

AND ALL THE DAYS WERE BRIGHT

A letter-Journal by

Geneva Maxson Holland

Stories about a childhood
in the 1900's

"... and all the days were bright
as I recall,
And all their evenings ended
in a soft-edged glow. . ."
--Helen Holland Graham

COVER PAGE

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Hi there! Greetings from South Arkansas!

I can't remember for sure which one of the girls that it was that I promised I'd write a journal or a few things about my childhood and growing up in the early 1900's.

First, I do want to thank all of you for making Grace and I so very welcome. I shall never forget the feeling I had about the whole trip. I told someone after I got home it was as if God Himself had rolled out the Red Carpet; everything, everywhere, went off as smooth as clockwork.

I did get a cassette recorder to talk to, as one of you suggested, but I must have been born too soon, for it just didn't work with me. I felt quite an idiot using it, so please excuse this poor writing.

My first memory is when I was six weeks old; we were on a train coming from Flandreau, South Dakota to Gentry Arkansas. Certainly it seems unlikely a baby only six weeks old could remember so well and I suppose what I remember is hearing my parents tell about it a good many times.

So: Darwin, ^(my father) with his father, Russell John Maxson, his brother Edwin, and his oldest sister's husband, Styles Lanphere, were all living in South Dakota, where they had done well homesteading farms; then improving them, and raising wheat and cattle. After a good many years there, Father Maxson, who still suffered from rhuematism, brought on by his stint in the federal army in the civil war, thought, what good is money in the bitter cold climate here? So he talked the two married sons and a son-in-law into moving somewhere warmer.

Grandpa ^(Russell John) and grandmother ^(Aminie Crankall Maxson) had eleven children, at the time of moving to Gentry. Only the three oldest were married. One girl, Celia, had died in Dakota, at the age of 17. (I don't think I ever heard the cause of her death) but there were still at home: Edith, Ora, Susa, Nathan, George, Myrtle and Ethel.

There was a Seventh Day Baptist settlement in South Dakota, but, "we'll start another one in a warmer climate," they reasoned. So they would all move, bag and baggage, dad said. I heard Grandpa Maxson tell how that last winter there in the "frozen north" he decided he'd rather be warmer even if it meant less money. Evidently they had all done quite well, raising grain and cattle. So one fall day he caught a train to go south. When he got to Kansas City he talked with the Station Master, I think he said, or real estate person who told him about a fairly new railroad system going south

as far as Port Arthur, Texas. He boarded a train on that (The Kansas City Southern) all the way down through Missouri the next day, the countryside looked good. There were many apple orchards and the trees were loaded with fruit. At one time the Plank Orchard, (acres and acres of apple trees, starting from Decatur, stretching southward) was supposed to be the largest in the world, and Grandpa thought about getting off somewhere along here just to look things over. The conductor called out Gravette, then Decatur, then soon came Gentry. That "Gentry" did it. So, "Gentry it is; we are gentry," he said to himself, "My father's family were of the ruling class in England, and landed people." So, gathering up his belongings, he left the train at Gentry, "At least," he thought, "to look around."

Evidently it looked good to him, for he said he spent a few weeks there, actually buying a nice large farm a couple of miles out northwest of town. I barely remember that farm, for after three or so years they were offered a good price for it and they moved into Gentry, first to a nice house with big yard and named Glenwood, or Glen Oaks. When I was a little older and we'd visit there, Grace and I decided we'd name our home place "Maple Lawn" but we never did get Papa to put up a sign.) I was about four, I believe, when they-- the grandparents-- moved to Glenwood. So much of my childhood memories are from there. The big shady yard and the big lawn swing that four could ride in, and ride we did, swinging high until Dad made one for us at home. He also made a merry-go-round. (I bet you remember that, Paul!)

Now, I go back to South Dakota; after Grandpa had bought the improved farm in Gentry, he scouted out four other pieces of land. There were no buildings on them. These were for Dad (Darwin); Edwin; and Sylvia's husband, Styles Lanphere; the fourth, I think, was for Mother's Dad, George W. Huffman, or for Mama's sister, Lizzie, and Husband, Menzo Fuller.

Anyway, I think they were all 80 acre tracts; Dad kept selling ours off until he wound up with 20. I know he used to own the house on the corner land and the Thomas's behind us.

So now, I really will leave Gentry awhile and go back to South Dakota!

In South Dakota, everybody rushed around getting ready to move before the weather got so bitterly cold. Everything was loaded into the three freight cars. Except Eunice and her two little girls, Ruthie and Grace. They were to stay with Mother's friend, Gertrude Sanford, until the new baby arrived. So Darwin went with the furniture, farm tools, and stock in the freight car, and when he got it safely unloaded at a place east of Gentry that Granddad had rented for him, he left Uncle Nathan to look after it all and got on a passenger train, and went back to Flandreau to spend Christmas with his wife and little girls, and to be with her when the new baby arrived. How he hoped this one would be a boy!

One cold day, the 15th of February, 1901, that baby did arrive,

after Dad had ridden his horse ten miles to get the doctor to come (on his own horse) with medicine in the saddlebags. No telephones, (or cars!)

And sad news! It was another girl! Anyway, they let me live, kind hearted as they were.

When I was six weeks old, Papa, Mama and the two lovely little girls, and Gertrude Sanford, carrying the big, homely new baby, boarded the train for their new home in the sunny south. Little Ruthie, past 5, now, with those beautiful blue eyes and ever ready smile, was popular with the other passengers as she was dragging her beautiful little curly haired, brown eyes sister Grace up and down the aisle; poor little Geneva, either asleep on one of the seats, or snug in Mama's or Gertrude's lap, wanted some of the happy attention, and thought long and hard how she could get it. She couldn't walk, or even sit up alone yet, so what did she do? Well, she got sick. (Really sick, with a high fever and croupy cough.)

Getting into Kansas City where they had to change cars at Union Station into the Kansas City Southern train, they had a two hour wait and it was decided to leave friend Gertrude with the two girls sitting in the depot while Mama and Papa took the poor little sick baby, so tiny, so sick, to see a doctor. That was done and the doctor gave a dose or two of some evil tasting concoction and said "Double pneumonia; Get right back on the train; continue your journey; it has only been the movement of the train that has kept the little one breathing."

Papa told me later he felt by the time they reached Gentry (222 miles from Kansas City), he'd probably be carrying a little dead baby; but he prayed God and promised he'd try to be a better husband and father if he would spare the life of this precious child. So I lived and thrived, but two times while I was small I almost died with pneumonia, they say, and the several times I heard this story, with my overactive imagination, it really seems to me that I remember it. . . .

So that was the last few days or March, or early in April, 1901.

We lived in the rented house until barns were built for the three families. There ~~was~~ ^{were} already good barns, corn cribs, cellar, smoke house and well at Grandads, so when the nice big clean fresh wood smelling barn was finished on the 80 acres a halfmile southwest of gentry, Papa said to Mama: "Since its springtime, warm and lovely, how about you, the girls, and I, moving out home. We'll live in the barn until my brothers and I get a house built?" Mama agreed, and it worked out nicely. My bassinet (a wicker clothes basket padded sides and a pillow for a mattress) was kept safely on top of Mother's big trunk in case a pig would come rooting around in the barn and possibly overturn the baby's bed. I slept warm and safe, and mama said she picked me up, told the other girls, "Come, lets go up and see how they are coming along with the house." So we did, and quite to her surprise, Papa was so far up on the structure

hammering away, she, standing below yelled up: "What are you trying to do, build on up to heaven?" "Oh, no," he answered, "just going to have plenty of room for a big bunch of boys." What I thought was raindrops falling on my head was probably Mama's tears!

No, it was not a huge house, but comfortable for the four boys they did have, as well as for us three girls, and for a time, all of Uncle Burt's motherless children.) I was only Two and One/half when Russell James joined us on Jul 5, 1903. I'll have to admit I don't remember that day. But I do remember kissing his cheek until it was red, and Mama telling me, "Not so hard", and the next summer when he was walking, I hugged him and said, "when you grow up I'm going to marry you, you're so sweet" (That I do remember), and quite well I remember Papa putting the four of us in the buggy and taking us up to Grandma's to spend the day and late that same afternoon, March 15, 1907, he came to take us home and there we found mother in bed with a sweet baby boy whom she decided to name "Fitch Huffman" after her brother who had been killed by a horse kicking him when he was in his twenties.

Then, again in December (19th), 1908, Papa took all of us (even baby Fitch, only 15 months old) to Aunt Lizzies to spend the day. It was so pretty and warm when we went in the morning that Russell, five years old, was allowed to go barefoot and when Papa came after us about dark, there was snow on the ground and he (Russell) had to be carried, along with baby Fitch, to the wagon, and wrapped warmly in a quilt. So again, when we got home, there was another beautiful baby brother, whom Papa named Paul and Mama said Leland-- there was some joke about a beau Mama had had in Wisconsin-- a doctor named Leland-- which I didn't understand! I wasn't so dumb, I was just a bit young--(seven years old at the time!)

I was older, all of 12, when the next baby boy came to our house-- Carl (named after a good friend, Carl Parker, from Chicago) and wonder of wonders, Mama said, and Dad agreed, I could give Carl ~~any~~ ~~unique~~ name. Roderick. (Some book I had read had the hero named that) And I had been such a good baby tender for my little brothers they said I probably would be a great help in caring for this new one. Indeed I was! I was the main one in "spoiling" him! Mama said several times, "Carl is a bit spoiled, we've all helped, but its Geneva's fault, she would take him and run upstairs or out of doors if I tried to correct him." Poor Carl-- my fault! But he was a beautiful and sweet child.

The house seemed always to be full of life, love and people. Mama's brother Burt (Huffman) lost his wife (Mabel Wheeler Huffman) only a few years after they had moved to Arkansas, leaving their children motherless. There was Vancha, Myrtle, Herbert, Purl, Dolla and Earl. They lived across the fields and railroad tracks on the road to S'low, and some of them, most often Purl and Dolla who were the ages of Grace and I, were staying with us. Not until much later did I

realize what a hardship it must have been on Mama and the older girls but if they ever complained about the extra children in the house I didn't hear it; we always had an abundance of food it seems and the long table was surrounded by family, and always others. Mama didn't always go to church, but Papa always did and he always took we children. I remember I was three years old, or so, and he had a canvas seat that fitted on the handlebars of his bicycle. That is where I rode. Usually it was in a buggy we went on prayer meeting nights, and the horse old Dan would be cold, standing outside. When we came out from church to start home, Dan would rear up and prance around. It would scare me so much, because I felt surely he would fall backward on us; but Papa spoke soothingly to him, and he soon quieted down and trotted at a brisk clip all the way home. Sometimes I pretended to be sound asleep when we got home, so Papa would carry me in and up stairs to my room, pulling the covers over me and saying "Little Dovie". Mama came in later and removed my shoes.

How I love those memories! Also remembering sleeping on the little bed in Mama's bedroom and awakening to see Papa and Mama kneeling by their bedside asking God to guide them and guard us. The wick on the bedroom lamp had been turned down to a soft glow and I could see the soft light on the sides of their faces, and the mellow shadows on the floor and walls, and I felt surrounded by warmth and love.

Where we grew up in Northwestern Arkansas, there was no black population which is why perhaps I grew up without the prejudice against race that was suffered by many southerners; there we had no black maid, but we called the household "help" "Hired Girl". Until Ruth, Grace and I grew old enough to be of more help to Mama, Papa paid a hired girl to come in and help with the work. (He said he had rather work out and pay someone to come in and help mother than to do it himself.) I remember one of the Jones girls as our hired girl, and especially do I remember Iva Fox. Iva worked for us a lot, and I vividly recall one incident. She scrubbed the freshly painted dining room floor and kitchen floor with boiling hot water and strong lye soap. When Mama saw it, she cried because Iva had scrubbed off all the fresh paint in her zeal for cleanliness. When Mama asked Iva why she had scrubbed so hard, Iva replied, "My Maw makes us scrub our floors with a broom and lye, and I thought you would like yours that way, too." When Papa came home from work, Mama went outside to meet him, and to tell him about the floors. He laughed and said he would repaint them for her, and she could tell Iva just to use a mop and warm water.

