

# STORY BOOK



# STORY BOOK

*Lois Nafziger*

MARZIPAN PUBLISHING

*Dedicated to ...*

# PREFACE

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# O1

## FAMILY

### **What was your Dad like when you were a child?**

Today is a good day to write about my father since 17 years ago today he died. He left us with an easy date to remember, July 4, 2000. Interesting date since I never thought of him as a patriotic person. I was not in PA when he died but I believe that many of my siblings were nearby. Ironically, given the size of his family it seems he chose to die when he was alone. My mother had briefly left the room.

But the question is about what my Dad was like when I was a child. He was Papa to me as a child and this gave way to Pop as I grew older. This change of name likely came to me under the influence of older siblings.



Figure 01.1: Lois with Papa - 1953

I experienced my father as a quiet man. He was likely an introvert. I always liked when he smiled. The world seemed a better place when he smiled. I have few memories of actual conversations with him but I'm sure I had some. I was the eighth child born to Jacob and Mary Hess so finding a place of distinction did not come easily to me. Three more babies followed me for a total of 11 living children in the family.

On summer afternoons it was a relief when he joined the group on the porch to shell peas or lima beans. The rate

of shelling likely doubled when he sat down on the green Adirondack chair and filled his big pan with peas. The baskets emptied so much faster and the messing around that happened among siblings ceased. Pop's presence could put an end to misbehavior. Pop in my book never has to say many words of correction. It does not take much remembering to bring back the image of Pop with his big hands sitting in the green porch chair or in cold weather in the rocking chair in the corner of the kitchen. I have an impression memory of sitting on one of his knees across from another sibling on his other knee. The wallpaper, calendars, linoleum on the floor, the door to the cellar, the kitchen cabinet with one section dedicated to the Bibles and hymnals used for family worship. Pop could sing and I liked to hear that. Another impression memory was sitting on his knee during Sunday morning church service. This meant that I was among the men of the church since the men and women sat on separate sides of the church.

I liked to see Pop with a twinkle in his eyes and when he laughed he did not laugh out loud but more often silently with his shoulders shaking as he held in his laughter. One of the ways that he teased Mom was to pull open her apron strings when he walked behind her as she worked at the stove or sink. It seemed that was one way he made a connection with her among all the clutter of work and children that filled their lives.

Pop had times of significant back aches. I wonder about that. I know he worked hard and have memories of seeing his everyday blue work shirt dripping wet with sweat. He was under a significant amount of pressure to make a success of the farm that he was buying from his



Figure 01.2: Papa, Mary, and Lois

mother (my Grandma Hess). It was troubling to me as a child to know that he was not always well. I was proud of his ability to hit a homerun during the end of school picnic ball game. It was during one of those games that he was hit on the neck by a ball leaving his singing voice damaged.

My impression was that he was a big man and while he was 6 feet tall the impression of bigness may have been the perspective of his fourth daughter. The two picture attached while grainy also convey his impressive presence I felt as a child.

**Tim's question** - This is quite poignant: "Ironically, given the size of his family it seems he chose to die when he was alone. My mother had briefly left the room."

Can you remind me of the details of this? Were they still at the house in Millersville? One of my first memories of what has become my classic hard, sustained cry was at a family gathering at the Hess farm after Grandpa's death. It was one of those moments that have become familiar where I didn't feel a lot of strong emotion and then the grief came on all at once.

I love these photos and they fit so beautifully with this line: "The world seemed a better place when he smiled."

I love this image: "One of the ways that he teased Mom was to pull open her apron strings when he walked behind her as she worked at the stove or sink. It seemed that was one way he made a connection with her among all the clutter of work and children that filled their lives."

I'm struck strongly by how different my life is from his as I sit here in our quiet living room on a Saturday morning with the dishwasher running in the background.

**Mom's reply** - "Can you remind me of the details of this. Were they still at the house in Millersville?" - Tim

They were living in the house in Millersville. Pop or Grandpa had been getting weaker. Hospice had been contacted and a hospital bed was going to be moved into the house. The family in the area had gathered and sang around his bed. Someone stayed the time with Pop and Mom. (I'm going from what I remember other family members telling me.) That morning my brother Dave and brother-in-law Rick had both stopped by. It seemed that Pop did not have long to live. Rick checked in with him and told Mom that his death was not likely to be immediate. They both left and Mom was alone with Pop. She went to the basement to start a load of laundry. When she came back to his room he was gone. When I heard that story I thought that seemed congruent with who Pop was. He was not comfortable being the center of attention and when alone took that time to leave this life and slip away. It was July 4, 2000.

Grief comes in different ways and at different times. I remember your weeping and thought it was a good response. We each respond to grief in our own ways. I remember experiencing grief for Pop in a cyclic way over the next years. Something would trigger memories of Pop and there would be a wave of grief. Grief would recede until there was another trigger perhaps with lessening intensity.

I have feelings about the differences between my life and my parent's lives as well. Then I think about my life growing up in my family and marvel at the differences between then and now as well.

**Abby's comment** - This was so lovely Mom. I am pretty sure I read it closer to when you first wrote it, but I realized I never replied to it. Your words paint such a wonderful portrait of a man I only knew a small part of. I am so glad you have such a gift of writing.

## What was your Mom like when you were a child?

This is an interesting time of the year to remember my mother. From early spring to the end of harvest she was always busy. Except for Sundays when my parents took a break from their labors to keep Sundays as a day of rest. Even then the animals and people on the farm needed to be care for. However, I have memories of the two extension tables being spread, set with china and crystal and filled with people. The guests may have been families from church or the school community. Looking back on the amount of hosting my parents did on Sundays it does not feel like they were having a day of rest but it was one of the ways the Mennonite community in which we lived stayed connected.

During the week my mother occupied herself with providing for her family. There was laundry to do and house cleaning to keep after. Mom soon had her girls to help with these tasks. But the garden is where Mom spent lots of time, planting, hoeing and picking the crops. Peas, lima beans, green beans and on down the list. Once picked we all helped with shelling, cleaning and preparing for blanching and freezing the vegetables. My mother always

wore an apron. I have memories of taking her a drink of water while she was picking something in the garden. She was hot and sweaty. I remember her taking her hankie from the apron pocket and wiping her face with it. She drank down the water and gave me her thanks with a smile. I remember Mom's face with a smile on it. She was most often smiling.

I think of her as an extrovert. She enjoyed people. Neighbors came to the farm to buy eggs. Some would come to the house and sit on the rocking chair in the corner of the kitchen while a child was sent to get the prescribed amount of eggs. The neighbor lady sat and rocked, chatting with my mother who was working in the kitchen.

Other times neighbor women stood and talked with my mother out by their car. I'm sure they covered many topic but I remember watching my mother talk with one of these ladies. Somehow I knew they both understood themselves to be Christian and as a child I wondered how that could be. My mother stood dressed in an apron covered dress that came well below her knees while the neighbor woman was dressed in robin egg colored shorts and sleeveless



Figure 01.3: Lois learning to enjoy applesauce with Mama - 1953



Figure 01.4: Mama, Mary, and Lois - 1953

blouse. I supposed my mother did not judge by outward appearances but took time to connect with the heart. She was clearly a heart person who cared deeply about people whether her children, grandchildren, neighbors, and others far and near.

She read to us. Whether it was the words of Louisa

Mae Alcott, Thornton Burgess, Laura Ingalls Wilders, or Bible stories the sound of her reading voice could quiet us down. One could say that Mom conveyed her feelings in her voice. When her voice quavered as she read about the dog Jack's death, we all knew that she was feeling sad as were we. Although she read book after book to her children for me it never quite felt like enough.

Did I mention her energy? I knew the reality of her energy by the results of it, no meals missed, clean ironed clothes available (mostly handmade dresses), a clean orderly house, and vases of flowers around the house. While she did not do it all, it was her doings or she organized someone else to do it. She took care of her family.

**Tim's question** - Can you say more about hosting? I imagine with a family as large as yours it was hard for other families to host you? Was it almost always your family hosting others? Do you have a sense of whether other families would have done as much hosting or was that a bit special for your parents?

When I read this I could see this scene in my mind's eye happening on the farm: "Some would come to the house and sit on the rocking chair in the corner of the kitchen while a child was sent to get the prescribed amount of eggs. The neighbor lady sat and rocked, chatting with my mother who was working in the kitchen. Other times neighbor women stood and talked with my mother out by their car. I'm sure they covered many topic but I remember watching my mother talk with one of these ladies. Somehow I knew they both understood themselves to be Christian and as a child I wondered how that could be."

I'm struck again by the list of authors that she read to

you from as many women authors as men.

**Mom's reply** - I do not have many memories of our whole family going to other homes for Sunday noon meals. We did not host every Sunday. It was more likely several times during the year. It was special that a large family invited other large families to join them.

What happened more often was that we children got to invite friends home after church to spend the afternoon or we went to a friend's home until the church service Sunday evenings. There were also a few times that we spent the night at a friend's house after school. A part of the fun of this was getting out of helping with the chores. Someone else gathered the eggs and carried the milk in my place.

An interesting observation women authors but I doubt that reading women authors was intentional, rather what was available and acceptable in her evaluation. All of my elementary school teachers were women. That I believe was significant.

## **What traits do you share with your mother and father?**

I'm looking at physical traits first. There are times when I look in the mirror and catch a glimpse of my mother's face. It can be a smile or some other facial expression. However growing up I thought I looked more like my father. While I'm not tall I have a large bone structure, large hands and feet. That was likely from my father's gene pool. My blonde hair and blue eyes were likely from the Hess gene pool as

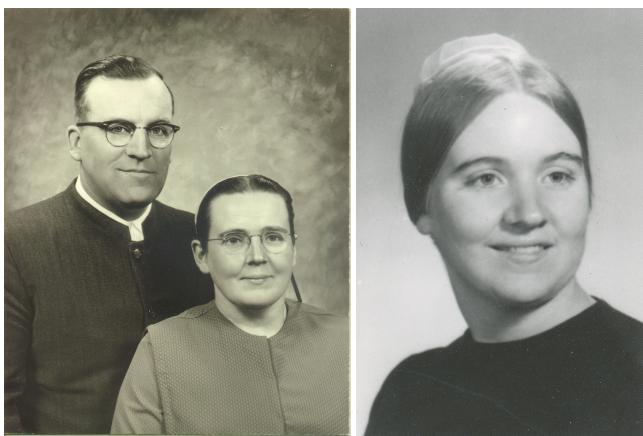


Figure 01.5: *left*: Jacob and Mary Hess. *right*: Lois Spring 1974

well. The following two pictures let you decide who I look like.

Personality traits are more subjective. What did I learn and what was I born with? From my mother I learned the power of a positive attitude. My father may have dealt with some level of depression. I've been aware of some in myself as well.

Both of my parents were hard workers who kept at the job until it was finished. My mother was an extrovert and my father an introvert. I come in the middle of that. School was a positive experience for my mother and she stayed in until she completed 11th grade and her family could no longer support her. My father completed eighth grade twice and ended his school years to become a farmer. Both of my parents encouraged us to get an education. School was a mixed bag for me. Some aspects I enjoyed

while others were difficult. My mother was a reader and I followed that example. Although I have clearly become my own unique person, my parents are present in the resources that have shaped who I am.

## **What were your grandparents like?**

I knew only one grandparent face to face. But I heard about the rest of my grandparents from my mother and Grandma Hess.

First let me tell you about Grandma Mary Groff Hess. She seemed old from the time I first have memories of her. She turned 61 the year I was born. Interesting perspective that I turn 65 this year. Figure 01.6 is a picture of my childhood Grandma.

