

Sister of my Father, Herbert Wyborny.

As I look back over my childhood I realize how little we had and how it must have been a struggle for our parents to keep us and feed us. But we children didn't know that and were a happy lively bunch most of the time. I can't remember Papa or Mama ever being well and healthy. Papa had inflammatory rheumatism and leakage of the heart and Mother had anemia and what was diagnosed appendicitis. I guess we children had all the childrens diseases, but the worse was smallpox. We were quarantined for six weeks when all the family were over it but me. It didn't seem I was going to have it. The day the quarantine was to be over and the house fumigated I broke out. I was so very sick, completely covered with the pox. Papa would put and tie cotton gloves on my hands at night so I couldn't scratch them while I was sleeping. They watched me and I tried not to scratch during the day. I remember the nights were so long and I always felt worse. In spite of all I did have some scars, but they have gradually faded until just a few can be detected.

Because of Papa's sickness and also Mama's, we children learned to work when young. I being the oldest was the first and I cared for the younger ones. Specially do I remember idolizing my baby brother Kenneth who was eight years younger than I. Wherever I went, except in the fields, he was with me. I carried him on my hip and Mama was always telling me I was going to have a crooked back. Sometimes I had him when we were playing in the hay mow in the barn. We were jumping from a stack of hay to a lower pile, quite a high jump. I jumped with him and he fell out of my arms. I think he was only about one and a half to two years old. He cried and cried and I was terribly frightened. I worried so long fearing I had caused him to be crippled, I never told my Father or Mother about it. The other children, our cousins, Keziah, Hubert, Orpha and Callie, Verna and Herbert didn't seem to be aware of what happened. I was glad about that. I guess they were too busy playing.

We lived only a quarter of mile from our cousins. Their Father was Mother's brother and our Grandfather Helm lived with them. I remember when he passed away and I think I was the only one of the children who went to the funeral. I felt so badly about it and missed him as he used to come trudging down to our place always bringing something. We were with our cousins so much either at their place or they at ours. Keziah always has seemed like a sister to me.

One place we loved to play was in a thicket of elderberry bushes just west of the house growing out into the grove. We also loved to play in the grove where we set up housekeeping. The elderberries were tall and thick. We crawled back among them and played in the dirt. We built farms and had our buildings laid out with small sticks and marked out our fields and pastures for our livestock (cattle, horses, hogs.) which were made of weeds. We visited one another, harvested out crops together, spending many hours playing to gether happily. I don't remember ever quarrelling much which was unusual I think. But that thicket was also used for things that were not so nice. Our Mother couldn't crawl back in there and it was rather dark in there especially if we crawled far enough back. So we hid in there when we knew we should not be doing what we were. I remember green apple time. We had an orchard of fruit trees in our front yard. We were forbidden to eat green apples for they would make us sick. We always ate them. Gathering them and crawling back in the thicket one of us was commissioned to go into the house, and when Mother wasn't in the kitchen, get some salt to eat on them. I think a good many times it was the youngest one's job, Verna or Herbert. Many times one of us alone would sneak back in there with a green apple or two. So I can't imagine how many we ate. And every summer we were sick with the grip. We call it flu now. Wonder if Mama surmised green apples and grip were connected. I had never connected them together, but I wonder now if they were. And our flu was the result of eating green apples. Our punishment for disobeying maybe. And we were terribly sick and most often all at the same time.

When I was six years old, the year I started to school, I was taught to milk cows. One old gentle cow was mine to milk morning and night. It wasn't long till I was milking more and could milk anyone of them. We milked from 10 to 12 cows every day. One summer Papa was very sick. He had scratched his thumb on a corn knife and blood poisoning set in. The Dr. was just ready to amputate his arm to stop the poisoning going through his body when it started to get better. Mother tried to help me with the chores, but she would no more than get started and either Verna or Callie would come running telling her Papa was calling for her and she would hurry to the house and I would have all the cows to milk. It seemed to me I did nothing that summer but milk cows which isn't so for I had field work to do to. Callie was afraid of cows and so she

Never learned to milk. Verna hadn't got started yet though she did a lot of it when she started. When Herbert got big enough to start in, things eased up a little.

