

SEVER AND MALLA SKALET

SEVER SKALET, son of Gilbert and Tonetta Skalet was born on Feb 4, 1878 at the Skalet Homestead, Vermont Township, Dane County, WI.

He was baptized and confirmed at the Vermont Lutheran Church, rural Black Earth, WI.

He married Dorothea Marie (Malla) Venden on May 23, 1908 at the Vermont Lutheran Church, rural Black Earth, WI.

He died on Dec 23, 1953 in his home in Black Earth, WI. He is buried in the Vermont Lutheran Church Cemetery, rural Black Earth, WI.

DOROTHEA MARIE (MALLA) VENDEN, daughter of Martin and Olijanna Venden was born on May 6, 1881 in Valdres, Norway.

She came to America in the fall of 1881 at the age of 6 months with her parents on a ship that took 6-8 weeks. Her parents had only a small wooden box with her belongings. Maurice Skalet now has this box at his home in Black Earth, WI.

She died on Aug 5, 1958 in her home in Black Earth, WI. She is Buried in the Vermont Lutheran Church Cemetery, rural Black Earth, WI.

Sever and Malla had 9 children:

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| 1. Grant Marion | - Born Mar 7, 1909 - Vermont Twp. |
| | - Died Mar 27, 1988 - Prairie Du Sac, WI. |
| 2. Thora Olijanna | - Born Nov 2, 1910 - Vermont Twp. |
| 3. Jorgen Norman | - Born Aug 30, 1912 - Vermont Twp. |
| 4. Steven Donald | - Born Mar 29, 1914 - Vermont Twp. |
| | - Died Sep 9, 1991 - Madison, WI. |
| 5. Gilbert Otis | - Born Mar 26, 1916 - Vermont Twp. |
| 6. Maurice Oliver | - Born Aug 6, 1918 - Vermont Twp. |
| 7. Dorothy Mae | - Born Feb 24, 1921 - Vermont Twp. |
| 8. Philip Arthur | - Born Feb 26, 1923 - Vermont Twp. |
| 9. Phyllis Arlene | - Born Apr 20, 1925 - Vermont Twp. |

SEVER attended grade school at Helland School in Vermont Township. He lived on the Skalet farm all of his life, except the last four years, which he lived in Black Earth in the house Gil and Maurice live in now. He farmed with his father until he was married in 1908 and then took over the farm from his father.

Thora recalls when she was young she would ride to town with Sever on the milk rig to attend her piano lessons. She also remembered Sever to have a quiet sense of humor. She writes, "Once when I was getting ready for a date. I was putting on the finishing touches of my make-up using the mirror in the gun cabinet. Pa was sitting nearby reading the paper. I placed my rouge compact on the table. When I turned around to get it, there was Pa's Copenhagen snuff box there instead. Of course that brought a smile. I thought it was funny and laughed."

Gil remembered cleaning the barn in the wintertime on the bobsled and took it up to the ridge to unload. On the way back down, they would stop on the "Slit", the flat of the farm, cut wood and bring it back to the house and throw it in the basement. One time Sever hit Phil on the head and he still has a scar to prove it. Phil also recalls this ritual of cleaning the barn and picking up wood on the way back. One time when Sever and Phil were on their way back down, they stopped to cut a tree down. When Sever and Phil stepped back and the tree fell, a branch came off of another tree and hit Sever in the head, knocking him to the ground. Phil helped him on his feet and Sever said he wanted to walk home instead of riding on the bobsled. Phil drove the team home and kept an eye on him all the way back to the farm. Sever stopped by the pump to clean his head with cold water before he went to the doctor to have stitches put in.

All the kids recall Sever taking out his fiddle on Sunday afternoons. He taught Thora to chord on the piano so she could play along. They often listened to records on Sundays too.

Phoodie recollected a time when she and Sever were riding down the ridge road and saw a snake. "I was so scared", she said, "but Pa calmed me down by singing 'Big Rock Candy Mountain' to take my mind off the snake."

There were times on Sunday mornings when the roads were too muddy to drive to church. Jorgen remembers Sever and him walking to church, crossing the Vermont Creek on a log, and following the line fence up to the church. They had to allow about 45 minutes to get there.

Maurice told of a sad time, when Sever had to put a horse down because of a broken leg. He recalled, "Pa led it over to the barn and I don't know who was crying louder, Pa or the horse."

Sever would often take the kids to school, about 1/2 mile on his way to the cheese factory with the milk. Dorothy Mae remembers riding on the runners of the sleigh in the wintertime.

1949, Philip Skalet from Sever Skalet.

1958, Jorgen Skalet from Philip Skalet and is still the present owner.

Phil was remembering that he always wanted to ride along with Sever to town. One day he hid in the back of the truck and when they stopped in Black Earth, Phil got out and Sever calmly said " You're here too?"

Sever's first car was a 1917 seven passenger Studebaker. Later, he bought a 1925 Studebaker Special.

In 1953 Sever was admitted to the hospital to have Prostate surgery. Dorothy Mae remembered going to see him in the hospital and asking him "how are you?" Sever responded with "It is not good".

Sever and Nitzy went to the store shopping for lutefisk and sil on December 23, 1953, and Sever carried the sil bucket home. Later in the evening, the women were doing some house cleaning to prepare for Christmas Eve dinner, Nitzy recalled asking Grandpa to move from his chair so they could wash the floor. He got up and groaned a little, walked a few steps and fell to the floor. He died instantly of a heart attack.

All nine kids remember there father to have been a very loving, gentle concerned father. He was a man of few words, but the few he used were very much respected by his children.

