returned to an institution similar to Vineland and, as the first director of the school's department of research, he looked forward to the opportunity for scientific study. "Not enough is known about the causes of mental deficiency, and the reasons why a brain suddenly stops growing," he told a reporter from *The Seattle Times*. "Where will research be done if it is not done in a school like this?"

Under Ot's direction the Rainier School undertook clinical studies of each child, classified the children, and provided a training program geared to each individual's abilities. His other major responsibility was to publicize the school. In 1948, for example, he spoke to nearly fifty groups and organizations about the school.

Ot was once again where he liked being the most, working closely with children with special needs, training staff to work with handicapped people, and meeting colleagues at professional conferences. The year 1948 proved to be special in another way, too, as Lillian on October 16 gave birth to seven pound, twelve ounce Robert Jay whom they named after his grandfathers Robert Otness and Jay Woodworth. Lillian and Ot enjoyed taking their baby on buggy rides around the grounds where children flocked to see him. "He was very popular," Ot later remembered.

Rainier seemed like the kind of place the Otnesses might have remained for a long time. But a variety of circumstances cut their stay shorter than they had expected. Ot's mother Christina, died of cancer in the family home on March 5, 1950, leaving the old Otness house vacant. Jay Woodworth was seriously ill (he would die in 1954), and Lillian felt the need to return to Moscow to be with her father.

The availability of the Otness family home and a one-year opening for a professor of psychology at the University of Idaho provided an opportunity. In addition, the Rainier School was embroiled in a political controversy that resulted in massive staff resignations. Ot had been asked to become director of the school, but the controversy, along with Jay Woodworth's illness, prompted him to decline. For the rest of his life he would wonder if he had made the correct choice.

While indications are that Ot learned to enjoy university teaching, he always regretted



that he did not get the chance to return to the field of his "choice" where he could work directly with people with mental deficiencies. He considered that he had made a professional sacrifice by moving to the University of Idaho so Lillian could be near her parents. On the other hand, the political situation at Rainier made life there so uncomfortable that there is no doubt the Otnesses were destined to leave, and there were precious few opportunities at other institutions, particularly if the family wished to remain in the Northwest. Most probably Ot's acceptance of the position at the University was not as great a sacrifice as he often let on.

In the fall of 1950, Ot and Lillian returned to Moscow to live in Ot's family home, to take up new careers, to raise their son, and to live the rest of their lives. When both had left Moscow in the 1930s for independent lives in Pocatello and New York, probably neither had any intention of returning. Those years away were critical formative years, and Ot and Lillian returned very changed people. Their life together in Moscow would be one of compromise, as neither had the independence each had previously enjoyed.



*Young Robert Otness*

Moscow offered little of the excitement of New York or even Pocatello; raising Robert Jay and tending Lillian's parents would require sacrifices; and Ot would embark on a new career that did not entirely enchant him, at least not at first. Still, they would stay in Moscow to complete their professional careers and enjoy a

long and active retirement.

### **Return to Moscow**

Ot accepted the University of Idaho's one-year teaching offer, a job that required a consider-

able pay cut. He wishfully noted in his acceptance letter that "any adjustment in the salary would be greatly appreciated."

It took a reluctant Ot a long time to think of himself as a permanent member of the faculty. "I had intended to teach just a . . . course, and the next thing you know, my 'temporary' assignment had turned into 21 years," he later reflected. A year after he arrived at the University, Ot responded to a colleague who offered him a job at the Arizona Children's Colony: "Your letter was a real thrill to receive. It was almost like throwing a steak at a vulture! I have spent my happiest professional years with the handicapped children—and now I miss them." But, "because of present commitments and obligations," he responded that he could not accept the offer.

Three years later when Ot declined another employment possibility, he noted that "Lillian's father is still very ill and requires attention. She spends the nights with him—and gets home in the morning in time to relieve me to go to school. So you see we have had quite a schedule."

In August, 1954, Jay Woodworth died, but by then the job offers arrived less frequently. Still, as late as 1964 Ot expressed a desire to get back to his "true" profession even though he felt it was too late. "The position you mentioned sounds fine," he wrote to a colleague. "It makes me a bit homesick for the type of work you are doing. After all of my time in it I have not given up my fondness for it. I have been here on this position for so long now I feel I must stick it out for retirement reasons."

In addition to being away from daily work with children, Ot felt isolated. "Doll was out here in June and stayed with us . . . for a few days," he wrote in 1951. "It seemed good to see someone from the East again. Out here one can become professionally lonely in mental deficiency."

To combat the frustration of working only in academe and to help make up for the pay cut Ot started a private practice in his home. "Several local physicians have referred children to me," Ot wrote, "so I am going to stick out my shingle on the side."

To help counteract the isolation of working in Moscow, Ot organized a series of highly attended summer conferences that permanently changed the way exceptional children

were cared for in the state of Idaho. The first two-day conference, held in 1954, focused on mentally retarded and handicapped children. Nearly 300 people attended, setting the stage for four additional similarly attended conferences in the following summers.

