

Forty-One Years of Helena History Recorded by Jorud

L. H. Jorud, Helena Native, Has Photographic History of Capital City

By Dorothy Larimer

Leslie H. Jorud, who was born in a house on Benton avenue Sept. 19, 1900, sent away for a pinhole camera when he was eight or nine years old. It cost him 35 cents and started him on a lifelong career during which he has photographically recorded the history of Helena for 41 years.

"I got fooling around with that camera and invented a shutter for it," he says today. "I took some pretty good pictures with it, but I finally saved \$2 and bought myself a Brownie."

With the Brownie camera, Jorud took family pictures around the neighborhood and was soon developing his own negatives and making contact prints. His investment in business at that point was about \$3.

His parents, Mr. and Mrs. T. O. Jorud, had moved to Helena from Marysville with Les' elder brother, Roy, now of Eureka, Calif., about 1898. His father, a native of Norway, met his mother, a native of Wisconsin, in Helena and they were married before moving to Marysville where the elder Jorud was engaged in mining. During their residence in Helena, he also followed the mining profession.

Leslie and his brother attended Broadwater and then Hawthorne schools. Les recalls being very impressed with the scholastic ability of a classmate, Emily Carlson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Carlson of Helena.

"We were in the same class until she whizzed past me when they let her skip a grade," he said this week, smiling proudly at the "smartest girl in school," who is now Mrs. Jorud. He still refers to her as "the brains of the family."

At the age of 15, he bought a 1-A Kodak, gave up his formal education and got a job running the elevator at the Monticello and taking pictures on the side. A better job was offered him by Parthen Drug, so he gave up the elevator and took up the broom, sweeping out the drug store, washing bottles and running errands for a salary of \$25 a month. At night he developed film for the store. One noon he had a rush order for a roll of film, so he dashed home, developed, fixed and washed the roll while he ate. Then he grabbed it out of the water, caught a street car, held the film out so the wind could blow on it and delivered the completed negatives to the customer on time.

Leslie Lyle, early Helena photographer, heard about the enterprising youth and offered him a job. Jorud went to work there during the summer of 1916 and three or four weeks later the boy (then 16 years old) borrowed \$300 and bought the picture finishing department of the studio. Lyle did the commercial photography and picture framing while his new partner took over photo finishing and enlarging with a homemade enlarger utilizing an arc light. He is still using the printer he made about that time.

During the summer of 1918, Jorud closed his business and joined the tank corps. It is a mat-

ter of record that there are only three World War I tank corps veterans in Helena today, Hugh R. Adair, chief justice of the Montana supreme court; Wellington D. Rankin, Helena attorney, and Jorud.

After he returned from the service, he re-joined Lyle, who had gone into portrait work, for a few months before opening his own photo-finishing shop in O'Connor Drug store (now occupied by Saveway drug). He was there for the next 12 years as a commercial photographer, picture-framer and photo-finisher.

On June 22, 1921, he and Emily Carlson were married. They observed their 34th wedding anniversary during the past week in the house her father built for them at 175 West Lyndale four years after their marriage. They are now in the process of remodeling the home and are living in two or three rooms upstairs.

When they were married, Les, an old hand at borrowing money to finance any venture, borrowed \$600, paying \$500 down on a house on Cutler street and had \$100 left for "incidentals." Mrs. Jorud assisted him in the photo shop.

"We prayed for sunshine every Sunday," Mrs. Jorud says. "If it was cloudy and people couldn't take pictures, we didn't have much to eat during the week. The only film available then was slow (non-curling) emulsion which didn't record anything taken in the shade or on cloudy days."

Because money was scarce, Jorud signed a contract with George G. E. Neill to take five pictures of Neill's billboards at \$2 a picture. The deal was that the pictures were to be taken every two weeks. One of the signs was near Intermountain college about five miles north of Helena, another was east of East Helena, one was west of Helena and the others in town, although separated. "The only bad part of it was that I didn't have a car, so I walked the rounds every two weeks," Les says now.