This is Sever's obituary as printed in the Dane County News, January 1, 1954: Sever Skalet was born February 4, 1878 in the Town of Vermont on the "Skalet Farm" where now Philip Skalet lives. His parents were Gilbert and Tonetta Skalet.

He was baptized by Rev. Jon Field and was confirmed by Rev. S. Gunderson.

He was married on May 23, 1908 to Dorothea Marie Venden. They lived at the home farm in Vermont 41 years until 1949, at which time they moved to their present home in Black Earth.

On December 23, 1953, Sever Skalet passed away suddenly and unexpectedly at his home in Black Earth. He was 75 years, 10 months, and 19 days old.

He leaves to mourn his departure his wife, nine children, and thirteen grandchildren.

He also is survived by two sisters, Nora (Mrs. Arthur Knudtson) of Black Earth, and Mrs. Hannah Field of Madison. His parents and sister Alma Skalet preceded him in death.

He was a kind husband and father, a good neighbor, a friend to all. He was a life-long member of the Vermont Lutheran Church. His passing creates a void in the community that will not soon be filled..

Funeral services were held December 26, 1963 at the Vermont Lutheran Church, Rev. Hector Gunderson, pastor. Mrs. Joseph Dybdahl sang a solo, and the Vermont Choir, directed by

Mr. Otto Festge, sang "Beautiful Savior". The church was packed with people from far and near to honor the father of the outstanding Skalet Family. Memorials totaled almost \$300.00.

I think the following poem, written by Grace Skalet, sums up the kind of man Sever was:

- S. His life is a synonym of honesty and love
His law of life comes from above.
- E. "Everyday Economy" is his best policy.
Luxuries as well as necessities he's provided for his family.
- V. He's virtuous and vigorous, big and strong
His opinions mostly right, seldom wrong.
- E. With a comely reserve he's endowed his offspring,
And gifted them with many talents--you should hear them sing.
- R. His reasoning power is always at work,
Discover "Wild Ideas" if around him they lurk.
- G. His "Ah Goodness" is like a rein holding us in check
And has saved our mind and body from being a total wreck.
- S. "Candy" he teases and offers you his snuff
When you refuse--"It's pretty good stuff."
- K. He's unusually gentle and kind,
Revenge and hatred never enters his mind.
- A. He's amusing in his teasing way
Causing much laughter and gaiety every day.
- L. He's been very lenient with the red,
His influence on others must come from God.
- E. He's an example of everything honest, decent and good
To follow in his footsteps--at least try you should.
- T. In these turbulent times he's like an anchor,
If you become confused--your mind he'll clear.

A quote by William J Bennett from the Book of Virtues: There is nothing more influential in a child's life than the moral power of quiet example. For the children to take morality seriously they must see adults take morality seriously.

Sever raised his family through this expression of quiet example and all of his 9 children have grown to be unquestionably moral individuals.

MALLA came to America in the fall of 1881 on a ship from Norway. She was only 6 months old. She was a seamstress before she was married and traveled different places to sew for people. After she was married she used her skills to make clothes for her nine children. Often times the girls' dresses were made from flour or feed sacks. She once made a jacket for Gil out of Buck Skin from his deer he had gotten during hunting. It was a hard job.

Malla spent many years being a mother and caregiver to her children. She moved to Black Earth in 1949 and lived there until her death in 1958.

Thora wrote, "Ma was an excellent seamstress. In those days before she was married, she stayed with families for two weeks at a time and just sewed clothing for members of the whole family. And so, in our family she sewed for all of us. All I needed to do to show her the style of dress I wanted, was to draw a picture to give her an idea. (no pattern) All my young life and into college I wore dresses sewed by my mother.

"Ma was a cozy person", says Jorgen, "she almost always had a smile."

Christmas was an especially busy time of year for Malla. Gil recalled her making lefse on the 24th in order to have it fresh for Christmas Eve. "Some of the best stuff we could eat", Gil said. Malla would make a list of all the things to be done before Christmas. The sign might even say wash floors, wallpaper a room, curtains need to be washed, etc.

Malla enjoyed berry picking up in the woods. This was something she enjoyed to do all alone. The kids feel this was her "get away" and quiet time from the family and all her work. She made shortcake covered with wild Strawberries from her pickings. The children picked berries sometimes too. The comment was made "oh so good!"

Dorothy Mae remembers her mother enjoying singing little songs around the house. Sever bought a player piano for \$500 when the family could least afford it, proving music very important. Dorothy Mae would be practicing on the piano and Malla would always tell her play "Rondo" and then a wren would sing outside the window.

Taking care of infants back then was not as easy as today. There were no cribs, bassinets, or high chairs. The baby would sleep between Sever and Malla at night, and the toddler would sleep at the foot of the bed. When another baby was born, the toddler would get moved upstairs with the other children, and the "old baby" would move to the foot of the bed to make room for the "new baby". Malla used to have a hammock in the kitchen that she would put her babies in. Every once and a while she'd give it a little push and the baby would swing. The toddlers would sit on Pa's lap at the table to eat. It was remembered that when Phil sat on his lap, he'd finish his food and say, "more Pa".

Malla was not always able to go to church on Sunday mornings, but Phoodie recalled always finding her in the parlor reading her Bible.

When Malla was married to Sever her wedding dress measured to have a seventeen inch waist. Years later, the dress was to be worn for a history event held at Vermont Church. Amy Schmitt Schlimgen was the one chosen to wear this dress with the tiny waist. There is a picture of her wearing it in the Sever and Malla Family photos section.

