

REMEMBRANCES:

FUNNY, SAD AND SILLY

BY

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GRANDPARENTS



Grandma Amanda Ross holding Kay and Grandpa Charlie Ross holding Kay's cousin Jerry.

MY GRANDPARENTS' HOUSE

My grandparents, Charlie and Amanda Ross, lived in Independence, Oregon when I was a little girl. Their house was fascinating to me; so dark and mysterious, with some really strange and bizarre furniture and fixtures. Such as the water pump in the kitchen. It had a handle one had to work up and down, first pouring a pitcher of water down it. After a few vigorous pumps out would come the coldest, clearest water I had ever experienced.

When I asked my mother why we didn't have one like that, she gave me an exasperated look and didn't answer.

Their house was right next to the back of the high school and my uncle Howard, the youngest of the family, played tennis against the wall when he couldn't find a partner to play with, exercising his "bad" leg. He had had "TB of the bone" according to my mother, when he was a boy and had spent a year in a body cast. He had a permanent limp as a result, but that didn't dampen his enthusiasm for tennis. He whipped me regularly when I was a teen-ager.

On the side of drive was a huge cherry tree, older than Methuselah, where my mom and her sisters and brothers each had their chosen limbs. They would climb up the tree and perch on their limbs, eating all the cherries within reach. Woe to anyone who invaded another's territory!

My Grandma Ross kept chickens and a goose in the side yard. The goose chased my older sister and pinched her and hit her with its wings. She wouldn't go out in the yard without a big person, for protection.

There was a huge round table in the dining room, where the family would gather after supper in the evening. They would all turn their chairs' backs to the table and read by the light of the hurricane lamp, placed in the middle of the table. Anyone looking in the window would think they were all mad at each other, all seven of him or her, with their backs to the table.

All the family were great readers, each with their own favorites. My mother and her sister Grace would go to the local library to borrow books and being impatient to explore their new finds would take turns leading each other while the one being led read her book on the way home, one block for each sister before trading. The library was always open and each person would write down the title of the book they were taking and their name. A volunteer would come in occasionally to straighten the shelves and put books away.

Grandpa Ross wore reading glasses, but he was always miss-placing them. He would wander around the house, all the time shouting at my grandmother: "Miss Ross, what did you do with my glasses?! I've looked everywhere, but you must have hid them from me!" This would go on for a time until Grandma would look up from her work and ask: "Have you looked on top of your head?" Which, of course, was where they had been all the time.

Whereupon Grandpa would shout all the louder: “Dagnab it, you knew they were there all the time; why didn’t you tell me?!”

Life was not always peaceful at the Ross house, but always fascinating, at least to me.

One of my uncles had a gramophone, with a big horn on the front and cylinders with grooves on them. You wound it up to play some really strange sounding music. There was also a wind-up phonograph that played records. My cousin Jerry and I would wind it up tight and the sounds that came out were high pitched and squeaky until it began to wind down and get really slow. Jerry was always impatient and wanted to wind it up again to hear the squeaky sounds. Pretty soon someone would come in and make us stop. We were not allowed to touch Uncle Guy’s gramophone, but we always took a turn on the phonograph.

GRANDMOTHER'S ROCKER

When I was a little girl, my grandmother came to live with us in the little mountain community where we lived. I was about four or five years old and was fascinated with this lady. She had such interesting stuff in her room. I would go in there as often as I could without my mother making me leave Grandma alone. She didn't mind, really. She always welcomed with open arms and some of the candy mints she kept in her apron pocket.

One of the things she had in her room was an old rocking chair. I had one too, made of wicker, just my size. Hers was wooden, with cushions and arm rests.

One day Grandma invited me into her room and told me to bring my rocking chair. She said she was going to teach me to rock the right way.

When we had arranged ourselves, side-by-side in the open area of her room, instruction began. She said, "Now there are some old ladies who think they know how to rock, but they don't have any idea of how to go about it."

"First you have to get yourself comfortable with your feet on the floor, your seat back on the bottom; no gaps between. Use a cushion if you need to. Then you should lean back slowly, just so that your toes are still touching the floor, and then lean slowly forward, so that your heels touch the floor. This has to be done slowly, no jerky movements."

She said that "some old ladies have no idea how to rock the right way; they bob their heads and jerk this way and that. That is not relaxing at all. Rocking should be gentle and relaxing; soothing to the body and the soul."

We practiced every day after that and she was right. I have several rocking chairs in my house today and I find it very relaxing to rock and sooth my soul.

THE GROCERY BILL

The little railroad town of Blackrock, Oregon had a general store, but my Grandmother, Amanda Ross, believed that the proprietor, “Old Ab”, overcharged, so she decided to send her grocery list to the grocer in the next town, Falls City. She could send her list with the local train, referred to as “The Speeder” and receive her groceries on the return trip.

“Old Ab” received his nickname because whenever someone wanted something that was not at hand, but had to be retrieved from the storeroom, he would say, “I’m absolutely out!” No one seems to know what his real name was, just “Old Ab”.

On her first occasion to use The Speeder to take her list to the grocer in Falls City, she gave her list to the engineer, who promised to fulfill his pledge to pick up her groceries at the train station and deliver them to her the next day. She had already discussed this arrangement with the grocer in Falls City, who was very willing to fill her order.

When the order was received the next day, Grandma Ross went over the list very carefully, but couldn’t find the last item on the invoice; she checked it again, several times but couldn’t find that last item, which she couldn’t quite decipher. The more she checked the list the angrier she became, convinced that Mr. Olsen, the grocer had charged her for something she didn’t get.

Finally she decided to do something about it. One fine day when it wasn’t raining (sometimes hard to come by, in Western Oregon) she put on her coat and hat, took the invoice in hand and set out for Falls City, walking on the railroad tracks since there was not a regular road between Black Rock and Falls City.

She arrived a little breathless after her four-mile walk, but went right in to the store and confronted Mr. Olsen. “I don’t know what that last item is”, she concluded, “but I know for sure I didn’t get it!”

Mr. Olsen took the invoice without responding to her long tirade concerning honesty and trustworthiness examined it closely and finally said, “Well, Miss Ross, that last item is Freight”.

“OH!” she said, snatched back the invoice, turned and left the store to begin her long march back up the railroad tracks to home in Black Rock.

MAY DAY

On May Day, in the lumber camp where I was born, the children would go out into the woods that surrounded our small village and gather wild flowers. We brought them back home, put them in water and then make May Baskets from colored paper. The older kids helped the younger ones with scissors and glue.

In the evening, we would put our flowers in the baskets and deliver them to our relatives and friends. We hung them on the doorknob, knocked and then ran and hid! We liked to find a hiding place in sight of the door, so we could see the expressions of surprise and pleasure of those chosen for this special gift of Spring.

I remember one year when I was about three or four years old, we did this. My Grandmother lived in a small house close to us. My mother told me that I had to deliver her May Basket in person, because she had difficulty getting to the door. I didn't like this very much, because I was very shy, but I agreed to the plan.

Mom obviously had alerted Grandma that I was coming, for when I knocked on the door and she called "come in!" She was sitting in her rocking chair, just far enough from the door to let it open. She opened her arms and laughed the low-voiced small laugh she reserved for us grandchildren, inviting me in and folding me into her arms, May Basket and all.



Grandma Ross at Kay's 5th birthday. Kay has a crew cut.

