



Henry and Helen

Remember when...

Jym Kruse

Henry and Helen

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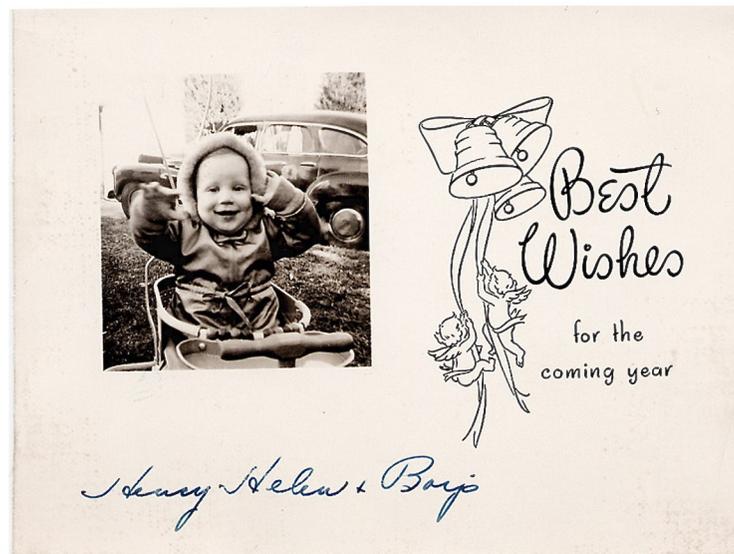
A commemoration of Henry and Helen Petersen Kruse. Follow Henry's travels from the wheat fields of Canada to the oil fields of Texas and his marriage to Helen only months before the start of the Great Depression. The births of their children (Don, Bill and Jym Kruse) and the many memories of those children highlight their story.

Bill, Helen & Henry Kruse



Henry and Helen

Remember when . . .



Compiled and edited by Jym Kruse

NuInsites

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Thanks to all the family members who contributed photos, knowledge, insight and good will in the preparation of this book. A special thank you to Brendan Kruse for his many efforts in editing and shaping the final version of this work.



Cover photo: Henry and Helen Kruse wedding in 1929.
Herman Kruse, Henry, Helen, Hulda Petersen.

Back cover photo: Helen and Henry Kruse in 1950
at the wedding of their son, Bill, in Houston.

Title page photo: 1948 Christmas card with Jimmie
in the photo.



Baptism Certificate for Helene (Helen) Caroline Petersen
March 17, 1910. She was born on September 12, 1908.
The certificate incorrectly says 1909, and she always spelled
her middle name as Carolyn in spite of her parents' intentions.

Henry and Helen

Henry Kruse and **Helen Petersen** were married on August 10, 1929. Since no one thought to ask them how they met, that rather important part of the story has been lost. Fortunately, a few pieces of the puzzle that lead up to that time have survived.

► The Early Years

Heinrich Jurgen Kruse (Henry George or, more often, Hank) was born on June 9, 1905, the ninth child of **Wilhelm and Abel Kruse**. He was born in the house on the Kruse home place near Bennington, Nebraska and lived there for the first 13 years of his life.

At the time of Henry's birth, his oldest brother, **John**, was already 17. **Mary** was 15. **Emma** had died of burns in a cooking accident at the age of 9 in 1901. **Bill** was 11. **Meta** was 9. **Emil** was 7. **Herman** was almost 4, and **Chris** had just turned 2. Their father was 47 years old and their mother 42.

Though not quite four when Henry was born, Herman said he remembered the day well. Henry and Herman were the closest of the brothers. They'd wrestle constantly. Herman recalled that at first he could handle Hank, but at last he couldn't beat him anymore. Chris was between them in age, but never really enjoyed the wrestling.

Meta would wash the dishes at night, and then Herman, Chris and Henry would have to dry them. Emil and Bill were just enough older by then that they had less to do with them.

In 1918, Wilhelm and Abel retired and moved to Bennington. Henry had wanted to continue with school, but getting confirmed in German (Hochdeutsch, which he didn't know, instead of the Plattdeutsch that they spoke at home) meant going to confirmation instruction every day instead of continuing with school. He remained bitter about that for the rest of his life. His way of furthering his education was to take correspondence courses. One benefit of his confirmation studies was that he learned the High German well enough that whenever letters arrived from Germany, people would bring them to Henry to translate. His mother spoke German her whole life and pretended not to understand English except when it served her needs. In spite of German being Henry's first language, later in life he claimed to have lost most of it from lack of use.



Henry Kruse c1920

When he was 14 years old in 1919, he worked on the farm for **Emil and Dora**. Emil had a Hupmobile. Once when they were going to go visit people in Winside, Henry took them to the train depot at Washington, and he got to drive the car home past a party that was going on in the neighborhood. As a 14-year-old, he thought he was really something.

