



Vahsholtz Cousins

March, 2014

vahsholtz.com

WALK THROUGH HISTORY WITH COUSINS

By Mary Dillon



Agenda

Friday, July 18, 2014

3:00 p.m. - 10 p.m. Early Registration in Academy Hotel Lobby and visiting in the hotel lounge area.

Saturday July 19, 2014

6:00 - 9:00 a.m. Breakfast for Hotel registrants.

10:00 a.m. Family Meeting in Conference Room; main topic, *Where Next?* Followed by free time for visiting. Lunch on your own in hotel or elsewhere.

4:30 p.m. Those attending the Melodrama meet at Academy Hotel to car pool (If you miss the car pool time, you are on your own to find the event; a 30 minute drive from the Academy hotel).

6:00 p.m. Arrive at Melodrama as a group.

Sunday, July 20, 2014

10:00 a.m. Ron Richter will lead a non-denominational Vahsholtz service in our Conference Room. Then more visiting or sightseeing on your own. ■

HI EVERYONE, IT'S GETTING TO BE FAMILY REUNION TIME. Don't forget **July 18 to 20th**. I still can't believe that two years have come and gone.

We've had a really snowy winter, and spring is in the air! We're looking forward to a great reunion. The 2012 event broke all recent reunion attendance records and we're hoping for even more this year!

Now is the time to get your reservations in to the Academy Hotel, who will be hosting us again this year. Email at www.theacademyhotel.com or call at 800-766-8524 or 719-598-5770. Ask for the "Vahsholtz" rate; same as last time, \$89, and includes an excellent hot breakfast. Other meals on your own, except dinner at the Melodrama. The cut off date for reservations is **June 18, 2014**. Hotel address is:

8110 North Academy Blvd.,
(just off I-25 at Exit 150)
Colorado Springs

As a quick reminder, if you haven't explored Manitou Springs, you will definitely want to. It is a great place to spend the afternoon going through shops for unique gifts, one of a kind souvenirs, as well as having your picture taken in an Olde Tyme Photography Studio as a character from the Old west, or a Gangster from the Roaring Twenties. This year Manitou Springs was voted second best place to visit in 2014 by Rand McNally.

Just a quick note on other sites of interest:

The Manitou Springs Cliff Dwellings, *A Walk through History*, built more than 700 years ago, shown left.

Driving, hiking, horseback in Garden of the Gods.

Pikes Peak Highway is paved all the way to the top.

Cheyenne Mountain Zoo—The highest zoo in world.

Cave of the Winds.

Manitou really does have it all! Google Colorado Springs Tourism for more great vacation ideas!

The Iron Springs Chateau Melodrama, is going to be great fun, with dinner and a great show featuring *Shanghi Express*, suitable for all ages above four.

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Iron Springs Chateau Melodrama
444 Ruxton Ave.,
Manitou Springs, Colorado

I was previously misinformed about the reservations for this event. It turns out we must pre-pay before **June 30, 2014**. As a reminder:

Adults: \$33.00. Children four to twelve \$17.00; taxes and gratuity included. Make your check payable to me, **Mary Dillon**, and send it to:

**1210 Adams Drive
Colorado Springs, CO 80904**

Please include with your check: The names of everyone in your party, your address, email, phone and everyone's choice of Chicken or Pot Roast with dinner (both include coffee or tea and dessert).

If you're planning to attend, but not staying at the hotel or going to the Melodrama, please mail or call me (719-635-1514) so that we know you're coming and can have your name tag ready. We don't want to miss anyone!

So come on Summertime—we're ready! See you in July!

Hosts Mary Dillon, Ruth Klement and Theresa Clark. ■



IRON SPRINGS CHATEAU
Colorado's Fun Melodrama

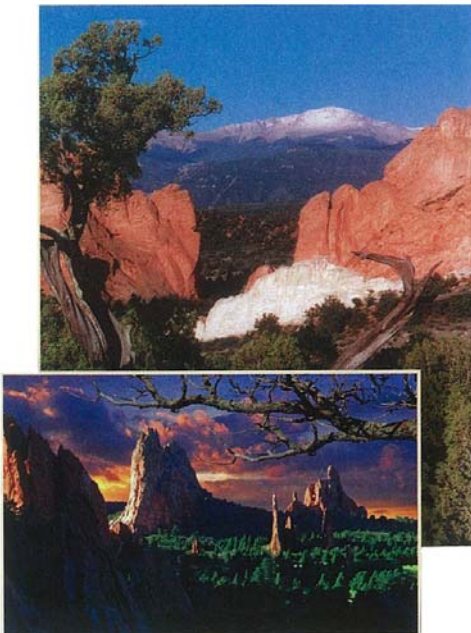
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Meet your Cousin ALLAN BROCKMEIER

By Ruth Richter

MANY OF YOU WILL RECOGNIZE Allan's name, if for no other reason than having sent donations and fees to him for the various reunions. Allan, along with his wife, Martha, served as the treasurer for the Vahsholtz Family Reunion gatherings for many years.