MEXICAN REVOLUTION

The Mexican Revolution began in the early years of the 20th Century, about 1910. It came about because most of the wealth and power of the country was in the hands of a small minority and the rest of the population lived in abject poverty with little or no political power. Even though elections were held and a constitution approved in 1917, fighting continued for several more years, with Pancho Villa and Emiliano Zapata leading large groups of guerillas harassing government troupes, destroying and burning down many large haciendas and ranchos. More details can be found on the Internet at MEXonline.com.

It was during the last days of this time when Revolutionaries began to gain the upper hand, thousands sweeping down out of the hills, attacking the haciendas and ranchos, that a young man, named Filberto Cardenas, emerged in the state of Michocan, in the central region of Mexico. He was a peasant (peon) employed by a rich landowner to protect the hacienda. During quiet periods he oversaw the activities of other peons in the business of the estate in their daily tasks of caring for the livestock and harvesting crops.

However, when the guerillas were in the neighborhood, Filberto wore his other hat as defensive organizer. He distributed weapons and posted his men where they were needed, directing reinforcements into the heat of the battle. As his skill and experience grew, so did his reputation both among landowners and the revolutionaries. His employer began to loan him out to the other landowners, to train leaders among their people. He became so well known that the guerillas began to seek him out, telling their soldiers to find "the one with the good gun".

Sometimes when the walls of the hacienda were breached, Filberto had to hide in the fields of sugar cane. The guerillas would find his house and threaten and beat his wife Otilia and their 4 children, trying to make them tell where Filberto was hiding.

Eventually the revolution came to an end and Filberto and his family had to flee. He sent Otilia and the children, Jesus, Antonio, Maria and Roberto to Otilia's brother in Baja California. Benjamin then helped them gain refugee status and cross over into the United States.

Filberto remained in Mexico for 9 months and then made his way to the U.S. border and the Rio Grande River. The family by this time had settled in the small lumbering community of Merced Falls, California. Filberto joined them and began to work in the lumberyard and mill. Eventually 5 more children were born and they gained moderate prosperity with the help of the older kids, gathering whatever they could find in the countryside, from mushrooms to firewood. Sometimes they even shot song birds with a small be be gun, so there could be some meat in the beans and rice tacos. Filberto made wine for the community, which the children did not like at all, since they had to get in the barrel and stomp out the juice. They had been barefoot all summer, with cuts and bruises on their feet. That made for a lively stomp!

In the early years the successful ruling party sent assassins to the Merced Falls area, looking for Filberto. There were three assassins sent over a period of time and Filberto dispatched them all.

When the older children were about 9 to 11, the local school board found them and started a whole new school with all the kids in the refugee community. That is when they began to learn English and something of the world outside their small town.

Several years later one of the sons, Tony, went back with some American friends to the area of Central Mexico where he was born. Not knowing what reception he might receive, he gave his god-father's name, Manuel Gonzales. He had candy and cigarettes to distribute to the village people. Very welcome items, coming from "Norte Americano". Some of the older people looked at him askance. "Do you know Filberto Cardenas? You look a lot like him." Of course, he did look like his Father; and was about the same age as when they had last seen him. "Boy, if we ever catch him, or any of his relations....!"

Needless to say, Tony didn't waste any time distributing his "goodies" and hitting the trail out of there!

The family continued to prosper with the usual ups and downs of any family, with "Papa Cardenas" at the head. They eventually gained U.S. citizenship, moved to Vallejo, CA when the lumber mill ceased operation. Mama and Papa Cardenas both lived into their ninties to see their surviving children (3 died in infancy) grow and prosper, giving them many grandchildren and great grands.

CHILDHOOD



Kay bathing her baby on the plank road of Valsetz.

ON TO MINNESOTA

My parents had just learned the whereabouts of my father's brother and sister, who had been placed in an orphanage following the death of their mother. Families in Minnesota had adopted them.

Mom and Dad discussed what they should do and decided to invite Dad's newly married brother Edward and his bride Lucile to join us in a road trip to Minnesota.

The new 1941 Chevrolet sedan was loaded with all the stuff we would need for a month-long journey and we drove from Valsetz, Oregon to Longbeach, Washington to pick up Uncle Eddie and Aunt Lucile on the dairy farm where they lived and worked with my grandparents.

We drove east, up the Columbia River, past Cascade Locks, the last dam at the time on the mighty Columbia before it entered the Pacific Ocean. Further up the river we stopped at Celilo Falls, where the native Americans had built very flimsy-looking wooden platforms, from which they netted the spawning salmon as they leapt over the falls to the tiny streams up river where they laid their eggs. These platforms were inherited from one's ancestors and very jealously guarded by the current occupants.

My Dad and Uncle Eddie got out of the car and walked over the rocks to see the people at work, but my Mother wouldn't let me out of the car for fear I would become "salmon bait". Aunt Lucile went with them for a short distance.

The journey to Minnesota seemed endless to me, but my Aunt and Uncle did their best to keep me entertained. I was only 4 years old, so enjoyed being read to and coloring in my "Blondie" coloring book, but it was mighty boring most of the time.

At night we stayed in motels along the way and often my bed was the two seats from the car. If they were not securely braced together they would separate during the night and I ended up on the floor between them.

As we got closer to Minnesota and Illinois, where my Father and his siblings were born, we stayed with relatives. My Father had lots of aunts, uncles and cousins who seemed delight to see Freddy and Eddie again.

At one place on a farm there was a young colt. My Dad put his long leg over the colt's back, but was still standing on the ground. The colt didn't know what to make of this, so decided to walk away. My Dad walked too, still straddling his back.

We went into East St. Louis to visit a cousin. Dad was nervous about driving in the big city, coming from a small town of 400 or so. He called his cousin from the outskirts of the city and arranged to meet him, so he could guide us to their house. When the cousin finally found us, he was driving a small black sedan, of which there seemed to be dozens, whizzing in all directions. I had never seen a four-lane street before and I am not sure

Dad had either. Dad was concerned about being able to follow his cousin through traffic, so we found a small white towel, rolled down the back window of the black sedan and put the towel in it, mostly on the outside. We were all told to keep our eyes on that white flag and tell Dad where to go. What an adventure! We had to travel fast to keep up with that little black car with the white flag in the window. We made it okay and enjoyed a nice dinner and visit with the cousin and his family. Of course, he had to guide us back to the edge of the city so that we could continue on our journey.

We finally found my Father's brother and sister. They had been adopted by two different families and were anxious to get acquainted with their big brothers. A family in Elk Grove, Minn, had adopted my Aunt Catherine. She had just graduated from high school and was engaged to be married. She seemed very chic and beautiful to me. She did not remember her brothers, since she was only 2 years old when adopted.

My Dad remembered her however and had named me after her. Never mind that he spelled "Catherine" differently and didn't quite get the middle name right. The thought was there.

Uncle Billy was adopted by a family named Gearhardt and lived in a big house on the shores of a lake. Mrs. Gearhardt told us how they came to adopt Billy. She and her grown daughter Susan decided one Christmas to go to the nearby orphanage and take some of the kids home for the holiday. They returned home in shock, due to the condition of the children, especially Billy

The kids were all lined up in a row and they were told to chose who they wanted to take home. The kids were kind of scraggly but looked healthy enough, except Billy. He was 18 months old but could not sit up, was cross-eyed and drooling. He was obviously retarded, due in part to this mother's deteriorating health during her pregnancy.

