

THE JEMTEGAARD FAMILY

1871-1985

**Compiled by Carolyn Ritter,
Daughter of Rolf and Mae Jemtegaard**

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BENDIKT AND GERTRUDE JEMTEGAARD were born in Norway in the late 1870's. Bendikt had traveled to the United States, South Africa, Europe and back to Norway before he married his childhood sweetheart in 1900. Then, nine years later Bendikt and Gertrude and family of Olger, Gudrun, and Rolf came to Portland, Oregon, where they stayed with Bendikt's older brother, Andrew, for a short time. They had come by steamship, "The Laurentic," across the Atlantic Ocean to the east coast of Canada. Rolf had his second birthday in the middle of the North Sea. Then they traveled by train from Montreal to Portland.

One of Bendikt's first experiences was to take a boat ride up the Columbia River. On this sunny day he visited with Norman McCray from the Mt. Pleasant area. Bendikt told Norman McCray how the Big Columbia reminded him of their smaller Tresfoid in Norway. How the landscaping along Clark and Skamania counties reminded him of their homeland in Norway but this was a big powerful river and the land looked so much more prosperous. Norman McCray told Bendikt that day about a homestead still available that was up, over and past the peak of Mt. Pleasant. Bendikt and Gertrude applied for the homestead and this is where they raised their family and this is where their descendants have many memories of. In later years Norman McCray was their neighbor.

By winter the Jemtegaards had built a house and barn and then in December Marvin Jemtegaard was born.

The family raised angora goats, pigs, cleared snags, planted crops and became the typical Mt. Pleasant homestead family. One of the stories Gudrun has often told about is that there were no Himalaya blackberry vines here in those days and there were lots of seven-foot tall fern growing among the burned snags. Now, we have blackberry vines everywhere if they aren't controlled, and beautiful smaller ferns in lots of places and just a few of the 7-footers.

In the very early years, the newly constructed house and barn both burned down. Another house and barn were constructed immediately, but later, in 1932, a lightning storm sparked the electrical wires in the third story hayloft. Bendikt tried to throw water on the flames in the loose hay but in doing so fell through the 3-story ladder chute onto a cement floor. Marie Knapp, who lived up the road, came riding over on her horse and found Bendikt in the burning barn in much pain. She pulled him out of the barn which undoubtedly saved his life.

OLGER JEMTEGAARD, the oldest son, worked in the community, did road working, especially in the building of Vendon Hill that passes Karl Abbuehl's place. He also worked on the building of the highway around the Cape Horn Bluffs in the late 1920's.

Olger and his wife, Edith, live just west of Sandy, Oregon, where she retired from teaching a few years ago. Both Olger and Edith have developed their 30-some acres into a beautifully landscaped orchard and yard with firs of magnificent beauty, rhododendrons, a large gold fish pond and many other beautiful plants and trees.

In the 1920's, Olger began clearing his stump ranch, as he called it, and planted about 20 acres of filberts. By 1969, a fruit and vegetable grower's magazine said he was the leading research oriented filbert grower, possibly in the United States. He has led the way in filbert research at Oregon State University and works closely with the United States Department of Agriculture, too. The magazine said he laid the groundwork for a large filbert, which he grows, for the nut bowl trade and a small nut for candy makers.

GUDRUN JEMTEGAARD graduated from Central Washington College of Education. Her first teaching job was at Mt. Pleasant for two years. Then she taught at Washougal's Hathaway School in Washougal for 40 years. After retiring she was honored by the Washougal School District when the Jemtegaard Middle School was named in her honor for her 40 years of dedicated work with the children of Washougal. Presently Gudrun is residing at Meadowglade Nursing home at Battle Ground. Gudrun's hobbies have included many kinds of art, flower growing, especially dahlias and daphodils.

Gudrun was the only one of the family who returned to Norway where she was born. In 1955, Marvin and Lois sent their daughter, Dicta, with Gudrun on Gudrun's first trip back to Norway. Together, Gudrun and Dicta visited relatives and friends that Gudrun remembered well, especially her 77-year old Aunt Anna Jemtegaard, where they stayed most of the summer. Mountain hiking to a seter cabin, crossing the fiord in a rowboat or ferry boat, seeing the land of the midnight sun, where it really does stay light all night, were some of the things they enjoyed.

