

AND THEN THERE WERE FOUR

by

Ethel Rudolph Day

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With comments by

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DEDICATED

To

Lois Jean

Without whose interest and encouragement this story might never have been written.

AND THEN THERE WERE FOUR

It was quite an average family – father, mother and three children, all boys. There was nothing unusual about that only that there was a marriage of over eight years before the first offspring arrived. Mother and Dad were married September 24, 1890 but it was not until May 3, 1899 that Leslie Allen made his appearance. Two years later on May 8, 1901 George Owen was born and then on January 20, 1903 there came into this world Howard Morrell. All three boys were born in Passaic, N. J. but soon after Howard's arrival the family left the city to move to the country, to Waldwick. Waldwick was country in those days.

Perhaps an even more rural setting was desired for in a few years, about 1907 or so, another move was made. This move took the family to Allendale, the adjacent village, where they established themselves in an old, old farmhouse – the Quackenbush homestead on Myrtle Avenue. Some people can see possibilities in even the worst of things and Dad must have been one of those individuals, for the house was then a hundred or more years old and in run-down condition. What followed was a project of restoration, or more correctly, house renovation. A restoration has authenticity about it but the repairs and changes that were made would indicate that it was renovated rather than actually restored. Be that as it may, it became a very lovely comfortable house.

For the next six years family life was filled with all the usual activities. Then there was an eventful happening! After three boys, and after ten and a half years since the birth of the youngest one, a girl arrived! I, Ethel May, made an entrance into this world on August 9, 1913. And then there were four.

I am told there was great celebration and my brothers, now ten, twelve and fourteen years old, thought it quite fitting and proper to herald the news all over the village. A baby sister!

What changes in family routine my arrival brought about I do not know but I feel there must have been changes, for a family dominantly male for so many years, now finding itself with a new female member most certainly had its ways of life altered. The simplest things changed! The clothesline, until now holding largely overalls and boys' shirts, would forthwith give place also to dainty dresses and ruffles! To be sure there would be changes.

Needless to say I cannot write about these earliest years of my life from any recollection of them, and even memories of happenings when one is four or five are usually a compounded confusion of reality and impressions formed from having heard stories related about certain incidents. Years later, in the eyes of the littlest one these memories were very real.

The Allendale house had an even more ancient history. The east end of the house was added in about 1830 to a much older log house with lower ceilings. As a small child I loved that house, and I was very sad when my grandparents, who inherited the place in order to care for my widowed great grandmother, built a new house and sold the homestead.

AS I WAS TOLD

As I have previously stated, the “memories” of those earliest years come from the stories I was told, from pictures that were preserved in albums, even in boxes on closet shelves, pictures that withstood spring cleanings and withstood being moved from one place to another as I have moved about in my lifetime. Any one of these pictures can recall a “memory”.

There was the tiny tot – oh, about a year old perhaps – in her carriage. The picture indicates it was summertime. She looks quite contented and happy. As the story goes it was because Grandpa Morrell was busy working in the garden. Grandpa came frequently for visits in summer and he enjoyed keeping a beautiful garden which bountifully supplied our table.

To describe an elderly man working with a hoe as a baby sitter is rather a misnomer, but to describe him as a baby entertainer might be more appropriate. While he worked he entertained me and I was happy! When he stopped work to sit on a nearby bench to enjoy a few puffs on his corn cob pipe it was a quite different story. I set up a howl which Mother said could be heard all over the neighborhood! She always told me that I took after my German grandmother, Grandma Rudolph, who was truly characteristic of the German race in that when there is work to be done, do it! I think that it is by reason of that very trait that now, in my so-called golden years, it is very hard for me to accept my physical handicaps. Who needs a psychologist to analyze things?

It would seem that in my earliest years I was destined for a scholarly future! I took an interest in the daily paper about as soon as I was able to hold it, and there are pictures to prove it. One of the ways to keep quiet and to accomplish a deed at the same time was to give me the paper “to read” while I sat in my chamber-pot chair. From my facial expression I was seriously intent on the headlines of the day! It would seem that they were as grave then as they are today. It could have been that my concern was really on the matter at hand for a closer look reveals that the newspaper is upside down! At least I entertained myself for the moment.

Another picture, identified “Ethel, Age 4, at Lake Hopatcong” seems to arouse what could possibly be very dim first recollections. I think it was a picnic, but my garb was a far cry from today’s blue jeans and sneakers. I wore a little white skirt, pleats all around it, buttoned to a bodice. Imagine ironing that! On my feet I wore the fashion of the day – patent leather slippers! This for a picnic!

So, those first years of my life do not go completely unrecorded. From the beginning I received the attention, love and concern that very special brothers give to their special baby sister.

COUNTRY GARDENS

In one's later years of life, reference to his childhood home is usually by the words "the old house". Used in this sense there is a feeling of sentiment and lovingness about it. Such are my feelings about my childhood home. Situated on its own half acre of land, with much open space all around it, it was a showplace, not of grandeur but a showplace of comfortable country living.

Mother's green thumb made flower gardens beautiful and Grandpa's tender loving care made vegetable gardens flourish. A little brook, gurgling and busy in winter and quiet and lazy in summer, flowed through the yard adding to the pretty scene. I especially remember the blue forgetmenots which bloomed on its banks. Does one ever need forgetmenots anymore?

Green lawns, which were kept neatly cut, spread from the house which was situated well to the rear of the property, down to the street. All around were all kinds of flowering shrubs so that from spring into fall there were colorful blooms of one variety or another. A huge willow tree, how old we do not know, stood stately on the front lawn. In later years it fell victim to a severe storm and actual tears were shed over the loss of a tree.

One of the prettiest sights of the neighborhood was our lovely rose arbor. It was actually room size, fully open on the side toward the house, with built-in benches on three sides of the interior. Old fashioned cluster rambler roses, some red, some pink, formed the "walls" and even the "roof" of the arbor. It was a favorite place for summer picnics – outdoor meals were not referred to as "cook-outs" as they now are – and I loved to play there in the arbor, too. It was indeed a favorite summertime place.

