

PROLOGUE

ALWAYS HOME

During my childhood and teen years, home was in a beautiful, little Ohio town. It was my universe. I have written the following as a tribute to the town, and the people, who lived there. My family and our daily life is representative of other families, who lived in that era. It was a time when neighbors shared each other's hardships, sorrows and joys. We were all members of the town family.

All the people, who have had the privilege of living in a small town many years ago, will relate to my memories.

It is an era gone by.

Molly (Stewart) Johnston

2006

In the little home, they had purchased before their marriage, my parents, Edson and Grace, welcomed me into their lives on a cold March day. Mother was attended by Dr. Barry, a local family doctor, and he was aided by a gentle, motherly lady, who then remained to help mother for two weeks. As was the custom, the doctor never saw mother until the onset of labor. I'm sure, if an expectant mother were having problems, a visit to the doctor would have been necessary. After giving birth the mothers usually stayed in bed for at least a week.

Five years after my birth Edson, Jr. (I always called him Bubby) joined our family and four years later Allen was born. Our family was now complete.

Our parents had never read books on parenting, or any of the "how-to" books or articles on the subject, that appear to be so necessary nowadays; they seemed to know intuitively how to guide a child in a tender way. However, the promise of a spanking by dad, 'when he came home in the evening' was occasionally thought to be warranted for some especially bad behavior that had

occurred during the day. The time spent until dad arrived home, anticipating our punishment, was worse than the actual reprimand. Most of the important life lessons that children learned were taught by the examples they observed in the everyday lives of their parents and neighbors. Edson and Grace surrounded their three children with love and security, a legacy that has remained with us all our lives. All our endeavors were encouraged and applauded, which planted the seed of self-confidence in each of us.

Our plain little home was a typical Midwestern frame house consisting of a living room, dining room, kitchen, three bedrooms, a front porch and a back porch. When I was four years old, dad installed a bathroom. Such luxury! In those days of no credit cards, purchases were made only if you had the cash, which made the luxuries we were able to buy, more meaningful than they are in this age of plastic and instant gratification. The dark and dreary basement was put to good use. On one side of the basement was a room, which housed the big coal furnace and the coal bin. The other side of the basement was used as the laundry room and for storing all of mother's home canned vegetables, fruits and jellies.

The winters were very cold and we had no heat piped to our upstairs bedrooms while I was a small child. Early in the winter the windows froze over in beautiful designs that mother said were created by Jack Frost and these works of art remained for months. Needless to say, the bedrooms were extremely cold causing me to snuggle under many heavy blankets at night. I could barely turn over due to their weight. Always in winter before going to bed, my clothes for the next day were taken downstairs and hung over a heat register so they would be warm in the morning. This made getting up on the frosty mornings more palatable. Poor dad, he arose early to get the furnace fired up each morning so his family would be comfortable. I never heard him complain.

As I journey back to my earliest years, I once again feel a sense of being totally loved, a sense of security, a sense of everything being right with the world and as I wrap myself in these memories, my senses are inundated with the warmness of these feelings. While my parents were the “rock” upon which I stood,

there were other contributors to these feelings – namely the times, the place and the people, who lived in that place.

THE TIMES

The times, I speak of, were quiet times without the babble of television, movies or radio. The reception on our little radio was so poor that we rarely listened to it. It was a time of story telling, piano lessons, singing with each other, church youth leagues and choirs, hiking, bicycle riding, sledding, baseball, football, picnics, swimming in the creek, reading and visiting on front porches. A time that allowed us space to dream and make believe. We had time to stretch out under a huge maple tree or sit along the bank of a brook and nurture our thoughts and beliefs. I believe, the mind is never at rest and because we had the serenity and time, we were able to listen to our thoughts; get in tune with our spirit.

THE PLACE

The place was our town and all the countryside around it. Located in the Midwest and surrounded by rolling hills, bordered by a lazy river and creek, it was home to a diverse group of people. As far as we, the children, were concerned, it was the center of the universe. When my mother was a youngster, the Ohio and Erie Canal ran through the center of the town. There had been a drawbridge installed so that people could travel from one side of town to the other. By the time I was a child, the canal and drawbridge were gone but there were many stories told about the canal days. Stories abounded but I loved the ones about the winter nights when people gathered along the canal and skated up and down while bonfires along the banks lit the way as well as provided a place to warm the skaters' frosty fingers and toes.

Another story I heard that was supposed to have happened along the canal. A group of four men, who had spent the evening imbibing in a bar that fronted the canal, emerged and staggered toward the canal. One of the men declared, that if they all had faith enough, he could walk on the water just as Jesus had done. Of course, the other three declared their faith and he stepped

toward the water and immediately sank. When he reappeared out of the murky waters, he shouted, “Now dammit! You just didn’t have enough faith!” I can’t vouch for the authenticity of the story but it was the sort of joke that people liked to tell.

The Pennsylvania Railroad ran through the town going East-West and made stops at our depot. It was an enjoyable pastime for folks during their nightly strolls to stop at the depot and watch departures and arrivals. Many times I watched the train in the evenings and envied the people being served in the lighted dining cars with the starched tablecloths, gleaming silver and beautiful china. It looked so glamorous to a young child. I would dream about their possible destinations.

Main Street was the focal point of the town. Main Street was the place where everyone shopped and transacted their business, kept appointments with doctors, dentists and lawyers. Unlike the malls of today the shops were owned and operated by local townspeople and these shops were varied and unique. It was

a wonderful time for all of us living in that era, because all the activity was located in one area.

One business, that is not common anymore, was the blacksmith's shop. At the end of Main Street on a little side street was Ike Norris's blacksmith shop. It was fun to watch him, clad in his leather apron, which protected him from the hot sparks that flew, pounding and welding the iron and fitting horses with new shoes.

In our little town the favored desserts of most people were cream pie; vanilla cream, coconut cream, butterscotch or chocolate. In the east end of town, built on the river bank was a restaurant that served, what everybody acknowledged, was the prize cream pie. They called it Angel Pie. Everywhere I have lived, I have ordered cream pie and have never found one as good as Angel Pie. I'm sharing the recipe with you.