My face is hidden in this picture (Figure 01.6) and that might reflect how I was feeling. I was likely nine years old and not too happy about the way I had to dress. Donna and Wayne, the two black children came to stay with us for two weeks through the Fresh Air program. Donna was from Philadelphia and stayed with Grandma. She came for several summers and kept in contact with Grandma into adulthood. I believe that Wayne came from the city of York. I believe he was only with us for one summer. Grandma wanted to help where and when she could. I have memories of my Papa driving to her house and bringing her to the farm to help my mother for at least one morning a week. One of the jobs I remember her doing was ironing my father's dress shirts. The collars of my father's shirts were starched stiff and were likely more time consuming than my mother had patience for. There were a few times



Figure 01.6: Grandma Hess, guests, and siblings 1963

I remember staying with Grandma but it did not happen very often since older brothers and sisters were built in babysitters.

The story that I learned about Grandma and Grandpa (Christian) Hess as a young adult was one that I'm sure shaped who she was as an adult. Here is how I told the story.

The one grandmother that I knew was a widow for 60 years. As a young person I wondered why my grandmother, Mary never remarried and as an adult learned the following story. Mary's father Emanuel owned several farms and Christian and Mary were in the process



Figure 01.7: Christian and Mary Hess

of moving on to one of them with the goal of owning it one day when Christian died rather suddenly. Mary was left with two young children, Verna (4 years old) and my father Jacob (1 year old). What would happen to their plan? The story goes that Emanuel told his daughter Mary that if she married again he would not save the farm for his grandson, Jacob (my father), but if she chose to not marry again he would make sure the farm was available for him. So the farm was rented to others while Mary moved home

with her children. From that home base she went out to care for other people's families when a baby was born. She saw her children on the weekends and Verna and Jacob grew up under the watchful eye of their grandparents and later an uncle and aunt.

So what was this man, my Grandpa Hess like who drove himself to the doctor and heard the doctor tell him there was something wrong with his heart and he had only a short time to live? He drove home to give his young wife the news and died the day before his 29th birthday. That is about all that I know of my Grandpa Hess. My father had no stories to tell because he was not yet two years old when his father died and Grandma Hess did not tell stories easily.

Now to my mother's parents, Grandma (Cora) and Grandpa (Willis) Stauffer who I never met face to face. Grandpa Stauffer died on January 30, 1932 in the Lancaster General Hospital of pneumonia. Here is his obituary published in the Gospel Herald<sup>1</sup>

STAUFFER—WILLIS K. STAUFFER was born Aug. 15, 1895; died Jan. 30, 1932, at the Lancaster, Pa., General Hospital, from pneumonia. He was a faithful member of the Mennonite Church from early manhood. His place in the church was never vacant when health permitted. He was the son of Bro. and Sister Jacob N. Stauffer, deacon of the Masonville Church. Nov. 6, 1917, he was united in mar-

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<sup>1</sup>GOSPEL HERALD - Vol. XXIV, No. 47 - February 18, 1932 - Page 1023

riage to Sister Cora E. Warfel. To this union were born 2 sons and 6 daughters. One daughter preceded him in death. His loving companion remains to mourn his departure, with the following children: Mary W., Dorothy W., Anna W., Ethel W., H. Wilmer, J. Marvin, and Erma Mae. The family keenly feels the loss of a faithful companion and kind and loving father; the Church, a faithful member and teacher of the Bible Class. Funeral services were conducted Feb. 2 at the home, and at the River Corner, Pa., Mennonite Church, by Bros. Maris Hess, John H. Mosemann, and John K. Charles.

"Friends may think we have forgotten,  
When at times they see us smile;  
But they little know the heartache,  
That is hidden all the while."

My mother was 12 at the time that her father died. It seemed to me that she always had a special place in her heart for her father. What little I've learned about him it seems he was a man with a plan. He was going to buy a farm and raise vegetables for market. This would keep his family of 7 living children busy. But this was not to be. His youngest child, Erma was not yet a year old when he died.

Cora seems to have been a determined and resourceful person. She would find a way to raise her family of children. She made potato chips and my mother told of selling bags of them on the streets of Conestoga the small town where they lived. My mother enjoyed school and



Figure 01.8: Willis and Cora Stauffer

did well. So when it became financially necessary to have Mary leave school at the age of 16 and go to work on a farm, the school superintendent visited Grandma Cora with the goal of changing her mind. That was not possible and so Mary never finished high school. Instead she lived and worked on the farm of Aaron and Faith Shenk.

My Grandma Cora moved her family to share the farm house when Mary and Jacob started farming near New Danville. They were planning to buy a house in Lancaster near Bridgeport along the Old Philadelphia Pike. However

Grandma Cora went to the hospital for a hysterectomy. The next day she had a procedure done on the veins in her legs. My parents visited her in the hospital and she was making a good recovery. They returned to the work on the farm. Only when they reached home there was a message that Grandma Cora had died of a pulmonary embolism (blood clot to the lungs). I've been left with the understanding that someone made an error and Grandma Cora should not have died. This was July 14, 1944. Cora's youngest child was 13 years old and her oldest, my mother had three small children. The oldest was 2 years old. I'm sure Cora was greatly missed.

Here is her obituary published in the Gospel Herald<sup>2</sup>

Stauffer.-Cora E. Stauffer, daughter of the late Hiram G. and Anna Mary (Sensing) Warfel, was born Nov. 6, 1894, in Conestoga Twp., Lancaster Co., Pa.; passed away in the Lancaster General Hospital, July 14, 1944; aged 49 y. 8 m. 8 d. Death was caused by a pulmonary embolism following a major operation 2 days before death. In early girlhood she accepted Christ as her personal Saviour and united with the River Corner Mennonite Church, remaining a faithful member until death. Her husband, Willis K. Stauffer, preceded her in death 12 years ago. She leaves to mourn her departure 2 sons and 5 daughters (Mary, wife of Jacob G. Hess, New Danville, Pa.; Dorothy W., Anna W., Ethel W., H. Wilmer, J. Mar-

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<sup>2</sup>Gospel Herald Vol 37 #21; 25 Aug 1944 pp 423-4

vin, and Erma Mae, all at home), 2 sisters (Mrs. Mary Shertzer, Farmersville, Pa., and Anna, wife of Chester Neff, Millersville, Pa.), a step-mother (Mary Warfel, Lancaster), and 3 grandchildren. One daughter (Edna) preceded her in death. Funeral services were held from her late home near New Danville, July 17, in charge of Bro. Maris Hess, and at the River Corner Mennonite Church, in charge of Bro. John K. Charles, assisted by Bros. Henry Nauman and James Hess. Burial was made in the adjoining cemetery.

Children: Edna W. Stauffer (1918 - 1923), Mary W Stauffer Hess (1920 - 2008), Dorothy W. Stauffer (1921 - 2004), Anna W Stauffer (1923 - 2010), Ethel W Stauffer (1924 - 2010), Jacob Marvin Stauffer (1930 - 2003), Erma Mae Stauffer Hunsberger (1931 - 2003)

## **What is some of the best advice your father or mother ever gave you?**

Although my father ended his schooling after taking 8th grade twice and my mother when she turned 16 and had completed 11th grade, they both encouraged their children to get an education through high school. My parents sent all of us to the local Mennonite elementary (Grades 1 through 8). They were also willing to make the financial commitment of sending all of us to high school at the private Mennonite owned and operated school, Lancaster

Mennonite School. Until 1970, the year that I graduated, the school (LMS) was under the guidance of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference bishop board. This is a group of ordained Mennonite church leaders. In 1971 the head administrator was a professional educator. He was not an ordained church leader. While some of us shone brighter than others we all made it through high school. Several of us have nurses training or masters degrees as well. So valuing education was one piece of good advice they gave.

The second piece of advice was to do service. Doing for other people in the name of Christ was important to my parents. When they were getting married there was a strong missionary movement in their part of the Mennonite church. Many people they knew were going to Africa or Central America. They knew that they could not respond to that kind of call but decided that perhaps they could raise their children to serve others. Most of my siblings and I have spent time serving in places of "need" here in the United States or internationally. While I have come to understand that one can serve wherever one lives rather than going "out there", the opportunity to interact in new places and find our way in a new culture, was a valuable learning experience. The advice to be of service to others was good.

## **How is your faith different from your parents' faith?**

I think that it would be fair to say that my parents had a very Biblical based faith. Their faith depended on the

Bible being true and by true I suggest literally true. We were told and read stories that were Bible reality. We attended church regularly. The family gathered for daily Bible reading, singing and prayer. While I did not always understand what was read, I knew it was important to my parents. We did this to acknowledge the reality of God. God was a given in the world that I grew up in. I did become aware that the way some people lived was different than my family. I was also taught that the way we treated each other was important. Every person is of value. I will confess that I had a bias that people different than me were more interesting than people like me.

As I grew to adulthood I had a hard time seeing the Bible as literally true. It soon became clear that the way one read the Bible made a difference in the way one lived. The Shema - Love the lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength and your neighbor as yourself, became foundational for me. My parents would not have disagreed with the importance of that verse but they had made the commitment to the cultural life style aspects of faith as well. They were comfortable with keeping the two together. I was not.

They believed that what one confessed should impact the way one lived. I also believed that. What that life looked like was different for me than it was for my parents. I felt drawn to living as an active peacemaker. I took mediation training. I came to seminary for a masters in peace studies, and took training from Christian Peacemaker Teams. I'm not sure what my parents thought of these choices but they did not openly disagree with me or tell me I was wrong.

My faith has continued to evolve and I live with more

ambiguity and questions than ever. What does God mean? Who are we in the immensity (both large and small) of the universe? Answers to questions may not be all that important but I continue to find that relationships are the stuff of life and each day is made real by caring for the other.

**Charletta's question** - Lois can you please elaborate on the distinctions between how you and your parents were impacted or how each one interpreted the Shema?

"The Shema - Love the lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength and your neighbor as yourself, became foundational for me. My parents would not have disagreed with the importance of that verse but they had made the commitment to the cultural life style aspects of faith as well. They were comfortable with keeping the two together. I was not."

**Reply to Charletta** - It seemed to me that my parents thought about these verses in terms of their love of and obedience to God. I was finding that for me the expression of loving God is evident in how I love and care for my neighbor and myself. Let me know if you have more questions about that.

**Tim's questions** - Two follow up questions: Can you give an example of how your parents made choices based on their view of the Shema and its call to love and obedience to God and then share a story that exemplifies how you approach loving and caring for your neighbor. And then comparison and contrast.

**Reply from Lois** - As I was waking up this morning the questions Charletta and Tim asked me were on my mind. Some thoughts about them came to me along with a song that I likely hadn't thought of or sung for a long time. I'll get to the thoughts later but here is the song that was going through my head. I found it in the hymnal from which my family sang on Sundays and in the daily family devotional time.

These words reflect some of the theology that was present in the community where I grew up. It reflects the first part of the Shema. There was an expectation that one should accept salvation through Jesus and live a life of piety, generosity, and goodness. My parents were very generous and offered hospitality. They opened their home to people different than them. Before I was old enough to remember my parents hosted a worker from Puerto Rico. He worked with my father on the farm and I believed lived in the house with my family. Later I remember them hosting large Sunday noon meals for other families from church. They hosted high schoolers who needed a place to stay over the weekend. Later after their children had left the home they frequently hosted families serving with Wycliffe as Bible translators. They were good people and I am not critical of them but rather I find that what motivates me to live a good life is different from what I heard in the community where I grew up.

To begin let me again say that I'm less clear about God. Is God love, light, goodness, truth, and beauty? I'm uncomfortable making God responsible for all the events of this world let alone the details of my life. I have learned to love and care for myself in a way that frees me to care

for others. I understand how there may be connections between living things in ways that could impact a shared survival or not.

While my parents did not vote and were not politically involved in their community, I have, and have written letters to and spoken with political leaders. I've joined with groups calling for political action. I enjoyed the opportunities I have had to visit Capitol Hill and express my concerns and interests to leaders there. Some of the issues we talked about were death penalty, violence against women, environmental concerns, and others.

While the mantra, "In any given situation, I am the one I can change" rings in my thinking I also know that the common good is important. We are linked in ways that can determine the survival of us all. I believe there are actions we each can take that can serve the common good.

**Tim's question** - Also, can you elaborate on this:

"I will confess that I had a bias that people different than me were more interesting than people like me."

