Did I tell You Stop Like to Run?

By Dorothy Gravlund

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Introduction

There she sits in her favorite rocker, her hair long turned to white, knitting a sweater she started last week. Occasionally her head nods. It's such a bother. She had gone this morning to visit a friend, a sister almost, in a nursing home. Her friend had fallen on a step. Broke a bone. So they popped her into a nursing home. Now they're fixing the step. She remembers what her mother always said, "There's no use fixing the barn door after the..."

She really should finish the sweater she started last week. But things aren't as easy as they once were. She used to whip out most anything for her kiddies. Made their clothes out of cast-off clothing of other people. Never used a pattern.

Never needed one. She never wanted her children to look like some of those other “poor kids” whose clothes didn't fit. Her kids always looked so nice. Such good kids. Well mannered and smart. So smart. Never could figure how she could have such smart ones. She was blessed, she said. It's a mother's right to brag about her kids, you know.

A mother always likes to look back -- a little laughing here, a little crying there. One always likes to reminisce from time to time. After all, tomorrow is her birthday. Seventy-nine years she has lived. Tomorrow it will be eighty. One brother and three sisters have gone before. Her mother was ninety-one, and her father eighty-one when they left this earth. Now she is almost as old as her father when he left. Doesn't seem that long. Time does fly. A lot of water has run under the bridge. Much happiness. Not too much sadness. For this she is grateful.

Keep a positive attitude her mother always said. This advice was helpful on more than one occasion in her life. She had three children, five grandchildren, and two great grandchildren. She wonders what the world will bring them. The world is in such bad shape. But then she remembers her mother saying the same thing. Maybe it isn't so bad. She hopes not. She wonders if children today are too interested in material things. She worries that the family isn't as close as it was when she was a girl. It's nice to sit back in your rocking chair and reminisce.

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So, here I sit in my rocker, knitting a sweater for an old friend, and recalling my

childhood days near a small Iowa town called Curlew. That's in Northwest Iowa. Nothing special mind you. Just the typical small Iowa town and a typical childhood. You've probably had one too. But would you like to hear some of mine? Just a little. Oh, good, just pour yourself some coffee and sit back. You don't mind if I keep on knitting while I talk, do you? Good, well then, it all began in the year ...

My First Home

My parents and four older siblings moved from Illinois to Iowa during World War I in 1915. A year later my mother had her fifth child; a little girl. That was me. I was born in a little house a mile north and a couple miles west of Curlew. I was born at home, of course. No one ever went to the hospital on such occasions. After all, the hospitals didn't have too much more to offer than what the doctors carried in their bags.

The house was small. It had a tiny kitchen, a living room, and two small bedrooms. The bedrooms were large enough for bed and a box to keep underwear. My parents slept in one bedroom and my two teenage sisters, Pauline and Helen, who were 12 and 14, slept in the other. Oh yes, the house did have a loft where my two brothers, Russell and Everett, slept. They were 7 and 9 years old at the time.

At the time I was born, Russell and Everett had whooping cough, and I was kept in a bedroom in isolation away from them -- away from curious eyes. They always called me 'the kid' -- a name they called me until I was middle aged.

We only lived in that first little house for two years. A family with five kids needs more than three rooms and a loft. So, two years later my parents packed their belongings and moved again. This time they didn't travel as far. The landlord had built a new house on our farm and we moved into that house -- right across the driveway. It wasn't really a nice house, but it was big. My mother must have been in seventh heaven when she saw all that room.

But after we moved into this house, I would put on my coat and go back to the little house, which stood nearby. Home to me.

Over the years this little house was used as a storage shed. Then one day, later still, after I had moved from the area, my husband and I just happened to be driving down this country road past, this, my first home. I started clamoring for him to slow down. I wanted him to see this dear little house where I was born. It had been many years since I had seen it. He slowed down, we looked, and, ... finally, there it was -- my little house. And there, standing in the front doorway of my little house was the biggest hog I had ever seen. It was his home now. My home. His home. Oh my.

Shortly after our family moved to our big house, my mother called me in from play and I didn't answer. She went looking. Eventually, she found me walking across a nearby field with my arm across the back of my old yellow dog, Rusty. She called to Rusty. He came. I did too. That was my first attempt to explore the world. So long ago.

But let me tell you about our big house. Of course, it didn't have built-in cupboards -- very few did at that time. There were no clothes closets, so where did we hang our clothes? Well, first of all each person only had one good dress and coat, and we hung those on nails pounded into the walls in the bedrooms. I don't remember having a dresser or chest of drawers until I was much older. I remember mother and dad had a large wooden box in their room where they kept clothing. Mother hung a pretty curtain over the opening.

We spent only two years in that big house across the drive. It was then time to move on again. In those days farmers often moved every few years. My dad rented that first farm, but now he bought his first farm. Again, it was a short move. Just a mile east down the road. I was so excited about moving and our new farm.

Moving and the New Home

I was three years old when my father bought his first farm a mile down the road from us. It was 1919 and the First World War was just ending. I use the word `road' loosely since in reality it was just a dirt path. My dad hoped the road would stay frozen until after moving day. You could sink out of sight in those Iowa roads in springtime. The frozen ground would quickly turn to a black, gooey mud at the first hint of spring.

Moving day on the farm was always on March 1. Rain or shine, cold or warm, snow or blizzard, every farmer who moved, did so on March 1. It was hard work, but it was a very exciting time. For me, it was my very first real memory.

On that memorable morning my mother awakened me and told me to eat my breakfast -- oatmeal, no doubt. I still eat it.

I could hear the voices of the men who had come to help us move. It was still dark outside. They began loading the real heavy stuff onto the wagons -- the stoves. Oh yes, before we go on let me tell you about the stoves.

The Range

All our cooking was done on a big heavy stove, called a range. Cobs, wood and sometimes coal were burnt in its firebox. We used the range for cooking and for heat. Usually, cobs and wood were used instead of coal. Money was scarce and coal was expensive. Cobs and wood were free.

We had tons of cobs when we shelled corn. Wood was obtained by trimming dead limbs from the trees in our grove. Every farm had a grove of trees, which in addition to supplying us with wood for the range, also added beauty to the farmstead and sheltered us from the cold northwest winds.

On moving day mother no doubt used cobs when she cooked breakfast. She would use them since they heated up fast and cooled down just as fast.

The Base Burner

In addition to our range we also had another stove, the base burner, which burned coal and was used to keep the house warm. A big bucket of coal was poured into a bin over the stove, which continually spilled coal into the firebox. Although the base burner was usually kept burning all night long, my mother let it go out on this night so it would be cool enough for the men to handle.

Oh yes, the stoves were always set just far enough from the wall so that on cold winter mornings, a little girl could crawl in behind and get dressed. It was so nice and warm back there.

Back to moving: As soon as breakfast was over, with a lot of grunting and groaning, the two monster stoves were loaded onto a wagon. They were also the first to be unloaded if we wanted any heat and supper that night. We always gave dinner to those that helped us move.

After the stoves were loaded, we loaded up the rest of the furniture on a hayrack. In the back of my mind I seem to remember that first moving day as very mild. Mother had told me I could ride in the hayrack with the furniture while my brother, Everett, drove the horses. Everett had taken two kitchen chairs and plopped them up at the front of the rack where we could sit. Could I be riding in such style? Everett was so grownup. I thought so. All that responsibility. He was 11 years old. I was 3. After all the furniture was loaded, I ran out to the rack and was met by a neighbor boy who said he was going to help the most beautiful girl in the world onto the rack. With that he picked me up and lifted me

upon the load of furniture. This was probably my first compliment. Enough of that.

I remember climbing over several pieces of furniture to reach the front, where I would sit on my chair besides Everett. Royalty, no less. I have always wondered how my parents could have permitted an eleven-year-old boy and his three-year-old little sister to drive a team of horses down the road pulling a hayrack loaded with furniture. Alone. Of course, it was only a mile and there were snow banks on either side of the road. At that time the roads had no ditches. In front of us my mother drove the team pulling the wagon with the two stoves. The two monsters. Could it be that they had given us the oldest, slowest team of horses they owned? It was more fun to think that we were driving the frisky ones.

The hogs and chickens were hauled in wagons pulled by horses. The chickens were placed in slatted crates and loaded on the wagons. The hogs were also taken on wagons. Then, after everything else was gone, the cows were driven on foot. The men carried prodding sticks just in case a cow had a different idea about where she was supposed to go. The hogs squealed, the cows bellowed, and the chickens cackled. Perhaps they did not like the goings on.

So here I sit, knitting my sweater and recalling those young childhood days in Curlew. Am I boring you? I'm sure you've got hundreds of stories of your own. I would love to hear them sometime. But let me continue. That moving day was probably my first real memory. So ...

... we all moved to our new farm, leaving behind the little house of my birth and the big house nearby. This new home would be the place where I would spend the rest of my childhood. I would have so many memories of this new home. Memories to last a lifetime.

Our new farm was a mile north and three-quarters of a mile west of Curlew on the north side of the road. The farm, although the buildings are mostly different, is still there. It was back from the road with a long lane of 125 yards. I know this for a fact since later when my brothers, Everett and Russell, were in high school, they measured it so they could practice the 100-yard dash. At first it didn't seem like home -- I still yearned for that first little house a mile down the road. I had used it for my own pretend home for so long.

Arriving at the New Home

When we arrived at our new home on that mild March day, the men herded the livestock to

their new homes and the stoves were quickly set up in the house. My brothers raced into the house and up the stairs with me right behind. There was one small room with a little window, which they quickly claimed for themselves as they raced through. Another small room with two windows was claimed by my older sisters, Pauline and Helen. Pauline and Helen were my oldest siblings with Russell and Everett next in line. I was the little squirt.

The upstairs also had one large bedroom, and that would be my parents' room. What about me? A small cot was set up in my parents' room and that would be my bed. It was nice to sleep so close to mom and dad. Safe and cozy.

After inspecting the upstairs, we all raced back downstairs to check out the rest of the house. There was a good-sized kitchen, a living room, and a nice bedroom. The kitchen was large enough for the range and a large table. In the living room we placed the davenport, a large library table, two rocking chairs, and a few assorted straight chairs. Oh yes, and the big base burner. So important. There was also a downstairs' bedroom that we used for guests. We also put a piano in that bedroom. (That was the only place left for it.)

Soon, heat was radiating from the big old base burner. Let me tell you some more about the stoves. The two monsters. I hope I am not boring you with stoves, but you must realize how important they were to us.

Monster Number 1

Monster Number 1 -- the range. The range was constructed of cast iron. It was as heavy as a battleship. There was a firebox at one end where cobs and wood were burnt. Since the hottest spot on the stove was right above the firebox, most of the cooking was done there. The area farther away from the firebox was used for slower cooking. Directly under the firebox was an ash pan which required emptying once a day.

And guess who emptied it? And heaven forbid if you let the ashes build up. You would find the pan almost impossible to remove since ashes would be crammed in there a mile high. And when you did manage to pull the pan out, the ashes would scatter all over the floor. What a mess! Next, in our range tour, at the opposite end from the firebox, was a reservoir, that held about five gallons of water. At least. This water was used to wash dishes or your hands and face. It stayed warm all the time. We kept it filled by carrying water from our ground well.

And finally, the last feature of the range was a nice big oven, where my mother baked the most delicious pies and cakes. The temperature of the oven was controlled by how many cobs you put in the firebox. A person learned how many cobs was needed to make a good pie. Later, when I did my own cooking, I made many angelfood and boiled raisin cakes on a range just like this. Nowadays, I use a microwave. It is a lot easier, but I'm not sure it has as many memories.

Monster Number 2

Although the range gave out enough heat to keep the house comfortable in the spring and fall, it was the huge base burner that was our primary source of heat when it got really cold. It sat majestically in the living room, and it was in front of this big old stove where we spent our long winter evenings. In the spring my father would take it apart and store it in the washhouse. When he brought it back into the house in the winter, the first thing that had to be done was wash the little isinglass windows in the door. Those little windows were washed with vinegar. I know this for a fact since it was my job to wash them. I always liked doing this, for they looked so shiny when I was done. You could see the fire dancing through these windows on a cold winter night. The stove was set off at each corner by ornate chrome decorations. In the

wintertime when the wind howled outside, I loved to sit in front of this huge warm old stove, probably reading a Bobbsie Twin book, and smelling cookies in the oven. Since the fire never died out at night, we would always warm ourselves in front of it in the early morning.

The bedrooms were freezing cold in those days. My mother always kept her flatiron warming on a mantel at the back of the base burner. Then, when I went to bed she would take the iron and wrap a blanket around it, and put it under my covers next to my feet. Years later, when I would come home from a date, my date would look on the base burner to see if my iron was waiting for me. He didn't want my feet to get cold, he'd tease me.

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Later, after my older sisters, Pauline and Helen, had graduated from school and left home, I moved into their room. It was nice to have my own bed. No more cot. The room had two small windows where a cool breeze came through in the summertime. When I went to bed, I often complained about the heat. My mother would come to my room and tell me to lie very still, and I would cool off. The first thing I knew it was morning and I wondered where the night had gone.

I must also tell you about our mattresses. The ones on my bed and my parents' bed were regular mattresses. Of course, they were not innerspring mattresses, but were sort of like an exercise mat you might find in a fitness gym. The mattress on Everett and Russell's bed was not a mattress at all -- but a husk mattress. If this style is unfamiliar to you, let me make one for you. Just begin by taking a large sack the size of a bed made of striped ticking, a fabric similar to denim. Then, stuff it with cornhusks. But, be sure not to get any cobs in with the cornhusks. It isn't much fun to have a cob stuck in your back all night long.

Oh yes, the house. I almost forgot. It's getting so easy to lose my train of thought.

What a Mess

A few weeks after we moved into our new house the snow melted and my mother began wondering what all that junk was in our front yard. Cans, bottles, paper, string, ashes, potato peelings and anything and everything you can imagine was there. "Good grief, did they just go to the door and throw?" she wondered. It wasn't long before it was cleaned up.

Our new house also had dozens of holes in the walls. It was by no means a new house. My

father covered the holes with pieces of cloth and pasted over them. The paste was made by mixing flour and water, and then adding water and boiling all this together. After cooling, it was ready to spread. We then painted the walls with a 'whitewash' substance, which we made by mixing calsomine, a colored powder, with water. After the walls were painted, they smelled so nice and clean. I think that house had a cleaning like it never had before. My mother was an immaculate housekeeper.

The Washhouse

Near the house was a small washhouse that housed a washing machine, a cream separator, and a small stove used to heat the washhouse in the winter. At the back of the washhouse was a small room where we kept the coal for Monster Number 2.

Washing day was always on Monday. Water from our well was used and lye was added to the water to soften it. After the lye was added and the water heated, a thick ugly scum, at least an inch thick, formed on top. This scum was then skimmed off with a small pan. All children were cautioned to stand back since lye water would cause nasty burns. As unpleasant as adding lye was, it was necessary if you wanted clean clothes.

If rainwater was available, it was not necessary to soften the water. The washing machine was powered by a gas engine. Later, better machines that had a small Maytag, or a Briggs and Stratton engine mounted below the washtub were introduced. What great machines they were. The freshly washed clothes were always hung outside on a clothesline, which was located in the backyard. In wintertime the clothes would freeze, stiff as a board. Fingers sometimes got stiff too.

The washhouse also had a cream separator that was used twice a day -- every time my dad milked the cows. My dad carried the pails of milk from the barn to the washhouse where he poured the milk into the separator. He then turned the crank on the separator and the milk flowed through a fast turning cylinder, which separated the cream from the milk. Often, I would bring a cup and catch some of the skim milk as it left the separator. Warm and very good. The cylinder that separated the cream from the milk spun very fast, and one day I decided to stop it. That wasn't a good idea. I received a large, painful blood blister on my finger. I never tried that again.

Between the house and the washhouse was a walkway. Or rather I should say, a crooked dirt path. Later, a cement walkway was put in. My mother told me the people who lived in

the house before us allowed a large thistle to grow beside the path. They thought it was pretty. A thistle is a noxious weed. The first thing any farmer does when he sees one is kill it. At least most farmers do. My father didn't liked thistles. One never grew there again.

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Behind our house stood an old rain barrel, which caught rainwater. Our home had no running water so this water was used to wash hair and take baths. Mosquitoes would lay their eggs in this barrel in the summertime, and there would be hundreds of little wrigglers swimming around in the water. You had to strain the water to get the little buggers out before you took your bath.

Mattresses,Telephones, etc

Let's go back into the house. I remember the time Everett and Russell finally got a new bed that had an honest to goodness mattress. I suspect that was the last time either of them ever slept on their cornhusk mattress. Anyway, I wanted that new bed so bad. My own bed had hard springs and was as solid as a ship. My brothers would push on the foot of their new bed with their feet until they eventually broke it. I told them they should have taken my bed. They certainly couldn't have broken it.

We kept warm during the winter months with double blankets. The blankets were twice as long as the bed and folded at the foot. You would lie on one end of the blanket and pull the other end over you.

We also made quilts, or comforters as they were often called. There were three layers to a comforter, the top layer was made from pieces of old coats and dresses, sewn together in a patchwork design, the middle layer was a wool batt, and the inner lining was made from flannel. It was real warm on a cold winter's night.

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A few years after we moved into our new house, telephone lines were installed on our road. My mother and I had gone to Illinois for my grandmother's funeral. We had traveled by train, and I remember when we returned, my mother called my dad from a nearby town and asked him to pick us up at the train station. It was the first time she had ever used a telephone. I remember how excited she was over this new invention.

Our telephone at home was mounted on the wall and to use it you turned a little crank on the side. Turning this crank alerted the local operator who answered, "Number Please". You

then gave her the number of the person you wanted to talk to, or if you didn't know the number, you would give her the person's name. She would then ring them. Every telephone had its own number. I will remember our number until the day I die. It was 7-26. I'll bet you remember yours too.

