

A Lifetime Full of Memories

Lydia Borgendale



Cover photo: Three Brutlag girls - Bertha, Lydia, and Cora - 1918

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This book is dedicated to my granddaughter
Leah Carlson Murnane,
Whose childhood question was
“Grandma, what was life like when you were a little girl?”

The Farm

When I was young I didn't realize how fortunate I was to be growing up where I was living. A farm usually means that a child's friends are mostly the farm animals. I had them in plenty, a dog Rover, many cats who were always having kittens, lambs that wanted to follow us because we had bottle fed them, and even a pet chicken that laid her eggs right by the steps to our kitchen door. I had even more.

Our farm site was about seven miles north of a flourishing western Minnesota town, on a state highway near a crossroad. Across the road from us was another farm site where a family with two girls lived. LaVerne was a year older and Lucille a year younger than I was. Across the other road lived their cousins, Edith my age, and Omar two years younger and the same age as my younger brother. Erwin and I were the youngest of nine siblings and we were doted children! There were the six of us like the children on a common block in a village, with all the expanse of the country with groves of trees on the horizon hiding other farm sites. The blue sky and fleecy white clouds blessed our play and the bright stars above pronounced their benediction on our sleep.

Our house stood on the edge of a huge grove of magnificent trees. The trees had been planted in rows on the native prairie. The space between had been kept clear of underbrush. A sturdy log fastened between the forks of two trees made room for two rope swings. From the branch of a near tree hung a tire swing. None of us had to swing alone.

Stakes in the ground from tree to tree became the walls of our play house. Orange crates were kitchen cupboards, and cast off utensils from three households made a good supply. Boxes and short unsplit fire wood made other furniture. Our dolls became our children, The two 'men' had to go off and build roads and cultivate the fields all in the shady protection of those huge trees. We four 'women' kept house and cared for the babies. We also managed to plant a garden.

After a few hours of this activity we would be dry and hungry for real food. Then mother would have us go to the pump house to bring in the gallon pail of milk -- cold delicious milk out of the cooler.

My father was a very ingenious person. He had fixed a tank inside the pump house right next to the well. All the water the faithful windmill pumped was first used to cool our milk and the cream that we were keeping sweet so it would bring a higher price when we brought it to town to the creamery. From this cooling tank the water flowed through a long pipe to the stock tank where the herd of black and white Holstein cattle and the horses came to quench their thirst.



Farm near Fulda

All the children liked to drink milk at our house because it was so cold. LaVerne and Edith's mothers kept their milk in a crock down in the cellar below the kitchen. It was cooler than keeping it right in the kitchen but it did not taste good like our water cooled milk. We were a very large family and we seldom had cake or cookies. As much as possible our food was our own farm produce.

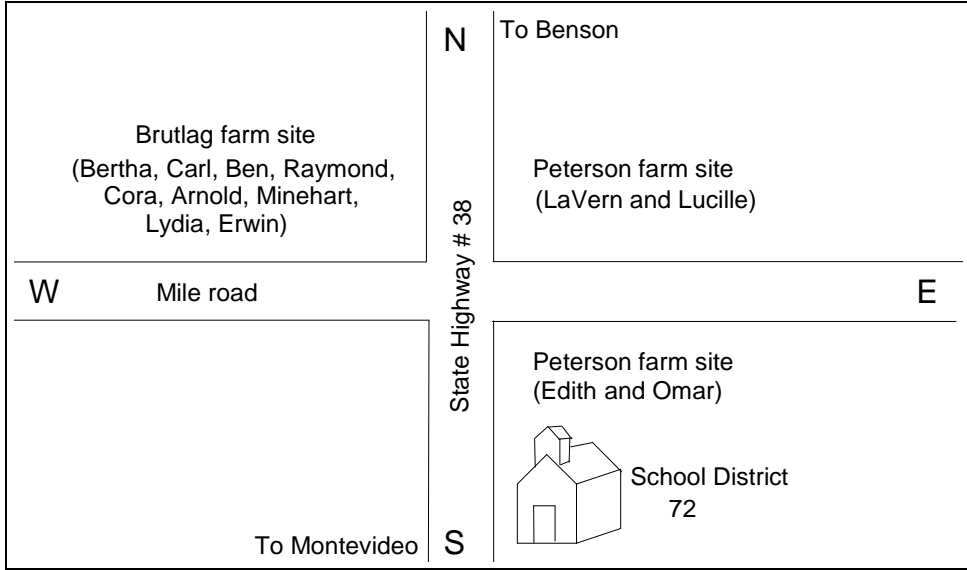
A large apple orchard provided our fruit. The vegetable garden supplied a large variety of vegetables. The chickens supplied both eggs and chicken meat. Father butchered of the farm animals so we ate beef, pork, and mutton. Occasionally there

would be a fishing excursion and we would have fish to eat. However, very little money was spent for fruit (how my mouth used to water for an orange) or sugar. But mother always had on hand fresh fluffy loaves of bread and when the children played at our house we were given thick slices of bread, generously buttered, and sprinkled with sugar -- sometimes even with brown sugar. Oh what a treat!

Father and mother moved us to this farm when I was three and a half years old and we lived there for six years. I had two sisters -- Bertha was the first born and was seven years older than our sister, Cora. I was seven years younger than Cora. Between were our six brothers except Erwin who tagged me by two years.

With his big family father felt he had to have a big farm to give them all plenty of chores as they were growing up. Our farm was really two farms at a time when a quarter section was considered a normal sized farm. That was the acreage that was given in the homestead grants. The two quarter sections of land met at the cross road corner. That '*quarter*' as Pa always called it had the farm site on which Edith and Omar lived. As children we never knew that they were our renters. Up the road a pace (perhaps an eight mile) was the District 72 school house where my siblings attended and where I entered first grade. It stood on an acre of land carved out of our farm.

I feel honored to share some of the happenings of my childhood. Please **enjoy!**



Map of Brutlag farm area north of Montevideo

The Spring Storm

"Arnie! Lucky!! Wait for me!"

My brothers ran ahead down the road, ignoring my plea. After all, the school was only an eighth mile down the road, with not a tree to break the view. They didn't need to look after their little sister. What could happen to me? It was Spring, and all the big boys tried to arrive early for a game of soft ball before the school hour.

I tried to run too, but soon gave up. It was such a queer Spring day. The clouded sky seemed so close -- right above my head. It was almost hot and sticky. There wasn't a breeze or ripple in the air. I pulled off my mittens, and they dangled from my coat sleeves. Ma had crocheted a long chain of yarn, fastened a mitt to each end, threaded them through my coat sleeves, and pinned the middle right in the back of my coat neck. I could feel the yarn and pin on the back of my neck. I hated my mittens dangling on a warm day. I set down my dinner pail, so I could unbutton my coat. I picked up my pail, and trudged along the graveled road. Why was I wearing this heavy winter coat on a Spring day? Ma had these rules.

"You wear your winter coat until after Easter. You wear your shoes until my birthday, June 20th. After that you may go barefoot."

If I tried to appeal to Pa, he would say, "That's Ma's department. You ask her."

I kicked a stone with my booted foot. Boots! Overshoes!

"The weather is funny," Ma had said. "You wear your overshoes. It might rain before you come home."

The long underwear itched my legs. I wondered why the air was so heavy it was almost hard to breath.

I mused as I ambled along. I loved the winter days, when it was really cold. Then my brothers took my hand as we walked to school. Sometimes even Pa would walk along, and check the fire in the big black heating stove for the teacher. Upon

arriving home after school, I would find him sitting in the big Boston rocker, and I would climb onto his lap. Pa, and my three big brothers who had already finished Eight grade, didn't have much to do in winter. There was mostly the barn chores, milking the cows at exactly 6 o'clock every morning and evening. Pa would hold me on his lap as he and the boys talked. Ma's work was never done. Winter or summer, she was busy with the cooking, washing, ironing, mending, sewing. Often she would mention about her aching back.

It was nearly a month now since those cozy days. The biting March winds had made my winter coat feel good on the way to school. Those winds had not stopped Pa and the boys from getting out into the fields. Almost the whole farm was plowed and seeded. We had a very big farm, a half section, instead of the quarter section, as original farms were plotted out for homesteads.

The school bell rang just as I turned into the school drive. "**District 72**" I could read the sign. After all I was in second grade. I struggled out of my coat, stuffed my stocking cap into a sleeve, and hung it on a hook. I placed my boots below, and my dinner pail on a shelf directly above. I took a drink of water from the dipper in the water pail. I was the last one through the door into the one room school. I found my way to the front to the double desk I shared with my friend Edith.

My underwear itched. I wriggled in my seat. I looked at the windows, four on either side of the room. The sky was still gray. I whispered to my neighbors.

Teacher slapped the ruler on her desk with a loud crack.

"Children, be quiet and settle down to the lessons. Third grade reading class please come forward." But even as she spoke she was looking at the windows too. A few snow flakes were drifting by.

Somehow we got through the morning lessons. At noon we scrambled for our dinner pails, ate at our desks, and were grateful for a time to talk aloud. The big boys ate their sandwiches in a hurry and rushed out to play ball.

That's when it happened.

A great blast of wind and thick sleety snow cracked against the north window panes. Teacher rang the bell, and the boys stomped their feet in the entry before

they filed back to their desks. Teacher asked one of the big boys to add coal to the fire. The wind whistled around the window cracks, and the whole building creaked and groaned.

“How will we get home?” someone dared to ask.

Teacher smiled and said, “Don’t worry. Everything will be all right. Tell you what -- instead of lessons, I’ll read a story to the whole school”

The story went on forever.

Suddenly there was a loud stomping of boots in the entry room. The door opened, and there stood Pa, in his big sheepskin coat! He was a big man, six feet tall, and his coat was long, way down below his knees, almost to his ankles. He checked the fire in the stove and then walked directly down the isle to talk to the teacher.

“We’re closing the school for today and taking the children home” Pa said. “Mr. Olson is coming with a sled to take the three south families home. The west families will come to our house, and I’ll help you and the Peterson kids home on the way.” Teacher took board and room at the home of LaVerne and Lucille Peterson, the farm place between ours and the school.

We could hear the sound of horses outside mixed with the whistle of the wind, and Pa checked all the south kids to see that they were dressed, buttoned up, and packed into the Olson sled. Then he poked the fire, spreading the coals to help it die out. He showed us a strong rope, and instructed us to hang on tight, one child behind the other.

“Leave your dinner pails here” he said with gentle firmness.

“You’ll need your hands to hang unto the rope.”

Pa led us down the road, into the north wind. I was directly behind him. My stocking cap was pulled tightly over my ears, and my mittens were tucked snugly into my coat sleeves. My coat was buttoned to my neck and a scarf tied around my head. I was lucky -- I had boots over my shoes.

When we had trudged the greater share of the eighth mile distance we were near the Peterson home. There Teacher, LaVern and Lucille, and their cousin Edith left us. We waited until we saw the four of them safely into the kitchen door.

We had only a little way left, but I couldn't help but think about how nice it was in the Peterson house. By now the girls would be standing beside the big hard coal heater with the glass windows all around watching the fire burn. Their home had a



Farm north of Montevideo, 1920

regular stairway, and upstairs was a hallway between the three bedrooms, and the world's most wonderful attic above the kitchen. They had only the two kids in this big house so they boarded the Teacher.

The snow bit against my face and then we were in our driveway and there was our low house nestled in the trees.

Ours was a walk-through house. We had to walk through the shanty to get into the kitchen; then walk through the kitchen to get into the living room. We walked

through the living room to get into the extra bedroom, the pantry, or into Ma and Pa's bedroom. We walked through Ma and Pa's bedroom to get into the boys' bedroom. That room had a back stairs that led to the big boys' room in the loft. If you climbed the ladder stairs in the corner of the living room, you entered the end of the girls' room. The two loft rooms also had a doorway between them.

Pa, myself, my two brothers, and the seven extra kids completely filled the shanty. We all stomped our feet and Pa took a broom to sweep the snow from all of us. We took off our coats and gave them a good shake before we took them into the kitchen and living room to be dried by the fires. Pa swept the snow from the shanty floor and the wind whistled as he opened the door to empty the dust pan.

We filed into the kitchen past the kitchen stove where Ma was just taking huge loaves of bread out of the oven. Little brother Erv hid behind Ma's skirts for a while, eyes big at the great number of us, and then he grinned as he decided it was fun to have so many kids in the house.

Slices of warm bread buttered and sprinkled with sugar soon made everyone feel at home. Ma made her way past the table to the far end of the kitchen where the phone was fastened to the kitchen wall. All of the neighboring farms were on the same telephone line so she didn't need to call *central* but merely had to crank the handle for the code ring. She cranked three short rings and then a long and waited for the Berg family to respond. We always knew when Ma was worried or excited as her voice would rise in pitch and she would talk faster and louder. Finally the Bergs answered and her voice kept rising as she informed them that their children were safe at our house and that we would keep them overnight. On these country party lines everyone always listened in to everyone's calls (we called it *rubbering*) so the other two mothers admitted to hearing. All received her message at one time.

