

## **An American Story**

### **The Life and Times of a Midlands Family From WWII to Vietnam, the Life of Our Nation Reflected in 4 Iowans <sup>[1]</sup>**

Villisca, Iowa – The homecoming was joyous - an exuberant hug frozen forever by a camera's flash.

A homecoming, though, is more than a happy ending. A war hero and his loved ones receive no exemption from life's heartaches - cancer, strokes, bankruptcy, alcoholism, loneliness, the sudden death of a daughter whose embrace was so warm.

World-Herald photographer Earle "Buddy" Bunker captured the family reunion on July 15, 1943, after Lt. Col. Robert Moore stepped off the train in Villisca, greeted by his 6-year-old daughter, Nancy; his wife, Dorothy; and his 2-year-old nephew, Michael Croxdale.

The photograph <sup>[2]</sup>, one of the most enduring images from World War II, symbolized the hopes of a generation whose men fought that war.

Not a single face shows in the Pulitzer Prize-winning photo, but the joy is overwhelming - a daddy in a round military cap stooping to wrap his arms around a spindly-legged daughter reaching up to his broad shoulders in a welcoming hug. Mom waits her turn, a hand to her face in delight. An excited little boy watches.

At depots across America, the scene was repeated countless times as fathers and sons and husbands returned from battle. Implicit in the joy of each homecoming was the understanding that more than a quarter of a million families grieved for soldiers who would not come home.

Just as Bunker's photo captured a nation's anxiety and relief, the lives that followed for the married couple and the two young children at the depot reflected many of the triumphs and trials of their two generations:

Post-war America loved the automobile; one of the people collected souped-up luxury cars and another died in a car crash. Post-war America viewed cigarettes as glamorous; two of the people died from smoking-related cancer. In post-war America, shops closed in small towns as people left for bigger towns and cities and suburbs; the Moore family drugstore went broke and all four of the people moved away from Villisca. Post-war America liked to unwind with a drink or two or more; alcoholism brought pain to each of the four. The Vietnam War split the nation a generation after World War II; the little boy grew into a flamboyant free spirit of the '60s. He came back from 'Nam with a heroism medal and haunting memories.

Through whatever heartaches the family faced, their lives reflected the pride and perseverance of post-war America. This is their story and in many ways the story of the country they loved and served.

## ***Growing Up in Villisca***

This is where a story about a boy who grew up in rural Iowa should tell about happy, wholesome small-town life, about fishing in farm ponds and sipping sodas at the corner drugstore.

The corner drugstore indeed was central to the life of Robert Ross Moore, the second of three sons of Ross and Jessie Moore. Ross owned a drugstore on the town square of Villisca, about 75 miles southeast of Omaha. His sons tended the soda counter.

But Villisca in the early 1900s didn't provide an idyllic rural life, not for the Moore family. During the night on June 10, 1912, when Bob was 7, someone took an ax and killed his uncle, aunt, four cousins and two visiting children.

The Villisca ax murders, still Iowa's biggest unsolved crime, dominated life in the town and especially in the Moore family for years. A suspect was acquitted. A detective hired by Ross Moore accused the local state senator, F.F. Jones, of hiring the killer. Jones sued for slander.

Folks in town picked sides and pointed fingers. Children from one camp were told not to play with those in the other, and adults would not patronize merchants in opposing camps. For years, the Presbyterian (Moore's) and Methodist (Joneses') churches, across the street from each other, would not cooperate on anything.

Fear endured in the town and the family. Bob Moore told of a visitor who stayed out late one night. The guest let himself in quietly, hoping not to disturb anyone, and was met by Ross Moore, wielding his shotgun.

Bob Moore was profoundly affected by the murders of his playmates. In his youth, he attended one of the three trials resulting from the murders. Though he talked with his children about them, he was critical of continuing public discussion of the murders.

"He wanted it left alone. He was very adamant," said Jan Castle Renander, editor of the Red Oak Express, who became a close friend after meeting Moore when she wrote a story about a 1986 novel based on the slayings. "He remembered in his childhood how it divided the town."

As much as the ax murders divided Villisca, the Army National Guard united it, and Moore was always glad to talk about the Guard.

He enlisted at the age of 17 and by 1928 was commander of Villisca's Company F, a unit of the 34th Infantry Division. He would work at the drugstore during the week and train on weekends and for two weeks every summer, preparing Villisca's men for battle.

Dennis Neal, a lifelong friend who died last week, recalled recently that in a training exercise Moore expressed the leadership style he followed throughout his four-decade Guard and Army career: "Whenever you give an order, tell the person why you gave it."

Moore married Ruby Taylor, a school teacher, in Omaha on July 1, 1930, wearing his National Guard uniform. Ruby wasn't the wife waiting at the depot 13 years later. She divorced him after three years, on grounds of cruelty. Court records don't elaborate, but in those days before no-fault divorce, cruelty was a common reason to cite.

Little is known about the marriage, which produced no children. Coming from a time when divorce was considered a scandal, Moore never spoke of his first wife. His son, Robert Moore Jr., who was born in 1945, was out of high school before he learned of his father's first marriage.

Ruby, who remarried, lived in Springfield, Neb., as Ruby Vincent and died this June.

On Feb. 10, 1934, six months after his divorce, Moore eloped to Maryville, Mo., with Dorothy Dee Goldsberry, who worked for her widowed mother at Goldie's diner in Villisca.

A year later, Ross Moore died, and his second and third sons, Bob and Bill, took over the drugstore. The oldest son, Wesley "Dinty" Moore, moved away from Villisca as a young adult and later became a vice president of the Great Northern Railroad.

The children in the famed photo were born as Iowa struggled through the Great Depression and German and Japanese aggression pushed the world into war. On Aug. 23, 1936, Dorothy Moore gave birth to a daughter, Nancy Jo. On Dec. 18, 1940, Dorothy's sister, Eva Croxdale, had a son, Michael Bruce.

### ***Training for War***

Company F was mobilized on the Moores' seventh wedding anniversary as war spread around the globe. On March 2, 1941, the town of Villisca gathered at the Burlington train depot to bid farewell to the 114 men under Moore's command as they left for training at Camp Claiborne, La.

Tucked inside the 36-year-old captain's gear was a Dick Tracy magazine that Nancy had inadvertently set on a stack of clothes as he was packing.

During training and through the war, townsfolk kept up on their servicemen through reports written for the Villisca Review and the Adams County Free Press in Corning by Sgt. Milo Green.

"Captain 'Bob' possessed the magic touch which won and kept the admiration, respect and cooperation of all his men," Green wrote from Camp Claiborne.

"He often told me that he'd much rather have a word of praise or a trusting glance from his MEN than a two-page memorandum of commendations from some high-ranking brass hat."

Moore insisted that his men keep in touch with their families. Don Patton recalls being summoned to the headquarters tent at Camp Claiborne. "Patton, how come you haven't written your folks?" the commander inquired. Patton promised to be a more faithful correspondent, and Moore wrote a letter "bailing me out, saying I'd been really busy," Patton recalled.

While Company F trained, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. In May 1942, the troops left for Europe. Company F trained in Northern Ireland at a camp so infested with rats that Green wrote, "I sometimes wondered if the Pied Piper hadn't passed that way."

