

*The year of the first "Cousins Reunion" Aunt Eva wrote about her memories of her parental home and family. "Aunt Eva" loved all her family dearly and was always interested in each and every one. I include her story which was written in 1973, in loving memory.*

## Memories Of My Home And Family

One of my earliest recollections was when our family moved to the home place in Reno County, northwest of Sylvia. It was March and of course cold, so being the youngest, I had to ride in the buggy with Mother. I suppose I expressed my discontent all the way, because when we got to the drive, I was allowed to get out of the buggy and climb up on the wagon with Frances. It was in this home that I enjoyed a happy childhood for several years.

Our Father was a short, stocky, bearded man. He was a hard worker and loved music and fun. On Sunday afternoons he would play the fiddle (I didn't know about violins) and Maggie would chord on the organ and we would all gather around and sing. The old songs we sang aren't heard very much any more. There is one, however, which we used to sing often, entitled "When There's Love at Home". This song has been featured on television in the King Family Specials. We sang hymns too. I remember a couple of lines from one of Pa Pa's favorites. "Just a little talk with Jesus doth soothe the rugged road – and helps we to go onward when I faint beneath the load". The pioneers did indeed carry loads, but sometimes I think they were less frustrated than we are today. I remember when my Father kissed me he always kissed my forehead.

When we came to the table, all were quiet and heads were bowed while Pa Pa "asked the blessing." Our Father loved all of his family, but he and Maggie seemed to have much in common and were very close. He liked to play jokes on Maggie. One evening when she and Ed were courting she sat down at the sewing machine in her petticoat and underwaist, just long enough to sew a seam before fitting the dress she was making. No one noticed Pa Pa call Leona to his chair and tell her something. Leona slipped outside and soon a loud knock came at the door. Pa Pa hurried to the door paying no heed to Maggie's frantic plea's, "Wait a minute Pa – wait a minute Pa." He opened the door wide with a surprised, "Good Evening, Ed. Come right in." A little excitement and a big laugh. Anyway, Maggie was relieved to find it was just Leona at the door.

We all loved the old sandy quarter and worked hard to raise the \$800.00, which it cost. We built a new house and how happy we were. Our Mother was a wonderful woman – very practical and how she worked. I can still see in my memory, big gardens with many kinds of vegetable and along the edge, a row of bright multicolored phlox – because "Sammy liked Phlox." Sammy was Pa Pa. Like the virtuous woman in the Bible she brought her food from afar. In early spring she would be up on the hillside picking "green" and later there were sand-hill plums to pick and can. A bachelor neighbor raised peaches, so she canned for him and in this way got peaches for her own family. There would be a trip away up to Keeslings for blackberries – to Wiess's for grapes and over by Sylvia to Speakers for apples. One time I didn't happen to have jelly on my bread at school and some of the kids did. That night I asked Ma Ma if we were the poorest people in the world. It gave her a jolt, but she certainly informed me that indeed we were not. I think I had jelly the next day.

Ma Ma wasn't always working – sometimes it was necessary for her to go to town with Pa Pa to the Bank. At these times she was very particular about her clothes. One thing she insisted on – she must have a pin, a ribbon or something pretty "at her throat." In regard to business she taught us to "deal to the penny." If we owed anything and could not pay we should go to our creditor and talk to him. No matter what the circumstances - "one should go and show an honest face." These were her exact words. People in days gone by did not have access to very much reading matter, but Mother loved to read and I sincerely believe she was far ahead of the average woman of her time and station in her knowledge of literature. We all liked to play Authors – we made them out of cardboard from show boxes and Mother could always supply the data. Time was taken for family devotions when the Bible was read and prayers offered.

Our parents and the eight children they raised were never living in the home at the same time. Irby and Albert were married in February before I was born in May. Maggie, Ernest and, I believe Frances were teaching after we moved to the home place and before Pa Pa died. Fern and Edith were not too much younger than I and it was a big treat when Irby's came. I remember when they got the new surrey – just like the one they sing about – with the fringe on top. There was just as much pride and excitement as there is over a new Cadillac today. Ernest and the girls got home on weekends when they were close enough. They would all get home for Christmas. The old square stand table served us, as there were no Christmas Trees. The gifts were placed on the table on the shelf beneath and on the floor under the table then all were covered with a snowy white sheet. There were nice gifts, pretty new dresses that the older girls had made for Leona and me and one year a lovely brown coat for me with a hood to match. The hood had pretty white ribbon across the front. I thought it was from Santa, but Fern and Edith wore a new coat just like mine, only their hoods didn't have white ribbons. Jessie just couldn't keep from talking to me about my coat, until I finally realized it was Jessie who had made this pretty outfit for me for a Christmas present. My mind began to sort of unfold and I knew for the first time “Who Santa really is”

