



Young Gail



GAIL AND KAY MARCUSON, are shown when they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary with a picture from the wedding in the background. They lived in the Lund community until they retired and moved to Oberlin.



Young Kay



Couple met at a USO dance

By **MARYLOU OLSON**
ml.olson@nwkansas.com

The unlikely story of a young Swede from the Lund area southwest of Oberlin courting and marrying a girl who was born on a farm "way out in the boonies" near Viking, Alberta, in Canada, began during World War II when the guy was serving in the Navy at San Diego.

Gail and Kay (Dillane) Marcuson of Oberlin said that they met at a USO dance at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, where her parents, Perry and Ada Perry, were among the sponsors.

The couple will celebrate their 64th wedding anniversary in November. They are active members of the Lund Covenant Church south of Oberlin.

"My parents asked me if Dottie Strong, a friend of mine, and I would consider coming to the dance," Mrs. Marcuson recalled. "We both worked the 1-to-10 p.m. shift at the San Diego main post office, so it meant working on Sunday. Anyhow, we decided to go, and the rest is history."

"During intermission, the sailor I had been dancing with asked me if I wanted to go look at the moon. That wasn't for me! I escaped to the powder room and when I came out, I saw Dottie sitting with a sailor, having a Coke.

"I sat down with them and when the music started, the sailor wanted to dance with Dottie, so he said, 'I have a buddy in the library,' then he brought Gail in and introduced us. Gail does not dance, but he did that night.

"When the dance ended, the guys asked if they could walk us home, which they did. The two sailors said that they had leave on Memorial Day and asked if we would like to do something. We decided to go to the San Diego Zoo, so they met us at the post office and escorted us to my folks' house on the public bus. Before long, Gail and I became a couple."

Mrs. Marcuson's sister, Joyce and her family were making plans to move to Wisconsin, so when they had a farewell dinner at Anthony's Fish House in nearby LaJolla, her sister asked when she and Gail planned to tie the knot.

She told her that they really hadn't discussed a date, but her sister said if they would get married on their folks' 25th wedding anniversary, she would stay for the wedding.

"I guess Gail didn't think the idea was too bad," she said. "So, three weeks later on Nov. 29, 1945, we had a wedding in St. John's Episcopal Church in Chula Vista, and Gail's parents, Albert and Myrtle Marcuson, and his sister, Mildred, drove out from Kansas.

"I'm sure I wasn't much help, since my head was in the clouds. I wore my sister Ruth's wedding gown, and she also managed to sew up three bridesmaids' dresses, plus a beautiful pink 'going away' suit for me. We got married and we have never regretted it."

The newlyweds rented a 'garage' apartment in Chula Vista, and she rode the bus to Whitney's Department store in downtown San Diego while her husband rode the Navy bus out to Brown Field.

After Gail was discharged from the Navy on July 2, 1946, they hung around for a week so they could attend the wedding of her sister, Dottie before heading east for their future home in Kansas."

They bought a used 1937 Buick coupe and loaded up all of their earthly goods for the drive to Lund.

They stayed with his parents for a month until they got a little house cleaned to live in. It was 3/4 of a mile north of Hjalmer's Junkyard — a Lund landmark.

They lived there a little over a year, then Mr. Marcuson's dad bought another farm and they rented it from him.

The couple wrote the story of their lives for their nine grandchildren. In it Mrs. Marcuson said, "You really don't want to hear my thoughts on my first two years in Lund! Needless to say, I must have felt just like my mother did when my dad moved her from London to a 12' x 14' house on the Canadian prairie."

Her husband was busy building up the farm, but he also built them a beautiful home with all of the things that are considered essential — bathroom, running water, electricity, etc.

Their first child, Diane Gail, was born on Aug. 17, 1949, then Julie Beth came on July 8, 1951; Richard LeRoy on Oct. 19, 1952, and last, but not least, Bradley Allan on Dec. 11, 1954.

Then in 1976, they started on another project — building a new home on land beside U.S. 83.

