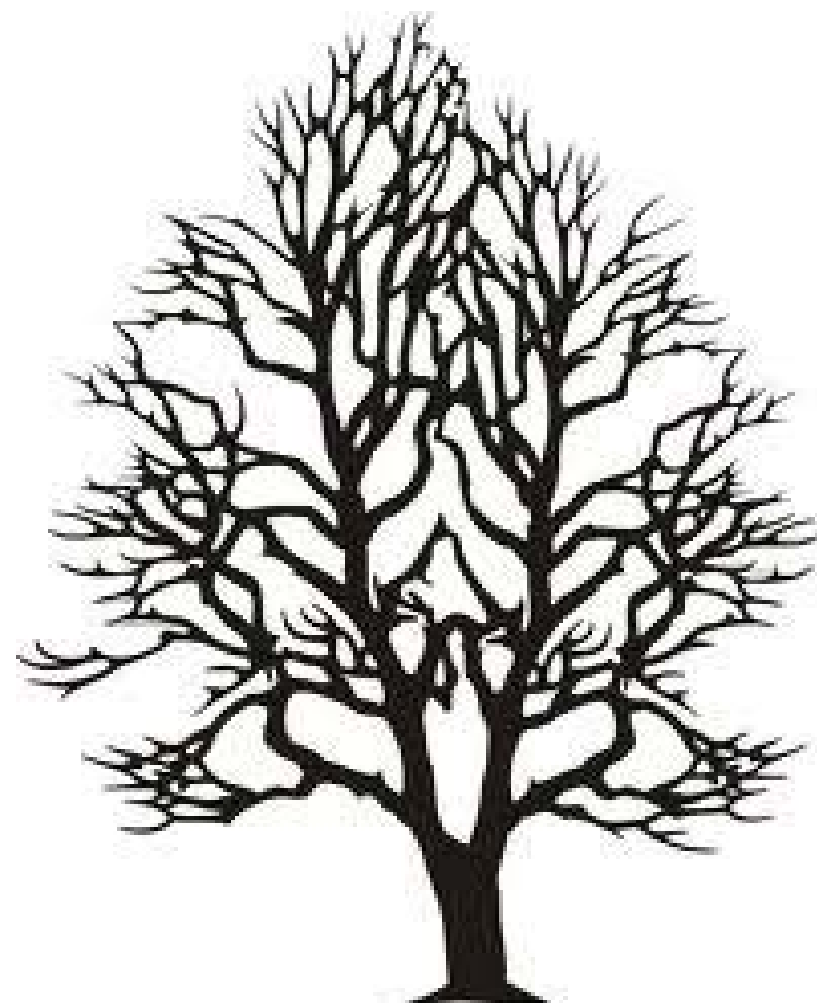


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Wilhelmson

Family History



Dedicated to...

This Family History is dedicated to all of the people who have helped make this book possible. I appreciate all the time and effort donated for memories, comments, proof-reading, suggestions, and encouragement.

Introduction

I have always been mildly interested in the history of my family. When I started going through the seven boxes of family memorabilia that I inherited, I was hooked. In the years since then, I have discovered myself as I discovered my family. I hope you have as much fun reading this and meeting these people as I have.

This is not intended to be a finished work. My intention is to devote one section to each person. As each new section is published, any additions, corrections, or updates to prior sections will also be included. Therefore, your input is encouraged.

Evelyn Wilhelmson
705 W. Bellwood Drive #87
Spokane WA 99218

FamilyHistory@Wilhelmson.org

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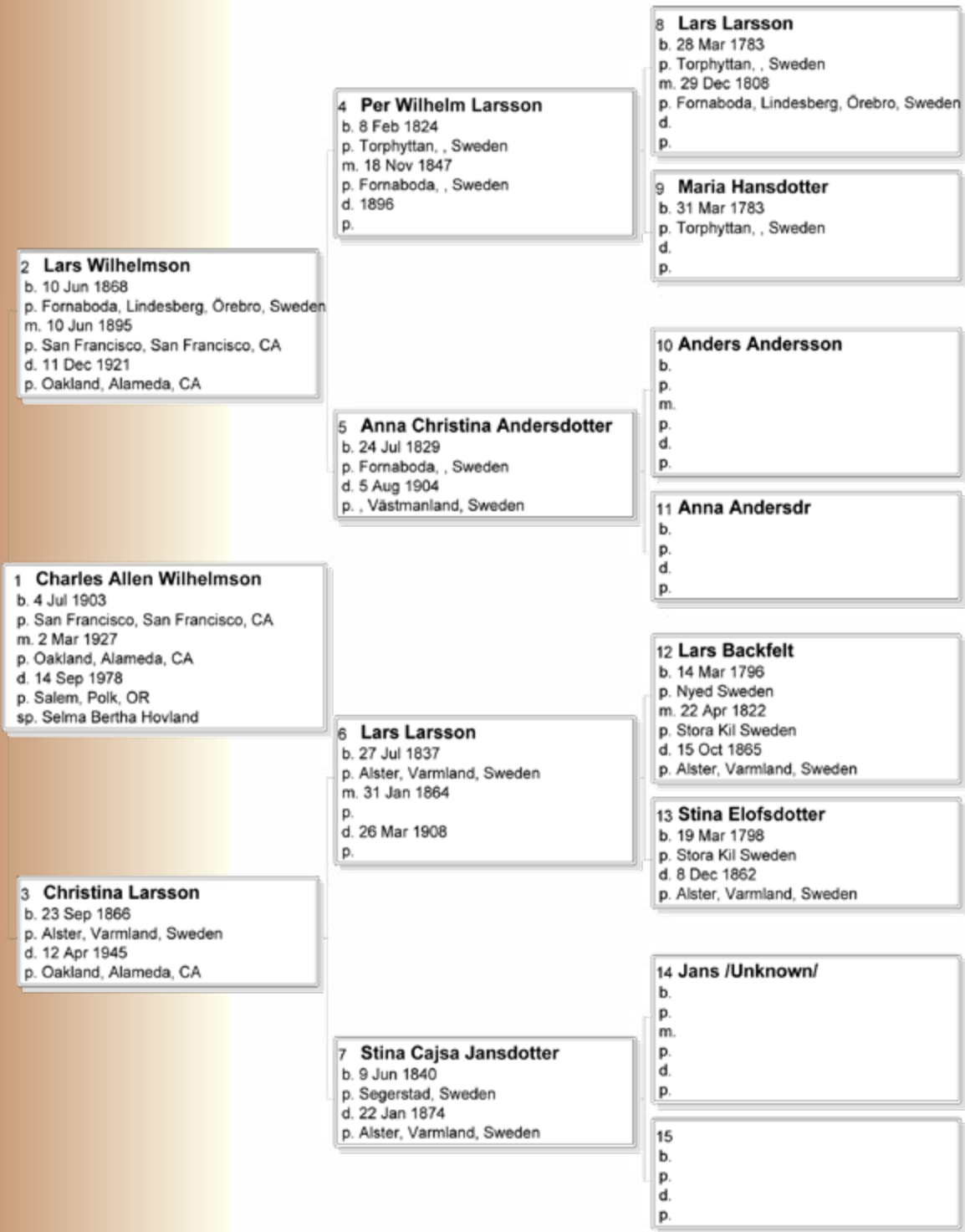
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Charles Allen Wilhelmson
1903 - 1978

picture taken November 14, 1972

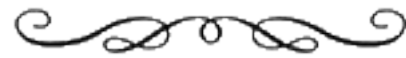
Pedigree Chart



Descendancy Chart



Charles Allen Wilhelmson by EJ Wilhelmson



(memories contributed by Andy, Brian, Evelyn, Gail, Jim, Karen, Lynn, and Tom)



1900s High Fashion



Typical SF Townhouse



Sample of 1904 Cadillac



Damage done by earthquake

Charles Allen Wilhelmson, an only child, was born July 4, 1903 in San Francisco to Lars and Christine Wilhelmson. Lars and Christine had both immigrated from Sweden as young adults. The house where the three of them lived was located at 4417 23rd Street, San Francisco, California. Looking at the photos of that address on maps.google.com, it shows one of the characteristic townhouses of San Francisco with neighbors sharing the side walls and the ground level was a garage & front door. Charles was baptized that fall on 13 October by the Lutheran Pastor E. Nelander.

Three years later, on April 18, 1903 at 4:13 AM the first of several earthquakes and aftershocks hit in San Francisco, California. Then fires started from broken gaslines and raged out of control since the water system was also broken. The fires burned for several days and did far more damage to the city and its inhabitants than the original earthquake. The courthouse was one of the casualties of the fires and resulted in most records of the city prior to that day in 1906 being destroyed. Naturalization records and marriage records for his parents and his own birth record were among the many lost to the fires.

Charlie and his parents lived a few blocks from the line which marked the edge of the fires. According to Don, Charlie's son, "My dad, ... thought he faintly remembered the great earthquake and fire of 1906, recalling his folks setting chairs out on the sidewalk, watching the city burn."

In December 1908, Charlie's parents purchased a lot in San Francisco at Mission street and Persia avenue. This lot was 25' by 83' and cost \$10. It is not known whether they purchased this lot to build a house or possibly it was an investment in the aftermath of the earthquake and fire 2 years earlier.

Sometime before 1910 Charlie and his parents moved from San Francisco, to Alameda which is directly across the San Francisco Bay to the east. In 1910, Alameda was a city with a population of 35,033 built on an island just off shore from Oakland. They lived at 562 Pacific Avenue. This house did not exist in 2005. It had been replaced by a large duplex that appeared to span several lots. The family lived at that address until their trip to Sweden.

The trip to Sweden was a major production. Lars, Charlie's dad, completed a US passport application in mid-April 1910. It was a 'family' passport in that the passport was issued to Lars Wilhelmson, but it also named Christine (wife) and Charles (son). The passport was delivered to the offices of the Hamburg-American Line in San Francisco. They left on their trip May 5th, 1910 from Oakland, traveled across the United States by train, arriving in New York City five days later. They spent a week in New York City then caught the Ameriland line ship. It took ten days at sea for them to arrive in Plymouth, England. After spending the next several days with their ship docking in Cherbourg (France), Cuxhaven (Cuxhaven, Germany), Hamburg (Germany), Lubeck (Germany), Kobenhavn (Copenhagen, Denmark), Malmo (Sweden), it finally reached Stockholm, Sweden June 8, 1910. a month after leaving home. The family spent two months, June and July, in various cities in Sweden. No records have been found describing who or what they visited in the various cities, although some of the towns on the itinerary were close to the towns where Charlie's parents were born. The family started their trip home leaving Gotesburg, Sweden. The ship docked at several ports before leaving Southampton (England) on August 8 to head back across the Atlantic



Sample 1900s train



Grafwaldersee - Sweden trip



St. Paul - traveled on return from Sweden



McCalls September 1910



624 Haight
Alameda, California



Longfellow School (prior to 1930
renovation)



1912 Men's Suit Advertisement

ocean for New York, arriving a week later. Another 10 days and they arrived back in Oakland by train after three and a half months traveling.

In April of 1910 they lived in the house on Pacific. From the beginning of May through the end of August that year, they were on their Sweden trip. Yet by the end of August, they were living at 624 Haight avenue a few block from their previous address. Did they move just before or just after their trip? Or maybe they put all their belongings in storage while they were away?

What is interesting is that by the end of the summer of 1910, even though Charlie had turned 7 years old, he hadn't yet been to school. He started school that fall. He attended Longfellow School in Alameda until he finished 5th grade. He then attended Washington School through 7th grade.

The schools in Alameda and Oakland had 2 separate reports showing student progress. One 3.5" x 5.5" card had grades for each unit during the school year. The student apparently took that home to have the parent sign, and then brought it back to school. The other was 3" x 4.5" and was issued when the student successfully completed one grade and was promoted to the next grade. Charlie started in class A of grade 1 in the fall of 1910. In December, he was promoted to class B or grade 1. He has cards showing both achievement and promotion through 8th grade.

The arrival of the year 1914 sees Kaiser Wilhelm declaring war in Europe. By 1916, the United States joined in WWI against the Kaiser. Closer to home, Charlie, in junior high school, suffered from the merciless teasing of his classmates about his last name of Wilhelmson. He was later to express that it was like being named "Hitler-son" during WWII.

The family moved again, this time to Oakland about 2-3 miles from their prior home. The house, a tiny place still standing in 2005, was small even for a family of only three. I don't imagine there was very much privacy for Charlie.

Traditional school didn't agree with Charlie very well. I wouldn't be surprised if starting school at age 7, being teased about his name, and moving so often contributed to his lack of interest in school. School records for the period of time from the end of 7th grade (June 1917) to the beginning of his attendance in the Vocational High School (April 1918) have not been found. In February of 1922 he was given a letter of recommendation from the Vocational High School for job hunting. He was still living with his parents in 1920 when the census was taken, although they had, once again, moved. This time it was to 1532 E 14th street in Oakland. Looking at maps.google.com. There is a large lot covered by parking spaces and garages or small storage units in the space between the cross-street (1400 block) and where the 1600s start. Buildings on either side of the lot and across the street are the elegant victorian town-houses that are so typical of the era. It is likely that they lived in a house of this style.

Charlie was listed in the Oakland City Directory of 1921 as living on his own at 463 Van Dyke av and working as a machinist. This ended up being an eventful year for Charlie. Not only was he living away from home, but his dad died suddenly in December of that year. He told his granddaughter that he came home from work one day shortly after his dad's death, to find his mother pulling things out and throwing away photos, letters, certificates and other family momentos. He said he was literally taking things out of the trash as his mother was throwing them away. No doubt that the majority of the memorabilia he passed on from his family was due to his rescue efforts.

Charlie turned 18 the summer of 1921. According to Charlie's son Don, "Although Dad had been baptized in the



1920s Ford



1920s Jumper Pattern



Charles Allen Wilhelmson
Selma Bertha Hovland
March 2, 1927



4158 Redding Street
Oakland, CA



Top: Don; middle: Sue;
bottom: Bob

Lutheran church after birth, he apparently had no religious involvement until shortly after his father's death when, possibly at the instigation of his mother, he began attending Plymouth Brethren tent meetings led by Tom Olson. At age 18 there, he first met Mother, age 14. Mother remembered Dad driving her home, seated between him and his mother, but she was still not particularly attracted to boys, and certainly not to him."

It isn't clear what motivated Charlie to request a birth certificate, but on July 14, 1924, he received a letter from the Department of Public Health stating *"This is to certify that all of the birth records of the City and County of San Francisco, State of California, prior to April 18th, 1906, were destroyed in a general conflagration on April 18th, 19th, and 20th, 1906; that no provision in law has ever been made for the restoration of the certificates or records so destroyed, therefore, this department is unable to furnish a certified copy of the birth record of Charles Allen Wilhelmson said to have been born in the City and County of San Francisco, State of California on the 4th day of July, 1903 ."*

In 1926, Charlie shows up in the Voters Registration, living at 1919 Fruitvale ave, Oakland. He is listed as being a 'fixture hanger'. It is also the first record showing his need for privacy. In the spot for political party, he indicates that he declines to answer.

Selma Hovland, at age 14, may not have been interested in spending time with Charlie, but her older brother Ralph bought a car with Charlie and the two guys spent many hours working on it. Four years later, Selma Hovland and Charlie Wilhelmson got engaged. It was announced a year later and they were married on March 2, 1927 shortly after Selma turned 20. Charlie gave up cigar smoking when he married and that first year he gained 35 pounds.

The wedding invitations read, *"Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Hovland request the honor of your presence at the marriage of*

their daughter Selma Bertha to Mr. Charles Allen Wilhelmson on Wednesday evening, the second of March Nineteen hundred and twenty-seven at half after eight o'clock Twenty forty-three Twenty-second Avenue Oakland, California." The address given was the location of the Hovland family residence.

Their first home was at 4158 Redding st in Oakland. This is where they were living when the first of their children was born. Donald Allen Wilhelmson was born February 20, 1928, the day before Selma's 21st birthday. Ellen Marie Wilhelmson was born May 24, 1929 followed by Robert Charles Wilhelmson on June 12, 1930.

These first seven years of their marriage were spent in this little house filling up with the three children who grew in size and energy. The stock market crash of 1929 and ensuing economic depression lasted at least through the 1930s. During the 1930s, Charlie and his family moved to Alameda for a short time during which they switched from the church Bethany to the meeting in Alameda. At that time they had a business based in San Francisco. They moved to Pacific Grove in the late 1930s. and November 1940 found them back at the little house at 4158 Redding street.

An attraction called Neptune Beach in Alameda was built in 1917. It has been compared to Coney Island. This was most popular in the 1930s and 1940s. It had rides and races, swimming beach and swimming pool (salt water), races and sand and sun. Sort of like living near Disney land.

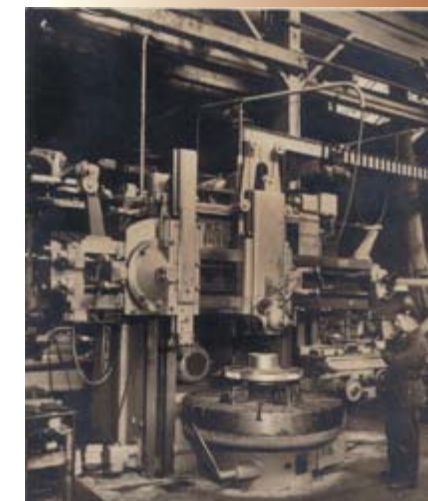
In the mid 1940s, they lived in Santa Cruz, California for a short time. They bought a good-sized lot in the hills just outside of town. According to the map of the lot, there was a creek that crossed the property. This home was dubbed 'Rancho Lumbago' because "it had a little crick in the back" and they built a house on it. That house was sold in 1950 when a close neighbor proved to be starting their personal



Postcard of Neptune Beach



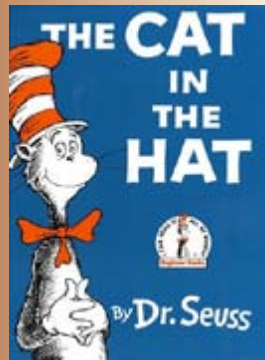
Rancho Lumbago



Charles Wilhelmson working at
United Filters in Oakland 1948



Charles & Selma
in their livingroom in
Norman street house



The Cat In The Hat
Published 1957



1341 Norman street; Redwood
City, California in 1957

junkyard. In Santa Cruz, Charlie worked in a letter shop.

About this time, Charlie began to have some serious health problems. He had his left kidney removed in July of 1945 because of a tuberculosis infection in it.

The surgery for the kidney may have cured that problem, but in December of 1945 he had his gall bladder removed and he developed an embolism in his lung after surgery. A lung embolism causes chest pain, shortness of breath and can result in death. He survived. The removal of his gall bladder would have left him unable to tolerate very much fat in his diet. To reduce the fat in meatloaf, Charlie came up with the idea for a pan and manufactured it. The pan was composed of 2 metal bread pans, one set inside another and separated by a couple of metal bars. The top pan had holes drilled into the bottom, allowing any fat in the meatloaf in the top to drain into the bottom pan.

Charlie worked for Oliver United Filters in 1948 in Oakland and the East Bay Title Insurance Company in 1950.

A letter written in 1953 to a cousin, reports Charlie was back to being a Machinist. In 1955, he left Holt Tool & Die to help start Dalmo-Victor Company as a tool & die maker in Belmont, California. He worked the night shift from 4 P.M. to 12:30 A.M. Charlie and Selma lived at 170 Bonita avenue in Redwood City. Two years later, they moved to 1341 Norman street, in Redwood City.

In the early 1960s (sometime before October) he had a heart attack. It was about this same time Charlie and Selma bought some property in Marysville, California to build their retirement home. He apparently was told by his physician that building houses was out, so they eventually sold the property.



Peace Symbol
Invented 1958

Charlie's son Don, moved from the east coast to the San Francisco Bay area in October of 1962. It was during those early 1960s that Charlie turned over a lot of the family memorabilia that he had been collecting, labeling and storing. He had amassed an amazing amount of information and personal items, all with notes neatly typed on the back of scratch paper (showing receipts and old letterhead on the back).

In a neatly typed letter to his son in reference to the family memorabilia, Grandpa Charlie says "If I have seemed overly specific in describing any of these items, you will understand that it is because I'm trying to see the situation from the viewpoint of a future generation. I wish I knew some of the details that those before me could have mentioned, but didn't."