Off to the side of the green lawns, plural because a wide flower-bordered walkway from the street to the house separated the broad expanses of green grass, there was an area across the little brook which we called "the field". I was truly a field for it was cut once or twice during the summer season, but it was filled with daisies and other wild flowers. There were two Baldwin apple trees there, beautiful with blossoms in spring and red with fruit in autumn. Baldwins are a variety of apples almost extinct now, but oh, how delicious – hard, crisp and juicy! An apple has to squirt when you bite into it! Mellow apples – no!

The apples which dropped were used for sauce and for cooking, but the hand-picked apples were stored for winter use. Each was individually wrapped in newspaper and carefully placed in layers in a large wooden barrel. As soon as I was old enough it was my chore to take care of that phase of the apple harvesting. This was before I was tall enough to reach into a barrel! To start, Dad placed the barrel on its side, raising the angle of it as I packed the apples. Soon it was upright and then I had to stand on a chair to pack the top layers! Child-labor! I suppose today there would be laws governing the practice! These special apples were not touched until Thanksgiving. Then some would be very carefully polished for the table centerpiece.

The grape arbors provided bunches of grapes for the jams and jellies Mother made. There again I had a specific job, that of stemming the grapes, readying them for the initial cooking process.

Two plum trees gave us pretty spring blossoms and tasty late summer fruit, tasty in the sense that it was tangy, just right for conserve when combined with oranges and chopped walnuts – conserve the like of which I have never tasted since.

There were also two quince trees. To these I did not thrill except for one specific reason – that was to get rid of them! Getting rid of them meant a bit of money for me! Mother would not have thought her winter canning complete without some jars of quince and lemon “preserves” on the shelf. But quinces go a long way and there were always more than we needed. Inasmuch as it was always my job to pick them as soon as I could reach them – quince trees are low-growing – it was my privilege also to take the excess to a neighbor, “Aunt” Ellie Hilbert who bestowed upon me some bright shining coins. Recently I saw quinces in the market – 79 cents for one quince! I am sure that my entire little basketful did not net me that!

It was in the wooded area back of our house that I always looked for the first dog-toothed violets, very soon after the skunk cabbage made its first appearance. The latter grew near the brook as it meandered down through the woods. I knew the spots for the purple violets, too, and always experienced great joy in gathering the first wild flowers of spring.

A path led through this area right in back of the old house over to the Talman barn and orchard, long since gone having given way to houses. Abutting the orchard, toward the old trolley track, was a grove of birch trees, and there in the grove was the “big rock”. How we loved to take our lunch there – “we” being the neighborhood kids – and swing on the birches. That was our idea of a good time. It’s all changed now. There may be a few birches left and the rock is in Hazel’s yard! It doesn’t look half as big to me now as it looked when I played there!

The gardens and orchard were still beautiful when the homestead was sold, but the new owners removed things one by one. I remember sitting under the rose arbor, and having lunch on the picnic table under the grape arbor. The brook was a joy to play in. It was full of frogs and crayfish. The birches in the old Talman orchard were eventually the same birches in my grandparents’ lovely backyard, and “The Big Rock” was in my own backyard. So, I also enjoyed their beauty. There were several large erratics, as they are called – large boulders, in this case granite, that were left by receding glaciers. Allendale was hilly because of terminal moraines in the foothills of the Ramapo Mountains, and thus there were large deposits of sand and gravel. The earliest and most successful crop in Allendale was strawberries, which grew well in the sandy soil.

OFF TO THE SEA THE SAILOR WENT

Something called him to the sea! Back in those years when communication was delayed and far away places were really far away it was a bit unusual for a young lad living in an inland village to have the great urge to sail the Seven Seas. George wanted – and wanted very much – to become a mariner. He was not to be discouraged and after completing two years at Ramsey High School he prevailed upon Mom to sign the necessary papers – he was but sixteen – for him to sail as a cadet aboard a Red D Line passenger ship, the ‘Philadelphia’ to South America. After all, he thought, what good did it do to stay in school and study all about Shakespeare when it was navigation he wanted? Such was his thinking and probably rightly so. At least that was his line of persuasion!

As the story goes – I was but four – Mom gave her consent, for Cousin Carrie Peck told her that if she didn’t he would probably run away anyhow! Cousin Carrie had experienced a similar situation when, as legal guardian for her deceased sister’s son, Floyd Schofield, she had to make the same decision. Perhaps Floyd, a few years older than George, may have been an influencing factor in George’s yearning for the sea,

Those first years he was a sailor I, of course, remember little or nothing. He went to Nautical School in 1918 and from then on lived a life on the sea. One of my greatest joys in my growing up was to receive colorful postcards from my big brother as he sailed all over the world. He remembered me with special gifts, too, and one of these was a pair of wooden shoes from Holland. I loved my clogs, wore them when I played until I grew out of them, and still have them, ‘though now they are a decoration on the fireplace hearth. They seem to belong there, a connecting link between past and present.

There were other gifts, too, among them a very unusual wooden bank from Japan, a bank of intricate design which held hidden its secret means of opening. Held hidden, that is, until I became a bit older and learned how to extricate my pennies from it! That, too, I still have and while it no longer serves as a bank because of its fragility from age and usage, it is a reminder of George’s first trip to the Orient in 1920. It was in June of that year that the terrible fire took place in the harbor of Kobe and the ship’s crew escaped from the burning ship by sliding down the anchor chain. I was but seven then and while I do not remember the events clearly I do recall that for weeks we had great concern for our sailor’s welfare.

What the reasons were for our lack of news I do not know, but there was great rejoicing weeks later when on an evening in September who arrived, unannounced, but our sailor! Evidently letters had not come through, for George was always the faithful writer. His homecoming was such a surprise that Mother nearly became ill. He came in the kitchen entry quietly and when she saw him all her anxieties were released in a flood of tears. Home was the sailor, home from the sea – temporarily!

Highlights, at least for me, in George’s maritime career were meetings with him in not far distant ports when his shore leave time did not permit his getting home to Allendale. Mother, Dad and I went to Poughkeepsie one time to visit with him aboard the S. S. Julia Luckenbach which had brought a cargo of lumber from the West Coast and unloaded it there for the Eastern markets. We had dinner at the Smith Brothers Restaurant where I was fascinated by the ceiling fans! We’ve come full cycle and now ceiling fans are once again in use! The bewhiskered Smith Brothers looked down on us from their

picture frames on the walls! They looked just the same as they did on the boxes of cough drops. About the food I remember nothing. Ceiling fans and whiskers! Strange things make lasting impressions!

