

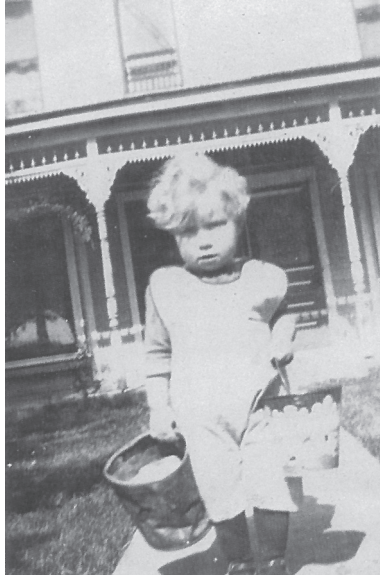


We Four Kids, 1929

## CHILDHOOD FUN ON THE FARM

There were many ways to have fun on the farm when we were children. Near our orchard, Dad had placed the broad canvas canopy of his old John Deere tractor. It became our playhouse! We added discarded crockery and tin-ware to furnish our new space as a kitchen.

Mud-pie making was a favorite activity and the recipe was simple enough: use an old metal spoon to mix water with rich Iowa garden soil until it was a thick, pliable dough.



**Margaret with Pails**

Our bucket of mud was quite a contrast to Mom's creamy white bread dough. We flattened balls of the mud and used a tin can to cut them into cookie shapes. We pressed daisy petals into each cookie for decoration. A battered pie tin was our treasure. We liked to create a fluted mud crust, and fill it with wild flowers that grew nearby. It made a pretty dessert pie. The cookies and pies 'baked' atop the flat canopy in the hot summer sun.

Stacked boxes become our store to display the cookies and pies. We'd stop by the garden well to wash the mud from our hands, and then beg the family to come and see our goods. The memory of Mom and Dad pretending to be customers brings a happy smile today.

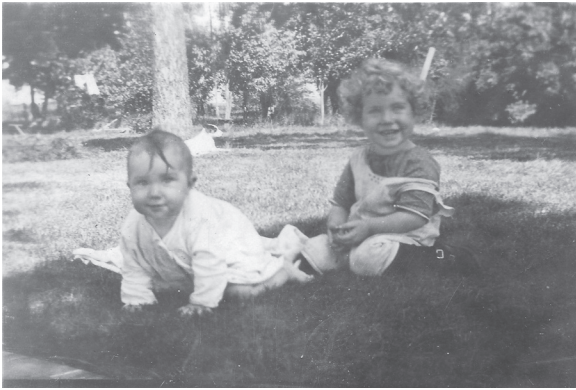


**Margaret with Dad**

Dorothy Adair Gonick



Grandma Marshall, Dorothy, and Margaret



Dorothy and Margaret

On other hot summer days we took paper and crayons under that tractor canopy and drew pictures. These might later be thumb-tacked on the kitchen wall or given to Grandma or Auntie Pearl. Often we took our dolls and played house with them. We girls each had a favorite doll and often pretended to be beauticians using combs and bobby pins on the dollies' hair. We tried our best to make their hair curly by twisting strands of hair and trying to fasten it into pin (spit) curls; it became so tangled that one Christmas we asked for doll wigs, and got them.

There were farm games we played, such as straddling empty barrels in the barnyard, pretending we were riding horses; shouting Giddy-up! Whenever we had a rope, we became cowboys, lassoing a stray calf. This confused our dog Spot, who didn't care to be mistaken for a calf.

*A Kaleidoscope of Memories*



**Ride 'em Cowboy"**

Spot was the dog of our early years. I remember her chewing on the indoor wooden clothes rack as the laundry dried. Some amusement! We wondered if she was getting a new tooth, or maybe she thought it was a bone. One day she surprised herself by biting it until the rack snapped. She jumped backwards and stared as though she had been attacked.

Lady joined us when our brother John was about one year old. We were visiting Jim Arneal to see their new puppies. The smallest of the litter looked like a miniature collie and padded over to us. She was a bundle of love and we named her Lady because she seemed so ladylike. She and John became special companions, romping and sometimes curling up together for a snooze under the maple tree.