ANGEL PIE

CRUST;

1 box zwiebach bread

1 lb nuts – any kind

butter size of a walnut

Grind bread and nuts and mix with butter.

Pat in the bottom of pan

Save some crumbs for the topping.

FILLING:

1 quart and 1 pint of milk

$\frac{3}{4}$ lb. Oleo or butter

6 eggs

5 tblsp. flour

3 tblsp. Cornstarch

1 tsp vanilla

Put 1 qt. milk and butter or oleo in a double boiler to

warm

Separate eggs.

Mix 1 pt. milk and egg yolks, sugar, flour,

cornstarch, vanilla, add to double boiler and cook ` until thick.

” Pour into crust.

Beat egg whites and place on top of filling.

Place in oven to brown.

Makes two large pies or 3 small ones.

THE PEOPLE

Being born and growing up in the environment of this small town, I learned most of life’s important lessons; love, loyalty, compassion, the ‘can-do’ spirit, patriotism, responsibility and faith and that each person has an important role in this life journey. My teachers in these ‘life’ lessons were first of all my parents, but also the people of the town by their every day actions.

As youngsters we were watched over by everyone. Not only did we represent our family but we represented our town and

everyone had high expectations for us. We never wanted to disappoint them.

This is not only my story but the story of my town and the people, who lived there. You will hear more about these people as I continue my sentimental journey.

SEASONS

As winter eased its grip and spring approached, the Jack Frost artistry disappeared from my bedroom windows. The breezes became mild with a touch of warmness, the days lengthened gradually, and best of all, the spring flowers started to bud. All the women had beautiful flower gardens. The lovely Crocus, Jonquils, Iris and Lilacs were the heralds of spring. With the leafing of the trees and the flowers blooming the landscape became transformed and our spirits soared.

Mother always rejoiced when she saw the Robins had returned as their arrival, for her, was a sign that spring had truly

arrived. She loved her birds, especially Robins, and always made sure the birdbath had fresh water and there were plenty of bread crumbs for all the birds. I knew of no one in those days, who purchased bird feed. When I had my first home, I tried to entice the birds with breadcrumbs, but they were not interested. Times had changed, even for the birds; they were probably patronizing bird feeders that were well stocked with all the gourmet seeds available for their snacks.

It seems to me as I search my memory, that every home had a house garden. These gardens provided all the vegetables needed for the family's daily table and enough to preserve for winter. When the earth started to warm again after the cold winter, all the men could be seen plowing or spading their plots, after which they gently planted their treasured seeds. After a time, stakes and poles appeared in the gardens to support the climbing plants. These gardens received loving care during the growing season from men, who had never gone to agricultural school but had learned all they knew from their fathers. Each evening after supper, each man was in his garden hoeing, watering and tending to any needs of his

prized plants. I'm convinced that gardening was a labor of love for all these men and they were rewarded with a bounty of the most delicious vegetables I have ever eaten. For a taste bud treat, I can think of nothing better than a ripened tomato eaten right after plucking from the vine. One of the rewards these home gardeners received was the bragging rights they earned for producing the tallest corn by July 4th (it had to be knee high), the first peas and the biggest, juiciest, tastiest tomatoes. It was a yearly ritual to compare the results of their garden with those of their neighbors. It was all in good fun.

One of the rites of spring in every home was spring housecleaning. It was one of the major events of the season. As soon as the weather had warmed enough to open doors and windows, mother would summon we, children, and dole out our assignments for the task at hand. We proceeded to turn the interior of our home inside-out and upside-down in order to insure there was not a speck of dirt or dust left from the winter months. We must remember those were the days when homes were heated by

coal furnaces, stoves and fireplaces and before the advent of powerful carpet sweepers and attachments.

All rugs and carpets were rolled up and taken outside, hoisted over the clothesline and beaten with a wire carpet beater. It was hard work and if you were allergic to dust, you never wanted to be anywhere near the beating in progress. Not only did the furnace cause dust and dirt to adhere to the rugs, but also to the walls of the house. We all had papered walls and they had to be cleaned also. Mother bought cans of a pink soft spongy substance, that resembled Play-Dough. Each person took a fist full of the substance, balled it up and proceeded to wipe down the walls with it. We had to replace these balls of cleaner often because after we had used it for a short time, it was no longer pink, but black through and through from the dirt we had erased from the wall. After the walls were cleaned to mother's satisfaction, storm windows were removed, all the windows cleaned and screens installed. Needless to say, all the furniture was either washed or polished, depending on the finish. Bed linens, pillows, quilts and blankets were aired and those not needed for the summer were

stored. Mother somehow managed to even get the mattresses out to the fresh air and sun. Most of our curtains were a lacy material. They were gently washed and heavily starched before being attached to tiny, pin-like protrusions on a curtain stretcher for drying. When they were dry, the curtains were almost as stiff as a board and ready for hanging. The carpets and rugs were put back in place and our pristine home was ready for summer living.

One of the yearly signs of the new season was when all the porches were dressed for the season and we looked forward to relaxing and visiting there. The porch furniture was given a coat of fresh paint, starched cloths were placed on the tables and potted plants appeared. On our porch we had a very large swing with a soft pad for the back and seat and the back could be let down enabling two to sleep there. I spent many wonderful summer nights sleeping there with my friend, Eileen, and falling asleep to the rhythm of night sounds. We all loved that swing.

All the cleaning done, we were now ready for summer. Had we only realized, that with all the hefting, pulling and stretching, we were getting the benefits of a good spa.

Decoration Day (now called Memorial Day) was a time when the whole town honored its heroes from the different wars. We were all oozing with patriotism and pride and this day was cause for a parade and much celebration. The main focus of the parade was, of course, the veterans, our heroes; men from the Spanish American War and World War I. The World War I veterans were all young and vital and they carried the flag proudly as they stepped lively to the marching music provided by the school band. The veterans of the Spanish American War were not able to walk the route and were driven in open cars. School children were invited to march in the parade and we were all there en masse. We made up the largest contingent in the parade. It came at a time when all our mothers' spring flowers were in bloom

and thus, we were provided with huge bouquets that we carried along with a small American flag. I can still see us dressed in our Sunday best, carrying our huge bunches of flowers and waving our flags to the crowds along the way. All the citizens, who were not in the parade, lined the parade route waving flags and cheering. The destination was always the cemetery, where flags had been placed on each veteran's grave by the American Legion Auxiliary. After we arrived at the cemetery, we added our flowers and flags to the veterans' graves. Everyone then gathered around the speaker's platform to hear his patriotic address.