As Mrs. Gearhardt and Susan were describing Billy to their husband and father, they looked at each other and said together "Let's go get him!" So they did. He was 14 years old when we met him. He was still struggling with mobility but eventually became independent due entirely to Mrs. Gearhardt's patience and determination.

Mr. Gearhardt took us fishing on the lake; Dad, Uncle Eddie and me, all crammed into a little rowboat. I had on a white cap and identified myself later in a picture as "that little pinhead", which got a big laugh. I didn't see anything funny about it. Grownups are weird!

We continued on our month long journey, promising to keep in touch with our new families. I don't remember much about our return to the West Coast, except that Dad was worried about the loss of the calluses on his hands due to a month of soft living.

We did stop in Salt Lake City and visited the big church where a pin dropped on the pulpit could be clearly heard in the back of the balcony. We marveled at the sights of the

city, especially the golden sea gull at the top of a tall column. I didn't understand the significance of it at the time, but thought it was very beautiful.



Kay's Father, Fred, Aunt Catherine and Uncle Edward, March 1941.

GRAVEL ROADS

The first memory I have of a journey, or many journeys, is the one to and from the lumber camp, where we lived to “town”, Salem, Oregon a trip of about 65 miles.

The first 16 miles from camp (Valsetz, Oregon) to Falls City was over a mountainous gravel road. You know the kind; with three tracks. Should you meet another vehicle coming from the other direction, one or the other might need to back up to the nearest wide spot, so they could pass. There were not too many wide places on this particular road.

Once, we were about half way to Falls City when a delivery truck came flying around the corner. My mother gave an anxious whimper, but my Dad said, “He hasn’t hit us yet!” and crowded our car up next to the mountain, half in a ditch.

From the back seat I saw the truck driver’s eyes big and round and his mouth forming a big “O”. He had more to worry about; he was on the side of the road that fell off into a canyon!

He passed us with a roar and stopped a few yards down the road. He came back to inspect the damage with my Dad. By this time my Mother had regained her voice and was in the process of picking apart the trucker’s ancestry, his driving ability and questioning how he ever got a driver’s license in the first place. My Dad said to just hush, no one was injured and there was little damage, just a mud flap ripped off.

The trucker helped us get the car out of the ditch and promised to take the road at a little slower pace next time and we continued on with our once-a-month Saturday excursion to town!

We made the journey once a month to buy groceries, visit the doctor/dentist, purchase clothing and/or shoes, meet our neighbors who were also in town for the same reasons. Every family in Camp went to town on the same Saturday, and generally have a good time. We had lunch at a lunch counter, maybe at Woolworths.

Everyone was always dressed in their best, my Dad wore his blue suit, white shirt, tie and his fedora. My Mom wore her best dress and shoes that were not the most comfortable. Sometimes, in good weather, she also wore a beautiful hat. My outfit was always a very pretty dress, sometimes with a sweater and tam. My shoes were high top leather whites, which my Dad and I both hated.

I remember once seeing my cousin, Betty Jean (who was over 6 feet) in her electric blue plaid swing coat walking down the sidewalk with our Aunt Agnes, who was 4 feet, 9 ½ inches at her tallest. No missing those two!

When my mother went shopping at Sears or Penneys, I would tug on her dress and whisper when she bent down to hear me, that I had nothing in my hand. Then we would

go to the toy department and buy me a miniature car carrier truck, with tiny little cars. I was then content to play under the dress racks with my toy truck and cars while she checked out the latest fashions.

On the way home in the late afternoon, I was tired and usually took a nap on the back seat of our 1941 Chevy sedan, with scratchy seat covers. Sometimes when it was raining I made up a little song to the rhythm of the windshield wipers, taking away the often-present Oregon mist.

I'm not sure how my Dad drove that little car. He was 6'4" and must have had his knees up around his ears! I've seen a '41 Chevy at the Auto Museum and I am not sure I would fit in it now.

Another time, after finishing our business in Salem and heading back to Valsetz, we were on the outskirts of West Salem, across the Willamette River, when I turned over the little carton (like those you get chinese take-out in) containing two little goldfish.

Responding to my wails and shrieks, my Dad pulled over on the side of the road. There was only about an inch of water still in the container, so he put on his hat, took the container, fish and all, hopped over several mud puddles down to the river and refilled the container. It was a little muddy but enough to get the poor little fishes home.

I will always remember the sight of him with his long legs in his best suit, black wingtips and all, skipping over the wet terrain, trying to keep his little girl happy!



Kay and her Daddy on her 5th birthday.

We continued on our way, through all the little towns like Kings Valley, Rickreal, PeeDee, & Willamina along the road, to Falls City, the last of the paved roads and then onto the gravel road over the mountain to our little village of Valsetz.

I don't remember if the fish survived my solicitous attention until our next trip, over the gravel road.

The journey over the mountain was very picturesque; green trees, bubbly streams, huge boulders and occasionally a glimpse of a deer or two.

However, it was also very dangerous, as my cousin Ross and his friend Bob found out. They ran home from school one fine spring day, jumped on their bikes and rode to the top of a steep incline. They stopped a moment to catch their breath and then took off down the mountain with their feet on the handlebars of their bikes.

They must have started a little later than they usually did, because the loggers who lived in Falls City had begun their trip home after a hard day in the woods. The boys came around a sharp corner, directly in the path of the first logger. The driver was able to avoid the first rider, but hit the second one head on. My cousin Ross was in a coma for 10 days and finally died, just short of his 15th birthday.

The town of Valsetz no longer exists. It was one of the last so-called “mill towns”, owned by the lumber company. All the houses and other buildings belonged to the company, and they decided it was no longer profitable to have a logging and mill operation there. Everyone had to leave in 1982. The houses and roads were dismantled and sold to the highest bidder and the gravel road was abandoned.

CHANGES

The culture of our neighborhood and city changed dramatically with the end of World War II. A child of eight years old in 1945 didn't remember any other time except wartime.

Suddenly the Curly's Dairy truck was traveling around the neighborhood by itself, without the assistance of the old gray horse, with blinders, that had been pulling the same truck through the streets as long as she could remember. She wondered where old Dobbin was; she would like to go give him an apple.

Ration books, that curse to a sugar-hungry girl with fast growing feet, were a thing of the past. There was real ice cream, not that awful half melted orange sherbet in little tubs, shared with watery and tasteless supposedly vanilla ice cream.

It was possible to expect cookies with whole milk (not powdered) when arriving home from school in the afternoon; and a real birthday cake (!) on that special day.

Advertising began to appear, other than a poster with Uncle Sam pointing his finger at you and saying the "The Country Needs YOU!!" One friend actually got a brand new car. What a lovely smell!

Nothing like it had been seen or heard of in her memory. Suddenly too, the service men, soldiers and sailors, weren't there on Saturday nights, listening to the wonderful music of the big bands, Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby and talking with each other. We were all packed into her mother's small living room, most of them invited by an older taxi-driving brother. They were all glad to see a little sister and have her sit on their laps as they chatted and exchanged stories. They also gave good bribes; \$.25 to .50 for a ½ of lap-sitting time. They sometimes had candy, too! She lost a good source of income when they no longer came around on the weekends.

All gone - no more hitchhiking soldiers and sailors to tell of their travels, adventures and homes - back to the daily business of buying, selling and going to work and school.

Lost camaraderie.



Kay, Brother Larry and Sister Lois on the beach at Newport, Oregon 1940.