Leona and Lester were a lively pair. They did very interesting things and I tagged along. We used to ride down a hill in the pasture on some old cultivator wheels. We would pull and tug till we got them up the hill, the Leona and Lester would sit on the cross piece between the wheels and I would sit on the tongue which drug behind. Lester would give a big kick and away we would go. Then the tug and pull up the hill again. No expensive toys, but we had lots of fun. Then there was the long walk from school in the Fall and the catalpa beans we smoked. Yes, we smoked catalpa beans. I didn't start it but I stayed with it the longest. We had trees at home and as I didn't have much to do and was lonely, I smoked those old beans till the folks had to put a stop to it. Years later when Fern and I attended summer school at Emporia, I took a puff on a cigarette once but when I saw the shock and shamed expression on Fern's face it took the smart alecky all out of me. I never did that again.

We always raised melons – watermelons and muskmelons, Leona and Lester would save seeds. Mother paid them for this job, but she required them to have the seeds clean, sacked and labeled as to variety. Once when Leona presented the seeds to Mother on the sack was no label, but it had little nicks all along the seam. When Mother asked what kind of seeds they were, Leona relied, “they are Hackensack”. “And Lester said, “We will just hack the sack.”

When the rest were old enough to work, I was alone and had to work out my own entertainment. I fashioned two play houses from boxes and various junk. One was mine and the other for the “little girl that lived over the hill.” We visited back and forth considerable. I also loved the birds and went the rounds every morning climbing the trees and visiting my birds' nests. I never harmed the nests and the birds were used to me and never seemed to make a fuss or mind me at all. I was never afraid of any of the wild wife we had on the farm – not even the rattlesnakes. I knew they were poisonous and dangerous and I used caution but I wasn't afraid of them. It was not uncommon for me to enjoy the company of a little sand lizard clinging to the front of my dress while I herded the cows. Mother who always held high hopes for her children, thought I would probably be a renowned naturalist some day.

Our happy years on the home place were few. I was seven years old when Pa Pa contracted pneumonia in March of 1907. As his condition worsened, the children all came home and everything was done that anyone knew to do in those days. The morning of his death, Albert came upstairs where Fern, Edith and I were sleeping. I remember his saying, “Jump up quick, girls. Grandpa is awful bad.” We were all in the room together when Pa Pa passed away. Many people today think it would be terrible to waken a young child at such a time. However, Irene wrote to me recently and said she thought they were right in the old days. Children are members of the family and they should not be left out of something that makes a big difference to all. This was a deep sorrow that the family all shared together. I am glad I was awakened and I proud of my daughter's insight.

The next few years were pretty hard. Ernest and Jessie both taught school southwest of Stafford in the community where Irby and Albert lived. The home had swindled down to Mother, Frances, Lester, Leona and

me. Frances was teaching too, but she was at home in the summer and on weekends. She was a wonderful daughter and Sister. She did the family sewing, set incubators and raised chickens, made trips to town as she could always handle the horses, washed, ironed and whatever else was needed. When and Ed Moyer started courting. Mail time was a highlight as it brought a message from Ed almost every day in the form of an old fashioned post card. Sometimes they were rather ordinary but usually they were especially funny or very pretty. One I remember was especially baffling. It read, "We are too young, dear one." Then a picture of a muskmelon. This was quite a puzzle until it was explained that muskmelons were also called cantaloupes.

After Lester's accident, his mental illness came on rather gradually. It was all so strange and unreal to me that I could scarcely grasp the situation at all. Not, until the day that Frances took the team and buggy and made the long drive down southwest of Stafford and brought back Ernest and Albert, did I realize that we were losing Lester. Ed Moyer stayed with Mother and we younger ones that day. There were no telephones, Frances had to – it was the only way.

That Fall we moved to Stafford. I remember so well Jessie telling me when we moved, not to be in too big a hurry to make friends. She told me sometimes the kids that come around first were not the ones I would want and to take a little time and see which ones I liked best. This proved to be good advice. Olive Haring and some of her friends didn't come to me for several days, but when they did, I had already made up my mind and Olive proved to be one of the closest and best friends I've ever known.

