

1507 Wagon Gap Trail
Houston, Texas 77090
September 16, 1973

Dear Cousin Olga,

Half a loaf is better than none, and so, while all the picture work is not finished I'm sending what I have back. Texas usually provides difficulty with any service work; Texans can't chew gum and walk at the same time. So too is it with photo finishing. I wanted two negatives made of Grandpa S. & Grandma S's picture and they (whoever they are) changed the order to one neg. So, I've still got the original having another neg made for my collection. I also wanted a "jumbo" print of your mother & Dad's picture and that whole order is still in the works. In the meantime I'm sending negs and prints of two of the pictures you sent, and am returning the one original still not in the works.

The original of G & G Soderstrom is a most interesting print. It bears the same hallmark of two old prints that I had...that of Emma S. (my grandmother) and Tina Cawery. I would guess that all three are about 95 years old, and date to about 1880. This would make Grandpa & Grandma in the enclosed picture at about the age of 60⁺; and since I found a baby picture of my dad with the same hallmark of the photo of grandpa S. I sent you before it would place that picture about 1888-89...when he was 71 or 72. The picture of G & G was the first one that I've seen of "grandma"; and the first of the old man at a younger period than the one of him alone...I was quite excited to see her...since it opens up a whole new mystery to me. I have two paintings which I understood were of A.M. Lind & wife Emma; but the more I look at the one purporting to be A.M. the more it resembles Grandpa S. (The paintings are of say 20-30 years old people) and the less it resembles that of A.M. in later years; Same with the other painting...it could well be Catherine S. and not her daughter Emma.... If so, they would have been brought here from Sweden and date to the 1840's! My mind wanders, with no hard fact; indeed my Dad thought they were paintings of his parents as newlyweds.

Anyway, I hope you find the enclosed negs and prints satisfactory. I will send the other neg & print and the other two originals as soon as they are back.

The weather here has finally cooled down to what in Illinois would be a normal hot summer. The nighttime temperature is finally down under 80 and some recent mornings a nippy 70 or so. Our son and daughter-in-law toured the eastcoast (North Carolina to Upper New York) and returned to Wisconsin ten days ago...should be on the road to California by this time. We hope to get over to the farm in Mississippi about October 1st for a week's vacation. But so get there to get the best of tomatoes before we colu sets in

Hope that you both are feeling chipper. Hope we can eventually sort out all the relatives!

Best regards,

George & Ruth

P.S. The man in the painting mentioned above has brown eyes
Would that fit R.M. Lind or your grand father S.?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To the many who gave me so much help in writing this life story of my brother, Reuben G. Soderstrom, may I say Thank You!

And my eternal gratitude is extended to Leslie Lind for his baptismal certificate signed by my dad, as pastor, and for some family history. To Myrtle and Ted Mills for making negatives and pictures of my grandmother's log cabin and many dates of events - To Eileen Cunningham for pictures - To Margaret Bottoms and Mary Halpin for jarring my memories re: childhood events - And George Lind for pictures of family members. To Carl Norberg, County Clerk of Wright County, Minn., for his patience and efforts to help me get court records, and to the Illinois State A.F.L. and C.I.O. for the Pope's Blessing, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees A.F.L. and C.I.O., Washington, D.C. for pictures - To Donald Schabel, Chief Historian of the Chicago Public Library - To Fr. Donahue and many others who were such willing helpers.

Olga R. Hodgson

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HE WAS A LITTLE RED SCHOOL HOUSE DROPOUT

Reuben George Soderstrom, Illinois State President A.F.L. & C.I.O. and a twenty year member of Illinois State Legislature.

In Illinois, he lights a lamp that will burn forever in the hearts and lives of Union Labor. Soderstrom - translated from the Swedish language means South Stream.

BIBLE RECORDS

John Paul born 8/17/1885, Goodhue Co., St. Paul, Minn. died 2/16/1950.
Reuben George born 3/10/1888, Wright Co., near Waverly, Minn. died 12/15/1970.

Levi (Lafe) Edwin born 4/5/1890, Woodland Township, Wright Co., Minn. died 7/26/1940.

Ruth Olga born 1/14/1893, Wright Co., Minn. died 1/25/1894.

Joseph Arthur born 6/11/1895, Wright Co., Cokato, Minn. died 1/28/1907.

Olga Rabacka Emmajeen born 10/1/1897, Wright Co., Cokato, Minn.

Lorraine Olga Marie, daughter of John Paul Soderstrom and Clara Simpco, born 1/19/1911, Cook Co., Chicago, Ill. adopted by our mother at Ottawa, Ill. when Lorraine was five year old - in the fall of 1916 - Atty. Arthur Shay.

Parents: John Frederick, father, born 2/4/1846, Smoland, Sweden, died 4/27/1912. Anna Gustafava Erickson, born 9/5/1866, Jamptland, Sweden, died 12/5/1959.

Marriage Record: Mother and Dad married 10/16/1884, St. Paul, Minn.

Maternal Grandparents: Carl Cederholm (Mother's step-father) born 6/6/1844, Sweden, died 2/3/1898. Martha Cederholm (Mother's mother) born 9/28/1843, Sweden, died 6/15/1927. Eric Cederholm (Mother's half-brother) born 9/30/1872, Sweden, died 9/5/1944. Oscar Cederholm (adopted brother), born 9/24/1885, died 8/18/1951. Minnie Cederholm (Oscar's wife) born 2/6/1893, died 7/6/1957.

Paternal Grandparents: Anders Soderstrom born 1818, died 1906
Catherine Soderstrom born 1816, died 1885

CHAPTER I

Mother came to America when she was sixteen years old. She came with her mother and step-father (her father having died in Sweden) and brother Eric in 1882. They came steerage and Mother said it was terrible. They were crowded in the bottom of the ship. It was unsanitary - not nearly enough food and they were fed mostly soup.

They settled in a Swedish settlement in Isanti Co. near Grandy, Minn. Here they built a log cabin in which our grandmother lived until her death. Then through the years the outside logs were covered, and a summer kitchen was added. All are buried in the church cemetery in Cambridge.

After arriving in the United States, they stopped in St. Paul, Minn. Mother went to work here, immediately, as a hired girl. Her salary was 05¢ a week.

The log cabin Grandma and Grandpa built consisted of two small rooms downstairs and an unfinished attic. The meals were prepared and eaten in the summer kitchen (when it was added), but to begin with were prepared in the kitchen of the log cabin (one of the small rooms), the other small room was a bedroom.

This log cabin was built on eighty acres of farm land which they cleared of trees and brush.

Eric never married, but Oscar did. Oscar and his wife lived in this log cabin too. Two children, both girls, Myrtle and Eileen, were born in this cabin and all lived there until Myrtle (first born) was seven years old. They all slept in the unfinished attic which was made into one small bedroom. Now, this family purchased more land that joined the original eighty acres and it was farmed by the two boys, Oscar and Eric. There was a small cottage on the new land and Oscar, Minnie and the children moved into this house.

Mother often spoke of how hard she had to work as a hired girl and how little she was paid. While in St. Paul, she attended the Swedish Lutheran Mission Church and there she met our dad who was pastor of the church.

John Frederick Soderstrom, Reub's dad, came to America with his father Anders and his mother in about 1867. Other members of this family coming to America at this time were sisters Emma and Sophie. Am sure there was at least one more sister, but I never knew her. I believe her name was Christine. Dad mentioned a Christine, and I remember this, but don't recall he called her Aunt Christine, however there is a Christine buried on the family plot. There was another member of this family - Tina - it was understood she was adopted, but I don't know if she was adopted in Sweden or after they came to this country. I'm inclined to believe she came with the group from Sweden. She was so much a part of the family, partaking in all family activities. Dad was the only son.

It was Dad who encouraged the family to come to America. In Sweden when a boy reached twenty-one years of age, he had to submit to compulsory military service. This Dad opposed, he was a sincere conscientious objector, and did not want any part of the military. If Dad had lived to see America adopt the compulsory military conscription, he would have been most unhappy.

Dad and his parents settled in Chicago. His sister, Sophie, went to Streator. She married a coal miner by the name of Carlson. She may have met him in Chicago and then went to Streator, of this I'm not sure. When their child Annie Carlson was three years old, Carlson was killed in the mine. Later, Sophie married August Johnson, also a miner, and I believe seven children were born of this union. There was one boy and the rest girls. These girls died, I was told, of T.B. which was so prevalent in those days. Don't believe the boy, Frank, ever married but he too died of T.B. Aunt Sophie never let Annie marry - She believed that the girls who married, would not have developed T.B. if they had not married, for the T.B. developed after they had given birth to their first child. So whether this was true or not, Annie lived to a ripe old age and was in her eighties. Aunt Emma met her husband on the boat coming over from Sweden and many years later they settled in Chicago.

The Soderstrom family, when they left Sweden in 1867, brought very few belongings with them. One thing, though, they did take along was an old French Vuillaume Violin, which was carried by Reub's grandfather on the boat. This heirloom is now with Leslie Lind, a great grandson. Grandfather Anders, his wife, son John and Emma settled on Foster Ave. in Chicago, Ill. Grandpa Anders was a tailor and worked at his trade. Andrew Lind, who later married Emma Soderstrom, stayed in Chicago. Son-in-law Andrew Lind and Reub's dad, John, started a business, they had a shoe store on the corner of LaSalle Street and North Avenue in Chicago, and continued in this business until they were burned out by the Great Chicago Fire in 1871. Ironically, Reub's brother Lefe was killed on this corner in a car accident in 1940.

CHAPTER II

After the fire, Uncle Lind opened a shoe repair shop in the basement of his home and they also had a candy counter. I remember spending pennies for candy there, when we came to Illinois from Minnesota. After the fire, Dad went to St. Paul, Minnesota and started his ministry. He was pastor in the Swedish Lutheran Mission Church. There he married Louise in about 1873. She was a very frail person and after ten years of marriage, died of tuberculosis. He was a widower for a year, but in

1884 he married our mother, and she was just eighteen years old.

Dad had two huge pictures, the frames must have measured thirty inches across and down, one of Louise and one of Dad. They were blown up bust size, and they hung side by side in our parlor as long as Dad lived and long after. And you know, I never once heard my mother complain about this picture of Louise having such a prominent place in our home. I remember the picture well, Louise was pretty but looked so frail.

Dad and Mother continued to live in St. Paul, Minn. Mother said being a preacher's wife at the age of eighteen was difficult. For one thing the congregation resented more or less, the December-May marriage, Dad was thirty-eight - Mother eighteen. However, they continued the present status until after son Paul was born. After the birth of this son, they moved to another parish in Red Wing, Minn. In this church where Dad preached, the family lived in the ground level living quarters under the church. When Reub and I visited here, we took a picture of it. It is a stone building and like all buildings of those days, has stood the ravages of time and weather, and is still a fine structure. While Dad and Mother were here, Sophie's son visited them and it was winter. He slid on the church steps, broke his leg and was crippled from this fall for the rest of his short life.

