

## **THERON MILO RUSSELL**

**1893-1939**

**by Gertrude McLain Russell Rowlee**

**March 9th, 1982**

Theron Milo Russell, son of Augustus Palmer and Harriet Ellen Russell, was born at Elkhead in Douglas County, Oregon, June 18, 1893. He was one of 17 children. Because of the failing health of his father, the family had moved via horse-drawn wagons from Sutter City California. They had traded a fine farm for property they hadn't seen, located in a narrow valley of the Cascade Range. They brought all their livestock with them. The journey was long, rough and tiring as they could travel but a few miles each day. The older boys herded the cattle along, the father drove and, of course, the mother, with the youngest, rode. Arch was the baby at that time.

Earl, Verda, Theron, and Homer were born while the family lived there. They then moved to Albany and rented a farm just east of town from "Hub" Bryant. He wasn't too pleasant of a man to deal with but they were on his farm for a few years. During that time, Rufus, Arch, Earl and Verda walked the distance to Knox Butte School. Theron could remember attending as a guest a time or two and reciting a piece or so at programs.

They began to look for a farm to buy and finally purchased a 400-plus acre tract north of Shelburn along the North Santiam River. There were the usual farm buildings. The Southern Pacific Railroad cut through the farm and left an older barn and house plus a family orchard on one side and the newer house plus chicken house hog pens and a large barn on the other side. A prune orchard of a number of acres plus the prune dryer were west of the house. By this time, the father was getting past middle age and the farm required so much work he needed the sons to help get fall crops in so they never could begin school at the start of the fall

term. Somehow though, they managed to keep up pretty well in their classes.

Shelburn had a hotel, railroad depot, station agent, water tower and well for the locomotives a general merchandise store and post offices, several homes and schoolhouse but no church. Mr. and Mrs. A. P. and Harriet Russell, (Theron's parents) being very religious, couldn't think of raising a family without a church in the community so by interesting the people, a real nice but small church was built. It even had a bell tower and beautiful sounding bell. There were stained glass windows and a pump organ, rostrum and pulpit. The room used kerosene lamps fixed on the wall and with reflectors. A large wood-burning stove sat in the corner.

Theron began his education in the Shelburn School and completed the eight grades there. Later he attended Scio High, but didn't graduate. In 1910, the family moved on a 60 acre small farm at Macleay which is eight miles east of Salem and located in the Waldo Hills. He decided to go to a business school so entered Capitol Business College, loved it and was doing real well. He acquired a workable knowledge in bookkeeping, studied a certain amount of law and had a beautiful penmanship. But because of illness, he didn't get to graduate which he always regretted. Also, he was needed at home as his father was now getting into his eighties.



# Theron Milo Russell

## 1893-1939

William, Jason, Hubbard. Jason, Jason, Jason, Jesse, Augustus



### Theron Milo Russell

b. 18 JUN 1893 • Yoncalla, Douglas, Oregon  
d. 14 SEP 1939 • Albany, Linn County, Oregon

### Gertrude Edith McLain

b. 6 JAN 1896 • Roseburg, Douglas, Oregon  
d. 25 FEB 1984 • Albany, Linn, Oregon  
m. 29 Aug 1915 Salem, Marion, Oregon



### Jesse Augustus Russell

b. 17 AUG 1916 • Macleay Marion, Oregon  
d. 14 DEC 2002 • Portland, Washington, Oregon

### Doran Lurene Russell

b. 19 OCT 1917 Macleay, Marion County, Ore  
d. 01 APR 1978 Portland, Multnomah, Oregon

### Clyo Edith Russell Dickson

b. 18 DEC 1918 Macleay, Marion, Oregon  
d. 19 MAR 2013 Tigard, Washington, Oregon

### Ellen Minerva Russell Schmidt

b. 06 NOV 1920 • Salem, Marion, Oregon  
d. 30 SEP 1991 • Linn County, Oregon

### Gertrude Elizabeth Russell Cade Lobell

b. 22 JUL 1928 • Fairmont, Benton, Oregon  
d. 7 SEP 1959 • Phoenix, Maricopa Co., Arizona