"Don't come out in the storm tonight. They are fine here." She talked very loud to make sure they could hear above the noise of the wind.

Our living room was small and sort of dark because it had only one window. Our stove could burn either wood or coal. It was not at all fancy just plain black with one little isinglass window in the door to peek at the fire. However, it did have a chrome ring all the way around, like a bumper about three inches away from the

stove and about a foot above the floor. We took chairs from the kitchen and took turns resting our toes on the bumper warming ourselves. The living room heated easily as this room, Ma and Pa's bedroom, and the two loft rooms above were the original log cabin. Now the interior was wainscoting and the outside was covered with siding, just like the lean-tos that had been added to both the north and south to make the additional rooms. No one knew about the log cabin unless we chose to tell. For some reason we seldom chose to tell.

Ma warned us to stay away as she opened the trap door in the pantry to the cellar where she kept her winter supply of food. She took a lantern down the steep stairs to the windowless room. She brought up a huge pail of potatoes, a ham, and a kettle of sauerkraut. We children did our part by setting the table, which we had to do twice as there were so many of us. My biggest sis was working as a maid in town and my middle sis was earning her keep while going to high school in town so Ma had all the work to herself.

I wondered where we would all sleep, but Ma seemed to know what to do. When I changed into my long flannel night gown Ma said:

“Sis, how would you like to sleep in Pa's sheep skin coat behind the stove? Then the girls could have your room.”

Oh Ma! How I loved that big coat. Many a winter night I was allowed to start my night's sleep there, as I didn't like to be in the loft alone. So the girls were tucked into the beds in the loft and feather beds were spread on the living room floor for the boys. All the big coats in the house were added to the quilts for covering.

The last sound I heard was Pa banking the fire. During the early morning hours there was again the sound of Pa checking the fires, but it was such a familiar sound that sleep returned immediately. Then the aroma of newly baked johnnycake reached my nose and I was up and dressed in a wink.

The window! How beautiful! Every little pane in the living room window was covered with frost. Fairy castles were surrounded with feathery ferns. I blew warmth against a spot so I could see out. There it was -- the biggest snow bank I had ever seen. Like a miracle the wind had whirled the snow around leaving our house as though it sat in a giant snow saucer with the snow walls higher than the

window. It looked for all the world like an enormous birthday cake covered with seven minute frosting. Sunbeams bounced off the gleaming snow and above that was the bright blue sky.

Pa and my big brothers had already shoveled a path to the barn and the new warm milk was in the shanty ready to be run through the separator. Ma was taking the johnnycake from the oven, and the neighbor kids were helping her set the table for breakfast. Ma took a syrup pail from the back of the stove where it had been warming and emptied the last of the syrup into a pitcher to pour on the johnnycake. She turned to me and said:

“See, we will wash up this pail for your dinner pail When the snow melts you will go back to school.” I had been worrying about my dinner pail at school.

Within a few hours Mr. Berg arrived with horses and a sleigh, to pick up the children of the three families that lived a mile west of us. Arnie and Lucky even helped me put on my boots and coat, wrapping a scarf around my stocking cap. They did the same for Erv, and then they helped us climb the twelve foot drifts where there was only flat yard the day before. Down we sped on our little coaster sleds!

I think a lot about that Spring Storm. The snow provided moisture for a bumper crop. Ma never complained about the extra work of bedding down seven children, nor about the food she shared from the family larder. Neither did she apologize for having only sauerkraut to serve as a vegetable. She did what any woman in her place would do.

Pa never talked about the event, nor tried to make himself some sort of hero. After all the school yard was an acre carved out of our farm, and he was president of the school board. He merely did his duty.

The Watermelon

The land overflows with milk and honey

The one small thing we lack is money

We were a very large family and Pa and ma worked together on two large garden plots to keep us in vegetables, many of which we canned for our winter supply. One year we planted the watermelon and musk melons too close together so we ended up having yellow watermelons. The next year Ma said “It is not good that these vines run into each other. There must be other places to plant some of them.” The grove was north and west of the farm buildings, and north of that was the cornfield. On the south edge of the cornfield right in the corn rows they planted the watermelon seeds. My brother Erwin and I used to go on the path through the grove to see how the watermelons were growing.

Once when we were along to town I looked longingly at the oranges. How my mouth watered for that good fruit.

“No, there is no money for oranges. We have plenty of fruit with the apples coming in, and soon there will be watermelons and mush melons. We have plenty of food at home. We will get two pails of corn syrup for the johnnycake. We need flour, coffee, and sugar. These are things we can’t grow.” Ma knew her money limitations. Pa liked honey on his johnnycake, so sometimes we had honey for a treat. But there was no persuading her about the oranges!

Erwin and I spent the hot days playing in our shady grove, and checking on the watermelons. Ma showed us how to tap them to see if they were ripe. One big melon caught my eye. I tapped it with my finger nails, and it sounded hollow.

“Erwin, try this one.” He tapped it just like he watched Ma do.

“Yea, that’s ripe,” he said in his five year old wisdom. We ran to tell Ma.

“I’m busy right now, but if you think it sounds hollow, you can take your little red wagon and bring it to the pump house. If it isn’t ripe, we will leave the others out in the field longer. There are so many of them.”

Erwin and I took the red wagon through the path in the woods. We broke the melon off the vine, and together we lifted it into the wagon. We brought home our prized possession, and soon had it floating in the cooling tank in the pump house. It had several hours to cool before it would be desert for our supper.

The day was hot and we were scantily clothed; barefoot and used to it. We played on the big grassy yard. It was not unusual that a car should drive into our farm place, but this car had a steaming radiator. The driver headed directly for the pumphouse. The huge windmill was built directly above the pumphouse so anyone could see that the well was there. Erwin and I ran to greet the man who was in trouble with his car. The steam kept coming in great puffs and it looked like it might explode.

“Is your mother or dad at home? I need water for my radiator.”



Cars, 1926

Of course Ma was at home. She had just told us that she was busy, but no one in distress was ever sent away without being helped. I often wondered how the Watkins man managed to arrive at our farm just at meal time. Food for eleven could easily be stretched for one more person. Then he would give Ma a box of cinnamon or pepper for his meal. Of course the man could have water for his radiator. I could show him how to connect the windmill to the pump. I had done it many times. If the cattle came home early, and the water tank was low, I would connect the windmill and soon there was nice cool water from the deep well, cooling our milk that hung in pails in the cooling tank and then overflowing into the tank for the cattle. I showed him the pail that we used for catching water directly. and the tin cup with which to have a nice cool drink.

“Thanks, Little Lady,” he said with a smile. “You are quite a Mother’s helper, aren’t you?” I felt proud that I was able to help him.

Later I was setting the table for our supper. The kitchen was long and narrow. The wood burning kitchen range was just inside the door that led from the shanty. The kitchen cabinet that held the cooking pans and dishes was on the opposite wall. The long table took up all the rest of the room. A long bench along the wall provided space for my four big brothers to sit. The rest of us had narrow kitchen chairs. The eleven of us squeezed in. The table was laden with plenty of food, and as usual we had fried potatoes with some sausage. Tonight we had an extra treat -- corn on the cob.

“Lucky, run out and get the milk from the pump house, please, and Lydia why don’t you take the little wagon, and bring in the watermelon?”

Ma’s request brought quick response. Lucky and I reached the pump house together. He lifted the gallon syrup pail. now full of nice cold milk, from the cooling tank.

“I’ll need help to get the watermelon out.” I took another look in the cooling tank.

THERE WAS NO WATERMELON IN THE TANK!

Our return to the house was slower than our trip out. My face felt long, as long as a round face can feel.

“Ma, the watermelon is gone. I isn’t there anymore!”

It took a few minutes to explain the whole thing to the rest of the family. My big brothers were angry that someone could do such a thing to their Lil Sis.

“But Ma, he was such a nice man. He smiled and said ‘Thank you’.”

Ma looked very sad. At first she didn’t say anything, but finally she consoled us.

“We have all had enough to eat. That was the first ripe melon. There are many more out there in the field. We will never be able to eat them all.”

Remembering

I really do remember, even though you point out that it is not possible. But I **do** remember!

My sister was a grown girl. Not as big as mom but grown up, and Mom was not at home. Sis dressed me in my prettiest dress, brushed my hair, and took me in the car. I don't really remember that part but she took me to a place, a building much bigger than our house, and there was a tiny new baby. No, there were two babies. I was told:

“This one is your brother.”

His face was very round. I can close my eyes and see him still. You see, I have been told later that there was a great war on and no doctor was available to come to the farm to attend his birth. Mom had to go to the hospital to have her ninth child. You say I can't remember but I really can. It was a small town -- a small hospital with two mothers and two babies -- and I was two years old!

Erwin was born September 19, 1918.



Lydia in costume, 1933

Edith

Edith twirled around to the left. Then she twirled around to the right. She giggled and gave a happy dance. The skirt of her plaid dress reached well below her knees, as it was not yet hemmed. The deep hues of blue, green and purple were especially pretty in the bright light of the day, out on the front porch of her house.

I could not usually visit as far as Edith's house alone even though the distance was not far. There were two roads to cross. But today Erwin and I tagged along with our big sister Bertha who was sewing a dress for Edith. After all it was Edith's birthday. Edith's mother had crippled, gnarled hands. My mother said she had very bad rheumatism. That is why Bertha was sewing for Edith. Bertha did not have patience with Edith's twirling.

Edith's mother scolded. "Edit!" (she always pronounced it 'Edit'). "Stand still so Bertha can fit the dress!"

Edith twirled and giggled.

"Edit!!" demanded her mother. "Stand still or we will give the dress to Lydia."

My heart leaped! It was my birthday in only two days. Edith was a little bigger than I was but my sister Bertha could easily take care of that. How I loved the colors in that plaid!

Edith's mother was smiling. Edith stopped twirling long enough to have her dress fitted. Bertha and her mother agreed on the length and marked the hem. I suddenly realized that the dress never, ever was intended to be mine.

The porch roof shaded us from the sun which sneaked its way between the fleecy clouds. Edith's mother called Erwin and Omar from the yard where they were playing and we all went into the kitchen and had a slice of buttered bread with home made jelly, and angel food cake. Two weeks later Edith wore her new dress to our first day in school. She and I were both newly six years old, two new first graders, and we shared a double desk in the school house that was marked 'District 72'.

The Curling Iron

I ran my finger over the barrel of my new curling iron. I stood in the bathroom, deciding how best to connect the electric cord to the limited outlets. The two outlets were already occupied with a clock and the ceiling swag light I had placed above the bath tub years ago. A tub of warm water was the best of all environments for simultaneously soaking and reading a favorite book. Pure luxury. I found an electric outlet cube and soon had the curling iron connected. I had grown tired of a half century of serial permanents. I wasn't quite ready to go straight.

As I held the warm iron with a wisp of hair entwined around the barrel so the ends would obediently roll **under**; I thought about the iron my sister used to use on her hair and on mine when I was just a tot.

I loved to watch my pretty sister Bertha fuss with her blond hair. Sometimes she teased a clump of hair in front just above her forehead. Then she would comb it ever so lightly leaving a bushy ball right in front. But mostly she would turn all the ends under with the curling iron., and then use a crimper for the space between the ends and her head.

One Friday night in June, when the supper dishes were washed, wiped, and put in the cupboard Bertha filled the basin with soft cistern water, prepared the pitcher of water for rinsing, and washed my hair. Usually we did this on Saturday afternoons or evening, combined with our weekly baths in the wash tub near the kitchen stove. But this was a very special Saturday coming up and the hair washing came a day early.

“What are we going to do, Bertha?”

“You and I are going to a wedding.”

“What's a wedding?”

“It's when two people, a grown up boy and a girl like each other, and decide to live together, like Ma and Pa live together.”

“But Ma and Pa have all us kids!”

“That’s the way it works, Lil Sis. If two people love each other, God gives them children of their very own.” I pondered this as she rubbed my hair fairly dry with a towel. Then she tore strips of cloth from a worn pillow case and taking a wisp of hair from the top of my head she wrapped it round and round a piece of rag and then tied the rag in a knot to hold it in place. I was glad that we were not to go to weddings often. In fact, even though I was five years old I had never been to one. I was glad I didn’t have my hair tied up in knots often. It seemed to me that it took a horribly long time to do, and hurt when I tried to sleep on it. But I did remember times when my sister Cora or Bertha did this to me, I had beautiful curls, and I liked what I saw in the mirror.

Bertha was also sewing me a new dress. Ma didn’t have much time to sew but my two sisters sewed very well. They even sewed for the neighbor children. Their mothers didn’t seem to know how to do it so well. I was never short of clothes that were pretty and the right size. But this seemed to be a very special dress. It was made of white organdy with lots of crisp ruffles. Many years later I saw pictures of weddings in magazines. There were flower girls wearing dresses similar to the dress Bertha was sewing for me.

