

Aunt Callie Wyborny Bishop's Memories

Sister of my Father, Herbert Wyborny

I and cousin Hubert Helm started to school in the spring when we were 5 years old--a one room school, one teacher, and thirty or more pupils. We spent most of our time playing. We were always dismissed early for recess if weather was good and played outside.

In winter we wore black leggings that buttoned up on one side over our long black stockings, shoes, and overshoes to keep warm and dry. A strap under the instep held them in place. I spent many forenoons sitting by the big stove in a corner of the school room trying to keep my feet warm--they were always cold. I suffered severely from chill blaines (never hear of them anymore).

Teachers were hired by the term and sometimes we had three different teachers in a year. While I was still in grade school this was changed to yearly contracts.

Our happiest times in summer were playing with cousins, Lizzie, Hubert, and Orpha Helm. A favorite was playing in the big willow trees in a grove north of the house. We each had our favorite home on a tree limb and could climb to great heights, it seemed.

I learned to help cook and wash dishes at an early age. My Mother would fix the dish water on chairs before she went out to help with milking so I could do dishes.

There was a big open space between the house and barn and windmill where we played games such as Pum-pum-pull-away, and Ring around the roay, Prisoners base, Fox and geese, in the winter, etc.

The rosy glow of a hard coal heater warmed our house and made a pleasant spot to undress by before going upstairs to bed and to dress by in the cold mornings.

Callie Bishop

Age 75

Written 1978

Callie:

I have an advantage for I have read the reports of the others.

Zella wrote of our little brother, Kenneth. I can remember when he was born. I was almost six years old. We three girls and perhaps Herbert (I don't remember) were told that we could go to Uncle Tillman's to stay all night with our cousins. This was a surprise for though we spent much time playing together we seldom stayed all night. In the morning we were told that the Doctor had brought us a little baby brother. How pleased we were.

Aunt Pearl (Mother's sister) told me that when Verna was a tiny baby both she and Mother were very sick. Aunt Pearl had gone to Belle Fourche, South Dakota to teach school the fall before. After school was out that spring she had a job working in the Post Office. She had worked one day when she received a message saying that our Mother was not expected to live. She resigned at once and came to Iowa to take care of Mother and help with the work. That summer she married Uncle Wallace Butts in July and went back to Belle Fourche where she lived the rest of her life. She made frequent visits to Iowa less often after Grandpa Helm died. I think Zella said that she was the only one of us children who went to Grandpa's funeral. Zella and Keziah attended. I and the rest of the children -- Hubert, Orpha, Verna, Herbert, Kenneth -- stayed at John Wyborny's which was across the road from Uncle Tillman's and I was to take care of everyone. I was about twelve years old.

In 1900 Hubert was six years old in February. He was old enough to start to school. School went by terms then -- fall, winter, spring -- and since I would be six in July my Mother asked the teacher if I could start too. Of course she said that I could but I think Hubert and I spent most of our time playing. When weather was good we were excused early for recesses and noon hour to go outside and play. We felt big because we were going to school. In our one-room school with one teacher and thirty or more pupils of all ages I can now well understand her motive. The older children watched out for us. I can well remember some of the nice things Nellie Watts did for me.

Winter seemed so cold. We wore black leggings that came to our knees and buttoned up the side. These went over our black stockings, shoes and overshoes to keep the snow out and our legs warm. My feet were always so cold. The teachers let me sit by the big stove in the corner of the room to warm them. I suffered severely with what was called chill blains and aching legs. Many evenings I sat by the hard-coal burning stove while my Mother rubbed my feet and legs with some kind of liniment. When weather was cold we undressed by the stove and scampered quickly upstairs to bed where the only heat was from the stovepipe going up through one of the rooms to the chimney. In the morning we came down to dress by the stove. It was a pretty stove with the glowing coals showing through the little izzing glass windows that made up the sides.

We pretty much made up our own games and entertainment -- no T.V., no radio, no movies -- until we were much older -- and few books. In summer we spent many hours playing in the willow grove north of the house. We each had a favorite tree and climbed as high as we were brave enough to go and this was our play home. A big pine tree south of the house and near the front door was a favorite place to play. Our Father fixed a swing from a sturdy limb and we had much fun swinging and pumping up with two of us standing on the swing seat. It was also a good climbing tree after we were big enough to get to the first limb which was quite high from the ground. The apple orchard was between the house and the road and some of the apple trees were good for climbing. I didn't like tomatoes, wouldn't eat them so Verna and the boys would hang a tomato on an apple tree and try to get me to eat it by telling me that they saw a nice red apple on a tree and they were sure I would like it -- I never was that vulnerable.

Since Mother and Zella were always helpers with chores I was taught to do work in the house. I began washing supper dishes when I was so small that mother fixed the wash and rinse waters on chairs so I could reach them and do the dishes while she helped with the milking. I also learned to get breakfast for the family at an early

age. I never disliked washing dishes and liked to cook. I sometimes wonder now what the food was like that I prepared but I can't seem to remember complaints.

Zella wrote of early experiences in learning to milk. I always was a coward. We had a cow that was so very gentle that she would stand any place in the yard to be milked. One day I felt very brave and decided I would milk her. I got close enough to set the pail under her and then turned around and ran. I don't think that I tried again until I was in High School. One time Mother and all of the rest of the children were sick so I went out to help Dad and found out that I could milk. Dad complimented me on my ability and speed, but I never liked it and always was scared, so seldom helped. I was also afraid of setting hens but that didn't excuse me from having to gather eggs.

I well remember my first ride in a car. Dr. Hemphill owned the first car we knew of. If he was making a call in the neighborhood he sometimes stopped to see how all of us were. This day a neighbor had called him. He stopped at our house and asked us children if we wouldn't like to ride to the neighbors and wait in the car while he made his call. We were delighted and I felt so happy and proud to have a ride in an automobile.

Since our entertainment was much of our own making we had to improvise. I remember at one point Herbert and Kenneth would catch bumble bees, put them in a can or jar, and play they were motors. Some people had gasoline engines that they used for various jobs about the farm. There were no tractors. Steam engines and separators threshed the grain. Some people had gasoline engines to pump water. We never did but depended on our windmill to do the job. On days when the wind was not strong enough to turn the wheel we children would take turns pumping by hand. We would decide on a number and each pump that many strokes. If the tank was not full when we had each had a turn we would start over. We didn't especially like the job. The windmill was quite a way from the house but often a pail of water was needed in the house in the evening. If it was my turn to get it and it was dark I ran as fast as I could to the well and hurried as much as was possible with a pail of water to get back to the house. I was always afraid of the dark but have never been able to figure out what I was afraid of. I never liked to go upstairs alone and going to the cellar for something was agony.

We didn't go many places and didn't expect to, especially during winter time. In winter we furnished play houses by cutting pictures out of catalogs. We played some card games like Somerset, Flinch, Authors, and Rummy, and we had checkers and dominoes. One winter I was the Checker champion. I could beat any of the children and some of the adults. That bolstered my ego which probably was good for I was very very shy.

About once every winter we would go to visit Uncle Jap and Aunt Dot who lived near Osage. Dad would put a lot of clean straw in the sled and then a blanket or quilt over it. We children snuggled down and covered up with more quilts and kept quite warm. Mother and Dad sat on a spring seat at the front. It was a long day to go, have dinner, visit a while, and come home.

With the coming of the automobile things changed. I think that I was about thirteen years old when we got ours. I'm sure there were unhappy times but mostly those do not leave a lasting impression. I'm sure also that because of our parents poor health we were required to do more than many children of our ages but I don't think that bothered us much. It is good that pleasant memories prevail.