



Ferdinand Oliver Wald

I Remember My Childhood By Ferdinand Oliver Wald

I was born in the little town of Fertile, Iowa, July 27, 1896, the third of eight children. My earliest recollection of my childhood was when I was about three years old and was sitting in the high chair in the kitchen when the cat came running in with her kittens. Mother made a dash for the cat, knocked the high chair over and I fell against the table, cutting the top rim of my ear, which gave me the scar I have today.

The three children had a picture taken when I was a baby in dresses. I was holding my mother's watch, the one given to her by her father when she was a girl. Mother gave it to me to keep me quiet while the picture was being taken and I dropped it. It stopped, and Mother never had it repaired. It was since given to Oletta, the oldest granddaughter, and it runs beautifully today, some seventy-six years later. The first home I remember was a small house near the old mill. Mother was always worried about the mill pond and her little children falling in. One day, my sister, Alvah, caught a fish and we all screamed with delight and Mother came running out to see who had fallen in the pond.

We soon moved from that house to a larger one across from the school house and near Father's parish house where he was a pastor for several years. As children, we knew what it meant to attend church and keep quiet.

As young boys, we had few store bought toys, and got used to making our own. We learned to be resourceful and used anything at hand to make our own toys. Mother's sewing spools made good materials for trains and many other things. We experimented a lot. My cousin, Harold, and I once made a steam engine. It blew up and we both got badly burned and so I switched my interests to electricity and became an Electrical Engineer.

We were like all other boys, we played pranks, such as putting a cat in a bucket and winding it around as it went up to the hay loft and letting it whirl around as it came down so when the cat got out, it would stagger like it was drunk. We would also put a corn cob under the horse's tail and watch his antics as he tried to get rid of it.

There was a fat man in our town who owned a horse and pony cart. One day we watched him go into a dip in the road and he was a little too heavy for the situation,

which found him in the cart at the bottom of the dip and the horse in the air pawing with his front legs to reach the ground.

I remember the time Burton, my little brother, was sitting in the seat of our wagon, when the team of horses became frightened and bolted. They ran wildly for some time and when they were stopped, Burton sat up in the back of the wagon and feeling his head said, "Where's my hat? I want to go to Hanlan Town." This was certainly a relief to Mother who was standing motionless and frightened. We must have been reluctant to leave our little house by the mill where we had such fun fishing and going swimming. Even when I was very small I swam in the shallow stream up above the mill. I remember once Dad was helping me undress and he said, "You've been swimming haven't you?" My undershirt gave me away--I had it on backwards.

The new house was set back from the street, and so was the school house across the street, which accounts for the concern Mother had for me when as a young boy I had to make the fire in the school building. We would sometimes have such high snowdrifts that she feared I couldn't find my way home, so she tied a rope to the door knob for me to take to the school so I could follow it home. I remember once I lost the key to the school, and was very upset, but I went over to the school anyway, not knowing really why, because I knew I couldn't get in. When I got almost to the door, I looked down and there laid the key. The wind had swept the snow off the path and it was in plain sight.

I have often thought, especially since the terrible blizzard of January 11, 12, and 13, 1975 which was considered the worst of the century, that we were well off in some ways when we were children. We had a storm cellar which served, not only as protection but as food storage. We always had potatoes, carrots, beets, apples and some cured meat. Mother also preserved some cooked meatballs and sausage in tallow. We always had a wood burning stove with plenty of wood we boys had to cut up in stove lengths. Most important of all, we had water from the well and a cistern of rain water collected during the summer months which had a capacity of 500 gallons. These things might have saved a lot of people some suffering from cold and hunger had they had them in this last bad storm.

While we were living in the new house, tragedy struck and our Father became very ill with pneumonia and passed away. Father was called to serve as Pastor of the Village of Fertile Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran congregation in 1892, after it had joined with the Clear Lake congregation to form one parish. The church edifice was built in 1895. At this time the congregation was affiliated with the United Lutheran Church. In 1893 the so called Augsburg strife caused a division in the Village of Fertile Congregation. This eventually caused a division in the congregation and in 1899 about half the

members, together with my Father, withdrew to organize the Elim Lutheran Free Church. They chose a building site west of Fertile where he served as Pastor until his death in 1908.

Life was not easy for our family after Father died. My youngest sister was born 8 months after Father died. Mother inherited a farm which was her share of Grandfather's estate. We had some income from this besides what Mother earned from her dressmaking. My Uncle Ludwig, Mother's brother, who had no family, was very good to Mother. He always treated us like his own family.

After my two older sisters graduated, they became teachers, but were not happy in that profession, and so one at a time, they went to business college and became secretaries. I worked for Uncle Simon, Mother's other brother, on the farm in the summertime and graduated from Ames Engineering School. We all helped each other until we all graduated from college.

