

Sept. 23, 1953

Dear Irene,

Will try to answer a few of your questions & give you some of the information you asked for. Your story sounds fine except that the second paragraph is wrong. I mean your information is wrong. You see, we received no letter at all - none are ever sent out in these cases - so it throws the whole paragraph off. If your article is published there will probably be a lot of the nets here and in other projects like this reading it so I think it should be kept factual - don't you? So how about me telling you just how it happened & you can take it from there & make it into a story.

As I said there was no letter. We just moved back home after the war and Robert went back to logging and worked on our house in his spare time. It had never been finished inside because we were still paying for the farm & trying to get started before the war. So after he came home we began to work on it to get it finished up. The kids were bigger & need their own rooms and we decided it was much too small so we remodeled it & made it about twice its original size. We were busy finishing the job up when this business of the farmsteads came up. A project similar to this was opened at Klamath Falls, Ore. and another in Wash. and of course the papers carried the story & the men talked about it on street corners the way they did about the weather and politics. Robert got in on a few of these discussions & that's how we heard about this project. I don't think we even took the paper then. The address was carried in the paper to send your name to if you were interested in one of these places so Robert figured he wouldn't lose anything by trying & sent our names in. We talked about it a bit but I didn't think about it seriously because it sounded too much like a pipe dream to me. We had just finished our house and got our place paid off so were just about ready to "start living again", I figured.

We waited, sort of half hopefully, for a few weeks &

P.S. - Thanks for the booklet. Maybe
I'll try writing sometime.

nothing happened so we forgot about it. Then one afternoon Bud + Emma came up and you know she gets such a comical expression on her face when she's trying to keep a secret so I knew that something was in the wind. I couldn't imagine what it was, tho' because I'd forgotten all about this business. She was carrying a copy of the local paper + I knew by her expression there was something in it she was just dying to tell about. I think I told you we didn't take any papers then. Finally she burst out giggling + then she + Bud + the kids all started laughing and we just stood there + gaped at them. Robert finally recovered enough to grab the papers and then they all started talking at once and out of the chaos we got the impression that we'd won a farm. I couldn't believe it but sure enough that's the way it was. Our name had been drawn + the information given to the papers before the letter from the Bureau of Reclamation reached us.

Of course we were elated at first because we'd never won anything and then to win such a big prize - well we were overwhelmed. But then we began to wonder what it was like and if it would be worth selling our hard earned land and brand new house to say nothing of leaving our relatives + friends and going to a totally new country hundreds of miles away. We had to be questioned further by the board, the men in charge of this project, to see if we qualified before our name was fully accepted + our final papers signed for the farmstead so we decided to drive out + see for ourselves what it was like. (you had to have at least \$3000 to start on, so many years of farming experience, etc. and they wanted to be fully satisfied that you intended to live on the place + make a home of it instead of merely accepting it in selling it right away just to make a fast buck.)

Our first trip out was in March + there had been heavy snow that year which was just melting by warm winds + everything off the road was a river of mud. We managed to get to the office at the

project but could go no further. Couldn't look at the land available or even the farms that had been given out 2 years before. You see, the project was divided into 2 parts + half the farms were given away in 1947 (I think) + the last half in '49. We ran across a couple of the homesteaders + they seemed to be pretty well satisfied with their farms. Since we couldn't talk to many homesteaders or drive out + look at the land available we talked to every other farmer that we had the opportunity to meet while we were here about farming in Idaho. Truthfully, everyone seemed to be bragging. You know these hills + the valley in Ore. are as green as the garden of Eden compared to this place in winter. About the only trees here are the windbreaks planted around the farmhouses and few of them are evergreens. The country is so different in the part of Ore. we came from. Out here the low, flat country seemed to stretch on + on indefinitely. There are mountains all around this valley but our eyes were not accustomed to the distance + they seemed to be hazy + blend into the skyline. The trees and fields are bare at that time of year and the houses are usually built low, so that everything blended together to me and I got the impression that it was all just one big flat disk with an immense stretch of clear sky arching over head. I felt a little awed at the endless sweep of the country but I could hardly believe that those brown patches of fields with their sandy looking soil could yield the pounds + bushels per acre the farmers claimed to get. The yields excelled those of our own fair green valley at home.

