

MAIN EVENTS OF THE LYLE CREAMER, SR. FAMILY

By Louise

Lyle got a job with Santa Fe Railroad as a fireman, which would have let him work up to be a train engineer in a few years. But at that time, the job of fireman was mentally as well as physically demanding. The fireman had to shovel coal from the coal-tender car (just behind the engine) into the firebox of the engine. The right amount at the right time was important, and it was a hard, demanding job. He was sent to Las Vegas, N.M., and made the run to Lamy, N.M. or to Santa Fe.

Lyle then proposed marriage to Vera, whom he had gone to High School with a year or two in Altoona. (Perhaps they were engaged before he went to N.M.) Vera went to Las Vegas where they were married July 30, 1927 by Lyle's father, John R. Creamer, a Methodist minister. I don't know whether John was preaching at Las Vegas then, or was at Trinidad, Colo. and came down for the wedding.

They seemed very happy in Las Vegas. As a hobby Lyle played trombone in a dance band. Sometimes they drove up in the mountains, once even tried to follow members of a secret Indian sect called the Penitentes, to see if it was true that the group sometimes killed a member as part of their religious rites. But they were unsuccessful in finding out anything.

Once, Lyle left his car motor running while he went into a shop to buy cigarettes, and someone stole it (he thought it was poor Mexicans), took it up in the mountains and stripped it down completely.

When they had been married almost a year, their first child, Eva Louise, was born. Then, 18 months later, Evelyn Jean arrived. About this time, Lyle purchased a brand-new Montgomery Ward washing machine for Vera. A wringer type, of course, complete with tubs of rinse water, etc., but it was a very modern labor-saver for those days. Vera used it, gratefully, until she moved to Wichita more than 20 years later.

Only 18 months after Evelyn's birth, Lyle Ross was born, and the family was complete. Things were looking good. Lyle had a good job with a future. They had a comfortable home and three healthy children.

But then, when Lyle went for the annual physical checkup required by the Railroad, the doctor said his heart was bad and he wouldn't OK him. That meant an automatic dismissal from his job.

The timing was pretty bad; the stock market crashed in October 1929 and he was fired late in 1931 or early in 1932. The depression lasted until 1940. I don't know whether he found any other work there in Las Vegas, but in April 1932, we all returned to Kansas. We apparently were broke and Lyle's health was deteriorating rapidly. We drove straight through in a 2 door, 2-seat car which had a removable back on the right front seat that laid back and made a sort of bed, so Mom got some rest. Lyle <sup>Ross</sup> was only 9 months old.

The family probably depended heavily on Vera's parents for meat and milk, even at this stage. I know we did later, when I was old enough to remember more about it. This must have been

very hard on Lyle, for he was a proud, somewhat bitter man, who did not get along well with either his parents or the Frankenberrys.

We rented a house on South Main in Altoona (it's long gone now). It had a water faucet in one room, but no sink, no bathroom or hot water heater. And of course no furnace. Everyone we knew used stoves in those days.

Lyle was in and out of Neodesha hospital, frequently in critical condition whether at home or in the hospital. Once (perhaps before he got so bad) he got a job on the Missouri Pacific Railroad section gang repairing track by hand. The first day he went out, he was so sick he fainted, and the men brought him home. The next day he went out again and the same thing happened. He didn't go again.

He knew quite a bit about fixing radios, partly as a hobby and perhaps from some college study, so he began fixing radios for people around Altoona - when he was able and when they had any money to pay him.

When I was five years old, a boy named Gordon Miller lived across the Street. He was 6 and so could start to school. I was just devastated that I couldn't go too, so Vera somehow scraped up the money to buy me a tablet and a box of crayons so I could at least do some of the school activities at home. They didn't cost much - a nickle for the tablet and a dime for the crayons, I think - but that 15 cents would have bought one and a half loaves of bread or a quart of milk or almost a pund of hamburger. I mentioned it to Mom about a year before she died,

and she said she didn't remember it at all. But I sure do, with deep gratitude.