**Reply from Lois** - Perhaps this statement reflects my boredom with the ordinary. While I have lovely memories of the place I grew up, I enjoyed reading books that took me beyond the world in which I lived. I thoroughly enjoyed opportunities I had to travel away from Lancaster County. I'll name a few that I remember: South Carolina, Ontario, Italy, Switzerland, France, England, Honduras, Haiti, South Dakota, Mexico, Tanzania, Malawi, South Africa, Bolivia, Cuba, Arizona, Colorado, Washington, Cal-

ifornia. There were other states we passed through. I also was in each country of Central America.

I have been curious about how much difference a group can tolerate. Can some kinds of difference put an end to the cohesion of a group of people?

## **When did your theological views diverge from your parents?**

Perhaps I never felt comfortable within the closed community of Mennonites where I was born. I do not have memories of identifying with much of what happened in church on a Sunday morning. I do remember my fascination with my first Sunday school teacher, Emma Miller telling us stories using a flannel graph. It was visual and the people shown in the Bible stories were quite different looking than people in my everyday life. I heard the preachers teach of the importance of dressing in the prescribed Mennonite way. At some level I was processing these differences.

It was noted in my mother's diary under November 9, 1961 that, "Lois accepted the Lord this evening". On Saturday of that week she includes the note that "We went down to Landis' for coverings afterward." It seems that my mother understood the connection between those two statements but as a nine year old they did not seem to connect for me. I remember feelings of frustration that my mother now combed my hair and put it in a bun with a hairnet over it and hair pins that could jab one's head. Over top of that was placed a white covering held to my

hair with straight pins.

What had Brother Willis Kling preached about that night at the revival meetings at the Byerland church? I do not have clear memories of his sermon but I'm quite sure it was not an invitation to begin wearing plain clothes. However, in the community where I lived standing in response to a revival invitation was a public indication that one was ready to join church which meant dressing plain. I'm rather sure that my nine year old thinking was not ready to accept all of those actions at once. However I dressed as I was told to. A part of this perspective that did stay with me was the connection between what one said one believed and one's actions. I just did not personally make the connection to plain dress.

Another theological view that caused me problems was the hierarchical perspective on the roles of men and women. God was believed to be over everything, men were positioned beneath God and women were expected to take a role under men. Where you found men and where you found women made visible the distinct roles they had in the community where I grew up. Men were in the field driving tractors or on the road driving trucks. They most often worked with animals and harvested crops. Sunday morning it was a man who looked down from the pulpit and a man who lead the congregation in singing. During the week women could be found in the kitchen and in the garden. It was women who kept the house clean and laundry washed and dried. They most often packed the lunches and got the children ready for school and church. In school during the time I was in grades one to eight, I had eight different single women as teachers. Sunday morning you

would find the women on the designated side of the auditorium since there was no mixed sitting of men and women. Women were expected to join the men in singing with their soprano and alto voices. They would likely be found teaching the children's Sunday school classes as well.

One of the ways that I became aware of other perspectives regarding the roles of women was from reading books. Many alternative ways for women to live in the world could be found between the covers of a book. However, I need only sense the occasional tension between my parents to learn that the traditional role did not always fit naturally with their personalities. My mother enjoyed interacting with people and had a personality that could be useful in a leadership role. My father may have enjoyed people but took leadership roles reluctantly. These are my observations and are not based on specific things my parents told me.

Thinking back I believe that I had a growing sense that I wanted independence from the female role expectations of the culture in which I grew up. However, I still remember the shock and surprise I felt when a male member of the youth group called me a feminist. I believe he intended to be derogatory and in that setting he was, but internally I wore it as a badge of courage.

I found I was more likely to talk with my mother than my father about my different perspectives but one of the realities that helped me out was having older brothers and sisters who also found themselves differing with their parents on some issues. The way we dressed was one issue. In many ways they cleared the road and by the time I came

along there seemed to less need to talk difficult issues over with my parents.

While my theological perspectives were changing during high school years I was still figuring out what I thought for myself. My parents gave me permission to go on a five week trip to Europe and following that supported my plan to get a degree in education from Millersville State College. I was testing ideas and having experiences that I knew were different than my parents so this was the time when I was using my wings and learning to fly on my own. I'm not really sure how they felt about that but I was their eighth child so I doubt I kept them up at night very often.

**Comment from Abby** - That photo of you with the snowman is one of my favorites. I love the line about you wearing the label of feminist as an internal badge of courage.

## **When did your political views diverge from your parents?**

Growing up I knew very little about politics. Between the community where I lived and the rest of the world there was a boundary that let in small amounts of talk about elections, governors, taxes, presidents and public schools. I'm sure my parents paid taxes but I do not know how large the checks to the state and nation were. Did having a large family make a difference back then? I was aware of the fact that my sisters and brothers all went to a private parent run school where my parents paid tuition in addition to the taxes that help to pay for public schools. I thought that

an indication of my parent's commitment to living the way they believed.

I'm sure that my high school teachers provided windows through the boundary to the world outside. Knowing there were other ways to live and think about life resulted in my evaluating life the way I was brought up. I do not have memories of conversations with my parents about politics. I was more likely to have conversations with older brothers and perhaps sisters about these things. Many of my older siblings had moved out of the area even out of the state and country. Indirectly that provided different ways of seeing the world. My parents were always respectful of the USA. It would have been hard for them to be very critical of the government. They did not approve of war but that was part of what kept up the boundary between the community and the outside world. During high school and on into college I became aware of some of the sad realities of life beyond my small world. I learned about injustice and corruption.

Living in Honduras I saw poverty and wealth in new ways. I had thought poverty to be a result of a person's poor choices. I now realized there is a systemic reality that contributes to poverty and the USA systems and structures contribute to keeping many people below the poverty line. Understanding that systems have impacted economic, race, religion, education and many other aspects of life was an important learning for me. I had a growing understanding that I had a voice and vote that could be used to help bring about change.

Using my vote is one way that I differed from my parents. They did not vote. I'm not sure but I think that the

first time I voted was after I returned from Honduras. My political views were evolving and they would continue to evolve in the following years.

I'll say a bit more about what I understand my parent's perspective on politics to be. They understood the political system to be part of the earthly kingdom. They were committed to the heavenly kingdom of God. The Biblical teaching was a guide for how they lived. Matthew 5 to 7 were important directives for how one lives. The beatitudes were verses we memorized. The blessing for peacemakers was one of special importance. We were part of a community that opposed participation in war. However, at that time, church leaders did not tell the government they should not go to war. The government was the earthly kingdom. During WWI some Mennonite men chose to resist becoming soldiers. At that time there was no exemption for conscientious objectors to war. There are stories of suffering for the stand they took. I honestly do not know the date of the decision but before WWII the US government made it legal for a man with beliefs of conscientious objection to war to not join the military. He had the option of alternative service. There was a variety of jobs men could choose from. There were smoke jumpers fighting wild fires, caregivers in hospitals for the mentally ill, men serving as Guinea pigs for research and more. My father was given a farm deferment since he was needed to keep the farm operating and productive. It is interesting to note that the Mennonite leaders spoke to the government when there was an issue that concerned their lives and young people but were silent when other young people's lives were at stake.

In the years since the CO status became recognized by the government, there are more Mennonites who voice their concerns to the government. There is now an office run by the Mennonite Central Committee in Washington DC. Their goal is to witness to those making political decisions in the government. They invite partners in the international community to also come and bring their concerns and prospective to law makers. These perspectives are that of peacemakers seeking justice, equity, opportunity, health and education for all people. I'm not really sure what my parents thought about the choices I made to begin using my vote, get training to conduct mediation, study for a peace studies degree, and joining and serving with Christian Peacemakers Teams. I like to think that if they had been in the generation that I am and had the opportunities I have had they too would have made choices that were clearly that of peacemakers.

**Tim's question** - Mom, do you remember any conversations with your parents or early conversations with your siblings around these changes you describe? **Mom's reply** - Unfortunately I do not have clear memories of such conversation.

## **Did you get along with your siblings as a child?**

As a young adult I remember my mother telling me that I was an "easy" child. I suppose she meant that I did not take up much of her time. Given all that a mother of eleven children had to do, one can see why she used the word

easy to describe a child with a quiet reserved personality. I think that I got along well with my siblings.

My oldest brother is ten years older than me and so I do not remember spending much time playing or interacting with the older half of my family. There was always work to be done on the farm. During harvesting time we might spend several afternoons a week helping to preserve fruit or vegetables. We each had our daily chores to do. I did not like that an older brother hit me with a rubber hose in a work situation. That did not help create a positive open attitude toward my older siblings.

However, the younger of us children were four girls and one boy. We played together setting up house with our dolls on the four porches of the farm house. We washed and hung up our dolly clothes. There was a small shed used for rabbit hutches. When it was empty we turned it into a "playhouse". This is where we set up our school. I remember that I found it more fun to set up the school than it was to actually play school. Older siblings created tunnels through the haymow. It was a somewhat scary adventure to play tag inside the tunnel. Summer evenings we often played a game of beacon. Winter evenings and Sunday afternoons were times when our mother read aloud to us.

So I spent a lot of time with siblings. When there were disagreements, and there were, slapping was often the signal that someone was upset at another. That was not acceptable behavior and could result in a parental reprimand to the offending party/ies. I think that I cried easily and may have used that to indicate my unhappiness and scare off someone who was upset at me.

## Has your relationship with your siblings changed over the years?

Yes, I learned to know my oldest brothers and sister better when I returned from Honduras and entered the adult world of my community. After I was married I felt like I had more in common with them. Paul and Nancy, Dave and Jane went to the "home" church. There was a point at which it was important for them to recognize that I was an adult and not one of the "little ones". My sisters-in-law likely helped with that since I was close to adulthood when we met for the first time.

There was a time when I was in high school and college that it seemed to me that I did not register with my older siblings as a person. One point at which I realized that was not completely true was the Sunday I left for Honduras. Mom had invited everyone home for Sunday dinner and later that afternoon I would leave for the airport for the flight out of the country. It was suggested that I be sent off with a time of singing. So family members suggested songs for my sending off. One of my brothers with whom I had a more distant relationship, Dave, suggested the song, "Under His Wings". I remember getting choked up as I received that song as a sign of my brother's concern for me.

My relationships with my younger siblings has changed over the years. As happened with my older siblings and me there were points at which I realized Rachel, Joe and Esther were taking on responsibility for themselves and others and were becoming adults. Examples of this are when Rachel left for a year in Europe, Joe received permis-

sion from parents to take a motorcycle ride out west with several other young men and Esther enter VS program for a year or two.

There were times in my life that I worked to take my unique place in my family. There was pressure to conform in some ways. Some of my siblings made that easier than others. All of them were supportive but I did not always feel that support. Some of my sisters began to occasionally go out for a meal together to talk. Those conversations were like good therapy when it came to processing our family system and the pain that we had experienced. We could also affirm the positive experiences as well. I was good for me to hear how others of my sisters had come through their growing up years and how they understood the family to be.

The fact that John and I moved our family to Indiana has impacted my relationships with my siblings. Mary and I have reconnected after quite a few years of little connection. The rest have become more distant connections. The annual sister's gathering and the annual summer reunion have become quite important to me. They are significant ways to keep in contact with my family. Phone calls with sisters living in the east and regular sessions with Mary and Wishart provide a connection to family.



# O2

## CHILDHOOD

### What are your favorite children's stories?

Two children's books that I enjoyed reading as a child were "Make Way for Ducklings" and "Bright April". A third one that I recently learned to know and regret not having to read to my children is "Enemy Pie"

**Make Way for Ducklings - Robert McClosky, 1941<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> From Wikipedia - Make Way for Ducklings is a children's picture book written and illustrated by Robert McCloskey. First published in 1941, the book tells the story of a pair of mallards who decide to raise their family on an island in the lagoon in Boston Public Garden, a park in the center of Boston. Make Way for Ducklings won the 1942 Caldecott Medal for McCloskey's illustrations, executed in charcoal then lithographed on zinc plates. As of 2003, the book had sold over two million copies. The book's popularity led to the construction of a statue by Nancy Schon in the Public Garden of the mother duck and

like maternal image of the mother duck who got her flock of ducklings to the park with the help of a friend and despite the busy streets. I enjoyed delightful illustrations as well.