He also worked for his brother **Bill** for a while and then for **John**, staying on the farms where he worked. While at John's, they had a machinery demonstration since Herman was selling farm equipment. They had a four-wheel drive Massey-Harris tractor and a two-row cultivator and drove it like a team of horses. Henry also worked for Herman and helped set up the machinery, binders and plows that people would buy.

In addition, he did some work for Bill Hayden and Bill Glandt. Around 1926, he helped Chris build a house for Abel in Bennington. Bill Hayden was a tinner, a plumber and an electrician. Henry said that after working for him for a few months, he figured that he knew everything—at least he knew what he really needed to and wasn't afraid to try much of anything from then on. He did the plumbing in Emil's house that's still being used to this day. He also did the plumbing, wiring and furnace work in Chris's house that was ordered from Sears and Roebuck.

About this time, he'd been working for his uncle Bill. He was kind of restless and wanted to do more than just be out in a field. A friend, Laird Kramer, came up with the idea of going to Canada since he had relatives there. While his mother didn't like the idea, Henry did it anyway, and his mother worried about him the whole time he was gone. They worked in the wheat harvest. They weren't allowed across the border on a work permit, so they went in on a visitor's permit. Laird's uncle wanted them to work for him and paid them \$5 a day to run a binder.

Technically, that made Henry an illegal alien, but he preferred not to think of it that way. They worked 12 hours a day to earn their pay, working from 6 a.m. to noon and 1 p.m. to 7 p.m. Later in the season, there would be frost on everything in the morning, so they had to start later. After their 30 day permit ran out, the man they were working for took them to the immigration office and told them he needed the help badly and got an extension for them. Most of the workers stayed in a bunkhouse. Since Laird was the boss's nephew, they got to stay in the house. To drive up there and back, they had only mud roads, not even gravel.

They came back to Nebraska, and the next summer they went to Oskaloosa, Iowa and worked on a paving gang. After working there only four weeks, they got fired because the local people didn't like strangers working in the area.

That fall, **Henry** and **Walt Suverkrubbe** saw an ad in the paper for workers in the oil fields in Borger, Texas, in the panhandle. While they wanted the work, seeing more of the world was the larger motivation. When they arrived, it was late in the day, so they slept in the car, the first time they'd done that. They decided it was so uncomfortable that one night was enough. Since Borger was a real boomtown, there were very small rooms to rent with just vertical boards between the rooms, no battens, so you could almost see between them. A room cost \$2-3 a night, which would have paid for a whole week most places.

When they got a job at the Chicago Iron Works the next day, they could sleep in the bunkhouse. They worked as laborers on the storage tanks, 40 feet in the air with the wind blowing. The steel got so cold that they decided there was a better way to see the world, and they went farther south to Beaumont, Texas. They waited two weeks for

a ship to come in that was supposed to provide them with some work, but it never came. Then they headed back north for the oil fields in Texas.

On the way, the crankshaft in Henry's car broke. At that time, they were traveling with another man they had met along the way. They pushed the car to a nearby farm place and got permission to leave the car there. They hopped a freight train to Maud, Texas and from there went to Oklahoma City. There was a boarding house where they got a room, with food, for \$2–3 per week. Henry then gave the man with whom they were traveling \$40 to go back for the car. He bought a crankshaft, repaired it and drove it back to Oklahoma City. The three of them were staying together, and Henry trusted the man because he'd retrieved the car for him. A couple of weeks later, the man asked to borrow the car. After about a day, Henry got a telegram from him. A few days later, he got another one from farther away. Then he got one last telegram from even farther away, and that was the last time he saw either him or his car. The car was a Model T for which he'd paid \$333.33. The insurance company said that since Henry had let the man borrow the car, they wouldn't pay for it.

While in Oklahoma City, Henry got a job at an art studio for 35 cents an hour. It was about five miles away from where he was boarding, but he could ride the streetcar for five cents. Sometimes he'd walk those five miles in order to save the nickel. His job was to start the furnace early in the morning to get ready for the day and then mix the watercolors. He'd also make screens by nailing large pieces of fabric to wooden frames. It was a two-story building with a slit in the floor. The frames were suspended with weights and lowered through the floor to paint the tops instead of getting on a ladder. The screens were advertisements for businesses and were used between the reels of films in theaters.

While people waited for the next reel, they would watch the screen. The company also painted scenery pictures.

When he had a little money and got tired of that, he headed farther north to Wichita, Kansas. That was the first time he went to an employment agency and paid to get a job. Because he told them he had experience farming, he got a job with a farmer about 15 miles out of Wichita. He said, "That was a mess! He had about a dozen cows to milk with cow manure a foot deep. If there was ever any place that I almost got homesick, there I did. He had a wife that was half batty and a cook that was about as bad. And after two weeks, I'd had enough."