In our house, the parlor always had a clean, fresh, colorful carpet. We all helped in the carpeting project, tearing colorful rags, discarded dresses and shirts, etc, into strips. Mother sewed them all together into one long strip, and we rolled this into balls; When she had a bushel basket full of strips in balls, she took them to someone to be woven into a carpet.

Iva Fox must have been between 18 and 20 years old, but to me she seemed OLD; and when she said, "You girls run out to play now, I want to red up the bedrooms," we scampered out without a word (I think!)

Mama taught her how to make "light" (or yeast) bread; that sort of bread was unfamiliar to her, as she said at home they never had anything except corn bread or biscuits. Mother's bread was something to be remembered all of one's life; each Monday and Friday she baked several large loaves and a huge tin or two of buns. (We never called them rolls). While they were still warm and spread with butter they were angel's food! Also, sometimes she made cinnamon rolls and Ruth and I argued about who would get the crusts (ends of the rolls).

Many summer Friday afternoons, Papa hitched the team to the wagon, drove up by the well and left Russell in the seat to hold the horses while he went inside to help Mama carry out the picnic supper that we wolfed down after we had been swimming for an hour, or two or three, or four! Grace could swim when she was four, but I think I was eight or nine years old before I could swim. But I had to show off and dive even before I could swim, by diving into the eight foot "pool" in Flint Creek, and Papa catching me. I didn't realize how cold Flint Creek was in those days; years later we went back and I waded into it, and I wondered how we could have enjoyed the really cold water. It is fed by springs out of the mountains its entire length, and it was a lovely little stream, clear and free of pollution. We had never heard of "pollution" in those days, although we did take the precaution to go up above where we were swimming (and the horses were drinking) to get a drink of water for ourselves!

Sometimes we'd stay in the water until we were blue with the cold and Mama would say, "You girls get out for awhile now, find a patch of sun to sit in." She always allowed us to go back in later. Before we started for home, mother handed us clean towels, clean and dry clothes, a comb and brush for our hair, and told us to get dressed. We had our favorite dressing room behind some trees and bushes where we hurried fast as fast to get into clothing, comb and brush wet hair and hurry back to the picnic spread on a cloth on the ground. Buns, fried chicken, pickles, sliced tomatoes, boiled and deviled eggs, and potato salad sometimes, but mostly finger food, so no saucers and forks would have to be looked after and carried home in the empty lunch basket. Fruit we had, too, in season, red apples, and peaches and cold watermelon, chilled in the cold stream. The only one that could eat more of that than I, was Papa, and of course we always had cookies. (Mama was famous for her cookies and I have a funny story to tell about that!) (Later!)

Often we would sing on the way home and I am sure all the neighbors and friends along the way knew well when the "Maxson bunch" had been picnicking at the creek. Papa would lead us all in his rich

baritone, singing Swanee River, Old Kentucky Home, Old Black Joe; and always, of course, our favorite hymns: Old Rugged Cross, There is a Fountain Filled with Blood, Will there Be Any Stars in My Crown, Sunshine In My Soul Today, I Surrender All, etc; today I thank God for those days, that enrichment of spirit that we gathered from our parents; and for those nights that we gathered around the organ, with Mother playing (she had been a music teacher before she married, and played beautifully), and all of us singing as Dad led out; besides the hymns mentioned earlier, we sang Down at the Cross, Rescue the Perishing, No Not One, Brighten the Corner Where You Are", I'll go Where You Want Me to Go, Gladly the Cross I'd Bear (tho when I was really young, four years old or so, I was sure Dad was singing about a little cross-eyed bear named "Gladly").

Friday night was always prayer meeting. Mother, tired, no doubt and probably pregnant, didn't always go with us. (When she was pregnant with Paul, I noticed how fat she was, but was not curious enough perhaps to ask why. When she was pregnant with Carl, I knew she was pregnant and wondered. Mother found it hard to talk to her daughters about such things. Papa explained somewhat after we were older and urged us to ask him any questions we wondered about; I wanted to, for I wondered plenty! But I was too shy I guess, and most of my sex education came from older cousins and Aunt Myrtle and Aunt Ethel, only ten years older than Grace and I; and they said not to let a boy kiss you, ever, for he'd want to go further (and by that I supposed he'd want to give you a baby, but I had not the faintest how he'd go about that!!!)

After prayer meetings, walking home on summer nights, Ruth, Grace and I would walk with Papa, through the woods (a virgin forest of oak trees, moss, and, in the rainy season, a little stream. It was always quiet and cool. I walked alone sometimes, in front, and sometimes behind the others, and coming home it was DARK. I would suddenly run up beside Papa and reach for his huge, warm hand. As soon as we were out of the woods, I would drop his hand and run on alone. One night he said: "See, Sister, that's often the way we treat God. When things are dark, or there's trouble, and we are afraid, we call on Him; then when the way is lighter, we forget Him." A little lesson I never forgot.

Nor have I forgotten Mama's hand, reaching out to hold mine when I had a bad dream. The first nightmare I remember having, I thought I was running from the front porch, around the side of the house to the back porch where mama was, screaming because a snake was fastened to the calf of my leg. I was very young at that time, but Mother awakened me, talked soothingly and sat there holding my hand until I could sleep again.

How wonderful are God's plans, to give us mothers and fathers who love so much, and do the very best they can to give the children a good foundation of Faith in the Heavenly Father.

I didn't thank my parents I suppose, but oh, how many times I've thanked God for letting me be born into a Christian home with Darwin and Eunice my very own papa and mama.

Dad often printed Bible verses on a cardboard and tacked them up where we could all see them; then he gave Grace and I, and perhaps Ruth, too, whole chapters of the Bible to learn. Although I can't repeat them word for word anymore, they are so familiar as I read them over again. Especially several of the Psalms and the 13th Chapter of First Corinthians. And if I have a creed in Life, or perhaps I should say, my philosophy is Phil. 4:8. One of Dad's printed-out verses was Psalms 139:23-24. I do love the Psalms very much. They express the feelings of all humanity from deep depression to highest joy.)

But please pardon me! You are a preacher's family and I'm glad for that. Praise the Lord, and I'm very pleased and proud you are also teachers. How we do need Christian teachers. My own family seems to be nurse inclined. Four of my seven granddaughters are already RNs and three of my great granddaughters are now in nurses training in Little Rock and Memphis; one of my grandchildren is a qualified teacher, (Shirley, Helen's oldest girl) and she only taught one year and decided not to teach any more. She had been working part-time ever since she started high school and buying a home and saving her money for trips. She's been all over Europe and to Africa and just before Christmas had a chance to go to China, Japan and the Phillipines. She did work for the government in Washington D.C. for a year and then in Bonn, Germany for two years. Now she is in Dallas, Texas, works for a Japanese firm that makes components for telephones (Nippon Electronics Corp.) She has been there for several years and is Benefits Administrator for that company. It has over 500 employees, so she's busy.

Sorry I "branched off"! Didn't mean to, and if I ramble and my story comes out in bits and pieces perhaps you'll be able to form a coherent picture of the childhoods of Darwin's and Eunice's children anyway!

I couldn't have been more than six or seven years old when I started school in the same grade with Grace. Aunt Ora Maxson was the first grade teacher. My early memories of school are tied in with the arrival in our home of a strange and fascinating invention. Early in my school memories is the memory of coming home to find a wooden box, golden oak in color, high up on the south wall of our dining room. How excited we were when Mama explained it was a telephone, and showed us how, when it rang, she could take the "received" down from the hook and actually hear some real person talking (from miles away) and she could answer back to them. "Why doesn't it ring so we can see you do that?" we asked, "Why doesn't it ring? Why doesn't it ring???" We kept on pestering her so that she said, "Pull a chair up there by the phone and stand on it and I'll let you ring it, and talk, if you must!" So ring it I did, and a voice said "Central", and Mother said, "Please connect me to R.J. Maxson's residence." That was done, a moment later Grandmother (Annie Crandall Maxson) came on the line in her pleasant voice, and thus I was introduced to the modern mode of communication. Our telephone was on a party line, and we were to answer only when it rang two long rings. Some rings were two shorts and a long; a long and a short, etc.

Nobody had telephone numbers then, one had only to ask "Central", (the main switchboard operator) for the residence or store to which they wanted to talk.

Another time, probably in 1910 or 1911, as Grace and I walked home from school we saw a tall silvery looking frame sticking up higher than the maple trees around our house. Our ever adventuresome papa had bought us a windmill. Now no more hand pumping of water for the stock or chickens, or household. For a long time, after the erection of the windmill was completed, he left the bottom ladder off, so his adventuresome children wouldn't be tempted to climb 60 feet into the sky. When I was older I did climb to the top, sat there and sang "My Country 'Tis of Thee" to all the world.

I can't remember the time we didn't have gas lights at the church, but I do remember when Gentry got electricity, and the church deacons voted to have the church wired, so then we had the electric lights.

And I remember, oh, so well, when there were Sabbath Days and that church would be full. I can see the families coming in, walking down the aisles, taking their places, the Lindalls, Mr. and Mrs., and three children; the Knights, Saunders', Oches', Eaglesfields, etc; also the Van Horns, Richmonds, and our Grandpa R. J. Maxson, and all his family--Aunt Myrtle, Aunt Ora, Aunt Sylvia--I often went up to sit beside Grandma Maxson, for she always had a white, round peppermint for me when I got restless and squirming, and she didn't give me severe looks when my attention wandered from the preacher's words.

Oh, I often had to leave my seat to go to the outhouse during servies, but this was most often so that I could see what was going on in the little ante-room. Once I went out, and, coming in the back door, met Mr. Richmond as he came in; later he told dad that he had asked a little black-haired girl who she was, and the child had said, "Oh, I'm just one of the Maxson gang, Geneva."

The incident where I spanked the preacher I don't actually remember, (I was only three years old at the time) but Mama told me about it later. It seems the children were being bundled into coats and bonnets in the ante-room of the church, preparing for the trip home after services. The preacher, Burdett Coon, was stooping to tie his child's bonnet strings; I was just close enough and it must have seemed the appropriate thing for me to do, so I reached up and gave his buttocks a resounding smack!

Another preacher I remember quite well was Rev. James Hurley; that's why our brother Russell wasn't a junior to Grandpa Russell John; our brother was named Russell James, to honor Rev. James Hurley. Other preachers we had were Rev. Biggs (Uncle Nathan married his daughter, Daisy), also there was Brother Ernst, a real old fuddy duddy, then Davis (a good one), and T. J. Van Horn.

There is an old song that nags at my memory, and some of the verses I cannot recall accurately, but it goes something like this, and I'll bet Paul can recall it, too:

"There's a dear and precious book
Tho' its worn and faded now
That recalls the happy days of long ago
When I stood at Mother's knee
With her hand upon my brow
And she talked to me in gentle tones and low.

Blessed Book, precious Book, on thy dear old
tear stained leaves I love to look;
Thou art sweeter day by day, as I walk the narrow way
that leads at last to that bright home above.

Then she told me of His love. . .
How he came from heaven above,
How he suffered, bled and died upon the tree;
. . . and with tears she said it was for me. . .

(these last lines, I feel sure, are not quite right.)

And how I loved "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder":

"On that bright and glorious morning when the dead in Christ
shall rise,
And the Glory of his resurrection share;
When the dear ones shall gather over on the other shore,
When the roll is called up yonder I'll be there. . ."

One old song that I've tried to find, and haven't been able to. . .
I think it was titled: "I've had a glimpse of Jesus". It went
like this:

"Back to the cold world I will not go
Back to the old life of pain and woe,
Back to old ways of sin, Oh, no,
I've had a glimpse of Jesus.

I've found a life that is sweeter to me
Fuller of joy than the old life could be,
Fuller of love and from unhappiness free,
I've had a glimpse of Jesus."