**Bright April - Marguerite De Angeli, 1946<sup>2</sup>** This was one of the first stories that I read as a child that included a little girl of color. I liked her and passed on to my children the code of DYB (Do your best. )

**Enemy Pie - Derek Munson and illustrator Tara Calahan King** I learned to know this book in recent year and am sorry to not have it when my children were learning to deal with enemies. What a great way to respond to an enemy. Jeremy's dad had a great way of drawing Jeremy into the process of converting that enemy to a friend without Jeremy even knowing what was happening! If only more of us used this process in our personal lives and in our communities. May the pie makers increase.

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her eight ducklings, which is a popular destination for children and adults alike.

<sup>2</sup> From Wikipedia - Bright April is a 1946 children's story book written and illustrated by Marguerite de Angeli, who later won the 1950 Newbery Medal for excellence in American children's literature for The Door in the Wall. Bright April is a story about a young African-American girl named April who experiences racial prejudice; it is also the story of her bright personality and her tenth birthday and the surprise it brought. The story is set in the Germantown neighborhood of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the scenery portrayed in the author's illustrations can be recognized even today. Bright April was the first children's book to address the divisive issue of racial prejudice, a daring topic for a children's book of that time. Selected digital images of this book are available at the Marguerite de Angeli Collection.

## What was your childhood bedroom like?

There were several bedrooms in my childhood. One thing that they had in common was the reality that I never had one to myself. When I was newborn I likely slept in the large metal crib in my parent's bedroom. From there I moved to the "little one's" room. I remember sharing a double bed with Mary with Rachel sleeping in a large metal crib in the corner. As another child came along we each moved up a step to the next sleeping spot. In this room I remember waking up and bumping my head because somehow I ended up under the bed rather than in it.

The next bedroom along the sleeping path was the "girl's room". This room had two double beds in it. Mary and I shared one and Martha and Rhoda the other. At some point Rhoda moved on either to her own room or off to college. Martha soon moved on as well. Then it was a room for Mary, Rachel, Esther and me. This is the room where a few kittens learned that if they climbed the wisteria vine to the window they might be let in. That did not have parental approval.

When we moved off the farm and to the brick house on the time of the hill. The girls had two rooms across the hall from each other. There was a bathroom conveniently in between. Mary soon left for nurse's training and I had the room to myself. It was from here that I took off to my college classes and after graduation to Honduras for three years.

## **Did you have a special hiding place as a child?**

I had a place that I frequently hid when we played hide and seek. It was a closet under the stairs. The door did not latch and there were bags of rags in the back part of the space. The front area had hooks for clothing. When sitting in the back of the closet the darkness closed in around me and the noises of a busy household fell away. I could breathe the dark stillness as I waited noiselessly hoping that the nearby footsteps would pass the door and leave me undisturbed in my lair.

## **What is one of your earliest childhood memories?**

It is hard to know what my earliest childhood memory is but I do remember sitting on a stool by the wash bowl in the kitchen and having my hair combed and then braided. Combing hair was most often my mother's domain but I have a memory that on a Sunday morning when my mother was quite busy with the getting ready for church details. My father would set me up on the stool and comb out any knots in my hair so that I was ready for my mother to swoop in and finish me up with the braiding. We did not go away from home with hair not braided. That could have been like leaving without being completely dressed.



Figure 02.1: The picture posted here was more likely taken on a Saturday afternoon when the 3 Aunties were making their weekly visit. I had likely had my hair washed and I was waiting for it to dry. I believe that this picture came from one of the Aunt's cameras.



Figure 02.2: Here I am holding my baby sister Rachel who was born 2 years after me in November 1954. So here I am having just turned 2 years old.



Figure 02.3: Here you can see that Mary and I have two braids. Rachel's hair is not long enough for braids. I expect our ages are Mary 5, me 4 and Rachel 2 years.

### **Can you remember a time that you were upset as a child?**

I remember several times that I was upset as a child. An early one was waking up during the night and bumping my head. I bumped my head because I found myself under the bed. So why was I there? I don't know perhaps I had a nightmare or bad dream. So I crawled out from under the bed and climbed back in beside my sister. Another time was finding my little brother holding a paring knife. When I thought I would take it from him the knife cut the tip of my left pointer finger. The cut called for a trip to a doctor and three stitches to hold it together. The wound healed fine and left me with a scar. Another kind of memory came

to me from my elementary school years. This involved an older brother. He operated the milking machines and Mary and I were to prep the cows and carry the buckets full of milk to the milk house. Mary most often washed the cows udders and I helped by putting a strap over the cow's back. The milking machine was hooked on the strap. In between these jobs we would play outside the barn. If we were slow in getting back inside and getting the jobs done he would occasionally hit us with the rubber hose of the milking machine. He most often hit our legs. I did not like him for doing this to us.

## **Do you consider your childhood to have been a happy one?**

Yes, I do consider my childhood to have been a happy one. There was almost always someone to play with. The big farm house had four porches, one on each side of the house. So we could each claim a porch and there we would set up housekeeping with our dolls. We could then make visits to the other households. There was a small shed that had rabbit cages in it. For a while we were allowed to clean it up and set up a school room. I enjoyed getting the school set up but once that was complete playing school did not seem to be as much fun. There were times when Mimi and Wilmer, our cousins joined us to play. There were the older siblings to follow after when they went to the haymow and built tunnels with the bales. During the spring my mother would take us to the woods and we would find wild flowers. When we were more adventurous we might hike to a

small cave in the hillside above the Conestoga River. It is thought that Native Americans (the Conestoga Indians) used the cave as a place to overnight when traveling along the Conestoga River. There were summer jobs such as shelling peas and later lima beans by the bucketsful. There were stories to tell and guessing games to play while we did this. It was special when Papa came and helped with the shelling. He sat on the big green Adirondack chair and his big hands seemed to empty the baskets so much more quickly than when it was just the children shelling. I remember having the job of cutting the asparagus. The patch was a large section of the garden and I remember not liking to do this barefooted because of the sharp stones that hurt my feet. I was glad when we stopped cutting asparagus toward the end of June. Summer evenings after a game of Beckon we lined up on the basement step to take our turn washing our feet and then it was off to bed. On holidays there were usually extended family gatherings. Christmas was held at Aunties. Easter, I'm not sure where. The Fourth of July was a picnic and watching the Lancaster fireworks from Auntie's back acreage. I can remember that as the sun set, the grass cooled my bare feet. I found a spot on a blanket or lawn chair then we waited for the first blossom of fireworks to explode above the horizon. After minutes of oohing and awing there came the finally of multiple colors and many booms. Then we packed into the station wagon and some of us may have fallen asleep before we reached the farm. Thanksgiving was most often hosted by my mother at our farm. These gathering were my mother's siblings and their families. If everyone attended that would be 11 adults and 28 chil-

dren. Uncle Marvin and his family lived in Arizona and so did not attend very often. Some gathering included my mother's cousins and their families. At home among the children there were squabbles and fights that occasionally got physical but these were the people that I had in my life so we most often got along. We were expected to be kind to each other so slapping was severely frowned upon. Did I love my family? I'm not sure I would have thought to articulate my understanding in that way. But this was my family. What else did I know?

## **Where did you go on vacations as a child?**

Regarding taking a vacation when I was a child you have to understand that on a farm it was difficult to take time away from the care of the animals. Cows needed to be milked and fed morning and evening. Chickens needed to be fed and the eggs gathered morning and evening. There was a rhythm to life on the farm that did not leave time for taking vacations. There were two times that I remember my parents leaving the farm for a day or two. My older siblings must have been old enough to do the chores with the help of a hired man. We traveled in a station wagon and even without the requirement of seat belts there was only so much room for children to sit.

My memories are that the youngest five children traveled with Pop and Mom to northern Pennsylvania. We stopped at Eagles Mere. While my memory is of a lake where we had a picnic, my research today tells me it is a small historic town that time has forgotten. We spent the night with Marvin and Dorothy Groff. Marvin was Pop's

cousin and they had moved to the northern part of the state to help start a church. The main impression that has stayed with me from that trip was the adventure of seeing new places and meeting new people.

The second trip that I remember took us south to the mountains of Virginia to visit John and Anna Miller who were also working at beginning a new church. This family had children that matched the ages of at least a portion of our family. They had a David, Daniel, Rhoda and Martha who was my age. Again I remember that we slept at their house and an impression that has stayed with me is the darker shadiness of where they lived in the mountains. The shaded valley in the mountains stood in sharp contrast to the sunlit farm where I lived.

Later my parents took the three youngest, Rachel, Joe, and Esther with them on a long trip out to the west coast of the USA and back. They stopped to visit Mom's brother, Marvin and his wife, Maryann and three children in Phoenix, AZ. There was only room for three in the car so I stayed home with the rest of my siblings, spending some of that time with my Uncle Wilmer and Aunt Corina.

From Tim - Its very interesting how the practicalities of travel created sub-groupings in the family on these vacations. It also makes sense that they could afford to travel more later in your life as a family.

I also love the impression of the shadiness of the Virginia valley in contrast to where you lived.

It's interesting that two of the three vacations were to church planters. Was this because missionary work was the main thing in that period that led people to leave the Lancaster area while still connected to the church?

From Mom - Missionary work was certainly something that took people away from Lancaster County. My parents were strong supporters of mission work.

## **Tell about a song that brings back an interesting memory from your youth**

There are two songs from my elementary school days that come to mind, My Grandfather's Clock and Old Black Joe. The first was a song that pointed to the mortality of us all. Johnny Cash sang this song. My grandfather's clock  
My grandfather's clock was too large for the shelf So it stood ninety years on the floor It was taller by half than the old man himself Though it weighed not a pennyweight more It was bought on the morn of the day that he was born And was always his treasure and pride But it stopped, short never to go again When the old man died Ninety years without slumbering His life seconds numbering It stopped, short never to go again When the old man died My grandfather said that of those he could hire Not a servant so faithful he found For it wasted no time and had but one desire At the close of each week to be wound And it kept in its place, not a frown upon its face And its hands never hung by its side But it stopped short, never to go again When the old man died It rang and alarmed in the dead of the night An alarm that for years had been dumb And we knew that his spirit was pluming for flight That his hour for departure had come Still the clock kept the time with a soft and muffled chime As we silently stood

by his side But it stopped short, never to go again When the old man died Ninety years without slumbering His life seconds numbering It stopped short, never to go again When the old man died Songwriters: Erich Doll / Henry Clay Work The second is a Stephen Foster song that reminded me of the hard lives of the negro slaves. 1. Gone are the days when my heart was young and gay, Gone are my friends from the cotton fields away, Gone from the earth to a better land I know, I hear their gentle voices calling "Old Black Joe". Chorus I'm coming, I'm coming, for my head is bending low: I hear their gentle voices calling, "Old Black Joe". 2. Why do I weep when my heart should feel no pain Why do I sigh that my friends come not again, Grieving for forms now departed long ago. I hear their gentle voices calling "Old Black Joe". Chorus 3. Where are the hearts once so happy and so free? The children so dear that I held upon my knee, Gone to the shore where my soul has longed to go. I hear their gentle voices calling "Old Black Joe". Chorus The third is a song that should I hear it or sing it would remind me of the day that I left home for three years in Honduras. My family gathered for a time of farewell and my mother asked people to offer songs for us to sing. My brother Dave with whom I had some issues suggested Under His Wings. I was surprised and realized that perhaps he did care about me and what was happening in my life. Under His Wings 1.Under His wings I am safely abiding; Though the night deepens and tempests are wild, Still I can trust Him, I know He will keep me; He has redeemed me, and I am His child. Chorus: Under His wings, under His wings, Who from His love can sever? Under His wings my soul shall abide, Safely abide forever.

