

*A life sketch of*  
**Victor Ray Oswald**

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1915 – 1987

The New Year was quick to bring good news to the family of Ludwig Fredrick and Maria Christina Klingler Oswald. January 8, 1915 was a cold, wintry day, but the Oswald home was warm and full of excitement when the midwife announced, “It’s a boy!” Lou\* and Christine had heard that news six times before when Ludwig Fredrick Jr., George Henry, Arnold Martin, Elmer Heber, Herbert Wilford and Willard James had been born. This, their seventh son, was to be named Victor Ray. His sisters, Verna Pauline and Mary Matilda were thrilled with the news. Although they were just four and three, they were anxious to help their mother care for this new baby.



The Oswald family lived in a home Lou had built for his new bride. The home was on forty acres his father had gifted him out of the Osswald Family Homestead at Coltman, Bonneville County, Idaho. The home was built of logs and plaster and was unbelievably small for so many family members, but it was clean, tidy, and filled with lots of love; a wonderful place for this little boy to begin his life.

On March 7, 1915, the family gathered together for a special occasion. Vic was blessed by a family friend, David R. Taylor. The family was proud and happy!

Vic was the baby of the family for five years until another sister, Violet Irene, was born and took over the position of youngest in the family. His first five years were spent close to his mother and sisters. He learned to help with basic chores around the house and was often entertained by Verna and Mary while his mother cooked, cleaned, washed and cared for the needs of her family.

Vic’s dad and brothers were busy farming, but once in awhile they would let him tag along. Lou and his brothers had claimed some land out on the desert, which became known as

Oswald Basin. They were clearing that land of sagebrush so it could be cultivated. At the same time they were farming their property in Coltman. It was difficult to find the time and energy to work both places. Lou was grateful for his boys and the help they were to him.

Drought conditions resulted in poor crops, which made it impossible to make the payments on both places. The bank foreclosed on the farm in Coltman, forcing changes for the family. Financially stretched to the limit, Lou and Christine loaded their belongings and moved the family to Oswald Basin in 1918.

The environment would have been unbearable for some, but Lou and Christine made the most of it and tried to remain positive. Blowing dirt, sagebrush, wild rabbits and winter snow storms worked against them. The family was forced to turn the property back for taxes and moved to Idaho Falls during the fall of 1919. City life was not what their dreams were made of.

In the spring of 1920, Lou and Christine gathered their family once again and moved to the Osgood Project. This was a housing and farming project managed by the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company. The Oswald Family rolled up their sleeves and got to work determined to make their new home heaven on earth. Vic helped plant berry bushes and flowers with his mother and sisters. He helped take care of their cows, chickens and horses. Vic especially liked the horses and spent his extra time with them. He had been warned to stay away from one horse in particular, who was extra spirited. One day, Vic reached in to pet this horse and it snapped at his hand, catching a finger in his mouth. From that day on, Vic sported a crooked finger, which was broken when the horse bit him.

When Vic was seven years old, his mother had complications with the birth of her twelfth child. She and the baby girl died August 17, 1922. An older sister, Dorothea Christina had died as a baby and so Christine and this last daughter were buried by her in the Central Cemetery at Grant, Jefferson County, Idaho. Although Vic was too young to understand all that his mother's death meant – he knew things would never be the same.

Lou, with the help of his oldest daughters, tried to take care of the family. Cooking, cleaning, and washing along with the farm work was overwhelming. Lou learned to make bread and doubled his efforts to make the long days productive. He could not fill the void left by the loss of Christine, but he did his best to keep the family together and happy.

When the family sold their farm, Lou had taken some of the money and bought a Model T Ford. When they could spare the time, he would load Vic and his brothers and sisters into the Model T and head for Heise Hot Springs. They would ride the ferry across the river. This was a frightening experience for Vic and the others. The ferry would carry four cars at a time and was propelled by the force of the water. It was held in tow by pulleys on a cable that stretched across the river. In the spring, when the water was high it was especially scary. These trips were a real treat for this hard working family. They loved to go swimming!