Patriotism was instilled in us at an early age.

Gradually, gently, the days lengthened and summer was born. As a young child I would awaken from sleep on the warm summer mornings to bird song, a dog barking in the distance and a feeling of serenity that has never been matched since those days.

What a joy to greet a beautiful new day without a care in the world.

In our town in those days we had no organized play, no care centers, no parks, no scouting, no camps, no television. The days were ours to choose the games or adventures we wanted to enjoy. We all know, children have great imaginations and if they are allowed to give wings to those thoughts, wonderful things happen. On the hot summer days all the youngsters might be found swimming in the little creek. Without coaching or body guards most of us learned to swim there and I could hardly wait to demonstrate for my mother and dad when I was able to swim over and back in the little stream. When I became a stronger swimmer and graduated from the creek, dad took me to the river in the evenings after supper for my swim. I was so proud when I announced that I had passed the test of swimming across the river and back. Of course, dad had been by my side.

The Warner family lived next door to us and our lives were intertwined in many ways. Like every other family, they had a

large garden for vegetables and they also had several apple trees. These trees were planted in a row and each tree was a different variety. There were “eating” apples and “cooking” apples. Whenever mother decided to bake a pie, I would be handed a basket and sent over to collect the apples best suited for baking. The apple trees separated the Warner home from a very large field in which they planted corn some summers, but many summers the field was not planted and this large bare field provided all the youngsters with a fine area in which to play. When we were in our pre-teen years, we gathered there for games of Baseball. Most of the girls were tomboys so we played and enjoyed many of the boys’ games. We played hard but were never destructive of property because, by example our parents and neighbors had taught us respect for the property of others. Warner’s field was bounded on one side by the Buckhorn Creek and the growth along its banks provided fine hiding places when our game was Cowboys and Indians or Hide and Seek. Warner’s field was a special place where we gathered to plot our activities for the day.

Our play in Warner's field would be interrupted for a week in the summer when the carnival came to town and made camp there. One of the town organizations, usually the American Legion, would sponsor a carnival and it was an event of huge proportions in our quiet little town. I cannot tell you how exciting it was for me because I lived next door to all the activities and from the arrival of the first carnival wagon in the field until they "pulled up stakes" a week later, I spent all my waking hours with the carnival people. One year I was befriended by one of the "carny" women, who ran one of the booths. During that exciting week, I always ate lunch with her and one afternoon, when mother came to check on me, she found me in this lady's tent taking a nap. Mother always trusted that I was all right, but she was watchful. The carnival broke camp on Saturday night after the last shows and I remember lying in bed with a sad heart, listening to the loading of the trucks and vans knowing that we would have to wait another year for the color and excitement to return. In my mind I can still hear the carousel music and the babble of happy voices.

At least once during the summer a medicine man would appear with his wagon and set it up in Warner's field. He stayed one or two nights and from the back of his wagon, he offered for sale the magic elixir that "could cure all ailments". It was surprising how many people came to the field to stand before the wagon, listen to the huckster and buy his product. I'm sure there were no advertisements announcing his arrival. His arrival was, no doubt, heralded by word of mouth after people had viewed his colorful, horse drawn wagon moving through town and heading for Warner's field. One of the medicine men had a contest to see who could win a prize for singing. I raised my hand to enter the contest and sang "Stars Are The Windows of Heaven". I won the contest and the prize was a Bon Bon dish – cobalt blue and nesting in a silver holder. Somewhere through the years this prize has been lost and I have forgotten the song, but the memory will always be with me of that little six year old girl holding up her hand to enter the contest.

Summer was a lazy time and we, children, drifted from one activity to another without any pre-planning or the involvement of

adults. Some days the girls picked loads of clover, which grew in profusion in all the yards, and we spent hours braiding them to make crowns for ourselves. Another pastime for the girls was the making of cradles out of oatmeal boxes that we always asked our mothers to save just for that purpose. Little celluloid dolls, that we purchased from the Five and Ten Cent store, fit neatly in these homemade cradles. Of course, we had to get swatches of material from our mothers to line the cradles, make little pillows and covers for the cradle and clothes for the doll. The sewing was clumsy and we suffered many pricked fingers but it was our initiation into the art of sewing.

All my friends and I had paper dolls that we delighted in dressing and then making up stories about their lives. Hopscotch was a game that we got very good at and we spent many hours trying to improve. We never went to a roller rink, there wasn't one in our town, so we skated on cement walks that were smooth enough. The skates were attached to our shoes by tightening clamps around the soles of the shoes with a key. Sometimes this apparatus worked loose and the skate fell off causing us to take a rather bad fall. There were many bruised knees but after an

application of iodine and a bandage this mishap never deterred us from continuing our skating.

Some other pastimes were jumping rope, walking on stilts, our fathers made for us, and swinging to the heavens on swings that hung from big trees in our yards.

While the girls were occupied with dolls and such, the boys could be seen drawing a large circle in a smooth patch of dirt, thus setting up for a game of marbles. The boys all had large pouches of marbles and would play for hours seeing who could garner the most marbles from their opponents. Each of them had a favorite shooter, which they thought, gave them an advantage in the game. You could always tell when the boys had been playing marbles when you saw their dirty knees caused by all the kneeling.

Summer evenings at twilight we enjoyed catching fireflies and putting them into Mason jars. There were so many that we were sure they could light the world. What has happened to fireflies? Also, in the evenings we congregated to play Hide and

Seek or Red Light. When the daylight faded, mothers could be heard calling their children home.

As Warner's field and Buckhorn Creek were special to us, so too was the Park Hill. This was the highest hill overlooking the town and only a short distance from the field and creek. This hill was covered with tall trees and overgrown with vines and brush. On one side of the hill was a huge protruding rock and under the rock was a cave. In our minds, we were sure the cave had been home to Indians in an earlier time. The most daring among us wanted to see where the cave would lead, but the idea that this cave might have become home to snakes kept us from venturing very far into the darkness. We were probably very wise.