Another typed note to his son, Don, about the family memorabilia states "In case you haven't already noticed, it is bad technique to use rubber bands on anything to be kept for very long. They rot and get sticky and let things get loose just when you can least afford it. Paper clips also have a way of getting rusty. Pins are no bargain either. Staples ... (?) It's just a thought. Good old grocery string has a lot to recommend itself."

Memories of Grandpa Charlie are hazy with most of his grandchildren, since they were so young at the time he died, but there are some vivid stories and memories. One story by Brian and Andy indicate they think Grandpa drove an old station wagon when living in Redwood City in the '60s. He had a box in the back to "hide" valuables or tools in the car. It was a wooden box with a wooden lid, and nailed to the lid was a jumble of wood blocks. When the lid was put on the box, it looked like a box of wood blocks. Who would break in to steal wood blocks?



Sound of Music
on Broadway 1959

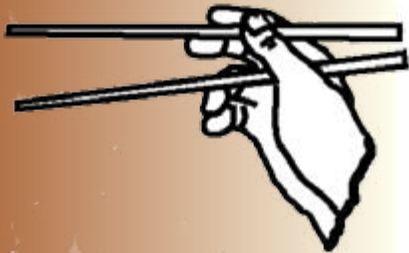


Berlin Wall
built 1961



It would always unsettle me, Karen said, when I would pass a plate of food to Grandpa at the dinner table and he would trap my thumb or fingers on the rim so I couldn't let go, then fake confusion that I wouldn't let the plate go.

Gail remembers Grandpa Charlie used to ask her (and she assumes all other blue eyed grandchildren) "What color are your eyes?" and she was supposed to say "as blue as a carpenter's thumb!"



Andy and Gail remember Grandpa's tiny front yard in Redwood City that he paved with concrete and painted green so he wouldn't have to mow it.

Tom said he doesn't have a lot of memories of Grandpa Charlie, but one of his favorites was when his family visited them in Redwood City on furlough. Grandpa sat all of us kids in the kitchen, gave us each a bowl of mini-marshmallows and a pair of chopsticks. He then told us that whoever could eat all of their marshmallows one by one with the chopsticks, could keep the chopsticks. That is a side of him we all would like to remember.

Tom also remembers being somewhat intimidated by Grandpa, because his Dad would always tell the kids before they arrived for a visit: "don't touch anything ... don't speak unless spoken to ... don't ask for anything ... remember to say 'yes, please' and 'thank you.'" I don't think the intention was to frighten us, but to make sure that we would make a good impression on Grandma and Grandpa by how polite we could be.

When Grandpa Charlie's daughter and her family moved to Oregon, Andy remembers Grandpa gave his mom a stack of classical records and a jar of dimes. If the kids could identify a song, she was to pay them a dime. That jar of dimes lasted a long time. The kids weren't too interested



in classical music.

Another memory Gail shared, "On birthdays, sometimes (always? I'm not sure how reliable a memory source I am) he would send a kid a card, money, and a typewritten note (always typewritten! I considered this cool, not impersonal. by the way) with the note instructing the kid to spend the money on something NOT useful. The money was a small amount that seemed large to a kid (\$1 ? \$5?). I remember Andy on one birthday spending it all on many packs of Juicyfruit gum, impressing me with the sheer splendor or such a wealth of gum ownable all at one time. I think it was probably exactly the sort of thing Grandpa Charlie was intending a kid to do/feel about the birthday money.

Then there was his classic letter that Charlie wrote to each of his grandchildren on their birthday when they turned 13. It was like a right of passage.

Another memory that seems a common thread for all the grandchildren involves color. Everything Charlie made was painted the same shade of "Grandpa Charlie brown" (GCB) which is not to be confused with 'Charlie Brown' the cartoon character. Brian has several items around the house that came from Grandpa. One is a set of small-parts drawers in his shop. They are wooden boxes that lay horizontally with the front side opened (painted GCB), each shelf holds 4 Velveeta Cheese boxes (painted GCB) that slide in. I keep nails, string, screws, etc. in my Grandpa Charlie parts box. Somewhere we also have a wooden magazine rack painted GCB. Andy comments that he remembers Grandpa used to paint a lot of his things brown, an ugly Rostoleum brown to identify it as his.

Marshall, a great-grandchild, still is using a wooden box that Grandpa made either when Grandpa's son went to college or to the east coast. It was like a bookcase that folded in half and had two clasps which held it shut, and two





Charlie's and Selma's hutch in their Redwood City home.

handles to lift it. It was heavy all on it's own and almost too heavy to lift when full of books. Granddaughter Karen, changed the color on the shelves from brown to green with antique gold weathering and used it at college. Her son, Marshall, continued the tradition and took it when he went off to college, and still has it in his home. It is indestructible, much like the camping trailer Grandpa made for family camping.

When Grandpa Charlie referred to some generic person, he always called them "Joe Bachigalupe". Andy was amused one day when he ran across a book whose author's name was "Joe Bachigalupo".

Grandpa Charlie neatly labeled everything. When Andy and his siblings moved their Mom's hutch, which used to belong to her parents, they found a note inside in Grandpa Charlie's handwriting describing when and where purchased, and the purchase price. Andy used to have an old camping stove of Grandpa's with a small propane bottle. Taped to the bottle was a neat label listing the weight of the bottle when full and when empty. This information allowed Grandpa Charlie to determine how much fuel was left.

Labeling, along with his brown paint, was a habit throughout Grandpa Charlie's life. His grandson, Jim, remembers Grandpa's tools having marks made with red finger nail polish to identify them as his tools. Finger nail polish must have been more durable in those days.

Many years after both Grndpa Charlie and his son, Don, had died, Karen was helping a neighbor of Charlie's son go through an accumulation of things in the garage that the owner couldn't ever throw away. They came across a couple of drawer sets that the neighbors think came from Don, Charlie's son. Karen thinks they came from Grandpa Charlie. There were wooden boxes with drawers made of some variety of food carton with little wooden handles. The only

thing that threw her off is that they weren't painted brown.

Karen also remembers Grandpa always dressed in khaki colored shirt and pants. Grandpa Charlie loved the tomatoes that her mom grew... and he loved his old cat.

Lefty, Grandpa Charlie's cat, got his name from his habit of standing on his hind legs and pawing the air with one paw ... always his left one ... when he wanted something.

A story Gail remembers: Mom told me once that when she was a kid still living at home and the whole family used to go to church, that it used to bug Grandpa Charlie, bug him a LOT, if the church organist finished playing a song and then went back and sat in the pew ... the organist having neglected to turn off the small light on top of the organ. Grandpa Charlie could hardly stand it. I think in the same conversation she told me he was briefly a light house attendant. I think it was a discussion about Grandpa Charlie's personality, and how it was really difficult for him sometimes to let small things go. That has to do with why he would love the solitary job of lighthouse attendant. (So would I, I think.) Sometimes when something small that somebody else is doing bugs me a lot I think about Grandpa Charlie fidgeting in his seat in church because of a small organ light and then it is easier to laugh at myself and let the detail go. I don't mean that I think these things are inherited - I don't think so- I just mean it is easier to recognize it in somebody else rather than ourselves.

Charlie had to take his beloved cat to the vet in 1971 to be put down. He wrote a long letter to the vet and wrote an ode to "Lefty" composed of Charlie's memories of the cat.

Tom remembers Grandpa's old 1954 Ford station wagon that he gave to his son, Bob, when Bob and his wife were on their 1971 furlough. When the furlough ended and they



Khaki pants



Sample of 1954 Ford station wagon

went back to Bolivia in '72, Tom was offered the wagon, but didn't think it was cool enough (at the time). He would love to have it now, and would be very proud of it. It was a 2-door, and Grandpa had fixed the back of it for camping. What would a 19 year old know in 1972 about sentimental value anyway?



Capitol Manor
Salem, Oregon

Charlie and Selma, his wife, made arrangements to move to a retirement community, Capitol Manor, in Salem, Oregon, near where their daughter lived. He had another heart attack in 1971 and again in early 1972. This postponed their move to Capitol Manor until he recovered enough to pass the health requirements of Capitol Manor.

Andy occasionally remembers the old jokes he used to hear Grandpa Charlie tell. He's always appreciated Grandpa's dry sense of humor. The classic story was after his stroke, while he was in the hospital, the nurse noticed him grimacing and asked if he was feeling OK. Grandpa asked, "Why do you ask?" She said, "You're making funny faces." He replied "It's my face. I can do what I want with it."



A stroke in 1973 caused weakness in one side of his body. A second stroke in 1975 made a walker necessary for the rest of his life. One of the effects of this stroke was to make one hand much weaker than the other. To regain strength in the hand, he was encouraged to use it. A resident at the retirement community where Charlie lived knit a ball out of blue yarn about the size of a tennis ball and stuffed with something soft. He was supposed to hold the ball in his weak hand and squeeze repeatedly to strengthen the muscles and improve coordination. He was supposed to repeat this several times a day. He hated it. It wasn't clear if he had a problem with the ball, or with the exercise, or just that he hated having to work hard at something

he used to be able to do easily. When his 2 year old granddaughter came to visit, he offered her his blue exercise ball. He was triumphantly rid of the thing and his granddaughter was totally delighted with it. It was her treasured possession for many years.

Another story Brian remembers from Grandpa Charlie's stay at the retirement community shows how hard it must have been for him to live in such close quarters with other people... and hard for them to live close to him. A hard-of-hearing neighbor at Capitol Manor had fashioned a home-made ear trumpet using a funnel and a length of flexible tubing. Grandpa would get annoyed when the man handed him the tube to speak into, so one time when handed the tube, Grandpa picked up a glass of water and started to pour it into the tube. The man snatched it back and quit pestering Grandpa Charlie.

Mom told Gail that Grandpa Charlie felt that he raised his kids strictly (not sure that was the adjective he would use. That he had high standards for behavior?) but then after that he gave them a lot of freedom. Mom said (I'm paraphrasing) "If you train your kids what to do in every situation and then let loose of them only when you know they will do exactly what you would tell them to do if you were there watching, how is that freedom or trust?" She felt that he sort of missed the point, and that it took her well into her own adult life to not think behaving well meant doing what the voice of authority in your head had already decided for you. She loved Grandpa Charlie and was not obsessing over past wrongs or something like that when she told me this. Or it didn't sound like she was. I wonder if this view of Grandpa Charlie is the same as his other kids had of him.

1976 Grandpa Charlie and Grandma Selma signed a "Right to Enter" document to allow any of their three children to enter their apartment.



Old fashioned
ear trumpet



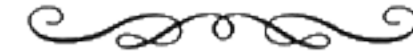
Charlie lost his battle with poor health on September 14, 1978 in Salem, Oregon. According to his death certificate, he died of congestive heart failure due to ASHD" (arteriosclerotic heart disease). He was buried in City View Cemetery.



City View Cemetery gate
Salem, Oregon



A story Gail told was about when Grandma and Grandpa lived at Capitol Manor, mom used to drive up almost every weekend, one day or the other, to visit them. Sometimes one or another of us kids would go. I also saw them when I was in junior high? high school? and had braces on my teeth. The orthodontist was in Salem, and I would go with Mom to get something or other done to the braces, then we would go to Dunkin Donuts, then to Capitol Manor and take the doughnuts with us to share. If I remember right, Grandma would give me Mug root beer. (In the 70s we ate all the sugar we wanted and we did NOT stress about it.) When Mom went up on the weekend, sometimes she would take pizza to Grandma and Grandpa's. Mom told me later after Grandpa died, once they went to the cemetery (where even IS it?) and she and Grandma were standing just sort of looking at the grave and feeling a little silly because neither one had brought flowers and then one of them said suddenly "really , I feel like I should have brought a pizza!" and then they both got the giggles and stood there laughing. Mom said it really did seem like a pizza would have been the right thing to bring.



Charles A. Wilhelmson, obituary (from a newspaper clipping, publisher unknown):

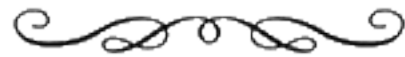
Charles A. Wilhelmson, 75, of 1955 Dallas Highway NW, died Thursday at his home.

He was born in San Francisco, Calif. He moved to Salem from Redwood City, Calif., in 1972. He worked as a tool and dye [sic] man for Amvex Corp. in Redwood City until his retirement in 1963. He was a member of the Tool and Dye [sic] Craftsmen of California.

He is survived by wife Selma; daughter Sue Ellen-Marie Cripe, Albany; sons Donald, Palo Alto, Calif., and Robert, Bolivia, South America; 12 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Private graveside services will be held at City View Cemetery, Salem. Arrangements are by Virgil T. Golden mortuary.

Charles Allen Wilhelmson by Donald Allen Wilhelmson



[Written July 1996 by Donald Allen Wilhelmson, the oldest of Charles Allen Wilhelmson's 3 children]

Writing this has unleashed a flood of memories and impressions, almost all of them felicitous, which remind me what an overpowering influence Dad has been, and undoubtedly will be, throughout my life. It was probably the combination of a very impressionable child, as well as an exceptionally intelligent and strong-willed father, which produced an impact that was probably greater than that of all of the other people in my life put together. It took decades of other influences, gradually infiltrating into my outlook, until I was able to achieve real independence, and, while retaining the positive aspects, break free from those mind-sets which caused him so much pain. It took me years to realize that I was judging people by his eccentric and unrealistic standards and interpreting events from his standpoint, and many more years to develop my own judgment, and put his into perspective. Although he communicated an immense store of knowledge and wisdom, some of my most valuable insights have come from recognizing, and avoiding, his mistakes.

My dad, Charles Allen Wilhelmson, was born in San Francisco on July 4, 1903. He thought he faintly remembered the great earthquake and fire of 1906, recalling his

folks setting chairs out on the sidewalk, watching the city burn. The fire stopped three blocks from their home. He was mercilessly razed during World War I, when the despised evil was Kaiser Wilhelm.

Dad had an outstanding sense of humor, an appreciation of the incongruous, and an eye for deft similes and pithy characterizations. When explaining the principles of insurance to us, it was always in terms of the Haywire Casualty Co. and the Erysipelas Indemnity Co. His generic name for a Russian was 'Ivan Awfulitch'. A Greek fraternity was 'Ate a bite o' pie' (eta beta pi). A slow job, like the lonely Maytag repairman's, was like being, 'Pork inspector in Jerusalem.' Any thingamajig was a 'mucket'. His similes always seemed a little sharper, and his incongruities a little more bizarre, than those in current use. While people often describe a dissonant church bell as sounding like, maybe, a dishpan, to him it sounded like a cracked shovel. Worn soles were so thin you could step on, not a dime, feeling heads or tails, but a wad of gum, sensing its flavor. Extra-strong coffee was likened to varnish remover. Something new in a discussion, which changed the consensus, "That's a white horse of a different color!" Someone denying familiarity with his topic, "Well, then, I can speak freely!" As people drifted away, "Maybe I should chew cloves." When an explanation eased his unstated suspicions, "I take back everything I was think-

ing." Early radios were battery operated, involving some trouble and expense. Newer models could be plugged into wall receptacles, and were advertised as 'all electric'. Dad's reaction was, "What did they think the old ones ran on, soft coal?"

Too small a portion of anything was dismissed by, "If you had it in your eye, you wouldn't feel it!" A garrulous person had been "vaccinated with a phonograph needle". A ferociously wrathful person was turned away with the soft answer, "You've been eating raw meat again!" A particularly stout person was "built when meat was cheap." Any clamor sounded like "feeding time at the zoo!" When asked if something had improved, he'd often reply, "Not so's you could notice it." People losing control over a large object were warned, "Hold 'er Newt! She's headed for the barn!" Over-reactive people were advised to "Cause thine heart to descend into thy bosom!" Any unusual name was, "a name to be conjured with" Or he would comment that, in Tehama County they think Wilhelmson is a funny name. Any complicated explanation was like a description of the New Jerusalem.

All internal pains were dismissed as too many square meals in a round stomach. A snack was just a little something to keep body and soul together. A refreshing beverage, "Something cold and wet" or "Something to wet your whistle" One of his favorite lunches was a baloney sandwich and a root beer float made with chocolate ice cream. This reminded him of the joke, "Did you slice this ham? Yes. Almost missed it altogether, didn't you!" His 'scrap salad' apparently referred to an ordinary tossed salad, but was not appreciated on occasion. After a good

dinner, "A little child could speak to me now." And any calorie-rich dessert was, "My favorite fruit" or "The fondest thing I am of" and would "put hair on your chest" He often said that the best pies he'd ever eaten were invariably those that looked like they'd been stepped on. In 1949 the folks took an auto trip around the country, and I joined them for the Massachusetts-to-New Orleans segment. In New York City, Dad had some business to attend to one day, so we separated for the day. At noon, Mother and I went to a Woolworth's lunch counter, and stood behind the eaters, waiting for a seat. We must have been there 10 or 15 minutes before I noticed that the customer seated in front of me was Dad. Small world!

When people gushed over Bob's cuteness as a tot, and asked him to go home with them, "only if you take the whole quarter-dozen." His response to anything complimentary, "It sure listens good!" His gifts were often minimized as, "something that fell off a truck." In a note to Mother, apologizing for not gift-wrapping a Monroe calculator, he likened it to the challenge of gift-wrapping a pair of watermelons. In conversation with residents of the Pacific Northwest he'd often ask whether it was true that the natives there had webbed feet. We often heard, "The evening's still young!. . . Into each life some rain must fall... I bruise easy, but I heal quick ... Let your conscience be your guide!. . . You looka wit de eye, no toucha wit de fing .. Everything is relative.. . I go now. . . That's a heck of a thing to be out of! ... Heads up!" Instead of telling us our hair was a mess, "Maybe you might run a comb through your hair."

Any awkward word form was followed by, "Dey's a woid like dat?" When diplomacy

forced a white lie he'd say, "I hope the good Lord will forgive me for that one!" One of the men I hike with can identify almost all of the plants and flowers we see. His recent inability to identify one flower recalled Dad's quip, "Me and my brother know everything. That's one of the things my brother knows." When talk turned to financial status, he'd say, "I'm still working on my first million. So far, I have all the zeroes. . . I've had quite a bit of luck. Unfortunately, most of it's been bad. . . When it rains soup, I'll be out with a fork! . . . My kids think a steak is something to hold up a tent." When he was disappointed that something personal had been revealed, "Yer life's an open book now! And God help ya if there're any pages stuck together!" When some analysis didn't pan out, "Another theory exploded!" When, enroute to Tahoe, I realized that I'd forgotten to bring my new glasses, he said he'd buy me some scenic postcards. We were often exhorted to, "Use your head! Did you think the Good Lord put it there just to keep your spine from unraveling?" My kids thought that admonition originated with me.

Dad had a number of quirky, but affectionate rituals. When he was in an amorous mood, he'd often hug Mother and say, "Here's the gal I'm stuck on." And she would respond, "Here's the guy I'm stuck with." One morning after Mother left for work, he wrote a memo to all three of us, remarking how attractive she looked, and how proud we should all be of her. On her birthday or their anniversary once, when we were kids, he wanted us all to go for a ride after dinner. Mother didn't want to go until she'd cleaned up the kitchen, but he urged, as he often did, "Aw come on! Yer only young once!" When we returned, Mother was mortified to

find that he had organized a surprise party, and the house was full of friends who had done the dishes and cleaned up the kitchen.

He had a huge stock of good jokes for every occasion, and told them well, including authentic dialects. Oddly, he also had a compulsion to tell many too-familiar, pointless jokes, and was never deterred by the negative response, just replying, "Maybe I shouldn't have brought it up." As a kid, I once told him a joke I had made up. He said that making up jokes was generally an unprofitable endeavor; he'd made one up once, and it really bombed, but he wouldn't tell me the joke. Even now, whenever something reminds me of one of his bad jokes, I wonder if that was the one he made up. One assurance was, "Hope to kiss a pig if I don't!" "We waited for you like one little pig waits for another" was quaint, but "I'm gonna make a P-I-G Hawg outa mahself!" was overdone.

He sang many songs which, as a kid, I assumed were mainstays of western civilization, but eventually recognized as merely those popular during his youth: There was a man, he had a goat. . ." ". . . her eyes were crossed, her teeth were false, she had a wooden leg. But I can't change her . . ." "Let's all sing like the birdies sing "A He-brew and two Irishmen once . . ." "Everyone, no matter who, the (gent?) over eighty and the kid of two, the tiger in the jungle and the monk in the zoo, say I love you." "I went to the animal fair. The birds and the beasts were there. . ." "K-K-Katie . . ." "Clementine" "She'll be Comin' Round the Mountain When She Comes" He had his own takeoff on, "I Wonder Who's K'S/NGer Now."