Of course, we all had `party lines,' which essentially meant that several families shared the same telephone -- or at least the same line. Our party line had ten parties. When the telephone rang for someone on the party line, the other telephones would also ring. That was the cue for everyone on the line to pick up the phone and “listen in.” Listening to other person's conversations was known as rubbering, and was a favorite pastime for many -- or I should say most. In order that people on the party line know which call was intended for them, a code of long and short rings was devised. The number one was one short ring, the number two was two short rings, and so on, until you go to five, which was one long ring. Then, six was two long rings; seven was three long rings, and so on. If there was an important meeting, or if someone was reporting a fire, then an alarm of several short rings was given. This was a cue to pick up the phone and listen to the message.

In those days my dad managed a cooperative group of farmers, called the Shipping Association, that helped farmers market their livestock. He was often asked by a farmer to determine if cattle and hogs were ready for market. One day he had just gone into Curlew when a farmer called him. The operator was sitting in the telephone office in town and was looking out the window when the man called. She told him she had just seen my dad go in the drugstore and she'd ring him there. This was the way of the small town.

Country School

I can't remember a time when I didn't want to go to school. Even when I was two and three years old, I wanted to visit country school with Everett and Russell. My sisters, Pauline and Helen, were much older so most of time was spent pestering my two brothers. Finally, when I was four years old, I got the chance to visit school. It was Valentine's Day, no less. Mother explained to me that I would not receive any valentines since none of the children knew I would be coming. I understood. I didn't expect any. Great day. When I arrived at the schoolhouse, there on the teacher's desk was a beautiful box all covered with pretty red paper and white hearts pasted all over it. It was beautiful. I had never seen anything like it. I do not remember much about that day except when the valentines were passed out; I received one from every student in the school -- and two and three from some of them.

The teacher had a book of wallpaper samples and the children made their valentines from this book. We never went to the store to buy valentines. We also made valentines from the wallpaper samples sent out by Sears and Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogs. On our

valentines we might write: Be My Valentine, or Be Mine. Popular verses were:

I love you little,
I love you big,
I love you like,
A little pig.

Roses are red,
Violets are blue,
Sugar is sweet,
And so are you.

One older girl gave me a valentine doll made from cardboard. The cardboard doll was wearing a pink dress. I thought it was beautiful even if the doll's legs got pulled off. I kept it for several years. All this was my first school experience. I could hardly wait to attend every day.

First Day of School

Finally, the time came when I would start school. The school was a country school, two miles north of Curlew. The year was 1921, and I was five years old and in the 1st grade. There was no kindergarten in our school, which was common in most rural schools. My brothers, Everett and Russell, were in the 6th and 8th grades, respectively, and also attended country school. The school had grades from one to eight with two and three pupils in each grade. A boy named Grady was my only classmate. I don't remember the total number of pupils in the school -- probably around ten.

Let me tell you about the schoolhouse. It was a typical box-like, one-room, country schoolhouse with a small entryway at the front and three large windows on each side. The windows had green shades that could be pulled down to keep out the sun. Inside on the front wall was a large blackboard, over which was written the alphabet in large cursive writing. Above this hung several rolls of maps and charts, which the teacher pulled down like window shades. There were maps of Iowa, the United States, and faraway places. There were even phonics charts that had all kinds of letters, words, and groups of letters printed on them.

The teacher's desk sat at the front of the room facing two long rows of desks. Each desk was large enough for two children to sit side by side. The desks came in a standard 'student' size and the littlest kids could barely see over the top of them. Later, our school bought some smaller ones, which made it nicer for the little kids. In front of the teacher's desk was a bench where pupils would sit and recite their lessons for the teacher.

And finally, above everything else was a picture of George Washington. There was also a picture of Abraham Lincoln on the back wall. I think all schools in those days had a

picture of George Washington in the front and Abraham Lincoln in the back.

The entryway of the school was the place where you hung your coats and put your dinner bucket. My dinner bucket consisted of a half-gallon syrup pail with a wire handle. Generally lunch was two sandwiches made with freshly baked bread, and an apple and maybe a cookie. Sometimes mother put a small jar of jelly in my pail to spread on my bread. I always liked bread and jelly.

Our teacher's name was Miss McCabe. I liked her very much. Miss McCabe would sometimes have us get out our ink pens and practice writing. This was called penmanship class, and I didn't like it at all. It was my worst subject. Each desk had a hole in the upper right-hand corner just big enough to hold your inkbottle. Most schoolwork was done with pencils, but in penmanship class we usually wrote with pen and ink. It was a real messy time. She asked us to draw `ovals,' and `ups and downs', and all sorts of strange-looking things. These were the standard figures to draw in penmanship in those days. I guess they were supposed to control our writing.

Ovals and Ups and Downs

Some kids could draw them nicely. I could not. Sometimes the ink would freeze and we'd have to put it next to the potbellied stove. I am thankful now for my word processor. Who would have ever thought. I only wish Miss McCabe could see it.

My Tin Cup

Oh yes, let me now tell you about my tin cup. On one side of the room was a small water cooler. The cooler was filled with fresh water every morning and every child had his own drinking cup. The cups all sat in a neat little circle around the cooler. My cup was a simple tin cup. Some kids had one of the newfangled ones that had multiple sections that closed like an accordion. These kids always bragged about their newfangled cups when they first got them. The newfangled cups would then start to leak after about a week. I told them they should get a simple tin cup like mine.

Sometimes Miss McCabe gave me the phonics pointer, and I would point to the phonics letters above the board while the other children gave the correct pronunciation. I was so proud. I, yes I, was the teacher. I could never understand why some of the others did not know these sounds. I did. Ego plus.

I have always credited Miss McCabe for my interest in reading. We had no reading books in our school so she had us cut out parts of a newspaper and underline the words we knew. This helped us with the words we knew and ask questions about those we didn't.

Fridays

Oh yes, on Friday afternoons Miss McCabe always had something special planned for us. Quite often it was singing. Since Miss McCabe wasn't a good singer, she asked Everett to lead in the singing. He had a nice singing voice. One day Everett was not in school, and she asked me to lead the singing. The boys all teased me, but I didn't care. It was big stuff. More ego. Quite often we sang patriotic songs, and of course during the Christmas season we sang Christmas carols.

Telling jokes and riddles was always popular with the kids at our school. I particularly liked the riddle:

As I was Going to St. Ives,
I met a man with seven wives,
Each wife had seven cats,
Each cat had seven kits,
Kits, cats, man and wives,
How many were going to St. Ives?

The other kids would try to count all these people and cats. The kid asking the riddle would stand by smugly knowing there was only one person going to St Ives, the others were, in fact leaving. I don't think any of us ever knew how many person and cats were actually leaving St. Ives.

Janitorial Duties

Our school had a janitor. The janitor also happened to be Miss McCabe. Miss McCabe was both our teacher and the janitor. On Fridays Miss McCabe would let us out early and the younger kids would clean the erasers. This was a lot of fun since it consisted of clapping them together releasing clouds of dust. Miss McCabe said we should go outside when we did this. She would also sprinkle a sweeping compound, which looked like sawdust soaked in oil (which it probably was), on the floor, and the older boys would sweep it up.

Also, after the last class was dismissed on Friday afternoon, we had to clean out all the old scrap paper from our desks and put our books back in neatly. They sure got messy during the week.

Christmas

Every year our school had a big Christmas program for our parents. We worked on this program for weeks. Children were given

recitations, which they spoke in front of the audience. I can still remember my first piece, which I memorized:

Although I'm very small,
And little I can do,
But I can wish you one and all,
A Merry Christmas too.

That would be about three-quarters of a century ago.

Later, when I was in 4th grade, I sang the song, Up on The Housetop. I memorized the words, which I still know by heart. They are

Up on a house top reindeer pause,
Out jumps good old Santa Clause.
Down through the chimney, with lots of toys,
All for the little ones, girls and boys.

Ho, ho, ho, who wouldn't go,
Ho, ho, ho, who wouldn't go,
Up on the house top click, click, click,
Down through the chimney with good St. Nick.

There are two more verses. I knew them all. I still do.

Horse Spot

During my school days my parents had a horse named Spot, which they brought to Iowa all the

way from Illinois. My older sisters, Helen and Pauline, always told me Spot was a frisky one. When they wanted to ride her, they had to go to the pasture and catch her. When Spot didn't want to be ridden, which was usually the case, she would chase my sisters.

When I was in 1st grade, Everett and Russell also attended country school. They would hitch Spot to our old surrey and drive her to school. The surrey had no top and no seats. Come to think of it, it only had a floor. Oh yes, did I tell you that Spot liked to run?

On cold days we boarded Spot in a barn near the school and she would spend the day eating hay. On warmer days we tied Spot to a post at the corner of the schoolyard. My brothers always picked up some water for the cooler for the kids to drink. It was hard to believe there was any water left in the pail with Spot always running flat out like she did.

The next year when I was in the 2nd grade, my oldest brother, Russell, began high school in Curlew, and Everett and I rode Spot bareback to country school. Sometimes we let a neighbor boy, Harold, ride with us. You've never ridden a horse until you've ridden three on a horse. I sat on Spot's shoulder blades, which were sharp; Everett sat in the middle, a soft spot; and Harold sat on Spot's rump,

another cushy spot. Did I tell you that Spot liked to run?

Everett loved the ride and so did I. Harold didn't care for it as much. When Harold didn't ride with us, Everett would kick Spot in her flanks. She'd then give us a warning buck, rear back, and away she'd go. What fun. Of course, I had my big brother's arms wrapped tightly around me. I was safe. I don't think Spot ever had a saddle on her in her twenty-seven years.

One day Everett, Harold, and I were riding home on Spot and the road was covered with ice. Spot was walking along very gingerly but slipped while walking up a small hill, causing Spot to fall and the three of us to tumble to the ground. None of the four of us was hurt, and Spot slowly got back on her feet. Everett then lifted me back on Spot and jumped back on himself. He then told Harold to do the same. Harold said he was going to walk the rest of the way home. Scaredy-cat, scaredy-cat, we teased him. But there was no way that kid was going to get back on that horse.

The Dredge Ditch

But let me tell you about the dredge ditch, or the `dredge' as we called it. A small drainage ditch ran across our farm and that of Harold's family and emptied into a dredge

ditch that ran along the road a couple miles north of Curlew. In the springtime Everett, neighbor Harold, and I would walk along this dredge on our way to and from school. One of the things Everett and Harold liked doing was drowning out gophers. They would fill their lunch buckets with water from the dredge, and pour it down one of the hundreds of gopher holes that lined the road. The poor little gopher would come out of his home all wet and unhappy. The boys thought this was fun. The gopher did not.

One day in very early spring, when Everett and Harold were drowning out gophers, Harold's little brother, Robbie, and I were playing along the dredge. Robbie was in the 1st grade at the time. I know it was early spring because there was still ice on the dredge. I didn't walk on it but Robbie did. I kept telling him it might break. He just laughed and said that it wouldn't. Then, *craaaaaaack* and through he went. I yelled and Everett and Harold came running and pulled him out. The water was about a foot deep. He wasn't hurt but he sure was cold. We hurried on home. I can still see him running ahead of me – crying at the top of his lungs and running as fast as his little legs could carry him.

At the corner a mile north of Curlew was a small cement bridge, and under this bridge the

water was always cool and crystal clear. The bridge also had a cement bottom at this spot over which the clear water flowed. We often stopped there and, using our dinner buckets, would scoop up minnows. There were millions of them down there. Of course we let them go. I've often wondered how much my mother worried about these activities.

Walking to School

By the time I was in the 4th grade both Russell and Everett were in high school in Curlew, and I went to country school alone. I didn't ride Spot since my dad thought it was too much work for me to board him every day.

Harold's little brother, Robbie, was now in school and Harold and Robbie would hitch one of their horses to a buggy and ride the buggy to school. Since Everett and I always gave Harold a ride on Spot, I thought it only fair they let me ride in their buggy. But I guess it wasn't an even trade since dad paid their family for the privilege of taking me to school every day. The only thing I had to do was walk the quarter of a mile to their farm.

On the first day this family explained to me that I wouldn't be riding in the front with Harold and Robbie, but behind the seats in a box of straw. This was the straw they use to feed their horse. So, I sat there dangling my

feet and legs out as we went down the road. I thought Spot could go a lot faster than that old buggy.

I didn't mind my accommodations, but didn't think it was what my dad had in mind. That night when I told mother about my ride, she was quite unhappy and went to see our neighbors. She told them that her little girl was to sit in the front with Harold and Robbie. The next day I didn't have to sit in the straw. So off we go to school again -- Harold and Robbie poking me in the ribs all the way -- hard. I wanted to get back in the feed box. From that day on I walked to country school.

Now I would walk by their farm when they rode in the buggy. They would often stop, however, and ask if I wanted a ride. Sometimes I would say yes, and sometimes I would say no. Sometimes, they would come out of their driveway real fast and head down the road like they hadn't seen me. I knew they'd seen me, but I didn't care. On the occasions when I did ride in their buggy, I just climbed into the straw box behind the seats and let my feet dangle. Sure did not want to feel those elbows any more.

In the winter I had to face that cold north wind. Sometimes I would stand behind a big

old cottonwood that stood along the side of the road. Of course I wore a heavy coat and cap, scarf, and long-legged underwear, but it was still cold. But I didn't wear slacks as girls today do; I wore a wool skirt, as did all the other girls. But soon I had to face that north wind again and get back on that road. Oh how nice it was when I reached the schoolhouse and warmed my hands over the potbellied stove. So warm.

Outhouses and End of School Activities

Every country school had two outhouses, or privies as the boys called them. There was one for the girls and one for the boys. They were always located at opposite corners in the back of the schoolyard. Students were only supposed to use the outhouses during recess or during the noon hour. At the end of recess when the teacher rang the bell, some of the boys would head for the outhouse to avoid going back into the classroom. Sometimes the Miss McCabe would have to go after them. How they hated to come in.

You see now, the sweater is starting to take shape. I hope my friend likes it. She always did like wool sweaters. So, where was I? Oh yes, country school. So long ago. If you drive by my old school now you will see only a cornfield. Just go two miles north of Curlew and look on the right-hand side of the road.

The dredge is gone too, of course. So much for the past. Let's see now, I was telling you about ...

The main activity at the end of the school year was the annual festival at Center School, the main regional school in our township. There were all kinds of races including sack races, three-legged races, and relays. In a sack race a burlap bag was pulled on over the feet and legs of the child. It was then tied around the waist. When the teacher called "GO!" all the kids ran. Have you ever tried to run in a sack? If you aren't very careful you will be on the ground and then just try to get up. In the three-legged race two children run together with two of their legs tied together so they really have three legs. If you got into the right rhythm, you could run very fast, but if you didn't you'd fall down. Most fall down.

The final activity of the day was the beautiful May Pole dance. I guess it was called 'wrapping' the May Pole. I thought it was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. A large pole was set in the ground. It seemed to me that it was very tall, but I suppose it may have been eight-feet tall. On the top of this pole was fastened strips of colored crepe paper. The big kids, probably seventh and eighth graders, held onto the ends of these

streamers. Then to music they skipped in and out, weaving this paper as they went around the May Pole. Round and round they went until they had all the paper wrapped around the pole. I thought it was so beautiful and yearned to do this when I was old enough -- in eighth grade.

This was never to be, however, for the very next year my dad decided to send my to town school in Curlew.

Town School

When I was in the 5th grade, I started attending town school in Curlew. Both Everett and Russell continued country school through the 8th grade, but dad thought I would receive a better education in town school. This was the year 1925 and right in the thick of the Roaring Twenties. Town school was a lot different than the one-room country school two miles north of town. For one thing country school had grades one through eight in a single room with a single teacher. But in town school I was in a classroom with only three grades; grades four, five, and six. I had nine classmates in those three grades. My teacher was also a close friend of my sisters, Pauline and Helen. Her name was Miss Johnson.

In Curlew the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades were called primary grades and were in one room. The 4th, 5th, and 6th grades were in another room and were called intermediate grades. Being in the 5th grade I was in the intermediate grades. Upstairs, in a larger room was junior high, which consisted of the 7th and 8th grades; and the first two years of high school, which were the 9th and 10th grades. If you wanted to finish high school you had to go to a larger school, like Mallard. Ayrshire, or Emmetsburg.

Recesses in town school were more structured than they were in country school. Much of the time we played `work-up' softball. The school also had a merry-go-round and a teeter-totter. I liked the teeter-totter best. Sometimes we went up-and-down like any good kid, but it was fun to `bounce' each other. To do this you would jerk the board up real fast when it hit the ground. The kid at the top would get a big thrill - maybe not appreciated. We also discovered it was great fun if the kid being bounced would stand up. We did that until some girl fell off and went in and told the teacher. We called her a spoilsport. That ended all that.

In the 5th grade I studied arithmetic, reading, grammar, physiology, geography, and spelling. I still remember

It's I before E except after C

Must not forget history. Dry. The favorite rhyme to put on the flyleaf of the history books was

In case of flood stand on me -- I'm dry

Walking the Tracks

At that time Curlew didn't have a schoolbus like the bigger schools. But, we only lived a

mile and three-quarters from school, and I enjoyed walking along in the early springtime, listening to the birds sing. The telephone lines would be lined thick with meadow larks, and I loved to hear them sing what sounded like, John Greenleaf Whittier, as I walked along.

Often, I'd walk across the field from our house and meet my good friend, Gladys, at the railroad tracks that between our farms. We would then walk the mile or so down the tracks to school. We would pick wild flowers as we walked along. We would sometimes walk the rails. Right before getting to Curlew we had to cross a railway trestle. Not too big. It was about five feet high. I used to tell my kids about the dangerous trestle I always had to cross on my way to school. Then, one time they saw it. Did they laugh.