That night when I had trouble sleeping I thought of the first time Bertha had gone for a ride. On a Sunday afternoon a handsome young farmer drove into our yard in a shiny black brand new Model T. Ford. My brothers admired the Model T. with a bit of envy. Our whole family knew Ervin who lived a bit down the road. He was the oldest in his family like Bertha was the oldest in ours. We had two cars because there were so many of us. Our big family car was an Overland Touring car and our second car was a Model T. It was no longer shiny and all the older kids in the family had to share it. Ervin now had his own car. He could drive where he wished and take along whomever he pleased. To my utter surprise I watched him help Bertha into the new car and then climb in behind the stirring wheel. The car drove out of our yard, unto the highway, and then I couldn’t see them any more. I burst into tears and cried as though my heart would break. A young man had come and taken away **my Bertha**. I would not be consoled. My big brothers laughed as though it were a joke. That made me cry even harder. That was over a year ago and we were all used to his presence now. He no longer brought on tears.

In the morning I hurried to get Bertha's attention to have the rags removed from my hair.

“This noon right after dinner I'll take them out. The wedding isn't until this afternoon at two o'clock. I want your hair to be very special pretty.”

I found things to play without getting myself dirty. I knew **that** would bring Bertha to tears. I watched her place the flat irons on the kitchen stove to heat and then press our new dresses. A rolled piece of newspaper tied on each end with a continuous heavy cotton string loose enough so the string made a sort of a V, made a hanger. Bertha made two such new hangers for her dress and mine, and put the strings over a nail in the door post. They were beautiful!

Next she lit the kerosene lamp, in the day time when we didn't need a light. She took the curling iron and hung it in the top of the glass chimney. With the lamp and iron on the dresser in Ma and Pa's room she could see in the mirror to curl her own hair. (I still have that dresser). She wet the tip of her finger on her tongue and ever so lightly touched the heated barrel of the iron. The quick sizzle told her that the iron was properly heated. She curled her front hairs, teased them into a clump, and then very lightly combed a few hairs over them to make that bushy ball. She was so clever to be able to do this. She reheated the curling iron over and over again in the glass chimney until all the ends turned under just exactly as she wanted them to do. Then when she was satisfied with her own she took the rags out of my hair, swept the hair from both sides up to the middle and fastened it with some pins. The few strands that didn't do as she commanded she put in place with the curling iron.

After the noon diner the big boys returned to the fields to cultivate the corn. Ma and Pa took the two younger boys to town to bring the cream and eggs to market and do the weekly grocery shopping. It was a good feeling to be alone with Bertha. It made me feel very important. With all the morning preparations it took only a few minutes to dress in our new dresses. The weather was warm and balmy. We walked to our old Model T. Bertha had me climb in on my side. It was very exciting to ride in the front with the driver. In the Overland, I always had to ride in the back. There was room for only my little brother Erwin with Ma and Pa in the front seat.

Bertha walked to the front of the car. She confidently turned the crank. She had been driving since she was twelve years old. The engine made a little snorting noise. It did not start. She tried again, turning the crank quickly several times in a row. She checked the board by the stirring wheel. She checked the magneto wire. All was as it should be. She returned to the front of the car. She gave the crank some extra hard turns. The engine refused to budge.

Tears came to Bertha's eyes. We went into the house and changed into every day clothes.

Later I heard Ma try to comfort her. "Bertha, there will be other weddings before you get married. You will be able to see how to do it. You are only nineteen. You are too young to get married yet anyway."

"But Ma, this was such a nice big wedding. How will I ever know how to do it? And they said anyone could go to the church for the wedding part. Even if we weren't invited."

Bertha and Ervin went steady for another five years before they finally married. They had a very small church wedding, with only family present. Bertha sewed her own wedding dress and veil and she fixed her own hair with the curling iron.

As for my curling iron, I put it away in a drawer. I decided that having reached my mid seventies, I could dare to wear my hair just plain straight.



Lydia - 1992

Ma's Chickens

My first needle work was a little yellow chicken in outline stitch on the corner of a white napkin. I learned how to do outline stitch with an embroidery needle and three stands of embroidery cotton. I'll tell you about my mother's chickens.

When our family moved from the farm near Fulda Minnesota to the farm seven miles north of Montevideo in March 1919, mother's chickens were moved in chicken crates to their new home. They were a small flock of Rhode Island Reds, proud of their glossy dark red plumage and their large brown eggs. In the spring they were allowed out of the chicken house to forage for part of their food on our large grassy lawn. The roosters woke us early in the morning to announce the rising sun. Later in the morning the hens crackled with joy as they announced to the world that each of them had produced another egg.

A year or so later I heard Ma and Pa discussing the chickens. There was another breed of chickens that they heard of that laid larger eggs and each hen laid more eggs before she gave up and decided to be a cluck hen and sit on her eggs to hatch them. Ma needed the egg money for groceries for our large family. She needed money for many other household items too. She liked white table linens. She also saved up egg money to buy factory made mattresses for our beds to replace the straw mats that Ma and Pa filled with new straw each fall after threshing time. The egg money was Ma's money to spend as she saw fit. It was most all spent for the family. Her winter coat would last twenty years or more.

That spring Ma and Pa came home from Monte with an incubator. It was a square box with four legs but shorter than a table. Little dividers had a place for twelve dozen eggs, twelve in each direction. Just think, 144 eggs. Ma bought those eggs from a farmer who had Buff Orphington hens. The eggs had all been candled to make sure that each one was fertile. A little kerosene lamp inside the box kept the temperature at 103 degrees. It took three weeks for the chick to grow inside the egg in the warm environment until it was ready to crack the shell and hatch. Half of the chicks would be cockerels and would be sold or eaten. Ma wanted a flock of at least a hundred hens, so she filled the incubator twice that spring.

Every day she took out the lamp, cleaned and filled it with kerosene to keep the eggs warm for another day. She also turned each egg to change its position daily.

The Rhode Island Red hen became a cluck hen after she had laid a nest full of eggs. She would sit on her eggs for three weeks and turn them occasionally. She would rejoice when the chicks hatched, and then she taught her babies how to scratch for food. When the chicks were tired or the breeze was cool she would spread her wings and make a shelter for all her young under her warm body. She was a doting, loyal mother.

The incubator chicks did not have a mother. They had to grow up in a sheltered chicken house. They needed a small kerosene heater at night when the temperature fell low. They were truly orphans. For several years I thought they were called 'Buff Orphan Tons' because they grew up without a mother.

My sister Bertha was fourteen when I was born. My sister Cora beat me by seven years. My six brothers were always good to me but they were not playmates. I spent much of my time alone with my dog Rover and with a very friendly Buff Orphington hen. I don't remember naming her, but she was very definitely Lydia's chicken. The hens as a whole were large and placid and loved to follow mother around as she came with her bucket of cracked corn. This one hen made her nest right beside the two steps that lead to the shanty room of our house. This entering room housed winter jackets, the cream separator, milk pans, the wash basin bench, and egg crates to accumulate the eggs for the biweekly trip to town. My hen sat in her nest next to the step to lay her egg. She would then jump from her nest, give a loud cackle, and with great rejoicing announce her fantastic accomplishment. I was completely mesmerized. The rest of the day she would follow me around and even let me pet her once in a while.

One day my pet chicken did not respond to my playing. She would run a little way and then stop to rest. I felt like playing. Then suddenly she ran -- then stopped -- then fell over. She died as I was watching. I was heartbroken. Ma came out and found time to comfort me. Ma found a piece of a worn sheet to wrap the chicken. Ma brought the garden fork spade to dig in the garden, and the two of us said a prayer and gave her a Christian burial.

I felt the loss for many days. Ma found some extra things for me to do. She put clean water in the wash basins on the bench in our shanty room. She gave me a

little rag to wash the eggs that needed cleaning to the sold. My five year old hands were small and I handled the eggs gently. I put the eggs in the divider papers, three dozen to a layer, four layers to a crate; twelve dozen eggs. These eggs were very large. Some were too large for the paper dividers. These and any cracked eggs I was told to put in a separate pan for our own use. It was always fun to see a double yolk when Ma or my sisters cracked eggs for breakfast or baking. These were twins, but Ma said that kind were not good for the incubator. She said twin checks would be too small and perhaps only die. I was glad to have something to do. My heart was very sad.

Highway 38 went north and south right past our farm site. It was a State Highway and that meant that the gravel surface was kept clean and in good repair. It was a spanking clean shiny black sedan that drove into our yard. The driver approached carefully to give the gentle hens time to move out of his way. He climbed from behind the steering wheel and knocked on our kitchen door. Mom came out.

“Would you have any eggs for sale? Your flock of hens looks so big and healthy. They must lay big eggs.”

Mom answered, “I have several dozen from the last few days. I get 27 cents a dozen in the store in town.”

“I’ll give you 30 cents a dozen. I have to pay more than that in the store in Minneapolis and many times they are not fresh.”

I tugged at Ma’s skirt. I wanted to ask: ‘What is Minneapolis?’, but no one had spoken to me yet. I kept still. Ma found a shoe box and we filled it with six dozen eggs. Ma let me help wrap each one with a square of newspaper. Ma was always friendly with anyone who drove in and they were soon visiting. The man explained that he was a candy salesman and that he supplied the drugstores with boxes of chocolates. He was on his way from Benson to Montevideo. Driving the same road frequently he had been impressed at the sight of the big beautiful hens.

I was continually in the way. Finally he addressed me: “You are quite a mother’s helper, aren’t you? What is your name?”

“My name is Lydia”, I sang as my siblings always did “L-Y-D-I-A”.

The man looked astonished. "It is? Really is? I sell Lydia Darrah Candies. Here, you better have a pound of Lydia Darrah chocolates."

I had never had a box of candy before. I didn't think anyone else in our family did either. Ma said gently, "You can keep the candy 'til supper time. Then you can share it with the whole family for our desert."

The chocolates helped to heal the wound of the buried chicken. I really began to wonder about Minneapolis.

"Ma, where is Minneapolis?"

"Over a hundred miles from here."

"Ma, what is it?"

"A very big city. I have never been there. Pa has."

"Ma, how big is the city?"

"It has high buildings downtown. Some are even twelve or fourteen stories high. There are many miles of houses and flour mills and factories. You friend Edith -- her Aunt works there at a factory called Honeywell."

"Ma, can I go to Minneapolis some time?"

"Maybe some time when you grow up. Then maybe you can go and work there."

I spent the rest of the summer dreaming about visiting Minneapolis. I knew I wanted to visit that city but I also knew I would not like to live there. I wanted only to live and work on a farm where there was room for a dog, and cats that had kittens, and cows and their calves, and these beautiful friendly chickens. Then I learned there was another city just across the river from Minneapolis. They were called the Twin Cities -- just like those big eggs with the double yolks. The wonder of it all helped to heal my wounded heart. Still mourning my friend the chicken, I continued to dream on.

A year after I graduated from High School -- at the age of nineteen -- I took the bus to Minneapolis. I have lived and worked in Minneapolis ever since and that is now sixty-five years.

The Red Velvet Dress

My birthday in August was nothing special, just a cake with nine candles at our own family supper table. Bertha, my oldest sister, came home from her job as a maid and nanny for the family in town. It must be great to be rich enough to have a maid and a nanny. My sister was fourteen years older than I. She brought home a red velvet dress! It wasn't really red, more like a wine or burgundy. It was a size eight. It was gathered at the neckline, had short sleeves to my elbows, and a spray of flowers embroidered a few inches below the neck. It was soft, felt yummy to the touch, and hung loosely from the shoulder. I had never seen or felt anything so lovely in all my life!.

Bertha was almost crying. "But, Ma, It's only four dollars, and Lydia has never had a really nice dress. Mrs. Marsh sent for it from a catalog. But size eight is too small for Jinny, She is such a big husky girl. It just fits Lydia. Our little sis is such a runt!"

I didn't even know that my dresses were not nice. Ma could buy cotton cloth for twenty cents a yard. With Ma and two big sisters who were all good seamstresses, I could have a new dress for forty cents. No wonder Ma objected to the four dollar price tag, but Bertha prevailed and I added the red velvet dress to my wardrobe.

Christmas that year was very special. For the Sunday School program my family chose to have me recite a poem alone so I would not have to attend practice times. We lived eight miles north of Montevideo and transportation was sometimes difficult. I was so proud and happy to recite my poem wearing my red velvet dress. I was allowed to wear it every Sunday to Sunday School after that. I wore my cotton dresses or my wool jumpers to school. I was in Fourth grade in the District 72 School Building just about an eight mile from our farm site.

In the fall Ma and Pa had made many trips searching for a new farm. Pa felt he had to sell our farm and buy one that cost less per acre. Ma always went along because she would not agree to move unless there was a Lutheran church our family could attend along with a Sunday School for us kids. They finally found a farm three miles from a small town named Herman. It was a half section one half mile wide

and a mile long. The back Quarter was still virgin prairie grass. The house was only four rooms, two down stairs and two bedrooms upstairs. Pa got permission to add a lean-to with two more rooms down stairs during the fall, but we couldn't move until March 1st. which was the traditional farm moving day. Even with the lean-to, Ma and Pa knew the house was too small for the eleven of us and knew that we would never all live together again. It was time to have a family picture taken!

