

15 May 2001

To Whom It May Concern:

My mother, LaVerne E. Miles Williams, died on the 3rd of May. I'm sorry this took so long for me to respond on her behalf.

Before Mom died I sat down and asked questions of her childhood. I typed this up for myself and her grandchildren. Feel free to use this in your study on local history.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Beam

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LaVerne Eldora MILES WILLIAMS
Her Growing Up Years

I was born in Oretown, Tillamook County, Oregon on 9 Sep 1912. I don't know whether we had our own house or lived with Grandma and Grandpa FOLLETT at the time. I was the first child born to DeWitt Clinton and Jessie Mae FOLLETT MILES.

Oretown is on the map, but just barely. We had a U.S. Post Office, a Tillamook County Creamery Association cheese factory, a community church and a public school that covered grades one through eight. Boyd, Orval and I all graduated from grade school there.

Cloverdale, right down the road, had a Creamery Association store. The farmers would get their grain, hay and some other basic necessities there. Then, when they were paid for their milk, what they owed was deducted from what was due them.

My brother, Boyd, was born in Woods on 11 Apr 1914. I don't know where we were living then. I was only 19 months old.

The first home I remember was a tent house that was located next to Grandma and Grandpa FOLLETT's house. The tent house had a wood floor and wood part way up the sides. The rest of the sides and the roof were made of tent material. Orval was born on 24 Jun 1917 while we lived in this residence.

Next we lived in a little house at the foot of the hill to Grandma and Grandpa FOLLETT's place. I was around 6 or 7 years old. I remember Grandpa going into Cloverdale. He would take his wagon and team of horses. On the return trip he would bring us hard candy. We seldom had treats of this sort and thought we were kings.

Christmas was a lot simpler when we were children. As a child I really believed in Santa Claus. I remember one

Christmas when we lived here. After I went to bed I heard my parents putting gifts under the tree. I thought it was Santa and was so excited!

Our gifts were pretty basic. We received games like dominos, checkers, etc. We also might receive books. I remember having a Peter Cottontail book. Great-aunt Dora, Grandma FOLLETT's sister, once sent me a baby doll. I played with it so much that I wore it out.

Our Christmas tree was decorated mostly with homemade ornaments, cards we had received, candles and some breakable balls. Folks would light the candles and let the kids look for a bit then put them out. It was quite a fire hazard.

We received little gifts for our birthdays, and Mom would make a cake, but we didn't have any birthday parties that I remember.

During the time we lived at this house, we would move to the cannery on Nestucca Bay each salmon season. We did this for several seasons. My dad worked for the cannery, and so did Elroy Clair FOLLETT, my mother's brother. I remember a great deal about living at the salmon cannery. There was a hill between the little burg of Oretown and the bay where the cannery was located. When the salmon were running, they brought a Chinese crew by boat from Astoria. They had to cross the bar at high tide to make it. If they came in when the tide was too low, they got stuck on a sand bar and would have to wait for high tide to come in to float them off. I can remember that happening. The manager of the cannery was a Mr. PENTER, and his wife was Bertha. They had a son, Harold, who was a little older than me.

Boyd and I would play at the cannery. Once we heard some Chinese talking and hollering. We hollered the Chinese words back to them, and the Chinese workers chased us. We thought this was great fun. This happened a few times until

Dad found out. The words we had been repeating were Chinese swear words. That ended our playing in the cannery.

There were boats in the bay anchored by long ropes. Boyd and I would get in the boats and play for hours. We'd row the boats around as far as the ropes would allow. Mom never seemed to worry about us getting hurt there. We had quite a bit of freedom for two little kids. The west side of the bay had a long sandy beach, but the east side was rocky. Back a bit from the shore was a wooded area. Boyd and I played on the rocky beach and in the woods. One day we were walking along the downed trees. I fell off and knocked myself out. When Boyd couldn't get any response from me, he ran home for Mom. The first thing I remember is Mom trying to rouse me. She helped me home and I remember my head really hurting. That was the last we were allowed to play in the woods.

Dad used to pilot the pick-up boat. He'd go up the bay where fishermen stayed in cabins or camps. They'd have their catch waiting and Dad would pick it up and bring the catch back to the cannery. Sometimes Boyd and I rode with him.

At low tide we used to spear flounder and crabs in the holes near the shoreline. Sometimes we also got crabs that had been caught in the fishnets. We'd have a wash boiler full of crabs to cook and eat. Dad always cleaned his crabs before cooking them. It was delicious and we would eat until we bulged!