I only have the arms to do and I'll be done. It should keep her warm on these cold days. You know, forty years after Gladys and I walked that old track, I was married and living near Ayrshire and we lived just down the road from that same track. Then, a few years ago in the early 1980s they tore the tracks down and turned it into a cornfield. I just happened to be crossing the tracks in my car when the last freight train made its run. It sure brought back memories. I'm probably

telling you a lot more than you want to hear. Oh, now where were we? Oh yes, Gladys and I were on our way to school. But I really should tell you about the bad water Gladys and I once drank. One day ...

Tainted Water

... when the snow was melting and there were large ponds of melted snow along the tracks, Gladys and I decided to fill our lunch buckets with some of this clear, cold water and have a nice drink. Well, as it happened the next day in hygiene class, Miss Johnson, told us about the dreaded disease, Typhoid Fever. "Never, never," she said, "Drink any water from along the side of the road." We thought we would be goners within the week. Well, we both lived and in a few days the entire incident was forgotten.

You know, I never told that story to anyone, but a few years ago, I just happened to run into my childhood friend, Gladys. During our trip down memory lane, I asked her if she remembered that incident and she said she remembered it well. But she said she never told it to anyone. It was the same with me. It was our little special bond that went back over half a century. Now where were we ....

I especially enjoyed the stories in our reading books. Fairy tales were popular.

After all, aren't there fairies? Aesop's Fables were often read. One of Aesop's Fables told of a fox who kept jumping for a large bunch of grapes. When he couldn't get them, he left, saying "Oh well, I didn't want them anyway. "I think the title was, Sour Grapes. Each story had a moral of some kind.

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On Friday afternoons we had singing class. An older girl from upstairs came down and played the piano for us. How I envied her. I so much wanted to play the piano like her. Sometimes we asked one another riddles like we did in country school. Those were fun.

On cold and stormy days we were allowed to stay inside during recess. The boys never did. They said only sissies stayed inside. For us sissies Miss Johnson would lower a map and one kid would be chosen to be `it'. This kid would then pick a secret place on the map and the other kids would try to guess it by asking questions. The kid that was `it' would give clues that would help find the place. I still remember the good times we had in that old Curlew schoolhouse. I think I managed to learn some geography in the process. I still know all the counties in our state.

The Story of Sakajawea

One day the county superintendent came to visit our classroom. While she was there, she told us the story of Sakajawea, the Indian girl who led the Lewis and Clark expedition. Her name meant `bird woman'. For the first time I realized that history was interesting. Now, many of my favorite books are historical novels. So much of the time was spent learning dates and names, which didn't tell us the entire story. This woman made history come alive.

Junior High School

Two years later, I moved upstairs to junior high. Really big stuff. During the summer before 7th grade, a new addition was added to the Curlew school. I guess that would be the year 1927, the year Babe Ruth hit 60 home runs for a baseball team back east. In Curlew, junior and senior classes were now being taught for the first time, allowing students to obtain a high school degree in Curlew. A big gymnasium was also added to the school along with locker rooms, an assembly hall, and two new high school classrooms. This meant, more importantly to me, that junior high had its own homeroom.

There was no more recess since we were big kids now. We did a great deal of memorizing and in English class we read poetry. Poems such as The Village Blacksmith and Crossing

the Bar were popular. We all memorized these poems. Sometimes when I read one of these poems, I think back to my days at the Curlew school and appreciate the many things I learned.

In those days students graduating from junior high school in Palo Alto County had to take competency examinations. With trembling bodies we all took it. Our teacher, Miss Helvig, told us that any student that passed every test on the first try would get a fountain pen. We had two chances to take each test. I guess we were all smart since we all passed it on the first time. And we all received a pretty yellow pen from her.

High School

I entered the 9th grade and high school in the fall of 1929, I felt so grown up. You might remember 1929 too. It was the year there were some problems in the stock market. But for us freshman and sophomores at Curlew High, we were more concerned about our new desks. Each pupil had his own desk in the main assembly. There were about forty of us in the main assembly and our new desks could be adjusted to fit each student. The tops were hinged so that they opened up and you could see the entire contents. Later, we realized the crash of the stock market and the Depression was a lot more important than new desks.

We were taught by three teachers. Some of the subjects were taught every other year with freshmen and sophomores being taught together, and juniors and seniors together.

Girls took home economics in their freshman and sophomore years. During the first year we studied cooking, and the second year we learned to sew. The boys all took manual training, which nowadays is called shop. Other subjects were algebra, geometry, English 1 and 2, history, physics, economics, business arithmetic, bookkeeping, science, and others I do not remember.

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One day the principal asked me to go down to the primary room and keep the children occupied until school was out. The regular teacher was sick and had gone home. I was very nervous, when I saw all those little eyes staring at me. Suddenly, a little blond girl raised her hand, and said, "Dorothy, I have to vomit". I quickly took her to the girl's room. She didn't. Then she did. Then she didn't. I finally gave her a drink of water and took her back to the classroom. I was sure glad when the bell rang and school was over for the day.

Basketball

In high school I played basketball. Relax, it wasn't the rough and tumble game it is now. It was much slower and us girls were considered dainty ladies. There were six players on a team. Two forwards, two guards, and two centers. One center was called the jumping center the other was called the side center. The jumping center was usually a tall girl, and the side center was usually short. I was a side center. The purpose of the side center was to throw the ball from the guards to the forwards or sometimes the other way. I never got to score any points. Only the forwards got to score points.

Our basketball suits were not as stylish as they are now. The blouse was a middy-type made of a white cotton fabric, and the sleeves came down to the elbows or below. The pants were big full bloomers, which bloused out down to the knees. Knee-high socks and tennis shoes completed the outfit. By the time I was a junior, new suits were purchased. These had a wool jersey with tighter shorts. Some of the parents said that they wouldn't let their daughters wear these scandalous clothes. After they saw them, they changed their minds. They were purple and gold and were very modest indeed.

Basketball practice was held after school hours during the winter months, and it would be dark by the time we finished practice. On the way home Gladys and I would walk the tracks in the dark. I remember one night I said goodbye to Gladys and was walking across the pasture toward our house. It was pitch black and there were several horses in the field. The only thing I could see was the kitchen light of our house ahead in the distance. I was scared that I would run into a horse or step on one while I walked. I sure didn't want to scare a sleeping horse. About half way across the field I heard a whinny. Nearby. I started singing out loud so they would know I was coming. I was relieved when I got to the fence. Soon I was walking up the long lane anticipating my mother's home cooked supper.

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I am not a morning person. Each schoolday morning a bell rang twenty minutes before classes were to begin at 9 o'clock sharp. This was called the Early Bell. Another bell rang five minutes before nine, and a Tardy Bell rang exactly at 9 o'clock. I was never tardy, but many times I crossed the assembly hall just as the tardy bell sounded.

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At the end of every six weeks we had Six-Week Exams. If our grade average was above 90, we were excused from taking them. Mine generally passed this test, but if your grade in Deportment was below 90, you would have to take all the tests. Because of this, I once had to take all the tests. I don't remember what I did that was so bad, but I guess I giggled, whispered, or got caught passing notes.

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Every year both the junior and senior classes put on a class play. Since there were so few students, both juniors and seniors acted in both of them. One year I had a part of a French maid. I don't remember any other parts. The money we received from the Junior Class Play was always used for the Junior-Senior Banquet, which the juniors sponsored. This was during the Depression years, and we had put the money in a bank for safekeeping. Well, a few weeks later President Roosevelt declared a bank holiday to stop the `run' on the banks, and we couldn't get our money out.

We were heartsick. Our mothers told us not to worry. They prepared a big banquet for us from home-canned food from our cellars. We had a great time. A few pennies were found to

buy some crepe decorations, which we put here and there. It was so pretty.

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Time marched on and soon it was graduation time. This was the spring of 1933. On the Sunday evening before graduation we had baccalaureate exercises, which was a church service honoring the graduates, and wishing them well. In midweek a class night was held where honors were handed out.

On graduation night I was so excited I was to give the salutatory address. I remember how nervous and, yes, proud I was as I gave this important speech. The most important of my young life.

I have many memories of my high school days at Curlew and most of them are good. Life was easy then, even during the Depression years. There was very little peer pressure and we could just be ourselves. So out we went after graduation into the real world.

Childhood Adventures

I will back up a bit now and tell you some of the adventures I had during the first years of my life. I hate to start with the saddest memory of my childhood, but I would like to say a couple of words about my younger sister, Margery. One morning when I was five years old, my father came upstairs and told me he had a big surprise for me. So down the stairs we go into the bedroom where my mother was laying in bed -- and there in her arms was a tiny baby.

My sister. I couldn't believe my eyes. We named her Margery Arlene. She was such a pretty little girl. She never was very strong and only stayed with us four years. I remember the day she died. Both she and I were sick. The doctor was called, who in those days made house calls. I was lying across the foot of the bed, and Margery was in the bed under the covers. I remember the doctor saying that she was dying. He then pulled the covers over her, came to the foot of the bed, picked me up and carried me to the couch in the living room. I remember the sad expression my mother had on her face. They hung a big pink ribbon on the door. This was the custom in those days. A white ribbon was hung on the death of an adult and a pink ribbon for a child. I do

not remember Margery very well. She talked hardly at all. I do remember pulling her around the yard in Everett's small wagon. It doesn't seem to me that she ever cried and was always happy.

Not all things were sad on our farm. I often played with my brother, Everett, who was just a few years older than myself. One of the things we did was play auctioneer and buyer. He was the auctioneer and he stood on the roof of the chicken house, and myself being the buyer, stood on the ground. He didn't actually sell anything, and I didn't actually buy anything. But he waved his arms and so did I. It was all pretend. It was a lot of fun.

Bees and the Morning Sun Incident

I also had a basketball. Shooting baskets by myself became very boring. I would beg Everett and Russell to play catch with me. After a great deal of begging, they would eventually agree. They would play keep away, which consisted of them throwing the ball back and forth to each other, but not to me. After a while I would cry and then they'd toss the ball back to me and walk away, leaving me to play by myself and starting the cycle all over.

One of the most pleasant memories of my childhood was my playhouse, which I had for a

long time. In the back of the lot under four trees I build my own home. Nothing too elaborate. I pounded some stakes in the ground and strung some string between them to create the rooms. I put some boxes here and there for tables, chairs and cupboards. For dishes I found some pretty broken pieces in a nearby junk pile. Near my playhouse was dad's beehives. Sometimes I would go over and watch the bees to see what they were doing. I guess they were making honey. Sometimes I would take my doll with me. She was my companion and friend. Mother would scream at me when she saw me there. I never did get stung.

Every Christmas the Baptist church in Curlew presented a special Christmas pageant. Once I recited a piece while sitting in a small chair holding my doll. I have no idea what the recitation was, but I remember the pride I felt when I said it. We would practice in the afternoon after classes were dismissed.

Once when us kids were in the church practicing a Christmas program, we were all standing around the woodstove trying to keep warm. One girl had a brand new blue coat and she stood too close to the fire. Well, we started to smell something and sure enough, when she turned around, she had a huge scorch mark all the way across the back of her coat. Well, the brand of the stove was `Morning Sun'

and she had the name, Morning Sun, branded across the back of the coat. Well, money was scarce and that girl walked around for several winters with the Morning Sun label engraved across her back. I bet she remembers that coat to this day.

Like all children, I believed in Santa Clause and the Easter Bunny. In the corner of our yard there was a small hole that I always lined with grass intending for the Easter Bunny to leave his eggs. I was never disappointed. I remember one Easter especially, when I was a little older. By this time I woke up to the facts of life, but since I was the baby in the family, I was expected by my brothers and sisters to act like a two-year old. So, to fulfill their fantasies, I prepared my usual nest of grass for the Easter Bunny. Anyway, I reasoned, I might still get some candy eggs. Well, dad went into Curlew that night but forgot to get any eggs. So when I went out to get my eggs the next morning, the entire family was watching out the windows. I looked and looked and looked all over the yard for those eggs. They thought it was so funny. They have always insisted I was nearly grown when this happened. That's their story.

A Santa Memory

I once had a nice rag doll my mother made for me, but I wanted a ma-ma doll so badly. She told me I could have one when I was seven. By that time I would be old enough to take care of it, she told me. Well, anyway I would be seven in just a few months so I wondered if I might receive one for Christmas. I sure hoped so. One day right before Christmas, either Pauline or Helen, I don't remember which, asked me to go upstairs and get something for her. When I went into their room, I noticed a big box under the dresser, which I hadn't seen before. Naturally, I opened it and before my eyes was a beautiful doll, just like I wanted. Only her nose was broken off. I picked her up, hugged her, and said, "I don't care if your nose is broken off, I will love you just the same". I then carefully put her back in the box and went back downstairs.

Christmas morning arrived. I hurried downstairs to receive my doll. There she sat on my little red chair. She was beautiful just as I knew she was -- only she had a new nose. Not a broken one. I stopped dead in my tracks and said, "I thought her nose was broken off". Well, the jig was up. The whole family thought I'd been snooping around the house for my doll. I hadn't. It was many years until I heard the last of that.

I learned later that my mother had ordered the doll from a mail-order catalog. It had come the very morning I found it. Shortly after dinner my dad had mailed it back, and it was replaced with a new doll.

Horse and Buggy Days

In those days most people didn't have cars, and if they did they surely didn't drive them in the wintertime or in bad weather. For one thing none of the cars had heaters. To go to the school or church programs we drove a team of horses hitched to a buggy or sled. In the wintertime dad drove a team hitched to a bobsled. In the afternoon before we left he would put fresh straw in the sled and mother would put some rocks in the oven to warm. Then, shortly before we left dad would put the rocks under the straw. We would then wrap ourselves up in heavy horse blankets. Very warm. As we rode along you could see the stars shining brightly overhead. The crunch of the runners on the frozen snow and the jingle of the sleigh bells made for a cozy winter night. I can still see dad in his horse-hide coat, standing at the front of the bobsled, driving the horses. After arriving at our destination, we would take off the blankets and put them on the horses. Horses get cold too, you know. They were put back on us for the ride home.

Puppies and Ornery Sows

When I was in the 4th grade still in country school, Miss McCabe told me they had some baby puppies at her house. She asked me if I would like to have one. Would I? My parents gave their permission so Everett and I hitched Spot to the buggy and away we went. He was so little and so cute. I held him all the way home. He was so tiny that when I went upstairs, he tried to follow me, but couldn't get up the first step. About that time I was reading a story in my reading book about a boy named Billy Bob. I had liked this story so much that Miss McCabe suggested I name the puppy, Billy Bob. This I did. Eventually he became just Bob. I had, and loved him, for many years. He grew up to be a large dog and very protective of me. There were a few men Bob didn't like. One of the persons Bob didn't like was the man who picked up our cream and took it to the dairy. We tried to put Bob in the house whenever the cream man came, but sometimes we were busy doing other things. The man would park his truck as close to the cooling tank as he could and then make a beeline as fast as he could. Sometimes he made it to the tank and sometimes he didn't. It was actually kind of funny, although I don't think it was ever funny for the cream man.

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Both my brothers, Everett and Russell, would help my dad in the fields. They would plow, plant, and cultivate in the spring, and harvest crops in the summer and fall. It was my job to carry cold drinks to them. My mother would fill a two-quart fruit jar with cold water from the well and wrap it in a newspaper. I would then run to the field where the men were waiting for a cool drink. I usually went barefoot. That ground was hot in the summer. I also remember walking in the oat stubble. Very hot and sharp.

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Sometimes a sow would be particularly protective of her piglets. We had one sow like this. Mother and I had gone to the corncrib to get some cobs and when we were coming back to the house, we heard a big noise. Turning around we saw this old sow coming at us on a dead run.

Luckily there was a wagon nearby, and we managed to reach it before the sow. The sow snorted but eventually became bored and left. We hurried down from the wagon and went into the house. Later, we went back and picked up the cobs that were scattered all over the ground.

Sometimes we had friends or relatives to our house for Sunday dinner. On these days I would run to the barn for our special rooster catcher. This was a long piece of wire with a U-shaped end. This wire was made especially for catching roosters for the frying pan. After going to the chicken house and looking over the flock, my dad would pick out a nice fat rooster. He would then throw some corn on the ground and while the rooster was busy gobbling up the corn, my dad and I would creep around and hook the rooster catcher around one of the rooster's legs.

The next job was to kill and dress the rooster. It was grizzly business. We kept an old broomstick in the barn for just this purpose. My dad would hold the rooster by the legs and put the broomstick over his neck. Then, standing on each end of the broomstick, dad would give a quick and mighty tug and off came the head. After the rooster stopped flopping around, mother would plunge it up and down in scolding water, which allowed the feathers to be plucked easily. I often helped with the chicken plucking. I was a real good chicken plucker. After plucking, mother would then take the carcass to the house where she would cut it up into pieces. Often, Pauline and Helen would help in this work. Later, so would I. My mother always cut up pieces of drumstick, thigh, breast, wishbone, and the

back, which was her favorite piece. She always put the pieces in cold water and soaked them for an hour or so. She then rolled the pieces in flour and fried then in hot lard. I had never tasted anything so good.

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Maybe, I should tell you about the wishbone. You rarely find them in grocery stores today. This is the curved bone located at the top of the breast. After the meat is eaten, two people, usually children, each take an end of this bone and make a wish. The children then pull until it breaks. The one that has the larger piece of bone gets his wish granted. We never had chicken without two of us carrying out this ritual. Every one enjoyed a good chicken dinner. Except the rooster, I guess.

