

MEMORIES OF THE PAST

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When Peter Hartlaub and Clara Grall were babies, at a wedding they were put into the same crib to sleep. Then in parochial school, Peter was Joseph and Clara was Mary in a pageant. When Clara was 16, a fellow on a treshing crew sent her a post card but her brothers hid it because they thought she was too young to be thinking about boys! Later, when they started dating, Peter let it be known that she was "his girl" and warned other beaus away. I guess it was inevitable that they would marry.

My Mom lost her first child at 2 months of pregnancy, probably due to helping to push a car. It was a boy. Thereafter she had four girls. When Dorothy was almost 12, she had stomach pain and since Peter was going to the doctor to have a growth removed, he took her along. Doc Kelly said, "You ate too many green apples." He gave her epsom salts to take--a serious misdiagnosis and she died of a burst appendix. Since first communion was observed at age 12, she never had that chance, but I am sure that she is a saint in heaven. While she was lying in state in the parlor--the custom those days--my sis and my mom both had a most unusual dream that night. They both dreamed they saw something white floating up through the room--an assurance that she went to heaven.

While we were children, we had to do chores like weeding the garden, dishes, etc. We also had time to play, though, and one thing we liked to do was play house. There were four trees in the yard and each of us claimed a tree as our house. We would visit each other in their trees, but since pants were not worn by girls those days, I wonder how many underpants the neighbors and people walking by saw!!

Other games were Hide and seek, Run, my good sheep run, Andy, Andy over, Tag, Red Rover, etc. On rainy days, we read, did puzzles, listened to the radio programs, played rummy and other card games or built card "towers". One we managed to get to be 10 stories high--while it lasted! After school, we rushed home to listen to the Green Hornet, Fibber McGee and Molly, The Phantom, etc. lying on our stomachs with ears tuned to the radio. Also read the funnies prone--the older girls got to read them from the normal side while I had to lay at the top of the paper. I can still read things upside down now!!

There were two large families in the house to the west of us and I later found that they were second cousins. They would come over and play with us--especially Hopscotch on our driveway. We used mower blades to toss because they would dig in nicely in the squares and not slide past, but once when we were just using stones, Tommy Zipperer threw too soon and hit me in the head. He was a little odd--once he came over wearing his sisters lipstick! Another game we enjoyed was "playing store". A board across two blocks of wood became the store, stones, bottle caps, etc were the money and we sold mud pies and soda (made by dipping crepe

paper picked up along the curb after a wedding into water and bottling it--no we didn't drink it!)

On the east side were the Rhodes, Richard, John and Ann. I can remember playing postoffice with them in a old car body on our land. Since I was only eight, all I ever got was stamps (a stamp on the foot) and I think Helen, age ten, probably got letters, (a hug) and no one ever told me what Dorothy (age 12) got--most likely a kiss! Ann became, I think, a lawyer and maybe a judge in Texas (after she had once stolen my paperdolls when she was little!), John married one of my cousins, and I see Richard, who married Mary Ann Stradal, often at dances and Mike and I trade dances with them. Coincidentally, Richard lived with his grandfather, Richard Grimm in Two Rivers so he could go to high school and was a good friend of Hugo.

Some of the stories I heard later about my father follow: Once when he was about 19, a "cowboy" came through Whitelaw and was showing how he could toss up a can and pull his gun and hit it. Of course, Pete had to top that. (His father was a well-driller and used dynamite) So Pete tied a stick of dynamite to a bamboo fishing pole, lit it and held it up high. It went off--and blew out his mom's front window. "She used to say, "My Petey is a good boy" but I don't think that was when she said it. Later, for fourth of July, he took a stripped down chassey of a car (he ran the local garage) without the gas tank on--(a gallon can hooked to the carburetor up front--and shot off fireworks or dynamite off the back of the frame while going up the street. After we had moved to Branch, on July 4, he took his cutting torch up onto the roof and made showers of sparks for our amusement. He was very talented and could fix just about everything, and were it not for a drinking problem, could have been a good "engineer". Most everyone in the county knew him and would call him to solve their mechanical problems.