In November, after we moved to town, Frances and Ed were married. After this time the memories of my family were mostly the times I spent in the homes of my married sisters and Ernest's. How I loved my little nieces and nephews and I think their Mothers rather liked to have me around during the busy seasons. I was enough older to keep an eye on the kids. I don't remember of spending much time in Irby's home but I do remember that when Mother, Leona and I lived in Stafford, Irby and Albert came after us different times and took us to their home for the Thanksgiving vacation. This was a real treat. We kids used to play blind fold in the big empty store building and sometimes Albert would play with us.

It was exciting to go to Maggie's. That is where the action was. Jessie spent the summers helping Maggie, then there was Ed and one or two regular hired men besides the kids and me. This was the regular daily crew and then when there was harvest, threshing or silo-filling the numbers to cook for and the vast amounts of food was really something. My joy was to look after the little boys. Glen liked to play like shoes were horses and he drove them day after day. When I arrived my cherished white shoes immediately became the "old grays" and I never could find a place to hide them that he didn't dig them out. Sometimes he would get the strings tangled (these were the harnesses) and called on me to straighten them out. This was a challenge. Because they must be "like Daddy only doos." Very seldom could I satisfy him but I was told that after I went home and Jessie or Maggie tried to help him he insisted that they be "like Aunt Ebby doos.": I would take the three little boys and an old quilt outside under the trees about the last half hour before meal time. I was at Maggie's the night Little Cleo was born. My task was to take the three little boys to bed with me and keep them quiet. Glen and Paul were no problem – they slept like logs – but that Gerald! Every little sound his head would dart up like a jack-in-the-box, his eyes would pop open and he would demand, "What 'at Aunt E?" I would manage to quiet him and would think he was about asleep, when some slight noise would prompt a re-run of the whole dialogue. Anyway, when morning arrived there was another little Keesling boy. He was a darling little fellow, but they didn't get to keep him very long. Something over a year later Mother and I were with the sorrowing family when Little Cleo died. I don't remember of being in the Keesling home very much after Clair and Geneva were added to the family. I do remember Maggie invited Ira and I and our family there for Christmas – I believe it was the last Christmas she was alive. It was indeed a lovely Christmas, which I shall never forget.

I must tell you of my happy visits at Ernest and Nettie's. Nettie had some characteristics, which were somewhat like those of our own Mother. She was very practical and always busy. However the thing I remember most was her piano playing. I dearly loved to hear her play. We would gather around the piano sometimes and sing. Ernest always liked to have her play "The Chariot Rose of Ben Hur." It was lively and beautiful and how she could play it. I was in their home lots of times when the children were little. One

experience I've always remembered was when Ernest guided Leona and I through a blizzard from Frances' home to his. We would have surely perished had it not been for the way he used his head and kept going. He kept his direction by going across the corn rows until we finally reached the fence quite near the house. We couldn't see the house or any buildings at all, but he followed the fence until he found a certain crooked post that he knew was directly across from the house – then he guided us on in. After Ernest and Nettie moved to Hudson, I spent one winter in their home. This was my last year of teaching. It was a happy year – their home was a joy to be in. The two men teachers were boarding in their home too and Clarence German was running a filling station in Hudson and he boarded there also. Ernestine was in my room – a third grader. At home she was learning to embroider and I used to help her get the tangles out of her thread. Ernest had made a very useful blackboard for his children. It was a large section of good slate blackboard from an old-schoolhouse. He had made a nice frame for it and it hung in the dining room. Ernest was a wonderful brother to me – you might say Brother and Father both. He helped me get lined up to go to Emporia to summer school and also to get the teaching job in Hudson. After Ira and I were married he used to come out to see us quite often. At one time the family came to Centerview and put on an evening's entertainment of music and reading – which of course made Leona and I very proud. I believe he came to all of our children's high school graduations.

I was in Frances and Ed's home quite often when the children were little. I was there when Ardis was born and I spent that night with our good neighbors and friends, the Sauers. I remember being in their home when Ardis was learning to talk. She had a good vocabulary, but sentences weren't so easy. About meal time this odd combination of words would come out fast and furious- “Ardis hungry, eat supper cook.”

I was getting pretty well grown up when Jessie and George were married, but I did spend some time in their home. I spent three weeks with them on the homestead in Colorado in August before Madge was born. It was a wonderful visit. After having been there I appreciate very much Jessie's book “Phoenix Bowl.” Later I spent a few weeks with them in Lakin, Kansas and was there when Georgia was born.

I love all of you and my Gold Bless Each and Every One.

Your Aunt

Eva (Anderson)Dimmick

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