

BEYOND THIS HOME

BOOK IV
BEYOND THOSE HILLS SERIES

BEYOND THIS HOME

Vernal Lind



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AN INTRODUCTION FROM THE AUTHOR



As I introduce this fourth book in the *Beyond Those Hills* series, I wish to dedicate this book to my family: first in memory of my parents, Alfred and Marie Lind, who exemplified so many Christian values; then to my sisters, Juneal and Marlys, and their families; and finally to my extended family.

In a broader sense, family is the fabric that knits a society together. The strength of our country and its culture depends on the stability of the family. In this novel and in the earlier ones, I have endeavored to present a family with its strengths as well as its problems. This fictional family is a reminder of the importance and influence of home and family.

Families grow and spread out. Keeping track of family members in a story or real life becomes more of a challenge. Who is related to whom? How are they related? These relationships become more complicated and puzzling. Perhaps this list will explain relationships, review some characters from earlier books, and update characters of the younger generation.

The last book, *Beyond the Darkness*, ended in 1947. This novel continues the story in 1962. Several in-laws as well as a number of children have joined the family.

MATTHEW'S PARENTS:

JOHN ANDERSON (PA). 1862–1940. Strong immigrant, farmer, man of faith. Patriarch of the family. Community leader. Married Elizabeth in 1887.

ELIZABETH OLSON ANDERSON (MA) 1868– . Mother, grandmother, and more. Survivor. Became stronger in determination to live independently, but now declining in physical and mental health.

MATTHEW AND HIS FAMILY

MATTHEW ANDERSON 1900– . Farmer. Loves the land and loves his family. Quiet leader, sensitive. Man of faith. Married Ellen in 1923.

ELLEN JOHNSON ANDERSON. 1899– . Retired country school teacher. Loving wife and mother. Strong personality.

JAMES ANDERSON. 1924– . Oldest son. College professor. Would-be writer. Married Ruth in 1950.

RUTH ROBERTS ANDERSON. 1925– . Teacher and wife. James and Ruth have three children: RICHARD. 1951– . ; COLEEN. 1953– : MELISSA. 1955– .

JOHNIE (JOHN) ANDERSON 1925– . Matthew's favorite. Loved the farm and farming, but became a minister. Married Laura in 1952.

LAURA (MALMSTROM) ANDERSON 1925– Originally a nurse. Now a pastor's wife and mother. She is struggling with cancer. They have three children: JANELLE. 1954– ; JACK (JOHNIE). 1956– . LEAH. 1958– .

MARGARET ANDERSON NELSON 1927– . The ideal daughter who first became a country school teacher and then a farmer's wife and mother. Married Joe Nelson in 1947.

JOE NELSON. 1921– . Formerly hired man to the Andersons, now farms on the home place, where Matthew grew up. They have six children: MATT (MATTHEW). 1948– . DAVID. 1950– DEBORAH. 1952– . JOEL. 1953. JUDITH. 1953– . MARLENE. 1957– .

CAROL ANDERSON STEVENS 1928– . Rebel daughter who got into trouble. Married JEFFREY GRANT in 1945, but was widowed in her teens. Married LEE MCKENZIE in 1951, but divorced him in 1959. Recently married HANK STEVENS in 1962. CAROL has three children: JEFFREY GRANT. 1946– . NICHOLAS MCKENZIE. 1952– . NICOLE MCKENZIE. 1954– .

MICHAEL ANDERSON 1939– . Youngest son of Matthew and Ellen. Loves the farm and is very much like JOHNIE. He has returned from the Army, a troubled young man.

MATTHEW'S SIBLINGS AND THEIR FAMILIES

MARTHA ANDERSON CARLSON 1888– . Matthew's oldest sister; has been a widow for many years. Was like a second mother to Matthew in his early life. She has three daughters.

RACHEL. 1907– . Matthew's niece. Has a family, and is not in the story.

JANE. 1908– . Matthew's niece. Has a family, and is not in the story.