Michael Croxdale's father also was sent overseas, though not with Company F. Ed Croxdale, a doctor, was sent to the Pacific with the Americal Division.

In July 1942, Company F was inspected in Northern Ireland by King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, now the Queen Mother of England. Moore served as the queen's personal escort during her visit, serving tea and saving the cup, saucer and spoon (stamped with "US ARMY" on the handle) for posterity.

Moore and his family back home kept in touch through regular letters. "When I get back," he wrote to Nancy on Aug. 4, 1942, "you and I will go swimming every day - Won't we?"

"Dear Daddy," Nancy wrote back, expressing the universal plea to daddies away from home, "Are you going to send me something? I wish you were home to play with me."

Company F moved to Scotland, and yes, Daddy did send something, Scottish tartan fabric. "Mommy can make you a skirt like the little 'boys' wear over here," he wrote.

Dorothy made Nancy a kilt, held together in the front by a large safety pin. A generation later, Nancy bought a similar skirt for her own daughter.

Moore also sent home the Dick Tracy comic and some new comic books, exhorting his daughter to read: "I want to see you get all A's on your report card - you must study and learn. ... Remember your Daddy loves you with all his heart and thinks of you many times a day."

### ***War in the Desert***

Soon after that letter, Company F was on shipboard, heading for a landing in Algeria on Nov. 8, 1942. Moore, a major and executive officer of a battalion, earned a Silver Star for gallantry in the Algerian landing. Though not in

command of a unit, he rallied some scattered men and directed a flanking action that destroyed a machine gun nest.

The Iowa troops were met in Africa by German forces led by Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, the famed "Desert Fox." The inexperienced Americans took heavy losses against the seasoned Germans in the mountains of Tunisia.

The commander of the 2nd Battalion was wounded at Sened Station and Moore assumed command. The battalion was assigned to protect a key lookout post on the mountain of Djebel Lessouda. "The Germans gave us everything they had – infantry attacks, tank fire, mortar shells and artillery blasting - for two days," Moore later told an AP war correspondent. "But we lost only three men."

American troops below, though, were captured or forced to retreat, leaving the mountain surrounded by Nazis the evening of Feb. 15, 1943.

Before being captured, one of the commanders sent his superiors a grim assessment of Moore's situation, scrawled on three squares of toilet paper:

"Enemy surrounds 2d Battalion ... Forty tanks known to be around them. Shelled, dive-bombed and tank attack. ... Germans have absolute superiority, ground and air. Unless help from air and army comes immediately ... infantry will lose immeasurably."

At dusk an American P-40 fighter flew over Moore's troops, dropping a typed note from the regimental commander: "Tank destroyers and infantry will occupy positions T6363 at 2200 hours tonight to cover your withdrawal. You are to withdraw to position to road west of Blid Ghegas where guides will meet you. Bring everything you can."

To fight their way past the German tanks would have been suicide. And the noose of Nazi forces showed no gaps through which 400 Americans might sneak. A captured German officer told Moore he was heavily outnumbered and should surrender. The stubborn Iowan didn't answer.

Moore decided that the best way to save the lives of his men was to march right through Nazi lines. Under cover of darkness, the Americans set out to march past the enemy.

"We walked past a German 88-millimeter gun position so close we could have touched the gun," Moore told the AP correspondent. "The gun crews must have thought we were Germans, because they did nothing."

A couple of times, Germans called out to the Americans but didn't react when they kept marching in silence.

Near the spot where they were to meet the American troops, Moore heard voices from a clump of bushes and walked ahead to meet them. A man

speaking German stepped from the bushes, and Moore turned and walked away. The Germans opened fire. Moore's troops scattered in the darkness, following his plan and confusing the Germans.

"Some big shells were bursting over us then, but they were high and outside," Moore told *Midwestern Druggist* magazine.

They escaped without casualties, though some previously wounded men and a chaplain who had stayed behind with them were captured.

What the Americans couldn't haul down the mountain on their backs or in their arms they left on the mountain, disabling weapons so the Germans couldn't use them.

"The one thing I didn't leave behind," Moore told the AP, "was a bed-sack I bought in England and carried all over Africa. I decided to bring it along if it was the last thing I ever did."

In the homecoming picture, the bed-sack rests at Moore's feet as he hugs Nancy.

Sgt. Green wrote home about a colonel's effort to order Moore's men back into battle immediately: "Then and there Major Moore proved his sterling worth as both an officer and a considerate and humane gentleman. 'These men are tired, sick and nerve-wracked,' he replied, 'furthermore, half of them have no guns or equipment for combat and I'm not relinquishing one of them for any more action until they're properly rested, fed and re-equipped.'

'I said turn those men over to me and that's an order!' barked the colonel. 'I'll do nothing of the kind. I'll stand court martial first. Those men are exhausted and deserve a good rest and I'm going to see that they get it!' was Major Moore's retort. The men got the rest and new equipment and Major Moore, who soon after became a lieutenant colonel, was not court martialed, I'm happy to report."

Moore also endured a tirade from legendary Gen. George S. Patton, whose son-in-law was among the many troops taken prisoner at Faid Pass. Moore despised Gen. Patton, telling a story of how he once insisted that Moore take an objective "even if he had to send back a truckload of dog tags."

Moore returned to battle soon after the escape from Lessouda, and a bomb exploded 15 feet from him on April 9, causing a concussion that made him lose his eyesight for several days.

Green encountered Moore, "a sad and worried man," on his way back to the front: "He spoke several times of his wife Dorothy and of little Nancy and wondered if he would ever see them again."

Moore's time to see the family was fast approaching. The Army

was learning costly lessons in the desert battlefields and needed to teach those lessons to new troops training back in the States.

Bob Moore was needed at the home front.

### ***The Homecoming***

About noon on Saturday, July 10, 1943, Dorothy Moore answered the phone and heard Bob's voice on the other end: He was in New York City and coming home soon.

The family waited seven hours in Omaha for his plane on July 14. His flight to Chicago was delayed by bad weather and he failed to make connections. The family received word that he would be arriving in Villisca at 9:30 a.m. On Thursday, July 15, on Burlington Train No. 6.

Nancy was too excited to eat or sleep.

Banners and flags welcomed the hero home. An arch of all the flags of the allied nations was assembled in the street in front of the Moore Bros. drugstore. A crowd gathered at the depot.

J. Harold Cowan wrote this account for the evening World-Herald:

Villisca, Ia. - Lt. Col. Bob Moore, officer-hero of this town of 2,600, came home from Africa Thursday.

He stepped off the train, arms burdened with a bulging flight bag, his helmet, his blankets.

A piping 7-year-old's voice shrilled across the platform.

"Daddy. Daddy! Daddy!" it cried.

Nancy, his daughter, ran across the platform, arms out. The bag, the helmet, the blanket, thumped to the planking. Nancy was swept into her Daddy's arms.

She nestled there for the first time in 16 months, her tiny face against his tropical sun-darkened cheek. Nancy sobbed. So did her mother, who had come over. So did her grandmother. ... And tears trickled unashamedly down Col. Moore's cheeks.

Nancy would tell her own daughter, "It was like the most wonderful thing to have him step off that train."

The townspeople rushed to Moore not only to welcome him, but also to ask about those still at the war. He offered encouragement to a mother whose son was fine, comfort to a father whose son was captured. He visited with Sheriff Frank Miller, whose son Wes was the first Villisca man to die in Africa.