SUMMERS ON THE FARM

When I arrived at the dairy farm on the outskirts of Long Beach, Washington I wasn't sure what to expect. I knew my Uncle Eddie and Aunt Lucile quite well. While my Father was alive we visited the farm quite often; we had taken a trip to Minnesota with them shortly after their marriage and they had come to our home in Salem, Oregon while my Grandparents were still running the farm.

But that had been a long time ago, and I was to be the only child within miles of the farm for the whole summer. My Aunt Lucile and Uncle Eddie were very busy with the daily activities of the farm, plus the extra work during the summer with cutting, curing and storage of hay for the winter months.

Who did I have to play with? No one, except the old farm dog JoJo, an Australian Shepard who was crippled with arthritis and mostly lay around the back yard. But he loved the attention I gave him, responding with kisses and adoring looks. Soon he began to follow me about the yard close to the house in spite of the pain in his joints. Eventually he became quite agile and went wherever I went; out to the pasture in the afternoon to collect the cows for the afternoon milking, into the barn and the hay mow (which I loved to climb into and slide down the back, much to my Uncle's concern); wherever I went.

We had a wonderful time together that summer. I couldn't remember ever having such a loving and adoring companion who listened sympathically to all my concerns and never expected much in return, except to be at my side every waking minute.

JoJo was a herding dog and late in the summer he and I would go to the day pasture, about half a mile from the barn, to round up the straggler cows. I had only to point in the direction I wanted him to go and he would fly out, ears perked and tongue lolling to get that last cow to hurry up to the gate, where Aunt Lucile was waiting to open the gate and allow them to proceed across the road and into the milking parlour.

My Uncle finally had to tell me not to send JoJo out with so much enthusiasm, because he made them run and nipped them on the bag, so that when they came in to be milked, they wouldn't let down their milk. We had to back off a bit.

There were a lot of other things going on at the farm; a lot of animals including pigs, chickens, ducks, geese, rabbits and a lot of cats. The cats were very welcome, because they helped keep the mouse population under control. They also welcomed an occasional treat of milk. Once I saw a mother cat follow my Uncle into the older part of the barn, where he had to house a cow whose udder was infected and her milk couldn't be included in the daily milking. She called her babies to follow her and lined them up beside her, on the right side of the cow, just outside the manure gutter.

When my Uncle sat down on a small stool to hand milk this cow, the momma cat gave instructions to her offspring to pay attention. Occasionally Uncle Eddie would direct a

stream of milk at the mother cat, who opened her mouth at the right instant and caught the stream in her mouth. The kittens became very attentive to what was happening, but when he directed a stream at them, they didn't open their mouths and were knocked over backwards. The other kittens would then start to lick off the milk from the up-ended one. They all got their turn at being up-ended and Uncle Eddie said it only took one session for them to learn the routine.

Well, the summer finally ended and I went back home and to school. Sometime during the following winter, JoJo went to sleep one night and never woke up again. I spent several summers on the farm after that, but none was quite so enjoyable as the one I spent with JoJo.



Jojo, Uncle Eddie's Shepard dog.

MY UNCLE'S GOAT

There was a dairy farm in southwest Washington state, owned and operated by my Uncle Eddie and his family.

His daughter, Eleanor, was allergic to cow's milk, so he had to get a goat and milk her daily, along with the seventy or so cows in the herd. This irritated him greatly, because he had to build her a special stanchion, since she didn't fit the stanchions for the cows. Neither could she be milked by the milking machines used on the cows, having only two "handles".

She had to be milked by hand, HIS hand. He would mutter and curse under his breath as he was milking and hand me the finished product, to be transported to my Aunt Lucile in the farmhouse kitchen.

Of course "Nanny" the goat had to be bred yearly, since her milk would dry up. That meant that a "billy" had to be borrowed or rented from a neighbor for the service. If there is a nastier creature on earth than a billy goat, it would be hard to find one in western Washington. He was relegated to the back lot, behind the barn and machine shed, where his obnoxious odor and habits would not disturb the rest of the farm. This particular billy must have been a veritable giant in the society of goats, because Nanny always produced not one kid, but two.

As soon as these twins had their 4 hooves under them, they began to follow my Uncle Eddie everywhere he went about the farm. He could be heard all day talking to and cursing these kids as they followed him in the barn, out the manure ramp, into the machine shed, to the garden, everywhere. Of course as soon as he reached a destination and turned around, he had to wait for them to get out of the way before he could go on to his next task. Waiting patiently was not a virtue of my uncle.

Goat bleating and curses filled the air.

Nanny couldn't be put out to pasture with the cows, even though she was a good-sized goat. There were too many gaps in the fences and gates that she could have squeezed through and she might have been pushed around by the larger cows. Being in western Washington, where it rains a good part of the year, grass was abundant around the farmhouse and she was safely beyond the reach of the cows. So....she was put on a tether and staked out in the farmhouse yard.

MY task during my summer stays on the farm was to retrieve her for the afternoon milking. The grass grew most thickly along the banks of a ditch that ran through the yard, so she was most often staked nearby. By the time of the afternoon milking, she was invariably on the far side of the ditch.

I was eight years old my first summer on the farm and my legs were short; they still are. Nanny would give me the eye when I called her, but kept on munching. She would come

for my uncle, but not me; she knew HE had grain; I had nothing, not even an apple. She was also bigger than me, not to mention stronger.

I would tug and pull on her rope to no avail; she kept on munching. Finally I got on the high side of the ditch, made a run for it and leapt over the ditch. I grabbed her collar and tugged and pulled. She finally decided that she heard the rattle of grain in the bucket, charged across the ditch and straight up to the barn, dragging me across the ditch and the barnyard behind her, soaked to the knees, at least.

Furthermore, I got no sympathy from my uncle and aunt. Being good German farmers, they just told me to figure out how to deal with Nanny.

Sometimes I could find a piece of fruit to bribe her with, but I found a good stout stick had a good effect also. I only had to show it to her to convince her it was milking time.

NEW YEAR'S EVE

New Year's Eve, 1946. My friend Joyce was spending the Christmas Holidays with us and my parents said that we could stay up until midnight if we wanted.

Of Course!, we wanted! Mom said we had to have our baths early and then allowed us to have snacks and drinks while we played games and did our best to be alert through the evening. It was hard; we were used to going to bed by 9 PM most nights, but we were very excited at the prospect of enjoying what we thought of as an adult celebration.

I am not sure what we expected to happen at midnight; thunder and lightening? Mom gave us pots and metal spoons to clang together and I think we had whistles, but what else would happen?

Mom kept giving us a countdown; 10 o'clock and we were wide-awake; 11 o'clock and we were getting a little droopy. She had us get up from our table games and play "hide the thimble", a game we had played often with Joyce's sister and brothers while the adults played pinochle. My mother had the best hiding place- the tip of her nose. When we had exhausted all the best places, the one hiding the thimble would give it to her and she would screw it onto her nose and keep on playing with her friends. It never fell off and none of her playing mates made any comment about the shiny object on the end of her nose. After we had ransacked the house, looking in every conceivable place and ready to give up, she would say "Oh, is this what you are looking for?" and take the thimble off her nose.

On this night the game kept us on the move as the midnight hour approached. Finally mom said "Okay girls, get your noise makers!". We put on our silly hats and scampered out into the damp evening air, poised for the big moment.

Finally she began the countdown: "ten, nine, eight..." At the minute she said "one" we blew our whistles and banged our pots for all we were worth for all of 30 seconds and then headed straight for bed. I think we were sound asleep before the church bells and fire alarm horns stopped their celebration. No thunder, no lightening. Just like all adult celebrations, no big deal.

