

## **Erna and Clifford Riskedahl History**

**\_\_ Erna Sauter, born May 28, 1916, was the 5<sup>th</sup> child born to Eberhard and Mathilda Sauter. She was the third oldest of the seven daughters, behind Hilda and Louise.**

**Erna's growing up years were spent, initially on a family farm southwest of Tuttle and later a small farming enterprise owned by her parents north of the baseball park, just north of the city limits of Tuttle, ND in Kidder County. She was educated in the Tuttle School system, graduating from Tuttle High School in 1934.**

**Erna's marriage to Clifford Riskedahl, her high school sweetheart, took place at the Lutheran Parsonage in Driscoll, ND on June 25, 1939. In the several years between high school graduation and her marriage, she lived and worked at the family farm and then traveled to Chicago where she worked as a nanny in an affluent, primarily Jewish suburb of Chicago. This opportunity had arisen in part because of her connection with Clara Riskedahl, Clifford's oldest sister, who was residing in Chicago during the mid 1930's.**

**The decade of the 1940's had a number of significant happenings for Erna and Clifford, including the births of their three children, Burt in 1940, Barbara in 1943 and Laura, in 1948. After residing in a small rental property in north Tuttle, owned by Roy Gorsline, the couple moved to a larger, older home in the block where the Tuttle English Lutheran Church is now located. They made some improvements to this home, including indoor plumbing and a septic system in the early 1940's. The last half of the decade represented prosperity for many folks in ND as a result of several good farming years and progressive programs which rolled out following the conclusion of WWII in 1945. Clifford had acquired three quarters of land from his father, on which he raised small grains while at the same time working full time in the Kremenetsky Store. Clifford had been mentored in the business field by Henry K. who hired him to work in the store starting in high school, naming him manager of the store in the mid 1940's and culminating with the sale**

of the store to Erna and Clifford in 1948, the same year that the couple had their new home built on the north side of town next door to Tuttle School. The new house was 'move in' ready when Erna returned home from the Bismarck Hospital in September of 1948 with new baby Laura.

While the 1940's represented many good happenings for the young couple with three children, there were also significant challenges. Clifford's drive to be a successful businessman as well as a part time farmer resulting in long work weeks. Erna was left with the vast majority of child care responsibilities as well as maintaining the home and gardens, while also occasionally working at the store. Throughout the marriage Erna maintained a close relationship with the Lutheran Church, volunteering significant time as a Sunday School Teacher and church organist. They were busy and sometimes stressful years. Erna longed for more family down time and occasional short vacations, which rarely occurred. The couple also had to negotiate differences related to their being raised in two distinctly different cultures. Clifford's family was straight-laced Norwegian Lutheran while the Sauter family represented more boisterous, sometimes fun-loving styles, along with Germans from Russia traditions, including social occasions such as dances which would include more openness and frivolity than what typically characterized the Scandinavian families in the community. Grampa Sauter, Erna's father drank quite a bit on a regular basis, apparently during most of the growing up years for the Sauter children. His drinking resulted in at times erratic behavior and sometimes what was perceived as emotionally abusive conduct, much of it directed at the female children of the family. There was significant animosity between the adult Sauter girls and their father, some of which may also have been due to their perception that their mother was not treated well at times by Eberhardt. Erna and Clifford had clashes at times which seemed related to cultural differences in their upbringings. Clifford's conservative financial philosophy sometimes collided with Erna's perception that money could be made more readily available for household needs. The couple both had strong work ethics and worked together to amply provide opportunities, including educational opportunities for all three of their children.

**The closeness of the 'Sauter Girls' and the close ties they maintained in later life was a significant factor in the development of all the subsequent families that resulted from the marriages of all of the girls, other than Louise and Ruby. Numerous family gatherings, including the extended families and the cousins who grew up as the children of the Sauter girls were instrumental in shaping the growing up experiences of all of the grandchildren of Mathilda and Eberhardt. Erna also had a particularly close relationship with Louise and Ruby due to their many years of employment in the store, which had been renamed 'Riskedahl's store following acquisition by Erna and Clifford in 1948.**

**As their marriage progressed, by the time their children were emancipated the couple took more frequent opportunities for short vacations, including some international travel. During their later years together Erna and Clifford traveled to Norway a couple trips and also did some visits to tropical climates which were organized by the Super Valu Company for the benefit of their dealers.**

**Erna's life took a difficult turn with Clifford's sudden and unexpected death from a heart attack in December of 1972, four days after the family Christmas gathering in Tuttle, which by then included grandchildren, Mark and Diane which had been born to Burt and his wife, Margo, and Kara, the daughter of Barbara and Albert Hisley. A fourth grandchild, Joshua Clifford, was born to Barbara and Al Hisley in the year following Clifford's death. At the time of his death Clifford was 57 and Erna was 56.**

**After Clifford's death, Erna's attention was more deliberately focused on her children and grandchildren. She continued to live in Tuttle for 5 years following his death, during which time she had operated a small gift store operation out of the basement of the family home, called 'The Marigold Shop.' She moved to Bismarck later in the 1970's, initially purchasing a 3 bedroom family home, downsizing to a condo at the Plaza Tower Condominium Complex when she turned 80. During the more than twenty years that she resided in Bismarck she retained very close contact with her surviving siblings. During those years, Edwin, Viola, Ruby, Mae**

**and Hilda had spent time living in Bismarck and Louise had been confined to a long term care facility there also as a result of a severe stroke, which eventually led to her death. Erna remained a devoted member of the Lutheran denomination until her death at age 90 on July 28, 2006.**

**Erna will be remembered as a devoted mother and grandmother. She was an outstanding seamstress and in later life did many artistic cross stitch pieces which she shared with her children and grandchildren. Grandma Sauter had done extensive sewing and crocheting for the benefit of her family and her skills as a seamstress had been passed down to all the Sauter sisters. Erna's generosity also included significant gift giving to those she loved. She remembered siblings, nieces and nephew along with her immediate family with cards and gift giving for birthdays and other occasions. Erna had a deep seated belief in the idea that people should always be treated equally. This trait generated respect and high regard on the part of people generally, but her children and grandchildren were sometimes humored and chagrined by the similarity of the gifts they received from their mom and grandma. At the same time, she was deeply loved for this life long trait.**

**Erna and Clifford are buried at the Tuttle Cemetery.**

**Submitted by Burt Riskedahl ... July, 2021**