The welcome continued at the park in the town square, and then at the drugstore.

"All Villisca took on a patriotic air," the Review reported, "and enthusiasm, without undue ostentation, glowed from the face of the hundreds of friends of 'Bob' who crowded the downtown streets during the afternoon to show the city's honored son they are overjoyed at his safe return home."

Mike Croxdale, whose excitement at age 2 was evident in the photos of Moore's homecoming, was puzzled when his own father later returned from the war in the Pacific. After months of hearing about the war against the Japanese "yellow peril," young Mike was stunned to see his father with a yellow cast to his skin, caused by quinine he had taken for malaria.

### ***The Home***

Moore stayed briefly in Villisca, traveling to neighboring towns to speak at luncheons and update the home folk on how their boys were doing at the front. He made a point to call on the families of men who had been killed or captured.

Soon Moore was sent to Fort Benning, Ga., where he helped start a leadership course and instructed 40,000 officers. They taught more than tactics, as a press release from the Infantry School at Fort Benning explained:

"Colonel Moore lists three things that make men fight: Pride in self, pride in the man's organization, and hate. The last of those - hate - he names as the most important. Without it, he says, the Americans suffer unnecessary deaths.

"'I can't tell you how to hate,' he states. 'You can only learn it for yourself. ... It was not until we reached Tunisia that my men learned hate.' "

Moore told of a Villisca sergeant, Monty Storm, who left the hospital to join his unit in battle.

"After considerable fighting, the Germans put up a white flag to surrender," Moore related, "and the sergeant stood up to accept them as prisoners. He was instantly killed, mowed down by a burst of fire from the Germans who were raising the white flag. That taught the platoon hate. From that point on, they had the spirit and determination to kill every German they saw."

Moore later told about psychiatrists from Washington who came to listen to his lectures and told him he was all wrong about hating the enemy. "'Have you ever seen your own men killed in battle?' I asked them. That ended the argument right there."

While at Fort Benning, the Moore family grew to four with the birth, just a day after the Japanese signed surrender terms, of Robert R. Moore Jr. He is still Bobby to family and friends who knew both Bobs when he was growing up in Villisca.

Some friends and family wonder if Bob Moore didn't later regret not staying in the Army for a career. "He lived for the military," Bobby said.

But the military was winding down after the war, and Moore wanted to get back home, to be near his mother and to run the family store. He did, though, return to the National Guard, retiring in 1963 as a brigadier general.

The Moore Bros. drugstore, with its soda counter and luncheonette, was a popular gathering place, for adults to swap war stories or for children to come on their lunch hour, after school or after a game (Moore treated athletes to free milk shakes after victories).

Admiration for Moore was not universal. Some resented him, either because of the lingering bitterness over the ax murders or because of wartime issues - his strong leadership style, his early return from the battlefield or the glory he received when other local troops were taken prisoner.

Moore "absolutely ignored" those who had differences with him, Bobby said.

But to most in town, Moore was friendly and outgoing. He was an accomplished story teller and a light-hearted practical joker. He was intense and enthusiastic in working with children as a Little League baseball coach and a Sunday school teacher.

"He loved children. He really did," Bobby said. "And children loved him."

He would hold an ice cream cone out to a young customer, then suddenly pull it down a few inches as the child reached for the cone, leaving the kid with a handful of ice cream. They would both laugh and Moore would make a fresh cone.

A favorite trick for children was to "blow up" his arm. Moore would put the tip of his thumb into his mouth and blow hard, slowly flexing his powerful biceps as if it was inflating.

Like her father, Nancy was gregarious. Bobby was the quieter child, more like his mother.

Dorothy Moore helped her mother-in-law run the drugstore while Bob was at the war, and helped out at the store after Bob and Bill returned from the war to run it. But mostly she was content taking care of her family and her house.

"I never walked in there that she wasn't dusting the floors," recalled Elaine Gillespie, a childhood friend of Nancy's, now of Glenwood, Iowa.\

Dorothy enjoyed her bridge club ("She had some card sense," recalled Zoe Dunn of Villisca, a fellow bridge club member). She liked to chat on the phone with other ladies around town or settle in front of the TV to watch Lawrence Welk or game shows. Her husband traveled

extensively after she died, but she didn't need to see the world.

When she went out, she always wore a nice dress, with her hair perfectly styled, and she was almost always smiling.

"In that era, the ladies were very proper," Bobby said. "I think Mom just kind of fit into that profile."

But she wasn't aloof. She would sit in a drugstore booth with Nancy and her friends and listen to their stories and troubles, no matter how trivial. "We girls just thought she was one of the girls," Mrs. Gillespie said.

The Moores bought a home just down the alley from the drugstore and remodeled it, putting in a sun room and a dining table that was like a large restaurant booth. Above the piano in the living room hung a large painted portrait of Nancy as a little girl, her dark hair in braids, her hands folded demurely in her lap.

Nancy took piano lessons for nine years, an interest she would carry into adulthood, playing favorites such as "The Old Rugged Cross" and other hymns and show tunes. She sang with the glee club and other choral groups and made the all-state chorus.

She had less enthusiasm for her studies, getting mostly C's. That wasn't good enough for her father. "He sometimes would get a little stern with her," said Debbie Parnacott, Nancy's daughter, who lives in Gladstone, Mo. "I think he expected a lot out of her."

The Moore children adored their father - when he wasn't drinking. Bobby said, "When he was good, he was really good."

The summer before Nancy's senior year of high school, she began dating Jim Watt, from the nearby town of Nodaway. They became engaged at Christmas in 1954. In spring of 1955, they graduated from high school and Watt flew to California for Air Force basic training. He came back on a 10-day leave, and Moore walked Nancy down the aisle for her wedding on Aug. 19, four days before her 19th birthday.

After three years in the Air Force, the Watts lived in Villisca, Council Bluffs and Omaha before settling in Gladstone, just north of Kansas City. They had three children, Debbie, Patrick and Michael.

Though more women of Nancy's generation were starting to juggle home and a job, she was happy choosing the same career as her mother - full-time mother and housewife.

### ***Bankruptcy***

Prosperity didn't last in peacetime for the Moores.

Small towns were changing. The GI Bill paid for soldiers to go off to college and many never moved back home. The industrial machine that geared up in the nation's cities during the war converted to provide the luxuries of a booming post-war economy, offering jobs in the cities for people living in new homes in the suburbs, built with GI loans and serviced by a new freeway system modeled on the German Autobahn.

Villisca's population dropped by 16 percent from 1940 to 1960, to 1,690.

And with agricultural technology improving rapidly, farmers could manage, and had to manage, ever larger farms. That left fewer rural families driving into town to buy prescriptions and the other staples of drugstores – greeting cards, gifts, paint, wallpaper and, of course, sodas.

Villisca, which supported four drugstores when Moore was born, could no longer support two. Survival of the fittest on Main Street didn't take into account one's ability to command troops.

"As a businessman," Bobby said, "Dad was a better soldier."

Jim Honeyman, who owned the competing store, said he had some built-in advantages over the Moore brothers. He was a pharmacist and they weren't. So they had to hire a pharmacist. Their profits had to support the two brothers' families, while Honeyman supported only his own.