On the Julia Luckenbach there was the ship's mascot – Minnie – a very friendly, big, furry orange cat, the subject of attention on the part of everyone. Minnie liked the attention, too, except for a time when she had had a clandestine love affair in some port of call and in due time sneaked away to have her kittens in one of the lifeboats! George's letters sometimes included a picture of Minnie and she became quite implanted in my memory.

Another time we went to Boston to meet our sailor and he was able to spend an entire day with us. We visited the Boston Common where I had the horrendous experience of getting a squirrel all tangled up in my hair when I was feeding him peanuts. What a time! Then we visited the famous fish pier where we watched the unloading of the fishing boats. We saw so many of the famous Boston cod – tons and tons – that we felt we didn't want to look at another fish for a long time. We drove down along the shore to historic Plymouth, visited the points of interest there and then had a delicious dinner on the waterfront – fish!

Later on we drove to the Cape Cod Canal, then followed along the Canal to Buzzards Bay, and on to Providence. George took a train back to Boston and we stayed in a hotel there. My childhood recollections of this area are pleasant and I often think of that enjoyable day back then when now we frequently sit by the Canal and watch its traffic.

I was twelve or thirteen when George joined the steamer Monmouth of the Jersey Central Railroad. He served as pilot on its New York-Atlantic Highlands run, and there again his maritime career afforded me some happy memories. I loved it when I could spend a day with him, sometimes taking a picnic lunch and other times having a real gala when we ate together in the dining salon! Why aboard ship is it always a "salon" – never just a dining room? Maybe I'll have that answered for me someday.

As the kid sister of the mariner of the family I shared in some happy experiences I'll always remember. As the years passed there were other happy memories, too, but this is a story of my earliest childhood so I'll stop there.

My Great Uncle George was at sea his entire life. I recall family trips to the ports in New York City and in New Jersey to meet him when his ships came in. One especially exciting visit was in New York City. Uncle George called my grandparents and told them to bring everybody to New York that day to join him in viewing the three greatest ships of all--all three of which were in port at the same time: The Queen Mary, the Queen Elizabeth, and the S.S. United States, which was the largest and fastest ocean liner in the world. As a little kid, I was totally awestruck by these immense ships docked side by side. I will never forget that experience.

THE WAR YEARS

The war years – World War I – were grim. Dark years for everyone. I was but four years old when we became involved in that horrible event. I do not remember very much about daily happenings other than that our family life seemed very quiet as the effects of the war touched us. Radio was just in its beginnings – perhaps this was even before Howard's first crystal set – and needless to say there was no television to bring world happenings to our attention almost immediately. News had to come to us through the press and more often than not it was days before it reached us.

We felt touched closely by the war. Dad's youngest brother, our Uncle Martin, was a major in the infantry, fighting in France – probably bearing arms against kindred. And Grandfather Rudolph had emigrated from Germany to America because he did not believe in the military!

Leslie, working as an auto mechanic apprentice at Washer's Garage in Hohokus, knowing he would be drafted, decided that he wanted to marry his beloved Caroline before he left for the war. So it was that on a rainy night in September 1918 the families gathered at the Methodist Parsonage in Waldwick and the marriage took place. I was but five then and seem to remember only the rain! Fortunately with the Armistice in November he did not have to go.

In the last year of the war, in October 1918, George was a member of the crew of the Standard Oil ship, 'Caloria', a tanker which was torpedoed by a German submarine north of Scotland near the Orkney Islands. Perhaps delayed news is better than immediate knowledge of war's grim happenings for the rescue had been effected [effective?] and he was safe before the news reached us.

Howard worked for Winter Brothers until he was old enough to get a job with the Erie Railroad, signal work and related responsibilities at the station in town.

Dad was doing his bit for his country, too, holding a post with the United States Housing Authority, sometimes in Texas and sometimes in Ohio. Our contacts with him were letters and picture postcards which always gave me much pleasure as I looked at the scenes of what were then faraway places.

Life at home was lonely for Mother and me. She tried to have things as normal as possible but I am sure it was a real hardship for her. There was the constant worry about loved ones, their whereabouts, their dangers. I did not like to see the newspapers with their pictures of bombed out cities in Europe for nightmares inevitably followed and often Mother had to take me into her bed to comfort me.

The Armistice! November 11, 1918! There was great celebration when news of it finally came through. Whistles blew! Bells rang! The people gathered in the streets waving flags. I remember being part of the spontaneous parade up and down Myrtle Avenue, waving my own little flag. Then, in my young years, I could not fully sense the meaning of it all, but it seemed to indicate that a great sadness had been lifted and that life would once again return to normal.

The Armistice meant that loved ones would be returning home, but we accepted the fact that George had chosen the sea for his career and would not live at home again. However, we rejoiced in his safety as he sailed the Seven Seas in peacetime rather than in war. Uncle Martin returned from Europe and that was cause for celebration when we met

him at Camp Merritt over in Dumont and he was able to visit with us for a few days before going on to South Carolina for reunion with his own wife and children there.

The most shining highlight of this post-war period was my trip with Mother to Washington to meet Dad as he returned from his work in the Housing Corporation in Texas. Even my favorite doll had a new dress for the trip! We traveled on the Congressional Limited and the most thrilling part of the journey was dinner in the diner where I was wide-eyed with excitement over everything I saw, especially the almost mesmerizing motion of the water in the carafe on the table! To this day the sight of a water carafe happily recalls for me that trip. We shared a table with an army officer who won favor with me for his attention to my doll – and to me! When he took leave of us at the conclusion of the meal he gave me the shiniest quarter I had ever seen. A quarter then was to a child a veritable fortune.

In the crowds there at Union Station in Washington I was frightened lest Dad might not find us, but there he was at the gate waiting for us. And it was there at the gate, as I try to remember more about that wonderful trip, that all recollection fades away in the dazzle of that shining coin!

Dad could not return home quite yet, having further assignments in Ohio, but later on his homecoming surprised us when an Erie express train, coming through from Cleveland, made a stop at Allendale station to discharge him as a passenger. Mr. McDermott, the station master, had his lunch hour completely disrupted when that train made an unscheduled stop! And so our family members were home from the war.