### Howard C. Rowlee

b. 27 SEP 1893 • Corning, Stuben, New York  
d. 3 OCT 1976 • Albany, Linn, Oregon

### Gertrude Edith McLain

b. 6 JAN 1896 • Roseburg, Douglas, Oregon  
d. 25 FEB 1984 • Albany, Linn, Oregon m. 13 Jul 1941 • Albany, Linn Co., Oregon



#### Occupations:

1910: Farm Laborer (re: Federal Census)

1918: Farmer (re: draft registration)

1920: Miller wage earner at Flour Mill (re: Federal Census)

1930: Truck Driver for Union Oil Co (re: Federal Census)

Traveling Salesman for Cherry City Flour Mill

Service Station Business, Swimming Hole

Sales Manager for Individual Mausoleum Company of Albany

#### Education:

Attended Scio High School

Attended Capitol Business College

#### Memberships, Clubs, etc:

Member of the I.O.O.F. Lodge of Albany

#### Religious Affiliation:

United Brethren Church

#### Physical:

Blue eyes, light brown hair, stout build

Rheumatic fever, Spanish Influenza

Heart attack, Bright's Disease

**Theron Milo Russell, continued**

Theron and a schoolmate had fallen in love, so began to make plans to marry. On August 28, 1915, he and Gertrude Edith McLain were married by her father in her family home. Gertrude's father, Rev. Wm Harvey McLain, was one of the last circuit riders of the United Brethren in Christ Church in the Willamette Valley of Oregon.

Theron had rented a 300-acre farm just west of Macleay. It was red clay and the soil was quite fertile and deep. There were 5 living springs on the property. The buildings were quite old. Water was pumped by a pitcher pump on the back porch from one of the springs just a few feet from the house that had been nicely bricked in and covered with a suitable spring building. The overflow went down the hill and joining the overflow from two more springs and they all together were fed into the summer garden during growing season.



*The McLain Family in Shelburn*



We farmed with horses; therefore, it took days to get the fields ready and planted and necessitated working in the rain many days. Theron had plows, harrows and a drill besides his wagon, etc. We had a cow and pigs. A near neighbor gave us a pair of white geese for a wedding present so by the next year, we had a nice flock. Every six weeks, I could take the ripe feathers from their bodies thus getting lovely feathers to make into pillows.

On August 17th of 1916, our first son was born, Jesse Augustus. Dr. Cashatt came from Salem, bringing a nurse to help deliver the baby. There were no complications and I was soon taking over my usual duties. We did have help for a couple of weeks.

Jesse grew as most healthy babies do. His Grandpa and Grandma Russell were so fond of him that Grandpa would occasionally drive over in his buggy to get him and take him home for a few days. Maybe they'd have him a whole week then we would drive over and bring him home.

The next year in October, Doran Lurene was born and the same doctor came out with the same nurse to deliver him. Jesse had begun walking by this time. We had a hired man, Leo Anderson, who worked for us the year round. So by now, I had plenty to keep me busy---no electricity so everything was done by hand. And there was a heap of laundry.





Theron's parents sold their seven-acre farm and rented a larger one, it was one mile east—from Mr. Arthur Fellows. It had fine, more modern buildings. The house had running water but still no electricity.

A gas engine was used to pump the water up to the water tower. Homer now had taken over the care of the parents and running of the farm. Fellows reserved the orchards. He lived in Salem and drove his car out most every day to work in them. Inis and Alma were home and Verda had quit teaching to keep house for Rain in the logging camp at Black Rock.

WW1 was declared in the spring of 1917. Homer was drafted, so that left the parents with no one to depend upon. The house was large having 6 bedrooms, sitting room, parlor, large kitchen and dining area, pantry and bath. So it



*Theron with his 3 daughters, Photo from Wally Russell*

was decided we would move in with them. The father

(A.P.) was now 84 years old and the mother (Harriet) very ill with heart trouble and dropsy so both required care. Grandpa still could get around so he cared for the chickens. He and Jesse were inseparable that summer---always together. Grandpa and Grandma were moved into Salem in time for Inis to start school in the fall of 1918.

She already had gone the year before so now was in her sophomore year. My brother Harvey (McLain), was attending Willamette so he boarded with them. Grandma kept getting worse and she died October 15, 1918.