There was a big building like a bunkhouse where the Chinese had their New Year's party. Once Dad went to the celebration. He said they ate all kinds of strange food. One item was pickled lizard. Dad said they looked like someone had hit them in the middle of their back. They curled up with their heads touching their tails.

My uncles, Frank and Clair, had two raccoons. They would bring the coons to the cannery. They got in the boats and

would poke around for fish. Crabs pinched them, and they would tear out of there. Once Mom was hanging up clothes, and she turned around to get more. One of the coons saw his chance and started playing in the clean clothes with his muddy paws. The whole time he was looking away trying to seem innocent.

The whole family would go in the rowboat with Dad up to Woods. My Grandma and Grandpa MILES lived on their homestead ranch north of Woods. At that time there was a hand operated ferry that crossed the river to Woods. Grandpa MILES would meet us with a team of horses and a wagon, and we'd all ride up to his ranch. Grandpa was so cute. He'd talk to his horses, Flossy and Roxie, all the way home. He'd tell them to move along in his gentle voice. Of course they'd plod along. We'd stay for about a week, and we kids had a great time. They were so good to us. There was a little creek that ran through their place. Boyd and I used to fish in the little creek with bent pins. There were little trout in the stream. Once in awhile we'd actually catch one.

They made cheese and sold it to the tourists. They had honey-bees, and they also sold honey. Grandma MILES could go out and rob the hives and never get stung. (While we were living on the ranch when I was about 10 or 11, Dad wanted to have his own honey-bees. He got some hives and swarms of bees and started out. Every time he tried to rob the hives the bees would run him clear up to the house and follow him in. He finally gave it up as a bad business. Grandma had a lot more success in the bee business!) Grandma and Grandpa shared the cheese and honey with us. They also raised their own sage and horseradish and shared that too. It was the best, really good!

In their kitchen-dining room they had a corner where Grandpa MILES used to sit in his rocker and read. The old cook stove was more to the middle of the wall. In the corner were two windows. This made a cozy corner for Grandpa. I can see him even now. He'd rock and read. If whatever had was reading

was funny, he'd chuckle and laugh. We couldn't help laughing with him. If his reading material was sad, he'd sob, the tears would flow. I'll never forget it.

The next house I remember was down the road east from the house at the foot of the hill. I remember my Mom having chickens there. I was told to leave them alone, but instead I chased them. I fell on a baby chicken and broke its legs. Poor Mom had to kill it, and she hated butchering anything. She was pretty upset with me, and I still remember that poor little chick vividly. I was pretty tender hearted for a farm girl. I also remember Dad finding a nest of mice in our wringer washing machine. There were lots of tiny naked babies, and Dad took them out and killed them. I was pretty upset.

Around this time we moved to Fairview, east of Tillamook, where we lived for about a year. We attended one grade of school there. I think I was in third grade, and Boyd would have been in first or second grade.

Dad went to work in the Fairview Cheese Factory. Dad would take Boyd and me to the factory where we would eat fresh curd right out of the vat. It was rubbery. I got good and sick from eating too much of the curds.

While we lived there I had a horribly sore throat. I remember Mom painted my throat with silver nitrate, which turned my throat black. The doctor couldn't tell what I had - probably strep throat or maybe diphtheria.

We used to go to dances at the grange hall. There were lots of Swiss people there. They would play Swiss waltzes, which were really fast and pretty. The Swiss farmers could sure dance. They whirled and twirled and their feet went a million miles a minute. The Swiss farmers would yodel when it was time for their cows to come in for milking.

My Grandma and Grandpa FOLLETT died two days apart in 1922. There was a flu epidemic. They took care of sick

friends, and both of them caught the illness. Mom took care of them. The flu went into pneumonia which was deadly then. Grandpa was recovering and the first day he was allowed up, he sat up on the bed and had a heart attack and died. Grandma was in a coma and died two days later. I was almost ten when that happened.

We then moved onto the ranch. My Dad didn't like living there very well, so he later leased out the ranch.

Dad used to go inland to Dayton where he would go to an island in the Willamette and get melons, cantaloupe, watermelons, pears, peaches, tomatoes, corn etc. This was the only time we would have that type of produce. It wouldn't grow on the coast.