These conferences proved to be extremely influential. Locally, the first conference provided the impetus for Moscow businessman Lee Connelly to begin the Moscow Opportunity School to serve the needs of exceptional children. While not formally affiliated with the school, Ot was in many ways the "father" of the Moscow institution, and in his retirement years he entertained children from the Opportunity School with magic shows.

On a state level, the summer conferences brought Ot to the attention of Alton B. Jones, state superintendent of public instruction. In 1957 Jones appointed Ot and Dr. Charlotte Cleveland of Idaho State College to serve along with himself on a three-person committee to determine the state board of education's responsibility in special education, particularly for the mentally deficient and gifted. This small committee dramatically reshaped public policy, and by the late 1960s the state legislature passed laws requiring that all handicapped children capable of being educated be given access to special school facilities in the state. The committee on which Ot served was instrumental in developing "interest in the education of the handicapped child," it was noted at the time of the legislation.

Ot's summer conferences also led directly to the formation in 1962 of the Idaho chapter of the Council for Exceptional Children, a national organization assisting children with special needs. Ot became a member of the Council and one of the leading advocates of the needs for exceptional children in Idaho. In the late 1950s he became a charter member of the Idaho Psychological Association. It was not a large organization (in 1965 Ot was one of only twenty-three psychologists licensed in the state) but it did influence public discussions and school and legislative policy-making.

By the 1970s, Ot was frequently referred to as a "pioneer" in the fields of mental retardation and child development in the state. As the University of Idaho noted when honoring him upon his retirement,

*Service and dedication to the education of Idaho's handicapped in the many related fields of psychology are the hallmarks of a 21-year career for Dr. H. Robert Otness . . . . His programs and service for the mentally retarded, visually handicapped, acoustically impaired, physically crippled, speech impaired as well as the mentally gifted loom as great milestones in the State of Idaho's efforts to keep pace with the needs of her citizenry.*

Indeed, Ot's many "extracurricular" activities do loom large in the history of Idaho's treatment of its exceptional residents. But even more than the summer conferences, the special committees, the speeches to community groups, and the professional memberships, Ot's most significant contributions came in the classroom. Ot, the reluctant professor, became increasingly proficient at his new career, and his ability to stimulate produced hundreds of students more aware of the needs of exceptional people. This army of teachers, policy makers, and concerned residents was to be Ot's greatest legacy to his home state.

For more than two decades Ot taught classes in child psychology, personality, abnormal psychology, social psychology, mental hygiene, and the exceptional individual. He taught all year long, working the University's summer sessions virtually every year. Ot gave the first courses at the University on mental deficiency and clinical psychology.

In 1964 the University's Student Educational Improvement Committee honored Ot with an outstanding faculty award. And even Ot who began his teaching career reluctantly, eventually came to enjoy teaching. Looking back on his career in the late 1980s he wrote, "It has been fun all along the way with the usual ups and downs. I enjoyed my clinical experience. I enjoyed teaching university men and women and sharing some of [my] experiences with them—and also learn[ing] from their experiences that they shared with me."

After he left the Navy, Ot did little research and publication, the one area of his teaching evaluations in which he rated low. But for Ot, stimulation came in doing, not in research. And he found many ways to be professionally active. Although he did not long maintain the private practice he began in the early 1950s, Ot maintained his professional associations,

volunteered at places like the Moscow Opportunity School and state hospitals in Medical Lake and Orofino, and worked with elderly individuals at the Latah Convalescent Center. He also maintained the very active speaking schedule he had begun at Buckley. During his twenty-one years at the University he spoke to hundreds of clubs, organizations, and civic groups.

In the 1950s and 1960s Ot annually released tips on buying safe and educational Christmas toys, and his suggestions were frequently picked up on the wire services and run in newspapers throughout Idaho and the West.

Ot retired from the University in 1971. Although he launched this new phase of his life with some reluctance, it may well have been that teaching was the field he was destined for. It certainly was one in which he excelled.



*Ot at center outside the Monroe Street house. The couple is not identified.*

Teachers do not often receive the recognition that researchers and clinicians do. Their rewards come not in publicity but in the recognition provided by former students whose lives they have affected, and Ot affected the lives of an entire generation of students. It was indeed fitting, then, that two years after retiring he was honored with the most prestigious award of his career. This was the first annual Edgar A. Doll Award given by Region One of the American Association of Mental Deficiency. Ot was the clear choice to win the award named after his mentor and friend.

Despite the honor, Ot never attained the national and international recognition of his mentor and his name is not included in ency-

clopedias of famous psychologists. But when you consider the rippling affect of his teaching upon thousands of students and the changes these students brought to the treatment of handicapped people during their careers, it might well be that his impact was the greater.