On Tuesday, August 5, 1958, Maurice came home from working at the Brick yard in Madison, and found Malla had died of a heart attack. Her obituary appeared in the Dane County News on Friday, August 15, 1958, and printed the following article: Dorothea Venden Skalet was born May 6, 1881 in Valdres, Norway. She was baptized in the Bruflat Kirke in Norway. At the age of six months she came to America with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Martin Venden who settled in Adams Township, Green County, Wisconsin, later coming to the town of Vermont. She was confirmed in the Vermont Lutheran Church by the Rev. S. Gunderson on May 31, 1896. On May 23, 1908, she was united in marriage to Sever Skalet in the Vermont Lutheran Church. Mrs. Skalet was a member of the Vermont Lutheran Church and Ladies Aid where she was honored with a Life Membership pin a few years ago. She was a kind and devoted Christian mother--at all times considering the welfare of others. She passed away at her home in Black Earth, August 5, 1958 at the age of 77 years and 3 months. Funeral services were held on Friday, August 8 at 2:30 p.m. in the Vermont Lutheran Church with the Rev. O.S. Solberg officiating. The pallbearers were Paul and Carl Mahoney, and Kenneth Corcoran of Madison; Jorgen Greve of Mount Horeb and Nels Goderstad of Black Earth. Music was provided by Mrs. Joseph Dybdahl and Mrs. Richard Goderstad. Burial was in the Vermont Lutheran cemetery. We are in our Father's hand; Wisely led at His command, By His grace and to His pleasure, We His keeping gladly treasure. In the name of Christ, our Lord.

THE STORY BEHIND THE NICKNAMES

DOROTHEA "MALLA" - this name is really a nickname in Norwegian. No one is sure how she got it, but possibly, when she was a young child going to school, the other children couldn't pronounce Dorothea (pronounced Dorti) and it came out sounding like Dirty. She went by Malla all of her life.

GRANT SKALET "GHETTIE" - Not one of the Skalets can remember how this nickname came about, but Grant was definitely called "Ghettie" frequently.

THORA SKALET GILLETTE "TOS" - T.O.S. are Thora's initials. Later they added the slash to the O, and pronounced it Tuss.

JORGEN SKALET "HA RDIG" - When Jorgen was a boy at Helland School, Gay Steensrud and him were playing football, and the ball went into the road. Jorgen ran after it, but fell and cut his knee. Just then the bell rang to go back in the schoolhouse. Gay walked by Jorgen and saw his knee with the skin laying back, and said to him "You're a hard egg!" Somehow all these names start to sound Norwegian.

STEVEN SKALET "DONNY" later "STEVE" - Donald is Steve's middle name, and he was called Donny up until he went to school.

GILBERT SKALET "G.O." - In Norwegian, the letter G is pronounced Gay and the O is pronounced Oh, therefore the nickname Gayo. Thora remembers when Gil fell in the water tank and she was screaming Gayo! Gayo!

MAURICE SKALET "MUTTS" - The story goes that one of the family's hired men, Henry Sale, would play with Maurice, pretending to be the characters from the cartoon Mutt and Jeff. Henry would say, "I'll be Jeff and you be Mutts."

DOROTHY MAE SKALET RASMUSSEN "TUI" AND "HONE" - No one could remember how she got Tui, pronounced "Two-ee", but Dorothy could remember that Sever used to call her Hone, which means chicken in Norwegian, because she'd try to sit on the chicken eggs and hatch them.

PHILIP SKALET "PUD" - Phil enjoyed the cartoon strip Slim and Spud, but had trouble saying "Spud", and it would come out "Pud". Phil has been called Pud all of his life. Phil even named his farm "Pud's Ranch".

PHYLLIS SKALET BOWER "LULY" and "PHOODÉE" - When Phyllis was small, the family called her Luly. Jorgen used to sing a song, "You can bring Peg with the wooden leg, but don't bring Lulu." and Pud would think that was terrible cause he thought Jorgen was singing about Luly. Phoodée came about, because Thora's daughter Nitzy couldn't say "Phyllis", and it came out "Phoodée".

DARLENE GILLETTE FIELD "NITZY" - When Welberne's sister Idella and him were small, Welberne looked at his sister and tried to say "look at her little hands!", but it came out "look at those Nitzy hands!" Later, he called Darlene that when she was small, and it stuck!

MARGUERITE SKALET PARRELL "TEE" - Grant called Marguerite "Reetee" until his dying day. However, when she was small, their hired man called her "Rena Tena Tot" which evolved into "Tee Tot", later "Tee Teet" and finally cousins, Aunts, and Uncles shortened it to "Tee".

STEVE SKALET JR "SONNY" - Stever Jr. was Steve's little son, and so the nickname "Sonny".

SHARON SKALET ERICKSON "SALLY" - No one is real sure how she got this nickname, but have always called her Sally.

JOANNE SKALET "TOOSALUMMA" - Dorothy Mae and Phoodie would sing a song called "Toosalumma" when Joanne was small and they started calling her "Toosalumma", later they shortened it to "Toosie".

ROSALIE SKALET RICHARDSON "RHODIE" - Probably evolved from a child not being able to say "Rosalie".

DIANE BOWER TWITON "DI DI" - The Skalet family has always referred to Diane as Di Di.

LIFE ON THE FARM

The following stories about life on the Skalet farm were written as memories by Phil and Thora, but should help give the idea of their "way of life"!

