

**BACKGROUND** Olav Otheim was born at Otta, Gudbrandsdalen (valley), Oppland, Norway on August 3, 1899. He lived on a middle-sized farm on the south side of the river Otta near a town. There were a lot of tourists, and he was very aware of the outside world. Olav finished school in 1918 and took a job in Lillehammer. He had two jobs there, and finally ended up working in a bank for 10 years.

**EMIGRATION** Although Olav enjoyed Lillehammer, there was no chance of him advancing in his job; the other men in the bank were all younger than Olav. So, Olav decided to emigrate, waiting two years before he actually did so. His mother died in this time, so his father and his sister decided to go to America also. The family joined his three brothers in Crosby, North Dakota; Olav started working for these brothers right away in the hardware-  
implement business. Olav had some experience with English from working in the bank. He could read and write the language, but he had some trouble speaking it. When he was in North Dakota, the population was about 75% Scandinavian with a few Germans mixed in.

**RETURN TRIP TO NORWAY** In 1956 Olav and his wife went back to Norway. His wife is of Norwegian heritage but does not speak the language. In Norway Olav's family would have someone present at the gatherings that could speak English so that his wife would have someone to talk with. Olav didn't use Norwegian very much in Crosby, North Dakota, speaking mostly English.

**PARENTS** His father came over from Norway when he was 70 and died when he was 82. Olav's father never learned English. Everyday Olav's father walked to each of his sons' stores and stopped and chatted with the old-time Norwegians on his way.

**BROTHERS AND SISTERS** Olav's brothers and sister all wanted to be together - which was another reason why Olav, his father, and his sister all decided to come to America.

**LIFE IN AMERICA** Olav first went to Moscow, Idaho. He was looking for a place to start his own hardware store. He found a place in Kennewick, Washington in 1930. It was a Western Auto store, but independently owned.

**DEPRESSION** Went through the Depression and drought in Crosby, but there was nothing left there. Olav talks of how his uncle (70 years old) made it through the Depression and drought by fixing up bank owned places around the area.

**MARRIAGE** Olav met his wife in Kennewick. Her father was 'the' Norwegian there until Olav came along. Olav's father-in-law's name was Olav Brue. There weren't too many Scandinavians in Kennewick; had a small Lutheran church. Mr. Brue was born there, and Olav's wife was a third generation Norwegian. Olav married Olive Brue in 1942, and they had three daughters: Ingrid, Barbara, and Signy.

**CITIZENSHIP** Olav became a citizen as soon as possible - in five years. He tells stories about certification and how subjective the official was in deciding to whom to grant citizenship.

EMIGRATION TRIP Olav and his family came over on the 'Bergensfjord'. When they got to New York, the immigration officer just looked them over and let them through. They didn't have any problems.

REGRETS LEAVING NORWAY Olav says the only time he ever regretted leaving Norway was during the drought and Depression.

LIFE IN AMERICA Olav was not really taken by surprise by life in America. He had received letters about it from his brothers, people he met at the bank, and picture shows. Olav felt it was basically how he thought it would be.

COMMUNITY CLUBS Olav was involved in Kiwanis, the Chamber of Commerce, Lutheran Church (ALC) - served on the Board - and the Sons of Norway.

CAREER Olav worked hard six days a week to build up his store. He started a chain. In 1965 he retired and sold half the interest of the store to his nephew. A few years later he sold his nephew the rest.

NORWEGIAN HERITAGE Olav feels that his Norwegian heritage is important. He feels that most people respect your being Norwegian. To those that don't and ask, 'Why did you leave Norway?' Olav answers that they were lucky to be born here; he had to ask Uncle Sam for his citizenship. Olav is proud to be a Norwegian, but he doesn't wear it like a shield.

Olav did not teach his daughters any Norwegian because he didn't feel that it was necessary. His daughters have been to Norway with church choirs. Olav and his wife have taught the girls the important things about Norway and being Norwegian.

CHRISTMAS Olav's sister taught his daughters some of the traditional crafts and foods - customs brought from Norway. Olav is proud of how the Norwegians have built up their country since he left; Oslo is very modern.

Olav speaks in Norwegian.