In 1918, after graduation, I joined the Navy and was in the service for the remainder of the war. I never saw actual battles, but I saw some countries I otherwise would not have seen. While I was on ship, I fell from the ship's mast--landing on my side and the side of my head, making a long gash in my head. The scar is still visible. The ship's doctor told me if I had landed on my back it would have killed me. I must have had a destiny to fulfill. While in the hospital aboard ship, I tutored a young man in mathematics, who was studying to become an Ensign.

After my stint in the Navy where I progressed to a commission as Ensign, I came west, ending up in Cheyenne, working for the Union Pacific R.R. I didn't care for Cheyenne as a community in which to make my home, so I went west to Ogden, Utah, where I applied for work at the Utah Power and Light Co. They put me on as a meter tester. Here I met David Isakson and his wife Ruth. We became very good friends and remained so until their deaths. Ruth's mother once told me I should meet a Mormon girl. I smiled at this, never dreaming I would do just that.

After being transferred to Logan as Power meter man, I met Velma Howe, who was going to the Utah A.C. College summer school. After three years and my transfer to Salt Lake as assistant to the Meter Superintendent, we were married on Dec. 31, 1925, the same year she graduated from the B.Y.U. in Provo. It was not until the 28th of October, 1952 that I was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We were married in the Salt Lake Temple June 30, 1954 and sealed together with all our children on July 1, 1954, the same day Oletta, our oldest daughter was married. Kay Cummings was proxy for our little 2½ year old boy, Gordon, whom we had lost in death.

We have had a wonderful life together and several fine trips. One to Europe in 1959 where we met Leonard who was released from his Norwegian Mission at that time. We stayed in Norway for one week visiting many of my relatives on both sides of my family, collecting many names for our temple record. We also had a nice trip to Hawaii in Oct. 1963 when the Cultural Center was dedicated. We have just returned from a trip to Minneapolis where we accompanied my sisters, Oletta and Alvah, to Iowa where my Father's little Lutheran Church was holding it's 100th anniversary. Oletta, who is a teacher of teachers in the Lutheran Bible Institute, was the principle speaker at the banquet. She gave an outstanding talk. One woman there asked Velma what Church we attended, and she told her she had made a Mormon out of me, which wasn't too difficult after he understood our principles and philosophy.

It was wonderful to see the old school house, the home where we lived by the mill, and the big house where we lived so long and where my Father died. The old pump just outside the door still stands, and believe it or not, still pumps water. We have just had a trip to Washington D.C. to see our beautiful Mormon temple and other high lights, such as the Capitol, the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument, the White House, the Kennedy Center and Mt. Vernon. We now have a mobile home in Sandy, Utah, and one in Mesa, Arizona where we spend five winter months of the year. This delights our youngest daughter, Lorna, who lives in Tempe, about 15 miles from our little house. We are just about 10 miles from the Mesa temple where we go often.

We are very proud of our family. Fred with his 9 children, the oldest of which is now on a mission in California; Oletta, with her 7, the oldest of which is now on a mission in Canada; Leonard with his two daughters; and Lorna with her 4 little ones. We hope to enjoy them all for some time to come.

1975 or '76

A Tribute to Ferd (on his ninetieth birthday)

90 years! Not everyone is privileged to live ninety years, especially when most of the years have been in good health. These have been years of ups and downs, successes and disappointments, joys and sorrows, mountains and valleys. But through them all has been the gracious and loving Spirit of God, blessing, providing and sustaining. Like a diamond, Ferd has many facets which have made him a man who has been loved and respected and admired by his family and friends. Ferd, the engineer whose expertise was recognized and appreciated by his co-workers at the Utah Power and Light Company.

Ferd, the watch-fixer who could somehow take all the little watch parts and put them together in working order. Ferd, the photographer who loves to record in pictures the many happy events and people in his life. Ferd, the encyclopedia who seems to know something about most everything. Ferd, the problem-solver who has been able to figure out solutions to many of the problems given him. Ferd, the handy man who can fix most things that break down. Ferd, the husband who has been privileged to live some 60 years with his loving wife, Velma. Together they have supported, sustained and encouraged each other in love. Ferd, the father who has never been too busy to give a listening ear or a helping hand to his children. Ferd, the grandfather whose 23 grand children and the coming “greats” bring him much pride and joy. Ferd, the man of faith whose trust and reliance on our Lord and Savior has sustained him through the years.

A Paraphrase of Psalm 128

Blessed have you been because
The Lord bless you from his heavens.
you have feared the Lord;
May you see the prosperity of your offspring
you have walked in his ways.
all the days of your life.
You have eaten the fruit of the labor
May you see your children's children.
of your hands;
You know the secret of happiness
Peace be unto you and your family.
and it has been well with you.
Your wife has been like a fruitful vine
within your house.
Your children have been like olive shoots
around your table.
Lo, you have been blessed
because you have feared the Lord.

by Ferd's sister, Oletta



