

## Memories of Marian Adams Elder, Part 2

[Taken from answers to questions from her granddaughter Lorna Elder.]  
Grampa=Robert S. Elder Jr.; your dad=Robert S. Elder 3d (BE); my  
parents=Birney and Hazel Adams]

### Work

Between Junior and Senior high school years, Jaime's mother [Ann Stebbins, who married my brother Bob] and I worked at one of the dry-cleaning stores her father owned – \$10 a week, \$100 for the vacation – big bucks!

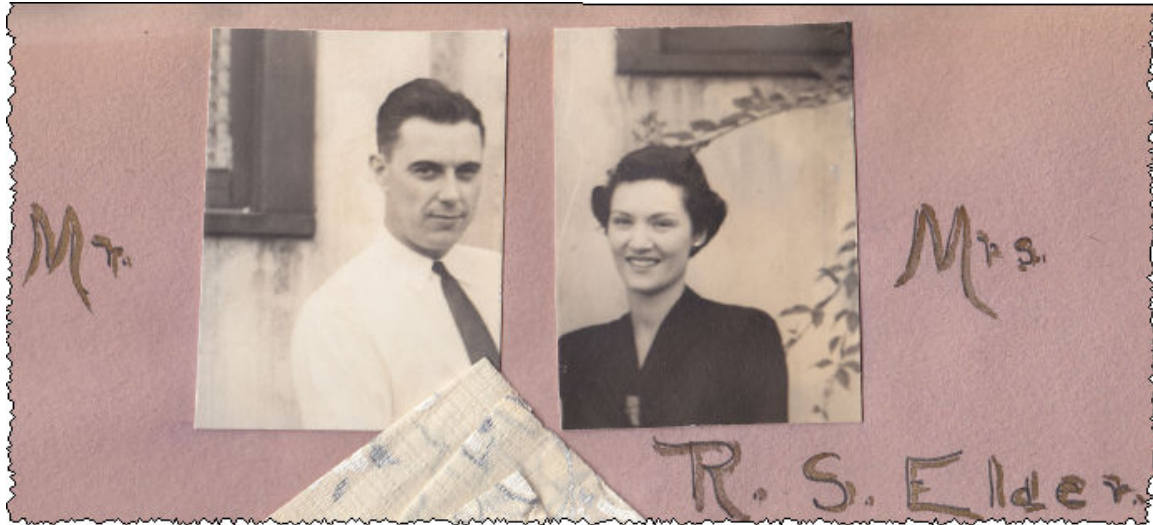
My first real job was as a comptometer (calculator) operator, figuring sales tax reports for the Michigan State Sales Tax office – for \$1000 a year! After a year or so, they opened an office in Detroit and several of the girls and I moved there.



Comptometer Model J

## Meeting Robert Elder Jr.

Grampa and I met when we were both living in the same apartment building in Detroit. He asked the credit manager to introduce us. He had a roommate and I had 2. We had seen each other in the dining room – married six months later.



from photo album

## The War

Everyone knew the U. S. would be getting into the war in Europe sooner or later. Japan had invaded Manchuria and China, and Italy had invaded Ethiopia. Grampa and I were married August 24, 1939, and on September 1 Germany invaded Poland. France and Britain declared war on Germany.

On the weekend of December 7, 1941, your dad and Grampa and I were visiting my parents in Lansing, when we heard on the radio that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor. Our greatest concern was for my brother, Paul, who had enlisted in the Coast Artillery a few months before rather than waiting to be drafted into the infantry. He had just been sent to the Canal Zone and there was speculation that Sunday that the Japanese would go on down to Panama to knock out that area in order to stop shipping through the Canal. They never did, as you know.

Later Paul was sent to NC (I think) to attend Officers' Candidate School, and after 3 months there was sent to the Pacific. He was a communications officer in New Guinea, which meant he was responsible for laying communication lines between army posts. He was in the retaking of Corregidore. Told us they could smell the stench of decaying bobies while still out at sea. When they landed, the flies were so thick they had to cover their mouths when they ate to keep the flies out. He was among the second landing force at Luzon and was eventually sent home from Manila at the end of the war.

My brother Bob was a geologist for Phillips Petroleum and because oil was so important was exempt from military service – which embarrassed him.

Both my sisters' husbands were in the army. Kick's husband Dick fell out of a jeep during the famous Battle of the Bulge and injured his knee; he was sent to hospital in England and then home. Jean's husband Bud served with Gen. Patton's 3rd Army during the battles in Germany to the end. And was lucky.

Grampa was too old to be drafted. He was 39 in 1941 and was Service Mgr. for the 4 factory-owned Cadillac branches around Detroit. At the main branch where his office was, they turned the used car department into a box factory for shipping guns. Cadillac made tanks (called M-5's, I think) during the war.

### **Life in Goodison, Michigan**



4705 Gallagher Road  
kitchen on back right; bedroom addition on left;  
pumphouse and driveway lower right (not in photo);  
chicken house/storage shed right rear (not in photo)

When Paula was born in 1943, we were living about 30 miles from Grampa's office in Detroit in the country. I had to go to a hospital in Detroit for the occasion, and Nana (Mother) came down to Rochester to stay with your dad. In those days new mothers and babies were kept in the hospital for 10 days. During those 10 days we had a blizzard all but the last one. Grampa had to park his car at the village store and walk up the road to our house about a half mile or more because the side roads hadn't been plowed. He had a man in the box factory make a big wooden sled, and the day Paula and I came home, he parked the car at the store, bundled us up on the sled and pulled us up the hill to the house. Nana and your dad saw us coming, so Nana put your dad in his high

chair and came down the long driveway to help push our sled up to the house. Afterwards your dad told us – and everyone – how Nana had helped Daddy push the sled, and that he sat in his chair and wet his pants.