Trying to stay afloat, the Moores took out a \$ 6,700 loan from the Small Business Administration in 1956. As collateral, they pledged the business and their equipment, including a couple of Hamilton Beach mixers, a 12-foot electric soda fountain, a Hallmark card case, a wallpaper trimmer and eight booth tables.

The loan only delayed the store's demise. The brothers closed shop and declared bankruptcy in 1962, when Moore was 57. Most of the store's contents were auctioned off.

The loss was more than financial. "You didn't take bankruptcy in those days," said Eva Croxdale, Dorothy's sister. "It was a sad thing in a little town."

Moore found a job as city clerk in Red Oak, the county seat 15 miles northwest of Villisca. The Moores sold their Villisca home and moved to an apartment in Red Oak. "We didn't see much of them in Villisca after that," Mrs. Croxdale said.

Eventually, Moore became a bailiff at the Montgomery County Courthouse, a job he held into his 80s. Moore loved the variety of people he would meet at the courthouse, from felons to judges. One convict the old bailiff befriended invited the Moores to his wedding. They gladly attended.

Dorothy also got involved in their new community, volunteering

on Republican committees, working at the polls on election day and cooking meals for inmates at the jail.

Moore became known as a friendly and colorful courthouse character. "He had lots of good stories to tell," said County Recorder Pat England, "as long as you didn't mention the ax murders."

### ***Bobby's War***

Another Moore went to war in 1966.

Bobby, who graduated from Villisca High School in 1963, enlisted in the Army after receiving his draft notice. After serving a hitch in Vietnam, he went to Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, attending a modern version of the leadership course his father had started. He returned to Vietnam as an officer, but his military career was cut short by a Viet Cong booby trap that seriously injured his left leg.

Though Bob Moore was a veteran of World War II, a Civil War buff and the son of a Spanish-American War veteran, he found no common ground in his son's infantry experience.

The Vietnam War "was clearly different than all the people in Villisca, Iowa, used to talk about World War II," Bobby said. "He really couldn't identify with it at all, so we really didn't discuss it."

Friends who did discuss Vietnam with the elder Moore remember his strong opinions.

"He felt like the military was not allowed to do their job in that particular war," said Mike Boylan, a longtime friend and Red Oak funeral director.

Mrs. Renander, the Red Oak editor, remembers that Moore disapproved of the courts-martial that followed the My Lai massacre, in which hundreds of civilians were slaughtered by American troops. His view, she said, was "that was war and in war those things happen."

Moore was proud of his son's service in Vietnam, Mrs. Renander said. Bobby was the guest speaker at Red Oak's Memorial Day program in 1990, and "Bob practically busted his buttons."

### ***Illness***

The Moores battled a series of disabling diseases, starting in the late 1960s.

Dorothy had a stroke and wasn't expected to live. She had an aneurysm at the base of her brain and needed brain surgery, the doctor said in a grim meeting with the family at the hospital.

"Dad thought about it, walked around and said no, that's not what

we're going to do," Bobby recalled. He returned to Taiwan, where he was stationed, thinking he wouldn't see her alive again.

Dorothy came out of the coma, asking for a cigarette. She had no memory and little mental ability. "She basically had the mind of a 2-year-old," Bobby said. "I remember seeing her and it was crushing."

Moore, a devoted husband not given to outward displays of emotion, drove regularly to a rehabilitation center in Des Moines to visit a wife who didn't recognize him. About a year after the stroke, recounted son-in-law Jim Watt, Moore walked into her room and she greeted him, "Hi, Bob, how are you doing? How are the kids?"

Her memory was back, a recovery doctors could not explain.

The Moores' daughter battled an illness that afflicted her body more than her mind. In the 1970s, Nancy developed multiple sclerosis, a disease that attacks the nervous system.

At first, when she started falling down for no apparent reason, she thought she was just clumsy. The disease progressed, though, until she sometimes had difficulty getting around without a walker. She had to give up her beloved piano and missed her children's high school graduation ceremonies.

Nancy and her husband were "street rodders," driving classic cars and attending shows with other collectors. Jim bought a wheelchair to help Nancy get around at the car shows and an adult tricycle to ride around their suburban Kansas City neighborhood. They had a car outfitted with hand controls, so she could keep driving.

A thin woman when she was healthy, she became frail as the disease progressed.

As much as possible, Nancy tried to live unaffected by the disease, making dinner nightly, doing her housework and enjoying as many activities as she could, especially when the MS was in remission. She walked on her own whenever possible.

"I saw her when most people would be in a wheelchair and she was trying to walk," Bobby said. "It was something that she kept saying she was going to beat."

She tried every treatment that promised hope. She tried chiropractic. She tried acupuncture. She spent two weeks in Miami, taking shots of cobra venom.

"She was strong-willed," her husband said. "She got that from her dad."

While Nancy battled MS in the early 1980s, her mother battled cancer. First Dorothy had jaw cancer, forcing the removal of half her jaw. Then she developed cancer of the esophagus.

Her decline was excruciating for the family. But Dorothy never complained of the pain. She died May 3, 1982, at the age of 71.

Two and a half years later, on Dec. 13, 1984, Nancy left her home on an icy morning, apparently to drive to the post office to buy some stamps for Christmas cards. She lost control of her car on the ice and slid into the path of an oncoming car. She was able to get out of the car and initially declined help, but rescue workers insisted on taking her to the hospital. She died there of internal injuries. She was 48.

As difficult as Dorothy's death was for Moore, it was expected. But to lose his daughter was devastating.

"So many times," Bobby said, "he made the comment, 'You're not supposed to outlive your children.'"

### ***Another Illness***

Friends and family of Bob Moore talk easily and enthusiastically about his military record, his playfulness, his story-telling ability, their admiration of him.

Reluctantly, they tell of his lifelong struggle: Moore was an alcoholic. He and his wife drank heavily, at times starting in the morning.

Protected in the bosom of an admiring hometown, the Moores' drinking didn't become a scandal. Only a few townsfolk interviewed for this story mentioned the Moores' drinking.

"Bob did drink," son-in-law Jim Watt said, "but he never did it in public and he never to my knowledge was drunk in public."

The drinking problem appeared to have its roots in the traumatic events of Moore's youth. "One of the things that would start him drinking was when people would bring up the ax murders," Bobby said.

Bobby remembers as a teen-ager driving his father to the Veterans Administration hospital in Omaha to dry out.

Nancy at times would decide not to visit her parents because of their drinking and once asked her husband to tell Moore she didn't want him drinking around the children.

"Everyone tried to get him to stop," said grandson Patrick Watt of Dallas. "That was probably the hardest thing for my mother, to handle him going through the alcohol."

The drinking strained, but didn't shatter, Moore's relationship with his children. "I think as a little girl he was everything to her,"

Nancy's daughter said. "And he still was even in the midst of the drinking problems and still up until the day she died."

Eventually diabetes forced Moore to stop, or at least curtail, his drinking.

"Toward the end there, I think things got better," Mrs. Parnacott said of her grandfather. She remembers when he would visit and take the family out to eat. He'd say, "If you want a drink, you can have one, but I'm not having one," she said. "I think he wanted to stay around a little longer."

### ***The Little Boy***

Michael Bruce Croxdale, Bob Moore's nephew, was more than just an excited little boy heading for the center of attention when the famed picture was taken. True, he loved the spotlight. But he was very much a part of the family that was celebrating the homecoming.

