

Recollections of Childhood

Today I am sixty. It is always an amusing game to remember what is the farthest removed incident that can be recalled. I was born at 86 East Main Street, Mount Joy. At two and one-half years I moved with my family from an apartment above my father's hardware store to a full-size house with yard and garden. I was recovering from "the mumps". The story is told that Demmy Hoffman a clerk in my father's store persuaded me to carry the quarantine tag with me to the new home. Perhaps I should explain that at this time in the history of contagious diseases it was required that a member of the Board of Health of the town nail to a dwelling a sign warning all comers to stay away, an inmate of said dwelling had been officially diagnosed as a victim of specific disease mentioned on the card. Mother decided that I was cured, and the tag was left behind. I do not remember this incident. But associated with it, I do recall sitting in the living room of the apartment at a small round child's table to eat my meal, probably segregated from the well children in the family. I recollect this with no feeling of pain. The picture of that room and table is simple, clear cut and pleasurable.

There was a balcony with an iron railing at the front of this apartment over- looking the busiest corner in Mount Joy. It must have been truly a vantage point. On the opposite corner across Main Street was the Exchange Hotel with a corresponding balcony at the front. I remember nothing of life on the balcony. These are storying my mother told me.

Here on the balcony Clarence as a small boy played "horse" with his dog, Joe. This lovable wire-haired terrier made his appearance in our family when he and Clarence were both two months old. They grew up as devoted friends. The small boy was not averse to "eating Jo-Jo's speck" from the dog's plate. in the warehouse, where his mother caught him in the act with grease dripping from his chin. Playing horse with Joe involved reins just like the reins on Dick the delivery horse. When Clarence would throw the reins over the post of the railing and say, "Stay there, Joe," there the dog would wait patiently for the return of his little master.

How many years Joe was a part of our household I do not know but before many years he fell the victim of a snapping mad dog that came careening down the street and for the sake of everyone's safety Joe's days were ended. Until 1896 the main line; of the railroad ran through the town at grade level, north of the Exchange Hotel, which served for many years as the station. With progress of time it was decided to make a cut through Mount Joy and move the tracks south of Main Street. The old track on the north of Main Street remained as a siding for the use of the flour mill at North Market Street. Opposite the mill stood a frame building which at some time had served as the railroad station. This track siding served other businesses along the alley north of Main Street and crossed Main Street at the west end of town. A favorite tale about little boy Clarence, who early showed his love of horses, I recall went like this. Father came upstairs to Mother near suppertime. She looked up from her preparation saying, "Where is Clarence?" The answer, "I thought he was with you." showing on their faces the search began. With surprise and then consternation Father returned to the store and from there to the street when an acquaintance coming along gave the clue. "Your little boy is growing up fast! I saw him driving alone in the spring wagon out Marietta Street." So, the pursuit began, remember this little fellow was only about three years old. I suppose his curls had been cut off by now. That happened the same day when a farmer came into the store commenting, "Your little girl has pretty curls." Sure enough out Marietta Street went the delivery wagon. Nan the old horse made numerous trips to Columbia for stoves. Clarence looking pleased as punch was seated high up on the seat. How far would they have gone? Thank goodness for old Nan who just

plodded smoothly along. Horse, wagon, and child were returned home safely. That night when Clarence was being rocked to sleep by his mother he sat up, looked at her and murmured, "Baby bye-bye all alone with Nan. in the wagon." No whip in the wagon, no whip".

Mother said if Clarence in his teen years was late coming home at night it usually turned out that he had been helping Zach Keller with the arrival of a carload of horses.

My last recollection of riding behind a horse with Clarence was in a sleigh, a cutter, delivering a basket of laundry to our laundress who lived on a farm north of Florin. each side of the road. star on his forehead. It was a beautiful ride with snow banked high on This horse was Joe, a handsome bay with a white Nan had been followed by Dick, but Joe is the horse I remember I can recall my father riding Joe in a Memorial Day parade. As an aide he was wearing a high hat and gloves, in his lapel a badge with rosette and flowing ribbon. Prompted by my mother I walked to the curb and handed him a bouquet as he came by. The aide's badge with other such memorabilia has been preserved.