### Community Life

Just as Ot's return to Moscow signaled a change of professions, so too did Lillian have to adapt to different circumstances. Although she mostly stayed busy with the family, Lillian did find some time for volunteer activity. In the 1950s she became actively involved in the Moscow branch of the American Association of University Women, serving as president. She would maintain her active participation in the organization into the 1990s.

In the 1960s she became even more involved in a volunteer organization that must have brought back memories of her youth. In 1963, Lillian served with twelve other women on a committee planning the organization of a women's auxiliary for Gritman Hospital. Lillian would remain extremely active in the Gritman Auxiliary until poor health forced her to stop volunteering in the 1990s—but not before she had donated thousands of hours to the organization, particularly to the sewing committee.

For most people, going back to college in their fifties would be out of the question. Yet for Lillian, that choice seemed evident, based upon her belief that she had never truly been challenged to think while in school in her earlier years. "I felt as I got older that I was vastly undereducated," she stated. Lillian was always able to see the connection between physical health and mental achievement; to her they were of equal importance, and throughout her life she made time to exercise both her mind and body. Thus, when she went back to the University to receive her second master's degree she chose English.

In 1963—when Robert was fifteen and no longer needing her at home so much—Lillian began teaching in the University of Idaho English department, a position she would retain for nearly ten years before retiring in 1972. After announcing her retirement effective the end of spring semester 1972—one year after Ot—Dean Elmer Raunio wrote to her,

*This serves to acknowledge receipt of your resignation from your position as Instructor in English. . . . I am truly sorry that the time has come when the University will lose your services. . . . I built up a very high regard for your abilities and for your devotion to your teaching—hence my feelings are soundly based. Thank you on behalf of the College of Letters and Science for your service to the College.*

### **Together They Always Made Rainbows**

In a sense, Ot had been preparing for retirement for many years. In a 1957 speech he expressed concern that so few people were ready for retirement. He listed the traits required to retire successfully: good eating habits, physical fitness, moderation in all things, caution in daily living, a wholesome outlook with a positive view, an appreciation of people, finding a hobby early in life that will carry over into maturity, and caution not to become too job centered while working. Ot did not specifically mention travel, but by 1972 that had moved to the top of the couple's list of things to do in retirement.

Lillie Woodworth died on February 8, 1971, just four days short of her ninety-seventh birthday. For several years on each birthday she had been the object of a feature story in the local Moscow newspaper, the *Idahonian*. As the last living link to Moscow's pioneer settlement period, she would recount details of the town's history.

When her mother died, Lillian was finally freed of the family responsibilities that had brought the Otnesses back to Moscow in 1950, and she and Ot were free to travel.

For Ot and Lillian the six weeks they spent in Europe in the summer of 1972 was the first of many retirement trips—some overseas, but most in the Western United States, the latter often taken with the Moscow Roadrunners, a group of retirees that the Otnesses joined as charter members.

As he had suggested in his 1957 speech, Ot had found a hobby early in life that carried over into his retirement: magic. For Lillian, however, the "hobby" came only after retirement, and became more like a second profession.

"To some extent I always had a sense of

history," Lillian noted to a reporter in the 1980s who was interested in her association with the Latah County Historical Society. "I think, probably, my family's background in Moscow pushed me into joining the society." Shortly after her retirement, Lillian was serving as chair of the society's membership committee, and was on the publications committee, a group which, under her leadership and that of chairman Kenneth Platt, would see the publications activities of the society grow from producing a mimeographed newsletter and local history brochure into one of the most respected publications programs of any county historical society in the United States.



*Ot and Lillian with historical society publications at Potlatch Logger Days in the mid-1980s.*

In 1973, Lillian joined the society's oral history committee and shortly thereafter became its longtime chair. That was the committee that was to spearhead the society's growth to a true professional organization, and was to seal Lillian's interest in both the society and Latah County history. She chaired the committee through its incredible growth, until it had amassed one of the largest oral history collections in the Pacific Northwest. Simply stated, the society would not, in the 1990s, be considered one of the finest county historical societies in the nation had it not been for the leadership of Lillian Otness and project director Sam Schrager on the oral history project.

Sam later wrote his reminiscences of the project and of Lillian's role in the growth of the society:

*She envisioned the historical society as an institution that would help the community learn about itself. She didn't wax on about why people needed to study their shared history . . . but her desire to create such a place, a place to encounter and be stimulated by honest representations of the past, guided all of her volunteering . . . .*

*When I spent afternoons in Lillian's front parlor, describing what I'd been hearing as I went about my research, she listened intently. She was as excited, and sometimes as perplexed as I, as we tried to grasp why certain stories mattered so much to individual tellers and, surprisingly often, to their communities. Like all the best teachers, she trusted me to find my own way while making me feel that she was, in spirit, with me on the journey . . . .*

*Lillian would be proud to know that the institution's reputation, so well-established regionally, is strong where it matters, at home. She knew it would take time. She'd never take credit for it, but the Society prospers because it has been true to her vision of a thriving local culture.*

Having seen the success of the oral history project when headed by a dynamic professional, Sam Schrager, Lillian was one of the first society members to advocate for a full-time professional director of the historical society. This was a controversial decision that led to several members leaving the organization, members who envisioned the society as more of a place for displaying the artifacts of the pioneer past rather than an organization with a larger mission to preserve and interpret the history of everyone in the county, from pioneers to the newest residents.

