

Scenes from a Brethren in Christ Childhood in Illinois

*By Vida M. Yoder**

Introduction

When I was a small child, our family moved from north of Morrison, Illinois, to the area southwest of the town. Here we had neighbors like Oostenryke, Voss, Dykema, Huizenga, Vander Schaff—to name a few. The name McCulloh was not well known. And it certainly wasn't a Brethren in Christ name.

During the decade and a half after this move, our family lived at several different places in the same general area. We worshipped more than twenty "horse and buggy miles" from the small Brethren in Christ congregation at Franklin Corners, where was also located the Mt. Carmel Children's Home.

My purpose in writing is to tell who our parents were and where they came from, and how it came to be that we were a Brethren in Christ family living where the Brethren in Christ were not known. I hope the events and incidents which I recall here will give some useful insight into what our life was like then.

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Papa

The little house where Papa was born stood beside the road east of Ft. Louden in Franklin County, Pennsylvania. It was a pleasant situation there on the sunny side of Parnell's Knob, but the Civil War came and Grandpa was called to serve as a soldier. He came home from the war with symptoms of the dreaded "White Plague," later known as tuberculosis.

Papa was born on October 18, 1866, the seventh of a family of eleven children. When Papa was nine, his father was no longer able to work, so Papa had to leave school and go to work. But he had a hunger to learn; I remember how he used to recite poetry and tell us stories that he had gathered along the way.

Grandpa died on the day after Christmas in 1876. It was a cold blustery afternoon; the little ones were napping, and Grandma was sitting by the window mending. Suddenly she saw Grandpa pass by the window, pulling his coat close around him. "What in the world is he doing out there, and how did he get out?" she wondered as she hurried to the door. There was no one out there! She turned to the bedroom just off the kitchen, and there on the bed lay the form of her husband, but he had departed this life. Who can explain how this happened?

Grandma kept her family together by taking in washings while the older children worked away from home. The family was Methodist; Papa became a member of that church when he was fifteen.

In about 1883 Papa decided to follow his older brothers John and George to Illinois. I believe two of his sisters had gone there, too. Papa did not have money for train fare, so one morning he packed his belongings in his mother's candle box, and lifting this little chest to his shoulder, he started west out of the valley. He had many hardships, but he had faith that God was leading him. At least two years passed before he set down the little chest at the home of one of his

brothers.

On October 4, 1888, he married Mary Sweigart. Their first child was a boy who died soon after birth. Next were twins, a son and a daughter, stillborn. In the winter of 1892 another son was born. He was named Archibald Scott for the first of our line who came to America from Ireland in about 1739. Mary died six days later.

Aunt Hattie, Papa's sister, took the baby home. She would care for him as long as he needed her. Aunt Hattie was married to Jeremiah Augustus George (Uncle Gus to us). He was a brother to Anna Zook, the wife of John R. Zook, a prominent minister in the Brethren in Christ church at that time.

Through this connection, Papa became acquainted with Brother Zook, was strongly influenced by his preaching, and joined the Brethren in Christ. He became interested in the Bible, and bought books to help him in his study.

In the meantime his brother John had been attracted to, and eventually joined, the Mennonites. Later, he became one of their ministers.

A Mother for a Little Boy

There were six of us at the dinner table that bitterly cold and stormy day in January, 1929. Paul and I were the oldest of the children at home. Ruth and Eunice were in school.

When we were finished, Grandma went to her room to rest. Grandpa went to his rocker in the next room to doze by the fire. The rest of us stayed at the table. Papa seemed to be in a pensive mood, and I thought that if we waited a little, he might tell us what he was thinking about.

Soon he said, "It was a day like this that Mary died." Tears came to his eyes, and to Mama's also. He continued, "It seems Mary and I were not meant to enjoy a family together."

After a pause I asked, "How did you and Mama meet?"

Then I learned that the families were acquainted, and Grandma Longanecker had helped prepare the young mother for her burial.

He then told of a conversation between Mary and him one day in the summer of 1892 while they were driving in a horse and buggy. They passed a house where a young girl was working in the yard with several small children playing nearby. Mary asked, "Have you ever noticed Maria--what a nice motherly girl she is?"

Papa answered, "No, I can't say that I have."

"Well, she is," Mary replied firmly, "and she will make some man a good wife, and a lovely mother for their children."

Papa answered absently, "That's nice," then added, "but I have you." However, before the year ended, Mary was in her grave. Papa had a son, but the little one had no mother.

In the summer of 1894 Papa was driving alone on that same road, past that same house. He was thinking of his little son, and was wishing he could find a mother for him, and have a home of his own while the child was young enough to accept the change.

Suddenly, in his mind he heard Mary's voice as she had spoken two years earlier. "Have you ever noticed Maria--what a nice motherly girl she is? Well, she is, and she will make some man a good wife and a lovely mother for their children"

Papa was shaken, but as he pondered the incident, he decided to talk to Grandpa Longanecker about it. Grandpa said he thought not: Maria is so young, and Papa has a little boy. Papa should look for someone older.

"Someone older," Papa thought. "Time will take care of that. I'll wait until she is old enough to speak for herself, then I'll ask her."

However, before long Grandpa came to him and said that the boys are beginning to come for Maria, and she will probably marry young. If Papa is still interested in her, he now has their permission to call on her: her parents would

rather she marry him than any of the others, because they were sure he would be kind to her.

So Papa called on Maria, and found her responsive to him, and her heart tender and full of loving compassion for his little son. They were married on December 4, 1894. Papa found Mary's perception of Maria to be a good one: Mama was indeed a good wife to him, and a lovely mother to us children.

Archie, Papa and Mary's son, made this statement one time when someone mentioned his stepmother: "Don't call her my stepmother. I'm one man God blessed with two mothers."

Mama

Mama's grandparents, William and Maria Gsell, lived in the vicinity of Marion in southern Franklin County, Pennsylvania. Their place was a station for the Underground Railroad, providing shelter and transportation for slaves who were trying to reach freedom.

