

FATHER LEE FAGERNESS



Dad at the time of his retirement in 1979.

My father was born on March 10th, 1920 in Adrian, Minnesota. He was the son of Bennett and Anna Fagerness. He had 2 sisters, Laura and Margaret, and a brother, Don. His first years were spent on the 160-acre Fagerness homestead. In 1932 his father moved the family to the 20-acre homestead. The years on the 20 acres were during the depression and it was a very tough time. He told of working as a farmhand for .25 cents a day. The good thing about it was that it included lunch and dinner. He was expected to show up in the morning after breakfast. He worked so late each evening that he required dinner to keep going.

While a teenager, a car hit him. It broke his leg and it took a long time to heal. His leg never did look straight after that. It did not seem to affect his walking however.

Dad graduated from Worthington High School in 1938. His English teacher, Mrs. Wick, was also the English teacher for most of Dad's kids. On June 1, 1939 Dad started work at the Post Office as a clerk.

He worked there for 3 years and then had to go fight the war with the Navy. When he returned from the Navy in October 1945 he got his clerk job back. It was a part time job. Mom told me his pay was \$90 a month when he returned from the service. Dad worked part time as a clerk until 1956. In 1956 he became Post Master until his retirement in 1979 with 40 years of service.

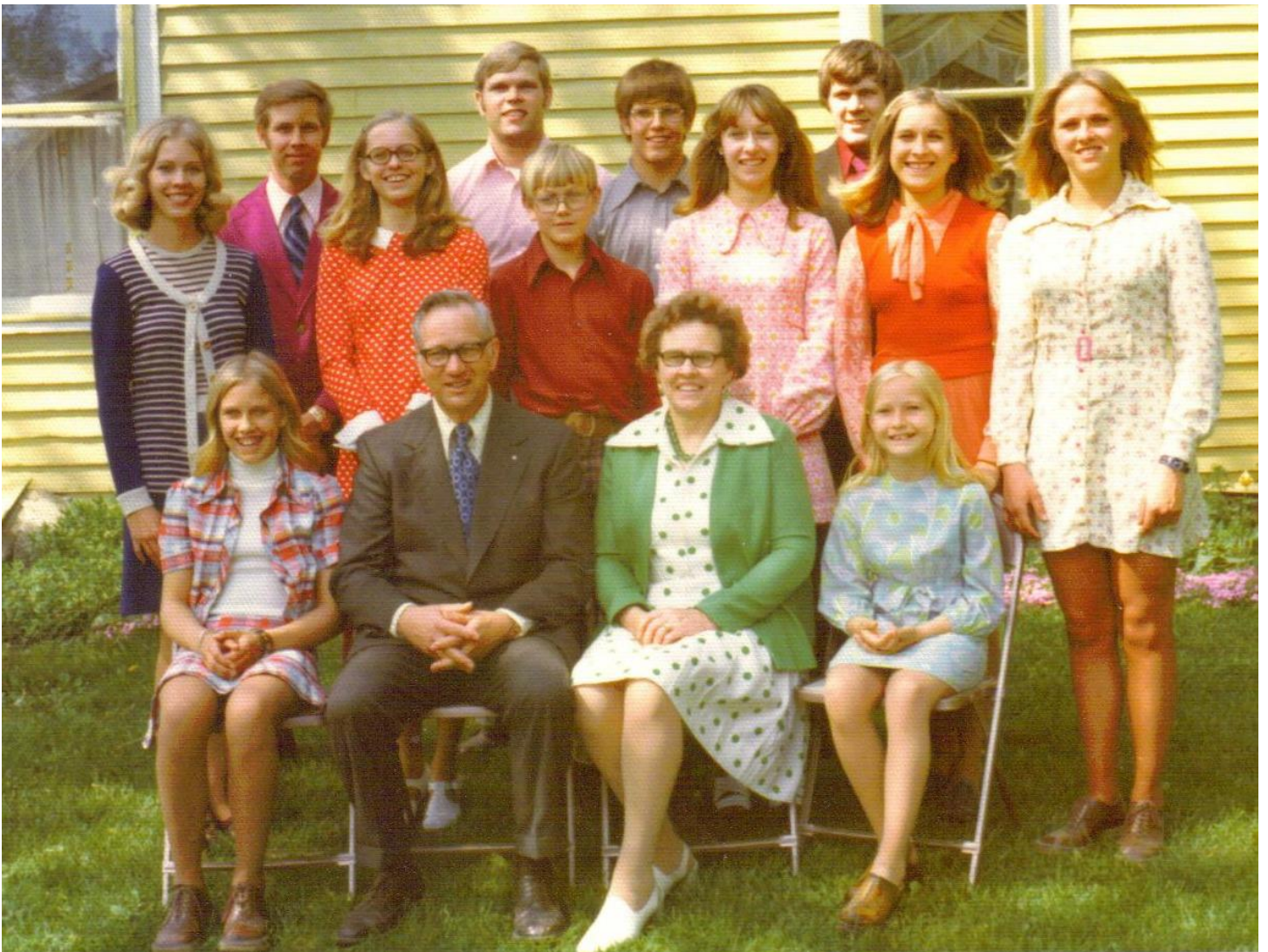


Lee and Armella Fagerness wedding photo on June 6, 1944.

Dad met Mom, Armella Mormann, before he went into the service. They were engaged on Valentine's Day, February 14th, 1942. However, the war called and Dad enlisted in the Navy. He went to Colorado to Radio school to learn communications with Morse code. Morse Code, the telegraph, was actually still in use at the Rushmore Railroad Depot in the 1950's. Dad then was stationed on a destroyer with the job of communicating with other ships. His most extensive duty was aboard the USS Jeffers.

Mom and Dad set the wedding date for June 6th, 1944. It turned out to be D-day. I asked Dad how he got away from the service on such a big day. He said they had to keep the date secret from the Germans and everything had to continue normal on that day even military leaves. As it turns out the entire nation each year celebrates their wedding. They moved to Norfolk, Virginia where Dad was then stationed. The first of 12 children, Mary was born in August of 1945 in Norfolk. After the war they bought the home Dad would live in

for the rest of his life. They also bought 5 acres of land near the home. Dad used this for raising meat and milk for our family of 12 children. He also rented small patches of land around Rushmore as well as the Fagerness Homestead of 20 acres. He farmed these small acreages. I can remember him picking corn by hand before he got a corn picker. It required two cows to supply us with milk. There was always pork, beef and chicken in the freezer from his farming endeavor. This plus his job as Postmaster fed our family.



The Lee and Armella Fagerness family with the photo taken in 1974. From the left standing: Mary, Craig, Rosemary, Gerald, Richard, Tom, Janet, Loren, Therese, and Joan. From the left seated: Sharon, Dad, Mom, and Celeste.

Eventually there were 12 kids born, 7 girls and 5 boys. They are Mary, me-Craig, Loren, Gerald, Therese, Rosemary, Janet, Tom, Joan, Richard, Sharon and Celeste. In 1979 Dad retired after 40 years of service to the Post Office. In 1992 he was diagnosed with a form of Leukemia, Multiple Myeloma, and died on March 19, 1993 at the age of 73. Dad was really dedicated to his family. He led by example but primarily he was the provider. In a small rural town with limited opportunities, he did a miraculous job. Dad accepted the awesome responsibility of a large family with the love of his life with total commitment. He was a dedicated family man and husband. He was a great Dad.