CLEANING THE BARN

Pud recalls a day that should have been an average day of cleaning the barn, but: It was the spring of the year, about corn planting time. Before Dad and my older brothers went to the field, they would pull a wagon into the barn for Steve, Maurice and myself to clean the gutters and load the manure on this wagon with a box on it. It would always get to be a very large load. We could move the wagon along the drive way without the horses. This particular day, after we had the load on, we were going to try to push the wagon out of the barn. The tricky part was that there was an upward grade before the wagon ended up outside. We pushed hard, but didn't quite make it. The wagon came rolling back into the barn and the left hind wheel ran right over my right foot. OUCH! I guess I started to holler and cry, so brother Steve picked me up and carried me back to the house. I lost the toe nail on that foot, but it grew back. However, every 4 or 5 years since then, I lose it and re-grow it.

LIFE WITH A MEAN ROOSTER

On the farm it was a good 150 yards from the kitchen door to the barn door, the ground was level going, and the chicken house was in the middle. Grant would tease a Plymouth Rock rooster on his way to the barn. I, Pud, was never far behind, and was always on the watch for that rooster, because at the age of 4 or 5, that rooster looked pretty mean with his sharp spurs and his big bill. I was a fast runner, but so was that rooster. It was a daily trip; sometimes faster than others.

CUTTING GRAIN

When it came time to cut grain on the ridge, we would take two teams up with the wagon loaded with water, oats, and hay in the box to feed the horses at noon. Three horses would be hitched to the grain binder in the morning, and at noon we sometimes would switch horses in order for them to rest if the weather was real hot. Malla and two boys would carry the food up to the ridge for us to eat our dinner. We would eat in the shade under a tree, rest for an hour, and then back to work. Those dinners always tasted so good. As the binder was going, there was a nice place to ride for a small boy just to Sever's left on a platform where the grain went after it went through the sickle. It was a little bit dusty, but it was always fun to be with my Dad and the horses.

HAYING

When it came time to do the haying in the summer, we would get started after milking and chores were done in the morning. After the horses were harnessed, we would take two teams up to the ridge. One team would be hitched to the mower, and the other to the dump rake, raking hay into windrows to later be cocked (small piles intended for drying purposes). After drying was sufficient, we would take pitch forks and load it into wagons to be taken back to

the barn and unloaded in the hay mow. We'd try to take one load down with us at noon and get it unloaded before we ate our dinner. We'd try to bring back two loads and unload them in the afternoon. In the barn we would have one team on the hayfork rope and the other team hitched to the wagon. One man would stick the fork into the hay and handle the trip rope (a smaller rope that could easily be handled by hand. It was about a half inch thick, while the hayfork rope was over an inch thick). Then, one or two men in the hay mow would spread the hay out and try to keep it a level pile. The mow was full of hay and corn fodder for bedding animals by the end of the fall. What a good feeling!

MILKING

We had to milk our cows by hand every morning and night. We got up at 6 O'clock in the morning so we could get things done in the field after milking. After milking each morning, somebody would take the milk to the cheese factory (one mile south of the farm at the intersection of the church road and Hwy 78) with a team of horses hitched to the milk rig. For many years we used King and Scott, a lighter team. After returning home from the cheese factory, it was time to "slop the hogs" as we called it. We mixed feed and whey into a liquid slop. After all the rest of the chores were done during the day, we got the cows back into the barn to milk them again. We had about 25 cows and enough people that each would milk about 4 or 5 cows each time. In the wintertime some of the cows would dry up so there wasn't quite as much time spent milking during those months.

CLOTHES WASHING

Monday was wash day, unless the weather was such that we couldn't hang the clothes on the clothesline.

In the summer we would always place tubs, boilers or barrels under the drain pipes that led from the eave spouts and gutters that ran along the roof of the house or the Bu (the summer kitchen). That water was used to wash and rinse clothes and also to fill the reservoir attached to the wood stove, which supplied us with warm water for our personal use--washing and bathing.

In the winter we would use the water that accumulated in our cisterns. Our first cistern was under our kitchen floor. There was a trap door on the floor, which was opened, and then with a pail in your hand, (with a rope attached if the water was low) kneeled down on the floor and dipped the pail to get as much water as possible. This was used to fill the boiler, and the reservoir.

When the boiler was filled with water, a portion of a Fels-Naphtha bar of soap was shaved off into the water to produce soapy water. When the water was hot enough, it was carried by the pail full to the tub or machine for washing to begin. In the earliest days, washing was done by hand, with one tub for the washing board, and the second tub with cold water for rinsing.

The second cistern we had on the farm was built into the hillside behind the house, with the help of Christian Rusten. It was deep and provided a great deal of rain water, which was

available by pumping it at the base of the cistern near the house. Then the water was carried into the house to fill the boiler and the reservoir.

The first washing machine we had was operated by hand. It had a handle which was rocked back and forth to move the attachment that worked on the clothes in the machine. A hand wringer was used to wring the soapy water from the garment and into the rinse water. After rinsing, the clothes were run through the wringer in reverse and placed in a clothes basket and ready for hanging on the clothesline.

The next washing machine we had was Maytag with a gas motor attached at the base of the machine. It had an attachment by which the fumes could be forced out through the base of the kitchen window. In the summer we moved the machine out on the "Tram" (a wooden platform built from the back door of the kitchen), which in our present age may be called a deck. There the exhaust from the gas motor was taken care of easily.

Then in 1927, we had our own electricity system called the "Delco" with batteries and equipment housed in the "Separator House" next to the pump and water tank. This also provided us with the use of a milking machine, and we had electric lights, and could have a radio to provide us with music, programs and news.

To go on with the clothes line job, the clothes were then hung on the revolving clothes line and/or fence to dry. It worked out well in the summer, but in the winter it was not easy. The clothes would freeze on the line and become as stiff as a board. Before night-fall, we would bring the clothes into the house and hang them on a rack that fit over the floor register where heat for the room was supplied by a wood burning furnace.