"I worshipped him," recalled Bobby, who was five years younger. "He was about as close to being a brother as you could ask for."

The boys' mothers were sisters, close in age and in spirit. Their fathers were buddies, both serving in the military and returning to prominent positions in the community.

In his family and in his community, Mike Croxdale always stood out. He was a paradox: an outgoing loner, a perpetual boy who pursued his passions and a man who served others with remarkable courage.

As a boy, he was regarded as one of the smartest kids in the Villisca school, skipping third grade.

Classmates smile when asked about Croxdale. Few knew him well, but they remember him well. He was flamboyant, brilliant, funny, different, playful.

Susie Enarson, former mayor of Villisca, laughed as she pointed to a white spot on her hand: "I still have a scar from when he showed me how a match burns twice."

Croxdale's penchant for the spotlight had him on stage, playing Arthur Godfrey in a high school program, when he had his first epileptic seizure.

The seizures were powerful and frightening, said Jacky Adams, his high school English teacher and lifelong friend. She remembers Croxdale as a young adult tumbling head-first down her concrete steps in a seizure. Medication eventually controlled the seizures.

Croxdale was fascinated by the workings of two complex systems - the human body and the souped-up car. "Here's somebody who probably could have ended up being a car mechanic or a physician and he would have been as happy

with either one," Bobby said. "It was either anatomy or car mechanics."

When Croxdale was 13, his grandfather bought a jalopy that didn't work. Croxdale got it running, then moved on to slicker, sleeker models. All his cars became hot rods - "chopped and channeled and louvered hoods and side pipes, whatever was popular," Bobby said. Croxdale had a Model A, a '55 Ford, a '40 Oldsmobile, a '57 Chevy that he supplied with fuel injection long before that feature became common.

Croxdale drove like he lived - fast. He'd take his hot rods out onto the gravel country roads, racing other boys at 85 to 95 miles an hour.

Mrs. Adams remembers Croxdale expressing his disdain for Shakespeare, saying, "I'm never going to be so grown up that I'm going to think this is any good."

"Some of us grow up," Mrs. Adams replied, "and some of us don't."

At the University of Colorado, Croxdale fell in love with mountain climbing and philosophy, his first major.

Croxdale loved folk and rock music, playing Woody Guthrie songs on the banjo when he was in high school and later falling in love with Bob Dylan, the Rolling Stones, ZZ Top and Willie Nelson.

A voracious reader, Croxdale insisted that Bobby read "The Grapes of Wrath" and eventually all of John Steinbeck's works while he was still in high school.

"My interest in the arts and literature came from Mike," Bobby said.

In 1960, after his sophomore year, Croxdale married Judith Gerow, a freshman from California. Nearly, two years later they had a son, Leyton.

Judith, now a botany professor at the University of Wisconsin, was drawn to his extroverted nature, amazed at his comfort in any social situation. In time, though, as Croxdale's drinking escalated, his outgoing personality carried to extremes. "Everyone was really tired of him requiring center stage," she recalled. "I spent a lot of years cringing mentally because his behavior was so off the wall."

Croxdale followed his father into medical school and the Army. Military service was virtually mandatory after a doctor completed his internship, even if he had epilepsy.

By the time he left for Vietnam in 1967, Croxdale was an alcoholic. "Don't blame that on the war," Judith said.

He also was a heavy smoker. "He believed if it's worth doing, it's worth doing to excess," Bobby said. "He didn't just smoke, he smoked Lucky Strikes."

The marriage was over before Croxdale went overseas.

They didn't divorce, so she would be eligible for widow's benefits.

Croxdale was in his father's old unit, the Americal Division, a hybrid outfit of infantry and light armor. He later described the field hospitals of the television show and movie "MASH" as far better than his working conditions. He was the sole doctor traveling with a combat unit, treating soldiers before they reached the field hospitals.

Whenever possible, Croxdale worked at a Vietnamese children's hospital, providing medical supplies pilfered from the military.

In addition to his medical gear, Croxdale carried an M-16 rifle and two .45-caliber pistols. When his unit was being overrun, the doctor grabbed a gun to join the fray. He killed five enemy soldiers.

On Dec. 23, 1967, a man in Croxdale's unit was injured by a land mine in the Tam Ky province. With no map showing where the mines were, Croxdale led a team of corpsmen into the minefield to treat the man and bring him out. For his "truly outstanding courage," Croxdale received the Soldiers Medal, with a "V" for valor.

He remembered walking through jungle that was wet with herbicide sprayed by American planes to strip away the foliage that provided cover for the Viet Cong. His clothes would get soaked with the chemical day after day, with no chance to do laundry for weeks at a time. The herbicide was Agent Orange.

A cannon explosion nearby when Croxdale was using his stethoscope ruptured his eardrums, causing a lifelong hearing loss.

The drugs Croxdale used to control his epilepsy disintegrated in the jungle's heat and humidity, and he suffered grand mal seizures at the front. The seizures weren't a quick ticket home, though. This was Vietnam and the Army needed doctors. He stayed until his year was up.

The war followed Croxdale home. The innocent sounds of night, or even the silence of a peacetime night, interrupted his sleep.

Exactly how much Croxdale was haunted by the war no one would know. "He didn't talk too much about the really bad parts," Leyton said.

Jim Branan, Croxdale's best friend from high school, visited after the war and remembers him telling of all the wounded soldiers he had treated. Croxdale quoted Civil War General William Tecumseh Sherman: "War is hell."

Croxdale's drinking got worse during and after his stay in Vietnam. "He was getting up in the middle of the night to drink," Judith said.

Studying to become a dermatologist, he flunked his test for board certification. "It was the first time he'd ever failed intellectually," Bobby said. "That was the wake-up call."

Croxdale went to a rehabilitation center for doctors and never had another drink.

He eventually passed the test and became a dermatologist, a field he chose partly because he seldom had to worry about patients dying. After several years practicing in small Iowa towns and hating the winters, he started his dermatology practice in Las Cruces, N.M. He saw his patients in embroidered blue jeans.

Croxdale dried out with the same enthusiasm he had brought to drinking. He became a friend to whom anyone in Alcoholics Anonymous could turn, especially another Vietnam vet. "There wasn't anything he wouldn't do or give to those veterans," said Bobby, who attended an AA meeting with Croxdale once.

Croxdale didn't give up the fast life, though, just drinking. He thought the best thing about being a doctor was that his income allowed him to live as he pleased.

He fell in love with Hawaii on his way to Vietnam and went back about 25 times. He never wanted to move there; that would spoil it. It was an escape.

He still loved his hot rods and luxury cars, trading annually and owning four or five at a time - a Rolls-Royce, a Jaguar, GTOs, Lincolns, Cadillacs, a TransAm, a white Challenger like the one Barry Newman drove in the 1971 movie "Vanishing Point."

He drove his cars to Las Vegas, often on a whim, wearing the flashiest of clothes. "He loved Las Vegas," Leyton said. "In Las Vegas you can be anything you want to be."

As with cars, Croxdale went through a lot of wives, though Leyton remained his only child. After Judith came Sandy, then Anne, and finally Teri.

"Very few people could keep up with him," Bobby said.

"I don't know what Michael was looking for in life," Judith said, "but I don't think he ever thought he found it."