THE NORTHERN LGHTS

I found myself in Fairbanks, Alaska in the summer of 1951. I had left Portland, Oregon to join my mother in Anchorage and then traveled to Fairbanks to visit my sister, Lois and her husband, Edward. We were all sitting around their kitchen table, catching up on family adventures, our wishes and hopes for the future. It was around midnight, but still twilight, since it was in mid-summer.

Suddenly we heard a crackling and snapping sound; my sister said “quick, let’s go outside!” Which we did, as fast as we could, I not knowing what to expect.

Outside there was a flashing of light and more intense crackling and snapping and a smell of ozone, which was hard to determine where it was coming from. Lois said “look up!” ; and what to my astonished sight should appear but dancing lights like water fountains, bursting with energy and electricity, directly over our heads. It seemed they were not more than 6 to 10 feet above us, but hard to determine, because they moved and danced, up, down, over here, over there, all around us.

Sparks seemed to fly off, but none reached the ground. All the light had a silvery appearance. Slowly, the show slowed down and gradually disappeared.

We all sighed, as though we had been holding our breath, which I had! A most dazzling exhibition of the famous Northern Lights.

DEDICATED DONER

It was the custom in the small village where I was born, high in the mountains of western Oregon, for everyone to “go to town” on payday. “Town” was the state capital, Salem. It was 65 miles from our village, the first 16 over a mountain gravel road to the pavement in Falls City.

Everyone dressed in their best and planned to stay the day, shopping, attending to errands, visiting doctors, etc. since there none of these amenities in our village of Valsetz.

On the way home we were practically a caravan, all the cars loaded with packages, groceries and kids.

One day my cousin Betty was in the crowd. She was about 18 but still in high school because of an illness that she had suffered a few years before. It kept her out of school and in a weakened condition for several months. Healthy again, she enjoyed going on family excursions, as we all did at that time.

Upon arriving in Salem the family split up to attend to various errands. Betty went with her mother. All agreed to meet for lunch at the Woolworth lunch counter. On one of the downtown streets the blood mobile was parked, taking donations. Being good citizens, Aunt Grace and Betty went in to make their donation before meeting Uncle Les and brother Ross for lunch.

After lunch the kids exchanged parents, Ross with Aunt Grace and Betty with Uncle Les, to continue with errands and shopping in the afternoon. The blood mobile was still parked on the street, so Uncle Les went it and so did Betty. In those days, during WWII, no one kept records of who had given or when. No questions were asked, it was everyone’s patriotic duty to give whenever possible.

Well, by early afternoon Betty began to fade a bit, looking for every opportunity to sit down and rest. By the time the family was ready to load the car and head for home, Betty was quite fatigued, to the point that the others noted her lack of energy. When her mother asked what was the matter, was she ill? Betty’s response was “Well, I gave blood twice today!” Of course, everyone was quite surprised and gave her water and place to rest. Younger brother Ross couldn’t resist the chance to rag on her about being so stupid as to give blood twice in one day! Luckily, Betty was quite a large person, almost as tall as her 6’3” father and had the generous proportions of her mother. Otherwise the story might not have ended so happily. It took her several days to regain her strength and she was as good as new.

It is a good thing that better records are kept today and people are told when they can give blood again, but no one could question Betty’s loyalty and devotion to God and country!

THE WORLD SERIES, 1953

Let me set the scene: I was a junior in high school, living with my Mom and Stepdad, John in Salem, Oregon. We were all avid baseball fans and were anxiously awaiting the beginning of the game between the New York Yankees and the Brooklyn Dodgers.

My Mom and I took our baths early, so there would be no interruptions during the game. John had established himself in the corner of the couch, the best position to get the best view of our tiny black and white TV.

We were all excited, confident that our team would prevail; my Mom and I were for the Dodgers and John was positive the Yankees would sweep the series. Mom and I settled into our end of the couch, ready to cheer for our team.

The first inning was a little slow, not much action; the Yankees went down in 3 outs. John was confident however, sure that Mickey Mantle, his hero, would save the day. Every time the Dodgers made a hit or a good play, Mom and I would jump around and cheer. John sat on his end of the couch, arms folded over his chest and feet stuck out in front of him, still sure that Mantle would make the difference.

As the game progressed, Carl Erskine, the Dodger pitcher, continued to keep the Yankees under control. Much to John's disgust, Mantle struck out every time he came to the plate, but that didn't discourage him; Mantle would make the day.

As the seventh inning came and went, Mom and I continued to cheer and John sank lower and lower into the couch; not giving up, but losing a little confidence. By this time, if high fives had been in vogue, Mom and I would have slapped each other silly. Finally, Roy Campanella hit a two run homer in the eighth inning and in the end Mantle had struck out 4 times, the Yankees a record 14 times.

With that final blow, John, nearly on the floor by this time, jerked himself upright and stalked off to bed.

We felt a little guilty for making such fun of Mantle and the rest of the Yankees, but not much.

FAVORITES: DOGS, CATS AND GRANDKIDS



Granddaughter
Alyssa with
Charlie (Family
resemblance)



On left is Color
me Hapi.

HAPI CAT

We lost our kitty today. Her name was Color Me Hapi and she was a beautiful Main Coon. She came to us when she lost her status as “Queen”, due to the fact that she was beyond her reproductive years of producing future grand champions. She herself was a grand champion, but fame is fickle.

She assumed her position as “Queen of our Roost” with grace and immediately made known her preferences by ignoring our wishes completely. It has been said that dogs have masters, but cats have staff. There was no question in our household who was in charge.

Hapi was accommodating, however; when Charlie the dog arrived six months after assuming her position. He didn’t smell right and she wasn’t sure what kind of creature he was. When it became obvious that he was staying she gave the equivalent of a kitty sigh and decided to tolerate him, but not to the point of giving up her position on my lap.

One of her great loves was the basket of fresh laundry. I don’t think she understood our preference for “hair free” clothes.

There were two things for which she had no tolerance; the dreaded “box” (animal carrier) and the vacuum cleaner. She didn’t see any need for either of them. She attempted to avoid them both by hiding under the bed, which was sometimes successful. However she couldn’t resist the sound of the can opener. She found a better hiding place, behind the speakers on the top of the 6-foot high entertainment center. She could peer down with imperial grandeur, if she chose, completely out of reach.

The outdoors fascinated her, especially the noisy, greedy birds clustered around and under the bird feeders. She just KNEW they would be more fun than hanging around inside the house. Occasionally she found the patio door ajar; just enough for her to squeeze through. She would hunker down behind the big can of birdseed, under the table. Completely hidden from us, she thought. Her jaw would quiver with anticipation and excitement at the thought of her next move. We usually discovered her absence and had only to say CAT! And she would dive back inside the door.

Once she crept out with Charlie’s last “potty call” of the evening without being noticed and was shut out all night. The next morning when I opened the FRONT door, not the patio door, a brown, black and white streak shot over the threshold and flew straight to the litter box in the washroom. This experience didn’t discourage her however. She still hung around the patio door, in hopes of more exploring.

Sometimes we had to be away for a day or so, leaving her in the care of friends who would come by to feed her and talk to her, if she would show herself. She always had lots to say to me when we returned, not all of it complimentary, I am sure.