But what about Allan, the cousin, who grew up on a Kansas farm until he was 10? Imagine the trauma and pure excitement that he experienced as a four-year-old watching the barn burn down on his family farm! Or the great fun of having his Grandfather V. come to help rebuild the barn.

Those farmers of the good old days were very innovative folks, so when his parents went out to cut oats, Mother Katie rode on the binder. That old machine made quite a clatter as it went through the field, so she'd use a fishing pole to get his Dad's attention. For the benefit of younger readers, there was no cell phone option.

Allan was the youngest of three boys. Older brother Werner was 11 when Allan was born, and his brother Darrell was six. Werner worked for another farmer during their growing up years, which was not an uncommon thing, sometimes called being neighborly and sometimes bringing in a few extra dollars to help out the family finances.

Like so many of our cousins, Allan attended a one-room country school for

first and second grade before going off to the BIG school in Herington with Darrell driving a Model A Ford. Darrell might have been a bit young, but remember, in those days, drivers' licenses were not much in evidence.

Katherine (Katie Vahsholtz) Brockmeier, Allan's mother, must have been quite a lady who was a real help on the family farm. Not only did she help out in the fields, but she also managed to break her leg climbing a ladder in the barn. One guesses she might have been searching for eggs for the family breakfast or helping out a mother cat ... or maybe even tossing down bales of hay. Allan says their Aunt Louisa Brockmeier came to help out until Mother Katie could walk again. Another time after they moved to Topeka, Katie was in a car accident, and Grandma Lena Vahsholtz came to help out while she was recovering.

It sounds as if the Vahsholtz relatives were much in evidence during his growing up years, particularly the grandparents Henry and Lena, but Allan never knew his Brockmeier grandparents. The Vahsholtz grandparents helped with the farm work and holidays were spent at their home.

The family moved to Topeka when Allan was 10 years old and the farm was leased to the Schrader's who still rent the farmland. Glenn Schrader agreed to pay for waterways to be dug in exchange for the house. The house



was torn down and the materials used to erect another building. You young folks might think of that as *re-cycling*.

During Allan's senior year he got an offer to work for IBM. He had to go to California for training and then work somewhere else in the country. A great opportunity, but his mother was concerned, since she had already lost one son. Werner had gone to work for Santa Fe railroad and died following an accident in Topeka.

After graduation Allan left for California where he spent about five months in training with IBM and was re-located to St. Louis, Missouri. It was while living there that he met Elizabeth Mercer who had come to the area to teach. They were married in 1959 and settled in Florissant, a suburb of St. Louis.

They were only married about one year when Uncle Sam came knocking on the door. Allan did his basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri and then was stationed at Fort Devons in Massachusetts. He was assigned to the Army Security Agency and IBM sup-

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Above is what was left after the Brockmeier barn burned. Here's the new replacement, with Grandpa V. standing proud.



Allan hunting out by the “new” barn, in more recent times.

plemented his pay with \$1,000 a year to retain him as an employee. Liz taught school on base.

After his discharge from the army they returned to the house in Florissant where their daughters were born. Like Allan and Liz, both had February birthdays. February must have been busy at the Brockmeier house. Their two daughters are Margretta Ann “Peggy” (former editor of this newsletter) who is married and has four children, and Stacy Ann. Allan’s father, Edward Brockmeier, died in 1960; Katie in 1983.

Allan spent his whole career working for IBM and was able to retire early at age 54.

Liz had worked for Welcome Wagon, so Allan and Liz then opened their own greeting service business. They spent time traveling, taking their last big trip in February of 2004. In March of 2004 Liz passed away from an aneurysm.

Allan married long time family friend Martha Mary Hagan Plyler in June of 2005. He still enjoys traveling and woodworking in addition to experimenting with photos on the computer and creating DVDs to view on the TV.

When any of us get a chance to tell our stories, they’re interesting. Family stories we can all relate to are the best. That’s certainly a compelling reason to go to the Vahsholtz Family Reunion next July in Colorado Springs. There surely will be ample opportunity for each of us to sit down one-on-one with someone else we hardly know and hear their Vahsholtz stories! ■

By Brother Bob V.

Granny’s Closet

My little sister Ruth wrote the preceding article and plays the starring role in this one. I should be ashamed for giving her so much coverage? Naw, I’m proud of what she’s accomplished for such a pipsqueak.

When Dick and I were kids, we wanted a baby brother, but Ruth is what we got, so we made the best of it.

But ... despite never growing very tall, she turned out OK. And look what she’s up to now!