TRADESMEN, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Perhaps this should be just ‘Friends and Neighbors’ for after all, were n’t our tradesmen our friends, too? Of course they were! When the same individual delivers the milk every morning over a period of years he becomes a friend! It’s past tense now! Try to find a milkman! Fred Rogers, a real Cockney from merry Old England, faithfully left the milk at our door for years. Yes, for years until both he and the poor horse could no longer make the rounds. Or perhaps it was the pasteurization laws caused him to give up his small dairy. His was raw milk, good, too, and nobody ever suffered any ill results.

No matter the weather, Mr. Rogers got through. Rain, snow, sleet did not deter him. Oh, he might be late but then one had a bonus – his version of town happenings and the news he gathered along the route. One always loved to hear his opinions about local political matters! Milk came in glass bottles then – collector items now – and on cold, freezing mornings, if he did not get through early, we would find it rising right out of the bottles. A natural pop sickle! What child today has ever seen such a sight? What child of today has ever seen a milk bottle?

John Mowerson worked for John Ackerman who had a grocery store. After all, it took more than Winter Brothers to provide groceries for the entire village. There were no super-markets and shopping plazas then! Mother traded with Mr. Ackerman, so it was Mr. Mowerson who took care of our needs giving our account his personal attention, as was the custom then. He came for the order in the morning, about twice a week, and then it was delivered in the afternoon. With him came all the town news, too, and it was of benefit, I’m sure, to the customers at the end of the route. For them it was like having the late edition, just off the press. When he shared the gleanings of news bits gathered along the way. Mr. Rogers and Mr. Mowerson were better than newspapers!

In town there was Simpson Brothers, Choice Meats. There was Kornhoff’s Bakery, Guatelli’s Ice Cream Store as well as Melchionna’s Confectionery, Scholz’s Barber Shop, a dry goods store I cannot identify by name but where I was often sent to get notions for Mother’s sewing. There were some other shops, too, and of course the Post Office, whose Postmaster changed with every political change! As soon as I was old enough to take my little basket and an envelope with note and money I was sent off to town all alone. I was always admonished that I was not to tarry and I was not to visit with anyone along the way. There were other times for visiting and playing.

Nearly all my playtime was spent with Alice and Mildred Ebersole and our capers together require a telling all their own. Marian Dator and I played together a lot, too, having porch tea parties with our dolls. Needless to say I had no playtime, as such, with my brothers, so my contacts with boys of my own age were with those of the neighborhood kids – the Caputis, Walter Bijou, youngest of the male members of that family, the Osborns, and Marion’s brother, Fred. Summer evenings found all us neighborhood kids playing our favorites – hide and seek and such games – out in the street. The boys liked to try to put it all over on the girls, but we could usually hold our own.

A favorite winter pastime was that of hooking a ride on the coal sleigh when it would come through. Fred Winters, the driver, would even slow down for us. In summer we loved to descend upon a telephone company repair truck, scrounging around beneath

the poles for all the bits of wire dropped by the lineman as he worked. With these we fashioned “jewelry” – rings, bracelets – which we wore everywhere. When sidewalks came to Myrtle Avenue every kid in the neighborhood had roller skates. We were the bane of the lives of Mrs. Wilkins and Mrs. Jersey as we skated much of the time on the slope in front of their house. And no kids ever skated without a lot of noise about it!

I often wondered if my brothers had as much fun in growing up as I did!

Aunt Ethel's description of my hometown is very familiar. I grew up with people who had the same family names. Our milk was delivered in bottles with wide necks for the cream on the top, and they froze in the winter even though we had an insulated milk box on the back porch. The small shops and stores downtown were great places to shop. I remember well the smell of the Deli, which had the best potato salad and cold cuts I have ever tasted, and the bakery was always a delight, with homemade pastries, and cakes, and a rather ominous bread-slicing machine for slicing their wonderful bread that was baked fresh every morning. The drug store had a soda fountain. The Sweet Shop was another favorite place for ice cream. Winter Brothers hardware store didn't change much until I was in high school. The 5 and 10 cent store. It was a lovely little town and I cherish my memories of growing up there. Allendale will always be my hometown, and I have never truly felt at home anywhere else.

PETS AND PASTIMES

No household with children should be without a pet, and I am sure at one time or another every family experiences having a dog. Our family was no exception. We had Teddy, a lively little terrier – so I'm told. I was too little to remember him, but my acquaintance with Teddy was through pictures. Teddy loved to chase trains and our nearness to the railroad tracks gave him great opportunities for his particular sport. He just could not be broken of his bad habit. One day Teddy did not come home after one of his chases and it was a sad time when his poor little body was found alongside the train track.

A decision was made. There would be no more dogs. But there had to be some kind of a pet so my brothers decided to have rabbits, and guinea pigs! These breeds always seem to come in the plural! The furry little animals lived in really fine coops in the back yard, and I do remember them. However, what I remember best is my falling heir – should I say heiress? – to the empty coops when the boys' interest in the pets waned. Or maybe they just outgrew them and I was too little to grow into them! One might wonder what a little girl would want with empty rabbit coops, but my imagination knew no limits. They made the finest doll houses and play stores any kid could ever want. All the neighborhood kids loved to come there to play.

There was a time we had a delightful little house pet – a canary which George brought from Holland on one of his very first trips. Pete was an exceptionally fine little singer but the poor little fellow outdid himself, I think, for without any warning he just gave up the ghost and one morning we found him in the bottom of his cage, never to sing again.

I had goldfish, too – goldfish from the ten-cent store, swimming around in a plain glass globe-like bowl. There were a few pebbles in the bottom and a little coral through which the fish swam to break the apparent monotony of just swimming round and round. There were none of the elegant trappings which fish seem to require today – plant life, ornaments, oxygen. These were just plain inexpensive little bright colored fish to amuse a child. It was my job to keep their bowl clean so weekly they had a change of scene when they swam around in the dish pan while I scrubbed their habitat. They were fed a little wafer which I am sure must have been made by the same firm which made communion wafers for churches! In later years, my goldfish always came to mind at Communion in the Episcopal Church! I don't think that's a sacrilege. After all, didn't three or four small fish feed a multitude!

