

Glars Pete Peterson's Life Story
(As told to his oldest daughter Emma Mae Peterson)

This is the story of my Dad's life as he told it to me while staying with me after mother died.

My Dad was Pete Glars Peterson born in Sweden on September 17, 1860, near Stockholm. His father was Swede and married a Norway girl. They visited back and forth over the border – had relatives scattered along with way. Pete was small in size, but bright and witty. He soon picked up both languages also Danish.

About 1870, he was 10 years old, a bunch of boys decided to go swimming in the river one summer day. They were having the time of their young lives. Suddenly a boy went under. A cry for help from his pals. A man nearby heard the cry and came running. He gave a boy a stick with a feather on it and sent him for help. The feather on the stick meant fly fast. Help came, they rolled the boy over a barrel, but could not save him.

In Sweden, at the edge of the town, there was a big fine church and back of it was a big graveyard with many large head stones. In the middle of the graveyard was a big tree. At times, when the wind blew, one could hear thumping sounds so someone said it was a ghost that lived in the tree. A gang of boys dared each other to go see the ghost one night, but no one would venture into the graveyard. The next morning the wind was still blowing and one could hear the thumping sound, so Dad decided that no ghost would harm in daylight. He ventured into the graveyard, cautiously up to the tree, carefully looked it over and discovered the wind was blowing a limb of the tree against another branch. He broke the small branch off and laid the ghost to rest. His pals sure admired his bravery.

When he was 14, he was about to go into the service of his country. A metals man (really a junk man) thought Pete was too small for such a hard life and bought his passage to America. On the boat, he made some friends and landed with them on a horse ranch in Canada. He did not stay there long – it was too cold. Here he picked up English. He drifted into Calumet, Michigan and worked in an iron mine. One day some of the crew got into a big fight and had to go to court. Someone said, "Get the kid, he understands the talk." He was in court as

an interpreter for the group. Many times he was called back to court and paid whenever there was trouble among the workers.

Later he drifted into Deadwood, South Dakota and, on November 3, 1892, married my mother, Minnie Cordelia Burdick of Pennsylvania. (I am the oldest daughter – there are 2 boys and 3 girls in the family.) Later he moved to Whitewood, South Dakota. His father-in-law helped him buy a livery stable which was the going thing at that time. Business was very good.

One day a man came and asked for the boss, saying he wanted a rig early in the morning, with a driver, for all day and nothing was to be said about it. For several days, they drove around the country early and late. Later on he heard the man was a Wells Fargo detective and had finally got some train robbers.

They had a new boy helping clean the stables and feed hay. Somehow the boy dropped a match in the hay and they were burnt out, horses, rigs, etc. It was a terrible loss.

He returned to Deadwood and worked on the Union Pacific Railroad for a while. Then went into the gold mine at Lead City, until they talked strike in 1906.

He pulled out for Gold Field, Nevada and found out they were on strike – so he drifted to Bisbee, Arizona. They were talking strike – so he went to Tuscan, Arizona seeking any kind of work. He talked to a man and told him he needed work, he had a family up North and expecting a child soon. The man told him to try Helvetia, Arizona. A mine there needed a hoisting engineer, Dad said I can do it, so he got the job and sent for the family. It was a shabby place, lots of Mexicans. Housing was a problem, but he got a shack at the end of camp. We children could not understand the Mexican talk and thought they were funny people. Baby sister Helen was born there on September 12, 1907.

About 3 years later, one late night, a coal oil lamp was knocked off the table. It broke and set fire to the shack. We were burnt out – 5 children in night clothes – lost everything. Doctor Lennox came, he was the mine doctor, and had a small emergency hospital there. He told my Dad to take us to the hospital for the night. There were no patients at the time, so we lived in the hospital for several days. It had 4 cots and some chairs. The neighbors fed us.

The mine manager moved a couple of bachelors out of a company house and we moved in. There were 2 stores: a company store and a Mexican store. The Mexican owner came and told Dad that whatever he needed to come to the store and get it. He could pay later. We traded at the Mexican store from that time until the mine closed down.

One winter the folks moved into town and rented a modern house, so the children could attend school. We were real country hicks, used the outside John and scrubbed every Saturday night in a round wash tub in front of the kitchen stove. The two little girls were about 4 years and 6 years old and the two older children went to school. This house had a big, long bath tub – the back end of it sloped down. The girls would sneak into the bathroom, close the door and stand up on the far edge and slide down. It was lots of fun, something different than they had ever known. One day mother caught them and gave them a good spanking. That stopped that.

They landed in Globe, Arizona. Dad helped install the first water meters in Globe and he cautioned us to turn the tap on slow – because if one turned the tap fast or full speed the needle would register too much and run up the water bill – so we went easy on the tap.

He worked in the Old Dominion mine, but did not like it. Later moved out towards Roosevelt Lake and worked on a ranch.

Later he homestead an old abandoned place on Baker Mountain. There were some old apple trees and an old log cabin – it was off the Globe Pleasant Valley Road - 3 ½ miles up Workmen Creek by pack horse. We soon has a new log house, barn, some fences, dug a well and cleared a garden spot near a spring. It was a hard life, but healthy.