One day the young boys brought hatchets to the hill to cut down some of the saplings in order to build a log cabin. I don't think it was ever finished but oh, the fun we had for days trying to put it together. Nothing seemed impossible in those days.

I have another memory of that hill. My friend, Gwen, and I took my dog, Bo-Bo, a hound dog, and went up the hill to play.

We romped all around pretending different situations and at one point, we tied Bo-Bo to a small tree. I have no idea what prompted us to do tie him. The day began to wane, the sun started to set and, I knew, I should be home for supper. We looked and looked but couldn't find Bo-Bo. I started to cry because I didn't want to leave my dog there. Dad climbed part way up the hill to collect me because mother was worried and supper was waiting. He promised he would take me back to get my dog after supper. By the time, we had eaten, it was pitch black outside, so dad went to Warner's and borrowed a lantern. We set off down the Canal road that ran beside the hill and as we approached the hill, dad started calling "Bo-Bo" and was rewarded by a bark and whining. We climbed the hill and his barking and whimpering led us directly to him. I don't know who was happier – Bo-Bo or I. Dad was my hero.

The hill had always been called Park Hill. At one time the owners of the hill deeded it to the town with the agreement that the town would clear it, erect picnic tables and make it truly a park. The town did do all that was required and for a time people went there for outings, reunions, and picnics, but the hill was high and

steep, which made it a real effort for people to reach the top.

Gradually it lost favor as a place to go and the Park Hill reverted to its original condition. I wonder if children still go there with a feeling of excitement, anticipation and a little fear as we did.

When I was a young child, we did not have electric refrigerators and in their place we all had an icebox. This was a rather large insulated box with a big compartment where a block of ice was stored. The rest of the box had shelves for storing food. Of course, the ice lasted only a few days and had to be replaced. Mr. Callentine was our iceman. He had really huge blocks of ice on his truck and he went from house to house where he would learn what size block each household required by a placard placed in the window showing the number of pounds needed. Then he chopped off that size block, grabbed it with large tongs and hoisted it on to a leather pad on his shoulder in order to carry it to the house. Wherever he went there was always a gang of children waiting for him to chip the ice and make his delivery. When he was out of sight, the children jumped onto the truck and took the tiny hunks of ice that had dropped from the chipping. We all

thought, we were doing something unbeknownst to Mr. Callentine because by the time he returned to his truck, we had scattered to hide. I'm sure he was well aware of our antics. That ice tasted better than any popsickle I ever ate. If mother needed more ice before Mr. Callentine was due to make his rounds again, she sent we, children, to the icehouse with my brothers' little red wagon to get a block for the icebox. We always had to buy a few pounds more than could fit in the icebox because so much of it melted before we were able to get it home.

Since food didn't stay fresh for very long in the old icebox, mother dispatched one of her children to the store every day – sometimes more than once. We were fortunate to live only one block from Main Street. Most of the food for our family was purchased from the store owned by Kennedy and Guy. Many of their customers paid once a week which made it easy for mothers to send their children for supplies without having to give them the responsibility of handling the cash for payment. The shopkeepers had a large rack that held a little book for each customer. All

purchases were listed in the book and each weekend mother paid her bill for the previous week's purchases.

Next door to Kennedy and Guy was Murphy's Meat Market. Meat was cut to order and there were huge refrigerated storage places, that held the uncut meat and there was sawdust on the floor where the butchers worked. I remember those stores and their proprietors clearly and with fondness.

One lazy summer day there must have been a lull in our activities, which was very unusual, and so with a little girlfriend in tow I decided to visit some of the local merchants in order to procure some snacks. We went into one store and I took two bananas and told the owner of the store my dad would be in that evening to pay for them. We went to several other stores for candy, gum and other tasty treats and the same line was told to the storekeepers. I'm sure these kindly people were aware that my dad knew nothing of our shenanigans but none of them denied my request. Dad walked to work every day and his route took him down Main Street. Before he arrived home that particular day he

had been told in good humor by one or more of the shopkeepers about the deal I had made with them. I'm sure I should have had a spanking but instead dad gave me a stern lecture and that evening after supper, I had to take him to each store so he could pay my debt and I could apologize to each trusting person. When I think about all this now, I'm struck by the trustfulness on everyone's part; my trust in the shopkeepers and their trust in my dad.

I really didn't make a habit of doing this sort of thing, but there was one other occasion when I took a friend into the ice cream parlor, went up to the counter and asked the owner, "Are you giving ice cream cones away today?" Mother heard about this caper when the owner, who was a friend of mother's, told her apologetically that she so wanted to give us a cone but if she did, every boy and girl in town would surely have been in to claim one.

I believe these two episodes give you an insight into our town family. We all knew each other and were there to lend a hand any time it was needed. It also shows how free we were as little

children to roam everywhere without our mothers worrying because we were watched over by everyone.

Near our home lived Ollie Barnes and his wife. Neither could read or write. They spent their days in their little garden and the only social life they had was visiting with neighbors. Ollie made a living by doing odd jobs. He had a small two-seater buggy and an old horse. When the ripened blackberries, that grew down the canal road had been picked, he loaded his wagon and traveled around town hawking them. The canal road ran by our house, so most days during berry season, I waited for him to pass. He always stopped for me and I had the joy of riding in the buggy and many times being allowed to hold the reins – such a thrill for a little girl who loved horses.

In our small town, where patriotism was one of its most prevalent characteristics, July 4th was cause for a huge celebration. In preparation for the day mothers were always busy making potato salad, baking beans, making coleslaw and lemonade and baking ham loaf, pies and cakes. They always had on hand

wieners and marshmallows for roasting over an open fire in the evening. Flags hung everywhere and there were bands, parades and speakers. The children entered three-legged races, tried to catch a greased pig or to climb a greased flagpole. Of course, in the evening everyone had their fireworks. It was a full day and enjoyed by everyone.

