



The Six of Us

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Mama spent many nights getting our clothes ready for the pictures taken on the previous page, taken by a photographer of her family of six. She had made everything except our shoes and stockings. As always, most of our clothing was made over from hand-me-downs. (It wasn't called recycling then.) We used to get big bundles of clothes from our good friends, the Agathers and Tante Wutke. The Agather children were just enough taller than the more stocky Krauses were so that often the alterations needed were minor and presto someone had a new top, or a dress, or a pair of pants. Tante Wutke, my sponsor, used to wash and iron for the Kelleys of Swan Lake. (The Kelleys were known as the Copper Barons of the U. S. A., or the world, maybe.) They would leave huge sacks and boxes of unwanted clothing with her which she distributed to people who could use it. And being the dear friend she was, she always knew just what our family could use. We didn't know what it meant to get a new dress or coat from the store. In fact, I was eighteen, a senior in high school, when I got my first store-bought coat. The rest of the kids used to get Bruno's and my hand-me-downs, that is, what was left of them. Even the under clothes - bloomers, shirts and garterbelts, were "made to order". They fit the way Mama had been trained as a seamstress, that they should fit. They were superior to anything available in the stores. I recall a winter slip Mama converted out of a wool sweater for me. As I grew, Mama would add rows of crocheting of matching, and when she ran out, of contrasting yarn to lengthen it. It was ideal for those cold Montana winters. For many years Mama knit all of our stockings but there came a time when she couldn't keep up with the demand, and about that

time a better selection of store-bought stockings could be had. Dad, too, got into the act of lengthening the life of our family's clothes. He had bought shoe lasts and taught himself how to resole all the shoes, including Mama's and his own. This also, like Mama's sewing, was an evening chore. No daylight hours could be spared from the business of working in the fields, raising food to feed so many mouths AND to produce enough to market for cash to buy the necessities not raised on the Farm AND to have money to pay interest and the taxes. In later years the shoes were taken to Mr. Browser down by the Stillwater Bridge just north of Kalispell, on the Old Whitefish Road. In those days the uppers were so sturdy that, with carefull resoling work, which Mr. Browser did, shoes and even slippers could be resoled two and three times.

These pictures were taken at two different sittings. Number one was taken several weeks before the other two. Mama was very unhappy with herself when she saw them; Harry was the only one in a dark top, and she didn't like the romper suits on Erna and Alfred. Mama just couldn't understand how this oversight could happen to her! Today, WE all can! Another appointment, another getting ready, another trip into town by horse and buggy. The six of us crowded into the one-seater with a short open box-like extension back of the seat, where some of us could squeeze in. It WAS crowded! No wonder Mama seldom took all of us at the same time. No wonder the neighbors shook their heads and dissdainfully referred to our Family as, "That woman with all those kids!" They didn't know how much Mama loved children. They didn't know how much fun they were missing with their two- and three-children families. They didn't know there would never be any more children in our family but our parents did and cherished from the

the bottom of their hearts the three boys and three girls they had. Their love and quiet ways, their desire for the best for their children set the pattern for a modified discipline where everything that concerned their children was discussed with them and explained. We, as children, learned early in life that everybody had to help. Help on the Farm. Help each other. Help those less fortunate. Mama and Dad were excellent examples. They worked and helped. They helped many people. They raised us on "The Golden Rule." AND they lived by it, too. Above all, they brought us up to believe in the One True God.

Alfred must have been about a year old. Erna was quite small for her age; she had had rickets as a baby and didn't learn to walk until she was almost three years old. (See Family Birthdate Chart for approximate ages of the rest.)

Johanna E. Siegel
June 21, 1979