

JOSIAH CONRAD LOEFFLER

The following information was obtained from both George Joseph Loeffler (via typed information) and Mary Loeffler Wiberg (via an interview I conducted with her in 1977). George writes:

JOSIAH (JESS) CONRAD LOEFFLER was born October 21, 1892, [I have the silver baby cup commemorating Jess' birth; Mom had it reinscribed to commemorate my son Nathan Long's birth - 1962 - because Jess and Nathan have the same last initial] and died September 21, 1952, in LaMessa, California, one month shy of 60 years of age. He was the oldest of seven children and was probably named after his maternal Uncle, Josiah Ulysses S. Conrad. There was an 11 year age difference between him and Mom. He called Mom his "Mary Girl."



Josiah Conrad Loeffler
1892 - 1952



Jess was baptized in Grace English Lutheran church in Newark, New Jersey, by the Reverend M. S. Waters, his Godfather being Uncle Jess Conrad. As a small boy he attended church school at Saint Andrews Clinton Hill Chapel of Grace Episcopal Church in Newark, then for a short time (with the older Weber cousins) at the Hill Temple which was either Methodist or Baptist, then at Saint Alban's Episcopal Church where he sang in the choir. Later he was confirmed in Trinity Lutheran Church, Newark, by Pastor Reimer.

Jess had one serious childhood illness--scarlet fever, through which his mother successfully nursed him. Finishing grade school, Jess worked for a time as an apprentice electric wiring installer. He was a member of Peter Cooper Council, Junior Order of United American Mechanics, Newark, New Jersey.

Mom mentions one other job Jess had:

I never heard my parents quarrel except one time when Dad whipped my brother Jess. Jess might have been a bit of a rebel. He went to work quite early too. He liked horses and when he was given a chance to drive a brewery wagon - although my mother and father didn't like it very much at all - he was only about 16 - they let him do it because he was so fond of the horses. But I remember this day my brother Jess came home and he had been drinking. Now it was alright for my father to drink, although he never drank to excess - his pint of beer on Saturday - and that was served to the family in the summer time at supper - everybody'd get a small glass of beer, but when Jess came home and he had been drinking, my father took off his belt and I can remember his whipping him with the belt until my mother was frightened and I remember her slapping him in the face to stop him and saying "that's enough, that's enough." Jess never went back to driving the brewery wagon and it was very soon after that that he joined the Navy, and how I know he was 17 was because he had to have my father's consent to join.



[Mary's note: There is a discrepancy here because Uncle George, in his typewritten notes, says that Uncle Jess was born in 1892 and enlisted in the Navy on March 24, 1911, which would have made Uncle Jess 19 years old. Presumably he would not have needed Grandpa Loeffler's permission to join the Navy at age 19. I must say, though, that in the picture opposite, he looks more 17 than 19!]

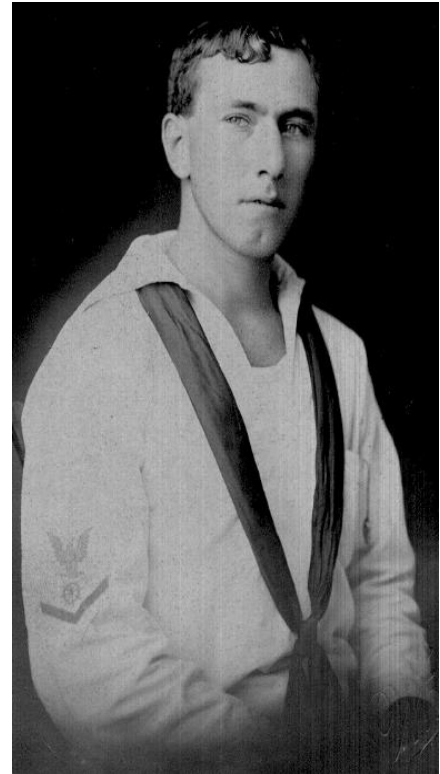
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Mom continues:

I've often wondered whether Jess carried a grudge, but I can't remember it ever showing when he used to come home. I wouldn't be surprised that what Dad felt very guilty about it. I remember Mom saying that they should never have let him take the job, but that's the only time that I remember my mother and father having any real argument over the children.

George says:

On March 24, 1911, Jess enlisted in the United States Navy and made that his career, serving 25 years [Mom says 22 years] to a pensioned retirement. He served on one capital ship, the U.S.S. Vermont, then on a number of auxiliary vessels, and finally on various destroyers where he attained the rank of Chief Torpedo Man. During World War One his service was mostly on patrols in the Caribbean area [his letters follow].



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Uncle Jess had two wives--Emma (?) and Harriet N. Novak. His first wife [Emma] married him while he was in the service, collected his checks, and I believe divorced him after the war [Mom says the marriage was annulled]. It is my understanding that she was married to many men at the same time in order to get their paychecks. There were no children.