Preaching was not the best paid profession in those days, so Dad found it necessary to farm, along with his preaching, in order to provide adequately for his family. Dad, I presume, was an average farmer but like many farmers had crop failures. This caused him to move frequently, hoping to find better farms, so he became quite a rover. From Red Wing, the family moved to a farm near Waverly, Minn. where Reub was born. Dad continued to preach, but he would also repair shoes to try to supplement his income, since crops continued to be failures. From Waverly, the family moved to Woodland Township where Lefe was born. How he began to be called Lefe from his baptismal name of Levi, I never heard.

From this period 'til we moved to Cokato, I've had difficulty in tracing. I'm not sure if the family moved to Delano, Minn. Another child was born, Ruth Olga - and her birth is registered as Wright Co., Minn. She lived a little more than a year and died of whooping cough. Another preacher of the area was so fond of Ruth, so when she passed away, he asked that she be buried beside him. He had two graves in Delano and Ruth is there beside him, but I'm not sure that the family at this time lived in Delano. Reub visited the grave on every trip to Minnesota, often talked of moving the remains to Streator, but Mother said it would be futile, there would be nothing left to move. In those days coffins were wood and this was no protection from moisture. I'm not even sure that wooden boxes were put in the grave to place the casket in, like vaults are used today. But even if they were, this box too would be gone - so Ruth was left to rest in Delano.

The next move of the family was to Cokato, Minn. Joseph was born here, a blue baby. He was very frail all of his short life. Dad again opened his shoe repair shop, and still preached on Sundays. Here Mother operated sort of a convalescent home to help out financially. Once Dad bought some land in Kansas and one day someone wrote a song "It Aint Going To Rain Anymore in Kansas", or some such title, Dad heard it, believed it, so disposed of this land or let it go for taxes, am not sure which.

When in Cokato, Dad had a lovely brick home built, he planted beautiful elm trees around it. Once when Reub visited, he went to see the house, got out of the car and walked around it. The folks living in it saw this, came out and talked with him, then invited him in. He said it was exactly the same as when he lived in it.

I was not born in this house, so you see Dad and family again moved, but stayed in Cokato. Reub also took me to see the place where I was born. My birthplace had been torn down and a store is there now, but the building next to the store is exactly like the place in which we lived. The downstairs was a store front and Dad had his shoe repair shop here and we lived upstairs.

I was born at about 6:30 A.M. and Mother said Reub was so happy. When he came down in the A.M. and saw me, he climbed over her and just wanted to stay there with me. All the family wanted a girl, and there I was, an answer to their prayers. Dad particularly was so happy - he wanted a girl so very much, so I was indeed a welcome addition to the family. Mother wanted to name me Ruth, but friends and neighbors talked her out of it. They said she would disturb the rest of my dead sister. So I was given Olga by my Mother, Rebacka by my Dad and the boys liked one

"Guns is always cleaner"

of the girls, who stayed with us, (Dad was always helping some girl in need of a home) and her name was Emmajeen, so my brothers gave me this name.

Times were tough, seemed we were always in a state of financial depression, so when Reub was nine years old he went to Hancock, Minn. to work in a blacksmith shop. There he operated the levers of the blowers which fanned the coals and made them burn hotter for the blacksmith. He also learned to repair wagon wheels, such as taking the steel rims off the wheels to repair the spokes and then replace the rims. For this labor he received 05¢ (five cents) a day and his board and room.

As a boy, he liked to fish and spent off hours fishing in "Lake Mary", "Smith Lake" and many other lakes of Minnesota. Fish were plentiful and the main course of many meals. Too bad Reub didn't carry this hobby into his adult life. But as he grew older, his time was spent trying to regain the education he lost as a child. He never had interest in games or swimming or sports. Once I said to him, "Reub, you never cultivated a hobby, nor have you ever made plans on what to do when you retire", and he said "this was true". He did love his car, when he finally got one, spent many hours just riding around Streator and on vacations would take his family to see the sights in America. He had no interest in travel to foreign lands. He loved Minnesota and went there often and he loved Streator.

Before I was born there was an epidemic of either scarlet fever or diphtheria and Dad was afraid the children might get it, so he had Mother take the four children, Paul, Reub, Lafe and Joseph to live for a few months with Grandmother Cederholm in Grandy, Minn. The mailman took this group in his wagon on his mail route and dropped them in Cambridge, Minn., a distance of about forty miles. They spent the night in one room at the hotel there and the next day Mother's brother, Eric, picked them up and took them to the log cabin. On one of Reub's early trips to Duluth, he stopped in Cambridge (in fact he stopped there on every trip for at least twenty years), and asked to see the room in which they stayed. He said it was as he remembered it as a child. We stopped there on each of the trips that I went with him. The dining room had tables that would seat some four people, some six, and there was a long table that would seat a group. Reub said this too had not changed. Cousin Myrtle Cederholm told me Uncle Eric spoke often of carrying a 100 lb. bag of flour, many times, from Cambridge to the farm, a distance of about six or seven miles. Reub said while they were there, Grandma walked seventeen (17) miles taking a cow with her to sell, so she could buy a new dress, and then walked back home.

CHAPTER III

The church in which Dad preached in Cokato was the "Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Mission". Times continued to be financially bad. Dad wrote of his troubles to his sister Sophie in Streator, Illinois. She in turn wrote that she felt there would be opportunities in Streator for work for Reuben. Streator had the coal mines, glass factories, and was building or I should say laying tracks for street cars. It was a thriving community at the time. Often wonder why it wasn't Paul who would be selected to go to Streator to work, guess he was a problem child and difficult to manage. So at the age of twelve (12), Reub came to Streator to live with Aunt Sophie and to work. Reub always said he came to Streator in 1900, but Mother said he was in Streator just one year, when the rest of the family moved there, and we arrived October of 1902. So, I believe it would be more accurate to say he arrived in Streator early in 1901, but still just twelve (12) years old. Reub's first job in Streator was as a water boy for the gang that was laying the street car tracks. He worked from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. and received \$3.00 per week. The work week was Monday through Saturday. Child labor existed everywhere as there were no child labor laws.

I don't recollect that Paul was ever a victim of the child labor market. He was mischievous and one time tormented Reub whose temper was quick and he, Reub, was chopping wood at the time and Reub started chasing Paul with his ax in hand. Mother stepped in and settled this argument. I don't recall ever hearing that Paul worked, (tho' he may have), until we moved to Streator. He was seventeen years old then and went to work for Ted Taylor who had a bicycle shop. There he learned well and developed into an excellent mechanic.

CHAPTER IV

In the year of 1902, Dad wrote Reub that he had no money for taxes. Now Reub had changed jobs and had a job in the bottle factory in Streator and here he earned sixty-five cents (65¢) a day. He had saved \$35.00

and he sent this money to his dad to pay the taxes. Reuben worked the night shift and carried bottles from the shop to the layers. He worked ten (10) hours a day and six (6) days a week. There was no work on Sundays and no stores were ever open on Sundays. Reub often spoke of how tired he was after ten hours of work. He walked home along the railroad tracks and said he'd be so tired his lunch pail would hang low it would bump along the rails. Conditions in the factory were bad. Workers would fight, air was polluted from smoke, workers were burned from the hot furnaces and hot bottles. Ventilation was very poor and there were no safety laws or toilets or wash rooms, so you went home blistered and always dirty. He worked under these conditions for three years.

As Reub grew older he managed to control his temper. He rebelled silently about conditions as they were, about children working so hard in sweat shops, about miners being practically slaves in the mines and about work in general as it existed as he grew up, and determined that he sure was going to try and do something about all these things.

His Streator home with Aunt Sophie (we always called her Auntie Johnson, children never used their elder's first names in those days), Uncle Johnson and Cousin Annie was a religious home, like our home in Minnesota, and he went to church regularly. Cousin Annie was quite a musician, she played the piano, guitar and violin. She worked too, as a seamstress in a tailor shop, but had time to teach Reub to play the guitar. They played together at the Chatauquas, when they came to town. They played for the Salvation Army, both at their church and Cousin on the street corners.

In our family, Mother dominated completely. Dad never raised his voice, he was angelic. I've never known anyone like him - so kind, so patient, so understanding, and far too generous for his own good. And Reub was like Mother. He dominated every situation and every conversation. It was hard for him to just listen, and you couldn't change him. He believed he was always right (and mostly he was), so he'd never give an inch. But, like Dad, he was good and kind and generous. He wanted to help everyone, and he did! He used to say: "No one needed to work more than two (2) hours a day to supply the needs of everyone."

People often ask me what moved him, what things in his life made him choose to devote his life to the "Labor Movement". I believe I have answered this in telling of his early life. He knew poverty, first hand, he experienced child labor. He knew the loneliness of separation from his family at such an early age. These were his formative years, and they were not happy years.

Another thing that disturbed Reuben greatly was the "County Poor House". Many were badly managed, but the most distressing thing about them was this - the poor houses divided male and female. Each lived in different departments. Thus, when an old couple entered, they were separated, one went to the women's division, the other to the men's. He believed this was all wrong and hoped some day he could change this.

It is difficult for me to keep in sequence, for what happened in his childhood influenced his adult life, so you will find I jump from his childhood to his adult life, it seems it will be impossible for me to keep it in chronological order.

So, back to Cokato where we were still living. Mother reached the point where she could not, or would not, tolerate this separation from Reub - And she was determined on this move, that we must go to Streator. But, before we made the move, Dad's nephew Charlie Lind (how he got to be called Charlie, I don't know - for his given name was Albert) and his wife came to Cokato with their son Leslie to be baptized by our Dad. The baptism took place in the church where Dad was pastor, "the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Mission Church", on August 17, 1902. This I knew nothing about or, perhaps, I should say I didn't remember. But, after Reub's death, his son Carl gave me a letter that had been sent to Reub asking for some family history on which he was trying to get information. Well, I wrote Leslie and through exchange of letters, he sent me the copy of his baptismal certificate; and when I saw it, I thought how thrilled Reub would have been to see Dad's signature on this document.

Perhaps, this visit from Charlie helped Mother and Dad to decide to move to Streator as quickly as possible. Anyway, in October of 1902, we moved. I was five (5) years old and remember the train ride well, the bench seats, eating our lunch of sandwiches on the train, the not too clean coach and the black smoke from the engine. And I remember getting off the train at Streator.

County
Poor
house

Mother always said we followed Reub to Streator in one year, that Reub was there only one year 'til we came - so this has confused me - Reub saying he came in 1900 and we came in 1902. Since he was so young, I'm sure that the way I wrote it is probably right. Mother was real sure about her statement. Now in retrospect, I wish I had been more interested in details and more inquisitive while both were alive. I'm sure though I'm right in that he came early in 1901, probably before his birthday which was March 18th when he would have been 13 years old, because Mother said he was just 12 years old when he left for Streator.

CHAPTER V

We first came to Chicago enroute from Cokato, Minn. Now, I don't remember getting off the train in Chicago - just when we got to Streator, but, I do remember Chicago. The cobble streets, the horses pulling the street cars, I remember that they changed teams of horses enroute to Auntie Lind's home.