Vic started his education in the fall of 1920 at the Osgood Elementary. His first report card showed him excelling in deportment (behavior), arithmetic and reading. He did well in school and liked to learn. He completed his first eight years in Osgood and graduated from there in May of 1928.

He was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, May 17, 1925, at Osgood by Joseph E. Lovell and confirmed the same day by David Smith.

During these young years, Vic worked with his dad and brothers on the farm. He learned many of the skills that would help him provide for his own family some day. Planting and harvesting, maintaining and repairing equipment, care of livestock and the qualities of honesty and dependability were all taught to Vic by the day to day example of his dad.

Vic and Willard played baseball in Osgood. This was a sport Vic really enjoyed. Homemade baseball diamonds provided hours of practice and he became a pretty fair player.

Bishop Alma Williams ordained Vic a deacon April 25, 1927. A graduation certificate dated May 12, 1928, was presented to him for completing the Religion Class Course, which reflects his church activity at this time.

After his graduation from elementary school, he moved to Idaho Falls where he could further his education. He lived with his father's sister, Dora Kedsie, and went to junior high and then Idaho Falls High School, graduating in 1933. Autographs in his yearbook refer to his 'cute smile', fun times on school sponsored trips and at parties, and weekends dancing at the Wandemere, an outdoor dance hall at Idaho Falls. He had the reputation of being a great dancer and was quite the 'ladies man'. His coach complimented him on his contribution to the basketball team and his regret over not being able to draft him onto the track team. He referred to him as 'a natural athlete'. Vic's classmates gave him the nickname of 'The Lucky Rabbit'.\*\* It

is obvious Vic was involved and enjoyed the social opportunities that come during the high school years. His teachers wrote that he was a good student and a pleasure to have in class. One can only assume he was a typical teenager who did well in school and had many fond memories of friends and activities.

About 1930, Vic's Grandmother Osswald had trouble with her health and moved from her home in Coltman to stay with her daughter, Dora. With her home empty and needing someone to take care of the farm, Lou moved back to Coltman in December of 1931. After graduation, Vic also moved to Coltman and lived with his father and sisters. They lived in the Osswald pink, stone house on the corner of Lewisville Highway and the County Line Road. This home was a landmark in the area. Vic helped his father with the farming and chores.

When work would let him he liked to fish, hunt and play softball. Practicing when he was young had paid off and now he was a valued softball player and participated with the young men in the Grant-Coltman area. Their team developed a 'tough team to beat' reputation throughout the valley.

Vic's cousin, Dean Gneiting, lived across the road from the farm. He and Vic spent a lot of time together. They did a lot of fishing, hunting and horseback riding. One Halloween, they decided to join in the fun. Among other activities they roped a yard gate and then looped the rope around the saddle horn. Off they rode with the gate dragging along behind them.

On one of their many horse rides they passed the home of Ace and Nettie Randall. There, sitting on a stool milking cows, was a brown-eyed, brown-haired neighbor girl who caught Vic's eye. Ora Randall and Vic started to see each other regularly.

At this time, Ora was staying with her sisters at Henry's Lake in Island Park. She was helping them with their household chores and children. On weekends, Vic would find a ride with someone going to Island Park or Ora would catch a ride with someone coming down to the valley for supplies. What time they had to spend together was never long enough, but they filled it with lots of fun. Picnics, trips to Green Canyon swimming, dances and card playing were some of the activities they enjoyed. When they weren't together they sent letters back and forth. Vic's letters were a reflection of his growing feelings for her. In one letter he wrote, "You haven't any idea how much I have missed you. The evenings are sure long and it gets pretty

lonesome. Next time I see a black cloud come over, I'll start up there. I could do with a few of those bear hugs. Loads of love to the sweetest girl in the world."

He tried to stay busy during the long weeks with Ora gone. He often went down to visit with the Randall family. He wrote of a trip to town with his sister Violet and her soon to be husband, Milt, Ora's brother. In a letter to Ora he told her about a great Saturday Matinee the three of them had gone to starring Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. He wrote that he thought the movie was one of the best he had ever seen.

