

Information from Wayne Carlson, the web editors' uncle, who had met a man who was a guard for the WWII Italian prisoners who were housed at the Adam's Ranch.

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They were a very nice couple and their names were Clarence and Anita Olson. They were good friends with my cousins, sisters Hazel Sommers and Frances Sandberg, and also Nels Blomgren's daughters, Kay and I don't know the other daughters name. They have kept close contact with them all through the years and have visited many times.

They were treated very hospitably in Odebolt and have fond memories of the three months that they spent in Odebolt. I was very surprised that the POWs were only at the ranch three months. I thought that they were there for the duration of the war. The Olsons rented a room at what they called the Hanson house that was across the street from where Nels Blomgrens lived. The Blomgrens invited them to the Lutheran church where they met Hazel and Frances. The room they rented was rented to school teachers and when school resumed they moved to a room at Henry and Ann Dressens and they were treated just like family.

The Olsons had a three year old girl and Mrs. Olson told a touching story about the prisoners' reaction to the little girl who was nicknamed "Snookie". When they took Snookie out to the ranch the prisoners would come to the fence and give her candy and some of them would cry, obviously thinking about their own children in Italy.

Clarence said that from Odebolt the POWs and the guards moved to Algona to work in a hemp mill and then to Eldora to build a POW camp for German POWs. The Olsons then moved to St. Louis where they stayed until the end of the war. They said that they didn't establish the friendship in Algona and Eldora that they did in Odebolt and have long lost contact with anyone that they met in those two towns.

They told about one guard named Barkley or Barclay (pictured) who moved to Odebolt afterwards and set up a plumbing business . I think that they said that he married an Odebolt girl but I am not sure. The only Barkley that I was aware of worked in the post office and his son now lives in California and was a rather well known radio personality. Can this be the same one?

The other guard that Clarence & Anita told about moved back to Odebolt after the war and was a hair dresser and I thought he married a Gronemeyer girl. The Olsons didn't know who that was.

The only other information was that the POWs shocked oats and hauled the bundles to the threshing machine. They didn't haul grain to the town elevator. And the guards rode mules and carried loaded rifles but they never had any trouble with the prisoners.

We took a couple of pictures of the Olsons. Mr. Olson is 85 and Mrs. Olson was somewhat younger. They both seem in good health. Mr. Olson is a plumber. They were very willing to talk about their experiences in Odebolt. Mrs. Olson talked about doing their daughter's laundry in the bath room and hanging up the clothes to dry in their one room. She told about the pastor visiting (Lester Peterson I believe).

They did say that they never saw any of the Adams family except the owner and the disabled son Robert.

Sorry that I didn't unearth any sensational prisoner escapes or human interest stories. I guess the main message was that the Olsons felt very welcome in Odebolt and made some lifelong friends.