Pies and Other Goodies

Every day during the summer when the men were working in the fields we had pie for dinner. Of course, we also had potatoes, gravy, a vegetable, salad, bread, but pie was the common daily fare. The vegetables were picked from our garden. Mother also grew many kinds of flowers and even the men remarked how pretty they were. We also had a huge strawberry bed, a plum thicket, a long grape arbor, and an apple orchard. I can still see

the hundreds of jars of canned preserves of all kinds setting on the shelves in the cellar. During strawberry picking time, I would always find a dish of strawberries on the table for breakfast. I used to beg my mother to let me help in the picking. I never got to. She was worried about how many strawberries I would step on.

We also had a long row of raspberries bushes. One day mother and I were picking some for a pie and I was eating as many as I put in my pan. After we were through picking and were walking to the house, I turned around and saw a huge bull snake sunning himself right where we had been picking.

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The evening meal was always called supper. It usually consisted of leftovers from dinner, which was the noon meal. Eggs were served a great deal at this time. This was before we ever heard of cholesterol. If there wasn't enough food for the hungry brood, we finished with bread and milk. Many a winter supper was cornmeal mush in milk. Fried mush was a favorite too.

Bread was home baked and a dry yeast, called 'yeast foam,' was used. Mother would begin by mixing a yeast and water mixture to a little

flour. She would set this starter on a warm part of the stove and let it stand overnight. In the morning more flour was added and kneaded until she had a good elastic dough. She would then let it rise, and then she'd knead it down, and finally let it rise again. She generally made about four large loaves of bread a week. She always used water in which she boiled potatoes for the liquid when she baked bread. She claimed the bread was moister this way.

In addition to making bread, mother would also make cinnamon rolls. Cinnamon rolls were often in the oven about the time I came home from school. I can still smell that great aroma as I came up that long lane.

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I remember one morning after I got up, I came downstairs to give mother a birthday spanking. It was her 40th birthday. She was kneading bread. I crept up behind her and gave her a couple of good whacks. I thought I would never get to the end of that spanking. Forty, that's a lot, I thought. I was four years old. She was sure old, I thought.

Speaking of age, I remember one year at our family reunion, I overheard an aunt say she could remember back when she thought forty was

old. "But," she said, "I'm forty now and I don't think I'm old." At the time I thought, yes, you are old. Thank goodness I kept my mouth shut.

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I mentioned my first bed was a cot in my parent's room. Since Pauline and Helen were twelve and fourteen years older than myself, they were married when I was quite young. At that time their room became my room. You would think having my very own bedroom would make me happy, but I was lonesome. On those nights when my dad stayed up late reading, I would go climb in bed with my mother. When dad came to bed he would pick me up and carry me to my own bedroom. He always told me not to do this but of course I didn't listen. Finally, one night when he was carrying me to my bed he gave me a little pop on my backside to let me know he meant it. This was my one and only spanking. A one-spank spanking.

You see, I'm making some progress with this sweater. I hope you don't mind listening to an old fogey trying to relive her past. Here, why don't you have some more coffee? You know, growing up during the Depression wasn't all that bad. When I see all the problems the kids today have, I think we

had it pretty good. I remember the time ....

Today is Easter Sunday and it is raining. Old timers used to say that if it rains on Easter Sunday, it will rain for six weeks. I remember how I hated rain. I would stand with my nose against the window looking out at the falling drops. Mother would say

Rain, rain, go away,
Little Dorothy wants to play.

Later when the rain stopped, how I enjoyed wading in the mud. It squished in between my toes so delightfully.

I always liked to play "house." You can play it by yourself – all you need are mud pies. What fun. Just take some dirt and mix it with water. Good mud. Then find a lid from an old jar and press the mud into the lid. Then bang the lids and the pies pop right out. Good pies. Sit them in the sun and they will be done in a few hours. You can even put a leaf on them for decoration. After they are done you can serve them with tea in your playhouse.

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At night after the dishes were washed and put away, we generally read. I especially liked

The Bobbsey Twins, although Little Women was my all-time favorite. I liked all of the Louisa M. Alcott books. Many times I would answer my mother with, wait until I finish the page, when she asked me to set the table.

Chores

Children in those days always helped with the chores. There was no arguing. You just did them. One of my chores was to feed the young calves. I liked this job. I would take a half pail of fresh milk and give it to each calf. Sometimes they would bunt the pail with their heads and cause me to spill the milk. When they saw you coming, they would come running fast. The calves were kept in a large, grassy lot.

Feeding the chickens was another chore that I liked. I liked watching the tiny fluffy chicks. Mother also raised ducks. She would often set duck eggs under an old hen chicken. It was especially fun to watch the mother hen with her brood of ducklings. After a rain, the little ducks would swim in the water puddles that covered the ground. The old mother hem would run along beside the pond clucking, trying to get her babies to come out. She just could not understand how her babies could enjoy the water so much.

Every evening the eggs had to be gathered. Sometimes a hen would be sitting on a nest and you had to reach under her to remove the eggs. Some hens didn't like this and would peck. I didn't like this either. Chickens were allowed the run of the farm. Well, almost the run of the farm. We had a large fence around our yard to keep the chickens from scratching up my mother's flower garden. If a chicken happened to get in the yard, it was my job to chase it out. Other than that the chickens could go about anywhere they pleased. Of course, they wouldn't get their daily ration of corn if they wondered off to far, so I guess they had some incentive to stay close to home. Some of the hens would find a secret place to lay their eggs. Maybe it would be in the hayloft of the barn or even in the grove. If we couldn't find her nest, she would lay an egg a day until the nest was full. Three weeks later we would see her proudly leading a dozen baby chicks.

Like I said, I always liked doing chores around the house. Well, I liked doing almost all the chores around the house. There was one chore I didn't like at all. We kept cobs for the range in a small shed near the barn and carried them to the house as needed. Sometimes, however, we ran out of cobs in the shed and we had to get our cobs from the pig lot. Dirty. Awful. I won't describe those

smelly things, but it was a nasty job indeed. I was always glad when we shelled corn so we had some nice clean cobs.

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Dad sometimes let me `have' a couple of hens that were in the process of hatching eggs. He let me keep the money I got when the chicks were sold. I would put the hens and their newly hatched chicks in a small chicken coop in a grassy field next to the road. It was fun to watch the tiny chicks grow.

I used some of the money from the sale of my chicks to buy Christmas gifts. One time my mother and I were shopping in Emmetsburg when she saw a picture she liked. Later, that day when she wasn't around, I bought it for her. The clerk wrapped it nicely so I didn't bother to rewrap when I got home. When we exchanged gifts on Christmas day, mother opened the package and lo and behold, there across the front of the picture in big black numbers was the price. I was so embarrassed.

A Real Cob Story

Speaking of cobs again, let me tell you a little story. My dad smoked a pipe, and it was his habit to knock the ashes in the cob basket next to the range. Of course, he never did this when the ashes were hot. Mother

always told him he was going to burn the house down someday. "Stop worrying", we all heard dad say a million times. Well, as you might have guessed, one day when my mother went to the washhouse to do her washing, my dad knocked some ashes into the cob basket. He then went outside to do his morning chores. Of course the cobs caught on fire. Luckily, my mother returned to the house in the nick of time and put them out. She may have had to clean up the mess, but that's the last time she ever heard dad say, "Stop worrying".

Dolls and the Little Match Girl

One of my favorite activities was playing with paper dolls. Paper-doll books were expensive, so I generally cut out pictures of little girls from the Sears and Roebuck catalog. I would cut out pretty dresses for the paper dolls. Sometimes they fit and sometimes they didn't I spent hours doing this.

I also made dolls out of hollyhocks. Mother had a long row of these flowers along the side of the garden. The flower was shaped like the skirt of a large ballroom dress so you simply took the flower and stuck a hollyhock bud on top of it to give the ballerina a head. If you've never made one, believe it or not, they're kind of pretty. My best friends, Gladys or Bonnie, would sometimes come over and we would make these hollyhock dolls by the

dozens. We would have entire families of these doll. They were very colorful. I never did know what mother thought of us picking her hollyhocks.

I always wanted to play the piano. I could never remember a time when we didn't own a piano. Mom and dad bought a piano so Pauline and Helen could play it - neither of whom wanted to. So, the piano just sat there collecting dust. I begged mom and dad for lessons, and they finally agreed during the summer after my 5th grade. Although I only took lessons for four summers, I did learn to play. My only regret was that I didn't take more lessons and become a good musician.

The piano sat in the downstairs bedroom and during the winter the keys were as cold as ice. (That was one of the reasons I didn't take lessons.) Mother also said I should spend my time doing my schoolwork. Still, I would often go into the cold room and play. Those keys were pretty cold.

One of the dumbest things I ever did had to do with a small bucket of cobs and a can of kerosene. I guess you know what I did. I poured some kerosene on some cobs and threw on a lighted match. That isn't a good idea. I was six years old. I'll tell you one thing though, the flame that shot out of those cobs

was taller than a six-year old girl. I remember thinking that mother shouldn't know since she would probably be upset. I walked slowly around the house where she was doing some yard work. I tried to act as though nothing had happened. She took one look at me and raced around the house and put out the fire. I guess my singed eyebrows and lashes gave me away. That was the last time I ever played with matches.

Movies and Penny Candy

Every Saturday night during the summer months Curlew had free movies. In a vacant lot between the bank and the hardware store, planks were laid across some posts. Those were the seats. The side of the bank was painted white to act as the movie screen. Everyone for miles around came to watch some of the great stars of the mid-1920s. First, a comedy was shown -- then the feature movie. Such a wonderful time! I would walk around with my friends, Bonnie and Gladys, waiting for the movie to start. The film reel had to be changed several times during the movie and often the film broke. But it great entertainment.

They were silent movies of course. This was before "talkies" came into being in the late 1920s. The younger children sat on the grass in front of the plank seats. Sometimes we

threw grass at each other instead of watching the pictures. I usually had to sit with my mother. Maybe she didn't like me throwing grass. As we grew older, we sat in the back with our favorite beau. We didn't throw any more grass, but we still didn't watch the movies.

On these Saturday nights I always had five cents to spend. Gladys, Bonnie and I would go to Easton's Drug Store where we debated over what to buy. There were penny candies. There were huge ice cream cones. There were candy bars. The candy bars were so big you couldn't eat them all at once. Many times two of us would divide one. In that way we could buy some penny candy too. Of course, if you bought an ice cream cone you could lick it slowly and savor each lick - or maybe eat it fast and feel that cold going down your throat. You could buy a lot for a nickel back then.

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Oh yes, my mind is slipping again. There is one thing I completely forgot to mention. It was my favorite activity. It was swinging. My dad would take the rope that came on the new rolls of binder twine and make a swing in the big old box elder tree that stood next to the house. It was not a tire swing or a sack swing like some of the other kids had, but a

swing with two ropes and a board between them. I spent hours in this swing. I still remember the poem :

How do you like to go up in the air?
Up in the air so blue,
Oh, I do think it's the wonderfulest thing,
Ever a child can do.

One time Everett and Russell hung a sack swing from a very high branch of another tree. This swing was great fun too.

Herding Cows and Scrapple

When I was about ten years old, dad always let our cows graze along the road in front of our house. It was my job to herd those cows and see that they didn't stray onto the neighbor's yard. I usually rode Spot when I did this. When I let the cows out of the barnyard, they would race right for the road and the green grass. I would give them a good start and then when the last cow was almost out of site, I would jump on Spot and race as fast as I could to head them off just before they got to the neighbor's yard. Did I tell you that Spot liked to run?

Believe it or not, the corn we harvested in our fields was used not only to feed the pigs, but to feed us as well. Dad would pick several of the nicest ears and take them to

Laurens to be ground into meal. I remember those bags full of cornmeal sitting in the corner of the cold bedroom. Many times our supper was cornmeal mush, fried mush or sometimes even scrapple.

What is scrapple, you ask? Since you'll probably never eat any, I'll tell you. After a hog is butchered, the head is cleaned and sawed apart. These pieces are then placed in a large pan of water and boiled until the outside meat can be picked from the bone. To this `water' you add the meat and some cornmeal, which is all boiled, creating a mush. This mush is then cooled, sliced and fried in lard. Believe it or not, it is very good. At least I thought so. Yes, we cooked the brains too, but I won't tell you how we did it.

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My maternal grandmother died when I was four years old. After she died my grandpa spent a great deal of time with us. I remember he was a tall man who loved to sing. I remember standing beside him in church and feeling very small. When he sang loud, I felt even smaller. As a pastime he would whittle sticks by the hour. He made whistles for me out of willow branches and sometimes made me a slingshot. Everett would use them, but I did not. I

couldn't hit anything anyway. My grandpa always carried the coal for the base burner.

I've forgotten so much. Just one more arm to sew on and I'll be done. I'd tell you more if I could remember. I guess you're glad for that. But let me tell you about my brothers and sisters. I'll give you the real lowdown on the time ...

Siblings

I was the fifth of six children. Mother was born in Indiana and dad in Illinois. They were married in Illinois and lived in southeastern Illinois for 14 years. In 1915 they moved to Iowa where one year later I was born. My sisters, Pauline and Helen, were 14 and 12 at the time. My brothers, Russell and Everett, were 9 and 7. Five years later in 1921 my younger sister Margery was born.

Margery was never well. I don't really know what was wrong with her, but I do know she never talked much and couldn't do many things for herself. I remember her as a pretty child and a good-natured little girl. I know too that she was loved by us all. She only lived four years. She and I always slept on the cot together in our parents' room.

Being so much younger than my brothers and sisters made it seem like I was an only child. Everett was the closest to my age and he would sometimes play with me. Sometimes we played catch with the basketball, but more often he and Russell enjoyed keeping it away from me. Both Russell and Everett liked to wrestle out in the yard in the summertime. They started by clasping hands, and when I walked between them this was their cue to begin wrestling.

They usually ended up fighting. Mother got very disgusted when this happened and would yell at them. I would just walk away and let them fight.

Jack and Jenny

At one time dad had a team of mules. Mules are good workers, but they are rather stubborn. Everett always liked horses, and he was the only one that could handle the mules. The mules' names were Jack and Jenny. When Jack would get tired he would just stop; when Jenny would get tired she would lie down. It didn't matter where they were, this is what they did. My dad and Russell gave up on them. Not Everett. He worked with them until he had one of the best teams of mules in the area. I think he not only worked with them, but he may have beat on them from time to time.

In the wintertime, after Everett graduated from high school, he would sometimes hitch Jack and Jenny to the bobsled and pick me up at school. He was so proud of those mules. Dad appreciated Everett so much for training Jack and Jenny that he gave them to him – with his blessing. I think it was more like dad trying to get rid of them. The first thing Everett did was purchase a bright red harness. Jack and Jenny now looked like a really sharp set of mules. Jack and Jenny also knew that everyone else was afraid of them. Everyone,

that is except Everett. Jack and Jenny were afraid of Everett.

Sometimes when Everett would hitch the bobsled to Jack and Jenny and pick me up at school, some schoolkids would get on their sleds and hang onto the bobsled. When we were ready to go home, Everett would give a `wahoo' and away we'd go – leaving all the kids and their sleds far behind.

Everett was also a good singer. He often sang with a men's quartet at funerals and other such gatherings. Sometimes in the summer, after a long day on the threshing run, I could hear him singing as he drove Jack and Jenny up the lane. He'd tie the reins on the hayrack somewhere and sit back and sing. Jack and Jenny would trot along while he sang at the top of his lungs. Jack and Jenny must have liked it too. He was an excellent yodeler and loved to sing cowboy songs.

Everett and Russell

Several years later, after Everett was married and had two children, he contracted encephalitis, commonly called sleeping sickness, and was never well for the remainder of his life. He and his wife, Alice, always owned horses, and the year he became ill, many horses in the area had the disease. The disease is carried by mosquitoes and can be

transmitted from horses to humans. This is probably what happened in his case. Everett and his wife, Alice, had two children, Bill and Almeda. Alice, apart from suffering from arthritis, is in good health. At the present time she lives just across the street from me in Ayrshire.

My older brother, Russell, owned a coupe. If my memory serves me correctly, it was a Hudson. It had a rumble seat, where everyone loved to sit. He and his girlfriend, Verna, who later became his wife, would take Bonnie and me to the basketball games with them. Usually, he would take us home after the game, but one night in the dead of winter with snow piled high, he stopped at the corner a mile from our house. He got out of the car, took out a kerosene lantern, and told Bonnie and me we had to walk. Boy, were we mad. Russell thought it was very funny. I still don't let him live this down.

When I was 13 years old Russell, mother and I went to Illinois to visit our relatives. Russell drove his Hudson coupe, and I rode all the way in the rumble seat. I can still remember that ride. Believe me, they don't make rumble seats like they used to.

Russell and his wife Verna had three children, Ramon, Dale, and Marilyn. Their oldest boy,

Ramon, died of cancer when he was in his forties.

At the present time Russell and myself are the only ones of mom and dad's children still living. Russell always says the two ornery ones are left.

Pauline and Helen

My two sisters, Pauline and Helen, were my oldest siblings. Pauline was the oldest and was married two days after my ninth birthday. Mother prepared a big dinner in honor of her wedding. I remember that mother took a skillet of sweet potatoes from the oven and set it on the stove to keep it warm. For some reason I came along and took hold of the handle. It was very hot, and I burned my hand badly.

I also remember a newly married couple that sat on the couch and did a lot of kissing. That's all I remember about Pauline's wedding. I do not remember a lot about Helen's wedding either except it took place on my 11th birthday.

Something every newly married couple could expect a few days after their wedding was a shivaree. On a dark night friends would sneak up to the couple's house and scare the living daylights out of them by banging pans and

doing all sorts of silly things. It was the time-honored custom for the groom to treat the rowdy guests by giving candy bars to the ladies and cigars to the men. Sometimes the men would `kidnap' the young bride and take her to town or maybe just for a ride. Pauline and Melvin had a shivaree and they made Melvin walk a mile down a railroad track in the rain. And he still remembers that walk.