One of my favorite pastimes was to play in Dad's carpenter shop on rainy days. Upon Dad's completion of government service he established his own construction business. In those days houses were built from scratch – nothing came pre-constructed. On stormy days his carpenters worked in the shop, making the doors and window frames. The shop was in the back yard. I loved to play in the wood shavings for they supplied for me that which heredity didn't – curls! I am sure this did not please Mom, even though I know she was disappointed with a straight haired girl after having had three curly headed boys. Wood shaving curls pinned all through my broom-handle hair did not make my hair care easy and I soon found myself with my hair pulled straight back into two pigtailed. It was Aunt Mary Morrell, with whom I always spent a week in summer, who caused me to

suffer through sleeping on kid curlers to try to put even a hint of curl in my hair. I don't know which was worse, those curls or my wood shaving curls. At least the wood shaving curls were far less painful!

Dog names didn't change much in our family. My grandparents' dogs were usually named Tippy, but our first and only dog was Teddy. I remember the little barn that was my great grandfather's shop. The brook ran along the west foundation of the barn, and there was a bridge in front of the garage door and another bridge to get to the entrance of the shop. Upstairs in the shop was a handsome built-in desk, set into a dormer, and shelves and cabinets, all hand made by the carpenters and by my great grandfather. I still have the stool that Great Grandpa Rudolph used at that desk. Aunt Mary Morrell was my mother's favorite aunt. Aunt Ethel's wedding gift to Mary and me was a beautiful, antique, square milk glass pedestal cake plate that had belonged to Aunt Mary, which we still treasure and use on special occasions.

UP EVERYBODY – I'VE GOT KDKA

We have come a long way in my generation – from the crystal set radio to television from outer space. It was Howard who was most interested in the wonders of early radio. I can't help but wonder how he ever held his job at Winter Brothers when he stayed up until all hours of the morning tinkering with his crystal set. I can remember the so-called radios – cigar boxes with assortments of spools and wires and various odds and ends. There were probably terms for even the simplest of these improvised parts but in my childish eyes it was a collection of so much nothing which produced so great a something – sound – voices – music! It was magic!

It was always in the wee hours that reception was best. Often the radio fan, Howie, was lulled to sleep by the magic tones that came through those headphones. There would be real excitement when on clear, crisp nights with little or no interference on the air waves distant stations could be reached. I am sure that Marconi, in the excitement of his trans-Atlantic message, had no greater thrill than Howie had the night he first picked up KDKA in Pittsburgh! In that time period of radio that was distance! We were roused from bed to gather in his room where each of us, in turn, had to don the headphones and listen to those magic sounds.

Radio improved! Soon local airwaves carried scheduled programs. From a tiny cigar box size crystal set we progressed to a family size model, a model of dimensions that took up the top of a library type table. Sound poured forth from a big horn, free standing at the side of the radio itself. This was in a corner of our dining room and it was there we gathered Saturday nights to hear Uncle Ezra giving a 'toot on the tooter' as the characters of a country town dropped in the general store and their life passed in revue – comedy and pathos! Could this have been the beginning of today's Soap?

As time passed we went on to more sophisticated entertainment – the Happiness Boys selling their Interwoven Socks and the Clicquot Club Eskimos promoting their ginger ale. We've come a long way since then and now we are confronted with TV commercials for the most intimate of wearing apparel and for all kinds of liquid refreshment from fruit juice to beer and wine. Headache medications and laxatives are promoted with detailed drawings telling how the product works on one's anatomy. I'll take the commercials of the old days!

Today we have ads for the 'entertainment center of the home'. There's nothing new about that. That corner in our dining room was our entertainment center. The lovely old Lincoln rocker was Dad's favorite chair and it was there he could really go into a snorting snooze. If Mom turned off the radio he would awaken immediately, 'Don't turn that off, I'm listening to it'! And so paraded through our lives the radio performers who have become history.

Today's television brings us instant news of happenings around the world. We actually see things happening! The magic of sound and sight! We have gone from the little crystal radio and KDKA to television and the moon!

Grandma and Grandpa brought a beautiful old Philco radio from the old house to their new house when they moved in, and it had a place of honor in the entry hall close to the

front door. As a child I often turned it on, and I could get foreign radio stations easily. It still works and has an honored place in our upstairs hall, where it is dusted and polished regularly to keep the shine that Grandma lovingly rubbed onto its beautiful inlaid wooden cabinet.

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT – WHAT’S NEW ABOUT IT!

Ours was an ecumenical family if there ever was one. Dad was baptized in the Carlstadt Presbyterian Church and then brought up in the Lutheran Church. Mother was a Baptist. Which denomination claimed them in their first years of marriage I don't know. Upon moving to Allendale and there being no one of those denominations there, Mother excepted the invitation to attend the Episcopal Church with a neighbor. Evidently all went well in spite of the minister's failure to convince Mom that she should be confirmed in the faith. After all, who needed that? She was already an immersed Baptist! In that day and age it was unheard of for anyone but a confirmed Episcopalian to kneel at the communion rail of the Episcopal Church, but Mother was invited to do so! Therein, I'm sure, was the start of the ecumenical movement – at least in Allendale. What spell did she hold over the minister? Was it because I was named for his wife?

The Episcopal Sunday School saw my faithful attendance, but so did the Epworth League of the Methodist Church. We showed no favoritism and I felt just as much at home in one church as in another in those early years.

Dad could not be counted present at many church services but he lived his life in a good Christian way, supporting the work of both village churches, and was highly respected in the community even though he was not a church going man.

OVER THE ROADS WE GO

Whether or not it was Dad's first car, I don't know, but I can remember an open touring car. What make, I don't know! But it was the fact that it was a car and it would take us places that enchanted me. Outstanding in my memory was an outing, an all day outing, to – of all places, Pompton Lakes! How many miles from Allendale? Ten or twelve perhaps!

There was Mom, there was Dad, there was one of my brothers. I'm not sure if it was Leslie or George, but I think it was George. And me! Mom in her long linen duster and veil! We had enough equipment for a day picnic to take care of our needs for a week. Food, plates, cups, frying pan to cook the fish we expected to catch, camp stove, and even a dish pan to clean up, using water from the lake. We did have fish, how many I do not recall. We rented a boat for the day. After changing our cloths behind some bushes we went swimming – Dad, my brother and I. Nothing could have attracted my mother either in or on the water!