After some early contentious times over custody, Croxdale became a close father.

Leyton remembers spending summers with his dad and going to action and adventure movies, especially Clint Eastwood films. "We saw every spaghetti Western ever made."

Always, Vietnam stayed with Croxdale. If he wasn't wearing flashy clothes, he was wearing his khaki Army jacket. He wore it when he went to Washington in the mid-1980s.

Croxdale visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, wanting to read through the list of names etched on the black marble. He would find and remember the soldiers he had left behind, the friends whose wounds exceeded any

help he could provide. He would find the name of Jerry Ziehe, the boy the Croxdales had taken in and raised as his older brother.

Those names Croxdale was expecting to find. The search was emotional, cathartic, the least he could do for brothers who had died in Vietnam. Then he found a name he wasn't expecting. Someone he had forgotten entirely. How could he have forgotten? Croxdale bowed his head in anguish, his right hand resting on the wall.

Photographer Cynthia Johnson snapped his picture. She was on assignment for Discover magazine, illustrating a story on veterans with post-traumatic stress. She didn't talk to him or get his name. Like the homecoming picture, this one didn't show his face. He would be an Everyman, grieving for a fallen comrade.

But you didn't have to see Michael Croxdale's face to recognize him. That was his jacket, his shaggy hair, his flashy ring, made by a friend from a 1926 three-dollar gold piece. That was even his brand of cigarettes (he had switched by then to Pall Malls) in the left hand. Friends and family who saw the magazine recognized him instantly.

Croxdale thought the picture would make a powerful image on a T-shirt, to sell to raise money for veterans' causes. He called Ms. Johnson asking for the picture. She said he would have to pay for the rights. He got angry, saying it was his picture, why should he pay? He berated her for taking his picture without his permission and threatened to sue. Ms. Johnson quickly passed him along to a Time Inc. lawyer.

"I remember feeling that he was a little unhinged," she said. He didn't sue and didn't make the T-shirts.

Several times, Croxdale returned to Villisca for visits, looking up old friends and always attracting attention with his fancy cars, long hair and gaudy appearance. "It was probably the first earring we'd seen on a male in Villisca," said classmate Judy Schroeder.

He always stopped for a visit with the old soldier he had greeted at the depot years before. However different their appearance or personality, Bob Moore and Mike Croxdale shared a bond of family and duty. Bobby said, "Dad kind of was amused by his interesting antics."

Croxdale quit smoking in his 40s, after decades smoking four packs a day of unfiltered cigarettes. He developed lung cancer, blaming it on Agent Orange.

Whatever the cause, the physician knew the fate he faced as the tumor on his lungs wrapped around his aorta. "He knew that he was going to bleed to death in a few seconds," Leyton said.

The man who craved center stage set about planning his finale. He commissioned a writer friend in AA to write his obituary. No somber just-the-facts send-off would do.

"Dr. Michael Croxdale truly lived his life taking all the pain and all the joy," read the obit. "He loved music, and cars with large, powerful motors. Not to be overlooked was the gusto he gave to casino gambling. He loved his fellow man and was there for them when they needed a helping hand."

As he was dying, Croxdale offered Bobby a gift. "He said, 'You don't have a mom and I've got a pretty good mom,' " Eva Croxdale recalled. The dying man asked his cousin to care for his aged mother.

The end came June 29, 1993. He was 52.

The funeral, planned by Croxdale, filled the 300-seat Graham Mortuary Chapel in Las Cruces. AA friends sat together to pay tribute to their flamboyant comrade and confidant.

Eric Clapton's emotional song "Tears in Heaven" opened the service. As the casket was being carried out, bagpipes played "Amazing Grace" and the tears flowed. "My Dad," said Leyton, "definitely knew how to make an exit."

Croxdale took one last trip to his beloved Hawaii, for burial in Honolulu.

Leyton, who lives in Kent, Wash., still has his father's favorite car, the only one he held onto for long. It's a huge 1978 Mercury Marquis, black with red leather and darkened windows, "bored and stroked, with dual exhaust and headers," Leyton said. In one vehicle, it combined Croxdale's loves of luxury, speed and ostentation.

His son drives the car, now with more than 200,000 miles, to work. Clipped to the visor, Leyton said, is his father's hospital identification badge. "Dad and I still drive around together in that car."

### ***'Darnedest Stubborn Person'***

Bobby Moore feared that the grief and loneliness, and the drinking, that followed Dorothy's and Nancy's deaths would kill his father, too. Like the German officer who advised a gritty American major to surrender on Djebel Lessouda, Bobby underestimated Bob Moore.

He grieved. He hurt. Everyone who knew him could see the pain. And he soldiered on.

Moore found comfort in his son, his grandchildren, his faith, his community. He traveled to Ireland to visit his ancestral home with Bobby and his wife, Lynn, and to the Black Hills and the Amana Colonies with Mrs. Parnacott and her family. He lived to see his first great-grandchild, Christopher Parnacott.

Mrs. Parnacott grew especially close toward the end. "It's like he was trying to make up for lost time that he didn't have with Mom," she said.

Though slowed to a limp by back and ankle injuries from the war, Moore played golf, nearly to the end. In his 80s, he shuffled around Red Oak's links almost daily with Tom Moates, who was in his 90s. When their legs could no longer carry them around the course, Boylan, the funeral director, loaned them his golf cart. "Once they got the golf cart," Boylan said, "they were just like a couple kids."

Moore grew reflective in his final years. The Rev. Sandra Wainwright, pastor of Villisca's Presbyterian Church, visited frequently.

"He just seemed to want to talk," Rev. Wainwright said. "I think as people get older, they can look back and start summarizing their life."

In a paradox of sorts, Moore seemed in his talks with the pastor to be yearning for understanding beyond his military persona. "People kept putting him in a role of a war hero," Rev. Wainwright said. "For someone who's always put on a pedestal, it's hard to come down and be a regular human being."

Moore didn't place himself on a pedestal. He was unpretentious and didn't make himself the hero of his stories. But the military was for decades his favorite topic for discussion, so it took little effort for others to elevate him to the pedestal.

He was still "General Moore" to lots of folks in Villisca and Red Oak, proudly claimed by both of his hometowns. He helped organize a Court of Honor that flies flags for veterans' funerals at the Red Oak cemetery on Memorial Day. He served on local and state advisory committees for the National Guard and fought successfully to keep the Guard unit in Red Oak. He helped lead a campaign to reactivate the 34th Division, of which Company F had been a part.

"Till the day he died, he was always spit and polish," Jim Watt said.

He also kept his boyish spirit. At his granddaughter's wedding in 1988, the old general entertained children by inhaling helium from balloons and speaking in a high-pitched voice.

Another war in another desert gave Moore another moment in the sun, almost half a century after he had gone to Africa. He took a position of honor in the community sendoff as Red Oak's Guard unit, the 1168th Transportation Company, headed off to fight in the Persian Gulf in December 1990.

During that war, on Feb. 10, 1991, the 34th Division was reactivated, 50 years to the day after it was mobilized for World War II. The assembled crowd at the Villisca armory sang happy birthday to the aging commander, just eight days shy of his 86th birthday. He pinned the division's "Red Bull" patch onto its new commander, Capt. David Lindberg.

Then guardsmen past and present retraced the steps of Moore's troops a half-century earlier to the site where the depot once stood. Moore told Bobby the ceremony was the greatest day of his life.