We lived in this large log house with a big round dining table in the middle of the dining room. Mother was a good cook and feed us well. We were healthy, growing kids and always hungry. After the chores were done, we would gather around the table and play Black Bess. Somehow Dad always managed to win. But one time, mother caught him cheating and really told him off about cheating his own family. He looked sheepish and said, "I had it coming."

Jake was friend of his and stabled him a few Mexican cows. He managed a good bred bull and soon had a nice herd of cattle SYL branded. Mother had a green thumb. She studied the calendar for moon changes and an Almanac before she planted anything. Dad kidded her about planting the seeds in the ground and not on the moon.

We had company and mother cooked some new potatoes with tender string beans and cream gravy. Everyone remarked how good it was. That evening an electric storm came up and it poured down. The visitor said, "What a pity. This will ruin all the little potatoes." Dad said, "The rain won't hurt them." "Oh yes" the man said, "It will make them grow into big ones." We all had a big ha,ha on Dad.

One year the cattle ranges were dry, the rains did not come. Feed was a problem for the cattle. There were some brush and lots of prickly pear cactus scattered over the hills. The cactus paddles were good eating for the cattle, except they had many sharp stickers. The cattle could not manage the thorns. The folks talked it over and decided to rig up some kind of blow torch to burn the thorns and feed the cattle. They worked up a gasoline blow torch. Brother started out to burn the cactus and save the cattle. All worked well for a while, then all at once the torch blew up with it strapped to his body. He was badly burned on his chest, stomach and face. He was rushed to the hospital at Globe. His face was seared but not scarred. It was a very sore and painful ordeal. He recovered in time and, to this day, he has ugly scars on his chest and stomach. Somehow or another, they weathered the drought.

Dad would go to town once a month for supplies. On his way back home, he said he found a magazine in the road, so he stopped and picked it up. It was a new True Story. He was looking through it and I asked him if I could look at it. "Later" he said, "after he had read it." Then he hid it under his mattress. He read it and then burnt it up in the fireplace. He told afterwards, he was ashamed to let us kids know what he had read.

Down at the main road was a small county store and a make shift place for the mail. The mail was put into a box on a shelf and everyone helped himself to what was theirs. One day Dad came by on horseback and stopped to look for his mail. A few days later the Forest Ranger stopped and asked if Dad had seen a

Government check in the mailbox for the Ranger. Dad said, "No." No one had seen the check nor could anyone find it. They suspicioned Dad had taken the check. Every time he went to town and bought something, someone watched him to see what he got and how he paid for it. About 2 months later, the check was found when the store lady decided to clean up. She moved the box which the mail was kept in and there was the check – somehow it had fallen behind the box. Both the Ranger and store lady apologized to Dad for thinking he had taken the check and begged his forgiveness. All ended well.

He loved baker's bread and, when in town, always got some. But it gave him indigestion, so he asked our family doctor about it. He was told it was probably the preservatives in the bread – not to eat it. He could eat mother's home baked bread, cold biscuits or corn bread without any trouble. He also had trouble with gall stones. He would walk the floor and cry during the attacks. The doctor wanted to operate, but Dad said, "No." He was too old for an operation and he did not believe in them. He was very foolish and suffered for 20 years.

On one trip back from Globe with a load of supplies, he had to take the ferry across the upper side of Lake Roosevelt. It was a barge run by the county. He drove the team on. Part way across a high wind came up and sank the boat. The wagon went down, the team was swimming. Some way Dad got the horses loose from the wagon then he and the team swam ashore. He had lost the month's grub. Later the county paid him for the loss and he bought himself a car. A Model T Ford truck. He was delighted, but could not manage it very good at first. However, he soon learned.

He peddled string beans, cabbage and apples and apple cider in Globe and Miami. About this time, a couple of dwarf cattle came up in the round up. The neighbor did not want them – so they traded a spring yearling. They were full grow, but only ½ the size – the little cow weighed 160 pounds, the bull 210 pounds. The theory was the mother cow had eaten too many acorns. The cow and bull were gentle and the grandchildren could lead them around on a lease, like a dog. Then one of the boys found a cub bear and managed to get it home. They had a ranch menagerie with a fighting rooster and a well-trained hound dog that would work cattle out of the bush. The bear would lick a saucer of corn sugar. Soon they were all friends.

Dad got the idea of putting the cattle and bear in a side show, so he put some hay in the truck with the cow and bull, tied the bear up front and went to Globe. He put up a tent and sign saying, "25 cents to see the dwarf cattle." He did good, had big crowds. Then went to Miami and some man offered to buy them for \$800, so Dad sold them. He made good on the side show and sale.

While riding over the range, Dad located some valuable minerals. He took out a claim and had the ore assayed by a friend of his in town. It was decided that it would be too expensive to work and too far from the smelter in Globe, so he let the idea ride. But, he talked about it, soon people were asking questions. Later 2 men from Los Angeles wanted to know if mother would board them for 30 days. They needed to get out of LA into good country air. Mother kept them – each day they asked for a lunch and took a ride to Dad's mine. They asked lots of questions and Dad gave them indirect answers. They really were green horn miners from LA. They had no luck, so returned home. A long time after that the prices of minerals were sky high and Dad decided to go see his mine. When he got there, he could not recognize it. The bluff had slough off and the brush had grown, so he gave up the idea. So far as we know, the mine is still there. He said his rich mine and dream came tumbling down.