Mother had three sisters; Virginia, Lillie and Mary and two brothers, whose nicknames were Skip and Bo. Uncle Skip was an outstanding baseball player and was chosen to play in a minor league in Texas. Therefore, he didn't get back to our town very often.

Aunt Mary lived only a block from us with her family and grandfather lived with them. We were in and out of each other's homes on a daily basis. Whenever I thought my parents had not been fair to me, I would huffily say, "I'm leaving home" and Aunt Mary's was always my destination. I usually stayed with her for an hour or two and mother and dad never worried...they knew where I had gone. Aunt Mary was a wonderful pie baker and I

loved to watch her in wonder when she peeled apples because she could do it so fast. A beautiful cherry tree grew in her yard that supplied her with wonderful cherries for her pies. In her home she had an old Edison crank Victrola on which were played thick black records. I always loved to crank it and listen to the delightful music. One of my favorites was “Yes, We Have No Bananas”.

Grandpa had a chair that intrigued me. It was a big Morris chair that could be set in different positions by changing the position of a metal rod on the back of the chair. I guess, this was a precursor of the present day reclining chair.

Grandpa had worked at Clow Brothers at one time but he was in an accident there and had one arm severed below the elbow. That was the end of his working days at Clows and, I am sure, in those days they didn't have Workman's Compensation or other insurance to cover his loss. However, he had a family to support so he started painting houses for a living. He would attach a hook to the shortened arm so that he could lift the paints and climb the ladders. When he wasn't working, he didn't wear the hook. I

cannot imagine the fortitude it took for him to do this every day, but with his backbone of steel, he kept at it and prevailed. I never knew my mother's mother; she died when my mother was in her teens.

One year Grandpa decided to buy a car even though he couldn't drive it. He knew his son, Uncle Bo, would be the perfect chauffeur. He loved that car and would sit proudly beside Uncle Bo as they took long rides all around the local areas. When the winter was about to set in, Grandpa had Uncle Bo take the wheels off the car and put it up on blocks in the garage until spring. In his mind it would have been unthinkable for his prized possession to be out in the elements. However, I never understood why the wheels had to be taken off. Needless to say, he never wanted it driven in the rain, if it could be avoided. He had that car until he died at which time, it was given to Uncle Bo. It was still like a new car.

Aunt Lillie and her family lived in Cleveland, Ohio and Aunt Virginia and her family made their home in Huntington,

West Virginia. Every summer both of these families came for a visit. It was a really wonderful reunion when mother's jolly kin gathered on our big porch on a summer evening to reminisce and hear all the latest news about each other. This was a time when we, the children, listened raptly to their stories of the past and learned the history of our family, lessons that would remain with us for the rest of our lives. Mother's family was very musical; violin, piano and banjo. Uncle Bo and his son, Max, were really virtuosos of the banjo and if they had lived in this day and age, I'm convinced, they would surely have been seen and heard on television. We were fortunate to have them for our gatherings on our front porch because not only did they perform for us, but they accompanied us as we sang, and sang, and sang. On those evenings our neighbors could be seen sitting on their porches being entertained by our happy music. Refreshments, usually consisting of lemonade, cakes and pies, were always provided by mother and Aunt Mary. It gives me a warm feeling as I remember the love and joy we shared on those balmy summer evenings.

We knew summer was leaving us when the days shortened and we started to feel a “nip” in the air and nature traded its coat of green for a coat of many colors. All the house gardens were ready to present their rewards in the form of delicious foods.

It was now time for all the homemakers to retrieve their empty glass jars from basements, where they had been stored, so they could be cleaned thoroughly in preparation for preserving the summer crop. It took many hours to prepare the vegetables. Corn had to be husked and cut from the cob, peas and lima beans taken from the pods, tomatoes steamed and skins removed and the list goes on and on. When all were cleaned, skinned, podded and husked, the vegetables were placed in the clean glass jars, lids adjusted tightly and then placed in a vat to be steamed. It was a lengthy process and filled many of mother’s autumn days.

This was the time when jellies and jams were preserved for the winter and this operation, too, took many hours. We had a huge grape arbor that provided us with wonderful, tasty jelly. One

other thing we enjoyed from the grapes was grape juice. Mother and Aunt Mary worked together picking the grapes and bottling the juice in “pop” bottles. This was our favorite soft drink during the long winter months.

Mr. Warner had a cider mill in one of his buildings and every day in the autumn there were long lines of wagons filled with apples and pulled by teams of horses waiting their turn at the mill. The cider mill was kept busy for many weeks and all those wagons, horses and apples were a sight to behold.

The biggest event in the autumn was the start of school. The children had enjoyed their lazy, aimless summer but now it was time for a change of pace and we looked forward to returning to some structured activities.

There were two elementary schools – one called the West School and the other the East School. There was one building that housed both the Junior and Senior High Schools.

The West School was the older of the two elementary schools; my mother had gone to school there. I can still remember the smell of the oiled wooden floors and the worn stairs that had felt the steps of little feet for many years. The building was constructed of red brick and had a long brick walkway leading to the entry, large double doors.

First graders were accompanied by their mothers the first day of school to insure they were settled in securely and happily. In those days all the town students walked to school regardless of how far their home was from the school. Only the children, who lived outside the town limits were bussed. It was a rather long walk for me when I was in first grade because we lived quite a distance from the school. It seemed like a long trek for a tiny tot, especially on cold snowy days. Some of the walkers, had busy roads to cross, but there were always older students assigned as crossing guards to help us. Our schools didn't have cafeterias so all the town children went home at noon for lunch, another daily hike for us. The boys and girls from the country brought their lunch and ate at tables on the playground in good weather and

when the weather was inclement, they ate in their classrooms at their desks. The only time the town children took their lunch was on the extremely cold and snowy days in winter. I have no memory of the schools ever being closed because of inclement weather.

My first grade teacher, Miss Emerson, was a tiny petite lady with a sweet smile and a twinkle in her eyes. I was left-handed and in those days most teachers tried to force a left-handed student to write with his right hand, but Miss Emerson never suggested I change. We learned to read by phonics and by using the JANE/SPOT books. Writing was taught by the Spencer method and I remember carefully tracing and writing the letters over and over. I enjoyed everything about school and after we were dismissed from school at the end of the day, my friends and I played school and took turns being the teacher. Of course, this was long before the intrusion of television and other outside stimuli. My parents were always interested in all my school work and complimentary of my efforts, which encouraged me to want to do well.