Hapi had a favorite chair, a rocker, where she would sometimes curl up and dare anyone to disturb her. Once our pastor and his wife were visiting and Martha chose Hapi's chair to sit in. Martha commented "What a friendly cat; she keeps looking up at me and meowing!" I didn't have the heart to tell her that she was in Hapi's chair, but when Martha stood up to get a cup of tea, Hapi was in the chair before Martha was fully upright. Martha had to sit elsewhere to enjoy her tea.

Hapi's MOST favorite place to sit or lie (& kneed) was my lap. She would follow me around the house meowing loudly and persistently, letting me know that she expected me to sit down NOW! so she could get comfortable after giving my lap a thorough kneading.

I miss my lap warmer.

DRAGON'S CHRISTMAS

Dragon, the cat queen of our household, very graciously allowed us to live with her as long as we provided the necessities of life and performed our duties as required. Namely a plentiful supply of GOOD food and a warm and sometimes unusual place to rest. She also required quick attention to the door, so she could access and regress at her whim. Her method of getting our attention at the door was to stick her claws in the screen door and give it a good shake.

During the Christmas holidays one year I had ordered three singing Santas. On the day they arrived I unpacked them in the hallway and had lined them up against the wall while I disposed of the packing materials.

Out came the Queen, sauntering up the hall to see what all the commotion was about. She passed in front of the first Santa, which immediately sang HO! HO! HO! And began in a loud voice singing Jingle Bells and went on to about five minutes of other popular Christmas music.

At the first HO! Dragon leaped two feet straight up and came down in front of the 2nd Santa who immediately began HIS song and dance. Another leap straight up and of course came down in front of the third Santa, etc.

By this time the Queen was so distraught by all this disrespect that she disappeared for several hours, only coming out gingerly to seek out the food dish. First she carefully scouted out the hallway and vicinity for those loud, unruly intruders.

For the rest of the season she gave a wide berth to the one Santa I kept and never again trusted anything even slightly resembling Santa Claus.

PETS ADD SPICE TO LIFE

There have been many pets in my life, beginning with a kitten my Dad brought home to me from the mill. Unfortunately it had ringworm and when I used it as muff around my neck, the ringworm infected my head, which resulted in having to get my head shaved.

Another that I remember was Nicodemus, a big orange tabby cat. We lived across the street from a big open field and it was there that he spent most of his days, hunting.

Snakes, birds, lizards, mice, gophers; if it was smaller than he was, he would catch it and bring his presents home to my mother. Then he would twine around her legs, meowing and meowing until she said “good boy Nicodemus, what a GOOD BOY!” Then he would leave her to deal with his present, often still kicking, however she wanted. He was no longer interested.

Nicodemus was a wonderful foot warmer for me. He would curl up on my icy cold bed at night, covering my feet. If I moved he re-adjusted himself over my feet again.

Another great pet was Chata, an English bulldog who lived with us while my boys were growing up. She was a great companion for roughhousing boys, never complaining if they got a little rambunctious and landed on top of her. She would just grunt and look at them with sorrowful eyes as to say, “That hurt a little!”

Chata had a doghouse in the back yard, constructed especially for her, with a baffle inside and hinged top. She had to sleep out there because she snored too loud to sleep in the house while we were trying to sleep! She often shared her house with a kitty called Villain, a harlequin tri-color. In the morning they would both come out of the doghouse, Chata yawning and stretching and Villain stropping herself against the dog’s chest.

Chata loved to ride in the car and knew the difference in sound between my work key ring and the car keys. She could be sound asleep and hear the faintest jingle of the car keys. Struggling to her feet she would trot to the door as fast as her short bulldog legs would carry her and press her nose to the door, so that it was impossible to open it without inviting her along as well. Getting into the car was another struggle; one foot over the door sill then the other, wiggle, wiggle, wiggle until finally she could get one hind foot over and then the other and she was in!

She always knew her territory very well and once defended it against an unsuspecting garbage man. She forced him into a corner of the fence with the can on his shoulder and lay down to guard the good stuff he was trying to take away. After about half an hour she fell asleep and he could finally escape. The trash company made sure we knew when their next visit would be so that Chata could be in another part of the property.

Another kitty was Dragon, a “tuxedo” Manx with a stub for a tail. She did not like dogs in her domain and cleared them out in a hurry. She was also a great hunter, but didn’t want to share. She stashed her catch under a cabinet in the garage. When the smell and

flies got to be too much, the cabinet was pried up to reveal 2 squirrels, several birds and mice, etc. We plugged the hole in the cabinet that she used to enter the space, after clearing out the corpses.

When we moved to California two mocking birds set up housekeeping in the pepper tree next to the backyard fence. They of course dive-bombed Dragon whenever they saw her, even through the windows inside the house. She had never been attacked by birds before and didn't take to it very kindly. She would sneak, snarling, as close to the side of the house as she could while they stood on the fence and swore at her, as only mocking birds can. They successfully raised two batches of babies that first summer, in spite of Dragon's best efforts to get rid of them.

I think pets add immeasurably to the quality of life and I expect to always have at least one critter sharing my space.



Kay and kitten who gave her ring worm resulting in the crew hair cut.

SCRAPS



Sister Lois and good friend Joyce

MR OR MS?

People often call me “sir” or “mister” on the phone and my nickname is Kay, which can add to the confusion. It all came to a head about 20 years ago, when I had just started a new job as Purchasing Manager for a small city in California.

One of my first tasks was to do an analysis of fuel prices and availability for the city’s vehicles. I called a local distributor of fuel, searching for information.

Dan Larkin, the owner, was a friendly talkative fellow, asking about my background, why I wanted come to Lompoc, of all places. We talked for about ½ an hour and then he said, “Well Ken, I will have to look up the information you need and call you back.”

I said, “The name is Kay”. There was a small pause and then he said: “I bet you get kidded a lot”.....I realized I could embarrass him now, or wait and let him find out his error for himself, later. I chose later. I said: “Actually not!” Then he went on about another guy he knew named Kay and the guys used to say, Yatty Yah, Yatty Yah. I kept muttering nonsense and monosyllables until we finally hung up.

I had some business to take care of at City Hall, about a mile from my office in the Corporate Yard. Dan called back while I was away and my assistant told him “She had to go to City Hall, but she should be back soon!”

“SHE?! SHE?! OH MY GOD!, I’ll never be able to speak to her again!” and he hung up. Of course we did speak again; I still needed the information. But I told my assistant that perhaps my new business cards should read “Kathryn instead of Kay”. And so I have been ever since, except to my friends and family I am still Kay.

K –12 SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

Since retiring, I have enjoyed myself by becoming a substitute librarian in elementary schools. I was a real librarian in a previous career, but missed the contact with the kids and the absolutely gorgeous, entertaining and imaginative books that appear every year, not to mention the ones I remember from my own days in the library. Authors Beverly Cleary, Judith Viorst, Nateley Babette, Bea Hunt, and many others. Titles such as Across Five Aprils, How to Eat Fried Worms (A favorite of my sons), The Secret Garden, We'll have a Friend for Lunch, and many others. I don't draw the line at picture books; some of them are the greatest. All literature has so much to offer.

So, whenever a school librarian needs a day off, for whatever reason. I am there, book in hand.

The rub comes in several forms; there is no longer a card catalog; it is all computerized. Luckily I am somewhat computer literate, so have learned the basics of the Follett system used by Washoe County School District. However, every librarian has their own pass words, little tricks for getting the kids interested and under control in the 30 minutes allotted to each class. And the kids have varying degrees of knowledge in how to use the computers and convert that to locating their absolutely NECESSARY book. (Horses, 3rd grade level, no more than 120 pages).