We made trips to visit my great-grandmother, Helen FOLLETT, and our great-aunt, Mary FOLLETT, on their farm near Newberg. My great-grandfather, Isaac FOLLETT, died before I was born. We went in Dad's Chevrolet touring car. I remember going to the orchard and picking prunes. We would go in to Newberg and visit Uncle Clair and Aunt Mary FOLLETT and my cousins, Wren and Jeanne. (Uncle Clair had a roofing business in Newberg. They were working on a building in town when a roll of roofing got loose and knocked him off the roof. He was broke up real bad and died of his injuries. This was later after the Second World War.)

Visiting my great-grandparents and great-aunt Mary could be hazardous. They had geese on the farm. Every time I would go to the outhouse I would first look out the window to make sure the geese weren't nearby. When I would spot them in a far field in a little valley, I would brave the trip. I would run to the outhouse as fast as my little legs would carry me. At least one goose would always see me and tell all the others. When I opened the door, they would either be ready to attack immediately or get me part way back to the house, and the chase was on. The geese would chase me and peck my legs. Aunt Mary would beat them off with a broom.

We wore mostly homemade clothes. Mom mad them on her treadle machine. Some items, like shoes and socks we would order from a mail order catalog. Mom taught me to sew when I was about 6 or so. First she taught me how to make doll clothes. I ran my hand through the treadle machine several times. She also taught me to do basic crochet. I must have been 9 or 10 then. (I didn't learn to knit until Lance was a baby and we lived at the Hebo Ranger Station. Bob AUFDERHEIDE's mother taught me the German method. I taught myself more when I worked at Miller's Department Store and ran the yarn department.)

We then moved into Oretown. Sometime around then we lived across the swale from the grade school where we three kids went. A little creek ran through the swale. The school covered grades one to eight. Boyd and I got the job of janitors at the school. We swept the floors, cleaned blackboards, etc. It was a two-room school. We each received \$5 a month and thought we were rich.

It was when we lived here that Orval shot his first deer. He was really proud.

When we lived at Oretown I remember they had big 4th of July picnics at Wynema Beach. The men and boys played baseball and the kids played on the beach. I remember someone picked up a firecracker, and it went off in her hand. We also had picnics up the Little Nestucca River.

When I started high school, we lived in the old post office building at Oretown near the cheese factory. Uncle Frank FOLLETT visited us there a lot and was there when my youngest brother, Glenn, died. Glenn was sick only about 24 hours. He was sick for a few hours then went into convulsions. On the morning he was sick, I remember holding him because he didn't feel good. We three older kids went on to school. When I got back home that afternoon, Glenn was dead. In those days they kept the caskets in the home until

burial. It was gruesome. At that time Glenn was very special to me. I was almost 14 when he died, and he was 2 ½. He was such a cute little fellow with a sweet disposition.

We lived at the old post office in Oretown for several years. I was in early high school then. Uncle Frank taught me how to drive there. I was just under 16. Uncle Frank didn't care much about regulations, so he didn't make me wait until I was 16. I learned in our first car, a Chevrolet touring car. We got the car when I was about 14.

While living there we used to get a magazine called "The Pathfinder". It would have stories that would continue from issue to issue. I loved to read them and waited anxiously for each new copy. I would laugh out loud if the story was funny and could even be brought to tears. Dad didn't like that and said he wouldn't let me keep reading the magazine if it continued. I guess I was a bit like my Grandpa MILES.

During my freshman and sophomore years of high school I rode to school with Ralph REDBERG. He had a touring car that had a canvas top. Several others also rode with him. Once he had three kids in the front seat, and several more, including me in the back. The kids in the front got to cutting up, and he swerved the car. It overturned and landed on the top. We all crawled out. No one was hurt, but the rest of the year we rode to school with no top on the car.

Sometime after Glenn died, we moved back to the dairy farm. The people who leased the farm had made such a mess of it that Dad took it back. While living there I sometimes drove Dad's car to school. Dad didn't want Boyd to drive, but sometimes I drove part way then let Boyd drive. I would have died young and beautiful if Dad had found out.

The last year of high school we had buses and rode those to school.

We had a herd of around 30 cows during this time. I wanted to help milk, but for some reason Dad didn't want me to. I begged until he let me, and I milked 9 cows myself morning and night. Also, when some of the cows didn't come in and Dad had to go look for them, I milked his cows too.