My great-grandfather became involved in the Underground Railroad after witnessing an atrocity on the streets of Chambersburg. A black woman with two small children was heading north. Rebel soldiers spotted them, tied the children's feet together, and tossed them over the back of a horse. They were taken one direction, and the woman in another.

Great-grandfather's family were Mennonite. In the mid-1860s he moved his family to an area northwest of Morrison, in Whiteside County, Illinois, where a number of other Mennonite families had settled. They worshipped in West Clyde Schoolhouse until the group built a red brick church where they then worshipped.

In early 1870, a young man named Samuel Longanecker came to the area. His family lived in Medina County, Ohio. They were members of the Church of the Brethren.

The Gsell family had a daughter named Maria. Samuel

was attracted to her as soon as he saw her. She felt the same way about him. They were married on December 17, 1870.

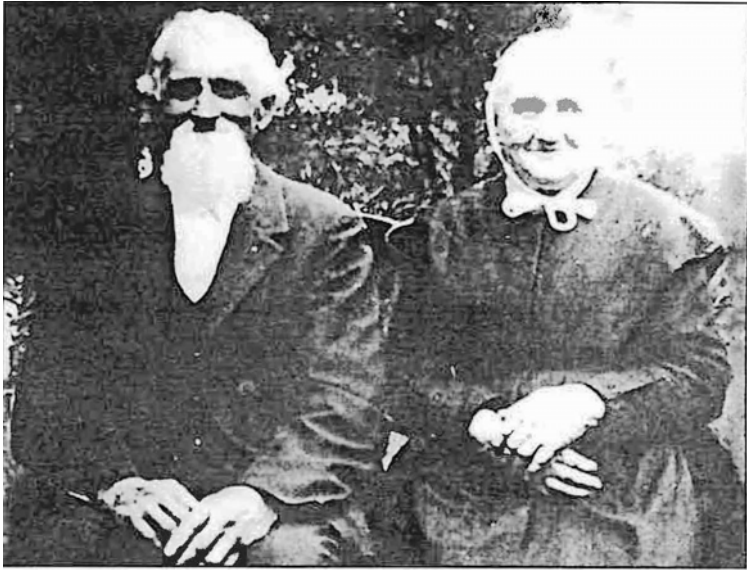
Grandpa and Grandma Longanecker became the parents of eleven children. One son died in infancy. Their fifth child, a girl born November 28, 1877, was named Maria, for her mother and grandmother. When she was twelve, she began to work away from home, helping other mothers with their housework and the care of little children.

One of the places Mama went to help with the work was the J.R. Zook home. The Zooks had two children, but both died in infancy. A long-lasting friendship developed between Anna Zook and Mama.

One year when General Conference was in Iowa, Papa and Mama took me along. We stayed at the Zook home. Mrs. Zook had a glassed-in cabinet with lots of pretty things in it--dishes, figurines, etc. She asked me if I liked pretty things, and I answered, "Yes." She then said that I could have something in there that I especially liked. I chose a little glass elephant. I have treasured that memory and the elephant these many years. After Brother Zook died, she would come to our home, too, when she visited Aunt Hattie and Uncle Gus.

Papa and Mama became parents of thirteen children--five sons and eight daughters. Two sons and one daughter died in infancy. Our family numbered eleven, including Archie, who was always like a full brother to us. I was born in November of 1912. I had two younger sisters.

Even though we were a big family, there was always room for another, perhaps an infant who needed mothering because its mother was ill or no longer living. In the summer we had "fresh air children" sent by an agency to give children a couple of weeks in the country. One year they sent us an ailing mother who needed rest, and her two children. Another summer we had a young mother and her two children from June until her baby was born in September.



Grandfather and Grandmother Longanecker on their fiftieth wedding anniversary.



William and Maria McCulloh (Papa and Mama).

Wayfarers were never turned away. I especially remember two. The first was a soldier who had had half of his foot blown away in World War 1. He came from the Soldiers' Home in Quincy, Illinois, and returned there for the winter. Papa helped him care for his wounded foot, and to put on his specially-made round shoe. He stayed until after my birthday, November 26. He gave me a dollar bill as my present, which was really special.

The other man was older, with white hair and beard. He came one Sunday towards evening and asked if he could split wood in exchange for a bit of food and for shelter in the barn to sleep. Papa gave him none of his requests, but brought him into the house to have supper. The man sat in a corner in the living room when neighbors came in for Sunday evening worship service. I saw him weeping during the singing. After the service he and Papa had a long talk, and he was given a bed to sleep in.

There were those who didn't know Papa very well who criticized him for his treatment of wayfarers. His defense was, "He is some mother's son, and God loves him." Maybe it was partly because he never forgot his long walk from Pennsylvania to Illinois.

Mama was always ready to help anyone she could. I have no idea how many women asked Mama to be with them when they gave birth. One summer five babies were born in our community; Mama was there for all their births. Two of these babies were twin sons born to Jack and Laura Hamm, whose eight-year-old son had died the year before. (See Jackie Hamm, below.)

Papa and Mama were involved in Mt. Carmel Children's Home from its beginning. He was a member of the board for twenty-nine years, for much of that time as chairman.

In 1972 Leroy and I visited in Morrison. I went into a hardware store to buy a little pearl-handled knife for a souvenir for Leroy. The owner looked at me and said, "I should know you." I told him I had often come in with my father when he needed supplies. "What was his name?" he

asked. I said, "Will McCulloh." "Oh yes!. I remember him! He used to canvas the business places for money for the orphans' home when funds were low. He took good care of those children." I thought, "I know. He never forgot what it was like to be an orphan."

Papa Becomes a Minister

A lane through the woods led to the farm where my family lived when Papa became a minister.

A Methodist minister was pastoring a small congregation which held services in the local schoolhouse (this was on The Bottoms, and the school was named Independence School). When he was absent from the area, he asked the Brick Church congregation of Mennonites to send a minister to fill in for him. They usually sent Papa's brother John, one of their ministers. One time he was asked to bring along a teacher for the adult Sunday school class. Uncle John asked Papa to do this and Papa agreed.