2. Under His wings—what a refuge in sorrow! How the heart yearningly turns to His rest! Often when earth has no balm for my healing, There I find comfort, and there I am blest. 3. Under His wings—oh, what precious enjoyment! There will I hide till life's trials are o'er; Sheltered, protected, no evil can harm me; Resting in Jesus I'm safe evermore.

## **Did you ever argue with your parents about clothes or haircuts?**

Not really. When I was a child the community in which I lived was comprised primarily of Mennonite families. There were others who were not Mennonite in the community but my school, church and home life was influenced by the Mennonite church and its culture of the mid twentieth century. I grew up knowing that it was not a good thing to disagree with or talk back to people in authority. So generally it was difficult as a young person to express ideas and wishes that were not like those of my parents. In my world, boys got short haircuts and girls grew their hair long and wore it mostly in two braids. There were a few times that I remember having ribbons put in my hair. This happened when my two braids were tied up with ribbons into a basket handle. This was not a regular occurrence and that may have been because it would have taken considerable time to keep ribbons washed and nicely ironed for three girls.

When I got married I still had long hair so issue of haircuts was not a problem I took up with my parents.

However, how I worn it was a concern. The temptation was to get a smaller and smaller covering and try new and more interesting way to wear my hair. But the dress rules of Lancaster Mennonite Conference were changing and so my parents no longer had that authority to back them up. We were allowed to make some changes. However, the clothing issue had been ongoing. At nine my mother put me in a dress with a cape, my hair was put in a bun and a covering was put on top of that. Let's just say I did not like that. My mother sewed a lot of clothing for her children, primarily the girls. The fact that I can remember two bought dresses, tells you that I did not have many dresses that my mother did not make. Once I dressed plain that pretty much sealed the deal, my mother made the dresses I worn. Some may have been hand me downs but I don't really remember those. I do remember as a chubby pre-adolescent trying to stand still as my mother fit different parts of the dress on me. There were often pins that stuck me. My mother did not intend for that to happen but it contributed to me feeling uncooperative with the whole process of dress making. It was high school until I began to sew some of my own clothing. We were allowed to wear a skirt like culottes and blouse for physical education. These were store bought. My mother had remarkable patience as she sewed for all of her girls but not likely all at the same time. The cape dress became a thing of the past for me my senior year in high school when LMS decide to drop that clothing requirement for girls. For graduation senior girls were invited to wear a pastel dress to the baccalaureate service and a white dress to the graduation ceremony. I do (thanks to pictures) remember the white shift style dress

with a stand up collar that I wore for graduation day. I do not have memories of open and respectful conversations with my parents about our differences about dress and hair. There were other more verbal siblings who made the attempt to talk with the parents about these issues. Some were more successful than others. I have to describe my way of dealing with this conflict as avoidance and when possible going ahead and making my own decisions about dress and hair. That spilled over into how I dressed my children. John and I chose to not dress plain and that impacted the kind of clothing we chose for our children.

## **What's something you really disagreed with your parents about?**

There is more than one thing about which I disagreed with my parents. One that I realize contributed to deep differences was the perspective that there is an evolution to life. Much in our lives is continually changing. At one level my parents may have known this but found it difficult to acknowledge for example that new information and learning can change what a person believes. Having said that, my parents demonstrated that some values do not change. One significant constant is when families love and care for each other they are healthier.

## What is the craziest thing that has happened to you?

One of the craziest things that happened to me was nearly deadly. In June 1967 I was 14 and participated with the youth group from church. To help make the group larger we joined with the youth from a nearby church.

On this summer evening we were hosting a fundraising car wash. We were working at two locations. When the group I was with finished washing cars at our location we decided to join the other group. We did not fit into the one car and so some of us decided to ride on the back of the car. I ended up in the center of the car's trunk.

All went well until we were pulling out from a stop sign. The driver decided to give us a bit of a thrill and started out rather quickly. I had no place to hold in and realized that I was sliding off of the car. I remember thinking that perhaps I could land on my feet, but alas we were going too fast. I hit the ground. Details after this were sketchy. The ambulance was called. I remember telling someone that our family doctor was Doctor Mustard, but then realized that he was no longer living. I knew I was traveling in the ambulance.

From others I learned later that in the emergency room I appeared conscience and was talking. When my parents arrived I was preparing to be discharged. It was then that I went into convulsions. I'm told that our church bishop was called and I was kept in the hospital. This happened on a Wednesday evening. I remember waking up in a darkened room. I believe it was Friday morning and I was alone. At first I did not know where I was and felt

uncertain about what had happened. I believe that I went home on Saturday.

## **Are you still friends with any of your friends from high school? How have they changed since then?**

Sorry to say I am not in contact with friends from high school. However I do keep in contact with two women with whom I shared an apartment as a young adult. Sandi Bontrager Harnish and Rose Brubaker Kennel. We shared an apartment from fall of 1977 to summer of 1979. Sandi grew up in northern Indiana and married a Lancaster County farmer, Martin Harnish. She lives a few miles from the farm where I grew up. You might say that we switched places since I now live in northern Indiana some miles from where she grew up.

Sandi and Martin have two children. The oldest, Amanda is a few weeks older than Tim. Sandi and I traded baby due dates and Amanda was born mid-April while Tim waited until early May to be born. While we went through the pregnancy at the same time I expected to have my baby first but the babies did not agree and made the trade. Daniel, their second child was born the same year as Abby. So while our children were small Sandi and I saw each other at mother's groups.

Rose married John's friend, Chris Kennel. She taught school for many years and then pre-school. Rose and Chris have two children, Eric and Carmen. Eric and Tim are the same age and Carmen was between Abby and Jonathan.

We have memories of a weekend spent with them at their cabin in the Pennsylvania Mountains. We enjoy connecting with these couples when we spend time in Lancaster County and time permits. They have both hosted us as well.

## **Were you involved in any organizations in high school?**

I do not have memories of being involved in high school organizations. I participated in the choirs, junior and senior years. I took the college prep track of classes which included Latin and Spanish. The science required General Science, biology, either chemistry (took this one) or physics. I chose to avoid physics. Too bad I didn't take physics and get John to tutor me. My senior year I took Advance biology and enjoyed it greatly. One has to remember that I was continuing to help with farm chores morning and evening during most of the high school years. The year I graduated from high school Pop had a milking parlor installed and I was freed from helping with the milking. Sometime during my high school year I was invited to join a reading guild. Several of my girlfriends from high school participated with this group as well. While I do not remember names of the books we read I have good memories of a weekend spent with these folks at a place on the Chesapeake Bay. Spending time at the beach was a new experience for me.

## What was your first big trip?

The trip I will describe here is one I took the summer of 1970. I had graduated from high school in June. On July 6 a group of thirteen students and one teacher from LMS arrived by plane in Rome, Italy. We were part of a larger group of students touring and studying with the Foreign Study League. My memory is that the total group numbered close to 200 students and teachers. Our time in Europe was divided between Italy, Switzerland, France, and England. Each country had its set of classes and curriculum. I earned my first college credits with these classes. Attached is a photo of me at the airport ready to fly. My face is sunburned from spending some time at the shore without enough sun screen. One other girl in our group and I wore our hair up with a covering. The other girls wore their hair down with or without a covering. Our first lodging in Rome was at a Catholic Convent. Part of the day was spent in class and the rest the day we went on guided tours of museums, churches, ruins such as Acropolis, Parthenon, Pompeii, and the Vatican. We attended an evening performance of Aida. We watched this performance outdoors on a set in the Roman ruins. Watching a segment of the opera just now I remember the sense of awe and amazement I felt watching such a spectacular performance which included live animals. It was likely one of the first live opera performances I had seen. Next we traveled by bus through Florence and up through the mountains, through the Saint Bernard pass into Switzerland. It was snowing in the higher elevations as the buses climbed the switchback roads up and over the pass. The

Swiss mountains were majestic and snowcapped in comparison to the worn down Appalachian Mountains I knew in Pennsylvania. Our base lodging was a school in the city of Lucerne. Since the dorms available were filled, our LMS group and a small group from Kentucky were given lodging in a chalet like building up in the mountains. It was surrounded with meadows, home to the brown Swiss cows. I remember walking through the beautifully illustrated Chapel Bridge. (It was later burned but has been replaced.) We traveled to Berne and Zurich. Saw statues of Zwingli and William Tell. I purchased a cuckoo clock and had it sent home to my parents. When I left home my mother gave it back to me. A favorite memory from my time in Switzerland was an evening walk in the mountain meadows and hearing the cow bells before we gathered for a fondue dinner.

France was next. The world here seemed larger than the one we left in Switzerland. We had lodging in Versailles and visited the palace there. We visited the Notre Dame Cathedral, the Eiffel Tower, and the Louvre art museum. We had a boat ride on the Seine River at night. I remember walking through Montmartre and enjoying the ever present sticks of French bread.

Then we were off to the final country on the agenda, England. We traveled across the English Channel in a Hovercraft. I learned that these vehicles transported cars and people across the channel from 1968 to 2000. Our lodging was in Reading. But we spent lots of time in London where we saw and heard Big Ben. Again there were visits to many cathedrals, museums, and palaces. I watched a Shakespeare play and fell in love with Johann Strauss's Blue

Danube Waltz. On one of the Sundays we were in London, Dan Wenger herded the LMS group to visit the London Mennonite Center. Unfortunately the Kreider family was state side and we ended up eating our lunch in a nearby park. Then we were once more in the blue skies heading home leaving the world of kings and queens, artists, and the Alps behind. Four weeklong classes completed for an A, which was a good start for my four years of college grades. I'm grateful that my parents gave permission for me to participate in this experience.

From Abby - What an amazing trip Mom! Two small things of note, Aida was also one of the first "live" operas I ever saw, but I viewed it in a movie theater in Chicago as it was performed live at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. And I also remember walking across the Chapel bridge in Lucerne, although probably the reconstructed version, since that would have been during my high school trip to Germany and Switzerland in 2000.

## **Who had the most positive influence on you as a child?**

I'm choosing to write about a group of people who had an influence on me as a child. This is a group of people that I did not choose to know, they were given to me. This group is the five brothers and five sisters who grew up with me. Seven were older than me and three younger than me. My oldest brother is ten years older than me and my youngest sister is seven years younger than me. It was this group of people who set the tone for the environment in which I

lived for the first twenty-four years of my life. Work was a part of this influence. My older siblings supervised the younger siblings when working. My older brother Dave even took it upon himself to discipline us when he felt we were not doing the job to his expectations. A rubber hose was used. When it was time for me to get a job away from home I followed my older siblings by taking the jobs they had moved on from.

But the question asked for "the most positive influence" so here are some memories for that. They set a positive expectation regarding school and friendship. Good grades were expected and most of them demonstrated that good grades could be achieved. Making friends was important and my older sister Martha made friendship look like so much fun. During her high school years she became part of a group of 13 friends who had good times and adventures together. Hearing about the overnight slumber parties they had left me longing for a group of friends like she had. My siblings demonstrated what it meant to think for themselves by not following exactly in the path our parents expected. When they started dated they provided an education in how that was done and chose partners who became a significant part of the family. When they had children they provided an example of how to parent. They provided examples of how to live as responsible adults. They each have enriched my life tremendously and left a significant imprint on my life. I'm grateful to have grown up in this large family. From Abby - Thanks for this lovely response Mom. It makes a lot of sense that your older siblings played such a big role in your life by providing examples of future stages of life.

I would be curious about what your experience was like with some of your younger siblings. Do you feel like they influenced you in terms of how you learned to nurture or instruct others? Obviously most of your siblings were older than you, but I would be curious to learn more about how you related to Joe, Rachel and Esther.