There were those who believed that a part-time staff working a few months each year, as the society had in the early 1970s, was ample; that an organization dedicated primarily to social activities and honoring pioneers required no additional leadership. But Lillian believed there was a greater role to play in preserving and interpreting county history, and in 1975 a three-person committee consisting of Ray Berry, Leora Stillinger, and Lillian recommended that the society hire a full-time director, a move which transformed the organization.

In the following years Lillian would lead the board of trustees into a wide variety of new programs that would ensure continued growth and professionalism: she worked hard for increased funding from the county commission; she advocated development of the society's research library; she fought for a change in format from the society's newsletter/bulletin to *Latah Legacy*, a journal about local history; as chair of the membership committee she oversaw a doubling of the society's membership.

For her many efforts, the society and other organizations cited her for awards. She won the society's first annual volunteer of the year award. She was nominated to serve on state-wide boards of the Idaho State Historical Society and the Idaho Humanities Council. The Moscow Historic Preservation Commission gave her an orchid award for outstanding work in historic preservation. And in 1983 she won one of the nation's most prestigious awards for those who labor in the field of local history, a certificate of commendation from the American Association for State and Local History—one of only fifty-five certificates awarded that year to individuals and institutions throughout the United States and Canada.



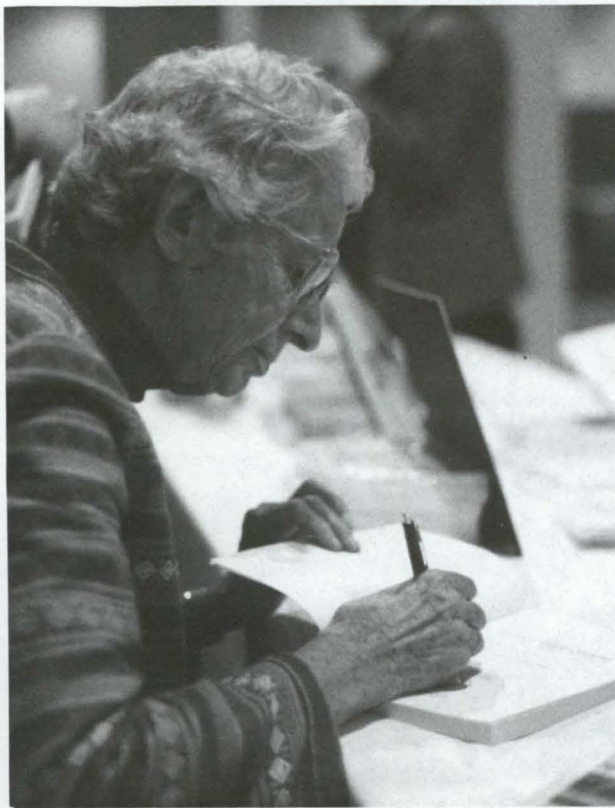
*Lillian receiving the AASLH award presented by Dr. Merle Wells, Idaho State Historian, in 1983.*

By the early 1980s Lillian was able to step back a little from her task of overseeing so many projects, as the society was then staffed by four year-round professional employees. Her interest in the society did not diminish, but its

emphasis changed.

During the nation's bicentennial celebration in 1976, Ot and Lillian had sponsored a project to develop a guidebook to the area. The result was *The Moscow-Latah County Historic Tours Guidebook*, a limited-edition publication that enjoyed success. Lillian had a vision of enlarging the scope of the guidebook. She formed a committee of people with expertise in various areas of the county's history and met monthly with them. She often said that the book that resulted from this effort, *A Great Good Country: A Guide to Historic Moscow and Latah County*, was a joint effort. But the book was truly hers.

Over the course of five years of research she read more than thirty years' worth of Moscow newspapers, researched in archives and repositories locally and regionally, reviewed hundreds of pages of oral history transcripts, and assembled a wide array of historical information into a readily accessible guide.



*Lillian signing copies of her book*

Lillian's years of research on *A Great Good Country* whetted her appetite for historical research. During the next decade she wrote walking tour brochures for the historical society and numerous articles for its quarterly journal. She assisted in the society's research

library. She transcribed her grandfather's store ledger and made numerous lists of significant events in Moscow and Latah County. And she became actively involved in researching the history of her own family.