Their friendship grew over that summer and they decided to be married that fall. On November 26, 1937, Vic and Ora were married at the home of Bishop George Christensen, at Grant, Jefferson County, Idaho. They began their life together in Grant, where they lived with Ora's dad and mother. Vic worked for a potato warehouse and helped various farmers with their work and chores.

Several months later, they moved to Coltman where he worked on the Judd Family Farm on the Lewisville Highway. They lived in a small frame home on the farm. Vic and Jacob 'Jake' Judd worked well together and became fast friends. Mr. Judd was impressed with Vic's work ethic and quiet character. Vic and Ora had big dreams and their future was bright. Their first child, Aceil Leon was born August 3, 1938. Vic was a proud father!

Lorenzo J. Ward ordained Vic to the office of Elder in the Church, February 22, 1942, in the Coltman Ward.

Vic was a good worker and always had people wanting his help. He contributed much of his time, efforts and logic to the construction of the canals in the Coltman area. He worked many hours to help make a working irrigation system for the farming community. Much of the work was done with pick and shovel. Long, tiring and tedious hours produced a vast improvement for successful farming and were an efforts Vic and many others were very proud of.

During the winter months, when the farming and chores slowed down, Vic sorted potatoes for different warehouses. He would rise early and get the chores done, eat a hardy breakfast, hitch the team of horses to the wagon and be off for work by mid morning. He would work on the potato sorters four or five hours and then he would head the team home so they would be back by dark. When he got home chores would be waiting for him and the day

would end with supper. It was sometimes too cold or snowy to get to work, but this was the daily routine for most of his winter. When he was able to purchase his first pickup his travel time greatly improved, which gave him more hours to work.

In the meantime, more children joined the family. Loa Maria was born April 23, 1942, followed by Victor Arlen, June 24, 1946, and completing the family was Roland Kay born November 14, 1950.

With the death of his father in 1942, Vic's family center was gone. The Oswald sisters tried to keep track of the family, but they were scattered and seldom saw each other. Ora's family was a close family and lived within miles of each other. The Randall's were always in touch or together. Vic and Ora were an important part of this family circle.

Vic was an avid pinochle player. He brought great enjoyment and frustration to those he played against. The enjoyment came from his great wit and good nature. The frustration came from his refusal to let anyone outbid him. He was even more frustrating when he would over extend himself in the bidding, but always came out smelling like a rose. It was great sport for him when he used his 'gambler instincts' against his mother in law, Nettie. He could really get her upset. He would raise the anti and then, using his uncanny skills, peck away at each hand until he would out play the table. Time and time again, Nettie and Ora and countless others would play to win Vic, but Vic was seldom beat!

When Mr. Judd started to plan his retirement, Vic started to look for a place of his own. He heard about 100 acres on the East River Road in Grant that was for sale. It was a choice piece of fertile ground with a lot of potential. Vic and Ora made the decision to buy it. They started farming for themselves in 1948. This was an exciting time! They had worked for someone else while dreaming of their own place long enough.

Vic had bought several milk cows, as well as beef cattle, through the years. Now with his own land he added more cattle to his livestock herd. Eventually he acquired pigs and chickens. The farm was beginning to take shape. Hay, wheat and potatoes were planted. With daily chores and irrigating, Vic always had plenty to do.

With the help of Leon, Vic milked six to eight cows, by hand, each day. They would load the full milk cans on a dolly and take them out to the roadside. A large dairy truck would

pick up the full cans and leave empties for the next milking. This routine went on day after day, and since it was the milk check that paid the bills, it was the daily priority.

When Leon got involved in FFA during high school, he bought automatic milkers, which were a big help to the daily chores. They were then able to increase the number of milk cows and the production of milk.

Most of the hay was grown to feed the horses, beef cattle and milk cows. The chickens and pigs were raised to feed the family. Some of the wheat and potatoes were stored for eating and the rest were traded for other needed items or sold for cash.