Sure, I go to a new (to me) library before I am asked to perform, to learn all these secrets, where the really important stuff is kept, the little quirks we librarians all have; and they are all different, believe me!

So, I arrive at the specified time, anywhere between 8:00AM and 9:00AM, check in with the secretary, emphasize that I am a CLASSIFIED sub,...not CERTIFICATED (important when it comes to being paid, and by whom). And am sent to the library. Sometimes there are books to be shelved, but not usually too many. I need to find the checkout classroom lists, not always in an obvious place, turn on the computer and hope I still remember the correct passwords.

THEN my day begins. Teachers and kids come in with various purposes; the teachers often are looking for materials on specific subjects, go to the computer, stick in some letters and numbers, mumble to themselves, etc. When I ask "Can I Help?" They may suggest a subject, such as Penguins. I say "Oh yes, that would be in the non-fiction section 599.3....and they say "Oh! You are a REAL librarian!". So I am.

THEN the classes begin to arrive, 30 minutes each. There is always a mix; a 5th grade, 2 2nd grades, a kindergarten, recess (shelve books like mad!) lunch, then a few others. Sometimes there are enough breaks to shelve most of the books returned by the classes, if not, they get left for the next day. I try to never leave books to be shelved for the next day, but sometimes it can't be helped. Some schools have volunteers who come in to assist the librarian, but I haven't found too many.

I have been told that the upper grades (4-6) are the most difficult to deal with: I have not found that to be true. The upper grade kids have been trained since Kindergarten as to how to behave in the Library (classroom) one and the same. Even though they may come in from the playground, not in the control of their teacher, it only takes a small reminder of how they are to behave: and there is always “timeout”; very useful. They usually have specific tasks to accomplish, such as finding a book on a research project, reading at specific level, etc. Not only are their teachers interested in what they are to accomplish, they also want to know how they behaved, they may suffer the loss of a recess, or some other coveted privilege. *(I know, I know; teachers are not supposed (under Nevada Law) to leave their students in the supervision of a classified (non-certificated) person, but that is the exception, not the rule.)*

Kindergartners, however, have the attention span of a nano-second. There are usually 35 to 40 of them, flying at sub-sonic levels most of the time. Their teachers welcome a short respite from their usual tasks, say “I am going to duck out for a few minutes, is that okay?” They don’t come back until 2 minutes after their class time is over and the next class is coming in the door. I can’t say I blame them.



Try reading a story to a group of 35 to 40 kindergartners, attempting to keep their attention on each page of the book with attempted interruptions of “Teacher, I can’t see!” (You could if the kid in front of you would sit down!), the kids in the back of the group can’t see OR hear, so they are rolling around on the floor, tickling each other and otherwise entertaining THEMSELVES. Then, assuming you have had the opportunity to check in the books they have returned, they line up to check out their new books, punching, pushing, tickling, etc their near mates.

NOW Jose Lopez, Arillio Quarez, Lupe Gonzales, are in line and all goes well; then a kid shows up who mumbles his name, a new student. A Spanish-speaking classmate attempts to assist, he can’t figure it out. “Que es su nombre? Gets no response, the new kid, in front of 30

classmates hangs on to his book, looking embarrassed and shy. Okay, I say, write down what I think he says and the book he is clutching, hoping the REAL librarian will not be too pissed off at me for not getting the correct info into the computer.

All this time the noise level is at 10 decibils, which makes it even more interesting in hearing the mumbled works of the shy ones. No other adult in the room to help control the noise, or the ones pushing and shoving in line, or discussing the possession of the five bean bags in the corner of the library.

AND TO THINK! I DO THIS FOR FUN!!! AND A LITTLE PAY!

It is fun though; a little challenge in life is good.

STATE OF GRACE

As the mother of two teen-age boys, I had to develop a variety of ways to deal with their almost daily mis-adventures involving general clumsiness, without “losing my cool”, as they would say.

So....instead of getting all upset and bothered when they spilled a glass of milk or fell over their own feet while walking across a perfectly smooth surface, I would say: “ well, I guess that makes you GRACE for the day!”

However....this practice backfired on me one day when I stepped out our front door, tripped over the WELCOME mat, fell and broke my foot in three places.

After the trip to the hospital and getting x-rays, a “boot” and crutches I was on the couch in our living room, arranging my “nest”, with books, water, lamp and crutches within easy reach.

My son Charles cleared his throat and in his understated way said: “Mom, I think this is worth at least two weeks of GRACE!”

My comment was: “Come here son, so I can poke you with my crutch!”

THE COFFEE TABLE

One beautiful Fall day, two sisters decided to travel the 60 or so miles to the Oregon Coast, just to enjoy the salt air together and perhaps visit some of their favorite haunts.

The older sister, Lois had lived and worked on the coast a good part of her life and loved it very much. The other sister also loved the coast, with its clear salty air and brisk breezes. The area they knew best was from Florence in the south to Land's End, north of Depot Bay.

They decided to stop about mid-way in Newport, where Lois had lived and raised her family. They were walking along the waterfront, listening to the seals barking in the bay, and enjoying that rarity on the coast, a calm sunny afternoon. They came to a restaurant and bar where Lois had worked at one time as a bartender. They decided to go in and have a look around and drink a cool soda.

The entrance was a foyer, between the bar and the dining area. As they entered they noticed some interesting small items on the walls. They were little framed dioramas, depicting familiar sights of the area, made with the seashells, ferns, driftwood and other things found on the beach.

As they were examining these charming and beautiful little scenes a man entered the foyer and say them examining these objects. He was middle-aged, dressed like a fisherman with the weathered look of one who spent most of his time in the outdoors.

He asked "do you like those little pictures?" The sisters admitted they liked them very much. Then he said, "Well, I made them and they are for sale!" They had already noticed some pretty significant price tags and when they hesitated, he quickly went on "I also do woodwork from stuff I find on the beach!"

With that he whipped out his wallet and produced a picture, which he gave to one of the women. "I made that too, for my wife". The picture was of a beautiful piece of driftwood, which had been sliced across the thickest part. The edges were rough but the top had been carefully sanded and polished, showing off the delicate, intricate grain of the wood. It had been made into a coffee table, about 4 feet by 2 feet. All around the polished edges there had been embedded silver dollars, with a row of them straight across the narrow middle.

The sisters stared at this monstrosity, completely dumbfounded and speechless. The creator kept up a steady chatter, describing where he had found the wood and come up with the idea of how to use it.

The women were in a quandary of how to respond, sensing that laughing out loud would not be appropriate. Lois finally found her voice and said "How.....interesting!" "Yes!" agreed the other "Interesting!"

The man finally took back his picture and offered “I can make you one if you like; you would only need to provide the silver dollars!” Lois quickly said “No, thanks, but we appreciate you showing it to us.” “Well,” he said, “if you change your mind, the folks here can tell you how to find me”.

The girls quickly left the building, without their cool sodas, and continued walking along the waterfront, literally holding in their laughter by putting a hand over their mouths. Finally they could stand it no longer and with a fast glance around to be sure the fellow wasn't following them, broke out in loud laughter, guffaws and who-haws. Tears streaming down their cheeks, they finally stopped long enough to catch their breath.

“Have you ever seen anything so ugly?” “Never!”