Aunt Emma Lind ran a boarding house and served meals. Her son Joe was the cook, and daughter Jenny waited on tables. The meals cost twenty-five cents (25¢). Auntie's children were talented musicians. Charlie could just make a piano talk, as could Jenny, and Joe could play too. I don't remember that her son George played, but another daughter we called "Little Emma" played the piano, but not in the same fashion as did Charlie and Jenny. Jenny, like we, had a string of names and I used to love to hear her rattle them off. It always gave everyone a laugh. In fact, the Linds were a real happy group and enjoyed playing the piano and singing. Another son, Andrew, was a Doctor of Medicine. Little Emma was married and lived next door and she used to come home and help wait on the tables. Uncle Lind had his shoe repair shop in the basement, and he also had a candy counter and I remember spending pennies for candy. Seems he had a few groceries too, but of this I'm not too sure - the candy I remember. I remember there was a beer garden just a few blocks from Aunt Emma's and that we stopped in there once. Tables were set outside, under huge shade trees and it was a real restful atmosphere.

Now, Grandpa Soderstrom lived with Auntie Lind and he used to visit us when we lived in Streator. He was a grand old gentleman and used to make acorn dolls and acorn pipes for us kids. I remember when he passed away. Dad was up early one morning, dressed in his frock coat and silk top hat. He looked so distinguished when he left Streator to go to his father's funeral. The train left Streator at 4:00 A.M. We used to call the hat a stove pipe hat.

Dr. Andrew was about thirty-four (34) years old when he died of T.B. I don't remember that Dad went to his funeral, but Mother and I were there. Grandpa was eighty-eight (88) years old when he passed away. He had visited in Streator a number of times while he lived. I never saw Grandma Soderstrom. She passed away March 7, 1885. Auntie Lind died of cancer, as did her daughter Little Emma and her son Joe. Jenny married and lived in California, and we lost track of her. Charlie Lind became an official in Edison Co. and while there organized the employees into a symphony orchestra and they played many concerts - he played the violin in it. They were such a happy out-going family. So much musical talent, so happy-go-lucky, so different from Aunt Sophie, where the home was solemn, sad and so religious.

Aunt Emma Lind had eleven children, I knew just five, the other six did not survive. Aunt Emma, like our Dad, wanted to help homeless girls so Tina who was adopted by our grandparents, probably not legally, was nevertheless very much a part of the family, and she visited us in Streator on several occasions. She too had a happy personality.

In Minnesota, Dad and Mother always had a homeless girl in their home or one who needed help. So it was when we settled in Streator, we had Nettie Johnson living with us for several years. She found work with a wealthy family by the name of Barlow, but, our home was her home. Eventually, after three marriages, she was widowed after each, Nettie married our brother Paul who also had been married three times, but he was divorced twice, but this last marriage lasted 'til his death, but they had enjoyed more than twenty-five years together. Before any of his marriages, Paul was in the army and served in World War I. He served as a messenger, carrying messages from one headquarters to another on a motorcycle and was a war casualty, he received a bad leg injury - was hit with shrapnel in his thigh. He also took part in the expedition into Mexico under General John Joseph Pershing and it was the Pershing Headquarters of the American Expeditionary Force of which he was messenger. Paul was not the most stable person after the war, he was very often in financial straits and Reub so often had to give

Grandpa
lived w/ Mom

Grandpa
died before
Dad

Tina
adopted
by grandparents

Nettie
Johnson

him financial assistance.

CHAPTER VI

When we landed in Streator, Mother said we had Eight Hundred Dollars (\$800.00) after selling all our belongings in Minnesota. Mother was determined that this money was to buy a home - it was to be the full payment - no more mortgage and no more losing our home.

We lived with Aunt Sophie until a house was found. One was, but it was on the wrong side of the tracks. It was in need of repairs - it had no water - just a well, no foundation, and was a two story house with four rooms down and three rooms upstairs. Dad had his bedroom upstairs and two things we did bring from Minnesota were Dad's organ and his desk which had a roll top, a bookcase on top filled with books and a storage place underneath the desk. Dad had the organ and the desk in his bedroom.

One upstairs room was used for a closet and storage. The three boys, Paul, Reub and Lafe, slept in one bed, and downstairs, Mother, Joseph and I slept in one bed. Half of the kitchen was made into a shoe shop so Dad could get at his trade and there was a little Swedish Mission Church just up the street from us and Dad would serve as pastor. We bought our furniture second hand from Barlows and I remember we had two carpets - wall to wall - Mother used one in summer and the other in winter. We, of course, had coal stoves. There was a lot between our house and the Santa Fe tracks. Lafe and I used to pick coal, sometimes he would even climb the coal cars that were on a siding and throw off a few pieces of coal. Mostly though coal would drop from the cars when the trains rode by.

I remember eating meals with Auntie Johnson (children in those days never called their aunts and uncles by their first names, so we never said Aunt Sophie). What a table she would set - so much variety and if you didn't take a second helping, Aunt Sophie was insulted.

I remember Dad as the most patient man, he'd play games like clapping his hands against mine - you'd put your left hand against his right, then your right hand against his left, then clap in between - then another way he'd put his hand on his knee, I'd place my hand on his, then he'd put his other hand over mine and I'd place my other hand over his, then he'd draw his bottom hand out and place over mine, then I'd draw my bottom hand out and place over his, and so on. Simple? Yes, but to me glorious, because I had this attention from him. And, if he'd be talking to anyone and if I came and had something to say, he always stopped, would put his hand on my head and in Swedish would say "such a lilla flicka" (such a little girl). Mother never played with me. By the way, I didn't know a word of English when we came to Streator, Swedish was spoken. Reub could still talk Swedish all of his years, but somehow I didn't after I learned English. I think because it seemed being a foreigner affected me - there seemed to be a stigma, at least in my mind. Foreigners were slurred - like being called "Hunkies" for Hungarian, "Wope or Dagoes" for Italians, "Swedes", of course, for us, so I wanted to not be in this position. By the time I was fourteen (14) years old, I could not understand Swedish - in later life I regretted this.

One Sunday morning, Reub smelled smoke, it awakened him, he hurriedly investigated and noted it came from Dad's bedroom. Dad had a little kerosene stove in his room and somehow it took fire. Reub ran in, opened the window and kicked it out, thus saving Dad's life as well as our home. Once a neighbor girl got her foot caught in the rails of the Wabash tracks - Reub happened along and extracted her just as a train was approaching. She came home crying, but so grateful and never forgot the incident.

One thing Reub hated was wash day. No electric washers in those days, and our wash machine was one you could stand or sit and work, like a hand car. Pull the top lever with your hand and push with your foot. Some machines worked with a wheel that you turned. When Reub came home for lunch, he'd have to work this machine.

Mother had ambitions for her children. She was real anxious to get Reub out of the bottle factory. Bottle factory workers were a rough group and usually heavy drinkers in those days, so she was determined that the boys should have a trade. Soon she talked to a friend, Walter Boxendale, who was a printer on one of the Streator papers, to see if he would help Reub get a job there. He did and Reub became a "printer's devil". Now Lafe loved gardening and he worked for a gardner in the summer. Can't remember how far he went in school, but know he didn't graduate from the 8th grade. He, too, at about sixteen (16) years old

Did not
know
of Reub's
work

left home and went to Minonk, a few miles from Streator, and started in a print shop, so he, too, became a "printer's devil". Paul went to work in Ted Taylor's bicycle shop and there became an excellent mechanic. Automobiles were just coming in and he would work on cars as well as bikes. I remember he'd come home at lunch on every type of bike - huge one wheel ones, sometimes a bike with a small wheel in the front and huge wheel in the back, like you'd see circus riders use. Eventually, he left and worked as a chauffeur for a wealthy family in Chicago. He also used to race cars.

Paul in Chicago

Now that the boys were working, our home began to get improvements. We first got city water, but it was still outside and always froze in the winter. Dad then went to work for a shoe store. He must have taken his shoe repair equipment to the "Loyds Shoe Store" to use because his shop was no longer in our kitchen. His salary was Ten Dollars (\$10.00) a week. However, this did not last too long. This was the first time Dad ever worked for someone. Prior to this as far as shoe repair and farming went, he was his own boss. He then opened his own shop in a basement under a saloon at the corner of Main & Park Street in Streator, Ill. After Dad moved his repair shop from our kitchen, more improvements came about in our home. We had the city water brought into the house and we had a kitchen sink. We still used the well to preserve food. We'd place the food in a bucket, put a rope on the bucket handle and lower it in the well which kept it cold. Then Reub and Lafe put a cement foundation under our house and built a porch on the front, all the way across the house, and a cement sidewalk in front of the house as well as around to the back door. Also, later we got a partial basement, a furnace and gas for cooking.

Going back, to before all this, when Dad first opened his own shop downtown, he again became restless and wanted to leave Streator. Reub was about fourteen (14) years old and one day went down to Dad's shop. He said he talked to him for more than an hour, and counseled him against this constant roaming. Dad was past sixty (60) years old, and nothing could be gained by moving. Dad took Reub's advice and we stayed in Streator. Reub used to carry a hot lunch to Dad everyday, as he, of course, came home everyday for his lunch. I remember after school I'd have to go to Dad and get twenty-five (25¢) cents for which I'd buy meat for the next day. The Bottom girls, Mary or Margaret, and maybe both, would go with me, and Dad used to give us a penny and we'd stop at Hill Brothers Ice Cream Parlor and get either a penny ice cream cone or a penny's worth of scrap candy. Scrap candy was the crumbs of candy left in the tray when the larger pieces had been sold.

Bottom girls

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Many times Reub had to pay Dad's leather bills. Dad was so kind and generous - often put soles and heels on shoes for people who never paid for them. Dad would never bill them. They were poor and he felt that if they had had the money they would have paid him. He used to have a safe, too - for what purpose, I could never guess, for there was never any money in it. It was always locked at night, but Dad always hung the combination on the outside, so if anyone was tempted to open it, they wouldn't damage it in their efforts. At times, Reub also had to pay the rent for the shop.

Xmas, New Years, the 4th of July and Labor Day were always times of big celebration. I remember Aunt Emma Lind and Grandpa would come down on the 4th of July from Chicago, and Auntie Lind would always give me a quarter which was a lot of money in those days. Flags were always flown on the 4th, Labor Day and Decoration Day. Patriotism was a real thing in those days, especially on the 4th of July - there would be parades, speeches, carnivals in town and activities for all. And there was a real feeling by everyone for love of country, and we had pride in being Americans. It was so much a personal thing, because it was a personal expression of love for our country. Patriotism was not legislated like today, such as saying the pledge of allegiance at every meeting one attended, when you might attend two meetings a day and say this pledge each place, it becomes so common place that it loses its meaning. I've heard high school kids say it becomes meaningless and is just words, spoken every day. In the old days, it was something special, it was almost like a prayer and the pledge was spoken of in pride and joy - something from the heart, not something that there was a rule behind its repeating. If we celebrated Xmas every day, it would soon lose its message and become a bore, and the impact of the story of Christ's birth would be gone. Something very precious would be missing from life. This is what I feel has happened to the loyal and heartfelt precious patriotism of old. I think the draft contributed to this, for when our youth joined the voluntary army, it was a personal choice, so different from being drafted and forced to serve. Going into the Service was not a matter of choice any more.

4th of July

Dad was the one that made Christmas a real occasion. He would take me and the Bottom kids to church, and I used to be on the programs. He would decorate the Christmas tree and little gifts would be put under the tree. No electric lights in those days, but candles (such a fire hazard) would be put on the tree and lighted. We always received our gifts on Christmas Eve after we came home from church. Dad would string popcorn to wind around the tree. The Swedish custom for giving gifts was to come and leave the gifts at your door, knock and then hurry away. This was the way Auntie Johnson did for several years.