We continued on the Fellow's farm. Ella Lybecker, Grandpa's oldest daughter, came to Salem and stayed several months with him, Alma and Inis, also Harvey. She found another boarding place when she left for home. Grandpa was a very lonely person after he lost Grandma.

The fall of 1918, our whole country was hit with a terrible epidemic called Spanish Influenza. The doctors didn't know how to treat it, therefore people died by the thousands. We were at war, soldiers came down with the flu, hospitals were full and nursing care was very hard to obtain. Soon after Grandma Russell's death, our family was hit. I came down first, then Theron, and soon Jesse and Doran. My mother came to help us and she became ill. Dr. Cashatt brought the same nurse and left her to care for us. She was with us two weeks and I don't think I was able to fully undress for bed any of that time. I'll never know how neither she nor the doctor were able to keep well because all available help was going the limit.



## Theron Milo Russell, continued



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having been so ill and it was several months before she really began to gain but by the time she was one year old, she weighed only 19 pounds.

By the fall of 1919, Theron decided to quit farming, moved into Salem and find a job. The war had ended November 11th, but Homer was still in service and at Ft. Lewis. He did not see duty outside of the States. So we held an auction and sold off all of our farm equipment as well as his. Theron got work at the Cherry City Flour Mill; we bought property and Harvey lived with us.

*Leo Anderson, the hired hand  
photo from Wally Russell*



Rainous and Alma also made our home their headquarters. Theron sacked and packaged flour and cereal, etc., then advanced to miller. Most of the time, he worked swing shift and that was really hard on our family routine, so when a salesman's job opened up, he was given it. The Company bought a new Dodge Coupe for him to use and he solicited business going from town to town. He covered the Willamette Valley and some of the coastal towns. This took him away from home usually from Monday morning until Friday evening which didn't help family affairs a great deal.

He gained pounds because of lack of physical exercise and found himself weighing over 300 lbs. With his health being impaired to the extent that his heart began bothering. A change was needed so he quit his job—he had done remarkably well as a salesman for he had the talent and wonderful ability of making friends. We bargained with his brother Earl, to move on the 40-acre farm north of Shelburn that he and his family had moved from when they went to Grass Valley to work for Arch.

Ellen Minerva had been born while we were in Salem so we now had four little ones. The 40 acres were quite isolated but did have a suitable house and all the necessary farm buildings. A family orchard had been set out and about three acres cleared. A large ash swale plus a living stream ran diagonally across the farm with only about a five-acre field on the north side. One could scarcely exist without getting outside work, so Theron obtained a job on the C & E RR section crew. They are the fellows who keep up the road bed The work included replacing ties and rails, fixing culverts, etc. so it was strenuous work and Theron soon lost most of the extra pounds.

Jesse began going to school as soon as he was old enough and Doran went the following year. We just weren't able to get ahead financially so Theron and Earl Lathrop formed a partnership, went to work for a bond company located in Portland and set up an office in North Bend. They bought lovely fixtures for the office, a piece of property, built a small house for Inis and Earl, and proceeded to sell bonds. They were doing fairly well, so Theron built a cabin for our family and moved us down there.

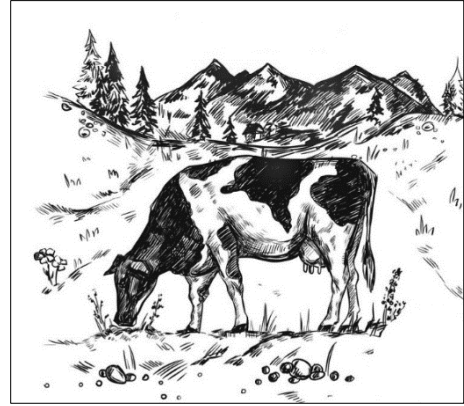
In about a year, sales began to lag, so Theron took a job working on the log boom a Marshfield for a logging Co. He now received \$65.00 every two weeks and times began to look better. But even that wasn't getting us ahead. They closed the office and Earl began building houses and selling them. That did not last very many

months so he moved the family back to Portland.

Jesse and Doran were going to school at North Bend and doing really well, but the general environment wasn't good and I couldn't see how we could raise our family under such conditions—so back to the farm.