From Mom - Interesting question Abby. My relationship with my younger siblings is different than that with my older siblings. I find that I feel protective of my younger siblings. I also realize that I do not remember details of what happened in their lives once I hit the high school years and was preoccupied and distracted with my own life. As with all of my siblings there was a time of realizing what it meant to be adults together. I enjoy the ongoing opportunity of trying to stay connected and up to date with what is happening in their lives. Family does not go away and is a great resource of relationships. Rachel had become one of my favorite sisters to talk with. Joe and I now share a diagnosis. I admire Esther's determination to live her life with meaning. Each of them influences me in their unique way. They each have a distinct sense of humor which I enjoy and admire. While Rachel and I share a lot of interests and concerns, Joe and Esther likely have more differences of perspective.



# O3

## FINDING MY WAY

**Was there any conflict at River Corner Church growing up? How did your family relate to it? How was conflict resolved in your family in general?**

During my growing up years it seemed to me that most of the conflict at River Corner Church involved whether you had a first a radio and then a television. I do not have memories of preachers preaching specifically about radios or televisions but rather that the way we live should remain separate from the world. "Be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. " Think of what is good and acceptable to God.

There were concerns about the way one dressed as

well. If male, did you wear a plain coat or a lapel coat with a long tie? For women the concern was, the length of your dress, did you wear a cape as part of your dress and what was the size of your covering? There was one man, Amos Shenk, brother of the preacher, who wore a bow tie under his plain coat. Perhaps that was his small form of protest.

I do not know if the preacher confronted people who were out of line directly. I think that he did not. At least not very often. The bishop for our church district was tolerant and seemed to choose not to make this a divisive issue and may have saved the district from splitting. There were people in our congregation who left RC and went to the local Brethren in Christ Church.

My parents did not want my brothers to wear lapel coats and ties. When they had their own money they bought what they wanted to wear. My mother sewed dresses for her daughters so there was the tension of how we wanted the dress to look and how she was willing to sew the dress. When Lancaster Conference Bishop Board changed their expectations for dress my parents said they no longer hold us to the earlier expectations.

I have to think about conflict in my family. There was conflict from time to time. Particularly as the family grew. At times there seemed to be unspoken conflict between my parents. I do not remember them openly arguing. I remember that my father's style was to hold in what he was feeling and then there were a few times that in frustration he hit a teenager child. I do not remember getting spanked but there were other siblings who did. There was quite a bit of conflict between one brother and sister in their growing up years. That got resolved along the way. Perhaps my

most common mode of operation was to observe what was happening among others in conflict without getting involved myself.

## **What's the first major news story you can remember living through as a child?**

It is hard to remember what the first major news story that impressed itself on my mind was. I used a timeline of news during the decade of the 50s to jog my memory.

I do remember that Eisenhower was president of the United States when I was born and was re-elected when I was 4 years old. Having a military general for a president was normalized for me because that is how it was when I first learned about government.

I learned about Rosa Parks but I do not remember hearing much conversation about civil rights and the demonstrations that were impacting our country.

Ray Kroc opened the first MacDonald's restaurant when I was 3 years old and I was likely close to 10 years old when I made my first visit to the first MacDonald's restaurant in Lancaster city. Our hired man took us. My parents were traveling so he filled his car with those of us who fit and we went to the restaurant on Columbia Avenue. I think that I had a hamburger and milk shake.

I do have memories of the presidential election of 1960. I was likely in 4th grade. One of the controversies of the situation was the question - what changes would a Catholic president make in our world. I was impressed by the young couple that moved into the White House.

I knew about the race to space and learned more about it by paging through the Life magazines at my Aunties house.

I have hardly any memories and little awareness of the Cuban crisis or the beginnings of the Vietnam War.

It was probably the assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas, Texas November 22, 1963 that I remember living through as a child. I was eleven years old. The fact that the assassination marks the first 24-hour coverage of a major news event by the major networks made it hard to not hear about and feel the impact of these events. Recently I heard someone describe how she was watching live TV when Jack Ruby shot and killed Lee Harvey Oswald. I did not have that experience but I do remember staring at the photo of that event in the pages of Life Magazine. I believe that our family had a radio by that time.

In 1964 again thanks to the Life magazine I knew that the Beatles arrived in the USA for a visit. I thought they looked strange and their music was not at all what I was used to hearing.

## **How did you experience Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon?**

My response to this question is a reflection that includes memories of how our family learned the news from our community and around the world. We received a daily newspaper and the most interesting pages for me were the wedding and engagement announcements second only to the comic's page. I had a vague feeling that reading the

comic page was not approved of by the parents but I have no memory of being told not to read the cartoons.

Another source of news was the Life magazine that my Aunt Anna subscribed to. We visited the three Aunties most often on Friday evenings. The evening visit often included watching Aunt Dorothy's latest slide show that was full of familiar scenes and people from around our community. I believe she enjoyed her role as the photographer of the family. Then there was the pictures in the magazine rack next to Aunt Anna's chair full of past and recent Life magazines to look at. My memories of learning about men landing on the moon involved seeing the pictures published there. Life magazine opened up a world far from the farming community in which I grew up. I remember looking at the moon in the night sky, amazed and wondering if that really was the place that the moon landing pictures were taken.

From Tim - I love this image of you looking up at the moon in the night sky. Also, are Aunt Dorothy's photographs collected anywhere? From Mom - No unfortunately they are not in one location and I believe that many were destroyed. I have a collection of them that I picked out the day of the Aunties house was emptied and sold at auction. I was not invited to be involved with decisions about Aunt Dorothy's slides. I might have suggested something different than scattering them among the nieces and nephews and discarding what remained. Than again it was not easy to know what to do with them.

## How did you get your first job?

I got my first job by following my older brothers and sisters to a neighboring farm to pick strawberries. I'm not sure how old I was but I do remember that the strawberry rows seems awfully long. We were paid per quart box picked and I think that I was paid with change. We walked from home to the strawberry patch and back again. I probably slept well after a day of picking. That was child labor but that was also life on a farm.

My second job was likely the one I had cleaning for a lady who lived nearby. I was following in the footsteps of older sisters who worked this job before me. This family was part of the Shenk's Cup Cheese family business. The founder had two sons and a daughter who worked with him. In the house that I cleaned there were two boys, but they were not expected to clean the house. Elise was the woman's name and she had clear expectations for what and how a house should be cleaned. I learned how to clean in a systematic way that benefited me for a life of cleaning. Sorry if I did not pass that skill on to my children.

From Tim - Hah! I love the last sentence there. I promise that it was not for lack of trying on your part. I was reminded yesterday that I did learn to fold sheets when doing laundry. This summer instead of using the dryer we've been hanging our laundry out on the line in the hot sun to save a little electricity. So small steps in domesticity.

Also, in my involvement in the campaign around the farmworker's bill of rights, I hadn't made the connection that you grew up doing this work as well. It's a different

context, but similar in some way. I guess my first job was detassling corn. It's funny that I have so minimal memories of that.

## **What was your first boss like?**

I'll name my job at Provident Bookstore as my first formal job. While I in high school I began working in the Lancaster store on E King Street. My job was a behind the scenes job in what was called the traffic department. I unpacked and counted the orders of items that came into the store. I remember often working by myself in the basement room. I do not remember who my boss was for that job.

When Provident Store moved to the large Park City mall west of town I applied for and got a job working on the floor in that store. I remember working the cash register, helping people find books and selling Bibles. When we sold a certain number of Bibles we received one free. Working at Provident Bookstore evenings and Saturdays helped me pay my way through the four years at Millersville College. My boss during this job was Nevin Horst. He was not a demanding supervisor and had a low key sense of humor. I remember him as a kind person to be around. I still remember receiving a phone call from him that left me laughing, giddy with silliness. The managers of the stores in the Park City Mall were invited to enter their employees into a drawing for a one day trip to the Bahama Islands. I was not aware that he had entered all of the bookstore employee's names. My name was one of those drawn as a winner.

Some weeks later it all felt surreal to arrive at the airport early before sunrise and board the plane for the Bahama Islands. Since this was a trip for two I invited my friend Linda to travel with me. I remember Linda and I were some of the few people who took juice or soda rather than alcoholic drinks during the flight. I remember visiting a market, walking the streets, and wading in the water so blue and clear that I could see my toes in the sand. Then as the day turned toward sunset we got back on the plane and returned to world of classes, studies, and work at Provident Store.

Nevin has died but I met his widow Blanche in recent years and she greeted me as someone she knew and appreciated. They were both good at letting people know they are of value.

From Abby - Wow Mom! I can't believe I didn't know about you winning a day trip to the Bahamas! What an incredible experience. Were you still dressing conservatively at that point? From Tim - I also had never heard the Bahamas story. I love these descriptions: "I still remember receiving a phone call from him that left me laughing, giddy with silliness. " "They were both good at letting people know they are of value. " It's interesting that these are both personality traits that I learned to value from you and Dad and strive to live up to in my own life.

From Mom - I actually still had long hair and wore it up in a bubble rather than a bun. I do not remember if I wore a covering that day or not. Given it was still my daily practice I probably did. Attached is my college graduation photo. I was a college student at Millersville College when I made this trip to the Bahamas.

## Which people have been the kindest to you in life?

Here are a few kind people that I've met.

This is a group of women from the church I attended as I grew up who cared about me. Anna Shenk, Betty Warfel and Emma Miller. Emma was the first Sunday school teacher I had. I liked watching her tell stories with a flannel graph. Betty is the woman I worked for as a teenager. I helped sell fudge, cookies and corn at her Central Market stand in Lancaster, working in the early hours of the morning before I was picked up and driven on to high school. Betty made sure that I had an egg sandwich for breakfast before I headed out for a day at school. Anna Shenk was interested in what was happening in other people's lives and always welcomed time to chat.

During my years at Millersville State College I learned to know a young man from Philadelphia. His name was Steve Mobley. He was open about his commitment to follow Jesus and he often initiated conversations with people about the meaning of that commitment. One day I was studying in a room in the college library when he stopped by to chat. I was feeling overwhelmed by my studies and work and perhaps life in general. After I was honest about how I was feeling he comforted me. It was a kind caring that I'd not experienced coming from a man. I wonder where his journey has taken him.



# O4

## MARRIAGE

**How did you meet your spouse? When did  
you know you wanted to marry  
them?**

Well, we met during high school and knew of each other, but it was more than seven years later that we connected with each other. I was teaching at New Danville School with Barb, John's sister. Several of the teachers started a bible study/discussion group. John started coming to that group. We got to know each other as participants in the group. I was at a time in my life that I was feeling good about living the single life. John and his friend Chris took off for a several week tour of Europe. Summer turned to fall and then winter. I was planning to spend Christmas

with one of my housemates in Indiana with her family. On December 16 some of the group we were part of got tickets to hear Handel's Messiah sung at the Fulton Opera house in Duke Street in Lancaster. I offered to drive and pick up some other people. One of the people was handicapped so I left the group off and then found parking for my car. I was a fine evening with good music. As I left to bring the car to pick up my friend, John asked if he could come with me. I said fine no problem. We were in the car driving back to pick up the rest of the group when John said that he would be interested in dating. I was floored to say the least. I did not know what to say. Since I did not say anything he was concerned that I was going to reply negatively. I was not feeling negative about his request, I just didn't know what to say. I must have responded positively because we did begin dating. This change in situation was a shock to my system and my two housemates teased me. Our first date was Christmas caroling with the folks at River Corner Church. Then I spent Christmas in Indiana. I was back in time for my family gathering on New Year's weekend. John worked on Saturdays so I thought I could ask him to the family gathering and he would decline. However, he decided to get off work and come to the Hess gathering and we had had only two dates. What would my family think? Well they took this as a sign that this was a serious relationship since the pattern was that once someone brought a "friend" to a family gathering they were likely to get married. There was no small pressure there. So the days and weeks went by. Not a week passed that we did not spend time together. I met his family. I was applying for a new job at Locust Grove School. It was for a new

program where I would work one on one with student who have learning disabilities. It required two weeks of training in Norfolk, VA during the summer. As I filled out the application in April I came to a question I did not know how to answer. Do you have or might you have plans to get married during the next year. What a question! It could not be asked on an application today. But what was I to do? I could not in all fairness answer this by myself since I was now in relationship with John. So I showed him the question. He said - why not! He was heading toward student teaching in the fall semester and liked the idea of being married during that time that can be rather stressful. So we got engaged on April 16, four months after John told me he was interested in dating. There was a lot to do in the next four months since we decided to get married on August 26. We chose to get married on a Sunday at the Hans Herr House, the only day of the week the place was closed to the public. I along with Sandi Harnish and Rose Kennel were living in the apartment above the visitor's center of this lovely historic place. We got married under the trees on a warm hazy August day and left for a trip to New England. We returned in less than a week and moved into an upstairs apartment in Millersville.