After they were married, Pauline and Melvin lived only a few miles from our house northwest of Curlew. I would often go to their home and would sometimes stay overnight. Their oldest boy, Kenneth, was only ten years younger than me. He lost his life when he was 14 from a rare infection. He was almost like a brother to me. They had two more children, Lavonne and Max.

Pauline's health started to fail shortly after they lost Kenneth. I always felt this was the main reason for it. Other than the childhood death of little Margery, Pauline was the next sibling to pass from this earth. She did so when she was 79.

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I remember one day when Pauline's future husband, Melvin, came calling for her. Melvin and Pauline were sitting on the grass on the

lawn. Melvin was showing me in some detail how to kill a bug. I thought he was so funny. We were always good pals. We still are.

One Sunday afternoon when Melvin came calling on Pauline, he brought with him a blind date for my sister, Helen. The four of them spent the afternoon sitting in the living room. My mother was upstairs taking a nap, and dad was doing something out in the barn. Everett and Russell were upstairs in their bedroom. I wanted to go upstairs too, but to get there I had to go through the living room where my sisters were entertaining their beaus. There was this new man in there and there was no way I was going through that room with him there. So, I went outside and called to Everett and Russell through their upstairs window. They said they'd lower a rope and pull me up. So, they tied a knot at one end of the rope, and I stood on it while they started pulling me up. Everything was going fine until I passed in front of the living room window. One of my sisters saw me and let out a scream. All four of them rushed to the window just in time to see me hanging out the upstairs window. Helen's blind date never did forget that. I know this for a fact since he became by brother-in-law. His name was Bruce Rouse and we laughed about that incident many times.

When Melvin and Bruce came to pick up Pauline and Helen they often went on long walks. They wanted me to stay in the house and play with my dolls, but I would have none of that. Sometimes as I tagged along behind them, they would stop and say they could hear mother calling me, but I would have none of that either. I would tell them I didn't hear anything and continue to tag along. I don't think they really minded since they never got angry.

My sister, Helen, lived to be 88 years old. She had good health until the last two years of her life. She and Bruce had three sons, Donald, Eugene, and Gordon. Bruce died in the late 1960s from Lou Gehrig's disease, about twenty-five years before Helen.

Pauline's husband, Melvin, is 94 years old and is living in a nursing home in Emmetsburg. My one remaining brother, Russell, is in good health and lives with his wife, Verna, in Curlew.

Hair Styles and Squab

A popular hairstyle in those days was the Buster Brown cut. The sides were cut straight and short. I remember my mother telling the barber to cut my hair to the middle of my ear. Straight bangs were cut across the forehead just above the eyebrows. The back was

shingled. I wore it straight except when I was in a Christmas program. Then, either Pauline or Helen would curl my hair with a curling iron. To heat it up the curling iron was hung in the chimney of a lamp to get it hot. They wrapped strands of hair around it forming teeny-weeny curls. If you smelled burning hair, you knew the iron was too hot. I always liked curls, but I sure didn't like those burnt ears.

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Both Russell and Everett had rifles and did a great deal of hunting and trapping. I remember they often caught skunks. They would skin them and stretch the skins on shingles. I suppose they sold them, but I have no memory of this. They often had the tell-tale odor of skunk on their clothes. Someone told my mother that if you rendered the fat of a skunk, it made a good chest rub for a cold. So, she made some. I can still remember her rubbing that stuff on me. I also think it had a rather bad odor.

Often during wintertime Everett and Russell would hunt rabbits, which were used for food and made a nice change in our diets. They tasted a bit like chicken. I didn't care much for them. I always saw the cute little bunnies in my mind. Years later wild rabbits in our

area contracted a disease so they were no longer fit for the table.

Mustard Plasters, Squab, and Threshing

Mustard plasters were used for infections in the chest. Mother would make one by taking a tablespoon of mustard and five tablespoons of flour. She would add enough water to them to make a thick paste. She then spread this on a piece of cloth and put it on my chest. This would draw the infection out. They could get very hot.

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Another meat that we liked was squab, which means young pigeon. Since many pigeons made their nests in the corncrib, it was easy to catch them. They made a very tasty dish. Russell and Everett loved to catch pigeons. They always told mother when the young birds were ready to eat.

Both Russell and Everett helped my dad with the farm work. I particularly remember them shocking oats. This was done during the hottest time of the summer in July and August. Dad drove a team of horses that were hitched to the binder, which cut the oats and tied them into bundles. Russell and Everett then set these bundles up against each other so they would dry and be ready to thresh. Several farmers then joined together to form a

threshing run. The younger men loaded the bundles of oats onto hayracks and took them to the threshing machine, where the grain was separated from the straw. The older men generally drove the teams that were hitched to the wagons of grain. Russell and Everett always hauled the bundles. The number of men a farmer supplied to the run depended on the amount of oats the farmer had to thresh. Most farmers supplied two men. Dad always supplied two men. One of my brothers on the hayrack and dad on the grain wagon. The other brother usually worked for a neighbor during this time.

Threshing was always a big thrill for me when I was young. I remember the huge engine coming down the road with smoke puffing and belching out all sides of it. I remember one day when we were threshing, a neighbor, who was Danish, and had just come to America. He spoke broken English and came to our door to ask mother something. While he stood there he told me he had a little girl my age. That was all right, but then he told me he would like to take me home so I could play with her. Do you know every time that man came to our house, I would run and hide under the bed. This must have continued for at least two years until my mother finally convinced me he was really a nice man. He would not capture me, she said.

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The lamp we used to light our house had a small yellow flame. In order to read we had to sit very close to it. Then, one day my parents purchased a new Aladdin lamp. It gave a lovely white light and we could all read quite easily. The first evening it arrived, mother decided she would light it and surprise dad when he came in from milking. She lit the wick and a big flame shot out the chimney. She extinguished it but decided she would wait for dad to come in and light it himself. When dad finally lit that new lamp for the first time, we learned that the mantle had a coat of wax.

Picking Corn

Corn picking was another backbreaking job. Both Russell and Everett were considered good huskers. In those days the corn was picked by hand. A good husker could pick over a hundred bushels in a day. This would generally be about three-wagon loads. Going to the fields early in the morning with dew on the corn would cause their hands to chap and crack open. They wore heavy gloves and a hook, specifically made for husking corn, was worn over one of the gloves.

When the corn was brought in from the field, it had to be scooped by hand from the wagon into the corncrib. Later, my dad built a new corncrib with an elevator that could elevate the corn into the crib. What a blessing. He would simply hitch a horse to a circular gear that drove the elevator. All the horse had to do was walk around in circles - which was the only way she could go. It was my job to drive the horse. I'm sure the horse could have managed without me. However, I did keep her moving. I really thought this was an important job.

My dad always planted pumpkin seeds in some of the hills of corn. I can still see loads of corn with a few pumpkins on top coming in from the fields. These pumpkins were used to make the best pie you have ever tasted. We didn't buy canned foods then. I don't even know if there were canned foods in the stores.

After the corn picking was done at home, Russell and Everett would get jobs picking corn for some of the farmers in the area. They used this to buy new clothes. Also they purchased Christmas presents for their girlfriends. The longer they worked the nicer the presents for their girlfriends.

When the last ear of corn was finally picked, we always celebrated this occasion with an

oyster stew. This was the only time we had oysters. It was a real treat.

Slumber Parties and One More Mule Story

Pauline and Helen often brought girlfriends home with them for the weekend. On these occasions I would sleep with them. I don't know why. I'm sure it wasn't their idea. At any rate I always slept in the middle. The big girls would sleep with their back toward each other and their bottoms nearly touching. If I wanted to turn over, I would rise up above them and then flip over. I always felt like a salami sandwich. After one particularly bad night, I told my mother I would not be sleeping with them any more. Mother laughed and said that she doubted if it was as bad as I thought. I don't recall sleeping with them again.

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I hate to go on so much about Jack and Jenny, so here is the last mule story. This one involved me too. I think I said that I used to carry water to the men in the fields. On this particular day I was walking down the road to the field where Everett was cultivating corn. It so happened that he was going the opposite direction and didn't see me. I decided to surprise him so I hid in some tall grass. When he was coming back

toward me and only a short distance away, I jumped up and yelled and waved my arms. I didn't expect the reaction of Jack and Jenny. They reared up and, ... well, I didn't have the courage to see what happened next, so I dropped down in the grass and stayed there until Everett finally stopped yelling and screaming. He managed to stop the mules at the end of the row. It was probably the fastest row of corn he ever cultivated. Although, he did plow out quite a bit of corn. He told me never to do that again.

Everyday and Sunday Clothes

Mother was an expert seamstress, so I may have been one of the best-dressed girls in school. Both Pauline and Helen taught school after graduating from high school and often purchased new clothes. From their old castoffs my mother made me many lovely outfits. I especially remember one cape that Pauline wore for quite sometime. It was tan with brown embroidery all over it. It was beautiful. The great day finally came when she cast it aside, and mother remade it for me. How proud I was when I first wore it to school. Miss Johnson saw it and commented that it had been made out of my sister's cape. Sure lowered my ego.

Mother and I would look through the mail-order catalog, pick out a favorite dress, and then she would make a pattern for it. All she needed was a yoke, and she could make the rest without a pattern. I remember the first coat she ever bought for me. I was five years old. I still have a picture of me wearing that coat.

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One new style in the 1920s was the `bloomer dress.' Whenever mother made a new dress, she would make a pair of matching bloomers. The

dress was always a bit shorter than the bloomers -- they were supposed to show just a bit. One time mother made me a pink-checked bloomer dress. I wore it to school -- I was six years old. Proud. Oh, so proud. Then some girl tried to pull down my dress so that my bloomers wouldn't show. I kept telling her they were supposed to show, but she insisted they weren't. Anyway, I continued to wear that dress, and she continued to pull it down.

Washing and Ironing

Perhaps I should tell you about washing clothes. As I've told my kids a thousand times, we had no automatic washers. On the night before washing day, a large boiler pan was filled with water and placed on the laundry stove in the washhouse. The next morning my mother would heat the water and add some lye. She then poured the hot water in the washing machine, added some homemade soap, and started that noisy gasoline engine. (You could always tell when mother was washing from the sound of that engine.) All the clothes were washed in the same water so it was important to wash the white things first. After the clothing was washed, she would run it through the wringer into a rinse tub. She would do this several times to get all the soap out. When the soap was finally rinsed out she would run it into a clothes basket -- which was formerly a basket that apples or

peaches came in. On the last rinse she would add some bluing, which kept the white clothes white. She then hung the clothes out to dry. Hopefully, it would be a nice breezy day. Surprisingly, in wintertime when the laundry froze on the line, the clothes had few wrinkles when they finally thawed.

In those days there were no drip-dry fabrics so everything had to be ironed. We also didn't have electricity so mother used a flat iron, which was heated on the stove. When a dress was washed, it was first rinsed and then starched. Starch was used to keep dirt from penetrating the fabric. The starch made the dress very stiff. After the starched dress was dry, you dampened it with water and rolled it up tight. The next day you could iron it. Ironing was generally an all-day job. We always washed on Monday and ironed on Tuesday.

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When I was in high school, I usually wore a wool skirt and sweater during the winter. They did not get washed during the winter, but only in the spring when they were washed real good. In gasoline. This took the dirt out rather nicely. Mom was very careful not to rub them too hard and cause a spark. She would then hang them on the line a long time to get the smell of gasoline out. They sure

came out clean. She never washed them in water since they would shrink.

Long-Legged Undies and Sewing

We also wore long-legged underwear in the wintertime. When we were older we sure did hate this. Walking to school against that cold wind we really liked them, but once we got there, we girls would roll up the legs of our undies as high as they could go. We laughed about this later, wondering what we looked like with that roll of underwear under our skirts.

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It always seemed like I had to wear those winter things until the middle of summer. One time when Spot was pulling us home in the buggy, I begged mother to let me take off my winter underwear. She didn't think it was quite warm enough. "You might catch a cold," she said. I begged and begged, and as I remember, I won.

When there were several children in a family, clothes were handed down one from the older ones to the younger ones. Since I was the youngest I just wore them until I outgrew them, and then they were used for rags.

Mother always made me a sunbonnet to match each summer dress. This seemed like a good

idea to my mother who always wore one when she worked in the garden. I hated to wear mine. I wanted the sun to shine on my face. She kept insisting that I wear it, but I took it off when I was out of sight. This may be the reason I had so many freckles. Some older girls washed their faces in buttermilk to keep their skin white.

Did I mention my mother was an excellent seamstress? I guess I have a hundred times. She made everything. Mother would let me seam the aprons that she made.(Every woman wore an apron over her dress to keep it clean.) I suppose it didn't make much difference whether the seams were sewn on straight or crooked. Later, after I could sew a straight seam, she taught me to sew more difficult things.

Once, when I was older she made a dress for me from a silk dress that had belonged to Pauline. Pauline had worn it for some time and now mother was remaking it for me. I never had a silk dress before. I was so excited. Mother had finished it except for the hem, and I was to do that. I had just started hemming it when the telephone rang. It was Bonnie who wanted to come over and spend the day. She lived four miles away and we decided that I would ride Spot to meet her and then we'd ride Spot back to our house. We often did that. Mother said that was fine, except first I had

to finish the hem in my new dress. I was in a big hurry and put that hem in nothing flat. When I got home mother made me take it all out and do it over again. This time with tiny stitches. I think of that silk dress every time I put in a hem -- even to this day.

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All sewing was done with a treadle sewing machine. Mother purchased hers when Pauline was small and Helen was on the way. One of her granddaughters now owns it. And it still works. This sewing machine was purchased from Sears and Roebuck and cost only a few dollars. I know my mother gave my dad a rocking chair, when I was four years old and she paid $2.98 for it.

Whenever a button came off a garment, another was sewed on immediately. Whenever an old garment was discarded, the buttons were cut off and saved. When the men wore holes through their overall legs, we used a worn-out pair as a patch. When the men went to town, they always put on a clean, pair of overalls that didn't have patches.

I made many doll clothes on that old sewing machine. This gave me a lot of practice. One day a friend came over and we played dolls, and she decided my doll's dresses needed some

restyling. So she took out the scissors and cut off all of the sleeves, leaving them sleeveless. She also did some other things that made both mom and myself very unhappy. I don't know why I didn't stop her. Guess I was too timid.

Overshoes and High Fashion

Another thing we did with old coats and woolen dresses was cut them into squares, and sew them back together into a pattern for quilt tops. If we only had tiny pieces of cloth, we made `crazy quilts'. To make these you cut a square piece out of an old bedsheet about fifteen inches wide. You then sew the tiny pieces to the square in any design you please until the square is covered. After you've made several of these squares just sew them together. You have a great quilt top.

I had a pretty new cap and scarf set that I wore to school. One day when I returned home, I discovered I had lost the scarf. Each day on the way to school as I walked across the field to the track to meet Gladys, I would look and look for it. Finally, one spring day as I was walking home, there it was on the ground. I was so happy. It was all torn and ragged, but I brought it home anyway. My mother wasn't too happy.

In the wintertime I generally wore a pair of four-buckle overshoes over my shoes. The snow would get inside those overshoes, making your feet cold and wet. There were only a few snowplows, which only plowed the main roads so sometimes the snow was very deep. Since the schoolrooms were not very warm, it was important that our feet and legs be kept dry. To keep the snow out of my overshoes, I always wore an old pair of stockings with the feet cut out over the overshoes. I also wrapped a scarf over my face, and of course I always wore heavy woolen mittens. If our mittens were wet when we got to school, we would lay them on the floor near the stove. A pile of mittens next to the stove was a common sight in winter.

All older women had a basic black dress, which they wore for Sunday best. Hats were a must. Many women had black plush coats with a large fur collar. Mother had one like this. I remember how nice it was to snuggle up to her in the bobsled as the horses pulled us to the Christmas programs.

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When I was in high school in 1930, silk stockings, held up with a garter belt, were the big thing. Nylon was still ten years down the road. Silk stockings all had a dark seam in the back. The trick was to keep that seam

straight and not let it run halfway around your leg. High heels were also in style. Since I was quite short, I loved to wear high heels. I used to put them on and practice walking in front of a mirror. Some girls would walk with their knees bent, but I sure didn't like the way they looked. Hats and gloves were a must.

More Childhood Rumblings ...

On Saturday nights everyone in our family took a bath. The washtub was brought into the kitchen and about four inches of water was poured in it. It was great to have all that hot water to wash in. Other times we simply bathed from a washbasin. The men would change their overalls once a week -- on bath night.

Mother had long white hair as long as I can remember. She said she started turning gray when she was a teenager. They weren't called teenagers then. They were just young ladies. She always hated her white hair, but I thought it was pretty. When I would tell her this, she would just say, "I don't see anything pretty about it." Everyday when the noon dishes were finished, she would sit in the living room and comb her hair. She always took time out to rest at this time. As I said, her hair was long and she wore it pulled back with a bun at the nape of her neck. She wore it this way until much later, when I

became a beautician. Then she decided to have it cut and curled. She had beautiful white hair for much of her ninety-one years.

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Earrings became stylish around 1930 during my high school years. I had my share. Dresses were worn to the middle of the calf. Who says that styles don't come around many times?

All fabric was purchased from a mail-order house. Most dresses were made from percale. This was an all-cotton material. A really good dress might be made out of linen. Percale only cost about twenty cents per yard. Linen was a little more expensive. Older ladies probably had their dresses made from silk. I remember the black satin dress my mother wore for her Sunday best. She had two or three lace collars, which she changed to give it a different look. Her shoes were plain black oxfords, and of course those silk stockings. (Don't call them hose.) Yes, they had a black seam in the back.

