



Lois LaVonne Knobel

February 19, 1923 - September 14, 2016

Lois LaVonne Knobel - a Life Story

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Lois LaVonne Knobel's Story began on February 19th, 1923 in a snowstorm, just outside of the tiny farming town of Odessa, Nebraska as Albert Sear, Lavonne's Dad, hitched up the horses to go pull the Doctor's stranded vehicle through the snow drifts to the farmhouse so that the Doctor could attend to his wife, Opal Bowen Sear, for the birth of their first daughter Lois LaVonne Sear.

LaVonne grew up on a farm with two older brothers and two younger sisters. Life then involved using horses for doing the field work and herding the cows. She and her siblings walked to the one-room school house, complete with outhouse. She told of being given pancakes from the morning's breakfast, sprinkled with sugar, folded over, and packed into a pocket for their lunch.

The family moved to the nearby town of Elm Creek when LaVonne was ready to start high school. She graduated early at 16 years of age and soon began learning the hair dressing trade, apprenticing in a beauty shop in the back of a barbershop in Kearney, Nebraska. Her Board Exams were successfully taken in Lincoln after which she continued to work in the small shop.

Nebraska felt the impact of the Depression and LaVonne recalled the dust storms coming through. She helped to hang wet sheets over the windows to slow down the invasion of the dust which she also helped to clean out of the house on a daily basis. Fortunately the family did not lose their property and her father and brothers operated a livestock trucking business to keep things together.

When World War II began, LaVonne went to work as a secretary at the air base in Kearney. She was good at this and remembered getting airplane rides from the pilots who were there for rest from the front lines.

LaVonne was acquainted with a hard working young man who was employed in the Elm Creek Post Office. He, like most of the men in the area, signed up for the military, and after Army Basic Training he was sent on a troop ship to Pearl Harbor, following the initial bombing. While there, the relationship grew as he corresponded with LaVonne, even asking her to marry him after the war and to return with him to live in Hawaii. Her Nebraska roots held firm however and she turned him down on that offer. Upon his return to the States, the Hawaii invitation did not come to be, but the marriage proposal did, and on April 21, 1946 one of “the fanciest weddings” up to that date in Elm Creek was held in the First Christian Church as Lois LaVonne Sear married Marshall Dale (“Deak”) Knobel. The wedding occurred on Easter and thereafter Deak thought they should celebrate their anniversary - on Easter - even though that day could be weeks before or after the calendar wedding date. To confirm the vows, and in keeping with the outdoor / hunting culture of the Nebraska Farming community Deak’s wedding gift to LaVonne . . . was a shotgun.

Their honeymoon was a quick trip to Denver, Colorado where they rented a motel room and went out to eat. Upon coming out of the restaurant to return to the motel, they realized they didn’t know the name of the place, or exactly where it was. Their “GPS” navigational - system - of - the - day turned out to be a single pack of paper matches which had the name of the motel on the cover.

Back in Nebraska the honeymoon continued in part by testing out that wedding gift shotgun in the Platte River huddled in the duck blind during a good old Nebraska blizzard.

The couple’s first “home” was a tiny apartment over the Elm Creek Post Office from which they spent as much time as they could outside in the summer to stay cool, and in which they wore sweat pants and sweat shirts as pajamas inside in the winter just to stay warm. Deak did not return to post office work, but began working his Dad’s farm and another rented acreage. Soon “home” was the farmhouse a mile and a half east of Elm Creek.

On March 31, a year after marrying, their first child arrived. The name “Michael” was chosen for the expected boy, but a little girl showed up and the name was changed to “Marsha Dee” after her Dad. Fourteen months later a little brother joined the family with the name “Monty Vaughn” to carry a part of his Mother’s name.

Life on the farm was great for the kids with lots to be learned and animals to interact with. Early pets for the kids were the lambs reared by the sheep that Deak raised and bred for their wool, along with an ever-present Golden Retriever farm dog.

For Deak and LaVonne there was a lot of hard work. Baths for the toddler kids were given in the kitchen sink with water from the outdoor pump, heated over the stove. Of course there was the outhouse that you had to negotiate past the hog pen. LaVonne raised chickens for a while, following her Mother's example, but the chickens all drowned in a flood that came through and she swore off chickens after that. The outhouse was finally replaced by a toilet in a real indoor bathroom added on to the house, and the outdoor water pump was needed less as water was piped into the house from the well.