Of course, we were always good kids--well, most of the time! The neighbor to the west liked to walk to Meyers bar--two houses to the east of us and spend an afternoon there. By then, he was rather "potched" and would walk home, stopping at a bench in front of our garage to rest. One day we climbed to the garage roof with a pail of water and just lightly sprinkled some on him. He held out his hand, thought it was raining, and went home. Luckily, we didn't make it "pour"--but I wonder if he ever wondered why it only rained in one spot!

Another fun thing we did was going to pick violets or buttercups in a woods about 3/4 mile away. Also wild strawberries when we could find them, though not many of those reached home. The flowers, if they survived, were for the May altar we alway had in May to honor Mary. One time, we walked home on the railroad track and played "wedding" with our flowers. Since we had no grooms, we lined up with 3 fence posts and I guess probably sang the wedding march or something. Had very well developed imagination. Another woods thing was playing house. Each would pick a

little open space among a couple evergreens and call it our house and visit each other, serving things like greens and pine cones, etc. to the guests.

During the depression, things were very tough. Once we did not have 5 cents in the house to buy a quart of milk. People often did not pay their bills, even some of mom's relatives, so we did not have money to pay the mortgage on the house. Then the banker took everybody's money in the bank and disappeared and the new people in charge took our house and gave us \$100 for the garage which was not included in the mortgage. Helen who was working loaned Mom \$100 for the land. With that, my folks bought cinder blocks and wood and built a small house into a hill at Branch. The "basement" was in the hill behind the house and at first we had to climb a ladder to the bedrooms upstairs or put on our coats and walk around to the upstairs door above the basement. (This was October-November.) The windows were openings covered with cardboard and tin, but snow could sneak in around the edges until they found windows from a granary to put in. The roof was flat and would sometimes leak onto the cardboard we had for ceilings in our bedrooms and we would look at the various water spots on the cardboard and imagine they were animals or other items. I knew we were poor, but didn't realize how bad it was. No indoor plumbing, a "Monkey Wards" catalog and a trellis with grape vines over it and benches in it to hide the outhouse. Later when the vines covered it nicely, boy, did we have good grapes!! Dad built a 3 stall garage into the hill and worked on a lot of cars, did welding, etc. but unfortunately, the customers would invite him to Schaffers or the other bar to cash the milk check and the pay did not very often reach home.

The first year there, Helen started to work for Aunt Mayme who had a problem pregnancy, and she later went up the hill and worked for a well-to-do family, so never got to high school. I and Marian rode the public bus (no school buses then) to St. Michael's at Whitelaw and walked home until it got too cold, when my Dad would come to get us. It was 3 1/2 miles and I would be so tired that I would just fall asleep and eat supper later. Our lunch would be a lard sandwich, an apple and if we were lucky, a ginger snap. I hated lard and would scrape it off and eat the bread. Weighed about 75#.

Next year, Mom sent us to the state graded school at Branch. I felt bad about not graduating with my class. The Whitelaw school was more advanced--even some algebra in 7th grade--had four rooms with two grades per room and nuns teaching. Branch was two rooms with one teacher for four grades, and a lot was what I had already learned so it was easy for me, but I missed honor roll just because I had lousy penmanship and got a C in it. Bummer.

We walked to school there year round--sometime falling into the deep snow drifts. Mr Harpt was okay. For final exams, he sent us five eighth graders into the cloak room to study--I'm not sure how much we studied--it was fun and we talked a lot, but we all

passed and got our diplomas!

Halloween was always a fun time in Whitelaw. Kids would dress up in homemade costumes (I was just a ghost one year with an old sheet over my head) and go around the village trick or treating. We always went to the convent because they had good cookies or apples and tried to guess who we were. One year, Brandls, who had a big family planned a Halloween party in their basement. It was probably the first party I ever went to and was great fun. They blindfolded us and had us walk thru' wet stockings into the basement and put a bit of fur into our hands and said it was a mouse. Then we could watch those who came later go thru' the process and laugh.

My mom could play organ and piano so we had sing-a-longs. She had a song for each of us--"OH h-e-l-en (stutteringlike) please be mine", "Come away with with me, Lucille" and "Pull your shades down, Mary Ann" (Marian). One year, we learned "Helpless Child" in school (learned later it was written by one of the nuns)--in four parts and I taught it to my sister and my folks. My dad played his violing (about the only time I ever heard him play) and Mom played the organ and we all sang our parts and it was a very moving time for me. I still love the song and sing it to myself at Christmas time.