He went back to an employment agency where there was a large group of people waiting around. They said there was a warehouse that needed a couple of guys to unload sugar. None of the other men wanted the job, so Henry went up and said he'd be interested. They hired him and an Indian guy, who was the only other one willing to do that kind of work. Henry worked there for quite a while and thought it was a pretty good job. They'd be sticky with sweat and sugar granules and use their break time to wrestle for entertainment.



Henry's Model T Ford that he took to the Texas oil fields in 1927. Walt Suverkubbe is on the right. The travelling companion on the left is the one who eventually stole the car.

Around 1928, he quit that job and headed for home, hitchhiking since he didn't have a car anymore. That proved to be the end of his wanderings, so he worked for Herman in the implement business for a while. His mother was so glad to see him come home, she bought him a brand new 1928 Ford coupe, which he owned until he traded it off for his Model A that he had for many years.

He worked on the farms of his brothers that summer. He worked first for Emil, but then John broke his arm and needed him more. He also worked for Otto Leopard picking corn in the fall. Then he met someone who quickly changed his life.

Helen Caroline Petersen, the fourth child of **Peter and Meta Petersen**, was born on September 10, 1908 on the land that had been homesteaded by her grandparents, Claus and Marie Lamp, in 1865. Helen's grandmother gave 30 acres each to Helen and her sister Rose. Henry's brother Chris married Rose and built a house on their 30 acres, and Helen eventually sold her portion.

While they may have seen each other in earlier years, it appears likely that Helen and Henry really met sometime after Chris and Rose began dating. Chris had helped build a new house for the Petersens after a fire and met Rose at that time. Herman apparently dated Helen awhile before Henry did. At the county fair one year, Henry, who hadn't been known to bring a girl to anything before that time, showed up with Helen. When some people noticed and commented, Henry exhibited one of his classic blushes and that embarrassed grin he could get. Mildred Kruse said that Helen was a "good-time Charley" and that Rose's job was to keep her in line.



Helen Petersen 2 years old



Helen Petersen 1911



Helen and Rose Petersen in 1911.
Images by noted Omaha photographer,
Louis Bostwick, whose photographs are now
in Omaha's Durham Museum.



Helen Petersen



Helen & Rose Petersen 1922

► Marriage, Children and the Great Depression

On August 10, 1929, **Henry and Helen** were married at Kountze Memorial Lutheran Church in Omaha. Even though they were members of local churches, Helen at Washington County Lutheran Church and Henry at St. John's in Bennington, the "modern" thing to do was to go to Omaha to be married in English instead of in German as was the tradition still at St. John's. Only the wedding party was at the ceremony, and then everyone gathered in Bennington for the reception. Shortly after he and Helen were married, during the Depression, Henry worked for Hans Neumeyer at Bennington Transfer driving truck. He started working for him one March and worked every day, including Christmas and all the holidays. The following June, over a year later, he got a seven-day vacation. He hauled milk seven days a week as well as cattle, grain and freight. Farmers would order butter that he would bring to them. They would even expect him to bring their clothes from the cleaners when he came.

During the Depression, farmers wouldn't get enough money for their milk, so they would often just dump it. There were sometimes strikers at the dairy who wanted the drivers of the milk trucks to join the union. Henry never liked the idea of unions, so he said he wouldn't join. Hans told him that it was just a matter of getting the milk delivered to keep his job and wouldn't really be like he was forced to join the union. Henry explained what happened. "I said, 'That isn't the way I feel about it. If you say I have to join the union to work for you, you've got a closed shop.' So we got to arguing, and I finally got so mad I went up to him, took his cap off his head and threw it on the floor and said, 'You can have your job!' And I walked out on him, and that was the last time I ever drove a truck. Hans thought I'd come back, but I never did."



Peter Petersen, Lorraine Rasmussen, Rose, Henry, Chris & Helen Kruse, Josie Rasmussen & Meta Petersen 1929

When they were first married, Henry and Helen moved into a house a couple of houses north of where Herman eventually lived in Bennington and paid \$25 per month for rent. Henry had started at Bennington Transfer for \$100 a month, but when the Depression got bad, everyone's wages were cut in half. He made \$50 a month and couldn't afford the house. They discontinued the phone and rented another house from Bill Glandt. It was brand new and should have been \$18 a month, but they got it for \$15 a month because Henry agreed to build a garage on it. The next month his wages went up to \$60. He said, "I tell you, we lived. We got by. We didn't miss anything. We just didn't have everything we have now." The house they rented from Bill Glandt was on 156th Street in Bennington just north of old Highway 36 (Bennington Road). It was here that their first son, **Donald Henry**, was born on August 9, 1933.