My second grade teacher was Miss Rogers, and I remember her as being motherly, kind and encouraging. Third grade was ruled over by Miss Rothenstein; we were all a little afraid of her. She was always stern and smiled rarely. Fourth grade belonged to a lovely teacher, Miss Peoples, who we all loved for her beautiful smile and gentleness. Miss Jones, our fifth grade teacher appeared to be a person of little joy, which made for a long year for all of us. Mr. Palmer taught the sixth grade and was also Principle of the school and the final disciplinarian the troublemakers had to face. We were a little in awe of him, even though he was a kind, soft spoken man.

These teachers had different personalities and approaches to teaching, which presented their students with the important lesson of dealing with all kinds of people and circumstances. A lesson not found in textbooks.

It's hard to believe that these teachers had lived in our town most of their lives and after leaving for a short time to become

accredited, they returned to teach and guide us. They continued to live in our town and were always available to parents at any time, whether they met on the street while shopping or were called at their home by a parent for information or advice concerning their child. These homegrown teachers were aided in their evaluation of each student by knowing the background of each family and their circumstances. I truly don't believe the parents made a habit of seeking out the teachers, but they weren't above asking about their child's efforts and especially their conduct if they happened to meet. This was a perfect example of home and school working together.

The Superintendent of Schools was W. B. Hayes, a man of high standards, who was revered and loved by everyone.

Superintendent Hayes visited each school once a week and told a Bible story to all the students. There never seemed to be a problem with separation of religion and state. Any child could have been excused from these storytelling sessions, if their parents wished, but I don't remember that ever happening. Everyone listened attentively as he taught us good from bad and respect for

others. We learned early to strive to live up to the high standards as taught by Mr. Hayes during those weekly visits to our school. Mr. Hayes had two sons and a daughter. One son was a highly respected veterinarian in the Midwest, his daughter was in the theater and his other son, Woodrow (Woody) Hayes, was the well-known football coach at Ohio State University for a number of years.

Our school day started with a salute to the flag of the United States. We were taught to respect the flag, what it represented and all the sacrifices that had been made in the past to protect our freedoms. Many of our fathers were veterans so we had heard about the rigors and sacrifices of war first hand.

At the end of the day, we lined up by twos and filed out in a double line to the end of the walk in front of the school where we would then be dismissed. I never heard anyone complain about this orderly ritual, which seemed to stifle any rowdiness, that might have erupted at the end of a day sitting quietly at our desks.

I can't remember that we ever had an art teacher in elementary school. Our teachers assumed the role. Most of our efforts in those early years resembled craft projects more than art. Halloween was a time for making huge pumpkins with funny or scary faces on orange construction paper. These would then be used to decorate the room. Christmas time we made various decorations, which, again, were used to decorate the room. Valentines Day was a time to create heart shaped tributes to the day and we always had a beautiful valentine box (made by the teacher) in which we put our valentines addressed to our friends. On Valentines Day the teacher distributed the valentines from the box by calling each person's name. It took quite a while to distribute all the cards, but was so much fun.

Once a year we all brought a fruit (mostly apples) to school unbeknownst to our teacher. We enlisted one of the other teachers to help with our secret plan by calling our teacher from the room on the designated day. While she was out, we shouted and rolled our fruit to the front of the room. We all laughed and thought we had surprised our teacher when, on hearing all the commotion, she

came charging back to our room. I'm sure each teacher knew she would be getting this surprise each year, but she always played along with our little trick by acting surprised and delighted as she gathered her fruit. I don't know when or how this tradition of the "fruit roll" started, but we did it once a year during our elementary school years.

Halloween was surely a holiday for the young people. I don't believe in those years of celebrating this holiday that any of the children wore store bought costumes. Costumes then were the result of our imaginations and created from old clothes, scraps of material and odd items that we found around our homes.

Our town had a Halloween parade each year. Creative people decorated their cars, bands played, floats were created and many folks marched in the parade in order to show off their costume creations. Prizes were given for the best in several categories. Our dear neighbors, Alice and Clarence Warner, had a car called the STAR that they spent days and days decorating with crepe paper, paper flowers and streamers. It surely was the finest

entry in the parade and would surely have won first prize in their category, but Alice and Clarence had overlooked just one thing – making sure it had enough gasoline to go around the block two times (which was required); the STAR ran out of gas after the first loop. It was a good lesson in preparation for all of us. Nevertheless, the Warners were congratulated by everyone for their outstanding entry.

The night before Halloween was Trick or Treat night when the youngest children took a bag of dried corn that they had spent hours scraping from the cobs (a hard job) and threw handfuls at the windows of houses, thinking they were scaring the people inside. The teenagers went much farther with their tricks. Many went to farms near town and stealthily managed to bring a cow or horse to the town square and tie it up. The next day farmers could be seen retrieving their stock from the square. Another trick the teens loved to play was to take a wooden swing from a porch and hang it high on a pole. I don't believe anything was ever broken or stolen, but the tricksters surely did do a lot of mischief.

Thanksgiving was the next holiday and celebrated as we do now with family gatherings, a huge dinner and prayers of Thanksgiving.

After Thanksgiving (not before, as they do now) the Christmas decorations, gift items and best of all, lots of toys appeared in the stores. The town's Main Street became a fairyland with different colored lights and decorated trees. Most exciting for all the youngsters were the visits to the stores where they could ogle the goodies. Mother brought out of storage all the Christmas decorations we used year after year. We knew just where each bell, wreath and elf was to be placed because we put them in the same places every year. A week before Christmas it was dad's job to put up the fresh pine tree in our living room and the odor of the fresh cut fir tree would permeate the entire house – the Christmas scent. Each of us loved to help mother attach the decorations to the tree.

The church choirs performed Christmas cantatas, Sunday schools told, once again, the age old story of Christ's birth and everyone was in a state of anxious anticipation. The week before Christmas Santa always came to town to hear the wishes of the children and to hand out candies and oranges. Santa always sat by a huge tree that had been erected on Main Street and decorated by the town fire department. As I dream back in time, it seems we always had a white Christmas and there were several people who had sleighs and horses to pull them through the town while the sleigh bells rang out on the clear night air.

