



The Agnes Hastad Memorial Scholarship

The story of this scholarship must begin with Albert Berness who was born in 1911 to Andrew (1866-1944) and Johanna (1873-1949) Berness on the family farm. Albert was youngest of six children, five of whom were girls—Bertha, Agnes (Hastad), Julie (Monig), Lillie, and the last, his twin Josie. Andrew and Johanna's farm was homesteaded in 1897 and consisted of two hundred acres located just south of Brocket in Lilleoff Township. They raised their own food, as was true of most early settlers in the region.

Albert took over the farm in 1944 after the death of his father. He and Josie tended to the farm, keeping it intact and managing it in the style used by their parents for so many years. Friends still remember Josie diligently taking care of the chickens and gathering eggs. Albert, on the other hand, was famous in the region for his blue-ribbon garden and raspberries. He

loved to share his produce with neighbors.

Albert has been described as a very orderly, frugal, and honest farmers. Neighbors remember how he took painstaking care of the barn, even during cold North Dakota winters. While others used tractors and spreaders, Albert would be seen rounding up his horses and sled to tidy up the barn. That was Albert. Everyone knew he took great pride in his work, no matter how large or small the task.

Since Albert was the only son, he knew his fate—tending to the farmstead. He enjoyed, however, watching each sister's future unfold. Albert seemed to be most proud of his sister Agnes.

Agnes graduated from Brocket High School and left the family farm to attend what was referred to in those days as Mayville State Teachers College. Ultimately, she achieved her goal and became a schoolteacher.

Agnes touched the hearts of many students as she taught in several North Dakota schools—Overly, Hanks, Valley City, and Wolford. In 1928, Agnes met and married Louis Hastad. During her many years of marriage to Louis, Agnes continued her teaching career in Bocket.

After Louis' death, Agnes decided to move to Devils Lake where she continued to teach. She retired from her Devils Lake post and became active in the Retired Teachers Association and the Eta chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma. This would be her last contact with North Dakota schools and the education system. In 1977, Agnes fell ill and was ultimately moved back to the Berness family farm where

Albert and Josie cared for her until her death in February of 1978.

Albert knew the importance of an education and was very proud of Agnes. One of her

former students, Judith M. Anderson of Bocket, recalls Agnes as "... *the best teacher I ever had.*" Judith fondly remembers Agnes as very bright, and if she were questioned by a student, the entire class would search for the facts. If

Agnes was proven wrong, her standard response would be, "*I stand corrected.*"

Albert appreciated the impact his sister had on so many youngsters throughout her teaching career. He made plans to invest his estate in a way that would provide opportunities for students of the future to continue to benefit from contact with talented educators. To this end, Albert established an endowed scholarship in Agnes' memory.

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Scholarship is awarded annually to new or returning students attending Lake Region State College. Recipients are selected on the basis of academic achievement and financial need. ●



Albert Berness is pictured here with his twin sister Josie Berness.