

bread or baking-powder biscuits. Buttermilk was a by-product of the churning, and Dad looked forward to that treat.

We soon finished the evening chores. As we entered the house, we were met with the aroma of rich beef soup that had been simmering much of the day with carrots, onions, potatoes, and whatever vegetables were available—mmm! On those cold winter evenings, as we gathered around the table, we relished Mom's vegetable-beef soup and flaky biscuits. We ate to our heart's content, sharing stories of the day's fun, and laughing at another one of Grandpa's tales.

A MEMORY OF MARGARET

By John Adair

One time we all were sitting around the dinner table in the dining room with Margaret sitting on the northeast side. Mom had made a meringue pie for dessert (the one Dad liked to put cream on...of course he liked to put cream on everything). The pie was passed around the table.

The first one took a piece and they noticed a strange odor. Well, everyone had to smell the pie as it was passed. It was started at the southwest corner of the table where I sat. This gave me enough time to slip around to Margaret's side and when she leaned over to check the smell...I pushed her face in the pie. I thought it was funny and right now I can't remember how she got even with me, but she did.

Now for the rest of the story. We couldn't for the life of us find out what caused the smell. Finally we traced it back to the corn starch. We took the box to "Charles the Butch" where we got the starch. He was surprised and went to get another box. Sure enough we found the trouble; he had placed the starch next to the *Lifebuoy soap*. Lifebuoy soap had a fragrance of its own and didn't help the pie or set well with Margaret, either.

A YEAR OF CELEBRATIONS

Living on a farm meant that there was always work to be done; duties from dawn till after dusk 365 days a year. This sounds dull and boring; however I remember that we always had something exciting to look forward to. We anticipated gatherings of family and neighbors to celebrate birthdays and holidays,

and had much fun planning for each month's gala.

Soon after one event was celebrated we thought about the next month's event and wondered which cousins might come. Visiting the farm was the summer goal for each of our cousins, creating closeness among our wide-spread family. This feeling of family unity has lasted throughout life, bringing a sense of warmth as I've recalled our early years.

January

Farm work slows during the winter months, allowing time for social gatherings. Three neighborhood birthdays were a good reason for a get together. Grace Arneal, Lyle Abarr and Alice all had birthdays on January 11th.

This date became an annual pot-luck birthday gathering. Each year, Margaret and I enjoyed creating a special birthday cake. One year we shaped it like Noah's Ark. Another, we cut round cake layers in half and stood them upright to form an igloo. A cupcake served for the entrance; all covered with Mom's fluffy 'seven-minute' icing. Eskimos made from stacked marshmallows held the birthday candles. With a block of ice and a pail of fresh cream, we looked forward to mounds of ice cream with the birthday cake.

The year Alice turned seven, we had fun figuring out that Lyle was then three times her age and Grace was then twice the age of Lyle.

Our neighbors, the Norris family, always brought a huge bag of fresh popped corn to the gatherings, which we enjoyed while playing games of checkers, dominoes and Rook.

Before trampolines were available, we loved bouncing on an upstairs bed for fun. On one birthday night, too many of us kids jumped at once, causing it to collapse. Our parents were frightened by the crash; needless to say, that brought an abrupt end to that activity.

As yet, there was no electricity in our section of Iowa, but our "carbide plant" was activated when the party was at our home. We didn't understand that water dripping on calcium could produce the gas needed to create such bright light. We kids thought this was magical. As opposed to the usual kerosene lamps, those lights gave the house such a festive air.

One year the party was at Grace's, but a big snowfall had kept cars home. We were excited when Dad hitched Daisy to the sleigh. With harness bells jingle-jangling, we rode across the fields to our neighbors.

February

Valentine's Day was preceded by much anticipation in school. All classmates made cards for their folks from red construction paper and lacy paper

doilies. We took ours home and hid them until the 14th. In class we decorated a large box with lace and hearts. A slot was cut in the top through which we slid valentines for classmates and teacher. After class work was finished on the 14th, we cleared our desks and the box was opened. The excitement was high as cards were delivered. Soon everyone was milling around thanking one another for the valentines. We treasured these cards, keeping them for weeks. Mom and Dad displayed theirs with our school projects.