In the fall, when the hay, wheat, and potatoes needed to be harvested, Vic and his father in law, Ace, helped each other get the work done on both farms. Vic's brother in laws, Walt and Milt, would also trade labor with each other. Because of their combined efforts each of their farms got the attention needed. When he needed extra help he would go to the employment office in Idaho Falls. He would offer men wages and lunch in return for their labor. Vic was strong for his 5' 9" frame and could out work most men. Quite often, the hired men would quit by noon and want their wages. They could not buck hay or potato sacks and keep up with Vic. He would pay them and send them back to town.

It was a monumental show of progress when Vic and Milt bought the first hay bailer in the area. They were the envy of all as they entered the fields and displayed the bailer's handiwork.

When they could squeeze in some playtime, Vic and Ora would take the family on picnics. They never went very far because of the chores, but once in a while Vic could be persuaded to take a couple of hours off. Ace and Nettie liked to go with them. A favorite fishing hole at Little Lost River was a temptation that took them in that direction when possible. They always enjoyed a day in the park.

Vic and Ace did a lot of things together including the butchering. Because they did not have freezers at the time, the butchering was done on demand. When beef was needed, they butchered and shared with family and friends close by who needed meat also. By sharing, they could avoid having any of the meat spoil. In the wintertime, they kept the wrapped slabs of meat on the porch roof. As meat was needed, it would be cut or sawed off the naturally frozen chunks.

Butchering pigs was a chore even the kids got involved in. The youngest kids would haul wood for a fire that was built under large pots of water. As the water would boil, a pig, which had been killed and hung earlier, would be lowered by pulleys into the scalding hot water. This would loosen the hair on the pig. The older kids and adults would then scrape the hair off the hide and then the meat would be cut and wrapped.

In the early spring, Vic would make a trip to the feed store in Shelley to buy baby chicks. He would fill the chicken coop with 100-200 of these little chickens, which were raised for eating and egg laying. When chicken was on the menu, a chicken would be caught and plucked.

Vic and his family became pretty self sufficient on their farm. Trips to town were occasionally made for things they could not provide for themselves. These trips to town were a big event. It was a long day, spent shopping for the things needed on their list. The kids looked forward to a nickel for a candy bar, or a dime for a pop.

Vic gained the reputation of being 'a pretty fair horseman', and his teams were some of the finest in the area. He had good judgment when it came to horses and was often sought after for his opinion and help with other teams. He was a hard worker and he worked his horses like he mended fences or built corrals – they had to be of good, sound quality. Two of his favorites were powerhouse Percherons, Bud and King. They were as dependable as the days were long.

The winters were long and hard. The snow would blow and build drifts until you could walk over the fences and in some places the snow was as high as the power lines. Travel in cars was near impossible until the plows could get through the roads, which sometimes took days. Schools would close and everything would come to a stop, with the exception of the chores. Several winters, while Vic and Ora were on their farm, they were snowed in for weeks at a time. The only way they could travel was by horse and sleigh. The horses would pull the sleighs over the drifts and they could go any direction, anywhere because they did not have to follow the roadways, or go around fences. It was beautiful, white, open country.

Vearl and Brinda Crystal bought a farm across from Vic and Ora where they built their home. Their friendship became priceless to the Oswald family. Vic enjoyed helping Vearl work on his home and barnyard. Tools and repairs were traded back and forth and many memories were made between these families.

Remembering these times with Vic, Vearl said, "He could almost sense when and what you needed and would come over to offer his help or tools or whatever he had. If something broke down, he could fix it, or invent something that would hold it together or keep it running until we could get the parts. When he fixed a fence, a potato digger, a mower, or whatever, it was done right the first time."

Once in a while, Vic and Ora would go with Vearl and Brinda to see a movie or have dinner. Vic always liked to go to Jack's Chicken Inn.

Vearl said, "Vic was proud of his family. He was proud of their accomplishments. On many occasions, when Vic and I were visiting, he would get a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye just telling me about something special one of the kids had done. Vic was not anti-social, he just liked his work and his family and that was his life."

Vic was enjoyable to be around and was known for his quiet, pleasant personality, but he also had quite a sense of humor and enjoyed teasing and seeing a good joke through. When he would get that certain twinkle in his eye, it meant someone was in for a teasing. He got particular pleasure out of teasing the Randall women. When the family was together, Vic was having fun upsetting the ladies, especially Grandma Randall or Aunt Alta.

