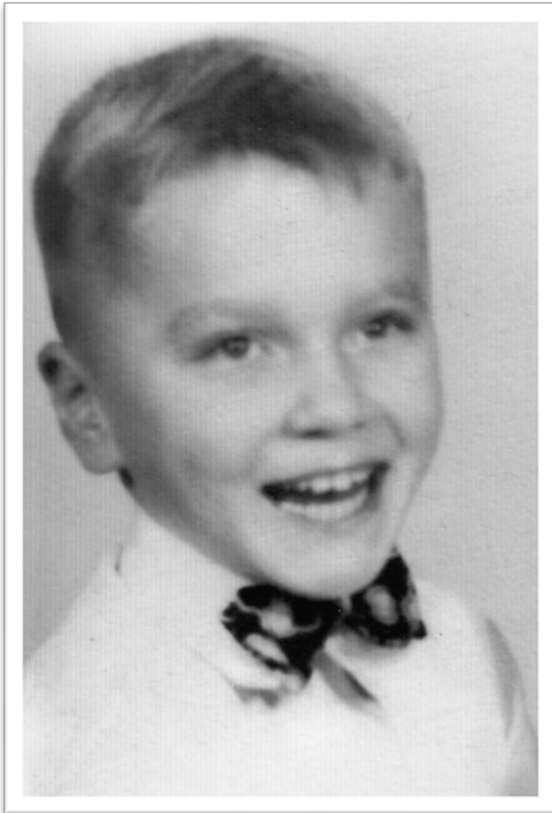


32 Childhood Stories



By Papa Jack and Nonna Linda Hoeschler

December 2010

Introduction

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler

Jack and I were thrilled with the birth of our first long-awaited grandchild, John Ignatius (Jack) O'Brien, in March 2005. After a serious car accident in June of that year, Jack O'Brien's very existence became a critical reason for our wanting to live and to heal, so that we could play with, care for and guide him. The birth of his brother, William Egan O'Brien, on the third anniversary of the accident, further evidenced the healing mission and power of these boys.

I began composing songs at various stages of Jack O'B's development to celebrate major milestones with music. I continued to do so for William. At the same time, Jack Hoeschler began to write stories about his childhood that he wanted to tell his grandchildren. After he completed a dozen or so tales, I decided that although my childhood was not nearly as packed with adventure, I should write some of my memories, too. We have added an *Uncle Wiggily*-type ending to the stories, promising that if the reader does something good suggested by each story, he or she will get to hear the next tale.

These stories are written for children, from each of our own child's memory. We tried to record stories about our early childhoods as we remembered them. Fact checking has been done as much as possible, leading to some elongated explanations that our pre-teen minds did not grasp at the time. Although the language is more advanced than *Dick and Jane*, it is definitely geared to the younger literate mind. We used family photos as much as possible to illustrate the stories, adding historic photos second, and finally, clip art to enliven and explain the verbiage.

Although we dedicate this book to our grandsons, we offer these stories to all of you to enjoy and remember: nieces, nephews, family and friends. You have helped make us the people we are today, so these are your stories, too.

Saint Paul, December 2010

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The Magic Kingdom of Gracemere

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler

When I had just turned three in August 1947, our Lovas family moved to the Gracemere Estate in Tarrytown, New York, 25 miles north of New York City. It was the 10th house I had lived in since I was born in Joplin, Missouri in 1944. My mother and I moved around often during World War II, in order to live near the Army bases where my officer father was stationed. When he went overseas we usually lived with or near family.



After the war ended in 1945, housing was still in short supply. Our reunited family stayed with friends in Ossining where Laura was born in February 1946, and in several Yonkers, New York apartments. My father worked in nearby White Plains for the Macy-Westchester newspapers. (1948)



A man named Henry King Browning had purchased Gracemere, an 80-acre estate on a hill above the Hudson River, in 1910. This rolling land featured a majestic 1850 granite mansion called ←Gracemere Hall (2010), plus many other outbuildings.

Browning was vice-president of Browning, King & Co., a clothing manufacturer and haberdashery chain. Browning's grandfather had started the business. He first made a fortune by manufacturing clothes for Gold Rushers, next secured the contract to make Union soldiers' uniforms, then added clothing stores (with King) after the Civil War. Browning, King clothes were popular among the prep school set, and Browning, King uniforms were worn in many wars, and by many service sector workers. (Browning, King store in Minneapolis, 1925)

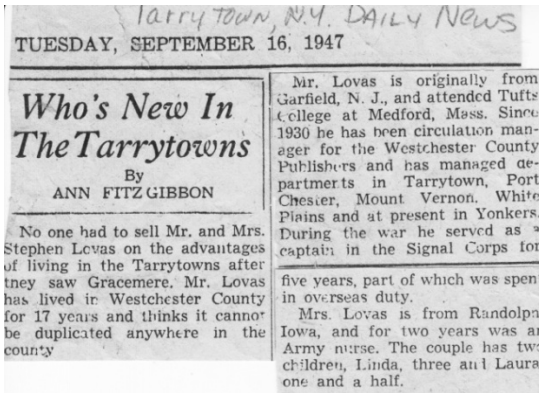


As Browning's four daughters married, he built each a gracious home at Gracemere, such as the one pictured. But the Browning, King business went bankrupt in 1934 and Mr. Browning died in 1936. Although at least two of his daughters, Mrs. Green and Mrs. Dickinson, stayed in their Gracemere homes, no one wanted to spend the money to heat all the other big houses and to maintain the estate grounds.



A Swiss-born clock and watch importer, Walter Kocher, bought most of Gracemere after World War II, except for the two Browning daughters' homes. Kocher hired a local Tarrytown architect, Robert Green, to design 20 new rental homes and apartments, using the existing estate buildings. (Green was also the architect of Transfiguration School that we attended, and our 1954 Altamont Avenue home.)

Green divided the three unoccupied granite homes, including Gracemere Hall, into apartments. Each apartment was different and surprising: some rooms were like ballrooms, others were like closets. Green also transformed the existing stables and other utility buildings into homes that looked like ranch houses. (*Newspaper photo shows stables after their conversion to homes.*)



Our family moved into Gracemere's squash courts building. Squash is a game like tennis, but played inside. The squash courts had been remodeled with a floor constructed midway up the court walls. The upper level of our house contained our living room, kitchen, bath and 3 bedrooms, two of which were tiny.



Below was a basement which had a small furnace room surrounded by a large storage area and garage.

As I look back, it was a funny house, with small, dim and damp rooms. But I loved the large print wallpaper in our living room (and every living room at Gracemere!), as well as the lovely grandfather clock → in the corner, a Kocher import. The built-in bread drawer in the kitchen seemed like high luxury after our old tin counter one, and was a major selling point for 3 year-old me. I thought we had moved to an enchanted place.



Gracemere was magic for Laura and me because it had many wooded areas which contained treasures and mysteries. The woods were full of broken fountains, old gardens, underground food storage structures, and half-buried dried-out water cisterns. Each offered a place for us to explore, to hold a club meeting, to play a game, or to hide.



We found a box of old dog biscuits in our basement that I loved to eat, as well as barrels of the landlord's clocks where we would set the alarms. We would use a pile of roof slate tiles as blackboards, and some old horse carriage equipment for pretend travel. Laura and I applied our imagination to transform any "found objects" into treasured playthings.

We had to watch out for non-toxic snakes, usually black runners→ which could bite when provoked. One time Laura and I found a dead snake in our driveway with its jaws wide open. We skewered plantain weed leaves on its fangs. I stupidly tried to convince Laura that it was just a big harmless worm.



Some afternoons Laura and I would knock on a neighbor's apartment door for a visit. We could always count on Mrs. Frost and Mrs. Patterson to give us tea and cookies at 4 o'clock, traditional teatime. These older women would tell us wonderful stories about growing up and about their families. We thought nothing about first being invited, because we seemed to think that they were always glad to have our company.

At times I would just wander off by myself through the woods. I had great confidence, matched by a hearty desire to explore areas around me. Luckily, in those days parents didn't have to worry so much about our safety. Usually I didn't go too far, but once when I was about 4, I



walked up a road and behind one of the old Gracemere granite houses, and through the woods to another estate with a ←gracious home.

I was invited in for cocoa, and can remember being torn. I was a bit cautious but didn't want to seem rude. A woman in a white uniform served me at the kitchen table, and there my father found me. I could tell he was worried, but he held my hand and calmly walked me home. He told me never to do that again. I promised I wouldn't, although it didn't stop all of my land explorations.





I later heard my parents say that they had found me at the home of Father Divine. He was a famous evangelical preacher who founded the International Peace Mission movement. One of his sermons inspired the 1944 song: *Ac-Cent-Tchu-Ate the Positive*. (Father and Mother Divine at Tarrytown)

One of my recurring childhood nightmares was that I was trapped in a big house with women in white uniforms guarding me. I always escaped by tying my bed sheets together, and using these as a rope. I am sure this dream came from my time at Father Divine's. But I am also sure now that the Divines' staff called my parents to come get their little lost child.



We had a "lake" at Gracemere which was really a small pond. It was probably created by dredging a marsh and lining most of the edge with a concrete rim. My ongoing goal was to be able to swim across the lake to the other side, something my father could do easily and gracefully. We did not care that the lake was weedy in late summer, and that green scum coated us when we emerged.

After all, it wasn't a swimming pool. (←1949, 1952→)



In the spring and fall we would go fishing in the lake. My father would send Laura and me out to the leaf pile, to dig up night crawlers or big worms.



When we had enough bait in our old coffee can, we would unscrew the heads of our kiddy garden rake and hoe, and use the handles as fishing poles. We tied thick package string on the poles, and used safety pins to hold the worms. I don't think we caught many fish, but we had great fun fishing with our ever-patient father.

We would ice skate on the lake in the winter, although I only had double blade runners→ that I would strap onto my rubber boots. You could just slide-walk, not glide, with these skates. I didn't really learn to skate until I was about 11 and Mother bought me used hockey skates. The figure skates I always wanted came much later.



Most of our winter activities involved building snowmen and sledding on Gracemere's many hills. One Christmas I got a Flexible Flyer sled which I considered a great treasure. Laura and I would haul it all over the place to try to find the best snow and slopes. (*The stone hill in front of our house was hard on sled runners, 1950.*)

During the first December in our new house, New York had a record blizzard. Over two feet of snow fell in a couple of days. Even today some old timers talk about the famous snowstorm of 1947. I was happy to help dig us out→, a project of several days. I remember the excitement of seeing my father crawl out the living room window to get to his car, because our front door was blocked by snow. How he drove to work I can't imagine.



During another blizzard a few years later, our furnace went out. We didn't have a fireplace, and somehow my father got hold of a kerosene ←stove to heat our small home. Something happened with the operation of it, however, and the first morning we all woke up with our faces, pajamas, bedding and furniture covered with oily soot. What a mess it was to clean up using only cold water and rags. Laura remembers singing *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*



about her smudged-face self.



We lived in Gracemere for seven years, from August 1947 until August 1954. I was 3 when we moved in and 10 when we left. It was the most happy, enchanted time of my childhood. Our lives there seemed sweet and simple, with few luxuries, but with unlimited opportunities to imagine and

explore. Gracemere was one discovery and one adventure after another.



Gem Lake reminds me of Gracemere. That is why I think the cabin is such a magical place, full of adventures for you children to discover and enjoy!

Now if you help Papa with the vegetable garden and yard chores at Gem Lake, the next time you can hear how Nonna turned herself into a horse!

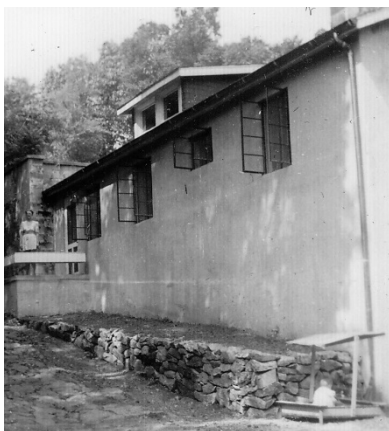
Games

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler



When I was a child, Laura and I didn't have many games or toys at Gracemere. The playthings I can best remember, except for our dolls, were for outdoor use. We had a ←swing set and sandbox, probably purchased from Sears in 1947 when we moved to Gracemere. I also remember a few balls, a croquet set, a Schwinn bike that I got in 1952 for my First Communion, and a Flexible Flyer sled. The swings were lightweight, and if we swung too high, the swing legs would lift off the ground, both frightening and thrilling us.