A little grey Ford tractor was used for the farm work and eventually two more tractors were added so that Deak and the kids could hit the fields together. LaVonne always had a good vegetable garden with lovely flowers mixed in. She grew amazing peonies and the hollyhocks were at least 6 feet high against the barn wall where the sun brightly warmed the ground. "Mom" showed "daughter" Marsha how to make hollyhock dolls, and both kids helped with garden harvesting and canning. A favorite food almost every night of the summer was the sweet corn that Dad planted behind the farmhouse for the kids, which became their first "business" as they hand-harvested and sold the tasty produce to friends and passers-by.

LaVonne was a fine cook and taught both her kids good skills. One of the favorites was Sour Cream Chocolate Cake with fudge icing. It was awesome! One morning a carpenter friend came to the house to do some work. Marsha and Monty were eating chocolate cake for breakfast and he asked LaVonne about the wisdom of that. She said it had all the good farm ingredients and was healthier for them than some of the processed (even then) cereals and store-bought sweet rolls. Homemade candy was another of LaVonne's specialties and there was often a batch of fudge in a metal tin. She also made "petit fours" and Danish pastries. In later years, while off at college, Marsha and Monty would receive a care package of her homemade goodies that were the envy of the other students in their dorms.

Back on the farm the big porch across the front of the farmhouse was converted into an in-the-home beauty salon, where the "babysitter" for the then pre-school aged kids was often the hair curlers for toys and a hand mirror for the imagination.

Life centered around the family, friends, and the activities of the home and farm, the school, and the First Christian Church. Both Deak and LaVonne sang in the choir and the kids sang in the children's choir. The Knobels were a singing family. Marsha remembers, at barely 4 years old, sitting with her Mom on the cement step of the farmhouse one evening watching fireflies after the sun had gone down. LaVonne taught her the old World War 1 song "There's a Long Long Trail A-Winding", including the harmony part.

At Christmas the family would make homemade candy, shell popcorn off the cobs into light canvas bags that LaVonne had made and the kids had decorated, and then deliver these to friends and the elderly people in Elm Creek. Along with the gift deliveries would be Christmas carols sung in 3-part harmony.

In addition to her cooking skills, LaVonne was also an excellent seamstress. Who knows where she found the time to make Marsha's dresses plus a dress coat each Easter, and often matching shirts for Deak and Monty too.

She interacted in the community, helping out with church activities, the American Legion, and taking her turn in "hostessing" the neighborhood ladies bridge club. She was also strongly involved in the Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts, serving as a Den Mother and behind the scenes support for Deak who was a Scout Master for over 50 years. She was especially proud when Monty earned his Eagle Scout Award.

When Marsha and Monty entered high school, Deak and LaVonne set up a business in Elm Creek that was a beauty shop on one side of the former grocery store, and a Laundromat on the other. These were busy days of long hours and honest hard work often capped off with a stop at the local sandwich shop for "A quart of vanilla ice cream from the soft serve machine please." "Sure enough, that will be 50 cents please." Then, off to home for a bowl of ice cream before getting down for a good night's rest.

Finally, after 20 years on the farm, running the other businesses, and with both kids in college, an "itch" that began on the honeymoon trip to Denver, developed into a move in 1968 to Colorado.

Fort Collins was a small, attractive city that drew in Deak and LaVonne. She opened the Lemay Beauty Salon that was across from the Poudre Valley Hospital where the parking garage now stands. A stab at real estate sales for Deak was hindered by a growing awareness that the encroaching, but at that time yet undiagnosed, Alzheimer's Disease was making itself more evident and taking its toll of his abilities.

LaVonne continued managing and running the beauty shop while providing more and more of Deak's personal care. At last, after 30 years at the Lemay salon, LaVonne sold the shop and "retired" from her 50 years in the business.

However, she still continued part-time in hair dressing work at another shop and also took her trade into ladies' homes if they were unable to go to a shop for their hair care.

More of her time was soon taken up as Deak's primary caregiver, first at their home near Edora Park, and then at a local nursing home, until his death in December of 1989. Having become familiar with care giving, she continued for 5 years as an aide at the nursing home that was Deak's last residence.