One thing I remember so vividly about Herbert and Kenneth was when we were a little older. Our grove was filled with the weed burdock, and every year we would take a hoe and some salt and hike into the grove. We would chop the burdock off with the hoe and put salt on the roots. One day Papa sent the boys out to cut burdock. They of course, hated the job as all of us did. I don't remember which of us girls went out to see what they were doing, probably Verna. She found them chopping and swearing a blue streak and came back and told Papa. He went out there and the penalty, a good scolding and an increased amount of burdock to cut. I can't remember that they got a tanning, but may have. Don't know how the tattle tale turned out afterward, but knowing the boys probably not so good.

We always had a happy Christmas, but was not so elaborate as Christmas celebrations are now. I can't remember ever having a Christmas tree when children, but we always hung our stocking up. We didn't get many gifts, but were so happy with what we got. One thing we got was always an orange in the bottom of the stocking and I can't remember having oranges any other time of the year. We had candy and peanuts. Papa loved peanuts, so he always bought a big bag of them. Mama never did much baking, it was hard to get the sugar. But we had baked things, especially do I remember the cookies. She baked white sugar cookies and put them in a large crock. There was something she put in them that would make them keep fresh a long while in a covered crock. They were so good!

Because Papa was sick so much of the time I was taught to work in the field when real young, I think about 9 years old or maybe younger. It seemed I always had worked in the field. I used to harness and hitch the horses to the machinery and go out to the field. When first starting, Papa would go out with me and lie at the ends while I was working. As I got older I went out alone. I did everything a farmer did--Plowing, disking, seeding, cultivating, mowing, harvesting. Everything but planting corn. He always hired that done when he wasn't able to do it. I guess he was afraid I would make such crooked rows of corn it couldn't be cultivated. I drove teams of 4 and 6 horses on plows, binders, etc. I loved to drive horses and care for them. I helped clean the barns also; therefore, I pitched lots of manure. When Herbert

grew older he gradually took over and I think he started pretty young also.

Our Father played with us a lot. One thing he loved and we did also was when he played with us out by the well and tank. He stood by the big tank with a bucket and the windmill pumping water into the tank. We would (what we thought) sneak up on him and he would throw the bucket of water and it would always land on us. Of course, we were soaking wet. Mama would try to stop it, but if she stepped outside the house she got doused also. Somewhere wasn't anything she could do as she couldn't get us inside the house. Our cousins were at our house so much they got in on it to. Aunt Mary would be so angry when her kids came home soaking wet.

Our Mother used to go to lodge meetings with Uncle Tillman and Aunt Mary and Papa kept us kids and Keziah, Hubert and Orpha. He always played with us. Our favorite game was hide and seek. I often wonder what kind of a looking house Mama found when she got home. It must have been in pretty bad shape. We had our orders to go to bed at a certain time as they would be late getting home. Papa never sent us to bed until just before it was time for them to be coming. Sometimes we barely made it before they were in the house. We pretended to be sound asleep when Aunt Mary came upstairs to see if we were. If we were able to fake sleep well enough Keziah, Orpha and Hubert could stay overnight. If not the kids were routed out and had to go home.

When I was thirteen years old I graduated from eighth grade. My gift from my folks (providing I got the corn all cultivated through three times) was a trip to Aunt Pearl's in Belle Fourche, South Dakota. I got to go with Uncle Tillman and Keziah on the train. At home it was my job to keep the yard mowed. I always raked the yard with the help I could wrangle from the other kids. I gave them all strict orders to keep the yard mowed while I was gone. They did in a fashion, but it wasn't what I thought it should have been. Mama told me later that they didn't touch it until about a day before I was due home. Then they went after it and had a job on their hands. Even having to get down on their knees and pulling weeds and grass with their hands. No wonder it looked so tacky.

Sometimes I wish I could go back to those carefree childhood days. There are so many good recollections altho some sad ones.

Aunt Zella

Age 79

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