

# The Story of Albert & Mary (Cook) Lauzon

Joseph Albert Lauzon was a small man and his sisters say he was very conscious of it. He had an attitude that he had to prove his worth.

## BORN IN WYOMING



Mary Martha Cook was born at home in Buffalo, Wyoming. She was a premature baby, weighing only about 4 pounds at birth. Her father, Jim, remarked that since her hands were so small she'd wouldn't be able to hold a broom and "never be able to sweep the floor". She was called Mary Martha during her entire childhood, until she was out of high school.

The family lived in a two room cabin with an upstairs. It was at the outskirts of town, with an old irrigation ditch behind. Mary recalls the stories her mother told about Indians and wolves that were frequently around their home. The Indians would press their noses against the window to look into their house. Her father was frequently not at home because his business as a chauffeur for several important clients required him to take long trips. A women named Mrs. Stricker owned the house next door.

When Mary Martha was about 18 months old, she suffered from terrible attacks of the flu. Her parents gave her heavy doses of whiskey every 3-4 hours to combat it.

The family would go on picnics to the country, probably to visit Uncle Elmer & Aunt Bessie, who lived nearby at Buffalo Gap.

## MOVE TO WISCONSIN

When Mary was about 5 years old, the family moved to Wisconsin to help improve her mother's health. Mary had a bad case of the whooping cough that lasted almost a year. She went to kindergarten in Sparta for a year. When Mary Martha didn't get as good of school grades as her brothers, her mother blamed it on kindergarten, which the boys didn't have.

The family moved to Farmers Valley and Mary Martha attended that grade school for 2 years. They then moved to Fish Creek so to take care of a farm that her grandfather owned. Mary went to school at Fish Creek until the 7th grade.

### **MOVE TO SOUTH DAKOTA**

Mary's family moved to South Dakota, because the climate helped her father's health. She had to repeat the 7th grade because the move disrupted her learning.

### **RETURN TO WISCONSIN**

After only 3 years, they moved back to Fish Creek because her grandfather's health was failing and help was needed to run the farm. Mary had a mean pet horse, named "Prince". Water would gurgle in it's belly when it'd run. Mary Martha attended Bangor High School.



### **AL IN PRISION**

I found out about my father by looking for his name in the 1940 federal census, which was released in 2015. To my surprise, he came up with a residence in the Green Bay Reformatory. I think looked for his name in the online Racine Journal Times and found his robbery exploits (with 2 other fellows) spread through the papers. I don't know when he was released, but I'm guessing it was around 1941-2. He was married in 1944.

### **MARY, THE TEACHER**

Mary went to LaCrosse State Teacher's College for 3 years to become a teacher. She selected LaCrosse because it was nearby and she had several friends who were also going. After graduation she taught 1st and 2nd grades for a year in Norwalk, Wisconsin. She was laid off because an older teacher from a recently closed rural school needed a job. It also helped that the teacher knew the school superintendent. This, along with World War II, interrupted her brief teaching career.

Mary went home for the summer and worked at the family farm. In the fall she was convinced by her Aunt Myrtle to move to Elgin, Illinois to locate a job. Mary worked in a watch factory in Elgin, making clocks for military use. After a year, she returned home to help on the farm during the summer.



### **DAY CARE OWNER/OPERATOR IN RACINE**

In the fall of 1943, Mary and a friend from college, Ellen Sorenson, opened a day care center in Racine, Wisconsin at 1519 Washington Ave, which was a vacant store at the time. Racine was the home town of Ellen's sister. Mary and Ellen also lived upstairs above the center [1] at 1521 Washington, which rented rooms for apartments. After the Daycare closed, the building became the Uptown Bar in 1945 and in 1950 The Corner House Bar and Restaurant.

### **COOK MARRIES LAUZON**

Dances were frequently held across the street from the day care center, where the Village Ballroom operated at 1518 Washington Ave. Mary and Ellen finally decided to attend one and at the dance Mary met Joe (Al) Lauzon. They soon fell in love and got married.

The wedding was at 9:00 AM at Holy Name Church, by the Rev. John Schneider. The bride wore a green wool crepe suit and carried a rosary. Dorothy Lauzon (Lewandowski), the only attendant, wore a brown suit. Corsages were of yellow daisies and sweetpeas. Joseph Seifert was the best man. Following the ceremony a breakfast was held for 16 guests at the Hotel Nelson. A reception was then held at the home of the groom's parents, at 4135 Victory Avenue. Guests listed in the newspaper included: John and Marcelline Lauzon (groom's parents), Gladys Cook (bride's mother), Myrtle Cook, Bob & Yvonne Schmedling, Evelyn and Frank Spierbeaur.[9].