They must have lived there only a short time, because their second son, **William Walter**, was born on September 4, 1935 in a house on the east side of Bennington next to the Suverkrubbes. The Kruses called them Grandpa and Grandma Suverkrubbe, but they were really very distant cousins and good friends of the family. Their son, Walter, lived in California. When he became a single parent, they moved there to join him and help raise his daughter, Joan. The banker, Harold Roe, owned the house where Henry and Helen lived when Bill was born, and the Roes moved in after the Kruses moved out. There is now a street in front of the house, Vermont Street, but at the time it just faced a field. The only access was from an alley behind the house.

Don went to school in Bennington for kindergarten and first grade with family friend Wilma Witte as his teacher.



Henry & Helen's house on 105 N 156th St. Don was born here.



Bill's earliest memory dated back to the few years he lived in Bennington. At four years old, he was sitting by himself in the car on Main Street while his dad was in the post office. A huge storm came up with lightning, thunder and torrential rain. Years later, he remembered how frightened he was to experience that by himself.



One time, Henry and Helen were going to a dance at the German Hall and were taking the kids to Grandpa Petersen's place. Henry was all dressed up in a new suit and tie, and their Model A got stuck in the mud. Hank was out trying to get them unstuck, and Don remembered his mother inside the car having a conniption that Henry had gotten his new suit all dirty. As a little kid, he was trying to figure out what else his dad could have done.

► Moving to Omaha



Their next move was in 1940 when they rented a house at 4216 Corby Steet in Omaha. Don and Bill attended Clifton Hill Grade School, continuing through the eighth grade. Clifton Hill, which is now closed, would eventually be where Jym attended from second through sixth grade.

Henry had worked for Bennington Transfer for over six years, and now he got a job from Louis Lahoda, the first carpenter work he ever did for a living. He'd done a little carpentry for Bill Glandt in the past, but not much. He got the job through a friend and was paid 55 cents an hour, which, with long days, meant about \$35–40 per week. Henry said that was big money in those days. When he quit Bennington Transfer, he'd only been making \$80 a month.

Top: Bill was born in this house in Bennington.

Middle: 126 N Molley St in Bennington. They lived here with Henry's mother.

Bottom: 4216 Corby St in Omaha. They lived here in 1940.

He built the house at 4920 Ohio Street in 1940 on weekends and evenings while working for Lahoda. Some of Lahoda's men, including Elmer Petersen, helped him build it. One of the notable features of the neighborhood was an old house on the opposite side of the block across the street from the Kruse house. The siding had gone unpainted for countless years, the structure was in disrepair and trees and bushes surrounded the lot. Don and Bill had a paper route and needed to collect from the old couple that lived in the house. Don said he would rather have given them the paper than have to knock on that door. While it was commonly assumed to be haunted, no specific stories of ghosts ever emerged.



Henry built this home on 4920 Ohio St in Omaha 1940

During World War II, it was hard for contractors to get material. One had to get a defense job to be immune from the draft, so Henry went to work at the Martin Bomber Plant, which would later become part of Offutt Air Force Base. When asked if that made him a draft dodger, Henry said, "Not a draft dodger, a draft evader—is that the same thing?" In light of his age at the time, there was little chance that he would ever have been drafted.

Henry's brother Chris had wanted a job at the Bomber Plant. Henry knew Sam Amato, who was the head of a department at the plant. He called him trying to get Chris a job, but Amato wanted Henry too. They both went down there and got hired. Henry said he needed a few days to start because he wanted to give Mr. Lahoda some notice. When his boss heard about it, he was angry and had already made out the paycheck when Henry got there. He wouldn't even let him work that day. Henry started at the Bomber Plant for 90 cents an hour and worked his way up to \$1.47 an hour by the end of the two and a half years he worked there.

He had gotten disgusted with the way they spent money so foolishly there, and when the war was over, there was no need for so many workers. At this point, he went to work for Rorick Construction and joined the union. He started with making apartments out of the old Drexel Hotel. He also helped build the May Clothing Company, where the architect Sessinghouse was supervising the work. Henry said, "Sessinghouse had different ideas and most people thought he was nuts. But I was about as nuts as he was because I always went along with those things. He had designed a staircase with a glass jewelry case around it. They asked me to install it. Glasswork wasn't carpentry, but I made some special metal clips to hold the shelves and engineered getting it built. Sessinghouse liked that." From there, he worked at the Stork Club in Council Bluffs, Iowa and then the Birchwood Club in Omaha. That was another Sessinghouse job with a complicated circular staircase that he didn't have time to supervise, so Henry did it on his own.