I had to wear long stockings because women didn't go with bare legs. Mom made me a homemade garter belt which went over my shoulder, around the waist and then had garters hooked to the socks. The socks were always baggy at the knees. Anklets came out then. We called them bobby socks. I wanted some. Mom and Dad said I had to wear them over my other socks, so I did - the height of fashion.

About that time I just had to have my hair bobbed because all the other girls had bobbed hair. I begged and begged and drove my folks crazy and into submission. They let Aunt Stella cut my hair. I looked like she put a bowl over my head and cut around it, but I thought I was beautiful.

One 4th of July Dad asked us what we wanted. The boys wanted fireworks. I wanted jeans (we called them overalls). Dad got me the jeans.

When we lived at the farm during my junior and senior years we had a party telephone line with oodles of people on the one line. When you wanted to ring someone, you rang their line. Lots of short rings meant everyone should listen, sort of an emergency broadcasting system. Some neighbors on our line (actually an aunt) knew everyone else's ring. They wanted to know what was going on in the neighborhood, so they would "rubber in" on the line. We would hold the earpiece and put it on the mouthpiece. That would just about deafen whoever was listening. We finally broke them from listening in on our calls.

During my senior year we had what they called Sneak Days. I took some kids in the car, and we went to the beach. I ran through some downed building and stepped on a nail that

went clear through my foot. It was very painful, but I soaked it, and it healed up. We didn't have tetanus shots then. It's a miracle we survived some of our injuries.

We used to go every other Saturday night to the "Whoop Em Up Club". We would square dance, waltz, fox-trot, 2-step, shodish (very lively) and polka the night away. It was just family and neighbors. It was held in Cloverdale - I think the grange hall. My cousin, Barbara GILMAN and I used to do our version of the Charleston. Mom was a good dancer and could dance anything they played, especially the fast dances. Dad could square dance and waltz. I loved to waltz with him.

Living at the coast, we didn't have much snow. If there were even a small chance for snow we kids would pray for it. Then our friends would come with their sleds. Our horse, Rex, would pull all of us on an old sled used on the farm. He pulled us up the hill about a mile where we would have a party. There was a spot where we could slide down a good-sized hill then come to a rest when the sled went up on a little hill. When we were done, Rex would take us back down again.

We had programs at school at the usual times. We drew names and exchanged small gifts at Christmas. I remember memorizing two poems - "Daffodils" and "The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere". I'm not certain if it was for a program or just for English class. In high school I took English, math (probably algebra), history, geography - all the usual things. I was a good student in all my classes, but my favorite subject was math. I also liked to draw. Sometimes I thought about being a commercial artist, but math won out, and I wanted to be a math teacher when I went to college. My senior year of high school I received straight A's.

While in high school I also played three years on the girls' basketball team. I played guard. In those days, the court was divided into three sections. In girls' basketball, you couldn't leave your section. In one end would be two forwards from one team and two guards from the opposing team. In the

middle would be the center and opposing side center. Then in the other end would be the forwards and guards reversed from the other end. Our team played Bay City, Wheeler, Garibaldi and other teams I don't remember. I loved every minute of it. I would be so excited before a game that I couldn't eat. My parents were sure I would ruin my health. I guess I was running on adrenalin!

I attended church quite regularly as a child. We went to the Community Church in Oretown. Grandma Mina PARKER FOLLETT had been instrumental in starting that church. After Glenn died, Mom was converted, and we attended more regularly. I remember having Christmas programs a lot like the churches do now, but maybe not so grand. They would make stockings out of a net material and fill them with maybe an orange, an apple, nuts and candy. We all got one. Later, after I left home, we attended the Presbyterian Church in Cloverdale.

I graduated from high school and went away to college while we were living at the ranch.

I attended two and a half years of college. One year I went to Willamette University in Salem, and then I spent one and a half years at Linfield College in McMinnville. This was during the depression. I couldn't come up with enough money to continue school, so I then came back home.

About this time Orval went out hunting with his dog and came across a fawn. The dog sniffed the fawn out where it was hiding. Orval called the dog and tried to leave the fawn, but it followed him home. We got a bottle and bottle-fed her. She took to my folks and Orval like they were her family. If she was out and she got scared, she would come running in the house and jump in the middle of Mother's bed. Orval named her Shirley after Shirley Temple. That first winter she would go up on the high school football field and play until Orval got out of school. Then she would walk home with him. A hunter

from the area shot her then bragged about it. Some people can be so cruel.

Dad lost the ranch because he didn't pay the taxes. After that the family moved in to Cloverdale.