CORRINE CARLSON WESTBERG. 1911– . Matthew's favorite niece. Married to WARREN WESTBERG. They lived in the area and were friends to Matthew and Ellen. They have three daughters. They now live in California.

VICTORIA ANDERSON 1892– . Retired high school teacher and principal. Strong, independent and forceful. Has a special interest in Matthew's children.

PJ. ANDERSON (PAUL JOHN) 1893–1940. Took the farm that rightfully belonged to Matthew. Had criminal connections. Source of problems in the earlier novels.

RITA. 1895– . Impressed with wealth and position. Lives "out east." "Southern Bell." There are two children:

NOREEN. 1914– . The family doesn't know her whereabouts. She has been married, has two girls.

LARRY ANDERSON 1915– . Changed from a troubled youth to a responsible husband and father. Good looking and talented. Works well with youth. Matthew's special nephew. Married JOAN in 1940.

JOAN ANDERSON 1921– . Joan and Larry have three children:

LOWELL. 1941– . LISA. 1946– . LORRAINE. 1948– .

MARY ANDERSON HANSON 1901– . Sister of Matthew and close friend of Matthew and Ellen. Suffered with TB a few years back. Has health problems. Now lives in California. Married ED HANSON in 1923.

ED HANSON 1891– . Brother-in-law to Matthew and friend for years. Now in California. A strict disciplinarian with a temper. Had been hard on his children, especially his son.

BETH. 1925– . Had been tomboy and cousin and friend to James and Johnie. A single teacher, now in California.

JACOB (JAKE) 1926– . Father and son never got along.
Married LORETTA in 1951. Has two sons, and lives and farms
in southern Minnesota. NICK. 1952– . JACOB. 1954– .
IRENE. 1928– . Cousin and good friend to Margaret and Carol.
Married WILL BARTLETT in 1950. Live in the Twin Cities.
They have three children: Margaret. 1952– . Bill. 1952– .
JEAN. 1954– .

MATTHEW'S COUSIN:

PETER ANDERSON 1892– . A childhood and adult friend. Lives
on the Iron Range. Visits infrequently. Married to ALICE 1894– .

MATTHEW'S LONG-TIME FRIEND:

GLENN ROBERTSON 1900– . Farms nearby. Matthew's closest
friend. Married to MABEL 1902– . They have several children.
Glenn's son TIM was a suitor of Margaret a few years back, but
now farms and is a "wheeler-dealer." Married with a family.

As you continue the story of the Anderson family,
I pray that the Lord will richly bless you.

Vernal Lind

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PROLOGUE



May 1962

Matthew Anderson listened intently as his wife read the words their daughter Margaret had written. Ellen's voice and face showed a depth of feeling she did not ordinarily show.

"My dear Father and Mother." Ellen read the words slowly and precisely.

"It is Mother's Day, May 13, 1962. Somehow, I want to honor both of you and express my love. You built a home for me and four other children. Your love and faith provided a foundation for all of us. It is the home that you established that has made me what I am today.

"Home. What a beautiful word! That word brings to mind all the people who mean the most to me. All those special times. While home reminds me of joy, I am also reminded of sorrows. The loss of special people—Grandpa. And Grandma, growing old, leaving for the nursing home.

"I am almost overwhelmed with my role as mother and wife, as well as my part in the extended family. But it is the Lord who provides this added strength.

"This house is on the spot where Grandpa and Grandma lived so many years. John and Elizabeth Anderson made a big impact on the whole community. But they started a family and leave a legacy of faith

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and love. Not everyone has followed their ways. But their example serves as a guiding beacon. Even now Grandma at 93 serves as a silent reminder of this way of life.

“I am finding it hard to believe that I am now thirty-five years old. Except for Michael, your children are all in their thirties. At this time, I feel a need to reflect on all our lives and the direction we’re going.