On May 18, 1930, about 25 years ago, Jorud opened Jorud Photo shop at 320 North Main. He borrowed \$600, rented the former silk store for \$100 a month, purchased \$435 worth of photographic supplies and found himself broke after paying deposits on light and gas. "I bought some equipment on credit and set out to prove a point to those who said I was crazy to open a luxury business so soon after the stock-market crash of '29."

He tells of standing out in front of his shop hoping somebody would come in. Business was good at times and they struggled along until 1935, when Helena's earthquakes caused a boom in his business. He had more orders for pictures and films than he could fill and his collection of earthquake pictures is still in demand.

"I remember the morning after the first 'quake," he says. "All the film had been shaken to the floor. People came in and pawed through the film until they found



PERSONALITY HIGH LIGHTS—During 41 years of taking pictures, Les Jorud has recorded many memorable occasions in Helena. These pictures are some of his favorites. No. 1, taken in 1919, shows the late Gov. Samuel V. Stewart, extreme left, with Teddy Roosevelt, Jr., third from left in the foreground, and Brownie Burke of Helena (short man in uniform), who was credited by Ripley with being the shortest man in the AEF during World War I. Burke was once a mascot for the St. Louis Browns. No. 2, taken March 30, 1927, shows the late Will Rogers during a visit to Helena. No. 3, President Woodrow Wilson (arrow) during visit to Helena in 1916. No. 4, William Jennings Bryan at the Montana State fair in Helena in 1916. No. 5, Amelia Earhart at the Helena airport Jan. 29, 1933. This photo, like most of those in this group, was taken on a glass plate. No. 6, Leslie H. Jorud, age 16, at the start of his career as a photographer. No. 7, Evelyn Jorud, five, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. L. H. Jorud, poses proudly with "The Spirit of St. Louis," Charles Lindbergh's plane, at the Helena airport in September, 1927. No. 8, a rare total eclipse of the moon taken before dawn near Townsend on July 9, 1945. Photographers will not be able to take another picture like this here until 1999. No. 9, doughboys marching off to war in 1917. Les Jorud took another picture almost like this of the First Special Service force parading before being shipped overseas during World War II.

what they wanted, then they'd toss the money at me."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Jorud worked long hours at the shop. He recalls working three days and two nights straight to get out some pictures of the fair. The regular working hours were from 8 o'clock in the morning until midnight, often stretched to an all-night shift, after which he'd go home for breakfast, shower and shave and be back to open up at 8. "I've always taken my obligations to my customers seriously," he says. "When they were counting on me to do something, I did it, no matter how much sleep I missed."

In 1944, the Joruds took their first vacation and were gone for six weeks. It was almost impossible to hire anyone during World War II, and by the time it ended, the couple was tired.

One day in 1946, W. A. (Al) Brown came in to look at a camera. During their conversation, Jorud said, "Why don't you buy the shop?"

Brown, who had no idea that Jorud was thinking of selling, said, "Are you serious?" Les apparently was serious, because by Jan. 1, 1947, Brown and his former partner, Elmer Ward, were the new owners of Jorud Photo shop and Jorud was conducting his commercial photography business in his home.

Later he rented his present location at 138 North Jackson, where he does all types of commercial photography, bronzing, photostatic and copy work, takes movies and does documentary work for Shodair hospital, showing case histories from admittance to discharge. He belongs to Helena Lodge

No. 3, AF&M; Scottish Rite, Algeria Shrine and the Helena Elks lodge. He is a past president (1940) of the Montana Photographers' association. His wife is currently reigning as queen of Sapphira temple No. 79, Daughters of the Nile.

"If I had my life to live over, I guess I'd do everything the same," Jorud says today. "I've had a lot of fun doing the work I love, I've met many interesting people and it's a good life."

He estimates his negative file would make a stack about 90 feet high. A more fabulous figure is his estimate that finished prints he has turned out would make a pile at least 900 feet high. That's a lot of pictures.

His picture career has taken him into a cage with five lions, 275 feet up inside the smokestack at the AS&R smelter in East Helena, into morgues and operating rooms, into the wilderness alone with a nervous horse who wanted to go home, up in a bucket over Canyon Ferry dam, down into mines, up steep mine shafts, in airplanes and to all the major events in Helena during the past 41 years.