Interior of home on 4920 Ohio St after Henry remodeled it

Henry worked for Rorick for six years and then quit to start working on his own in 1954. He said, "When I quit Rorick, that was probably one of the biggest mistakes I've made, because I had a good job there. One year I even got a TV for a Christmas bonus. But I thought I could build houses on my own and make more money. Unfortunately, I started a little too late. If I'd done it about five years sooner, people really did make money."

Vern Kruse, Henry's nephew, helped him build his first house as Kruse Construction. Vern was still farming, but he helped build the house and learned about construction from Henry. He then worked on other houses with him for a while. Vern's brother, Elvin, sometimes worked with Chris, making cabinets.

During these years, Helen and Rose spent a great deal of time together. Helen loved her roses and other flowers. She went to church functions, but didn't leave the house for much else. She definitely inherited the Lamp-Petersen penchant for cleanliness. The living room was rarely used except at Christmas, and the fireplace never had a fire in it because the smoke might get the house dirty.

Saturday night often meant a trip to Rose's Lodge in Omaha for chicken dinner. Every Sunday on their way home from church, they stopped at 30th and Dodge for their once-a-week treat of lunch and ice cream. Occasionally, they'd stop at Hansen's Restaurant at Leavenworth and Park Avenue. When Vern's first wife was sick, he would come in every Sunday and go to church with them and have lunch before going to the hospital.

Don would often spend a week or two at Herman's in the summer when he was around 10 years old. They had a pony named Prince, and Don would ride the pony to Uncle John's farm. He thought he was in heaven pretending he was Hop a long Cassidy or Roy Rogers. Herman's place was the fun place to go. John was always a little more reserved. Bill usually spent his week with John and Greta. He'd have a great time as he rode in the hay wagon that was still pulled by horses. He'd also get to ride on the new tractor that had steel wheels with lugs instead of the rubber tires that would come later.

There was quite a contrast between the two farms. Herman had a typical farm for that day without indoor plumbing or running water. John had the really modern farm with indoor toilet and bathtub and even electric lights. At Herman's, the water bucket sat by the back door with a ladle in it. If you were thirsty, you'd dip in, take a drink and put the ladle back for the next person. No one remembers Helen ever choosing to drink from the bucket. When Don stayed at Herman's house, they'd fill up the washtub on Saturday night for the weekly bath. Since Herman had three girls, they'd get to bathe first. When it was Don's turn to get into the tub, scum would be floating on the top, and the dirt of three previous bathers was still in the water. They even had to use the same towel, so he had to wring it out to try to dry off.

Don and Bill were just far enough apart to have separate circles of friends. Don was particularly interested in sports. In little league baseball, Don was a catcher for Jackie Brandt, who later played in the majors. Don loved the game but said he was never that good at it. The summer when he was 13, the folks went to California, and Don stayed home for two weeks because he wanted to play ball. Jackie threw a curveball during a game that hit Don's finger and split it wide open and pulled it back. The medical center they went to never asked about parental permission to treat him, but they pushed it back, taped it and said it would hurt for a while. It did.

Both Don and Bill loved hockey. The coach of the Omaha Knights hockey team, Mud Bruneteau, lived just a block away. He had been a star player for the Detroit Redwings, scoring the only goal in the longest hockey game in history. While he was with Detroit, he had been so famous that there was a comic book about him that rivaled Captain Marvel in popularity. When he retired from playing, he became the coach of the Knights, a farm team of Detroit. Many of the great names in hockey got their start in Omaha during these years, including Gordie Howe.

Sometimes Bill would babysit for Bruneteau's son, and often Mud would provide Don and Bill with tips on their own hockey skills. Occasionally, he'd even give them free tickets to the games, which were always sold out. More often, they'd get into the games by getting a free pass for serving as ushers. They walked all the way to Aksarben Arena, where the games were played, in the middle of winter to be a part of the experience. Not content to be only spectators, they would ice the driveway to have a place to play their own games. On occasion, they'd even ice down the street in front of the house. Just as often, an unfriendly neighbor lady, Mrs. Ostler, would call the city about the ice, and a sand truck would appear to ruin the fun.

Bill also remembered Mrs. Ostler showing up at the door one Sunday morning after he had tipped over her garbage cans while delivering the Sunday paper. He had been out early enough that he never expected her to see him, but with her presence at the door, he was forced to apologize.

Another neighbor was Ray Clark, the news anchor for WOW television in Omaha. Ray served as a correspondent in the Pacific during World War II. He covered both the bombing of Hiroshima and the signing of the peace treaty on the battleship *Missouri*. He had a dog named Benny that had been given to him by Jack Benny during Ray's time on the west coast.



