

Lester was born June 25 1902; Mabel on December 23, 1904; George on February 13 1907; and Bernard on June 2, 1909. Our father, Louis Ctness was married twice; the first time to Martha Mathieson and 4 children were born to this marriage George and Earl, sons, and Sadie and Lillian daughters. Father lost by death his first wife and all the children except Lillian who grew to adulthood and was married to Roy Douglas.

Dad's second wife and our much-revered Mother was Jennie Mary Eid. Dad and Mother lived in both Moscow and Genesee. I believe that Lester and Bernard were born in Moscow and Mabel and I in Genesee.

We had many relatives in the Moscow area. On Dad's side there were his brothers, Ole, John and Robert. On our Mother's side there were Uncles Ben and Tone and Aunts Tillie Madison, Minnie Olson, Clara Thompson, and Nellie Smith. Our Aunt Tillie and Nellie lived on farms 10 miles or so from Moscow. Uncle Ben had a farm adjacent to our Grandparents place. We children spent much time visiting and staying on these farms and especially on our Grandparents place. Our Grandmother Toline, was the guiding light to her family, children and grandchildren.

And then, our Uncles Ole, John and Robert had fine wives and families who were in Moscow most of our childhoods. Uncles Ole and Robert had farms near Moscow but this must have been before my time as I have no remembrance of their farms. One rather unique result of having so many relatives in Moscow was that, in 1925, 4 graduates, all cousins named Ctness received their High School diplomas--they were Olga, Roy, Lester and Clara.

As we lived in the heart of the Palouse Country, most of the jobs we had were related to farming. We worked in the harvest fields--"shocking" wheat, oats, barley, etc, haying and helping with the threshing. This was in the days of the stationary threshing machines before combines were used. Dried peas were found to thrive in the Palouse Country and 2 grove-men--Washburn and Wilson--went into the raising of pure pea seed. Thousands of acres of farm land were leased for high-grade seed which were then planted all over the Northwest. They hired boys to walk through the fields and pull out weeds and off-grade peas. Bernard and I worked on this; it was called "rogueing". We 3 boys also worked on the railroad section crew for the railroad near home.

Lester was always big and strong and he worked hard during the summer months sometimes in road-building and construction jobs. He and cousin Roy (Uncle John's son) worked one summer at Potlatch in the lumber mill. That must have been around 1918 which was the last year of World War # 1. All 3 of us boys worked hoeing beans on the ridge country near Troy. Lester and I and cousins Roy, Fred and Arthur worked in forest-fire prevention work out of Elk River, Idaho. Lester and Roy worked as lockouts: I worked 2 years on trail maintenance and one year as a lockout. When there was a forest fire reported by the lockouts, those of us on trail maintenance had to go immediately to the fire. This involved back-packing to the site of the fire and setting up a camp as best we could and to control the blaze. Sometimes more fire-fighters were sent in from Elk River, Bovill, Potlatch and even from Montana. This was a very rugged way to make a living and a very isolated area in which to spend the summer. But most of the boys "stuck it out" as it was a good way to make--and save--money.

One incident which occurred during these summer months still lingers in my memory. Two of my friends, Lester Allen and David Kay and I determined that we would go up to the lumbering country and get work. This was at the end of our Freshman year in High School, I believe. We took the Inland Empire train to Palouse, Washington and the logging train from there to Potlatch, Idaho. We found no work in Potlatch; a kindly night-watchman let us sleep in the boiler room of the mill to keep warm. The next day we went to Bovill and from there to Elk River, finding no work in these places also. By this time we were starting to feel frustrated so we started to walk back to Moscow. In Elk River we stopped at a grocery store and bought some bread and weinies. As we were trucking on the highway back to Bovill we discovered that the weinies were spoiled, and we had



to throw them away. We were starting to learn the "facts of life". Anyway we walked all the way from Elk River to Troy. We got into Troy very late; probably it was almost midnight when we got there as all stores were locked up and no one was on the streets. We 3 boys curled up in a box-car near the railroad station to await the morning Northern Pacific train to Moscow. Soon I discovered that the front-door to the hotel was open and so I went into the lobby and sat in a chair until morning. I don't know if the proprietor would have objected or not. At any rate the next morning we boarded the train for the short trip to Moscow. Now the whole point of this lengthy narrative is my Mother's reaction when I walked in the door in Moscow. She had been canning strawberries and jam and the aroma of all this was heavenly to me. I am sure that Mother, in particular, and Dad also were aware of the risks involved in kids taking a trip of this nature and also the possibility of injuries were we green kidsslucky enough to find a job; I am sure they worried about us. When Mother saw me the look of love and relief in her eyes spoke volumes about her devotion to her children.