Some weeks later the little congregation at Independence School learned that their pastor had accepted a call in the West. They called Papa and asked him to preach for them until they could find a permanent pastor.

"Oh," Papa said, "you have the wrong McCulloh. It's my brother John who is the preacher."

"But aren't you the one who taught the Sunday school class that Sunday?"

"Yes, but I'm not a preacher."

"We don't care about your not being a preacher; what we want is someone who can teach us the Bible the way you taught the Sunday school lesson that Sunday." Papa consented to their request. It meant a trip of close to fifteen miles one way with horse and buggy, but he did it.

A Methodist minister was never brought in to fill the pulpit. Papa continued to serve there for a dozen years. He was ordained to the ministry in 1915 by Brethren in Christ Bishop Henry L. Trump.

Belle, Papa's Bay Mare

She was a beautiful little bay mare. Papa drove her when he went to his meetings on Sunday. It wasn't practical to take the family along--he had to leave too early and he got home too late.

In later years I came to understand that Papa knew his horses, and that he loved them. There was a special understanding between him and Belle. She knew the way home; Papa, bone weary from a busy week and a long Sunday, often fastened the reins on the dashboard and settled back to relax--sometimes to sleep. Belle would stop when they arrived in the driveway of the granary where the buggy was kept.

One chilly Sunday night when it began to rain, Papa buttoned the storm shields on the buggy, and they started home. Sleep overtook him. When Belle stopped, he realized they were not in the granary. There must be something wrong. He lit the lantern and got out to check. Everything seemed all right, but when he got into the buggy and spoke to her to go, she whinnied. Papa got out again and checked her shoes--maybe one was loose, or a stone wedged in. But, no, nothing there. Then, what is it? he thought; something worries her.

Just then, above the sound of the rain and the wind, he heard another horse's whinny. Belle answered it. So that's where the trouble is. He took the lantern, climbed over the fence, and went to look for the horse in trouble. He found it tangled in a roll of barbed wire.

Papa freed the horse, and it whinnied again to Belle. She answered him, and when Papa got back to her, he told her she was a good little horse. Papa used to tell this for a horse story, but I think it says much about him, too.

A Lesson in Obedience

I was three years old when I first learned that to disobey

brought consequences peculiar to the situation. We were living on a farm not far from the east edge of The Bottoms. This farm had very sandy soil.

Papa had gone up over the hill to fix the fence. He told me not to come along. I wasn't happy about that. I was usually allowed to tag along when he worked outdoors. Eventually I thought that maybe by now he was missing me, and wouldn't scold me for going up to find him. When I got up to the top of the hill, I found that sand burrs grew there in great abundance. I sat down to pick them out of my bare feet and got sand burrs when I sat. I put my hands down to help me get up and got sand burrs in them. All I could do was send up a wail of despair. Papa came, picked off the offending burrs, then said, "Now, do you think you know why you should listen to Papa?" I thought I did.

He carried me down to the path where it was safe for bare feet.

Revival in Burr Oak Grove

I think it was probably in my sixth summer that a big tent was pitched in the burr oak grove in a neighbor's pasture. Two evangelists conducted the revival: one was rather quiet and gentle in his approach; the other I remember for the way he "got around" on the platform. Tents were pitched under the maples in our house yard to live in. Two lady workers were in one of the tents and did the cooking for the team.

One night at the big tent, after the sermon had been delivered, the people were singing an invitation song--#55 in the old *Spiritual Hymns* book: "Let Jesus Come into Your Heart." I knew a person should let Jesus come into his or her heart. I had heard Papa say it in family devotions, and my Sunday school teacher had told us the same thing. The chorus of the song said, "Just now, throw open the door, Let Jesus come into your heart."

As we were standing I was lost in the crowd of grownups

all around, and I was wondering just how *do* you open the door? The only way I could think of was to open my mouth as wide as I could and let Jesus figure out how to get in. I don't suppose any person saw me standing there with my mouth wide open, but surely God saw it. I wonder what He thought.

Amos and Nellie Dick

It was that same summer (1918) that Amos and Nellie Dick visited Illinois for the last time before they sailed to India. Nellie was the sister of Abbie who had married Archie. The sisters were the daughters of Bishop John Sider of the Wainfleet congregation in Ontario. They had been brides in a double wedding ceremony on December 20, 1916, in Canada.

It was on a Sunday afternoon when Amos and Nellie went for a walk in the meadow with us girls. Across the creek was a catalpa grove, where it was nice and shady. There they made Adam and Eve dresses for us by pinning catalpa leaves together, using the stems for pins. We wore these back to the house to show them to the people there. Amos and Nellie sailed for India the day dear Leona was born to Archie and Abby. They never got to see her in this world. (See Leona, below.)

The Bush Girls

I started school in the fall before my seventh birthday in November. The other girl in my class was Dorothy Bush, whose family lived near us. Dorothy had two sisters at home--Marjorie and Jeanette. In that winter another baby girl was born. The mother died soon after the birth. One of the mother's sisters took little three-year-old Jeanette. Mama had the other three, and she was expecting Eunice in May.

The three older girls were placed in Mount Carmel

Home in a few weeks, but it was about three months longer until they felt they could handle a baby.

Why Are We So Different?

The last day of school was always a big occasion. School was over, and a whole wonderful summer lay ahead. The pupils had learned and repeatedly practiced their parts in the program which would be given in the forenoon.

At noon the mothers would bring from their baskets the food they had prepared for the picnic. The men brought big cans of lemonade *with ice!* The school directors brought the ice cream--lots of it--vanilla and strawberry.

I was excited and happy as I hurried along the road to school, feeling good about my world and myself. I wore a new pink jumper with a white blouse, and pink ribbons on my braids.

As I entered the school yard I noticed two of my playmates, Buella and Burdetta, and approached them expecting a happy welcome. Instead, they said coolly, "This game is only for girls with white stockings and black patent leather slippers."