SO ... YOU’RE FEELING A LITTLE BORED in retirement? Sometimes think it would be nice to do something for the community, but don’t enjoy re-shelving books at the library? It happens to those of us who’ve been used to busy lives and find ourselves retired. Recliners are not much better than rocking chairs.

Ruth (Vahsholtz) Richter was one of those go-getters, living in Seward, Nebraska as husband Ron (Doctah Richtah) continued professing to the students at Concordia University. Ruth had always been an active volunteer; the gal you’d go to if something needed

done in a hurry. She spotted a Mennonite thrift shop downtown, and poked around there in search of treasures. It’s a family tradition.

Those Mennonites are tidy and well organized. Ruth asked if perhaps they could use a little help. They could. In short order, she was a key member of the volunteer team.

When Ron retired ten years ago, they moved to their dream house; a log cabin in Idaho. Ruth loved everything about Garden Valley—except she missed that Mennonite store. With a population of 164, the little town was too small to support a thrift shop, but it had a small Senior Center, limping along with a bit of support from the retired community and the odd government grant. Ruth and Ron enjoyed going there for dinner—a good place to get acquainted. Soon both Richter’s were on the Board.

The Coordinator at the time commented to Ruth (who was wearing thrift store clothing), “We should start a little thrift shop,” but the majority of the Senior Center Board said, “No. Who wants

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Granny Ruth, happily at work in her closet

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smelly old used clothes around the Senior Center?” Ruth liked the idea though, and as new Board members came along, she sold ’em on the notion of allowing her to use a little corner about the size of a walk-in closet (about 350 sq. ft.—there are now two storage sheds, and a workroom built into the Senior Center’s open space).

Granny’s Closet was born in 2007. Ruth’s dream was to one day get monthly sales as high as \$500, despite the tiny size of the community and the closet itself. It was agreed that half of any profits would go to the Center and half to the community.

Hard times came along when the Senior Center lost its grant, stopped serving meals and there was talk of closing. *Granny’s*, however, was thriving. Ruth manages a team of about ten volunteers, and is constantly amazed at the donations that pour in. And she’s even more amazed at the money that piles up from sales.

Ruth has that Vahsholtz nose for sales, and she’s a manager to the bone. Though the space at *Granny’s* is tight, everything is kept tidy, well organized and fairly priced. When Ruth is traveling (another major passion) a favorite activity is to snoop around other thrift shops to pick up tips and maybe an odd treasure. The plague of thrift shops, she finds, is that “smelly old used clothes” deal, and it does put people off. There’s none of that at *Granny’s*. Everything that goes into inventory is clean and bright, even though it rarely comes in that way. Ruth stays busy cleaning, organizing and turning inventory, and Ron is often called to repair and rejuvenate items too good to be thrown out, but in need of repair. It’s inevitable that many well intentioned donations are not salable. At least, not to Ruth’s clientele, who know if they buy from *Granny’s*, they’ll get quality and value. The rest of the donations—often the majority—are donated to other less-particular thrift shops, or even taken to the dump. As a result, when you enter *Granny’s* you feel like you’ve found a friendly gift shop where everything’s a bargain.

These days, *Granny’s* donations are

“We Grannies do have fun and work our buns off too! I’ve got a pot of split pea soup on the stove ... to serve at tomorrow’s lunch at the Senior Center. We decided that we had these several ‘old guys’ in our community who were missing out on not having the regular senior center meals, so we thought we could just as well fix a light lunch for ourselves and have them join us ... and I was able to convince Peggy Ashton-Parker, who serves as Co-Head-Granny (she’s *not* a Granny nor even a senior citizen!) it was a good thing for us all to sit down and eat rather than work six hours straight on our feet!

“So we take turns bringing a soup or something, and we have a salad, some bread, some dessert that we round up from hither and yon, and have a lively lunch with great conversation, lots of hugs for the old guys, and a bit of charm thrown in. We have usually 13-15 people coming. Tomorrow we thought we’d give a try to teaching folks to play Mexican Train. I think maybe I’m the only one who knows how ... and we’re experimenting to see if having a games-time at the Center might be a worthy endeavor. People say they want to do that, but will they show up? Hmmm.

“Now, mind you, there will still be *Granny’s* work to get done tomorrow in amongst the game and the food. Oh well. Ron is doing his DJing while the lunching is going on, which is a shame because he’d be cooking/warming up food/whatever if he was available. I’m not sure he’s seen all the hugging and kissing yet! And now we have a new gentleman who lost his wife a couple of months ago, he’s lonely, hungry, and he’s the handiest handyman ever, and the willingest one too.”