There were some articles of clothing that would need to be ironed. So they were sprinkled slightly and folded and kept until the next day which would be ironing day. Old fashioned irons that were heated on the wood cook stove. One iron holder which fit on all the irons, was used as we changed frequently to keep ironing with a warmed iron.

There was no polyester or easy to wash garments in those days. So washing clothes was a big job, especially with a family of 9 children, parents and some years, hired men.

Washing clothes on the farm in the old days is only one part of life we remember. But it is a life like this that brings back to us many memories.

BABYSITTING

With a family of nine, you can realize that there was plenty of baby sitting at various stages in our lives. Being one of the oldest in the family, Grant, Jorgen, and I can remember some aunts coming to help on the farm--Aunt Alma, Aunt Clara, and Aunt Nora. In those days too, even the hired man would occasionally hold a child so Ma could finish dishing up food for our meals. The second from the youngest, (about 2 years old) always sat in Pa's lap while we ate. We never had a high chair.

At one period of time I remember when Jorgen, Stephen and I were on a schedule for washing dishes and baby sitting. This would be in the summer time. After breakfast, Stephen and I would do the dishes and Jorgen cared for the baby. After the noon meal, Jorgen and I would do the dishes and Stephen took care of the baby. After the evening meal, Jorgen and Stephen would do the dishes and I would take care of the baby. Taking care of the baby could involve wheeling the child in a go-cart, or rocking and putting the baby to sleep for a nap. Sometimes we would walk back and forth with the baby in our arms, singing songs to help the baby go to sleep. The songs were not always lullabies. Grant was old enough at this time to help with the farm work.

At another period in our lives, I remember we had a "time limit" for doing dishes. We called it "Beat the Clock". We allowed ourselves 5 minutes, or whatever time we thought would be reasonable as to the amount of dishes that needed washing. The one who was washing dishes would prepare the water in the dish pans for washing and rinsing. The others would put away the food. When we were ready to start washing, then the time limit began. It was judged after all the dishes were wiped and put away. At that point Ma would be holding the baby and probably would be nursing the child and be preparing for bed. She sat there laughing at us racing the clock. The baby was put into bed where the parents slept. We never had a crib.

On Saturday nights, Pa always drove to town to shop as the Farmer Store was open until 9:00 in the evening. We could go along, caring for the younger children while Pa and Ma got some groceries. We were not allowed to get out of the car. We remained in the car and watched other people walk back and forth on the sidewalks and crossing the streets. Sometimes we would enjoy a 5 cent ice cream cone to eat on the way home. Sometimes Ma did not go along, which gave her some time at home by herself.

The younger children didn't have much chance to baby sit until after Grant and I were married. Then Marguerite and Nitzy got in some baby sitting and companionship with Gil, Maurice, Dorothy Mae, Philip, and Phyllis. I know I enjoyed their help when in 1938 my husband died and the ones mentioned were of great help to me, as we spent many weekends on the farm. And especially when Dorothy Mae and Phyllis lived with me in Black Earth while they attended High School (and Dorothy Mae worked for Dr. Turk) and I was teaching at Union Valley and the Black Earth Grade School, a period of seven years after which Nitzy and I moved to Madison, but we still came out to the farm to help with house work, teach Sunday School, and for Nitzy's piano lesson.

Thora wrote a small story about the "Bu" (Summer Kitchen) on the Skalet Farm when she was in College, and it was chosen to be read over the radio. I will include the entire story since it is a very important part of the Skalet Family History.

THE "BU"

On the farm where I grew up, in the Town of Vermont, Dane County, there was a small building located just a short distance away from the south entrance to our home. It had been built by my grandparents as a storage house for food, and placed directly over a spring. A few boards extended in different directions provided the only flooring on which to walk to place food into containers or crocks that were set into the cold flowing water. Dairy products and meats were the main foods that were kept in this way. (Not as handy as a refrigerator, but a very welcome place in the days before electricity.)

It is not too definite as to how this building got its name, but I would presume that it may have derived from the name given to storage houses in Norway. The name used there was "Stabbur" (pronounced Stabbu). This storage house was in two levels, supported on pillars, so that no animal would be able to enter the house. The lower level was used for storing food for the family, and the upper level was used for storing hay. Thus, the last syllable of the name "Stabbur" became the name for our storage house on our farm.

At a very young age, possibly two years, I have been known to have fallen into the cold spring water in the spring house. I was rescued, and probably warned to stay away from the "Bu", until I was old enough to be of help.

At a later date, my parents decided to move the "Bu" to the north side of the house and furnish it with a complete floor and use it for a summer kitchen. As it was done by the family and a hired man, large logs were placed in a continuous fashion underneath the building, as it was pulled by many hands and put in place, slightly elevated, near the north entrance to our home.

The space under the "Bu" provided a nice shady place for the dog and cats to rest, on hot summer days.

As our large family would use large amounts of water, eave spouts and drain pipes were placed on both sides of the roof and building to catch rain water, which would flow into a huge barrel or other container. This water was carried to fill the reservoir that was contained in our kitchen range, which was kept warmed for daily use, or the water was used to fill the boiler to heat water for washing clothes.

As the "Bu" was now to become a summer kitchen, there came a day in late spring when the kitchen range was dismantled and carried piece by piece to the summer kitchen, where it was assembled and made ready for its use in its new location. This arrangement was not the handiest for those who did the cooking, but it did provide a much cooler place in the kitchen of our home, to eat our meals, during the hot summer months. As there were nine children in our family, we all had our turn at helping to carry the food and utensils from the "Bu" to the kitchen in the house where we ate as a family. Another advantage of cooking in the summer kitchen was its nearness to the wood-pile. For that task, we all had our turn at keeping the wood box filled with wood.

