Memories of Great Grandma Macfarlane

My memories go back to my early elementary school years. I remember looking forward to birthdays and Christmas because Grandma would send store bought clothes. She would really put time and effort into picking them out. Those outfits were the only store bought clothes I really ever had, and I loved them. In all of my early elementary school pictures I was wearing one of those outfits. They were always some type of a dress or a top with a skirt because in those early school days girls weren’t allowed to wear pants to school.

Grandpa and Grandma Macfarlane came to visit our family in Chester. They drove their white Pontiac Bonneville car. That car was the fanciest vehicle that I had ever seen or had the chance to ride in. Grandma took meticulous care of their car and house, so to be able to ride in it you needed to be on your very best behavior. I remember them taking me for a ride up to Ted’s Store and asking me if I wanted to buy some candy. On their way to Chester, they had stopped in at the Big Rock Candy Mountain which is close to Marysville, Utah and bought the grandkids toy rubber donkeys that had an air ball attached to them and when you squeezed it the donkey would buck. We had fun playing with the donkeys.

During summer breaks when I was in elementary school, I was able to go to Cedar City and stay with Grandpa and Grandma Macfarlane for a few days in the summers. It was always a real treat to go and stay with them. They would both roll out the red carpet especially Grandma. I always loved their house and backyard. As stated before Grandma was a meticulous house keeper. The house was white with a steep red shingled roof. It had a rounded front door with a small window to look out to see who was knocking. It had a sunken living room and a bay window in the dining room. The guest bedroom had a door that went out to the backyard. Their backyard was like a magicial forest with large pine trees, grass, and flower. I remember them having a plastic deer and fawn in the yard to really make it look like a forest. The smell of wintergreen lifesavers and double mint gum could be smelled on Grandpa and in their kitchen where they kept the supply of gum and mints in a cabinet. Grandma and I would always take a shopping trip to Woolworths which was a child’s delight. I remember especially liking the animal and critter section of the store. They had miniature frogs and turtles. I don’t remember getting any, but I liked looking at them and wishing that I could. I did one time get some Mexican jumping beans in a little plastic case. At the store they were jumping all over the place, but when we got home they stopped jumping. With them not jumping they really lost their allure, so Grandma and I took them back for a refund. I would help feed Sam their dog and then go on a ride with Grandpa in his white International truck out to his farm to see his horse Sheree. Sheree was more a of pet to Grandpa. He had given her treats of candy corns and she had gotten spoiled. One day she bit Grandpa on the upper arm. I wasn’t there when this happened, but I remember being shown the large bruise that she had left. After that I was to keep my distance from Sheree. She now had a bad reputation. Grandma would have me sleep with her so I wouldn’t be afraid when being away from home. She would sing me the song “School days, School days dear old golden rule days. Reading and writing and arithmetic. Talk to the tune of the hickory stick.” This is only part of the song, but I still remember the whole song to this day. I really enjoyed my summer trips to visit Grandpa and Grandma Macfarlane.

In junior high and high school things kind of changed because Grandpa Macfarlane started to lose his memory and had other health issues. Grandma became his fulltime nurse which she was very capable of doing. She gave him the very best care, but it wasn’t easy for her in anyway. Because of her excellent nursing skills, Grandpa lasted in a bedridden state for a few years. I remember many Sundays driving with Dad to Cedar City to spend the day with Grandpa and Grandma. Grandma would want to talked to Dad in private, so she would ask me to go and sit with Grandpa and hold his hand. I remember the tender care that she gave him and how tears would come to his eyes and she would lovely kiss him and wipe the tears away. Grandpa passed away when I was junior or senior is high school.

My relationship continued with Grandma Macfarlane when I went to college at SUU in Cedar City. I would go once a week to spend the day with her. It always started with just visiting telling her what had happened during the week. She always liked to hear about the fun lite hearted things that were going on. I enjoyed making her laugh. After our visit, she would outline me with a few things that I could help her with. I would mop the kitchen floor, wash windows, fill the bucks with coal for her furnace, and do yard work. There were two yards projects that stand out in my mind. One was trimming Grandma’s large pyracantha bush in her front yard. Pyracantha bushes are pretty, but they have wicked thorns on them. I headed out with a log sleeve wool shirt, leather gloves (that the thorns still got through), and an electric hedge trimmer that Grandma had supplied me with. She wanted the bush to be trimmed in a circular shape. I was so nervous that my bush trimming would not met Grandma’s expectations. It took me all day, but somehow it turned out pretty well. I was definitely breathing a sigh of relief. In fact, I felt so good about the job I had done for Grandma Macfarlane that the next week I borrowed all the equipment that I had used and headed to Grandma Jenson’s house to trim her tall hedge that ran the length of her driveway. In the end I was pretty happy with both Grandma’s trimming projects. The second yard project I didn’t feel so great about. Grandma had me take the fertilizer spreader and cast nitrogen all over the front yard grass. Easy job no problems. A week or so later I was back at Grandma’s house and saw all these round orange rust spots all over her front sidewalk. Long story short I should have swept the nitrogen off the sidewalk before it was watered in. Grandma never said anything to me, but I have felt bad about that for years. Remember Grandma Macfarlane was meticulous. Grandma would have me take her big white Bonneville car out for some exercise (she wasn’t driving as much and didn’t want the battery to go dead). I had to get use to backing it out of her driveway which I considered steep and narrow. She might ask me to get a few things from the store and then I was to drive it around. I did a fair amount dragging Main Street in Cedar City. It was still a very nice car, but probably not my first choice of vehicles to drag Main in. The car had lost some of its appeal from when I was much younger. Grandma would always remind me not to park by two door vehicles because she said the doors were longer and she didn’t want her car dented or scratched. The next part of the day would be would be having lunch together. She would either make lunch using her pressure cooker or we might go out on the town and have lunch at McDonalds. I always knew when it was going to be McDonalds because Grandma would be dressed up ready to go. Lunch always needed to be at a certain time because we would then watch the soap box opera “As the World Turns.” Grandma would catch me up with what had happened earlier in the week. I think that Grandma was a romantic at heart.

When I got my first teaching job in Salt Lake, Grandma gave me a folding chair and a lamp. She said that when she was first getting started those simple things had really helped her. I used and kept those two items for years. Grandma knew what she was talking about. Grandma Macfarlane lived alone in her own home until she passed way at the age of 90. She enjoyed talking on the phone with her friends and family. Her longtime home teacher and her neighbor/friend Alice from across the street greatly helped her to be able to stay in her own home, as well as her own abilities to take care of herself. Grandma Macfarlane was quite a remarkable lady in many ways. She was an excellent nurse and the bread winner for her family. She was loving and kind always giving a kiss on the cheek and much appreciated gifts on birthdays, Christmas, and when she felt that someone was in need. I love and cherish the memories that I have of Great Grandma Macfarlane.

By JoAnn Winkle