

Chapter 8: Roy Lee and Margie Jean Allen Redding

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Profile of Roy Lee and Margie Jean Allen Redding

Roy Lee Redding was born in the family home at McLouth, Kansas, in 1920. His family soon relocated to Tonganoxie, Kansas, where Roy Lee grew up. When Roy Lee was five, General John "Black Jack" Pershing was visiting Tonganoxie and noticed the boy, saying what a good boy he was. Roy Lee won the Kaw Valley piano contest as a freshman in high school and captained the football and basketball teams as a senior. In 1943, just graduated from Officers training for the U.S. Navy in Evanston, Illinois, Roy married Margie Jean Allen.

Margie Jean was born in Valley Falls, Kansas, in 1923. Her father was a blacksmith in Tonganoxie, and her great-grandfather had immigrated to America from England in 1842. Her grandfather served in the Civil War. Her great-uncle, Lonesome Charley Reynolds, was a famed Western scout who died with Custer at the Little Big Horn. Margie Jean's mother was from the Missouri Ozarks, where her father was a doctor.

Roy Lee was a lieutenant and gunnery officer on an LST in the invasion of Normandy in World War II. Returning from the war, he settled with Margie Jean in Tonganoxie and worked as an office manager for the Rural Electric in Leavenworth. In 1955 Roy became the office manager for Barton Construction Company, owned by Amos Barton, the preacher at the Methodist Church in Tonganoxie where the Reddings were members. That year the Reddings moved to Towanda, Illinois, with the Bartons.

In 1969, Roy Lee went to work as an accountant for State Farm Insurance in Bloomington, Illinois. He retired from State Farm in 1985 and took over the bookkeeping for his son Sam's business in Lincoln. Roy Lee served three terms as Mayor of Towanda and was active in Boy Scouts, Lion's Club, and many civic activities.

Margie Jean was the active mother of four boys who grew up on a small acreage at the edge of Towanda. When the boys were in school, Margie Jean became a cook for the school district, first in Normal and later at the Towanda Elementary School near their home. Margie Jean passed away at her home in Towanda in 2009.

Children of Roy Lee and Margie Jean Allen Redding: Samuel Francis Redding, Rodney Linn Redding, Kent Allen Redding, and Gary Mel Redding.

Chapter 8: Roy Lee and Margie Jean Allen Redding

Growing Up in Kansas

Roy Lee Redding was born in the family home in McLouth, Kansas, on October 1, 1920. Soon after, the family moved to Tonganoxie and lived just north of where the swimming pool is today. When Roy was five, he stepped on a nail and had his foot wrapped. One day he was sitting in front of the Meyers Hotel, with the bandage on his foot. General John “Black Jack” Pershing was staying at the hotel. Pershing picked Roy Lee up and said what a good boy he was. That same year, the swimming pool was built in Tonganoxie, and Roy Lee learned to swim. In the summer after first grade, Roy Lee marched in the 4th of July parade, dressed as Uncle Sam.

Roy Lee started first grade when he was five and had perfect attendance in school all the way through eighth grade. In third grade he was quarantined for two weeks after being exposed to spinal meningitis by a neighbor boy who died in three days.

In fifth grade, Roy Lee started piano lessons and played “Indian War Dance” at his recital. In eighth grade he won a sugar cookie for writing and reciting the following poem:

When I was a little boy
Just so high
Momma took a stick and made me cry
Now I'm a big boy and she can't do it
But daddy took a strap and went right to it.

Roy explains that his dad shaved with a straight-razor which he sharpened on a razor strap.

In his freshman year at Tonganoxie High School, Roy Lee won the Kaw Valley piano contest and competed at the state level. At the beginning of the football season, he was initiated by running through the upper classmen's belt line. He weighed 95 pounds. He was selected that year as one of a few freshmen to make the basketball team.

By sophomore year, Roy was up to 100 pounds and ran the chain at the football games and served as water boy. He was a member of the student council.

As a junior, Roy Lee was a substitute guard on the football team and played on the varsity basketball team. He worked at Cain's Drugstore after school, and the seniors sometimes held him in the shower after ball practice, making him late for work. He worked at Cain's during the school year in high school, earning \$3.50 a week. In the summer, he was the only lifeguard at the Tonganoxie swimming pool, where he earned \$1.00 a day and saved \$90 that summer for his college fund.

Senior year, Roy Lee was captain and quarterback of the football team, a team known as the “scoreless wonders.” He was also captain of the basketball team, which won second place in the county tournament. Roy was the lead in several school plays.

On May 10 of his senior year, Roy Lee had his first date with Margie Jean Allen. Her father didn't approve of him because he was too old for Margie; she was a freshman.

Roy played the piano at his high school class graduation, and at his sister Betty Lou's wedding

Off to College

After high school, Roy Lee went to Kansas University in Lawrence. He joined the ROTC. His roommate was Frank Emerson, and they survived on a daily diet of fried potatoes and milk gravy. At the end of his freshman year, in May, he began dating Margie Jean again. This was in 1939. A year later, they were engaged. Roy gave his spare money to Margie Jean's mother, Myrtle, to save for him until he had enough to buy the engagement ring. He gave the ring to Margie on their way to the Black Cat (a roadhouse) after a basketball game.

After a year and a half at KU, Roy transferred to Pittsburgh State Teachers' College in Pittsburgh, Kansas. Twelve kids from Tonganoxie were at Pittsburgh. Roy's first roommate was Gerald McCaffery, and his second roommate was Raymond Allen, Margie Jean's brother.

In the summers of 1940 and 1941, Roy traveled for the Joe Lowe Corporation, advertising ice cream stick confections in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Wisconsin. In August of 1941, somewhere on the Iowa-Wisconsin border, Roy received word that Margie Jean's father had died. The weekend before, Roy Lee and Margie Jean had taken Margie's parents for a long Sunday drive through the country around Tongie.

The Navy and the Wedding

In December of 1941, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Roy enlisted in the Navy under a program that allowed him to finish college before going on active duty. He graduated from Pittsburgh in 1943, leaving



Roy Lee and Margie Jean in Tonganoxie, about 1940.

school a month early to attend Naval Officers Training at Northwestern University in Chicago. He was commissioned an Ensign at noon on August 20, 1943, and married Margie Jean the same day at 2:00 pm at the First Methodist Church in Evanston, Illinois. His brother, Francis Raymond (Babe), then 16, was the best man. Between noon and 2:00, Roy raced to buy the wedding ring and get a marriage license. They discovered that the law required Margie Jean to get a blood test, which she did just 15 minutes before the license place closed. Roy ordered flowers, but they were never delivered. Roy Lee and Margie Jean got married, put Babe on a train for Kansas, and spend the weekend in Chicago.

The night before they were married, Roy Lee and Margie Jean attended the Midshipmen's' Ball , where their

picture was taken and appeared in a Chicago newspaper. The night before that, they had met Doug McNaulty, a friend from Tongie who played for the Chicago Bears. While they went to a nightclub, Babe entertained himself in a penny arcade on State Street.

After their short honeymoon, Roy Lee and Margie Jean went back to Tonganoxie. His parents met them at Union Station in Kansas City and took them home to a special dinner. Margie Jean's mother was there, as were family friends—the Redmans and the Denholms. The newlyweds started in debt, as Roy was required by the Navy to purchase his officer's uniforms for \$700.



Wedding day, August 20, 1943, Evanston, Illinois.

In November of 1943, while on a shakedown cruise in Chesapeake Bay, Roy Lee received word that his mother had died. He went home on a special leave for the funeral. While there, Margie Jean cooked their first Thanksgiving dinner—turkey with all the trimmings.

Roy Lee's orders arrived while he was home for his mother's funeral. He was assigned to LST 504, which was built on the Wabash River near Evansville, Indiana. The ship sailed from Evansville, down the Wabash and Ohio Rivers to the Mississippi River, and finally to New Orleans. Margie Jean was then working at the Hercules Powder Plant at Eudora, Kansas, but took a leave from her job to spend three days with Roy Lee in Mobile, Alabama, where they had their first Christmas together. They decorated a small, live Christmas tree with candy wrapped in red paper. When Margie Jean left, she stopped in Columbus, Mississippi, to visit her brother Raymond.