Pa made an appointment at the town Photographer. We all dressed up in our best clothes, and took both our Overland Touring car and the Model T Ford to town. I was so happy to be wearing that red velvet dress my smile was unquenchable. We were never again all of us together in the same place.



Brutlag family 1926 - Carl, Bertha, Raymond, Minehart, Ben, Cora, Arnold,
Ewin, Katherina, Herman, Lydia

The January and February snows finally melted away. The end of February meant that moving time was drawing near. Sometimes the inside excitement was hard to contain. Then one day in school every one appeared to be obnoxious. All the kids were whispering to each other but no one talked to me. I felt very left out. Even my friend Edith who shared a double desk with me turned her back to me. Usually the teacher would put a stop to such goings on. but she seemed almost unable to control the fifteen kids who ranged from first through eighth grades. I went home a very unhappy girl.

My head ached and my throat was sore. I asked my sister Cora to wrap my throat with a wet wool stocking. We dipped one sock in cold water, wrapped it around my neck and then wrapped a dry wool sock over that, fastening it all securely in place with large safety pins. The cold compress would stimulate my body heat as I slept and cure my sore throat. I went to bed early.

I was dozing up in the girl's bedroom in the loft when I heard a car drive into our yard. Then I heard another car -- Then three or four more! I was wide awake. Both the headache and sore throat were gone!

My sister came up the ladder stairs. As she carefully unpinned my compress, she informed me, "The neighbors are having a Surprise Farewell party on our family. Your friends are all down stairs."

She helped me slip into my red velvet dress.

I backed down the ladder stairs, as we always did. There were all my friends from school eager to talk. I was suddenly the center of attraction. All the elusive events of the day were quickly forgiven. My friends were so proud to have been able to keep the secret from me. I was happy to have yet another chance to wear that red dress! How could I be angry?

On March 1st, the last bed rolls were loaded on the truck. We piled ourselves and as much of our personal things that we had room for in our Overland Touring car and in the Model T Ford and drove the sixty-five miles to our new home. We took the rest of the week to settle in. The following Monday Ma and my sister Bertha took us four younger kids to town to enroll us in school. Grades one through three had classes in a building near down town. Grades four through high school met in the brick school building out on the edge of town. Ma took my brother Erwin to the down town school building. Bertha took me and my two older brothers to the brick

building. She was the person driving the Overland car. I was enrolled in a room of half fourth graders and half fifth graders, about twenty in all. A smiling lady whom we all addressed as **Miss Strand** seemed to be expecting me. I loved being introduced to all my new classmates. I explained to Miss Strand, “Today I am wearing my best dress, because it is my first day. After this I will have to wear my regular school cloths.”

The Herman district was called a consolidated district. This meant there were school buses sent out to pick up the farm children within a five mile radius of Herman. One bus went east and north, and the other went south and west. Our farm was three and a half miles north east of Herman.

The next morning I was sent to school in a brown jumper.

My three brothers and I, each with a syrup pail holding our lunch, walked the length of the driveway and waited for the black bus. We entered by way of a back door. The wagon was long and narrow and had a bench built along each side. A rather fat old man was in the driver’s seat in the open area out front. He had good control of the team of horses and I soon learned that his name was Mr. Flakker. We drove to several other farm places farther north of Herman and after almost an hour we arrived at the school. After school the bus took the same route home so those of us who got on early were among the first to be unloaded in the afternoon.

We grew accustomed to our day’s schedule and long rides. If the day was very cold, as Minnesota can be in March, there were woolen horse blankets to cover our legs. The next winter when it was severely cold Mr. Flakker provided a kerosene lantern which he placed under the blanket to keep our feet from freezing. He was always thoughtful of us kids.

By the time my tenth birthday arrived the next August, the hem of my size eight velvet dress was above my knees. My sisters sewed new dresses and jumpers for me so I didn’t miss that dress as much as I might have. It’s true I came from a large family and there were many mouths to be fed and many bodies to be clothed. I always felt all my needs were met. However, a certain red velvet dress added a great deal to my feeling of well being.

Of course, it wasn’t really red. It was wine red, or burgundy, or whatever you want to call it.

Miriam

“But you’re the one who always gets us into all these scrapes.” my husband accuses.

Well, maybe that’s true; I do get into them. But then it surely has made for some exciting events in our lives!

Like for instance that time during the war. My friend Alfa was having her second baby. Her husband, Clarence, had an opportunity to get started farming about sixty miles out of Minneapolis. Alfa who had never lived on a farm longed to have her baby in the city with the same doctor attending and going to the same hospital. Good hearted Lydia -- as usual.

“You can stay with us, Alfa, and I’ll take care of Philip while you are in the hospital. Tedi will love to have him with us.” I was still trying to fill the void left in our lives when Tedi’s infant brother was taken away from us just a few months earlier. I felt that God had lent him to us for seventeen short days. She was three and a half and was still grieving too.

That is how it happened that a week before the expected birth Alfa and her son Philip, just a shade over a year, moved into our three room apartment. Tedi’s crib shared our roomy bedroom, and Philip’s crib was put up in our living room. Alfa used the studio couch in the same room. Who cared that the place was crowded? We were all poor and shared whatever we had.



Tedi - “I’m so high”

The week of waiting stretched into two. Then into three. I began to get a little edgy. Only a three hour labor had produced her son, and so I admonished,

“Alfa, when you get the very **first** warning, let me know!”

Then one night, an hour after midnight, I was awakened.

”Lydia! Lydia! Call the doctor!”

We didn’t even have our own phone. I robed, took one look at Alfa, and ran down the hall where there was a phone I could use to call the doctor. I told him who I was, for whom I was calling, and pleaded with him.

“Please meet her at the hospital. This is going to go fast! “

The doctor’s voice was slow and reassuring,

“You just take her to the hospital. The nurses will examine her and they will tell me when to come.”

I ran back to our apartment, into our bedroom, and started to dress. Slacks were not common those days so I grabbed for a dress and had one hose on.

”Lydia, Lydia! Come quickly! The baby is here!”

Carrying the second hose, I dashed into the living room, and there sat Alfa on the floor with the newborn whimpering lustily. Philip was voicing his anger at being disturbed from his sleep.

My husband brought Alfa a towel from the linen closet so she could wrap her babe. He then took Philip into our bedroom. Tedi by now had also awakened and the two



Lydia and Malcolm - 1936

children sat wide eyed in our bed. Meanwhile, I ran down the hall to phone her doctor.

This time the phone rang and rang. I thought perhaps he is doing as I suggested. Perhaps he is dressing to go to the hospital. Perhaps -- finally he answered.

The words fell pell-mell out of my mouth. "Doctor, this is Lydia, Alfa's friend. While I was dressing the baby came. It is already born. Can you ..."

"Listen, Lady," the male voice interrupted me. "*This is not the doctor.* You have the wrong number!"

After dialing again, I was advised as to what to do. So that is how it came about that Alfa, Miriam, a nurse friend of ours, and I had a ride to the hospital in an ambulance.

Postscript:

Our families have had **Christmas card** connections over these many years, but I have seen Miriam only twice. One Sunday when she was about ten we took our family to visit Clarence and Alfa on their farm. Then the Christmas when Miriam was in her mid twenties we received a wedding invitation. Trinity Lutheran was especially beautiful trimmed in pine boughs and red candles. She was a beautiful bride. We waited in a long receiving line. Finally it was our turn to kiss the bride. When I told her my name, she flung her arms around me and I was the one who received the kiss. The groom was a newly ordained pastor and their first call was to a congregation in Hawaii.

Some day I hope to meet her again.



Mac -1953

The Paper Boy

“Hey, the paper boys get cuter all the time”

It was a hot Saturday afternoon and I had knocked on the door of one of my son’s customers whom I had not found at home the preceding evenings. I was subbing so Mac could go on his scouting weekend. I collected the two week fee, gave the man his newspaper, and proceeded to finish the route.

It was a cold January day that our son, or rather ‘we’ signed the contract that put him into business as a paper boy. He had objected rather strenuously but we felt it was just what he needed to learn responsibility and we had agreed to help him when he was on Scout outings so he would not miss these happy times. It took almost a year to learn why there are so many openings for new paper in January after the Christmas tips had been given.

In most families, I found, it was “big sis” who ended up with the job of being substitute delivery boy. However, in our family “Big Sis” was seven years his senior and was already a working college girl; the job fell to me. I took the small fry along to help me, not only to keep an eye on them, but also to make it appear as though I were helping them! During his first summer camping period I tried doing the collecting. Calling on four blocks of my neighbors proved rather unprofitable time wise, so after that my husband did the collecting. A neighbor remarked jokingly, “Isn’t that just like a man? He lets his wife do the work, and then he goes and gets the money.”

Being a paper boy has its trials even for enthusiastic boys. For reluctant ones it can be almost a tragedy. Within two weeks he lost his route book. With the thermometer standing at -3 degrees I followed him around writing down the house numbers as he placed the papers. He knew the places well.

Few people realize that if they fail to pay, it is the **boy**, not the paper company, who is the loser. Moving out of a furnished room or apartment just before collection day seems to be common practice. There was the man who owed him for two periods.

Twice he assured him that on Monday he would have the money. When he returned the following Monday no one answered the knock. Upon peering into the window, he found the apartment bare to the walls.

There was his first experience with death. Our community has many senior citizens and he was visibly moved when he had to report a stop order because a patron had been found dead in his room. There was another death. One mild snowy evening he took his Lil Sis along on collection night. When the elderly lady opened the door in response to his knock her dog slipped out, ran down the outside steps of the upper duplex into the street directly into the path of an automobile. That evening there were tears to wipe, and comforting to give.

There were compensations too -- other than the Christmas tips. One evening, one of his customers was featured as a "Town Tipper". A later morning route included the home of the owner of the paper. One Grammy always left pennies on a shelf for his little brother. But most of all it was people continually telling him, "you are the best paper boy we ever had" that built up his self-confidence. For although he never learned how to pronounce the word 'collect' with ease, he learned to enjoy doing a good job of delivering the papers and putting as many as possible indoors, protecting them from the weather.

Weather was always a factor. There were hot sweltering days when he kept reminding me that the middle of the afternoon was the best time of the day to be at the lake swimming. There were windy days when he hunted for stones and bricks to keep a paper in place until it would be picked in. There were rainy days when I drove the car to keep them dry. There were dark after school hours in winter blizzards when I waited anxiously for him to come home and to know that his work for the day was done. There were three years of such days.

A few years later at his high school graduation he wore the gold braids on his shoulder with pride. Money from his savings account in the bank since his paper boy days paid for his first term at the University of Minnesota. Meanwhile, "Big Sis" has married, and provided us with two grandsons. "Lil Sis" has grown taller than her mother, and our younger son was not yet old enough to be eligible as a paper boy. I have never considered four children an exceptionally large family, but ours is surely a **long one**.

TV Commercial

Characters:

Mac, age 10

Mamie age 6

Ken, age 3

Scene: A breakfast table casually set for three children. A milk carton, several boxes of cereal, a peanut butter jar, butter, and toast are on the table.

Opening flash: The two boys are at the table, helping themselves.

Mac: Hurry up, Mamie, you'll be late for school

Mamie: (comes running and stops abruptly) You're teasing me again. There is no school today. It's Saturday.

Ken: O goody. Then we can play school.

Mac: You're too little to play school. You can't read.

Ken: I can read letters. That's a '**K**', and that's an '**R**'. (Pointing to a cereal box.)

Mamie: But you have to read words, like this:
snap, crackle, pop

Mac: No, you have to read whole sentences like this. (He proceeds to read the nutritional details from the cereal box, in a mumbling monotone. Obviously, no one is listening.)

Mamie: (holding milk carton) Whole milk. Vitamin D enriched

Ken: I can **too** read. I can read letters **and words!**



Ken, 1958

Mamie: You're just a little kid.

Ken: (Grasping the jar, concentrating on the label, and speaking very deliberately.)

S - K - I - P - P - Y. That spells **peanut butter**, I know that!



Marilyn - 1961

Telecommunications

*Others may dial-a-joke,
Dial-a-friend,
dial-a-smile,
or dial-a-prayer,
but not me--
I just dial-a-mother!*

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
WITH LOVE
TEDI

The card arrived on Tuesday. My birthday was the preceding Saturday. However, a card for a special Great-grandmother came a day early. It was signed 'MICHAEL' in an eight year old's careful printing. A pattern of connect the dots enabled a four year old hand to print in bold letters, 'JENNY'.

I should remind you that Tedi is our daughter who lives in Boston and has had a heart transplant. Jennifer and Michael are her grand children who live with their father, Scot, a Staff Sergeant in the Army in North Carolina.

"Your card will be late," Tedi told me on the phone. "I'm simply not used to shopping with children along. Jennifer knows her birthday is coming soon, and she wanted to pick out all the cards that she would like to get. I don't have the patience. I had to take them home."

Two weeks earlier, August 12th, on Sunday afternoon the phone demanded an answer. "Hello Grandma. This is Scot. Mom told me to call you. The Army tells me I have to get some permanent care for Michael and Jennifer. I'm going to send them up to Mom. Do you think I am crazy? I have to do something with them.

