

My name is John Lorenzen and I am married to Cindy, Beverly's daughter and Lester's granddaughter. I first met Lester about twenty years ago. In my own life my grandfathers died when I was very young so I grew up with an understanding of Grandma but only a limited memory of Grandpa. For that 20 years I found myself referring to Lester, sometimes as Lester, but more often as Grandpa. My first memories of Grandpa Peterson centered around the family and the farm. I don't remember how it started but someone said he could use some help baling hay. I was still young and foolish at the time and I greatly exaggerated my endurance and coordination. I soon learned there is more to haying than simply lifting a bale and throwing it on a pile. Putting up hay was a family thing. Anyone who could would show up, Grandpa would have the hay down and raked. The wagons would be waiting, the elevator positioned, and the tractors running. Grandma would make sure there was supper or lunch later. Lester made sure there was a jug of water and off we went. And did he go! Lester, outfitted in the traditional tin hat and long sleeves, giving instructions to everyone, bouncing on the seat of one of his tractors, leading the procession to the field. More than likely if it wasn't July, he still had the long johns on too. Bouncing down the road, a sharp turn and you're in the field. One thing I noticed right away was the wagons. There tended to be two kinds; the box wagons, where the sides insured there would be no breeze inside and the low boys, which meant you better stack them tight or you'll be picking them up again. Off we'd go up and down the field. The bales flew off the baler and it didn't matter if there were one, two, or three in the wagon, it was time to

keep up. I kept looking at the people around me, the work, the effort, the love of the fields, and noticed that this endeavor was an extension of Lester. Working the land, hard for the body, great for the soul. It was a challenge to keep up to a guy who at the time was in his 70's. Sometimes you had to make a noise by banging on the bailer or screaming at the top of your lungs to get his attention, (His hearing wasn't real good and turning around became difficult later.) "Slow down. Put it in second gear!" we would cry. But the family would be there. Sometimes Lester would recruit some young person and we all worried that he worked them too hard and they might not come back, but they did. At the end of the day there was always supper with Grandma and Grandpa. It was a full course meal complete with discussion and the real highlight, the stories. Grandpa was a walking historical reference for the Ham Lake and the Anoka area. At every family gathering there were the stories and the discussions; a rich oral history of the family and the area. Some people say they farm, some claim to have it in their blood. With Lester farming was living. Renee remembers when she was young Lester would sing and yodel while he was in the field. We often tried to get him to yodel but he always found a way out of it. Nothing was sweeter than the sound of a tractor running or a bailer kicking out the next bale. Nothing was more refreshing than the smell of fresh cut hay. Nothing was more reassuring than testing the tension on the first couple out of the bailer or so satisfying than to put the final load away in the barn. After many years, we had to find ways to limit what Lester would be allowed to do. His body and health were at risk but the spirit could

still do the job. That was very difficult, but Grandpa was always in charge. When Cindy and I started raising alfalfa on our land, Grandpa came up to help us. He rode on the tongue of the wagon and bailer showing Cindy what to do to adjust the tension or get the knotters to work.

Being a farmer, Grandpa had to be able to figure things out and fix them. With the age of some of his equipment this sometimes required considerable time and effort and maybe some inventiveness. He was amazing. The things he knew and figured out boggled my mind. We measure people by the degrees they earn in school or the parchments we hang on our walls, but Lester had the ability to see what he wanted to do and then was able to create it. He understands power mechanics, hydraulics, physics and geometry. Give him some raw material and he could fix anything. Give him a welder and an acetylene torch and nothing was impossible or safe. He mastered the art of scratch and drag welding. It wasn't pretty but it worked. Grandpa lived a blessed life. How many stories do we have of finding Grandpa lying under a piece of equipment being held up by one block or resting on the end of the farmhand loader? I swear the angels held those things up or pulled him out in time. He had that run in with the sawmill. I heard that he wanted to bring his finger home from the hospital saying it had been with him for eighty years and he wasn't going to part company with it now. Earlier this spring I came down to the house and I thought I should check the workshop first. Grandpa was there sitting on the hitch of a tractor trying to drive a pin out of a clevis with a four pound hammer. He wasn't in the best of shape but the