The War

Early in 1944, Roy's ship steamed from Mobile to New York, then up the Potomac to Boston. Margie Jean joined Roy in Boston and New York. They then went to New Jersey, where Margie's sister Beth visited them. On March 5, they went back to Boston, where the ship was loaded for its crossing of the Atlantic in the largest convoy ever to cross the Atlantic Ocean. The crossing took 21 days, and the LST rounded the north end of Ireland, sailed down the Irish Straits, and stopped in Port Tolmouth, Wales. After training in Wales, Roy Lee's LST sailed to Plymouth, England. In June of 1944, the ship loaded 500 Army personnel and 36 medics and joined the convoy for the invasion of Normandy on D-Day. LST 504 made several trips across the English Channel, encountering German fire at Omaha beachhead and buzz bombs in Southhampton, one of which barely missed Roy's ship and hit a nearby LST. Roy Lee's LST then joined a small convoy and headed for Italy to prepare for the invasion of Southern France.

While in the Mediterranean, a German war ship was sighted, forcing the convoy to make an emergency turn at night. The ship to the port side turned the wrong way, jamming 504, opening a hole below the waterline and damaging the bow door. LST 504 was diverted to Berzert, Africa for repairs. From there, the ship sailed to Sicily, then to Naples, passing the Isle of Capri. While in Italy, Roy Lee visited Old Pompeii, and Winston Churchill visited the complex where Roy's ship was docked. From Italy, LST 504 made several trips to Marseilles, France, where troops and supplies were delivered for the invasion of Southern France. On one trip, the ship stopped at Corsica, the birthplace of Napoleon.

While in Italy, Roy's flotilla commander received word of his promotion to full captain and commander of a new battleship. The ship was sent directly to the United States. En route, the ship encountered severe storms for three days. The crew lived on salty crackers and raw potatoes while the storm raged because the galley was inoperable. Roy was the only officer on his feet during this time, so he assumed command of the ship.

Roy L. Redding in Invasion of France

Two Trips Across
Channel on LST Boat
In the Invasion.

LETTER DATED JUNE 14

Mirror Gets Naval
From Which Is Official
Notice of Action.

A special V-mail notice has been received here by the Mirror stating Ensign Roy L. Redding was in the operation in France, as follows:

I, Roy L. Redding, age 23, rank Ensign, was a member of a U. S. Naval crew in the American Assault Force which invaded France. This was my first action with the enemy. My home address is Tonganoxie Kansas. My parents are: Mr. C. F. Redding. My wife's name is Mrs. Margie J. Redding.

A note at the top says: Naval Personnel—This letter is to inform your home town newspaper of your part in the European invasion. Do not fill in the name of your ship nor any information other than that requested.

In a letter dated June 14 Roy Lee writes that he is serving on an LST boat and has made two runs to France during the invasion. He writes each time after he returns to England, so the family will know that he is safe.

In addition to the above Margie Jean has received a birthday package from him in England, which, by the way, arrived a month late but was greatly appreciated. It contained a ring made of an English coin, a set of tea spoons and butter spreaders, sterling silver, which should provide a useful keepsake for the future. Roy Lee is the first Tonganoxie boy of whom we have received word as being a part of the great invasion across the channel from England into France.

Ensign Redding's sister's husband, Francis McVay, is in the army in the European area, and has recently been promoted to major we are informed. Mrs. McVay, the former Betty Lou Redding, with her young daughter, Marcia Jean, is staying here with her father, Chant Redding.

A WRITE UP FOR

Returning to Norfolk, Virginia, Roy Lee was joined by Margie Jean. They lived at the Arlington House Hotel at Virginia Beach from February to June. Then Roy went to New York to pick up a new ship—LST 289. Roy Lee and Margie Jean stayed in an apartment in Jersey City, New Jersey, where the neighbors were camera bugs and took exotic pictures of Margie. Margie's sister Beth visited them in New Jersey. They took a carriage ride in Central Park, ate supper at Jack Dempsey's restaurant, saw Cab Calloway, went to the top of the Astoria Hotel, and danced to Harry James' band. In New Jersey, they saw a parade celebrating General Eisenhower's return. Margie left for home, pregnant; Roy shipped out for duty in the Pacific.

Roy's new ship loaded up a full compliment of ammunition and was fitted with dual 40 millimeter guns and Mark 5 sights. Their orders were to sail to Okinawa Beach and prepare for the invasion of Japan. While at sea, America dropped the atomic bombs on Japan, and the war came to an end. Roy's LST anchored in the James River near Jacksonville, Florida. Roy Lee took a leave and spent Thanksgiving of 1945 with Margie and her mother in Kansas City. He returned to Florida to wait for his discharge. In Chicago he was released to inactive duty. His release papers were signed by his commanding officer, who had also been his math teacher at Pittsburgh.

Back Home in Kansas

After his release from active duty, Roy Lee returned to Kansas City, where Margie Jean was living with her mother. They bought a maple bedroom set at Jones Furniture Store. Roy got a job at Anderson's Furniture Store in Kansas City, Kansas. Margie's sister Berene bought a high chair for the expected baby, and Beth bought a crib. On March 12, 1946, Sam was born at Bethany Hospital in Kansas City; Dr. Lang was the doctor. The doctor's bill was \$65 and the hospital bill was \$110. The new family lived in Kansas City with Margie's mother, her brother Raymond, and her sister Berene and her husband Lace Hogan. When Sammy was 4 months old, the family moved on July 4th to live in Tonganoxie with Roy's father and his brother. Roy Lee continued to work at Anderson's Furniture Store as assistant manager and salesman.

Myrtle Allen, Margie's mother, died on February 7, 1949, a month before a second son, Rodney Linn, was born. The day Rodney came home from the hospital, Roy Lee lost his job at Anderson's. The job had been subsidized for a period of training for veterans, and the program terminated. In April of 1949, Margie's brother Don died at the age of 45. Roy Lee and Margie took baby Rodney to the funeral in Wichita, and Sammy stayed with friends Mel (Cush) and Georgina Quisenberry.

Out of work for two months, Roy Lee learned from friend Helen Schilling of a job in McLouth with the REA. He applied and got the job as an office manager and accountant for \$90 every two weeks. A year later, the family moved to a small farm house on the Walt Denholm farm near Tonganoxie. Roy Lee's father had remarried to Betty Mae Huffman. After a few months in the country, in a house with no indoor plumbing, the family moved to a house in Tonganoxie, which they rented from Mr. Leichty for \$25 a month. The day they moved to town, four-year-old Sammy jumped from the truck and hurt his arm. Rodney developed the croup, and when Margie took him to the doctor, she mentioned Sammy's injury. She said Sammy could wiggle his fingers, so she didn't think the arm was broken. But it was. This was the Saturday before Mother's Day. In the next couple years, Sam broke his elbow and then re-fractured it. The first time, he fell from a peach tree in the back yard, after being pelted with rocks by Rod. The second time he fell from a tree in Valley Falls, at the home of the Haas cousins.

A month later, Roy Lee and Margie Jean bought the house they were living in for \$2,000. The payments were \$42 a month. Roy Lee's sister Betty Lou, and friend Milly Cook's sister Mary gave them some furniture. At Christmas of 1950, the family bought their first electric clothes dryer, but still washed clothes in a wringer washer with water heated on the kitchen stove. The washer tub also served as the family's bathtub, which they placed on the kitchen floor and filled with water heated on the stove.

On February 11, 1951, Kent Allen Redding was born, the third son to Roy Lee and Margie Jean. It was a beautiful, warm day on the day he was born, but the next day an ice storm set in. No one could get to the hospital in Lawrence to visit the mom and her new baby for two days. At birth, Kent had trouble breathing, and the intoxicated doctor was less than responsive to the problem. Years later, when Kent first showed signs of a degenerative nerve disease that ultimately led to his death at age 45, the problems at birth were thought to have been a possible cause of the problem.

