

Virginia decided she wanted a Flower and Rock Garden in one corner of the garden, next to the driveway and the road. We helped her find rocks, which wasn't easy in northern Missouri. From the creek area, we transplanted wild flowers and even a cedar tree, which grew. It's hard to transplant a cedar tree as you must have the long tap root or it won't live. That cedar tree was still living the last time we drove by the farm!

Virginia's nickname was "Annie". I'm not sure why Randall started calling her that. (He still does occasionally). Anyway we had neighbors named Oscar and Annie St. Clair. They lived a mile north of the Mt. Pleasant School and collected junk. In those days Junk dealers did not have very good reputations. They had a son named, David. David sold antiques years later when he was living up in Iowa.

One day we were out in the yard playing when we saw a hoop snake rolling down our driveway. We killed it but we probably shouldn't have as hoop snakes are not native to northern Missouri. We kept the "horn" from the snake's tail. I don't know what happened to it.

On rainy days we would dress in old clothes and play in the ditches, squashing mud through our toes, trying to catch crawdads, and getting muddy from head to toe. Some days we would make rag rugs. We would tear about one inch strips from some old clothes, sew the strips together and roll the strips into big balls. Dad made us wooden crochet hooks and we would crochet rag rugs.

Mom's mother, Caroline Shepherd Hill, had given her a piano when she got married. We would bang on the piano and sing at the top of our lungs. One summer I walked more than two miles each way to take piano lessons from Cindy Jones and paid her 25¢. One evening walking home after a lesson, it started to storm. I had to walk past the cemetery and by then it was getting dark and my imagination took over. I ran and ran. I think that was the end of my piano lessons. (I never did learn to play or carry a tune). Years later the piano rotted away in the house we lived in as little children.

I'm not sure how our mother kept her sanity with all us kids being so noisy but she hardly ever said anything to us about the noise as long as we were having "fun". I don't remember any of us being spanked. When we did misbehave Mom would sit us down in a chair and lecture us. Then we were to sit there and think about what we did wrong and that we should not do it again.

When Mom used our complete names we knew to "get moving". Sometimes we would all get to laughing at the dinner table. Dad would join in, up to a point, then he'd say, "O.K. that's enough now" and we knew to stop being silly and to settle down. Dad was the jokester in our family. Mom was much more serious.

We were never allowed to cuss. Don and I would go out to the barn, sit on the wooden fence and see which one could say the dirtiest cuss word! Sometimes we'd sit on the rafters in the barn and see if we could "pee" on the pigs below. Good thing Mom seldom came to the barn.

We tried smoking. We smoked grape vines and burdock seeds. Dad told us he smoked horse manure. So we tried that. Slick, sick, sick. That cured me of smoking. I wonder now why we did not try marijuana. It grows wild all around that area. Dad smoked Prince Albert, in a can, and rolled his own cigarettes.

Something we looked forward to each day was to watch the trains go by and wave at the engineer. If he did not wave back or blow his whistle for us we'd tell Mom that engineer was mean. Sometimes we would put pennies on the track so the train would flatten them. There were 4 trains a day, two freight trains during the day, a passenger train in the morning going south and one each evening going back north. It was a C. B. and Q. line, "Chicago, Burlington and Quincy". (More about the trains later) .

Summer evenings we played ball, caught fireflies and climbed trees to catch katydids. On real hot nights we would sleep outside, look up at the many stars and count "shooting stars". The stars were so bright then I felt like I could nearly reach out and touch them. I never dreamed man would one day walk on the moon. I never dreamed of exploring space. I dreamed of seeing what was over the next hill or around the curve.

We had bad lightning storms sometimes. One night the lightning struck the big maple tree in our front yard. The jolt knocked Mom out of bed! Dad always kept an eye out for storms. If it looked bad, he would take the axe, and we'd all go to the cellar. One time a big wind and rain storm came. We were all in the house. After it was over Dad and Don went outside. The storm hit again, worse than before. Big limbs blew over the house. Mom said if we all can't go to the cellar none of us would go. After it was over we went outside. Part of the barn had been blown away. Don was sitting in the car in what was left of the barn. Dad was caught out in the field with the horses. The second storm struck so fast he didn't have time to get back in.

In the winter, the snow would come down and the wind would blow until the east and west roads were full of snow from bank to bank. We loved to play in the snow. We'd build forts and have snowball fights. After dinner, we would make taffy or popcorn balls, using the molasses made that summer and the popcorn we grew. Some nights, after we all were in bed, and the lamp blown out, someone would start a story and we would all add to it, making it up as we each took a turn. Sometimes the story would get out of hand and Randall would end it.

One night I woke up and was sure someone was in the living room where Don and I were sleeping. I could hear foot steps walking back and forth, back and forth. I finally called out to Dad. He got up, and figured out it was only tar paper hitting the side of the house where it had torn loose. Dad put tar paper over the north door, to keep out the cold wind, in the winter time.

We had a battery radio but we could only listen to it in the evenings after all the day's work was done. We would all sit around the radio and listen to such programs as: The Green Hornet, I Love A Mystery, and One Man's Family. Dad would listen to the weather and to the Stock Market. No, not that kind of Stock Market, the sale of cows, pigs, etc. I remember going to our neighbor's house, Audrey and Edna Grant, and listening to a Joe Louis fight; and to hear President Franklin D. Roosevelt speak. He told how the government was going to borrow money to be paid back in 20 or so years and do all these big things to help us poor families. Young as I was, I thought, that's not right; you are only to buy what you have money to buy. Our parents were proud to say they did not lose their farm during the Depression, but for several months or years they only paid the interest. (They finally paid off the farm in the mid 40's).