It was important to keep the coffee grinder in a handy place, also, so it, too, was moved to the "Bu". It was the kind that was attached to the wall. The upper part had a large glass container in which we poured and emptied into a glass at the lower part of the grinder. In the winter time, the coffee grinder was returned to the kitchen. It may not always have been moved so promptly as the stove, because I remember running to the "Bu" (and it was colder then) to grind the coffee.

Everyone in our family learned to help with the baking and preparing of food. The boys, as well as the girls, had their share of cooking,--and especially baking cakes. A great variety of kinds were tried,-- chocolate, white, yellow, marble, black walnut and even checkerboard cakes. With the ingredients in the house, and the stove in the "Bu", it took many hands (and feet, too) to complete the tasks when cooking in the "Bu".

For us, as children, the "Bu" also provided a good place to play the game we called "Ante-high Over". Any number of participants could play the game. One member on one side of the building would throw a soft ball over the roof and say, "Ante-high Over" and a person on the other side would try to catch the ball. If someone caught it, all members of the team on that side would quietly and quickly run to the other side and the person with the ball would tap someone before they reached the half-way mark, to gain that person for their team. Luckily, there were no windows on the sides of the building, only one window on the end.

The years went by, and every summer the kitchen range was moved to the "Bu". When autumn came, it would be moved back to the kitchen in the house. In the winter time, the "Bu" would become a storage place for foods that needed to be kept cold, particularly meat. After a day of butchering, large chunks of salt pork were packed in crocks and stored. Parts of beef were cut and hung to dry up near the rafters. This was our cured dried beef.

At a later date, we acquired a gas stove (pressure stove) and when we finally got electricity, we had an electric stove. This took care of our needs for cooking and baking during the summer months and the "Bu" lost its use as a summer kitchen and became mainly a good place to store a variety of things. One of the items I recall were bags and bags of rags. These were stored there until at such time when a "ragman" would stop by to buy whatever we may have accumulated.

As years went by, and more conveniences were added in our home, and remodeling was completed by my brother and his wife, who still live at the home farm, the "Bu" was dismantled,--and now in its place the fresh green grass flourishes where it once stood.

In our family, we all have fond memories of the "Bu".

Probably as important in some respects as the "Bu", is the shooting cabin tucked away in the valley, several hundred feet behind the barn. This cabin has been a host to shooters from all over the area as the Vermont Rifle Club for years. An article about the cabin was printed in The American Rifleman magazine, May issue, 1953. I would like to include parts of the article here in the history of the Skalet Family. It was written by Emery G. Gregory, and titled "An Independent Group of Shooters".

These men asked of the new land only the opportunity to live and prosper and to build a new life. When they got together and formed a gun club, they asked little or nothing of any man, but set up their own standards, their own rules, devised their own target and scoring system.

The amazing thing about this independent group of shooters in the Vermont Rifle Club is that through the years they have been steadfast in the tough competitive shooting which their half-century old rules impose upon them. Through the years, good weather or bad, members show up at the clubhouse on the last Saturday of each month for a round of ten shots at their unique target, hoping of course to shoot the perfect score of 90, but never, over all the years, quite doing it. Some of the old-timers came close, and some of the younger members, sons and grandsons of the original founders, manage to equal the marks set many years ago with black powder and the rifles of another day. But they keep coming back for another try.

The Vermont Club's 'big shoot' is held on May 17 which honors Norwegian Independence Day. Special prizes are awarded to the top winners on this day and the little valley is parked full of visiting cars, families of members who have come 'to make a day of it' and meet and visit with old friends. As each year brings new members into the club, the annual May 17 shoot has become the occasion for the Rev. Hector Gunderson to tell the story of Norwegian Independence Day to the members.

The Rev. Gunderson is one of the club's regular members and is usually on hand for the monthly meeting unless a wedding or funeral makes his duty to his flock keep him away. He is a man's man, big and four-square, meriting respect for his ability with his rifle either at the target or when deer hunting deer in Wisconsin's northern deer country as well as for the sincere ministry he brings to these men largely of his own faith and carrying in their blood the same rich heritage of Scandinavian culture which is so enriched the American Middle West.

The Vermont Rifle Club has been in continuous existence since 1896 and half a dozen of the original members are still living and active in the present day club. Plaques on the walls of the clubhouse bear testimony to the scores of the early founders. In 1902 H.G. Halsten made a score of 81; on June 7 of 1904 he managed an 88. Others of the old-timers who are still active were Sever Skalet, who made an 80 in September 1904. C.A. Anderson, who died last winter, made an 81 in December 1934.

In 1932 the club had become a part of the community and what had for years been known as the Black Earth Valley Rifle Club became the present Vermont Rifle Club.

Many of the club's members are active in other gun clubs, but they find in the friendliness and fellowship of the Vermont Club a gathering-place of kindred spirits. In the Vermont Club's members one finds the same strong moving spirit which we know existed in the riflemen of our early history. They keep alive personal independence and self-reliance in a day when men both individually and in groups seem to seek some answer to their every problem through edict and statute.

This one quality alone makes the members and the activities of the Vermont Rifle Club important. Perhaps the club in some respects harks back to an earlier, less hurried day when backwoodsmen gathered in tiny hamlets to try their skill with muzzleloaders at a block of wood set up for a target. New generations are taking up the comradeship of arms in the Vermont Rifle Club and are learning from the old men of the club not only about how to shoot, but about how to live. ***

The club has made few changes since 1953, maybe the most significant would be that the perfect score of 90 has been reached a couple of times. The club was strictly men years ago, but women have been members recently; it was actually a woman who was one of the perfect 90 scores. Many of Sever's descendants have been and are members of the club. All of his boys belonged at one time, some of his grandsons, and his great-grandson David Parrell is a current member. The shooting cabin burned to the ground in 1954, shortly after this article was written, but, because of the dedicated members of this club, it was quickly rebuilt. It should be noted, that the last Saturday of December, 1953, they did not hold a shoot at the cabin, for they attended Sever's funeral.