In March of 1951, Roy's father, Chant, was stabbed at the Black Cat, a roadhouse which he now owned (he and Betty Mae lived in the basement when Roy Lee and Margie Jean lived in Chant's house). He recovered, but the wound left his hand crippled. In April, Margie Jean's sister, Berene, died in Kansas City.

In the summer of 1952, Aunt Beth and Sammy took a train trip to California to visit Margie's brother Raymond and his wife, Billie. When Sam was in first grade, Rodney started nursery school at a nearby church. Sam met Rod at the nursery school and walked him home from school. When Sam saw Rod's behavior at the nursery school, he was appalled, and when Rod threw rocks at passing cars on the walk home, Sam knew he had to inform his mother. It seems that the nursery school teacher was also unhappy with Rod and asked that he not come back. "He is so cute, but he is a little immature," the teacher said. A picture taken in Valley Falls, with Sam's arm in a cast and cousin Phil with a baseball mitt, shows Rod toddling menacingly toward cousin Debbie, his hands out to throttle her, and Debbie screaming in horror.

In 1952, Roy Lee worked on Jack Niebarger's business accounting, and Jack gave him a round screen, 12" Zenith television set, the family's first TV. Family friends, Roy and Jerry Salmon, gave Rodney a cork gun, and he shot baby Kent between the eyes while Kent was sitting in his play pen.

In 1953, the Reddings decided to build an addition on their home. Cush Quisenberry, a brick mason, laid the foundation for a utility room and bathroom. He and Roy Lee build the rooms, and Sammy pulled nails from old boards for a penny a nail. At the same time, the kitchen was remodeled. The Reddings now had a real bathtub and a washing machine. Rod chased Sam into a peach tree, Sam fell out and broke his elbow and had to be taken to a specialist in Lawrence. Later that year, Rod chased Kent through the house, then closed a French door in front of him. Kent's arm went through the glass, and he required stitches. Doc Parker stitched him up without deadening the arm. Also in 1953, Sam brought home from school the red measles and chicken pox. Kent broke out with both varieties of spots, and was very ill for several days, being held and rocked most of the time. Two weeks later, Rod broke out with chicken pox and measles.

While the boys were playing baseball with the neighbors in the vacant lot next to the Reddings' home, Kent toddled into Sam's swinging bat and was clobbered in the head. More stitches. The next morning he wouldn't open his eyes. When asked why, he explained that the doctor had told him to keep his eyes closed while he stitched him up.

Sam had perfect spelling and perfect attendance for his first three years at Tonganoxie Grade School and won an award from the State of Kansas for the number of books he read at the public library during the summer.

For several years during the 1950s, Roy Lee took a pheasant hunting trip to Philipsburg, Kansas, each October with his brother Babe, John White, Cush, and G.A. Emerson. Georgina stayed with Margie Jean and the boys while the men were away, and the two women colored or cut their hair to surprise the men.

In the summer, Roy Lee and Margie Jean vacationed with Jerry and Roy Salmon at Lake of the Ozarks. Roy Lee's sister, Betty Lou, and her children—Marsha Jean and Dennis—stayed with the Reddings that summer while Betty Lou's husband, Red, was in the Air Force. While Margie Jean and Roy Lee were in the Ozarks, Aunt Beth stayed with the kids.

In 1954, Margie Jean and Sammy collected milk bottle caps from everyone in town in order to win a contest sponsored by Meyers Dairy in Basehor. Sammy won his first bicycle. A couple years later, when the family had moved to Illinois, Margie sold Reader's Digest subscriptions to earn money to buy Rodney a bicycle. The garbage man ran over the new bike.

In the summer of 1954, Roy Lee took Sam, Rod, David Cook and Ronnie Salmon to Wiley's pond for an overnight camp out.



Sammy, Rod, Roy Lee, Kent, Margie Jean in Lawrence, Kansas, 1954.

In February of 1955, Kent had a birthday party, and Aunt Beth gave him a rocking horse. He loved the rocking horse, and rocked on it for hours. That same month, Amos Barton, the minister at the Methodist Church the Reddings attended, asked Roy Lee to move with him to Illinois to be the office manager of his road construction company. Roy Lee and Margie Jean had been attending a Bible study at Mr. Barton's home on Sunday evenings, and Amos and Roy Lee got to know each other well. At first, Roy Lee declined the offer of the job, but later decided to accept the challenge. Aunt Beth agreed to quit her job in Topeka and move to Illinois with the family. Roy Lee and Red Wager went to Illinois, and Roy Lee found a house for the family in Towanda. A vacant lot came with the house. Mr. Barton bought the vacant lot, which gave the Reddings a down payment on their new home, and made it into a mobile home court for families, including the Wagers, who were moving to Towanda to work for the Barton Construction Company.

The Move to Illinois

On May 15, his last day of third grade, Sam said goodbye to his class and jumped in the '36 Chevy with Roy Lee and their dog, Ginger. They headed for Illinois to prepare the house for the rest of the family. On May 21, Margie Jean (now seven months pregnant), Aunt Beth, Rodney, and Kent took the train (Toonerville Trolley) from Kansas to Illinois. The train consisted of an engine, coal car, and caboose. The family rode in the caboose.



Sam and the newborn Gary Mel in Towanda, July 1955.

The first summer in Illinois was unusually cold, and the Reddings had to order a ton of coal for their furnace on June 17. Two days later, the weather turned hot. Beth began taking the boys on a weekly outing to the beach at Lake Bloomington. A group of Towanda women—Etau Wiser, Lou Kelly, and Lucille Woodrum—met at the Grade School each week, packed their cars with kids, and took them to the Lake.

Roy Lee had also found a doctor for the family, Dr. Ray Doud in Normal, so Margie Jean began seeing the doctor to prepare for another addition to the family. On July 3, the Reddings enjoyed a day at Lake Bloomington, where the Bartons had a home. On July 4th, the baby was ready to be born, but the Chevy wouldn't start. Roy Lee and Margie Jean took one of Barton Construction's old pickup trucks to the hospital, and Gary Mel Redding was born that day.

The day before school started the fall of 1955, Sam fell out of a tree and chipped a bone in his ankle. He was put in a cast. Dennis Wager, who lived next door in a trailer park for Barton employees and was in the third grade, and Rodney, who was beginning first grade, pulled Sam to school in a red wagon for his first day of fourth grade.

The backyard of the Redding's first house in Towanda was home to the family's growing menagerie. They had arrived from Kansas with a dog, Ginger. But then Sammie joined 4-H and set up a rabbit hutch in the backyard. Roy and Red Wager, with help from their boys, built a shed to house the Redding's two goats, both nannies. Like all goats, these goats were mischievous and got out of their fence on occasion, usually in the middle of the night, and the boys were accustomed to the wake-up call: "The goats are out!" Everyone ran out into the dark to fetch the goats.

The Boys Grow Up in Towanda

When the family moved to the old Roseman place in 1956, 11 acres of pasture and orchards were theirs. They bought a pony, Cindy (half Shetland and half Hackney) from Johnny White, a classmate of Sam's. The black and white pony wasn't broke, so Sam got up early and rode the pony each morning before school until it was easy to handle. Through the years, Cindy had several colts, and they had colts, and ponies were a part of the Redding life.

But ponies weren't the only animals. Paul McClure, a local farmer, put a flock of sheep on the Redding's pasture and to compensate for taking care of the sheep, the Reddings got to keep half of the lambs each year. Joyce, an old, white-faced ewe, was a favorite of the kids. The Reddings went into business with their neighbors, the Livingstons, one year, and set up hog houses to raise pigs. Several litters of pigs were born and raised. In a later venture, Sam raised four pigs and sold them.