It eventually financed a dream trip for he and his wife. In July, 1950, they went abroad, spending four months in Europe, including two months with their daughter and husband and their four grandchildren in Germany. They showed movies of their trip more than 100 times after they returned home.

Everything started with a pinhole camera, but L. H. Jorud has become an institution in Helena and his cameras will continue to record major events for many years to come.

Jorud Relates Humorous Incidents in His Career As Commercial Photographer in Helena

L. H. Jorud, who has used photographic equipment ranging from flash powder through electronic flash and from glass plates through today's high speed films, has had his share of amusing incidents during his career.

As a budding photographer with Leslie Lyle, he recalls that one day a man came in to get the shop to take a picture of a woman who was on trial at the courthouse. The running fee was \$2.50 a job, but the visitor promised \$5. Lyle wasn't interested, but his new partner agreed. The deal was to the effect that a group of men would be stationed at the north door. Les was to get behind the group and when the woman appeared, one of the men was to put his hand on his hip, giving the photographer space through which to take the picture unseen. The woman's husband, a huge, burly

man, and apparently of a suspicious nature, saw the group at the door, turned and escorted his wife to the south door.

With visions of \$5 going up in smoke, Les hurried alone to the south door. The woman came out with her hands over her face and her husband charged at Les. "What do you think you're doing?" he growled at the boy. "Taking pictures," Les answered. "If I hear that shutter click, I'll bust that camera over your head," the man threatened. With that, he told his wife to go to the hotel while he kept an eye on Jorud.

"That ended my career as a crime photographer," Les says. "I didn't get the picture and next day, when the man came back to offer \$10 for a shot of the woman, I turned him down." Jorud says he often accompanied Lyle on picture-taking as-

signments. Once there was a fancy party at the Placer hotel honoring some dignitaries from Europe. They were to take pictures, but were afraid the smoke from the flash powder would offend the delicate nostrils of the honored guests and the Montana personalities attending. Lyle and Jorud rigged up bags of umbrella cloth and sheets to catch the smoke. They thought they had fire-proofed them by dipping them in alum water, but when the flash was ignited, the bags caught fire causing quite some excitement among the carefully posed crowd.

"We tossed the flaming bags out the window on Grand street and got out of there in a hurry," he says. "The picture was fine."

Once he was asked to take the decorations for Carroll college's junior prom at Harmony hall (now Central bowling alley).

There were crepe paper decorations on everything and the crew had just finished its work when Jorud and his friend, Al Bausch, arrived to take the picture. When the flash was set off, the decorations caught fire. "We had it out before the fire department arrived," he says now, "but they had to do lots of their decorating over again."

Gov. John Erickson caught a bad cold once because of Jorud. The photographer was asked to take one of the traditional pictures in the governor's office in 1929. "I had to work fast to get two shots because the smoke and dust from the first one sometimes started to settle before I could take the second picture," he said. "Well, the governor opened the windows to clear the smoke out and he caught cold. He wasn't very happy."

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SHOOTING ECLIPSE—L. H. Jorud is shown in July, 1945, when he photographed a rare total eclipse, which will not be visible here again until 1999. He got several good shots of the phenomenon during the 26 seconds it was total. One of the pictures is reproduced elsewhere on this page. He went to Townsend to get the photographs.



NEW ENLARGER—Les Jorud is pictured here with an enlarger which he recently bought second-hand in St. Paul. A rare piece of equipment, it is always in focus and can enlarge up to eight diameters, as compared to the average enlarger's capacity of four. This means he can enlarge a five by seven negative to 40 by 54 inches.



COMMERCIAL PHOTO SHOP—L. H. Jorud is pictured in front of his shop on Jackson street. Seven of his 10 cameras are shown. Cameras, left to right, are 8 x 10 view camera; 7 x 17 Graphic view; fingerprint camera; Speed Graphic; older Speed Graphic and Graflex. Jorud uses all cameras pictured. He has three additional cameras, ranging from 5 x 7 to 7 x 11 size.