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REMEMBERING OLGA RECHNITZER

by

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with an Introduction by Wayne Ray

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In the spring of 1996 I was in the last semester of the Library Technician Program at Fanshawe College in London Ontario taking an archives course. One of the projects we had to do was record the history of a house in London Ontario. Having previously published the diaries of Olga Rechnitzer and her sister, Alexandra, I chose to look into the history of the house that they lived in during the period of time that the diaries were written. The two diaries along with the diary of their mother, are located in my archive holdings at the Scott Library Archives, York University, North York Ontario. The diaries were given to me by a cousin of hers who related to me that no-one in the family wanted them. Alexandra's granddaughter is named Olga.

124 Ridout Street London Ontario
Plan 419, Lot #1, 53.6 feet by 90 feet

2005 New Owners

1996/97 Rented by Beauty by Bea Hair Salon Lower level only. Upper apartment is for rent. Owned by a Mrs. Lourdes who lives in Toronto.

1994/5 Exterior of the house was covered with aluminum siding, covering the original anthracite / mica / concrete & wire, stucco and wood.

1978-1986: William of Vienna and Grand Ave Beauty Salon occupied the site.

1975-1978: Hair Care by Edmund and William of Vienna (who is now located on Wharncliffe at Blackfriars and the apartment was rented by R. Claes.

1969: Apartment occupied by Cathy Henderson.

1959: Sold to Cecil Carruthers by Mr. occupant.

1957-1966: Owned and occupied by Henri Vermeltoort .Presently living in London. He has no memorable stories or photographs of the house.

1956: Owned by Thomas Wilson

1955: Owned by Mr. F. Arcese

1954: Owned by Mr. H.W. Coulson

1927-1953: Owned by Velda and William Morton

1947-1953: No information

1940-1947: Occupied by Isabel Rechnitzer. Isabel was a Relief Worker with London Welfare.

Two daughters:

Olga and Alexandra

Olga died in 1947 at the age of 18 of renal failure.

Diaries published by HMS Press:

Remembering Olga Rechnitzer (1997)

Alexandra married Olaf Henderson

Two sons:

Olaf Henderson (adopted but recently found birth parents) London Ontario

Eric Henderson (has renal failure as well and is on kidney dialysis). Victoria BC

1935-1939: Occupied by RT Gee, of Gee Luminous Products.
1934: Occupied by FC Brock.
1933: Occupied by Mrs. A. Kirkpatrick.
1927-1932: O Occupied by Robert Rawlings.
1926-1927: Occupied by Mrs. J. Addy.
1925: Occupied by Orlando and Barbara Taylor, merchants.
1924: Occupied by Mrs. Eliza Lane, widow of John Lane.
1922-23: Occupied by William Laing, a brakeman with CNR.
1921: Occupied by Mrs. Jackson.
1918-1920: Occupied by WJ Milton, manager of Central Garage in London.
1915-1918: There are no records of the house on Ridout Street prior to 1914. The occupancy records start in 1915 with CA Mann of CA Mann Wholesale Produce at 78 King St., who lived in the house until 1917.

Before 1914 the spot that the house was located on was part of an Estate at 17 Grand Ave. The house no longer survives but was demolished. A later dwelling on the corner was moved by truck, according to Olaf Henderson, to the South East corner of Ridout and Emery. Information is scarce on this finding.

The London- Westminster Road Records show that in July 1849 an application was put forward to the City of London to extend Ridout Street, south from the river Thames, extending all the way to Commissioners Road and having a width of 66 feet. The only claimant for compensation was a William Casey who received 12 pounds and ten shillings per acre for what land belonged to him at the time of the survey. A new bridge was built at this time.

Wayne Ray August 1997
Library Technician

Remembering Olga Rechnitzer

Sunday January 02 1944

Fred called to thank me for the Christmas card, he had been in Montreal.

Monday January 03 1944

Got my exams, failed in three.

Tuesday January 04 1944

Went up town in the afternoon, met Fred but he stopped and talked to Phyllis Radyun.

Went to see 'Girl Crazy'.

June 21 1947

Mum's wedding was very lovely. A small service in Colborne St. United Church and a small reception at Aunt Jean's and Eric's. The Mrs. Conolly arranged a surprise party at 124 Ridout St. and everyone was there. M rim and George left at 6pm for Toronto and then to Collingwood. Olga was ill that night and the next day. We drove to Port Stanley to see Ga-Ga and there Olga got a terrible headache. We are going to put her in the care of Dr. Bartram specialist and Dr. Simpson will work on the case together. I'm terribly worried about her.

Sunday January 09 1944

Gordie and Mr. Seigrest came over for dinner. We played cards and Gordie gave both Allis and I a New Years kiss - really nice.

Monday January 10 1944

Today, or rather tonight I went to the basketball game over at South. South Seniors against Navy. Fred was there and watched me quite a bit, but Iris Young was also there and did nothing but look at him. South lost 17-44. The Navy could really play. This weekend I am going to Katheryne Parkers. Also got a letter from Earl today.

Tuesday January 11 1944

Am going for my music lesson and to the library tonight.

June 24 1947

Have been inquiring about Olga and hear that she isn't so well again, but is going to Dr. Bartram tomorrow. I'm afraid his report won't be very good.

June 25 1947

Olga had a cardiograph today but Bartram says he will discuss results with Dr. Simpson before they will know.

January 13 1944

Today, Bob Douglas was announced dead.