Uncle Horace and Little Aunt Arlie Whittier were another of the old friends I remember. Aunt Arlie once wrote me a letter and addressed it to "Mip" Geneva Maxson. I asked Mama what the "Mip" meant, and she replied that was an old fashioned term to address young people. Aunt Arlie used to attend our "Junior (League) " meetings. (I think we always called the meetings simply "Junior". These were on Sabbath afternoons at 4:00, where we sang and had devotionals, etc, sort of like a "Junior" church service. Aunt Arlie came to play the organ for us. They had no children, were older than Mama and Papa and she never could seem to get over the shock that young people were so "active"!! I've wondered if that letter she wrote me had anything

to do with my behavior! She also was my music teacher at one time, trying to teach me to play the organ, but she gave up, and told Mama: "I'm only wasting my time and your money, Eunice, for she is tone deaf and will never learn to play." I could never imagine why I was so tone deaf when I loved so well to try to sing, and sing I did in church, loudly and enthusiastically, and I must have been an awful cross for the whole church to bear! Mrs. T. J. Van Horn sort of "gentled" me down I think, and I did adore her although I didn't think much of the preacher T. J. Amey (their daughter was nice) I wonder what ever became of Leigh?

I was seven years old, in the second grade at Gentry Grammar School. (Hattie Ellerson was my teacher.) That year Papa, seeing I needed shoes, and knowing I was much harder on shoes, dresses and everything else, decided I should have boy's shoes. The only difference in those years was that the girl's shoes had holes all the way up to lace them, and were obviously a bit lighter than the boy's shoes, and the shoes for the boys had metal hooks at the top instead of lacing "holes" all the way up, and were also a little sturdier. I can't remember that I complained to Papa at the time, for I thought anything he did was always right, but at school, some of the other girls noticed my shoes and giggled and "snickered" behind their hands. Opal Eldridge, one of my friends (I thought!) derided me about my shoes, and pointed out that I should have had spunk enough to tell my father I wouldn't have them. I was humiliated and hurried home ahead of Grace that afternoon, and I figured out an answer that would certainly have gotten even with her, if I had only had presence of mind to say it to her at the time! I thought: "I should have said to her, 'Yes, Fattie, don't you wish you had some shoes like mine!'" That would have cut her a good one, since she was some ten pounds fatter and more awkward than me. Oh, but I didn't think of it in time and now I had months (at least weeks) to wear the shoes before they could be discarded for new ones! No wonder I was extra active for the rest of the winter, scuffing and scrubbing away at the shoes, running, jumping, hiking over rocky ground, just anything to put on some extra wear and tear!

Aunt Myrtle married the handsome, dashing Dan Ricketts in a lovely parlor ceremony in my grandparents' home. Grace and I (about five and six or so) had been chosen as flower girls. We wore white, full skirted gowns with huge puffed sleeves, white long stockings and "once in a lifetime" white babydoll slippers! We had flowers in our hair and carried beribboned baskets of rose petals. Mama said to Aunt Ora, who was directing proceedings, to put "a little rouge on Geneva, she is so pale". Grace and I walked daintily (I hope!) down the stairway, preceding the bride, and when we reached the bottom of the staircase, we dropped rose petals here and there to the smiles and nods of our huge family and friends gathering. How important, beloved and precious we felt! We tried to steal the show, of course, but the bride's appearance on the staircase, on the arm of our Grandfather took all attention away from us. After the ceremony, there were long tables loaded with cakes, punch, lemonade, and dainty sandwiches without crusts. It was the first time I had ever seen sandwiches without crusts and I thought it was the height of fashion. The Gentry City Band was there to play

Papa had long been a member of the band, and of course they wanted to play for this function. I don't remember that there was any dancing at this wedding and I suppose not, for our church did not believe much in dancing. But it was a grand affair and a high point of Gentry society at that time. Especially so because Grandfather Russel John Maxson was the mayor of the city at that time.

Just a week before that, I overheard the grownups laughing as Dan Ricketts related to the group (Papa wasn't present) that when he had asked Grandpa Maxson for Aunt Myrtle's "hand" in marriage, Grandpa had replied: "No, Myrtle is too young. You can have Ora if you want."

Later that summer, in a family gathering after church one Sabbath, Grace and I sat in a lawn swing with Aunt Ora and Aunt Myrtle and Aunt Ethel, and they taught me a little poem to say. It went like this:

I love my papa, that I do;
My mamma says she loves him, too.
They both love me, this I know,
For in a thousand ways, their love they show;
But papa says he fears some day
With some mean scamp I'll run away."

Then they sent me in to say it to the grownups, all the while they giggled and laughed. But I confused "scamp" with "tramp" in my mind and could never figure out why I would ever run away with a "tramp", many of whom had come by for a handout.)

Our social life, in those days, was mostly with our relatives, and church friends. I went into Carpenter's store one day to use the phone to ask Mama if I could go home after school with Myrtle Bruce, and come back to church that night with them, to the "Good Will Society Social". Roy Carpenter laughed, overhearing my conversation, and said, "We all need good will." Our family bought many a dollars worth of groceries at the Carpenter Brothers Grocery. There were Roy and Ray, and a younger brother Ross. Roy was married to a Carl, another of the leading families of Gentry, and they lived in a lovely brick home just west of Mrs. Evans' fancy home right on the corner. Next to the Carpenters was Tallman's, the newspaper editor's family, and across the avenue, the Baptist Church, and a block south, the Public School that we all attended.

Several times, while visiting Grandparents Maxson's, when Russell was just a toddler (and Grace and I not much older), we got Russell in the next room from where the grownups were, and coached him, saying: "Now, Russell, just say I want some bread and butter". We'd make him say it a couple of times, then push him toward the door, and he'd go to Grandma and say, "Now Russell just say I want some bread and butter." Of course she would laugh, and lead him toward the kitchen and we'd follow, and we'd all get some bread and butter.

Grandma Maxson always had good homemade bread and butter. When I was older and baking for my family, I asked her why hers was so much

better than mine. She answered, "Practice, I suspect. And I add potato water for the liquid, and I beat the batter for at least five minutes before I add the rest of the flour-- then, too, I knead it a lot." My bread did get better with the passing of the years.

I think Mama, in her lifetime, must have baked several million cookies, as well as good bread. She always had cookies and milk for her grandchildren when they came. I know she made them by the dozen when her own children were growing up.

There was always a crock full of molasses cookies in the pantry which we could eat at any time, by the handfull. She also kept a cookie jar of sugar cookies on a high shelf in the closet under the stairway. Now, on the floor of that same closet was kept sorghum molasses. Perhaps a barrell or keg or two and two or three 50-pound lard stands full of sorghum. Dad at that time, ran a sorghum mill where everybody for miles around would come to bring their sugar cane to be made into sorghum molasses, and most often he'd take sorghum for pay, money being scarce at times. Since there was always an abundance of molasses for cooking, making ginger bread, cookies, and to use for syrup on hot biscuits and hotcakes, there was always sorghum on the floor of that stairwell closet. (There was a beautiful dark blue and gold syrup pitcher always on the table at breakfast.) One day the folks all left for town, leaving Grace and I to play with our dolls in the shady front yard. Our cousin, Charlie, about sixteen, was nearby in the garden, doing some work for mother. The two little girls decided to have a tea party, and since there was no one to say no, we thought, why not get some of the special sugar cookies that Mama kept for special treats, company or school lunches? So Geneva (of course) was sent to get a few cookies out of the stairwell closet. Whether the lid was not on tight, on the barrel of sorghum setting on the closet floor, or whether I was just heavy enough to smash it down into the gooey liquid, I'll never know, but while I was reaching for the sugar cookies, standing atop the molasses barrell, the lid suddenly gave way, down I plunged into the molasses, stuck firmly, and could not extricate myself. I screamed for Grace, who came running, but since she was even smaller than I, she could not tug hard enough to get me out. Soon she ran out to the garden for cousin Charlie. After he laughed awhile and I cried at the top of my lungs, he went out, filled a tub with water, placed it next to the molasses barrel and with the three of us struggling, managed to extricate me from the mess. I thought for sure I would be killed when they all returned and found what I'd done, but for some reason, Charlie never told on me, nor did Grace, and certainly I didn't. And for some reason none of the three of us ate any molasses either in cookies, gingerbread or syrup for a long time after that.)

Late every summer, before start of school, Mama would have Molly, her buggy horse, hitched up, and she would go to Siloam Springs for the day-- to shop. Sometimes she would allow Ruth to go with her, or she would take Aunt Lizzie. She would bring back packages of goodies-- always a treat of candy, little bakery cakes or pretzels to eat, but also always, the school supplies--pieces of yard goods for a new dress apiece and shirts for the little boys who were in school at the time, and tablets and pencils. I loved the pencils of all colors. After everything was unpacked and put away, she would put the school supplies on the table, clear the room of children,

then ask us to come into the room, one at a time, to choose which color pencil, or tablet, we would like. After the choosing was over, she would have us go out again and when we returned, our possessions would be in separate groups, and we would usually always get the ones we had chosen. I loved the pencils and the fat tablets and I dreamed of the fine, inspirational things I would write upon the pages of the tablet with the beautiful pencils. One year, Papa went to Siloam with Mama to shop, and was there when the choosing and dividing up was occurring. But he gave the occasion his own special twist. He cut each pencil in half, and told Mama to save the other half until we had used up the first half! To say I was angry, ashamed and embarrassed to bring a half-pencil to school was putting it mildly! (To this day, I dislike using short, stubby pencils!)

The fabrics she purchased on this trip for our school clothing were always beautiful to me. She had a special way of choosing just what we would like. Grace and I, being about the same size, she always bought a length of dress fabric for me in blue and the same pattern in pink or rose, for Grace. For Ruth, she always got something just a little different. Ruth, being older, did not especially like to be identified with the two younger girls, one of whom was always getting into some kind of mischief or other. Also then, Mama always got the three of us girls one good dress fabric and sewed up "best" dresses for us, for wearing on Sabbath, and for parties and such.

Here, I'll tell one small story, mystery at that, about the "almost alike" dresses belonging to Grace and me. One Friday afternoon, after the wash was on the line, Papa took us down to the creek for a swim and a picnic. In the Friday wash was a blue dress for me and a pink dress for Grace. Mama hung them side by side to dry, then hurried inside to prepare the picnic supper. We went to the creek, had our swim and picnic as usual, returned with our singing and good spirits as usual. When we went to take the wash in from the line before dark, Grace's pink dress was missing. That's all that was lost, Grace's lovely little pink dress. My blue one was hanging ~~beside it~~, undisturbed, clothespins in place, dry and ready to be ironed and worn to Sabbath School and Church the next day. But where was Grace's pink dress? We never solved the mystery, nor did we ever see Grace's pink dress again.

Aunt Ora, Dad's sister, was quite a dramatic artist. She first "took elocution lessons", then became an "elocution" teacher. She was in several dramatic presentations in Gentry, posturing and posing in quite a grand manner, I thought, and I determined at that time to become an actress, perhaps as great an actress as Sarah Bernhardt. But first, I must take "elocution" and practice a lot. I had already been coached to learn little verses and to recite them to admiring gatherings of family and friends. I loved to be very dramatic as I said or did ordinary things for awhile, sometimes surprising family and teachers with my dramatic statements and gestures. I was in a special fan drill when I was in second grade, and, although dressed exactly as the others, and was drilled to move my fan exactly like the others, I tried throughout the evening to stand out just a little bit from the others by special curtsies and bows, and flutterings of the fan I carried, twirled and swept about.)

Aunt Ora had promised to give me "elocution" lessons and teach me all she knew, but then she went to Battle Creek, Michigan, and took training to become an RN. She worked at that until she married a widower named George Lowell who was a realtor and lived in Gravette, Arkansas with two daughters, one of whom was named Dorothy. I have forgotten the name of the other daughter.

Papa played the slide trombone in the Gentry Band. They had uniforms and were often asked to play for public gatherings. When I was about five years of age, a carnival came to town and set up a merry-go-round (carosel) behind the auditorium, and the band played all evening. Dad came by where Mama and we children were and said the man who ran the merry-go-round had told the band members that their children could ride the merry-go-round, free, for a couple of times. Of course, I was on in a flash, and I rode time after time. When the ticket taker came around I'd say, "My papa plays in the band!" Afterward I heard Papa tell Mama he had to pay for all of my extra rides, but he didn't scold. Perhaps he could see how happy it made me.