New Year's too was a big occasion. Mother entered into this spirit, and prepared many special foods, such as pig feet pickled in brine along with pork and heart, and tongue. Also, we had head cheese which was jelled and could be sliced. There would be home made bread, cake and pie all set on the table and each could eat at will. The boys always had guests with them. I remember one New Year's Day, I did something to displese my mother at breakfast, and she punished me by pulling my hair. My head was (and still is) super sensitive. At six years old I was combing and braiding my hair for school - I couldn't stand my mother doing it because she would not be careful in combing out snarls. Well, there was an old saying in those days, that whatever happened on New Year's Day would happen every day of the year and I had a vision or a fear of having my hair pulled every day - of course, after a few days passed and this didn't happen, I lost that fear and relaxed, but I really spent a miserable New Year's Day worrying about it. Joseph, too, was on church programs with me - in plays or reciting verses.

In those years, after the Mission Church closed, Dad took us with the Bottom girls to the Baptist Church. Then, they had trouble and the church divided and Dad then took us to the Presbyterian Church. He didn't believe in church quarrels and wouldn't become a part of it. Really my dad was the most patient, kind and thoughtful person. If ever there was a saint on this earth, it was my dad. Even to this day the Bottom girls will comment and say he was the most angelic man they ever knew.

CHAPTER VII

Dad was so saddened about the death of President McKinley. He was mortally wounded, having been shot by a political anarchist from Czolgasz in 1901 at Buffalo, N. Y. Dad talked of this often.

Troubles entered our home in the next few years - In 1909 my brother Joseph died of typhoid fever and my mother never really got over this. We used to walk to the cemetery (about a good two (2) miles) three or four times a week, and Dad took me and the Bottom girls about every Sunday.

Then, Paul had married Clara Simpcio and they had a son who lived only four months and was brought to Streator from Chicago for burial in 1910. In 1911 they had a daughter born, Reub took me with him to Chicago when this baby was just four days old. She was named Lorraine Olga Marie. I remember going into the apartment in Chicago and someone was boiling a chicken and it smelled awful, like it was spoiled. Clara was real ill, expenses were high and Paul needed financial help, which Reub, the old stand by, gave him. When Lorraine was two weeks old, Mother went to Chicago to get her for Clara could not care for her. Lorraine was born January 19, 1911. When Mother brought her home, she was so tiny, she wondered if she could raise her. Maw (as we called her) Bottom came over and when Mother said this to her, she said between the two of them, they would. Clara came to Streator Easter, which was in April that year. I can remember seeing her get out of the hack - a horse drawn carriage which had seats sideways and three people could sit on each side, and the door was in the back of the hack. She had a huge straw hat with lilacs around the crown, it was snowing and the lilacs just peaked out of the snow and made a beautiful picture. Clara was a beautiful lady and she was so frail. In May her sister who was a nun in the Franciscan Order came to Streator and put her sister Clara in the hospital. She had tuberculosis and Sister Edvina didn't think we should be exposed to it. Sister Edvina was truly an angel - one of the finest persons I have ever known, like my Dad, she was angelic. One day Clara called Mother to come to the hospital. Clara was a fallen away Catholic and the Priest had called on her and threatened her saying if she didn't have the baby baptized Catholic, he would have the gates of heaven locked so she could not enter. She (Clara) was so heart sick, she didn't want Lorraine baptized Catholic as she knew Mother could not raise her in that religion. So Mother eased her worries by saying the Priest had no such power and for her not to worry. Clara passed away in June of that year. The third funeral from our home in two years, and, of course, Reub financed all of these burials.

Joe
Dies 1909

CHAPTER VIII

Reub was gone from Streator and I can't remember for how long, but it was several years. He worked in Chicago and was foreman of the shop. While there, Lafe had also gone to Chicago and Paul was there too. Reub tried to get them to save their money and they would all live on his salary, and he hoped they could go into business one day, but he couldn't get them to agree. They boarded with Auntie Lind. During this period, he worked in Milwaukee and Madison, Wisconsin and finally in St. Louis, Missouri getting his needed apprenticeship fulfilled so he could join the union. He always sent money home to help us out.

In 1912, he was back in Streator working when the Titanic was sunk. Dad was so depressed when this happened. The ship was supposed to be unsinkable, yet two and one-half hours after colliding with an iceberg south of Newfoundland on April 15, 1912 it sank. This resulted in the loss of some fifteen hundred lives. The liner was on its maiden voyage. The Carpathia, responding to the wireless, picked up seven hundred six survivors. The ship's length was 852 ft., gross tonnage 46,326, speed 21 knots per hour.

Dad died just fourteen days later, April 29, 1912. This financial expense was assumed by Reub. Funerals in those days were from the home - huge crepes were placed on the doors. I remember, Dad was laid out in the parlor; corpses were embalmed in the home. I, inquisitive, I suppose, went in the parlor, not realizing what I would see. There was my precious father with tubes, it seemed all over and blood draining in a bucket on the floor. I wish I had never seen all this, for this vivid picture has remained with me all my life.

When Clara passed away, I didn't see this, maybe it was done in the hospital. I remember though that the Priest who lived across the street from us (the Slavish Church too was across the street) came to see Clara and when Mother asked him to say a prayer, he said he couldn't for we were having a protestant funeral and prayers would be said after his prayer. The Catholic religion was so different in those days. Today it is so much changed. When Reub's wife passed away, Father Donahue came and before he left he said a prayer. Father Donahue was a close friend to Reub and gave him much comfort in later years. Father Donahue was with Reub when his only daughter passed away; also when Paul passed away and when Mother passed on. He always said a prayer that helped us in our sorrow. May God's blessings be forever showered upon him.

When Reub was away those few years, when he'd come home I'd run to meet him as he walked down the tracks, and he would always have fifty cents (50¢) in his hand to give me. He was so dependable and he had financed all the funerals. One wonders how he managed. I remember that one Christmas, he sent me a gold bracelet - another Christmas Reub sent me a white fur neck piece and a muff to match.

Once I went to Chicago and Lafe and Reub met me and took me to Riverview Park for a day, and I had all the rides. One, the roller coaster, I didn't like and I never went on it ever again. Which reminds me, Dad had taken me in 1909, I believe it was, to see the first aviation meet on Chicago's lake shore - what a sight to see those planes flying. A thrill of a life time.

My Dad's passing was such a loss. Mother once said, all Dad talked of in his last illness was me - he worried so about Olga. Mother seemed to resent this, for he never seemed to be concerned about how she would get along, but I feel he knew Mother's determination and felt she'd manage. Dad never believed in insurance, so he never had any. So, of course, again Reub paid all funeral expenses.

I remember once while Reub was still home, he had some friends up in his room and they were playing cards. Mother caught them and she had a poker (stove) in her hands and chased them out of the house and she destroyed the cards. Reub at one time took cornet lessons and I remember hearing him practice, but he soon lost interest in this. A musician he was not. I never heard him play the guitar, but Cousin Annie said he played it very well.

I remember our Saturday baths, too - taken in a galvanized wash tub in our kitchen. There must have been places in town where the boys could pay to take a bath, for I don't remember Lafe, Reub or Paul bathing at home - just Joseph and me. And, I remember the butcher shop where I would buy the meat. The butcher would bring out a huge quarter of beef, lay it on a round (maybe square) wooden table to cut what one wanted. From the ceiling the saw hung, the huge knife hung or laid on the butcher's table, as did a knife sharpener and you know, I never saw the butcher pick up the knife without sharpening it before cutting the meat.

Barnstorming

Play my
cards

CHAPTER IX

I graduated from the eighth grade in June of 1912. The first of the family to achieve this goal, and Reub gave me a beautiful watch.

I think the worst experience I ever had was once the Labor Council was giving a dance and the orchestra was late, Reub asked me to play and I was, to say the least, a poor musician. I never played well, and it was awful, I knew they couldn't dance to my playing. I was so glad when after just a dance or two the orchestra arrived. Dad was a real musician. He used to play his organ up in his room. Every Sunday A.M. he awakened us with hymns. He also composed music for his pleasure. In those days we were not taught chords, we had to read the music. I remember one song I played that Dad enjoyed and would ask me to play - a popular tune that made him laugh, it was "Call Me Up Some Rainy Afternoon". I don't recall Dad ever asking me to play and sing any other tune.

I believe I saw one of the first talking motion pictures. It was shown at the "Bijou" Theatre, which was upstairs above the armory building. They had a screen and behind the screen a graphophone that spoke for the performers. It was really something, because the record was never synchronized with the speakers. This show appeared only a few days and admission was five cents (5¢). That was the admission to all movie theatres all the time I went through high school.

Except for Reub, I never would have got to go to high school. Now, Reub married in December of 1912, the year Dad died. I was the only attendant at the wedding, which took place in home of the bride, Jeanne Shaw, Reub's sweetheart of several years. Jeanne was chief operator at the Streator telephone office and she continued to work for about a year after their wedding. Most brothers would have said that I should go to work and lift, or at least help lift, the burden of supporting the family after Dad's death. But Reub was anxious for me to go to high school, even though he was the support of our family, Lorraine, Mother and me. Mother helped by doing practical nursing which she loved. She would take cases in the home and sometimes brought the patient to our home. When she worked, "Maw" Bottoms would take care of Lorraine while I was in school, when Mother worked, then I would take care of her. Lorraine was about eighteen months old when Dad passed away.

Mother made our home into two (2) apartments - one upstairs and one downstairs. The parlor downstairs, we always kept; but folks who rented could have their choice of three (3) rooms downstairs or the three (3) rooms upstairs. So often we were moving from one to the other. This was after Reub and Jeanne moved to their own home. Reub worked at Andy Anderson's print shop at this time and he gave Mother five dollars (\$5.00) a week. I went to work at the dime store on Saturdays and in the summer during school vacation. I received seventy-five cents (75¢) a day for Saturdays, and when I worked in the summer I received four dollars (\$4.00) a week.

Right after Jeanne and Reub married, they lived at home. The following summer, Mother went to Minnesota to visit her mother and I believe, if I remember right, she stayed almost a year. I would do the house work before and after school, would take care of Lorraine after school and on Saturday and Sunday (this was before I went to work in the dime store, as I was just fourteen (14) years old when Dad passed away and would be fifteen (15) in October). Jeanne would cook the meals and this is the way we managed while Mother was gone. Maw Bottoms took care of Lorraine until I got home from school. When Mother returned, this was when we arranged to rent rooms, and Reub and Jeannie bought their first home - a small three room house on the west side of town. There his children were born. They had three - Bob who lived only two years, then came Carl and Jean. Reub paid \$900.00 for this house.

In high school, I took the regular course for two years, then changed over to a business course. Reub was contributing to our support all this time. I remember earlier before Dad passed away, I had seen a fake fur coat that I wanted so badly. I asked Mother if I could have it, she said to ask Reub. I remember I went to where he worked, he was running the linotype machine there and he was working right in front of the shop. Both the machine and Reub were in full sight behind the huge glass pane window that made up the store front. I went in, and I remember he put his arms around me and I asked him for the coat. He took his purse out, gave me the ten dollars (\$10.00), and I went home a very happy girl.