For the first time that I remember, I was conscious of my black stockings and my plain black leather shoes. The other girls had their hair cut, and wore wide plaid ribbon bows. My ribbons were only about an inch wide, and were plain pink.

I noticed how different Mama looked from the others. Mama had black curly hair which she wet with water and combed so it would lie flat. She also wore her white prayer covering. Her dress was plain, and reached to her ankles. Other mothers had on pretty dresses and had fancy hairdos. I was embarrassed at how different Mama looked, and at the same time I was ashamed of myself for feeling that way about my mother. I loved her; she was a good mother. But why do we have to be so different because we are Christians? I was sure that most of these families went to

church and professed to be Christians, too.

As I was walking around alone, I observed that the other women were friendly to Mama, and she seemed to be at ease with them.

Next, I began to notice the fathers. Mine was a preacher as well as a farmer and a dairyman. He was the only one with a beard and mustache.

The question, "Why are we so different?" stayed with me a long time, and I retreated into a shell and became something of a loner, spending time in the meadows and the woods, listening to the music of the little brook, enjoying the flowers and the birds, and thinking my thoughts about many things.

I began to feel a loving Presence, and I knew it was God. I could speak to Him, and I knew He cared. So, like the poet, "The little things that troubled me, I lost them--out in the fields with God."

Leona

On December 5, 1918, a daughter was born to Archie and Abbie. She was named Leona Marguerite. She as a dear little girl. When she was several months old, they moved to Ontario where Abbie's parents lived. Merlin was born there on September 17, 1920. Before he was a year old, they moved back to Illinois. Leona was past two then, and talking about everything.

Abbie was a skilled seamstress. She made coverings like all Brethren in Christ women wore in those days. Leona wanted one, so Abbie made a covering just her size which she liked to wear. She also made for me the prettiest dress I remember ever having as a child.

In November 1921, Leona contracted diphtheria. Archie and Abbie were quarantined with her in the living room at our place. The rest of us Were given toxin-antitoxin.

Leona died on November 13. There could be no funeral. But the undertaker brought her body back in its little white

casket and set it outside a window on the porch. She looked so sweet. We all loved her so. The night before she died Archie asked her if she wanted to get well and stay with Daddy and Mother, or did she want to go and be with Jesus? She said she wanted to go and be with Jesus.

Another Lesson in Obedience

Around the same time, I did something that was strictly forbidden, but I was sure I would be very careful, and no one would know about it. It happened like this.

We had a windmill to pump water for the livestock. First, the water flowed into a tank in the milkhouse, then down an overflow pipe into pipes underground that went to big watering tanks near both barns. The milkhouse was nice and cool on a hot summer day. Papa wasn't home, and no one else paid much attention to me, unless I hadn't done my chores.

I took my fleet of paper boats to the milk tank. The gentle flow of water made it extra interesting. Alas! One of my tiny boats slipped over the edge of the overflow pipe and was gone! I quickly gathered up -the rest of the fleet; and stood there watching for the dreaded signs of a clogged pipe. I didn't see any, but that didn't help me. As soon as Papa saw me he'd know I did something wrong and ask what was bothering me.

When I saw him coming I went to meet him, climbed up into the wagon beside him, and told him what I had done. We went to the milkhouse and saw the water still flowing freely. I fully expected a spanking, but all he did was to say, "Well now Vida, do you see why you should listen to Papa?" I was very sure I did.

I have no recollection of ever getting any corporal punishment from Papa. To see him looking at me with that I-expected-better-than-that-from-you look was more than enough for me.

Final Lesson in Obedience, I Think

I think it might have been in the following May that the teacher was to take the school children May-flowering in the big woods beyond The Bottoms--a mile and a half one way. Papa said I shouldn't go--I was too small for such a long walk. But I did want so much to see where the wild flowers grew, and I went! We found violets--the biggest, bluest ones ever. There were Dutchman's breeches, wild columbine, wild geraniums, spring beauties, trilliums--to name a few. But what fascinated me most was the Jack-in-the-pulpit. It was a lovely time--except for the guilt gnawing away at me. On the way home the teacher took a short cut. By now I had a blister on my heel and was walking barefoot. The blister broke open at the top. The short cut led through a cow yard, and I got my blister full of dirt. When I washed my feet the dirt didn't wash out. When we got home, Papa asked me why I had disobeyed him. I told him it was because I wanted to see where the wild flowers grow.

"You knew I'd have to punish you if you disobeyed me, didn't you?" His eyes were sad. I said, "Yes, Papa, I knew." I do not remember what the punishment was--it wasn't very severe, I'm sure.

But punishment came anyway in a different way. A couple of weeks later my ankle was red and somewhat swollen. But I didn't say anything to Mama. She didn't like us to fuss about every little thing that happened.

It was Papa who asked, "Vida, what's the matter with your foot? I see you favoring it when you walk."

"Oh, it hurts a little."

"Come here, let me have a look at that. Hmm, red, and swollen! We must show that to Dr. Pettit." So after supper we went to see the doctor. The verdict was a tuberculin infection. I had my foot in a cast for the three months of summer, and when school started in September, I still had it taped.

I think by that time I was thoroughly cured of

disobedience to Papa.

The doctor was convinced I had picked up the bacillus in that cow yard. If I had peeled off the blister and cleaned it out thoroughly, I probably could have prevented the infection.

Of Love and Raisin Pie

I had just come home from school, and after I changed my clothes I went to the kitchen for a slice of apple butter bread (we always had apple butter bread before we did our chores). On this evening, Mama called to me from the dining room where she was mending, saying I should get out of the kitchen and get to my chores. I was stunned! I went out to the granary to get chicken feed, and the seriousness of my plight overtook me there. I climbed up into the buggy to think about it. I concluded that I must be an orphan that the family for some reason had felt obliged to take in before I was old enough to remember, and now Mama is tired of me and she doesn't care if I do starve to death.

To be eight years old and suddenly lose your sense of identity is a traumatic thing, and I began to cry.