“James. You must be especially proud of him. With a doctor’s degree, he now will be the head of the English department at Riverton State College. I’m told that is quite remarkable for a man only thirty-eight years old. And Ruth, the ideal wife and teacher, fits right in with the Andersons. I wish we saw more of them and their three children.

“I wonder if James will ever fulfill his dream of writing that great American novel.”

Matthew had wondered the same thing. People could become so preoccupied with earning a living and getting ahead that they forgot their dreams and what might be more important in life.

“John—or we all know him as Johnie. We always thought he would be the farmer, but he’s become a fine pastor. What sadness we feel now that Laura is struggling with cancer. Yesterday, I heard that she’s doing better. And Johnie and Laura have blest you with three grandchildren.

“And I, Margaret, function as mother and teacher. I wonder sometimes how I can get everything done. I couldn’t have asked for a better husband. I don’t know what I ever did to deserve such a devoted and hard-working husband. I think I fell in love with Joe at the tender age of twelve or thirteen. And now we have six children!”

Matthew interrupted. “I remember so well when Joe came into our lives. He was always around when we needed him. It’s great that we have Joe and Margaret just a few miles away.”

Ellen nodded agreement and continued reading. “Carol. Oh, how I miss my sister. I don’t understand her leaving Dr. Nick McKenzie for Hank. Apparently, Hank Stevens is a millionaire businessman. Divorce hurts. Those three children have been badly hurt. I’m afraid my sister has lost sight of some of our important family values.

“That leaves little Michael. Only he isn’t little. I think he’s the same height as Johnie. His time in the service seemed to lead him into habits that aren’t good. I hope and pray he will get his act together. If he’s taking over the farm, he needs to get serious. He’s twenty-three and it’s time for him to settle down.

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“Look at our family size. Fifteen grandchildren. The five of us with our spouses add up to nine. And with the two of you, we are twenty-six. That’s the change from six—or seven after Michael was born.

“I think there’s always that desire to come home. I feel an urge or a nudge that something is calling all of us home. Maybe there is an instinct within that wants to return to the safety of home—that creates in me a desire to see my brothers and sisters and my aunts and uncles and cousins as well.

“I wrote to James. He is serious about taking a break this summer. I think I need to remind him of his dream about writing that great American novel. And, Johnie is sure that he can take a Sunday away from the church. However, I haven’t heard from Carol. Of course, Michael should be around. I think Aunt Mary and Uncle Ed and many of the cousins will be coming. That should mean we can have a big family reunion.

“I may have become sidetracked from my original purpose. I want to thank you for being the parents you have been. How can I ever pay a proper tribute to you and the wonderful home you have provided? Our hearts and minds come back to that home, but your children and grandchildren are going far beyond this home.

“May the Lord guide and bless us all. And may we all come together in our Eternal Home.”

Ellen wiped her eyes. Matthew looked away, not trusting himself to speak. They sat in silence for several minutes.

Ellen broke the silence. “I don’t think we realize life as we live it. The decisions we make and the lives we live impact many, both in the present and in the distant future.”

The wall clock chimed the hour.

Matthew stood up. “It’s time for chores. The milking won’t wait.”

CHAPTER 1



June 1962

Matthew stood by the garden gate, looking at his handsome 1910 farm home. The new coat of paint gave the house a touch of class. In a few weeks the front porch would welcome a host of people for a midsummer family reunion.

He glanced at the garden nearby, and several healthy red strawberries caught his attention. His mouth watered at the thought of a bowl of luscious strawberries with rich cream and sugar. The garden, as well as the hay and grain fields, displayed the lush green of June. Spring brought with it the hope for a good life.

Matthew wore well his sixty-two years. Dr. Baker had said his heart seemed strong, and his brush with death and those past stomach problems were far behind him. This lean farmer appeared to have some good years ahead of him.

Matthew reached down for his pocket watch. The time on his watch and the appearance of cattle in the barnyard reminded him of milking time.