Ot also took an interest in the affairs of the historical society, frequently volunteering at social and fundraising events. In 1976, he and Lillian—using their stage names of Zingo and Lingo—sponsored a magic show as a fundraiser for the oral history project. More than 800 people attended, giving the oral history project a greatly needed financial boost.

Ot, however, was never as involved in the society as Lillian. But, taking his cue from his own pre-retirement advice, he remained extremely active in a variety of interests during his retirement years.



*Ot performing a rope trick during a magic show*

Ot's interest in magic began in the 1930s, but it was not until he retired that he had much time to devote to his hobby. He initially thought of magic as a way to reach out to mentally deficient children and help them learn—and he did eventually entertain “a few thousand mentally handicapped persons” with his magic shows. But magic became something

important for its own reasons, a way Ot and Lillian as Zingo and Lingo could perform together on stage and enjoy themselves in a venture far removed from the disciplines of their former professional careers.

And the two did perform regularly. They gave programs at fundraising events for organizations like the American Festival Ballet and Special Olympics. They gave performances for children who lived in their neighborhood. And they were regulars on Spokane Magic Club programs. When Ot died, the former president of the Spokane Magic Club wrote to Robert about his father:

*During past annual magic shows everyone enjoyed your mother and father's performance. They were well-liked and respected. The last show we had was held on April 29, 1995. We missed your parents' performance. This show was dedicated to the remembrance of your father, and the special person that he was to us. I also spoke a little to the magic brethren and the audience who attended this performance about your father as a person, and about his contributions to our magic Club. I know I will miss him.*



*Ot and the neighborhood children  
at the Otness' annual Christmas party.*

July Fourth became the annual performance of Zingo and Lingo. The Otnesses began the tradition of a 4th of July party for neighbor-

hood children in 1953. In the 1970s and 1980s, the event usually drew between thirty and fifty children who would parade around the neighborhood with flags and homemade hats before attending a magic performance. At Christmas time, Zingo and Lingo performed again, at what became an annual Otness Christmas party, sometimes for neighborhood children, sometimes for special education classes.

Throughout his retirement, Ot remained active in his former profession by lecturing on the needs of and creating exhibits about exceptional people. It is not surprising that Ot remained interested in his profession after retirement, or that he continued to lecture during University summer sessions—given his often-repeated assertion that university talent was usually wasted once faculty retired.

Following his sabbatical in 1966, Ot wrote to University of Idaho president Ernest Hartung about the need to make better use of retired faculty: "A better use of talent and experience in Idaho of persons being retired should be considered. It seems illogical to assume that as of a certain day a person becomes of no use to society."

In order to see some of this "landfill of talent" better utilized in Moscow, in 1978 Ot began working on a project that would consume much of his time during retirement. In that year the University's faculty secretary circulated a memo suggesting the possibility of organizing an association that "could give retired faculty members . . . a regular mechanism for continued participation in the life of the University." The faculty council appointed a committee consisting of Ot, Elna Grahn, Alf Dunn, and Richard Johnston to explore the possibilities of forming such an association.

In order to determine the interests, talents, and desires of retirees, Ot developed a questionnaire. The results of that questionnaire largely determined the future of an organization that became incorporated as the University of Idaho Retirees Association (UIRA), with Ot becoming a charter member and serving on the first board of directors.

The UIRA was largely the brainchild of Ot, who had spoken out frequently about the need for such an organization in the 1960s and 1970s and was no doubt responsible for the faculty secretary sending the memo that spurred the organization. Ot remained active

in UIRA throughout the 1980s —although he never did feel that it fulfilled all of its promise of utilizing the talents of retirees to assist with the teaching needs of the University.

Although the University Retirees Association did not accomplish all that Ot had hoped, throughout their retirement both Ot and Lillian combined volunteerism, philanthropy, and civic activism into a lifestyle that kept them very busy. Continuing a joint interest that dated back to their high school years, the Otnesses served on the prop and stage committees of the Moscow Community Theater. In her retirement Lillian became even more active in the Gritman Hospital Auxiliary. When shopping malls moved into Moscow in the 1970s, Lillian and Ot played leadership roles in attempting to retain the downtown area as a vital business core.

Both Ot and Lillian strongly supported a new addition to the Carnegie Library and a community center in the former post office as ways of revitalizing the downtown area. In both 1979 and 1986 Lillian helped lead the fight in supporting a bond

levy that would have transformed the post office into a museum and community center. Both bond levies failed, but through the persistence of people like the Otnesses, by the 1990s the building had not only been preserved but had also become the community center many had so long envisioned.

Late in her life, Lillian took up the cause of another historic preservation battle, to save Moscow's 1912 High School which had subsequently been renamed the Whitworth Building.