CHAPTER X

In 1916, Reub made his first attempt to be elected to the General

Mother
↳ Practical nursing

Different home

Assembly. I remember [Jeanne, Mother and I were busy campaigners. We had no car, so we took the interurban car to different places and would mail his literature up on fences and take to stores to put up. We could canvas the homes, too.] I remember I was real shy and it was difficult for me to approach people. [There was nothing shy about Mother and Jeanne, who did well in campaigning.] But, as hard as we worked, we lost this election. Reub ran on the Bull Moose ticket. He was a loyal follower of Teddy Roosevelt, who had formed this third party in 1912. He, Teddy Roosevelt, was very dissatisfied with the policies of his successor, President Taft. Teddy Roosevelt succeeded to the Presidency when McKinley died, then was elected to his own term in 1908. When he ran in 1916, he received more votes than did President Taft, but the split in the Republican Party elected a Democrat, Woodrow Wilson, who had campaigned on the issue that he had kept America out of the war. Reub lost in that election along with Teddy Roosevelt.

Same as
mom

When I was graduated from high school in 1916, I went to work as a secretary in a washing machine factory. I was paid \$5.00 a week. However, I was unhappy in this work and decided to go into nurses training. Seems phenomenal, that I could make these decisions because of our dependency on my wonderful brother. He was still contributing five dollars (\$5.00) a week, and more when needed, and had his own family now to think of. Few brothers would continue this program and permit his sister to continue an education and yet he did just this. He would have preferred that I would have chosen teaching, but this did not appeal to me - So I entered the West Side Hospital in Chicago in September of 1916. We, nurses in training, in that era received three dollars (\$3.00) per month the first year of training, which, of course, did not cover expenses. Mother used to buy shoes on sale sometimes for twenty-five cents (25¢) a pair and send me. Many times they were a poor fit, but I wore them. I could buy blouses and sometimes I bought material and would hand make a dress. We could usually buy things on credit at nearby stores and I'd pay say fifty cents (50¢) a month on the bill. I could write a great deal more about nursing in those days, but this is Reub's life so will omit what training was like in those days.

Making
Insight

Page
Sick goes
to Chicago

It was the second year of my training when the flu epidemic struck our nation. It was a tragic thing. Boys would come back from the war (World War I) and be brought in the hospital and die in less than twenty-four hours. We had no treatment for the flu then and everywhere people died. We lost several nurses with the flu and I contracted it. Apparently, was on the critical list and the hospital notified my folks. Reub was living in Chicago at this time and he called Reub. So Reub came up from Streator and both came to the hospital to see me. I, of course, did not know they had been called, so I tried so hard not to let them know how ill I was. I just couldn't eat anything and all I wanted and asked for was lemonade, and I drank it profusely. Our Superintendent would come in and ask if there was anything at all that I wanted and I'd say "please just keep a pitcher of lemonade on the table", and I truly believe that this saved my life. I was getting so much Vitamin C, which no one thought much about in those days, or perhaps even knew about. Anyway, while my brothers were there, supper was served. I just had soup and coffee. The reason I wanted lemonade was that water, coffee and everything had such an awful taste, I couldn't eat or drink anything but lemonade. But, when they brought my supper, I thought I must eat it so my brothers would not know how sick I was. Reub always believed, when sick, you must eat! And I knew this, so I ate all on my tray. After they left, I was just desperately ill from having eaten, but they left the hospital feeling I was getting along, at least that is what I thought not knowing they had been called because I was so critical. But, I'm here to write this story about my brother.

1917
flu epidemic

Life in
Chicago 1917

My senior year, things were so bad and really intolerable. So, I decided to circulate a petition. I called a meeting and there had been so much dissatisfaction among the nurses that it wasn't difficult to get them to sign the petition and if conditions were not improved we threatened to strike! We sure created a storm. We were told that if this news reached the press, we'd be expelled. Leaders of the strike were called, and some were blamed who had no part in starting this event. But, five of us upon learning they wanted no publicity, immediately went to the Chicago American (it may have been the Herald American) and told our story and our pictures appeared. Well, we all were suspended and after we left, more were suspended for a year. No time was stated for the five (5) of us. We were even told they would blackball us in any hospital we might try to enter. It happened one of the doctors was in sympathy with us, and he took an interest in me and said he would help me get into another hospital. I asked that he

1919(?)

take my dear friend, Leah Hodgson (no relation), along and he got us into the American Hospital on Irving Park Boulevard. It was a new hospital then and Dr. Thorax was its chief surgeon. We, Leah and I, entered there and joined their senior class, which was the first class to graduate from their new hospital. We had lost just three months of time, and we were a welcome addition to this class.

You can believe Reub was not happy over this experience. Funny too, the hospital thought we had outside help. I had formulated the letter and our staff doctors said no nurse in training had written that letter, the one, of course, that went with the petition. Funny too, the nurse who mailed the letter, married one of the staff doctors. I'm not sure if she was ever suspended, for several were suspended after we were. So, I believe I probably lead the first strike of nurses. We had no outside help, my brother knew nothing about this until it appeared in the paper. It was a difficult time, Mother felt I had disgraced them, but as long as I finished training, I was forgiven! I will say Reub never scolded me. Reub was kind, generous and precious, but if you crossed him, he could surely lay you low! He was so determined, like Mother, he dominated every situation. He had his opinions and never budged. His strong convictions are what carried him through many trials in his life. He'd say, "I'd rather be a big potato in a small town, than a small potato in a big town". He always felt equal to everyone. But, I was not an aggressive person. I was easily hurt. I remember as I grew up, Lafe would kid me about my pug nose. He'd say "don't go out in the rain without an umbrella, you'll drown". Therefore, I was so sensitive about my nose until I went to the American Hospital. There Dr. Thorax nicknamed me "Puggy". Somehow he made it a compliment and I think helped me so much in accepting this nose of mine, and gave me so much confidence which has helped me through life.

Married 1921

CHAPTER XI

Mother was ill so often and all through my childhood school days, it was a problem because I lost so much, being absent because she was ill. And until I was in training, I didn't realize so much of it was an act. When Mother lived with us in Kankakee, which was a period of ten (10) years, she once told me that she had had six (6) children and never had a vacation, so she felt she was entitled to time off and she'd go to bed - ill.

Should say here that I married in the year 1921, having finished training in 1920. I did private duty and hospital duty for a year. And Art and I lived at home and took over all expenses. So for this period from 1920 when I came home until September of 1923 when we came to Kankakee, Reub was relieved of the responsibility for our family. When we came to Kankakee, Reub and I agreed to each contribute \$15.00 a month to Mother for expenses, and rooms would be rented again. At Christmas I would go home, get a tree, trim it, rig Lorraine out with clothes and always give Mother money, as I did on all special occasions, such as Mother's Day, birthdays and always when I went home for a few days I'd give extra money or buy all of the groceries.

I never heard Dad and Mother argue at any time, but then Sunday was the only day he was home and he spent most of the day in his room, or taking us (the children) to the cemetery, church or to a show. And week days, he went to work everyday at 6:30 A.M. and never came home until 10:00 P.M. Dad never became excited by Mother's illnesses. In retrospect, I know he understood her better than I did. I'd be petrified by her illness, fearful she would die, she would shake so much that the bed shook hard. I'd be calling the doctor at 3:00 or 4:00 A.M. - this mostly after Dad passed away. Once while Mother lived with me in Kankakee, she was ill and the doctor came in one day and said "My you look fine today, so much better". Well, she never let me call that doctor again!

1930-1946
Mom in
Kankakee

After I married, which Reub opposed, Mother and Lorraine lived in Streator alone except for renters, then in 1926 Mother married again. Reub tried so hard to impress upon her that it would never work, but she accepted no counsel from either of us and she married. This marriage lasted until 1930 and Mother got her divorce. During this marriage, she sold the old home; so they, Mother and Lorraine, came to live with us in Kankakee. So during these ten (10) years that she was with us, Reub was relieved of the responsibility again.

After ten years, Mother decided she wanted to go back to Streator, so Reub took over the financial end at Streator. Mother lived with Paul and Nettie for about two (2) years, but it was not satisfactory, so finally Reub got her a small three (3) room apartment about a block from his home. Lorraine in the meantime had entered nurses training here and became a registered nurse. She eventually married and has three (3) lovely children.

In 1954 Mother came to Kankakee because she had lost the sight in one eye with glaucoma and a cataract had developed on her other eye, and she wanted it removed. This was done and was unsuccessful, so now she was totally blind. Reub again financed all this expense. I tried to care for her, and did for a year. She just refused to accept blindness. One day the nurse in the hospital tried to get her to try and help herself, showing her how she could follow the bed to reach her chair, but she would not do this, she told the nurse she was blind, she would not budge, and if she didn't lead her to the chair she'd scream. I tried to get her to let me take her on walks, she refused. I tried to get her to go on the porch, take hold of the banister so she could walk back and forth by herself. This she would not do, so without exercise, Mother became a complete invalid and a bed patient. Good help was so difficult to get, so much of the time I had really twenty-four (24) hour duty. Reub paid all the help that I could get and often we had to have help day and night. After a year, I just collapsed and had to then place Mother in the Hermling Nursing Home, and Mother was completely happy there. I remember one day, all help had left and I was alone for more than a week and I sat down and tried to explain to her that I couldn't continue to care for her unless she would try to cooperate and not be so demanding and that I had lost weight (from 145 lbs. to 114 lbs.), and I couldn't get help to stay. Guess what she said? "Well, you never wanted to be fat anyway". Through all of this period, Reub never missed a week that he wasn't over to visit Mother.

Reub would never admit to illness. He didn't believe in hospitals. While Mother was in her apartment in Streator, I was called many times to Streator. Sometimes I'd get her in the hospital and Reub didn't like this, but I had a family and couldn't stay. Once Mother called me at 2:00 A.M. - she didn't sound ill so I said I'd be over in the morning. When I got there she was in the kitchen, Reub's wife Jeanne was with her and they were laughing and enjoying a cup of coffee. No sign of any emergency. Sometime Reub would meet the doctor at Streator and he'd say "Your Mother called me at 3:00 A.M. and when I got there, we'd have a cup of coffee and chat, she was just lonesome".

Well, Mother was in the nursing home starting her fifth year when she passed away at the age of ninety three (93) years. This illness was a tremendous expense to my brother, and during it the Internal Revenue one year harassed Reub with first one agent checking his return and then another (they must not have trusted even their agents), after about five reviews Reub finally asked why? So one agent said "Well it's so unusual in this day and age that a son will take over the expense and care for his mother and so we just kept checking". I was very careful and kept receipts for every dollar.

Guess I haven't mentioned that Reub's wife passed away in 1951, and our brother Paul had passed away in 1950. Jeanne died suddenly with an attack of asthma, and his daughter Jean (Jeannie) passed away in 1966 also in an asthma attack.

CHAPTER XII

The following chapters will be and I hope with some continuity Reub's life in the Labor Movement. He was an early convert to the Labor Movement. Streator was a mining town and also had two glass factories. There the bottle blowers were well organized and one of the first to be organized. They helped get the miners organized by refusing to blow the glass that was melted by non union mined coal. The struggle to organize the miners was met by the miners marching, carrying clubs, axes and guns in Streator, in some places there were lynchings, but I don't recall hearing anything like this happening in Streator.