About that time someone entered the granary and called my name. It was Mama. She climbed up into the buggy and put her arms around me. She said she had been mistaken when she thought I had already been in the kitchen, and that after she had sent me out, she learned it was Lois who had been there earlier. She said I should go back to the house with her. No, she didn't give me apple butter bread--she gave me a piece of raisin pie! I've never since doubted that I am a true flesh and blood daughter of William and Maria McCulloh. And if you ask me what I think love tastes like, I'd say I think it tastes sort of like raisin pie!

Grace and Roy

Grace Miller was a girl in our community who had become a Christian and a member of the Brethren in Christ Church. She became a Sunday school teacher, and taught the class I was in. One Christmas she gave us each a pretty little china cup. I still have mine.

The time came when she felt called to do mission work somewhere, and went to Messiah College to prepare for that work.

At Messiah she met Roy Mann. He came along home with Ezra from Messiah in the spring of 1921, his purpose being to visit Grace in her parents' home.

On January 1, 1922, they were married in a simple ceremony in Independence Schoolhouse. Bishop Trump performed the ceremony. In August of that year they went to Africa. On March 18, 1924, Grace died of malaria. It was a very sad loss to her family and to the whole community. I treasure the memories I have of her.

Long Ago Summers

All sorts of interesting things happened in the summer. There were hens to set--eight or ten with chicken eggs and a couple with duck and goose eggs. There were still things to plant in the garden and flower beds, and spring cleaning to finish, as I will mention later.

The men were busy with farm work from early in the morning until after dark--corn to finish planting, hay to make; wheat, oats, and maybe barley to harvest. These grains were cut and tied in bundles with a four-horse team drawing the binder. Then the farmer and his family set these bundles together in shocks to wait until the man came with the big steam engine pulling the threshing machine. He'd toot his whistle to let us know he was coming. It was an awesome sight.

Having the threshers was a big day. The neighbors

helped each other with men, teams and hay wagons. And the women helped each other, too. It was quite a job to cook for twelve or more hungry men, and to take them coffee and cookies in the field in mid-afternoon.

After the threshing was over, some nice day Mama would empty the straw ticks from our beds and wash them. After they had blown dry in the sunshine, she filled them with fresh straw and sewed them shut again. Now they were ready to go back on the beds, and the beds "made up." There was no trouble getting the kids off to bed that night. We needed a chair to climb in.

We went barefoot the whole summer, except when we went to church or some other special place. There was a grassy meadow with a creek to play in. Sometimes I'd lie on my tummy on the bank of the creek and watch the water striders make lacy-looking shadows on the sandy bottom of the stream. Or I might find a field sparrow's nest on the ground, half hidden by a clump of weeds. I can think of lots of pleasant things city children miss!

We had our chores to do, of course, but we knew we were helping. That made it worthwhile.

Since we were always barefoot, we had to wash our feet every night before going to bed. I remember a few times when we added a little change to the nightly ritual by pretending we were having the foot washing part of communion service. We'd wash each other's feet, then kiss, just like the grownups did in church. These were solemn occasions. I remember them with a tender feeling.

The Bottoms (Early Spring of 1922)

I had heard about The Bottoms all my life. Now I was going to live there. It seemed like a strange place to me. Here was an area about a half mile wide, reaching both north and south for as far as one could see, and beyond that, yet it was a vast peat bed. On either side of it was regular Illinois soil. How did it happen?

One day Ed Randall stopped along the road to talk to Papa. Ed was an elderly bachelor who had lived on The Bottoms all his life. He drove a pretty little black and white pony hitched to a small cart. During the conversation he told Papa that he remembered hearing an old Indian tell that when he was a boy the Mississippi River flowed through here. Then the earth shook, and the river went over beyond the hills where it now flows.

Long years later, I read in an encyclopedia something that convinced me that the Indian story is true. The account told of what was said to be the strongest quake ever recorded on the North American continent. On December 16, 1811, and again on January 26 and February 7, 1812, these shocks occurred in the area of New Madrid in southeastern Missouri. Shock waves were felt 1100 miles away in Boston, and bells were made to ring in Washington, D.C. There were numerous lighter quakes between and afterward. It was said the river flowed backwards for a time, and when all was finally quieted down, the topography of the landscape had been altered. Where the river had been here, all that was left was its desolate, watery bed. Water loving birds visited the place, bringing in their droppings the seeds of water loving plants, among them the cattail reed, with its velvety brown spikes of tightly packed flower heads. The abundance of these gave the place the name, "The Cattail Bottoms," sometimes shortened to "The Cattail," or "The Bottoms." In a century of growth, breaking down and decay, the bed eventually filled with the "compost."

In the early quarter of this century, a drainage ditch was dredged down the middle of the length of it. Smaller ditches were dredged at right angles at intervals. This made a wonderful place to grow celery, onions, cabbage, potatoes-anything, almost. A few of the great blue herons remained, as did the bittern, and the 'red-winged blackbird. Frogs and turtles lived in the ditches, as did some other things I do not like to think about.

Papa Makes a Friend

On the farm just north of us, perhaps a quarter of a mile, lived an elderly couple. They had raised their own children; then in middle age a number of their grandchildren made their home with them. One had been with them from the time he was about a year and a half old, and was now the mainstay of the aged couple. Of the others—some married, others came and went as they pleased. Most of the time it was just the three: Grandpa, Grandma, and Guy VanDyke. Grandma was little and frail. Papa took pity on her, and even though she despised Papa, he did everything he could to make life easier for her.

For a while he sent Lois to help her, then later he sent me. We fed the chickens, hunted eggs, brought in wood and water, took out ashes and "slop water." We filled lamp and lantern fonts with kerosene, washed lamp and lantern chimneys, dishes, and the "less honorable" (but sometimes very welcome) vessels from under the beds. We also scrubbed the milkhouse and the privy. Besides those things we helped Guy with the milking and washed the milk buckets afterwards. Of course, all those jobs weren't done every day.