The following story occurred at the time of the laying of the tracks for the trolley line from Lancaster to Elizabethtown, early in the 1900's. It was a rough gang of laborers who took up residence to carry out this work. Their payday brawls were centered around the hotels at the Main and Barbara Streets corner. Mother saw more than one knifing in the gutter. One of the most thrilling tales she told was of the angry mob of Italian laborers out to get the paymaster when the money was not there on time. When Mother told how the mob went through the swinging door into the Exchange Hotel where the Irish boss had his living quarters ---- I could live that terror as keenly as any youngster feels it watching a Western today on television. The payroll had not arrived. The boss man came into the store asking to be hidden. My father said, "I can't do that they would sack the place." But he did make his getaway and the street seethed with angry laborers.

Let us go back to the balcony of a summer evening. Here the family would enjoy the cool breeze after the day's work and observe the passing scene. For the years that this was home to our family the traffic was a horse and buggy parade, very occasional would have been the gasoline buggy. Mother related one of her balcony stories of Katie our best loved and well-remembered hired girl who was sitting there one evening when Mother said, "Katie I believe there is a big bug down my back." Katie put her hand down inside Mother 's blouse then drawing her empty hand out quickly said in frightened tones, "Yes, Mrs. Newcomer there is!"

It was about this time, Katie was living with us, I was not yet three. It became necessary for my mother to go with Father to Hot Springs, VA. He to take the cure for an acute attack of "rheumatism" which crippled him so badly he could scarcely walk. Mother was gone for a number of weeks. Auntie who lived with us from the time I was born cared for us children. However I must have been confused by my mother 's absence for Mrs. Stauffer who lived next door liked to remind me in later years how I peeped through the side porch railing to her yard and asked, "Mrs. Stauffer, are you my mamma?"

A story of the horse and wagon days when the automobile was a rarity always amused me greatly for, I viewed it through the eyes of one who had grown to assume autos had the right of the road. On this occasion my father and mother accompanied by the Reverend and Mrs. Richard Downes were making a two-day excursion to the Gettysburg Battlefield. They were riding in a two-seated carriage, the ladies occupying the back seat, the gentlemen in front. The carriage was drawn by a pair of fine horses. The gentlemen' s names were Harry and

Dick, the horses responded to the names of Dick and Harry. As they went spinning along on the road to Gettysburg, suddenly to the horror of the ladies on the back seat a frightening monster was approaching them from the rear -- a gas driven vehicle. What would the horses do? Quickly each grasping a piece of the morning paper from the seat beside them they leaned out on opposite sides of the carriage, waving the papers in a sweeping motion and calling in unison, "Stay back, stay back!" as if to halt the march of progress. But as with King Ganute demanding that the waves of the sea cease to roll, the automobile rolled by. Dick and Harry taking it in stride made less fuss than the ladies.

In time the Richland Club occupied the apartment above the hardware store. A men's club of a most respectable nature frequented by the worthy town gentlemen of that day. I can recall various of the town bachelors sitting smoking, conversing, and observing the activities on Main Street from the vantage point of The Balcony. Among them were Demmy Hoffman, Fred Fenstermacher, H.M. Stauffer, Clarence Schock and later Art Mylin, Oz O'Neil, Dave Shelly, and others.

At the time of presidential elections this club would be the center for gathering the returns by telephone. As the returns came in they were chalked on sheets of paper and projected upon a large screen conveniently placed across the street at the balcony of the Exchange Hotel for the benefit of the crowd gathered below in the street in friendly rivalry. Thus we made do before the days of television or even radio.

The first election of which I really felt a part was the Wilson and Hughes competition. My stand was determined by my father's, who was a "Wilson Republican", while my best friend whose grandfather was Mr. Republican in Mount Joy was of course cheering for Hughes. I can still feel that gloom of sadness almost shame being on the wrong side as the returns built up for Hughes. Then the reprieve in the morning, and of course the chant, "Wilson was elected, just what I expected!"

I do not remember when my father did not drive an automobile. Mother told me of his first attempt. Someone drove up to the store in one of the new gas buggies. Dad stood admiring it. "Get in and try it." said the owner, stepping out he explained the throttle to Dad who got in and started off down street. But when he wanted to stop Dad said, "Whoa" the thing didn't whoa. The speed was not great so heading for the curb was enough to halt their progress.



Virginia Lane