Moscow was a completely different community in the 1990s than it was in the 1970s, and much of that was due to the historic preservation leadership of Lillian Otness. In earlier times, "developers" could destroy historic

structures without fearing any reprisal from the community. By the 1990s, well-publicized historic preservation struggles over structures like the former post office and the Whitworth Building made this all but impossible. In the 1990s, agencies such as the Latah County Historical Society, the Moscow Historic Preservation Commission, and the Latah County Historic Preservation Commission—the later two formed in the 1980s—were important players in the politics of historic preservation.

While many people deserve credit for leading the shift in public thinking toward preserving important historical structures, no one played a more vital—though often overlooked—role than did Lillian Otness. Through her persistent voice, her community activism, her volun-

teering on behalf of historic preservation efforts, and through her ground-breaking book *A Great Good Country* and the subsequent walking tour brochures, Lillian helped to lead many people into the fray, with significant ramifications for the future of the community.

It was this sense of improving the commu-

nity by retaining its history that led Lillian in the 1970s to consider donating the last remaining acres of her grandfather's claim to the city to be used as a park. In honor of the national bicentennial in 1976, Lillian and Robert donated six parcels of land on Residence Street. The donation came just 100 years after Almon Lieuallen purchased his log cabin store from Samuel Miles Neff and moved it into what became Moscow's Main Street. Over the course of his life, Lieuallen donated much property in an effort to boost Moscow, and—a century later—his granddaughter and great-grandson continued that tradition by giving land for Almon Asbury Lieuallen Park.

Ot, too, proved philanthropic in his retire-



*Lillian and Moscow Mayor Gary Scott at the dedication of the park in 1987, during Moscow's centennial*



ment. In 1991 he donated \$3,000 to the Training School at Vineland for construction of a case in the administration building to exhibit artifacts relating to the history of the school. It was similar to an exhibit case he had made for the University of Idaho psychology department in the 1980s, also for the display of historical materials. Ot also spent a good deal of time in his later years donating parts of his large collections—especially books—to various institutions.

### Perspectives from a Diary

For two years in the 1920s, Lillian kept daily diaries. Like many people, she always had good intentions of being more consistent in her diary writing. Her resolution on New Years 1928 was to have “fewer blank pages in this book.” Even so, her diary for that year runs only through January. She would not return to her diaries until 1983. From that year into 1992, Lillian, for the only time in her life, kept regular, nearly daily notations of activities. Her last entry comes on October 29, 1992, written in pencil: “Turned on the heat in the kitchen.”

The entry is in many way typical. Neither Lillian nor Ot (in the diary he kept in the 1930s while in New York) were given to sharing personal thoughts and introspection. Their diaries record daily activities. You can learn much about the amount of time they spent going to plays, doing volunteer tasks, baking for the holidays. You can't learn much about how these daily events affected them. So, you have to be cautious trying to read too much into these entries.

Was Lillian's entry on September 7, 1984 a precursor to a fatal illness, or just a recording of the type of forgetfulness that we all experience? “In evening to post office to retrieve keys.” Sometimes in the 1980s Lillian would walk to the historical society, having left at home something she intended to bring along. “It makes me so damn mad when I forget things,” she would say.

There is no doubt that some brief diary entries in the early 1990s indicate that Lillian knew she was in dramatically failing health:

*October 27, 1991: Left [Yakima with Road runners] at 9:30 for Moscow. Arrived early*

*afternoon but distressed when home; called [Dr.] Spain.*

*April 30, 1992: To Dr. for estimate of what to do next.*

*August 10, 1992: To West One bank for signing papers to complete wills and check Medicare receipts.*



*Lillian and Joann Jones in front of the McConnell Mansion's Christmas tree in 1986.*

On August 13, 1992, Lillian, Ot, and Robert met with representatives of the Latah County Historical Society about a possible donation. My own diary entry for that date states, “I have not seen much of Lillian in the last two years. She is frail, and her mind wanders. Once during the meeting she mistook me for her father.”

That was a difficult day for me. Just two years earlier, our children had arrived from India, with many new demands on time and much less time to spend volunteering at the historical society or visiting with friends in Moscow. On that day in August 1992, I was shocked at how Lillian had declined, and I felt guilty that I had not stayed more in touch; there had been times in our friendship, in the 1980s, when seldom more than a day or two went by without our seeing each other.

In 1992, Lillian's health steadily declined as her fine mind and athletic body were racked by Alzheimer's. In the spring of 1993 she was admitted to Latah Care Center. By then, she

rarely recognized anyone, even family members. On Mother's Day in 1994, Robert made the last video recording of his parents together, both in wheelchairs in the care center. Lillian does not speak, but throughout the visit she wants to hold Ot's hands as they sit together. Somewhere in the back of her ravaged mind, one feels that she recognizes Ot—and that she understands their time together is short.

Two months later, on July 22, 1994, she died. The historical society dedicated its annual homes and gardens tour and ice cream social that year to "the memory of Lillian Woodworth Otness, friend, visionary, and leader in preserving and interpreting Latah County's history." The previous fall, the University of Idaho Dance Theater dedicated its production of "Interiors" to Lillian.