“Michael’s not back yet.” Ellen’s voice startled his reverie. “You shouldn’t do the milking all by yourself. I’ll help.”

“I wonder what’s keeping Michael. It’s a quieter time at the elevator. And he’s supposed to be off the job by four.”

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Ellen cleared her throat. “Matthew, dear, you know very well what’s keeping him.”

“I hate to admit it. Liquor destroys lives. It helped destroy my brother P.J., and it could destroy Michael.”

Matthew herded the cows into the barn. With the new bulk tank and the new machines, milking was simpler in some ways. He didn’t have to lift those heavy milk cans. Yet, there was all that cleaning and rinsing and disinfecting that had to be done. He and Ellen had learned to work as a team when Michael was in the service. But now Michael was supposed to help. After all, he would be taking over the farm.

There were times when Matthew wished he were back on the home farm—the farm with those pleasant memories of childhood. But that special place also had the memory of P.J., who had essentially stolen the farm from him. He was thankful that the home farm was back in the hands of the family, namely his daughter Margaret and son-in-law Joe.

He surveyed the hills and fields nearby. This was truly his place, his home—not a place that other family members could lay claim to. He dreamed that this home would be the place where his children and grandchildren would return.

Matthew and Ellen said little as they did their work. By a quarter after six they finished the milking. Matthew let the cows out of the barn, and Ellen returned to the house to finish getting supper ready. Still there was no Michael.

As Matthew entered the kitchen, Ellen made an announcement. “Things can’t go on this way. Michael has to settle down, or we sell the cattle. We need less farm work, not more work.”

Matthew knew Ellen was right—as usual. “I had hoped Michael would get over this habit of stopping for a few beers.”

“We’ve been patient long enough.”

Matthew had an uneasy feeling about Michael’s actions and where they would lead.



An hour later, Ellen put away the last dishes. Matthew was outside, probably tinkering with the new motorized lawn mower. She looked and saw Margaret get out of the car.

Chapter 1

“Mother,” greeted Margaret. “I thought we should do some planning for the family reunion.”

“I guess we should, Ellen answered.

“I hope this reunion isn’t going to be too much for you. It’s a lot of work to have all those people here. It’s enough with just us sisters and brothers and our kids.”

“I may be sixty-three, but I’m feeling just fine. I don’t do as much as I used to, but it will be fun to be all together.”

Ellen didn’t look her age. She was still petite, though not as slim as she once was. Her blue gingham dress accented the brilliant blue of her eyes. Her hair was now completely gray—almost white. Her face, with only a few wrinkles, still remained youthful.

Margaret, a younger version of her mother, seemed always to be in motion—working or planning something. It was easy to see why this girl was Matthew’s favorite daughter.

In moments, with writing pads in hand, mother and daughter were busy planning menus and other important details that go into a family reunion. Both mother and daughter loved the idea of bringing the whole family together.

“Isn’t it about time for coffee?” asked Matthew as he and Joe entered the kitchen.

“We’ve been busy,” replied Ellen, realizing they had lost track of time.

“I’ll get the coffee going.” Margaret got up and filled the coffeepot with water and put the grounds in. “By the way, where’s Michael? I thought he was with you fellows.”

Ellen hesitated and gave Matthew that knowing look. “I’m afraid he hasn’t come home from work.”

Joe, always the quiet one, spoke up. “I think I know what’s been going on. And you don’t want to talk about it.”

Margaret looked bewildered. “Am I missing something?”

“He stops off for a few beers after work,” said Matthew. “He’s supposed be finished at the elevator before four. I’m afraid it’s not just beer. It’s whiskey and some of the stronger stuff.”

Ellen could see that her daughter was not one to hold back where Michael was concerned. She had been like a second mother to her younger brother, and she was not afraid to scold.

“So this has been going on for a while?” Margaret questioned. “And I didn’t know about it!”

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Ellen looked to Matthew for reassurance. “It’s happened several times. He doesn’t seem to have purpose in life.”

