

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF DAISY HAZEL WELLS CALDWELL

The first four years of my life was lived on a farm about four miles north of Centralia, Kansas. I can think of only two things that I actually remember happening. One is on the last day of school we went to a basket dinner at school and there were steps up over the fence in front of the schoolhouse. I remember some people across the road from us had some sheep and Jim tried to get me to eat some of the sheep manure. He said it was chocolate candy; I went running home, told Mother and she whipped him.

I remember mother telling about me wanting a baby; every baby I saw I wanted to take home. One day we were in Seneca and saw a black baby. She asked me if I wanted that one and I said, "Yes, but I would rather have one that had it's face washed."

Dad painted the house and the barn. They found me behind the house with a bucket of brown paint. I had painted my feet and legs as far up as I could get my clothes with brown paint. I have heard Mother say that the reason I was so dark is because she didn't get all the brown paint off.

March 1 after I was four years old we moved by way of covered wagon to Jewell County. The horn to the phonograph was hanging in top and it swung back and forth and bumped Jim on the head and he cried himself to sleep.

While we lived in Jewell County, one summer day, Henry was driving in with a team of horses hitched to a wagon when Mother's geese flew over them squawking, scared the team so they ran through the barbed wire fence. Henry was so scared he fainted. I remember seeing him lying on the ground in the shade of the barn, face white as a sheet and Mother real excited.

Dad stacked the wheat and covered the stacks with canvas and the neighbors all laughed and said, "Mr. Wells must think it is going to rain." When the threshing machine came through a couple of months later, there had not been one drop of rain fallen on them.

When Mother and Dad wanted to go somewhere and didn't want to take me along, they sent me to school with the rest of the kids. I remember one day, I dressed myself and after I got to school someone noticed I had my shoes on the wrong feet. Jim and some of the other kids made fun of me, so Clyde took me behind the coal shed and changed my shoes. Another day, when they wanted to go to Beloit, they sent me to school, the teacher, a man, was dusting the erasers by beating them together. It scared me and I ran home. Mother sent me back with Clyde. I kicked and cried, so he picked me up and carried me. I grabbed the barbed wire fence and cut my hand. Mother was determined I was going to school so she took herself and Dad went to Beloit by himself. She stayed until recess then went home.

Dad found some "mushrooms?" in timber and brought them in to cook them. Mother said she did not know how to cook them but he remembered how his mother fixed them, so

she fixed them the way he said. All seven of us kids and Dad ate some but Mother did not eat any. It made us run both directions so she had all the pans, wash boilers, tub, etc. for us to vomit and potty in. Dad started to go to Hoels to call the doctor and just got outside when he collapsed. Mother dragged him back into the house. If she had eaten some, we would probably have all died.

After 3 years, Dad sold the farm and we moved to Soldier, Kansas. Henry and Elmer went on the train with the livestock. The rest of us again went via covered wagon. Clyde helped Dad to Drive.

Dad had a cousin, Marion Argenbright, living some where along the line and he wanted to stop there and stay all night. It was dark and raining, horses got in a ditch, turning the wagon over and broke something. Us 4 kids in the back scrambled out over Mother; she said we stepped on her face. Dad, carrying the lantern, walked in front of the horses the rest of the way to guide them. They fixed the wagon the next morning, then we traveled on.

The house near Soldier, Kansas, I remember as being very cold. Had a fire only in the dining room. The boy's room upstairs had a flue going through it and it was not so cold. The girls' room never got any heat in the winter but we got cool breezes in the summer. I slept in a bed by myself and on real cold nights I could not go to sleep because my feet were so cold. I heated an iron and wrapped it in paper to warm my bed and I can remember the other kids making fun of me.

The blizzard of 1912 was written up in weather history. It snowed and blowed all day. Dad came to school after us in a lumber wagon; the snow was drifted so deep the horses fell down. Dad had to get out with a scoop shovel and dig snow out from around them before they could get up. There was a big tall hedge row about 25 feet high on the south side of the road and just the very tips of the trees were visible. The snow froze over and we walked to school on top of the fences.

Dad, Mother and I went to northwestern Nebraska, near Alliance, to visit Grandmother Kennedy, Aunt Ellen and Aunt Ursula. They had gone up there to homestead. Mary and Nellie stayed with Clarence and Pearl. The boys stayed home. Aunt Ellen lived in a sod house with a lean to on the back where the chickens roosted. One day I went out into the pasture with the men and children to pick up cow chips to burn, Grandma lived in a one room house boarded with foot wide boards up and down, lined on the inside with several thicknesses of paper. The train went by close enough to shake the house. She said she got so cold some nights she put a teakettle of boiling water under her bed and in the morning it was frozen solid. On Sunday we went to Aunt Ursula's in a spring wagon. It took us all day to go and come back. At night we sat outside. The moon was so close that it looked like I could almost reach up and touch it. Aunt Ursula lived in a house covered on the outside with tarpaper.