Our home, when I first became aware of it, seemed always a happy home; if I had a dime for every time I ran up the stairs singing, (at least belting out the words) at the top of my voice, I'd have a tidy sum. As we came into our house, entering the front door, we were in the front hall; on the left was the door to the parlor, and just beyond that, the stairway. On the right was the door to the "cry" room, as Grace and I called it, for it was the room where Mama sent us when we were crying unnecessarily and making nuisances of ourselves. It was at various times an extra bedroom or used for the incubator, which hatched out 350 baby chicks. Those eggs were carefully tended and kept at the right temperature. Mother turned each one each morning and before bedtime. After the three weeks and the baby chicks hatched out, they were often kept in that room on the floor in brooders until papa could prepare a warm place in the woodshed for the brooders and chicks to be moved outside. We had chickens to fry in plenty, to roast later, and many of them to keep for layers. Mama sometimes kept 300 laying hens. Dad built six henhouses in the orchard, with trap nests so they could tell which hens were the best layers. The water was piped down there and a small room was built for the 100 pound sacks of feed. At one time when Mama was in the chicken business, Papa had five milk cows, and Mama kept track of expenses; she said the hens fed themselves, the family, and the five milk cows. There was a buyer from Tulsa who came to the house once a week and collected and paid for the eggs that had been packed in cases or crates holding twelve dozen each.

But I started out to tell about our home! Beyond that door on the right was the hallway that led to the kitchen. Just before you reached the kitchen was the door on the left to the closet under the stairway--(that closet that held the sorghum molasses kegs!) Just inside the kitchen was the corner shelves large enough for a six-year old girl to climb to the top shelf, near the ceiling, and hide after she had taken a sheet out to the front gate to scare

Cousin Russ as he came home one night after dark. Instead of a joke on him, it spooked his horses, making them run almost down to the creek, and it scared me nearly to death. I was as quiet as a mouse, hiding up there when he finally got the horses quiet and into the stable. He came in to eat and fuss about the near accident, and saying some stupid kids should have their hides tanned. Finally, after he'd gone to bed, I climbed down and told Mama I was sorry. (I was glad Dad had gone to some meeting uptown!)

Opposite the door into the kitchen was the cookstove. It was a big, comfortable stove with a reservoir to keep an extra supply of hot water. The firebox had a door opening on the side, as well as two stove lids on top, and four other stove lids that could be removed and a kettle or pot set directly over the flames. Up above were two warming ovens, which were supposed to keep food hot until ready to serve, and probably would, but they certainly dried out biscuits and made them hard as rocks, if left in the warming oven too long. It seemed that Papa always had the Sabbath Recorder by his plate, and we would sit and wait for breakfast until he had looked up the daily reading, read it to us slowly and thoughtfully, then he made the comments, and asked for the same from us, and then he said the morning prayer. When finally we were ready to eat, the oatmeal was cold and the biscuits hard. That was good spiritual discipline.

In the kitchen there was also a table, similar to the one in the dining room, where we often used for breakfast. After supper in the dining room just south of the kitchen, the table was cleared and we did our homework, before bedtime. Just before we went upstairs to bed, we had more Bible study and prayer, and we called this the Family Altar.

The dining room in the southwest corner of the house was the most lived-in room. Besides the long table, there was a secretary that held some books, writing materials, and a secret drawer that Mama kept coins in. For years I didn't even know it was there. Next to the secretary was a magazine rack Dad had built and attached to the wall. It was somewhat like a ladder and many times I climbed up that far enough that I could reach the hands of the huge old "regulator" clock that hung on the wall over the dining table. I often listened to the ticking of the clock as Papa paused sometimes in our morning, or evening prayers. On the opposite side of the dining room, a gigantic map of the United States was fixed upon the wall. There is where we learned where the states were placed and other things about this great country. We often traveled "in our mind's eye" as Dad was fond of saying, to different parts of the United States, and we discussed what each part was like. Under the map was a lounge, the kind without pillows, sides, or back, but with an elevated end upon which one could rest his head without use of pillows. I seem to remember it was of some sort of smooth leather, and brown in color. One of the men Dad had hired had an epileptic seizure there one night. Mother sent us to bed when this happened and Dad called the doctor.

In winter the big wood heater stood in the corner, next to the parlor. Having no electricity in the early years, we used kerosene lamps for lighting. . . "coal oil lamps" we called them. Later, we got aladin lamps and I thought that lamp, which cast out so much fine, bright light was the wonder of all wonders. However, I shall never forget how Mama looked, like a goddess, carrying the kerosene lamp up the stairway to light our way up to bed, how the shadows moved and shifted all around us and, walking behind her I noticed how the light silhouetted Mama's proud head with hair piled high on top and her fine features softly touched by the yellow light.

I have mentioned earlier how the family would gather in the parlor around the organ and sing hymns and have evening devotional. The organ was of some sort of dark wood, intricately carved and trimmed, with two round "arms" that held out a small round platform on which the lamps could be set, so that Mama could see the music. Mama had to "pump" (we called it!) or work the pedals at her feet and I loved to watch her hands lightly touch the keys to bring out the music. I have already mentioned the hymns we sang, and the voices of our family. Later, when the boys, Fitch, Russell and Paul were older, they played along on their musical instruments, filling the parlor, the whole house, with a mighty sound.

There were small tables, or "stands", as we called them, about the parlor, one table on which stood a huge fern near the window with its white lace curtains. There were other chairs, the one I remember most was the "morris" chair, which, when you pressed a button on it's arm, it laid you back into a comfortable resting position.

In recalling the two uncles of Grandmother Maxson who lived with us at different times I am having difficulty. I must have been four years old, so don't remember clearly, except for one vivid incident! One of the uncles, (Uncle Tom Hess), told the future by feeling the head bumps. He described himself as a phrenologist. He did Ruth's and Grace's readings by having them sit on a stool at his feet as he felt the bumps on their heads. He told Grace she would live to be one hundred years old, and a lot of other nice things. I can't remember what he told Ruth. When Grace got up, I popped down onto the stool, but he refused to "read me", said he was too tired and he'd do it some other day. That other day never came. I suspect he just ran out of something different to say. Uncle Tom stayed around awhile, and not long after he left, his brother John came to visit. Uncle John paid Mama some for groceries, and Papa allowed him to build a cute little one-room house for himself down in the edge of the woods, not far from the brick kiln. He had a nice horse and buggy, and one afternoon, took all three of us girls for a buggy ride. Ruth and Grace sat on the seat, one on each side of him, and I sat on the floor. I'll never forget the shock and repugnance I felt, looking at him as he suddenly opened his trousers and exposed himself to we girls! I looked away and heard Ruth say, "we want to go home." I have forgotten exactly what happened next, but obviously, Ruth went straightway and told Mama, and we never saw the uncle again. The next day, he was gone from his little "dollhouse" in the woods, bag and baggage, little buggy, horse and all! I imagine Papa dispatched him speedily with no mincing of words!

When I was about nine years old, and in the fourth grade, Papa had the brick kiln operating. It was located down in the pasture, west of the apple orchard. There were two square mills, or mixers of the clay from which the bricks were made. As it was mixed with the water which they got from five ponds they had made, it was pushed out by paddles into molds--(trays with brick-size pans), four at once, then these were carried into the level brickyard to dry in the sun. After they were solid (several days later) they were picked up and carried into the huge, round kiln, stacked just so-so, and fires were maintained in the fireplaces that were built around the outside until the bricks were very hard and glazed. They were called fire bricks. Dad operated this kiln for about three years, in the summers. I don't really know why he quit making bricks, but suspect it was because he ran out of suitable clay in that location. The ponds were there for years, and we loved to "sail" on them in a big wooden box. They were not deep, the box was stationery on the bottom of the pond, but when the breeze rippled the water past the box, it appeared as if one was moving across the water, and many summer afternoons I sailed away to faraway places with strange sounding names, all alone in a lovely dream.

Dad was known all over that part of the country as a skilled house-mover (also!) (He had many trades and skills, and used to say he was "jack of all trades, master of none") so he took a lot of house-moving jobs from other towns. He would go down to Westville (Oklahoma), or up as far as Gravette, on the train, look the job over, name his price and make an agreement. Nearly always, he would take two or three of we children along. How we loved that ride on the train! Then, if he got the job, he would take his teams, wagon, and all his equipment and drive down Monday, usually coming back on the train on a Friday night to go to church on Sabbath Day and be at home over Sunday.

When Mama was home alone with we children she always locked the doors at night. When Dad was home, they were never locked. One night when Dad was away on a housemoving job, about midnight, Mama heard the front door open very quietly, and she heard someone coming stealthily up the stairway. She lay there, terrified, wondering if she had forgotten to lock the door, wondering, Dear God, what next? Would she and the children be murdered in their beds? She lay quietly, scarcely daring to breathe, wondering what to do? As she listened, she heard the intruder turn at the head of the stairs and go into the little boys' bedroom. Russell and Fitch were sleeping in there. Paul, her baby at the time, was sleeping in his crib in her room. She waited a second, everything was still quiet, but knowing she could put it off no longer, frightened or not, she got up, took up the lamp and walked into the boys' room. There was Dad, just getting into bed with the boys-- he had gone in there, rather than disturb her sleep, thinking we would all be surprised by his presence in the morning.

That was a terrible scare he gave Mama that night, but nothing to compare with the one that he gave both Mama and me later!

The summer after Carl was born, I was twelve years old and since I was "so good with babies" Mama had made me fulltime nursemaid for Carl. I liked anything better than doing dishes, making beds, etc! One day after lunch, when Dad was out of town on a job, Mama decided to go to town and told me if I'd put a clean dress on the baby and put my shoes on, she would take Carl and me along. Ruth and Grace were to look after the other children, and they were upstairs trying to make Russell, Fitch and Paul take naps. (Not that they were ever very successful at this.) I rushed to get the baby ready and after he was ready, he was sleepy so I put him on the cot in the shade in the front yard near the house to sleep while I went in to get my shoes. Mama came with the horse hitched to the buggy and said, "Come, bring the baby and we'll go." I ran out front to get him, and there was no baby! Mama was frantic, running here and there looking for her baby! "Geneva, what has happened to the baby?" she kept crying, "Geneva, were there any dogs around???" I was dying, too, frantic, looking into every bush and shrub. I was sure someone had kidnapped our precious baby, some passing gypsies, perhaps, I had heard of such things. Just then, Dad walked around the corner of the house where he had been hiding, with the baby in his arms. Dad had thought he would teach me a lesson not to go away and leave the baby untended!

We all loved books, and Mama read aloud to us at night; how we loved that, even if we did have to wait until the next night to see what happened in the story. Once, when I was being more than usual bothersome, I suppose, asking too many questions while Mama was busy, she sent me up to her room, telling me to open the top of her big greenish-gray trunk to get the little book that she had kept from her childhood, and she told me to read it. I loved getting into her trunk, it gave me a chance to rummage, see what treasures I could find. The little book was there. The title was "Curious Jane". It was about a little girl who was curious about what was down the road and went to see, thereby becoming lost and getting into all kinds of trouble. I thought at the time that I had better take a lesson and not ever be so curious, but I soon forgot about the warning and became again my old, curious self.

Another time when I was cranky and out of sorts, she sent me out to look at her pansy bed. Afterwards, she said: "See all those little shining faces, and think how cross your face looks." And she recited to me the old nursery rhyme, Cross patch, draw the latch, sit by the fire and spin; take your cup and drink it up, ~~and~~ call the neighbors in. . ."

Sometimes when we were too noisy going to bed, or rowdy, or after reading us a bedtime story, she would say: "Mum mum, for a plum, P., P., for a pear; first one that speaks out loud will get a boxed ear!" Then, putting her finger to her lips, she would tiptoe out of the room and we'd go to sleep.

When Paul was the baby, Mama would rock him to sleep, singing softly, "My Kitty Has Gone from her Basket". It is sung to the tune of "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean." The lullaby went like this:

"My kitty has gone from her basket,
My kitty has gone up a tree,
Oh, who will go up in the branches
And bring back my kitty to me.

Chorus:

Bring back, bring back, bring back my kitty to me, to me,
Bring back, bring back, oh, bring back my kitty to me.

The dog that lives down by the river
Will come with his naughty old bark,
And frighten my kitty so dreadfully
She won't come back until dark.

Chorus.

They say that when people are frightened
Their hair will turn perfectly white,
If that is the case with my kitty,
She will be white by tonight.