pin had bent and it needed to come out. Then there was that metal hat. Rain or shine, especially in both, he wore that hat. It saved his life more than once. Just a couple of years ago when that limb hit him in the head. Lester got his moneys worth from that hat. People would ask what I was doing and I would respond I was going down to Grandpa's to help out. They would ask where that was and I would give directions. They would say you mean with the guy in the steel hat and I would say, "Yes, that is Grandpa." People knew him for that hat. It wasn't that they thought it was so funny but that they saw him day after day working the farm and the fields and there was no way to mistake who it was because of the hat. He was nifty and handy. He could fix little things too. Altering a tool, making handles, steps on the tractor, mirrors as well, a converted grocery cart into a walking sled for winter. One thing he wasn't able to do was weld a scope on his shotgun for deer hunting. He tried and tried but the welds just kept breaking. And then there were the famous gopher and woodchuck devices. I think somebody hid his most original fearing that people were more in danger than the little varmints in the field. Lester had a passion for keeping his fields rid of those pests. He initiated a petition to raise the bounty on gopher feet and carried it through to reality. A lot of young kids should thank Lester for increasing the money in their pockets by getting that bounty raised. Today, his daughter Renee seems to have picked up the gauntlet and you can often find her keeping the fields clean.

Grandpa also was a collector of sorts. While some people might specialize in one particular area or item,

Grandpa wasn't so fussy. Everything had a purpose and value and you could never tell when you might need something. Without a doubt the prize of his collections was his family. Each of them precious beyond question. Whereas my family and many others stretch their wings and move beyond the home, the Petersons stayed close, some within yelling distance. At early family gatherings, I would try to catch them playing their roles. The family is like a wheel and it was clear the wheel spun freely and the hub was Lester. I remember the banter with Chester, Edith, Doris and Pearl, Lowell and Cookie. The stories, oh the stories. Each fall Grandpa would prepare for the deerhunting trip up at Dave's and Beverly's. He continued this tradition for many years even through last fall. We've all seen pictures of Lester and his hunting. The deer tied to the front of the old car. The brush wolf he shot with Willis. He enjoyed the opportunity to get into the woods even if his hearing and eyesight meant the deer weren't at too much risk. He looked forward to the tradition, the trip north and the trip south with venison for the coming year. In no time that deer was in the freezer. Lester is the last of Peter O. and Lily Peterson's children to die. For me their absence is profound. A generation I fear we may never see again shaped by the early events of this century; the wars, depression, and the expanding technology. One of a generation that formed the backbone of what we are as a nation and a people.

Beyond this Lester seemed to be the head of the Peterson family. You can see so much of him in his family members. This in itself is a testament to his example and

his inspiration to his children. I am a teacher by vocation and avocation. Some people have the ability to draw and keep attention, to liven up the gathering, to bring the past to life. Lester was this way. He always wanted to know about something or someone. Conversations were like breathing. A teacher might comment that he was very sociable. The people who came to buy hay better be ready to spend an hour even if it took only ten minutes to load. In Grandma, I see the quiet strength and character. A single tree can withstand the force of the wind only so long before it is bent to the ground, but two trees can support and shelter each other. Together, they are more than a simple sum. Willis is a quieter Lester. I remember that first time Lester talked about Willis. The pride was there for his son had gone so far in his education and was teaching at the University. Willis works the land like his father. Days begin with the rising of the sun and end when the work was done. Willis carries on Lester's second profession; that of a teacher. In Beverly I see his drive and intensity. She is the starter on the engine. She takes the initiative and gets things rolling. Renee is handy also, and reflects his gentle side. Her sweet voice and manner reflect his caring and generous spirit. His character seemed a little tough and rough, but the love was there for all in the family. Over the past few months Renee has become Grandpa's arm and legs, taking care of many things he could not handle. In all three children the acorns did not fall far from the tree. In all three as in Lester, there is a strong protective instinct for family and friends. Each possesses an unassuming manner, a willingness to do their part, a full sense of pride in who they are and where they are from. One view of afterlife or

immortality suggests that we continue to live through the people affected by our living. We live on in an endless chain of our children. You can see a lot of Lester even in the grandchildren. Troy and Craig show his mechanical skills, working on machines and projects. They like to tinker. Trudy has his business sense and his drive to finish the job. Todd is the effective communicator and his love of the outdoors and hunting has become his profession. For my wife, Cindy, I will say she certainly has his penchant for getting the job done. She said I could say she was stubborn but I won't. She certainly thinks the way Grandpa did. I can't say he was always right, but I never knew him to be wrong.

In the balance of life it is not so much what we take, as how much we give. In love it is not so much how much we have kept as how much we have risked. In the measure of a man, it is not the size of the monument but the living that continues after the monument has been inscribed. I will miss Grandpa but I cannot mourn his loss. I would like to be selfish and ask for time for my children to know him but that will not be the case. We have pictures, we have taped conversations, and we even have video of Grandpa. We have the stories and the memories. But more than these we have him still. He has given us all that he could and all that we need. He lived his life fully in the joy of friends, farm and family. It is time to say goodbye.