Don & Bill Kruse 1944

There were occasional conflicts between the brothers. Don recalled the time Bill shot him in the rear end with a BB gun and the time Bill hit him over the head with a garden rake. Whenever there was a conflict that reached the attention of their parents, Mom would side with Don, and Dad would side with Bill; and often neither one would end up in trouble. Bill did seem to be better at sneaking out to avoid his chores, like washing the dishes. Don was usually the second one to attempt escape through the squeaky-hinged screen door and would hear, "Don, get back in here and do the dishes." By then, Bill was long gone.

During the 1940s, Aunt Lena Schroeder Busch gave Don a baseball that had been autographed by Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig during a 1927 exhibition ball game in Omaha. Somewhere along the way, he lost the ball and regretted it ever after.

Don recalled two other regrets he had as a child. The first was playing in the front yard at the age of 12 and swearing within earshot of his mother. He said he thought he'd broken her heart. The second incident occurred when he was 13. He was on his bicycle several blocks from home, smoking a cigarette, when his mother rode by in a cab coming from the doctor and saw him. That night, he stood in the kitchen and received a very long lecture from his father. Don had learned to smoke Lucky Strikes at the age of 12 while he was detasseling corn. It would be almost 30 years later before he finally quit smoking in 1973.

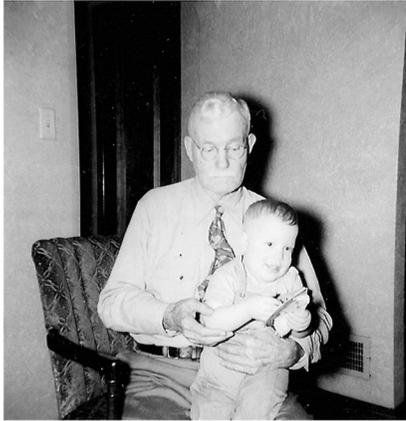
Henry was known for his habit of falling asleep at the kitchen table after dinner even before the crumbs had been wiped off. Helen would wake him up and get him to move to the other room where he'd fall asleep reading the paper, with the paper usually covering his head. At 10:00, it was time to wake him up again so he could go to bed. A variation on this pattern occurred the evening Bill was

playing hide the thimble and tried to hide it behind Dad while he was sleeping. Dad was startled when Bill touched him. His feet jerked up into the air and came crashing down on the glass-top table on which they had been resting, sending glass flying in all directions. Bill didn't remember getting in trouble for it, but they never had another glass table in the home.

If other forms of entertainment weren't sufficient, Bill would sometimes sneak into the fruit cellar (the closet under the front stoop) and take a few eggs from the large case they would buy from the relatives on the farm. He avoided taking more than might be missed. Targets included houses in the neighborhood and cars driving along on Military Avenue, that were easily hit from the steep hill overlooking the street.

Their third son, **James Lee**, was born on February 22, 1948. That Sunday morning was a particularly cold one as Don and Bill stuffed newspapers to deliver. Helen, at age 40 now, had wanted a girl. As she and Henry left for the hospital, she shouted down the stairs, "What do you want me to bring back?" Don and Bill both replied, "A boy!" With the arrival of a boy on George Washington's birthday, Don thought "Jimmy George" would be a great name. Helen was adamantly opposed to that particular option, and they chose James Lee instead, soon to be Jimmie. Don was a freshman in high school and remembered how proud he was to announce to his classmates that he had a new baby brother.

With the help of the boys, Henry had finished off the attic to serve as a new bedroom since their small one on the first floor was now to become the nursery. The upstairs room also provided other options. Bill remembered the times that Don would come home late, having had a few more drinks than Mom and Dad would have appreciated.



Grandpa Peter Petersen with Jimmie Kruse 1948

He would climb up on the front porch roof and knock on the window for Bill to let him in. Apparently, the technique worked, since Don didn't remember ever being caught.

In the summer, it would often be so hot in the attic bedroom that they would go down and sleep in the basement, where it was a little bit cooler. Helen didn't like to run the large attic fan because it would bring dust into the house. They learned to live with the heat instead.

Helen was a very meticulous and proud person. Her hair had turned pure white while she was still in her twenties. She usually preferred to wear black or navy blue. A tall woman of 5'-7", she often ate Rye Krisp and grapefruit with her tea as she attempted to watch her weight. She was a good cook, but with a very limited menu. Round steak, roast beef, chicken, BLTs, mashed potatoes, peas and corn were the primary staples in the rotation.

They were very active at Grace Lutheran Church on 26th and Poppleton in Omaha, where Henry designed a major renovation of the sanctuary. Originally, there had been a sloped floor. To expand the worship space, the floor needed to be raised, and Henry took on the project.

