



## AUNTIE PEARL AND CHUCK

“Let me live in a house by the side of the road, and be a friend to man.”

—*Sam Walter Foss*

Grandma Adair had embroidered this favorite verse of Grandpa’s years ago, and hung it prominently in our living room. To us, it was the motto of farm life.

Dad’s cousin Chuck Adair and his wife “Auntie” Pearl lived this philosophy. Their little house with its adjacent garden setting always made people feel welcome. They expected people to stop by.

Chuck was a great story teller. It was a joy to listen to the men folk ‘chew the fat’ and laugh while slapping their thighs. They made us feel grown-up while visiting them, and expected us to be on our best behavior.



Auntie Pearl's kitchen was cozy, not large; she still used a kerosene-burning stove, a hand pump for water, a wooden clothes washer, and a work table for preparing nutritious meals, as well as fancy desserts. I recall her singing as she frosted small squares of cake. She invited me to help decorate them with tiny candies as she prepared to entertain the "Idle-a-whyle club." To get off the farm for the afternoon, women formed clubs and would gather at one another's home to chat and play the card game Rook.

Together we decorated each petit fours and placed them on her crystal cake trays—one for each table of card players. When she was satisfied that all was neat and lovely, she donned a fresh dress of flowered dimity. Its lace collar was neatly arranged; she carefully tied a dainty hostess apron on her trim figure. A spot of rouge and a careful coiffure highlighted her smiling face.

Auntie Pearl gave just as much attention to her vegetable and flower garden as she did to the foods she set before her guests. We felt honored when she let us help with her gardens, which were so pretty. She collected rocks whenever she visited a new place, and was delighted when friends gave her rocks from their travels. Her goal was to collect a rock from every state. Arranging them in her rock garden among the flowers, she fascinated us with the story of each rock.

If we stayed overnight we got to sleep under Auntie Pearl's beautiful quilts. She made many that we admired, and encouraged us to sew our own. I still have the Sunbonnet Girl quilt that she helped me make.

Chuck and Auntie Pearl's children were older than us. George Samuel or

G.S., was a construction worker; his sisters Dale and Oakland were teachers. Margaret and I were happy to be in Dale's third and fourth grade room. She always encouraged us to do our best, and she fostered a love of poetry that I still cherish today. We were saddened when Dale became ill and died, while being treated for goiter problems. The minister's daughter taught our class for the rest of the year; it was a difficult situation to understand for us kids.

Even in hard times, Chuck and Auntie Pearl were always ready to lend a hand. They truly lived as friends of mankind. I sometimes wish that I could stop by their house again and just sit a spell.



## MARGARET'S CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

We grew up on a farm in southern Iowa, not far from the Missouri border. There was no electricity or running water on the property. One Christmas at my school's party, my grab bag gift was both a live chicken and a rooster. I took them home and they ruled the roost. I went with my family to church on Christmas Eve, where I got an apple and an orange.