“What a waste of beautiful wood!”

“I wonder where his wife has this gem!” “And what she puts on it to hide it!”

“Maybe she likes it, or just wants to appreciate her man's efforts!”

Such were the comments as they made their way back to the car and continued on their journey.

QUILTER'S RETREAT

When I first started to learn quilting my friend Sharon Stephenson organized a quilter's retreat. Another friend had a condo in Tahoe City with eight beds, so eight of us were quickly signed up to attend.

Sharon gave us a supplies list with directions for cutting, to be done before we arrived. We came with our sewing machines, fabrics (washed and cut), food for the weekend to share and our ditty bags.

Some arrived early and got right to it, others straggled in as schedules allowed. Sharon had made a big pot of spaghetti and we had salad, bread and drinks. The fridge was bulging with all we had brought to share.

By 8 PM everyone had settled on a location to work, machines were humming, the ironing board was in high demand and conversation was lively. When eight women get together there are lots of stories and experiences to discuss; this was no exception. In between yells for "HELP!" and compliments on choice of colors there were comments such as "how do YOU choose colors?" to "I wasn't sure I could come, but the thought of 2 ½ days without kids, dogs or husband made me determined to come!"

WE began to fade about 10:30 PM or so and by midnight we had all found our bunks. Some early risers were up and at it by six the next morning, but not everyone. The late risers had to scramble to catch up and we kept checking on each other's progress. We were hoping to find out what exactly it was that we were building, since this was a "Mystery Quilt" and one only received directions for the next step when you demonstrated to Sharon's satisfaction you had completed the previous step. If she didn't like what you had done, out came the "quilter's friend" a seam ripper. With sotto voce mutters of "darn!" and "why did I do that?" you get to the ripping out. Some fabrics become so shredded, you only hope you brought some extra stuff.

We caught lunch on the fly but stopped for dinner about 7 PM with shouts of "just let me finish this little bit!" or "I can't leave yet!" We finally got to the restaurant of choice for a relaxing time of sharing.

Then we were back at it until midnight. We had a lot of fun, found out a lot of interesting stuff about each other, our kids, husbands, etc. and finally discovered we were making a quilt of the "Irish Chain" pattern. Some did so well that their quilts were given as gifts, some decided the dog would have a new blanket and some have theirs up for display.

I am not saying what I did with mine. If nothing else I can pull it out and compare it with what I hope are my improved techniques and then stuff it back in its hiding place.

DRIVING

Driving is a privilege, as we are often told, not a right. We all experience the hazards of being in a moving vehicle (target) along with many others. Sometimes it seems as though some of us have never thought about the opening statement; only concerned with getting to our destination and to heck with the rest of those idiots who insist on in our way, impeding our progress.

I have always been somewhat of a defensive driver, always trying to guess what that other driver is going to do so that I can stay out of the way. This drives my husband right out of his gourd, he being much more aggressive. His philosophy is that the other driver had better be aware of HIM and get out of his way.

Driving at a safe distance from the car in front is beyond his understanding. He sees nothing wrong with being able to read the other's speedometer through the back window. The concept of changing lanes in the middle of an intersection is completely a matter of course, unless it is the other driver doing it. Then he becomes very impatient and critical. Of course, this is common practice in Reno/Sparks, even though it is against regulations and no doubt causes many accidents.

This difference in driving techniques causes a lot of tension when we are traveling together. My solution when a passenger is to read, sleep or listen to the radio or cassettes. Anything to take my mind off what is going on.

His solution while being in the passenger seat is to critique my methods, paths chosen, etc. "Why are you going this way? It is nearer to go....etc. You should be in the other lane....turn here (with hand gestures, even when silent)". Need I say that we don't take many long trips together?

Mountain roads are another point of difference. He was taught (by whom, I have no idea) that it is safest to drive in the middle of the road, so that you can dodge in either direction. This may be accepted behavior in Arkansas, where he was born and raised, but hardly appropriate when you can't see around the curve, as in the mountains.

Recently I was out of town for the weekend and since we have only one vehicle, he had to find another way to get to church on Sunday. We have occasionally given rides to a fellow parishioner, so he called Jim for a ride.

The first intersection he came to, Jim drove right through the crosswalk. My husband asked, "Do you see that red light?" Apparently this continued all the way to church, with my spouse clinging to the door handle and pressing on the non-existent brake on his side of the car.

He couldn't wait to tell me of his harrowing experience when I returned home Sunday evening. "You mean he is a worse driver than I am?" I asked, somewhat factiously. "You are perfect!" was his exclamation. I asked how he faired on the way home. "I

prevailed (read that begged) on John, another nearby church-goer, to bring me home. I never want to ride with Jim again!” was his answer.

This experience seems to have affected him in other ways also. On a weekly trip to the grocery store this morning he said not a word, made no hand motions, etc. Maybe we can take a trip together some time.

FOGGY DAYS AND NIGHTS

We have recently had a series of very foggy days and I was reminded of other foggy days and nights.

It is always suggested that one stay home rather than venture out in the fog, but some times that is not possible. During one such occasion of several days of fog, I had to drive about 30 miles from my job to home after completing my swing shift, from 3 PM to 11PM. Driving into the job in the afternoon was bad enough, but that trip home at nearly midnight was very scary. Several of us car-pooled and I dreaded when it was my turn to drive.

We often referred to the conditions as “two striper” or “one striper”, meaning you could see one or two stripes of the median of the road. Once we had to stop in the middle of the highway, get out of the car and squint through the fog to see the overhead sign.

Another night, creeping along at a snail’s pace, I came to what looked like gate posts in the middle of the road. “O Great!” I thought, “I’ve driven off the road into a farmer’s field!” On investigation we found a dead horse, lying on its back with all four legs straight up in the air. Poor baby. At least we were still on the highway!

Often when driving in the fog it helps to follow the taillights of another vehicle in front of you. Not too close, of course. One night returning to college after a weekend with my parents I followed a set of taillights; someone who seemed to be familiar with the winding country road. I followed him right into his farmhouse yard! I didn’t try to explain; I’m sure the farmer knew what had happened.

When driving north on I5 from California to Oregon, one has to travel over Mt. Ashland, which is often shrouded in fog. Creeping along one night with my 15 year-old son, with the window down, in order to hear the crunch of gravel should I drive off the highway, I turned to David, who was very nervous sitting on the edge of the seat. “Gee Dave, you may have to get out and find the edge of the road”.

Imagine my shock as he immediately opened the passenger door and said “You want me to do it now!?” I assured him I didn’t think it was necessary quite yet and we were soon out of the cloud and into bright moonlight, continuing on our journey to Grandma’s house.

We moved to Eugene Oregon in December of 1980. Eugene is situated at the end of the Willamette Valley, surrounded on three sides by mountains - ideal conditions for a cold inversion with cold, damp, foggy and smoggy air. This went on for days and weeks, so when we heard that the weather was beautiful, warm and sunny at the beach, a mere 60 miles away, a friend and his wife decided to make the trip.

Sure enough, there were daffodils and other spring flowers blooming, bright sunshine, hardly any wind; beautiful spring weather. On the way home in the late afternoon they

stopped for a gas fill up. Striking up a conversation with the attendant, my friend remarked “It has been a beautiful day, but it looks a little cloud over there on the horizon”.

The attendant looked up and immediately exclaimed “Oh, thank God! It has been nothing but that awful glaring sunshine for days and days!”

I guess it all depends on what you like.