After three verses with chorus every time, she would keep singing, sort of like this: "Geneva, our baby is asleep, if you will hand me his blanket, we'll put it around him nice and warm and cozy, and put him in his little bed. . . (so as not to disturb the rhythm and drowsiness of the baby, I think). Then we'd put him in his bed and he would stay asleep. (Usually!)

On February 15, 1908, my seventh birthday, it was a cold, rainy day. I felt it unfair that I had to go to school on my birthday, although usually I loved school. Mama felt my forehead to see if I had a fever; since I couldn't fake it, I went along with Ruth and Grace, acting ugly and disgruntled. Ruth pinched me (as she usually did when I was misbehaving, not "minding my manners") and I "bawled" in really great form, going by the neighbors', the Drakes. Later, Mrs. Drake told Mama I could bawl louder than anyone she had ever heard! The schoolday passed eventually, and when we arrived home, the dining table was already set--for company dinner, it seemed--white tablecloth and all! (We usually ate on oilcloth, which seemed to grow "sticky" or "oily" with use!) There was a cake in the center of the table, covered with white icing, a sauce dish for each place setting, holding canned peaches with a great mound of whipped cream, a cherry on top! I was completely mollified for the time, since I was getting the attention I felt I deserved. A good dinner, the cake, the singing of Happy Birthday to me, the whipped cream and peaches, sweet elbertas from the tree in our garden last summer, and after supper, the whole family taking turns playing "Authors" with me. The birthday person never had to wash dishes or work much on their birthdays. I felt like a queen. However, that same year, when June 10 came around, school was out and we had a real party; friends came in, there was a big cake, and homemade ice cream. There were games on the lawn, croquet and running games like tag, and sitting down games like "Gossip" where one would whisper a sentence to the next, on down the line and around the circle, and we'd whoop to see what it came out as! But of course young Geneva pointed out peevishly to her sweet Mother: "Oh, yes, on Grace's birthday, we get a real outdoor party, and real ice cream.

...Don't ever have ice cream for mine." Patiently, Mama explained, there was never ice to be bought in the winter when it's my birthday. Then she'd mollify me by patting me and saying I was her little Valentine Day present, even if a day late.

Very early, before daylight every summer morning we could hear the big wagon go by our place carrying a load of ice for Gentry ice-house from Siloam (Springs), seven miles south where they made it at the Ice Plant.

We often had parties, called "socials" then, at our house because we had room for lots of people and a large front yard for games. Ones we especially enjoyed were Last Couple Out; Blind Man's Bluff; In and Out the Window; Hide and Seek. The "it" was chosen this way: we would recite: (pointing to each child in turn around the circle):

Erie, Orie, Ockrey Ann,
Wirey, Briary, Tiery Tan,
Inktum, Blinktum, Split 'em in two,
Nobody stinks but Y-O-U!

Then that person had to be "it".

Another counting out game we had was

Wire Briar, Limber Lock,
Three Gray geese flew in a flock,
One flew east, one flew west
And one flew over the cuckoos nest;
O-U-T spells OUT GOES HE (SHE)!

Regarding the house that the seven Maxson children grew up in; I didn't mention all I could have about the parlor. I mentioned about the carpet and described some of the furniture, etc. There was another "lounge" in the parlor which we called the sofa, on the wall that backed the staircase entrance. Over this sofa there were huge photographs or portraits of my mother's parents. They were George Washington Huffman (very stern-looking and be-whiskered. I could imagine his eyes following me around the room when I had been naughty), and Mama's mother, Loretta Brown Babcock Huffman, who was pretty, with nice even features, but it bothered me that she had her hair pulled back so severely. I always had the urge to take a pencil or crayon and draw little curly tendrils around her face, and probably would have dared, except that I was so afraid of the grim face and evil eyes of my grandfather Huffman's picture and afraid he would invoke the wrath of God upon me even from his grave. Across the room hung a picture, a sort of colored sketch it seems to me, of the Battle of Pea Ridge, one of the battles of the civil war that was fought in Arkansas. This held special meaning for us, because my Grandfather, Russell John Maxson had fought in this battle (for the North--he was in a New York Infantry Regiment). It is unclear to me now, but I believe he was an officer in this regiment. I remember he had a livid sort of bump on his forehead which we understood was the only wound he had suffered in the war, and that was caused by a glancing bullet. The walls of the parlor were covered in a rich textured dark red paper, a bit formal, and not

changed as often as the paper in the rest of the house. The other rooms were papered in light, cheerful patterns. Every two years or so, Papa would bring home the wallpaper book full of samples from uptown, and Mama would select new paper for the rooms needing to be renewed. She always settled on the cheaper grades for the upstairs bedrooms, so she could afford to change often. She allowed we children to select the paper for our bedrooms. Ruth was lucky; she could choose any pretty pattern she wanted, and did it with no argument. She always chose some dainty flowery light blue lovely paper. Grace and I always had to share a bedroom, so it was a stressful time and one of us had to give in to the other, most often. Dad was a good paper hanger, and with Mama spreading the paste on the back of the paper, on a long table, it was quickly done. About sharing the bedroom! We always had to share one room, Grace and I. The arguments about the room went on so incessantly that we had to come to a business-like compromise and keep it strictly that way. We placed the bed in the exact center of one wall. Everything on one side of the bed, and room belonged to Grace, and she kept it neat as a pin. (The bed itself was rather difficult, but it usually was made up, as nicely as possible on her side, the covers pulled up nice and straight, the pillow placed just so and patted down)-- while my side remained rumpled and bumpy, usually. On her side of the room belongings were picked up and put neatly away, shoes and lamps and books placed just so-- while on my side, clothing was dropped carelessly on the floor, books and papers sprawled where I had dropped them-- havoc in general. But I took care that Papa didn't see that I had thrown books around much.

When I was tiny, three or four years old I suppose, I was looking at a picture book, turning the pages by wetting down my thumb liberally (in my mouth) and scooping the pages over. Papa saw that and, sitting down on the floor beside me, said, "Books are our friends, and we must never mistreat them" He demonstrated to me how to slip my finger behind the top of each page and turn it over gently. I love books to this day and treat them tenderly, and cringe whenever I see someone turning down a page to hold their places, or leaving a book overturned and spread apart, or otherwise abused. Grandfather Russell John always had many books (he read law at one time, studying for the legal profession), and we could look forward to receiving at least part of them, after he had finished with them. One I especially remember was "Teddy Roosevelt and His Rough Riders".

Mama had little time for books, but she always had several magazines she subscribed to. Woman's Home Companion, The Delineator, The American Magazine, and one I think was called "This Week" which was like our modern Newsweek or Time. There's where I first met Bruce Barton, the author of "The Greatest Story Ever Told", and "The Greatest Book Ever Written" (the New and Old Testaments), and "He Upset the World" about Saint Paul and his missionary journeys. Aunt Myrtle would sometimes let us read her True Story magazines. Mama considered those trash, so we didn't dare carry them home. The books in the bookcase in the parlor we were welcome to read, all except the one titled "The Queen's Necklace" by Alexander Dumas. This one, she said, we could read when we were eighteen. I slipped it out two or three times long before I was

eighteen, but never got interested in it. Finally, before I was married, I tried again, but it was still boring. I put it back on the shelf and have never read that story to this day.

I had been to the Public Library in Gentry, and had read Zane Grey, Also Kathleen Norris's romances. These, Mama didn't approve of, she said they treated divorce far too lightly. The books our parents bought were read and re-read. I remember vividly "The five Little Peppers", "Mrs. Wiggins of the Cabbage Patch", "Helen's Babies" by John Habberton, I thought, ~~one~~ was one of the best books anyone could ever read.

We always had books and music around. Ruth and Grace both had good voices, and played the piano, and our brothers! As they grew up, they nearly drove us nuts practicing on their various musical instruments. I think they all learned to play slide trombone, and Fitch came along, having to be different, took up the saxophone. After school, the boys would do the chores that Dad required of them, then practice on those horns until suppertime. After eating, they would practice again. They couldn't have been very far into their teens, if that old, to begin playing the musical instruments, for Russell was only fifteen years old when I married in 1918. By that time Ruth had been married a couple of years, also Grace soon after so the boys were almost like a second family to our parents. After "going through it" with their daughters, now they had these fine, lively boys to raise.

One memory I have of Paul was that, when he was in high school, he brought home his report card. Mama, upon studying it at length, asked him: "Paul, what do these 'F's' mean?" "Oh," Paul replied, "those F's mean 'fine', Mama!" I am sure Paul did not get many F's, having made it through college later and into a successful career in the ministry.

Observing my brothers in their growing up years, between visits, etc, I remember how handsome I thought they were becoming, in their starched white shirts, driving off in Dad's newly acquired Ford to date some girlfriend, or to some ball game. Dad had purchased the car about 1918 or so, and of course I was gone from home by then, so did not learn to drive until much later. Paul broke his arm cranking the Ford one morning before school I do remember.

Back to when we were all younger, tho, I remember Fitch fell off the elevated sidewalk that lead from the back porch to the woodshed and broke his collarbone. The woodshed was a two story affair, twelve or fifteen feet behind the house. It was a great place to play, the upstairs room of the woodshed, but it was used by the hired man for a sleeping room after we children grew older and required all the bedrooms in the upstairs of the house, but when we could get up in that upstairs room of the woodshed we had some fun times. There were a lot of old photograph negatives in a box that one of Dad's friends, a photographer, gave to Dad when he sold his photo gallery and moved back North. We had fun with

those, Grace and I, and one day we dropped several of them, making a loud crash, (they were the glass negatives, much larger than the modern negatives on film that we have today). We were startled to hear Dad's irritated voice calling: "Bust 'em up! Bust 'em up, girls!" We were so startled that we dropped a few more before we could get out of there. Poor Dad! I don't suppose he ever really had anything that he could call his own, and keep it intact, until we grew up.

If the boys misbehaved, it was to the woodshed with Dad. My only hard spanking came one day when I was coming back to the house from the woods where we had a playhouse. Dad was in the barn door, and called me to him, saying, "Didn't you hear your Ma call you an hour ago?" I said no, but he laid a harness strap across my legs, anyhow, perhaps thinking I was not telling the truth. When he took Fitch or Paul to the woodshed, with them already crying, "I'll be good", I knew he was the meanest man in the world, and I would have enjoyed killing him (I thought then!). I don't remember that he ever struck Russell, Carl or Grace, but the rest of us got "it" when "it" was coming to us.

There was an open range for stock in those early days, the yards and gardens had to be fenced to keep stock away, otherwise they had free range. Ruth, Grace and I were often sent to drive in the cows so they could be milked before dark. We'd hear the cowbells and run to the other side of them, as they were already on their way home to be milked, and we thought we'd done such a great job of herding them in. Even after fencing was required to keep stock in their pastures, sometimes Grace and I would take our three calves, Annabelle, Dick and Daisy, down the road to the cemetery to eat the fresh green grass. We would often take Fitch and Paul with us, taking turns carrying fat little Paul. The little boys loved playing in the cemetery, jumping, sitting and standing on the gravestones, running in and out and hiding among them. Carl, after he was older, would take my children down there to play, and would sometimes amuse them by standing on his head atop a huge marble marker which had a large, round ball on top of that. Anyhow, back to the times we girls would take the calves (and little boys) down to the cemetery. Sometimes one of us would have to run and head off a calf from going down as far as the railroad track. We'd sing out "Annabelle's so lazy, but Oh, you Dick and Daisy!"

Ruth was five years older than Grace, and some of her girl friends were even a year or so older than she, so they were more interested in hair styles, clothes and boys. How we did love to sneak around and listen in to their conversations! The era of the "hourglass figure" was just about to phase out in 1910, 1912, but "stylish" women still wore corsets. (Mama wore one as long as she lived.) Cousins Sylvia, Vancha and Aunt Myrtle wore corsets, so Ruth must have one, too. Mother bought her one, but wouldn't allow her to lace up as tightly as she begged to be laced, and Mama promised Ruth if she would not lace it up tightly, that when Ruth was eighteen Mama herself would lace it up so tight she could hardly breathe. When Ruth became eighteen, she no longer wanted to be laced up like that, as that silly style had gone out by then.