A more traumatic time was when the flat roof on the house was leaking and my dad went up to tar it. He had a bucket of hot tar and a bucket of sand to spread on the tar. At one point, he reached back for sand and dipped into the tar. Needless to say, it was painful, and he ran down the ladder and washed off as much as he could with gasoline while he told my mother to get him a pint of whiskey to deaden the pain. Then she took him to the hospital, where they wanted to amputate his hand. He would not allow that so they covered it with some healing stuff and wrapped it up. He lost much of the skin on the hand, but it did heal and new pink skin grew and he did not lose the use of it. Even the doctors were amazed that no infection set in.

Other fun times included playing ball in the pasture across the street, using dry cowpies for bases--no, we didn't have to slide into base--just go around it outside! Also, we would pick up little twigs we called our boats and have races down the creek to the river, but we weren't allowed to go into the river. One time, Mom took us and a couple of our friends to the place where the Manitowoc and Branch river meet and went swimming with us. She didn't have a suit, but wore some old-fashioned underwear and we didn't mind. I think she had fun, too.

We had a big garden in Whitelaw, but a smaller one at Branch. I remember picking a carrot about 13" long and 3" diameter and taking it to my teacher at Woodrow Wilson. Going to high school was a whole other story in my life. I didn't expect to go as it was not required for country kids, but am so happy I had the opportunity to go.

OLD MEMORIES PART II

My aunt Tillie (later Sr. M. Mathias) offered to give me piano lessons and Mom urged me to, but I was only 8 and not very interested because she was teaching me to read music and I just wanted to sit down and start playing! After two lessons, I gave up and, to this day, I am sorry I did. I can play melody by ear somewhat, but can't chord. When I asked Mom how you know what chords to play, she said, "You just hear it." Well, she did, but I don't! Anyway, I preferred to have my nose in a book and that paid off in doing schoolwork, writing poems, stories and doing Wheel of Fortune. Unbelievably, I have guessed two of the games before they put up a letter--must be psychic!

Speaking of ESP, it seems to somewhat run in the family--or maybe we are just good at "educated guessing." Had that kind of rapport with Mom re phone calls and, at times, with some of the kids--we seemed to be on the same wavelength. I wonder if we put out some kind of radio waves that people on the same wave length can pick up. I have had occasions where I wake up abruptly from a horrible dream like a car crash or something that doesn't seem to involve people I know, so I always say some prayers in the event I picked up some ESP from someone. Can't hurt and it helps me get back to sleep and take my mind off the dream.

Re high school, about a week before school was to start, a girl-friend from 8th grade said, "Why don't we go to high school?" So she talked to her mom and I talked to mine and they both said okay and helped up through the procedures to get registered. We are still friends and she recently moved to TR and we spent two hours gabbing yesterday. Was great. At first Dad took me when he went to work, but I had to go very early and wait until the school opened, so Mom arranged with a neighbor lady who worked at the courthouse to take me. Since she worked until 5PM, I had plenty of time to get homework done and even took some swimming sessions after school for awhile. On Saturdays, I worked at Reedy's Log Cabin helping with bird breakfasts for a bird-watcher's club. Got paid a whole \$1.00 and I put the first one in one of those little aspirin cases and lost it at school! Was more careful after that.

Made several new friends, Vange Klein, Mary York, Ruth Hunsader and they and Betty and I would walk about 7 blocks to Vange's sister's house at noon and eat our lunches there and then walk back to school. Carolyn was at work, but Vange had a key and C didn't mind. Also met many other kids in classes, and because it was such a privilege to go to school and learning came quite easy to me, I really enjoyed it. All except typing with Mr. Pew. He was Phew to most of us! Being a bit dyslexic, I reversed letters a lot and got C's. Freshman year is when I started writing poems--some for friends who didn't have the knack and wanted them for their boyfriends. At this point, I didn't know there was such a thing! Nose in a book--I read 181 books besides school work.