There was a company owned store and a few company owned houses in Streator, and in many areas there were many of these. And since the miner didn't work for about three months every summer, they were always in debt for food and clothes for those months. In Reub's mind this made them slaves to the mine owners. "The miners" Reub said "never saw daylight, they went to work before daybreak and worked 'til dark". All this Reub felt was wrong, and he wanted to right it. Reub wrote about how unions came into being in an article which appeared in the Streator paper's Centennial Edition and a copy is attached.

Reub was reading clerk, vice president and finally president of the Streator Trades Labor Council, a central body of union members. He was twenty-four (24) years old when he was elected president of this group. On one Labor Day, he gave a talk on labor, from the bandstand in the park. Labor Day was always a big day in that era - parades, carnivals, and always a prominent speaker would be invited to take part in the festivities. So besides Reub on this special day, the main speaker was

*Symbiotic
relationship between
glass & coal*

*Did he give the
speech in 1924?*

20 hrs = 1920

1921-23

First run

Unnecessary relationships w/ Republicans

1918

Prohibition ends Reub's term (1920)

FIZZ

"Do nothing Republicans"

Sam Gompers, a National labor figure. After the celebration, Sam Gompers called on Reub at his home. He told Reub he saw in him marvelous material for the Labor Movement and gave him much encouragement to continue. During his visit, he said to Reub: "Just remember one thing, YOU CAN CLIMB THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN STEP BY STEP!" And Reub always remembered this.

As stated earlier, Reub was defeated in his first effort to be elected to the General Assembly in the State of Illinois. Reub made use of his printing job in many ways. He didn't just set type, he absorbed what he was printing. Andy Anderson's was a job office - printing many things. Besides, Reub's wife carried books from the Streator Library and Reub burned the midnight oil studying. He always called the Streator Library his university. He studied hard and long these many years.

In 1918, he ran again for the General Assembly in Springfield, Illinois. This time on the Republican ticket and he won. However, Reub was never accepted as a Republican and the regular Republicans always ran someone against him in the primary election and when he won this, they'd run an Independent against him in the General Election. Reub never had an election but what this was the program in the State of Illinois. He always had opposition. He was too liberal and Labor oriented. When a Representative for the General Assembly won the primary (there would be three elected - two Republicans and one Democrat), they ordinarily never had to run in the General Election. The three were automatically elected. But, with Reub as one Republican, in the fall an independent would run. When Reub won this election of 1918, he would go to Springfield for three days and then he would work at Andy Anderson's three days, for which he received Eighteen Dollars (\$18.00) a week. Now, I had gone in training, so Reub would give Mother Five Dollars (\$5.00) a week. During this period Mother did practical nursing and rented rooms. His pay during those years from the State of Illinois was Eighteen Hundred Dollars (\$1,800.00) for the two years, which netted him little when you see he always had two campaigns in order to win. He received no pay, of course, from being president of the Streator Trades Labor Council. This position he held for ten years.

In his first term as a legislator, the W.C.T.U. (Women's Christian Temperance Union) was in favor of the Volstead Prohibition Act becoming a part of the Constitution and wanted Reub to vote this way. It consisted of providing for the enforcement of the 18th (Eighteenth) Amendment, which defined as intoxicating beverages, those containing more than one-half (1/2) of one (1) percent of alcohol by volume. The United States Congress had passed this law over President Wilson's veto. Reub, however, voted against this amendment because he knew it would put a lot of people out of work and, too, Labor was against it. However, it became the law of the land. So when Reub ran in 1920, he was defeated. The W.C.T.U. worked hard to help defeat him. But, in the 1922 election, he was again elected from his district. I remember that campaign was in the spring and fall, and he did not have an overcoat so Art (my husband) loaned him his and he wore it in the Primary and in the General Election and to Springfield.

Reub never forgot what Labor stood for and remembered the unions' early beginnings. He spoke of the Knights that met on the second floor of a building on South Bloomington Street in Streator, referred to as the Bulldog Building. These meetings were held at night with out lights in the hall, and all who attended entered through a dark back stairway. Because of these secret maneuvers, it took some time before new members actually knew their Master Workmen officers or even their fellow members of the Knights of Labor Organization. As time went on, Samuel Gompers appeared on the scene nationally and the Knights of Labor were divided into craft unions under the appealingly patriotic name - "The American Federation of Labor". Locally, wage earners flocked into unions of their calling and later formed the Streator Trades and Labor Council.

During Reub's second term in the Legislature, he was not the stranger he was in his first term and then had learned something about legislative processes. So, he took his Labor program to the Democratic Caucus and asked about their program and then asked help for his Labor program. They said they would help him. Next he went to the Republican Caucus and asked about their program and they said, "It is to do nothing", so they did not commit themselves. However, as the years went along with the help of both parties, he met with success for many of his Labor laws that are on the books today.

CHAPTER XIII

Reub had the energy and determination of our Mother, none of the docile

1918

calmness of our Dad. I remember Mother would have liked to hold office in the lodges and clubs to which she belonged, but she felt inadequate. She could speak English well, but could not write except in Swedish. She taught herself to read the English language. After World War I, the American Legion started an Americanism class for those who wished to learn to speak or write English, and probably helped prepare them to become citizens. Mother, of course, became a citizen when our Dad achieved this honor. When the classes started, Mother wanted to go to learn to write, but Reub vetoed this thought. This was difficult for me to understand because he believed so much in education, and this was one time she respected his wishes. This was strange, too, because she usually did what she wanted in situations of this kind.

During World War I, Reub was one of the Minute Men, selling "War Bonds". This program, sponsored by the Government, consisted of these "Minute Men" appearing at theatres, lodges, union meetings, etc., to give a three (3) minute sales talk on War Bonds and then Peace Bonds.

America was always called the melting pot, all nationalities were here, but was it? There was a definite stain to being a foreigner. As a child I wanted to forget the Swedish language, which is all I could speak when we came to Streator. Often in later life, I regretted this, and only wish I had retained the ability to speak Swedish. But, I wanted to be an American. There seemed little respect for foreigners. I remember we called Italians "Wops" or "Dagoes", Polish people "Pollocks", the Hungarians, "Hunkies", etc., and it was done in a more or less derogatory way - so I wanted no part of it. But, Reub kept his knowledge of the Swedish language and could still speak and understand it at his death.

Reub always believed that the worker had a right to share financially in the wealth he produced; that he (the worker) had a right to a decent living, a right to have sufficient from his labors to see a little of this beautiful country - A right to vacations, medical care in illness, and a right to warm clothing, all of which takes money. Certainly, a right to a decent home, some luxury, and a right for his family to eat well and enjoy life. And for this, Reub spent his entire life and being, and every hour he worked to achieve these ends. Yes, and more, a right to free speech.

Some time during his career in the General Assembly, he was speaker at a meeting or, perhaps, it was at one of his conventions, anyway, in his speech he berated the University of Illinois for not having classes in Labor and Management. He felt students should be given an insight into these fields, that they left college to enter the labor, or professional market and knew very little about conditions which they would face. Seems the University read of this speech which was headlined in the press, and was moved by it. One Sunday morning, following this speech, there was a knock at his door at home about 7:00 A.M. and it was a representative of the University. Reub told me who it was, but I can't at this writing recall the name or position of this visitor. The University was very sensitive about this speech, they said they did not want the college to be in this position to be publicly heralded as neglecting their students in any capacity. So this University visitor wanted to know how they could make the above subject a part of their curriculum. In their discussion, it was thought a building dedicated to teach Labor and Management would be the answer. While a legislator, Reub appealed to the State of Illinois to help finance such a building, and he succeeded in getting the State of Illinois to contribute Three Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$350,000.00) and then the Federation of Labor contributed a like amount through Reub's efforts and the Labor and Management Building is now a part of the University of Illinois campus.

These last chapters will surely be a conglomerate of his activities, successes and honors, and I will try and keep it or have it in the continuity of its happenings.

CHAPTER XIV

Reub entered the practical field when there were no "Labor" laws on the statute books of the State of Illinois, so his was a Herculean task.

In one campaign, he won his seat in the Assembly by only twenty-eight votes. His opponent was Sheriff Welter. A recount was called for and the courts ordered one. Reub found it necessary to hire guards to protect the ballots. Some had been stolen, at least they were missing, so the remaining ballots were guarded twenty-four hours a day. The missing ballots were from the wards where his vote was heavy. In the room where the ballots were stored, they were scattered on the floor; strangers roamed in unmolested and it was a bad situation, but with all

Match this election

this, Reub won by better than two hundred (200) votes. I asked Reub how come the courts allowed a recount with the way the ballots were found. He said after the trial, he asked the judge and he said if Reub had lost on recount, he would have declared the recount void because of the way the ballots were cared for in the ballot room.

During a strike by one of LaSalle County's big cement works, Reub's life had been endangered. Some one had sawed the back axle of his car and this was discovered by a garage mechanic who had checked his car. Then, once he learned there was a plot to kidnap him, so he was very cautious. One night in Springfield two strangers approached him in his hotel lobby and wanted to drive him to the depot. Reub was in the Assembly several terms before he had a car. These gentlemen were real persistent, but Reub continued to refuse their offer. However, he decided to call Governor Horner and told him about these strangers and of his knowledge that a kidnap attempt was to be tried, and he also called the Attorney General of the State of Illinois and told him his story, so if he turned up missing they would know the kidnap plot was a fact and they could make a search for him. However, he was not kidnaped, but it was a frightful few months. Then during this cement strike he was charged with conspiracy and was tried in the court at Pontiac, Illinois. Paul Chubbuck of the Streator Car Works brought the charge. Reub had a number of injunctions served on him and he was limited to just certain areas in Streator where he could walk or visit. One area ended at the Sante tracks, he could not cross them so he couldn't even visit his mother. He took these injunctions with him to Springfield, waved them in the air in the Assembly Hall so all his co-legislators could see them and made them aware of the fact that one of their honorable legislators was under this strain, of what he felt was illegal, and from it all he succeeded in having passed the Anti-Injunction Law. He also won his court case and was freed from the conspiracy charge. Paul Chubbuck was ordered by the court to pay court costs and a settlement to Reub in the amount of Six Thousand Dollars (\$6,000.00) to cover his expenses of the trial. Reub had organized about three cement factories before the strike. After World War I, an attempt was made in Streator to break all the Unions, and this was a terrific attempt to bring back the open or non-union shops. Injunctions were used among the workers, they were deprived of their rights, no freedom of speech or peaceful assembly, or a free press was not to be allowed "Labor"! So the conspiracy charge against Reub laid the foundation (or at least one of the foundations) for one of the greatest of labor laws - "the Anti Injunction Limitation Bill". This was before the Morris LaGuardia National Act. This bill which was passed in 1925 assured Organized Labor the same rights while they were on strike as when they were not striking. The bill gave workers and strikers the right of freedom of speech, of assembly, freedom of the press without worrying about injunctions. In fact, it finished government by injunction in Illinois.