## **What are the top 5 things that you and your spouse have in common?**

Priority of family Humor Earth care/gardening High value on community Enjoyment of music

## **What do you think are the secrets to a happy relationship?**

Concern for the other person's wellbeing and happiness.  
A level of openness that is comfortable with both people.  
Demonstrated respect for the other person.

## **What was one of the most difficult times in your relationships? How did you get through it?**

Let me begin by saying that John and I did not know each other very well before we got married. I'm not sure that we had even had a serious argument. While I thought I was in love and I was at some level, I was also in love with my idea of being in love and getting married. There was a time in the early years of our marriage that my ideas about being in love and being married hit rough water. I experienced some painful times of loneliness. Gradually I went through a time of allowing the reality of the marriage I was in to transform what I expected of marriage. This was not a fast or easy metamorphosis. Unfortunately I was not always able to articulate what was happening to myself, let alone John. Thankfully over years more synchronicity grew into our relationship. We know each other pretty well, our communication skills are better and there is a strong underlying commitment to each other.

# O5

## MEMORIES

### **What is one of the funniest things you've ever done?**

It took me a while to remember this but here it is.

It was another boring Saturday morning on the farm and I was feeling unnoticed and taken for granted. The chores had been assigned and I do not remember what I was to do that morning. Perhaps it was the dusting, perhaps watering the many house plants my mother kept on the nice wide window sill of the farm house. I doubt I was assigned the baking. So here is what I did. I made myself more invisibly visible. I put the white chenille bedspread over my head. It draped to the floor completely covering me from head to toe. I stood as a white pillar. Perhaps

like a pillar of salt. I did not speak as I slowing walked around the house and out to the porch. I did not respond when spoken to. As you may imagine this was irritating to some around me. I remember standing silent and alone in the white world of the chenille bed spread while to those around me I was no longer invisible.

From Abby - This story made me chuckle. What a funny and fascinating thing to have done. It reminds me of some of the goofy things Tim, Jonathan and I did as children.

## **What is one of the most memorable camping trips you've been on?**

I've been camping quite a few times and many are memorable, but the one I write about here was unique. I was not camping with family or friends but rather with peacemakers of the Christian Peacemaker Teams. It was May of 1999 and the place was Pierre, South Dakota on the La Framboise Island in the Missouri River. CPT was joining an encampment of Native Americans who were resisting the Federal government's decision regarding control of land.

Here is a report written by someone with CPT.

Seven Council Fires Camp On March 22, 1999 in Pierre, SD, seven Lakota men established the "First Fire of the Oceti Sakowin (Seven Council Fires) camp on La Framboise Island after more than 200 people demonstrated against the U. S. Congress turning Treaty land over to the state of South Dakota. Spiritual leaders conducted

ceremonies and lit a sacred fire at the camp-in site as a reminder that the aboriginal and Treaty rights of the Oceti Sakowin nation are not extinguished. The camp-in participants were committed to a nonviolent presence across from the SD capitol on La Framboise Island, part of the 200,000 acres in question. The intent was to remain there until the congressional decision, called Title VI: Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe and State of South Dakota Terrestrial Wildlife Habitat Restoration Act of 1999, or the "Mitigation Act", was repealed.

CPT was invited to be observers of this nonviolent camp-in calling for the reversal of the Mitigation Act. Various church groups endorsed CPT's presence and local congregations were invited to join and support Lakota people and CPTers on La Framboise Island.

The CPT presence on LaFramboise Island in the Missouri River was designed to help prevent the outbreak of violence of the sort widely associated with the deaths at Wounded Knee in 1973. The presence by committed non-violent Christians sent a message to local troublemakers and law enforcement bodies that the world is watching.

This was an important opportunity for Christians who want to witness to our nonviolent faith to make a very concrete statement with their lives. Although the presence on LaFramboise Island was peaceful, there had been racist incidents and occasional harassment, and gunshots were fired into the camp. As the deadline to remove the camp approached, the possibility existed that Federal or State Forces might use violent force to remove the Lakota people from the island. CPT was present to document these events and to help prevent an escalation of the violence.

The island was connected to the main land by a cause-way. The days were counting down toward the deadline for removal of the camp. Memories of the camp include the following. There was a tipi as a focal point of the camp. A sacred fire was kept burning all the time. We took turns helping with the cooking. Being May the temperatures were cool during the day and cold at night. The tent I used was our family tent. I slept in a sleeping bag with extra blankets on a cot but found it difficult to keep warm. The nearby woods was a source of Morel mushrooms. I watched people go into the woods and come out with bags of mushrooms. I walked through the woods wanting to see the Morels that everyone seemed to love. I only saw a few. My eyes were not trained to see the mushroom and I likely walked by them by the dozen.

There were afternoon visits to the capital building to observe a hearing regarding the dispute and meet with officials. There was a threat of a disturbance at night. At night we took turns watching at the gate where the cause-way came onto the island. One night a car showed up at the far end of the cause way and my memory is that a shot was fired on the mainland side. Thankfully violence did not break out.

After two weeks I returned to my home with all of its comforts. The camp eventually disbanded but I'm not sure that the Treaty land was returned to the Oceti Sakowin nation.

A CPT urgent action request.

<https://cpt.org//es/cptnet/1999/04/17/pierre-sd-urgent-action-federal-south-dakota-governments-seeking-expidite-land-tra>

## What is one of the strangest things you've ever eaten?

One of the most unique and strange buffet I've eaten at was in Stone Town, Zanzibar. We were traveling with Rachel, Dennis, Ted and Justine. We had spent the day exploring the old city's narrow streets and visiting the shops.

Now we were on the beach in a festival type setting and ready to enjoy food. There was a long table with interesting and different looking food. I wasn't sure what some of it was and became unsure of eating it when I learned that two of the dishes were octopus and squid. After a small sample I had no problem leaving the piled up trays of octopus and squid for others to enjoy.



# 06

## OUR FAMILY

### **How did you decide when to have children?**

We had been given the advice that it was good to be married at least a year before getting pregnant. We took that advice and after a year John had a job that paid decently and I had a job at Locust Grove School where the pressure was less since I worked one on one with students. I did not have all the prep planning work of the classroom teaching.

I got pregnant sometime after our first anniversary. I ended my job at Locust Grove after Christmas and Tim was born in May 1981.

Dad was one of three children in his family. He liked that family size. Interestingly John's family is a sandwich

family and so is ours. I like having three children.

## **How did you figure out how to be a parent?**

Perhaps reflecting on my childhood family experiences helped me think about how I would parent. My experiences with children included having younger siblings and nieces and nephews that I helped to care for. I also babysat for other people's children. John and I spoke about parenting and we both felt that we wanted to parent differently than our parents. One of the items that concerned us was the lack of comfort that we had speaking with our parents about some important issues. Another was the sense of connection I felt emotionally with my parents. I wanted my children to know that they were loved and their care was my priority.

So was it enough to have these aspirations? We talked with other people about parenting and read books that we thought might be helpful. One book was titled "Parenting for the Nineties". We wanted to know what was being suggested in our culture at this time. We found conflicting ideas and we made mistakes and changed course when we felt it was necessary. One book we rejected was titled "God, the Rod and Your Child's Bod".

My brother Dan gave me advice that was helpful in understanding that I could not manage my children without managing myself. "In any given situation you are the only one you can change," was a mantra that became important to me. While it applied in many areas of living it affected who I became as a parent. How could I help my children become compassionate adults who loved themselves and

the people around them? The image of journey became important to me as I thought about our life together as a family. We each went through stages of growth and I realized that was also true for me as an adult. One never stopped changing and learning. I was also aware that we have only the current moment in which to live. A question that was helpful was, "Will we be able to live with the decisions we have made. " I also know that my family learned that "When Mom is happy the family can be happy. " John and each of you children were willing to move with me to Indiana. While not always easy, in the end, the move was life giving for me.

So how did I figure out how to parent? Perhaps by being present in the moment, listening and aware of what is being asked of me as a human being who loves and cares for those around me.

## **How did you feel when your first child was born?**

During my pregnancy with Tim I realized how little I knew about the process of labor and delivery of a baby. What could I expect? I had never talked at length with my mother about what her experiences of childbirth had been. She had delivered 11 babies without one C-section. All I knew from her experiences was that it was a routine process that brought a pregnancy to an end. John and I went to classes and learned that indeed it is a unique and individual process for each woman. It was also reassuring to know that I would not be alone during the process. John

agreed to be with me and our family doctor would attend as well.

Rather than go into more detail about the hours of labor that led up to the delivery let me say that relief and amazement are at least two feelings I experienced when blonde headed baby Tim appeared. John had nearly fainted so I'm not sure where he was right away. The doctor called Tim a banana head because his large blonde haired head had been molded as he pushed through the birth canal. Another amazing part of this is the way fatigue fell away after I held the baby in my arms. I'm sure it caught up with me later but the transition from a pregnant woman to a mother was astounding. Here is this person who has been living quite intimately with me for most of the last year. They had made their presence known before but we only now could begin to learn to know this person who had come into being as a result of our shared love. I was awash in a sea of maternal love.

From Abby - This story both made me laugh out loud (the line about Dad fainting is hilarious and I also want to know more!) and tear up a little. I am very excited to experience my own transition from pregnant woman to mother in just a few months.

## **What are your favorite memories of each of your children growing up?**

I enjoy spending time with my children They each have a keen mind and a great sense of humor.

Timothy- first born, absorbing observer of what is

around him, articulate, values people and engages with and listens to them From an early age Tim has worked at communicating ideas to people. He has become quite an articulate and skilled communicator. Even at an early age before he had the vocabulary to speak his ideas he was able to communicate. One evening John and I were sitting at the dining table when Tim headed back the hallway toward his room. He was not gone long. He came back into the kitchen pointing back toward the bedroom with one hand, while opening and closing the other and blinking his eyes open and closed. No words were needed we knew immediately that he wanted us to come back and turn on the light in his bedroom.

Abigail- only daughter, brings energy into the room, able to give a significant critic, compassionate, loyal, aware of others thoughts and feelings Sometimes Abigail likes to organize people. One Sunday after church she asked if her cousin Laura could spend the afternoon with her. For whatever reason both her parents and Laura's parents said no to that plan. The Jackson van left for home and John and I finished up whatever it was that we were doing and then looked for Abigail and Jonathan. Tim was with us but we could not find Abigail and Jonathan. The church is not very large so we soon knew that the two children were not there. This was before the days of cell phones, but there was a phone in the church. We soon learned that when the Jackson pulled into their garage at home they found two little stowaways behind the back seat of the van. I'm guessing that Abigail was the mastermind who planned the escapade and Jonathan went along with the idea. I suppose Laura and Ben were looking forward to having

two cousins to play with for the afternoon. Needless to say we had a longer trip home from church that day since we first drove to the Jackson house to pick up our two missing children.

Jonathan- the youngest, ability to analyze and make wise observations, brain power, make important connections, sensitive to others From an early age Jonathan was exploring his world. What did the world look like upside down? Can I walk in these shoes? What is it like to be a fish? He was interested in the way things fit together and how they worked.

From Abby - What a fun set of memories and descriptions. I am so glad to have you as a mother and to have Tim and Jonathan as brothers.