Chickens and rabbits were also a big part of the Redding animal life. Sam showed rabbits at the county fair and earned a first place with a Checker Giant buck. An old chicken house stood on the Redding property, and a brooder house nearby. The Reddings kept laying hens in the old chicken house. Sam bought 150 fryers one spring as a 4-H project.

At one time, Sam and his Aunt Beth went into the horse business. They bought two half-Arab mares and planned to raise and sell their offspring. One mare was hit by lightning, and the other broke her neck while tied to a rope. Before their deaths, the white horses—Princess and Angel—were ridden by all the kids in the neighborhood.

The four boys went to Towanda Grade School, and Sam was a member of the last eighth-grade class to graduate from the school before Chiddix Junior High School was opened in Normal for seventh and eighth graders. The four boys also graduated from Normal Community High School. Rodney was captain of his wrestling team, a member of the glee club, and a trombonist. Kent was manager of the wrestling team

and played an electric guitar. Sam and Mel both played the trumpet. Mel played freshman football and then became active in plays, both at school and in community theater.

All four boys had jobs while growing up. Sam sold Stark Brothers trees, raised chickens and pigs, baled hay for farmers, and had a paper route. Rod kept a Pantagraph paper route for several years, until late in high schools, when he drove his '54 Chevy when weather was bad. Rod also worked at Barton's in the parts department, and Sam drove a truck for Barton's in the summers. Kent . . . Mel . . . The boys all mowed yards and walked beans and participated in Boy Scouts. They picked strawberries from their garden and sold them to earn money for a season pass to the swimming pool in Normal. They re-built the old '36 Chevy in the garage and ran it around the pasture. The garage also housed rabbit hutches and was where Sam built a wooden go-cart with a lawnmower engine. Aunt Beth asked Rod to build her a box to put papers in. She said she wanted it about 12 by 9. She meant inches. He thought she meant feet, and constructed a huge box from plywood. Realizing his error, he then trimmed down enough to fit under her bed.

After Mel started junior high, Margie became a school cook. She was a cook at Normal Community High School, and then at Towanda Grade School for 20 years. She had been an Avon lady when the boys were little.

The family, having been Methodists in Kansas, attended the Community Church in Towanda for several years. The Community Church had been formed as a merger of the Towanda Methodist and Presbyterian churches. When Sam was a freshman in high school, the family attended the Methodist Church in Normal for about a year, and then they settled into the Towanda Baptist Church, where they remained. Sam later preached a few sermons there, when in college, and Rod was a deacon at the church. Roy and Marge were pillars of the little church for decades to come. When Gary Mel later became a Baptist preacher, he returned on occasion to preach at Towanda Baptist.

Roy Lee was a Mason, a Lion, a village clerk, a member of the village board, and for three terms the mayor of Towanda. He and Marge were always active with the Boy Scouts, the Towanda Fourth of July Committee and other civic functions. Aunt Beth visited the family on weekends, living in a small apartment in Bloomington the rest of the week, where she was a proofreader for the Pantagraph. She retired in 1971 and maintained her apartment for several years, while spending more and more time in Towanda. At last, she moved into the Redding home to help care for Kent. She died at the house in 1999.

Fourth of July was Mel's birthday and always a huge family celebration. The kids brought friends and, later, extended families, filling up the Redding yard and swimming pool. The Fourth of July gatherings at the Reddings continued and grew each year, as the family grew.

When Sam was in college and Rod in high school, Roy bought the Marathon gas station in Bloomington, where the boys had worked. The boys continued to work at the station, which included a two-bay garage where they worked on cars. The business was sold within a year to a man who worked there.

In 1969, Barton Construction Company folded, and Roy became a tax accountant at State Farm Insurance in Bloomington. He retired from State Farm in 1985 and began working as the business manager for Sam's company.

In 1984, Roy and Margie took the four boys, wives, and kids to Florida to see Disneyworld and Epcot Center. They stayed in a motel, where they swam and lounged around the pool. The kids met Mickey Mouse and other Disney celebrities, rode the most thrilling rides, and saw the Electric Parade.

When he was 12, Kent began to show an awkward gait. Over the years, he was taken to Children's Hospital in Chicago, Mayo Clinic in Minnesota, a Chiropractic Hospital in Denver, and to dozens of doctors. His condition deteriorated gradually over the years. By the time he was in high school, he walked with a cane. Then a walker. After high school, he worked as an elevator operator at Livingston's Department Store in Bloomington. He was later confined to a wheelchair. The condition was diagnosed as a degenerative nerve disorder similar to Multiple Sclerosis. In 1996, it took his life.

Sam graduated from Illinois State University, where he was a member of the swim team. Rodney also graduated from ISU. Mel graduated from the University of Arizona. Sam became a teacher, earned two master's degrees and a doctorate in education. He taught special education and social studies at LeRoy High School for four years. He became the Dean of the College and Vice President at Lincoln College and then, in 1984, founded the Academic Development Institute, becoming its president. Rodney taught first grade in South Carolina and then enlisted in the Air Force, where he became a pilot. Rodney earned an MBA from Oklahoma City College. After six years of active duty, Rod became a commercial pilot but remained in the Air Force Reserve, retiring after 23 years as a Lieutenant Colonel. Gary Mel earned a master's degree from Brooklyn College in Brooklyn, New York, while working at Radio City and the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. After working in Miami for several years, Mel moved his family to Texas, where he

graduated from the Southwestern Baptist Seminary. He became pastor of a country church and an administrator at the Seminary. Gary Mel earned his doctor of theology degree from Southwestern Baptist Seminary in 2007 and moved to, Tennessee, where he became vice president of the Baptist College in Memphis. Later he left the college to become a consultant.

Margie Jean Passes Away

Margie Jean passed away at home, in Roy Lee's arms, on October 26, 2009. At her funeral at the Towanda Baptist Church, with a crowd that filled the church with people standing and lining the walls, Margie Jean's niece Beth Anne Mercer read the eulogy prepared by Margie's sons.



Thoughts About Mom, From Her Boys

We grew up knowing that nothing on this earth was more important to our mother than her boys. Except for our dad. And while Dad would tolerate a fair amount of tomfoolery, he would never allow us to be disrespectful to our mother. For us, there was never any doubt—Mom and Dad stuck together. She was our confidante, and we sought her out to talk things over, but she kept no secrets from Dad. When we confessed something to Mom and talked it out with her, we knew what came next: Now you have to tell your dad. No matter what. Whether it was Rod tipping over Mounce's outhouse or Sam turning pigeons loose in the schoolhouse, or Kent bringing home bad grades, first we bared our souls to Mom, and then we confessed to Dad. Notice that Gary Mel never had anything to confess.

The bond between Mom and Dad went way back, long before any of us came on the scene—all the way to Mom's freshman year at Tonganoxie High School. She was a cheerleader, and Dad was the senior quarterback of the football team and captain of the basketball team. Friends called him Remus, and they called her Girlie. After high school, Dad went to college, and then to the Navy. When he finished officer's training in Evanston, Illinois, on August 20, 1943, they got married. Mom and Uncle Babe, Dad's brother, had taken the train from Kansas to Illinois so that Mom and Dad could be married, and they, plus the minister, were the only ones present. Our uncle signed as witness. Since he was only 16, some doubt remains as to whether Mom and Dad were legally married. But that is a technicality.

Dad went to Maryland for advanced training, and three months later, his mother died. Dad was given a leave to go home to Kansas for his mother's funeral, and he stayed through Thanksgiving. Mom was 20 years old, newly married, separated from her husband, then reunited for a funeral, and the Redding family was without their mother for Thanksgiving. So our mom cooked her first big family meal, for all the Reddings who had just buried Dad's mother. Mom was very nervous, Dad said, but everything she cooked came out perfect. A lifetime of good eating for Dad had just begun.

Dad met his ship, an LST, in Evansville, Indiana, and headed for New Orleans, then the East Coast, and then to England where in June of 1944 he was part of the Normandy invasion. Mom worked in a munitions plant in Kansas, waiting for the war to end.