Gudrun went to Norway in 1958, retracing many of the same paths and some new ones, too. This time she took her niece, Carolyn. One of the highlights of the second trip was seeing the parade of the newly crowned King Olav's coronation in Alesund, Norway. Carolyn also liked to remember seeing the headlines in a Norwegian newspaper that summer saying Alaska was becoming the 49th state. Seeing a world-known ski jump was another highlight in Oslo, Norway.

ROLF JEMTEGAARD married his neighborhood sweetheart, Mae Fitzgerald, and together they had a fairly long and a happy life. However, Mae passed away suddenly in 1973, shortly after their 40th anniversary. Rolf and Mae bought property adjoining his parents' homestead which included the Louis Hall Place, the Poser place and the Hiram Marble place. Rolf and family raised a few dairy cows for while, did a lot of custom farm work and gradually switched to raising beef cattle.

Mae had made their yard into one of special attractiveness with a three-tiered

rock wall in front of the house and steps going up through the middle of it. The rock type flowers, carnations, primroses, honeysuckle and crocus were just a few she grew there. Rolf and Mae had some of the biggest and best apples they knew of, called "20 oz.". You could make an apple pie or applesauce in a hurry with big apples like those.

In the early '40's Rolf delivered milk between Mt. Pleasant and Carson for Cedar Dell Dairy, which his brother-in-law was operating at that time. Rolf did road work and other jobs, but his life long interest was always farming and power. He has had an intense interest in the high waterfalls his family has told him about in Norway for the use of hydropower. He has read about and seen other waterways that are, or could be, excellent sources of hydropower. The power is needed whether it be windmill, hydro, solar or nuclear. Rolf was elected to the Skamania County PUD Board of Directors in 1958, and retired there in 1981. His work for the PUD is known by many dedicated people throughout the state and beyond that.

Rolf and Mae's life-long interest together was in this Grange, its heritage, its voice in governing matters such as the Washington State Grange's Power Bill in the 1930's that helped pave the way for hydropower in rural areas. They were always dedicated to their Grange work whether it be installation and degree work, smorgas-bords, keeping the water pipes from freezing up, or matters where the Grange has a voice in the laws of the land.

Rolf has always been an avid reader, beginning this trait when very young. I, his daughter, believe that none of his children have the knowledge from reading of history and literature than that of my Dad. Rolf and Mae had three boys: Rolf, Bob and Arvin, and a daughter, Carolyn. There are seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

MARVIN JEMTEGAARD set out as a young man and served for the state as a District fire warden. Many are the tales he can tell from this experience of fighting fire. Marvin was also a state game warden, both for the protection and preservation of man and animal. He has been hugged ravenously by a bear and shot a cougar jumping at him. Anyone who hasn't heard one of Marvin's dog, bear or cougar stories haven't heard a good story!

Marvin married Lois Staack from Glenwood in 1938. They had seven children, two of whom died in childhood. First they lost Larry Lee and then Marvin Edward. Remaining are Dicta, Alma, Irene, Jack and Annette. Marvin and Lois have 10 grandchildren, plus one more due any day soon now.

Marvin worked in the logging business for many years and was well known as a skilled timber faller. Later he worked for Bonneville Power Administration as a danger tree timber faller.

Marvin and Lois and their family have had much interest in rocks, especially those here in Lawton Creek. Marvin makes hand-made jewelry from them. The family has always been active with their filbert and fruit orchard, beautiful varieties of rhododendrons and many wild and domestic plants.

Their goal in recent years have been to see the farms and land of Mt. Pleasant and the Columbia River Gorge left for the people who have done so much work to make it the way it is today and leave it for their descendants, or whoever comes after,

preserved as it is.

Marvin and Lois' other interests include the Skamania County Sports Council, National Rifle Association, Historical Society, Navy Mothers, Veterans, and Washington Women in Timber