After supper, I washed up the dishes, then was free to go home. Of her own free will she gave me a quarter a week!

As I said, she despised Papa. That was because Guy was converted through Papa's influence, and he no longer accepted invitations to sing popular songs at parties. His dream of making music a career simply melted away. Now, he wanted to sing for the glory of God. Poor Grandma's dreams of a famous grandson faded, and it was Papa's fault. She wouldn't be convinced otherwise.

One fall when she was feeling stronger, she decided to go out west to visit a son who lived there. This would also take her away from "Old McC's (pronounced "mucks") preachin." Alas, it didn't work that way. She wrote back that instead of getting away from it, "The coyotes' hollerin

keeps remindin her of it," as she put it.

After they were home again, she sometimes called Mama and asked her if it would be all right if she came up to visit a while. She did love Mama, in spite of her feeling about Papa. If Papa knew she wanted to come, he'd send us children down with the buggy--some pushing while others handled the thills.** We'd pull up to the stoop*** in front of her house, then ease the buggy next to the porch when we got to our place. We'd take her home when she was ready to go. I think she had as much fun from those rides as we kids did.

In the summertime when we had our Sunday school picnic, Papa always saw to it that there was a rocking chair with a cushion on it for Grandma. But still she hated him. One sad day dear gentle old Grandpa died. The family got together to make plans. Knowing her feelings about Papa, they gave her a list of ministers who would be available and asked her which one she wanted. "I don't want any of them," she said firmly. "I want old McC."

From that time on she owned Papa as a good friend.

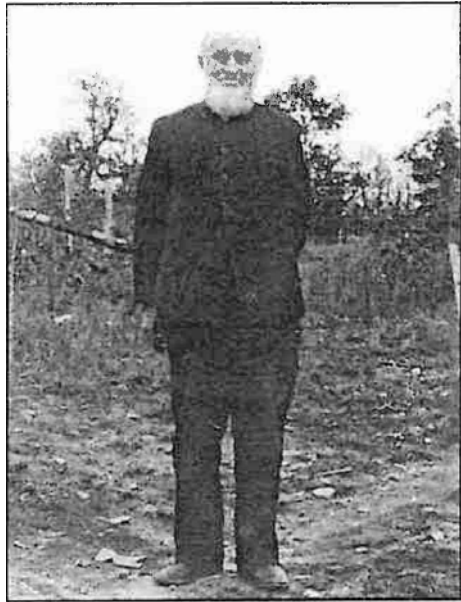
A Step in the Right Direction

I believe it was in the summer of 1923 that Rev. J.H. Byer from California held meetings in the schoolhouse. He was the same one who had been with another minister when the tent was pitched in our neighbor's pasture. He was often in our home as he traveled across the country. His approach to preaching was gentle and warm, as I remember it.

**Thills: the shafts in the front of the buggy which the horse backs into and is strapped to securely to make the buggy move with the horse.

***Stoop: a platform with a step leading to it. Many farmyards had these to make it easier for ladies to get into buggies or carriages.

Evangelist J. H. Byer.



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William and Maria McCulloh family at the last time they were together in Illinois. Back row, left to right: Archie, Paul; middle row, left to right: Anna, Esther, Cora, Vida, Lois, Ruth; front row, left to right: Ezra, Papa, Mama, Charles.

One night the sermon touched me, and when the opportunity was given, I walked forward and knelt at the altar. My big problem, it seemed to me, was my hot temper, and I wanted it under control.

I do not remember exactly all that happened there, but I do know that when I left I felt better. I went out on the schoolhouse porch--no one else was out there. I was alone with God and His wonderful sky full of stars.

Then someone came, slipped her arm around me, and drew me close to her and said softly to me, "Now you are my little sister." I didn't know then about "warm fuzzies,"**** but that certainly made me feel wonderful. The woman was Amy DeHann, a half sister to Guy VanDyke. She had been my Sunday school teacher.

The last time Leroy (my husband) and I were in Illinois, we learned that Amy had terminal cancer, and we went to see her. She made a comment that "she'd soon be gone, and just as soon forgotten."

"Oh no," I said. "You will live in the memories of the people whose lives you touched." Then I recalled to her the night on the porch of the schoolhouse.

"Did I say that?" she asked.

"Yes, you said that. And I'm sure you said lots of things to others that will never be forgotten."

The Visitor From Oklahoma

There was a stir of excitement as people gathered to the little white schoolhouse that summer evening. A visiting minister, all the way from Oklahoma, was going to preach.

The opening songs were sung and a scripture passage read. Papa introduced the speaker.

He hadn't got very far into his message when a very

****"Warm fuzzies: a sincere compliment, a word of encouragement, appreciation or some other loving expression.

loud whistling sound came through the open door leading through the girls' cloakroom and onto the porch. Guy VanDyke walked out there and the noise suddenly stopped.

At breakfast the next morning, the visiting preacher remarked that never in his life had he been in a meeting where someone was rude enough to disturb a meeting like last night. Papa was bewildered; he wasn't aware of any misbehavior during the service. "Surely, Brother Will, you must have heard. Didn't you notice Brother VanDyke going out and sending whoever it was away?"

Now Papa knew what he was talking about, and told the preacher that the "noise" was the call of the whippoorwill which chose the threshold of the door as the place to sing his song. The preacher was dubious. "Are you telling me that a bird made that racket?"

"Yes, the woods are full of them, and evening and night is when they sing."

It isn't surprising that the preacher was bewildered about the sound. It is very loud up close, and the birds can keep up the noise so very long. I suppose it gave him something to talk about when he got home.

Jackie Hamm

Jackie was the first-born son of Jack and Laura Hamm. (Laura was the auntie who cared for three-year-old Jeanette when her mother died in childbirth in the winter of 1920, until she went with her two older sisters to Mount Carmel Home.) Jackie had a sister Marie, about seven, and a younger brother, Tommy, five.