ANCESTORS OF SEVER SKALET AND DOROTHEA (MALLA) VENDEN

PLAN:

The ancestors of Sever Skalet will be presented first, then the ancestors of Dorothea (Malla) Venden, his wife. In other words, we will trace Sever's ancestors back as far as we can go, then Malla's. Doing them separately should cut the confusion in half.

It is confusing, of course, to try to see all of this. It would be ideal if we could have a big "tree" or chart for the eye to follow, but this wouldn't fit on an 8 1/2 by 11 sheet of paper! Consider that each generation doubles in size. First there are 2 parents, then 4 grandparents, 8 great-grandparents, 16 great-great grandparents, and so on. If we went back just 12 generations, we would end up with 2,112 ancestors!

I am going to use identification numbers, which I will explain below.

IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS:

1. The first number, before the hyphen, indicates the Generation, starting with Sever and Malla as the first generation. There will be headings to show this too.
2. The second number, indicates the PERSON in that generation. 1-1 being Sever, 2-1 and 2-2 being Sever's parents, 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, and 3-4 being his grandparents, and 4-1, 4-2, etc. being his great-grandparents. Now look at the chart on the next page.

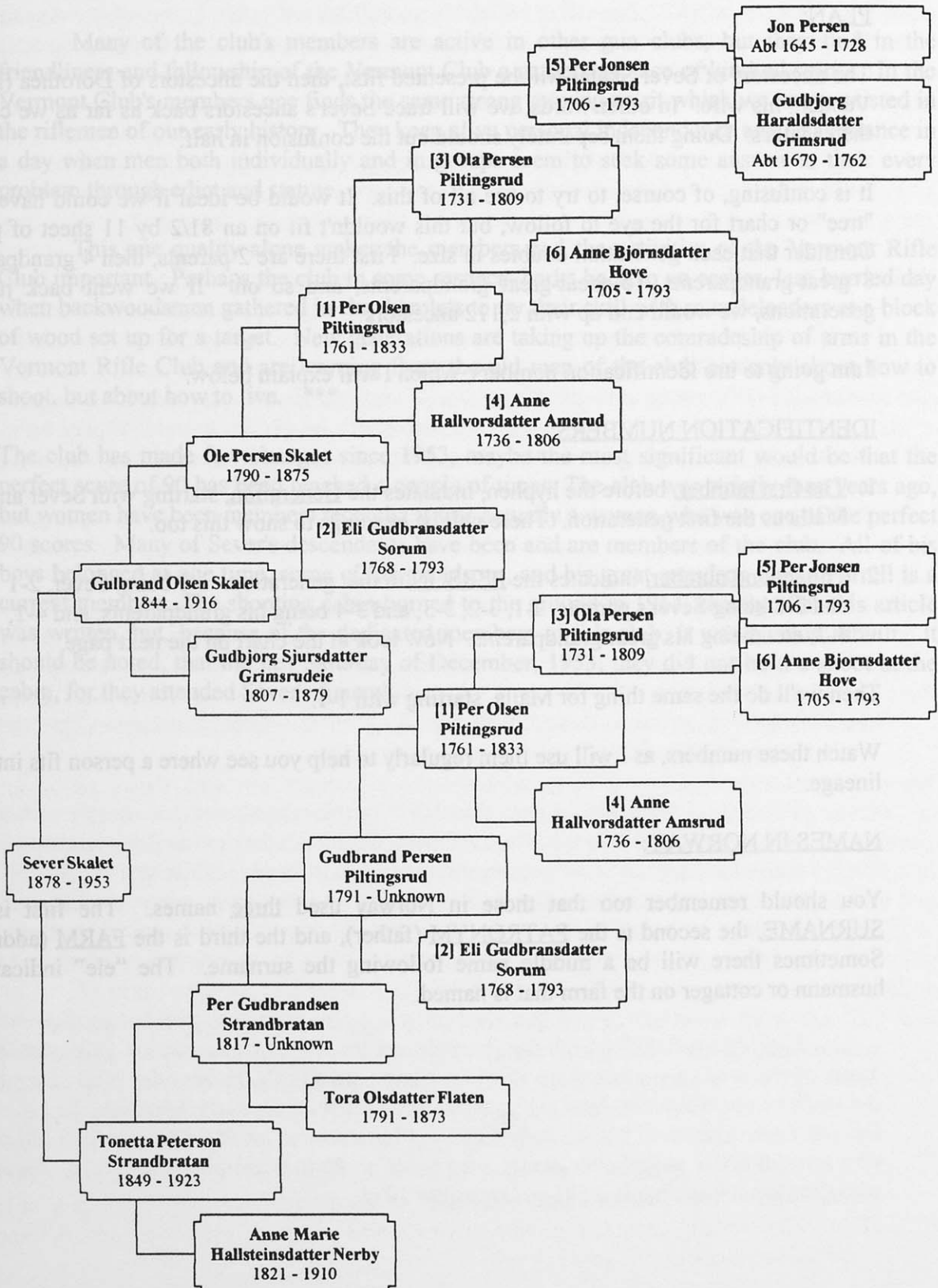
Then we'll do the same thing for Malla, starting with 1-1.

Watch these numbers, as I will use them regularly to help you see where a person fits into the lineage.