When we first came I had half expected to see a "farm" even tho we knew it was new land. A farm was a farm to me in those days. But this was altogether different than I had expected. In fact, it was nothing. Just rolling plains covered with sagebrush as far as we could see. I don't mind telling you, that, by the time we started back to Ore. I was beginning to wonder if we shouldn't take our name off the list + forget the whole thing. By the time we got back into our own

little green country and saw all the spring flowers beginning to bloom and the new paint on our house looked so shiny I was all for the idea of giving it back. I don't know whether Robert liked what he saw here or was intrigued with the idea of the gift or just wanted to be contrary but anyway the more I talked about staying in Ore. the more he talked about moving to Idaho. Before I knew it he had put our farm up for sale and it was sold within a week.

We moved out in June of '49. He bought a used truck & loaded our furniture on it and brought it out, then flew back & got the cars and trailers & us. We had arranged to have our buildings moved when we were here in April to choose our farmsite. We were able to drive around on the prairie & look at the different spots that were marked on the map but I couldn't tell one from the other. (We chose ours mainly because it was closer to a road than any of the others left. I think there were 12 farms left when our turn came. We were no. 34 and there were 26 farmsteads to be given out.) I was expecting Karen then and wanted to be near a road so we could get to the hospital in a hurry if necessary. Also the kids, Lonnie & Terri, were both school age & if we had chosen a farm way back I don't know how we would have gotten them to school that first winter when there were no roads. The gravelled road came up to within 3 miles of this place.

We drove up late in the afternoon, June 14 - 1949. I guess will always remember that date. It marked the beginning of an entirely new life for us. There are 4 farms on this part of the project & were about 6 miles from the main part of the piece that was opened up in '49. Two of the farms front the trail that led to our place. One right at the end of the gravelled road & the other right across the tracks from us. The one at the end of the road was not occupied yet but the people across the tracks had moved in. The world seemed to end with the gravelled road. You reached our barracks by following the path.

made by cars driving across the prairie. As long as there were no rocks & the sage not too big you could drive around almost anywhere & about 3 trips over the same track would make a road. The electric lines ended with the road and farms that were ahead under cultivation. For a long time after we were here it seemed like we left the rest of the world when we came home. Our barracks were still up on blocks where the mowers had left them. They were covered with black tarpaper then, with a dull green tarpaper roof. The doors & windows were a grayish white, the only thing about the whole thing that had ever been painted. The inside had never been finished. The weather was already warm the day we arrived. I was surprised to find that Robert had unloaded everything by himself before coming back for us - even the couch & refrigerator. Of course everything was a mess & it was late so we just dug out some beds & covers and went to bed. She had eaten in town because we knew we couldn't cook anything yet. The next morning we woke up bright & early, anxious to see our new place. She had been so rushed before we hadn't really been able to look around. To my surprise it was really chilly. It had been so warm the day before I could hardly believe it. You see, I wasn't acquainted with Idaho weather yet. We didn't have anything to make a fire in yet so we searched out our clothing & jackets from the jumble of furniture & boxes & went outside where the sun was already up. Everything was such a mess I didn't know what to do first so Robert took us out to the barracks we planned to use as a barn to show us the two rattlers he had killed the day he brought the furniture out. It was the first time I had seen a poisonous snake, even a dead one, but it made me realize that they actually were a very real menace. They are what worried me most that summer. There was nothing but weeds & sage around the barracks, even right up to the door. The kids were so excited the first few weeks & they just couldn't be held down so they ran into more than one rattler in the weeds.

I was feeling pretty bad those days + could hardly walk so I stayed in the house + didn't see one until we were here a couple of months. We had the kitchen finished by then + I was putting up curtains + looked down + there was a big rattler under the window. Robert was there but I shot it just for fun because I told Mom I'd shoot her a rattler. Robert kills them with a spade or anything handy now but then we were too scared of them to get that close. We have killed 26 or 27 in the 4 years we were here but they don't come around the house anymore. I think he found 3 in the fields this year. We have most of the rattles but the biggest is one that Lonnie killed on a camping trip back on the prairie behind the house. It had eleven rattles.

He cleared brush away from the buildings, put up a temporary outhouse and straightened up the furniture in one big room of the barracks we intended to use for a house. There was no electricity yet so we hauled water from the Greenwood store 3 miles away. We cooked on a little gas camp stove. He thought it would be too late to put any crops in by the time he could clear + work up land so he just started working on the house. He had promised to have it done before winter but it was a bigger job than he thought + I was too sick to even help paint or lay linoleum so he had to do it all by himself. He found that we had put one of the buildings in the wrong position so we had to have a moving truck come out + move it around. But even without help Robert got an enormous amount of work done those first 4 mo. He had the houses movers move the one large section that was placed wrong + Robert moved the other smaller piece in place by himself. He poured the foundation, mixing the cement by hand. He finished the 4 rooms that are now the library, dining room, kitchen + utility and we moved in a few weeks before Karen came. She was born Oct. 1. He also partitioned some of the other rooms + put in the toilet. He did all the work himself, even wiring, and even dug a pipeline by hand from the well to the house. It's about 300 feet + the ground on this hill is all shale about 3 ft. down

Robert never served a snake bite kit but we have one in the medicine cabinet.

411

so it was really a job. He had to use dynamite every few feet and a pickaxe to loosen the shale. Lonnie was only nine that summer so wasn't much help. The all had disintery from the heat and couldn't eat much so the kids + Robert lost weight but not me. I was so heavy I could hardly move about and the heat almost killed me. I hung on every day until the noon meal was served and then fell across the bed in a stupor until the heat of the day was over + then would drag myself up to make the evening meal. I didn't expect to live through that summer. There was no shade and that old bank tarpaper just seemed to soak up the heat. On the irrigated farms where water ran + the fields were green + cool I don't think the temperature ever got past 98° but out here it was over 100 many days. How our little canary lived through it I'll never know. Many days he just lay spread out on the floor of his cage + panted, too weak to fly onto his roost. The heat still affected me up until the 3rd summer we were here after getting over heated that summer.

By Aug. we had electricity + could hook up the refrigerator + new electric range. We could have ice water. You'll never know how good it tasted after drinking warm water from a milk can. Soon after, we got running water and then the hot water system + dishwasher. We had all new steel cupboards and a new breakfast set and a new freezer. We put in a double laundry tray + Robert built cupboards all in the utility room and the walls + windows were finished so we were really pretty comfortable the first winter. There was also another thing in our favor. We found that there was a good 300 ft. domestic well right off from our house across the line and got permission to use it so saved ourselves the cost of drilling. Since then the well + 5 acres around it have been given us as a part of our farm.

Robert stopped working on the house + cleared 10 acres of land + put it into alfalfa. Karen arrived and the cool weather came so my health + spirits improved. The kids had to walk ½ mile to catch the school bus which isn't too bad but the snow drifts along the roads running

north + south so they always had their boots full + were half frozen by the time they reached home. The wind here is so strong sometimes they could hardly stand against it. We kept them home during the worst weather because we couldn't get them out with the car. The wind was bad in the summer too and the dust was so thick sometimes we couldn't see to the railroad tracks, 100 ft. away. You can imagine how it would be to keep house. You could make tracks on the floor just as plain as outside after a good hard blow and the jilly I tried to make that fall looked like it had been peppered.

The elements are still the same. The summers just as hot, the winters as cold, but it gets better for us each year. We broke up new land to farm each year until we have a little over 100 acres under cultivation. We finished the house a little at a time until it's now quite comfortable + keeps out the heat, dust, and cold. We have a heating plant large enough to keep the house warm, too. Heating was a problem for awhile. The tenant house + barn are finished and we added a small cellar to the place. There are still many things we plan to do and some that we must do but still you'd never guess that 4 years ago this farm was just sage land.

Rickie was born 20 months after Karen and my health has been good ever since. Also I feel better because the allergy I had in Ore. the year round has diminished to a few weeks of hay fever during the summer. I used to hate it here and just lived for the day we'd make a saleable farm out of this dump + sell out + go back to Ore. but now I'm not sure I'd like to ever go back. Robert is definitely sold on this country.

Terrily is in the 6th grade this year + goes to Greenwood and Lorraine is in the 4th + goes to Gr. H. in Hazelton. The bus comes right to the gate this year since the road has been gravelled. We have a phone line in, too + should have a phone soon. Terrica's extracurricular work is 4 H and she won 2 blue ribbons with her dress + slip (county fair)

this year and a red ribbon at the district fair. Lonnie's is scouts. He's the troupe scribe this year so hasn't missed a meeting and has gotten a few badges in the past year. He's now a first class scout & is working on merits to become an eagle scout. He is 13 this year so has graduated to the position of a farm hand. His wages were 50¢ an hour this summer for hoeing weeds, hawking hay, disking, etc. He owns a saddle mare named Lady & has had her bred to a thoroughbred American Saddle and is going to try to develop a good strain.

Of course Robert's hobby is hunting & fishing and we're all taken to those two sports since coming here. I got my first deer last season & plan to go again this year. Robert has gotten quite a name as a carpenter out here. He worked out last winter on different small jobs & even built a house for a neighbor. The other day a stranger came over & tried to talk him into building a house for him this winter and another man asked him earlier to build a barn, and lots of people around here want small jobs done but he's telling them all no so far. He may give in & build the little house the fellow wants. He didn't intend to work out this winter, though. He has a flock of sheep he has to tend at lambing time & we plan to build a new garage & patio & make the old garage into a rampas room.

As to the incident you mentioned about someone calling Robert "dutch" - well I don't think anyone calls him that all the time but he was surprised to come into a totally new neighborhood & have people ask him if he wasn't a "dutchman" or German. He doesn't think he has an accent at all anymore. And let's see, you wanted to know where we get our water and about the buildings & my chinese robe. Robert brought the robe from China. It was supposed to be over 200 years old when he got it during the war. It was a family heirloom & was hidden in the caves in china during the war with the other things the Chinese valued but the depression was so bad they were selling off all their valuable things to keep alive when the Americans were there. Or

(Carmie)

antique dealer in Twin Falls told me such an old item would be worth \$500 to \$600 apiece (shirt + jacket) to a collector but I haven't gone into it further because I want to keep them. I've learned many new hobbies since we came here. Making flowers from nylon, plastic jewelry and am going to start a course on painting of china figurines this week. There do so many more things out here than we did at home. The people are so friendly. We were welcomed to the community sunday school right away + have attended there ever since. I joined the local ladies club + the new homesteaders have organized a ladies club. I also joined a circle at the Presbyterian church in Hazelton so I go out with the "girls" quite often. At home I never went anywhere. Robert is on a couple of boards so he is out some evenings, too. We joined the local Grange this spring and also the square dance club so we go to these two together. There busy day + night out here + at "home" life was so dull. The only thing we miss is the family at home but we go home once a year + sometime someone comes to see us. As a matter of fact, all the immediate family at Amity but Jim + Doris have been out at least once + even some of Roberts cousins + uncles stopped by.

The buildings came from the old relocation camp. When the gyps were taken from along the coast, they were brought here. Each building is 20 x 120 ft. + they were laid out similar to an army camp. They were barracks type, covered with tarpaper + unlined. There were mess halls, stores, churches, movies, etc. It was the biggest town in Idaho + was called Hunt. (Still is. The project is known as the Hunt project.) The gyps lived in family rooms or the girls + boys were put in dorms. and I think most of them ate in the mess halls. The barracks were furnished by the govt and all furniture retained which it was broken up. The barracks, furniture + all equipment were divided between the new homesteaders. Each got two barracks, some furniture + a bathroom outfit (none too good). The restaurant dishes, etc. was also divided. They got so

(He got a bedroom set)

the thought of finding a dead man scared them so. Now, as to the farm paying off — we think it has paid us to sell out + come here. I believe we've made much more in the past 4 years than we could have in Ore. Or at least as much and the future looks much brighter. The govt helped the fellows all they could by making loans available through the F.H.A. and so on. You know all vets are entitled to so many mo. of schooling according to the mo. spent in the service so they started classes on farming for the men. Robert went until his allotted schooling was up and I think he learned a bit about farming on irrigated farms there. All the "old timers" gave him advice, too, and the rest he learned the hard way. It was hard to get the new ground under cultivation. It had to be cleared of sage roots even after it was burned + plowed + there was some loose stone. (That's where Lonnie came in handy.) The fields had to be topoc-ed before the ditches could be laid out and the direction to run the water be determined. Also there was some land leveling to be done and heavy equipment had to be brought in for that. We were lucky enough not to need too much done. All the hill we built on is good for farming but "dry" so we made a pond for the waste water + pump water up. I think there will be around 20 acres more when we get it leveled. The govt is working on a deal where the men get 160 acres more at a small cost. The land adjoining ours has some good farming land on it. Don't know what well do for water. If we can't get shares somewhere (they're hard to find) will drill a well. It took a great deal more capital than we figured to develop this place but we were always able to borrow all we needed. All on long terms. We have 70 years to pay off the large developing loan. Our crops have been fair so far and some are "good" this year. We have grain, sugar beets, spuds, peas + this year alfalfa seed. We fed out a few beef steers 2 winters ago and were lucky to break even on the deal. Last winter we had sheep + did better so will have a hundred or more this winter. I could write a book but I think I've hit most of the main things. Hope you

I can hardly fill a pencil. I will get the off to you so you can be working on it and will talk up some songs + send them later to see if you can use them. — A new project similar to the one opened this summer near here. They have no buildings — just land — and I think they will for water. When I think of all the hardships we've gone through I don't know if I'll have the

(over)

100

money things, I can't remember what all, but few of them could really be used in our permanent home. you were not allowed to sell any of them or even give them away. They wanted you to use everything you could & really try to make a farm out of this - not just get rid of the place as soon as possible. And I must say - most of the people have stayed and intend to stay on.

The water comes from the Gooding canal, you're allowed 1 share per acre of irrigable land. We pay \$1 per share for the first 5 years, & then the rate increases. It comes to \$115. a share but we have 40 years to pay.

The Gooding takes its water from the Snake River.

About the man who was found on the prairie. A sheep herder found the skeleton last spring. The gun and boots were the only thing left except the bones. The hardware dealer identified the gun as one he had sold to a negro man who lived in the labor camp at Hazelton. He didn't have a family, I guess, and he just lived at the labor camp & worked where he could. He had been trapping for the govt. in the winter. He had been missing about 4 years. They never knew whether he had died from illness, snake bite or frozen or what. He was only about 3 or 4 miles on the prairie behind our house but I suppose if he'd gotten lost in a storm in the evening he could very easily have frozen before he could reach the farms down here. The ~~Harwood~~ area is closest to where he was found. The coldest I've known it to be is 15 below zero but we got stuck in the snow & had to walk home in a snow & wind storm one day and I was so stiff I could hardly walk by the time I'd gone a quarter of a mile. Of course, most anything else could have happened to him, too. He was found in a little low spot with bushes all around it where he could have gone for warmth but that's also where rattlers make nests. The rancher who runs his cattle across the canal from us said his men found a nest of 40 about a mile back from our place last spring. Lonnie & a neighbor boy had been camping out on the prairie the night before they heard about the man being found & they didn't camp out any more that summer because

(You don't remember any of them we were & intestinal fortitude to try it over again but mine so small better off than we were & suppose we would. It's been fun, anyway and we're happier here than we were in Ore. Robert + I don't even fight as much - probably because we keep too busy doing other things. If I see missed anything write & let me know.