We will always be indebted to Lester, after his graduation from the University in 1925 and before going to Spokane to work for the bank, for his work in helping to re-model and modernize our home. Bernard also worked hard on this. This meant so much to all the family.

For sports we all played games like boys have done for many years--baseball, football, basketball, etc but none of us had any outstanding talent. We also played tennis on the tennis courts at the University during the summer months. We set up a jumping pit near our house. I believe that Mabel was good at this and also in running. Kids in our neighborhood used to congregate on the "flat" east of our house where there used to be an athletic field before the Harvester Plant was built. We used to compete mostly in track events. I believe Lester's group was called the "Mohawks;" we small fly called ourselves "Eagles".

For swimming there was a crude--but adequate facility called the "Sand Pit" which was on the Northeast edge of town. For some years sand had been excavated in this area which was used for construction in the Moscow area. After the sand was mostly used up there remained an area suitable for swimming. This "Sand Pit" was fed by natural springs and there was an outlet so the water did not become stagnant. We 3 boys learned to swim here as did countless others. To my knowledge there were never any drownings here in this un-supervised pool. In the winter the water froze over and it was used for ice-skating. In addition to the "Sand Pit" there were at least 2 other places which were used for swimming--one was called the "Mudhole" and was aptly named.

Winters in those days started in November usually and we were all used to trudging through the snow well into February. North of our house was a large hilly farm owned by Glen Sanders and it was ideal for coasting, skiing and also tobogganing. Coasting on the streets of Moscow was also very popular.

So, all in all, Moscow was a good area for boys to develop in; girls may not have found it so but we boys learned to "rough it". The educational advantages of a University town were evident to both boys and girls.

We had some accidents and sicknesses, of course. Lester broke his arm while playing football. Mabel was very ill for a time with what may have been appendicitis. George, who stayed with the Grandparents Eid for an extended time, fell on a grub-axe while "helping" his Uncle Tone and Grand Uncle Anton load hay from a haystack to be used for bedding for the cattle. This was in wintertime and resulted in a gash on the right side of my chin. Bernard and I both had bad falls; he from a poplar tree southeast of our hose and I from the barn behind our house.

For colds, Mother always gave us hot lemonade and we had our chests rubbed with Analgesic balm which was then covered with a flannel cloth. She had never heard of Vitamin C but I am sure this treatment would be approved of today. Through all our sicknesses she gave us tender loving care. As I have said before we could always see her loving care for her children.

Our Mother was desperately ill once and we children will never forget it. Her condition was so critical that many of our relatives came to see us.



I can remember taking little brother Bernard by the hand and we went into our bedroom and knelt and prayed for her recovery. I am sure that all who knew Mother were praying also. I can recall her being taken to Dr. Carrither's hospital and, thankfully, she recovered. This was a very trying time for Dad and all the children and friends, and relatives.

I spent quite a bit of time living at the Grandparents Eids farm: Aunt Nellie took most of the care of me. I think this was in 1911 and 1912 as I can remember their talking about Woodrow Wilson winning the election for President over Taft and Teddy Roosevelt. I am not sure why I spent so much time with the Grandparents but I suppose it was because our Mother had all she could handle especially with family moving from Genesee to Moscow, etc. I must have been something of a "Wandering Willie" as I have been told that I used to wander down town by myself and look in the store windows; a butcher thought I looked hungry so he used to give me bologna or sausage. To this day I love to walk.

During the influenza epidemic of 1917-1918 the school nurses used to take the temperatures of the children before we were permitted to attend school. Some kid heard that a high temperature could be induced if one put a peppermint or some sea-sen under our tongues. So we worked this a few times and spent the day in playing around town; we never got caught.

Bernard and I had a particular liking for onion-tops (fresh from the garden) as sandwich -fillers. With our Mother's delicious home-made bread we knew we had a real delicacy.

A trip of any distance was a fine experience for us. Going down to Lewiston on that steep grade was a thrill. A few times went to Spokane on the electric railroad. Once Dad took Bernard and me to Spokane and from there over to Hayden Lake and the Coeur d'Alene country. From there we took a boat trip down to St. Joe and St. Maries and back. We did a little fishing and swimming on this trip. We were simply over-joyed and appreciative.

Please excuse the ramblings as I write some of my recollections. I know that Lester, Mabel and Bernard all will have many interesting things to recall for you.. This whole narrative seems to center on me which is something I had not intended it to be

George Otness