I also had a gardening set of rake, shovel and hoe, much like the kid-size one at the cabin. The gardening set was always special to me since my father brought it home after work one night as a surprise. I was thrilled, and believe it was the only important gift I got for no special reason at all. We used the tools in our gardens, particularly while working alongside my father in his beloved tomato and cucumber patches.



With these few toys and equipment pieces, Laura and I used our imaginations a lot. For instance, we would collect food boxes and empty cans to play *Grocery Store*. The ↘sandbox seats would serve as store shelves, from which we would sell our products to each other or to pretend customers. For money, Laura and I would collect the horse



chestnuts that fell from the many trees in Gracemere. We would peel off the prickly green shells to expose the treasured glossy nuts, our coin of the realm, and store these nuts↑ in paper bags.

We made puppets from odd fabric pieces and used our old TV packing box as a theater. Piles of abandoned slate roof tiles → became writing surfaces for an imaginary classroom. We also made up several games when we lived in Gracemere.



One of our two favorite invented games was *Going to Alaska*. We played this



game only one day a year, in the heat of the summer. Laura and I would wait until noon to see how hot and humid it was. If we were quite sure that this day was going to be the hottest day of the whole summer, we would try to find an old blanket or two, some hats and scarves, and “food” (empty cans and boxes). We would go to the garage and pull out our Flexible Flyer sled.



We would fasten on the back rest that came with the sled, used for hauling little kids through the snow. Then we would pack up the sled and drive our team of imaginary sled dogs through the Yukon snows of Canada and into Alaska. We would talk about the deep snow, the harsh winds, and the dogs’ well-being. The game seemed to last for hours, and we were always sad to see it end. But we knew that next summer we would get to go to Alaska again.



The Yukon Territory in northwest Canada became a great source of interest to me. For several years every box of ←Quaker Puffed Rice and Quaker Puffed Wheat contained a deed→ to a one-inch square piece of land from the Klondike Big Inch Land Company. I saved up tens of these deeds, advertised on



the *Sergeant Preston* radio show. I hoped to go one day to this wild place, full of miners, wolves and Canadian Mounties, in order to claim my land. I can also remember a treasure map to find Yukon gold, undoubtedly another advertising gimmick. My imagination for gold prospecting and Yukon adventure ran wild.

Gracemere only had a couple of other children living there at any one time, and their families usually left after a year or two. The Gracemere living spaces were small, the landlord was difficult, and the grounds maintenance left much to be desired. One of our precious Gracemere playmates was ↯Stephanie Kob,



my classmate at Transfiguration School. She taught Laura and me how to play our second favorite game, *Horse*. Stephanie started riding horses at age 4, and within a few years she was winning major ribbons and medals. She was the youngest winner of “Good Hands” in the National Horse Show at Madison Square Garden, beating out teens and adults.

HORSE SHOW PRIZE TO STEPHANIE KOB

Tarrytown Girl, 11, Wins in
Medal Class on Society
Melody at Sparta

By GORDON S. WHITE JR.
Special to The New York Times.
SPARTA, N. J., Aug. 5—
Stephanie Kob of Tarrytown,
N. Y., displayed excellent horsemanship as youngsters held the spotlight during the first day of the Lake Mohawk Horse Show at the Squire Hills Ring today. The 11-year-old rider qualified for the American Horse Shows Association medal class events to be held at the National Horse Show in Madison Square Garden this fall.

It seemed, however, that all Stephanie liked to talk about was horses. So, since she was our only neighborhood playmate at the time, we talked about horses



too. And then she taught us how to move like horses. First we had to have horse gear: bits, bridles and reins. We used twigs, string, and white medical adhesive tape to make them. We would wrap the tape around a twig to make a bit that would go into our mouth. Then we would tie package string to both ends of the bit to make a



bridle and reins. Stephanie taught us to how to trot, canter and gallop in the yard, just like horses. We neighed. We also would pretend to compete in the riding ring, and Stephanie would award us ribbons.

When I was 10 we moved into town and the games became more typical, such as *Kickball* and *Monopoly*. But when I remember my childhood games, I am most happy when I think about playing *Going to Alaska* and *Horse*.

Now if you share your toys and put them away, the next time you can hear about the day a kid almost drowned at Papa’s waterfront show!

The Church, Holy Mary and Me

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler



When I was a little girl I loved going to church with my father. Since my mother was Methodist, and my father was Roman Catholic, he had the responsibility for taking us to ←Transfiguration Catholic Church in Tarrytown. The parish had been established in 1896 for the Irish servants who worked on the Tarrytown-area estates.

My father was always very respectful of the priests, almost to a fault. He particularly admired

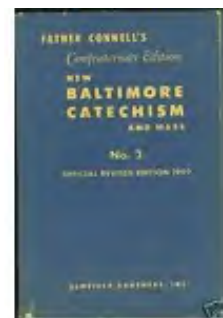
Father John A. Wholley→ who was our thoughtful, decent parish priest. Dad enjoyed giving *Four Roses* whiskey to the priests at Christmas, and slipping cash to them throughout the year, much to Mother's dismay.



My father expected us to be nicely dressed and well-behaved in church. All shoes were polished on Saturday afternoon, in preparation for Sunday Mass. When Laura and I would elbow each other to “protect our space” at Mass, Dad never spoke angrily, but simply gave us a disappointed look to stop our nonsense. We also depended on the clean white handkerchief he carried in his pants pocket, which he freely used to wipe our eyes, noses or faces. (1951)



In those days, if a Catholic and Protestant married, the Protestant had to promise to raise the children Catholic, as my mother did. In fact, I was quite proud of Mother because she read a lot of books about Catholicism and was a whiz on its rules. She knew when you had to abstain from meat, which feast days obliged you to go to church in the middle of the week, etc. Other Catholic mothers often called her to interpret these mysterious and complicated Church rules.



Laura and I both attended Transfiguration School → which was built and run by our parish. I entered in 1949 in the first kindergarten class. Most class members completed



all nine grades there, graduating from ↓8th grade in 1958. I fondly recall the excitement of walking into a brand new school, admiring the hand-carved religious statues, and happily feeling the heat of our kindergarten floor.

(1950 kindergarten graduation with Uncle Jack and Aunt Bette Lovas)

Our education was in the firm and uninspired hands of the Sisters of Mercy. The teachers occasionally had health and mental breakdowns. Our art, music and gym classes were limited. The only field trips I remember were to the St. Vincent de Paul orphanage across the street. Doesn't this sound grim? But it wasn't. Our classes were orderly and our teachers worked hard to ensure that all of us learned the basics, and then some. We got a solid, no frills education. I can still diagram sentences when going to sleep!



While we lived in Gracemere my father would drive us to school each day on his way to work. Because he liked to get to the office by 7:30, he dropped us



off at ←church (next to our school) for the first Mass of the day at 7:30. On First Friday and Holy Days of Obligation we also attended the 8:30 Mass with our schoolmates. The only day of the week we didn't go to Mass was Saturday. I was thrilled when I made my First Communion in 1952, so that now I could take communion at Mass. I didn't care that you couldn't even have a sip of water, much less anything to eat before church. But I did worry that I might "hurt" the host in my mouth. The Sisters of Mercy warned us that if we bit into a communion wafer it would bleed.



I remember my dress for First Communion. Most of the girls wore frilly dresses, but my mother was more practical. She bought me a ←sheer white dress and two slips to go under it, one white and one yellow. Because you could see the slips, the yellow color shone through and I would wear it with a yellow ribbon for parties. My father, upon seeing the dress, wondered aloud if I shouldn't have a fancier Communion outfit. I was thrilled at that suggestion, but Mother's flexible solution won out, for the better, I now realize.

My First Communion gift from my parents was a royal blue Schwinn bicycle, like the one pictured at right. Laura got a matching maroon bike for her First Communion the following year, 1953. In those days boys' and girls' bikes were identical, with a high bar in the middle that really hurt if you jumped off too quickly or carelessly.



I remember one time when I angrily threw my bike on the ground after I had hit the tree in the middle of our yard. I ran over to our swing set to calm down and practice something I *could* do. I looked up at the glorious clouds as I pumped the swing up and down. All of a sudden a shaft of light peaked through the billows, shining on a spot on the ground, not far from my feet. I jumped off the swings, kneeled and prayed to God. I awaited a message from Him, like the young ←Saint Bernadette. But no message came then or any other day.

On the day of my First Communion, I was mildly embarrassed that Mother would not kneel in church with the rest of us, because Protestants don't do that (unless they are Episcopalian). The next week the nuns pointedly asked me, as they did many times, when I thought my mother might convert to Catholicism. I seriously replied that I was praying hard and thought that in a year or two she might be ready. She never was ready, nor did it even enter her mind to convert, I am sure.





My First Communion also meant that I could now go to Confession on Saturdays. All week long I would keep track of my sins to recite in the ←confessional. The priest who heard my confession↓ would bless me and thus make me pure enough to receive Holy Communion on Sunday. One Saturday when I was 7 or 8, it

was pouring rain and my father didn't want to drive me to church for Confession. I cried and cried to my parents that it was a sin not to go. I was only comforted when Mother called our Catholic babysitter, Geraldine O'Connell. Gerry told me that going to Confession every two weeks would be just fine, so I calmed down. But I still didn't like it.



This early indoctrination into the mysteries of Holy Mother Church, as Papa calls it, set me up to cheerfully embrace other religious opportunities. For instance, I often signed up to take part in a *Living Rosary*↓ at church. 55 children would stand in a circle around the outside of the church interior, with every 11th child

holding a flashlight. Ten children would each say a *Hail Mary*. Then the 11th child would turn on his or her flashlight, recite a *Mystery* and say an *Our Father*. I can't remember how we did the first part of the rosary: the *Apostles' Creed*, *Our Father*, *Three Hail Marys* and *Glory Be*. Perhaps the church members did it in unison. I loved being a flashlight person myself.



I had the best grades in my grammar school class, or at least the best among the girls (Gregory Mooney was my big competitor). On the last day of school I was usually awarded a plastic statue of Holy Mary, about a foot tall, with a screw-off base that held a rosary. Since I got the same award every year, I would have to bury last year's statue in the yard, since religious articles were not to be thrown away casually.

Because I was a class leader and tall, my classmates usually chose me to play the Blessed Virgin Mary in the school pageant. For some reason our grade was picked many years to do the pageant, and I grew to expect the lead. Between productions I would practice my role with Laura. My doll was Baby Jesus, I was Holy Mary, and Laura was Joseph, Jesus' father. I can remember Laura asking if she couldn't be the Blessed Virgin for once, but I was bossy and thought it my rightful role. I wish I could re-do my autocratic actions.

In the 6th grade the nuns rightfully decided that I had cornered the market long enough. Instead of putting the choice of the Virgin Mary to a vote, they selected Patty Vetrano, a good friend of mine who later became a nun. I was made the Angel Gabriel. I was not a happy angel in this diminished role, but knew in my heart that I really should share the glory. In the 7th grade I reclaimed my Holy Mary role (*Patty Vetrano on right*).



The role I yearned for, but never got, was May Queen. The first Sunday of May all the Transfiguration students would dress in their Sunday best in order to celebrate the Blessed Virgin Mary as *Queen of Heaven* and *Mother of God*. The mothers would make boutonnieres for the boys and floral wreaths for the girls. Mother would make the wreaths for Laura and me by picking a ←weigela bush branch from our garden and tying it into a circle.



At church (*I'm on far left*) we would march around the parish garden to a circular shrine which held a white statue of Mary on a pedestal. The chosen girl, a 7th or 8th grader, would place a flower wreath on the statue's head and we children would sing:



*O Mary! We crown thee with blossoms today,
Queen of the Angels, Queen of the May!*

When it came time for someone in our grade to have a turn as the Blessed Virgin Mary wreath-placer, the nuns chose Maren Bonney. Now, Maren was a lovely girl and a wonderful friend. But for years the nuns drove me crazy by repeatedly saying, like a mantra, “If only everyone’s father were like Mr. Bonney.”