Mom said she would take them. Do you think she is able to do this? I called Dad, and he said no. That really hurt.”

“Scot, It is better the kids are not with your dad. They were pretty unhappy there last Christmas. I’m sure your Mom, together with Eric and Leah can care for them. I think your Mom’s health has recovered enough so that she is ready for a larger responsibility. She is tired of just being at home taking care of only herself. She said she put in a thirty eight hours at work last week and is working on getting back on the pay roll.”

“Grandma, there is another way to care for them but I would rather have them with family. I’ll send them up to Boston on Wednesday.”

Monday AM:

It is unusual for the phone to ring while we are still at the breakfast table. “Hello, Mom. I have to leave for work soon and I have to tell you. The airlines won’t take the kids without an adult. Jennifer is not yet five. No one from here has time to go and get them. Scot has a couple of men who will cover for him, and he will bring them on Thursday. He has to fly right back, or he will be AWOL. I have to arrange at work to be gone on Thursday and Friday.

Leah and Eric each want to be their guardians too. They arrive at four on Thursday afternoon. I’m not telling anyone. I want to drive to the airport myself to pick them up.”

Wednesday Evening: The phone rings. “Mom, I’m home alone, and I need to talk.”

”Tedi, would you like to hang up, and I’ll call you? Then it will be billed to me.”

“I really would appreciate that. This is creating a real financial crises here.” The re-dialing is completed.

“Mom, Scot is coming with the kids tomorrow. He has to decide which of us will be their legal



Tedi - 1989

guardian for the coming year. Since he got back to Fort Bragg from Fort Lee in Virginia where he attended school this summer, he has been working fourteen to sixteen hour days. He has hardly seen the children. He is lucky there are always some army wives who are willing to do child care.

“The Army wanted him to place them in a foster home. I told him, ‘Over my dead body are they going to a foster home.’ Almost all of the 82nd Division of Paratroopers is already in Saudi Arabia. His unit is in Honduras at present, and he has to be ready to go with them as soon as they can be deployed from there. Here the three of us are fighting over who is going to be responsible for the children. Leah thinks she should give up her scholarships and work instead of continuing college in Salem. Eric and his fiancé are just moving into a three bedroom duplex in Cambridge, near MIT, and not far from Harvard. They have two other roommates. Leah thinks I should find a larger apartment and she should live with me and help care for the children. The three of us are fighting to have the children. I finally decided that one of us had better act like an adult and that one had better been me. I decided we each should answer three questions. 1. What do I have to offer the children that is unique to me? 2. Which of us can give them space, without disrupting our present life? 3. What is the biggest problem any one would face if they lived with us. Tonight we are meeting at Eric’s place to talk it over. I don’t like to see Leah quit college. I don’t like to see Eric and Liz tied down with two children while they are building their relationship.”

Usually I just listen, and act as a sounding board. Then she solves her own problems. This time I speak up. “By all means, Leah should **not** give up her school arrangements. I surely wish that Eric and Liz did not live so much like the sixties hippies.”

“But Mom, they really aren’t living like that. They are sharing a house, but that is because rent is so high. Liz has worked all these years full time as well as going to college, and has finally made it. She wants to take a few months off work to catch her breath after eight years of this. The young man who has one bedroom is a camp councilor and works with children all the time. The young woman is a chef and works nights.”

Later that evening I call Marilyn. I know she has talked with Tedi too. Marilyn's contribution is "Leah should not quit school. She has been granted scholarships and a live in nanny position for her board and room. If she gives this up she will never get back to school again. I urged her to not change her plans when I talked with her." Marilyn is Leah's godmother. Two years ago when Tedi had lost hope of getting a donor heart in time she had asked Marilyn to take Leah under her wing and help guide her through her college years. At least we were all agreed on that one point.

On Thursday I watch the clock. Now Scot, Michael, and Jennifer are lifting off at Fayetteville North Carolina. Now they are landing in Boston. Now it is 5:00 pm here -- 6:00 pm there. They should be at Tedi's home by now. I get the answering machine. I leave a message. "I hoped to be able to speak to Scot. I have to leave now and teach a Hmong Math class from 5:30 to 6:30 I'll call you later."

While I am gone Scot calls. He tells Grandpa that the flight went well. They have unloaded the suitcases filled with clothes, toys, and books. They are all going over to Eric's place for dinner and to make decisions.

I seldom call on Friday evening as the weekend rates cut in for Saturday morning. I think of the six months that we were awaiting a donor heart for Tedi and we had all but given up hope of getting one in time. Almost every day I called her at 7:45 am and used the last fifteen minutes of the night rates. In Boston it was quarter to nine so she usually was through with her meager breakfast. But this evening I had to know "How did your day go?"

"This morning we took daddy to the airport for a 10:00 am flight. He kissed them good-bye and promised them that he will return for them -- after they have gone to school for a year. Then we drove to Grandma's work so they could see where I will have to be much of the time. Then we stopped and shopped for some groceries. Now they are out for a ride with Leah and her friend John. John and Michael took to each other immediately. Right now I am here with their belongings spread all over this two room apartment. Most of their clothes need laundering and I won't have time to go to a laundromat until next Wednesday. Scot decided to name me Guardian with Leah and Eric named to follow in case I can't handle it. The Army Dependency allotment is sent to me. In any event I hold the purse strings."

On Saturday I again contact Marilyn. I feel relieved that the children are primarily under Tedi's care. Marilyn is not so at ease as I am. She says "The trouble with this scenario is that Tedi has a way of getting her family to get entirely dependent on her. She doesn't speak up when it's too much for her. Then she will be ill again."

What can I do but to wait and pray? I have to talk to somebody, God.

Sunday evening I get another of the return call requests. "Mom, if I am the legal guardian does that mean that I have to keep them here and take care of them myself? Or does it mean that I have to see to that they are taken care of? Eric lives in Cambridge and I really feel the schools are better there. There are more Asian people living there so they would feel more at home. The children in this neighborhood are not used to Korean faces and have already poked fun at them on the play ground. Also, I think this is going to be too much for me."

In all our conversations no one has mentioned their mother, Suki. I wonder if she ever thinks of her two little Amer-asians that she abandoned in order to go back home to her mother in Korea. She wanted to take the children. The Army wouldn't allow her to take two American citizens. She chose her mother and country over her children.

Wednesday evening there was another call. "Mom, I took their clothes to the laundromat. I am exhausted. I ache in every bone in my body. Leah and John have taken them camping for the weekend. The weather is not very nice for camping. Next week we have to enroll them in school and we have to decide where. Then I am scheduled to spend two days at Brigham and Women's, for my two year heart cath and check up."

Saturday noon. "Leah called. It's raining all the time. She and John are bringing the children home."

Monday evening. "Mom, today Eric, Liz, and I enrolled Michael and Jennifer in school -- in Cambridge. School officials were quite impressed. Usually their minority children are brought by one adult --a mother who can barely speak English. Jennifer received all her preschool shots free. Their school will be assigned later."

Thursday evening I call Brigham and Women's and ask for Tedi's room. She is still flat on her back after the heart cath but she has had all good reports. Her doctors however, discourage her from having the children with her in her tiny apartment. Her medications keep her immune repressed, and they will bring home everything from school "You will catch every thing they bring."

I have to talk to somebody, God. I know the children are happy. Eric was their nanny for a year in Germany after Suki first left. They are used to him. They love their Grandma Tedi even though they have been with each other very little. They also know their great grandmothers Betty and Lydia. They know that for their birthdays and for Christmas they get extra mail and gifts. But will someone please tell me: Why is it that when a man with a very strange name like Soddam Huesein can take tanks and cross the boarders of a very small country on the other side of the world. Yes, tell me, why can that upset my quiet personal life here in Minneapolis? If you know the answer feel free to call me -- collect.

Telecommunications II

October 1, 1990:

We are eating supper, almost done, when the phone rings. I forget about the two ring code and answer immediately as my chair at the kitchen table is just below the telephone.

“Oh mom, you answered right away. I need to talk.”

“Hi Tedi, just hang up and I’ll call you right back.”

I take time to fill the teakettle for our evening tea before I dial her number.

“Mom, I simply had to call you. So much has happened since we talked on Saturday. This coming weekend Scot has an extra day off so he is driving up from Fort Bragg to get the kids. None of us can handle them here. I have told you several times they are really disturbed children, especially Michael. He is in third grade and can’t read at all. He could read at the end of first grade but last year he lost it all. This past weekend I was so achy that I couldn’t drive to get them from Eric’s home, and Jennifer called me up and asked if I wouldn’t please come and get her. Later she told me she was going to ask me to drive her to her daddy. Things really came to a head when Jennifer came out with a bottle of Tylenol with Codeine. When questioned she said she got it from Michael’s back pack. When Liz checked the pack she found her \$85 that had been missing, plus my rings, and a number of other things. Mom, I know I’m just rambling, but I feel so bad.”

I manage to get in a few questions. “Did Scot give up his house?”

“No, but he found a couple who moved in with him. This way they share the rent. He tried to get a couple of fellows to live with him. I think this is better.”

Scot has been reassigned to the rear detachment of his unit so he is not apt to be sent to Saudi Arabia. He is a Staff Sergeant in charge of supplies. He makes up the orders here stateside.

“Mom, we all feel like such failures. Eric feels like a failure. I talked with Scot -- He feels like a failure. Liz wanted to help so badly and she feels like a failure. I feel like a failure. We thought we could do something for the kids, show them the love of their extended family. Now it’s all come to naught.”

”Tedi, I feel so helpless, so far away. But it is not all for naught. Now there are more of us that know what Scot has to cope with, and we can get him some help with his parenting.”

October 7:

“Mom, Scot came Friday evening and slept here. He picked up the kids so that they could be together. They were so happy that they could be with their Daddy even if they did have to sleep on the floor. On Saturday he drove to Eric’s place to pick up all their belongings. We also had a good-bye dinner there. He came back to my place with Mike and Jenny to sleep. In the morning he packed them all in the car and headed for Fayetteville North Carolina. He has a couple living in his house with him and they will help care for the children. At least for the time being he is assigned to Rear Detachment. That means he has to order supplies for his troops

Within a few weeks Scot received his orders to join his troops in Saudi Arabia. He called Marilyn and Bruce who were visiting with us in Minneapolis at the time. Bruce and Marilyn flew to Fayetteville to pick up Jenny and Michael. The children lived with them in Chicago for the six months of the Gulf War and attended The Chicago Public Schools. They also drove to Minneapolis for a long weekend so we got to know our great grand children better.

Christmas -- Color Me 55

The tinkling of Christmas bells downtown, the snowy back yard, and the neighborhood children going to and from school bring back poignant memories of a Christmas long ago. Christmas Eve fell on Saturday that year but for some reason the winter vacation schedule had been set so that the children were home from school the whole preceding week. Tedi (our eldest) a high school student, spent her time sewing doll cloths for her little sister, age four, working in the same room, but hidden from her. Mac at age nine was a restless, turbulent soul. From his being intermittently came forth lusty noises, crying, hearty laughter, tears, teasing, words of sympathy, stern threats, anger, giggles -- but never peace and quiet. Ken would not be a year old until the end of February but he had learned to walk for Thanksgiving. In our house **bedlam** reigned supreme.

Up stairs behind a closed door, Friend Hubby tried to refresh a fatigued body with sleep. He spent a decade working night hours inspecting the street cars and later buses in preparation for their runs the next day.

Tuesday morning in desperation I took a *twenty* I had tucked away for an emergency, went downtown, and paid down on a small TV set. I was assured it would be delivered and installed before Christmas.

By Wednesday evening the principle culprit was presented with an ultimatum.

“Mac, **you** are not spending another whole day in this house. Tomorrow morning you are going downtown. **Alone!**”

“I don’t know how to get there, or how to get back.”

“You will learn.”

A piece of typing paper soon turned into a map of the loop, with all of the main stores marked and named. Arrows and X’s marked where to get off from and where to board the Chicago Avenue bus.

Thursday morning the map was reviewed. He was given a dollar with which to buy a gift for his little sister, and a fifty cent piece for a hot dog or other food. He had

another fifty cents of his own. I hunted in my purse and found only one slim dime. “Here’s your fare down. I don’t have another dime, so you will have to save back a dime for your fare home. Now good luck.”

“And don’t forget to give some money to the Santas on the street corners.” This came from his big sis.

“The way you look, I think Santa will reach into his chimney and take some out for you.” He really was a ragamuffin. His parka, scheduled for replacement right after Christmas, was so tattered that anyone would know he had his own mother. No foster mother would dare to let her child be seen in such rags. With a mixture of eagerness and trepidation he left the house for the bus stop.

Four thirty in the afternoon he returned, tired, hungry , and excited, clutching a package under his arm.

“Can I have something to eat?”

“Surely, but didn’t you have a hot dog down town?”

“I didn’t have enough money. I couldn’t find a nice present for Marilyn for only a dollar”

With that I had to go into a secret hiding place so he could show me his treasure. My heart almost stopped beating when I saw the fragile China dishes, so beautiful I hardly dared pick up the tiny cup.