I never remember learning how to swim, how to keep afloat, that is. Of course I had to polish off my earliest dog paddle which seemed to come to me naturally when Les and Carrie took me swimming with them at Cole's Pond in Waldwick. I never had any fear of deep water, thus at even an early age I could enjoy the water with my brothers.

The Pompton Lakes outing having been such a success we then ventured far, far afield going all the way to Lake Hopatcong. Then horizons broadened even more and it was – Delaware Water Gap! That was in the days when one waved to a passing traveler. Mother and Mrs. Lawrence were so busy waving to every passing car that I am sure that Dad, Mr. Lawrence and I were far ahead of them on the fried chicken and biscuits we had for our picnic lunch, in the shade of a beautiful big, old tree by the side of the road.

Soon there were more frequent outings with a variety of destinations. West Point Military Academy for dress parade on a summer Sunday afternoon. Asbury Park, Bear Mountain. Trenton State Fair. Our world was opening up! What a wonderful thing was the invention of the "touring car".

THE FIRE HOUSE

In my earliest childhood Allendale was a country village. There was the center of the village with its stores, its railroad depot, the schoolhouse on the Turnpike, the little Church of the Epiphany there, too, and the Archer Memorial Methodist Church. The little chapel of the Guardian Angel was nearer town. Adjacent to the railroad station was the Fire House, housing the bright red truck, housing the Police Department and whatever offices of the town government there may have been, and – the movies!

The movies rated high on the list of social activities of the townspeople, especially the kids. On movie nights there were treks of people coming from all directions, all with one destination – the Fire House. The whistle blew a bit ahead of time if there was to be a show. No whistle, no show. The reels hadn't come in! Of course those were the days of silent films, so to lend a finishing touch to the scene and to bring everyone into the proper spirit of things Lottie Sholz provided appropriate music on the piano. It was not possible to have a Western, and these were favorites, without a stirring rendition of the William Tell Overture. It would be especially stirring if Lottie had to compete with a passing Erie train! Her exhaustion was as great as that of the heroine left on the edge of the cliff when "To be continued next week" flashed on the screen!

School graduations were held in the Fire House, the formal ceremonies taking place upstairs with a party following for the graduates, on the ground floor. The fire truck would be positioned outside the building to make room for the decorated table, always elaborately festooned with streamers of the class colors. Dennison surely did a business in crepe paper sales in those days! Whoever heard of any restrictions in the use of flammable materials!

I think it can be rightly said that the Fire House was the community center of the town. In addition to the already mentioned activities taking place there, there were dances, meetings of one kind or another, flower shows, plays. All ages seemed to participate. I think that participation came about in the absence of baby sitters. I recall some amateur theatrical production or pageant in which Mom had a part and I was led across the stage by her hand as she sounded forth on voting rights for women! I wonder what the presence of a six year old contributed to the Woman's Suffrage movement! Be that as it may, I was impressionable and I have always regarded the right to vote as a duty and a privilege.

For the flower shows sponsored by the Garden Club, of which Mother was a charter member, I was surely a water boy of sorts from the earliest days of the club. The shows were always held in the Fire House – second floor. Where was the nearest water? Fire House – first floor! Mom was always an exhibitor, many times a ribbon winner, for this youngster it was a foregone conclusion that I had to do my part for the community effort.

These were good times. Some memories are not too clear, but always there is the memory of a community of people working together, playing together, no generation gaps. It is a memory of simple living people, people with their roots down in a lovely country village. It is part of a rich heritage. Joys and sorrows were shared and one was never too busy to show concern for his neighbor.

WEDDING BELLS

“Summer people” came to Allendale and settled for that season of the year in various parts of the village. Howard, covering his route for Winter Brothers, came to know many of them. There was one family who summered on the Turnpike and it was at that house that Howie always took longer to accomplish his mission. Why? One daughter in particular held special charms for him! He was smitten! So much so that there was a wedding on Marge’s twentieth birthday in September 1923 at the family home in Passaic Park.

I was ten and my brother was going to be married! Leslie and Caroline had already been married five years, I hardly remembered that ceremony, so this was an occasion. Of course my own new dress was most important to me and I remember it well – a peacock blue dress with black and white smocking. Later, as I grew it grew with me by the addition of black velvet bands on the skirt. This doesn’t sound descriptive of a child’s dress – black and white smocking – but that it was, as I am sure it was right in that era for after all, it came from Meyer Brothers! It was my “best” dress and I wore it until it needed too much black velvet to give it length.

The marriage took place in the parlor, but I had my eyes only for the dining room table with the wedding cake and all the delicious food in readiness for the guests. There were streamers, flowers, and wedding bells decorating the room and it was quite the nicest party I had ever attended.

The bride and groom went to live in Elizabeth where Howie had work. That seemed so far away but they made time to have this little sister visit often and that pleased me very much.

When Aunt Ethel writes about her dress from Meyer Brothers, I recall shopping at Meyer Brothers in Paterson as a child, which, until years later when we sometimes shopped in New York City, was by far the most elegant department store I had ever seen. I remember the red carpet, the shiny brass doors on the elevators that were run by female operators, and the air tubes that carried messages and money and whatnot all over the store, and the superb restaurant. It was a grand palace of commerce. The window displays at Christmas time were dazzling.

HURRAH FOR THE PUMPKIN PIE

Family gatherings at holiday time took on an all-important air. There was little likelihood that every member of the family would be home together but those who could make it did so. In the early years there were the brides of Leslie and Howard with us, and also very much a part of the family were Uncle Frank, Mom's youngest brother, and his bride, and not to be forgotten, Grandpa Morrell.

Whether it be Thanksgiving, Christmas or New Year's Day, the latter a special holiday worthy of celebration, too, there would be a festive air about the house. The dining room table would be extended full length and there would be a scrumptious meal at mid-day and "picking" for supper. Mother made a pumpkin pie second to none. Perhaps the old-fashioned blue lined earthenware pie plates had something to do with it. And she cooked her own pumpkin, too!

In those days one had turkey only at holiday time and I think that has much to do with the remembrance of the old fashioned goodness of its flavor. We inhaled its aroma as it roasted, we looked upon it almost with awe when it was brought to the table, and we savored each mouthful. Today turkey is just as frequently served as any other cut of meat and its common appearance on the table has brought about the disappearance of its particular holiday meaning. I almost wish it were like the old days!