While working as a foreman for Rorick Construction, Henry's Christmas present in 1949 was a television set. The family had taken a vacation in the summer of 1949 to see the Suverkrubbes in California. Bill remembered seeing a TV for the first time while visiting friends of the Suverkrubbes on that trip. Soon after, the first broadcast in Omaha was on WOW on August 29, 1949. Just a few months later, they had a set of their own.

In the early 1950s, Henry decided to remodel the house. They finished part of the basement into a recreation room. Henry had never liked the dining room arrangement, so the doors were rearranged and the dining room moved. They finished the project just in time for their 25th wedding anniversary in 1954.

➤ Emptying the Nest

When **Bill** was a junior in high school, a friend introduced him to **Dawn Wiley** while they were attending a movie at the Military Theater. A few days later, Dawn's friend was talking to her at school about an upcoming dance for which she had a date, but no way to get there. She knew that Bill had access to his dad's car and wanted Dawn to ask Bill on a double date so they could use the car. Dawn said that she didn't really have any interest in going. But as Bill walked down the hall, Dawn's friend said, "Bill, you've met Dawn. She wants you to go to the dance with us." That was their first date, and soon Bill started going over to her house every day.

While the relationship was becoming more serious, Dawn's family moved to Texas. Bill wrote her every day for a whole year during his senior year in high school. They saw each other just once during that year when Dawn came back for a few days.

In August of 1954, after Bill graduated, Dawn's family came to Nebraska for a vacation. As they were getting ready to leave again for Texas, Bill announced to Dawn, "I'm going home with you." They had mentioned the idea in their letters but hadn't really talked about it. He had told Mom and Dad about it the day before, and the idea hadn't gone over very well. They were sitting in the breakfast nook when Bill told them. Dad didn't say much, but Bill remembered his mother's reply: "All you're going to do is go down there and get that girl pregnant." This might help to explain why Helen was slow to warm up to Dawn. As Dawn's family was getting in the car to leave, Bill came out with his small suitcase and piled in the backseat with three other people. Dawn's father just turned around and said, "I see we have someone new here."

In Houston, Bill lived with some friends of the Wileys and went to work for Dawn's dad building houses. They were married the following November. The only thing Dawn remembered her dad saying was as they stood at the end of the aisle, ready to walk into the church. He asked, "Are you sure? Is this really what you want? Dawn, we can turn right around and everything will be fine if you don't really know for sure." All she said was, "Yes, Dad. This is what I want." "OK then." At the time, November 13, 1954, Dawn had just turned 17, and Bill was 19. Those who had predicted that it wouldn't last are no longer around to see how wrong they were.

A few years later, Bill and Dawn moved back to Nebraska for a short time and went into business with Henry and Don. During the winter, they were working on a building

at Updike Lumber. It had been 10 degrees below zero the previous night and hadn't warmed up much during the day. At noon, they went to the Nifty Bar for lunch, and Bill thought he'd lost his feet. "That's the coldest my feet have ever been. I thought if I ever get out of here, I'm never coming back." As the business was not doing well, they soon did move back to Texas. Bill wasn't tempted to return to work in Nebraska during the winter ever again. Kruse Construction continued for a few years after that, but times were tough in the building industry, and the company eventually folded.

In the meantime, another new chapter had changed the family's life forever. Helen had been diagnosed with cancer. It was the year of the worst flooding in recent Omaha history, 1952. She had her first operation after noticing a lump in her breast. They soon discovered that it had gone into her lymph nodes. From that time on, she was never really well again, although the worst of the symptoms subsided for a few years.



Bill & Dawn Kruse



Helen Kruse, Grace Updike, Sally Updike Kruse 1955

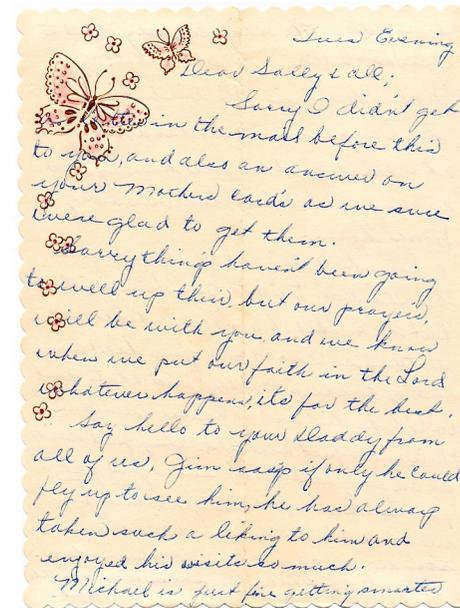
In 1958, the cancer returned in a more invasive form. Now in the bones and in the blood stream, she spent most of the next two years in and out of the hospital. Helen had been alert while in the hospital and made the choice to come home since there wasn't anything more that could really be done for her. She had a hospital bed in the small bedroom on the first floor. She died on December 13, 1960 at the age of 52 and is buried at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Omaha.