“O Mackie, they will break so easily.”

His reply was so absolutely right. “But Mother, they match her. They are just like she is.”



Marilyn - 1954

He started to tell of his fun. Then suddenly tears came to his eyes. “Mother, I had trouble getting home.” I saw him struggle to keep from breaking down.

“Don’t cry. Just tell me about it.”

His story tumbled out. He had had so much fun visiting the toy departments of all the stores. He had spent his money for rides instead of food. He had ridden the elevators and escalators and shopped diligently for his sister’s gift. Then he made his way to Eighth Street to await the bus. He reached into his pocket and discovered he had a dime and a penny. He had already put a nickel into Santa’s chimney, but he wouldn’t need the penny, so he trudged all the way back to Seventh Street, placed it in the chimney and returned to the bus stop. As he was about to pay his fare, he realized he had only a penny. He had given the dime to Santa! He was alone down town with no way to get home!

He admitted he stood on the corner quite some time, as several buses passed. Finally a woman spoke to him.

“You look a bit sad for Christmas time. Aren’t you the Borgendale boy who lives on our block? What’s your problem?”

He explained about the penny and the dime. She produced a dime and they both boarded the next bus. He didn’t recognize her, so I have never had the opportunity to thank her.

The TV set was delivered on Friday. We were given orders to let it warm to room temperature overnight. On Saturday a man came out and adjusted the set. The children were mesmerized for the remaining Christmas vacation. In January I managed to lay hands on an extra ten dollars, and I took Mac down to Kaplans and bought him a new parka. Friend Hubby continued to sleep days and earned us all a living working nights. We even managed to make the TV payments. If you would like to see the miniature dishes feel free to stop in to visit Marilyn in her home in Chicago. She keeps the cherished set in her China closet, top shelf--- delicate, beautiful, and completely whole.

Christmas -- Color Me 65

I simply can't hold a job -- at least that's the way it sounds when I tell of the many placed I have worked. But that is not the true picture. Rather it is a case of buying up every opportunity for longer or shorter temporary jobs between the responsibilities of our **long** family.

Homemakers find working in stores for special sales and pre-Christmas selling a common opportunity to add to the family income, and thus provide a more generous Christmas for our children. The fall of 1965 found me in a new area, the marking room of a large department store in downtown Minneapolis.

It is with a feeling of awe that I enter the special designated door on Nicollet Avenue in the early morning hours, long before the sales floors are open to the public. The elevator swoops up to fourth floor. The only door that leads to anywhere is posted with a sign "**This area is restricted to authorized personal only**" Suddenly I am one of those trusted few.

Promptly at 7:30 the laughter and conversation in the cloakroom ceases and all feet tread to designated places. Tasks left as suddenly at 4:00 the day previously are resumed as though no time had elapsed. Young men are opening huge cartons, and placing the contents on wheeled tables. Women are checking the merchandise against the orders. The sharp crack of the graphotype pierces through the air as metal plates are cut to print the various tickets, some pressure, some glued, and some on strings. Sweaters, blouses and pants find their way to the pinning machine. In the ready to wear, coats, dresses suits and skirts are hung, checked, and ticketed with string tags.

The P.A. system consists of the projected human voice. From any direction we can hear, "**RALPH! -- TELEPHONE -- RALPH -- Ralph**"

In this work it takes a while to become acquainted with fellow workers. A voice demands "**BETTY**", but Betty beside me does not respond. There is another Betty. Dorothy is behind me making tickets and Dorothy is in the ticket line. Alice is at the pinning machine and Alice is at the graphotype. Agnes relinquishes part of her

coffee break because Agnes and Agnes are coming up from the selling floor to look over some substitutions in an order. (These most likely will be charged back to the manufacturer). Ralph is in charge of the whole operation and is everywhere, simply everywhere -- unless you are the one who needs him. **“Ralph, telephone -- RALPH ! RALPH ! Oh, R A L P H !”**

By noon there is an atmosphere of utter chaos, a traffic jam of new deliveries, opened cartons, unfinished and finished tables, racks of clothes, and baskets of sweaters. In the next few hours the ticketed merchandise is placed in stock, or taken directly below to satisfy the insatiable appetite of the selling floors. By closing time at 4:00 all is in readiness for a new day's work.

The stock room shelves are groaning under the weight of Christmas merchandise. Storage space for robes has already given way to the boxes of sheets for the January White Sales. Suddenly, like a child sitting too long at a festive table, the order comes “No more, don't send down any more right now.” It is good the deliveries have waned. My work as a marking room extra is finished. The stock room Christmas rush which blew in with the first Autumn breeze in August reached it's peak along with the Thanksgiving turkey.

I find myself in a new spot. I am behind the cash register in the shoe department. I try to keep a smile in my voice, “Would you like some help, Ma'am? I'm sure your grandmother would be very happy to receive those slippers for Christmas. May I have your charge card, please?”

Christmas -- Color Me 78

Clean the kitchen.

Scrub the bathroom.

Bake the bread; store it in the freezer.

Bake the anise seed cookies -- decorate them with colored sugar.

Make up the bed upstairs with the pretty new sheets.

Marilyn and Doug are coming home for Christmas!

Buy a Christmas tree. Get an artificial tree this year. At our age, who needs pine needles to pick out of a blue and green carpet?

Arrival flight is scheduled on Thursday afternoon. I am scheduled to work at three o'clock. Trade the day with a fellow worker to be free to meet them. Better yet, collect a holiday past due and get the day off.

No time to think about the Christmases long ago when we first had our home. We never returned to either farm for Christmas. Did my father and mother miss me? Did my in-law parents have enough Christmas with the younger children still at home? Were their Christmases ever lonely?

Finnish the hand knitted sweaters. Buy special gifts -- ignore the cost. The children are all through college -- no need to skimp this year. Wrap the packages. Have them ready under the tree when Marilyn arrives.

No time to think about the Christmas past when there was so little money that we made simple gifts and bought trinkets for the children from the five and dime.

Invite Doug's parents for dinner. Bake Marilyn's favorite pumpkin pie. Shovel the walks. Vacuum the carpets. Turn up the heat in the upstairs room. Set the table for six. Wait for the phone to ring to hear that the plane from Baltimore has arrived and they are ready to be picked up. Hold down the speed on the ten minute drive from our home to the airport.

No time to think of that Christmas over three decades ago spent in the hospital with a new born son -- a little life lent to us for seventeen short days. No time to think of the tiny white casket, my own hacking cough, and the slow recovery.

Work days continue. There is no Christmas vacation where I work. Will I trade Christmas Day with the following Thursday? Oh surely, and how great! Will you trade Thursday day hours for the evening hours? That's better for you? Oh great! Then I'll be free for the return trip to the airport.

Christmas Eve falls on Sunday. Warm greetings to all our friends at church on Sunday morning. Home for lunch. Bake the lefse so it will be warm and fresh for supper. Pack the lefse, salad, and home baked Julekage (Christmas bread) in a box ready to be transported to our son's home.

No time to think of the Christmas Eve the children and I were home alone. Dad had the strangest working hours that year -- from supper until the wee hours of the morning. At five a.m. that year the children were up to greet their dad. We had a Christmas breakfast of lefse and bacon. Then the gifts were opened before dad turned in to be rested for his work.

That night Ken arrives. He has driven from his home in Rochester. Pile all the packages and the five of us into our two compact cars. Drive to Mac's home in Crystal for our Christmas Eve gathering. Add our packages to the ones already under the tree. Greetings to all -- to Sue's parents -- to Tedi and Jo. Kiss our grandson, Scot who is on leave from Fort Deven. Hi Eric and Leah. You both have grown since summer. Love up Heather and Malcolm -- the lucky twosome who can share their Christmas with four grandparents. Is it really true that this is the first time in five years that we have all been together for Christmas? Go ahead, you seven big kids, exchange your gifts before supper, before Tedi's family leaves. HAVE FUN !!

Sip the eggnog. Share the supper. Listen to the old, old story anew, as our son Mac reads, and his little son Malcolm sits on his lap. Then open the gifts. Open them slowly, one at a time, so all can see and enjoy. Far more gifts here than those brought by the Three Wise Men who journeyed from the east to Bethlehem.

Ah, affluent America! How dare you claim a bond with the babe born in a stable in Bethlehem so long ago?

In years to come, when I sort out the essays and vignettes of the times of our lives, I will need to delete this Christmas. Where there is no problem, there is really no story. But then, why does my heart burn so warmly within me when I think of Christmas 1978



Leah - 1974



Chai, Marilyn, Ken - 1970



Chai, Kaew, Nam, Sai, Id, Nuh - 2000

How Do You Say Goodbye?

February 1972

It all came back to me with both happy and painful clarity a few weeks ago when I finally cleaned out the basement freezer. A year and a half is too long for any cup cakes so I discarded them into the garbage, but not without some guilt. The cup cakes were still left over from Chai's open house which was held just two weeks before this departure from our home back to his native family in Thailand.

Chai is out Thai boy. He lived with us for a year and attended our high school as a foreign exchange student. But here or half way around the earth he will always be our son and brother to our children who are now grown and on their own.

It was before Easter that our family took a run down on the calendar and decided that June 14th would be the best day for an open house. Chai as a senior would be in the High School graduation ceremonies during the preceding week. All of our relatives living in the state (ten families in all), our friends, plus friends he had made would be welcome to that open house. We had no way of knowing how many would be able to come, fifty or one hundred and fifty.

As the time drew nearer, I wondered if I should have attempted such an endeavor. My full time work at the hospital was demanding. Yet it was a change of pace to be baking a variety of breads and tucking them away in that little freezer. There was also a growing supply of cookies baked by our daughter Marilyn who was Chai's age and was a college freshman that year. All activities were zeroing in toward our special day. Admittedly, baking took time and effort, but my biggest problem in preparations was the cleaning. Having everything clean and in order in every room in the house seemed next to impossible. I decided to ask my sister Bertha to come to the city from her farm in western Minnesota to help us for a few days. She came with enthusiasm as Chai had stolen her heart also. (How she later cherished his thank you note in which he said to her: "I don't think we could have made it without you.")

That Sunday was an absolutely perfect June day, neither hot nor cold, sunny with a few scattered, billowy clouds. The invitations had been given my mouth and by mail, welcoming friends to come at their convenience any time from 2 pm to 8 pm. Our relatives, who could number up to forty people, were asked to gather over the supper hour. The morning started with church attendance as usual. After a light lunch all six of us shared the chores of setting up the buffet table in the dining room and tidying the house.

I looked a little wistfully through the glass cabinet doors at the soft beige roses embossed on my china; I decided however that the paper plates with the tiny printed flowers and the matching napkins had been the wiser choice. My cup collection also remained untouched on the display shelf in deference to the styrofoam cups that we had decorated with colored felt pens. The goodies sparred for space on the buffet table. Marilyn filled large plates with her cookies; chocolate chip, oatmeal, caramel nut, spritz, brownies, net bars, and rolled sugar cookies. Bertha and I made open faced sandwiches of white, rye, raisin, and cinnamon breads. Even my husband got into the act as he vacuumed the new carpeting the boys had laid during the teachers' strike. Chai and Ken our youngest who was then in tenth grade set up the punch bowl, canned fruit juice and ginger ale in which floated a large pink ice chunk consisting of sugar free nectar frozen in a milk carton. Then of course there were the cup cakes, four kinds of them.

What if no one came?

Chai's total six feet of height suddenly stood before me. He was wearing his usual disarming smile.

"Mom, may I be barefoot for the party?"

My husband sells shoes, so naturally our whole family prefers going barefoot at home. It took me a moment to think of the best reply.

"It might be all right, but I think maybe we should all be dressed somewhat alike. If you prefer to go barefoot, then I will take off my shoes too." He returned a few minutes later with his feet properly shod.

My fear of no visitors was soon allayed. Within two hours there were people in such numbers in our small house that they pressed up the stairs and spilled over to the outdoors. The steady clicking of the ping-pong balls assured me that Chai's friends had found their way into the basement.

Between introducing guests to each other and keeping the table replenished, I had a glimpse of the Hi League from our church out front gathered under a tree. A few minutes later Chai came in, this face radiant, his whole being intoxicated with the excitement of the day.

“O Mom, did you see what the League kids gave me?”

He handed me a black leather bound Bible. The fly leaf was inscribed to: “A young man who walked with us, touched our lives, and caused East and West to meet”. On the cover, engraved in gold, was his formal name: THANON THONGSONDHI.

Later he was showing slides to some of his younger guests up in the expansion room that he and Ken shared. There he confided: “When I am 21 my head will be shaved and I will be a Buddhist monk for three months. It is traditional that all our young men do this. During this time a man cannot touch a woman, not even his mother.” He answered their questions about his way of life at home.

It was late in the evening when the last reluctant guests left. Then relieved of our shoes as we tidied a bit, chatting and reliving the highlights of the day, the doorbell announced the arrival of a family of our town relatives. We shared the foodstuffs that were left, and bedded them down for the night.