“He’s twenty-three. He’s an adult!” exclaimed Margaret. “We’ve babied him long enough. He needs to act like an adult and take responsibility.”

“Don’t be too hard on the boy,” said her father.

Ellen began to think aloud. “I’m afraid he was the baby, and we spoiled him.”

“As big sister, I’m afraid I spoiled him, too. He was so cute, and I bought him those extra gifts when I started teaching.”

Joe smiled at his wife. “Michael has some of that male Anderson charm. And even his sisters can’t resist that.”

Margaret gave her husband an annoyed look. “That charm will not work. When I see him, I shall have something to say.”

Ellen knew her daughter could be sharp with her words. “Please be careful. I’m afraid Michael is hurting for some reason. We may have little idea what that hurt is all about.”

By this time, the coffee was ready.

“Let’s have the coffee and relax,” said Matthew.

Ellen went over to the refrigerator and brought out sandwich meat. “This meat is good. We can make ourselves sandwiches. And I baked some chocolate chip cookies this morning.”

For a short while their attention was taken away from Michael and his habits. Ellen thought of the Scripture used in a prayer—a prayer about “leading a quiet and peaceable life here on earth.” Most of the time Matthew’s and her lives had been “quiet and peaceable.” And that’s the way life was supposed to be. That’s the way she wanted it.

As they finished coffee and their visiting tapered off, Joe pushed back his chair. “It’s time to go. Five o’clock morning chores time comes awfully fast.”

Just then came the sounds of a car followed by squealing tires and a sudden stop. The look on Matthew’s face told Ellen he was both relieved and concerned about the return of his son.

The car door slammed.

“I wonder what’s coming,” said Ellen.

The four waited tensely. The Andersons were not used to this kind of behavior.

Ellen silently prayed for patience and wisdom. Michael’s walk up the back steps and onto the porch told her that her son had been drinking.

Chapter 1

Michael entered the kitchen. Awkward silence greeted him, save for a few awkward hellos.

"I guess I'm a little late," he mumbled.

Ellen managed to say, "We were worried. Why so late?"

Michael stood unsteadily by the door. "I needed to relax a little. I lost track of time."

"The cows didn't lose track of time," said Margaret.

"I'm sorry, Dad."

Margaret stood up and walked toward her brother. "Michael, do you realize what's happening? Look at Mom and Dad. They're not so young anymore. They keep the farm and milk business so you can take over. Then, you don't show up to do chores. Dad works twice as hard to build up the herd, and you have Mother out there doing chores with him. That's not right."

Michael looked down, avoiding his sister's gaze.

Margaret backed away and clenched her fist. "What do you have to say for yourself? That smell of liquor is filling this room. You're disgracing the family."

Michael's words were barely audible, "I'm sorry." He backed away.

Joe went over to his wife, placing a protective hand on her shoulder. "Margaret's right. I know what it's like to get out of the service and back to civilian life. It's hard. Remember, I was in heavy fighting in the South Pacific. And Johnie fought in Germany. There are terrible memories to erase. But you didn't go through any of that terrible bloodshed. You were in the Army during peace time."

Ellen looked at Matthew and saw tears in his eyes. Tears filled her eyes; yet she felt anger at her son and at herself.

Margaret's voice rose sharply. "Mother and Dad are too kind and nice to speak up. You need to face up to what you're doing to yourself and to them!"

Michael's apologetic mood changed suddenly to one of belligerence. "Oh, you're always so perfect, Margaret. You do everything right. I can't do anything right."

"We're not talking about me. We're talking about you and the way you're not living up to your agreement with Mother and Dad."

"I need my friends. And I go where they go."

Ellen stood and walked toward her son. "Yes, son, you choose your friends. But those friends determine who you are. You become like your friends. And look what your friends are doing to you."

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Michael looked down and backed away, avoiding his sister's gaze.

Margaret grabbed her brother's arm. "You know better than to do what you're doing. Liquor is not a part of Anderson life. You're wasting your life. You're destroying yourself!"