*Granny crew
T.C. Steib,
Pam Sprague
and Ruth
clown it up
with some of
the lingerie
available at
Granny’s
Closet. Who
knew?*



the financial foundation of the Senior Center, which is prospering and has started serving meals again. *The Idaho World*, a local newspaper put Ruth and her gang on the cover, with photos of Ruth passing out five checks totaling \$7,500 to community organizations. The \$500 per month in sales dream is ancient history, with triple that amount being the norm.

Interviewed for this article, Ruth

said, “In 2013 we gave back to the community; various organizations like the library, volunteer ambulance service, volunteer fire department, new museum, new radio station, and community food baskets; a total of \$13,000. And we’re currently getting ready to put in new flooring at our Senior Center, we put in a French drain to try to alleviate the icy conditions in front of our building, and will probably paint the interior

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of the place at some point. And still Granny's has too much money in the bank account!"

In addition, Ruth annually loads up her Granny volunteers and takes them somewhere interesting for a great lunch, an "educational" outing since thrifting is usually involved, and Ruth feels it's imperative that volunteers know they are appreciated. They're a great gang who make volunteering what it should be—fun, useful and profitable, and only folks who really want to do it should apply!

Professor Ron still does a bit of teaching online classes, and not nearly as much fishing as he'd envisioned for his Idaho retirement.

In addition to hustling goods around for Granny's, he's taken up another retirement career as volunteer disk jockey for the local radio station. In addition, he finds time to keep up a supply of wood to heat the cabin, does a bit of painting and crafty stuff in his shop and be best friend to all the local dogs.

Both Richter's work hard and both know how to have fun. ■



Would you believe we're letting this guy lead our service on Sunday morning at the reunion?

Reunion Planning and Details

AS NOTED IN THE AGENDA, the main topic for discussion planned for this reunion is, where will we meet in 2016?

Over the long history of these reunions, most have been held in Kansas, the "home state" of a majority of American Vahsholtz's. A few years ago, it was suggested we branch out to an area that might attract more distant members of our increasingly scattered tribe. Branson, Missouri was chosen and liked so well we returned a second time, drawing an even larger crowd..

You may recall we then considered three locations, Colorado, Wisconsin or the Northwest. All three were discussed at length, and Colorado was chosen. The record crowd there suggested a repeat and it will be interesting to see how many, and how many "new" and repeat guests come this year.

We'll talk about the 2016 reunion, and if you have suggestions, speak up! Suggestions on location, agenda, program and most importantly, willingness to host!

This year, we have the meeting room for all three days; Friday, Saturday and Sunday. If you have family albums or other memorabilia to share, we can have it on display there and locked up overnight. Marge will have a laptop with the very extensive Vahsholtz family tree available to answer any questions regarding who is related to whom and how.

She would very much appreciate being updated as soon as possible with any births, deaths and marriages in the family, so we can keep the family genealogy up to date. Email her at mvahsholtz@gmail.com. If you'd like a printout of your descendant family tree, just let Marge know well before the reunion, and which ancestor and which descendant. She'll print it out and bring it along.

The Zwillipp book is available on line and you can print it yourself if you wish. We can bring along hard copies of the whole thing for \$29 if you wish, but would require early notice, as we only get them printed on special request. We'll have copies of the Hulda book available again. *Please see next page for your registration form!* ■

Vahsholtz Cousins is published twice yearly, spring and fall. Copies go out to some 250 Vahsholtz families. It is supported entirely by donations. Those who supply email addresses get full color copies attached to an email, as a PDF file, which they can read or print as they wish. Those having no email address get a black and white edition mailed to their last known address. "Snail mail" is the biggest cost item of the whole Vahsholtz publication enterprise, due to costs of printing and stamps. Your donations are appreciated. What will help most is any additions or corrections you can make to our email list. Each mailing we send out, we get half-dozen email bounces or returned mail from those who have moved, passed on, or changed their address. Please let Marge know! mvahsholtz@gmail.com

And if you want to make a donation, contact Treasurer Tony Vahsholtz avahsholtz@gmail.com or mail him a check at 1920 West Honey Dew Drive, Napa, Idaho 83651 ■

For your convenience, print this page, fill it out, write your check and send both to: *Mary Dillon,*
1210 Adams Drive,
Colorado Springs,
CO 80904

PLEASE REGISTER FOR THE COLORADO REUNION SO WE CAN PLAN FOR YOUR ATTENDANCE!

Names of all attending family members and their choice of **chicken or **pot roast**** _____

Address: _____ Zip _____ Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Email addresses: _____

Arrival Time: _____ Departure Plans _____

Lodging at Academy Hotel _____ Campground _____ Other _____

Amount of Check Enclosed: _____

IMPORTANT NOTE: Wherever you stay, please check in at the host facility (Academy Hotel) on arrival and see Geri Tate so you can pick up badges and other material that will be available for you. ■