I was still wide awake when the rest of the household was dark and quiet. I took the guest book into the kitchen, sat at the table and read through the names. Seventy five, seventy six --

What was it about this boy, this young man really, that I could not explain? This tall thin boy with the black shiny hair -- What was this strange hold he had on us? There had been ample literature with good advice and many friends helped us give him a happy year. We opened to him our home and our hearts. But when his year was over, we realized he gave us more that we gave him.

August 2000

Thirty years after we said our goodbyes, I received a call from Bangkok. Chai called to inform me that his first born had come to the States as an exchange student.

“Which state?” I ask.

“Minnesota”

“Which city?”

”Stillwater”

“That is only about thirty five miles from here.”

“Mom”, (he still calls me mom) “how is all your family?”

“They are fine but they live far away. But next week they are all coming home for my birthday. Marilyn and her husband from New Hampshire, Mac from Florida, and Ken any my grandson Malcolm from Austin Texas.”

“I will give you the phone number of my daughter’s American family. I would like to have Nam meet my American family.”

Nam is seventeen and a very beautiful girl. We all had a very delightful supper in our back yard. It was indeed a blessed birthday celebration.

I Don't Work -- I'm Retired

Finally I hear the soft voices of the radio at my head. The radio cuts in early, but I am programmed not to hear it unless I have a need to rise early. It is Saturday, April 7th. I twist my head, open one eye, and read the numbers on the digital clock -- 6:48. Slowly I drag myself out of bed, pad into the dining room, disconnect the yogurt maker, and refrigerate the five white cups. The ten warm hours are up. Since there is no need to be up yet, I crawl back into bed for a few more minutes of shut eye.

Sorry, I can't sleep. At 7:15 I emerge once more, pull on heavy socks and a robe, turn up the thermostat, take in the newspaper, start a pot of coffee and a pan of oatmeal. Following a diabetic check I take 55 units of insulin.

During breakfast I read the paper. Usually Malcolm and I eat and read it together, but today he feels like sleeping late.

By 8:30 I am ready to start my the whole wheat bread by mixing the flower, yeast, milk, brown sugar, and salt to make a sponge. Twenty minutes later I dress and then wash up the dishes from last evening and breakfast. With my hands spanking clean from this chore I knead the bread.

By 9:00 I am ready to work on the turkey. I wash it thoroughly and then marinade it with lemon juice, water, and herbs all wrapped and placed in a double plastic bag. As I return it to the refrigerator I also write a note on the blackboard to remind me that I will need to turn it every two hours. The giblets are on the stove stewing. By 9:40 Malcolm has eaten his breakfast and we share a few moments of morning devotion.

It's 10:00 and time to start the apple pie. In 40 minutes it's ready to slip into the oven and it's also time to punch down the bread. I somehow manager to wash my hair, water the plants, make the beads, and clean the bathroom. At 11:30 I turn the turkey.

It's nearing noon and I must choose between cooking a meal and panning the bread. Guess which wins. The bread dough results in two dozen biscuits, six hamburger

buns, and two small loaves. Lunch is ready by 1:00. Another set of dishes to wash prepares my hands for kneading the white rolls I have started earlier. At 1:30 I take a minute to turn the turkey.

An hour later the dark bread is baked so I am free to walk to the store for some last minute groceries. I also walk to the drug store for a big ball for the children. When I return it is time for the crescent rolls to be formed and panned, and also time to turn the turkey.

By 4:00 I have time for a tea break. I lie on the sofa and read a magazine article. While the crescent rolls are baking I add three leaves to the dining room table and set it for ten people using my china closet dishes. Then I scrub 12 potatoes ready for Sunday morning baking. Much to my surprise, by 5:30 I'm free to watch the Saturday evening news, after turning the turkey.

Supper is followed by a long luxurious bath. I have a light over the tub so I can read. I then bag the extra bread for the freezer.

At 10:30 I turn the turkey and proceed to climb into bed. But first I turn up the volume on my clock radio, for in the morning I MUST get up early enough to stuff the turkey and have it in the oven by 6:30. We have invited a Hmong family, parents and six children, to share an American Sunday dinner with us.

The Brutlag / Borgendale Baptismal Dress

Maria Katherina Utz married Herman W Brutlag on February 9, 1902. It was a busy year for the young bride and all stitching had to be done by hand. Her first child, Bertha Barbara, was born on Christmas day of the same year. All her baby dresses were of the shorter version just barely covering the child's feet to protect them from the cold. A year later when she was expecting her second child, Papa Herman decided that his Katie should have a sewing machine. Katie's hands and feet and hands soon mastered the art of the treadle and cloth, resulting in long even seems. She sewed the dress full length. Her friend, Mrs. William Jesson crocheted the lace for the petticoat three and a half inches wide and the length of two pillow cases.

The dress was ready for the baptism of her first son, Carl Frank, born August 5, 1904. Her next son, Ben, was born December 5, 1905. Raymond was born November 20, 1907. A daughter Cora was born October 8, 1909, and another son, Arnold was born on October 9, 1911. The long full dress was worn not only for the Baptism, but also for church attendance to protect the child from the bitter cold of the Minnesota winter.

Five children wore out the original dress, but as the petticoat was removed as soon as the family arrived home, only a new dress was required for her seventh child, Minehart, born November 19, 1913. Two more children used the dress and the original petticoat, a daughter Lydia Fredericka born August 25, 1916 and Katie's last child Erwin Cleo Brutlag born September 19, 1918.

Lydia dearly loved this dress and requested to have it when she married and established her own home. Four of her children used the set for Baptism. Othelia Marie Borgendale, born July 21, 1939. She later changed her name to Tedi Borgendale Carlson. Malcom Bruce Borgendale born September 23, 1946, Marilyn Adele Borgendale born August 17, 1951, and Kenneth Wayne Borgendale born February 20, 1955. A son Dennis Duane, born December 20, 1942 was baptized in the home at the age of 16 days as an emergency. He died the following day. Dressing him in the festive Christening gown was not even considered.

The dress and petticoat were mailed to Minehart and Cora Brutlag for the Baptism of one of their children. Tedi's three children used the set: Scot Luther Carlson born June 20, 1960. Eric Peter Carlson born February 7, 1964, and Leach Michelle Carlson born January 24, 1969. The set was also worn by Mac's daughter Heather Sue Borgendale born February 10, 1975.

Patrick Theodore Murname born September 25, 1998, son of Leah, daughter of Tedi, daughter of Lydia, daughter of Katie Utz Brutlag wore the dress when he was baptized on December 27, 1998, thus becoming the fourth generation of the family to wear the dress which was sewed by his great-great-grandmother.



Patrick - 1998

A Little Breeze am I

After being held back and constrained for days, I was exuberant over finally breaking loose so I could give a little wiggle. Then **pronto**, first thing I knew, I was dancing joyously down the field.

I felt **power!** I felt power to flip the leaves on the trees -- to bend the little blades of grass -- to ruffle the mirror-like surface of water. I felt power to make great waves in the ripening wheat field, and to blow the tiny mosquito off his chosen course.

In my path was a little old house, weather beaten, and with window ajar. I scampered in, pushed the lace curtain aside, and rattled the ancient shade. With glee I whipped and scattered some papers on the table.

“My papers! My papers!” It is the fretful cry of a small child.

“Never mind, dear” The mothers voice is warm and reassuring.

“I’ll help you pick them up. You are so warm, and Mommy knows you don’t feel well. Maybe it would be better if you rested instead of trying to draw.”

I notice the mother’s hand touch the child’s forehead. I tug gently at the small curl on her right temple. I tussle the wisp of hair at the mother’s neck, and dry the perspiration.

“I do believe your fever has broken -- and there is a gentle breeze. Here, Honey, I need a rest too. Come sit on my lap, and I’ll rock you right by the window. Mother Nature has sent us a very special gift!”

I am a little breeze, intoxicated with power. I turn a somersault, and the power turns to joy!.

City Skyscrapers or Minneapolis in a Fog

The Government Center, that Giant Toaster, stands with its feet firmly embedded among the landscaped hillocks and snow covered water fountain. An umbilical cord reaches over the street , to the shiny, new Pillsbury Tower. These two towers , along with the City Center, the IDS tower, First National Bank, the Lincoln Center, and the Piper Jaffray & Hopwood structure, and various other columns, stand jauntily, with their heads in the clouds.

On ground level, dirty mud splashed busses and autos wend their way through the corridors. On the walk ways, men and women with unsmiling , introspective faces, thread their way gingerly around the muddy water puddles. Like so many ants, they struggle on , carrying their burdens , often bigger than life. Meanwhile, they seek warmth in down coats and jackets -- tired, wrinkled and in muted shades of beige, and brown, and blue, and mauve, and gray.

You monsters of the sky -- How dare you stand so tall and proud?

You stalagmites of glass, and concrete, and steel -- How dare you stand with your heads in the unseen above?

Do you not know that each one of you was once but a tiny spark of an **idea in the mind of some human, like those humans now walking at your feet?** Do you not know that those who create and build, have also the power to destroy?

Do you not know that even now one of your number is being threaded with cable so set that an explosion will cause all your walls to fall **inward?**

So, stand tall -- but humble.

Stand firm -- but be patient.

Stand proud -- but as the created, not the creator

Await the return of the sun, and the smiling faces.

State Fair

Sylvia, with deft fingers, washed the last breakfast dish, set it into the dryer rack, emptied the soapy dish water from the plastic dish pan, rinsed the dish cloth, hung it over the edge of the pan, and stepped lightly into the bath room. She brushed her teeth, put a mite of powder on her nose, and a bit of red lip stick on her upper lips, bit her lips together to share the color with her bottom lips, and ran a brush through her short brown permanent curly hair. Then she picked up her purse, checked that she had at least \$20 and her check book, glanced in the mirror in the dining room as she passed, stepped out the back door and walked briskly the half block to the corner bus stop. She was going to the State Fair. She did not need to hurry as the bus was scheduled to leave the end of the line at this very moment and it usually took five minutes to arrive at her corner twelve blocks later.

Sylvia wished that Max would go with her. But he didn't like the fair. She had gone alone many times since the children were grown and moved away. She mused as she waited. The world is full of couples: one likes to travel, the other likes to stay home; one likes to eat out, the other likes to eat at home; one likes to see a movie, the other wants only TV sitcoms; one likes an occasional steak, the other likes only ground hamburger. Anyway, Sylvia and Max had made a go of it for fifty years. She wouldn't let being alone spoil her day at the fair.

The bus was half full of passengers -- it was the first bus after 9 am when the dime fare goes into effect. Almost all would be transferring to a Fair Ground bus down town on Hennepin Avenue. There was a great deal of visiting as most every one had a spouse or friend. Sylvia felt more alone.

Standing at the transfer point Sylvia noticed another lady standing alone. She seemed a bit perturbed and definitely unsure of herself. Sylvia stepped closer and just stood near her. Both had her eyes glued to the on coming bus still some blocks away.

“Are you going to the fair?” Sylvia asked quietly.

“I surely hope to get there. I have never taken the bus to the Fair. In fact I have only been to the Fair once in my life.”

“I’ve been there many times. The bus is easy. No parking problems.”

As the bus neared, it was easy to read the sign **‘FAIR GROUNDS’**.

It was just natural for Sylvia to slip into the seat beside this lady. She was thin, attractively dressed, neat gray hair, and was wearing an anxious face.

“I hope I get there in time. My son is supposed to give a cake decorating demonstration at eleven this morning. I live on the south side of Bloomington. But I simply had to see his show. He is a student at Anoka Tech and his instructor said he is the top decorator.”

When the bus arrived at the Fair grounds, it unloaded quickly. Again it was just natural that Sylvia and the woman walk together. Standing in line to be admitted through the turn style -- admission was free on Senior Citizens Day -- they talked.

“My name is Sylvia.”

“Mine is Anne.”

Then they were in the grounds. Anne now looked completely bewildered.

“I haven’t the faintest idea where to go!” Anne was crestfallen.

“Food demonstrations are usually way over in the food and home makers buildings, near the 4H building about six or eight blocks from here. Let’s head for there.”

Sylvia walked past all the merchandise displays she loved so much to see. It was important to help Anne find her son, and it was getting close to time for the demonstration.

“There it is! There are some of his class mates, and there is his instructor Mr. Brown, and up there is the sign ‘ANOKA TECH’.”

She was shy and Sylvia encouraged her to go closer. “Where is Alvin?”

Mr. Brown stopped his work temporarily and looked at her -- not too friendly like. His eyes spoke the question his voice failed to ask.

“I’m Alvin’s mother. I have come from home in Bloomington to watch his demonstration. I have visited his class and have seen you before.”

Mr. Brown almost growled. “Alvin isn’t here. He’s in the hospital.”

“In the hospital! What for? What’s his problem?”

“I don’t know. All I know is that he is in the hospital, and we have no one to decorate the cake.”

“Which hospital?”

“Mercy, I think.”

Anne’s face turned white. Sylvia took her arm, and led her to a bench.