## **What are some choices you made about how to raise your children?**

1. John and I grew up without TV in our homes. Radio came to our house around the time I turned 9 years old. Interestingly it was the decision of the Lancaster Conference Bishop Board to relax their decree on "no radios" that freed my parent to purchase a turntable and radio console. I remember listening to two events by radio, funeral of President Kennedy and wedding of Luci Johnson. I'm not sure if the radio was borrowed or if my parents had already purchased their radio. I say all of that to say that after there was a radio in the house we listened to certain radio programs like clockwork. It was every afternoon at 4 or 4:30 that we listened to Ranger Bill or Aunt Bertha. This

habit had an impact in my way of thinking.

When it came to teaching and training my children I was concerned about the impact of allowing an influence from secular society to regularly impact the thinking of young minds. I wanted my children to think for themselves and have an inquiring skepticism of popular culture. So we limited the amount of time you watched TV as well as the content.

2. I breast fed my babies and felt that provided a healthy nutritional start for your lives. It also seemed the natural and normal action. Interestingly my mother choose to not breast feed me, at least not for very long. Here is the recipe for the formula I must have drunk. Notice that the date is March 1953 this could mean that my Mom did breast feed me for a few months. She is not here to ask and I can't remember. I was quite surprised to see the amount of sugar included in each batch of 5 eight ounce bottles. Is it a wonder that I have a sweet tooth?

3. We chose to invest in Tyco/Lego building blocks and I enjoyed the hours you all spent creatively building and playing with them.

## **What was it like for you when your first child left the nest?**

I realized that a season of my life was coming to an end. No longer was I primary care giver for this child with whom I had spent years of my life. This child was now charting their own course though life. Arriving at this place had been a gradual process over the years. There was a push

and pull aspect to parenting. As parents we wanted our children to make decisions but we wanted them to be good decisions that we approved of. There were times when we left a child consider if the choice they made was one they would be able to live with. We wanted to offer the perspective that some choices impacted a lifetime of living. At some point we needed to let them make their own choices.

The transition out of the nest was time for a shift in the relationship. We could better understand the relationship adult to adult. I realize that because I am of another generation our points of view will be different. Questions that continue to be relevant are about what we value and how that continues to impact how we relate as a family.

## **What is your best advice when it comes to raising children?**

I realize that when I got married at 26 I adjusted to sharing life with another adult. However when our first child was born there was an even greater adjustment for me. John and I made choices that left me the primary caregiver of the children. Believe me that was different than being a full time teacher. Children are needy little people and they benefit from having a parent committed to their care. That will not always look like the system that John and I set up but it works best for all when child care is top priority for the parents.

Having space to be organized and the stuff you need for the child's care can help to take pressure off child care. I'm not suggesting the latest gadgets or fads but comfort-

able space for a rocking chair, crib, changing table, diaper pail, and chest of drawers for baby clothes and some kind of container for toys/books. Simplicity can be helpful so there is not too much clutter and there is a designated space for baby care.

Talk to your children. Read to your children. Be friends with your children. Give time to your children. They should know that they are a priority of their parents.

Having said that I made the difficult decision with John's support to come to study at AMBS when my children were still in elementary school. This was not an easy move for my children or for any of us for that matter. In the long run it may have saved my life and given all of us some fresh air and new space to explore. To some I'm guessing it looked like a selfish decision on my part.

From Abby - This is lovely Mom! Thanks for all the good advice and I should say that while I don't know how I responded to it at the time, I have often pointed to your decision to go to AMBS as a critical one for me in realizing that the needs of mothers and wives are just as important as those of fathers and husbands. I am very grateful that you and Dad gave me and my brothers that example and many others of how a more equal partnership can be formed and nourished through the years.



# O7

## REFLECTIONS

### **Are you an extrovert or an introvert?**

I think that I'm a bit of both. In the culture in which I grew up women were encouraged to be reserved and let men lead. What I often found was that I was OK being a background person unless a need or a vacuum appeared. Then I was often willing and ready to step into leadership. I enjoy being with other people, listening to their stories and wisdom. I can also happily spend a day by myself with limited interaction with other people. Both my job with VIP (Violence Intervention Project) as a mediator and with MCC Great Lakes Peace and Justice as educator/advocate meant that I was communication with people and leading in a variety of ways. I was energized by this work but I

also needed the balance of time away from the office. Several inventories that I took put me in the middle between introvert and extrovert. In retrospect I've observed that different seasons of life called for me to more of one than the other and usually I've felt comfortable moving between the two.

## **What have been some of your life's greatest surprises?**

That I got married and had a good time raising three children. That I studied at AMBS and received a master's degree. That I conducted mediations in the Elkhart County small claims court. That I continue to enjoy making art.

## **If you had to go back in time and start a brand new career, what would it be?**

There are some jobs that have interested me but I didn't feel I had the preparation/training to pursue; anti-bullying work in the schools, caseworker for restorative justice mediation (CCJ), and working with at risk youth are more recent ones that come to mind. Mediation was a strong interest of mine. I wonder how my work life would have been different if I had taken a social work major in college. I regret missing the opportunity to put a masters in social work alongside the masters in peace studies. I'm sure working with people in some way would have also been part of any new or different career.

**Lois, you were the 9th generation of Hess's  
born in the land in Lancaster  
County. Can you talk about your  
family's relationship with the land  
over time and what that looked like?  
How did your family's longevity on  
the land impact relationships at  
church and elsewhere?**

There is an interesting difference between my paternal grandparents and their relationship to the land. Christian my Grandfather Hess died when my father was less than two years old. I never knew much about him except for his dying story. Which I may have told you in another place. If not I can add it here. Below I'll talk more about the Hess connection to land. As a widow his wife, Mary, the only grandparent I knew, bought one of the three farms my Grandfather Emanuel Groff owned. This made it possible for my father to begin buying a farm as a young man.

Interestingly I do not know much about my Hess great grandparents, Benjamin H. and Emma Hess. My mother writes on page 80 of the book The Fruitful Vine, that neither she nor my father knew much about them. Since my father also did not know his father there is a two generation gap of information.

My mother writes of a visit she and Pop made to an Uncle Henry R Hess in May 1968 to learn more about Benjamin H Hess. Here is some of what she wrote.

"He was a big man over 6 feet tall. He had big hands

and was able to accomplish a lot of work in a short time. They owned and farmed a farm near Marticville, PA. He loved to sing, and in the evenings he would often take a hymn book and sing by himself, if no one else was inclined to sing with him. If anyone in the neighborhood was sick or in trouble he was quick to offer help. He often stayed up at night with people who were sick. " Marticville is in southern Lancaster County. While Lancaster County is known for fertile farm land the southern part had rolling hills with rocks and the land was not as fertile. The farmers there were not as successful.

The description of Benjamin Hess could also be a description of my father. He was 6 feet tall, had big hands and worked hard. He was 6 feet tall, had big hands and worked hard. I remember noticing that the blue denim shirts he wore for farm work were often wet with sweat when he came in from working. He too enjoyed singing but during a softball game was hit on the throat by a ball. The injury affected his singing voice. He too was willing to help others in trouble. He enjoyed serving with MDS (Mennonite Disaster Service) at various times. He wanted to be a good farmer and was one of the first farmers in the area to contour the fields of his farm to prevent runoff after heavy rains and snows.

Mary, the widow of Christian Hess, was the only grandparent that I knew. She was a quiet presence in my life and I feel that I only knew her in a somewhat superficial way. There are stories about her parents, my great-grandparents Emanuel and Susie Groff. Emanuel owned three farms by the time my grandfather Christian was ready to marry Mary and begin farming one of the Groff

farms. After Christian died Mary moved home to her parent's house. Her children lived there while she went from family to family caring for the family when a baby was born. Some of my older brothers and sisters remember visiting Emanuel and Susie. The overall impression of Emanuel is that he had high expectations and could be demanding. An example would be what he is said to have told his daughter Mary, widow of Christian and my grandmother. If she married again he would not hold a farm for my father Jacob, but if she did not marry he would have a farm for Jacob when he was old enough to farm. She put the opportunity for my father to farm ahead of her option to remarry.

I know less about my material grandparents and their connection to the land. I've hear talk that described Grandpa Willis Stauffer a having the ambition to make improvements and farm a particular farm near Conestoga. Finances were a consideration and so he bought a smaller place in the town where he raised crops he could take to market. My grandmother Cora Warfel worked with him but I know little about her family and land. Willis died of pneumonia when my mother was 12 years old. Cora died in 1944 leaving 6 unmarried children. I can say that my 3 aunts who did not marry raised their younger siblings. A memory I have of their place (along the Old Philadelphia Pike) includes a large garden. In the fall we would go and help them dig and collect the white potatoes from the ground.

As for how land impacted relationships at church and elsewhere there are only a few things I might mention. I believe that my father was a respected farmer in his com-

munity. He was given responsibilities in the church and while he was in the lot for leadership there was not chosen. He served as Sunday school superintendent for a number of years. He served on the board of New Danville Mennonite School for quite some time. All 11 of his children attended there for 8 years. He was glad to have sons to take over the farm when he left and now the sixth generation of Hess's seem poised to continue the farming opportunity.

## **What are some memories you hope never to forget?**

Growing up knowing that I have always been surrounded by sisters and brothers who care about me. Working and playing together we formed the reality of family.

Moments of coming to understand who I am as an individual, similar yet distinct from the people around me. Finding my voice and gifts and ways to carve out a unique shape that is my life.

The journey of finding my life partner. Knowing the joy of discovering each other alongside the pain of facing conflict and knowing that we are richer because we are different from each other.

The experience of three unique childbirths. Watching, nurturing, accompanying and learning to know each child as they continuously marched toward adulthood.

Completing with meaning and satisfaction a job or a conversation.

Sharing of the resource to which I have access.

Learning more about another person after spending

the time and listening.

Knowing that I have been fully alive and contributed to the world around me.

## **What is some advice you would like to give?**

Breathe deeply and savor the morning. Some mornings will be freezing and others hot but this is the day you've awoke to and it is full of possibilities.

Smile a lot and look people in the eye when you greet them.

Notice colors that are around you, even if they are muted and subtle. Wear a variety of colors.

Speak up when the silence calls for it. Cheer for the underdog if they are playing fair. Think about truth and justice when you plan your day.

Be loyal to your family and friends and spend time with them.

Enjoy holidays and find meaningful ways to celebrate.

Keep the commitments you have made.

Love babies and do your part to nurture them. Read to them.

Find ways to show the earth that you value her.

Ponder what it means to love your enemies. Work for peace in your neighborhood.

Breathe deeply and get enough sleep.

## **What things matter most to you in life?**

Love, truth, and beauty are important to me. These are like harbor lights that provide guidance through life's channels. They add direction and meaning in my day to day living. They provide splashes of color to life and bring comfort in the night.

My relationships with my spouse and children and the spouses that my children have brought to my family are important. Family is important and does not go away.

Gratitude for these things keep me focused on what is good in this life that slips through our fingers like sand. These things tell me - enjoy this moment you have!

## **How do you want to be remembered?**

I'd like to be remembered on my birthday and in the slight facial feature or smile on faces of some of my descendants. When folks ponder the story of what happened during the decades in which I lived, perhaps someone will reflect on the way I lived. I made choices daily that scrapped, marked and sculptured the contours of my life. Perhaps there will be something of the shape of that life for people to see and understand.

I hope it is evident that I enjoyed beauty. The sun rising and setting, the freshness of a lovely northern Indiana June morning, the grandeur of a giant oak tree, the mischief of the squirrels, the amazing detail of a flower, the speed at which the garden goes in a well-watered June, and the rising and setting of the moon. And so much more as each day has some part to savor.

I learned that it was not enough to be moved to tears by injustice but that there were actions that could be taken to work at balancing the scales of justice. When needed I intended to give voice to what needed to be said. People are so varied and interesting in personality and action. Listening and hearing another's perspective and meaning added to what I understood about life. What remains of this effort can perhaps only be seen in the lives of other people being formed alongside mine. Together we shaped a space we called family and community. May what is remembered be light for the path ahead.