CHAPTER XV

The Chicago Daily News on Thursday, March 10, 1966 headlined an article as follows: "SODERSTROM, LABOR'S ONE OF A KIND - By Robert M. Leevin. There's never been anyone else in the Labor Movement quite like Reuben George Soderstrom. For thirty-six years he has been President of the Illinois State Federation of Labor and its merged successor, Congress of Industrial Organizations. In the eighty years since the old American Federation of Labor was organized, no other union chief anywhere has led a State Federation so long. No one has ever run against Soderstrom either. He is the full, rolling, resonant, needs no microphone, voice of the 1,300,000 Illinois workers who belong to 3,000 A.F.L. - C.I.O. unions and city and county central labor organizations. Once, at a White House luncheon attended by Soderstrom and several other labor leaders, the late President Kennedy rose and said: "There will be no political speeches". The guests looked at the President in surprise and disappointment and then at each other. After a pause, the President put in: "That's because I'm afraid Reub Soderstrom will ask for equal time". Soderstrom is a five foot nine inch man who by not eating between meals for four years has slimmed from a 217 pounds to 176 pounds. His gray eyes sparkle behind spectacles that have a thin silver edge. His long gray hair gives him the appearance of an old time orator which he is when he gets going. Reub hands out mimeographed texts of his speeches to newsmen and then talks from memory, with virtually no change in words." There is much more in the news item, a copy of which will be attached.

After the luncheon with President Kennedy a tour was made of the White House. President Kennedy drew Reub aside and took him on a personal tour. They went together to the elevator and the President said he

Attempt at
life during
cement strike

Also from
cement strike -
Anti-
Injunction
Law

Bill in
1925

Cement

thought Reub would enjoy seeing President Teddy Roosevelt's bedroom and President Abe Lincoln's bedroom. President Kennedy had apparently done some research on Reub and knew he had been a follower of Teddy Roosevelt and his Bull Moose Party. Reub really appreciated this extra personal attention paid him by President John F. Kennedy.

When the youth of today started letting their hair grow - Reub objected and didn't like it. When I would say: "Reub, you were far ahead of these kids, you've had long hair for years", he'd just deny his hair was long. The last trip we made to Duluth, we had registered at the Duluth Hotel. We asked for hotel parking space for our car, and when the clerk handed him the ticket he said "Here, Dr. Bradley, is your parking ticket". Dr. Bradley was a guest at the hotel and was scheduled to deliver a lecture in Duluth, Minnesota. The next day we were eating lunch at the "Flame", a restaurant on the shore of Lake Superior. I had left the table temporarily, and when I returned I found Reub seated at our table with two women. They had stopped to tell "Dr. Bradley" how much they had enjoyed his lecture the night before. He, of course, explained he was not Dr. Bradley. They said they surely thought he was, for he looked so much like him. Reub said on many occasions in his travels, redcaps took him for John L. Lewis, President of the Coal Miners Union. He said he had tipped many redcaps in Lewis' name. He seldom corrected the mistaken identity. Reub's hair (in color and in length) and his heavy eyebrows is what made the likeness to the above two, so real.

Reub, too, was honored on March 9, 1953 by the Jewish Labor Committee of Chicago and was given a beautiful citation, a copy of which is attached. Civic leaders, the clergy, political spokesmen and labor people gathered to pay homage to the achievements in this field which had been made by a real champion of justice. This gala occasion was held at the Sherman Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, and it was held in celebration of President Soderstrom's sixty-fifth (65th) birthday. After the dinner a beautiful birthday cake was carried into the darkened dining room with flaming torches carried by the waiters. It was a beautiful sight. This was a well deserved tribute to a man who had fought for 23 yrs. for the cause of humanity and organized labor, and it was typical of the State Federation President to state: "This honor should be paid to the organized Labor Movement rather than to me in merely carrying out the policy of the American Federation of Labor." (Some of the above copied from the Illinois State Federation of Labor Weekly Newsletter, dated March 14, 1953, given me by courtesy of Miss Dorothy Stutzman, Reub's secretary). *I was an honored guest at the banquet*

CHAPTER XVI

Illinois was a very backward state, labor wise. Reub changed all of this after he became a member of the State Legislature and during his forty years as President of the State Federation. He represented what was then the thirty-ninth (39th) Senatorial District. Reub helped get legislation for aid to the blind, and widowed mothers. Also another important bill he sponsored was known as the "Anti Yellow Dog" contract. Before the passage of this bill, employers made their employees sign contracts that they wouldn't join unions. Of course, the passage of the "Anti Yellow Dog Contract Act" outlawed this practice.

Reub was an ambitious, tireless, impatient worker in the legislature. He was successful in passing legislation known as the "Workmen's Compensation Act". Under this law workers are given compensation when they are injured on the job, and for the time they are incapacitated. Also, their hospital and doctor bills are paid by their employer. One time when Reub was visiting in the cemetery, a gentleman came to him and asked if he could polish the monument on his cemetery lot. He said he wanted to do something to show his appreciation. He said: (and I wish I could remember this gentleman's name, but I can't), he had been injured on the job and had not been able to work, and that during this time he was paid "Workmen's Compensation". He went on "I began wondering who was responsible for this wonderful legislation that enabled me to pay my way, to a degree, while I was ill and while recuperating". He said he began to make a search to find out who made this possible. He found in his research that Reuben Soderstrom had worked for and succeeded in passing the enabling legislation. So, he wanted to do something for Reub to show his appreciation. Of course, Reub said: "If this is what you wish to do, you go ahead and polish the monument.. It isn't necessary for you to do this, I'm only glad that what I have done, has helped you in your need, and I appreciate very much your way of saying 'thank you'".

While Reub was in the Legislature, he became Vice President of the

State A.F.L. and in 1930 was elected President. He served as both a legislator and President of the Illinois State Federation of Labor from 1930 to 1936. The State Federation had not merged with the C.I.O. at this time. During his tenure as Representative, he was, indeed, labor's spokesman. He became a very important member of the State Legislature. He was Chairman of the Utilities & Transportation Committee, and also served on the House Education Committee, and, too, he served as Speaker of the House for some six weeks when Bob Scholas was ill in 1925.

As previously stated, he succeeded in passing the Anti Injunction Bill. Prior to the passage of this bill, the courts would issue injunctions against union members and their officials, and would fine them or jail them for violations of the injunctions. With experience, one learns the ropes, and he skillfully received the cooperation of both Republicans and Democrats to get his labor bills passed into law.

In 1936 Reub was defeated for the Legislature. It came about because President Franklin Delano Roosevelt invited him to be on the platform and address the people at this campaign meeting in Chicago, Illinois. President Roosevelt was running for his second term. The mass of humanity at this meeting was almost beyond anyone's imagination. Reub had difficulty getting through the crowds. People were out in the streets and the hall was crowded beyond its capacity. After he managed to get into the hall the aisles were filled, by the time he reached the podium, his clothes were ruffled, his shirt torn, hair mussed, and tie askew. He was greeted by F.D.R. When introduced, he gave a rousing endorsement for the re-election of President Roosevelt. Labor leaders have always followed a policy of voting for the man and not the party. So here was a Republican member of the Illinois General Assembly boosting a Democrat for the Presidency. These were depression years, and we had a brilliant President anxious to bring our nation back to prosperity, and Reub felt F.D.R. could do this deed. For this effort, the Republicans of his district defeated him (Reub). Reub never ran for the Assembly again. He was approached and beseeged to run, but he never did.

President Soderstrom was called upon by President Roosevelt to help him with data that would be impressive to present to Congress, to show the need for some Social Legislation to help the aged. Being a labor leader, Reub had much information about the poor, the old and needs of many who labored. So you see, he had a part of helping create the Social Security Act. When credit unions began to materialize, he succeeded in having legislation passed to permit their formation in Illinois. I remember he told me that one of the bank presidents met him at the depot, on a trip home to Streator, and suggested that no one in the labor field could possibly have the knowledge and the ability to manage a credit union. This was the wrong thing to say to Reub. He knew there was great competence and knowledge in the labor unions and he worked hard to help establish the Credit Union and to see that legislation was passed so they could operate in the State of Illinois, and his belief was justified. The emergence of the Credit Unions in the State of Illinois is truly a monument to his faith in the ability and talent that is present in every labor union. The Credit Union is a boon to the union laborer. He can save, and he can borrow at a very low rate of interest. Many carry insurance so if a member is in debt with the Credit Union (having an unpaid loan) this debt is cancelled and is paid by the insurance company in the event of death.

Reub is responsible for such other legislation as tenure for our school teachers, which was not only enacted into law, but has been improved upon through years - by his efforts. Then, there is the one day rest in seven (in many categories people worked seven days a week), the women's eight hour law that came into being, the forty hour week, and an old age pension bill was a law in Illinois before Social Security was passed. Many work safety laws were also a part of his success record. Occupational disease and workmen's compensation (of which I have written) were so controversial, it seemed impossible to get passed by the Legislature, but he succeeded in these efforts. Reub conceived the idea of inviting conferences of industry, management, labor and insurance companies to meet and work out an agreement among themselves. The agreements they presented were presented as bills to the Legislature and passed. Since then they have been improved upon through his efforts. These laws protect the worker and his family if he is injured or becomes ill from some cause of his job (such as the black lung - that miners developed), or if he is killed at his work.

The unemployment insurance act is another bill achieved through his

efforts. He felt a great need here, and determined when a man is unemployed he should receive compensation, and since this original law came into being, it too has been improved upon through Reub's insistence and persistent interest in those who labored. President Soderstrom also worked diligently for laws regarding garnishing of wages, always pressuring for larger exemptions. He worked against deficiency judgments, and wage assignments and always made every effort to protect the wage earner. Because of Reub's constant diligence, the State of Illinois does not have a "Right to Work" law. Reub spent many hours in Legislative Committee Meetings testifying in behalf of the worker and is responsible for the failure of many anti-labor laws being passed by the legislature. Through Reub's effort "the No Strike" provision has been kept out of the Collective Bargaining bills for public employees. Every hour of his life was spent in trying to protect the laborer and to try to make his life easier, both in his pay envelope and for his leisure.

CHAPTER XVII

As I wander through his life so much can be said, and if I have failed in giving you a real insight of President Soderstrom, perhaps by reading the copies of things said about him by others, the speeches he has made at conventions, the honors he has received, the copies of which I have incorporated in these my memories of my brother, will give you a complete picture of his earnest desire to make life better for all mankind.

When Reub first became President of Illinois State A.F.L., his secretary-treasurer was Vic Olander. Mr. Olander was almost completely blind from cataracts. He was, however, a loyal, talented and brilliant labor leader. Reub helped him in his job, walked always at his side to see that no harm befell him, that he crossed the streets safely and tried to always be Vic's eyes. Too, Vic Olander always had sage advice to give Reub. He counseled the new President and could do this well for he had many years of experience to draw from.