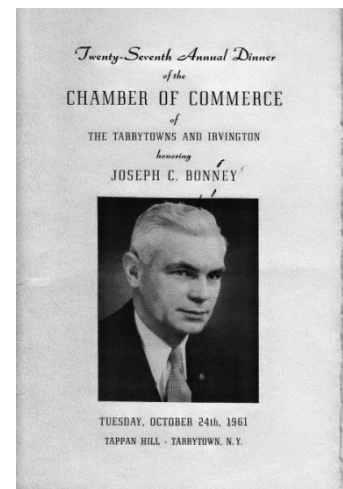


Mr. Bonney was an officer at our local bank and did a lot of fundraising for our school and church. He was also very involved in the men’s church sodalities or support organizations. Somehow, under Mr. Bonney’s serious, modest leadership, at the 11th hour he always found the money to fill any budget gap.



When Maren was chosen to crown the Blessed Virgin, a role she clearly deserved, the nuns spoiled it by reminding the rest of us that our fathers weren’t as good as Mr. Bonney. I went home and begged my father to join the church sodality. He said he would think about it, but of course, he never did. *(Maren and Joe Bonney Jr. with Laura and me, 1954 Confirmation)*

In 1969, when Kristen was just one, we traveled from St. Paul to Tarrytown to see my parents. One day I went to visit the Bonneys and show them my beautiful child. Mrs. Bonney didn’t seem well and said Mr. Bonney was away. The following week the local newspaper reported the arrest of Joseph Bonney on suspicion of stealing money from the bank for over 20 years. Was that how our church and school had filled those seemingly insurmountable gaps?!



For once, the nuns had no comment.

Now if you promise to be attentive in church, the next time you can hear about the day Nonna went to a parade, but there was no marching band!

In Our Easter Bonnets

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler

In looking through our Lovas family album, there are very few photos of us at holidays, except for Easter. Almost every year when we were young there is a new photo entry of Laura and me, taken just before we headed off to Sunday Easter Mass. We are always wearing a new (to us) outfit, new shoes, and usually a new hat. (1949→)



When I grew up we didn't have lots of clothes. We had a few play clothes, a couple of outfits for school, one or two good dresses, a play jacket, slicker and coat. We probably had two or three pairs of shoes. Clothes were passed down from my cousins to me, from me to Laura, and down the line. Brand new clothes were rare and beloved. (←1950 Easter outfits by Aunt Helen)

Easter was the time when we got one good dress that would be worn to most spring, summer and fall events. Sometimes Aunt Helen Marie sewed matching dresses for Laura and me, but most often we went to Macy's in White Plains and got identical dresses in different colors. We also would get our good shoes which had to last the year.



(1951 with Aunt Helen & Mother→)

Many years Mother would take Laura and me to Rhythm Hats, a hat factory on Orchard Street in Tarrytown. The factory showroom displayed scores of undecorated hats in many different colors. We would choose the hats that looked best on us and matched our outfits. Then we would pick out the artificial flowers, feathers, netting, and ribbons to decorate them. (←1952)

Mother would pay for everything by the piece and pick up the customized products the following week. I believe that these hats only cost several dollars, a bargain, even then. (1953 with Kathy Hawkins→)



As I got older my outfits were usually tailored, as preferred by my mother. ←In 1954 she found a two piece outfit on sale, and insisted it be my Easter suit. I was fairly tall and skinny, and was convinced it wasn't flattering. My father sided with me and asked that Mother get me a dress, but she thought this plain silly. I almost felt punished, because the year



before I had to wear a boxy wool suit from my cousin, Jane Wederquist.

Also in 1954, I couldn't decide between two pairs of shoes at the Stride Rite store in White Plains. I chose a pair of ↑loafers and decided I would buy the other pair the next Easter. I dreamed about those one-strap light brown shoes with crepe soles. They became more and more beautiful in my mind with time.



The next year, 1955→, we went back to the same store and bought those shoes. Fashions didn't change as quickly as they do today. I realized when I got the shoes home,



and particularly when I wore them Easter Sunday, that I didn't really like them that much. Because I had to wear them an entire year, I learned an important lesson.

Easter Sunday was a much anticipated event because everyone, or at least the girls, wore something new. Some girls jumped the gun and wore their new spring outfits the week before Easter, on Palm Sunday. But my father never allowed this. He solemnly reminded us that Palm Sunday was the beginning of Holy Week, the saddest week in the Christian calendar. Not until Easter should we appear joyful. (←1956)



The Sunday after Easter we always raced to find the rotogravure section in the *New York Herald Tribune* newspaper. In this sepia-toned, photo-only section, there were pictures of women in grand hats at New York City's Easter Parade. This event was popularized in an Irving Berlin song: "In your Easter bonnet, with all the frills upon it, you'll be the grandest lady in the Easter Parade..." As a child I pictured drum majors and bands leading gorgeous women in a grand march down 5th Avenue. (1948 Easter Parade movie starring Fred Astaire and Judy Garland)

On Easter, April 18, 1965, Papa suggested we return to New York City for the Easter Parade, after an overnight visit with my parents in Tarrytown. Papa, a law student at New York University, and I, a junior at Barnard College, were dating seriously at the time, although not yet engaged. I was excited to see this famous parade, at last! We took the train down the Hudson River to Grand Central Station and walked the 8 short blocks to St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue. Imagine my shock when I saw that the parade was nothing but a bunch of women and men milling around, looking for cameras to take their photos. I really never was the New York sophisticate that I thought I was!



The Easter Parade in the 1890's in NY... in 1950 at St. Patrick's Cathedral... and again in 2010

As you can see from the three photos, the Easter Parade was never a musical march. It was an opportunity to show off new spring outfits to friends and strangers. Today, the more outrageous the hat, the more likely you'll get your photo in the paper—even though rotogravures went out 50 years ago!

Now if you promise to eat your Easter candy slowly and over several days, the next time you can hear how Papa used Easter chicks as balls and targets!

My Childhood Pets

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler



Growing up we had some simple, yet extraordinary pets. Most of our pets were cats, with three later attempts to have a dog. The favorite pet of my youth was Boots, a Russian Blue cat (*sitting in Laura's lap*). She was a gift to us in 1948, an extra cat in a litter of someone's unwanted kittens. In those days, people seldom "fixed" their animals so that they couldn't have kittens or puppies. Instead, you had to talk people into taking this darling small animal that didn't always grow up to be a good looking adult.

If we couldn't find homes for our extra kittens, we took them to the Humane Society. Our parents told us that these cats would be shipped to Europe. World War II had ended in 1945 when I was one



year-old, and a lot of cats were supposedly needed to kill the rats that infested bombed out buildings. As a child I imagined that one day I would go to Europe and find my kittens living lives of adventure and glamour.



Anyway, our Boots came with four white socks that quickly disappeared, so we always had to explain her name to others. She was probably a pure-bred animal, but since my mother was raised on a farm, all cats lived outside, even though we didn't have an Iowa barn for shelter. One winter it was particularly cold and Boots' ears froze. She lost the fur on her ears so that forever after her ears looked like glossy leather mittens. She never complained or withdrew her affection, however.





In fact, Boots was so good natured that Laura and I would dress her in doll clothes, lay her in an old stroller and wheel her around. Sometimes Boots would leave home for a few days or a week, and return all dusty. We would simply lay her in the bathroom sink and bathe her with shampoo.



She relaxed in the water like the queen she was!

Boots was very intelligent and intrepid. Once she had a litter of 4 Manx cats, a tailless breed. One day when our landlord's mean boxer dog came sniffing around, Boots carried the kittens, one at a time, up a tree. She nursed them in the tree for several weeks and then carried each one down in her mouth. She walked them proudly to our house, one following the other, like ducklings. This litter was easy to give away since the kittens had such a good story behind them.



Laura had a sweet cat when we lived at Gracemere called Bibby. She was part Persian with a white bib. I can't remember whether or not she was one of Boots' many offspring, or a gift from someone else. Anyway, she had a dear and tolerant personality. (*Laura holds Bibby, 1951.*)



One Sunday afternoon we came home from an outing and walked the wide steps up to our house. Lying in the middle of one step was Bibby, flat as a pancake. Laura screamed and I cried. We couldn't figure out what happened and how she had gotten in this pathetic position. The next day my father had a call from a co-worker whom we called Uncle Bob Crawford. Uncle Bob said that he and his family had driven over to see us on Sunday. Since we weren't there, the Crawfords turned around to go home and accidently ran over Bibby with the car. Uncle Bob put her body on the steps so we would see her. Even as a child I thought this was thoughtless, and I never really trusted Uncle Bob's opinion on anything again.



We also had three ←Border Collie-type sheep dogs, but each had a sad story. We got these beautiful animals from my Aunt Helen, who would mate her dog with one owned by friends. I think my parents thought that a dog was more appropriate for my brother than our dolly cats.

Our first collie, Misty, died of distemper as a young pup, before she had a chance to get the shots that would have prevented the disease. I remember that my mother put her in my brother’s old wooden playpen in our basement where Misty barked madly and foamed at the mouth. This was very painful to watch and she had to be put to sleep, of course.



Our second dog, Mr. Lovas, lasted longer but got hit by a car on Altamont Avenue and died. Before this tragedy, I made a sign for his doghouse saying: “Mr. Lovas Lives Here.” I had to remove it when my father didn’t like the joke.



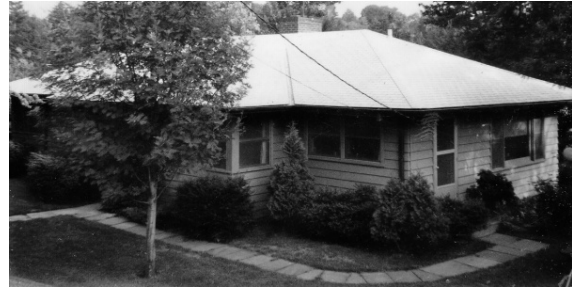
Our last collie, Ito, came to us second hand in 1958. He was a litter mate of Mr. Lovas, and had been adopted by our friends, George and Lorraine Morris, and their two sons, Bill and Dennis. The Morrises were moving abroad for a military assignment and couldn’t take the dog. We happily took Ito. (*Ito with Dad, 1958*)

But Ito was impossible to control. He had not even been trained to walk on a leash. After trying many techniques to make Ito behave, we finally gave up. My mother called my cousin, Joe Wederquist→ who had a large farm in Randolph, Iowa. We took Ito to the airport and he was flown to Omaha, 50 miles from the farm.



Joe reported that Ito took to the farm right away and began ←herding sheep. Ito had returned to his breed’s identity and was finally happy. Still, we never did adopt another dog.

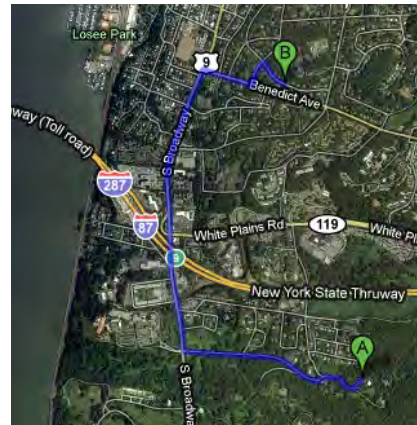
My all-time favorite pet story involves Boots and our August 1954 move from Gracemere to 185 Altamont Avenue→, also in Tarrytown. My father put Boots in his Ford sedan to drive her to the new house we had just built. Dad had some windows open because it was so



hot, and Boots bolted out a window and ran away down Broadway. My father went to hunt for her, but she was gone. We sobbed when we heard the news and made my father go back to Gracemere every day to look for her, but without luck.

About a week after Boots' leap to freedom, I was standing outside our new house with my Aunt Helen. Sauntering down the street was a dusty gray cat, walking slowly but with great determination. We could hardly believe it was Boots, she was so dirty and tired. We scooped her up, put her in the sink and bathed her. When she purred like a queen, we knew we had our girl.

One hears of animals that return to their old homes, but I've never heard of any animal, other than our Boots, finding its way to a place it had never been. Boots had walked over two miles on major streets from Gracemere (A) to Altamont (B), somehow finding our scent and our hearts.



Boots lived into her late teens, old for a cat. One day she went off on an adventure and never returned. She probably died in the woods near us. We called and searched for her, but to no avail. After two weeks we knew she had gone off for good. To the end she never wanted to bother us and always remained our lady.