“Let’s find a phone, and call Mercy Hospital.” Sylvia suggested. Anne dug for a quarter. They looked around for a phone. Luckily there was one right at the entrance door. Unluckily, the area was cluttered with people, each one talking a little louder than the other, so he or she could be heard. Together they looked in the disheveled phone book and then finally called information. Anne repeated the numbers she was given and Sylvia jotted them on a piece of paper. The quarter came back. Anne deposited it again and dialed the hospital number.

“Is Alvin Statton a patient there?” A pause. “Sylvia, will you take the phone? I can’t hear with my hearing aid and all this talking in the background.”

Sylvia took the phone and repeated “Is Alvin Statton a patient there?”

“Just a moment, I’ll give you Patient Information.”

“Is Alvin Statton a patient in the hospital?”

“Just a moment. I’ll refer you to another station.”

“Is Alvin Statton a patient in the hospital? I’m calling for his mother and she is getting quite anxious.” Sylvia was almost pleading.

“Just a moment, I’ll give you Patient Information.”

Patient Information was about to give Sylvia another phone transfer when she demanded bluntly “Is Alvin Statton in your hospital?”

The reply was hesitant. “Well maybe, but he’s not on a medicine floor so we can’t give you any information.”

In disgust Sylvia replaced the receiver. And then it came to her. All those years she had worked as a cleric in the hospital down town. Of course, that is why they were being given such a run around. Alvin was in the Psych Ward. She could feel her own blood drain down as she realized it was up to her to explain this to Anne -- nervous, anxious, Anne.

“Let’s sit down for a minute before we call again.” Anne was easy to lead.

“Anne, Alvin is not on the medicine floor. He is no doubt in the Psych Unit. That is why we are having such a problem getting information. How old is your son?”

“He’s forty. He lost his job and since he has long been interested in baking and decorating he decided to take a course and try for a new vocation. He says Mr. Brown insisted that he was by far the best decorator and that all he had to do was to do it just as he did in class. He is a very private person. He doesn’t like people watching him. He was hoping he wouldn’t break down. Between jobs, he has no health insurance.” Amazingly, Anne did not break down and cry.

“Now I’ll try again.” Sylvia dug for a quarter. This time she used a different approach.

“Is Alvin Statton still a patient at the hospital or has he been discharged?”

This brought a different response. Anne had a short conversation with the nurse on his station.

“I have to go immediately. I have to catch the bus that goes from downtown Minneapolis to Mercy Hospital.”

Anne didn’t have any idea where the Fair Grounds exit was located. Sylvia pointed out the general direction, from which they had recently come, and soon realized it wouldn’t work.

“Here, I’ll walk back with you.”

It was near noon when they arrived at the gate. “Anne, you sit right here until the bus that’s marked ‘**To Minneapolis**’. Then you can transfer to the bus you need down town.”

“I know the bus from there. Thanks so very much for all your help.”

Sylvia by now was too hungry to be interested in the exhibits. She bought a pronto pup which she had never done before as she tried to avoid fatty foods. Then she bought a serving of fried onion rings. Max wouldn’t eat onions so she ate hers at the fair. Then she bought a large size chocolate Dairy Queen. Standing in line for that wasn’t so bad, as she could watch the sculptor carving a likeness of a dairy princess out of a huge chunk of butter. It reminded her of the beautiful butter roll her mother used to make with the rose impressed on the top.

Sylvia tried again to look at the exhibits. They had lost their attraction. Usually when she attended the fair alone she would stay until six or seven in the evening. Suddenly she had a desire to make the dime fare cut off at 3:30. She had just time to visit the home improvement building and there she saw it. There was a little cast iron stove with glass doors. That is what Max and she had been looking for.

“It’s an air tight cabin stove. Production of this model has started just this summer. They are made plain, or for \$60 extra you can have glass doors. Here are the places in Minneapolis that are handling them. We can’t keep up with demand. You will have to plan on ordering.”

She had found what she wanted. She looked at her watch. It was just three o’clock. There was still a half hour to make the dime fare home.

Sylvia stepped into an almost full bus and sat down beside a rather large woman. She looked a bit weary so Sylvia turned on a cheerful voice and asked “Did you have a nice time at the Fair?”

“No. I’m disappointed. All I came for was to watch the cake decorating demonstration. I want to learn how to make and handle that almond paste. The man got sick and it was canceled out.”

Sylvia picked up the literature about the cabin stove and didn’t say another word until she reached home.

On a cold winter evening Max sits on his favorite recliner, the TV remote control within reach. Sylvia curls up on the love seat in their basement living area. Together they watch the log burning in their little cast iron air tight cabin stove.

The Cost of Free Items

“Please ma’am, could you tell me the price of that free item?”

I tremble a little as I pick in the mail this afternoon. It is now 2:30 and sometimes the mail arrives by 11:30. I have had three hours in which to get edgy. I sigh with relief as I find there are only a few bills and a refund check from Blue Shield.

I can relax for another day.

Being home alone during the day hours with my husband at work and my children commuting to college is a new experience for me. For years I have worked and barely had time to read the mail that arrived in my absence. Right now my tension is of another sort -- I thought maybe someone might have sent me some money. (Blue Shield refund checks don't count.)

With time on my hands I keep looking at this certificate acknowledging me as the winner in a Tips Contest. It all happened about a year ago. Encouraged by the nurses on the station where I worked as a station secretary, I entered my idea which consisted of using plastic squeeze bottles instead of glass for the skin medications. The place was in a tizzy of excitement when I won first prize. The award was an invitation to a noon luncheon and a check for ten dollars. The nurses kidded me about furnishing a treat with the money but as I had purchased the plastic bottles and donated them I felt the money was already spent. Anyway, I brought a huge pan of home made cinnamon rolls and shared with all.

But how about that luncheon? Shouldn't I have a new dress for such an occasion? First prize winners from every hospital in the Metropolitan area would be there. So on my day off I bought a piece of wild psychedelic print and hastily stitched up a dress. The cost? Two yards of cloth at \$2.95 a yard, \$5.90; One pattern, \$1.00; one spool of thread, 39 cents; one twenty two inch zipper, 80 cents; chain for a belt, \$1.59; total, \$9.68. Ah, it is well within the ten dollar limit.

That week there was a special appeal for the camping fund for a group of young people in whom I was interested. Now I rationalized, I earned plenty of money for

all the dresses I needed especially since I sewed them . So why not give the ten dollars prize money to the kids? It was so easy to write a check.

A few weeks later I was down town wandering idly through my favorite department, housewares, when my eye rested on a set of deep orange canisters. I had been eyeing them for almost three years ever since we rebuilt our kitchen and decorated it in accents of orange. Now this, this was really the kind of item prize money should be spent for. Oooops -- I should have bought them last fall -- the price tag has gone up a dollar. It now reads \$10.95. Oh, well, what's a dollar? I placed them on my charge account and now I proudly display the set on my kitchen counter. The old canisters were just as functional but these new ones (clearly marked '**FLOUR**', '**SUGAR**', '**COFFEE**', and '**TEA**') are very attractive!

Suddenly I realized that I had spent my prize money four times!

Now that really isn't too bad considering what happened after I won a supply of sheets and towels. It was in the era of box top contests, in the fifties, when every radio program and every other magazine advertisement admonished us to send in a box top and a statement of twenty five words or less telling why you liked 'Sudso' or some other kind of laundry soap. I submitted six entries. Can you imagine the excitement at our house when I won one of the thousand Fourth prizes? It was delivered in a huge box at least a yard long, a foot and a half wide, and eight inches deep. Inside, very neatly packed, were nine bath towels, nine hand towels, nine wash cloths -- four sets in yellow, and five in pink. There were also nine fringed terry cloth guest towels each in a contrasting brilliant color. In addition there were four percale full size sheets and four percale pillow cases all first quality and snowy white.

You would think I could just put these lovely things to use and when they wore out they would be forgotten; not so in our family. The house in which we were living was of very ancient vintage and although we were busy knocking out walls and building in closets and cupboards no small space could be found suitable for building a linen closet. I had to store those beautiful towels on a shelf so high (in the kitchen, no less) that I had to climb on a chair and then on the counter to reach them. No wonder they remained good as new. It was all most disconcerting, especially if we had guests for whom we liked to supply our very best. It's amazing

how some small matter can exasperate a household. We simply gave up and bought a different house (admittedly, another old one.)

When we moved we packed the towels in a box and stored them to await the day they would have a shelf worthy of their thirsty terry loops. It was no less than three years and a thousand dollars later that our upstairs project was completed and I could with great satisfaction place the towels on the linen closet shelf in easy access for use. It was a great milestone in our lives.

Meantime, two other things happened that effected great changes for us, and of course, kept our purses slim. Our sleeping bodies grew fond of percale and as our old muslin sheets wore out I found myself replacing them with percale. The difference in price wasn't too great -- about a dollar a sheet -- and for a family of six, I would average eight replacements a year. Let's see, over ten years, that would be a difference of only eighty dollars not counting the pillow cases or the times I splurged on color or prints.

The other event was far less subtle and managed to take a considerably larger financial bite. At the opening of a supermarket in our neighborhood I won a set of Hallite Aluminum cookware. You may have seen this kind of kettle in a store or advertisement. The pans are molded rounding inward at the upper edge to discourage the contents from boiling over. The set included pans in three sizes, 1.5, 2.5, and 3.5 quart capacity, and a 10.5 inch chicken fryer. The four copper colored covers came with black knobs to match the black handles. These kettles were not intended to be stored inside a cupboard. They came complete with eight decorative hangers. The kitchen must be rebuilt to accommodate this hanging show piece!

Luckily my husband is handy with the hammer and saw. (A child in the neighborhood even called him "Mr. Board'n'nails") He built the cupboards himself, and not counting the new appliances we figured the cost to be about \$800. That wasn't so bad if only the smallest cover hadn't needed to be so close to the dining room doorway. It was forever being knocked down to the floor bouncing like a metal ball and clanging like a bell. Our frayed nerves prodded us to search for another house.

On purpose we chose a house in need of remodeling. Although it was in a much nicer neighborhood and half the age, the purchase price was only twice that of the house from which we moved. Materials for the garage came to \$1200, and for finishing the upstairs expansion the materials came to \$950. That included the knotty pine boards for the walls. Doing the work ourselves surely keeps the prices down. However, it's the kitchen which gives us the most satisfaction. We bought commercially produced cupboards for \$1200, a new refrigerator for \$350, a hood for the stove for \$50, and a dishwasher for \$185. The lay-it-yourself carpeting came to about \$210. That makes a total of less than \$2000. And on the narrow wall right beside the range hang those kettles with their covers -- beautiful, safe, and useful.

That is why each day I pick in the mail with mixed emotions of both anticipation and trepidation. I have this compulsion to enter contests, and should my winnings be small I think I could control the mushroom reaction before I forfeited all my savings.

But what if I should win a first prize of say \$5000? I simply couldn't afford it!

About the Author



Lydia Borgendale was born Lydia Frederika Brutlag near Fulda Minnesota in 1916. She was the eighth of nine children and she grew up on several farms in western Minnesota. After graduating from Herman High School she attended the Lutheran Bible Institute in Minneapolis where she met and married Malcolm Borgendale. She has lived in south Minneapolis ever since. Malcolm and Lydia lived together for 56 years and had 5 children -- Tedi, Denny, Mac, Marilyn, and Ken. Denny died shortly after birth.

Lydia worked for many years at the Hennepin County Medical Center and continues to do volunteer work. She has been an active member of Our Saviour's Lutheran Church for over 60 years. After her children grew up, she was able to travel the world and has been to Thailand, Hong Kong, Japan, Jordan, Israel, Egypt, Hungary, Germany, Norway, and Denmark. When in her mid-seventies, she bought a computer so she could write the stories of her life.

Notes:

“The Spring Storm”, Written January 26, 1979, Revised and entered March 17, 1990. On March 28th and 29th, 1924, there was a spring storm with an 18 inch snowfall, and high velocity winds that left western Minnesota fields almost bare, but also left farm sites and towns with eight to fifteen foot hard packed drifts. This story is dedicated to my granddaughter, Leah, who asked, “What was life like when you were a little girl?”

“Watermelon”, Entered February 11, 1991

“Remembering”, Entered March 13, 1990

“The Curling Iron”, Written October 24, 1990, Rewritten January 8, 1992.

“Ma’s Chickens”, Written August 17, 2000.

“The Red Velvet Dress”, Written February 5, 1998

“Miriam”, Written 1980, Entered March 1, 1990

“The Paper Boy”, February 16, 1972

“TV Commercial”, Written 1979. Entered February 19, 1990

“Telecommunications”, Early fall, 1990, Written January, 1991, Corrected February, 1992

“Christmas -- Color Me ‘55”, Written 1985.

“Christmas -- Color Me ‘65”, Revised January 26, 1990

“The Brutlag / Borgendale Baptismal Dress”, December 21, 1998

“A Little Breeze Am I”, Written February 9, 1984, Revised January 30, 1990, Entered March 11, 1990,

“City Skyscrapers”, Written spring 1984, Entered March 13, 1990

“State Fair”, Written 1986, Revised September 2, 1989

“The Cost of Free Items” Written 1972, Revised 1990