Friday January 14 1944

Went to Strathroy to visit Kay Parker. Dick Pencombe and Bob Osteryard came over and we danced. About 4:30 we went down into town and had something to eat. Bob is cute, an American, soon to join the US Air Force.

June 26 1947

Called London to see how Olga was and Jane McPherson who is staying there tonight says Olga's face is swollen and headaches are still bad - Paul and I are driving down tonight to stay until Mum gets back.

June 27 1947

Stayed with Olga all last night and will sleep in her room tonight. She is very sick and I don't think Simpson is paying enough attention to her condition. I got next to no sleep and was terribly tired today. Dr. is coming tomorrow.

January 15 1944

We went skating at night until around ten o'clock. We went back to Kathryn's and changed our clothes so that we could go dancing at the town hall. Went dancing and had lots of fun. Bob had the habit of chewing the back of my hair on my forehead. Went out to eat afterwards then we went home. I hope to see him again and I hope he comes to London soon.

Sunday January 16 1944

Slept late at Parkers, came home on the 5:45. Went out for dinner with Mr. Seigrest and mom. Baskette and Doug Knowles were there.

Monday January 17 1944

Slept in this morning. Went to school this afternoon, thrilled to pieces because of Bob Osteryard. Got the front of my hair feather-cur. Mom went down town on the bus with Fred. He told mom that his brother Erwin had a baby boy.

June 28 1947

Spoke to Simpson on phone yesterday and he shocked me by saying that Olga had only a year to go - maybe less. I can't believe it - yet instinctively know it's maybe less. Why didn't he warn us of such a dangerous condition? He saw Olga today and told her she was to have "no visitors". She has sub-acute edema now and blood pressure has been as high as 220. He said three years ago he put her life span at about 28. Why didn't he tell us then how serious it was? Mum came home but wasn't told the whole story.

June 30 1947

George knows everything and is going to see the Dr. soon. Paul and I stayed at Aunt Jean's and Eric's Sunday and I took a sleeping pill. Everything reminds me of Olga and I wish we had done many more things together. I love her so much and life will not be nearly as gay and worthwhile when she goes. If only I could convey to her how much I love her.

Thursday January 20 1944

Alice got her hair cut very short to-day, almost feather-cut - It looks mal cute. Went to Labatt's to-day and saw all my old friends in the mailing department. It was fun seeing them again.

July 02 1947

We got home today July 02, Tuesday and are going to London tomorrow. Einer got a dachshund puppy for Olga because we told him she wanted one. We will deliver it tomorrow and will stay until Friday evening.

Friday January 21 1944

Saw G.P. today, didn't thrill me in the least. Stayed home to-night to clean silver. K. Parker came up with D.P. to go to the movie. Dick said he would give Bob, my love and I told him to bridge Bob up to London some time. Gee I was thrilled.

August 08 1947

Olga has been sick on and off all during July. Not too bad though. She left with Uncle Eric for Bayfield today - The trip may do her some good.

August 10 1947

Olga was sick in Bayfield. She didn't tell Aunt Jean how really bad she was.

August 12 1947

Olga has improved a bit and is enjoying her stay in Bayfield.

August 23 1947

Olga not very well all during this month. Has spells of feeling alright and then gets a headache. Bob McBride is very attentive and he is someone to aide Olga over "until I get well enough to find someone else" she says.

Friday February 18 1944

To-day I phoned up Fred and asked him if he would like to go to the co-ed dance this year. Much to my amazement he said yes and he also said he would give me a ring to-morrow around one o'clock.

September 08 1947

Olga has another uraemia attack and this time will likely be the last. Paul and I in London for the weekend (6&7) and I stayed on to look after Olga. Her face is a bit swollen, but not much. Headaches unbearable.

September 09 1947

Got two nurses in to look after Olga. She knew Dorry quite well as Bob used to take her out. Olga starting to want bed-pan but kidneys not functioning. Head bad. Dr. ordered Morphine pills but they don't seem to agree with her.

September 10 1947

Olga removed to hospital. I went in ambulance with her. She can't see awfully well. Is terribly brave and still has great faith.

September 11 1947

Olga's face very swollen and neck the same way. She wanted a mirror but we wouldn't give her one. Headache not as bad. Pantapone has been substituted for Morphine and seems to work better. Mum and I are with her constantly - doing it on shifts. Dr. Simpson delayed to call Dr. Brian but finally did. Brian very nice and explained how a good kidney acts in nephritis and goes to uraemic stage. Simpson told Olga may go any time if a blood vessel breaks. Blood pressure was 260 today! Temperature quite high. Olga perspires a lot now on the forehead. Sleeps a lot. Was delirious on the 11th but clear-headed now. Swelling not as bad, but she told me she had been wrong in believing she would recover. Talks about dying a lot. Breathing very labored now. Tonight they gave her Oxygen which only frightened her and did no good. She has very little time left.

Saturday February 19 1944

Fred called about a quarter to two and we talked only for about fifteen minutes. He was then going skiing so that we had to cut the conversation.

September 15 1947

Chest is filling up with fluid. Mum and I are with her from 1 o'clock on until 6:30 - when Olga died. She was unconscious for about an hour or so before death. She was too sweet and young to die. I don't think there is a kind God anywhere.

September 17 1947

Olga's body and face look beautiful now. She got so many flowers and people are all saying "goodbye" to her. Funeral today. Olga has gone, but my first little girl will be named Olga Isabel and I will tell her a great deal about my other own dear Olga.

Monday August 07 1944

Today is my birthday - I am eighteen!