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Hats were a must. They, too, were often ordered from a mail-order catalog. Many were fancy ones with a large brim or maybe a 'boa.' A boa was a hat adorned with a stole of

feathers. I remember once I was about eight or nine years old and Helen was teaching and she bought the most beautiful velvet, large brimmed hat with a huge feather. I thought it was the most lovely hat I had ever seen. In addition to hats we also wore gloves. Some gloves went all the way to the elbows and had tiny buttons. It took a long time to dress in those days. We always had to match our gloves to our dress or coat.

Hair Styles

My sisters had long hair until they were grown. To make the hairdo look fuller they used “rats”. Nothing like this was ever purchased. In fact, I don't think the stores had any hair supplies at all. Not even shampoo. Ladies would keep any hair they might comb out, and when they had enough, would roll it up into a sort of long tight ball. This was called a rat, which was put inside their French roll or under their hair to make it look fuller. They had a small box with a hole in the top that was used to put the combings in until such time there was enough to make the rat.

I don't think you could purchase shampoo in the stores. We made our own shampoo by putting small slivers of soap in water and warming this on the back of the stove. The soap soon dissolved making a nice (and strong) shampoo.

For styling, most women 'finger-waved' their hair, which consisted in forming a wave with their fingers and a comb. Of course, you needed some type of hair gel to keep the wave in place. To make this gel we used flax seeds soaked in hot water. This made a very sticky substance that would hold anything. We could have used it on Spot.

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When Pauline and Helen were teaching school, bobbed hairstyles came into vogue. This was in the 1920s. Naturally, both of them wanted this new cut. My dad said they could, but only after a certain girlfriend of theirs got hers cut in this style. My dad knew this girlfriend would never get hers cut this way in a million years. Well, that is what he thought. Well, do you know what those two sisters of mine did? One day, when they were in town they talked this friend into having her haircut. And they got her to cut hers first so she couldn't change her mind if she didn't like the way my sisters' hair looked. So, the next morning Helen and Pauline came down to breakfast with their new bobbed cuts. Dad took one look at them and blew his stack. But a deal was a deal they argued. Eventually, dad got used to Pauline and Helen's bobbed cuts, and didn't say any more.

I remember the first permanent wave machine I ever saw. This was in the mid-20s and it was demonstrated at the Palo Alto county fair. The man at the fair said it was the greatest thing for women ever invented. Little did I know then I would be curling women's hair using just such a machine -- or a later version of the process many years later. The first permanents were called spiral waves, and any woman who has ever had one will remember it to this day. Of course, the process was intended to put a wave in the hair and to do this the hair was wrapped around heated metal rods that stuck out ninety degrees from the head. It was quite a sight. The rods were also heated with electricity, I don't know what would have happened if there were a short in a wire.

By the time I started my training in beauty school many years later, many women were giving themselves home permanents. These permanents were similar to the cold waves given in beauty shops. Many people said that beauty shops would be a thing of the past. With trepidation I went to beauty school. I remember an instructor saying, "As long as a woman has a dollar in her pocket, she will spend it on her hair." I had a business for twenty years, and I know this to be the case.

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I might mention too that most girls received a wristwatch for graduation from their parents. Mine was a Bulova, which I wore for many years. Men did not wear wristwatches, but had pocket- watches, which they carried in the bib-pocket of their overalls. If a man had a `good' watch, he would carry it in a trouser pocket attached to a chain. Some of these watches had ornate lids, which closed over the face of the watch. My mother owned one of this type, which she wore on a long heavy chain.

I haven't mentioned much about the men's clothing. I guess that's a girl's prerogative. Everett and Russell always wore bib overalls to school. A few years later bibless overalls came into being, which later were called jeans. Men's dress socks were made of lisle, which looked a bit like rayon. I guess in reality, men's styles have not changed so much.

Playtime Games

Children in bygone days did not have many toys. If a girl had a single doll, she was one of the lucky ones. And since that was before the days of radio and television, we entertained ourselves.

Both my parents and brothers and sisters played games with me for as long as I can remember. I also played games with my friends and classmates. Let me tell you about some of the games we played.

INFANT ACTIVITIES

1. **Knock on the Door**

A parent holds a child and lightly taps the child's forehead and carefully opens an eyelid. Slightly tweaking the nose, the parent puts a fingertip in the child's mouth. Then the parent tickles the child under the chin, all to the rhyme:

Knock on the door,
Peep in.
Lift the latch,
And walk in.

2. **Chin Chopper**

A mother holds her child on her lap and touches the baby's chin, mouth, nose, eye, forehead, and then tickles the child under the chin to the rhyme:

Chin chopper
Mouth eater
Nose dropper
Eye winker
Brow brinker
Getcha, getcha, getcha.

3. **Rock-a-Bye-Baby**

Rock the child in your arms as though the wind is blowing and sing:

Rock-a-bye baby in the tree top,
When the wind blows the cradle will rock,
When the bough breaks the baby will fall,
Down will come baby cradle and all.

As the last line is sung, the child is gently lowered to the floor amid much laughter.

4. **Piggie Went to Market**

After the child has put his nighties on and before going to bed, you tweak each toe, from the big to the little and recite:

This little piggie went to market,
This little piggie stayed home,
This little piggie had roast beef,

This little had none,
And this little piggie cried wee, wee wee all the way home.

5. *Trotty Horse*

In the evening while sitting with your legs crossed, a little one would often come sit across your top foot. You would then take the child's hands, and while rocking your foot, recite the rhyme

Trotty horse, trotty horse off to town,
Take care little one and don't fall down.

On this last line the parent might toss the child up in the air, or maybe tease him that he is falling off.

When a child became school age they started playing group games. I will tell you about some of these.

Drop the Handkerchief

Several children hold hands and form a ring. They then drop their hands to their sides. One child is chosen to be 'it' and this child runs around the outside of the circle with a handkerchief until he decides to drop it behind someone. The kid where the handkerchief is dropped then picks it up and chases after the kid who is 'it.' If he catches 'it' before 'it' gets back to the empty space, the kid

that was 'it' is still 'it' and the game starts all over. If he doesn't catch 'it', the kid with the handkerchief is the new 'it'. We played this game in country school many, many times.

Ring Around the Rosie

This is a game played by very small children. They would hold hands and go around in a circle while singing:

Ring around the Rosie,
Pocket full of Posie,
Last one down,
Will be old Josie.

As this last line is sung, everyone squats down real fast.

Blindman's Bluff

This was a game played indoors with several children. One child is blindfolded by tying a large handkerchief over his eyes, and then turned around several times. The other children tiptoe to different places in the room, after which the blindfolded child tries to find them. When he succeeds in finding someone, he tries to identify who it is by touching his clothes, measuring his height, or something. If he guesses correctly, the two persons exchange places, and the game starts all over again.

Button, Button, Who's Got the Button?

This was a game played in the house, perhaps on a rainy day. The players sit in a circle, while 'it' holds a button between his hands, with the palms flat together. Each player also holds their hands in the same way. As 'it' goes around the circle, each player opens their hands slightly as 'it' places his hands inside them, looking as though he dropped the button in their palm. After he has gone around the circle, he says "button, button, who's got the button?" Of course while going around the circle he dropped the button in the hands of one of the players. Each in turn tries to guess who has the button. The one who has the button is 'it' next time.

Bubble Blowing

Children playing alone often did this. A pan of water and a bar of soap are all that was needed. Try to make a lot of suds with the soap. Then use a spool of thread your mother has discarded and put the spool in the frothy suds and swish it around. Then lift it to your lips blow carefully. Beautiful bubbles of many colors were sent out into the air.

Hiding the Thumble

This was another game that could be played with only two players. If your mother wasn't busy, you might be able to coax her to play

with you. The one who was 'it' would hide a thimble anywhere in the room while the other one had their eyes covered. As you searched, 'it' would say you are cold, or you are warm or you are hot depending how close you were to the thimble. After the thimble was found the other player became 'it'.

Angels

In the wintertime when there was nice clean snow we enjoyed making angels. We especially liked to make them along the grade bank that ran along the road next to the school. We would carefully go down into the ditch and stand with our backs to the bank. Then we would flop down on our backs with our arms and legs outstretched. Then we moved our arms back and forth in the snow to make the wings. It was easy to get down, but the trick was getting up without ruining the shape of the little angels that were imprinted in the snow.

Ante Over

When the neighbor children gathered together the most popular game was 'ante over'. All that was needed was a ball and a building, such as the garage. We would divide into two groups with a group on each side of the garage. The one with the ball would call `ante over' as he threw the ball over the garage. If someone on the other side caught the ball, he would run around one of the sides

of the garage and try to hit one of the other kids with the ball. The members of the other team would try to run around to the other side of the garage. If a player is hit by the ball, he would become a member of the opposing team. The two teams took turns throwing the ball over the building. If by chance it didn't go over the roof, the thrower would call 'pig tail,' and the other side would know the ball was not coming over the roof. Many an evening was spent playing this game until it got too dark.

Fox and Geese

This game was played in the wintertime, preferably with newly fallen snow. When the children went out for recess, all would form a line, with one older boy in the lead. All would then follow the leader as he made a large circle in the snow. All would shuffle along, in this way a visible circle was formed. The leader would then cut across the circle, making spokes such as are found in a wheel. After the wheel was finished one player was chosen to be the fox. This was usually one of the older boys who could run very fast. One child was chosen to be the goose. This was usually a younger child who could not run so fast. The fox stood at the center of the wheel where the spokes crossed. This was his den. Each of the other players stood just outside the circle, between the spokes. The

goose stood in front of any player he chose. When the goose stood in front of a player he was safe, but he had to run from one player to another. While he ran, the fox would try to catch him. The fox had to stay on the spokes, or the circle at all times. The goose had to stay on the circle when he ran from one player to the next. When the goose was caught, he then became the fox.

Last Couple Out

This game took several children to play it. The children coupled up by twos and stood in a line. One person was 'it' and stood in front of the line, with his back towards the line. 'It' would then call "last couple out." The last couple in the line would then run out, each one running toward the front on their side. 'It'would try to catch one of these players before they touched hands at the front of the line. If 'it' caught one of the players, he would take their place and the one caught would be 'it'. The new couple would then stand in front of the line. If the old couple succeeded in touching hands before 'it' could catch them, then the same one would be 'it' again.

Crack the Whip

Several players stood in a line with their hands locked. The stronger players, probably the boys, took the position at the head of the

line. They were arranged according to size with the smaller ones at the end -- called the tail. The boys at the head of the line ran in sort of a circle very fast. Then they would turn directions while going very fast the smaller ones at the end were either flung to the ground or the line was broken at some place. The big boys enjoyed doing this -- the little kids did not. The teacher finally forbid any playing of this game.

Foot Racing

This was simply a race to see who was the fastest runner. All lined up against a fence or a building. Instead of just saying "go" a rhyme was usually shouted:

One for the money,
Two for the show,
Three to make ready,
And four to go.

With that all ran as fast as they could to the finish line. The boys especially liked to do this.

Pom-pom Pullaway

Another running game was pom-pom pullaway. All the players except one lined up against a fence or a building. The player who was 'it' stood out some distance in front of the others. The object of the game was to run from

the first spot to another spot, such as the sidewalk or maybe another fence across the yard without being touched by 'it'. If those against the fence were reluctant to run, 'it' would say, "pom-pom pullaway, come or I'll pull you away". With that the players would all run as fast as they could to the other side. Anyone who was touched by 'it' became the new 'it'.

Hide and Seek

This was a game usually played during the evening after the dishes were done. It took several players to make an interesting game. As in so many games one person was chosen to be 'it'. With his eyes shut and facing home base, which was usually a tree, he would count to one hundred by twos, or maybe even fives. While he did this the other players would run and hide. After he had counted to one hundred, he would call out:

Bushel of wheat,
Bushel of rye,
All not hid, holler I.

He would listen, and if someone was not hidden they would call out "I." Then “it” would count again, and then he would call out:

Bushel of wheat,
Bushel of clover,

All not hid,
Can't hide over.
All within ten feet of my base
Are caught.
Ready or not,
Here I come.

He then hunted them down. Any kid that was hiding could take off for home base at any time, and if he got home before 'it' he would pat it three times and say, "One, two, three, I'm in free." If 'it' beat him to home base, he would say "one, two, three, you're out," and this kid would be 'it' for the next game. If 'it' found one of the hidden kids, both would race for home base. Occasionally, some kid was hidden too good to be found. When this happened 'it' would call, "all not found, come in free".

Marbles

Seeing boys on their knees playing marbles was a sure sign of spring. Each child kept his marbles in an old tobacco bag his father gave him, or perhaps one his mother made him. Marbles were either glass or clay. There were many kinds of glass marbles. There were Aggies (real agate), and Immies (imitation agate). These were the most desirable ones. The small clay (commonies) were the most common.

The first thing you did was take a stick and draw a circle on the ground about two or three feet in diameter with a hole in the center. The center was called, the “pot”. Each player put one marble in the center hole. Each player chose a marble (taw) from his marbles to shoot with. The marble was held between the thumb and forefinger and propelled with the thumb. If he succeeded in knocking a marble from the pot, he kept the marble and got another turn. If he did not, it was the next player's turn. The game ended when there were no more marbles in the pot. At the end of the game all marbles were usually given back to their owners. Sometimes the boys would play “keepsie”. In this case they kept the marbles won. The mothers frowned on this.

Hoop Rolling

This was a very simple game that a boy usually played by himself. Find a narrow board about three feet long and another one about a foot long. Nail the shorter one to the end of the longer one, forming a T. Find a rim from an old wheel and you are in business. The rim should be about eight or ten inches in diameter. Just start the hoop (rim) rolling, and keep it rolling by using the stick, which you have made. This takes a bit of skill, and is not as easy as it might seem.

Leap Frog

Two or more kids played this game. The more the better. Players lined up one behind about six feet apart. Except for the kid last in line, they all bent over, bracing their hands on the ground. The last kid then leaped over the others one at a time until he got to the front, where he bent over like the others. The new kid at the back then leaped over the kids ahead of him. This would continue until the players became tired.

Walking a Barrel

This was played whenever one was alone. Just find an empty barrel, lay it on its side. Stand on it and start walking, thus making the barrel roll. If you walked backward the barrel rolled one way. If you walked forward it rolled the opposite direction.

Riding a Horse

Small children often used their mother's broom or a branch of a tree as a substitute for a riding horse. While galloping around the yard you might hear the child singing:

So fast, so fast, my horse can go,
A riggity, riggity, jig you know,
It's just a branch of a willow tree,
Oh riggity, jig you see.

Stilts

Stilts had to be made for small children by an adult. It took a couple of boards about five feet in length. A small step board was attached to the upright boards about a foot from the ground. Finally, a leather strap was nailed to the ends of the step boards and the uprights forming stirrups. The child could then walk along. The trick was to learn to balance oneself as you walked. After a great deal of practice one could run and do all kinds of tricks on them.

Slingshots

If children were fortunate enough to have a grandfather living with them, they might be lucky enough to have two or three slingshots. Older grandfathers usually whittled a great deal. To whittle you just took your pocketknife and shaved off small bits of a tree branch. A slingshot was made from a forked limb of about six or eight inches long, and about half inch in diameter. It would look like the letter Y. A strip of rubber, probably cut from an old inner tube, would be attached to the two forks. Then a small stone could be put in the center of the rubber. Holding the handle of the slingshot with one hand, and pulling the rubber back with the other, one could aim for a certain post, or maybe a spot on the barn. Grandfathers also made whistles from willow tree branches.

Some games were played mostly by girls. I will tell you about some of them.

Playing House

When three or four girls were together, they often played house. One would be the mother (every one wanted to be the mother), one would be the father, and the others would be the naughty kids. The kids were really naughty too. The mother and father would punish and yell at them. I think that is why it was enjoyable.

Playing School

We often played school. Everyone wanted to be the teacher. One person would find sticks of different lengths, and hold them tightly in his fist. Each one drew a stick. Perhaps the one who drew the shortest stick was designated to be the teacher. The teacher was very strict, and the children were very naughty. This is what made the game so much fun. They could do things that they would never be allowed to do in school.

Jumping Rope

This too was a sure sign of spring, when you saw the girls jumping rope. All girls had a jumping rope, even if it was just a rope taken from a bale of binder twine. Some had a `store bought' rope, and they were the envy of the class. At home a girl would jump for

hours with her short rope. Quite often she would count the number of jumps she made. One hundred was the desired number. If a friend were visiting her, the friend would be invited to jump with her. While one swings the rope and jumps, the other runs in and jumps with her. At school two girls swung a long rope. The other children would line up to take their turn jumping. The girls swinging the rope would give the orders for jumping. Pepper meant they would swing the rope very fast; High water meant the rope would be swung high off the ground. Going in the back door meant going in the opposite side the rope was swinging.

Sometimes we would run through without jumping at all. The next time we would jump once, the next two and so on until you were jumping many times, or until you missed and stopped the swinging rope. Then you started over.

Wring the Dishrag

Two girls faced each other, holding each other's hands above their heads in the form of an arch. They then continued to hold hands as they each turned around, causing them to go under the arch. Their hands had to be held loosely so they could turn around. They would continue to go around and around, faster and faster, until they eventually collapsed in a heap on the floor.

Skin the Cat

This required quite a bit of skill, and it helped if you were small and agile. You found a sturdy tree branch, which was several inches above your out-stretched hands. You jumped up and grabbed the branch with both hands. You then swing your legs up between your arms and over your head all the way around so you would land on the ground on your feet.

Other games were played by both girls and boys, and were considered quiet games.

Poor Pussy

This could be played either inside or outside. One player was 'pussy'. The other players stood at places some distance apart. Pussy would go to one player and say `meow'. This player would say something like, `poor pussy', while patting pussy's head. Pussy would then keep meowing, but in such a way to try to get the person to laugh. If pussy couldn't make him laugh, pussy would then go to another player and proceed in the same way. The first player to laugh was the new pussy.