Now if you promise not to search for a new place on your own, even with a compass, the next time you can hear how Papa might have won a racehorse!

Traveling to Iowa

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler



My mother, Hildur Wederquist Lovas, grew up on a farm in Randolph, in the southwest corner of Iowa. Iowa is the state just south of Minnesota. Every other year Mother would take Laura and me (and later, our brother Stephen) from Tarrytown and journey half way across the United States to Randolph.

We would travel from New York to Omaha, Nebraska, either by train or airplane, and then drive the 50 miles southeast to Randolph. We would first spend a week on the Wederquist family farm, owned at that time by my Uncle Royce and Aunt Eleanor. After our farm visit we would go into the small town of Randolph and stay at my grandparents' home for another week.

After World War II, passenger airplane travel became more popular, although it was still unusual. In 1950, the summer I turned 6, we traveled to Iowa by plane, my first airplane trip. My sister and I wore matching red and gray checked dresses, as well as our Easter hats. Such fancy dress is hard to imagine



today, when so many people wear sweatpants and shorts to travel. We left ↑La Guardia Airport in New York on a ←DC-3 airplane, bound for Midway Airport in Chicago. As you can see from my ticket below, my round trip half-price child's fare from New York to

Chicago to Omaha was \$40.69. That is equal to about \$375.00 today, not such a bargain then or now.

PASSENGER TICKET AND BAGGAGE CHECK 162 A 111108		UNITED AIR LINES, INC. PASSENGER TICKET AND BAGGAGE CHECK 162 A 111108	
<p>Member of International Air Transport Association Member of All Transport Association of America.</p>		<p>TO: 531 FROM: 4009 CLASS: Y FARE BASIS: YAL CARRIER: UA FLIGHT: 409 CLASS: Y FARE BASIS: YAL CARRIER: UA FLIGHT: 409</p>	
<p>Each Passenger should carefully examine this ticket particularly the Conditions on the next page.</p>		<p>NAME OF PASSENGER: LINDA LOVAS TRAVEL SERVICE: NOT TRANSFERABLE ISSUED: JUN 23 1950 PLACE OF ISSUE: TARRYTOWN, N. Y.</p>	



In Chicago we stayed overnight with a nursing school friend of my mother, Arlie DesCombes, before going on to Omaha. She was a wonderful guide who took us around Chicago on buses, trolleys, and the thrilling ←elevated, the commuter train that circles the Loop on high tracks.

We also went to the Lincoln Park Zoo and the Field Museum of Natural History, which Laura and I called the “dead zoo” because of the hundreds of stuffed animals on display. This photo of today’s Field Museum shows the T-Rex Sue dinosaur, whose tenth Anniversary we celebrated in 2010.



Mother wisely foresaw that the days of luxury trains were coming to an end, and decided that we should experience this leisurely adventure as much as possible. Therefore, we took the train to Omaha, Nebraska for most of our trips. My father would drive us 10 miles north up the Hudson River to the Croton-Harmon train station. At Croton-Harmon the train engines switched, by the way, from electric to diesel. *(Our family poses at Gracemere before Dad drives us to our train, 1952.)*

At Croton-Harmon we would board a New York Central train, either the *Wolverine*→ or the more famous *20th Century Limited*. Our clean, well-appointed train sped quietly north through the beautiful Hudson River Valley to Albany, New York. At Albany we started our trip west along the Great Lakes and the Canadian border that would end in Chicago.





The 20th Century Limited took just 15 hours overnight to travel from New York City to Chicago's La Salle Street Station (14 hours from Croton-Harmon). The Wolverine made more stops and took about 17 hours to traverse the full 960 miles. In Chicago we would board another train for the last leg of our journey across the states of Illinois and Iowa to Omaha, Nebraska, 475 miles away.



I enjoyed talking to the other passengers when we would sit in our coach seats. I remember asking many patient people to quiz me about the state capitals and to help me with my map puzzles. Mother would tell me not to bother them, but I insisted that they liked talking to me.

I loved eating on the train. We would dress up and rush through the shaking car connectors to get to the dining car. A polite steward would escort us to our drawing table, set with white cloth and napkins, china, silver flatware and flowers. While waiting for my food I'd usually make "worms" out of my crushed straw wrapper and water drops.



We always had a private compartment→ on the train, with a main room and a bathroom. Our room could sleep three or four at night, and became a small living room during the day. We would spend most of the daytime playing in our compartment, because when we sat in our coach seats we had to stay put and couldn't move



around. When I was about 5 years old I was very worried that the upper bunk where I slept would fall down on Laura who slept below me. I was only comforted when Mother pointed to the small wall light in Laura's bunk, and suggested that this frail fixture would easily hold up my bed.



My Uncle Royce and Aunt Eleanor Wederquist would pick us up at ↵Union↶ Station in Omaha, and drive us 50 miles to the Randolph, Iowa farm where they lived with their three children, my cousins Joe, Ann and Lyn. We were always greeted warmly by them and felt like visiting celebrities.

Now if you continue to be good travelers on all your trips, the next time you can learn how Nonna held funeral services for some baby chickens!

Summer Adventures on the Farm

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler

The Randolph, Iowa farm owned by my Uncle Royce and his family was one adventure after another, just like the Gem Lake cabin is for you children. Royce was one of my mother's four older brothers, and he and his wife, Eleanor, bought the farm from his parents, my grandparents Royce and Mabel Wederquist. They grew corn and grains (oats, barley and wheat) as cash crops, raised cows, pigs and chickens, and sewed alfalfa for livestock feed.



↑Original Wederquist farmhouse in the 1920's

↑Second Wederquist farmhouse in 1988



As the owners of the Wederquist family farm, ←Uncle Royce and his family were somewhat saddled with having to entertain a stream of visiting relatives, including us. When I think of all the large meals that my dear Aunt Eleanor→ had to fix, both for the farmhands and for in-laws and cousins, I feel guilty.



But Aunt Eleanor was always cheerful and well organized, and tried to make sure that we all had a good time. Her kids, Joe, Ann and Lyn, also worked hard at being good hosts. Lyn (Maurice Lyndon) →, the youngest, was my age and our primary playmate. He was a fun-loving kid, who enjoyed mischief and teasing, things we girls weren't used to, but tolerated with a few sighs.

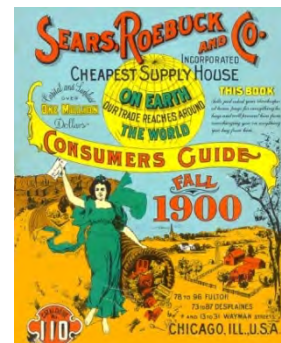




←Lyn's sister, my lovely and talented cousin Ann, was about 7 years older than I. She would take us riding on the pony↓ until we got used to him. After a few days we were on our own. Luckily for us, the pony never did much more than walk. One year Laura was riding the pony and he walked right up the front steps of the farmhouse. We all had a good laugh and teased Laura about it for many years, particularly since I think she was wearing her Dale Evans cowgirl outfit when it happened.



For years the farm only had an ←outhouse for toilet needs. Even after Uncle Royce got a bathroom inside his house, I often used the outhouse because it was such a novel experience. I was particularly fascinated by the Sears, Roebuck catalogue that hung on a nail on the outhouse inside wall. We might read its pages while sitting there, and then tear off what we needed to wipe ourselves.



I also used the catalogue pages for the dead chicks that I would find around the barnyard. I would wrap each body in a catalogue page, say a prayer, and drop it down the outhouse hole. Nobody else seemed to care about burying them.

Sometimes chickens would lay eggs in the barn's hayloft. We couldn't eat them because we didn't know if they were fresh or spoiled. They were ours to play with. We would toss them back and forth, hoping the eggs would not break in our hands. A few times we would smash the eggs on the barn roof. We didn't do this often because the smell of a broken old egg is pretty bad.





I was always a little nervous when Aunt Eleanor asked me to go to the henhouse and get some eggs for our breakfast. If a mother hen were laying eggs in the nest, it was scary trying to take her eggs away. Sometimes the hen would



get so upset that I would leave that egg for someone else to retrieve.

Uncle Royce was very patient trying to teach me how to hand milk the cows, although I never got very good at it. My uncle always seemed to appreciate that we New Yorkers were so interested in farm life. But we couldn't drink the raw cow's milk as my cousins did, because my mother was concerned that we might get sick since it hadn't been pasteurized (heated to kill any bugs).



In my teen years my Uncle Royce would sometimes have me drive the tractor, while he and the farm workers loaded bales of hay onto a skid. Once I misjudged the width of a row, and drove the tractor up onto two bales. My uncle took the steering wheel, and carefully backed the tractor onto solid ground. I was very lucky that I didn't tip the tractor over.

Now if you eat your eggs and drink your milk, the next time you can learn how Nonna got some ladies to float in a tub of water!

Summer Life in a Small Iowa Town

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler

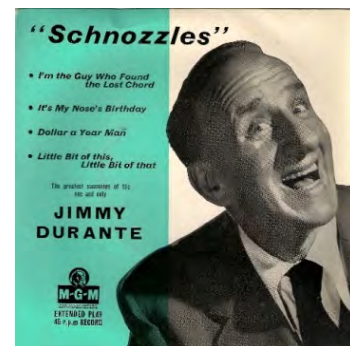
Randolph, Iowa, where my mother was born and grew up, is a small town in the southwest corner of Iowa in Fremont county. In the 1950's it had a population of about 300 people. Today it has about half that many people, as family farms disappear and folks move away from small towns. About 50 to 75 people lived in town in the 1950's, including my grandparents, Royce and Mabel Wederquist, and two of their children, my Aunt Hulda Wilson and Uncle Lou Wederquist. The rest of Randolph's residents lived on farms.



After we spent the first week of our vacation on the farm with Uncle Royce and Aunt Eleanor, we would go into town and stay with ←my grandparents. Laura and I slept in the top upstairs bedroom, probably an attic conversion. I can still remember the pleasant warm smell up there. The vacation time we spent with our grandparents was slow and lazy. On the farm we had chores and everyone was always busy. Grandma and Grandpa, who had owned the farm before Uncle Royce, were in their 70's and their life was now quieter and slower paced.

I liked them both because they were patient, spoke softly to me, and never got angry. I try to be like them when I am with my grandchildren. Grandma was a schoolteacher and Grandpa an accountant, by training. They tried to teach us in clear, gentle ways.

Although I loved my grandfather, sometimes I felt guilty because I did not like to sit on his lap when his face was unshaven and scratchy. I would study his Swedish fair skin with its cheeks full of broken red blood vessels, probably caused by doing farm chores in the bitter cold. But together we would quietly listen to his Jimmy Durante records that I could play whenever I wished.



My grandpa was always happy to have me visit him at his retirement job, his feed and seed store (↓Grandpa, far left). Most days I would walk a couple of



blocks “downtown” to visit him there. His store was in the lobby of an old movie theater. I loved to go behind the store and explore the theater, although it was dusty and dark. I had to be careful not to trip on the broken seats and old film equipment.

Other retired farmers came to the store in the afternoon to talk and play cards. The store was full of wonderful things that I could pick up and feel, such as grains and interesting hardware items. Grandpa also had two penny machines, one for gum and one for candied peanuts, and he would usually treat me to something from one. Grandpa also let me pick out any grain I wanted, and would pack up a small amount of it in a paper sack for me.

Other retired farmers came to the store in the afternoon to

Once back at Grandma’s house, I would pretend to cook with the seeds I got at Grandpa’s store. I would mix them with water, stir them, and strain them through a sieve. One time my wet oats spilled onto my grandparents’ front lawn. I tried to pick them up as best as a 6 year-old could. I was worried and don’t think I told anyone. But a couple of weeks later I got a sweet, funny note from my grandmother who wrote that all the neighbors were commenting on the lovely patch of oats in her front yard. I loved my grandmother forever for being so nice and understanding.



Grandma also taught me how to make ←hollyhock ladies and float them in a tub. The heads were made with a bud, the skirts with a flower in full bloom. Both parts were held together with a toothpick. It was a great activity on a hot day. The cool well water felt so good on our small hands and arms.