Mom's nephew Freddie remembers when she was a teenager and he was a tagalong nephew: "She was an incredibly important character in my childhood," he says. "She was my beautiful aunt, who shone as Venus. I loved Margie all my life. My dad adored her as proudly as I." Fred's younger brother, Richard, knew her only in recent years but recalls that "the times I was with Margie Jean I felt awash in her kind and sunny spirit."

Let us back up a bit, lest you think Mom led a charmed life. Her dad was a widower who married her mother, a widow, both bringing children into the marriage. Then Sam and Myrtle had three children of their own, with Mom the youngest, born at home, a child of the Depression. When Mom was four, the Ku Klux Klan boycotted her father's blacksmith shop in Valley Falls, Kansas, forcing the family to leave town. They moved around Western Kansas during the Dust Bowl days, finally lighting in Tonganoxie. We grew up with Mom's stories of the Depression, how she snagged cigarette butts off the street so that her older siblings could salvage the residue and roll their own. How her father gave her sister and her a quarter and told them to go to the store to get groceries for the family. How they tore the stalls out of the carriage house to burn for heat one winter. How cousins stayed with cousins when their parents couldn't afford to feed them. Two of Mom's brothers, finding no jobs in Kansas, joined the Marines, served their hitches, came home where the Depression still offered no work, and re-enlisted in time for the war.

Mom idolized her father. Well past mid-life when she was born, he recited poetry to her, and gently blew smoke in her ear when she cried with an ear ache. He died at his anvil when Mom was still a teenager. Her oldest brother, Don, became a lawyer, state senator, law partner of the former governor, and then died in his

early 40s. Within a matter of months, Mom's mother and a sister were also gone. At age 26, Mom had already lost both parents, a brother, and a sister. She had survived the Ku Klux Klan, the Depression, and the War.

And then there was Kent. Kent Allen Redding, our brother, the third son, his middle name was Mom's maiden name. Dark-haired and blue-eyed, always clowning and making us laugh, the best athlete in the family, the kid we called Crow. Kent began stumbling during a Little League game when he was 12, the first symptoms of the nerve degeneration that would slowly consume him until his death at age 44.

From the way Mom and Dad dealt with Kent's long decline, we learned the greatest lesson in life: always *choose* life. Never give up. Live each day to the fullest. Keep your chin up. Care for those around you. Don't put on airs. Especially, don't put on airs. Or, as she might say, "Don't get upitty." Your works will speak for themselves. As the scripture says, Love kindness, seek justice, walk humbly with God.

Something of her Quaker heritage lived in Mom, along with the gritty resolve of the frontier and the self-conscious vulnerability of a Depression child.

So Mom's life contained its share of suffering, and each of us disappointed her and hurt her more than we would like to remember. She could get angry on occasion, but we could handle that. Like the time she got angry when Mel, a kindergartener, was practicing his rhyming words. Mom jammed soap in his mouth somewhere after Buck, Chuck, and Duck. She got over her anger quickly, didn't hold a grudge, and we could look back at these instances and laugh. But we could never forget when we saw disappointment on her face. We always knew she loved us. That was rock solid. But nothing grieved us more than knowing we had let her down.

Mom cooked for the Crippled Children Camp, where she was mother to staff and campers alike. She volunteered for any cause related to kids or disabilities or both. She prepared meals for the sick, made bandages for the wounded, visited hospitals, worked with the Boy Scouts, delivered library books. She cared for her aged aunt in Missouri, she cared for her sister who died in our house, she cared for many people in this room. But we never felt that she didn't have enough caring left for us.

We remember most that Mom was simply always there. She fed us. Dad always got fried eggs for breakfast, and we all had pot roast on Sunday, for the most special meal of the week, after church. She transported us and other kids to ballgames. She was always in the stands, watching us perform. She nursed us. Sam, Rod, and Kent all three had both chicken pox and measles at the same time, and she nursed them. She lanced our boils. She applied Watkins salve to everything. She told us to let a dog lick our wounds because dog saliva was medicinal. Rod remembers that a blister on his foot had turned bad, and he sat in the kitchen soaking it in Epson Salts while Mom's bridge club played cards in the living room. After each hand, Mom would go to the kitchen to check on him and pour in some hot water. Sam remembers her pouring hot water into the galvanized tub when the family took turns bathing in the middle of the kitchen in the early days in Kansas, before their Dad built a bathroom on the house.

Mom reminded us that being poor didn't mean you had to be dirty. That patched pants were no disgrace, and meant that someone cared enough about you to put on the patch. No matter how old we were, or how late we came home, we kissed our mom goodnight. What we did mattered more than what we said.

Mom taught us to be independent and self-reliant, even though Sam was slow to break the apron strings. He remembers that when he was five years old and preparing for a bus trip to Wichita with his Aunt Beth, Mom told him that she would not be going with him, so it was time for him to learn to wipe himself.

Mom collected things. Or hoarded things, depending upon how you looked at it. First there was anything with a violet on it. Then anything with an owl. Then bells and angels. Norman Rockwell plates. Tea cups. Snow globes. Anything you could buy at a fairly small price, one at a time, and accumulate for years was likely

to become something she collected. The collections are displayed on every wall of the house, alongside pictures of the family, and some of Mom's needlework, and a needlework made in 1832 by one of her great-great-grandmothers. One wall was reserved for her grandfather's medical school sheepskin. In the family he was known as Papa Doc, and he died before Mom was born. But we heard about him on each trip to Mountain View, Missouri, to visit Mom's Aunt Clyde. Yes, that is *Aunt* Clyde. Mom was one of the few people with both a brother named Clyde and an aunt named Clyde. Strange that none of her children or grandchildren named a daughter Clyde.

On the journeys to the Ozarks to see Aunt Clyde, Sam invariably got car sick as our '37 Chevy chugged up and down the rolling hills to Mountain View. We always stopped at the bridge on Jack's Fork of the Current River, where Papa Doc once had a cabin. We waded in the clear, cold water, and skipped stones across the surface. Mom had lived in Mountain View in first grade, and said she went a whole year without wearing shoes. Dad teased her about her Ozark ways.

Mom and Dad liked to pack the family in a car and go for a ride on a Sunday afternoon. When we ventured very far, Mom packed a picnic basket full of sandwiches. She ground up hot dogs and made weenie salad sandwiches. Anything Mom made tasted good. In 1960, we drove to Tennessee to see Little Beth. We have home movies of the trip. Mom looked like an airline stewardess. Dad looked like Richard Nixon. Later that year, Mom, Dad, four boys, and Ginger the dog packed into Dad's boss's Oldsmobile and drove all the way to California and back. We saw everything. Golden Gate Bridge, Grand Canyon, Painted Desert, Disneyland. We saw it all, staying with relatives most of the way, and spending our first night ever in a motel. Mom kept a journal of the trip, just as she insisted that we keep minutes of our regular family meetings.

Mom and Dad took their grandkids on great travel adventures as well, always by car, always staying with family, and always having a grand time. Just this August, Mom and Dad took their annual anniversary drive—a few hundred miles over four days seeing central Illinois. Annually they have taken the trek to Texas to see Rod and Mel, and just as often back to Kansas.

Mom was a member of the Christian Church as a child, and was never sure that Dad, a sprinkled Methodist, was really saved. So when he was 50, Dad was baptized right here in this church, and so were Kent, Rod, and Gary Mel. Rod was a deacon here, Sam, who was baptized in Money Creek, preached here in college; and Gary, now a Baptist preacher himself, has returned here to fill the pulpit. We absolutely never missed Sunday School, and when we traveled, Mom and Dad took us to church wherever we might be. Mom made sure we got a note confirming our attendance to take home to our Sunday School teacher.

For years, Mom hosted a houseful of family and friends on Christmas Eve and insisted that someone read the Bible's Christmas story. In the King James version. For even more years, she opened her home on the Fourth of July, Gary's birthday, with the American flag flying in the front yard and food spread across six tables in the house. For 50 years, we celebrated Thanksgiving with the Wagers, the family that had moved here with us from Kansas.