In a letter to my parents and Ed dated September 5, 1966, George says:

Jess died Sept. 21st, 1952 and both John and I remember that he had been married to and divorced from "Emma" - who was in the habit of marrying all the sailors she could to profit from government allotments. Was there also a "Ruth" in his marital affairs? I do not remember Ruth but between Et[hyl] and John this name was brought up and none of us can verify it to another's satisfaction - that she really was there. Can you? [Mary's note: I do not find any reference to a Ruth any place else] Of course there is no importance about it now and neither can we consider it currently important that Jess once bragged that he had a son. Sailors have been notoriously credited as story tellers and when they visited home one listened to fact and fancy, I suppose, as they chose to spin their yarns. Jess could very well have invented his story of a son to match our George or to very lamely approach the accomplishments of you and Hugo. Anyway it seems a fair topic to pass about to settle any facts of knowledge on the subject.

Mom speaks about Emma:

I do know that his first marriage was after - that he says that he wasn't sober when he was married - that he and this other man by the name of Surbus (?) had been on a weekend and they were out with these two girls and after the weekend was over they found they were married with marriage certificates and everything. That was after the war started, see, the United States went in - when was it - 1915, 16? and they were down in Norfolk, Virginia, and I remember when he came home and told my mother - and I remember him standing on the kitchen table - the table was covered with paper - and he was painting the kitchen for my mother - and he told my mother that he'd been married then.

He stayed in the Navy for 22 [George says 25] years and years afterward - of course he didn't live with Emma too long - especially after he felt that she had aborted his child - and he came home and cried on my mother's shoulder because he thought that Emma should have had his baby and he felt that she had aborted his child and I don't know how long she - she had come from the World's Fair out in San Francisco - she had been out there and she came East and lived with us for about six months. I liked her! I remember she brought gifts from California. I must have been - I was born in 1903 and this was oh maybe - I must have been 11 or 12 - maybe 13 years old at the time [The World's Fair was in 1915, so Mom would have been 12 and Jess would have been 23, so I am assuming that Jess was married sometime between 1911 (the year he enlisted) and 1915. From Emma's standpoint, this would have been an ideal marriage, because Jess was at sea from about 1912 through at least 1918. Mom goes on to explain where (I think) he was after 1918:]

We didn't see much of Jess during those days. He was out in California or - no - I guess he spent a great deal of time in St. Louis, Missouri - he was a recruiting officer out there for a number of years and he met his second wife out there - Harriet (a nurse) - but before he could marry her he had to find out where Emma was and get a proper divorce he thought, but then when they looked into her record they found - the Navy found - that she had been getting money - or that she had gotten money from several men that she had married during that first world war and the, ah - I don't remember whether she was dead at that time or not - but anyhow, the upshot of it was that Jess' marriage was annulled - he was never legally married to her - he wasn't the first one that she had married and so he was never legally married and then he was free to marry Harriet, and I guess he and Harriet were really in love with each other - and she was nice - she came to the house and that was one of the early years of my marriage or was it before I went to Training College, because I remember that Harriet tried to persuade me not to go to Training College, so it must have been they were married before that **[they were married June 30, 1926; Mom and Dad were married in 1928]** - sure - and ah - but it didn't make any difference - I went to Training College, didn't I!