"Wow, no more muddy roads and only 8 miles to Oberlin," she recalled. "I had so much fun pick-

ing out all the things that go into a new home — all at one time. Gail also gave me a fireplace, which I had wanted for years. We enjoyed that home for 15 years, then it was time to move into Oberlin, and our son, Brad and his wife, Elaine, and Leslie, Sarah and Jared, moved to the farm.

Mr. Marcuson said he still enjoys going out the farm and helping his son.

The couple said their backgrounds were quite different. Mrs. Marcuson's father told her that during World War I, he served in the Canadian Army and was sent to England. While there he met Ada Gurney. After the war was over, he returned to Canada and they carried on a mail courtship. A year later, after he had saved up enough money to pay Ada's boat fare, he sent for her.

"Imagine," she said. "Ada came from London and Perry had a small farm in Canada. What a shock it must have been to Ada, but she had determination and love for Perry, so they settled down to start their lives together."

They had three daughters while in Canada, then in Nov. 1928, the couple and their three little girls started out on a grand adventure from cold Canada to sunny California.

She said that the girls often say, "That's the best decision our parents ever made for our family and we are forever grateful."

A brother joined the three girls and they used to tease Allan that he must have brought on the Great Depression. However, he added a lot of boy enthusiasm to their family and they all loved him dearly.

Mr. Marcuson's father, Ture Albert Marcuson, served in the U.S. Army during World War I in Germany and returned home in 1919. He started courting Ruby Peterson and they married on April 14, 1920. He was 30 and his wife was 19. They had five children, Glenn, Gail, twins Doris and Donis, and Mildred.

He remembers that when his brother Glenn first saw the babies, he said, "Oh boy, lots of them!"

When Gail was 5, the Swede Home country school teacher felt sorry for his mother with four little ones and another one on the way, so she suggested that he might as well come along with Glenn to school.

"A wonderful memory for me was when the teacher let all of the boys go to the Alvin Wenger home, 1/4 mile from the school, to listen to the

World Series on their radio. It was a real thrill to hear the bat strike the ball," he said.

During the summer, he and Glenn herded cattle — there were no electric fences then. One summer he herded cattle for a neighbor for a week and his pay was \$1.

He remembers well the summer when he was bitten by a rattlesnake.

"That was one of the miracles that happened to me. I nearly died, because it took 18 hours to get the antidote here. Another hour's time would have been too long.

"Another miracle in my life was when I was in the right place at the right time when a cardiac arrest happened. God really has constantly been at my side," he said.

Farming was good in the 1920s, then things changed in the 1930s. The depression was bad enough, but the lack of rain and the dust storms made it much worse in the Midwest.

His mother, Ruby, was diagnosed with cancer and died on June 17, 1935, leaving his dad with five young children to raise."

Mr. Marcuson attended Decatur Community High School and graduated in 1940.

His father married Myrtle Tabor in Portland, Ore., on April 12, 1941, and he said that he is so thankful they had 48 years together,

"World War II made a big change for young people my age. Most all young men were called to serve. I was deferred for a year to help on the farm, and I didn't like it that I had to stay home. I realize now that God has a plan and all the things that happened were really so I could meet Kay," he said.

He joined the Navy in August 1944 and that was a big change for a farm boy from Kansas. He was sent to Farragut, Idaho, for boot camp, then trained at Norman, Okla., before going to San Diego.

"That's the best thing that could have happened," he told his grandchildren, "because I met your Grandma Kay. I had no idea of meeting someone special, but it was the best thing for both of us. I'm thankful for the many events that led up to our marriage.

"To spend a year in wonderful California and to meet and get the girl of my dreams, it couldn't have been better, and we thank God for such a wonderful family."



AT THEIR WEDDING RECEPTION in Chula Vista, Calif., Gail and Kay Marcuson (above) cut their wedding cake. They are shown (below) in 1947 at the home of her parents in California after they had moved to Kansas.