Grandma also let me pick the fresh vegetables in her backyard garden and help prepare them for dinner. However, I avoided helping with the meat. I was shocked when I saw her grab a chicken from

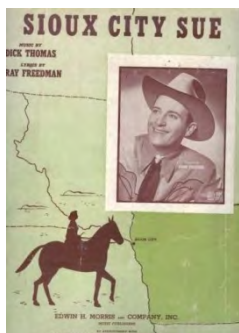


the coop, twirl it around by its head to break its neck, then take off its feathers and cook it. I had never seen anything like that before.

I always liked to play with the kids who lived in town, particularly Sandra Trively, and my two older cousins, Charlotte and Bill. Sandra Trively was about my age and lived next door to Grandma. We loved to play two card games called *Old Maid* and *Hearts*. Laura and I would go to Trivelys every day, and play these games in their lovely Victorian parlor. I hated it when we might have a small fight with Sandra, whom we thought was quite spoiled, because it would leave us with time on our hands. So we made up our differences quickly.



←Cousin Charlotte Wilson patiently taught me how to walk on stilts up and down Randolph's few, short sidewalks. Cousin Bill Wederquist→ never complained when I would knock on his door and ask him to push me on the swings at the school playground.

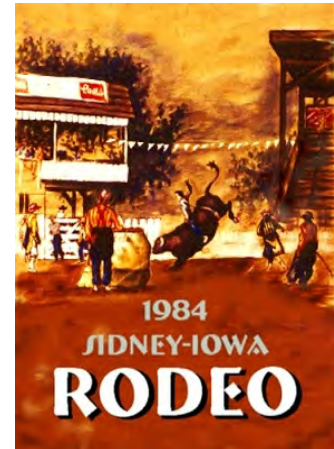


I remember singing *Sioux City Sue* at my grandparents' house, a 1946 song about a red-headed girl from Sioux City, Iowa. I would "belt" it out on the school merry-go-round and swings. I would also sing the state song with gusto: "We're from Ioway...That's where the tall corn grows!"



The extra special events each year usually came at the end of our two-week visits to Randolph. The first was the family picnic at Glenwood Park where I would get to know better my relatives, especially my cousins. I was about 10 years younger than most of my Iowa cousins, so this outing was a big grown-up deal for me.

The other event was the Sidney Rodeo. Sidney was about 15 miles from Randolph, but still in Fremont county. I don't remember much about the rodeo, other than the rides and that we got to stay up late at night. I enjoyed meeting my cousins' friends and being a bit of a celebrity to them since I was from New York. I admit, though, that I got tired explaining that we had plenty of grass and trees in New York. Many of the Iowa kids thought our state was nothing but concrete sidewalks and skyscrapers.



The other bit of celebrity I felt in Iowa was through the weekly local newspaper, the *Randolph Enterprise*. Each year when we arrived in Randolph, the society reporter, Mary Estes, would call and find out exactly who came and how long we planned to stay. Our family's visit was often the lead subject of these rural life recordings. Of course, almost every Randolph family got called for their "news", but this was an unexpected spotlight on us, and I looked forward to seeing our names in print.

My grandfather died when I was 8 and my grandmother when I was 16. I am very grateful that I got to spend some quiet summer days with them so I could get to know them and understand a little bit about their lives.

Now if you help Nonna grow hollyhocks next summer, the next time you can hear about the day Papa fell flat on his face in the Mississippi River!

Baseball

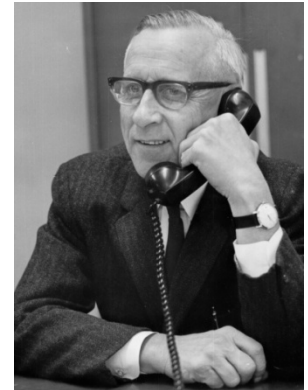
By Nonna Linda Hoeschler



My family and my father's family were all nuts about baseball. They would read about it, watch it on their small screen TV's, go to as many games as they could, and argue about it. In those days New York had three major league baseball teams: the Yankees, the Brooklyn Dodgers and the Giants. My father was a Giants fan, so I was too. My Uncle Joe Lovas, who was a sportswriter for the *Passaic Herald News* in New Jersey, was a Yankees lover. And my Aunt Marie Lovas Prevelige was crazy about the Dodgers.



One time my father and Uncle Joe were watching a Giants-Dodgers game at our house, and the Giants blew a game to the Dodgers at the last minute, their third loss in a row. The next day Uncle Joe wrote in the *Passaic Herald News*: "What are these Giants trying to do to me?" moaned one of the Giants fans. "My ulcer can't take any more of it." The Giants fan was my father and his ulcers were real. However, he also liked to use his ulcers as a facetious threat on stressful occasions.



One Sunday when I was about 7, several of my aunts and uncles were visiting us. I brought out my autograph book with the blue cover for everyone to sign.



I was a little timid because one schoolmate, Bobbi Ann Persky, had written on the front page: "You are so BIG and so SMART and I want my mother to meet you." I was self-conscious that I was always the tallest girl in my class, and I envied the cute, short blonde girls such as Bobbi Ann. But my ←Aunt Marie ignored the other pages, and wrote the cleverest rhyme I had ever seen: "I haven't got time to write in your book. The Dodgers are playing and I have to look."



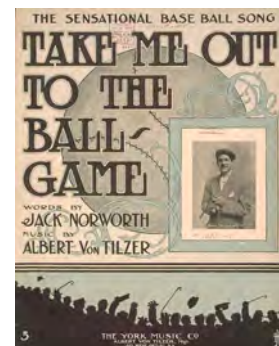
After Sunday dinner our family and guests would sometimes pile into our cars and drive north up the Hudson River to the small town of Scarborough. We were on a baseball pilgrimage to look at Red Barber's house. ←Barber was the genial, Mississippi-born radio commentator for the Brooklyn Dodgers, and later, the Yankees. I remember the house as white with aqua-blue trim, but thankfully we never saw Barber. We would have been embarrassed if we had.

At least once a year I would get to go to the Polo Grounds→ for a Giants game. It was located on 155th Street and 8th Avenue on the north tip of Manhattan. In any crowd, baseball or otherwise, my father would first estimate the number of people there.



He developed this skill when he was 18 and managed a semi-pro baseball team. Evidently his partners would lie to him about the gate numbers, so my father trained himself to gather his own attendance figures so that he could figure out his share of the profits. I don't remember much about the Giants games, except that Dad made us pay attention when Coach Leo Durocher came on the field or the great Willie Mays was at bat. (*Durocher cheers Mays home.*)

In the meantime, my father would buy us hot dogs, ice cream, and other vendor food. On the way home he would then tease us about how we ate our way through the game. We sang *Take Me Out to the Ball Game* driving back and forth to the ball field, emphasizing: "Buy me some peanuts and Cracker Jax." By the way, that song was written in 1908, and was inspired by the Polo Grounds. As baseball's unofficial anthem, it is sung during the 7th inning stretch of almost every baseball game played in the United States.

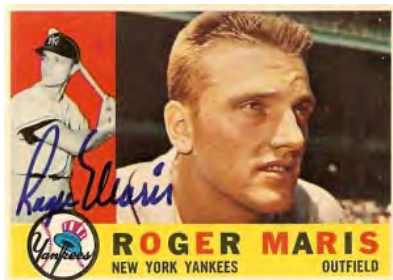


In 1958, the year I started high school, two of our family's teams left New York. The Giants moved to San Francisco and the Dodgers moved to Los Angeles. To see live baseball, we had to go to Yankee Stadium → in the Bronx. The Yankees have always been a great team. However, they offered fewer emotional highs and lows, since they usually won both the pennant and the World Series. We missed our underdog Giants.

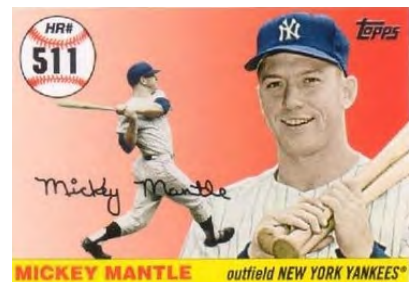


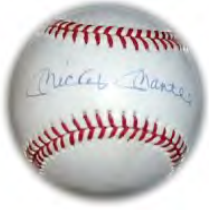
Due to my Uncle Joe's "in" with the Yankees, we now always got fabulous seats. My sister, father and I often sat behind home plate. My brother, Stephen, would join his godfather, Uncle Joe Lovas, and the legendary sports announcer ← Mel Allen in the press box. The press box in those days was a "Men Only" area. I frankly didn't enjoy having my younger brother look down on me and wave. But despite the VIP treatment we got, the Yankees just weren't our team in our heart of hearts. I took to reading books during the game. My father complained about my lack of attention, but didn't get angry.

In 1962 when the New York Mets baseball team started, my father switched loyalty and cheered for the Mets. They lost many more games than they won in the early years. My dad took great pleasure in recounting the crazy ways they had botched another play, another game. But I have never been really interested in baseball since the Giants left New York for good.



Now I have a confession to make. My brother got a baseball signed by Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris, Yankees and all-time greats. Somehow the ball ended up in a drawer at our St. Paul Edgumbe house. I think my dad must have brought it as a gift to Fritz, although no big deal was made of it.





One day I came home from work and found a very muddy ball outside. Fritz and Kristen had played with the valuable autographed ball when they couldn't find the old hard rubber ball they usually used. The Mantle-Maris baseball was dirty, scuffed, and the signatures were ruined. I sadly sighed and threw the ball away. I still feel sorry about this ruined baseball, even though it was a Yankees souvenir. In some ways, it felt like I was throwing away some of my best childhood memories.



Now if you take good care of your balls, bats and other toys, and put them away when you're done playing, the next time you can hear about a mighty ant that rode on a tiny railroad train!

The Early Days of Television

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler



About 1948, a year after our Lovas family moved to Gracemere, we bought our first television. I think it was an ←Admiral TV, with a 12-inch screen. The large walnut wooden cabinet which housed the huge picture tube, speakers and other electronics, now became the focus of our modest living room.



The Shinn photo
Camera behind the plate in the upper stand of Yankee Stadium chases a hit ball to the outfield and shows a close-up of the player fielding it

We were one of the first families we knew to get this new entertainment luxury, quite remarkable because my parents were never “the first on the block” to have anything. I think we probably got a TV so that my father could see more baseball games. In fact, he most likely only watched baseball and the news on his television until he died at age 87.



Newspapers, radio, magazines and books were more important in my family, in terms of getting the news and being entertained. At the dinner table we were expected to have read the daily newspaper so that we could discuss current events. Moreover, since my father worked for the Macy-Westchester newspapers, we needed to be familiar with the products he so ardently sold.

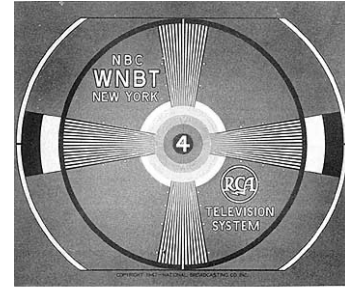
Children’s entertainment included newspaper cartoons and columns, as well as kids’ radio shows. My favorite radio shows were on Saturday morning after breakfast.



Let’s Pretend, a storytelling show, was sponsored by Cream of Wheat. I can still sing the theme song, if you ask nicely. *Captain Midnight* had nail-biting adventure tales and ended with a coded message. I saved up my allowance to buy the ←Captain’s Secret Decoder. I remember the thrill of finally getting the ring, only to discover that the top secret messages always spelled out “Buy Ovaltine” or some other advertising nonsense.



In the late 1940's our television only received 2 or 3 black and white stations (no color!), with part-time programming: early morning, mid-afternoon, and early evening. Most of the time the TV displayed a test pattern. I would sometimes be allowed to watch these afternoon television shows: *Kukla, Fran and Ollie*; *Ernie Kovacs in Kovacsland*; and *Howdy Doody*.



During the early days of television, a test pattern was seen on the screen more often than programming.



←*Kukla, Fran and Ollie* was a puppet show from Chicago that originally ran from 1947 to 1957. Burr Tillstrom was the puppeteer and voice, while Fran Allison was the level-headed host and advisor. The script was ad-libbed, meaning it was not written out in advance. The two primary puppets were Kukla and Ollie. Kukla was a bald-headed, naïve puppet leader, and Ollie was a

sweet one-toothed dragon. Dear Ollie would slam his flat chin on the stage in frustration, or roll on his back to be endearing. There were seven other



Kuklapolitans created by Tillstrom. My favorites were ←Beulah Witch and the mailman, Fletcher Rabbit→. The stories were simple and the humor was sweet, sort of like Mr. Rogers. My mother thought Tillstrom was a real genius, so we were allowed to watch *Kukla, Fran and Ollie* often.