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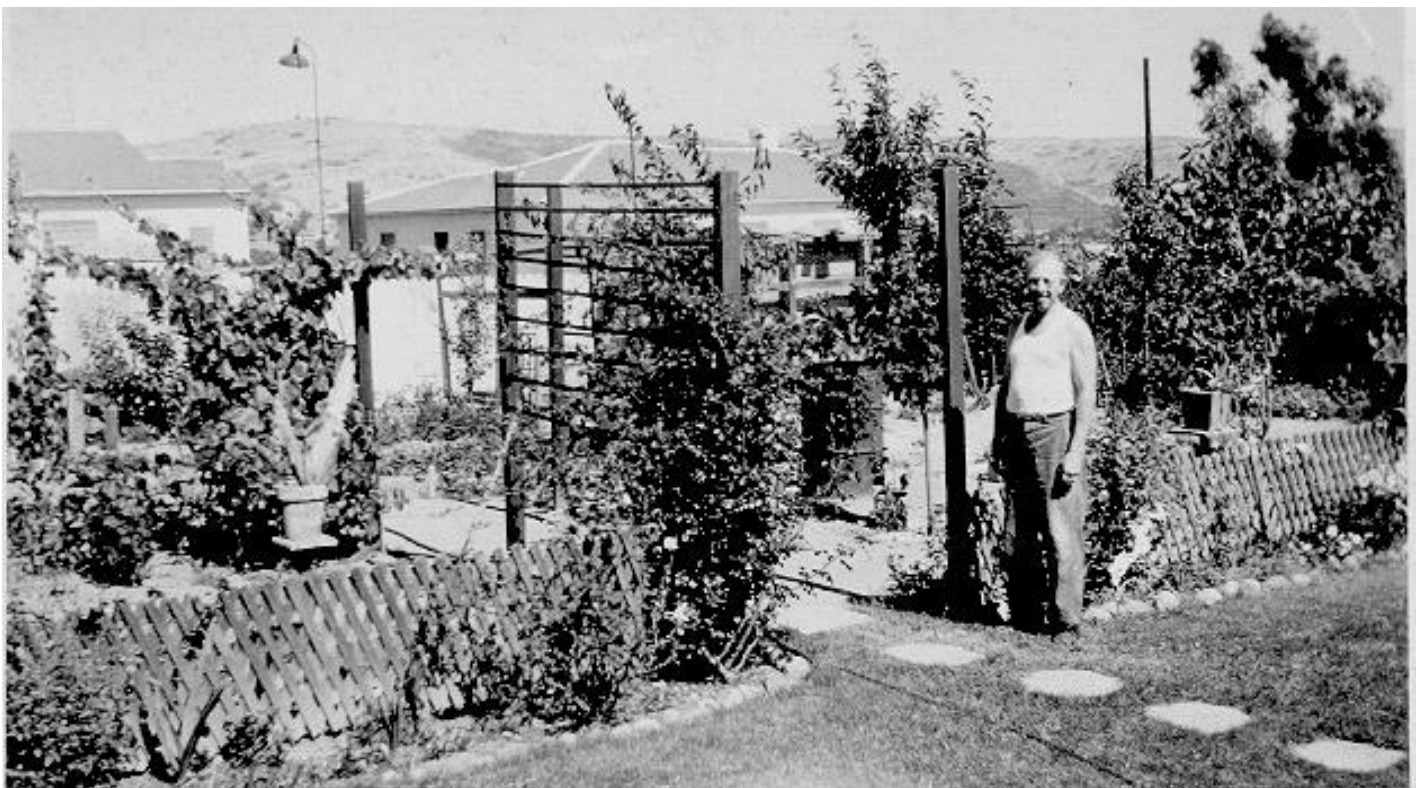
Jess married Harriet N. Novak on January 23, 1926, in Vineta, Oklahoma. Mom continues:

I liked her and she and Jess were very happy - they never had any children. When he was retired from the US Navy after 22 [or 25] years they settled out in California and they lived - they had a little home in La Messa - near the Mexican boarder - I think that's part of Los Angeles or is it San Diego - it's down the south of California anyhow - and he worked for an aircraft company there as a guard for many years - besides getting his pension from the US Navy and the money he made as a guard [Uncle George says Jess was refused re-entry to Navy service during World War Two, but served as an industrial plant guard] - special policeman I guess it was - cause I know that he carried a gun - and my children were quite impressed when they were old enough to realize that their Uncle was a policeman of sorts and carried a gun.



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But that's where he lived and had a lovely garden with orange trees and this and that he used to brag about and he's buried in La Messa - and Harriet left and went back to Michigan to her family [after Jess died] - they lived in Michigan [actually it was Michigan City in Indiana] - but she had visited us a couple of times - I mean visited my mother a few times - my mother didn't especially like Harriet - she, Harriet was Polish [her obituary says she was born in Germany, but I guess she still could be Polish] and had some funny habits that my mother didn't like - like petting a dog and not washing her hands afterwards - things like that - but as long as Jess loved her that was all that mattered I think. Well, she was a little bit flamboyant, she was a little bit - what shall I say - maybe, maybe course is the word - but she was a nurse, and evidently a good nurse and she always had work. But she loved her Joe - she always called him Joe - course his name was Josiah - he got used to signing his name Josiah C. Loeffler - and so she called him her Joe [her obituary says she was married to Joseph Loeffler]. Even after he was dead we wrote very faithfully to her until she died and then I even wrote to her sister Mary for another year - but she always talked about her Joe - she loved her Joe.



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Jess didn't get home [to New Jersey] very often - he was even late for his Mother's funeral, ya know. We wrote to him that Mum had died - course Mom died suddenly, ya know - she had gone for her afternoon nap - and I told you that - she didn't wake up - and they sent for me and I came down and we sent for - notified Jess, but it was in February and there was some - the weather evidently wasn't too good and the plane service not so good and he didn't make it across country as had been scheduled and the funeral was - although we had the funeral held over for a day he didn't get home until after she had been buried.

Jess died of a heart attack on September 21, 1952, at exactly 60 years and one month of age. George writes in a letter to Mom dated Oct 11, 1952:

I have written and wired Hattie but so far have received no further word from her than the original telegram regarding Jess' death. She may not be too well herself. Jess was a beneficial member in the Junior Order and the necessary papers were forwarded to Hattie to cover his death benefits. These have been returned to Charley Haeder - who informs me that the cause of death stated thereon was "Arterio-Sclerosis" - evidently hardening of the arteries and heart trouble [or maybe congestive heart failure, which seemed to run in the family]. Jess was originally stricken about August 26th. A doctor Hill had him under care from August 28th until he died on Sept 21st. We should hear further from Hattie before long.

Jess is buried at La Mesa, California. After Jess' death Harriet returned to Michigan City, Indiana, and lived with her sister Mary until she died 14 years later on August 17, 1966.