Rufus was able to find a job for Theron with the Union Oil Company as station attendant. He worked at First and Ellsworth at the south end of the bridge. He found a place to board and room, coming home on weekends.

I managed the chores. We had several milk cows, a couple of horses, chickens, calves and pigs—I wasn't used to milking so had to get up early in order to get everything done and then start in early in the evening. We had a hand-turned separator; used the milk for calves and pigs, then sold the cream. Different dairyman gave me young calves and when old enough for veal, Theron butchered them. Those days we could do our own butchering and ship the veal to Portland market. The work proved too hard for me and caused me to come down with the flu. We obtained help for me and the children, and Uncle Lon (McLain) did the chores.



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As soon as I was able, Theron moved us into Albany. We rented a home in Sunrise area. Brought one horse and a cow in with us. The other animals were sold. We had a model-T Ford for transportation. That property was for sale, but we just didn't have the money which was being asked \$4,000. It included the house, a barn and one acre of ground. Within six weeks, it was sold so we made another move and found ourselves in North Albany, one mile west of the bridge. We again rented and in about a year, that property was sold. By now, we were able to purchase a two-acre piece of ground with house and barn, etc. Gertrude Elizabeth was born July 22, 1928, just six weeks after that move.

Theron now had a good job driving the big oil truck for Union Oil and really loved the work. The children were growing and large enough to go to the hop yard with me and pick hops. I left the baby with next door neighbors during the day, but when she was 13 months old, I took her to the hop yard. We camped out that season, but camping was very inconvenient and dusty. Just not at all pleasant so after that, we drove back and forth.

It was quite a job trying to keep up the laundry, preparing lunches, etc. We had taken in an unfortunate girl 14 years old, so had extra. She also picked hops as she needed the money. Paul Brooks, 13 years old, had been with us on the farm, but he now was living with his mother. He was a delight to have around and was very willing to do whatever was asked of him. He stayed with us about one year. Theron continued with Union Oil and all seemed to be going really well with us until his brother, Rob in Chico, California became ill and died from cancer. Rufus had a bad cold so persuaded Theron to go to the funeral, which he did and while gone, he contracted a bad cold. A gas war was on when he returned so he, without any rest, went to work and delivered gas for 36 hours without any time off. That really threw him into an attack of rheumatic fever. He lay at the point of death for days in the hospital. Finally, he began to recover, but slowly. So of course, he lost his job and was never able to work on the truck again.

**Theron Milo Russell**, continued

Theron had purchased a service station and set of cabins at the north end of Ellsworth Street Bridge and taken Justin Ransom as a partner so had that bit of business on which to rely. As he convalesced, he began to think of constructing a swimming tank using logs on which to build it. He figured that by using logs for the frame and sinking a cradle in the center, he could anchor it and use it in the Willamette River, which he with help of Vern Mason, did build.

Thus was Albany's first swimming pool put into use.



*The swimming tank under construction*

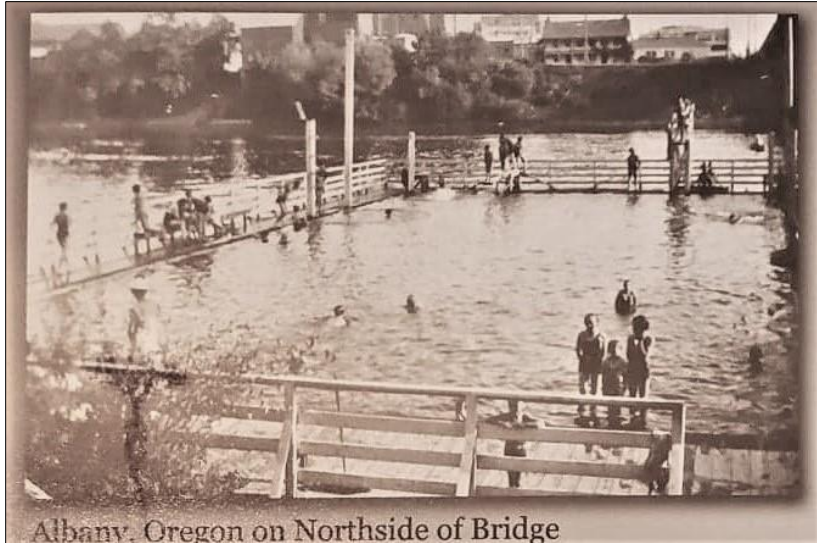
We were in the midst of the depression; people couldn't afford trips away from home, therefore we had good success. Dressing rooms were built and the pool anchored just above the bridge on the Benton Co. side of the river. The hours for swimming were from 1 PM to 6 PM and again in the evening for a couple of hours. I was matron so my afternoons were busy. We boarded the crew of lifesavers, also a young lad from Corvallis—all told, we were cooking for eleven people that first summer. We had an unusually early spring so opened the pool the last of April and ran the season through Labor Day.