Butter, meat, sugar, gasoline were rationed during the war and many things were scarce. We had ration books for food and gas. Gas was rationed on the amount necessary to get to work and back and very little extra. A friend of Grampa's had bought 2 Model A Ford coupes in order to get more gas stamps. (They lived in the country, too.) He sold one of them to us for \$25 – this was my car until after the war. It was 3 miles to Rochester where I did most of my shopping. Trips to Lansing were few then because of the gas. The little country store in the village of Goodison where Grampa parked his car was owned and operated by an older woman who tried to be fair in seeing that her customers had butter occasionally – and meat and cigarettes. People who smoked had to buy rolling devices and make their own cigarettes.

We were told to save bacon grease, and each time we took a Crisco can full of it to the store, we got an extra meat stamp.

Nylons were almost non-existent. One time a salesman gave Grampa 3 pairs, and the first time I wore a pair I caught one on something and tore a big hole in it. I could have cried.

The prior owners of our house had had chickens and had built a fenced-in chicken house, so one of the first things Grampa did was buy 200 chicks, and almost all of them lived. They helped the meat situation but I hated them when they were big enough to eat or lay eggs. I had to gather eggs each day and they'd peck me, so I'd take a handful of chicken feed to scatter on the ground. They'd fly off the nest to eat and I'd snatch the eggs. The worst part was having to clean and pluck them. We had chicken every Wednesday and Sunday. Grampa would kill one and leave it in a pail outside the kitchen door; I'd boil water to dip it in (for plucking the feathers off) and then cut a slit up the back end as far as I could without ruining it, grab the legs and spread them apart and shake to try to get the gunk out. It never worked and I'd have to take it all out with my hand. I couldn't stand the odor, so I'd take one of Grampa's handkerchiefs, sprinkle cologne on it and tie it over my face like a bandit's mask. I couldn't stand to eat giblets for as long as we had them.

Everybody had gardens – Victory Gardens, they were called. For our first one, Grampa bought 75 tomato plants. So I had tons of tomatoes which I canned in every way I could think of. There would always be some soft or squashed ones in the bottom of the pail and with those I got rid of my frustrations by taking them near the chicken yard and throwing them into it. The tomatoes would plop behind a chicken, the chicken would squawk and fly into the air and your dad and I would laugh. He'd want to throw some, too.

Our house had not been completed when we bought it, and many things like furnaces, pipes, etc. were hard to get. We had inside plumbing and a cistern for catching rain water in the basement. That water was piped to the bathroom, but we couldn't drink it, and we didn't have a water heater or furnace.

When our chickens started laying, Grampa took all the extra eggs into the office and sold them for 50¢ a doz. I put the money in a fruit jar on the top shelf of the cupboard and by the time the hens stopped laying – or had been eaten – we had enough money to buy a water heater. We could take a bath in our bathtub without heating water in big kettles on the stove.

We had a huge fireplace and 14 acres of oak trees around the house. Grampa would spend weekends cutting logs for the fireplace to last for a week, and we kept warm. We had a big kitchen; our living room was about 24 ft. square with cathedral ceiling (it must have been hot up there) and another large room that we used for a bedroom at first and that after the war was our dining room. The bathroom was off a short hall between the kitchen and bedroom/dining room.

Because all the auto manufacturers had switched to war manufacturing of some kind, Motor Wheel had to find something else to make, too. One of the things they made was oil space heaters, and my father got one for us to add to heating the house. After Paula was born, I'd put a kettle of water on top of the heater and set her bottle in it so it would be warm when she awoke for the 2 AM feeding.

For the first year we had to get our drinking water from a well about 50 ft. from the house – I mean we had to pump it ourselves! - and kept a pail of drinking water in the kitchen. One winter night when it was especially cold, we decided to close the door between the kitchen and living room to keep the heat in that part of the house. The next AM there was ice on top of our pail of water! That was the last time we did that.

Eventually – maybe the second year there – the rationing board gave us permission to get a furnace because we had two small children. Grampa was able to get an electric pump for the well, and we were able to end our pioneering days and live like city folk. The first year after the war when cars were being made again, we sold my Ford coupe. Grampa was always able to buy Cadillacs at cost, and from then on I drove one of them. [Actually, a red pickup truck came after the Ford: Grampa thought it would be useful to have, but Gramma wasn't thrilled to drive a truck with kids in the back, so it wasn't kept long – BE] Grampa earned a bonus large enough to add onto the house, and we were really civilized.

In spite of all our pioneering those first years we had fun. We made a toboggan slide down one of the hills on our property. Whenever it snowed hard, Grampa and other men who worked in Detroit would call each other to see if we

ought to have a toboggan party. Grampa would call me, and I'd call the wives. Sometimes we roasted hot dogs at the foot of the slide, or we'd come up to the house for hot chocolate and coffee.

We had sleigh-ride parties and learned to square dance and had community square dances at our little town hall – usually to raise money for the school or some other organization.

We gave an acre of our land to the Scouts and raised money in different ways – square dances, auction, July 4th strawberry shortcake festival, etc. – to buy material for a Scout building which the men built.

We lived there from 1941-1951 before moving to Oregon, and they were good years.