One of our favorite winter pastimes was sledding. Sleds were on the wish list of many of us at Christmas. Everyone had to have a sled because we had the most perfect hills on which to enjoy them. I think, the most favored hill was the steep one leading up to the Park Hill. Thankfully, in those days, there was very little car traffic on the cold nights and we were free to ride as far as the sled would take us, a long way, especially with the runners well waxed. We traveled down the hill at a good rate of speed, continued over the Buckhorn Creek bridge and on to the

next street. Exhilarating! We got a lot of exercise climbing the steep hill for another run. If the night was particularly cold, we could rely on some of the older people to have a bonfire roaring so we could warm ourselves; a lovely sight on a cold, clear moonlit night.

Through all the seasons there was one activity that all the children participated in, learning to play a musical instrument. Charles Leiser owned a store on Main Street, where he sold many items, but the main focus of his store was music; he sold instruments and sheet music. He not only sold band instruments, but he gave the buyer lessons. Mr. Leiser was known for the many marching bands he organized in our town. At one time he started a fife and drum group and even I participated. I know I didn't qualify as a good student in the art of fife playing, but it was fun to parade around the town.

Mrs. Landers, the town's piano teacher, was the one with whom I spent much time. I began my piano lessons when I started school. Mrs. Landers had a beautiful old upright piano and a stool that she could twirl around – up or down – to fit the height of each student. Every lesson started with the assigned scales that, hopefully, I had practiced the previous week. Scales were very important to her and very uninteresting to me. The lessons lasted a half hour and cost fifty cents. She was very serious about our learning to perform, so once a month all her students met at a different student's home where each of us would be on the program. She took our training very seriously and we all were expected to behave like young ladies and gentlemen. Once a year she had a recital to which the public was invited. All of this was good training in poise, presentation and performing. Of course, we never got through any program without some sour notes, but Mrs. Landers was always encouraging and loving. She gave a lot to us; another of those people who helped to mold a generation of our town's young people.

DAILY LIFE

As in all communities, where there are a lot of children, we had many birthday parties. The games we played were probably the same as those played today. However, the refreshments were different. Because we had to rely on iceboxes to preserve our foods, ice cream and other frozen desserts could not be kept for long, so Jello was the favored dessert of that time. We had Jello in one form or another at every party along with hot chocolate and birthday cake. Everyone dressed in their party dresses because this was a festive time for us.

Our town had a volunteer fire department. Fires were few and far between, but whenever the fire alarm peeped and the siren on the fire truck sounded, not only did the firemen answer the call, but everyone, who could get away from what they were doing, ran to view the fire. Our neighbor, Clarence Warner was the Fire Chief and he loved to say, "Molly usually gets to the fire before I do". None of us ever wanted to miss any excitement that might be occurring in our sleepy little village.

Mother and dad were very industrious and each had special areas of responsibility in our everyday life.

Dad spent long days working at Clow Brothers. He always arose early for his work at Clows but during the cold winter months he had to get up even earlier because he had to tend to our big coal furnace before he left the house. Also, he made it his duty to see that walks and driveways around our home were cleared of snow, and ashes were thrown on the icy places.

In the spring he turned his attention to his large vegetable garden and every evening and weekends would find him there. We had a large lawn that he mowed once a week with his push mower. He never fertilized the lawn but it was always lush and green.

Aside from all these duties, dad was responsible for the complete maintenance of the house and furnishings.

His days were full and he looked forward to Sundays, when he could lean back in his favorite chair, prop up his feet, read the

newspaper and try to listen to the baseball games on our little indistinct, crackly radio. He was a huge fan of the Cleveland Indians.

Dad had played baseball and basketball when he was a young man. In later years he managed a local baseball team that gained a lot of local recognition. The players were all from our little town; they had a lot of talent and were dedicated to the game. Their home base was Warner's field. The legendary baseball pitcher, Cy Young, was retired, when dad managed the team, and lived on a farm nearby. He was interested in dad's team and during World War II, when it was almost impossible to get equipment for sports, Cy wrote, on dad's behalf, to the suppliers and always was rewarded with any items needed for our little local team.

Mother always seemed to be busy. She had a schedule for all her household chores.

Monday was washday. All soiled items were taken to the basement and sorted; white, colored, rugs and rags. She had a wringer washer and two large tubs that sat by the washer. All of them had to be filled with water. She also had a hot plate with a very large kettle on it and clotheslines strung in the basement where she hung the clothes to dry in the winter and inclement weather. In the summer all the clothes were hung outside on nice Mondays. In those days there was no detergent and no spot remover. Therefore, it was necessary to boil the badly soiled items in the large kettle on the hot plate to loosen the dirt. With two active boys and a tomboy in the family, some clothes would be so soiled that she had to make use of her washboard. White clothes were put in the washer first and after they had agitated for awhile, everything was fed through a wringer, which attached to the washer, and after the wringing, they dropped into the first large tub of water for rinsing. After the first rinsing, they were ready to be put through the wringer again and placed in a second tub of clear water for their final rinsing. Soap was used for washing and LaFrance bluing was added to whiten the white clothes; we didn't have bleach. After the whites were finished, she put the colored

items in the saved soapy water and continued the same routine. She had to hang the clothes for drying after rinsing. The washday routine wasn't finished yet, because she still had the big job of cleaning up after the washing; emptying the water in the washer and tubs, drying them out and putting them back in place for the next Monday. Washday was a full day's work and there was little time for cooking so mother always had a large pot of hardy soup or a large casserole on Mondays for supper.

Tuesday was ironing day and back then before polyester and "drip dry" and steam irons, everything had to be dampened, rolled and covered to prepare for ironing. Shirts, dresses, aprons, pillowcases and many other items were heavily starched, which made them more of a challenge to iron without leaving any wrinkles. We didn't have place mats in those days and so each week (with three clumsy children), I remember, there were always several tablecloths to iron. It was a full day's work and very tiring because you had to stand for so long.