Vic was not one who enjoyed the social life. He and Ora were very different in this respect. Ora loved to get out with people and was often the center of entertainment, where Vic was content to stay home or in the background. He was always congenial and friendly, but he was more comfortable with his family at home. He was especially close to his sister in law, Leone. He and Leone spent a lot of time visiting. She seemed to be someone he could confide in. Vic often stopped at the Idaho Drug in Rigby, where Leone worked. He would sit up to the soda counter and visit with her while she worked. She would help him shop for a birthday, Valentine's, Christmas or 'just because' gift for Ora. Leone said he was never particular about what, but wanted the best. They usually settled on chocolates!

True German blood ran in Vic's veins and could be stubborn and set in his ways. This worked in his favor at times, and at times it worked against him. His children remember coming home from school one day finding their dad a sorry sight. He had had all of his teeth pulled, and would not let the dentist use anything to deaden him or help with pain. He was not to be messed with for several days!

Leon married Trena Dee Rhodehouse, July 28, 1961 and moved into a trailer home on the farm. With Leon's help, the farming continued, but it was getting harder and harder to make ends meet. With an opportunity to buy the farm adjacent to Vic's, Leon and Trena moved to that farm. With the two farms side by side, Leon and Vic continued to farm and milk cows together.

Although Vic's daily routine seldom varied, his family was at a point of considerable change. Leon's family grew and Vic became a Grandpa! Susan, Sherrie and Todd were all exciting additions to the family. Loa graduated and moved to Idaho Falls and then Salt Lake City, where she worked as a secretary. Vic looked forward to her weekend visits. When Arlen graduated in 1964, he left the farm and moved to Salt Lake City where he worked and went to school. These really were changing times for Vic and Ora.

In order to help with the troubled finances, Ora made the decision to go to work at J.C. Penney's, in March of 1962. Vic was working in the potato warehouses and doing what farming he could on the side. The farming situation was getting harder and harder to make profitable.

In spite of their hard work and attempts to save the farms, Vic and Leon were facing bank notes they could not pay. Their options were exhausted. The bank scheduled a farm auction and took control of the property and equipment. There wasn't much the two families could do but watch as they faced this disappointing time. Financially and emotionally, they were drained.

On August 28, 1965, the farm was sold. The life Vic and Ora had known for the past eighteen years was exchanged for a new start. Vic and Ora purchased the home that the Judd family had lived in and moved, once again, on the Lewisville Highway, at Coltman in February 1966. The home was different and the surroundings had changed, but they were back where they had first started.

Leon and Trena decided to return to college and left Grant headed for Utah. This was a sad day for Vic and Ora. They had depended on Leon and his help on the farm since he was a young boy. After college Leon's family moved to California. Two more grandsons, Eric and Kalen were added to their family tree. The visits they had were now fewer and farther between, but they became anticipated highlights for Vic and Ora.

Vic continued to work for the potato warehouses. He gained a good reputation throughout the industry and was well thought of by his fellow workers and employers. His experience over the years had provided him with a working knowledge of the equipment and potato packaging process. Lyle Taylor asked Vic to help him build a new warehouse in Lewisville. Vic's judgment and experience well qualified him for such a responsibility. He was a vital resource for Lyle during those building years. Taylor Produce was a success and much of the credit was due to Vic.

Vic had always been blessed with good health and strength. It came as a shock when Vic collapsed one day. He was rushed to the hospital where the doctors tried to find the problem. After testing was completed, Vic was diagnosed with bleeding ulcers. Vic was really sick and along with other concerns, he had lost his ability to walk. He spent the next three months trying to recuperate. Arlen moved home from Utah hoping he could help with the required therapy and daily care Vic needed. Using a walker to steady himself, he slowly started to regain strength and the use of his legs. In time, he was able to walk again, but his strength and endurance were never the same. His legs were never strong and often ached, especially after long days at the warehouse.

Kay graduated from Bonneville High School in 1969 and moved to Moscow, Idaho where he enrolled in the University of Idaho. He married Cindy Chapman, June 22, 1974. Vic was a proud grandpa again when Leaha Skye was born December 17, 1974.