His health declined quickly. Shortly after the ceremony, he was hospitalized for a few weeks. Not long after he got out of the hospital, his longtime friend Rex Holmes, a retired Marine veteran, found Moore on his bedroom floor, disabled by a stroke. He was taken to the hospital, then transferred to the Villisca Good Samaritan Center.

### ***He never spoke again.***

He could move his left hand and would squeeze Rev. Wainwright's hand to show he understood. He would open his hand to answer yes to a question. With smiles, squeezes and small movements of his hand, Moore managed to communicate, even to maintain his personality.

"In a pleasant, intriguing way," the pastor said, "he was the darnedest stubborn person."

She remembers reading golf stories to Moore the morning he died, April 18, 1991.

Mourners filled the Presbyterian Church in Villisca for the funeral, the right side filled with comrades in their military uniforms. They sang "Amazing Grace," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "Onward, Christian Soldiers."

Don Patton, the soldier Moore had admonished a half-century earlier for not writing home, gave the eulogy.

An honor guard from Offutt Air Force Base provided a 21-gun salute at the cemetery, where Moore was buried between his wife and parents, 80 yards uphill from Nancy's grave and just in front of the long headstone for the six Moores who were slain with the infamous ax.

Jets from Offutt paid tribute in a flyby, Rev. Wainwright recalled. "If you were trying not to cry, that just did it. Forget it."

Downtown, just a block from where the Moore Bros. drugstore used to stand, the marquee at the Rialto theater proclaimed, "Farewell General Robert Moore."

Outside the Presbyterian Church, the message board quoted one of World War II's most famed generals, Douglas MacArthur: "Old soldiers never die."

### **SIDEBAR:**

#### ***Photo Won Pulitzer Prize***

"The Homecoming," a [ 15 JUL ] 1943 photograph by Earle "Buddy" Bunker of the

World-Herald, won a Pulitzer Prize and became one of the most famous pictures from World War II. In 1956, Kodak selected it as the best human interest flash photo of the previous quarter-century. Bunker shot the picture, shown above, at the train depot in Villisca, Ia., as Lt. Col. Robert Moore returned from combat in North Africa. The photo shows Moore hugging his daughter, Nancy, as his wife, Dorothy and nephew, Michael Croxdale, watch.

Earle "Buddy" Bunker barely snapped his classic homecoming picture.

Cameras didn't come with motor drives in 1943, or even with a crank that advanced film with a quick flip of the thumb. Electronic flashes were off in the Buck Rogers future somewhere.

Bunker was lugging a Speed Graphic camera, with an attached arm for holding flash bulbs, as he waited at the Villisca train depot for Lt. Col. Robert Moore to return home from World War II.

The nine-pound camera included a holder for two 3 1/2-by-5-inch sheets of film. After taking the first shot, the photographer had to insert an opaque slide that protected the film from light, remove the holder, turn it around for the second shot and remove the slide protecting the second sheet of film. Then he had to cock the shutter and fire again. And that was if the picture was already focused. Even a swift, seasoned photographer needed several seconds to prepare for the next shot. And, if he was using a flash, as Bunker was, he had to pop out the old bulb and insert a new one.

Bunker snapped his camera as Moore stepped off the train. The flash bulb didn't fire. Muttering under his breath, Bunker popped in a new bulb and flipped the film holder around for the second shot. He finished reloading and snapped the shutter just as Moore embraced his excited daughter, Nancy.

Standing next to Bunker was J. Harold Cowan, a World-Herald reporter who also used a Speed Graphic, because he frequently traveled without a photographer. He fired his camera at the same instant.

After shooting other pictures as Moore visited with townspeople, Bunker and Cowan hurried back to Omaha to make their deadline for the evening paper. Each had captured the welcoming hug, but Bunker's picture was sharper, perfectly focused. "I think I was probably shaking just a little," said Cowan, now 87 and retired.

Some have speculated through the years that the photo was staged, noting that the train in the background was a freight train. The subsequent, clearly spontaneous, pictures make that appear doubtful. In one of them, Bunker had stepped back farther and shifted his angle, showing the full depot platform, a freight train on the left and passenger train to the right.

The picture was republished widely, winning Bunker the 1944 Pulitzer Prize.

It also was honored by Kodak in 1956 as the best human interest flash photograph of the previous 25 years. It was the pinnacle of Bunker's distinguished 38-year career at The World-Herald. He died of a heart attack in 1975 at age 62.

Cowan was glad for the fame that came to his colleague. "I goofed and he didn't," he said. "He was a good friend and I was very happy that he got it. I didn't have the faintest bit of jealousy."

Moore displayed a framed copy of the photograph in his home, as did other family members. "The very first time I met Bob he had to show me that picture," said Jan Castle Renander, editor of the Red Oak Express.

Michael Croxdale, the little boy in the picture, grew up to be a doctor and had a copy hanging in his waiting room.

Linked by the famous photo, the Moores and Bunker became friends. Robert Moore Jr. remembers his parents visiting Bunker in Omaha in the 1960s.

Moore was prone, though, to downplay the picture if others were making too big a deal of it. Longtime friend Rex Holmes of Red Oak remembers Moore saying, "That guy just got a lucky shot."

Luck or not, the picture's appeal was enduring. It was published time and again in books and magazines and brochures. Moore's children and grandchildren found the photo in their history books. Debbie Parnacott, Nancy's daughter, studied it in a photography class in college.

Serving in Vietnam brought Moore's son a deeper understanding of the photo. "At first the picture was just a matter of pride," the younger Moore wrote to Bunker in 1973. "But now, having been to war myself and returning to my loved ones, there is something in the picture that gives it a deeper meaning, something I can't explain, but feel. Perhaps I can relate to my Dad's feelings at that moment. Whatever it is, I do know that 'The Homecoming' means more to me - it's a classic."

### ***The Four in the Photo***

Robert Ross Moore, the soldier in the famous homecoming photograph, spent four decades in the Army and National Guard, retiring in 1963 as a brigadier general. He spent five years on active duty during World War II, first leading troops in battle in North Africa and then starting a combat command course for officers at Fort Benning, Ga. Army records say he was 5 feet 10 inches tall, with gray eyes and brown hair. As a civilian, he was a partner in the Moore Bros. drugstore in Villisca, Iowa, and later was city clerk in Red Oak, Iowa, and bailiff of the Montgomery County District Court in Red Oak. He died after a stroke in 1991.

Dorothy Dee Moore was the oldest of three sisters (she also had two brothers) who worked for their mother at Goldie's diner on the square in Villisca after

their father died. She was married to Bob Moore for 48 years. She had a son and a daughter and, except for helping in the drugstore, stayed at home to care for the house and family. She died of cancer in 1982.

Nancy Jo Moore was 4 years old when her father left home to train for World War II. She wrote him letters regularly during the war and greeted him at the Villisca depot with a homecoming hug. She married Jim Watt and they had a daughter and two sons. After battling multiple sclerosis for several years, she died in a car crash in 1984. "She had a smile that was as big as Texas," said Carolyn Mitchell Olson of Red Oak, a high school classmate who was the maid of honor at her wedding. "Nancy was always bubbly."