During the Prohibition period (from 1920 to 1933), times got pretty rough. A silver dollar looked as big as a cart wheel. Our neighbors across the lake seemed to have everything they wanted. They even bought a new Dodge car. Dad asked Al, "How do you do it?" He answered, "I have a little pipe line up the canyon that pays real good. I have no problems." Al advised Dad, so Dad decided to try it. But, Dad was afraid to tell Mother – she would not approve of it. Anything Dad went to town and sneaked some grain and sugar and copper piping home and hid it all in the barn. Mother overheard some remarks between Dad and the oldest boy. It bothered her and she went snooping around the barn. She found the sugar and grain. She kept on looking until she discovered the copper tubing hiding in the hay. She sat down to think this out and decided that there would not be a still going around their place. She was mad and went to the wood pile and picked up the sharpest axe. She returned to the barn and chopped the sacks of sugar and grain and scattered it all over. She then did the same towards the copper pipes – she hacked and bent them out of shape, so they could not be used. When Dad returned home, she told him off (and she could do it). The family feud lasted for a week. This man Al and his family lived across the lake and

could drive off the main road towards a high mesa. At certain times on a dark night, he would go to the mesa and blink his car lights 3 times off and on – if everything was ok. The other man (a customer) would blink back 3 times. They would then meet and exchange of corn dew and cash. It was supposed to be safe and sound arrangement. However, not to long afterwards, the law raided Al's place and he got a good long sentence. Dad never heard the last of it, because mother through up her hands and said, "Thank God it wasn't us." She would not have a new car that way.

They started a small a small summer resort saying, "Back to nature with good home cooked meals." There were hunters during the fall looking for deer and wild turkeys.

One time they butchered a beef and phoned to see if the Asbestos Mine people could use some. "Yes" they said, "bring us a hind quarter also some fresh vegetables and eggs if you have them." Mother had extra eggs, so she carefully wrapped each egg in a square of newspaper and rolled it. Packing them carefully in a 10 pound lard pail with a lid. She cautioned Dad to be very careful. They were worth 25 cents per dozen and there were 2 dozen. With his mare which he rode and pack animal with the meat he headed over the ridge. He gave the pail of eggs to the manager's wife. She examined them and asked, "How did you ever get these here so nicely?" With a wink in his eye and a smile, he said, "I hard boiled them." She threw up her hands and said, "What?" They had a big laugh.

One February, a group of friends decided to go to Baja, California for a week of camping and fishing. February was considered to be the time for fishing there. Dad had been a desert rat for these many years and he longed to see the ocean again. He had spent a good part of his boyhood on the water front in Sweden and he was a good swimmer. He was very excited about the trip. They hired a boat from a native and had extra good fishing. Dad was the littlest man and he caught the largest fish. We was happy. They also gathered a big gunny sack of oysters to take home. In those days about the only way one could save fish was to dry salt it down. One had to soak the salt out before you could cook it. That trip was the highlight for him. He never tired of telling about it.

Zane Grey came by one day and had lunch with them. He was at Payson writing a book. (Senator Payson of Illinois was Chairman, Congressional Committee of Post Offices and Post Roads.)

After 20 – 25 years on Baker Mountain without a road up to the house, children grown and gone, they sold out to the Government through Senator Carl Hayden,. The Government bought it to protect the forest there - there were many large oak trees.

They moved to Salt River Valley and had small house. My mother was in poor health and 16 months later she died on March 4, 1941, in a Phoenix hospital. Mom and dad lived together 50 years and raised 5 children. They often talked together about the past.

As I was the oldest daughter and the only of the family nearby, dad came and stayed with me a good deal of the time. After mother's death, dad worried a lot about illness. His biggest and last wish was to die with his boots. On May 6, 1942 (my youngest brother's birthday), he dropped dead in the bathroom late one night. He had his wish.

Dad was an American citizen. He took his first papers out in the East and the second paper in Globe. He was proud to be an American. Every time the Star Spangle Banner played, he stood up and put his hand over his heart.

Dad loved to listen to the radio and compare the speed of sound now to years gone by and the methods of fast news.

Dad was very talkative towards the last, and after 30 years, I still remember the many things he told me. I will always cherish them.

By Emma Peterson
Oldest Daughter

Peterson Children:

Sylvester Oran Peterson - Born 9/1/1893 in South Dakota. Died October 1973

Emma Mae (married name Noles) – Born 3/25/1895 in Deadwood, South Dakota.
Died 1/20/1980

Dewey Lee Peterson – Born 5/6/1898. Died April 1983.

Evelyn Maud (married name Ollson) – Born 12/1/1903

Twins born dead

Helen Esther (married name Mayne) – Born 9/12/1907. Died 3/3/1986. Esther
Helen was really her name.