Whenever we ate chicken, it was usually my job to kill and pick them. One day I was sent out to kill a big old rooster. I had his head partly off when he flopped loose from me. I

chased him all over the barnyard, following the trail of blood until he lost so much blood that he toppled over, then I finished him off.

We had a big strawberry patch and I was sent out to pick some for dinner. I picked all I thought I could hold, then sat down in the shade of a tree and ate them. Then I filled my pan and took them to the house.

Edna Whitaker, about my age, lived near us. I went down to play with her. After I came home I was telling things that happened and I called Edna's mother by her first name. Mother said, "who did you say?" I repeated it and she said, "You mean Mrs. Whitaker." I said, "Well, so and so calls her so and so." She said, "It makes no difference what someone else calls her, to you she is Mrs. Whitaker." This is a lesson I never forgot. Children now days are not taught to respect their elders.

One cold winter day Jim tried to get me to touch my tongue to the iron wagon wheel. Clyde heard him and told me not to because my tongue would stick to it and peel the skin off. He threatened to beat him to death. Jim said it was all right if I was dumb enough to do it. He ran to keep Clyde from whipping him.

One Sunday after church, Elmer, Jim, Henry and Clyde were playing ball in the yard while waiting for dinner to be put on the table. I waddled across the yard just as Henry threw the ball and Clyde knocked a foul ball. It hit me on the head and knocked me out. Clyde grabbed me up and carried me into the house; he thought he had killed me.

Aunt Ellen and Wilhelmina came to see us one summer. We were sitting on the east porch and Wilhelmina heard Mother telling Aunt Ellen that she had to buy setting eggs last spring because we did not have any roosters. Later a young frying rooster came by chasing a hen and Wilhelmina said, "Look, Aunt Edie, you said you didn't have any roosters."

Henry went to Kansas City to learn to be an auto mechanic. Dad bought a Ford and Henry taught him how to drive it in the pasture. Dad went to drive it into the garage. He yelled "Whoa" but it didn't "Whoa". He knocked the end out of the garage. When Henry came home from Kansas City he brought us the measles and mumps.

When Clyde and Nora were married, we had a reception for them. Helmer could not come, so Edward brought Nellie and Louise on the train. Edward was sick with "grippe" and did not come downstairs for several days. The boys waited on him upstairs. When he was able to go home, Elmer helped him to open some blisters on his neck and hands to let the pus out. He went home on the train. After he got home, he was told he had smallpox. We read in the paper later that the conductor and brakeman, who lived in Nebraska, had smallpox. Mr. Frantz (Emma's father) shook hands with Edward as he left. When Mr. Frantz heard that he was exposed to smallpox, he went around telling all his friends "Good Bye," that he was going to die. He never caught the smallpox. Jim, Mary and I had it. They closed the school and made every one be vaccinated before they could come

back to school. Two or three of the kids nearly lost their arms; they were out of school 2 or 3 weeks longer than Jim and I were.

I went to high school in Soldier, Kansas, my first two years, at the same time that Jim went his last two years. We were in the same Caesar Class together. At the end of the term everyone that had a grade above 75 was excused from taking the final examination. The teacher put the list of the ones exempt on the blackboard. I was the only one in Caesar Class that was excused. Some of the kids teased Jim about his “dumb” sister making better grades than he did, which made him furious.

Dad sold the farm and in 1919 Dad, Mother, Mary and I moved to Bolivar, Mo. where I finished high school.

August 30, 1922, I married Lorenzo Caldwell and we moved to Springfield, Mo., where he entered Drury College as a ministerial student. We had two daughters, Lorene and Ethel Jane, and one son who died in infancy. October 5, 1954, I was suddenly and unexpectedly left a widow and financially embarrassed. I didn't know how to do anything anyone would pay me for doing. But I either had to work or starve and I did not choose to starve. I was too old to work and too young to get a pension. The hospitals were the only place I found where they would take me at my age. Hospital work is low pay, hard work but very gratifying. I worked 40 hours a week and went to night school. I loved my work and retired at age 70.

Now I live at Foxwood Springs Living Center in Raymore, Mo. and love every minute of it. The home belongs to the Christian Churches, operated under auspices of the National Benevolent Association. This is where I shall live until the Good Lord calls me home. The Lord has been very good to me and I am hoping He will say, “Well done, Thou good and faithful servant.”