

helped us understand that there were places in the world where these were lacking, but that wasn't our community.

Finally, on a bright spring day, they arrived at our farm to our warm welcome. We girls were impressed by the puffy hair bows Etheldean, Betty, and Maureen wore. Their shoes were dressy, not sturdy like ours.

We eagerly began to show them around. The baby chicks in the brooder house fascinated Betty, who cuddled one and took it into the house to show her folks. Aunt Bess was more concerned with the "mess" she feared would soil Betty's dress than with the soft chirping chicken, so we put the chick back. Aunt Bess kept three year old Maureen with her. We took Betty and Etheldean to the barn where Smoky had a nest of kittens in the hay mow. Carefully climbing the ladder and scuffling through the hay, we found Smoky guarding her precious family. Under that watchful eye, we gently petted the four balls of purring fluff. The kittens were still too small to leave their mother, so we stroked her silky fur and thanked her for letting us be close.

After gingerly climbing down the ladder, shaking the hay from their dresses, and smoothing their hair, the girls were ready for other adventures. Our dog, Lady, had come to meet us and was ready for a good rumble. Etheldean was wary of getting dirty but Betty just hugged and pet Lady. We passed along the stalls, patting our favorite horse Daisy's muzzle, and on back to the house.

Mom had baked a cake that was ready for frosting. We asked if Betty and Etheldean could help us frost it and were surprised when they said, "We've never frosted a cake, will you show us how?" That was a shocker—they had never frosted a cake? And missed licking the bowl? I guess we'd been luckier than some far away children. After frosting the cake, we all savored the left-overs together.

PICKNICKING IN THE SOUTHEAST CORNER

The Southeast corner of our farm was left as nature intended it. Dad made sure no horse with plow entered it, leaving a special place for our family's enjoyment. A bit wet and swampy, pussy willows flourished alongside many of the wild flowers that were native to our area. Birds nested in the trees and raised their young.

Early each spring Mom packed lunches and we wandered down to that Southeast Corner, skirting the cornfield on our way. Spread out on a flat rock, we enjoyed our simple lunch of homemade buttered bread and deviled eggs. The quiet of our special place was broken only by songbirds.

We searched for the early wild flowers of violet and forget-me-nots, asking

Mom to tell us about any flowers that we didn't recognize. We thought she knew everything and she seldom disappointed us. The Jack-in-the-Pulpit caused us to giggle as we wondered what it could be preaching to the flowers. Beneath the May Apple's two large leaves, a single drooping apple grew that was not edible.

Solomon's seal had a wand of bell-shaped blossoms. The tufted blossom of its look-alike was called false Solomon's seal. We marveled at the bloodroot's pure white flower growing from a root that oozed a blood colored fluid when cut. There were the lovely trilliums that surprised us with their stinky smell and the Dutchman's breeches that led us to wonder if tiny elves might wear them. Mom warned us not to pick these fragile flowers, but to leave them to bloom in following years. Then she helped us pick bouquets of violets before wending our way home. Violets are a favorite of mine to this day.

Later in the summertime, we gathered goldenrod, Queen Anne's lace, chicory, and asters in big bouquets for all to enjoy. Butterflies delighted us, crickets and grasshoppers jumped around our feet.

When the gooseberries ripened, we braved the thorny bushes and gathered pails of tart green berries for jams and pies. It was fun rolling those berries over a wire screen to remove the stem and blossom ends while anticipating one of Mom's gooseberry pies.

Each season from spring to fall held its own special attraction, but the first foray in the spring was our favorite time for picnicking in the Southeast Corner of our farm.

FOR PHYLLIS

Dear Cynthia and Barbara,

I trust you will enjoy reading these recollections of our younger days with your mother.

I treasure many happy memories of visiting Phyllis and her brothers, Richard and Kenneth in Des Moines, Iowa. Their mother, Aunt Jennette, often welcomed us with a plate of her homemade hermits—ready for us to enjoy. We kids each took a couple of those cookies and headed outdoors for play-time fun. Croquet was the game we usually played. Striking the ball through the wickets took skill and we cheered each other on. Uncle Chris had hung a car tire from a nearby tree branch that was a delight to swing from. We took turns pushing each other higher and higher.

The back part of the lawn was planted as a garden of vegetables. It became