At last, LaVonne allowed herself to start taking life easier and moved into Oakbrook II and became a part of the community there. Even there she was helpful and had friends who benefited from her caring nature. She enjoyed reading, watching sports on television and socializing with other Oakbrook residents at the regular meals, bingo and domino games, and other Oakbrook community events.

She had sung in the First Christian Church Choir for 25 years and did regret having to give that up as she began to confront more health issues of her own. Yet she attended when she could, and later enjoyed listening to her favorite Pastor / Preacher Charlie Patchen on the radio.

LaVonne was a special breed of those women who always felt the call to work wisely and to give of themselves to their family and to others. She always did that without complaint while expressing thanks for the good life she said she had had.

She and Deak raised their own family well and then enjoyed participating with and loving the extended families of Marsha and husband Ron, with her three stepchildren and their three offspring, and of Monty and wife Deborah, with their five children and the five, now six, great grandchildren.

Some of Mom's encouraging words to the family were:

"If I am not here when you return, just know that I am helping to run things from a Better Place."

and, to those providing her care at Columbine West, "I'm OK, . . . I'm OK".

On September 14th 2016, after 93 good years, this "Chapter" of LaVonne's Story ended. She died peacefully at the Columbine West Health and Rehab facility in the presence of members of her loving family.

Cause of her death, besides the 93 years of good hard work, was listed as kidney failure due to bladder cancer. LaVonne's "cremains" are interred in Roselawn Cemetary alongside the grave of her Husband.

LaVonne was preceded in death by

her husband Marshall Dale “Deak” Knobel,
brothers LaVern and Darrell Sear and
sister Lorraine.

She is survived by

Her sister Evelyn Ross and husband Jim of Kearney, Nebraska;
Daughter Marsha Knobel and her husband Ron Smith, of Fairbanks Alaska,
Son Monty Knobel, and his wife Deborah, of Fort Collins, Colorado;
Grand Children: Caleb, Carisa, Christopher, Cody, and Kelsey
Great Grandchildren: Lea, Anna, Clara, Nora, and Jude,
and as of Tuesday, September 20th newborn baby girl: Winslow Elaine.

This “Chapter” of LaVonne’s Story has ended. But for Her, and for us, the “Whole, Grander Story” is not yet over.

LaVonne’s daughter, Marsha relates that:

“Her parting wish would be for you to ‘Be happy and not complain about everything. Look for the good and hold close a strong faith.’ Lavonne was not afraid of death and was curious about what happens next. Now she is privileged to be discovering that mystery.”

Her son, Monty reminds us that:

LaVonne had a firm faith in the Biblical Good News that God offers to each of us some very important Gifts:

1. His Never Ending LOVE.
 2. The Amazing Grace of His FORGIVENESS,
 3. His Gracious Provision of SALVATION
- through the Life, Death, and Resurrection of God’s Own Son - Jesus

Lavonne chose to accept God’s Gifts, and thus was able to live her life with the Love, Devotion, Courage, Grace, and Service that we, who know her, all recognized in her. She knew that Jesus walks with her ALL the way, even through death’s doorway, and that there was, and is, a Heavenly Continuation of . . . The Story.

As Monty, her son, has often said at the death of an acquaintance, friend, or family member: “Now she or he Knows!”

The other part of the Good News, is that now we, You and I, can Know God's Grace and what will be our destination. "Heaven" starts the moment we personally accept God's Gift of Salvation through His Son Jesus, the Christ.

We, her family, look forward to continuing "That Grander Story" with LaVonne, and with You.

Thank you for being LaVonne's Friends.

Thank you for being her Helpers.

Thank you for joining us in the celebration of her Life.

God Bless you each and all.

You are invited to participate in a Celebration of LaVonne's Life that will be held

Sunday "October 2nd at 2:00 PM

at the Oakbrook II Senior Citizens Community

3300 Stanford Road in Fort Collins

just East of the Foothills Mall.

We will gather in the Dining Room for memories, conversations,

and of course: Cake and Ice Cream

If you so desire to give a gift in her memory,

In lieu of flowers,

Please consider a donation to the Local Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association,

Or to your favorite charity in her name.

Events

OCT **Celebration of Life** 02:00PM - 04:00PM

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Oakbrook II Senior Citizen Community

3300 Stanford Rd, Fort Collins, CO, US, 80525