



CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

The long lane leading to our farm was a welcome sight, considering my weary feet. Walking one mile each way to our one-room schoolhouse was a daily occurrence unless it rained or snowed.

It really wasn't as bad as it sounded. Each morning two of my siblings and I met the other neighborhood children at the crossroads and enjoyed sharing our daily news with each other. Farm life makes for happy conversation. Something special is always happening on a farm, whether it is the litter of kittens found in the haymow or the new calf born during the night. For the older boys, it may be the pigeons they caught or the tricks they are teaching the dog.

Some afternoons on the way home from school, we scrambled under the neighbor's barbed-wire fence and crossed the meadow to our own white board fence and into our backyard. Other times we walked in the long lane to our farm. With the slam of the screen door, we called out, "Mom!" We were usually reassured with her welcome "Hello." It would have been very unusual for Mom not to be at home, but sometimes we found her outside in the garden or working in the butcher house.

I liked going out to the warm butcher house, which smelled of meat cooking in the big iron kettle. If Pop was making scrapple or pudding meat, he'd take his big fork and dig out a piece of liver and hand me a saltshaker for a tasty after-school snack. In the

autumn, Mom might be in the butcher house cooking tomatoes in the big kettle for a batch of homemade ketchup. I can still smell the spicy aroma of cinnamon, cloves, and vinegar, and taste the hot, sweet spoonful of ketchup.

Otherwise, our after-school snack might be a warm sugar cookie or a fresh doughnut. Mom didn't bake her own bread, so I didn't grow up tasting bread hot out of the oven. Instead, our bread came from Wright's Bakery, and the bread man delivered it to our door three times a week.

It must have taken oodles of bread to feed our family. Every school day during the winter, we had sandwiches for our school lunches. In the summer, our suppers consisted of bologna or dried beef (Pop's special recipes) sandwiches and "brokel" soup. Brokel soup was broken-up pieces of bread covered with milk, sugar, and fruit, including bananas or fresh strawberries, peaches, or raspberries in season. In early summer, we enjoyed fresh-cut leaf lettuce and tasty young onions and radishes in our sandwiches. I do not remember putting cheese in sandwiches. Cheese was a luxury.

Home for me was a hundred acres of Pennsylvania farmland, a large barn, tobacco shed, butcher house, chicken house, and our big old stone farmhouse. Pop raised pigs and steers along with a few sheep, laying hens, and a cow for milk. My father was a butcher. Our lives revolved around the butcher house in the winter and our truck farm in the summer. Two days a week we sold our meat or vegetables, according to season, at the Coatesville Farmers' Market. We did not have electric coolers for our display case, so we used ice on the meat. I learned at a very young age to help with customers, clean up, or do whatever was needed at the market stand.

On Saturday afternoons we peddled our goods from door to door, but I admit I did not care much for this job. However, I

do have happy memories of spending time with my dad as we walked the street. As I got older, I received ten percent of what I sold on a certain street. Occasionally, Pop would buy a sandwich for me at the last store where he sold eggs.

I was the youngest of seven children in a family of three girls and four boys. Pop said seven was God's perfect number. I appreciate the close family ties that enveloped us and continue to bind us together as brothers and sisters. A large family allows for much interaction and many happy times together. On the whole, I had a happy childhood and a safe environment to grow up in. I never had to struggle as do many children in our world today who wonder if anyone cares or loves them. We were not expressive with our verbal declarations of love, but we knew without a doubt that we were family and that we would always be there for each other. My parents showed their love by providing for us and spending time with us in work or play.

Both my oldest sister Marion and my brother Paul got married when I was seven, and Ben got married several years later. Therefore, most of my memories of home are of spending time with Dan, Ray, and Lindy. I enjoyed working outside in the barn and fields with Dan and Ray and helping Mom with the flower gardens. I much preferred working outdoors, and Lindy enjoyed the housework more, so it was easy to divide our responsibilities as we grew older. We both enjoyed reading, but we were sure to put our books aside when my dad came into the house! However, I do appreciate the work ethics he taught us. When I was fourteen, my parents, along with Lindy and me, moved into a new house built at the end of the lane. My brother Ray was now married, and they moved into the farmhouse.

My earliest memories include playing with dolls. I never had too many. My happiest Christmas gifts included a new doll. Our

playroom was the envy of my friends. As I grew older, I had little nieces who became like younger sisters to me, and we spent many happy times together in the playroom. My dreams for the future centered on a husband and many children.

My education included two years at Spring Garden, an eight-grade one-room public school that all my siblings had attended. When I was in third grade, Weavertown Christian Day School opened, and the one-room schoolhouse consolidated with other schools in the area. Lindy and I transferred to Weavertown, where I completed the ninth grade. I wanted to attend high school but, since none of my brothers and sisters had attended, my parents said no.

I tried taking high school correspondence courses but never finished because I soon started working outside of our home. I worked for several of my aunts during times of sickness, which was a good experience in developing my homemaking skills for the future. I also worked at several markets and part-time at a nursing home. When I was eighteen, my cousin Ruthie Lapp and I began working at Lancaster General Hospital as nurses' aides. To my disappointment, I was placed in Central Supply, where we sterilized needles, syringes, and all those products that are now disposable. My favorite job was taking the supplies out to the various floors and having opportunity to interact with patients. I developed many good friendships during that time at the hospital.

I enjoyed my teen years, spending many happy times with our church youth group. We were blessed with a large group of dedicated young people. We enjoyed singing together and singing at old folks' homes, passing out tracts on city street corners, Bible studies, volleyball games, socials, and many other activities.

God led me to a wonderful Christian man. Melvin, or Mel as he is mostly known, was a young man who desired God's will for

his life and had a deep desire to serve Him. He had grown up in the Old Order Amish church. Mel was the oldest of six children. He had two brothers, Elmer and Sam, and three sisters, Anna Mary, Fannie, and Verna. He was born in a log cabin in the village of Bird-in-Hand. When Mel was four, the family moved to the Glick family farm close to Lancaster City. His grandparents, along with three single aunts, lived in the “doddy house” at one end of the big farmhouse.

Mel walked with other neighborhood children to a one-room public schoolhouse two miles from home. He had the same teacher for his first six years of school. When he was twelve, his family made a very traumatic move about twenty miles away to far eastern Lancaster County. Attending a new church and school at that age seemed like a mountain to a twelve-year-old Amish boy. However, he found new friends and adjusted to those life-changing events. Perhaps God was preparing him for the future. It definitely helped him to adjust to new and varied situations later in life.

The family lived on a rented dairy farm for six years. When that farm sold, they rented another farm for three years in Chester County. Mel often worked for neighbors, helping with farm work, picking tomatoes and potatoes, and other chores.

After Mel turned sixteen, he chose to associate with a group of Christian Amish youth who enjoyed Bible studies, singing, and sharing in happy times together. One of his memories of driving a horse and buggy occurred one evening as he was driving alone on a mountain road. A carload of boys stopped behind him, and one of the boys jumped up on the back of the buggy and grabbed his hat. Mel prompted his horse and sped up the mountain.

Several young men from Melvin’s neighborhood in Morgantown, Pennsylvania, attended the Weavertown Church and were