Michael Croxdale was the son of Ed and Eva Croxdale. His mother was Dorothy Moore's sister. He was 2 1/2 years old when his uncle returned from the war, and he ran forward with his cousin and aunt, joining the Moores in the historic photo. As a youth and an adult, he was known for his flamboyance. "If it was a crazy fad, he was one of the first to do it," said classmate Sandy Penwell Taylor. Like his father, Mike became a doctor and served in the Army. He was decorated for valor in Vietnam. He died of cancer in 1993.

The Son Who Came Later Robert R. Moore Jr. wasn't in the homecoming photo. "I was probably born exactly nine months after that picture," he said recently, laughing. Closer examination of the dates showed the interval to be a couple of years. He grew up in Villisca, served in the Army in Vietnam and was seriously injured. He still can't fully bend his left leg. He is chief operating officer of Advanced PET Imaging, a medical technology company dealing with diagnosis of heart ailments. He lives in Atlanta with his wife, Lynn.

### ***The Lives and Times of a Midlands Family***

1905 - Feb. 18, Robert Ross Moore born in Villisca, Iowa.

1910 - Census counts Villisca population at 2,039. Montgomery County has 1,917 farms, averaging 139 acres.

1911 - March 16, Dorothy Dee Goldsberry born in Shelby, Iowa.

1912 - June 10, Joseph Moore, Bob Moore's uncle, and his family are slain, along with two visiting children, in Villisca ax murders.

1920 - Villisca population is 2,111. Montgomery County has 1,793 farms, averaging 144 acres.

1922 - July 7, Bob Moore joins Company F of the Iowa National Guard.

1923 - Moore graduates from Villisca High School.

1929 - Dorothy Goldsberry graduates from Villisca High School.  
Oct. 29, stock market collapse starts Great Depression.

1930 - July 1, Moore marries Ruby Taylor in Omaha. Villisca population is 2,032. Montgomery County has 1,615 farms, averaging 165 acres.

1933 - Adolf Hitler appointed German chancellor. July 24, Ruby Moore granted a divorce from Bob Moore.

1934 - Feb. 10, Moore marries Dorothy Goldsberry in Maryville, Mo.

1935 - Feb. 1, Ross Moore, father of Bob Moore, dies.  
April, Bob and his brother Bill take over the family drugstore.

1936 - Aug. 23, Dorothy Moore gives birth to Nancy Jo in Villisca.

1939 - Sept. 1, Germany invades Poland, starting World War II.

1940 - Dec. 18, Michael Bruce Croxdale is born to Ed and Eva Croxdale (Dorothy Moore's sister). Villisca population is 2,011. Montgomery County has 1,633 farms, averaging 163 acres.

1941 - Feb. 10, Company F mobilized. March 2, Company F leaves Villisca for training at Camp Claiborne. Dec. 7, Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor.

1942 - Nov. 8, Bob Moore and other U.S. troops land in Algeria.

1943 - Feb. 16, Moore leads his surrounded troops in escape past German lines. April 9, Moore injured in bomb blast. July 15, Moore returns to Villisca and is welcomed by his family at the train depot.

1944 - May 1, Earle "Buddy" Bunker of World-Herald wins Pulitzer Prize for picture of Moore hugging daughter Nancy on his return to Villisca. June 6, Allies invade Normandy.

1945 - May 7, Germany surrenders. Aug. 6, U.S. drops first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Sept. 3, Robert R. Moore Jr. born in Fort Benning, Ga.

1946 - March 19, Bob Moore leaves active duty. May 21, Bob and Dorothy Moore buy Villisca house for \$ 4,500.

1950 - June 27, U.S. sends 35 military advisers to South Vietnam. Villisca population is 1,838. Montgomery County has 1,516 farms, averaging 174 acres.

1955 - Nancy Moore graduates from Villisca High School. Aug. 19, Nancy marries Jim Watt.

1957 - April 24, Nancy Watt gives birth to daughter, Debra Jo, in Corning, Iowa.

1958 - May 20, Nancy Watt gives birth to son Patrick Lester in Corning.  
Michael Croxdale graduates from Villisca High School, starts college at University of Colorado.

1959 - Sept. 23, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev visits Roswell Garst farm in Coon Rapids, Iowa. Montgomery County has 1,269 farms, averaging 210 acres.

1960 - Villisca population is 1,690.

1961 - Dec. 8, Judith Croxdale, Michael's wife, gives birth to a son, Leyton, in Iowa City.

1962 - March 19, Bob Dylan releases his first album, immediately becoming a favorite of Michael Croxdale. Croxdale, who transferred after his junior year, graduates from University of Iowa. July 31, Moore brothers close drugstore. Aug. 10, Moore brothers file for bankruptcy, listing debts of \$ 6,068.91 and assets of \$ 4,398.87.

1963 - Nov. 22, President John F. Kennedy assassinated. Nov. 27, Moore simultaneously promoted to brigadier general and retires from National Guard.

1965 - May 16, Nancy Watt gives birth to son Michael Robert in Omaha.

1966 - January, Bobby Moore joins Army. March 29, Bob and Dorothy Moore sell their Villisca home for \$ 8,000 and move to Red Oak. Michael Croxdale graduates from University of Iowa Medical School.

1967 - July 1, Croxdale receives medical license No. 17465 from the Iowa Board of Medical Examiners. Croxdale joins Army, goes to Vietnam.

1968 - April 4, Martin Luther King Jr. is assassinated. June 5, Robert F. Kennedy is assassinated.

1969 -Montgomery County has 984 farms, averaging 264 acres.

1970 -Villisca population is 1,402.

1971 -Dec. 31, Bobby Moore receives medical discharge from Army.

1973 - Villisca depot closes.

1974 - Aug. 9, Richard M. Nixon resigns as president, brought down by the Watergate scandal.

1975 - Jan. 29, Buddy Bunker dies.

1978 -Montgomery County has 796 farms, averaging 328 acres.

1979 - Oct. 4, Pope John Paul II visits Iowa.

1980 - Villisca population is 1,434.

1982 - May 3, Dorothy Moore dies. Montgomery County has 684 farms, averaging 372 acres.

1984 - Dec. 13, Nancy Moore Watt dies.

1986 - Dec. 1, Red Oak native Stephen Bowman of Omaha publishes novel "Morning Ran Red," based on the Villisca ax murders.

1987 - February, Villisca depot demolished.

1990 - Villisca population is 1,332. June 22, Rebecca Christian play "A Terrible Stillness," based on the Villisca ax murders, opens in the Montgomery County Courthouse. July 30, Christopher Parnacott, Bob Moore's first great-grandchild, is born. Dec. 8, Bob Moore bids farewell to National Guard troops from Red Oak, activated for Persian Gulf service.

1991 - Jan. 16, U.S. warplanes attack Baghdad.  
Feb. 10, 34th Infantry Division reactivated in Villisca. April 18, Bob Moore dies.

1992 - Montgomery County has 563 farms, averaging 422 acres.

1993 - June 29, Michael Croxdale dies in Las Cruces, N.M.

## NOTES

**1** By Stephen Buttry, Omaha World-Herald / Copyright 1997 Omaha World-Herald / Reprinted with permission / November 9, 1997, Sunrise Edition / Section NEWS, p 1a.

**2** [Homecoming](#) 1944 Pulitzer Prize for Photography, by Earle L. Bunker of the Omaha World-Herald.