Papa was always very patriotic. He had a flagpole, and always a good flag to fly on suitable days. And we were allowed fireworks. Russell, Fitch and Paul (after they were older) were allowed to climb to the platform on the windmill and shoot their fireworks. It was a thrilling display, and exciting, to see the fireworks coming from up there, especially the rockets and "wheels".

We were only allowed one dog, or cat, at a time around the farm. The cats had to stay around the barn to keep rats from eating corn and feed in the corn crib. Tippy was the dog I loved best, a beautiful collie. He stayed pretty close to we children and sometimes we'd let him into the wagon to go to the creek for our swim and picnic. Sometimes he would walk through the woods with us, then turn and go home as we went on to school. We never let him go as far as Barrett's, or the little house next to them. In that little house lived a woman whom we (perhaps unkindly) called "The Dog Lady". She had six or eight dogs and regarded them as her children. One day one of her dogs died. She came to the schoolyard where we were playing at afternoon recess and asked for several of us, "All that would come," she said, to come to her house as soon as school was out, that she would like to have us come to "Crickett's" funeral. We surmised that Crickett was one of her dogs because we had never seen anyone else around her place. Probably ten or so of the "braver" children did agree to go, Grace and I among them. I don't know now if it started as a joke, or "acting out" a role, but one of the children began to really cry, almost the first moment the Dog Lady started the services; another joined in, and another until every child there, and all her other dogs, which she had in one corner of the room began howling. The children wailing at the top of their lungs, and the dogs howling was more than the poor woman could bear. She took the poor deceased Crickett, wrapped in a winding sheet, up in her arms and outside to bury him in the grave she had prepared for him, children, dogs and all following. Grace and I did not wait for the burial services. We went home, running all the way.

Our Grandfather Huffman, the stern old gentleman who stared down at us from the parlor wall, died the year after moving to Arkansas in 1902. Grandmother Huffman lived with her oldest daughter, Lizzie Fuller, until her husband, Menzo Fuller, was killed in an explosion at the tomato cannery where he worked. Then Grandmother moved into one of our upstairs bedrooms. She hired a girl to look after her because she had suffered a stroke and she knew our mother had all she could do with so many lively children already and pregnant again. Grandmother got worse and Dad moved her bed into the parlor, and Mama's and his into the north downstairs bedroom, so that Mama wouldn't have to climb stairs to look after her. Grandmother did walk some, with help, and her cane. However, I was in her room one afternoon, (I was six years old at the time, asking her if she needed me for anything. I sat down on her bed, and suddenly began bouncing up and down as a six year old loves to do. Suddenly she became very angry, her eyes flashed fire and she said, "No, there's nothing you can do for me, and I'll take my cane to you if you don't get off my bed!" (This is probably why Aunt Ora could never talk me into becoming a nurse!) Before Fitch was born in March, our Grandmother Huffman died-- and I didn't care-- or at least didn't understand! The funeral was held in the parlor after taking out her bed and moving in chairs. The casket was placed by the south

window. After the service was over, Dolla, our cousin, and Grace and I, (who had been sitting in the back row giggling, whispering and having fun) happened to look at Papa, and we wondered why he was wiping tears from his face. As the family and friends went by the casket to look, we got in line and a neighbor, Mrs. Barnett, lifted Grace, then Dolla up to see Grandmother, and Dolla began to cry. That was enough for me. I shook my head as the nice lady started to lift me, ran past the people and outside, where I could watch, and not see.

When I was about ten or eleven, the three of we girls were playing "house" in the woodshed when we sent Paul, about three, to the garden to get some raspberries to serve at our tea party. We gave him a little bucket and sent him along. He was gone a long time, so in the meantime, we caught some grasshoppers, pulled off their legs and set them in the sun to dry. Dad had told us about some people in Kansas having to eat grasshopper legs during a severe drought. We thoughtfully sprinkled salt on them, as Dad had said the people in Kansas had done this. After awhile Paul came straying back, said he'd lost the pail, his face and hands were smeared with red juicy stains, and he proudly reached down into his pockets and brought out juicy handfull of smashed berries, among other things. We cleaned him up as best we could, for fear of Mama, and sat us down to eat of the grasshopper legs. Of course Paul, having feasted on plump juicy raspberry, had no taste for grasshopper legs and refused to eat, turned his head away in an obstinate manner when we tried to encourage him. Even Grace refused to taste the "delicacy" we had concocted, and Ruth ran away saying we were "sillies". But I bravely chewed away on one grasshopper leg, pretending it was the finest I had ever tasted. (It tasted exactly like a wooden stick.) I didn't eat any more, said I would save them for the rest.

About this time, Dad's brother Nathan had married Daisy Biggs, bought a farm north of Gentry and was raising strawberries, thousands of acres, it seemed to me, probably only five or six acres. When the berries were ripe they had to be picked; Dad loaded our family up and off we went to help harvest the berries. Oh, how I dreaded this job! We children were given a little carrier that held four quart cups; each time the cups were filled we took them to the shed where they were sorted and put into crates of 24 quarts each. When we went in with our strawberries we were given a ticket naming the amount we turned in. At the end of the day, or the season, we turned in the tickets at the packing shed and were paid two cents for every quart. I don't remember how much I earned, but when I'd go back out to the patch to try to fill another quart or two I'd look down that long row shining with red strawberries, so beautiful in the green leaves, I'd wish I could die, and thought surely I would before the day was over, I was so hot, tired, hungry! About twelve noon, Dad would shout for all of us to "Come, take a break and eat a bite". That was a treat, especially if Mama had fried chicken for us, or better yet, if Dad had stopped at the store as we came through town and had bought bologna. What a treat that was. I don't recall if we had anything but water to drink. Mama would come, sometimes, too, leaving Ruth at home with the little ones.

How I hated being young, how I envied Ruth, for she got all the breaks, (I thought), all the cushy jobs; never did I even think, besides watching and feeding the young ones at home, changing diapers and washing faces, she also washed dishes, swept floors and even did some of the cooking and baking.

After the strawberries were off, Uncle Nathan had blackberries, which were even worse to harvest, because of the thorns. Then came peaches; they were easier, nice to rip the skin off a nice juicy tree ripened peach and bite into the fresh sweetness on a summer morning (when no one was looking)-- there was one minor discomfort-- peach fuzz that would drive a person crazy when it got down ones neck and over ones arms; what a hard, tragic life we had! What hard work! But, oh, that would all be forgotten when Friday afternoon would come around, we would all get into the wagon with baskets of food and clean, fresh clothing, and fresh peaches we could wash in the clear cool water of Flint Creek until all the fuzz was off; and later in the summer a watermelon or two; and the glorious, *invigorating* cooling, invigorating swim.

We always had good neighbors. The Jones family had been there a long time and owned the place just south of ours. On the other side of the road were acres and acres of woods, just trees mostly, oaks, and some maple, and we spent many happy hours there in the "woods" picking violets, climbing trees, taking walks, making secret hideaways where we could talk the happy talk of childhood. The place on the road toward the cemetery changed hands several times. The first people I remember there was an older couple, a Mr. and Mrs. Coon. When I was about six, Mr. Coon came by our house on the way to town and asked Mama if one of the little girls would go down now and stay with his wife until he got back. He said she wasn't feeling well, and was in bed, but he'd feel better if she were not alone. So mama sent me. I didn't mind, they had lots of pretty things to look at, and she usually had candy or some treat to give me. Running down the road to their house, I opened the door and went in, as I had been told to do. She called me into the back bedroom and told me she was glad I had come, but since she didn't feel well, she asked me to just stay in the front room. She said I could look at the picture books, or play the organ if I wanted. That was something I enjoyed! Pretending to play, I had fun for awhile; then I got restless and went to the big bay window to look up the road to see if Mr. Coon was coming. I wanted to go home. As I looked out, I was utterly horrified, terror-stricken to see a big black bear, standing there in the front yard. I closed my eyes, swallowed; No, it just couldn't be! Not a bear, the thing I feared most in all the world! I looked again. It was a bear! I walked so fast I was almost running into her bedroom. She looked at me and said, "Are you sick?" I shook my head, unable to speak. She said, "Go home if you want to. I'll be all right."

I ran from the front door, across the opposite corner of the yard from where I had seen the bear, up the dusty road my feet flew, breathless, panic stricken, knowing the bear was close behind me. Into the house in a flash, to Mama. When I told her what I had seen she didn't laugh at me. She said, "Honey, no, it couldn't have been a bear." Taking my hand, she walked back down the road with me.

Shewalked with me far enough to see the neighbor's yard clearly. Of course we saw no bear then, but the Coons' huge black cow, grazing peacefully in the yard. The cow raised her head and stared placidly at us. I squeezed Mama's hand tightly as we walked back to our house and thought about how much I loved her.

I think I have adequately described our home downstairs on the first floor. Upstairs there were four bedrooms; Mama's and Papa's was on the southwest corner of the house, coolest in the summer and warmer than the others in winter because of the stovepipe (from the downstairs stove) going up through it, left unenclosed to heat the room in winter. At the top of the room, near the ceiling, the flu chimney was built, resting on "two by fours" so that there were shelves underneath it for linen and such. On cold winter nights we girls undressed in Mama's warm room and ran to our cold beds; there we had quilts and big checked blankets piled so high on the bed we could hardly turn over; but we did soon get warm and cozy and slept well. I don't remember that I ever did any sleepwalking as I grew up, but Paul did, much to Mama's anxiety, as her youngest brother Fitch had been kicked by his horse as he was walking in his sleep. Paul never did get into any serious trouble walking in his sleep as I remember; he did go down the stairway and out into the yard one night.

Every Friday night the year around almost, was Bath Night, unless of course we had been to the creek for swimming and picnic supper. Water from the deep well had to be pumped up by hand (until we had got the windmill) then carried into the kitchen to fill an oval tub (called a clothes boiler) which was set on the front burners of the cook stove. The reservoir also was kept full, and that was plenty hot! A tin washtub was brought in, placed on the floor near the stove, cold and hot water added until it was the right temperature, and in we'd go, one or two at a time, depending on the size we were at the time! I think the boys were scrubbed off first and sent to bed; then with clean water, we'd start over again. "Ruth, you can wash Geneva," Mama would say, "I know Grace can take care of herself.!" Our hair was kept quite short, too, so it could be well soaped and a dipper or two of fresh water poured over it for the rinse. At least my hair was short. Grace, the pet, had long brown curls which I often wanted to take the scissors and cut off, but I knew people would kill me if I did; besides I loved Grace, she was always my best friend. I loved Ruth, too, of course, but she was such a proper young lady, she scarcely admitted I was her sister. She hated me tagging along whenever she went anywhere, especially when she first started "walking out" with the boys. Both of my sisters were beautiful and popular, and when I got to be a teenager, sometimes their "beaus" would bring me a "feller" but it was always a one-time arrangement! None ever came back!

Now I digress! I was telling about Bath Night. Mother sometimes made lye soap for use in doing the laundry, but that was too harsh for bathing. We did have Ivory soap then, and Pears, Sayman's and

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a pretty, oval bar, that I think was called "Fairy". Aunt Grace (Uncle Edwin's wife) once told Aunt Sylvia, "Eunice is a crank about bathing. She makes that whole family bathe EVERY WEEK!" Of course we always washed hands, face and feet every night before going to bed. Every morning, when we came down for breakfast Papa always made us, with both hands, splash cold water on our faces, "to wake us up," he said. Once Purl came to the wash stand as I was busy washing my face; she put one finger into the cold water, then rubbed that one finger on her cheek. I thought Dad might see her, and make her wash properly, but he didn't.