Jackie was eight and a third grade pupil in Independence School, when he became ill at school. On the way home he grew so tired that he sat on the bank beside the road. The older boys carried him home. He became increasingly ill; the doctor said he had rheumatic fever. In a few weeks the lad was dead. His daddy bought a casket for his son, and neighbors prepared him for burial.

Papa was asked to be the minister in charge, but where would the funeral be held? School was in session, and their house was small. Church services were held in our house during the school year, so the funeral was held there, too.

Jackie's mother was numb with grief, and the tears stayed locked within her.

Two neighbor girls, Pearl and Ada Baker, were asked to sing with Lois and me. One song we sang was

Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast;
There by His love o're shaded,
Sweetly thy soul shall rest.

The thought of her son cradled in those loving arms released the mother's tears. Pearl, about fifteen, wept while Lois, Ada, and I did our best to finish the song. Others wept, too. It seemed we all were touched by the love of Jesus that day.

Leaving The Bottoms

It certainly was not Papa's choice to leave; in fact it was a most bitter time for him. He was now fifty-eight, had put a lifetime of savings and much hard work into this place, and now he was losing all of it. He depended on the crops for income to make payments on the mortgage, but for two years in a row the old Mississippi tried to reclaim its bed, and just when it was about time to harvest the crops, the rain came, and came! And the water stayed and stayed. A couple of weeks after the flood, the water was still over the bridge which we used to get to the onion patch. Earlier, it had been hip deep there.

When the water was finally off, we went out to see if we could at least salvage some potatoes for our own use. But as soon as a forkful of soil was lifted, the hole filled with water. If we fished around, we could find some potatoes, so we tried to get several bushels before the ground froze. We also

gathered some onions that we could find. But all that work was in vain, too, because both the potatoes and the onions soon rotted.

It was a sad day for Papa when he had to go to the bank and tell Mr. Smith he had no choice but to give up. Then he said, "Like Job, I came into the world naked, and I'll go out naked."

With tears in his eyes, the banker said, "Well, Will, there's one thing. You go out an honest man!"

Papa Forgives Me

It was Christmas time, 1926, and our teacher at Prairie Center School was planning the Christmas program. There would be singing, recitations, perhaps a pantomime, and several dialogues. The teacher wanted me to play a part in two dialogues.

I loved pretending, and in order to get Papa's permission to take those parts, I lied to him. I told Papa the teacher was not going to have a Santa Claus. (We couldn't go if Santa Claus was to appear at the end of the program.)

But Santa did come. Papa never questioned me about why Santa appeared after the program was over. There was the jingle of sleigh bells outside and Santa came in the door beside the Christmas tree. His bag held a gift for each child (gifts from the teacher). Then he passed out the gifts under the tree--the ones the children brought for the person whose name was on the paper he or she drew a week or so before Christmas.

I was miserable most of the evening, expecting to be called aside and questioned when we got home, but Papa didn't say a word. This added to my misery. Would he ever trust me again? I had to go to him and confess that I had lied to him. He looked sad, but he forgave me. How could I ever forgive myself?

A Surprise Gift For Missions

We were now living on a large dairy farm. The Hahn family lived on the farm next to us. They had a lovely home reflecting the prosperity the farm provided. There were four children; the two younger ones went to school with us.

They were Christians--faithful members of one of the large churches in Morrison. So it was, quite a surprise when Mr. Hahn came to see Papa one day. He said he liked to give to missions, but had questions about how the money he sent to their mission board was spent--how much actually got to the mission field. Then he gave Papa a very generous check for the Brethren in Christ mission board. He said he felt he could trust them.

I have often wondered how he came to that conclusion, or was he the kind of person God could count on to fill a need somewhere? I think perhaps he was.

A Firm Decision

The summer of 1927 was a difficult one for me. This trouble came from deep within myself. I felt homesick, but how could that be when I was home? What was this yearning that made me cry into my pillow at night?

When I heard plans being made for our little group to have a communion service at our house and to invite the Franklin Corners congregation, I began to understand what my problem was: I didn't "belong" with those who would be taking communion. I had given myself to God five years earlier, but I had never "joined the church." I knew Jesus wanted those who love and belonged to Him to "eat this bread and drink this cup" in remembrance of Him, and I wanted more than anything else to be with those who would do it.

The opportunity came for me to tell Papa my feelings, and he reminded me that the bishop required that only members be served. I told him I wanted to be a member,

too.

Before long I learned that I was to have an interview with the bishop and the deacons, and I was surprised and happy that my sister Lois was joining with me. We were accepted into church, and had our first communion that evening. The next morning, Monday, September 5, 1927, a dozen or more met with us in the meadow, and Papa baptized us in the creek.

A Very Quiet Breakfast (Spring, 1929, at the Zook Farm)

In the early spring of 1929, Papa had the opportunity to move to the J. R. Zook farm. He stayed there until he retired in 1936.

Papa had a field of especially nice hay cut and cured--ready for the mow. There was no dew that morning, which hinted that a rain may be coming. We hurried through the milking and other chores so we could get out on to the field and begin storing the hay in the mow.

When we went in for breakfast, the meal wasn't quite ready. Papa spoke impatiently to Mama: "Of all the mornings, why is this the one when you don't have breakfast ready?" Mama said we should be seated; breakfast would be ready shortly.

It was a strange thing to hear Papa talk like that to Mama. We ate breakfast in silence. Family worship was affected, too. The prayers, it seemed, just hung in the air below the ceiling.

When we arose from kneeling by our chairs, I hurried out to the milk house to wash up the buckets and to set the milk house in order. Before I was finished, Papa came to me, his face very sober. "Vida, you heard what I said to your Mama, didn't you?"

"Yes, Papa, I heard."

"Vida, I had no business talking to her like that, and I've asked her to forgive me, and she says she does. Now, can you forgive me?"

"Yes, Papa, I forgive you."

Oh, what a wonderful feeling. Our home was where peace and love ruled again.

An Evening in the Kitchen at Mt. Carmel Orphanage

The cook had to have critical surgery, so I was sent to cook for the Mt. Carmel family of thirty-three. Three days a week I baked bread, ten loaves each time.