In September 1994 Ot and Robert buried Lillian's urn in the Moscow cemetery. "My father insisted that my mother's name be the prominent name on the stone," Robert noted.

Ot received many sympathy cards upon Lillian's death, but the one written by Carolyn Gravelle, who worked with Lillian on her historic guidebook, summed up their relationship the most succinctly: "Together you always made rainbows."

Ot, not in good health when Lillian died, steadily declined after Lillian's death. He died on April 21, 1995 of congestive heart failure and advanced Alzheimer's disease.

Lillian and Ot are not the type of people who will be written about in books. But they influenced hundreds of people—including this author—an influence stretching over decades that changed lives, taught lessons, improved the quality of a small Idaho town, and enriched those who knew them. They lived their lives well and they enhanced the lives of those around them, and that is an impressive legacy few can match.

**Note:** This article is taken from a more extensive and documented biography of these families written by Keith Petersen which is available for researchers at the Latah County Historical Society's Library.

The author, Keith Petersen, has written several articles for *Latah Legacy* over the past few years. He is also the author of *Company Town: Potlatch and the Potlatch Lumber Company*; *River of Life: Channel of Death: Fish*

*and Dams on the Lower Snake River, and This Crested Hill: An Illustrated History of the University of Idaho.* Currently he is an editor at the Washington State University Press.

Photographs used in this article came from the Latah County Historical Society's collection and the private collection of Robert Otness.



*Ot with Mary Banks. During retirement he recorded and photographed local people and events for the historical society and other community organizations.*

This article is part of a project funded in part by the Idaho Humanities Council, a state-based agency of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and Robert Jay Otness. The project produced a biography of the Otness family and an exhibit at the historical society which is described in the following article.

## There Was Always Sunshine: Notes on the Exhibit

### Mary Reed

When we began planning the exhibit, the amount of material seemed overwhelming. Also, we didn't want the story to be only a biography of these interesting families. Because of Lillian and Ot's close relationship to the historical society, we wanted more than the standard biographical approach.

After a few false starts, Keith Petersen hit upon an approach to integrate different perspectives. The first was biographical, to tell the story of these families in relation to Moscow's growth. The second was to provide insights into the objects, photographs, and other materials that had been passed down for generations. And the third was to encourage visitors to think about their own family histories and the memorabilia they have saved.

We also wanted to educate our visitors about the connection between family history and the historical societies which preserve and interpret that history. Large collections from or about one family are particularly valuable because they reflect family and community values and changes over time. We were fortunate that the Otnesses had been so generous in donating a rich variety of materials.

In this exhibit, the large collection of items donated over the years reveals the importance of single items, such as Lillie Lieuallen's wedding dress, and ledgers from the Lieuallen store. These are objects that most families would want to save. More puzzling or interesting were the nails and pieces of charred wood in a box with a hand-written label: "Square nails from the Lieuallen House Fire." Unfortunately, there is no record of where that house was or when it burned.

Although some family heirlooms have mone-

tary value, most are probably treasured because of their sentimental value. A pair of Almon's cuff links was handed down from Lillie Woodworth to her daughter Lillian who then gave them to her future husband, Herman (Ot) Otness. These may be the only personal items belonging to Almon Lieuallen that have survived.

Artifacts can also tell us how each family lived and what may have been most important to them. Christina Otness's mincemeat jar, cookie jar, crocks, and ribbons from the county fair reveal her love of cooking. A handmade doll suggests thrift and the enjoyment of handmade objects.

A sewing basket and embroidery and a what-not shelf with miniature pitchers came from the Lieuallen and Woodworth side of the family. In addition, Lillian's mother carefully saved her daughter's baby book and her long, blond braids.

Both Lillian and Ot were collectors, and among the items they donated to the historical society are toys and baby clothing belonging to their son. They, like most parents, carefully documented and saved memorabilia belonging to their first child. In most families, photos and childhood items of later children generally become fewer.

Photographs are a major part of the exhibit, yet there are many gaps. There are only two photographs of Karen Sether and none of her husband, Herman. The only photographs we have of the Lieuallens is a portrait of Almon, a family grouping, Sarah and her friends with their bicycles, and a shot of the family home with two women and two boys in front, none of whom is identified. Only one photograph of Almon and one of the family exist, which is somewhat puzzling. Moscow had photograph studios, like Erickson's, in the early days and surely the Lieuallens could have afforded to have more than one image taken. Even later they may have owned their own camera. Because they only had one child who lived to adulthood, Lillie probably would have inherited all the family photos. Where are the other photos?