When the little ones of Leslie and Howard – Hazel, Doris and Bob – came into the family picture and shared the holiday scene, there appeared in the corner of the dining room a small table for the children. This was not because there wasn't room at the big table, but because Dad was superstitious! Often we numbered thirteen! Can you imagine an intelligent man harboring such a superstition? Having that number at a table was not to his liking, so to keep things pleasant for all the small table was put into service for the little ones. I was beginning to feel grown up by then, but I had to sit there, too, to keep everyone happy.

We decorated throughout the house for Christmas. Ground pine could be gathered in the nearby woods and it became garlands for the stairway. Pine garlands and red paper bells – I can still see it! We always had a big Christmas tree which was left trimmed until January twentieth, Howard's birthday. It made no difference whether or not he was there! The tree never appeared until Christmas morning when Santa brought it, but when I became old enough to participate in its trimming it appeared Christmas Eve afternoon, but only if the shades were pulled down so as not to spoil the enchantment for the little tots in the neighborhood who still believed in that very special personage who made the rounds all over the world on Christmas Eve. How times have changed! Christmas trees now appear in homes sometimes in early December!

Many of the tree trimmings were hand made – beautiful paper and tinsel decorations made by Mother who turned out very artistic cornucopias and little baskets. I always had a part in the making of paper chains. Small transparent candies in the shapes of little animals, about two or three inches high, from the candy shop of Mr. Nadler, were always hung on the tree as a special treat. They were red and yellow – raspberry and lemon!

A very important part of Christmas was the Sunday School celebration. First there was a worship service in the church, then we went into the parish house for the party, at which time we received a box of candy, an orange, and a gift from our teacher. The

celebration was always held between Christmas and New Year's Day, as were all holiday parties. Custom seems to have changed completely for now the holiday parties usually take place before the special day itself. Some of the European customs are being adopted in this country now. Celebrants knock themselves out attending parties all December, a sudden quiet settles over everything when the lights are doused on Christmas night and the rest of the holiday week is spent in sheer exhaustion! As with turkey, I like it the old fashioned way!

A table for the children was always a necessity in our house and in my grandparents' house, because the dining room tables were not large enough for the crowds of relatives. Usually my Aunt Hazel or my cousin Nancy chaperoned the children. And we, too, hiked through the woods before Christmas, pulling up the precious ground pine that grew everywhere to make garlands and wreaths.

VACATION

It was always fun to go on vacation. Sometimes in summer Mother and I would go to Sound Beach in Connecticut to visit some of her kin folks. It was there that Cousin Carrie Peck's family had a very nice old home, Keofferam Lodge, named for Chief Keofferam whose mark appeared on the Indian land grant which came down through the Peck family. It was fun to stay in the old house, but more fun to stay at Camp Barnstable, the big old barn down by the water. The upper level of the barn was converted to a sitting room, a kitchen complete with hand pump for water and a kerosene stove, a bedroom, and a "dormitory", which slept six in three beds lengthwise, or more crosswise! It even had a convenience of a sort – on the ground level, a two holer which even flushed! Camp life there suited me fine for I never did like roughing it. We had such good times there and we were often joined by kissin' cousins from New Canaan and Norwalk.

We liked to row out to Sand Island to swim and to picnic, but at high tide we could swim from the dock right at the camp. For those who liked to go swimming the schedules were governed by the tide, as were the timetables for the fishermen. When enough water came in the cove to float the boat one could take off for the places where they hoped the fish would be biting. Dad and George were with us for one little vacation and they had everything in readiness to take off at daybreak. George arose ahead of the others and planned to put their gear aboard – does one say "aboard" for a row boat? – and to make it easier he pushed off to bring the boat around to the other side of the dock. He pushed off all right! Sailor George had left the oars on the dock! Between him and the oars there was water, a muddy bottom, and marsh grass. Well, marsh grass was useful, for by grabbing clumps of it he was able to "navigate his ship" to the dock! No need for an SOS! We loved to kid our mariner about his rowboat experience.

More of Mother's family lived in Mount Vernon, N.Y. and no summer was complete without a visit of a few days with them. Aunt Hattie Ferris, Grandpa Morrell's sister, who lived to be 97, loved company and always entered into conversation spiritedly. In her later years, always the gracious lady, she very cleverly concealed whether she did or didn't know us all! On one of the rare occasions that George was in port and able to accompany us on a day's visit, Aunt Hattie greeted him most cordially but without address by name. So said George, "Aunt Hattie, do you know who I am?"

"Why of course I know who you are."

"Well, what's m y name?"

Aunt Hattie was not to be outdone. "Young man," said she, "If you do not know your name you are in a pretty bad fix!"

Thus ended the friendly, lively interrogation. We wondered – did Aunt Hattie know his name?

Then there were visits to Wyandanch, Long Island, where Dad had friends, Mr. and Mrs. Koehbrich, a most enjoyable German couple. Mrs. Koehbrich did not speak English but we seemed to get along well with gestures and strange sounding utterances. I remember her delicious German cookery. Dad could praise it in her native language while we showed our pleasure – Mom and I – by eating every morsel.

In my early years when it would have been easy for me to learn German first-hand from Dad it was frowned upon in America. After all, we were at war! I regret that I

cannot speak the language. I often wondered why Mother never learned it. Neither did my brothers.

The visits with the Koehbrichs, even with a partial language barrier, were always enjoyable. We always stayed overnight because it was so far – so far for those days!

GREAT OAKS FROM LITTLE CORNS GROW

In Mom's conservatory, the glass enclosed front porch, there were always green growing things and pretty flowers of the variety that adapt themselves well to the indoors. She seemed to be able to make anything grow – vines, geraniums, fuchsias, impatiens, marguerites. There was one plant there that received special attention for what seemed, and probably was, years. It was different from all the others. It wasn't anything special to look at, but as it grew it was carefully transplanted from one container to another, each a bit bigger than the one before it. It was an oak seedling. Mother planted the acorn!