Theron was never well after that illness, but did live until September 14, 1939. Justin had married so the partnership was finally dissolved and our family moved to Tower Grove to manage that service station and the row of tourist cabins.

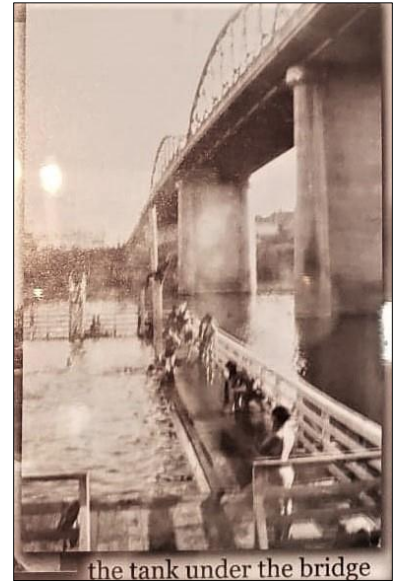
Jesse had graduated from High School and attended most of one year at Monmouth. He came home to help his father. Doran dropped out of high school when ready for his senior year so he, too, helped Theron. I took on the boarding of a crew of carpenters from Eugene, so with the help of Clio and Ellen, we managed the cooking and cleaning of the cabins. That lasted a couple of years, until Theron sold his contract from near Bend. In the deal, we acquired an 80 acre irrigated ranch.

Theron had been very active in Sunday School and church work. He was the song leader at both Macleay and the United Brethren Church in Salem. He was also Sunday School Superintendent in Salem. We took a very active part in church and Sunday School in Shelburn but he never got interested in active church work in Albany. Maybe it was because there was no United Brethren Church nearby---although our children regularly attended the Methodist Church with the Schmidt family.





Albany, Oregon on Northside of Bridge



the tank under the bridge

*photos from Betty Russell Meisner*

He loved his fellow men and our home was always “open house” to friends and relatives. I never knew when he might bring a guest home with him for a meal, but there always was plenty of food to share. So many people were there during the Depression and we spent many a Sunday afternoon visiting shut-ins and families that were needing. He would put groceries in the car and we delivered them to families in need. In spite of ill health, he remained jolly and entertaining.

We bought a house and lot on First Street in Albany for \$800.00 and were still living there when Theron passed away. He had developed Bright’s disease from which the doctors had no cure. His life was short and his death seemed untimely his being only 46 years old.



*Gertrude, Jess, Gertrude, Chyo, Ellen, Doran, Ellen*  
*photo from Betty Meisner*

He was a wonderful man, even-tempered, jolly, full of fun, tender and loving. He loved the members of his family and was especially close to his parents, brothers and sisters. He loved his own family with a passion; each child being as dear to him as the other.

Our family life was so rent apart when we lost him. Ellen and Ray had been married just four days before his passing. They were in San Francisco on their honeymoon when they got the message. Jess and Doran were both married and we had one grandchild, Gary Russell, a few months old. Theron and Gertrude Elizabeth, now eleven years old, were almost inseparable, therefore, the sorrow and shock were hard for her to understand and I’m convinced that she never did fully recover from the loss.

He never complained---was a wonderful companion and gave me five of the most wonderful possessions anyone could wish for; they are our children, and now, I’m blessed with the grandchildren and also 28 great grandchildren, all of whom are so lovingly devoted to me. I really can’t ask for more...