In describing the upstairs of our home, I will go on, since It seems I only got as far as Mama's and Papa's bedroom! Standing at the top of the stairway, directly to the right (northwest) was the bedroom first used by the hired hands, then by Grandmother Huffman, then it became Ruth's bedroom. By then she had decided it was too much hassle to room in with Grace and I because of our constant hassle about keeping the bedroom clean and neat. As I said before, Grace was the neat one, and I, the one who threw things about and dropped things all over the place. But when there was company, or someone else came to stay for awhile with us, Ruth would move her bed back into our room (the rooms were rather large and ample). Sometimes she would allow me to crawl into bed with her and she would snuggle up to my back and tell me stories about all the nice things she would buy me when she was through school and had a job. We were the dreamers! To the right (at the top of the stairs) was also the door to Grace's and my room. Directly in front of one standing at the top of the stairs was a small alcove where the laundry hamper stood; then Mama's and Papa's room, next to theirs on that side, the "boy's room", and opposite the doorway into the boys' room was the stairway that went up into the attic. (We called it a "garret") A huge desk always stood in one corner of the boys' bedroom, with a tall stool. The desk was the roll-type, so prized as an antique now, with little compartments and cubbyholes galore. One drawer was always kept locked. We could never, in all our searchings, find a key for that desk drawer, so I don't, to this day, know what was kept there. In the boys' bedroom there were two double beds and various tables and other boys' treasures. We never paid much attention to their belongings, having many more treasures to explore in the attic. Only part of the attic was floored, so we had to step carefully on the rafters when we went farther out under the eaves to explore boxes and trunks. There was a five shelf bookcase, painted blue, there in the attic, filled with an assortment of books just waiting to be read and loved again. Then there was old-fashioned dresses and hats to be tried on, strange looking shoes with pointed toes and spool heels, which laced up far past the ankle, and a trunk filled with petticoats already yellow with age upon which rows and rows of tiny handworked lace edgings were sewn. Mama once told me these had belonged to Grandmother Huffman.

Right in the center of the attic stood the ladder that let us up, *Gingers* through the trap door that could be lifted off and set aside;

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(this was only done when Papa was overseeing the procedure, for he had two little bolts securing each side of the trap door that fitted in tightly, and besides he had put the fear of God into us if we ever dared to do this when he wasn't with us). When we stepped off the top rung of the ladder, (Papa was always up there before us), we stood on top of the world!! The roof was fairly steep, except for a 12 foot square platform in the very center, so we had to immediately sit quietly, close around the enclosure to the trap door, while Dad talked to us, pointed out the stars, the big dipper, the little dipper, Orion and the bears. Once, while we were up there he quoted these verses:

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun." (Psa.19)

When I was 13 or 14 years old, the house on the corner toward town was sold to a young city man from Memphis, Tennessee (no less!), who said he and his mother were moving to the Ozarks (mountains) for his mother's health. She was a tiny, sweet little lady with a heart condition. Mama came back and said to us, after her first call on Mrs. Spinks to make her welcome to the neighborhood, "Mr. Spinks is a delightful young man, a genuine gentleman farmer, and his mother, a dear little person, so fragile you think you'd like to pick her up and carry her." Indeed she was precious, as I found out when Mr. Spinks came down to see if one of the Maxson young ladies would be interested in coming up to help with the housework, cleaning up the breakfast dishes and helping cook dinner, as his mother was not able and he would be busy putting the crops in. Mother decided to send me (probably because I wasn't much help at home anyway!) Ruth fell directly in love with Mr. Spinks, saying as he left, "He's mine. I'm going to marry that man." As indeed she did, but it wasn't that easy! Mr. Spinks dressed in his fine southern manner each Sunday morning and went up to the Baptist Church in town, and before too long, he had two or three of the town's young and attractive women walking out with him on Sunday afternoons. Ruth was a bit depressed and extremely jealous when I would come back from a Sunday afternoon visit with my school friend Maud Baker (she had roller skates and a sidewalk!), and I would gleefully report to Ruth I had seen Mr. Spinks walking out with Lizzie McClintock (or whoever). Ruth would turn pale, look away and say, "I don't care. He's mine, if I never get him."

Aunt Susa came to visit her parents (Grandfather and Grandmother Maxson) that summer, and asked Mama and Papa if she might take me back home with her, to help with their children. I'd been staying a lot with Aunt Myrtle, to help with her children, and Aunt Susa had observed my expertise with children! My parents decided if I wanted to go, and Aunt Susa would pay for my train tickets both

(this was only done when Papa was overseeing the procedure, for he had two little bolts securing each side of the trap door that fitted in tightly, and besides he had put the fear of God into us if we ever dared to do this when he wasn't with us). When we stepped off the top rung of the ladder, (Papa was always up there before us), we stood on top of the world!! The roof was fairly steep, except for a 12 foot square platform in the very center, so we had to immediately sit quietly, close around the enclosure to the trap door, while Dad talked to us, pointed out the stars, the big dipper, the little dipper, Orion and the bears. Once, while we were up there he quoted these verses:

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork; day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone throughout all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun." (Psa.19)

When I was 13 or 14 years old, the house on the corner toward town was sold to a young city man from Memphis, Tennessee (no less!), who said he and his mother were moving to the Ozarks (mountains) for his mother's health. She was a tiny, sweet little lady with a heart condition. Mama came back and said to us, after her first call on Mrs. Spinks to make her welcome to the neighborhood, "Mr. Spinks is a delightful young man, a genuine gentleman farmer, and his mother, a dear little person, so fragile you think you'd like to pick her up and carry her." Indeed she was precious, as I found out when Mr. Spinks came down to see if one of the Maxson young ladies would be interested in coming up to help with the housework, cleaning up the breakfast dishes and helping cook dinner, as his mother was not able and he would be busy putting the crops in. Mother decided to send me (probably because I wasn't much help at home anyway!) Ruth fell directly in love with Mr. Spinks, saying as he left, "He's mine. I'm going to marry that man." As indeed she did, but it wasn't that easy! Mr. Spinks dressed in his fine southern manner each Sunday morning and went up to the Baptist Church in town, and before too long, he had two or three of the town's young and attractive women walking out with him on Sunday afternoons. Ruth was a bit depressed and extremely jealous when I would come back from a Sunday afternoon visit with my school friend Haud Baker (she had roller skates and a sidewalk!), and I would gleefully report to Ruth I had seen Mr. Spinks walking out with Lizzie McClintock (or whoever). Ruth would turn pale, look away and say, "I don't care. He's mine, if I never get him."

Aunt Susa came to visit her parents (Grandfather and Grandmother Maxson) that summer, and asked Mama and Papa if she might take me back home with her, to help with their children. I'd been staying a lot with Aunt Myrtle, to help with her children, and Aunt Susa had observed my expertise with children! My parents decided if I wanted to go, and Aunt Susa would pay for my train tickets both

ways, and keep me in school, they would allow me to go. Of course I was eager to go! Anything that was a new experience was exciting to me. But we decided since Mrs. Spinks needed me, and I'd promised to help her out until school started again, the Patterson's (Aunt Susa and Uncle Birnie) went back to Nebraska promising to send me the money to come there just before school started. So I helped Mr. Spinks and his mother the rest of the summer. Soon he had asked me to call him "Bud" as his friends did. He loved to tease me. I did not go up to help on Sabbath Days. Mama had told them that was our Sabbath, and he agreed, and respected our beliefs. Yet once I remember, it rained all day Sabbath Day and when Sunday morning came, the sun was out bright and early. I went up to stay with Mrs. Spinks, and you have never seen a prettier, brighter day. Bud laughed at me, and said: "Don't you see what day God shines on?" I was at a loss for words, a bit shy believe it or not, but I thought afterward I should have answered, "Yes, God gave us the rain, knowing our church didn't leak and we could worship Him anyway! Now, while the sun shines we can get ahead with our crops!" Boy, did I ever have the snappy comebacks, (if I could just have thought of them in time!)

End Chapter 2

Bud and his mother were patient with my awkwardness. She often sat in a chair in the doorway, in the sunlight. It seemed to fall upon her as a mantle of gold, falling away into the shadows as it etched a picture of her lovely frail figure, her gentle hands. She instructed me to boil the vegetables in a goodly amount of water, so that there would be enough "pot liquor" for her to drink. She was conscious of health and nutrition and taught me many things about true "southern" cooking that Mama did not know. She also made me aware of many Southern "expressions" that summer, as my folks were "displaced Yankees", (Bud said!). He had met and talked with my Grandfather Maxson, had consulted him about some legal question about his property. Bud said it was all right to be a Yankee if the Mayor (Grandfather) was a sample, for he said Grandfather was a 'real gentleman.'

Bud also told me his mother and father were separated and his father lived and raised cattle down in the Mississippi River bottoms below Memphis, where Bud grew up. Bud said that he had one sister, Hattie, married to a railroad road bed contractor who lived in Texarkana, Arkansas. While I was there cooking for the Spinks family, the sister Hattie took advantage of the new Parcel Post service by getting up early enough in the morning in Texarkana to kill and dress out a chicken, take it to the post office in time to get it sent to Gentry that morning. It came out in the 10:30 delivery, all fresh in butcher paper, in a box wrapped in brown paper, arriving there in time to be prepared by me, under Mrs. Spinks' direction, in time for dinner at noontime.

Eventually September First came, and I told them goodbye and thanked them for paying me for working for them (it had been so much pleasure to me!), and I left, never even saying I was planning to go to an Aunt in Nebraska. I suppose I was just thoughtless, for I liked Mrs. Spinks very much. She told Mama later, she could not believe I would have gone without saying goodbye to her. I was really sorry, for she died that winter, and I never saw her again.

I spent most of the school year at Aunt Susa's, going to school and helping her with the housework and the children. They bought a farm the first of March several miles from North Loop (Nebraska) and I went to Uncle Ed's to finish the school year. Later I went back to them (Uncle Birnie and Aunt Susa) and worked all summer for them. Believe it or not, I was paid \$2.50 per week for that work! In August Grandfather Russell John Maxson died, and I was heartbroken for I could not even go to his funeral. I had adored my Grandfather. Uncle George (father's brother) who lived in Exland, Wisconsin, had gone to the funeral and had suffered some sort of nervous breakdown, and my Dad had to accompany him back home. Uncle George and his wife, Ida, left their farm in Dad's care and went to Washington, D.C. to Dr. Dan Main for medical care. Dr. Main had married Dad's sister, Edith, and was a well known physician in that area. Uncle George recovered, but while they were gone, and Dad was caring for their farm in Wisconsin, there was communication back and forth between them. They had decided to leave Wisconsin and go to California for Uncle George's health, and Dad decided, since it was such a fine farm, he would like to buy it from them. Mama agreed to sell our farm in Arkansas, and she did sell the cows, and was preparing to sell the chickens and farm tools and other things they couldn't move, but would not agree to sell the house until they could see how things worked out up there. Arrangements were made for me to go by train to Wisconsin, rather than to return to Arkansas. I was to remain with Papa in Wisconsin on the new farm until Mama and the other children arrived there.

I was excited and apprehensive about traveling on the train alone, all the way from North Loop, Nebraska to Exland, Wisconsin. Aunt Grace, (Uncle Edwin's wife) and Aunt Susa bombarded me with a volley of instructions and warnings. Aunt Susa told me to always sit on my handbag if I felt drowsy on the train, and never accept anything to eat while I was traveling, especially from a man, for many a man had offered a young girl whom he saw traveling alone a poisoned peach or apple, and had drugged her and taken her off the train and she was never to be seen again. My trip included an all night "layover" at a place called Ladysmith, Wisconsin. Aunt Grace had lived in Ladysmith. She instructed me to "go directly, as soon as I got off the train, to Baker House Hotel. Not to one of the other hotels, for there will be people from all the hotels there attempting to get you to go to their hotels! Now, the Baker House is the only safe hotel there for young women traveling alone. Be sure and lock your door as soon as you are in your room, and pull the bureau in front of it, and never, never open it to anyone. . . etc. " I did arrive safely at Baker House (wonder of all wonders). Reaching my room without incident, I locked the door and lay down upon the bed for a nap. I was so tired, I went sound asleep and it was almost dark when I awakened. I had slept so soundly I was confused, and thought it was just about daylight and that I had missed the five o'clock train. I hurried, panic stricken, downstairs and could find no one about the place. I heard some banging about in the kitchen, so I went out there. A cook looked around and asked "What do you need?" I was almost in tears. "You let me oversleep," I cried, "now I've missed my train. I left word at the desk to be awakened at four o'clock." She laughed. "Honey, it's not morning," she said, it's almost dark and it's the same day you got here!"

She suggested I walk around a bit outside, before it got really dark, or sit on the porch for awhile. Then there would be other people around, and she would have supper on the table and I could eat with all the others. I did feel rather stupid, but soon relaxed and began to enjoy the trip. I could even look around at other people traveling and people in hotels, and not fear them!