### **LIVING IN RACINE**

Joan Kittson Slama and Barb Wolters Reuss remember the little house that their Uncle Al built behind Grandma and Grandpa's house in Racine. They both remembered walking to Al & Mary's house either on a dirt road or grass. It was not a whole actual street way, visiting to play with the young ones on some of the trips to Grandma's. [8]

### **AL & MARY'S FAMILY**

Mary stayed at home during the first dozen years of her marriage to raise their six children.

### **IN KENOSHA**

The family moved to Kenosha County in about 1950. Pat Seifert Holub commented that in those days Uncle Albert's house seemed a long way away in the country, but as roads improved and everything became built up it didn't seem so far. [10]

Albert was always working on something around the house, a busy guy with lots of energy. Mary was calm and easy going [10].

### **TEACHING AS A WIDOW**

In the late 1950's Mary began to substitute teach and take classes at Dominican College to resume her teaching career. After her husband, Al, died in 1960, Mary taught for varying periods at Holy Rosary (3rd grade), Lincoln State Graded (3/4 grades), St. Marks (3rd grade), and St. Theresa (1st grade) schools. She usually taught in the lower elementary grades. Mary retired from teaching in 1981.

### **RETIREMENT**



In

retirement, Mary lived with her daughter, Bev, in Bristol, Wisconsin. She is a traveler.

Joseph Albert Lauzon "YOU CAN CALL ME AL" Joe was known as Al or Albert to his family, because Joseph was also the first name of his older brother. Al was called Joe by persons at work and outside the family.

### **HEALTH PROBLEMS**

Joseph Albert Lauzon was sickly most of his life. He had a big chest, which he was very proud of. He'd boast that it was muscle, and Dorothy would comeback, 'Yeah, chicken muscle' [5]. He had a nice build and was a good looking man. He had heart problems all of his life, which made it very difficult for him [5].

Al suffered from what was referred to as "leakage of the heart". He'd come back from school or elsewhere and his face would be blue, blue, blue. His mother would run to him and care for him, such as rap him in hot towels [6].

Albert had to go to the Madison general hospital to have some blood removed, because he had a rare blood type [6].

During the 1940's, Al acquired a rare blood disease where his body produced too many red cells. He had to have some blood removed periodically. Initially, the Red Cross did this, without cost,; but, after they had no need for his type of blood, they required a fee for the procedure. Al refused to pay and thereafter didn't have it done. [7].

### **WORLD WAR II**

Al was classified 4F because of poor health and didn't have any combat service in World War II.

Albert worked for a time in the CCC (Civil Conservation Corps) program on outdoor construction projects. His sister, Dorothy, thought he was stationed around Gay Mills, Wisconsin, or some other location famous for its apples. He would tell stories about how he went to town to get apples [1].

### **WORK AT NASH MOTORS**

Al worked at Nash Motors (AMC) as an electrician. He was known as Joe to his work friends, but as Al by his family.

He was in a serious accident at the factory, where his chest cavity was punctured. He was in the UW Hospital, Madison for several years. He was told that he would never work again, but that turned out to be a premature idea.

### **LAUZON MARRYS COOK**

In 1943, Al met Mary Cook. They married in 1944 at Holy Name Church in Racine by Fr. John Schneider.

Barbara Wolters Reuss explained how during one of her visits to Racine, she went to her Uncle Al's to visit for a few hours. She remembers she had a fun time, recalling that Al and Mary were a happy couple. One time, Uncle Al was taking off Mary's shoe and would give it back. Mary was giggling and laughing so much. Barb thought "how nice it was they enjoyed being together". [2]

Al was laid off frequently from Nash/AMC when the company went through cycles of low sales and union disputes. Eventually, he got a job at Fansteel in Waukegan. He typically worked 2nd shift.

Lorene recalled how her Dad was always fixing his car and how she would hand him wrenches.

Albert never hugged his children or gave any sign of affection.

Lorene hated the name Glen, because there was a brat at school with that name.

### **CONTINUED HEALTH PROBLEMS**

Al continued to have health problems.