He, like most people then, enjoyed Amos

'n Andy. Although we had a regular radio, he built a crystal set, and I recall listening in bed to Amos 'n Andy, and then Dad coming back up to discuss it. When he accidentally took too hot a mouthful of something, he'd twist his ear, a ritual I've never seen elsewhere. He used to amuse dinner guests by rubbing a moistened finger around the rim of a stem glass, producing a tone. People now play music on a whole array of such glasses, collectively known as one form of a 'glass harmonica' or 'glass armonica.' Several times a year Dad would succumb to an urge to play "Country Gardens" on our piano. After less than a minute of a series of cut-and-try sequences of double octaves, starting at randomly selected notes, he'd give up, another life-long aspiration frustrated once more.

Dad had uncommon integrity, loved his family, worked hard, and sacrificed for them. He always managed to get a job somehow, even in the depths of the depression. Still, money was very scarce. He postponed work on his own teeth, and had to sell the gold case from a family heirloom watch to pay for Sue's tonsillectomy. Laid off one year, just before Christmas, he was reduced to answering an ad for a gift-wrapper in a department store. He showed up early but found a large group already waiting outside. When the door was opened, they all rushed for the elevator. Dad, instead, ran up five flights of stairs, and had already demonstrated his proficiency and been hired, when the first elevator load arrived. Years later I used that strategy in Chicago; racing a crowd for the last remaining hotel room, I got off the streetcar two blocks early and ran to the hotel, signing the register just as the mob swarmed into the lobby. Still later, visiting Dottie in a maternity wing, I took

the stairs when visiting hours started, and beat everyone to the ward, only to hear the nurses scream, "Man on the floor! Man on the floor!" and be hustled back into the stairwell. I've also profited from his strategy in job-hunting: always checking out every lead, no matter how unlikely sounding. Most of his best jobs, he said, resulted from the least promising leads.

He was sympathetic to the plight of others, and helped when he could. At Redding St. a hungry stranger once rang our doorbell at dinnertime. We kids were goggle-eyed when Dad, on impulse, invited him to the table. In Sacramento, near the railroad mainlines, hoboes often requested hand-outs. The folks always asked them to clean up the vacant lot next door while Mother made them a huge sandwich. When rounding the corner of the house once, I was startled by a bum eating his sandwich on our back porch. Returning, I met Sue, and told her that Bob was hiding there to scare her. She charged around the corner with a loud "BOO !", almost into the poor bum's lap. At one point, apparently due to some exhortation, the folks began tithing, even though money was scarce. They often mentioned that their fortunes had improved after that, which always seemed to me to have blunted the point of the message.

He took great pains to arrange educational tours for us. At the beet sugar refinery in Spreckels, when the guard stepped out of his kiosk, Dad, accompanied by a wife and three kids, rolled down his window, said "boiler inspector", and was waved through, to my amazement. At the Davenport cement plant, I remember, on the guide's insistence, feeling the huge ground-side copper

buswork, warm from the high current. Only years later did I understand why we'd not all been electrocuted. Once, Dad had noticed a news item that a square-rigged sailing ship from the Chilean navy was docked for a week or so in Alameda. Driving home from a Sunday meeting, he told us what he had in mind and pulled over at the dock gate. When, as he feared, the guard spoke no English, he proudly waved the guard over to me, and was appalled to learn that several years of high-school Spanish was almost useless in real life. He then wrote to the captain and received an invitation. Mother brought a box of home-made candy, and I laboriously composed, memorized, and recited some appropriate remarks in Spanish.

Dad must have gone to a lot of trouble arranging these jaunts, but he seldom gave us any hint of his plans. He eventually explained that a few early forays that he'd mentioned to us had fallen through, and he'd just heard way too much "...but you said we were gonna., etc. etc."

On a drive in Monterey one evening we noticed lights, crowds and music, with people roller-skating on a couple of blocked-off concrete streets. "Gee! Can we skate here sometime, can we?" "Sure. Your skates are in the trunk."

When we lived in Pacific Grove, he got wind of a ship launching at Moore Shipbuilding in Oakland, and arranged for the whole family to attend. We had house guests at the time (Tom and Doreen Hill, as I remember) who were more than a little miffed when Dad told them we had a previous engagement, left them a key and asked them to lock up when they took off. One of my

earliest memories is of a ride in a noisy, boxy airplane, possibly an old Ford Trimotor, with Dad, Grandpa Hovland, and another uncle I believe, and Dad boosting me up so I could see out of the square windows. We often visited the Oakland airport, watching planes, and one of my first words was "Eh-pane". Dad got permission for us to enter a then-new DC-3 airliner, and we were all astonished at the steeply sloping floor when it was on the ground. Planes used to adjust their compasses while positioned on a compass rose embedded in a plane-size round concrete pad. Dad insisted that we learn its name: 'Orientation Table'. Ron Hovland remembers Uncle Ralph's disgust that Dad insisted that we say 'locomotive' instead of 'choo-choo.'

When that huge airship hanger was first built at Moffett Field in Sunnyvale in the '30s, he arranged for us to tour it. I still recall Dad's saying he'd heard that the hanger was so big that it would occasionally cloud up and rain inside, while it was clear outside. He took us to see the steamer "Ohio-an" after it ran aground off Ocean Beach in San Francisco. He was constantly explaining how things worked. I remember being fascinated by the system used to switch double-ended cable cars over to the other track and cable at the end of the line. Another time we were standing on a track, with a locomotive approaching, and I kept telling him we'd better move. I was amazed that he could tell by looking at the rails that it would switch to another track. We watched a derailed locomotive replaced on the tracks at the Fruitvale station. He kept track of a three-story house on MacArthur Blvd. being prepared for moving, and in the middle of one night, woke us all up to watch it being moved to

High and Redding Sts. where it became the Harris Realty office, since demolished for Interstate 580.

There were the usual visits to his offices and shops, watching planes, ferryboats, yacht harbors, fairs, trains, fires, band concerts, fireworks, weddings and funerals. Dad taught us all to fish, although I don't believe he enjoyed it much himself, and eventually abandoned the sport, probably because of humane reservations. In Oakland he bought us rides in a small plane, took us to the stage play "Abie's Irish Rose", through a railroad switchyard and locomotive roundhouse, a foundry, a steel mill, the Chabot observatory, snow on the hills, Breuner's animated Christmas window, boat rides and the flight of a model of the China Clipper at Lake Merritt, and early one morning, the produce market. He once borrowed some clubs and took me golfing at Bay Farm Island, but it never took. He introduced us to sailing in the Berkeley lagoon formed by the construction of the Eastshore Freeway.

In Sacramento, a baseball game, water filtration plant, S.P. locomotive shops, and flooding at the confluence of the Sacramento and American rivers. In San Francisco, the '39 World's Fair, cable car powerhouse, Chinatown, noodle and fortune cookie factories, and the original, real Ghirardelli chocolate factory. Stanford University's Hopkins Marine Station in Pacific Grove, the lighthouse at Point Sur, a winery in the Napa Valley, Mercer's Cave at Murphy's, the Malakoff Diggins hydraulic gold mining site, Pinnacles State Park near Hollister, a rig drilling for oil near Coalinga, and a lumber mill in Scotia. We camped for two weeks to a month every year in Yosemite, Tahoe, Big Sur, or other

places. Sometimes Dad would get us set up and after a week, go back to work for a few weeks, and then bring us home. We often went for long rides on Sunday afternoons. Dad had collected stamps years earlier, and introduced me to the hobby, maybe Bob and Sue also, but it never took.

In Pacific Grove, Dad entertained visitors on tours of the local tide pools. He had read up on hermit crabs, sea anemones, etc., and made a steel cane-like tool for prying abalones off the rocks. (Those were the days before sea otters were protected, and ate most of the abalones.) He enrolled us in a summer nature program, and made professional-looking butterfly nets for all of us. I remember his telling visitors on walks that crushing bay leaves and sniffing them would produce a brief, severe headache. The skeptical visitors would usually try it, and then wince at the pain. I had never heard or read of that anywhere else until it recently appeared in a self-guided nature trail booklet for the Toyon Trail in Palo Alto's Foothills Park. We all took piano lessons from Miss Tuck, although we all hated it. I remember practicing early in the morning. I can't imagine how anyone else slept. He also managed to scrape up enough money to buy all three of us second-hand bikes, on which we practically lived for years.

He and I often walked in the hills, and back home from the meeting in Alameda, through the Posey Tube. I always loved talking with him, and remember many conversations, and things I've learned from him. At the Chabot observatory, when Bob and Sue got tired, Dad told Mother to drive them home, and we'd take the little Leona Heights 'dinky' back. But we missed the last run and

ended up walking home in the dark. I was pretty apprehensive, and I recall Dad quoting some appropriate scriptures. Once, walking on MacArthur, near Fruitvale, he said he was always pleased that we kids were so observant. At that point, and not thinking of his comment, I noticed regular cracks in the macadam sidewalk, and wondered aloud if the macadam had been laid on top of a board sidewalk. "Now see? That's what I mean." At railroad overpasses, a sign often says, "Permission to pass over revocable at any time." Dad said that when he was a kid, he thought the overpass was called a 'revocable', and that the sign granted permission to cross it in perpetuity.

Some attractions were unplanned. Driving through Truckee, Dad noticed one of the S.P.'s huge, articulated, cab-forward Mallet locomotives getting up steam, and parked the car. After inspecting the engine up close, he told the engineer his kids had never seen the inside of a locomotive cab (his standard entre), and we were all invited aboard. After showing us all of the really impressive firebox, gauges and levers, the engineer said he had to switch to another track and we'd have to get off unless we wanted to ride it down and back a quarter-mile or so. Needless to say, we rode, and I'll never forget the thrill.

Driving back to Oakland from Pacific Grove one night near Coyote, where Rt. 101 parallels the S. P. main line, we saw a crowd near the tracks, and Dad pulled over to investigate. About the time we saw there was a car stuck on the tracks, someone noticed the headlights of a speeding train approaching, and while we watched, the train hit the car, knocking it into the air. Going to

the scene, we heard that the occupants had escaped the car, and there were no injuries. People with flashlights were sent in both directions along the tracks to flag down any train, but the engineer said people often flash lights at him, and he couldn't stop the train for that. We walked to the front of the train to assess its damage, and the classic black, red and orange streamlined steam locomotive only had a few scratches on its paint job. Dad talked to the engineer and we were invited aboard. The cab must have been ten feet above trackside, and just as Bob reached the top of the ladder, the engineer blew the whistle, and Bob jumped off.

Dad was an excellent, if impatient and aggressive driver, using techniques and observations of which most drivers are not even aware. He was also an effective driving instructor. Hardly a day passes, even now, that I don't recall an admonition of his, such as limiting backing up to a bare minimum since the risk of hitting something is so much greater, staying out of other drivers' blind spots, and keeping your front wheels straight when waiting to turn left, lest being rear-ended shove you into oncoming traffic. When in doubt, I still turn on my headlights, recalling that "It's cheap insurance." When I was a kid he once told me that a good driver should be able to maintain a constant highway speed just by listening to the sound of the engine. I could never get the hang of that, and mentioned it to him 30 years later. He explained that it was no longer possible with the newer, quieter cars. Sue recalls his reaction to her awkward attempts to parallel park. "You'd think you were berthing the Queen Mary!" He constantly berated other drivers. Mother told me that when I was two, standing on the back seat, they fi-

nally figured out what I kept repeating was, "Come on, guy! Come on, guy!" Whenever Mother gasped as he beat another car into an intersection, he'd say, "He's got brakes!" He walked aggressively, also. In Berkeley, when a car cut him off in a crosswalk, he walloped the rear fender, only then realizing it was a police car, and getting quite a tongue-lashing.

He must have been self-taught. Neither of his parents drove, and there were few other drivers, and no driving schools. He drove an Oakland touring car his dad bought in 1918 when he was barely 15, and a Studebaker Special Six in 1921. At one time he owned a Cleveland motorcycle. He bought an Overland roadster in 1923, a new Buick roadster in 1925, and a Whippet after he was married in 1927. During the time I lived at home he also owned two Model A Fords, two '36 Plymouths and another Studebaker. In 1943 Mother was in the Alum Rock Sanatorium to cure what was then thought to be a flare-up of TB. On the Sunday she was to be discharged, Dad asked me to go along. On MacArthur Blvd. he pulled over and told me to drive, although I'd never been behind the wheel before. Without my knowledge, he had applied for, and received, a learner's permit for me at age 15, claiming a special hardship privilege based on Mother's incapacitation. I was doing ok until MacArthur swooped to the right, around Mills College. I felt we were turning too sharply, and was overcome by the impression we might roll over, so veered across the center line. Fortunately, there was no other traffic, and after we both recovered, I drove the rest of the way without incident.

When we were small, he got us a wire-

haired fox terrier puppy which they named 'Rags'. We were all somewhat scared of dogs, and Rags was an extremely rambunctious pup, so Dad sat us all up on the kitchen drainboard, from where we watched the dog yapping and jumping. We quickly got used to him, however, and enjoyed him a lot. Rags was very protective, and if one of us got spanked, Mother had to lock him up first, or he would bite her. When Bob was a tot, he'd drop food he didn't like under the table for Rags, and then sometimes crawl under the stove and taste Rags' food. At the Oakland Yacht Harbor once, Rags, chasing a seagull, ran off the end of a dock and had to be fished out. Late one night Rags dragged himself into the house, badly injured from a dog-fight or maybe hit by a car. We all wanted to help him, but I still recall our frustration when we got bit whenever we got near him. Later, after he recovered, we finally had to give him away after he nipped a few people.

Dad must have been self-taught on etiquette, too, and we all learned to thank our hosts when we left after visits. He made it a point to show us the proper use of soup spoons, butter knives, bread, etc., when we ate out. We often ate at Al's Chop House, a Chinese restaurant on E. 14th St. In those days, menus were limited to chow mein, chop suey and a few other staples, with none of the fancy dishes common now. We all loved the food after we got used to the worm-like bean sprouts. Another favorite was the Golden Gate Tamale Co. on 40th, near Telegraph. Old-fashioned tamales wrapped in corn husks and tied with grocery string were served in an old restaurant with dark woodwork booths and hexagonal white floor tiles. We were taught to say, "Yes

please" and "No thank you" and I instinctively corrected my own kids whenever they just said yes or no. It got to be a sort of family joke. I automatically began to correct Mary, too, but she straightened me out in a hurry.

Dad often said that he tried to give us kids as much freedom as possible, and I suppose he did, in his way. All three of us kids, at some age, expressed a desire to stay up all night sometime. Over Mother's objections, Dad fixed us up at the dining room table with drawing materials, and told us we could stay up as long as we wanted. All I really remember is his recounting it, but we were all apparently disappointed by the reality. Sue, I remember, said she was thinking in terms of traffic, and lots of people around. Sitting alone at the table was quite a let-down. Mother, characteristically, couldn't sleep while we were still up, and when she no longer heard any noises, came out to the dining room just as Sue, fast asleep, was falling off her chair.

As we got older, Dad made it a point to include us in family business. At a family conference in Pacific Grove, the folks said they were considering buying a second-hand Plymouth. Since money was tight, a car would mean essentially no Christmas, and they were interested in our preference. We all voted for the Plymouth, which we used for many years. Bob eventually bought it, and later sold it to Marilyn Scammon and her husband. Dad always insisted that we keep an account of our allowance and expenditures; in fact, our allowance was contingent on our account balancing. That was duck soup for Sue and me, but Bob was invariably in tears Saturday night. We used to window-shop on Saturday night when all

the stores were open in Monterey. It was not until I'd been an engineer back east for several years that I managed to break the compulsion to account for every penny. I remember receiving high praise for deciding to buy a new wheel for my second-hand bike, instead of buying a new bike. We were delighted, at one gathering, when Dad informed us they had to cut back on expenses, and we'd have to forgo piano lessons. In the case of loans, even within the family, he always insisted on adding a fair interest rate, and executing a formal signed note, with all terms spelled out. I have a number of these, including a paid-off note on which I'd apparently loaned the folks \$115.50 in 1944. His policy was undoubtedly correct, but typically, it irritated most other people, and added to his authoritarian image.

When occasion demanded, Dad wrote admirable letters with a unique prose style, combining clear logic and forceful expression, softened by humor and self-deprecation. I have dozens of his letters. Most of the passages, I believe, were original, although he did have an appreciative ear for the deft writing of others. In a memo describing his specially-arranged visit to the not-yet-restored Fort Point, and the pervasive vandalism he saw there, he wrote,

"Sentimental folks toss pennies into the Fort from the G G Bridge and others toss whatever is handy."

He was particularly effective in delicate interactions, getting the message across without giving offense: terminating a correspondence he realized was unprofitable, accompanying a gift which could be misinterpreted, giving money when choosing a

gift was totally impractical, or requesting a favor which bureaucracy would ordinarily automatically deny. A cousin tracked him down from Montreal and initiated an exchange of letters and an escalating series of gifts which taxed Dad's diplomacy:

"Robb's book 'Tecumtha' arrived the middle of January and is very obviously a classic. ... I am afraid, however, that the Van Koughnets have overrated my literary appreciation but to the extent that the book fell within the scope of my comprehension I did enjoy it. Poetry is not my forte but the competency of Mr. Robb is most evident. ... And an autographed first edition. You were thoughtful."

A real trial was an old friend from Pacific Grove, Frank Atkinson, one of the few people he particularly admired, and whose company he enjoyed. Ironically, Frank apparently took a dim view of Dad in the early years. He never married, was well enough fixed that he didn't have to work, and his daily activities betrayed an excess of time. I recall Dad's telling me that Frank washed his car twice a week, the entire underside as well as the visible surfaces. Frank's letters from the thirties reveal a refined, religious, slightly eccentric gentleman with a flair for expression. His account of his first exposure to the Plymouth Brethren, an embryonic assembly in San Jose, meeting in an abandoned streetcar with chickens roosting on the trolley, is charming. Dad wrote him, asking his advice on dealing with my apostasy, unaware that the years had taken their toll. By then Frank was somewhat of a crank, writing multi-page typewritten missives on arcane doctrinal issues, liberally capitalized and underlined, sprinkled with exclamation

points, and further emphasized by penned-in and red-pencilled multiple underlines, arrows and encirclings. He was also somewhat paranoid; by his own admission, some forty people had asked him to stop writing to them. In the five days following Dad's letter, Frank replied in six separate letters, an almost incomprehensible 24 pages in all, and still never responding to Dad's appeal for ammunition. Dad replied:

"The pair of letters received on Monday went into matters pretty thoroughly, I thought, and I was surprised to find a third letter when I returned from San Rafael Tuesday evening. Yesterday's mail brought #4 and #5 which served to completely overwhelm my capacity to discuss things theological. I feel complimented by your assumption that my grasp of this sort of philosophy is on a par with your own, but I admit freely that it is not."

Another 24 pages followed in eight letters in the next two months, and the barrage only ended when Frank's typewriter broke, and Dad suffered his first heart attack. When Frank's health failed he was moved to a nursing home in San Jose, and then to a retirement home in Cupertino. Dad tracked him down through his nephew, Marshall, in San Francisco. For years, until the folks moved to Oregon, Dad visited him, took him for rides, did occasional shopping and letter-writing for him and, I suppose, had his ear bent by earnest and mind-numbing expositories. During the folks' only visit from Oregon, we invited Scott and Elaine over, and Dad asked if Scott and he and I could see Frank. In the course of a pleasant visit, Frank brought out a bottle of Southern Comfort liqueur someone had given him, and

poured us each a shot, using four glasses and a tray someone else had given him long before. Not until we'd finished the drinks did I noticed a layer of dust and lint on the tray, literally an eighth-inch thick, with four clear circles where the glasses had been. We hadn't even tasted it.

Dad's exchange with Africa USA, arranging to pet a lion, and then sending his regrets after his heart attack, is classic. He had a very soft spot in his heart for animals, particularly cats. He could never engage in hunting, and early forswore fishing. His list of his favorite cat Lefty's endearing idiosyncrasies, and his letter to the vet requesting that Lefty be put to sleep, are touching. Attached was a quote from Margaret Cooper Gay's, "How to Live With a Cat":

"I stroked her back and prayed the Lord who marks the fall of sparrows to take notice of my old cat."

When I forwarded to the folks a long, disjointed letter Grandma Hovland, also showing her age, had written to four-year-old Ev, with abject apologies for some imagined omission, Dad wrote a long letter trying to explain the circumstances, saying in part:

"If you haven't already noticed it, Grandma has a conscience that makes a hair shirt look like an organdy veil."