In the intervening years, life had gone on with some level of normality. **Don** started dating **Sally Jane Updike** while in high school, after cancelling a date with someone else to go on the first date with Sally. Being two years older, Don started college while Sally was still in high school. He was then drafted into the service, and they continued with a long-distance relationship. They were married on August 28, 1955. Sally's father died of cancer in 1958 around the time that Helen's symptoms began to reappear.

► Moving On

Shortly after Helen died, Henry began making plans to move to a new home. He and Jym soon moved to a duplex at 50th and Manderson in Omaha. Rose would wash the clothes, and it became a weekly ritual to pick up the laundry and eat a meal together.

For many years, Henry worked with Don at Woodland Products in Mead, Don's sawmill and pallet plant. First hit by a tornado, rebuilt, and then destroyed by arson, the business was abandoned after the fire since there was no insurance to rebuild it again.



Letter written by Helen to Sally in Minnesota while her dad was at the Mayo Clinic in 1957 and Helen was taking care of Sally's son Michael.



Sally & Don's Wedding, Jimmie on right 1955



Henry, Jan & Jym Kruse 1969

On August 16, 1969, **Jym** married **Jan Felker**. They lived first in Fremont, Nebraska, then Chicago, then rural Scribner and eventually back in Fremont.

On July 28, 1973, **Henry** married **Lucille Lamb Weare** in Omaha, and they then lived in his duplex. As he slowly cut back on his part-time carpentry projects, golf and pool became his new pastimes. One of his last building projects was in 1978 when he helped Don and Jym build a new house in Fremont for Jym and his family.

Having been so active his whole life, Henry spoke frequently of his fear of becoming an invalid in his old age. On the evening of September 9, 1987, he went to his room to take a nap and never woke up. In his entire 82 years, he had never spent a night in the hospital, and fortunately never had to. The official cause of death was listed as a heart attack. He is buried at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Omaha.

Lucille died on November 16, 1994 in Omaha. She is buried at the cemetery in Onawa, Iowa.



Henry with Brendan Kruse 1974



Henry working on Jym & Jan's home 1978



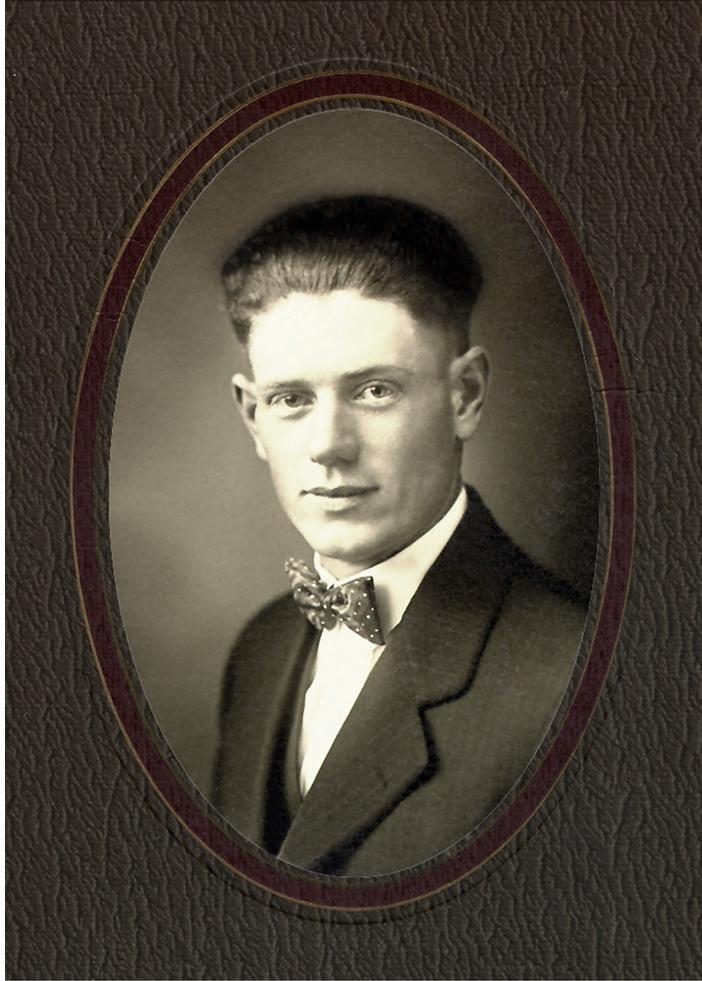
Henry & Don Kruse 1978



Henry & Bill Kruse 1978



Henry & Derek Kruse 1979



Compiled and edited by Jym Kruse

Jym is the son of Henry and Helen Kruse.

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Henry and Helen

Remember when...