

Woman writes life stories for her family

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Though many of us have thought about sharing the story of our lives with our grandchildren, one Oberlin woman has completed not only information on her own life, but also of her late husband.

Doris Sloan says she encourages everyone to do the same.

She said she decided to carry out the project in November 1989, addressing it to her grandchildren:

"This weekend was Veterans Day, and this past week the Berlin Wall came down. This has caused me to think a lot about your Grandpa (Cleland Sloan). I recalled how, when the Berlin Wall went up, it changed the course of our entire lives. This Veterans Day brings to mind another event that many years earlier had greatly influenced our lives.

In 1940, your Grandpa was a young man and the threat of war in Europe was on the minds of everyone.... In December, Grandpa and his brother Dennis joined the Kansas National Guard and were sent to Camp Robinson, Ark., for training.

On Dec. 7, 1941, Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. The United States declared war on Germany and Japan. Within a few hours, Grandpa was on a train heading for California and then on to the Pacific area, but they were kept in California on coastal guard duty. Some of their division were sent to the Pacific, but Grandpa remained in California with the 35th Division until February 1943. At that time, they were sent to Fort Rucker, Ala., and Tennessee for maneuvers. January of 1944, they were sent to Durham, N.C., to prepare to be shipped overseas and they left the States in May.

They spent time in England and 30 days after D Day, July 6, 1944, they landed in France and fought a long, hard battle through France and Germany until the war ended in 1945.

Grandpa was a supply sergeant for a reconnaissance troop and worked hard to see that they were kept in supplies: food, clothing, fuel and ammunition. He came home and was discharged June 17, 1945.

We moved near Norton in 1954 and Grandpa soon helped to organize and joined the Kansas National Guard in Norton. He was a good soldier and really liked the military. He took a job as a civilian employee of the Guard and worked hard at recruiting to help build the unit.

August 1961, the Berlin Wall went up and again our country and freedom were threatened. In September, the Norton National Guard unit was activated and in November was sent to Fort Riley. By February 1962, he had decided to enlist in the regular Army and finish out his years to retirement. We were going to move to Fort Riley in June, but May brought orders for Korea in August, so the family stayed in Norton. Fourteen months he spent in Korea and they were hard months for him.... He returned in October 1963 and we moved to Oklahoma City where he was an advisor to the U.S. Army Reserves.

That was a full-time job with evening and weekend drills and at least six weeks of summer camp for his units, as well as notifying families of soldiers' deaths in Vietnam.

An assignment to Germany came in February of 1967. We went to Heidelberg, with was U.S. Army Reserve and 7th Army.... When serving in a foreign country, you learn how very important the United States is to you and how important it is to keep our freedom.

He traveled to many other countries besides Germany, checking property books of Army units. We left Germany in November 1969 to return home and in January, Grandpa went to Fort Lee, Va., for five weeks of school before going to Vietnam. In February he went to Washington State, but because of his father's illness, came back to



Doris Sloan

Fort Riley until October. At that, he went to Vietnam.

The heat and humidity were really hard on him. He was assigned to the Vietnamese Army as an advisor and made many friends among the people there. He was invited into their homes to eat and had a little problem with that, as he wasn't sure what he was eating. He was very careful not to insult them because they showed him great respect....

His father died in August 1971 and he returned to Fort Riley for his next assignment. There his job was as an Inspector General, which was a stressful job. At noon one day, after a grueling inspection one morning in September 1972, he suffered a severe heart attack. In February 1973, he was retired with a permanent disability after 26 years in the Army.

I am writing this because I want you to know how important it was to your Grandpa to make sure his grandchildren could enjoy a country of freedom. In his travel in foreign countries, he saw what it was like to not have this freedom that we enjoy, so I am saying to you, you must carry on the love of this country that your grandpa spent so many years making sure you might have. You can do this by serving your country, not so much in the military, unless you choose this, but in many other ways....

Mrs. Sloan also wrote of her own life to her grandchildren:

I was born the oldest child of Ira and Dolly Wasson, May 8, 1920, in Bassettville Township, Decatur County, Kan.

I was the first grandchild of William and Daisy Brainard. I had two younger uncles and one aunt. I always felt warm and loved when thinking of my childhood and all my relatives....

My brother Donald was born in February before Grandfather Wasson died in June.... I went to school at Vickers, two miles south of home — no road, just a trail and pasture gates. Uncle Jesse was my protector my first year. He was in fourth grade, I think, and was my best friend. I went to Sunday School at Vickers church, across from the school. We had many programs and would wear crepe paper dresses, do drills and little dances....

My first teacher was Lela Trimble, who was just out of high school; my second- and third-grade teacher was Zelma Barratt Cox and our schools had "play days." Flossie Shields Sloan was from another school and was one of my best friends. Other teachers were Mary Stastney Francis, Irene Counter Ayers, Edith Anderson and Billie Shields Winkler. Edith Anderson was my most outstanding teacher — she taught me so many things, so much music and art appreciation, to be kind and loving and never use the word "hate" in any way....

When we were a little older, Donald and I drove a horse and buggy to school. We wrapped up in blankets and Dad would put straw at our feet



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to keep warm. The horse was never very willing to go to school, but he really got us home in a hurry....