I also mentioned that we were expecting our third child.

"Glad to hear you're in production again. While I wouldn't care to take the responsibility of asking the Lord to send you a son, I shall feel free to remind Him that you al-

ready have a couple of daughters..."

He sometimes wrote to authors or artists whose work struck him right, simply letting them know that he'd enjoyed it. He asked one poet for the full text of her ditty which had appeared many years before in the Saturday Evening Post. The only lines he recalled were revealing:

"But I would like to live by my own dim star, And my own pet biases, such as they are ..."

He often quoted another quatrain, which I can only recreate as:

"As you travel down through life brother, Whatever be your goal, Keep your eye upon the doughnut, And not upon the hole."

When I went back east with GE, I assuaged my homesickness with letters home, first daily, then gradually cutting their frequency as I adjusted to life on my own. After we moved back to the Bay Area, Dad presented me with several boxes, containing all of the letters I had written over the years. It was fascinating, re-reading them. Unfortunately, I didn't keep any of the letters the family had written to me, but my own letters are filled with Dad's characteristic expressions, which I had adopted. Although I thoroughly enjoyed his letters, he was often self-conscious about what he felt was their excessive length. He would often apologize, suggesting that I probably needed a bookmark in wading through them.

During one period, a former neighbor, Mrs. Waalkes, imposed her marital problems on Mother during almost daily visits and

phone calls, and wouldn't take any hint to moderate it. Concerned that it was adversely affecting Mother's convalescence, Dad finally wrote a blunt letter to Mrs. Waalkes, ordering her to cease her visits and phone calls, and expressing the hope that he would not have to resort to the deployment of bear traps. After riding his bike to the post office to mail the letter, he found he had lost it on the way, and, retracing his route, could not find it. He never learned whether or not she had somehow ever received it.

A nosy neighbor, Mrs. Freeman, often pumped us kids for family information. Since we were brought up to be polite and responsive, as well as private, we didn't know how to handle the problem. Dad told us to just say, "Gee, I really don't know, but I'll tell the folks you were asking." As he knew, that solved that problem: "No, no, no, just forget it." Our next-door neighbor, Art Taylor, was Dad's opposite in almost every respect, and it was amazing that Dad managed to stay on good terms. He used to say that Taylor was the kind of guy who if you asked him the time of day, would send you home with a grandfather's clock. He gave Dad many tools until Dad began to realize that Art, or someone, had almost certainly purloined them from the shipyard he worked for. and Dad had to decline them diplomatically.

When I talked to Mother on the evening before she died, she couldn't wait to tell me an anecdote she'd just recalled, which struck her so funny. Dad had taken a shine to the minister of a church in Redwood City they had attended occasionally, and decided to give him a personal gift. He wrote a nice letter, enclosing a check for \$100, and suggested he buy a new suit. That may have been the same minister to whom Dad

wrote, expressing appreciation for his style, explaining the circumstances of their sporadic attendance, that it was no reflection on his ministry, and hoping that it would not trigger visits or calls from any committees.

Every generation faces a new and worrisome challenge in explaining the facts of life to its children. Mother and Dad conscientiously tried to do the right thing, correcting the defects in their own education, and striking an appropriate balance between society's rapidly changing norms. Mother told me that before she was married she didn't have any conception of what was involved in sexual relations. She was profoundly grateful that Dad had been so considerate, and that she really fell in love with him during their honeymoon. Considering their own upbringing, and our religious environment, they were remarkably open and honest. Still, they were acutely uncomfortable and, to us, surprisingly unaware of what we knew, and what we didn't. Sue and I, like most teenagers, were fascinated by the subject, read everything we could find, and looked up every new, erotic-sounding word, hoping to stumble onto a sequential trail of words which would lead to the real stuff. We used to compare notes, and analyze dirty jokes, and plan questions of Mother. When Mother finally fell back on, "Well, you'll know that when you need to", we knew we were getting close!

Dad was equally conscientious, but found it even more difficult. Once, at morning devotions, he had chosen a scripture on which to base his homily, a passage of which the only thing I remember was its total incomprehensibility. He reinforced this with a graphic description he'd heard somewhere,

that something was like picking spit off the street and swallowing it. It made a profound impression on me. but I still haven't any idea what he was referring to. I recall, too, the feeling that I was getting conflicting messages, from the world as much as from Dad, that pre-marital sex was sinful and abhorrent, but that boys were almost expected to succumb, and could even be considered somewhat suspect if they didn't. Just before my marriage, I received a small package from Dad marked 'Personal', and further warnings inside not to open it in public. It turned out to be a box of condoms. He often said, "I'm not responsible for what you do, but I am responsible for what you know."

Once, as a kid, I rode with him to Montgomery Wards (always Monkey Wards to Dad). On High St. he thought he recognized two neighbor ladies waiting for the bus and stopped to give them a ride, only then realizing that they weren't neighbors, but two strange floozies. I didn't think anything about it until they left the car, when Dad, overcome with mortification, anxiously explained his gaffe to me, who hadn't any idea there was a problem. Dad's cousin in Montreal, Ed Van Koughnet, sent him a copy of some genealogical work he had had done in Sweden. Dad eventually sent it on to me to keep, double sealed, with elaborate instructions on maintaining its confidentiality, and copies of letters to Van Koughnet assuring him that I could be trusted with the secret. I don't recall discussing it with Dad, but the only thing I could ever find in the genealogy which might have triggered his concern was the fact that Grandma Wilhelmson's step-mother had earlier had two children out of wedlock.

Birth control was a critical issue when we were born. There was apparently very little information in print and there were still legal restrictions on advertising and even advice by a doctor. Everything that was known, and much that was mistaken, was communicated by word-of-mouth. Mother told me that at her last baby shower, as one of the women left, she leaned over, hissed "Use cocoa butter!", and fled. Dad used to tell people, "Well, we know three things that don't work!" He also repeated that well-known quip that sex with a condom was like taking a bath with your socks on. After I described my interest in Mary, he asked, as he probably often did in that context, "How is she in the moonlight?" Just before writing this, I was watching a discussion on the O.J. Simpson trial, particularly the problems of jury sequestration. One participant asked, "Those conjugal visits. How do they do that?" Dad would have replied, "Didn't your mother tell you anything?"

Dad inherited his father's genius for mechanical invention, and continually devised clever solutions to problems at work and at home. He exemplified the truism that any mechanic or engineer can devise complex solutions; the really brilliant designs are simple, unpretentious, even obvious (after the fact, at least). He designed and built a folding camp trailer which we enjoyed for many years. When any of the manufactured trailers with double beds was unfolded, one bed was always higher than the other so that they could be folded one on top of the other. Some brands had added a skirt to the higher bed to hide the asymmetry. Dad, without any formal education or previous experience, had figured out a way to stagger the hinge elevations so that the beds folded one

on top of the other, yet were at the same level when unfolded, a solution which had escaped all of the commercial engineers.

His trailer incorporated many other ingenious and original designs, and many of the parts had dual functions. I believe I can still remember almost every detail of that trailer, and every individual step in its deployment and refolding. He also devised a system of jacks and movable brackets which enabled one person to raise the trailer in the garage, over the hood of our car. I vividly remember my anxiety every time he trundled the trailer, all by himself, down the steep driveway and into the street, while the rest of us were posted to stop any traffic. He also designed and built a 'horse trailer' and a paddleboard, both of which we used for years, and a flannelboard which Mother used in her child evangelism sessions. He was a good teacher, too, although Mother was usually mystified by his explanations. I recently found, in some technical notes his father had left, parts familiarly labelled "driver" and "driven".

Although probably not an original idea, Dad made a floor lamp shade of parchment, laying out the proper arcs on the living room floor, and lacing its perforations to the wire frame with leather strings. Guests were then invited to sign it, and I recall spending hours rereading the signatures. Inevitably, a few children, including Billy Warner I believe, also managed to scrawl their names prominently, to Dad's disgust. He devised a system of a rope and pulleys which enabled a spring-loaded sliding cat door into the crawl space under the house to be opened and closed from a closet. Then a ramp into the bottom of the ironing board closet let

the cat into the kitchen. When Mother was bedridden, he devised a system of wires and pulleys which allowed her, from her bedroom above, to unlock the back door for visitors. He also built extensions to raise her bed, and brackets to suspend the blankets above her injured legs. To save the \$4/yr safe deposit box fee, he made a tin box that size and installed it through the baseboard in their bedroom, behind a dummy receptacle, extending out under the built-in china closet in the dining room. Later, he stored more documents in a large pickle jar buried in the crawl space under the house. He showed me both just in case something happened to both of them. He regraded our front yard at Redding St., and built a whole new front porch, including a wrought-iron railing. Function always took precedence over form in his designs, and we often heard the comment, "It's not much for looks, but it's hell for strong." I certainly can't recall anything he built breaking.

Ironically, Dad was often intimidated by technical subjects with which he was not familiar, but could easily have mastered. He was somewhat in awe of the slide rule, and of its users, and sometimes expressed his intent to take it up someday, much as one might resolve to learn a foreign language. In spite of my assurances that he could learn the basics in about 20 minutes, and completely master its use within a few days, it apparently just seemed too formidable an undertaking. Another case was the subject of logarithms. Although I was especially intrigued by the task of devising the clearest and most efficient explanation, he always fended off any such discussion. The irony, again, is that he would have taken great pleasure in both, and would have relished

teaching the subjects to others.

Once, while waiting in an outer office for an appointment, watching a clerk do long division on a mechanical calculator, and listening to the cadence of clicks and clunks, Dad figured out how the calculator was doing the division — successively subtracting the divisor from the dividend until it became negative, reversing the last subtraction, counting and displaying the number of subtractions, moving the divisor one digit to the right, and repeating the process. As might be expected of a young boy, I was not only impressed by his intelligence and ingenuity, but also depressed and even intimidated. He always credited my accomplishments, and certainly never demeaned my efforts, but I just despaired of ever reaching anything like his proficiency. Who, then, would have guessed that Dad enjoyed watching wrestling on TV?

His insistence that we eat at least a little of everything that was served, and all of what we had taken, was overdone. "What harm has that last piece done, that you shouldn't eat it?" His only compromise, as I recall, was that we were allowed one or two lapses each year, or maybe on our birthdays. He also insisted that we finish the various foods on our plate evenly, not one thing first or last. In response to that edict, it was probably I who devised the technicality of the 'last-bite', one spoonful at the far edge of the plate which combined a smidgen of each of the foods, and which was eaten last. Cousins and friends, years later, still recalled Don, Sue and Bob's 'last-bites'. It seems odd now that Dad would have settled for that kind of literal compliance. When he called us on a neglected chore, he used

to answer his own question, "Yeah, I know. I was gonna." Another frequent injunction was, "Don't take up the whole sidewalk!" He had a piercing and distinctive whistle, without benefit of fingers or instrument, which we all immediately recognized, even in the noisiest surroundings, but could never duplicate.

He always seemed to be campaigning to correct speech idiosyncrasies he found irritating. For many years, as I recall, whenever we would ask something like, "Are you going shopping or something?" he would always say yes, to make the point that the all-inclusive 'or something' vitiated the intent of the question. He alone, as far as I know, insisted on pronouncing it 'catsup' instead of the universal 'ketchup'. His "Yes, I shall" in polite company always seemed affected to me, but he may have been correct. On the other hand, Mother often corrected his use of 'don't', as in, "It don't matter." (He used to say, "On the other hand, she had warts".)

Bob always seemed to find it harder to comply with Dad's edicts, or to devise subterfuges. He used to shift hated foods from place to place on his plate, prompting Dad to accuse him of trying to dispose of the food by wearing it out. During one stage, Bob tended to act out, with exaggerated gestures and grimaces, the narratives of others. Dad was continually telling him, "Don't dramatize everything!" He often shared with me his concern about Bob's prospects in life, apparently stimulated by his less docile response to regimentation, and his merely-better-than-average record at school, compared to better-than-everyone-else. He seemed totally unconscious of Bob's additional assets in personality and

general well-roundedness, which made his overall prospects better than most of us.

Some of Dad's strategies made a certain amount of sense, but I doubt that many people would go to all the trouble. Back then everyone used fountain pens, and kept bottles of ink in their desks. Apparently, mixing some brands produced a precipitate which could clog a pen. Less-organized people ran out of ink occasionally, and knew that Dad never did. Filling their pens caused a certain amount of mixing, which he could not accept, although refusing ink caused some resentment. Dad's solution was to maintain two bottles of ink, one in the front of the drawer for other people, and the other in back for his own pen. He also kept a cheap 'loaner' pen to satisfy most borrowers. When he occasionally could not avoid lending his own pen, he made sure he kept the cap, so people were unlikely to pocket the pen. Other people also came to know that Dad always carried change, and rapidly depleted his stock. He therefore actually carried two coin purses, one in his left pocket with a nickel and a few pennies which he spilled out on demand, and one in his right pocket which carried his own supply.

I once decided to disassemble the wringer drive and reversing gears on Mother's Maytag washing machine, just to see how it worked. When Dad came home and saw all the parts laid out, he wasn't upset, but he made me post a \$1 bond, to be returned only when the mechanism was satisfactorily reassembled. I felt that was unreasonable and unnecessary, but I managed to scrape up the dollar. When I put it all back together, there was one thin washer left over. I didn't think it mattered because the wring-

er worked fine, but Dad wouldn't return the bond until I took it all apart again, figured out where the washer went, and replaced it.

Dad seemed to crave more privacy and solitude than our small house afforded. At several times at Redding St., he constructed hideaways where he stored his 'junk', and to which he retreated on occasion. One he made by walling off the far half of the basement, and another he built on the mezzanine floor of the garage, after he sold our camping trailer. His antique kerosene heater warded off the chill in winter, and gave his lair its characteristic odor. He never allowed Mother or us kids to view it, and conscientiously kept it locked. But I was so overcome with curiosity that I checked it regularly, found it unlocked a few times, and hurriedly scanned the contents when I was confident that the coast was clear.

My fantasy of discovering scandalous material was dashed; I only found a few clever quips and cartoons. One was an ad showing a newlywed couple in a hotel room, with the groom sound asleep, and the bride gazing hopefully at a 'No-Doze' billboard. I was so taken with one quip that I submitted it anonymously to 'The Knave' columnist at the Oakland Tribune, and was excited to see it in print: "An anonymous contrib who signs himself Pete wonders why people bemoan the state of their lawn when it is their lawn which should be mown." But I couldn't share my moment of fame for fear that its source might be recognized. A later 'Knave' entry during a cigarette shortage was my own idea: "Remember when 'I'd walk a mile for a Camel' was just a slogan?"

Dad's delight on reading of our possible

move back to the Bay Area was surprising. I recall his writing, "I tore up our phone book and threw it out the window! (We never seem to have any confetti on hand)." He sent me maps and advice, and later seemed to be disappointed that we didn't settle in Los Altos, and that I never did own a 'Snipe' sailboat or a Packard 'Clipper'. In explaining that the various Peninsula cities were not separated, he remarked that you couldn't see boundaries except for a smudge where the street-sweepers had turned around.

For the last decade of Dad's life, he continually impressed on me his conviction that when he died, Mother would be helpless and irresponsible, incapable of tending to her affairs, and likely the swift victim of scams. When I tried to reassure him, he just said, "I've noticed that you kids always clam up when I talk about your mother, but I feel I ought to mention these things anyway." Anyone who knew Mother knew that she was unusually capable, an experienced book-keeper, a little too conservative, if anything, and certainly better equipped to deal effectively with life's problems than he was.

He fretted interminably over junk mail, and magazine renewal appeals, and wasted much time and energy writing masterfully composed complaints which were probably seen only by computers. He finally began mailing the material hack, with the notation, 'MOVED TO NEW ZEALAND'. For some reason he resented cars turning around in his driveway, and constructed a formidable-looking white post at the entrance, mounted on an auto flywheel so that it could be rolled aside when he used the driveway.

He refused to let gas station attendants

wash his windshield, and carried a bottle of denatured alcohol to rewash it if they did. He launched unwinnable campaigns against boys who left bikes sprawled across sidewalks, and people who stopped and chatted at the ends of escalators. He engaged in a perpetual feud with barbers, who could never seem to understand exactly how he wanted his hair cut.

He was repelled by any kind of haggling over sales prices, whether as a seller or buyer. He wrote me, explaining his approach to selling his surplus tools, and other possessions. He would determine a fair price, usually half of the purchase price if the object was in mint condition, and then cut that in half. If anyone made him a counter-offer, he'd terminate the whole deal, refusing even to sell at his asking price, or at any price. When he bought something, he also refused to bargain, even when it was customary, or even expected. He apparently paid the full sticker price for new cars, telling me that he could thus get exactly what he wanted in a car, apparently unaware that he could order anything he wanted, still at a substantial discount.

Dad was a tragic misfit over his entire working life, able to use only a fraction of his real talents, and he found little of the job satisfaction most of us achieve. He would have made a brilliant and enthusiastic engineer, but he early became fed up with formal education, and never finished high school. After some vocational schooling he became an apprentice machinist at the Atlas Imperial Diesel Engine Co. in Oakland at 20 cents an hour, and later at the Union Machine Works where his dad had worked. He ended up as probably the world's best tool-and-die-

maker, in a succession of eighteen different shops, suffering throughout his career from the miscomprehensions of his inferiors, and his own 'prickly pear' personality.

Tom Hill, a somewhat pompous and pretentious former brother-in-law, was one of those who irritated him most, and the feeling was apparently mutual. When Mother was recovering from what was then thought to be a flareup of TB, Tom inquired as to her condition, and Dad replied, typically, that she was fine now, and "pretty much her mean old self again." Tom was offended, probably because he'd had a long-standing crush on Mother, and chided him for his choice of words. Dad's contempt was palpable. At the same time. Dad was often conscience-stricken by sensitivity lapses which seemed minor. When recalling Joe Willis taking our Sunday-school class fishing off the Berkeley pier, and proudly bringing home a bunch of small shiners which were deemed impractical to clean and cook, I was amazed to find that remorse over that incident had cast a pall over his life ever since then. To the opposite extreme, he seemed to go overboard in his admiration for a few people, like Ben Warner, Frank Toucane and Frank Atkinson, who just happened to strike him right from time to time.

After his machinist apprenticeship, he worked as a clerk at the California Packing Co. (Del Monte), Thomas Day Co. (lighting), Bethlehem Steel, and Great Western Power (a PG&E precursor). At one time, he had a business, with Ralph I believe, and maybe others, growing and/or distributing mushrooms. As an insurance underwriter he worked at Hartford Ins. Co., James S. Kemper, Lumbermen's Mutual Casualty and Pa-

cific Indemnity, all in San Francisco. Later, personnel supervisor for the state in Sacramento, and IBM punch-card accountant at the Federal Land Bank in Berkeley. For several years in the late '30s he wired houses for Holman's in Pacific Grove, and in partnership with Mother's brother Ralph Hovland in their Monterey Light Shop in New Monterey.

At James S. Kemper, I believe, his unreasonable boss was a constant irritation. Driving back from the SP commuter train where Mother picked him up after work, he would often vent his disgust at Gregg (Chandler?)'s latest outrage. When the folks planned a vacation drive to Victoria with the Cochranes, Gregg insisted that Dad drive to Yosemite and back the night before they left, which he and Scott did. During the depression, people did what they were told, with no back-talk. Dad was later assigned to lecture truck and bus drivers all over northern California on safe driving, a job he hated intensely. He was also supposed to ride buses in many cities, and report on the drivers' performance. Gregg refused to reimburse him for bus fare, insisting that he use the pass supplied, despite Dad's contention that that would tip off the drivers, and defeat the whole purpose of the check.

The carbon of a 12/22/37 letter to Grandma Hovland was on the back of a letterhead:

The COCHRANE - WILHELMSON Company
Consumer and Trade Investigations
Market Surveys and Analysis
Hunter - Dulin Building
San Francisco

I have never heard any mention of such a company. In 1995, Scott told me they had

these letterheads printed, but that they had only done one job. Since the letterhead was used for scratch paper, the company may have existed some years before 1937.

Dad had long dreamed of setting up his own insurance agency. I was somewhat dubious as to his ability to endure contacts with such a wide range of people, but he seemed to feel that his intimate knowledge of, and long experience in, the business would overcome his limitations. He had even composed the slogan he would use in his advertising: "You cannot buy insurance when you need it most!" The insurance agency never materialized, but in the late 40s, the folks set up a letter shop business in Santa Cruz for typing and copying. They rented an office, bought equipment, and placed an ad in the yellow pages. When the new phone book came out, they were appalled to find that another, larger letter shop had also opened, and dwarfed their ad in the yellow pages. So that venture died on the vine as well.