Mom raised an educator, a preacher, and a pilot, and on the day that we earned our degrees or our wings, we would tell you that nothing motivated us more than the desire to make our mother proud.

Mom lives on through her three sons, 10 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren, and in the core of our Dad's heart, where she is still the high school cheerleader, cheering for him. We would not dare tell him that we always thought she was cheering for us.

DAYBOOK

Area deaths

Margie Jean Redding

TOWANDA — Margie Jean Redding passed away at her home in Towanda on October 26, 2009.

The daughter of Sam and Myrtle Allen,



Margie was born on May 19, 1923, in Valley Falls, Kansas, where her father was the village blacksmith.

She graduated from high school in Tonganoxie, Kansas, and on August 20, 1943, she married Roy Lee Redding in Evanston, Illinois,

where Roy had just graduated from Navy officers' training.

Roy Lee was soon headed for Europe where he was gunnery officer aboard an LST, landing at Omaha Beach in the Normandy invasion. Margie spent the war years working at the munitions plant in Olathe, Kansas.

After the war, Roy Lee and Margie Jean lived for awhile with Margie's mother in Kansas City, Kansas, and then moved to Tonganoxie.

In 1955, Roy Lee became office manager for Barton Construction Company, and the family moved to Towanda, Illinois.

Margie Jean and Roy Lee arrived in Illinois with three sons, and a month later a fourth was born.

Margie raised her four boys in Towanda, where she was the quintessential '50s mom, Cub Scout den mother, parent-teacher organization volunteer, chauffeur for carloads of boys going to hundreds of ballgames, 4-H meetings, church activities, band practice, play practice, and afternoon swims at Lake Bloomington and Normal pool.

She was also the Avon lady, sold Reader's

Digest subscriptions, and canned produce from her large garden and orchard.

When the boys were all in school, Margie became a cook for Unit 5 school district, retiring after 20 years in 1987.

She also cooked for the Easter Seals Crippled Children Camp at Lake Bloomington for several years, and was an advocate and volunteer for children with disabilities.

Margie was a member of the Towanda Baptist Church and the Daughters of the American Revolution.

She contributed to and volunteered for many causes including the women's auxiliary of the Baptist Church, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, and Native Americans.

For 12 years, Margie was the First Lady of Towanda, riding in each Fourth of July parade alongside her husband, the mayor. Roy Lee retired from State Farm Insurance in Bloomington in 1985.

Margie Jean Redding was preceded in death by her parents, three brothers, two sisters, and a son, Kent Allen Redding.

She is survived by her husband of 66 years, Roy Lee, and three sons: Dr. Sam Redding (Jane) of Lincoln; Lt. Col. Rodney Redding, Air Force Retired (Meredith), Conroe, Texas; and Dr. Gary Mel Redding (Tonda), Eads, Tennessee. She is also survived by 10 grandchildren: Rebecca Domkuski (Doug), Towanda; John Redding (Tamara), Germantown Hills; Tom Redding (Brittney), Castle Rock, Colorado; Caroline Rohlf (Nathan), Emden; Aaron Redding (Kristin), Tomball, Texas; Jordan Redding (Heather), Grapevine, Texas; Robyn Redding, Woodlands, Texas; Briana Redding, Arlington, Texas; MacKenzie Redding, Eads, Tennessee; and Emily Redding, Eads, Tennessee.

Margie also left behind 13 great-grandchildren: Andrew Domkuski, Alison Domkuski,

Alaina Domkuski, Aidan Domkuski, Kylie Redding, Kruse Redding, Kailyn Redding, Emma Redding, Eli Redding, Evan Rohlf, Avery Rohlf, Katheryn Redding, and Kaylei Redding.

Upon her retirement as a cook at Towanda Elementary School, the school presented Margie with a plaque with a poem entitled "Cheerful Presence." The poem ended: "All the children in this place, will bless her for her cheerful face. We want her to know that she is so dear, and that she'll be missed at school next year."

Services will be held at 10 a.m. Thursday, October 29 at Towanda Baptist Church with Pastor Cal Gowen officiating. Visitation will be 30 minutes prior.

Entombment will be at East Lawn Memorial Gardens Mausoleum in Bloomington, with family and friends gathering after for a meal at the Redding home in Towanda.

East Lawn Funeral Home in Bloomington is in charge of arrangements.

The family requests that memorials be given to the Towanda Baptist Church, Box 62, Towanda, IL, 61776.

Online condolences may be submitted at www.EastLawn-Bloomington.com.

Roy S. Behrens

TUCSON - A memorial service will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 31, 2009, for Roy S. Behrens at the American Legion, 1740 Fifth St.

Dee Pruitt will officiate.

Maralee Hobbs

Maralee Hobbs of Lincoln passed away October 27, 2009 at Abraham Lincoln Memorial Hospital. Arrangements are pending at Holland Barry & Bennett Funeral Home in Lincoln.



The grandkids on Mum Redding's funeral day. From left: Mack, Briana, Emily, Tom, Robyn, Becky, Aaron, Cari, John, Jordan

Roy's LST—504 (landing ship, tank)



- Laid down, 21 July 1943, at Jeffersonville Boat & Machine Co., Jeffersonville, IN.
- Launched, 19 October 1943
- Commissioned **USS LST-504**, 18 December 1943
- During World War II **LST-504** was assigned to the European Theater and participated in the:
- **Invasion of Normandy**, June 1944
- **Invasion of Southern France**, August and September 1944

In Mediterranean waters for the first time, LST-284 was ordered to Bizerte, Tunisia. There, the 284 collided with the **USS LST 504** which was executing an emergency turn. The 284 sustained, as a result of that collision, extensive damage to her starboard side, a crushed wing and a smashed boat davit.

- Reassigned to the Asiatic-Pacific Theater taking part in the:
- **Okinawa Gunto operation**
 - (a) Assault and occupation of Okinawa Gunto, April and June 1945
- Following World War II **LST-504** performed occupation duty in the Far East until mid-January 1946
- Decommissioned, 22 January 1946
- Laid up in the Reserve Fleet
- Named **USS Buchanan County (LST-504)**, 1 July 1955
- Struck from the Naval Register, 11 August 1955
- Final Disposition, sunk as a target in February 1956
- **LST-504** earned three battle stars for World War II service

Specifications: (as reported by Office of Naval Intelligence-1945)
Displacement 1,625 t.(lt), 4,080 t.(fl) (sea-going draft w/1675 ton load)

Length 328' o.a.

Beam 50'

Draft (light) - 2' 4" fwd, 7' 6" aft

(sea-going) 8' 3" fwd, 14' 1" aft

(landing) 3' 11" fwd, 9' 10" aft (landing w/500 ton load)

Speed 12 kts. (maximum)

Endurance 24,000 miles @ 9kts. while displacing 3960 tons

Complement

9 officers, 120 enlisted

Troop Accommodations

14 officers, 131 enlisted

Boats 6 LCVP

Cargo Capacity (varied with mission - payloads between 1600 and 1900 tons)

Typical loads: One Landing Craft Tank (LCT), tanks, wheeled and tracked vehicles, artillery, construction equipment and military supplies. A ramp or elevator forward allowed vehicles access to tank deck from main deck. Additional capacity included sectional pontoons carried on each side of vessel amidships, to either build Rhino Barges or use as causeways. Married to the bow ramp, the causeways would enable payloads to be delivered ashore from deeper water or where a beachhead would not allow the vessel to be grounded forward after ballasting

Armament (varied with availability when each vessel was outfitted. Retro-fitting was accomplished throughout WWII. The ultimate armament design for United States vessels was

2 - Twin 40MM gun mounts w/Mk. 51 directors

4 - Single 40MM gun mounts

12 single 20MM gun mounts

Propulsion two General Motors 12-567, 900hp diesel engines, two shafts, twin rudders



LST 504 Standing Inspection

D-Day, June 6, 1944





Two Fathers

by Sam Redding

(written in September of 1967 while student teaching in Pontiac, Illinois)

I see him on a classroom wall
Erect he stands, proud and tall
Immaculate in his soldier's dress
Continental blue—all to impress.