He moved away, freeing his arm. "So what, it's my life. I can do with it what I want."

Ellen felt the eyes of everyone on her. She knew they were waiting for her to speak. Her eyes showed the gentle love of a mother but the stern discipline of a teacher.

"My dear Michael, my youngest, you know something else very well. Your life is not your own. You are accountable to God. You will face Him at His judgment seat. Please, don't go on the way you are."

Michael let out an angry laugh. "And if God cares so much, why does He let some people starve? And why are some people under the yoke of communism?"

Ellen knew her words were falling on deaf ears, but she had to speak. "Michael, God gives people choices. I'm afraid if they choose evil, He lets them do that. But they and others reap the consequences of those choices."

For a moment Ellen thought her son was about to break down and cry. The smell of liquor seemed to permeate the whole kitchen. It was almost as if an evil spirit took over.

"I'm not so sure I even believe anymore. I've had it with all this church and religion. I want no part of it!"

For the first time Matthew spoke. "Are you giving up on God? Are you saying you want no part of us or of the farm? Are you giving up this life?"

"I don't know! I don't know!" Michael yelled. "I can't take anymore of this badgering."

Margaret grasped both of her brother's arms. "You just stop what you're saying. You owe something to your family. Mom and Dad loved you and took care of you. You've done these stupid things, and they've put up with you. You've caused more pain than the rest of us put together. You can at least have the decency to come home and help with chores."

Michael backed toward the door, pushing his sister away from him.

"You know where you can go."

Ellen saw the anger in Joe's eyes as his whole body stiffened. Though several inches shorter but husky in frame, he moved forward and took hold of Michael.

Chapter 1

“Don’t you dare speak to my wife that way—or the rest of this family. Mom and Dad mean as much to me as any real mother and father. If you treat them this way, it’s best you get out.”

Michael’s fist aimed unsteadily at Joe. But Joe caught his fist and pushed him onto the porch.

Michael stumbled and then lunged toward Joe. Despite Michael’s larger size and strength, Joe pushed him away. Michael was too intoxicated to fight.

Ellen heard the loudest scream she had ever heard. Not until Margaret held her back did she realize the scream was hers.

Michael stood up slowly and backed away. He looked down, avoiding his family’s gaze. Then, he opened the door and went out, slamming it. He ran but half-stumbled toward his car. He got in the car, started it and gunned the motor. He turned the car around, leaving a cloud of dust behind.

Ellen rushed outside, followed by the others. “What will happen to that boy? I’m afraid he’ll kill himself.”



That night Matthew and Ellen found sleep would not come. They tossed and turned for several hours, hoping Michael would return. But he did not return.

“There’s nothing we can do,” said Ellen. “As Joe said, if we’d follow him, Michael would only become angrier.”

“It’s almost like my brother all over again. Once P.J. began drinking it seemed he couldn’t stop. He had to have those drinks no matter what.”

“Let’s pray that something stops Michael before he gets to that point.”

They lay in silence for what seemed like hours.

Finally, sleep came to Matthew, but it was not a restful sleep. Nightmares blended the past and the present.

P.J. appeared in those nightmares. P.J., dark and handsome and charming, seemed to take the form of the very devil himself. Matthew became that little boy while P.J. locked him in the attic. P.J. stood below, taunting and ridiculing him.

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Then P.J. stood before him and Michael. Matthew became an adult and stood on the sidelines, watching as P.J. signaled for Michael to follow him. P.J. kept on offering Michael beer and other drinks. Michael followed.

Suddenly, P.J. changed into Michael. Michael was shouting out in fear as he kept on falling—falling into an abyss.

Matthew called out. “Michael, come back.” He reached out to his son. “Son, I’ll help you. Please don’t go that way.”

Matthew sat up, fully awake. He kept seeing Michael stumbling toward his car and driving away.

Deep within he knew something terrible was about to happen.