In the late 40s the folks bought a lot on Felt St. in Santa Cruz, dubbed 'Rancho Lumbago' because it had 'a crick in the back'. Dad built a one-room 'shack' on it, where they lived while he built a larger apartment and garage adjacent. The shack had no bathroom; they used a nearby gas station rest room until the one in the new apartment was available. Later, they changed their plans and rented an apartment across the street. They eventually abandoned all plans for that location, primarily because of their neighbors, the Harbisons, real hillbillies who let their house disintegrate, and filled their yard with junked cars and appliances. Mrs. Harbison once told Mother that they hated the East because her husband had returned from a trip there with a terrible

case of gonorrhea. The folks also owned a lot on Laguna, a block or two from the ocean, in northern Santa Cruz. This lot didn't appreciate as expected, and was later sold after it became a headache to maintain. In the early 60s, after moving back up on the Peninsula, they bought a lot in the hills northeast of Marysville, and planned to build a retirement house there. About that time, Dad had his first heart attack, and the doctor forbade any building.

Dad often had naive but firm convictions as to what should be expected of certain people or certain training. I've mentioned his disappointment with my fluency in Spanish. Dottie, who had pretty definite opinions herself, had a couple of run-ins with him. When they first met in 1951, he couldn't wait to bring out an Alka-Seltzer bottle of fluid he'd drained from his crankcase, and was astonished to learn that she, a biochemist, couldn't identify the clear globule at the bottom. He always had the simplistic idea that any chemist, using only vinegar, bicarbonate and other kitchen staples, could perform a quantitative analysis on any substance. When we moved to Palo Alto, Dad met us at our motel with trinkets for the kids and two cans of olives for Dottie, under the stated impression that easterners were always fascinated with olives, which he apparently thought were not available back east. He always insisted that small children speak up, and answer his questions forthrightly. When Jim shyly failed to respond as expected, Dad began to badger him, and Dottie straightened him out in no uncertain terms. Although I think at first he was somewhat put off by Dottie, he became an admirer later, sometimes overdoing it. When Mary and her parents and I had dinner at

the folks before our wedding, his extravagant praise of Dottie was as embarrassing as it was inappropriate.

Dad was assertive, probably over-assertive, and took pains to insure that his kids would develop a similar style. "Go right to the top! Don't deal with secretaries!" Many times I found myself steered into a maneuver which seemed to me neither appropriate nor productive. In 1955 he became fascinated with the stock market, and impatient with my reservations. He finally wrote me, enclosing a \$100 check, and directed me to open an account for myself at Merrill Lynch. "Talk to the manager! Don't discuss it with the receptionist! Tell the manager so and so ..." Being 27 at the time, with a wife, 2 kids, and an engineering career, it really struck me that I didn't want to play that game anymore, and that this seemed to be an appropriate time to terminate it. I returned the check, thanked him for his interest and intentions, and told him we were investigating other investments. He replied, wanting to know what other investments, but eventually abandoned the campaign.

Although Dad had been baptized in the Lutheran church after birth, he apparently had no religious involvement until shortly after his father's death when, possibly at the instigation of his mother, he began attending Plymouth Brethren tent meetings led by Tom Olson. At age 18 there, he first met Mother, age 14. Mother remembered Dad driving her home, seated between him and his mother, but she was still not particularly attracted to boys, and certainly not to him. In one of those tent meetings in Elmhurst in September 1922, Dad was saved, and Ralph befriended him. He took it seriously,

attended Bethany Gospel Hall in Oakland, and joined the young people's group there, where he met scores of other folks who became life-long friends. The group was apparently very active, with many parties, outings and camping trips. To one costume party he wore a caveman outfit; a burlap gunnysack with holes for head and limbs, and only swimming trunks underneath. A new guest said years later that she always visualized him as burlap-clad, and was always oddly surprised to see him in a suit.

One favorite holiday excursion almost defies belief. The whole group would walk to the SP train which took them to the ferry to San Francisco, another ferry to Sausalito, the Northwestern Pacific train to Mill Valley, and then climb hundreds of stairs and hike all the way to Stinson Beach and Willow Camp. After swimming and lunch, they retraced the whole route home, the round-trip hiking part at least 16 strenuous miles. On one outing, Mother stepped into a creek early on, and walked the rest of the day with wet feet, resulting in such a bad case of bleeding chillblains that she had to wear slippers to work. Some of the girls used to show up with food in large, flimsy suit boxes secured by one string, and the boxes leaked and collapsed before they even reached the train. Chronic late-comers waving and hollering from blocks away invariably made them miss trains and boats. When Dad became outing chairman, he instituted a new policy; the group met, not at Bethany, but on the far end of the 7:00 AM ferryboat. Characteristically, that solved the problem, but probably ruffled some feathers, too.

Dad and Ralph owned a car together, and spent many hours working on it at Ralph's.

Grandma often invited him for dinner, and Mother and he got to know each other there. Tom Hill was crazy about Mother, but he was too pompous for her taste. Her younger sister Grace was crazy about Tom, and envied Mother. Mother and Dad were engaged on 11/20/25, but it was not announced until a year later because Mother felt she was too young. They were married on 3/2/27, when she was barely twenty. Tom and Grace were married a few years later, but Grace died three years later. Another sixty years later, Tom told Bob, "It was your mother I really wanted!" She told me that, at her request. Dad gave up cigar smoking when they were married. He gained 35 pounds the first year they were married. I don't know whether he used to have an occasional drink, or only later developed a taste for wine with meals, but I never saw any alcohol in our home, and was aghast at the very idea. One Christmas, though, he brought home a bottle of red wine and poured himself a small glass. I remember being really concerned, watching him for signs of drunkenness, and fearing some kind of crazed outburst.

In 1932 (he thought) they hosted Hettie Sherratt's wedding to Ben Warner. Ben was very worried about the legendary practical-joking reputation of his friends, who did not attend the ceremony, but were staked out in cars up and down the block. Dad undertook to thwart their plans and hustled the newlyweds out the back door, across the vacant lot to a waiting car on Hopkins St. which dropped them off at their newly-rented house in Berkeley. At the same time he had another guest couple, shrouded under a big coat and pelted with rice by the other cheering guests, dash to a car in front. They took off, followed closely by Ben's friends,

and drove all the way to Hayward where they stopped at a gas station and were immediately surrounded by the mob, smirking "Can we help you?" Shocked to find they had chased the wrong couple, they returned, shamefaced, to our house, still looking for the newlyweds. The folks fed them refreshments, and ignored leading questions as to whereabouts. Ben's friends eventually checked out the empty house in Berkeley, while the couple inside cowered under the front windows as the others tromped around outside, shining flashlights into the windows.

After he retired, Dad developed quite an interest in photography, and bought a good camera, along with a telephoto lens and tripod. I got the impression he was trying to get me, and maybe others, interested, but it didn't take. Some years before, he was taking pictures of Sue's little kids. Trying to make them smile, he made ridiculous faces, and piled papers and things on his head. Not until the pictures were developed did he realize that the kids had been seated under a large mirror, and that his antics were part of the pictures.

The folks became increasingly disenchanted by the old and stuffy atmosphere at Bethany, and eventually switched to the meeting in Alameda, possibly in 1935 when we lived there for a while. I recall that all of the other men broke the loaf of communion bread unsymmetrically into top and bottom halves; Dad always broke it lengthwise vertically into symmetrical halves. During the summer we lived in Sacramento, we attended the PB meeting there, in an old rickety building reminiscent of a one-room schoolhouse. When the weather was cold, the gas heater in one corner left the opposite corner

cold. Dad suggested mounting a fan above the heater to circulate the hot air, but was vetoed by an old gentleman who typified the reaction to so many of Dad's ideas: "We don't need a fan; it's too cold in here, not too hot!" On another occasion when Dad was walking downtown he heard organ music, which he loved, and followed it into an almost empty church. More people gradually entered until Dad realized, too late to flee, that he was attending a wedding, which he hated.

Eventually, even at Alameda, the whole Plymouth Brethren format became unsatisfying. While in theory any of the men could share their insights as the spirit moved them, in practice the meetings were pretty much monopolized by a tedious few who fancied themselves biblical scholars, and held forth, regularly and predictably, on their ruminations over the week past. Dad scouted a few other evangelical churches, and was very much impressed by pastor Wallace Johnson's sermons at the Evangelical Free Church at 47th and Melrose in East Oakland. In about 1942 we began attending that church, which had a Swedish history, although it was English-speaking by then. At one church dinner there were several bottles of salad dressing on each table. As was his custom, Dad made sure the lid was screwed on tightly, and then shook the bottle vigorously. Only after an awful outcry from others nearby did he realize that a hole had been punched in each lid, as was their custom, and that he should have placed his finger over the hole while shaking the bottle.

When one elderly couple, the Bostoms, planned a trip to Sweden, friends in the church gave them a movie camera. After

their return, when they showed their films at a gathering, it became obvious that neither of them had had any training or experience in filming, and the pictures were mostly a blur, panning rapidly from side to side and up and down. Some reels were taken from a train window, showing only greenery streaking by, while Bostrom testified how beautiful the scenery was. Since there appeared to be an endless supply of reels, Dad finally said what everyone else had probably been thinking, "Bostrom, I think you really ought to save some of your films for another session." Another elderly couple, the Larsons, were celebrating their 50th anniversary and, if it hadn't been for the food rationing in force then, would have cooked up a feast of Swedish delicacies. When Mr. Larson, overcome with disappointment, and unbeknownst to his wife, took it upon himself to cadge red stamps from the rest of the congregation, no one had the heart to turn him down. Not until she was well along with the preparation did she finally realize where all the red stamps had come from. Mortified, she invited all of the families in the church over, in groups, to sample the goodies.

At one point, Dad became intrigued by Herbert W. Armstrong and Garner Ted Armstrong's TV program, "The World Tomorrow" (and publisher of "Plain Truth" magazine). Armstrong's challenge to look up the relevant scriptures and verify his claims, seemed to strike a responsive chord. He was determined to discover exactly why evangelical Christians scorned Armstrong's message. Dad wrote to Bob and a number of authorities to pursue the matter, but was never really satisfied by the responses. Mother was mortified by his interest in the group, and upset that I had inherited the correspond-

ence.

Dad developed TB in one kidney, which had to be removed in July, 1945. I recall driving Mother and him home from the hospital. In severe pain, every bump in the road was agony, and I was unable to find a route or a speed which could spare him. The TB was undoubtedly contracted years before from the Hovland family, and Mother often said she was glad that Grandma Wilhelmson was not alive to know it. She had been opposed to the folks' marriage, and only years later confided that it was because of her fear of the TB. Dad was virtually disabled by hay fever every summer, but would never see an allergist.

He suffered from gallstones for most of his life, and reacted painfully to the slightest bit of fat or onions. Mother always had to cool the food and skim off the fat first, and she never used onions. I recall many times seeing him in agony from finely chopped onions in someone else's salad, which he had failed to detect and pick out. We kids had probably never eaten onions in food until one Saturday, after shopping in Monterey, the folks gave us each a quarter for lunch. There were onions in the hamburgers, and I had never tasted anything so wonderful. In December, 1945 Dad's gall bladder had to be removed, and he had no trouble with onions or fat after that. But he did have a serious problem with an embolism which lodged, dangerously and painfully, in his lung. When he was recovering at home, I got the bright idea that he might like to play with our cat. Without thinking about his incision, I tossed the cat onto his stomach, and can still recall his sudden contortion and agonized cry.

Dad had serious heart trouble for decades, with several heart attacks and strokes toward the end. A devastating heart arrest in 1972 resulted in significant memory loss. The doctors' attempts to assess his disability were often stymied by his characteristic habit of deflecting, with quips or blatant misdirection, any inquiries for which he didn't see the need. Whether he couldn't answer their questions, or just thought them impertinent, he would often reply, "Why? Are you writing a book?" or toss off a familiar quip which we recognized as apropos, but must have seemed incomprehensible to them. They would often ask Mother or me, "Why does he say that?" When Dad emerged from the coma, he sometimes screwed up his face as if he might be in pain. When the doctor asked him why he screwed up his face, he said, "Well, it's my face, and I guess I can do what I want with it!" He had always been the despair of all mind- or emotion-probing professionals, and they never really had a clue as to with whom or what they were dealing. And Dad, deeply mistrustful and disdainful of their stock probing techniques, was never exactly cooperative himself.

He kept ordinary doctors at arm's length, as well. He apparently lacked the normal reflexes, and always faked the knee-jerk and other responses (at least he thought he faked them). I've never understood the significance of that defect, or whether it had any connection with his other problems. He recommended to me, and probably to others, his carefully-crafted strategy on medical examinations. After all of the stock questions, doctors usually ask whether you have any other problems they hadn't mentioned. Instead of admitting those he had, Dad would ponder the query and then volunteer

that, well, he wore bifocals. They'd invariably bite, saying, "Oh, well, no, that's nothing", accepting his response as a straightforward denial of other problems. Considering Dad's intelligence and imperious style, I suspected that his memory loss and dependency might be a frightening experience, and that it might help him to talk about it. But again, he just passed it off with quips, and clearly didn't want to discuss it.

For years Dad had collected and catalogued thousands, maybe tens of thousands, of news items and clippings about local attractions from all over the country, with the view of eventually making them the basis of an auto trip: These were all stored in coded manila envelopes in dozens of boxes (painted CAW brown), labeled and keyed to several large wall map grids. The boxes, in turn, were shelved in a bookcase he had made for the purpose. As his health deteriorated, he despaired of making the trips himself, but continued collecting and coding. Eventually he induced me to take the collection, and I installed it on the mezzanine floor in my garage, while he continued to mail me new items he ran into. Before several of our trips I reviewed the material for the areas we intended to visit, but never really found much of interest; the regular guide books, I felt, were better. Right after his memory loss I almost discarded the whole collection, but decided I'd better wait, in case he recovered. The folks moved to Capital Manor in Salem, Oregon in July, 1972. After Dad had recovered some of his memory, and the folks visited us, I was very glad I hadn't junked it. When I made some reference to it he seemed puzzled, so I brought him out to the garage to show him. "Well, it sure does look like something I would have done, but I

certainly don't remember it."

Shortly after they moved in, they were introduced in the Manor's monthly newsletter, with a picture, short biography and a summary of their reporter's interview. Dad was quoted as saying he was mainly looking forward to "some plain and fancy loafing". Ron Hovland says that when a resident knocked on their door, and inquired as to their hobbies, Dad told him his only hobby was loafing. At the Manor, living in such close proximity to so many others continually strained his diplomacy. Mother said it would have been even worse before his heart arrest and memory loss, which seemed to moderate his irascibility. At the table, people often insisted that he taste something he didn't want, and sometimes, over his objections, spooned it from their plate to his, not realizing that that was the ultimate no-no in our family. Dad's revenge was to urge them to take more salt and, over their objections, over-salt their food to the point that it was inedible.

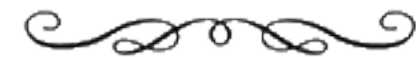
In the previous few years he had given much thought to settling his affairs and documenting his preferences on disposal of his remains. Fundamentalists have traditionally opposed cremation, apparently to avoid even the appearance of a symbolic attempt to foil the Resurrection. Dad, however, was attracted to the idea, and took pains to research the subject, trying to find any scriptural prohibitions, and inquiring of various spiritual authorities. He became convinced that cremation was permissible and eminently practical, and converted several of their PB friends to his view. After his memory loss, however, he remembered nothing of his study, and was adamant in opposing

cremation. After his death on 9/16/78 from multiple causes, he was buried. He might have quoted Sam Goldwyn, as he often did, "Enough is enough, and too much is plenty!"

He would have enjoyed the awkwardness of his own graveside service. He had always made it clear that, when he died, he wanted the absolute minimum, and we were all similarly inclined. There was no funeral or memorial service. Mother and Sue and I drove to the cemetery and walked to the grave site, where the morticians had set out folding chairs near the casket. They stepped back discreetly, and we sat down. We all apparently had the same vague impression that, as in all of the funerals we had attended, someone had arranged some kind of program, and we just expected to go along with whatever had been planned. After five or ten minutes of silence, all three of us began to realize that we hadn't really planned anything, and neither had anyone else. The morticians would surely have been eager to accommodate any wishes we had conveyed, but they obviously were not going to take over at that point. We began wondering and whispering what to do next, and finally decided we could only get up and leave, feeling somewhat gauche. I can just hear Dad's relish in recounting his clumsy send-off.

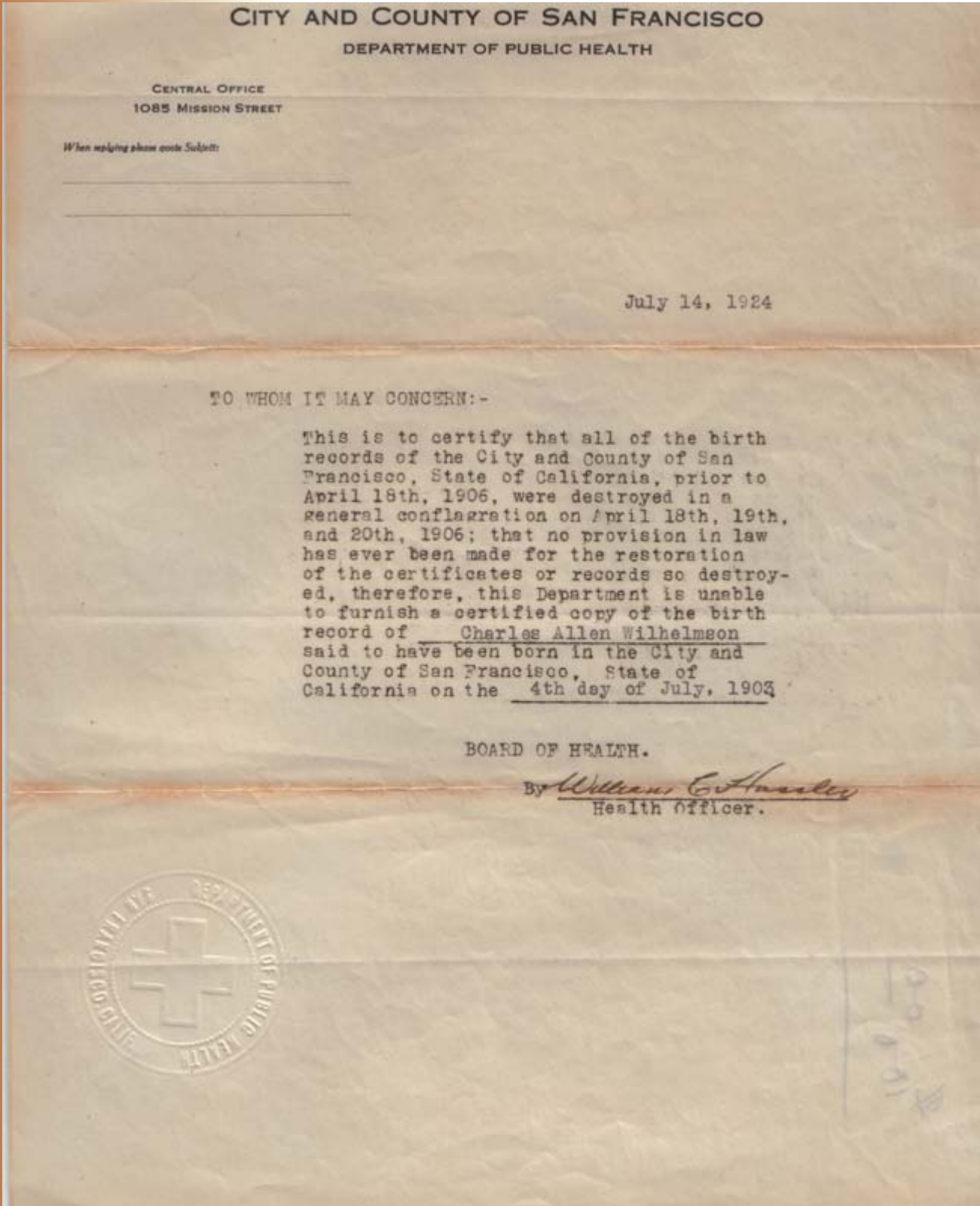
DAW (rev. 7/22/96)

Vital Records & Documents





SOURCE: Lutheran (San Francisco, California, USA), Charles Allen Wilhelmson baptismal certificate (1903), issued 13 Oct 1903.