It is possible that Al suffered from "PV", a rare, chronic blood cancer like [polycythemia vera](#). In PV, your body makes too many blood cells, which can lead to thicker blood, reduced blood flow, and an increased risk of blood clots and other serious complications. This can also lead to troubling symptoms, such as headaches and brain fog, just to name a few.

Al used to regularly donate his red blood cells, until the agency said it no longer could do that for free and would need to charge for the service. Al refused to pay and discontinued "treatments"



A blood clot in his leg caused him to limp and he started to use a cane. In Nov, 1960 he had a stroke that caused him to be hospitalized.

Bill: The last time I saw my father (other than in the casket) was lying on the kitchen floor after his "stroke". I am forever haunted by the fact that just before it he yelled at me and sent me out to the shed to get something, and I was mad at him and "wished he were dead". When I came back in, he was on the floor.

Imagine that on my mind all these years. None of the kids were ever permitted to go to either the Kenosha or Madison UW hospital, where he died. I had dreams for years of him not really being dead, but being a secret agent and living in a safe house with his head bandaged (that was what he had in his casket, which was a cover-up).

Barb Wolfers Reuss recalled the day Susanne Seifert was married in Nov, 1960. That day her Uncle Al was in the hospital and seemed to remember that he had been there for some days. Between the wedding and the reception her mother, Blanche, wanted to go to the hospital to visit him. She always talked so fondly of him. Barb felt he was always nice during the few times she saw him when her mother and her would take the train from Lombard, Illinois. Barb remembered the hospital day because her mother would not let her go up to say good bye or "hi". She said I HAD to stay in the lobby until she came back down. She always tried to protect me from any "life" experiences that she judged should not to be seen or heard by children [14].

Al was transferred to the U.W. Hospital in Madison, WI. for treatment. Al died from brain endema after 12 hrs; had brain abscess & feueposal lake? for 3 months; autopsy was performed; Died at UW-Madison University Hospital after being there for 3 days

### FINAL REST

Joseph Albert Lauzon was initially buried in St. James Cemetery on 12/1/1960, Kenosha. In 1990, after 30 years, he was relocated to St. John Church Cemetery in Paris, Kenosha, where his wife Mary resided and attended.

### Month illness Claims Joseph A. Lauzon, 45

Joseph A. Lauzon, 45, 9117 32nd Ave., died at the University Hospital, Madison, Monday morning following a month's illness.

He was born in Escanaba, Mich., on May 29, 1915, the son of Mr. and Mrs. John B. Lauzon. He moved to Racine in 1928, and resided there until 1950 when he moved to Kenosha to make his home.

On May 20, 1944, he married Miss Mary Cook. He was a former employe of American Motors Corp., and for the past four years was employed by the Fansteel Co., Waukegan, as an electrician. He was a member of St. Therese church. He was also a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, AFL-CIO.

Survivors are his widow; three sons, James, William and Glen, and three daughters, Lorene, Beverly and Linn, all at home. He is also survived by his mother, Mrs. Marcelline Lauzon, Milwaukee; one brother, Joseph, California, and eight sisters, Mrs. U. C. Wolters, Villa Park, Ill., Mrs. Robert Kittson, Round Lake, Ill., Mrs. Roman Spielbauer, Cudahy, Mrs. Robert Schmedling, Milwaukee, Mrs. Joseph Seifert, Racine, Mrs. Roy Scoggins, Woodstock, Ill., and Mrs. Leonard Lewandowski and Mrs. Frank Jozwik, both of Milwaukee. He was preceded in death by his father.

Kenosha News, Tue Nov 29, 1960



## **SOURCES:**

- [1] Dorothy Lauzon Lewindowski, sister of Albert; recollection of her brother during a small family get-together at her house in Sept, 1996; to Bill, Bev & Mary Lauzon
- [2] Letter from Barbara Wolters Reuss to Bill Lauzon; Sept 12, 1996; recollections of memories about her grandparents
- [5] Dorothy Lauzon Lewindowski, verbal recollection of her family history at a visit to Dorothy Lewindowski's house; info given to Bill Lauzon, August, 1996
- [6] Irene Lauzon Siefert, verbal recollection of her family history at a visit to her house; info given to Bill Lauzon, August, 1996
- [7] Mary Cook Lauzon
- [8] Barb Wolters Reuss email, Jun 18, 2915
- [9] Wedding News Clip, Racine newspaper, Wed, May 24, 1944
- [10] Pat Seifert Holub email, Dec 19, 2020