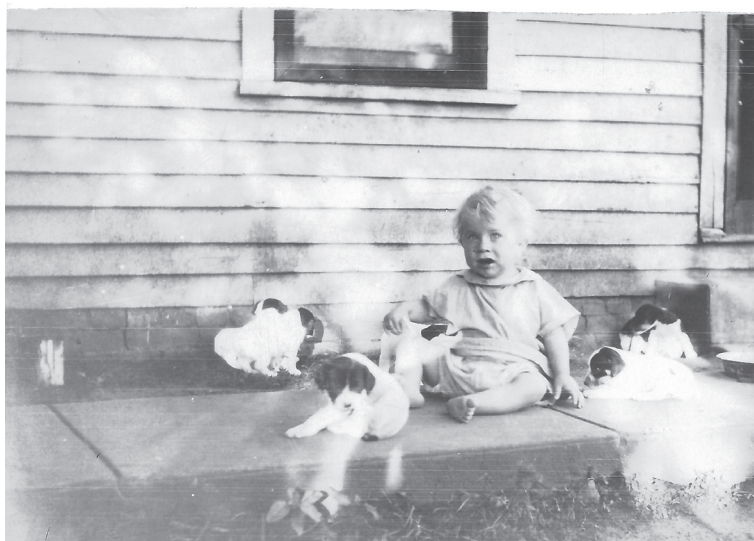


**Hot Summer Day**

Dorothy Adair Gonick



Margaret, Alice and Spot



John with Spot's Puppies



### *A Kaleidoscope of Memories*

There were usually several cats to pet and play with. Most of them were barn cats. Cricket was a special one; so named because she pounced on crickets and played with them. Those cats didn't like going for a wagon ride dressed up as dolls, though we did try. They amused us during milking time. It was fun squirting milk toward them as they opened wide to catch its stream. Once while Grandpa was milking, the cow kicked his bucket over and the milk spilled. Those barn cats came hurrying in for a feast!

We spent many enjoyable hours racing our wooden Kiddie cars on the front sidewalk. Alice laughed and clapped her hands while riding along in Margaret's lap. John was always eager to be the next passenger. Sometimes we pretended to be auto mechanics in search of car trouble just like Dad or Grandpa did. We sure put a lot of miles on those cars.



**Riding Kiddie Cars**

Cousin Maurice usually spent the summer with us. One year he gathered old wheels, a big wooden box, boards, and wire to fashion a go-cart. He rode down the hill from the house toward the pigpen. Even though it had no brakes we knew the pigpen fence would stop it. We begged him to give us rides. Margaret held John when it was their turn. That was a thrill to remember. Luckily all went well, because no one had asked the folks for permission to ride in his go-cart. Dad scolded Maurice when he found out; and got his promise to not take us for rides unless someone was watching. I suspect Dad got rid of that go-cart after Maurice's vacation was over.



Maurice's Go-Cart

The tool shed was a fascinating place to explore, but we were cautioned not to play in it unless Dad or Grandpa was there. They told us about the tools they used; letting us try hammering nails, and measuring pieces of wood with a yardstick. Our favorite pastime was twirling the brace and bit to drill holes into the ground, pretending we were carpenters.



Drilling holes in the Ground

Near the workshop there was a smooth area where we drew a large circle in the dirt, ready for a game of marbles. Learning to shoot a marble with our index finger was a skill that took us long to master, but Grandpa helped us learn. We each had our own marble bag and special marbles. As we held those colorful glass marbles up to the sunshine, we saw mysteries inside, especially in the large red ‘shooter’ marbles. In them we saw spots and swirls, and we created stories that they had come from the stars in the heavens.

During rainy weather we had many building blocks to construct little towns, as well as games of Pick-up-sticks and Tiddly-winks to play. Go Fish, Old Maid, and Authors were favorite card games. In the evening we played regular Checkers, Chinese checkers, Dominoes, or the card game Rook with the grown-ups. Sometimes we kids even won a game.

Grandpa didn’t allow regular playing cards—he said they led to gambling, but Rook was acceptable and everyone knew how to play it. When the *Idle-a-whyle Club* met every few weeks, Mom and other ladies got together for an afternoon of card playing. We liked the days that Mom was the hostess, for we helped make and serve delicious treats. Another ladies club was called the *Chat-a-whyle Club* and they also played Rook. We kids thought those were funny names for grown-up ladies clubs.

Story time was special. Our mother sat in the big red rocking chair and we snuggled close to listen. Through the mail-order exchange library, Mom had certain books sent to us. It was always an exciting time when the mailman brought the books and we chose which one she would read first. One favorite was *Nils, the Little Goose Boy*. It told of a naughty Scandinavian boy who was shrunk very small and rode all over Norway on a goose’s back because he had played hooky from school. Mom’s voice carried us on those adventures just as though we were there. Those childhood hours of story time were a very special gift indeed.

We kids had a great time turning some of those stories into plays. We filled many hours practicing our parts and gathering costumes until we opened the double doors into the living room and staged our play for the waiting family. Holidays, especially Christmas, were special times for a play.

As kids, growing up on the farm provided endless possibilities for adventure. As the weather would clear from a dark storm, we’d watch for rainbows, hoping someday we’d be allowed to run to the end and find the pot of gold.