Another genius I watched but didn't always understand was ←Ernie Kovacs, a cigar-smoking comic. In 1950 he began several TV shows in Philadelphia, one called *Ernie in Kovacsland*. His glamorous wife, Edie Adams→, was his assistant. He did skits using various disguises, sang songs and told stories. Kovacs didn't have a script, so he would



look around the set and decide to do something with a piece of furniture or a particular character. There were plenty of stage accidents that he would incorporate into spontaneous jokes.



Kovacsland and its successor, *The Ernie Kovacs Show*, had a silent trio of men dressed as monkeys, the ←Nairobi Trio. One played piano, one conducted, and the third bonked the conductor on the head. But my favorite skit was when Kovacs talked about Howard, the World's Strongest Ant. Howard was invisible, by the way, and



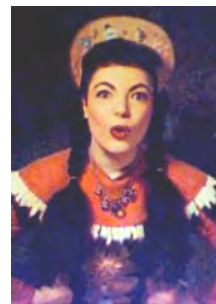
would ride a tiny model train on a studio table. Kovacs told wonderful stories about Howard's adventures and my imagination soared. Someday we will have to watch these old shows, to see if they are as good and as funny as I remember.



Howdy Doody was a cowboy-circus show that began in 1947 in New York City. ←Buffalo Bob Smith was host, and the lead actor, Howdy Doody, was a cowboy marionette. Other Doodyville characters included Clarabell, a mute clown, Phineas T. Bluster→, Princess Summer Fall Winter Spring→, Dilly Dally and Flub-a-



Dub, a flying multi-animal marionette. Kids sat in the Peanut Gallery, and when asked the time at the beginning of the show, they would scream out: "It's Howdy Doody Time!" Then would come a half-hour of crazy stories, skits and songs.



Laura and I loved the show, but my mother thought it was silly and discouraged us from watching it. Perhaps it was because Buffalo Bob played the role of hawker-host to



the hilt. Throughout the show he did advertisements for Wonder Bread, Poll Parrot Shoes, Welch's Grape Jelly, Colgate Toothpaste, Halo Shampoo and other products we *had* to have. Moreover, Buffalo Bob had the kids in the Peanut Gallery sing the ad jingles.



Laura and I would often go to our neighbors, the Hawkins, to watch *Howdy Doody*. Kathy Hawkins was about a year younger than Laura. Kathy and her little brother, Bobby, were not only allowed to watch the show, they were *encouraged* to see it. Their father was a top executive at RCA which owned NBC that broadcast the show. (*Kathy Hawkins far right, 1949*)

At one point Mrs. Hawkins offered to take us all to a live *Howdy Doody* TV show. Laura and I were so excited that we would get a chance to sit in the Peanut Gallery. But our Mother would not allow it. Although we tried to be happy for Kathy and Bobby, it was a bitter day when we watched them on TV sitting in the Peanut Gallery singing and shouting and having lots of fun. (*Buffalo Bob, Howdy Doody, Clarabell*)



One time when I was in college a bunch of us were discussing the *Howdy Doody* show, and we couldn't remember the machine that ←Flub-a-Dub flew around the stage set. It was one of those silly late-night conversations when you are wistful about childhood. My father told me that Buffalo Bob Smith, the former host, was then running a liquor store in New Rochelle, near my Tarrytown home.

I wrote Buffalo Bob a letter asking him about the name of Flub-a-Dub's airborne vehicle, explaining our college discussion. Buffalo Bob wrote me back on *Howdy Doody* stationery as if I were a kid your age. I wish I had the letter to show you children, it was so silly.

And I still can't remember the name of the flying machine!

Now if you promise not to watch television before dinner, the next time you can hear how Papa was afraid he might get arrested in La Crosse!

Birthdays

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler



Birthdays were simple affairs in the Lovas household, so simple that they were often ignored. My birthday was in the middle of the summer, July 19th, and New York almost always had hot, humid weather at that time of year. Plus, kids were out of school, and we often didn't get together during the break. Although I don't remember any parties when I was a young child, here is a sweet photo of me and my mother on my first birthday, sitting before my cake.



My mother usually made lovely angel food cakes for summer birthdays, adding whip cream and strawberries as toppings. For the winter birthdays of my sister Laura and brother



Stephen, she would often make fine white or chocolate devil's food cakes.



Despite the lack of formal festivities, I have a few memories that mark some of my birthdays. As you may remember, my ←Aunt Helen Marie Wederquist lived with us for several years at Gracemere. On my 6th or 7th birthday she decided to get me some pet goldfish, something I had wanted for a long time. She couldn't have made the day more special for me. We drove to two pet stores in White Plains to pick out the perfect fish bowl, fish, sand, net and decorative elements. She never rushed me and was patient as we discussed choices. I finally chose two fish that looked different. One had black and white patches and the other was solid gold. They looked lovely against the bright blue sand.



Unfortunately, after a few months of admiring the beautiful fish and cleaning their bowl weekly, I did what many kids do: I gave the fish too much food. They both died, one after the other. Aunt Helen told me it was all right and found a box for me to bury them in our yard, after a suitable funeral service.



When I was about 8, my birthday fell on a Saturday. Laura and I got up early to play on the front porch with our new kittens while our parents stayed in bed. We ran inside for something, probably to get doll clothes for our cats, and looked out our living room window. To our horror, we could see one



of our landlord's boxer dogs → with my favorite kitten in his mouth, racing away down our drive. We woke up



my father, who gallantly chased after the killer dog in his pajamas and ←scuff slippers. It was too late, of course, to save the kitten but I was grateful that he had tried.

When we moved from Gracemere to Altamont Avenue in 1954, I had just turned 10. For my birthday that summer and for the next few years, I could bring one friend to Playland → amusement park in Rye, New York. My father would take us, and we had a great time going on as many rides as we could stand, and eating more than enough cotton candy.



As a teenager I gave a couple of summer parties that passed for birthday celebrations, but without the presents. Mother took me to the library to get books about planning teen parties, and I would set up a party schedule, organizing everything hour by hour. Mother would fix the best Sloppy Joes and my Dad would pace around. The parties I gave were quite successful, because they were different from the usual.

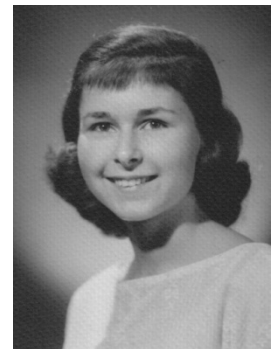


I wish I had some photos, but at one party a kid knocked my new ←Brownie Hawkeye camera onto our flagstone terrace. The chipped corner of the hard Bakelite box let in light, ruined the film and couldn't be repaired. I had so wanted this camera, particularly since it had a flash attachment which meant we now could take photos indoors, a real advantage over our pre-WWII model.

The best birthday of my youth was my 14th in 1958. My parents suggested I could take a friend to the big Broadway show that year, *The Music Man*, starring ↓Robert Preston and Barbara Cook, two truly great performers. My dad could always get fine seats since one of his newspaper truck drivers played trombone in a Broadway theater, and thus had an inside track. The tickets weren't any cheaper, but they were always in good locations in the center section and on the aisle.



My father arranged for tickets for a Saturday matinee. On that summer day my parents, 5 year-old brother Stephen, friend Patty Vetrano, and I drove to the Majestic Theater at Broadway and 44th Street. I loved my first musical and remember that my mother was particularly excited that Meredith Wilson, the playwright, was from her home state of Iowa. I also remember what I wore that day: a white pique dress by Anne Fogarty, given to me by my cousin, Jane Lovas, with a red fabric carnation on the collar, and red patent leather belt and shoes. (1958 in another white dress)



A few weeks before the play my father had asked me where I would like to eat dinner afterward. In the newspaper social columns I had read about Sardi's Restaurant where the Broadway stars ate, so I asked that we eat there, too.



After the show our entourage went across 44th street to Sardi's. My brother sang 76 *Trombones* from *The Music Man* as we entered the restaurant. My parents thought he was cute, but I was really embarrassed. We were greeted by the owner, Vincent Sardi→, who seated us at a table near the entrance. We enjoyed looking at the framed caricatures of various stars that hung on all the restaurant walls. Rumor had it that you weren't a real star until you had your picture at Sardi's! I also looked around for celebrities, and was thrilled to see Peter Lind Hayes and his wife, Mary Healy, sitting in a corner. They starred that summer in a short-lived Broadway show, *Who Was That Lady I Saw You With?*



But then, ta-dum, in walked six *Music Man* performers, including the stars, ←Robert Preston (& caricature→) and Barbara Cook. They sat two tables away from us, and had dinner before the evening show. My father went to the bathroom, and after he returned,



the cast walked by us on their way out. But then they stopped at our table. They sang *Happy Birthday* to me! I didn't know whether or not to be embarrassed or delighted, since I really didn't want to be the center of attention in this fancy restaurant. But I did appreciate it.



So how did they know to sing to me? On his way to the restroom, my father evidently stopped at the *Music Man* cast table. He proudly told them that they probably didn't know it, but this was Miss Linda Lovas' 14th birthday. Would they stop by the table to say hello? Their singing was a gift to me, and its memory warms me each and every birthday.

Now if you promise to write thank you notes or do drawings for the gifts you receive, the next time you will learn how Nonna got her backstage courage!

How I Came to Love the Arts

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler

Today I love going to concerts, visiting museums, attending dance performances and having artists visit and stay with us. For about seven years between 1969 and 1976, when Kristen and Fritz were small children, I wrote about the arts as a critic and feature writer for Twin Cities newspapers and regional magazines. Many people think I must have grown up in a sophisticated family of arts aficionados, but that was not the case.



My mother → sang throughout school, solo as well as in trios and choruses. She had a lovely contralto voice, but her award-winning performances were limited to school and county fair stages. She often tried to teach Laura and me to sing harmony, but with limited success. I clearly was not the natural that she had always been. Mother commented that when she and my father first married they went to a disappointing violin recital, and my father refused to go to any more. That was that, until we girls were old enough to go with her to concerts.



In August 1949, soon after my 5th birthday, our family took a trip that forever changed my life. We visited ← Cecil and Kay Hemley in Provincetown, Massachusetts, on the outer tip of Cape Cod. The Hemleys had two children, Betsy and baby Fred, and lived in a charming seaside cottage. Cecil and my dad had been Army Signal



Corps roommates, and my dad had a funny story about this smart rich New Yorker who expected my father to get his laundry done. Hemley was a fine poet who founded the much respected *Noonday Press* in New York. He also translated fiction by the great Isaac Bashevis Singer from Yiddish to English.

(Betsy Hemley, center)

That same summer, Hemley and another poet, Weldon Kees, organized *Forum 49*, a historic, summer long lecture series and art exhibit in Provincetown. The *Forum* primarily focused on the new American art style, *Abstract Expressionism*. Cecil Hemley involved his first cousin, artist Adolph Gottlieb (*front row, far left*→), along with many protégés of Hans Hofmann. Hofmann taught painting in Provincetown, a major summer arts colony.



Hemley convinced his father-in-law, the artist Donald Witherstine, to stage a substantial exhibit of these avant-garde painters in Witherstine’s Gallery 200 on Commercial Street. I recall visiting the gallery, but unfortunately do not remember the paintings by Jackson Pollock, Stuart Davis, Barnett Newman, Hofmann and Gottlieb. One of the funnier stories about the art exhibit is the polling box Witherstine placed before Pollock’s drip painting *Number Seventeen*↑. *Life* magazine had just published an article about Pollock asking “Is He the Greatest Living Artist in the United States?” Witherstine asked the same question, and after a week, the gallery visitors’ vote was 503 “No”, 39 “Yes.” History shows that “Yes” was clearly the right answer.