One evening around 9:00 p.m., I was sitting on the wood box waiting for the last loaves to come out of the oven. I began to hear sounds as though someone was on the boys' stairway. I listened; was that a hand on the door knob? The door squeaked open, and there stood Vernon, a boy of eleven. His face bore the signs of his suffering. He was the oldest of six children (three boys and three girls) who had come to the orphanage after having lost their mother.

I slid over on the wood box. He understood the invitation and came to sit beside me. I put my arm around him. "Are you hurting?" I asked.

He shook his head, "Yes."

I held him close while the tears came. Then when he could talk he said, "I miss my mother."

"I'm sure you do. Would you like to tell me about her? What was she like?"

"She was a lot like you. You make me think of her. Her hair was the color of yours. She had eyes like yours...." The misery set in his features again. He sat there choking back the tears.

"Would it help to pretend I am your mother, and you could come here whenever you feel like you want to talk, or maybe just get a hug? It will be our secret."

He shook his head, "Yes, it would help." He smiled a teary-eyed smile and went back to bed. This was the beginning.

Some months later, when the cook was back on the job, I was working at several different places in succession while

the mothers were waiting for, having, and recovering from the birth of their babies. One day when I was home, Papa attended a board meeting at Mt. Carmel Home. When he returned, he handed me the pretty cover from a new tablet. "Vernon sent this for you. He said you would know why." Papa had a look which asked, "What could possibly be between her and that boy?" I thanked him. Since then I've wished I had told him "the secret." I'm sure he would have loved it. I still have the picture in a scrap book.

Emergency at the Andersons

The call came on a May evening. "Could Vida come and help me? I've been spotting, and the doctor says I must spend most of my time in bed."

Catherine was eight months pregnant. She was like one of our family, and I loved her. Of course I'd go. It was about bed time when I got there--they lived in Clinton, Iowa--just across the Mississippi.

Next morning I prepared breakfast, got the children fed and Art off to work. He was a mechanic. About then Catherine said I should hurry the children off to school, then help her back to bed. With the children off, I turned to Catherine, and offered her an arm to help her get up. What I saw almost sent me into a panic. Spotting? The spot on her wrapper was as big as the seat of the chair she sat in. "I had better call the doctor, Catherine," I said as calmly as possible. "This isn't just spotting".

"It's all right--it will let up when I lie quiet." But it didn't. After a while she asked for the bed pan, and while I was placing it under her a huge clot of blood, like a half pound of liver, passed from her, followed by a flow of blood. She still didn't think she needed a doctor. I took the pieces of blanket she had been using which I had washed out (this was no job for sanitary napkins), and took them out to dry on the line.

Dear God! What should I do?

Just then the little Irish lady next door stepped out to shake out her little table cloth. I felt compelled to go to her, though I had never seen her before. "Mrs. Malone, Catherine is hemorrhaging and doesn't think she needs a doctor. May I use your phone to call one?"

"Oh, honey, don't you call a doctor. You could be held responsible to pay the bill. You call the Visiting Nurse Association and tell them. They will take it from there."

Almost before I got back home a nurse was there. She told it to Catherine "like it was." Then she called Art home, but before he got there a doctor had come and had already sent for an ambulance.

The doctor talked to Art. "Mr. Anderson, your wife is in extremely critical condition. She must be taken to the hospital now! I only hope it isn't too late." What could Art do but give in?

On his way out the doctor said to me, "Young lady, if we can save this woman, it's because you had enough sense to recognize what was going on!"

They had to take the baby before the day was over. Nothing else would stop the flow. It was a case of *placenta previa*. I had read a little about such an occurrence in Papa's big book *Know Thyself*.

The baby was a darling little girl. She lived only a short time after the delivery. The next morning the undertaker brought the baby to the house in a little white casket. She was wearing a little white dress and had a little pink rosebud in her tiny hand. I thought I'd never get done crying. It seemed so sad. The little baby had never been held in its mother's arms, and I had dark questions on my mind about how much its daddy cared.

With blood transfusions and good care, Catherine was up and around before long. And in two weeks she went to church, and was soon able to take over at home.



The McCulloh home on the Zook farm.

The author at age eighteen near the time when she left home in Illinois for Pennsylvania.



Our Last Home in Illinois

This place (the J.R. Zook farm) turned out to be our last home in Illinois. It was a good farm with gently rolling farm land and well kept buildings. I didn't like it as well as I did some other places where we had lived, because the pasture had few shade trees, no stream, and there wasn't even a small patch of timber where one could find solitude.

The house wasn't as convenient as the one we left, either. Downstairs was a large eat-in kitchen, a large square living room, and two small rooms. One of these became Grandpa's and Grandma's bedroom, the other, Papa's study. Upstairs were five bedrooms and a storage room--here Papa tested his seed corn.

In the winter, the house was cold. On some mornings our bucket of drinking water was frozen over. The teakettle on the cook stove sometimes had ice in it. We didn't use the living room much in winter, and kept the shutters closed when the room wasn't being used. My room was on the northwest corner of the house, so I kept the north shutter closed, too, in winter.

The house faced west, and in the front lawn were several tall larch trees. I'd hear them at night, softly sighing in the gentle breeze, or wailing bitterly when the wind blew down from the north in icy gales. It made one pull the covers up close around the ears.

Before long I was too busy to spend much time strolling in meadows and woodlands--there were people who needed me. When I had time to be alone, I found that the whispering of the wind in the larches brought solace to my restless spirit. I came to see, however, that it was not the larch trees, the woods, or the brook, it was Jesus finding my heart open and hungry. It had been He all along in His gentle way saying, "All you need is to 'Be still and know that I am God'" (Psalms 46:10).

In August 1931, I left Illinois with my brother Paul to visit family members in Pennsylvania. I intended to return

before September, but was persuaded to stay in Pennsylvania and to go to school at Messiah College. I've been back to Illinois on brief visits, and found so many changes. But I still cherish my memories of what used to be.