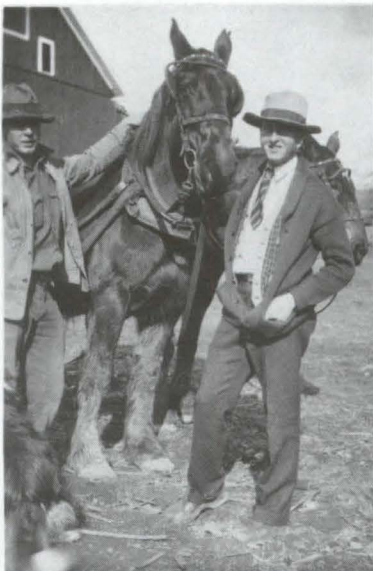


*Lillian wearing her mother's wedding dress, c1985*



The women in this unidentified photo taken in South Dakota may belong to a religious order

We were fortunate to receive three photo albums from the Otness branch of the family. A few people are labeled in two of the albums which makes it possible to identify other people. Unfortunately the oldest album, which may contain photos of the early Sether and Otness ancestors, has no identification for any of the images and it is unlikely now that an identification can ever be made. Photographs are treasured family keepsakes and valuable research tools, but if they are not labeled they risk becoming only curiosities or may be discarded.



Ot is at right, but we don't know who the other man is or where the photo was taken

the more typical tourist shots of skyscrapers and buildings.

The two photo albums that Ot put together contain wonderful candid snapshots that reveal a lot about social and cultural life of the times. This was also a time when almost everyone could afford cameras and film. Ot took many snapshots during his time in New York City, including ordinary street

scenes as well as

the more typical

However, the historic usefulness of the photos is impaired because they are not identified.

Moscow, Nov. 8, 1944.

Dear Ot:

Lillian has written us about her lovely trip, your splendid vacation and visit together - but best of all - your new found happiness.

Oh is it new?

As I look back over it, it seems to me it was always there and that a kind Providence was taking care of you both and saving you for each other. You found the bluebird in your own back yard

Lillian Woodworth's letter to Ot, Nov. 8, 1944, congratulating him on his engagement to Lillian

Of all things a family can preserve, letters and journals are the most significant. These written materials can tell us much about everyday life which official documents and business records overlook. Yet many people, believing their lives are too ordinary to be of value to anyone else, discard these records. Or they might believe that their letters and journals contain information so personal that it should never be shared with the public. In either case, donations of personal correspondence and diaries/journals are still relatively rare. We were fortunate that Lillian and Ot and their son realized the importance of their correspondence and diaries. Without this information the exhibit and this issue would be much less insightful and interesting.

The exhibit, *There Was Always Sunshine*, will be at the McConnell Mansion through this year. We invite you to visit it and also to come by our research library for more information on these four families. We'll also be happy to answer questions about preserving your own family heirlooms, keepsakes, and other historical materials.



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The baptismal certificate of Robert and Christina's son, Herman, written in Norwegian. Neither the Moscow Norwegian nor the Swedish Lutheran Church conducted services in English until the 1920s.

## Border Rivalries A Photo Essay

On Saturday, April 4, Moscow and Pullman dedicated a new path between their two towns. The path, which follows the route of the abandoned railroad line, is already filled with bicyclists, rollerbladers, runners, joggers, and walkers. It is unusual for two land grant universities in two states to be so close to each other—ten miles in fact—and we expect the path to bring these two communities even closer together.

A railroad once linked the two towns with extra cars added for special events. Perhaps the most dramatic cross-border event was the annual football game between the two schools. Below are some from two of these games which we are in an album belonging to H. Robert Otness. In one photo an outhouse has been loaded on back of a truck, presumably for the giant bonfire that preceded these games. Another photo shows the Washington State College mascot, a live cougar, long since replaced by a person in a cougar outfit. There is a scene of the U.I. student section at the thirty yard line with the band and bench on the right. The photos were probably taken by Charles Dimond, a professional photographer and Mr. Otness' friend. They both worked at Hodgins Drug Store.



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Privileges are identical for all classes; the highest dues represent a much needed donation to help carry out our work. Dues are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

**The services of the Latah County Historical Society** include maintaining the McConnell Mansion Museum with period rooms and changing exhibits; preserving materials on Latah County's history; operating a research library of historical and genealogical materials; collecting oral histories; publishing local history monographs; and sponsoring educational programs, events and activities. Our mission is to collect and preserve all items relating to the history of Latah County. These are added to the collections and made available to researchers as well as being preserved for future generations. If you have items to donate or lend for duplication, please contact us.

**Our library and offices** are in Centennial Annex, 327 East Second St., Moscow; hours are Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, and 1 to 5 p.m. The McConnell Mansion Museum is open Tuesday through Saturday from 1 to 4 p.m. Visits to the museum or research archives at other times can be arranged by calling (208) 882-1004. Admission is free to members and donations are requested for non-members. Our FAX number is (208) 882-0759, and our e-mail address is lchs@moscow.com. The Mansion's first floor is handicapped accessible. Researchers who cannot access the Annex can telephone or write us, and we can make research materials accessible at the nearby Moscow Library.