SOURCE: Board of Health Letter (birth 1903) no birth certificate available, issued 1924; EJ Wilhelmson (private archives).

737 10,000-1-41

AFFIDAVIT OF BIRTH
PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS

Full name of child Charles Allen Wilhelmson
Date of birth July 4th 1903
Place of birth San Francisco, California
Sex of child Male
Full name of father Lars (Louie) Wilhelmson
Residence at child's birth Mission Street, San Francisco, California (near 24th St)
Age at child's birth 35 Years
Color or race White
Birthplace Arboga, Västmanland, Sweden
Occupation at child's birth Marine Engineer
Full maiden name of mother Christine Larsson
Residence at child's birth Mission Street (near 24th St) San Francisco, California
Age at child's birth 36
Color or race White
Birthplace Alstersöcken near Karlstad, Varmland, Sweden
Occupation at child's birth Housewife

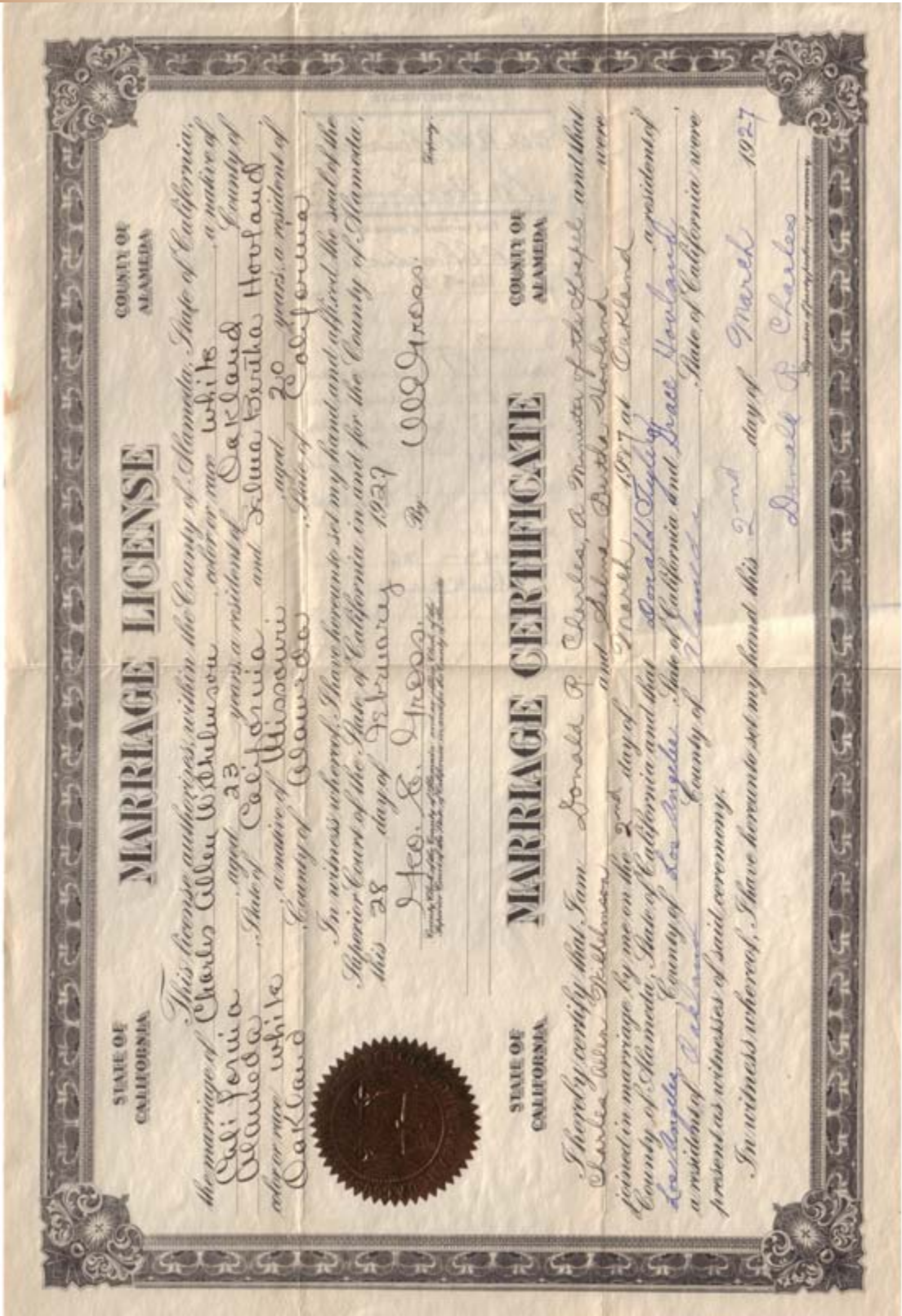
I hereby certify that I am the mother of this child, who was born on the date above stated.

AFFIANT Mrs. Christine Wilhelmson
(Mrs. Christine Wilhelmson)
ADDRESS 1908 Twenty-second Avenue
Oakland, California

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 18th day of May, 1943.
W. Humphreys
Notary Public.

My Commission Expires May 20, 1943

SOURCE: Affidavit of Birth (1943) birth record, issued 18 May 1943; EJ Wilhelmson (private archives).



SOURCE: Wilhelmson, Charles Allen-Selma Bertha Hovland. Certificate. marriage, 1927. Printed Oakland, California: n.p., n.d.

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Local File Number

STATE OF OREGON
HEALTH DIVISION DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
Vital Statistics Section

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

State File Number

DECEASED—NAME First Middle Last
1 Charles Allen WILHELMSON

DATE OF DEATH (month, day, year)
2 September 14, 1978

RACE White, Black, American Indian, etc. (specify) 3 White SEX 4 Male AGE—Last birthday (years) 5a 75 Under 1 year 5b Under 1 day 5c

DATE OF BIRTH (month, day, year)
6 July 4, 1903

CITY, TOWN OR LOCATION OF DEATH 7a Polk 7b Salem 7c 1955 Dallas Highway N.W. HOSPITAL OR OTHER INSTITUTION—Name (if not a hospital, specify) 7d Inpatient

STATE OF BIRTH (if not in U.S.A., name country) 8 California CITIZEN OF WHAT COUNTRY 9 U.S.A. MARRIED, NEVER MARRIED, WIDOWED, DIVORCED (specify) 10 Married SPOUSE (IF MARRIED, WIDOWED) 11 Selma Wilhelmson

WAS DECEASED EVER IN U.S. ARMED FORCES? (Specify yes or no) 12 no

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER 13 547-05-1642

USUAL OCCUPATION (Give kind of work done during most of working life, when it ceased) 14a retired tool and die 14b Machinist

RESIDENCE—STATE 15a Oregon COUNTY 15b Polk CITY, TOWN, OR LOCATION 15c Salem STREET AND NUMBER OR R.F.D. NO. 15d 1955 Dallas Highway N.W. Inside City Limits (Specify yes or no) 15e yes

FATHER—NAME first middle last 16a Lars Wilhelmson MOTHER—Maiden Name first middle last 17a Christine Larsson

INFORMANT—NAME and relationship to deceased 18 Selma B. Wilhelmson

BURIAL, CREMATION, REMOVAL, MAUS. (specify) 19a Burial CEMETERY OR CREMATORY—NAME 19b City View LOCATION city or town state 19c Salem Oregon

FUNERAL SOCIETY LICENSE OR OTHER AUTHORITY 20a V.T. Golden Mortuary, Inc., 605 Commercial St. S.E., Salem

At the best of my knowledge, death occurred at the time, date and place and due to the causes stated.
21a (Signature) Robert E. Danner, M.D. 21b 9-15-78 21c 7:15 P. 97301

NAME AND ADDRESS OF CERTIFIER (Type or Print)
21d Robert E. Danner, M.D. - 655 Medical Center Dr. NE - Salem, Oregon 97301

NAME OF ATTENDING PHYSICIAN IF OTHER THAN CERTIFIER (Type or Print)
21e

DATE RECEIVED BY REGISTRAR (Mo., Day, Yr.) 22a 9/19/78 REGISTRAR 22b (Signature) Teresa Leach

23 IMMEDIATE CAUSE (ENTER ONLY ONE CAUSE PER LINE FOR (a), (b), AND (c).)
PART I (a) Congestive Heart Failure (b) A.S.H.D. (c)

PART II OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONDITIONS—Conditions contributing to death but not related to cause given in PART I (a) AUTOPSY (Specify Yes or No) 24 NO WAS CASE REFERRED TO MEDICAL EXAMINER OR CORONER 25 NO

ACCIDENT (Specify Yes or No) 26a No DATE OF INJURY (Mo., Day, Yr.) 26b HOUR OF INJURY 26c DESCRIBE HOW INJURY OCCURRED 26d

INJURY AT WORK (Specify Yes or No) 27a PLACE OF INJURY—At home, farm, street, factory, office building, etc. (Specify) 27b LOCATION 27c STREET OR R.F.D. NO. 27d CITY OR TOWN 27e STATE

RESERVED FOR REGISTRAR'S USE

VS-2 Rev-1-78 F-66412

STATE OF OREGON
County of Polk
This certifies that the foregoing is a correct complete transcript of a record of death on file with the Polk County Department of Health.
Alicia M. Barnard
Registrar of Vital Statistics
9/19/78
Date

NOT VALID WITHOUT RAISED SEAL OF POLK COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

SOURCE: Oregon Center for Health Statistics, death certificate 151 (1978), Charle Allen Wilhelmson; Oregon Health Statistics, Portland.

Wilhelmson, Charles A.; son; male; white; age 6; single;
born CA; father born Sweden; mother born Sweden; not in
school; end

STOCKHOLM. *Andra Klass*
No. *29361* **BILJETT-KONTRAKT**

emellan

ADOLF LARSSON-ORTON, Stockholm, befullmäktigad Utvandrare-Agent, samt nedanstående passagerare:

Jag, ADOLF LARSSON-ORTON, förbinder mig härmed att på sgt här nedan närmare omförmåles från Göteborg till *New York* i Nord-Amerika beförda nedan antecknade passagerare mot en redan till föllo erlagd och härmed kvitterad afgift, af *612.50* Kronor, hvart jemväl inräknats de vid landning i Amerika förekommande afgifter af allmän beskaffenhet.

Resan sker från Göteborg den *3/8* 19*10* på ångfartyg *3 2 a* Moss till London.

Passagerarens namn: *Louis Wilhelmson* 42 *America*
Kristina 42
Charles 7

Ålder: *42* *42* *7*

Nationalitet: *America* *America* *America*

The journey takes place from Gothenburg the *3/8* 19*10* by steamer *3 2 a* Moss to London, Hull, Grimsby or other British Port, and thence within 48 hours after having passed the customs to London, Southampton or Liverpool by rail 3rd class, and from London, Southampton or Liverpool within 12 days after arrival there by Ocean steamer Boston or Portland, New York, Philadelphia, or Halifax or Quebec in North America, New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Portland, Me. In North America, or Halifax or Quebec the emigrant will be forwarded immediately after having passed the customs and complied with other formalities to the place of destination.

At the above mentioned fare the emigrant will be supplied with food and from leaving Gothenburg until arrival at the place of landing in America, lodging and carriage in England and conveyance of effects not exceeding 200 cubic feet of effects not exceeding 65 lbs. per cubic foot by steamer and 100 lbs. per cubic foot by railway. Effects of children between 1 and 12 years carried free at the rate of half of what has been before stated for effects to America, where conveyance of effects of children under 5 years is allowed. The emigrant is entitled to a check for such effects as are not under his own care, and will receive for same consisting of 1 trunk, package and 2 trunks, a compensation, not exceeding Kronor 50, per adult and not exceeding Kronor 25 for children between 1 and 12 years in the event of their non-delivery on surrender of said check upon arrival at place of landing in America, but no compensation will be allowed for loss or damage of effects caused by sea accident.

In case the emigrant on arrival in the foreign state should be forbidden by the proper authority there to immigrate, and it cannot be proved that this prohibition has been caused through circumstances which have arisen since the opening of this contract, I, Adolf Larsson-Orton, engage to refund the emigrant his outward journey, and at my expense provide him with a return fare to Gothenburg in Sweden, together with subsistence, and to convey and take care of his effects.

Besides, I bind myself, if the emigrant should desire it, that all disputes relative to the interpretation of this contract and claim for compensation by the emigrant for nonfulfilment of same, may be settled by five arbitrators, of which the emigrant appoints two, two are appointed by me, providing I do not decline to do so, in which case they are appointed by the Governor of this county who also appoints the fifth arbitrator.

If the emigrant has any reason for complaint of not being treated in accordance with the terms stipulated in this contract, a report thereof should be made to the nearest Consul as soon as circumstances permit.

Stockholm den *17/6* 19*10*
A Larsson-Orton

Uppvisadt och godkänt såsom upprättadt i öfverensstämmelse med Kgl. Förordningen den 4 Juni 1884, och tillägg af den 28de Sept. 1893, intygas.

ANTAGES: *GÖTEBORG i Polisbureauen* den *2/8* 19*10*
Louis Wilhelmson *Erik Palmgren*

Ticket Contract

Source: (1910) ship contract, issued 3 Aug 1910; EJ Wilhelmson (private archives).

Transcript: I, ADOLF LARSSON-ORTON, hereby undertake upon the following terms, to forward from Gothenburg to New York in North America, the passengers named below for the sum of 612.50 Kronor, which amount has been duly paid and includes all ordinary charges upon landing in America.

The journey takes place from Gothenburg the 3/8 by steamer second cabin to London, Hull, Griansby or other British Port, and thence within 48 hours after having passed the customs to London, Southampton or Liverpool by rail 3rd class, and from London, Southampton or Liverpool within 12 days after arrival there by Ocean steamer second cabin to New York, Philadelphia, Boston or Portland, Me. In North America, or Halifax or Quebec in Canada.... Louis Wilhelmson, age 42, America; for Kristina Wilhelmson, age 42, America; Charles Wilhelmson, age 7, America; [signed] Louis Wilhelmson

Form 500-A
Bureau of Commerce and Labor
IMMIGRATION SERVICE

5

SALOON, CABIN, AND STEERAGE ALIENS MUST BE COMPLETELY MANIFESTED.

LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN PASSENGERS FOR THE UNITED STATES
Required by the regulations of the Secretary of Commerce and Labor of the United States, under Act of Congress approved February 20, 1907, to be delivered

S. S. ST. PAUL sailing from SOUTHAMPTON 19010

No. on List	NAME IN FULL	Age	Sex	Calling or Occupation	Ability to Read and Write	Nationality	Place or People	Last Permanent Residence	The name and complete address of nearest relative or friend in country whence alien came	Final Destination
Family Name	Given Name	Yrs. Res.				(Country of which citizen or subject)		Country	City or Town	State
1	Worland	Anders	47	M	Engineer	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
2	Wilhelmson	Louis	42	M	Marine Engineer	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
3	de	Kristina	42	F	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
4	de	Charles	7	M	Child	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
5	Shaw	Henrietta	34	F	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
6	Markham	Abel	36	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
7	de	Sofia	36	F	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
8	de	Rosa	29	F	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
9	Rachien	Lara	32	F	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
10	de	Anna	24	F	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
11	Bahl	Anton	39	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
12	Lavonier	John	18	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
13	Rollins	Alphonse	37	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
14	de	Mrs	37	F	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
15	Lavonier	Mrs	37	F	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
16	Sabcock	Dorothy	34	F	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
17	de	Elizabeth	35	F	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
18	Muldomey	Edward	31	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
19	Dotter	John	24	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
20	Knos	Benjamin	35	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
21	Smith	Alfred	31	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
22	de	Dorothy	34	F	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
23	Hare	Clarina	30	F	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
24	Armstrong	Wm	36	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
25	Finch	Major Wm	44	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
26	Hogan	Charles	34	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
27	Horsach	Francis	33	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
28	Shell	Albert	32	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
29	Russ	William	30	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden
30	Chenoweth	Arthur	26	M	Wife	Swedish	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden	Sweden

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By intended residence of one year shall constitute permanent residence. The last country in which alien resided with the intention of remaining as long as one year shall be the last permanent residence regardless of length of actual residence therein.
If alien is "Passenger" as to be determined by the mark from which alien came and the language they speak. List of names will be found on back of this form.

S.S. St. Paul, Passenger List - Aug 1910
Return trip from Sweden to USA

Source: "Ancestry.com," online images, manifest, S.S. St. Paul, Aug 1910, lines 2-4.

Transcript: S.S. St. Paul sailing from Southampton...
line 2; Wilhelmson, Louis; age 42; male; married; marine engineer; can read & write; pass-24199 - 4/11/10; Alameda, Calif; 24199 - 4/11/10; Alameda, Calif; 616 Taylor Ave, Alameda, Cal.;
line 3; Wilhelmson, Kristina; age 42; female; married; wife; can read & write; pass - 24199 - 4/11/10; Alameda, Calif;
line 4; Wilhelmson, Charles; age 7; male; child; not read & write; pass; end

[illegible]

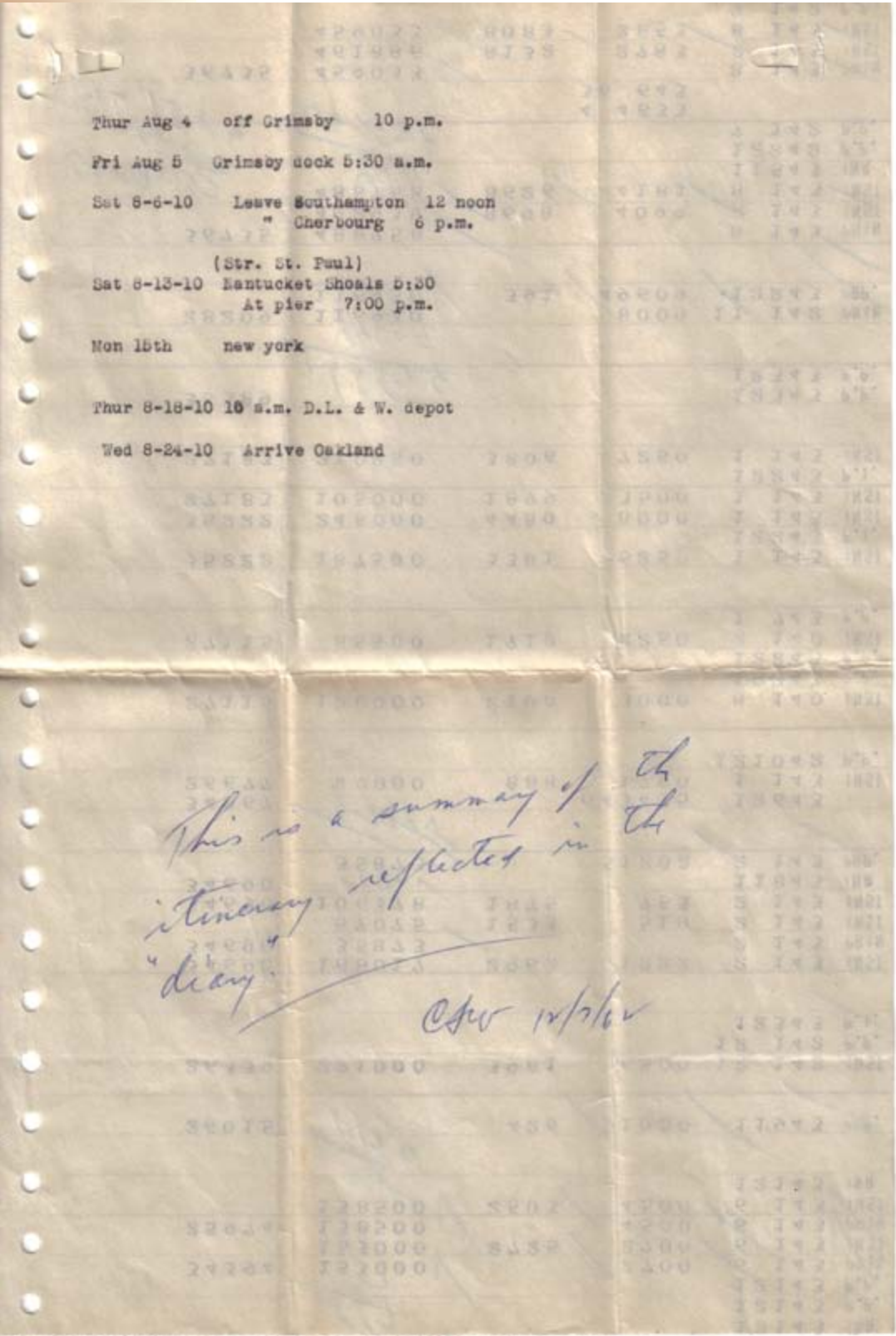
S.S. St. Paul, Passenger List - Aug 1910
Return trip from Sweden to USA - Page 2 of above

THUR 5-5-10 Left Oakland, Overland limited 11:07 a.m.
TUE 5-10-10 Arrive N.Y. 9 p.m.
WED 5-18-10 Left Hoboken, Hamburg amer line Graf Walder See 2 p.m.
SAT 5-28-10 Arrive Plymouth 12 noon
left " 12:40
Arrive Cherborg 8:30 p.m.
left " 9 p.m.
MON 5-30-10 Arrived Cuxhavn 10: a.m.
left " by R.R. 11:35 a.m.
Arrived Hamburg 1:30 p.m.
Berliner Hof Hotel (Hamburg)
TUE 5-31-10 Left Hamburg 3:08 p.m. ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~
Arrived Lubeck 6:08 P.M. Str Westkusten
WED 6-1-10 Arrived Kobenhavn 9:30 a.m.
left " 3:00 p.m.
Arrived Malmo 5:00 p.m.
WED 6-8-10 (were in Stockholm)
SUN 6-12-10 Heby
13 Sala
14 Deje
16 Fair at Karlstad
22 Ulfsby
SAT 7-2-10 left Deje 9:05 a.m.
SAT 7-9-10 Hellekil
FRI 15 Karlstad
16 Ulfsby
WED 20 Orebro
22 Stockholm
27 Left Stockholm on Str Venus
29 Arrive Gothenburg 12:30
31 Marstrand
WED Aug 3 Leave Goteburg 10 a.m. Str Eldorado

Summary of Trip to Sweden - summer 1910

Source: transcript by CAW of trip to Sweden in 1910
(1910) itiniary; EJ Wilhelmson (private archives).