Wednesdays and Thursdays were the days to mend, sew (mother made most of our dresses) and catch up on odd jobs.

Friday was cleaning day. When I was old enough, I was assigned the job of dusting all the furniture and baseboards, which took me a long time. However, I loved the smell of lemon oil on the rag used for the dusting; it permeated the whole house. Mother did the sweeping and scrubbing – the heavy jobs.

Saturday was her time for shopping and preparing food for the coming week.

Besides all the housework, that mother did each week, she prepared three meals a day. Dad walked home each noon and we, children, were there too for what we called dinner. In the evening after chores were done by dad, we all had supper. All this cooking was almost enough to keep a woman busy most of the day; no dishwashers, no microwaves and no frozen foods. But, oh, those delicious odors that always seemed to be in our kitchen!

THE DEPRESSION

During my childhood an event of huge proportions occurred which tested the mettle of all Americans for several years. Wall Street went “bust” and jobs all over the United States ‘dried up’ leaving people destitute. There was no welfare as we know it now. We heard about the daily lines that formed in most of the cities at the “soup kitchens”, places where people could go for something hot to eat once a day. We never had any “soup kitchens” in our area and this was due to the fact that everyone had a garden and shared their bounty with each other. My dad was working at Clows and they managed to give their men one or two days of work each week; we were very lucky. Churches and organizations tried to give help to the needy. No one was too proud to accept any help that might come their way. We were all in the same boat.

It was during this time that most of us were introduced to oleo as a substitute for butter, which was too costly. Oleo was white in color then and looked like lard, but it came with a little packet of yellow coloring, which we had to add to give it the look

of butter. When the oleo was softened, we added the coloring to the white substance and squeezed it all through our fingers until it was uniformly yellow. The color didn't add to the taste but made the oleo more appealing because it resembled butter.

No one had money for anything extra so we cut our hair at home, resoled our own shoes with soles we bought at the Five and Ten Cent Store, helped each other with food and handed down clothes when we outgrew them. I was always delighted to get clothes from my cousin, Mary, who lived in West Virginia as she always had styles that were more current and different from our small town clothes or the ones mother made for me. This was a time when people learned to make use of everything and to never throw anything away, a habit my mother never lost.

It was a harsh time but people came together. I don't remember that there was any crime; it would have been useless to rob anyone because none of us had anything of value. As I look back, I'm so proud of all the people of that era for never losing the "can-do" spirit of the American.

The adults in our community carried a heavy load in the Depression days but the children were little touched by the hardships because our security net had been in place since our birth. We knew we could depend on our town family to protect us and everyone to love and help each other.

INTO OUR TEENS AND BEYOND

After six years of teaching and gently guiding us, the teachers in the little red brick elementary schools were ready to send us on to Junior High School. It was an exciting time for us; we were closing in on adulthood. Like our earlier teachers, the Junior High teachers were dedicated to bringing out the best in us. During my years there, the teachers were Miss Root, Miss Barnett, Miss Emerson, Mr. Derr and Mr. Barthalow. I remember them all fondly but I must speak to the teaching of Clyde Barthalow, everyone's all time favorite teacher. He was a born teacher and could teach any subject, but for me, he made history come alive.

We all lived American History with him and it has inspired me to this day to learn more about the history of this country and all the places where I have lived. His influence was felt by all his students and, I'm sure, if any person, who attended school during his tenure, were to be asked which teacher they revered the most, they would say Clyde Barthalow. He is another person in our little community who inspired our generation.

After two years in Junior High we were passed on to High School. These were halcyon years. We all seemed to handle the subjects being taught without much trouble. Classes were interesting and serious and well attended.

Beyond school hours there were so many things to do; attending sports events and cheering on our teams (we took it seriously), drama and operetta productions, Glee Club, Booster Club, Girl Reserves, Boys' Varsity, intramural sports, dances, parties and dating.

We were fortunate to have two places where teens could congregate, have a soft drink and even dance because both places had a small dance floor and juke box. Every day after school we went to one of these places and on weekends we met there to dance and party. It's a mystery to me how the proprietors made enough money to stay in business since most of us only bought a soft drink or two and a bag of potato chips each time we were there. None of us had a recreation room in our homes, so we were fortunate to have these clean, wholesome venues for our enjoyment.

Football and Basketball were our sports and the whole town attended all the games. Every Friday at the end of the school day, we had a pep rally in our auditorium. The cheerleaders led us in all the cheers and the coach gave a pep talk. Every autumn we had a homecoming game. The night previous to the game all the students met at the high school, formed a long, long line and proceeded to weave this line from the high school to the Football field (we called it our snake dance) and it took us through the center of town. All traffic halted and we had the right of way. At

the Football field we would have a huge bonfire and more cheers. You can see how psyched for the big game we were.

Saturday in our town was the time when all the farmers and their families came to town to shop and visit. It was also when most of the townspeople did their shopping and Main Street came alive with wall-to-wall people. It was a weekly event and everyone, young and old, wanted to be there. Many folks drove their cars to Main Street and parked them early in the day in order to assure themselves a good parking place in the evening. In the early evening they strolled back to their reserved vantage spot on Main Street. There were no parking meters and by parking early they were assured a choice spot from which to shop, to people watch and visit during the evening.

All the teens headed for Main Street too. Most of us went to the early show at the Ritz Theater and after the movie, we walked and visited with our friends before heading for one of the teen “hang outs” to dance and continue to party. It was a big night for all of us.

During those teen years none of us gave much thought to the fact that in four years we would be going our separate ways. We had no way of knowing that in a few years many of the boys would be fighting in a cruel war. Without a care in the world, we enjoyed our high school years to the fullest by participating in all the activities; dancing, joining all the clubs in high school, performing in dramas and operettas and supporting our sports teams. It was a time of high school crushes and falling in love for the first time. The elders of the town watched over us, as they had always done, cheered us on and expected much from each of us.

Finally we came to our graduation. We hugged, kissed and said, "We did it!" to each other and for the first time realized we would be going our separate ways. Some of us remained in town and still live there, while others of us moved away. No matter where our separate paths have taken us we still hold those times in our hearts, we are still true friends and our little town will always be home to all of us.