When Carol was young she was very skinny. We tried to fatten her up by having her drink warm whole milk straight from the cow! To this day she does not like to drink milk. Randall, Marvin and Don would set traps to catch skunks, 'possums and other animals they could skin and later sell the skins. Carol set a trap and the only thing she caught was a weasel. To this day, our brothers call Carol "Weasel", on occasions.

One of us kids, and I think it was Carol, sucked her thumb until she was a big girl. Finally to quit, she wore a pair of Mom's white gloves to bed at night.

I said before that we were never spanked, well I was wrong. One summer Carol kept doing something in the garden Mom didn't want her to do. Mom told her time and again not to do whatever it was but Carol continued to do it. Finally Mom took a little weed and hit it against Carol's legs. Carol cried and cried and then we all started crying. The end result was that Carol quit doing whatever it was she was told not to do! One time we thought Dad was going to town to buy Carol some new shoes. When he came home, riding on his horse, he had a puppy under his jacket. We had a white terrier, with one black eye and ear, named Jiggs and a black terrier named Jip.

Don and I had pet goats. Frankie, my goat, was tan. Johnnie, Don's goat, was black and white. Sometimes we would hitch them to a wagon and they would pull us.

One day when Marvin was mowing the alfalfa, the mower killed a mama skunk. Marvin brought the three baby skunks to the house. He fed them with a medicine dropper and a baby's bottle. One skunk lived and we named it Shorty. It was so cute! When it was grown it lived under our house. We caught grasshoppers to feed it. One evening that fall, we saw another skunk around the yard and shortly after that Shorty left. We kids thought Shorty found a wife and left home.

At Christmas, we usually got fresh fruit, nuts and hard candy. Any presents we gave or received we made. My only doll was a rag doll, and I don't know what happened to it. Mom's relatives would bring us presents: Mom's dad, our Grandpa Hill; her brothers, our Uncle Maurice, Uncle Harold and Uncle Roland; and her sister, our Aunt Dean.

We seldom left the farm other than to go to school, church or visit some neighbor that lived within a mile's walk away. The neighbors we visited were: To the north, a mile up the railroad track, Ed and Bertha Omstead. They had four children: Roberta who was my age, Duane, Aileen and Madalyn. Driscolls moved there later. To the east, just past the school house, Audrey and Edna Grant, brother and sister. Edna was good to us kids; often on hot summer days she would make lemonade for us, no ice, just cold water from the well. It sure tasted good. We would buy eggs from Edna, for 12¢ a dozen, when our hens didn't lay enough eggs for us to eat. The neighbors on east one mile were Verle and Mary Boothe and their children: Dorothy, Verle Junior and Mary Lee. I think Wanda Barth lived in that house at one time. On east another 1/2 mile, past the church, and then to the south 1/2 mile, lived Howard and Arlene Lane and their children: Roscoe who was my age, Marjorie, Della Ann and then Gary was born later.

Verle and Mary Boothe were very short people. When we were young and wanted to drink coffee, our mother would say, "Do you want to grow up and be short like the Boothe kids?" We drank gallons of milk! The Lane family lived near us all the years we were growing up. Arlene was my idol! I thought she was the prettiest and nicest lady I knew. When we kids played house I was always Arlene Lane. When we played grownup I would always say I was not going to have any babies, I was going to adopt them. This proved to be true. Years later Lanes moved from their farm to Blythedale around the same time my folks did. When playing grown up, we would brag about our parents. If we each told about our parents shoe size I would get embarrassed as Mom wore a size 10 (Later she wore size 12). Well, I now wear a size 11AA.

Back to our neighbors: South of the school, Mary Marte Smith lived. She had a horse that she would ride up to see us. Charlie and Eva Bowles lived to the west and south of us. Less than a mile away. Their youngest son, Jack was only about 2 years older than me. The Fowlers and Bowles had a Feud going all the years I can remember. To this day I don't know why. The Strong Family lived on west across the creek, in the same house where our Aunt Bessie and Uncle Frank had lived.

Our mailbox was located on the road going south of the school house, next to the railroad track. We usually walked down the railroad to get the mail as it was closer than walking the road. Our mail man was Ray Schlefelbusch. He came every day regardless of the weather. I remembered he brought our mail to our house one day in a terrible snow storm, riding a horse. It only cost 3¢ to mail a letter in those days.

I don't remember going to the big town of Blythedale (population of 197), 4 miles to the south until I started High School. I'm sure the boys would go with Dad; in fact Don went with Dad every time Dad left the farm, and I would complain, "How come Don can go and I can't" ? My words of many, many times through out my childhood.

Chapter 2 Cisco School: 1st through 8th Grade.

Cisco School was just across the railroad from our house, maybe 1/4 of a mile away. I started school when I was 5 years old, the fall of 1931. My teacher was Miss Eureka Fralser. The teacher said I visited every day the year before so she might as well enroll me. I did not remember her first name, it was in the book "Memories of Harrison County Rural Schools". Two other teachers I had were Edna Starmer and LaVaughn Trlpp.

What was to be my first day of school was a disaster at home. Most of us kids were sitting on the floor around the cook stove. It must have been a cool day. Marvin picked up the tea kettle from the stove and started to pour the hot water into the wash pan. Mom told him she wanted the water to make oatmeal for breakfast. Marvin turned around to put the kettle back on the stove, but the wooden handle rolled out of his hand and the tea kettle fell, hitting Don on his back. The hot water splashed on Don and Kathleen, scalding them. Dad and Mom took them both to the Doctor. They were not too seriously burned. So that's why I missed my first day of school.