Again I see him, in the park
Astride his horse—sleek and dark
With masterful bearing he peers ahead
A man who has awed all he has led.

In the church, a picture I see
Of this man knelt beside a tree
With head bowed in reverent grace
And dedication writ across his face.

And then I read of his success
His leadership in our distress
Of the morals of this man
Who lived for and loved our great land.

I find that more than leader was he
But a man who sat children on his knee
And cherished all their youth and beauty
While he versed them in honor and duty.

Great I know this man to be
The father of our country
But in his character I see
The father who fathered me.



To Kent From His Brothers

(Read at his funeral at the Towanda Baptist Church by his cousin, Beth Anne Mercer)

At first we called him “Baby.” Just “Baby.” When the Cooks came to our house on Wednesday nights to watch boxing on our 12-inch, round-screen TV, he curled up on Noel’s lap. He was everyone’s baby. And what a perfect baby he was. Even then we knew he would be the good-looking one; with the thick dark hair, big blue eyes, and long lashes, he got the best of both of our parents’ features.

Baby was the good-looking one, but he was also the unlucky one. He ran his arm through the French-door glass. He toddled into a swinging baseball bat. But he never complained. He seemed to accept his pain, even from the beginning. When we got into trouble, Sam would try to talk his way out of it, Rod would cry and beg for mercy, and Kent would just stand stoically, ready to take his punishment alongside his big brothers. He called Sam “Bu,” which was his way of saying, “brother.” We all called Rod “Niggy” until he became “Rimp.”

Baby was the baby for four years, and then he was replaced by Melsie, who arrived just after we moved to Illinois from Kansas in 1955. The boys shared a bedroom and, when Kent had worms, he had to sleep in a separate bed for awhile. We scooted his bed next to ours and held his hand until he fell asleep. But to compensate for this act of kindness, we gave Baby a new nickname. We called him “Worms,” or, more affectionately, “Wormie.”

Playing in the schoolyard near our home, we soon discovered that Wormie was not only the best looking, he was also the most athletic. He loved to run and play ball. “Wormie” didn’t seem such a good nickname for a star athlete, so somewhere along the way he became “Crow.” Why “Crow?” We each have our own theory. Wasn’t there a character on Gunsmoke named “Crow?” Didn’t we realize that worms were “Crowbait?” We aren’t sure, but the name stuck, and his nephews and nieces knew him only as “Uncle Crow.” At one time he drove an old brown Ford with “Old Crow” printed on the door. But that is jumping ahead in the story.

The pasture was always filled with kids, and Crow was in the middle of it—playing ball, playing Army, shooting BB guns, catching frogs, riding ponies, feeding sheep, climbing trees. Every Sunday, on the way home from church, Dad would ask us what our Sunday School lesson was about. Kent always answered, “Jesus,” and he was nearly always right.

One summer, Crow began to drag his foot when he ran down the baseline in Little League. We tried to teach him to hold his foot straight, but we didn’t succeed. The doctors said that if he didn’t do his exercises, he might have to wear leg braces. So we badgered him to lift his weights and stretch his limbs. But he got braces anyway.

Mom and Dad took him to doctors. They took him to hospitals in Chicago. Aunt Beth took him to a hospital in Denver. We drove him to Mayo Clinic. We prayed and hoped and prayed and hoped. When our prayers weren’t answered, we blamed God. But that was because we were young and did not yet see God in our parents’ love for all their sons and their tireless devotion to Crow.

Leg braces and walkers and wheelchairs did not stop Crow from testing Mom and Dad’s patience in the same ways we tested their patience. He grew long hair, got an Afro, grew a beard, smoked cigars, wrecked cars, drank beer, stayed out late, and told us all to “get off his back.”

The good athlete became the manager of the wrestling team and watched his older brother become the team’s captain. The good-looking kid watched his brothers come home with girlfriends, get married, have children, get jobs, buy houses. He never complained or showed the resentment he deserved to feel. He loved our wives, and he loved our children. For a long time he continued to bring laughter to our lives. The little boy

who brightened every home movie with his funny faces continued to say funny things and laugh out loud and enjoy the company of his family. He was always better to us than we were to him.

Becky taught him to exercise to Richard Simmons tapes. John, Tom, Aaron, and Jordan pushed his wheelchair. Becky and Tom worked alongside their grandmother at Uncle Crow's Crippled Children's Camp at Lake Bloomington. Robyn and Briana and Cari and Emily sat in his lap and put caps on his head and tugged at his whiskers. Even baby Drew came gently to Kent, seeing past his great-uncle's depleted body to an inner-soul that never raged against the little ones he loved. When two-year-old MacKenzie accidentally pushed Kent's wheelchair off the deck, Crow fell to the ground. MacKenzie said, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to, Crow," and Crow laughed out loud and let his little nephew know that he understood. The source of that understanding is not of this world.

Sitting in his wheelchair alongside his Dad and Rod, he shot a duck over a pond in Oklahoma. The duck was stuffed and mounted and became a prized possession of a young man whose parents tried to provide every aspect of a normal life against all the odds. When John played basketball, Crow sat in his wheelchair on the sidelines as the team passed by. They patted his arm for good luck. But he was the one who needed a little luck.

It is not right that we should gain from our brother's loss. But we have. It is not fair that we should understand love and loyalty and devotion because of our brother's suffering. But we do. We know that not only did our parents and Aunt Beth abide by Kent and attend to him constantly, they also managed to give us and our families more than we can ever repay. Now that we are fathers, we more fully appreciate the saintliness of parents who carried their grief for our brother's condition with such grace without depriving us of a single moment of attention. With all of their deep concern for Kent, they never forgot us; they never removed themselves from us in our own times of pain, even when the burden they carried was far greater than ours. They gave us perfect Christmases.

In some ways, our brother was not taken from us on January 14, but many years ago. In other ways, our brother remains with us still. His love and loyalty were greater than ours, and in that greatness we glimpsed heaven. We hold him forever in our hearts.

Children of Roy Lee and Margie Jean Redding

Samuel Francis Redding (March 12, 1946 in Kansas City, Kansas) married Jane Alice Bittner (December 21, 1947 in Normal, Illinois) on June 8, 1969 at Trinity Lutheran Church in Bloomington, Illinois

Rebecca Jean Redding (April 1, 1970 in Normal, Illinois) married Douglas Dale Domkuski (March 14, 1970 in Spring Valley, Illinois) on August 20, 1994 at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Lincoln, Illinois

Andrew Douglas Domkuski (May 5, 1995 in Normal, Illinois)

Alison Jean Domkuski (February 21, 1997 in Normal, Illinois)

Alaina Beth Domkuski (January 20, 2000 in Normal, Illinois)

Aidan Dale Domkuski (June 16, 2002 in Peoria, Illinois)

Samuel John Redding (November 11, 1971 in Normal, Illinois) married Tamara Michelle Kruse (July 19, 1973 in Bloomington, Illinois) on October 11, 2003 at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Peoria, Illinois

Kylie Marie Redding (September 1, 2004 in Peoria, Illinois)

Kruse Samuel Redding (April 20, 2006 in Peoria, Illinois)

Kailyn Elizabeth Redding (February 5, 2008 in Peoria, Illinois).