The Hemleys had a record of the Broadway musical that had opened in April, *South Pacific*. I loved singing *I’m in Love with a Wonderful Guy* along with Mary Martin. I would play that record



often, and the Hemleys never seemed to mind. After a day at the beach we would all relax on the Hemleys’ rooftop deck, and Mrs. Hemley would help me select the best scallop shells for my collection. (*Provincetown beach, 1949*)



One night the Hemleys had a cocktail party at their ←47 Commercial Street home, before the annual Provincetown Art Association costume ball at the Town Hall→. Hemleys and my parents went as cave dwellers, barefoot and draped in maroon

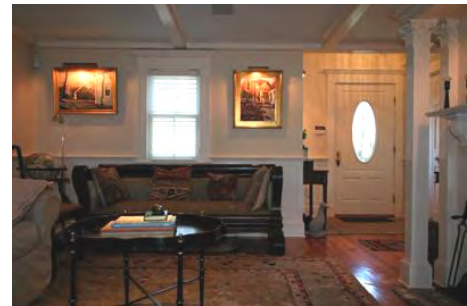


velvet “hides”. My mother even released her bun and wore her long hair straight, a notable event.

At the cocktail party everyone sat on the Hemleys’ living room floor↓ except for my parents. I was a little embarrassed that they seemed uncomfortable and weren’t fitting in. But I loved the guests and later learned they were known as “Bohemians.” I remember happily talking to both a painter and a writer, although I have no idea who they were. I thought: “This is different, and I like it.”



From then on I regarded artists as fascinating and as my kind of people. (←Hemley rooftop deck)



A few years later I went to my first concert to hear a violinist and pianist. During the 1950’s the Columbia Community Concerts program was at its height. Famous artists toured around the country and performed in auditoriums and halls. Mother bought the local Columbia Concerts series for Laura, her and me, with performances at Washington Irving High School in Tarrytown↑.



After our first concert we were thrilled to be invited to a reception at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Robert Cole. Dr. Cole was also Laura’s orthodontist. Laura and I wore matching dresses that you can see in the photo on the next page. Laura’s dress was white with red figures, mine white with green.

At one point the violinist was sitting alone, and Mother suggested we introduce ourselves to her. I was scared to death, but Laura and I held hands and walked over. We shyly asked her a few questions, and then she questioned us with great enthusiasm. I was relieved and excited, and decided that artists were nice people who got lonely, too, particularly at parties.



This experience fortified me to suggest a backstage visit later on. In the mid-1950's the baritone ←Theodor Uppman appeared on our concert series. He was blond, muscular, handsome, and a wonderful actor and singer. I was enthralled with his performance and, somewhat out of character, I asked Mother to let us tell him directly. He was as warm and gracious backstage as he had appeared. A decade later I saw him perform Papageno in the *Magic Flute* at the Met, and joyfully recalled his singing Papageno's song in Tarrytown, plus our brief, lovely encounter.

My comfort with meeting and talking with artists has developed into many wonderful experiences with Papa. For over 40 years we have had parties for many musicians in Saint Paul. Many stay with us and perform at our house, sometimes even playing music with our grandsons!

For years I asked to take piano lessons. When I was 10 my mother bought an old black piano for \$25.00 that she put in our walk-out basement. The piano had probably been in a bar since the right brass sustaining pedal was worn through to the base metal. The varnish was cracked and there were plenty of scuff marks all over the body.



Mother found a piano teacher, Mr. George Wackwitz, who would come to our house one morning a week, and give both Laura and me half-hour lessons before school. He charged 75 cents a lesson, a bargain even in those days. Mr. Wackwitz was old, had very dry skin with the bluest of thick veins, and fingers that looked like round butter knives. He was demanding and usually kind, particularly since he thought I was talented.

He advised me to go to the Juilliard School→ in New York for college, but even then I knew I wasn't going to be a great musician. How right I was! When I went to Barnard College, near Juilliard, I lived with several Juilliard students and occasionally attended classes at the music school. In a way, I had my cake and ate it, too.



In high school Mr. Wackwitz decided to retire to Florida and I was relieved. Mother bought a lovely new Baldwin upright piano for our living room, and hired a superb teacher, Mr. Frank Mace. He was a professional musician who played New York City gigs on TV and stage shows. He also taught classical, jazz and pop music, perfect for our teen-age interests. *(Mr. Mace, at right, led his band at our 1966 wedding reception.)*

At my first lesson, Mr. Mace told me that although I could sight read well, I had no idea what I was playing. He began to teach me how music was constructed. I also had to write a new composition each week. The pieces I composed were usually jazz, but they gave me a better foundation to understand and love music. This composition experience was of huge benefit when I reviewed music, and much later when I headed the American Composers Forum.



AMERICAN COMPOSERS FORUM

As you know, I love to dance, especially with Papa. My father was also a great dancer. When I would see him walking up our steps in the evening, I would start playing a record to greet him, often the RCA recording of *Linda*. By the way, this 1946 song was written by Jack Lawrence for Linda Eastman→ when she was 5 years-old. She became a professional photographer and married Paul McCartney, of the Beatles. I would greet my father at the door: "Please dance with me, Daddy." My father would start dancing around the small Gracemere living room with my sister and me, one at a time. We knew that his Duchess and Princess, as he called Laura and me, were his treasures.



When I was 7, Laura and I took modern dance lessons from Steffi Nossen→, a well known teacher whose dance school continues today. I loved the dance instruction, and enjoyed wearing my leotard and spinning around the living room. I wasn't great, but I was earnest. Moreover, I was self-conscious about being so tall, and dance offered me coordination and confidence.



After our final dance recital the first year, in which we were trees swaying in the wind, my mother asked me if I wanted to take lessons the following year. Right away I said "Yes." But Mother added, "You know, it costs \$75.00 a year for each of you." I knew that we had only \$35.00 a week for groceries and I thought that \$75.00 sounded like a fortune and a hardship. "I guess not," I replied.



I now know that my parents had the money for the lessons, since my father was a business executive. And I regret that my mother, in wanting to make sure that I knew these dance lessons were valuable, didn't tell me they were affordable. Children don't know these things, and lack of dance lessons is one of my life's few regrets.

But mother did encourage other talents, like my painting. She recognized that our parish grade school, Transfiguration, had marginal music and art training. Ms. DiMenna only seemed to teach us Gregorian Chant for music. Mrs. Downey, our art teacher, taught us about famous paintings, not unimportant. But our art projects were uninspired and only used crayons, paper and paste.



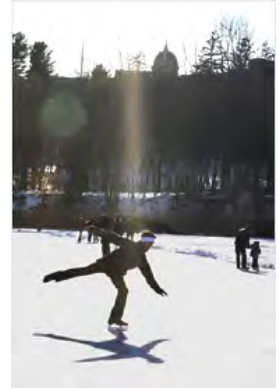
MR. CAIVANO
Art
B.F.A., Syracuse
A.M., Columbia

In the summer of 1956, just as I turned 12, mother signed me up for group painting lessons with Mr. Rocco Caivano, a local public high school teacher. I remember the thrill of going to an art store for the first time, in order to buy a cardboard-backed canvas, brushes and a series of professional oil paints.

We painted outside each week, mostly on a lovely, shaded spit on the ↓Tarrytown Lakes, a piece of land that I had never noticed before. The lakes provided our town's water supply, so we couldn't swim in them, but we could skate→



there in the winter. At the first lesson I misheard Mr. Caivano's directions on which blue paint to use for the sky and water. My sunny landscape immediately turned into a storm scene. At first I was embarrassed by my



mistake, but later I liked my more dramatic rendering. Mr. Caivano thought I was talented, so I continued my lessons with him while at Sleepy Hollow High School. He became a good friend, and as an adult I bought several of his paintings.



Mr. Caivano's training gave me the courage to paint throughout high school and to do other art projects, like photography and clay sculpture. (1969 statue of me & Kristen)

Because I have struggled to make some barely decent art, I am greatly energized by excellent visual art, plays, dance recitals, operas and concerts. I appreciate the imagination and skills required to make superb art, whether it be visual, kinetic or musical. I describe myself as a good audience member, not an artist. Artists need to be seen, appreciated and supported, so mine is an important role, too.

We hope all children, including our dear grandsons, have many opportunities to experience some of the beauty of our culture in museums, theaters and concert halls. But more important, we think it important that all children learn to draw and paint, dance, sing and play an instrument or three. If you have at least tried to play the game, you know what it takes to make a winner.

Now if you practice your music every day and without whining, the next time you can learn why Papa always wore his figure skates to play hockey!

Christmas Memories

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler

When I was a little girl I always looked forward to Christmas, like all children. Our Christmas holiday was nice, but never fancy, guided by my parents who



grew up quite poor. My father said he got the same 2-cent Lotto game each Christmas, and, if lucky, an orange in his stocking. My mother



told of her most disappointing Christmas, a year when her shoes were falling apart.

She joyfully opened her present, a Sears shoe box, only to find two left-shoes.

We would get our holiday tree from a gas station in Tarrytown. If we waited until mid-December or later,



we had to take a tree with a lot of holes. We would twirl it around, trying to find the worst side to face the wall. My father would then string the lights, large multi-colored



bulbs. We next pulled out the dusty cardboard boxes that held shiny glass ornaments of various shapes and colors. With a wire on each, we would very carefully hang these silvered globes on the branches, lest one drop and explode.

I thought that our two glass birds were exotic, and loved rubbing their brush tails against my cheeks. We finally added angel hair and tinsel that gave our tree sparkle. The angel hair

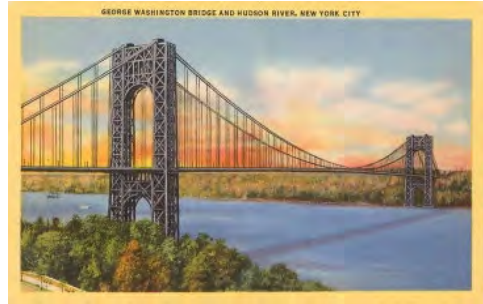


looked like cotton candy, but was spun



glass that prickled your hands if you grabbed it, so only the adults positioned its airy clumps. Our small hands would drape the branch tips with thick, sticky aluminum tinsel that came in cardboard boxes.

From 1947 through 1953, Christmas Eve was spent with my father's family, all of whom lived in New Jersey. We would drive down the Hudson River and across the George Washington Bridge→ to go to the home of my Aunt Marie and Uncle Peter Prevelige in Clifton. My sister and I would sit on two low, flip-down square seats in the rear of our 2-door Pontiac coupe. Mother threw a blue cotton-velvet blanket over our legs to keep out some of the cold. Laura and I struggled to look out the windows since we were practically at floor level. We were relieved when we got our 1949 Ford sedan with a regular bench back seat. The big treat was driving through the Italian parts of lower Westchester and upper New Jersey, where the houses were festooned with thousands of colored lights, and brightly lit plywood Santas, deer and crèches.



All the Lovas aunts, ←uncles, and spouses (16 adults) were at Aunt Marie and Uncle Pete's. Each of the 16 Lovas cousins↓ would get one gift. I loved the madhouse of the party, despite having no girl cousins my age. 1953 was the last all-Lovas Christmas gathering at Aunt Marie's since her husband died in 1954. That final year Aunt Marie fixed Slovak dishes, a great treat for me since I knew little of my Dad's ethnic traditions. Aunt Marie later told me she was very sad that no one else picked up having the family Christmas party. (1952 photos)



I remember many happy Christmases at Gracemere, particularly when ←Aunt Helen lived with us. One holiday she taught us how to string cranberries and popcorn to decorate the tree. I thought this was wildly creative and elegant, yet now recognize it was more like homespun and sweet.





But my best Christmas was in 1950 when Aunt Helen gave Laura and me some very special gifts. Laura and I had gotten ←new dolls the Christmas before, in 1949. These beautiful matching dolls had eyes that opened and shut, and were crowned with soft and curly Dynel hair. Dynel was a post-World War II innovation. But we had no extra doll clothes.

One day Sister Mary Athanasius told the kindergarten girls in my class to bring our dolls to school the next day. My excitement turned to embarrassment when Sister decided to use Maureen McGowan's new miniature washing machine to wash all of our doll clothes. My doll was the only one without an extra dress, so I had to use a paper towel to cover her nude body in order to keep her modest. I was mortified.



The following November, Aunt Helen would come home from work and sew away on a new project. She tried to keep it secret, but since we had a small house and the Singer sewing machine was in the living room, I could see her working, although I wasn't sure what she was making. Even as a child I realized that she must be tired from work and that all this sewing after dinner was a lot of effort.