Lemonade

Eight to ten players are needed to play this game. They are divided into two teams who stand in lines facing each other. A line is drawn somewhere in front of each team, which

defines that team's 'base.' One team is chosen to go first. This team, say Team 1, will then choose some activity to pantomime. This could be something simple, such as picking apples, washing clothes, or maybe rocking a baby. After an activity is chosen, both teams move toward each other. As they come Team 1 says

Team 1 *"Here we come"*
Team 2 *"Where you from?"*
Team 1 *"New York"*
Team 2 *"What's your trade?"*
Team 1 *"Ice cream and lemonade"*
Team 2 *"Go to work and show us some".*

Team 1 then acts out whatever activity they had chosen. When someone on Team 2 is successful in guessing their act, the members of Team 1 run back to their base with the other team chasing them. If anyone is caught, they go over to the other side.

Rhymes were also popular. A popular one was

Eeny meeny miney mo,
Catch a nigger by the toe,
If he hollers let him go,
Eeny meeny miney mo.

The players stood in a circle and this rhyme was said by everyone. As each word was said a

different person was pointed to. The person being pointed to, as the last word was said, was “it”. Today, we realize the insensitivity of this rhyme and would classify it as 'racist.' Back then, in our little country school, we had no intent to be insensitive to anyone. A popular book of the times was, Little Black Sambo, which we also realize now as demeaning to African-Americans. I guess we've opened our eyes to some things.

Another rhyme that was popular and was sung by kids in a circle. I can only remember it partly as

Something about some birds,
Some flew east, some flew west,
Some flew over the coo-coo nest.
O U T spells out,
So out goes he.

Sometimes this last person was “it”, or maybe they just played this rhyme, taking one person out of the circle until just one was left. That person was then “it”.

Maybe, when one player wanted to play a game he might yell, "Lets play hide and seek -- not it." Others would say, "not it." The last one saying this would be `it'. Maybe one would say, "The last one to the gate is it,"

and all would run to the gate. The last one there would be “it”.

Some games were usually played at parties with both boys and girls present. Some of these were:

Going Out West

As the players sat around the room, the designated starter would say that he was going to California, and he was going to take something. This is an example of what might be said. I'm going to California, and I'm going to take a suitcase. The next player says that he is going to California and is going to take a suitcase and his dog. The next player says he's going to California and is going to take a suitcase, his dog, and his violin. This goes around the circle, with each player repeating what the former players had said, and adding something to the list. This goes on until someone can't remember everything. That person then is removed from the circle, and the others try to continue. It is interesting to see how long players can continue without missing an object.

Pin the Tail on the Donkey

This is a game enjoyed by younger children. The mother draws a picture of a donkey. A child is blindfolded and given a cutout donkey tail with a pin attached. The child then

tries to pin the tail to the donkey, which is set up somewhere. Each child takes its turn and the child who comes closest to pinning the tail in the right place wins a prize.

Who What When Where

This is a game for older players. A sheet of paper is passed from one player to the next. The first player writes “who”. This can be any person, or even a dog or some other animal. The paper is then folded down so that the next person in line cannot see what was written. The next person writes “what”. This can be any activity. The next person writes “where”. This can be any location. The last person writes “when”. This can be any time. The paper is then opened and read aloud. Of course the object is to write silly things on the paper, so that it will be ridiculous when read.

Many hours were spent outside during a summer afternoon, simply lying on the grass, under a shade tree, watching the clouds float by. Have you ever noticed the great pictures, which the clouds form?

If your mother wasn't busy maybe you could talk her into playing string games. You would take a piece of string about thirty inches long and tie the ends together. Then each person would pull the string around their

hands and make crow's feet, or double crow's feet, or even rocking-the-baby patterns with the string. Crow's feet could be made by one person, but the other patterns took two persons.

At night, using the shadow of a kerosene lamp, a parent might make shadow pictures on the wall or ceiling to entertain small children. My father would entertain me with pictures of foxes, birds, horses, and other animals when I was very young.

Jacks

A favorite game when you were alone was jacks. One had six 'jacks' and a small rubber ball. You began by scattering the jacks on the floor. You then sat on the floor and tossed a ball in the air, letting it bounce once before catching it. While the ball was in the air, you picked up a jack. You did this over and over until all the jacks were picked up. You then scattered the jacks on the floor again, but this time around you picked the jacks up two-at-a-time; the next time around three-at-a-time, and so on. There are other variations of this basic game.

Children loved to play tricks on each other. A first kid would say to a second kid:

Adam and Eve and Pinch me tight,
Went over the river to see a cat fight.
Adam and Eve got back all right,
Who didn't?

The second kid is supposed to answer, pinch me tight, and the first kid would do just that.

One child one might walk up to another child and say:

Child 1	*I saw a dead chicken down by the hen house, I one it*
Child 2	*I two it*
Child 1	*I three it*
Child 2	*I four it*
Child 1	*I five it*
Child 2	*I six it*
Child 1	*I seven it*
Child 2	*I eight it*

Then Child 1 would laugh at the other child's expense, usually chiding him, "you ate it, you ate it".

"Open your hands and shut your eyes and I'll give you something to make you wise," was something someone might say to you. But if an older boy said it, you had better be a bit skeptical, for it could be anything from a worm to a rock.

April Fools' Jokes

Of course, these are still played by kids everywhere (and adults too), but how they are played changes over time. Sometimes a child couldn't wait until April Fools' Day, so he'd try to fool someone at an earlier time. When he did this you would say, April Fools a coming, and you're the biggest fool a running. Sometimes he had so much fun fooling his playmates that he would continue for a day or so. The answer might be, April's gone and past, and you're the biggest fool at last.

In country school the teacher would go out and play with her students at recess. Usually she wasn't too much older than some of her pupils. In the town school the teachers didn't play with the pupils Sometimes they had students who acted as watchdogs over the others.

When a child was caught cheating or doing some other thing that did not please some of the other children, there was usually one who would go to the teacher and tell her all about it. Then you would hear some of the others sing-song a verse. Tattle tale, tattle tale, hanging on a bull's tail.

Sometimes a child might be unhappy and maybe cry. If the girl were Dorothy, a boy might say:

Dorothy's sad,
And I'm glad,
And I know what to please her.
A bottle of wine to make her shine,
And a cute little boy to squeeze her.

This would usually end with Dorothy chasing the boy who teased her.

Games of today may be quite different from the games of many years ago, but the one thing we see is that children are children who enjoy playing together and having a good time during these wonderful days called childhood.

Entertainment

I entered country school, two miles north of Curlew, in the fall of 1921, and graduated from Curlew high school in the spring of 1933. By the time I graduated, television was still twenty years from being in most person's homes, but my high school years marked the beginning of the age of radio. The radio was very important in our family. It brought entertainment to us every night. Before this we entertained ourselves.

So how did we "wile away" the hours on a summer evening or on a cold winter night? Almost any summer evening you could find my mother and myself lying out on our grassy yard enjoying the cool evening breezes.

My mother had a lovely singing voice. It may not have been that good but to her little girl, it was lovely. She spent hours singing to me on these evenings. Each song had a message and some were sad -- but I liked them anyway.

If the mosquitoes were thick, we would lie on the cellar door, and if they were really thick, we would go inside. Mother often sang while she worked around the house.

Here are a few of the songs my mother sang. I wish I had a recording of her singing them. I don't suppose you have heard many of them. Several had an Indian flavor to them.

NAPANNEE

Out on an Indian reservation,
Far away from civilization,
Where the feet of paleface seldom trod.
White man went to fish one summer,
Met an Indian maid, a hummer,
Daughter of the big chief “Spare the Rod”.

White man threw some loving glances,
Took the maiden to war dances,
Smoked his pipe, and took his chances,
Living in a teepee made of fur.
Rode with her on Indian ponies,
Bought her a diamond ring, a phony,
Then he sang these loving words to her.

CHORUS
You are my pretty little Indian Napannee,
Won't you take a chance and marry me?
Your daddy is a chief, `tis my belief,
To a very merry wedding he'll agree.
Sure you're a dark little Indian maid,
But I'll suntan to a darker shade.
I'll wear feathers on my head,
Paint my face an Indian red,
If you'll only be my Napannee.

RED WING

There once was an Indian maid,
A shy little prairie maid.
Who sang away, the long summer day,
As o'er the fields she whiled her hours away.
She loved a warrior bold,
This shy little maid of old,
And then one day, he rode away,
To battle in the fray.

CHORUS
Oh the moon shines tonight on pretty Red Wing,
The breeze is sighing, the night birds crying,
Far, far beneath the stars her love lies sleeping,
And Red Wing's weeping her heart away.

I sometimes wonder why so many Indian songs were sung, but when I was a child, it had only been fifty years since the last Indian Wars in the West. At any rate I did like those two songs.

Another song I was forever asking my mother to sing was a very sad one. Even though I usually cried when she sang it, I still wanted to hear it. Here it is:

BABES IN THE WOODS

Oh don't you remember, a long time ago,

Two little babes, whose names I don't know,
Were stolen away, one bright summer day,
And were lost in the woods, I've heard people say.
And when it was night, so sad was their plight
The moon had gone down, and the stars gave no light,
They sobbed and they sighed, and they bitterly cried,
And the poor little things, they lay down and died.

And when they were dead, the robin so red,
Brought strawberry leaves, and over them spread,
And all the day long, they sang them this song,
Poor babes in the woods, poor babes in the woods.

The following songs are not quite as sad.

TWO LITTLE GIRLS IN BLUE

Two little girls in blue, lad, two little girls in blue,
They were sisters,we were brothers,
We learned to love them too.

One little girl in blue, lad, won your father's heart,
Became your mother, I married the other,
But we have drifted apart.

HOME SWEET HOME

Through pleasures and palaces though far we may roam,
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home.

The stars in the sky seem to hallow us there,
Which seek through the world are ne'er met with elsewhere.

Home, home sweet sweet home,
There's no place like home, there's no place like home.

Although many songs seemed to be sad, there definitely were some on the lighter side.

LITTLE BROWN JUG

My wife and I lived all alone,
In a little brown shack we called our own,
She liked gin, and I liked rum,
I tell you all this, we had lots of fun.

Ha, ha, ha, you and me little brown jug how I love thee, Ha, ha, ha you and me, little brown jug how I love thee.

If I had a cow that gave such milk,
I'd dress her in the finest silk,
Feed her on the choicest hay,
And milk her forty times a day.

Ha, ha, ha, you and me, little brown jug how I love thee,
Ha, ha, ha, you and me, little brown jug how I love thee.

GO TELL AUNT ABBIE

Go tell Aunt Abbie, go tell Aunt Abbie,
Go tell Aunt Abbie, her old gray goose is dead.

The one she's been saving, the one she's been saving,
The one she's been saving to make a feather bed.

BILLY BOY

Oh where have you been, Billy boy, Billy boy ?
Oh where have you been charming Billy ?
I have been to seek a wife, she's the joy of my life,
She's a young thing and cannot leave her mother.

Did she bid you to come in, Billy boy, Billy boy?
Did she bid you to come in charming Billy ?
Yes she bade me to come in, there's a dimple in her chin,
She's a young thing and cannot leave her mother.

Did she set for you a chair, Billy boy, Billy boy?
Did she set for you a chair, charming Billy ?
Yes she set for me a chair, but the bottom wasn't there,
She's a young thing and cannot leave her mother.

Can she bake a cherry pie, Billy boy, Billy boy?
Can she bake a cherry pie, charming Billy?
She can bake a cherry pie, quick as a cat can wink its eye,
She's a young thing and cannot leave her mother.

How old is she, Billy boy, Billy boy?
How old is she charming Billy?
Twice six, twice seven, twice twenty and eleven,
She's a young thing and cannot leave her mother.

As Mother was busy doing her housework she sang songs. Mostly hymns. Some of these were, Bringing in the Sheaves, Jesus Loves Me, Amazing Grace, My Faith Looks up to Thee, and many others. She always had a deep abiding faith in herself and her God. I enjoyed having her recite poetry to me. The Village Blacksmith and The Children's Hour were my

favorites. Let me tell you the words to the later.

THE CHILDREN'S HOUR

From my study I see in the lamplight,
Descending the broad hall stair,
Grave Alice and laughing Allegra,
And Edith with golden hair.

They climb up into my turret,
O'er the arms and the back of my chair,
If I try to escape they surround me,
Coming at me from everywhere.

But now with you fast in my fortress,
I will not let you depart,
I'll put down in the dungeon,
In the secret part of my heart.

And there I will keep you forever,
Yes, forever and a day,
Till the dungeon walls shall all crumble,
And molder in dust away.

I think when my mother attended school, they did a great deal of memorizing. She knew so many poems. Some of these same poems are studied in literature courses by student's today.

About the time I entered high school in the late 1920s, the Big Band era came into being. For me there isn't any music that comes close matching those great bands with their great singers.

Some of the band leaders of that time were Tommy Dorsey, Les Brown, Guy Lombardo, Lawrence Welk, Glen Miller, Kay Kaiser, and many others. All of them played in dance halls around the country, and each had their own singers who sang the popular songs of the era. Some of the singers we enjoyed were: Bing Crosby, Rudy Vallee, Frank Sinatra, Perry Como, Al Jolson, Lena Horne, The Andrew Sisters, Jo Stafford, Frances Langford, and of course the incomparable, Kate Smith.

Who could ever forget Kate Smith as she sang with that beautiful voice: When the moon comes over the mountain, I'll be there with my memories of you. We thrilled as we heard Bing Crosby croon: When the B-B-B blue of the night meets the gold of the day, someone waits for you.

Music always reflects the times, and it can be reflective, nostalgic or humorous. When I was born in 1916, during the First World War, the popular songs were, Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag, The Rose of No Man's Land, and It's a Long Way to Tipperary. I was too

young to remember those songs, but mother would often sing them.

Later, during the Great Depression, the popular songs were those that kept people's minds off their troubles. Some of these were, Mairzy Doats, Three Little Fishies, Happy Days are Here Again, and Side by Side. I remember those songs well.

When I was a young adult during the Second World War, we sang, Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer, Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition, Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree with Any One Else but Me, They're Either Too Gray or Too Grassy Green, This is the Army Mr. Jones, I'll Get By, and who can ever forget Kate Smith singing, God bless America? White Christmas and I'll be Home for Christmas were tear jerkers, and to this day favorites at Christmas time.

Chautauqua

Each summer during the early 1920s my dad would come home with a smile on his face when he told us that the Chautauqua shows were coming to Curlew. This was indeed a great day. More entertainment. This was before we had our first radio. Chautauqua shows generally lasted five days. As I recall there were two musical shows, two plays, and a show with a speaker who spoke on issues of the day.

I did not like that one. We begged dad to buy tickets, which would enable us to go every night. He teased us and said they were too expensive, so we didn't know if we were going or not. In the end he always did and oh how glad we were. One Chautauqua show I particularly remember was Abbie's Irish Rose. I really loved those musicals with their handsomely dressed men and their beautifully attired ladies. How they could dance and play those shiny instruments. I remember especially the xylophone. I immediately wanted one.

Victrolas and Radios

We had a Victrola in our house which played the old 78 rpm vinyl records. One record I all liked was, The Preacher and the Bear. I thought it was so funny. It was a song about a preacher who went hunting on a Sunday and was chased up a tree by a bear. Part of the song was:

Oh Lord you delivered Jonah,
From the belly of a whale,
Two Hebrew children from the fiery furnace,
The Good Book does declare,
Oh Lord, if you can't help me,
For goodness sake don't you help that bear.

In 1929 the year I entered high school, my parents bought their first radio. It made a major change in our lives. We not only could

listen to good music, but could also hear the latest news broadcasts. In addition to farming, my dad was now in the livestock business and could hear the latest market quotes. This was a great help for him. As far as he was concerned, this was the only thing the radio was good for. He never cared for music.

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During the days when mother was working in the kitchen she would listen to the `soaps', including Ma Perkins, One Man's Family, Kitty Keene, Private Detective, and John's Other Wife. In the evening we listened to Fibber McGee and Molly with their famous overflowing hall closet, Amos and Andy and their escapades, Abbott and Costello were always a delight, Jack Benny who always made us chuckle, and of course there was George Burns and Gracie Allen. Was there ever better entertainment or anything funnier? Many of these shows were popular during the Great Depression, and we needed some light entertainment to lift our spirits.

Movies and Sundays

When I was in country school and junior high, the only movies were the silent kind, but by the time I entered high school in 1929, `talkies' came on the scene. They were only

black and white, but it was great to hear the voices of the actors. In those days movies always started with a News of the Day newsreel. It was exciting to see pictures of the happenings all around the world. Next came a cartoon. We really enjoyed the antics of Bugs Bunny and all the other characters. And then finally, the main attraction. This was a great evening out. You could go to the movies for 10 cents for a child and 25 cents for an adult.

During the Depression years theater owners had dish nights. On these nights women crowded into the theater in order to get a free dish. The goal was to complete the entire dinnerware set of 112 pieces. Later, this dinnerware was called, Depression Glass, and was a collector's item. When dish night wasn't enough to bring in patrons, theater owners started a bank night. On these nights about halfway through the movie, the film was stopped and a ticket was drawn from the big glass container that was placed on the stage. If you were the lucky person whose number was picked, you won the nightly jackpot. Many people went to the movie for no other reason than hoping to win that jackpot of maybe $25.

When I was in high school my friends and myself would often go to a lake on Sunday afternoons. We always like to go to Silver Lake near Ayrshire. In those days the lake had a nice sandy bottom that sloped off slowly. A little ways from shore a raft was anchored that was always loaded with kids. It wasn't hard to reach the raft, but any kid that couldn't swim didn't dare slip off on the deep side. One day one of the boys pushed me off the deep side. I couldn't swim. I thrashed about for a while until another boy jumped in and pulled me out. The boy who pushed me in thought it was funny.