I made the remainder of the trip in fine style, and was overjoyed to see Papa on the train platform at Exland, waiting to meet me. He had three girls from the home where he had been staying. They were Cora, my same age, Dora, younger, and Esther, about six years of age. They had an older brother, R. B. (Etter), whom I fell in love with, but he didn't fall for me, so that was that. I met another boy there named Lars Olsen. Lars did like me, he said. He said we would be married as soon as we finished high school!

Dad and I settled nicely in at Uncle George's house on the farm Dad planned to buy. We were looking forward to the arrival of the rest of the family, making plans for school, and church, and for the farm, where this crop would be planted, where that would be done. And one day we received a telegram from Mama in Arkansas saying Ruth was critically ill with typhoid, not expected to live, and requesting us to come home at once. Of course we made haste to return. On the train coming back to Arkansas, Dad suddenly said to me, "Sister, Ruth will be all right now." I said, "Papa, how do you know?" "I just know," Papa said, "I talked to God, and she has passed the crisis now. She will be well soon." Later Mama said that the crisis had come just about that time. When we arrived home, Ruth was better. Later her hair fell out, almost all of it, and that caused her great consternation, for she had grown to be a beautiful young woman and was, of course, rather vain about her beautiful black hair. But it grew in soon afterward, and soon afterward, too, she was married to the dashing Mr. Spinks, the Southern gentleman farmer who was our neighbor.

After that Dad and Mama abandoned plans for the farm in Northern Wisconsin and we all got on with our lives in the Arkansas sunshine.

Ruth and Bud were married and living in Joplin, Missouri; Grace was dutifully helping Mama and Papa raise the boys and get on with the farming and Geneva was mooning over a daring, mischevious "scamp", perhaps he was most often called a "rake". His name was Alvah Holland. He lived near Springtown, ten miles or so from us, rode a lovely spirited horse, carried a pistol, had had some near "brushes" with the "law" at Gentry (and possibly other towns around!) (once for "stampeding" around a church service with other young men on horses and shooting skyward with their guns for no other purpose than to create a havoc and make the people inside think Jessie James and his gang had come to town!) Needless to say, Papa and Mama were not enthusiastic about my attachment to him. (When he would call me on the phone, I would call him "Alfred" while the folks were listening! (The dining table, as I've said, was next to the phone on the south wall of the dining room.) "Alfred" was a young man in our church, whom the folks did like, and approve of as fit company for me.

Al wanted to "spark" me (as he called it) and we did "court", sitting in our parlor most often in the presence of Mama, or Papa, or certainly one or more of the little brothers! If we wanted to kiss, I would have to meet him out under the mulberry tree where he tied his horse when he came to call. We didn't have long to remain there before we were expected to walk into the house or join the family on the porch, or in the front yard in summer evenings, so we did kiss and whisper when I first went out to meet him. And to our surprise, and my chagrin, we heard giggling on one occasion and looked up into the mulberry tree to discover my two "rotten" little brothers, Fitch and Paul clinging to the branches above us, giggling and pretending to retch!

Eventually, Papa and Mama gave their consent to our marriage on the condition that I finish school first. But I (we!) didn't want to wait that long, so we eloped, to Missouri, were married in Carthage, attended by Ruth and Bud, and spent our honeymoon at their house. Honeymoon? The next morning, we came home, me to my home, and Al to his folks', and I did finish school, then moved to Springtown to live with him and his parents until we bought a place of our own.

After three children, along came twin boys to Al and me. Of course we needed milk and lots of it at that time. Al and I had only one cow, one of the twins was rather allergic to it, and Dr. Wilson told us if we could get milk from a herd (because it would be more uniform) rather than from just one cow, it would be better for the twins.

So Papa and Mama sent either Paul, who was about sixteen at the time, or Fitch, about seventeen out on their bicycles every morning before school to bring us the milk from their cows. At this time we were living in a small house three miles east of Gentry. The first time Paul brought out the milk, and saw the babies he was rather impressed. Returning home he told our mother he could tell them apart easily, for "one of the twins," he said "has a square head."

In describing the home place where we grew up, I think I have failed to mention that the house was built a nice piece back from the road, so as not to catch the dust from passing wagons, buggies, etc. Along each side of the yard Papa had set maple trees, every ten feet apart. By the time I grew up, there was a beautiful shady yard, with a path down the front edged in jonquils. At the side of the yard, just outside the maple trees was the driveway.

The house itself was rather large and stark, or bare, always painted white, with sometimes a trim around doors and windows of brown. In front, started on the north side of the front door, was a climbing rose, deep pink when it bloomed in the springtime. The rosebush grew steadily up the side of the house until it almost reached the very roof, clinging around the upstairs bedroom windows so that, leaning from our window, we could reach out and pick roses.

Another incident I remember about the house, is that one day when Mama was upstairs, she suddenly screamed for Darwin! "There is a snake on the stairway to the attic!" she screamed. Dad came running and killed a rather evil-looking black snake. It was a mystery to us how the snake had got into the house until we figured it must have climbed up the rosebush and got in through an upstairs window, which, at that time, was unscreened. I was very young at that time, but evidently that snake was reason enough to install screens on all the windows, for when people are talking about "old times", how there were no screens on windows, and how they were so bothered by "flies" I cannot recall that we had a lot of flies. They did come into the house occasionally, there being so many children to run in and out the doors, but I can't remember that they "swarmed" over our table, as some people say they can remember of their homes. I do remember, at outdoor picnics, having to take a green branch from a tree and swishing that back and forth to drive away the flies.

While I'm about it, there are a few songs I would like to put down, while I can still remember the words (or at least most of them), and some verses, etc!

It's a Long Way to Tipperary

It's a long way to tipperary,
Its a long way to go;
It's a long way to Tipperary,
To the sweetest girl I know.
So it's goodbye to Picadilly,
Farewell, Liester square,
Its a long, long way to Tipperary,
But my heart's right there.

Up to mighty London
Came an Irish lad one day
As the streets were paved with gold,
sure everyone was gay;
Singing songs of Picadilly, Strand and Liester Square,
Till Paddy got excited and
He shouted to them there: (Repeat chorus)

Paddy wrote a letter to his Irish Molly O,
Saying if you don't receive it, write and let me know;
If I make mistakes in spelling, Molly dear, said he,
Remember, it's the pen that's bad, dont Lay the blame on me.
Chorus again.

Molly penned a neat reply to Irish Paddy-O
Saying Mike Maloney wants to marry me, and so
Leave the Strand and Picadilly, or you'll be the one to blame
For love has fairly drove me silly and here's hoping you're the same!
Chorus.

After the Ball

After the ball was over, after the stars were gone,
After the dancers leaving, after the break of dawn,
Many a heart was aching, if you could but read them all--
Many a hope had vanished-- after the ball.

A little maiden climbed on an old man's knee,
Begged for a story, "... do, uncle, please tell me one,
Have you no wife, why live alone,
Have you no children, have you no home?"
Slowly he answered, "Yes, pet, I'll tell it all,
I broke her heart, pet, after the ball."

Bright lights were flashing in the ballroom,
Softly the music played a sweet tune,
There stood my sweetheart, my love, my own,
"Please get me some water, you may leave me alone."
When I returned, pet, there stood a man
Kissing my sweetheart, as lovers can:
Down fell the glass, pet, broken was all
Just like my heart was, after the ball.

Chorus:

One day a letter came from that man,
He was her brother, so the letter ran,
So that is my story, Pet, I've told it all--
I broke her heart, Pet, after the ball.

Hush-a-bye my little Georgia 'possum
Lay your kinky head on mammy's arm;
Don't you dast to winka, blinka, snicka,
If you do I spank-a-doo you, hon;
Andrew Jackson White, shut your eyes up tight!
Daddy's in the henhouse looking for a chicken,
Brother Ben's outside, helpin' with the pickin'--
Sister's makin' corn pone--now Honey don't you cry,
Mammy's tryin' to make her chile a little chicken pie.

Poor Little Kate swings on the gate
Lonesome and feeling blue,
Girls passing by hear Katie cry,
"Please let me play with you."
Girls turn and go, they answer "No,
You're a tom-boy girl, that's why."

With heart so sad Kate tells her dad
and he says "Little dearie, don't you cry,
We were pals in the days of old, dear,
We'll be pals in the years to come,
For you've never had a mother to guide you,
Or to put your hair in a curl,
But there's not another girlie in the world like you,
You're daddy's little tomboy girl!"

Little Johnny Rankin got an awful spankin'
From the teacher yesterday;
Just before the recess, he went all to pieces
And cried, in a "cry-baby" way.
Before I knew, I was crying, too,
'Cause he wrote something funny on my slate.

Chorus:

Well, you can't guess what he wrote on my slate,
Makes no difference how hard you try!
I felt so ashamed, but I couldn't be blamed,
The thought of it makes me sigh--Oh, my!
But you can't guess what he wrote on my slate,
Don't you wish that you really knew?
I promised not to tell it, but just suppose I spell it?
He wrote "I L-O-V-E U!"

Teacher's awfully cruel, she hit me with a rule
And then she called poor John a little "brat",
And across her knee she yanked me,
Oh, golly, how she spanked me,
Then I knew just what she was driving at!
She threatened to expell me, said, "You've got to tell me
Just what it was that Johnny Rankin wrote!
Take my advice and answer this: Was it naughty, miss?"
I said, "It may be naughty, but it's nice!"

Chorus again: "But you can't guess, etc. . .

Tramp, tramp, tramp the boys are marching,
Cheer up, comrades, they will come, etc. . .
and when I'd reach the part where I'd sing
"And their hollow eyes grow bright
and their poor hearts almost gay, as they think of seeing
home and friends once more. . ." I would sing this to Reola (Ricketts-
White) (daughter of Aunt Myrtle Maxson Ricketts)-- when Reola was
three or four years old-- and Reola would look at me sadly and
seriously and say: "I don't want my heart to ever get gay, do you,
Etsaneva?"

Rufus, Rastus, Johnson, Brown:
What you gonna do when the rent comes round?
What you gonna say,
How you gonna pay,
You haven't got a bit o' sense about the judgment day!
You know, I know, we all know
The ole landlord's gonna throw us out in the snow;
Rufus, Rastus, Johnson Brown,
What you gonna do when the rent comes round???

This is my prayer, since growing older:

God, keep my heart attuned to laughter
When youth is done,
And when the days are grey days
Coming after the warmth, the sun,
God keep me from bitterness, from grieving
When life seems cold;
God, keep me loving and believing
As I grow old.

God, give me sympathy and sense
And help me keep my courage high;
God give me calm and confidence
And please, God, a twinkle in my eye.

Give me a man-sized soul, God,
Pure, brave, serene
To meet these days,
Ready to walk, head high,
With firm, sure tread
The year's strange ways.

Make me to fill each day
with work well done;
I would be soul-poised,
Great in gentleness
And gentle in power;
Rich in self-giving,
Pouring life and love into each hour.

Let me live grandly,
Seek the things that last;
Press toward life's goal,
Win jewels? Fame? Nay, better,
When earth is past
To stand a crowned soul!

So be my helper, Father, comfort me with staff and rod,
Till I shall give thee back thy year well lived
For man-- and God.

There was a game that we used to play called Huckleberry Bread.
It goes like this:

We would sit cross legged on the floor and grab the left big toe
with the right hand and the right toe with the left hand and chant:

My father and mother have gone to bed
And left me alone to make huckleberry bread;
So up goes my heels, and down goes my head,
And that's the way we make huckleberry bread."

(As you say "Up goes my heels" you rock back and forth, hanging
on tight to those toes!)

Worry and fret were two little men
Who knocked at my door again and again;
"Oh, pray, let us in out of the night,
We'll be gone with the mornings light!"
At last, moved to pity, I opened the door
To shelter these travelers so hungry and poor,
And, when on the morrow I bade them adieu
They said, quite unmoved: "Oh, we'll tarry with you."

Now, in closing this rambling journal-letter, I would like to
quote one of our Dad's favorite verses, also from the Psalms:

"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in thy sight, Oh Lord,
My strength and my Redeemer."

And I would like to say in closing that our Mama never talked her
religion--she lived it. She used to say to me, when I would be
criticising someone: "Hush, Geneva. If you can't think of something
good to say, say nothing."