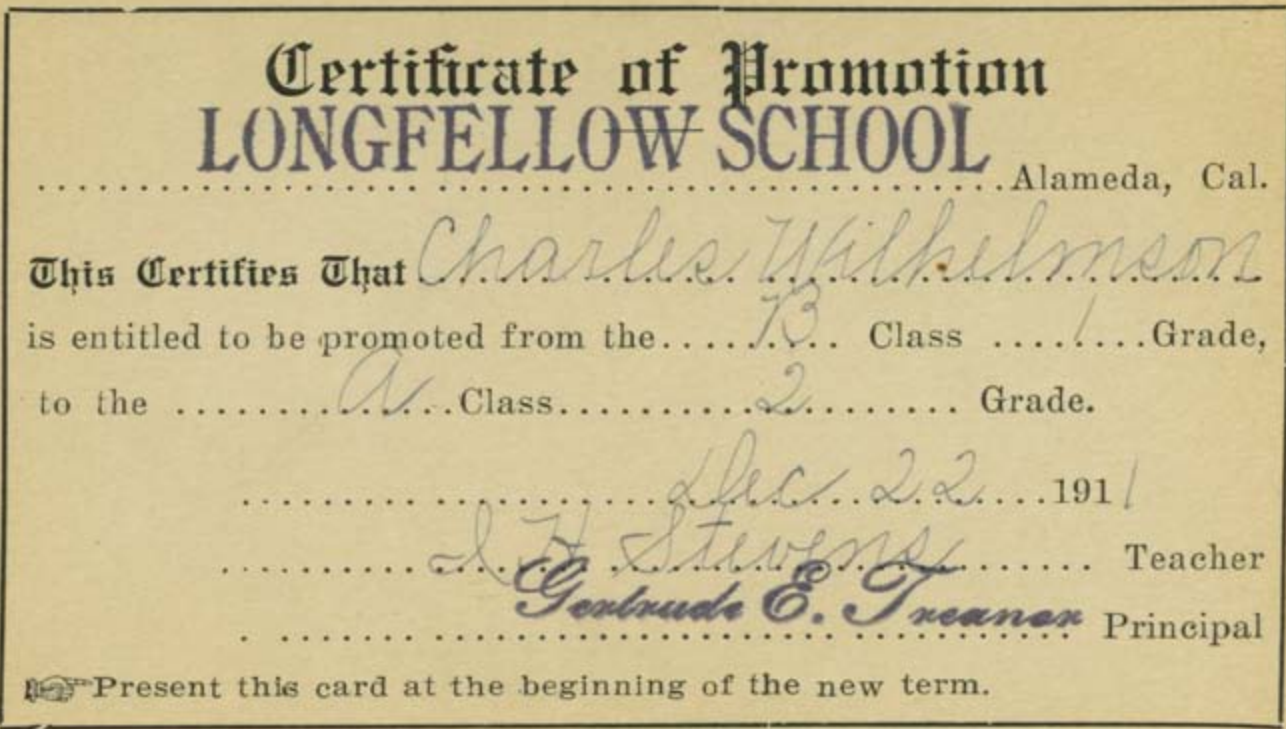
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Str Weskusten
Wed 6-1-10 Arrived Kobenhavn 9:30 a.m.
left " 3:00 p.m.
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Wed 6-8-10 (were in Stockholm)
Sun 6-12-10 Heby
13 Sala
14 Deje
16 Fair at Karlstad
22 Ulfsby
Sat 7-9-10 Hellekil
Fri 15 Karlstad
16 Ulfsby
Wed 20 Orebro
22 Stockholm
27 Left Stockholm on Str Venus
29 Arrive Gothenburg 12:30
31 Marstrand
Wed Aug 3 Leave Gotesburg 10 a.m. Str Eldorado



Summary of Trip to Sweden - summer 1910
Page 2

Transcript:
Thur Aug 4 off Grimsby 10 p.m.
Fri Aug 5 Grimsby dock 5:30 a.m.
Sat 8-6-10 Leave Southampton 12 noon
" Cherbourg 6 p.m.
(str St. Paul)
Sat 8-13-10 Nantucket Shoals 5:30
at pier 7:00 p.m.
Mon 15th new york
Thur 8-18-10 10 a.m. D.L. & W. depot
Wed 8-24-10 Arrive Oakland

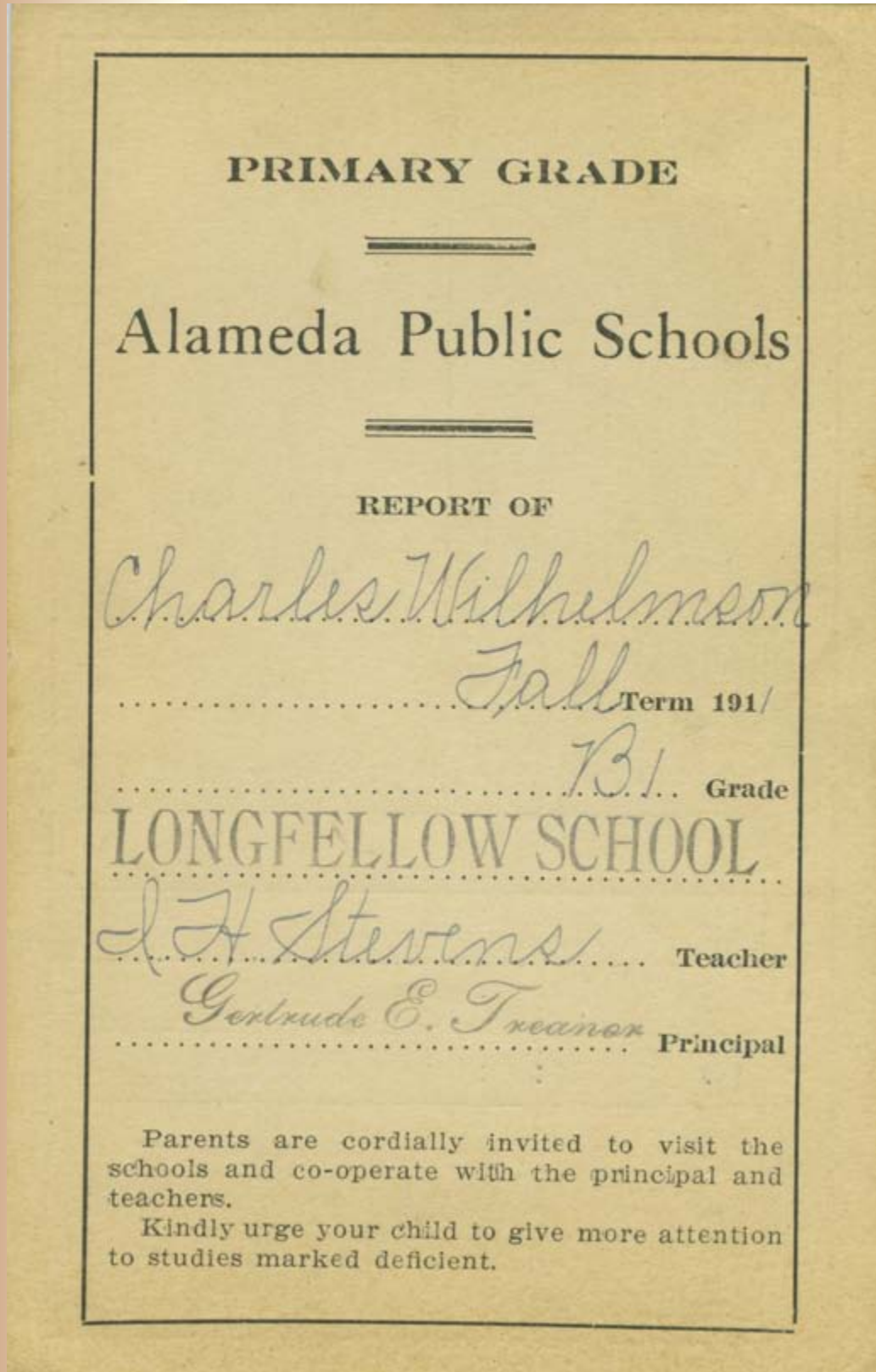
(this is a summary of the itinerary reflected in
the "diary" [of Lars Wilhelmson] CAW 12/7/62)
[transcribed by Charles Allen Wilhelmson 7 Dec 1962]



December 22, 1911 - Promotion Card
from the second half (class B) of grade 1
to the first half (A) of grade 2

Source: Original Document; Promotion Card from B1 to A2
(22 Dec 1911) school; EJ Wilhelmson (private archives).
Actual size 3" x 4.5"

Transcript: Certificate of Promotion
Longfellow School, Alameda, Cal.
This Certifies that Charles Wilhelmson
is entitled to be promoted from the B Class 1 Grade,
to the A Class 2 Grade.
Dec 22, 1911
I. H. Stevens, Teacher
Gertrude E. Treanor, Principal
Present this card at the beginning of the new term.



Achievement Report Card - Fall Term 1911

Source: Report card (Fall 1911) longfellow school;
EJWilhelmson (private archives). Actual size: 3.5" x 5.5"

Transcript: Primary Grade = Alameda Public Schools
Report Of Charles Wilhelmson
Fall Term 1911
B1 Grade
Longfellow School
I. H. Stevens, Teacher
Gertrude E. Treanor, Principal

Parents are cordially invited to visit the
schools and co-operate with the principal and
teachers.

Kindly urge your child to give more attention
to studies marked deficient.

MONTH	1	2	3	4	REMARKS
Reading	E	E	E	E	First Month
Language	E	E	E	E	Parent's Signature <i>Mr & Mrs L. Wilhelmson</i>
Penmanship ..	E	E	E	E	Second Month
Spelling					Parent's Signature <i>Mr & Mrs L. Wilhelmson</i>
Arithmetic ..					Third Month
History					Parent's Signature <i>Mr. Mrs. L. Wilhelmson</i>
Geography					Fourth Month
Drawing	E	E	E	E	Parent's Signature
Application ..	E	E	E	E	
Deportment...	E	E	E	E	
Days Absent ..	2	8	5	1 1/4	
Times Tardy ..					

E excellent; G good; F fair; P poor

Achievement Report Card - Fall Term 1911
Back of card (see above)

Transcript:					
Month	1	2	3	4	5
Reading	E	E	E	E	E
Language					
Composition					
Penmanship	E	E	G	G	G
Spelling	E	E	E	E	E
Arithmetic					
History					
Geography					
Drawing	G	G	G	G	G
Application	E	E	E	E	E
Deportment	E	E	E	E	E
Days Absent					
Times Tardy					

E excellent; G good; F fair; P poor; VP very poor

VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

Name of Student Chas. A. Wilhelmson

Report for Term ending Jun 20 1919

A SEPARATE CARD IS ISSUED FOR EACH SUBJECT

QUARTER	1	2	3	4	TERM
SUBJECT	3	2	3		3
MECH. DR.					
CONDUCT			Cr.		.25

1 indicates excellent work.
2 indicates good work.
3 indicates fair work.
4 indicates conditional or incomplete work.
5 indicates failure.
X indicates unsatisfactory conduct

When a student is marked "4" or "5" the parent should confer with the principal or teacher.

G. C. Polson Teacher 53 No.

Vocational High School Report card - June 20, 1919

Source: Vocational High School (20 Jun 1919) report card; EJ Wilhelmson (private archives).

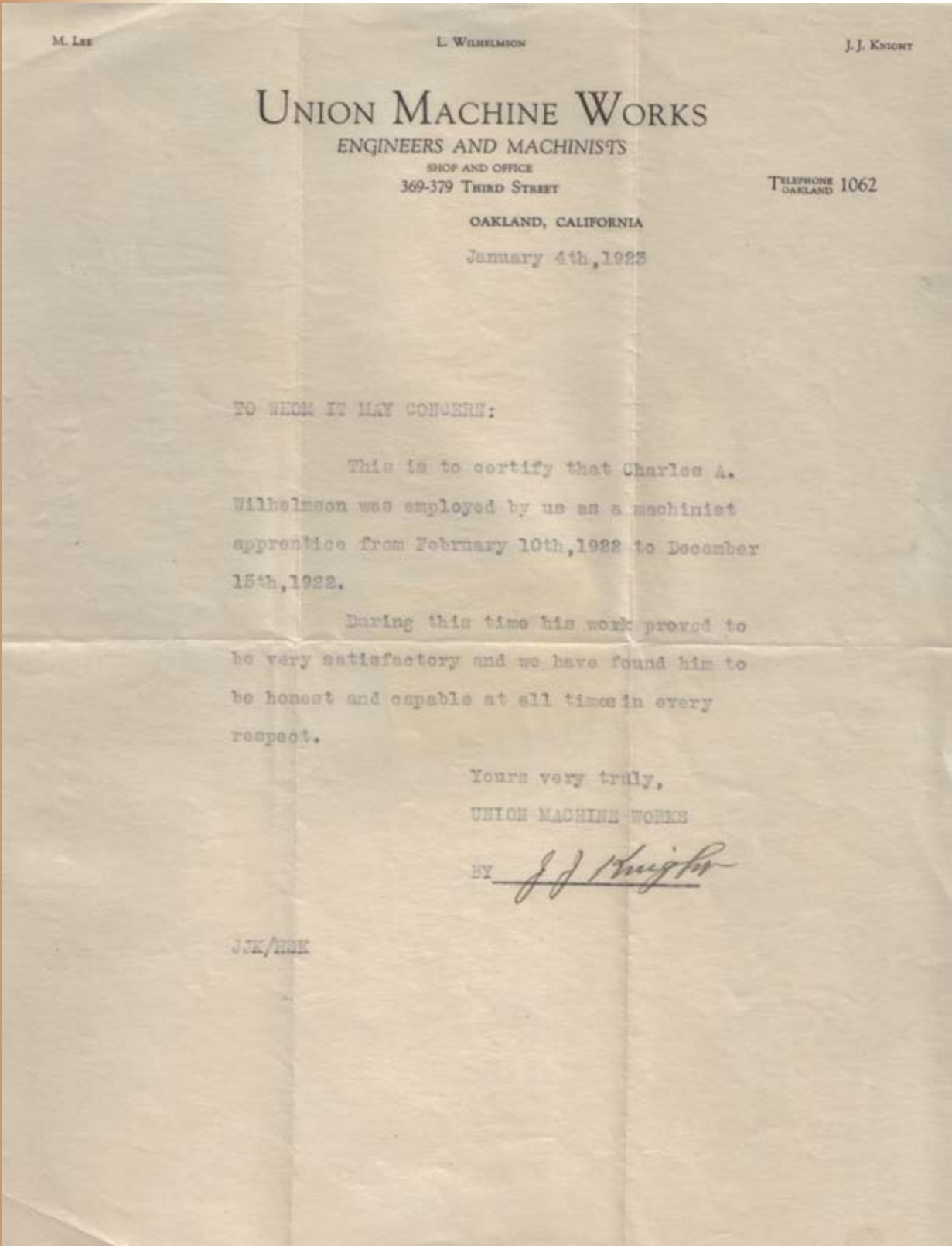
Transcript:
Vocational High School
Name of Student Chas. A. Wilhelmson Major Teacher's
Number 44
Report for Term ending Jun 20 1919
A separate card is issued for each subject.

Quarter	1	2	3	4	Term
Subject- Mech. Dr.	3	2	3		3
Conduct			Cr.		.25

1 indicates excellent work.
2 indicates good work.
3 indicates fair work.
4 indicates conditional or incomplete work.
5 indicates failure.
X indicates unsatisfactory conduct

When a student is marked "4" or "5" the parent should confer with the prinipal or teacher.

G. C. Polson, Teacher 53 No.



Letter of Reference - January 4, 1923

Source: Union Machine Works (4 Jan 1923) letter of reference; EJ Wilhelmson (private archives).

Transcript: January 4th 1923

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

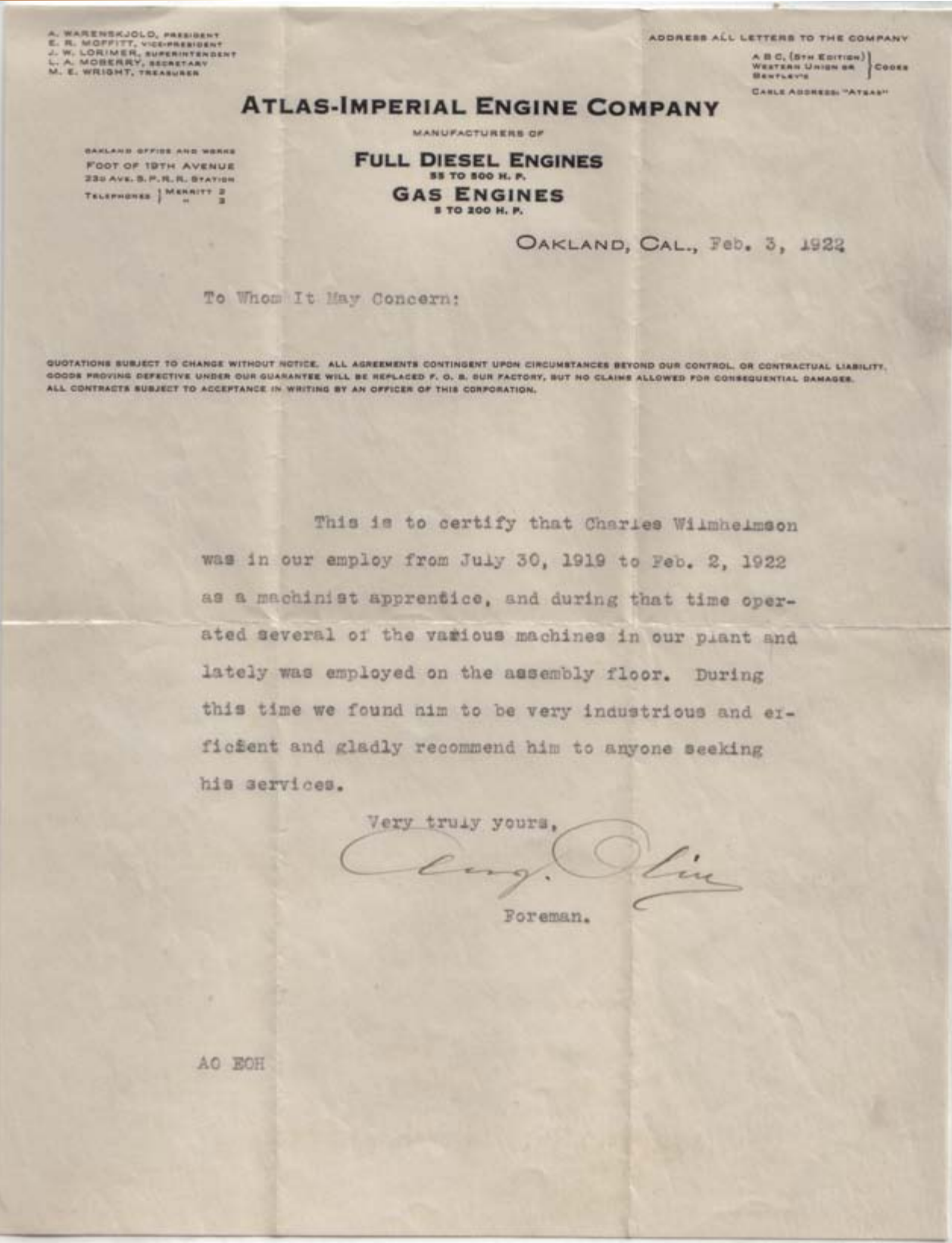
This is to certify that Charles A. Wilhelmson was employed by us as a machinist apprentice from February 10th, 1922 to December 15th, 1922.