Thomas Andrew Redding (April 30, 1974 in Lincoln, Illinois) married Brittney Marie Geskey (April 13, 1976 in Lincoln, Illinois) on October 28, 2000 at First Methodist Church in Lincoln, Illinois

Emma June Redding (April 7, 2004 in Normal, Illinois)

Eli Thomas Redding (February 27, 2007 in Normal, Illinois)

Caroline Elizabeth Redding (December 26, 1978 in Lincoln, Illinois) married Nathan John Rohlfs (April 9, 1977 in Lincoln, Illinois) on May 20, 2000 at Saint John Lutheran Church in Hartsburg, Illinois

Evan John Rohlfs (December 28, 2001 in Normal, Illinois)

Avery Elizabeth Rohlfs (November 10, 2006 in Peoria, Illinois)

Rodney Linn Redding (March 16, 1949 in Lawrence, Kansas)

1. Carol Groff (October 6, 1947) married on August 8, 1970

Aaron Linn Redding (November 3, 1977 in San Antonio, Texas) married Kristin Nowacke (October 5, 2004 in Clear Lake, Texas) on March 10, 2001 at Lord of Life Lutheran Church in The Woodlands, Texas)

Kaylei Arissa Redding (December 5, 2004 in Houston, Texas)

Kathryn Larissa Redding (September 16, 2006 in Texas)

Boy Redding, October xx, 2011 in Texas

Jordan Linn Redding (June 28, 1982 in Houston, Texas) married Heather Champagne (September 19, 1982 in Conroe, Texas) in The Woodlands, Texas, on May 29, 2005

Harper Campbell Redding, born in Texas in 2011

Robyn Lynne Redding (August 25, 1984 in Houston, Texas)

2. Meredith Lewis Lowery (May 18, 1957 in Massachusetts) married October 25, 1989.

Kent Allen Redding (February 11, 1951 in Lawrence, Kansas; January 14, 1996 in Towanda, Illinois)

Gary Mel Redding (July 4, 1955 in Normal, Illinois) married Tonda Lea Sinden (October 22, 1955 in Warren, Ohio) on March 31, 1979 on a ranch near Tucson, Arizona

Brianna Rose Sinden-Redding (December 30, 1984 in Miami, Florida), married Justin Blake in March, 2011.

MacKenzie Ryan Sinden-Redding (February 12, 1988 in Miami, Florida)

Emily Lauren Sinden-Redding (May 21, 1993 in Miami, Florida)

The Allen Family

Please see book on *The Allen Family*.

Wednesday, December 28, 1999

Dear Sam,

This morning Dad left for Lincoln and I walked out into the sun (or toy) room and the sun was shining in so brightly and it was so warm that I picked up the Allen book and took it out there to read. I wanted to read all about my Pop and that part of the book. It did bring tears and memories, memories only I have. My Pop always referred to me as the Baby, even when I was in high school. Pop could answer any question I could ask him—whether it was from my history book, the Bible or the newspaper. He always helped Georgina and me with history. Whenever I was in a play at school (I was in a lot, really), Pop would read the whole play and almost memorize the whole thing—always the part I had. Then he and Mom would come to the plays, and he couldn't hear any of it but he could follow along with it.

When I was a sophomore in high school our class gave one of the young teachers a very hard time, so badly that she resigned. When I was telling Pop about it, he let me have it—about this being a young teacher and needed our cooperation and that I should remember this some day when I would be out in the world and would want to be treated right. I don't remember all, but I left the shop feeling very low and not nearly as smart.

Pop was a drinker in his early years but when Mama was pregnant with Raymond he quit drinking and it wasn't until we moved to Tonganoxie that he started drinking beer at the local pool hall—only on Saturday night. He would stop on the way home and drink a few bottles. I remember his dog would always sit at the back door of the pool hall and wait for him. I could always know when he had a few beers because he was very talkative. One night we were sitting in the porch swing on the back porch of the Mirror apartment. Papa started telling me how pretty Mom's eyes were and how pretty she was. He said her eyes were violet, and when he first saw her get off the train she was a beautiful sight. He always said her eyes were violet (they were really hazel). He also said to me, "Now you are a pretty girl but you will never be as pretty as your mother." That night he also asked me for a cigarette (I didn't think he knew I smoked). He said, "It's kinda bad bumming a cigarette off the baby." I think he was testing me to catch me, and it worked. I gave him one. He never mentioned it again.

Pop and Mom always went to all the boys' baseball games out in dirty old dusty pastures, and I was always with them in the back seat ducking the tobacco juice Pop would spit out the front window. I can still feel how I felt in the back seat with the dust—choking.

When I had whooping cough (I was very sick with it) and they gave me some medicine to take and every time it was time for me to take it I would cry and throw such a fit that I can still hear Mom say, "Sam I can't get Margie to take her medicine that Dr. Jones left for her." Pop came into the room and said, "Here Myrtle, let me have that," and he took a big swig of it and said, "Don't give her anymore." But I survived it. When I broke my arm (I imagine it was what you call a green break), Pop fixed it by covering a piece of chicken wire with cotton and making a brace out of it for me. Mom made a sling out of a dish towel; we didn't have money for a doctor. Although when I was sick with whooping cough the doctor came to the house.

I can only remember Papa ever giving me a spanking one time. Raymond and I were in our beds and were supposed to go to sleep. We were laughing and making a lot of noise when all of a sudden Pop appeared, turned up my gown and gave me a couple of swats on the bottom and left the room. I imagine Raymond got it too—Raymond got a spanking every other day. I'm sure Mom told Pop we were making all that noise. I don't think Pop could hear it.

Pop went to all the school events that we were in. I graduated the May before he died and he was there with Mom, Rose and Don.

Sunday before Pop died, your Dad and I took Pop and Mom for a long ride in the '37 Chevy—all around the countryside around Tongie. We didn't have a car then, so Pop really enjoyed it.

The day some man walked up the stairs with Pop, Mom went running to the door so upset and Pop turned to her and said, "Myrtle you know when the fruit is ripe it will fall." That's the last he ever said and died a couple days later.

I doubt if you are interested in all this. But without Beth I don't really have anybody to tell my thoughts about all this. I'm so proud of all the work that you have done on the "Allen Book," Sam. Dad and I are so proud of you boys, and I can hear my Pop say, "Job well done Margie Jean."

Thanks to you and to Janie both for giving us such a nice Christmas and making us part of your Christmas celebration.

Love you and love to all of you,

Mom [Margie Jean]

A Little Allen Family History

Christopher Allen was born on Isle of Wight off the southern coast of England in 1804, the son of Richard and Martha Allen. Richard and Martha had previously lived on the outskirts of London where other children were born. Richard and Martha were in Birmingham in 1807 and in Manchester by about 1810. Christopher later wrote that all the children worked in the cotton factories from the age of 10. Christopher was an eager learner and later became a successful brass founder in Manchester. He married Amelia Bennett in 1826, and the family moved to America in 1842, settling in Cleveland, Ohio. Christopher had become a Quaker about 1835, and in the 1850s he moved his family to Winona, Ohio, where he farmed and operated a grist mill.

Christopher and Amelia's son Richard, born in 1835 in Manchester, England, left home in Ohio in 1854 and headed for a Quaker settlement in Iowa. After a couple years there, he moved to Atchison County, Kansas, where he married Melinda Reynolds, daughter of Dr. Joseph and Phoebe Bush Reynolds, Kentuckians who had settled in Warren County, Illinois, before moving to Kansas. Richard served in the Civil War and then returned to Kansas. He homesteaded in Washington County, Kansas, where their son Samuel Allen was born in a sod dugout.

Sam Allen apprenticed as a blacksmith at the age of 13 and within a few years had his own shop. He went to Oklahoma with one of the land rushes, opened a blacksmith shop there, and then returned to Kansas. He married Grace Boyer in Jefferson County, Kansas, and to them were born Donald Chester Allen and Elizabeth (Beth) Allen. Grace died shortly after giving birth to Beth in 1906. In 1911 Sam remarried to Myrtle Blaine Anderson, daughter of Dr. Thomas Mitchell Anderson and Laura Ellen Granade Anderson from Mountain View, Missouri. To Sam and Myrtle were born Samuel Clyde Allen, Raymond Anderson Allen, and Margie Jean Allen. Driven from his hometown of Valley Falls, Kansas, by the Ku Klux Klan in 1927, Sam worked in blacksmith shops in western Kansas and then settled in Tonganoxie where Margie Jean entered eighth grade and a year later first dated Roy Lee.