NAMES IN NORWAY:

You should remember too that those in Norway used three names. The first is the SURNAME, the second is the PATRONYM (father), and the third is the FARM (address). Sometimes there will be a middle name following the surname. The "eie" indicates a husmann or cottager on the farm that is named.

Ancestors of Sever Skalet



The following information was copied from a Norwegian Bygdebook (a book that tells the history of the farms in different areas of Norway.) by Gerhard Neseth a geneologist at the University of Wisconsin. Thora contacted him a few years ago and he found the following ancestral history for us. (The book was all in Norwegian, and Jean Bower Amundsen translated it for me.) Looking into the Strandbratan history, she noticed a Tonette born in 1849. It seems Sever's grandfather, Ola Persen Piltingsrud sold Strandbratan to his younger brother Gudbrand Persen (1791-1878) Gudbrand Persen married Tora Oldsdatter Flaten(1791-1873) in 1816. They had five children and lived on Strandbratan.

- * 1. Per (1817-1859)
- 2. Eli (1820-)
- 3. Siri (1823-)
- 4. Anne (1824-)
- 5. Tora (1828-)went to America in 1852.

Per Gudbrandsen Strandbratan married Anne Marie Hallsteinsdatter Nerby in 1843 and they had four children, one of whom was Tonette born in 1849. The dates match up, and the names are so similar that we are pretty sure this would be Tonetta's family. If this is true, Sever's great Grandfather on his father's side is the same person as his Great-Great Grandfather on his mother's side. Thora could not verify if all this information is true, but also feels this could be a match.

SKARET

Skaret lies up in Muggedalen about 250 meters above sea level, on a flat meadow down towards the river. Along the new farm road (from about 1956) it lies about 800 meters from the main road (highway).

Skaret was cleared as a tenant farm before 1800. The first that we know about anyone living there is Harald Torsteinsen and his wife Gunhild Tordsdatter.

According to folklore, in 1801 there were tenant farmers on the southern part of Steinsrud. In June that same year the same people are said to have lived on Piltingsrud land and both were called Piltingsrud when they died in 1810 and 1814. Their daughter, Gunhild Haraldsdatter later came to Skaret.

With the dividing of Steinsrud in 1796 Skaret was set off as a separate farm. But the new owner, Gudbrand Arnesen (born 1788) the fourth and youngest son of Arne Olsen Steinsrud, was too young to live there. In 1805 Gudbrand sold Skaret to his brother Tord Arnesen (born 1783) and Tord sold it the same year to Chamberland (court official) Peder Anker. In 1809 Tord sold Hesjabakken and Muggedalen together to Hallvor Olsen Sorumseie. Hallvor sold the land with the exception of Skaret the same year to Gudbrand Persen Piltingsrud. Hallvor sold Skaret back to Tord Arnesen who in 1810 sold it to Ola Olsen Muggedalen. Included in the sale was Skaret's setra (summer pasture), the northern part of Valdreshaugen.

In 1811 the Skaret land was assessed. Ola Muggedalen sold Skaret that year to Hallvor Olsen of Hesjabakken. In 1821 Hallvor Olsen traded Skaret for Kristians moen with Ola Persen Piltingsrud. Ola and his family seem to have been the first family to live on Skaret in many years.

ANCESTORS OF SEVER SKALET

GENERATION 2: Parents of Sever

2-1 GULBRAND OLSEN SKALET

2-2 TONETTA PETERSON STRANDBRAATEN

Parents of Sever Skalet (1-1)

GULBRAND SKALET was born on Nov 22, 1844 in Sondre Urdal, Valdres, Norway. He came to America with his family on the steamship "Winter" porting in Quebec, Canada, July 25, 1861 when he was sixteen years of age. He married Tonetta Strandbraaten Peterson on September 20, 1877, after knowing her for a time in Norway. He died suddenly on Saturday, February 26, 1916 at the age of 74 years, 4 months and 4 days. He was a respected citizen of Black Earth. His obituary in the Dane County News had this to say about him: He was a man who helped when ever help was needed in a quiet, unobtrusive way. He will be missed; not only by his family, but by a large number of friends. The Vermont Lutheran Church; of which he was a member, will miss him; his place was seldom vacant. We have every reason to believe the Church Triumphant has gained what we have lost. The funeral services were held at the Lutheran Church in the village and also at Vermont Lutheran Church conducted by Rev. S. Gunderson. The interment was at the Vermont Lutheran Cemetery where his parents many years ago were laid to rest. Among those present from out of town were Mr. and Mrs. Joseph G. Field (his sister and her husband) and children of Madison, Mr. Ole Pederson (Tonetta's brother) of Blanchardville, Samuel Thompson, James Gesme, and Clarence Paulson of Mt. Horeb.

TONETTA STRANDBRAATEN PETERSON was born in Valdres, Norway, January 22, 1849. She came to America in 1868, coming directly to Black Earth, where she lived until 1877, when she was united in marriage to Gilbert Skalet of Vermont Township where they lived until 1908, when they retired and moved to Black Earth. Tonetta was a good wife, and an upright Christian. She took active part in all church work as long as her health permitted, being for many years, president of the Ladies Aid at Vermont and for several years acted in that capacity in Black Earth. Tonetta passed away on Wednesday morning, January 17, 1923 after having been in poor health for some time, but her last illness was of short duration. Had she lived until the next Monday, she would have been 74 years old. The funeral services were held Saturday afternoon from the home and the Lutheran Church in town and at Vermont Lutheran. Rev. Gunderson conducted the service and testified to the many good qualities of Tonetta, and that her presence and counsel would be greatly missed. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord".