

My Life
Anton T. Kraabel

I was born on the 16th of October, 1862 in Oier, Guldbrandsdalen, Norway. My Father was Torger Olson Strangstadhagen; my mother was Ranghild Brekke. After their marriage, father bought a "gaard" named Kraabel, the custom at that time being that a farm was recorded by name as well as by description. The farmer then added the name of the "gaard" and thus father's name became Torger Olsen Kraabel, a name which we have kept since.

In the Spring of 1867 we started for America, 8 all told, 3 boys and 3 girls and Father and Mother. Our destination was uncle Skjonsberg, mother's brother, who had come to America a few years before and who lived about 2 miles southwest of Coon Valley Post Office and about 20 miles southeast of LaCrosse, Wisconsin. The latter was the nearest railway station so my uncle, who had no horses, had made arrangements with one of his neighbors to meet us. I do not remember who the man was, but it seems he liked his drink and while in LaCrosse had taken several of them, and would have dumped us all in Coon River, or Creek as we called it though it is larger than the Red River, had it not been for the quick action of Mother. She sat in the front seat with the driver holding the youngest, Ben, in her lap. She grabbed the lines from the driver, swung the team to the left, and barely missed going over the bridge on the right.

We lived with Uncle Skjonsberg that winter. We had been three weeks on the ocean so we got to Uncle's the last part of August, 1867. Coon Valley was and is a nice fertile valley. Coon Creek runs the whole length of the valley, and empties into the Mississippi River about 15 miles west of where we lived. Several small valleys branch out from Coon Valley. There was Skjonsbergdalen, Helge Dalen, Haatvedtdalen and Ramsruddalen. Father filed on a homestead at the extreme small end of Skjonsbergdalen, and we moved there in the Spring of 1868. The 160 acres were laid out in "T" shape, 80 acres in the narrow valley and 40 acres each on 2 bluffs. A good deal of the acreage was taken up by the slopes so it was only 50% tillable.

There was quite a little timber on the land so Father found enough for a log house, a barn which he built partly of stone and partly of logs, and a small granary or "stabure" as they called it then, which was more for storing things than for grain.

Father built his own buildings with the help of his neighbors. He had been a carpenter and painter in the old country, and liked that kind of work better than farming. For shingles he used what was called "klapboard" split by hand axe from straight grained oak and were about 4 feet long, 4, 6 and 8 inches wide, and about ½ inch thick. These were nailed on like shingles.

The house had one large room downstairs which answered for living room, dining room, parlor and Mother's and Father's bedroom, and one small bedroom in which the girls slept when they were at home, or which was used for company which we often had. (The house was never too small for company – friends of the girls or brother Ole who all

worked in LaCrosse – or for newcomers who came from our part of Norway.) Brother Ben and I slept in the attic where it was hot in the summertime and cold in the winter. Often we woke up in the winter with snow all over the bed or icicles on the covers from our breath, but we were healthy and enjoyed life.

Two daughters were born to Father and Mother after we came to America: Lisa on the 3rd of November, 1867 and Thea on August 29, 1869. Lisa died of scarlet fever in the winter of 1871. She was a bright sunshine with golden hair, and was so good. She would give anything at any time to her younger sister. On a sunny day that winter, just after a light snowfall, she asked Mother if she might go out to play. Mother gave her permission, and sat at the window watching her walk back and forth, looking at the little footprints she made in the snow. After a little while she came in and told Mother she was not feeling well, so Mother took her to undress her and put her to bed. She told Mother then that she was going away, far up to Heaven where there was no snow, brush or rocks; where God had all the little lamps and the big lamp lit all the time. Mother finally put her to bed, and in 3 days she was dead. Before she died she said to Mother, “You and Uncle Skjonsberg are coming, too; Uncle first and then you.” Uncle died a few years afterwards, and Mother in 1903.

Talk about hard times; we have had them before. I think it was in the year of 1874 that we raised on our farm 24 ½ bushels of poor wheat. After screening out enough for seed for the next spring, we took the rest to the flour mill at Coon Valley and exchanged it for a little flour middling and bran, and that is all the flour we had the whole year - with 7 of us in the family and sometimes company. We had some corn which we ground. We had our own meat and pork, and while we always had eggs, we could not afford to eat them but took them to the store to trade for sugar and coffee. We lived on cornmeal pancakes, cornmeal mush and cornmeal bread, pork and “svlte” and “spikekjod” and other meat dishes the Mother fixed up all that year. We got fat as pigs and felt fine. Wonderful with what little people can get along when they have to and yet be happy and satisfied with what the Lord gives them. More so than when we have plenty. No grumbling, “I don’t like this or that.” “Eat what you get and be thankful,” were the instructions.

I started to school when I was 9 years old in a small one-room schoolhouse up on the hill about 1 mile from home. There was no road. We ran through the woods in a beeline for the schoolhouse, waded through the snow as best we could in the winter, making our own path. There was no such thing as an overcoat or overshoes. I wore one pair of trousers, probably 2 shirts in cold weather – all homemade from wool from our own sheep, clipped by Mother, carded by Mother and Father, spun and woven by Mother and made by either or both of them. Father generally made the trousers and fashioned brogan shoes from our own leather. Mother knitted and sewed the other garments. “Walk, run or work fast enough to keep warm,” was the slogan, and we enjoyed it and lived through it.

My first suit was bought for me for confirmation.

Before we went to school in the morning and when we came back at night we had to help with the chores – clean out the stable, milk the cows, chop and carry the wood. There

was plenty of exercise those days without baseball, basketball or football. In the Spring of the year we went with Father to inspect and repair the rail fence around our fields. The cultivated land had to be fenced for the cattle ran at large. In the Summer we had to see that the cattle were home for the night and in the corral. When there was plenty to eat, the bellcow would bring them all home, but toward Fall when feed was scarce they would stray away, and we often did not find them until very late. We came home tired, with bleeding feet, but happy and satisfied.

In the Fall of 1878, after being confirmed with the first confirmation class in the new brick church (still standing and in use), in upper Coon Valley, I went to school for Hagbart Engh in the old log church. Engh had just graduated from Luther and started this school something on the order of Luther. We had a good attendance that year, but it was not continued the next year so I went to Viroqua, worked for my board and room and went to school. I almost finished the 8th grade. That is the extent of my education except the course through the University of Knocks and Bumps and I have nearly finished that. When I visited the boys at Luther in 1914, I looked for a back door in the Main Building so I could go out that way and thus say I had gone through Luther College, but I failed to find the door and so I was disappointed there too.

After I was confirmed I was practically on my own resources. I worked on farms for 9 dollars a month in Spring, 50 cents a day during haying, a dollar a day in harvest, binding and shocking which was hard work. This we considered good pay. In the Spring of 1881 I went on to Onalaska, Wisconsin to work in a sawmill. My brother Ole lived there and was head sawer at one of the mills. I got work, but the mill burned and my brother and I transferred to the night shift of another mill there. We worked from 7 in the evening to 7 in the morning and tried to sleep in the daytime. I contracted the disease called Ague, and had to go home early in the Fall. I stayed at home all winter, one day freezing and shaking by the hot stove, the next nearly burning up with fever. After drinking several pints of good brandy and eating lots of quinine I began to feel pretty well, and in the middle of February I started for Dakota Territory.

I had a chance to send my little baggage with a neighbor to LaCrosse, so, free of baggage, I walked to Onalaska, a good 23 miles. I suppose I had some "niste" with me but had nothing else to eat until I got to my brother Ole's place. I stayed there a few days, then left for Minneapolis, stayed over night there at the old Pauly House, and left the next morning over the N.P. for Fargo. I entertained the other passengers all the way by my freezing and shaking until it was a wonder I didn't shake the car off the track. We got to Fargo late in the evening; sick and hungry, I went to bed in the Headquarters Hotel, which was the N.P. Depot and Hotel in one. Feeling fine in the morning, I went into the dining room, hungry as a wolf. A young girl came and rattled off something, the bill of fare I suppose, which was something I had never heard of, and she talked so fast I couldn't make out what she was saying anyway. She finally asked me what I wanted and I said "breakfast." The food was good enough, but hardly enough to satisfy me, but I paid for it and my lodging, took the train to Mayville where I had a good dinner with N. D. Nelson. I felt fine and have never had a touch of ague since.

After staying in Mayville a few days, I went over to Portland and got work in a hardware store which was just opening. I worked there until later in the Fall when the owner failed. When I had made an assignment and worked a few days for Col. W. H. Robinson who was the assignee until he disposed of the business, I found myself out of work. One John Steen, about my age, thought we should try peddling. We made arrangements with a merchant in Portland to stake us, we to sell what we could, return the rest and pay for what we sold. We hired a team and sleigh and started out. It was a winter of heavy snow and it is a wonder we didn't freeze to death. One evening my partner was so nearly gone before we got a place to stay that I had to help him in. As a rule, however, people were very good to us and took us in regardless of how crowded they were. About the only way we could find a habitation was to watch for smoke coming out of a stove pipe sticking out of the snow. There we would find a sod house which was all there was on the prairie.

I remember one night coming to a place Southwest of Northwood. The snow was drifting quite a little and since it was late in the evening we headed for a wreath of smoke. The man was in the stable doing chores. Yes, we could stay all night. We were to go right in. We would find the womenfolks there. There were steps made of snow leading down to the hut. We made a noisy entrance. With our trunk of wares between us we started down the steps. In response to a "Come in" Steen opened the door, stumbled, slid into the room on his face and hands, the trunk fell on top of him and I fell on the trunk. We scared the mother and daughter almost to death. There was only one room and one bed which they let us sleep in. The three of them slept in a bed made on the floor half of which extended under the bed we slept in. I cannot remember their name and I have never seen them since but years later the girl became John Steen's wife.

In the Spring of 1883 I hired out to Ole Bakke who owned the best – or rather the only – hotel in Mayville. It was known as the Mayville House. Bakke operated a farm besides, so it was up to me to run the hotel most of the time. He had 6 girls working there so it was quite a job for an ignoramus like me, but I got away with it until Fall when I hired out to Col. Robinson to go to Clifford to take charge of a lumber yard which he was opening there. Thus I came to Clifford and there I lived ever since until we came out here to the Coast in the Fall of 1930. I worked for Robinson until shortly before Christmas 1884 when I asked to be released as I wanted to go home for a visit. Father had sold the farm and moved to Woodville, Wisconsin so I was anxious to pay them a visit.

After Christmas, brother Ben and I went to Onalaska to visit brother Ole. We also paid a short visit to some of our friends in Coon Valley. I got back to Clifford the latter part of February 1885. On March 1st I started to work for M. A. Plummer who had a pretty good general store there. On April 1st, Plummer was shot in a drunken brawl in a saloon by the proprietor Pete Daly, and I had a few strenuous days and nights. Didn't have a wink of sleep for 3 nights what with staying up with the corpse, helping Mrs. Plummer get ready to take him back to Iowa, and looking after the store. I stayed with the store until July 1st, when I quit, since in the meantime N. D. Nelson and E. Botten had decided that we three and S. N. Botten should build a good store and put in a good stock of goods. This we did in September 1885 with S. N. Botten and me as managers.

In July that year I made a trip with others to the Mouse river country to look for homesteads. We took the train to Devils Lake and drove with team from there to the river. The first night we camped a little West of where Churches Ferry is now I think. We found we had no cream for our coffee so George Sewall who was the boss of the party, handed me a tin pail and told me to go milk some cows we saw grazing near a sod shanty about ¼ mile from us. I took only enough for our coffee and whether the owner noticed the difference or not I do not know. We stopped a couple of days with a batchelor about 2 miles north of where Towner is now, picked out our land and started for home. For lunch the first day we didn't have enough bread to satisfy the hunger of 5 healthy young men so George Sewall, spying some sod shanties north of us and seeing smoke coming out of the chimney of one of them said, "Anton, you go up there and buy some bread." I did and found 5 nice young ladies sewing and knitting and having a big time. They were all teachers from Crookston and Grand Forks taking homesteads. They all had shanties on their land but 2 and 2 slept together at night, going from shanty to shanty in order to hold their claims. This one shanty they had papered and carpeted and here they spent most of their time. A couple of them had their brothers with them doing the breaking and making improvements. I got my bread, but I probably stayed a little longer than necessary. The boys were pretty hungry when I got back, but I told them what I had found and that they were lucky I came back at all.

When we got back to Devils Lake we found that most of the land we had picked out had already been filed on, so we filed on other land. My quarter was not very good, but I finally proved up on it as a tree claim and sold it for about what the trip cost me.

I took an interest in local, county and state politics from the start. I was a delegate from Traill County to the second Republican State Convention, and every state convention after that, until the primary was passed. I was elected clerk of our township in 1888. My partner, Botten, growled a little as he had no use for politics, but he was satisfied when I told him what I expected to accomplish. With the assistance of the town board, Mons Knudson, Carl Larson and O. A. Skauge we got the road through West in line with Main Street, which is neither on the section line or the ¼ line. We paid A. L. Plummer \$ 12.50 per acre for the right of way through Section 28 and 29 and the road is still there, although there was some kicking by a few. I disregarded this. I knew it was done legally. I did not, however, seek the clerkship again. I. A. Rygg was elected the next spring and held the position 30 years.

I was elected township treasurer shortly after this and held it until 1906. Was school treasurer also until we got the bank there. In 1898, I was elected treasurer of our local congregation and held that until the Fall of 1924 when I refused to take it again.

In 1889, N. D. Nelson and I bought out the Botten Brothers interest and my brother Ben came to work for us. After Christmas and invoicing, I went home for a visit. This was in 1891. Also went to Onalaska to visit brother Ole. While there I got acquainted with a young lady by the name of Maren Oline Oswald. She looked kind of small to me, but I liked her. I went to see her again in 1892, and September 6th that year, we got married.

This is the most sensible deal, and the best bargain I ever made. She has been a wonderful and faithful wife and mother. She has always worked hard and enjoyed it, and grown stout on it.

I got along pretty well with the political bosses, so to speak, in the county. Norman and Galesburg townships were generally on my side of I was on theirs, and I usually consulted them as to what we should do. But as a rule I was the spokesman and it was said in the rest of the county that I carried Norman and Galesburg townships in my pocket.

One Sunday evening when I was driving home from Hillsboro alone, I came up to a working man walking so I asked him to ride. He got in, very glad of a ride, and very talkative. I soon discovered that he was interested in politics, so I led him on, not mentioning who I was. He told me he had overheard John E. Paulson and others talking of getting one Kraabel from the Western part of the State to run for County treasurer. I got all I could out of him, and when he got out, thanked me for the ride and wanted to know my name. I said, "My name is Kraabel" He slapped his knee and let out some Norwegian fireworks and said, "Well, I haven't said anything bad about you, anyway." I told him to remember the name if he saw it on the ticket in the Fall. He assured me he would and guaranteed the statement with more fireworks. I didn't know who he was, nor do I remember of meeting him again until 1926 when he came over to visit Nestingen and the latter said to me, "You gave this man a ride from Hillsboro several years ago." Brother Ben was on the ticket that fall for Clerk of court so he got his chance to vote for "Kraabel."

In the Fall of 1898, Ben and I bought out the mercantile business of H. H. Wasem in Hope, to take possession January 1, 1899 when Ben's term of office was up. This same fall, 1899, N. D. Nelson, C. S. Edwards, Col. W. H. Robinson of Mayville and I started the Clifford bank. The building now stands empty.

After invoicing in 1901, O.P. Satrom, N.D. Nelson and I and Oswald who was a little past 7 years old, went west to Parkland, Washington where brother Ole now lived. We were gone about 30 days and had a very enjoyable trip. Oswald, I guess, enjoyed it more than any of us.

On November 3, 1901 our store burned to the ground with most of the stock. It was a cold, wintry fall, and too late to try to rebuild. We owned a building across the street, so I moved what stock we saved over there, bought some more and stayed there during the winter. During the winter I made arrangements with N.D. to divide, he taking some real estate we had acquired, and outstanding notes, I to take the stock which was left, the little store building, and the lot and ruins of the other store. In 1902 I built the double brick building and moved in September 1st. The same building stands there now, empty.

In the Fall of 1902, I was elected member of the legislature from the 39th district (west half of Traill County). Robinson of Mayville was the Senator. After getting to Bismark, I soon discovered that when it came to legislation, the Senator and I could not keep

company. His term would be out after that session, so when going home, I asked him if he was to be a candidate for re-election. He said, no, he didn't care to bother with it. Toward Spring, some of the boys began to talk of me for Candidate. Candidly, I did not care to run, knowing that it was the unpopularity of Col. Robinson rather than my popularity that prompted most of them to urge me to run. I tried to get them to center on O. O. Hauon, a farmer in Mayville Township, but they were so insistent, that I finally entered the race. I won over Col. Robinson in one of the bitterest political fights we ever saw in Traill County.

What made my campaign for the Senate more complicated than it otherwise would have been, was the fact that I had been among the leaders in the campaign of 1900 in defeating Portland's candidate for Register of Deeds. P. M. Paulson had gotten the nomination at the convention because Portland combined with Caledonia, Hillsboro and others in the Eastern part of the county. We in the Western part were mostly for Pete Davidson of Hatton, an old school friend of mine. What went against our grain was that in prior campaigns we had always gone with Portland and what they wanted. They had a man from their town for Registrar of Deeds for 8 years. First T. G. Dahl for 4 years, then Ole Hem for another term. And these had both won because of our support. Learning that Pete Davidson was a candidate and would have the delegation from Hatton and probably others from the West, Portland supporters of Paulson made a bargain with the Hillsboro and Caledonia leaders to support Paulson, and in return they would throw their support to them for what that group wanted. This was readily agreed on, as their group was anxious to defeat the "Big Three" as they got to calling us after we had beaten them in several skirmishes. I imagine the three referred to were N. D. Neslon, O. J. Sorlie of Buxton, and me. So they forced the nomination of Paulson on us and it left a very bad taste in the mouths of several of us from the west side. Riding home from the convention, I tried to figure out how to square the score with them. I wrote Oluf Hagen who had gotten the nomination for County Auditor for the 2nd time, and at whose request we had refrained from much of a fight against the above mentioned combination. He felt it might jeopardize his nomination. I asked that I be allowed to name his deputy, if he were elected. He promised, but asked me to keep it quiet until after the election. Then I wrote T. E. Nelson who had, against his protest, been put on the ticket for member of the House. He was from Hatton, and Hatton had to be pacified in some way. It put Nelson in a peculiar position. He had been sent as a Davidson delegate, and came home for the nomination for the House. Well, I wrote Nelson asking if he would personally vouch for Davidson as Deputy for Hagen. Davidson was well qualified but had been drinking quite heavily and had lately taken the cure, and I was sure that Hagen would stand for no boozing. I therefore would not send in his name until I found reliable men to vouch for him. Nelson replied that he would recommend Davidson, that it would help him too, in his peculiar situation, to have Davidson get the position. I wrote everyone concerned at once, told Nelson to see Hagen personally, then let the Hatton people think that he, Nelson, had gotten the position for Pete. With that settled, Nelson from Mayville got the Democrats to put up O.P. Bakke against Paulson, and we elected him in the Fall. So Davidson became Deputy Auditor, and Paulson was defeated.

To go back to my own campaign: George A. White was president of the first national Bank, in which Paulson was cashier. This was in Portland. From there Grinley and Gopelrud were my main supporters. They told me it would be uphill work for them to get the delegation for me without the help of White since Robinson had promised his support to Jacob Kern for member of the House, and White would probably support Robinson. They had opposed him in the race for Mayor in the Spring, and did not care to go to him themselves, so asked me to see him. I knew when I went in, that what he really would have liked was the defeat of both myself and col. Robinson, and the nomination for himself. I told him I knew that Portland owed me no consideration politically, but the campaign was now between Robinson and me personally, that it would be one or the other, that I was sure of certain delegates and that we would pledge him our support for him as member of the House if he would come with us. He said he would think it over and let me know. In a few days he phoned asking me to come to Portland. I was unable to go so sent my trusted friend John O. Rindall, who was also a friend of White. The deal was made.

They had the best attended caucus ever held in Portland, and my side won, my delegates sticking like glue. E. Y. Sarles of Hillsboro was elected Governor that year. I had opposed him in Convention for the Traill County Delegation and of course, he had opposed me for the Senate. We both won out, so we had our fight to do over again in Bismark.

In those days, all the Public Institutions of the state were run by local boards, and the Senate had to confirm the members appointed by the Governor. Col. Robinson had asked the Governor to appoint him as a member of the board on the Normal School at Mayville. The Governor called me to his office to ask me what I thought of it. I told him I would oppose it, of course. He tried to win me over, but I would not listen, and he dismissed me with "I will do nothing until I see you again".

It was almost considered a crime for us Progressives to be seen in private conference with such old time political war horses as Jud LaMoure and Alex McKenzie, so I hated to go to Senator LaMoure, but I knew I needed him on my side if it came to the point where I had to fight the confirmation of one of the appointments on the floor of the Senate. I sneaked up to his room one evening, unseen by anyone, and laid the matter before him. I was very frank with him, and I know that is why we were always good friends afterwards. I said, "Before I lay this matter before you, I want you to know that you must help me on the merits of the case, as I will not be under obligations to you – I will not support you or any measure of yours against my convictions." He said "Alright, fire away." When I concluded, he said he would be with me - "I have some friends in the Senate, and so have you." Well, I felt pretty good. That afternoon, the Governor called me to his office and said, "I have found another place for Robinson, if you have no objection. But I would like to appoint Mr. Edwards again." He was the out-going member. By that time I was pretty brave and I told him I would oppose that. That riled him a good deal, but he promised to wait a few days. In a few days, Edwards who was cashier of the Goose River Bank, came to Bismarck. I am sure the Governor sent for him. He brought with him a bill for an appropriation for the Normal School, and of course I promised I would

do what I could for him on that. Then he said he had another matter to discuss with me. "I want you to be frank with me. The Governor wants to re-appoint me on the board. What do you think of it?" I said I would oppose it. "This is not a personal fight, Mr. Edwards, but I won this battle, and to the victor belongs the spoils. I am going to name the man who goes on the board." He laughed and said, "Go ahead. Eliminate all those who have been mentioned and name your own man." And so I said "Gilbert Elken will suit me if its O.K. With you." He agreed but wanted to tell the Governor. I felt I could afford to be charitable and that was settled.

I next took up the matter of the appropriation with the house members. We decided to introduce the bill for \$75,000 which was of course more than we needed. Then I had to go to see my friend Senator LaMoure again. He was chairman of the appropriation committee. When he saw the bill, he said, "You don't expect to get that amount do you?" What is the least you can get along with?" I said "\$50,000." He said, "I will see that you get \$45,000." I was not a member of that committee, and left it all to him, and he appreciated it. The next session, 1907, I got \$20,000 for the school, and I felt I had done pretty well.

In the winter of 1905¹ I took my two clerks into partnership. I wanted to be free for awhile, and so I went with Murray Brothers and Ward Land Company as their field man in Illinois and other states. I soon discovered what a handicap in business of politics to have a limited education. Mother and I agreed that we would try to give our children a better education than either of us had, even if we left them nothing else. Recent events have proven without a doubt that there will be nothing else, and that the education we gave them is the only safe investment, and the best one, that we made. They are showing us that they appreciate it, God bless them for it.

I managed to keep going till the boys got through Luther, Alf through the Seminary, and the girls through St. Olaf. Maynard, with the help of his brothers and his sister Thelma, managed to get through the Seminary too.

In 1910, I was urged to run for the Senate again, but by that time I had decided to quit politics. I was also urged to run for Lieutenant Governor but I absolutely refused. I thought I had worked up pretty good connections back east for the real estate business, but the drought of 1910 put a damper on it. But I made some sales. In the winter of 1912, I was urged to run for Governor, but stayed by my resolution. I did not attend the conference of the Progressive Republicans which was held in Fargo in January. This was held on a Tuesday, and I had to be in Hillsboro at a telephone meeting of the Traill County Telephone Company, of which I was president, on Thursday of the same week. There was much snow that winter, so I was obliged to take the train, on Wednesday, to Fargo in order to catch the train for Hillsboro the following morning. The first man I met in the lobby of the Gardner Hotel was U. L. Burdick who said in his blunt way, "Where have you been? We've been trying to get you by telephone all afternoon." When I asked the reason, he said, "You've got to run for Lieutenant Governor. Come up to my room; most of the boys are up there waiting for you." I followed him, and found most of the

1 In the original manuscript, Anton typed a "5" and a "6", so the date could be 1905 or 1906.

men who had attended the conference. After listening to them and hearing of the troubles Burdick's and Hanley's friends had gotten themselves into, I agreed to run providing both factions would pledge me their support. This they did and I was nominated and elected. I was a candidate again in 1914 for the same position but was defeated for the nomination by a little over 100 votes, in a 3-cornered contest. I made no campaign. If I had, as some of my friends urged me, I think I could have won. I went to Bismarck, though, for the opening of the 1915 session. I got there at 11 in the forenoon on Saturday. The session would open on Tuesday. There was a spirited fight on for Speaker of the House – 5 candidates among the Progressives and I on the other side. I knew all the candidates, and urged the party to get together on 1, or they would be beaten. They knew this, but could not seem to agree. G. A. Divet, who was then a Representative from Richland County was one of the candidates. He came to me after lunch that day and said, “Kraabel, you can get these fellows together if anyone can.” I was flattered of course. I said nothing, but by 5 o'clock I had made up my mind what I would do. I saw each of the candidates, quietly and alone, and asked them to come to my room that evening at 8. They were all there. I told them that I intended to lock the door and keep them all there until there was only 1 candidate. They laughed and agreed, provided I would stay and help. I gave instructions at the desk that I was not in to anyone. We stayed until 4 a. m. When we retired with Hanson of Barnes County the choice. He was elected by a big majority at the caucus on Monday.

In 1912, shortly after I was elected Lieutenant Governor, I bought out the hardware store in Clifford. I was tired of running around, and the boys in the general store were doing so well I was not needed there. I had good help and still retained my connections back east for a little real estate business. When the time came for the 1916 campaign, I wanted to run again as I felt that I had not gotten justice in 1914, but my friend Hanson of Barnes County whom I had helped make Speaker of the House wanted to run. Since we belonged to the same crowd we could not both run. After a conference in Fargo, Hanson withdrew in my favor. I received a shock, however, when my petitions came back with only about $\frac{1}{4}$ as many signers as I had gotten before. I was not a Non-Partisan, my friends told me, and most of the farmers had joined that organization and refused to sign for anyone not affiliated with them. I prepared my platform, however, and decided to go ahead. I could easily get enough signers to get on the ballot, of course. In a few days I received a letter from my friend, A. T. Cole of Fargo, with this query, “what will you do if the Non-Partisans endorse your candidacy?” It kind of stunned me for while, but I answered that I was a candidate, and while I had not sought the endorsement of any group, I had been endorsed by all the temperance groups, and if the farmers, through their organization would support me, it would certainly be appreciated. In a few days I was called to Fargo. I was taken to a meeting of about 10 of the leaders, among them Townley. I told them of my platform, and answered their questions very independently, and left for home. Several days later I was notified that I had been endorsed, and asked to meet in Fargo with the rest of the candidates. I was not asked to make a campaign, nor to put up a single dollar. I was nominated and elected. When I got to Bismarck, they tried to get me to dance to their music, but I did not know the steps and refused. It killed me politically with that crowd, but I have never had occasion to regret it. I thought I was right, and I think so still.

I was a member of the board that took care of Bruflat Academy for 4 years, Chairman of the Norman school board from 1908 to 1923, Treasurer for the Home Missions of the North Dakota district of the old synod from 1908 until the merger of the 3 bodies in 1917. I helped to organize the Traill County Telephone Company and was its president for 12 years. During the war, I was Chairman of the Traill County Red Cross. How I got away with it all, I do not know. In the Spring of 1924, I had a kind of stroke, I guess. At least I keeled over in the store and had to be helped home. And in the spring of 1925, I was taken to Rochester for an operation. I got along fine, and I cold attend to business in a way. But it all was too much for me after invoicing in 1930, my head went back on me and I had to quit.

Our 7 children are all grown to manhood and womanhood and no one of them has ever occasioned us a bit of worry. All are enjoying good health, except Elvida, who has been bothered a great deal with asthma. She is improvig and we hopewill entirely recover from it. Torger Oswald and Ragnar Evald, the 2 oldest boys, served during the war, but came back, thank God, hale and hearty. T. O., as we all call him, is Veterans Service Commissioner for North Dakota, is married and lives at Fargo. Ragnar is married and lives at San Pedro, California. Alf is a Lutheran minister at Central Lutheran Church, Portland, Oregon. Elvida, Mrs. Mikkel Long, lives in Tacoma, Washington, where her husband is pastor of Luther Memorial Church. They have 3 fine children, 2 girls and a boy, Mary Ruth, Ingrid, and Luther. Thelma teaches in the High School at Tacoma. Maynard, the youngest of the boys lives in Circle, Montana, where he is Lutheran Minister. He is married and has 1 daughter, Kthryn. Eline, the youngest of all is a registered nurse and lives in Tacoma.

We have in the past enjoyed having all of the family together, at least once a year, except during the war. The last home gathering we had at our home was in July 1930 at Clifford. Our youngest son was ordained to the ministry on July 6 that year, and all were present except our son-in-law Rev. Lono. Our children are now scattered over 5 different states, so they were insistent on our coming to the coast to live since most of them are there. We came out here in 1930, August, we are living here at Portland with Alf, except when we visit Tacoma, with the Lono's which is quite often and which we enjoy very much, since we are with 3 grandchildren as well as 3 daughters. We enjoy it here, and have it as good as anyone could ask for. We all were here for a reunion last August, and were together for almost a month.

As I look back and think over the past years, I realize as never before, how little of the time I spent at home helping with the care of you, our children. When I came home it was to eat and sleep. Most of the work was done by mother; in sickness as well as when you were well she was the one to attend you; and as good as you have always been to both of us, it seems to me that you can never repay her for her unselfish care and loving kindness. It would please Mother and me, of course, if we could all be together again. If that is not to be, God grant that we all may meet in that heavenly home were we may be together forever.

Father

Since there is room, perhaps I can add a brief postscript: Father died on June 17 (Father's Day), 1934 at Helen's and my home in Circle, Montana; he is buried in the family plot at the graveyard in Clifford. Mother died on April 19, 1951 at Immanuel Hospital, Portland, Oregon. Since Father's death she had lived with sister Eline. She is buried at Clifford, also, of course.

Maynard