It grew ever so slowly but there came a day when she felt it could be safely planted outdoors. She was laughed at when she planted it beside the old cherry tree on the front lawn. A little tree by a big tree? There it grew, the little oak tree beside the big, old cherry tree. Mom knew that old cherry tree would someday die and it was her wish to have another tree in that spot to shade the house as the old cherry tree did.

The years passed, the old cherry tree died and had to be taken down, and the oak tree flourished. When last I saw it, it was a fine big tree, perhaps not yet a mighty oak but left alone to continue growing it would become one. At least it had become an impressive oak, impressive because of its story. I wonder if the present owners of the old house know that story.

In the spring of 2006, during our trip to New Jersey to attend my Mother's funeral, I was greatly saddened to see that the new owners of the old Rudolph house had cut down the beautiful Pin Oak, which had indeed grown into a great oak. I watched it grow through all of my young life and for many years after that. The new owners had told Mother and John that they didn't like that big tree right in front of their house. Now the front of the house has no shade, and I can't understand how anyone can be so stupid.

THE OLD GEM CHOPPER COOK BOOK

Its worn cloth cover, its brown, almost tattered pages bespeak the age of the Gem Chopper Cook Book. One of Mom's favorites, it is still in my collection of cook books and to thumb through it is like turning back the pages of time and opening a door to the past, a past filled with memories of a kitchen of wondrous cooking aromas, larders filled with good things to eat, garden produce properly stored for the winter, and the keg of flour without which no old fashioned kitchen was complete.

Throughout the book there are pages here and there where favorite recipes were written. There was no conserve; there was no piccalilli quite like Mom's. And when those favorites were being made the good smells emanating from the kitchen were not to be equaled. Today's commercials for air fresheners to "remove those offensive cooking smells" leave me cold. What was more delightful, more heartwarming than a kitchen giving forth a bouquet of wonderful aromas?

The garden provided much for the table. Carrots and beets were stored for winter use in boxes of sand in the "cold cellar" and it was my job to retrieve them from the sandbox when we needed them. In the "kitchen cellar" were bins for potatoes and onions. Here also were the "wire closets" in which the jams, jellies, preserves and canned fruits were stored. I never could understand the difference between canned fruit and preserves. Peaches were canned fruit, yet quinces were preserves!

Every fall Dad ordered a small keg of salt mackerel from Davis, the Gloucester Fisherman. That was his Sunday morning breakfast treat. I think he must have been the only one who liked them, for on Saturday night I was always instructed to bring up from the cellar just one salt mackerel, to be soaked overnight in readiness for Sunday morning cooking. The rest of the family had pancakes cooked on a big old iron griddle which was greased with a greasing stick – a little flat piece of wood around which was wrapped some cloth to hold the grease. It was a long time between then and Teflon!

Sugar was purchased at least ten pounds at a time, and flour came in a cloth sack – twenty-four and one half pounds! I never could understand why it wasn't an even twenty-five. The sacks made any number of things from aprons to rag dolls. I think my Aunt Jemima rag doll was originally a pattern on a flour sack. Both flour and sugar were stored in wooden kegs in the kitchen cupboard. At least once a year the kegs would have to be soaked to tighten the bands around the staves.

Cooking methods have changed over the years and the old Gem Chopper Cook Book is more a reference book of nostalgia than a collection of recipes for today's housewife. However, the recipes here and there in it, in Mom's own handwriting are favorites – her lemon cake filling, her corn bread. It is the only corn bread I have ever made that does not crumble. For that alone it is a treasure!

FAR AWAY FLORIDA

It was in 1925 that Mom, Dad, George and I drove to Florida. In those days it was almost like pioneering to the West only we were headed South. Dad had been ill, having suffered injuries when he fell from a building scaffold and it was thought that a winter in a warmer climate might be good for him.

It was exciting for me to look forward to attending a school so far away and in the meantime enjoy all the things I would see before I got there. We left home on October tenth –now, how can I remember the very date? – and drove as far as Gettysburg that day. Though it was only October, bad weather overtook us and that night we walked around the historic square in Gettysburg in a blinding snowstorm and bitter cold. The following morning we toured the famous battlefield in its mantle of white! In October!

Travel in those days was not like it is today. There were no express highways, one traveled narrow two lane roads and put up with many inconveniences – detours, flat tires! It was in Virginia that we actually drove through a flowing stream. There was no bridge! A farmer working in his fields assured us that everyone did it.

In the Carolinas we saw them picking cotton quite as we had read about it in story and song. It was as though the scenes of Stephen Foster's writings unfolded before us.

In Georgia, in the turpentine forests we saw chain gangs working under the watchful eyes of armed guards. It was a chilling, ominous sight but perhaps such a penal system was a deterrent to the high crimes rates such as we have today.

At the Georgia-Florida state line we crossed the murky, meandering St. Mary's River on a barge! Three cars to a crossing! And this after we had ridden for miles on a narrow plank road through swamps.

Florida! It was almost a magical word. We had finally arrived there after seven long days of travel. We settled in Miami, a very different Miami then, than it is today. No time was lost in getting me enrolled in the Ada Merritt School. George spent a bit of time there with us, and then he, if I remember rightly, signed on a ship sailing to New York.

On completion of my school term in the spring, Mother and I returned North by train. Dad remained throughout the summer, working for an architectural firm. He returned home in September, just a very few days before the terrible hurricane which did great damage to much of the city.

LOOKING BACK

In looking back on the years of my childhood I seem to have enjoyed more close association with George than I did with Leslie or Howard. It is understandable. All three brothers were involved with the busyness of their own lives – school, work, recreation. Les and Howie fell in love very young. That's a full time commitment! Then came their early marriages, the establishment of their own homes, and then their families. George was almost thirty when he married.

In some ways my childhood was almost like that of an only child. I had brothers and yet I was quite alone. My parents were not young, my mother being almost forty-two when I was born. So I was quite used to being with older people. That, too, makes a childhood different. Perhaps because of these facts George made himself close to me. Whatever, we enjoyed a wonderful brother and sister relationship.

It is pleasant to reminisce. The years pass and as we become older the memories become more precious. In some instances memory is dimmed, in other instances people, places and things stand out very clearly. It has been a challenge to write about those early years, to write about the family, friends and happenings. I have tried to present it as seen and remembered by the Littlest One! Thus I shall not go into the teen years. That would be another story!