That Christmas Laura and I opened packages with beautiful new wardrobes for our dolls. Each doll had a new pink flannel sleeper with a satin ribbon, a maroon wool coat and hat with lace trim, and another dress. I felt so happy and grateful, and regard this as the best Christmas gift of my whole life.

Now if you do your chores and are nice to each other, so that Santa is very pleased, next time you can learn how an old jeep helped Papa learn to ski!

The Gifts of Time and Interest

By Nonna Linda Hoeschler

As I look back on my childhood, I realize that the greatest gifts given me were never things, but the time and interest of many adults. They asked my opinion, questioned me about my activities, praised and encouraged me, and offered me new experiences. These people were particularly important because I did not have grandparents to regularly guide me, as Papa and I try to do with our dear grandchildren. My father's parents died before I was born. I too seldom saw my mother's folks (*holding me in 1944*) since they lived in Iowa, and we could only visit them some summers.



Both my parents cared deeply about my well being and gave me important gifts. However, as a young child my father → made the bigger impression on me in terms of having extra time for us. My mother was busy cooking, cleaning and running the household on a budget.

Every Sunday afternoon after dinner, Daddy would take Laura and me on walks through our Gracemere woods and beyond. We would discuss various subjects and sometimes meet old and new neighbors. He also took us fishing in Gracemere lake, danced with me when he would come home from work, and would even buy suntan lotion that I would smear on my rubber doll. No desire expressed was too small or too silly to him.



Most important was his total belief in me and my abilities. He and Mother always told me the same two things from the time I was very little. The *first* was that I could be anything I wanted. The *second* was that I always had to be able to take care of myself. These were crucial messages, particularly since many girls at that time were told that a college education and career were unnecessary. Many were simply expected to “marry well” and raise a family.

I was *never* told that girls couldn't do this or that, or that getting less than all A's in school was all right. Dad and I would do verbal math puzzles in the car. He would take me to work and explain his job there. He taught me to read



income statements, and how to roughly add several columns at once. He occasionally asked me to read and write my opinion about various children's columns his newspapers were considering for publication.

My father also went out of his way to praise and introduce me to successful women he knew, doctors, lawyers and businesswomen. Although my upbringing was ordinary in many ways, my parents' firm and consistent messages to me about trust, responsibility, excellence and pride were extraordinary. Their expectations of me were life-changing gifts.

Another critical person in my life was Aunt Helen Marie Wederquist→, my mother's younger sister. Like Mother, Aunt Helen was a registered nurse. In 1949 she moved from Iowa to Tarrytown, New York, the year this photo was taken. She lived with us at Gracemere until 1952, and worked at Grasslands Hospital in White Plains. Without asking, she always cut the fat off my meat, read *Uncle Wiggily* and other stories to us, and made outfits for Laura and me (including the ones in this photo).



Aunt Helen made our best Halloween costumes ever. In 1951 she helped us collect leafless branches from around Gracemere and made s(witch) brooms. For our witches' garb she altered two old nursing uniforms and tried to dye them black. They were still gray after several attempts!

In 1952 she thoughtfully considered our plain, and definitely uninspired plastic dime-store gypsy costumes. She added scarves and costume jewelry, and applied her make-up on our faces. In the end we felt exotic and wild.





Aunt Helen's supreme sacrifice was accepting the leadership of our Transfiguration School Brownie troop. I was so proud of her election by the other mothers, who were *supposed* to act as assistant leaders. I am not sure why "Miss Wederquist", as we called her, a full-time nurse, even considered the role. But she was the best leader we could have hoped for and almost every young girl at school joined the troop.

Moreover, she continued as leader after she moved to White Plains. (*Part of our Brownie troop, 1954→*)



Aunt Helen planned interesting Brownie projects, some quite challenging for the abilities of our 7 to 9 year-old group. She brought home large clam shells from a trip to Gloucester, Massachusetts. We painted the shells royal blue with bright gold paint borders, transforming

them into ashtrays. Sometimes a cigarette burned the paint and produced a terrible smell, but otherwise these ashtrays looked stunning to me. Aunt Helen also bought some glorious salmon colored satin fabric, the most beautiful material I had ever seen. She had us sew it into pincushions. She also taught us how to cut, hem and embroider tea towels.



Perhaps her most dramatic training came when our Brownie troop was to march in the Memorial Day Parade. Since Aunt Helen had been an ←officer in World War II, she knew what it meant to march well, in step and in straight lines. Our Brownie troop practiced near-precision marching in the schoolyard for several weeks. We learned to make turns by wheeling around a corner, always keeping our lines straight.

We learned "Eyes right!" or "Eyes left!" to acknowledge the statues of patriots.

On parade day the other Tarrytown Brownie troops meandered along the route in clumps. Even the older Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops were fairly sloppy marchers. But we Transfiguration Brownies were the high performing prodigies of Lt. Helen Marie, and we proudly marched in step, all the way!



Two other women who offered me new experiences were mothers of Gracemere playmates. ←Helen Hawkins was the most glamorous person I knew. She was always beautifully dressed and often wore the most divine cerise lipstick and nail polish. She was a kind, funny person and an asset to her husband, Howard. Mr. Hawkins was raised on an Indiana farm and was very serious and reserved. He was a top corporate lawyer and executive at RCA who later became its President. *(Helen and Howard Hawkins with baby Kathy)*



I frankly wished my mother dressed more like Mrs. Hawkins, and once told this to Mother, something I still regret. Mrs. Hawkins, in turn, probably sensed this and was always careful to compliment my mother on how well she ran the house and raised us. I can remember her once telling Mother that her children would never be as well behaved as Laura and I were. Mother beamed! By the way, the four Hawkins children *(1957, with nanny)* were very nice and polite.



Helen Hawkins would organize trips to New York City for the two families, mostly involving the four older kids: Laura, me, Kathy and Bobby Hawkins. We would all pile into Mrs. Hawkins' station wagon, ready for another Manhattan adventure.



My parents generally regarded the 25-mile trip to New York City as a grit-your-teeth challenge. They limited their visits to Broadway shows without us, or ←Circle Line boat trips around Manhattan with family and guests. The Circle Line boat rides were efficient and delightful, but offered only peeks at the great city. *(With Grandma Wederquist at the Battery after a Circle Line tour, 1954)*



Helen Hawkins planned and executed these outings with great enthusiasm and a winning smile. Moreover, she was knowledgeable about what we were seeing, a true teacher-mother. Whenever I now walk



into the Metropolitan Museum of Art→ or the ←Museum of Natural History, I always think of the first time I visited these magical treasure troves with Mrs. Hawkins.



The other Gracemere mother who gave me special gifts was Eleanore Kob →, mother of my friend, Stephanie. Mrs. Kob had reddish blond hair, always dressed up, and wore makeup daily, not just on special occasions. She was very funny and outspoken. She was also an expert in shopping, a real New York bargain hunter. Stephanie, a Transfiguration classmate, always looked perfectly lovely.



In 1953 Mrs. Kob offered to find Christmas dresses for Laura and me on a shopping trip to New York City. She arrived at our Gracemere house late one night, and triumphantly draped our sofa with the most beautiful dresses I could have imagined. They were patterned ↯pale blue satin, with dark blue velvet sashes and collars. The collar edges sparkled with tiny crystal drops. Mother started to reject the dresses as too expensive. Mrs. Kob looked astonished, and simply told my mother that she couldn't return them. I was so relieved. (*Lovas and Nelligan families after Royce's baptism, 1954*)



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Mrs. Kob offered me another experience, but one I couldn't enjoy. On several occasions she took me with Stephanie→, a champion horsewoman, to Kentucky Stables in Harrison for lessons. Noting my enthusiasm, Mrs. Kob told my mother that she would drive me to horseback lessons if mother would pay for them.





My mother declined, probably because she thought this was an unnecessary expense and indulgence. ←Mrs. Kob recognized my disappointment and paid for a lesson for me as a gift, but she never took me to watch Stephanie ride again. At my one and only lesson I was taught how to walk a horse, post at a trot and canter. This training came in handy several times, especially in La Crosse when the Hoeschlers had annual family horseback rides and Coulee hunts.

The most important non-family influence on my life was Dr. Lansing Keeler. You know his daughter, Sister Anne Claire, now a nun. Anne (*age 10*→) and I met at Transfiguration School the first day of kindergarten in September 1949. Anne, 4, couldn't open the door, so she looked around for the tallest person to help, and there I was, all of 5. With that event we became lifelong friends.



The Keelers were wealthy and lived in a mansion on a lovely estate in Irvington (←2010), just south of Tarrytown. Their home was filled with beautiful paintings and antiques. I was so fortunate to see a lifestyle that doesn't really exist today. The movie *Julia* shows some of the types of experiences I enjoyed many times at the Keeler home.

Anne never bragged or mentioned aspects of her privileged upbringing. However, we kids quickly figured out that her home life was different from ours. Almost every day, a uniformed chauffeur would drop off and pick up Anne at our plain-Jane parish school in a Packard limousine→. The Packard, which I fortunately got to enjoy, was an exquisite car that featured plush seats, jump seats, a glass window behind the driver, and a small vase for fresh flowers.



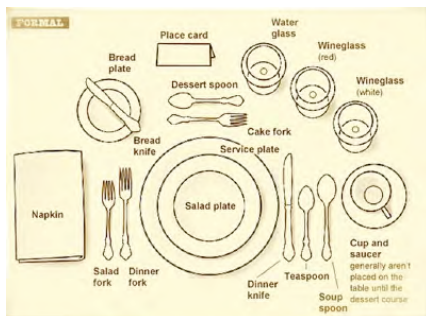
When Anne and I would play at her house, either my mother would drive me there in our Ford, or Dr. Keeler would send the chauffeur to pick me up. Mary, the Keeler's maid, might put wrapped cookies



on the back seat so that I wouldn't get hungry on the 3-mile trip to their home. I remember one time when some of our Altamont Avenue neighbors peered out their windows to see what was going on as I stepped like a princess into the Packard, the chauffeur opening my door!



The Keeler house had many rooms to explore, and we had our choice of which to play and sleep in, although we usually settled on Anne's bedroom for the night. Dinner was served promptly at 7:30 pm, and we always wore our good clothes. I remember my first dinner at Keelers, brushing my teeth and putting on my best dress before coming down to eat with Anne's family. When we had finished eating I started to stand to help clear the plates, as I would do at my house. But Mrs. Keeler sternly looked at me and nodded her head, so I sat down and waited for the maid to clear the table.



I had learned manners at home and can remember my mother saying that with good manners you could go any place in the world. Yet the Keelers trained me in other ways. I learned about napkin rings, as well as the order for using extended flatware and many glasses. I also learned the art of dinner conversation, speaking to the person on each side of you, in turn.

Dr. Keeler often asked my opinion on matters and made me feel valued. This led to an uncomfortable situation, however, when I was about 11. He had decided to build a swimming pool behind their house. He laid out the plans and asked me what I thought. I was thrilled with this request, but embarrassed that he didn't really include Anne in the conversation. (*Kristen at Keeler pool, 1970*)





So I tried to be a better friend to Anne whose mother had died when she was 10. I wanted her to feel special whenever she came to ←our house, just as I felt special at her home. This was easy to do because Anne was a kind, funny girl, always enthusiastic for new adventures. She was simply a great pal. She was also the best of guests, relaxed and polite. *(Anne, far right, in our 1966 wedding)*



Dr. Keeler continued to groom me in quiet, thoughtful ways. With Anne in tow, and with him at the wheel of their Cadillac, he took me to eat at clubs or restaurants I would not have seen otherwise. I remember his commenting wryly on the pretentious habits of others. He was a successful eye surgeon, self made in many ways, and clearly disliked fools.



Dr. Keeler included me in family parties, such as his 1960 wedding to Helen Kipp when Anne was 15. By the way, I drank the peach punch at the Keelers' wedding reception, not realizing it was full of brandy. I got a bit dizzy, a lesson for you as you get older! Dr. Keeler always introduced me as Anne's best friend, and as their honored guest at Anne's debutante parties. When I was with Dr. Keeler I would usually rise to the occasion, I believe. He gave me polish and exposure, and because of him I feel at ease in almost any situation. *(Dr. and Mrs. Keeler, 1966)*

I am so appreciative of the many adults who helped raise and shape me, more than are named in this story. Papa and I want to pass on their gifts of love, confidence and caring to you, too.

Now if you promise to try to help other people have better lives, you will get a new book of stories about us and our families!