Reub was the recipient of many honors. One was the "Green Murray" award, which is a recognition that the Fraternal Order of Eagles grants annually to an outstanding national leader of the Labor Movement. He succeeded in having President Johnson address his State Convention. He represented the Illinois State A.F.L. & C.I.O. at the Presidential Prayer Breakfast in February of 1968. He was invited to a White House luncheon by President John F. Kennedy. He received a Pope's Blessing. He was honored by being selected as the A.F.L. fraternal delegate to the Canadian Trade Union Congress. Usually fraternal delegates given out-of-the-country assignments are selected from International Unions. This was the first time that the officers of the American Federation of Labor had appointed a representative of the Illinois State Federation of Labor to serve in that International capacity. He and his daughter, Jeannie, attended the reception held in honor of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Phillip at the Drake Hotel, July 6, 1959. As they left the dining hall, Prince Phillip stepped to Reub's side and talked with him. And Reub said that when he left the room, reporters crowded around him and wanted to know what Prince Phillip had talked to him about - but Reub just would not comment on the conversation. Then, there was the honor given by the Jewish Labor Committee. There were other honors too, but I do not have the records of these.

But, Reub had many sorrows too. His wife Jeannie died suddenly with an asthma attack in 1951. He never remarried. Reub and his daughter Jeannie continued to maintain their home in Streator. Then he lost his daughter Jean, who had been a guidance counselor at the Streator High School and his homemaker and companion in 1966. And Reub's memorial to her is also a part of this story. He never really recovered from her death which came with an asthma attack. Jean was a real artist too, and at one time was art instructress in the elementary school system in Streator. Jean (we all called her Sister, never Jeannie) had, just before her death, earned her Master's degree in counseling. Her certificates arrived after death. He found her death the most difficult to accept.

CHAPTER XVIII

After Jean's death, Reub called me when he was ill and to be his travel companion. Before her death, she had several stays in the hospital and Reub always called me to come to Streator and be with her. These illnesses were not of major significance.

In August of 1969 while we were in Duluth, he first became ill in our hotel room. He wouldn't let me call either his grandson, Dr. Carl, who was a resident physician at the Mayo Clinic. When he felt a little

better (he said), we went to Dr. Carl's home. Reub went immediately to bed. Inside of an hour, Dr. Carl took his Grandpa to the hospital - much against Reub's will. The doctors there wanted to do surgery, diagnosing his trouble as a bad gall bladder, but Reub refused! He had a National Convention coming up in Atlantic City and he insisted he had to attend. So attend he did. He kept writing that he was fine, but we knew he wasn't for while there he wrote to the Clinic and made an appointment to return. He never would have done this had he been well, for he never would admit to being ill. When he returned to the Clinic he was admitted immediately. They knew he was in serious trouble. When they operated they found the gall bladder had ruptured and had deteriorated to such a degree that it had to be taken out in pieces - in fact, they said it laid like a mud pie. He was called the miracle of the Mayo Clinic. He was eighty-two (82) years old and to recover from such surgery was indeed a miracle.

He recuperated in Streator for about six weeks (not nearly long enough) and then returned to his work in Springfield, Illinois. This is where his office was located. He stayed in Springfield, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. He would also spend two days in his Chicago office. He'd come home on Wednesday, go to Chicago Thursday and return to Streator Friday night. This was his program for the forty long years that he was President of the A.F.L. - C.I.O. The two Union organizations merged in the '50s. I'm not sure which year, but I believe it was around '54 or '55. This was his routine and a heavy schedule to leap into after such serious surgery. But Reub was determined and back to work he went.

CHAPTER XIX

I made five trips to Minnesota with Reub. We had relatives in the State and Reub hadn't seen them for many many years and I hadn't seen them for about thirty some years. So our first trip was to Duluth, I decided I wanted to visit them. Now, Reub always had a schedule on these trips and year after year when he's go to Duluth with his daughter, they made the same tours. So everywhere we went this first trip, he did nothing but talk about events that happened there with Jean. I felt this was doing him no good, so I decided there should be a change. I suggested we visit these distant cousins we had not seen for so long, but Reub vetoed this. I remained determined, but I didn't tell him the reason. When he just refused to change his schedule, I just said: "Alright you do as you please for a couple of days and I'll take the train or bus to Thief River Falls to visit Myrtle and Ted Mills, for I'll never be any closer". Reub said: "Well, you're not very close now". I knew we weren't, but remained determined (he said I was stubborn). I said: "Well, I'm closer than when I'm in Kankakee". "O.K.", he said "Call them and see if they're home and we'll go tomorrow". What a day we picked - there was a dense fog and it rained so hard - I figured he'd back out, but no, we started, and after a couple of hours we were in clear weather. The visit was marvelous. Myrtle and Reub conversed in Swedish and he loved it. Myrtle was an R.N. and was supervisor of the hospital. Ted was a professor and was teaching Electronics, radio and T.V. in high school. We stayed over night and had such a delightful visit. Reub was so glad we went. He reminisced about this visit many times and said many times he was glad we went. A year or so after our visit, Ted was elected teacher of the year and Reub thought that great.

On another trip, we were luncheoning in Cambridge, Minnesota, and Reub happened to mention that Lefe's daughter's husband's mother and father lived in Cambridge. So, I said: "Let's visit them". "Well", he said, "You sure like to look up people". "Sure, why not?", I said. So we asked the waitress if she knew the Larms. And, of course, she did, gave us directions and we were on our way. No opposition this time, and how happy these old folks were to see us. The visit did much for all of us.

We always visited Duluth in the middle of August, mostly so Reub could get away from the hay fever season in Illinois. He was rarely bothered with it in Duluth. He always had a convention (his State A.F.L. & C.I.O.) coming up, so he would have his speeches organized - the Convention address, the speeches for each guest were also prepared. He would practice reciting them, when we were driving. After our first trip (when he drove), I did all of the driving. Reub had cataracts and glaucoma so his vision was not the best. However, he always drove from Streator to Springfield and back home. The Federation wouldn't let him drive to Chicago ever, or in Chicago, too hazardous, they said. When we'd reach the hotel, he'd recite his speeches to me - and ask my opinion. Reub never read his speeches at the Conventions or anywhere when he addressed the group or introduced his guests. He had memorized

every word, and he'd never miss a word, or forget any part of his speech. He always performed beautifully.

It took many years before he would fly, but after his first flight, he was indeed a regular patron. He enjoyed the flight, and especially the speed, and the time saved to get where he was going and home again. But, no flying to Minnesota - this was vacation time and he wanted his car so we could tour the State.

He told me once of an incident that happened in a restaurant in Duluth, Minnesota. He liked to kid the personnel. Once he said to the cashier "Did you ever try to swallow a hic-cough?" She looked at him and laughed. Several years later he was again eating out and it was in a different area in Minnesota than when he had said this to the cashier. Well, when he paid the bill, the cashier said to him "Did you ever try to swallow a hic-cough?" He really got a bang out of this, especially that she remembered him.

Without these trips to Minnesota with my brother, I really would have found writing this impossible. But, we reminisced on these trips - he took me to places he remembered and talked of those we didn't visit, all of these I knew nothing about. We enjoyed the freeways of beautiful Minnesota. Weather was always great, and Minnesota skies so beautiful with lovely white clouds making images everywhere. He'd look at them and say, if occasionally we'd have some clouds like those in Illinois, "Mother used to say they are like the beautiful clouds of Minnesota".

Along the highways in Minnesota, there were signs "Buckle Up", "Come Home Alive" or "Bring Them Home Alive" - Reminders to buckle your safety belt. Often we had forgotten and would get off the highway and buckle up. It would be nice if Illinois would have these too. Seems we never went to Minnesota but what there was highway construction. I believe Vice President Hubert Humphrey helped his State get these roads.

We tried many times to get Reub to write a book - re: his life, his travels and his successes. Once he said "I sure could blow the top off of a lot of events", but he never mentioned which ones. It was suggested he call his book "Forty Gavelis".

One thing the President of the A.F.L. - C.I.O. could never be bought. Once it was said to him: "Why do you stay with Labor? Business would appreciate you much more than your folks who work". They continued: "You know, we could buy at least half of your people to kill the other half". But, he was never interested in any programs except those for his people - the workers. Sometimes, I was tempted to believe some of this was true - Labor had deserted him in his defeat of 1936. Labor has never been tied up with one Party. They are always (that is the leaders) for the man who is for them. He believed F.D.R. was labor's friend and he worked hard for him. So his district in that year - defeated their best friend - the President Reuben G. Soderstrom, he who had done so much for them. Reub brought highways and bridges to his district. He helped bring the new Armory Building to Streator and he helped bring industry there. But these things are often forgotten by the voters.

Later, his son, Carl Soderstrom, a lawyer, was elected by the district. He was accepted by the powers that be. They never run an independent against him in the General Election. And Carl helped Reub get his labor bills through the legislature. I don't remember that Carl ever had a fight to be elected in the General Election, but, of course, he had his battles in the Primaries. However, he was defeated in 1970, but elected again 1972 in a new district.

It has been said that every man has his price. Not so with Reub, "the Great Giant of the Labor Movement". Reub told me once that the underworld, the racketeers, tried to move in on the Illinois State Federation of Labor. These people called on him, but he said to them: "You can kill me, that's for sure, but as long as I'm alive and President of this Great Labor Organization, you'll never get control of Labor in the State of Illinois".

Reub had been approached by folks who wanted to buy his property (home) for business purposes. But, he had dreams of his grandchildren, the doctors, building an office building there and setting up practice, and that one would live in his home. Once one buyer said "Why won't you sell? Every man has his price - what is yours?" He answered, "The property is not for sale. I'm not that hungry yet!"

The only Governor I ever heard Reub complain about was Governor Kerner.

It seemed he could never get cooperation from Governor Kerner, found it difficult to get to see him and talk to him. What else he said - I'll leave unsaid! I could add, it was anything but kind!

This is not the book of "Forty Gavels" we hoped Reub would have written, but is my recollections of the beautiful, eventful and gratifying life of my Beloved Brother whom I adored and miss so much.

CHAPTER XX

Stanley Johnson succeeded to the position of Secretary and Treasurer of the Illinois State Federation of Labor after Vic Olander. When illness came to my brother and he had to resign the Presidency, Stanley Johnson who earlier had become First Vice President of the Federation moved into the office of President. Now, of course, it was the State A.F.L.-C.I.O. He was Reub's choice. This was Reub's wish, he felt Stanley Johnson so capable and knew he would be a strong leader. When President Soderstrom resigned, he was made President Emeritus which made my brother very happy. He'd talk of having an office of his own and of the things he could do to help Labor. He never gave up hope - felt he'd soon be back in the saddle. He talked of continuing our trips to Minnesota.

In this rambling reminiscence of the Life of President Reuben G. Soderstrom, President of Illinois State A.F.L. & C.I.O., whom by the "Grace of God" was my brother, I've forgotten to write of another of his thoughts. It was regarding income tax. He said to me once, "By paying one percent (1%) of one's gross income, it would provide all the money the Government would need. It would be simple to record, each could take care of his own figuring on what to pay. There would be no tax loopholes and he would pay his just share, and it would be the fairest type of taxation ever enacted into law". But, he continued, "This would never be considered - it favored no one, and was much too simple to be accepted by the powers that be!"

Finally, let me say that Reub was the Rock of Gibraltar to his family, and to all who labored and he never faltered in his search for a better and more wholesome life for mankind.

Like the beautiful Minnesota clouds that my Mother loved and that I was privileged to see drifting across the skies, so my Brother has drifted to everlasting peace. I'm sure when he knocked at the "Pearly Gates", St. Peter bid him welcome, this man who lived and died helping humanity.