Christmas was a wonderful time. Dad would cut a tree from the pasture, Santa would come Christmas Eve and put up the tree for us. Christmas morning, it would be lit with candles, popcorn and cranberries that we strung and paper chains....

I always had lots of pretty dresses that my mother sewed for me. When school started, I would have five new dresses, one for each day. Mother also crocheted and I had pretty tams or caps.

My little sister, Daisy, was seven years younger than me. By the time she was old enough to play with Donald and me, I was old enough to help with the house work and outside chores. Donald and I always had to bring in wood and corn cobs....

Dad would cut our winter supply of wood down on the creek, and how we loved on Saturday to go with him all day with the team and wagon to haul up the logs he had cut. We'd take a lunch and ride home in the wagon with the logs. He had a buzz saw with gasoline motor — so modern. He would cut the logs up and Donald and I would pile them up neatly. I hated picking up corn cobs out of the pig pen the most, but they made a fast, hot fire and mother used them when she baked bread and ironed....

I helped farm a little, drove four horses to a corn weeder one summer before Donald was big enough. We always went to town on Saturday evenings except in the winter. We went to the movies a lot but didn't dare tell Grandma Wasson. Didn't dare play cards, couldn't go to Sunday ball games, but we were very happy, had everything we needed and lots of love and all through our childhood we felt secure and loved....

I graduated from eighth grade in Oberlin and mother made me a yellow eyelet dress in 1934. My Uncle Jesse graduated from high school the same year and we went to his senior play. That was the first time I saw Cleland Sloan. He was in the play and I thought he was so handsome.

A few days later, he, Uncle Jesse and some friends came to visit my grade school. I was so excited — my good-looking uncle and his good-looking friend.

I started high school in Selden in the fall of 1934 and stayed all four years with my Brainard grandparents. I was very fond of them, and have many, many happy memories of those four years.

The depression came about 1930. and by the time I was in high school, things were pretty tight. The folks took meat, butter, cream and eggs to the grandparents for my room and board.

Cleland dated my sophomore class sponsor and she roomed next door to my grandparents. We had a class skating party north of Selden



THE SLOANS on their 40th wedding anniversary on July 6, 1982, at the home of their daughter and her husband, Judy and Dennis Shirley, rural Norcat. They were living in St. George at that time and he was serving in the Army at Fort Riley.

on the Prairie Dog Creek. Cleland was helping the girls learn to skate. It was my turn, and as we went out on the ice, one foot went one way and one the other way. I knocked my "teacher" Cleland down and I fell on top of him. I always say that is "when he fell for me." I've never had a pair of ice skates on since that day!

I have many happy memories of high school, class parties, school operettas and plays. My senior year, I was chosen 'The most all-round outgoing student' and I was asked to speak at graduation. I loved it!

The dust storms were really bad all during high school, and children died from dust pneumonia.

After I graduated, we had a home economics teacher who was determined I should go to college and wanted to find me a place to work for my room and board at Kansas State. However, my father was a very proud man and said if he couldn't send me and pay my way, I couldn't go. At that time, there was no way he could do that, as Donald was in high school, too. I was disappointed but don't remember being terribly upset. I accepted it....

I went to high school in Oberlin that year and took a normal training

course, which allowed me to receive a two-year teachers certificate. I applied for Lund and Hawkeye and was offered both schools. I chose Lund because it was close and I could drive from home. One year, we had so much snow that I had to board with Hilda and Herb Anderson, who lived across the road from the school. She packed me a lunch and they didn't go to town very often, so I ate a lot of headcheese sandwiches and eggs.

Cleland joined the National Guard and left in December for Little Rock, Ark., and was only to serve a year. He joined the Army, was stationed in California and his feelings for me seemed pretty serious. Flossie Shields was dating his brother Dennis, and had gone to California in February. They decided to get married in June.

By then, Cleland was urging me to come to California. Flossie asked me to go out with her the middle and June and I'm surprised that I had the nerve to go. I'm sure my parents weren't very happy over that. Cleland was stationed in Los Angeles and Dennis in Pasadena.

We took the Rocket from Colby, which was an experience for me. I had only made a trip to Denver be-

fore on the train with a friend....

We arrived in Los Angeles about midnight, and needless to say, we were two meek girls in a big city, afraid to venture out of our hotel....

On June 20, Dennis and Flossie were married in Pasadena in the chapel of the Methodist Church. We were their attendants. Cleland was urging me to get married and it took a while for him to get a three-day pass so we could. My mother sent me money to buy a dress and shoes and I got a navy crepe with a big white organdy collar and navy shoes, size 4 1/2.

Finally, on July 6, he managed a pass. He stopped off to buy me a corsage of gardenias and as he was walking to the house, a hook and ladder fire truck stopped and offered him a ride. In view of the fact that he was on his way to his wedding, he had to pass that up. He never let me forget that!"

Cleland died on Jan. 23, 1988, and his wife moved to Oberlin in October 1991. They have two daughters, Judy Shirley and Cindi Sauder of Oberlin, and a son, Tom Sloan, Hoxie; seven grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.