During this time, about 2 years, that we lived on south Main, Lyle almost died once. The nurses at the hospital covered his face, thinking he was dead, but he revived.

He told Vera afterward how it felt to him.

"It seemed like I could see a person or an angel beckoning me to come there and enter a door. Inside the door I could see a bright, beautiful light. I wanted to go through the door very badly, but something held me back."

7  
Slowly Lyle began to get better. He got a job working in the flour mill which used to stand alongside the dam at Altoona. It was a 3-story red wooden building. Part of his pay was that we could live in a house about a block east of the mill. It was a large 2-story house, painted blue and, wonder of wonders, it had a full bathroom indoors, and a sink with hot and cold water in the kitchen.

There was a garden spot on the east side of the house. I remember we raised some really delicious tomatoes there. I was allowed to take a salt shaker out and pick and eat the tomatoes right off the vine.

The house had a number of rooms, probably 9 or 10. In one of the upstairs bedrooms, Dad fixed up a radio room, where he did some repair work, as well as using the "ham" radio outfit he'd fixed up.

One of the other upstairs bedrooms became a play room for us kids. I remember one occasion when we were allowed to have a

portable kerosene heater up there and we thought we'd be able to heat cocoa on it, but found it didn't get hot enough on top.

During this time, our Creamer grandparents came to visit. They lived in Oklahoma then and had bought a brand new 1935 car - a Buick, I think. They had gone to Detroit to pick it up, and were on their way home when they stopped.

Another time, Grandma Creamer came alone. She was on her way to visit her mother in Lawrence. Our whole family went to Lawrence once and stayed overnight with Greatgrandmother Martin. I had to sleep with her, and she told the folks the next morning that she was sure I had worms, because I thrashed around all night.

Just before we moved from that house, it was decided that I should have my tonsils removed. But before the actual surgery, I think we had moved to a house on North main. However, we lived in another house on South Main, next door to the first one , for a while too.

I started to shooool shortly before we moved to the blue house near the mill. I was seven when I had my tonsils out. Dad had been hospitalized for several days or more, and was due to be discharged so they arranged my tonsillectomy so he and I could go home together.

I didn't mind the surgery too much (Dad had carefully explained it all to me beforehand, so I knew what to expect). But when I got home, I turned into a little tyrant, making Lyle Ross and Evelyn wait on me hand and foot, until Mom put a stop to it.

The house on North Main was only two blocks from the school, which was a 2-story brick building where the ball park is now. My dad ran the filling station across the highway east from the north end of the school block. Every evening I had to take Dad's supper to him. It was always ready just before my favorite kids' radio show was finished. I hated to miss the program, but if I waited till it was over, I had to risk crossing the railroad tracks about the time a train was due. And I was deathly afraid of being hit by a train. Looking back, I can see that I was totally unreasonable about my fear of trains.

One very cold night I woke to the sound of bells ringing wildly. Because the Altoona fire alarm consisted of a large bell, I immediately thought of fire. Since I couldn't smell any smoke in the house, I was reasonably sure the fire wasn't in our house, but then I thought it could be in Dad's station. Until I jumped up and looked out the window, I was really upset, because I was old enough by that time to realize with an economic disaster it would be to lose the station. Mom heard me, and told me it was just people "ringing in the New Year".

In the spring of 1937 or 1938, things began to change for our family. In fact, I guess the change began a year or so earlier, when the doctors discovered the real cause of Lyle's heart trouble was an extremely overactive thyroid gland. They operated, removing part of the gland, and Lyle's health began to improve dramatically.

Then, in the aforementioned spring, Lyle and Vera decided

it would be best if Vera got her teaching certificate renewed and helped support the family by teaching. To do that, Vera would have to spend June and July taking refresher courses at Pittsburg Teachers College. She would stay during the week at the college, going home most weekends. Lyle Ross would stay on the farm with the Frankenberry grandparents during the week. But Evelyn and I were to spend those 2 months with the Creamer grandparents, who then lived in Newport, Kentucky, just across the Ohio River from Cincinnati, Ohio.