Flat Tires and Sundays in the Park

When I was in grade school my dad bought our first car. It was a Model-T Ford. It didn't go as fast as Spot, but then again, it didn't buck like Spot. And oh what fun! In case of a flat tire we stopped, took the tire off the rim, took out the innertube, took out a small repair kit, and proceeded to patch the hole. We then did these steps in reverse order, pumped up the tire, and away we'd go until the next flat. Once my date and I had two flats on our way home from the movies. I don't know if my mother believed us, but it was true. Really.

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Many picnics were held in the State Parks. These included family reunions as well as school and church picnics. All picnic dinners had fried chicken, potato salad, baked beans, and probably a couple of pies. Ice cream was always a treat in the middle of the afternoon. Two or three families were designated to furnish this delicious dessert.

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Making ice cream was always a major event at our house. Mother would mix eggs, sugar, and milk and cook this mixture until it became a custard. She would then pour this custard into a metal container and fill it to the top with cream. Then, dad would set the metal container in the ice cream maker and pack it with ice. He would then turn the crank while adding more ice and salt. Soon, the crank was hard to turn and you knew the custard was almost frozen. I always stood by waiting for the container to be opened. I surely wanted to lick that paddle.

Togetherness

Back before the roads were paved and even before they were graded and graveled, there was the horse and buggy. We often hitched up Spot to the buggy and visited our friends on a Sunday afternoon. Sunday afternoon get-togethers were a way of life.

Neighbor helping neighbor was also a way of life in those days. Whenever hay was put up, two neighbors would help each other, exchanging work. When there was sickness, hot soup or some other goodies were taken to the sick ones.

There were several activities in which people worked together. One was threshing.

Threshing

Threshing was a time neighbors worked together. There were usually about ten farmers who formed a threshing run. They would then hire someone who owned a threshing machine to thresh their oats.

The farmers with small farms generally furnished one man, a hayrack, and a team of horses. Those with larger farms would generally furnish two men, a hayrack, and a wagon with a team of horses. The younger men

would fill the hayracks with bundles of oats, which had been cut and shocked a few weeks earlier. They then took turns pitching these bundles into the threshing machine, where the oats would be separated from the straw. The oats ended up in a wagon and the straw was blown in another direction onto a huge stack. The older men usually drove the wagons of oats to a granary where it was unloaded.

After the threshing was done, we had a huge straw stack that was used for feed and bedding for the animals. It was also possible for a little girl to play and slide down that straw stack. It was also very big and it was possible to fall and get hurt.

While the men were threshing, my mother and sisters (and myself, when I was older), would be working inside. Right after breakfast my mother would bake about five pies, which was all our oven would hold. Since apples were ripe, she made nice spicy apple pies. A typical threshers' dinner would be roast beef, potatoes and gravy, green beans, cabbage coleslaw, sliced cucumbers and onions, sliced tomatoes, fresh-baked bread, home-churned butter, and pie.

Drinking water was taken to the men in a large cream can. Quite often we took sandwiches to

them in mid-morning. This was not called coffee break, but the mid-morning lunch.

The younger girls had to help too. They would set up an area where the men could wash for dinner. They would set a box or old table under a shade tree and place a washtub of water on it. They would also hang towels and a mirror from the branch of a tree. Just before the men came in to dinner, mother would get a bushy branch from a tree. When I was young my job was to stand at the door when the men came in the house and 'shoo' away the flies.

The men were generally famished and would eat a large meal. Finally, after they had finished eating, they would go out and rest in the shade of a big tree before going back to work. They did a lot of laughing and joshing at this time. After an hour, it was back to work.

After the men had finished eating, the women would finally relax for the first time all day and eat their own meals. They then had a mountain of dishes to wash. Flies were always a constant problem, and the women might spray the kitchen at this time. In spite of the tree branch being waved, many flies got through. Some people hung a roll of a sticky tape from the ceiling of the kitchen to catch flies, but

it wasn't very appetizing having a hundred dead flies hanging over the dinner table.

The first thing every woman asked her husband when he got home from a day's threshing was, "What did you have for dinner?" I think most wives wanted to serve the best meal. Some wives were known for great meals, and some were known for rather skimpy ones.

Hog Butchering

During mid-winter every farmer butchered hogs for their yearly meat supply. Early in the morning a neighbor would arrive to help my dad butcher three hogs. A barrel of scalding water and a table, consisting of a door lying across a couple of sawhorses, had been set as far away from the house as possible. After a hog was killed and gutted, it was bathed in the scalding water, and laid out on the table, where it was skinned and scraped clean. The head was cut off, the carcass was strung up on a rope, and the organs were removed. My mother was always there to pick up the liver and heart. She would soak those in cold water and fry them for supper.

The remainder of the carcass was then taken to the corncrib and hung in the alleyway, where it froze solid and was kept for several days to cure. Of course the crib doors had to be

shut tight so foxes, raccoons, and other wild animals wouldn't steal it.

After a few days, the carcass was removed to the washhouse where it was cut into parts ready for the kitchen. The fat was trimmed and later rendered into lard. The shoulder meat was cut into small squares and put in glass jars. Mother would then cook these jars in the oven for at least three hours. The hams were rubbed with brown sugar, curing salt, and another substances, which I do not remember. After it was rubbed thoroughly, mother wrapped the ham in brown paper and put it in a cloth bag, where it was hung in a dark room at the back of the washhouse. Mother always fried the pork chops and steak, and put them in crock jars and covered them with lard. If they got a little moldy, you could just scrape off the mold and the meat below was fine. In fact, it was delicious.

The head of the hog was cleaned and cut into small pieces where it was then put in a large pan of water. It was then boiled until the meat could be easily removed. From this we made scrapple. Fried in butter there was no better supper than scrapple on a cold winter's night.

The fat of the hog was stored in a cold place until a warm spring day when we would put it

in a large black iron kettle placed in the middle of the barnyard or some other place away from the house. We would start a fire under it and shortly the fat would begin to melt into lard. This lard was used to make piecrusts, fried potatoes, and anything else we fried. The lard was stored in crock jars and kept in the cellar. Most people butchered one hog that was a little fatter than the others. In this way they had plenty of lard to last out the year.

After the lard was drained off, all that remained were the cracklings. They were delicious to eat. Rather fattening, or actually very fattening, but delicious. I loved warm cracklings. On another warm day, water and lye were added to the remaining cracklings and another fire was built. Upon heating this mixture turned into a thick, goody soup, which was poured out on a flat surface to cool and harden. After it hardened, it was cut into large bars. The result was the strongest soap you've ever seen in your life. This lye soap was used to wash our clothes.

There is a lot of truth to the old saying, "Everything except the squeal was used when you butchered a hog."

Radio Days

When the radio first came out, we never had one but one of our neighbors did. We, along with other friends and neighbors, would go to their house and everyone would gather around the radio to listen to special programs. More often than not, the static was so bad that nothing could be heard. It was still a lot of fun trying to catch every third word.

Every radio needed an antenna. After we bought our first radio we ran a wire from the house to the top of the windmill. This made for good reception most of the time. One night lightening struck the windmill, and it sure woke us up. Our farm didn't have electricity so the radio ran on batteries. A large battery, similar to a car battery, was placed on the floor near the radio.

When someone died, neighbors would bring food to the bereaved family. The funeral director, or undertaker, as they were called then, came to the home and prepared the body. Several men in the neighborhood would stay with the body all night so the family could get some rest. They did this until the funeral ceremony. I remember my first funeral. The funeral car, or hearse, was white. I thought it looked like a ghost. I did not like its appearance and was glad its style was changed so it looked more like any other car.

The Great Depression

One way to show your age is to start talking about all the tough times you had during the "Great Depression." I hate to admit it,especially to my children, but some of the happiest times of my life took place during those years.

It is true we had no money. Farmers were losing their farms. People in town were losing their jobs. The dust was everywhere. And to top it off, the summer of 1935 was the hottest on record.

People who lived in cities say they will never forget the soup lines. But on the farms we always had plenty of food. We had chickens for eggs, we butchered our hogs, we had fruit orchards, and a huge vegetable garden. It was not unusual to find five hundred quarts of fruit and vegetables setting on the cellar shelves.

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Canning days were busy days for mother and my sisters. When I was older, they were busy days for me too. Fruit, such as apples or peaches were peeled, cored and quartered, water added, and then cooked in kettles on the stovetop until they were tender. Sugar was

added during the cooking. The fruit was then poured into quart jars and sealed with a rubber and zinc lid. Tomatoes were canned in this way too. They were cooked with a bit of salt and sealed. No need to add water since they made their own juice. Peas, corn, and beans were cold packed. We would pick the beans the night before canning day. We would then snap the ends off and break them in half. The next morning we put them in sterilized fruit jars, added a little salt, filled the jars with water, and put the lid on loosely. We then set them in the large boiler on the stove. We would fill the boiler with water until it comes almost to the top of the jars. Bring this to a boil, and let it boil for three hours. Carefully remove the jars from the water and seal the lids down tight so that no air gets into the jars. If air gets into the jar, the food will spoil. They will keep all winter and taste so good during that cold weather. A boiler will hold sixteen one-quart jars. We would probably can at least three boilers full during the fall season. Corn was canned the same way, except it had to be boiled four hours in order for it to keep. I never canned peas, since they spoiled so easily, and they were a great deal of work to shell. We probably had peas for dinner every day during the season.

Since we never had any fresh vegetables on our table over the winter, we were always anxious for fresh summer vegetables. Before the vegetables were ready, my mother and I would go searching along the fencerows for new little shoots of mustard, dandelion, lambs quarters and many other plants that I don't remember their names. These were washed and put in a kettle of water to boil. Oh, so good. They were a good substitute for spinach. I always looked forward to this outing.

Hobos and Pegleg

Let me tell you about hobos. The first thing you should know about hobos is that they weren't considered tramps. A tramp was a person who never worked and didn't want to work. A hobo was a person who was out of work but wanted to work. Many hobos would split wood and do other odd jobs in exchange for food or money. We always gave them some food, even if it was only some bread and jelly. We always had milk. Hobos were always appreciative of whatever was given to them.

I remember 'Pegleg,' as we all called him. I have no idea who he was or what was his name, but once every summer, he came in his old covered wagon, pulled by an old dappled gray horse, followed by an old dog. We called him Pegleg because he had one wooden leg. Or rather it was a round piece of wood, not much

larger in diameter than a broomstick. This was fitted to the stump of his leg just above the knee. His pant leg was drawn tight around the wooden leg with a piece of twine. He always sold things like shoelaces, knives and other small items. Mother always bought shoelaces from him. He had long gray hair and a long white beard. He was always polite and we had no fear of him. Sometimes, he would camp out down the road from our house. He would build a small fire over which he cooked his food. You could see his fire burning at night. Some neighbors said that he asked them for food in exchange for his goods, but he never did at our place.

The Big Crash

The stock market was high, farmers were paying big prices for land, and everyone seemed to think the good life would go on forever. Because of this many farmers purchased two or three farms. My dad was very leery of the whole affair. Suddenly, in 1929 the stock market crashed, and the banks closed their doors. People began to lose their farms and money was scarce. I was only in the 9th grade, but I knew something was terribly wrong. My dad was able to hold onto his farm, and we didn't suffer as much as some.

Depression Prices

One time during the Depression I purchased two large bags of groceries. After getting them home, I thought the storekeeper had made a mistake. They were too expensive. He had charged me $2.40. Now, one can spend $50 for two bags of groceries.

Here are some Depression prices from the 1930s:

pound box of crackers	$.08
dozen oranges	$.25
three cans of pork and beans	$.19
10 large bars of soap	$.25
pound of coffee	$.29
pound of raisins	$.09
box of bran flakes	$.09
pound of hamburger	$.25
pound of roast beef	$.15

Every town had two or three grocery stores. There were no large supermarkets. The groceries were placed on shelves behind long counters. You stood at the counter and read your list to the clerk who gathered the groceries and put them in a sack. Many things we take for granted today were not found in stores then.

Some wages at the time were :

monthly teacher salary	$60
housework for one week	$3
farm worker for one month	$30
doctor's bill for childbirth	$25

Farm workers often worked for room and board during the winter months with no pay. The price of hogs dropped to a few cents a pound during this period. Corn sold at a dime per bushel. Corn was so low that many farmers burned it instead of coal. It did make good heat.

Prices of other items were :

man's wool top coat	$10
pair of shoes	$2
a new car	$600
gallon of gas	$.18

We still had fun even if we didn't have much money. Families took turns having house parties. We would just roll up the wool rug, if you were lucky enough to have one, and someone would play the fiddle or the squeeze box. We would collect money to pay for a fiddler. These fiddlers were only too glad to play for whatever the fellows could scrape together. Each man would put whatever he could into the pot, even if it was only a nickel or a dime. Then we danced until the wee hours of the morning. Everyone took their

children with them, and when it was time to go home, you would find them curled up among the coats.

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There were several very hot summers during the Thirties. The summer of 1936 seemed worse than the others. Many businesses gave the ladies a fan. These were made of cardboard, about five by seven inches in size. On one end was a short but sturdy stick to hold on to as you fanned yourself. On one side was their advertisement and on the other side was a pretty picture. I think all funeral homes gave them away. In church the ladies would generally fan themselves as they listened to the sermon. A few stores had a ceiling fan. Only the towns had electricity.

Threshing oats was rough in the summer of 1936. It was so hot the men couldn't stand to work during the day. One time they decided to start threshing about three o'clock in the morning and stop when it got too hot. Then, they would continue in the evening. The wives would do the morning and evening chores, which included milking the cows, slopping the hogs, feeding the chickens, and gathering the eggs. And of course making the meals for the threshers.

To earn money during the Depression, all farm families took their eggs to town and sold them. This money was used to buy groceries and other supplies. We received about 12 cents a dozen for eggs. A twelve-dozen crate brought $3.60 and this went for weekly groceries. Going to town on Saturday night was the social event of the week. One could visit with neighbors and catch up on the latest goings on.

Sack Dresses

Chicken supplement came in cloth bags and some feed companies decided to put pretty designs on the bags. This was a great idea since we could make dresses from this fabric. It was a coarse weave but who cared. It was free. The last thing a man usually heard, when he walked out the door on his way to the feed store was, "Be sure to pick out a nice design."

Dresses weren't the only things made out of feed sacks. The white sacks were made into underwear, bed sheets, and table cloths. People used a table cloth whenever they had guests for dinner. The brand name of the feed was always stamped in big red letters on the white sacks, and sometimes it was very hard to bleach out. Some women didn't bother to do this when they made children's undies.. Sometimes you would see a little girl tumbling about in the grass, with Purina Chicken

Starter across her bottom. We discovered if you boiled the sacks in water and lye soap, the letters would come out quite nicely.

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When shirt collars became worn and ragged, we used a razor blade to cut the threads and remove the collar from the shirt. The collar was then turned around and sewn back onto the shirt. After all, only one side was visible. When a child's dress became too short, the hem was let down. If the worn line showed, we would sew some rick-rack or pretty material over it. Ruffles could be added to the bottom of the dress to give it another year of life. We learned many things to dress up old clothes. Clothes were always purchased a little big so they could be worn more than one year.

> *There, how do you like it? The sweater. I just hope it isn't too big. I'll drive over tomorrow and give it to her. I have to go through Curlew, you know. Maybe I should drive by the old place. You know we buried Spot next to a big rock right by the road. I wonder if that rock is still there? Probably not. Don't worry, I'm not going to keep you much longer. But I can't let you go until you hear about*

the winter of `36. It all started to snow on the morning of ...

The Winter of `36

In addition to the hot summers during the Depression, there was also a very bad winter. If you ask anyone from those days the worst weather he ever remembers, he will always say the Great Blizzard of `36. The blizzard raged for three days straight, then there was three days of extremely cold weather, then another three days of blizzard. Some drifts were so big that they reached the telephone lines. The temperature fell to 25 degrees below zero for three weeks straight. Should I tell you more?

Farmers hitched their horses to bobsleds and drove across the fields, going around the drifts, to town to buy groceries. Any man that made it through brought groceries for his neighbors. The cows were milked by hand and the men would come to the house after every cow to warm their hands. The snow blew so hard you couldn't see the barn from the house. The snow was higher than all the fences so trenches had to be dug next to them to keep the livestock from walking over them. The snow was packed as hard as dirt and all this had to be done by hand.

One day we were looking out the window, and we saw a calf standing in the haymow door of the barn. The snow was so deep he had walked right up the bank.

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Those storms did not stop the stork. One woman we knew gave birth during this time. Because of the storm the doctor was unable to get to their house. Fortunately, a neighbor was there and was able to assist the mother. Twins were born. One died.

The End of the Age of Innocence

In 1933 I graduated from high school, just a few months after President Roosevelt was inaugurated the 32nd President of the United States. (It was also the year the Prohibition Act was repealed, thus officially ending the 'speak-easy' days of the Roaring Twenties.) After inauguration, President Roosevelt began the New Deal, a series of work programs designed to help the country out of its economic woes.

Little did I know as I gave the salutatory address to the Curlew graduating class, that the country still had several more years of hard times before the Depression would spend its course. Nor did I know or much care about world problems and the political turmoil in

Germany and Japan. Until now, my life had been centered around a small farm a mile north and three-quarters of a mile west of Curlew. But, within a few years, myself and the entire senior class, along with millions of other Americans, would be engaged in the struggle of our lives. And little did I know as I gave my salutatory address, that within ten years I would send a husband to fight in the Pacific. A husband that was also my childhood sweetheart, and the boy that always looked for the flatiron on the old base burner – "just to keep your feet warm," he'd tease me. But, as difficult and trying as the times would be, with the values and lessons we learned in childhood, we would all survive.

(the end)