During this time his work proved to be very satisfactory and we have found him to be honest and capable at all times in every respect.

Yours very truly,
UNION MACHINE WORKS

BY [signed] J. J. Knight

Wilhelmson, Charles A.; son; male; white; age 16; single; not in school; able to read & write; born CA; father born Sweden speaks Swedish; mother born Sweden speaks Swedish; speaks English; machinist app; Gen Engines; wage earner; end



Letter of Reference - February 3, 1922

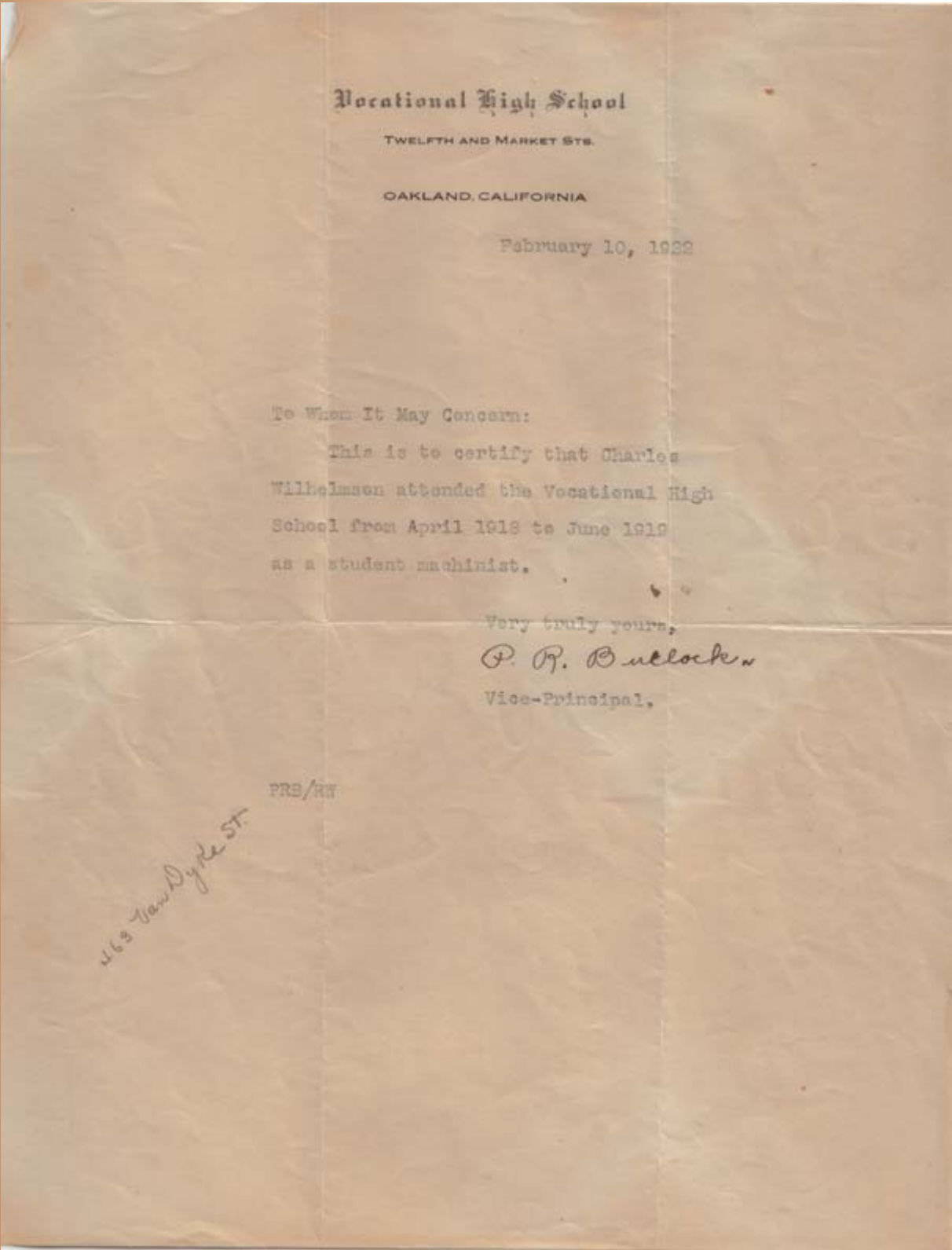
Source: Atlas-Imperial Engine Company (3 Feb 1922) letter of reference; EJ Wilhelmson (private archives).

Transcript: Atlas-Imperial Engine Company ...
Oakland, Cal., Feb. 3, 1922

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to certify that Charles Wilhelmson was in our employ from July 20, 1919 to Feb. 2, 1922 as a machinist apprentice, and during that time operated several of the various machines in our plant and lately was employed on the assembly floor. During this time we found him to be very industrious and efficient and gladly recommend him to anyone seeking his services.

Very truly yours,
[signed] Aug. Olin [?]
Foreman.



15th Census of the United States: 1930
POPULATION SCHEDULE

City of Oakland
Alameda
Brooklyn

Serial No. 2507
Block No. 2507

Enumeration District No. 1-181
Supervisor's District No. 8

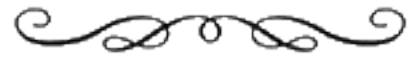
Enumerated by me on April 12, 1930
Signature: Charles A. Wilhelmson

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	SEX	AGE	DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH	PLACES OF RESIDENCE PREVIOUS TO PRESENT ONE	EDUCATION	INDUSTRY	REMARKS
Charles A. Wilhelmson	Head	M	26	1903	Sweden	Sweden, New York, Sweden	12	Accountant	
Selma B. Wilhelmson	Wife	F	23	1907	Norway	Norway, New York, Sweden	12	Insurance	
Donald A. Wilhelmson	Son	M	2	1927	California	California	12		
Ellen M. Wilhelmson	Daughter	F	10	1920	California	California	12		
Charles A. Wilhelmson	Head	M	26	1903	Sweden	Sweden, New York, Sweden	12	Accountant	
Selma B. Wilhelmson	Wife	F	23	1907	Norway	Norway, New York, Sweden	12	Insurance	
Donald A. Wilhelmson	Son	M	2	1927	California	California	12		
Ellen M. Wilhelmson	Daughter	F	10	1920	California	California	12		

1930 US CENSUS
SOURCE: 1930 U.S. census, Alameda Co, California, population schedule; digital images; citing National Archives and Records Administration microfilm T626.

TRANSCRIPT: 4158 Redding Street;
Charlie A Wilhelmson; head; not farm; male; white; 26 yrs; married at 23 yrs; not attended school; can read & write; born CA; father born Sweden; mother born Sweden; speaks English; works as accountant in Insurance company; not member of military;
Selma B Wilhelmson; wife; female; white; 23 yrs; married at 20 yrs; not attended school; born MO; father born Norway; mother born TX; speaks English;
Donald A Wilhelmson; son; male; white; 2 yrs 8 mos; single; not attended school; born CA; father born CA; mother born MO;
Ellen M Wilhelmson [known as Sue]; daughter; female; white; 10 mos; single; not attended school; born CA; father born CA; mother born MO; end

Photo Gallery



Charles Allen Wilhelmson
home with parents:
624 Haight
Alameda, California



March 2, 1927
Selma Bertha Hovland & Charles Allen Wilhelmson

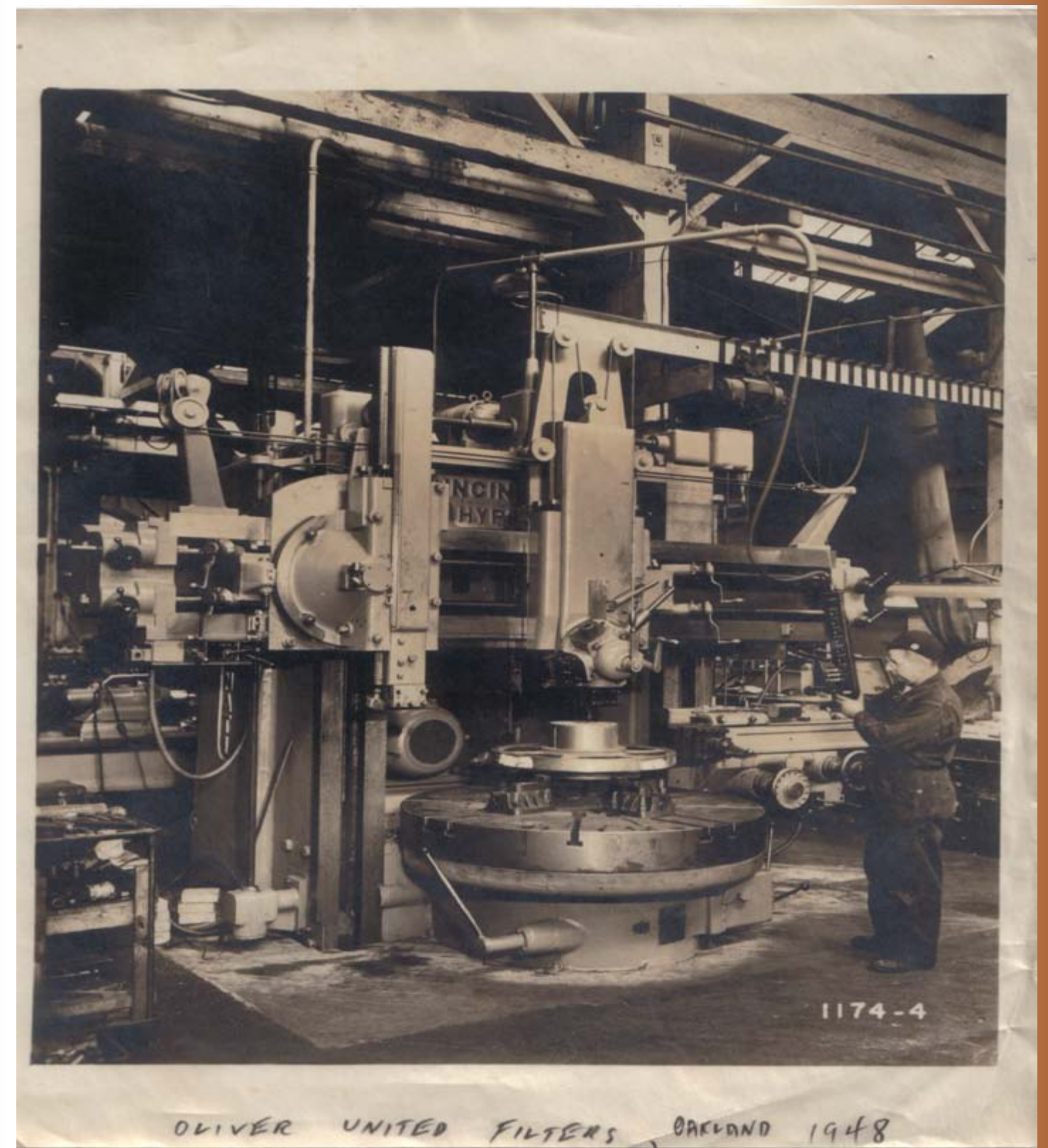


Selma Wilhelmson
In front of her first home with Charles Wilhelmson

4158 Redding Street
Oakland, California



Charles Allen Wilhelmson
Probably at Oliver United Filters about 1948

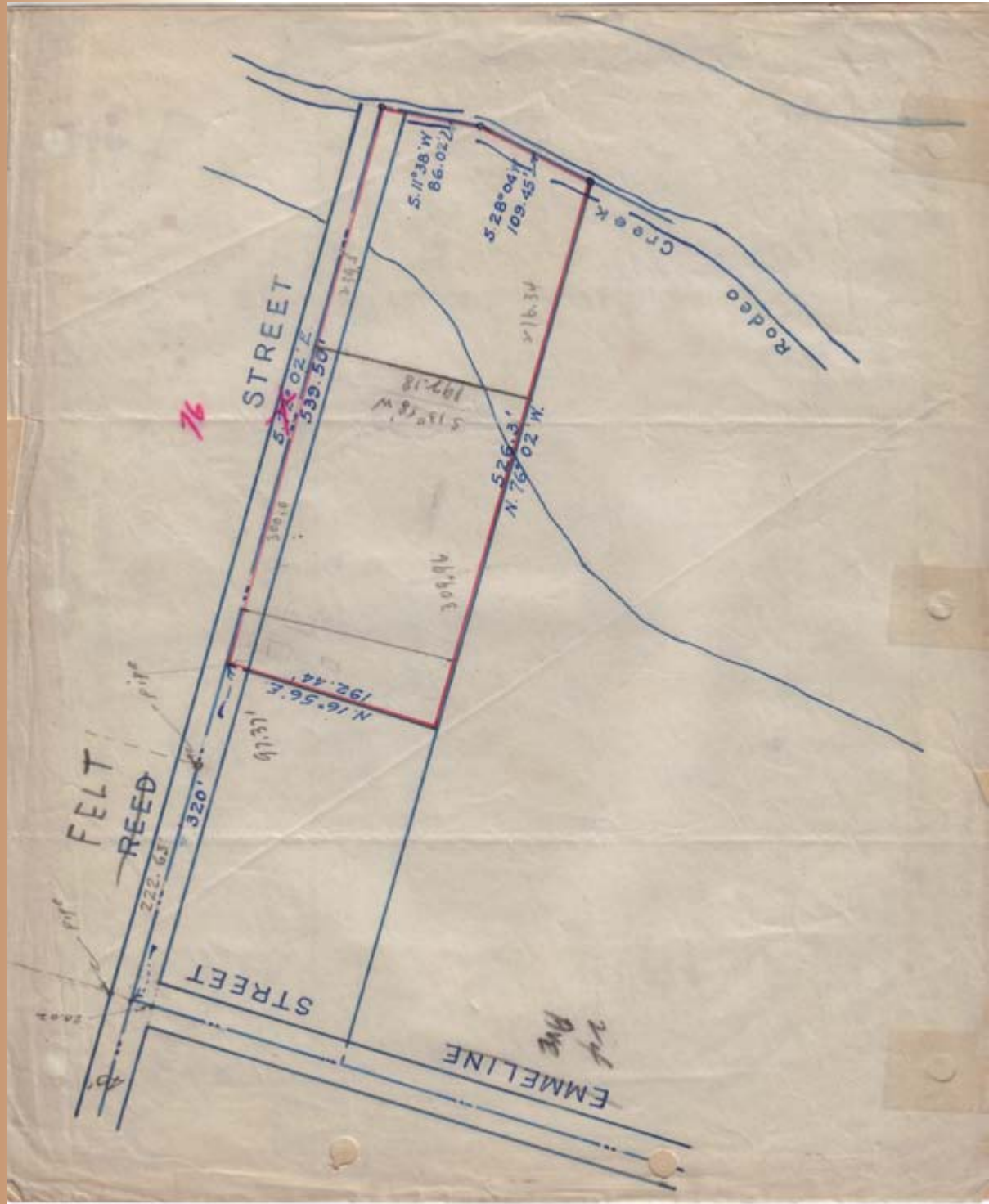




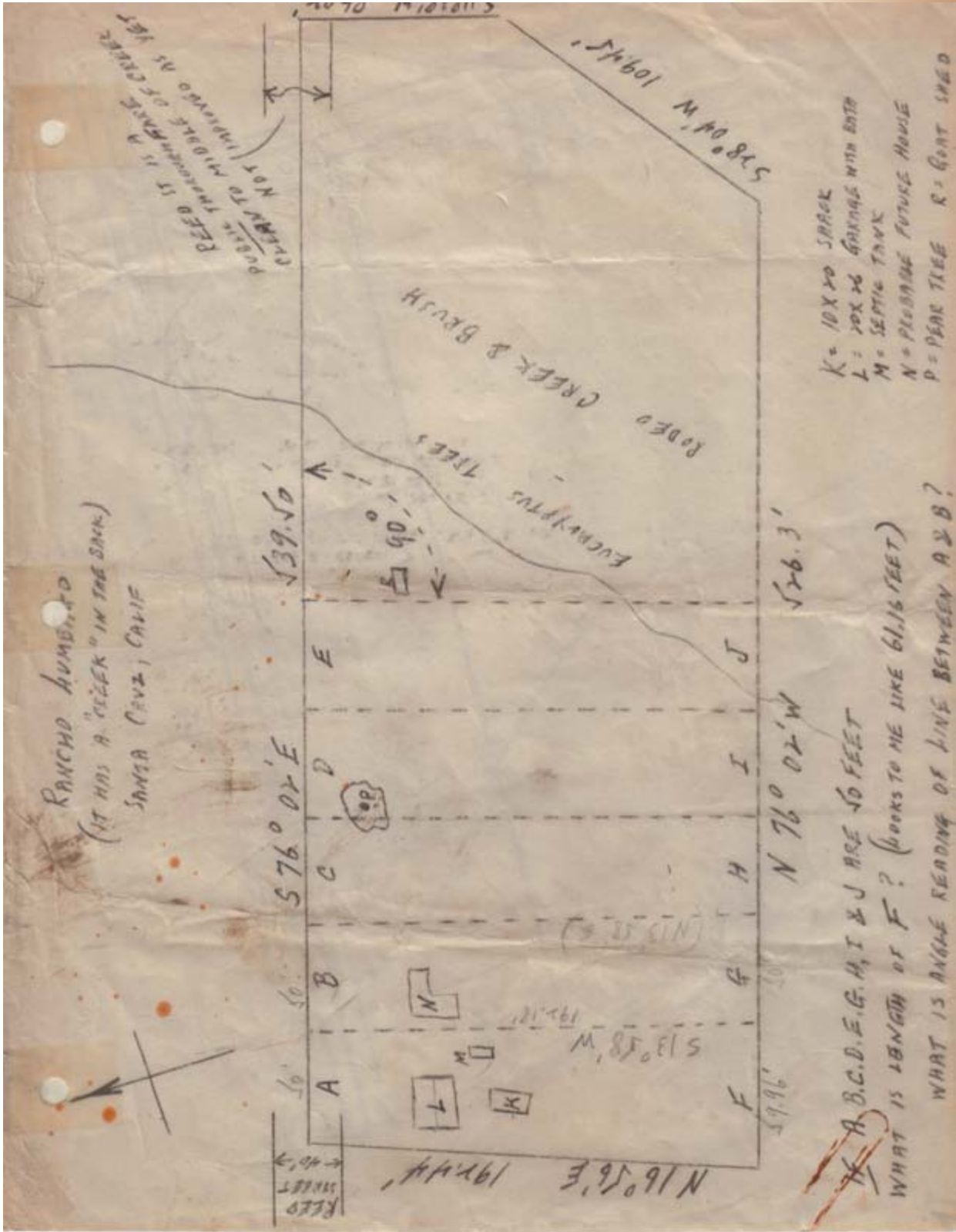
Charles & Selma Wilhelmson
November 10, 1957
in their livingroom at
1341 Norman street
Redwood City, California



Charles & Selma Wilhelmson's home in 1957
1341 Norman street
Redwood City, California



Drawing of the lot in Santa Cruz
date unknown





Selma Bertha Hovland Wilhelmson - Charles Allen Wilhelmson
November 14, 1972



City View Cemetery
Salem, Oregon

WILHELMSON
CHARLES A. SELMA B.
1903 - 1978 1907 - 1993