Grandma Creamer was to be in Kansas in early or mid-May and would take us back with her on the train. So we made arrangements with the school to work ahead in our lesson books, so we would have the school year finished early.

When Vera had finished her schooling, the three of them drove to Newport to pick us up. Our return to Kansas is the only family vacation we ever had; it lasted only 2 or 3 days and the only stops I remember were to visit Lake Taneycomo briefly and to see the operations at a fish hatchery. I think we stayed at a motel or some such place, but I don't remember it.

That year and for 2 more years, Vera taught a small rural school east of Altoona called Five Mounds. Had 7 to 11 pupils in most or all the 8 grades. Us kids continued to go to Altoona school.

Before long, Lyle got out of the filling station and took a job in a radio repair shop in Chanute. He stayed in Chanute during the week. Vera took him up on Sunday afternoon and went after him at the end of the week, perhaps on Friday evening, I

don't remember when.

Their marriage had been getting shakier for several years. I believe it was Lyle who was wanting to get out of it. But the final breakup was some years away yet.

One Christmas season, Lyle took us all to Chanute one night to see the Christmas lights. In those days, colored lights were strung over the trees in the north end of the city (Katy) <sup>over</sup> on east Main. The lights also outlined the gateposts at the park. It was a beautiful sight, especially to us who had never seen a display of lights other than those on a Christmas tree.

After a year or so at Chanute, Lyle went to work in a radio shop in Neodesha. We still lived in Altoona, but I think he drove home each night. As soon as school was out in 1940 (I think that year is right) we moved to Neodesha to the house at 1012~~7~~ Grant. *He also worked + lived in Independence while we lived in Neodesha.*

In about a year, Lyle took a job in Kansas City. That short span in Neodesha was the last time he ever lived at home, ~~full time.~~

The Kansas City job was with the Army; he taught soldiers to repair radios out in the field. Lyle was still working in Kansas City when World War II began. Before long, he took a job with Raytheon Corp. in Boston, Mass. His work there was with the installation and final testing of sonar units. They had just been invented shortly before that, and he helped install some of the first one on U.S. warships.

Just before he went to Boston, we moved to the house at

1012 Seward. It was the only house the folks ever owned as a couple. The price was \$700, which was a good buy for that house at that time, but no real steal. The house had 4 rooms, including a toilet in the small bathroom, and a sink in the adjoining bedroom, which we had to use as Vera and Lyle's bedroom.

Maybe I've got my timing wrong, because I seem to remember Lyle living with us for a year or two at 1012 Seward. He put all his radio equipment in the attic. He had put down floor boards across the ceiling joists in the rear third of the attic. To enter you had to climb up a ladder onto the back porch roof, then crawl through a 20" by 30" opening in the rear wall of the house. No heat or ventilation, so it wasn't very comfortable. I never went up there much while Lyle lived at home, but did sometimes later. We stored some boxes of stuff in the unfloored part of the attic. *After Lyle went to Boston, Vera worked at Neodesha library for several years.* Vera lived there until all three of us kids graduated from high school. Then, after Lyle asked for a divorce, she got a job with the library department of the Wichita schools. So she sold the house and almost all of the contents in 1951, and moved to Wichita.

Lyle had always said he didn't believe a couple should divorce while they had children at home, and he did wait.

During the years they were still married and he was working in Boston, he came home 2 or 3 times to visit. In addition, Vera went to Boston once, and they both went <sup>✓</sup>one to Florida, where they visited Lyle's parents as well as seeing

each other.

A while after the divorce, Lyle married a woman named Goldie. She had two children already, a boy and a girl. Lyle and Goldie had one daughter, a little girl named Sue, who is either a year younger or a year older than Dinah.

Sue and Goldie sometimes correspond with Lyle Ross.