Loa was living in Salt Lake and sometime between her traveling, work and trips home, she met Ronald DeMar Nebeker. Vic and Ora were excited to welcome him into the family. Loa and Ron were married, March 19, 1976. They continued to live in Salt Lake City, but made regular weekend trips home. Vic and Ora looked forward to their visits. One year they coaxed or coerced Vic into taking a vacation with them to Jackson, Wyoming. They really had to talk to get him to go because he just didn't like to leave home and often didn't feel good. That trip became one of his most enjoyable times that he often spoke of.

Vic worked hard for many years and finally earned a quiet, comfortable retirement. He was content to spend most of his time around the house. Ora enjoyed her flowers, quilting and genealogy work. Occasional trips to town to take care of the banking, pick up a few needed items, a hair cut, and fish for lunch were enough for Vic. He could be found in his stuffed

rocker watching sports or news programs on TV or catching a nap. His reading of the daily newspaper kept him in touch with the outside world.

On February 19, 1983, Arlen married Karla Knapp. They made their first home in Coltman, just a few miles from Vic and Ora. When more grandchildren joined the family, they were regular visitors. Tyler and Jeremy would climb in Vic's chair and coax Grandpa to read a story. They liked to tag him around and snuggle up for a nap on the couch. They shared some fun times with Grandpa O.

About this time, Vic began having trouble with his health. He was diagnosed with gout in his feet and hands which was particularly miserable for him. After several trips to the doctor he was treated for various ailments and more restrictions were accepted. His hard working body was struggling. On April 9, 1987, Vic passed away in the Idaho Falls Hospital at Idaho Falls, Idaho. He was buried, April 11, 1987, in the Central Cemetery at Grant, Jefferson County, Idaho.

Those who knew Vic knew he was a kind and compassionate man with a big heart. He was always available to help friends and neighbors whenever they needed him. He was always concerned about his family. It was not a natural or easy thing for Vic to show his feelings, but he was very proud of his family and their accomplishments and worked long and hard to provide them with what was needed.

Occasionally, Vic would go with his family to a Christmas Program, a funeral or special event, but he was not a man who was found in church each Sunday. He was always supportive of Ora and the children in their callings and desires to be active in the church and community. He was quick to make sure the tithing and fast offering checks were written. He was proud and supported Loa and Arlen as they served their missions for the Church. Although he did not get his religion in the traditional way, he was a man who had respect for God's creations and a love for mankind. He was aware of the needs of those around him and was eager and always willing to lend a helping hand. His service was often quiet and anonymous. Little gestures of kindness were typical of Vic.

Vic had a keen mind and an outstanding memory for names and local history. He was acquainted with or knew the situation of anyone who had lived in the Grant or Coltman areas within the past seventy years. He could tell you who their mother and father were, who their

brothers and sisters were, how old they were and who they went to school with. He was up to date with the latest news in the country and was well informed with pending legislation, farming trends and financial investing. He was surprisingly aware of all that was going on around him, while to some he seemed in a world of his own.

In spite of the problems he may have had, Vic was synonymous with integrity. His handshake was as good as a notary signed document – he was a man of his word. He was sincere and genuine in his concern for others. He loved his family and was always devoted to Ora. His contribution to the Oswald Legacy leaves much for his posterity to be proud of.

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*This Life Sketch of Victor Ray Oswald was compiled from stories, documents and other records collected and kept in the Family History Library of K. Oswald.*

*Additional facts were obtained from writings and a personal interview with Ludwig Friedrich Oswald's son, Willard James Oswald and from writings of his daughters, Verna Pauline Oswald Taylor and Violet Irene Oswald Randall.*

*Names, places, and dates have been verified with family genealogy information and records in possession of K. Oswald, and family history records in possession of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.*

*\*Ludwig was known as Lou and Maria Christina was known as Christine after immigrating to America.*

*\*\*About this time, a new Walt Disney character, 'Oswald the Lucky Rabbit', made his debut on the silver screen. We assume this is where Vic got this nickname.*