March

Although St. Patrick's Day was on the 17th of March, we had fun using the Irish theme for three neighborhood birthdays. Amah Lou Boyles, Bessie Arneal and John's birthdays were all on March 19th. We wore something green, and tried to speak with an Irish brogue. A shamrock-shaped cake was the centerpiece of the pot-luck gathering. During the evening we gathered around the piano and Irish songs filled the air, beginning with "When Irish Eyes are Smiling." All the kids tried to dance a jig and laughter erupted with our inexperience. Much fun was had at these neighborhood parties.

April

Easter was a very special time of year, aptly called "The Season of Joy." It was a time for new life. The grass was green, trees budded, and bulbs sent green spears bursting from the soil to blossom in the springtime. Each year our understanding of Christ's life and resurrection became clearer. We enjoyed the symbols of lilies, eggs, newly hatched chicks, and bunnies.

Mom pricked holes on both ends of the eggs and blew into them to empty the yolks and whites. Excitedly, we got out our crayons to color pretty designs on the shells. Finally, we put the eggs into a cup of dye to become "works of art." A big bowl of colorful eggs then brightened the center of the dining room table.



**Off to Church
in Our Easter Bonnets**

On Easter morning we dressed in our new spring clothes, and worshipped with church folk the joyous event of Christ Risen. During the afternoon and days following, we took turns hiding our colored eggs for others to find. This was a fun game even through some eggs got cracked while searching.

May

On the first of May, we celebrated May Day. We decorated several small boxes with frilled crepe paper and paper doilies; then gathered violets and apple blossoms to put in the basket with the fudge that Mom helped us make. Dad drove us to town and we hung the baskets on special friend's doors, knocked loudly and ran to hide. I recall Effie Holland, Lulu Edwards and Ada Ullery trying to catch us. These were older friends that had often surprised us with treats throughout the year.

On his birthday, May 8th, Dad always requested one of Mom's rhubarb pies. He claimed that Mom's flaky pastry and fruit pies were the ultimate dessert, and rightly so. We had a family party and tried to put birthday candles on his pie, but had to use a thick slice of Mom's homemade bread to hold them. After a big blow, he cut the pie into big wedges and we all had a treat. Dad always asked the same question: "What's better than a piece of Mom's rhubarb pie?" And waited for our answer: "A second piece of pie."

Mother's Day called for flowers, and we knew Mom loved violets. We kids knew where to find some fine large ones, and picked bouquets for her to enjoy. We told Mom to take a rest while we did her housework of washing dishes and dusting furniture. Dad would take Mom for a ride over to Auntie Pearl's, all celebrating Mother's Day together.



Mom with Margaret, Grandma Marshall, Aunt Jennette, Creo

Memorial Day was a solemn day. We gathered peonies, iris, and bridal wreath to add to the baskets of flowers that others brought to the church. To honor fallen soldiers we were part of the children's parade from the church to the cemetery. Each of us was given an armful of those flowers and told to place some on each grave marked with a flag. Surviving veterans then made speeches and we sang patriotic songs. Margaret recited *The Gettysburg Address* one year. The ceremony always closed with trumpeters playing "Taps," followed by its haunting echo that sent chills down our spines.

June

Margaret's and Grandma Marshall's birthdates were both on June 1st; Mom's was on the 7th. Often, we'd celebrate all three together. Some years we drove to Des Moines to celebrate with Grandma and Aunt Jennette's family. Our cousins, Richard, Phyllis and Kenneth, set up the croquet set in their backyard and were eager to play the game. Striking those balls through the wickets was challenging but fun.

When we heard Aunt Jennette's distinct vibrating trill we knew it was Birthday Party time. We hurried back inside to watch the three open their gifts and blow out the candles. Later that night we rode back to the farm, our bellies content with ice cream and cake.

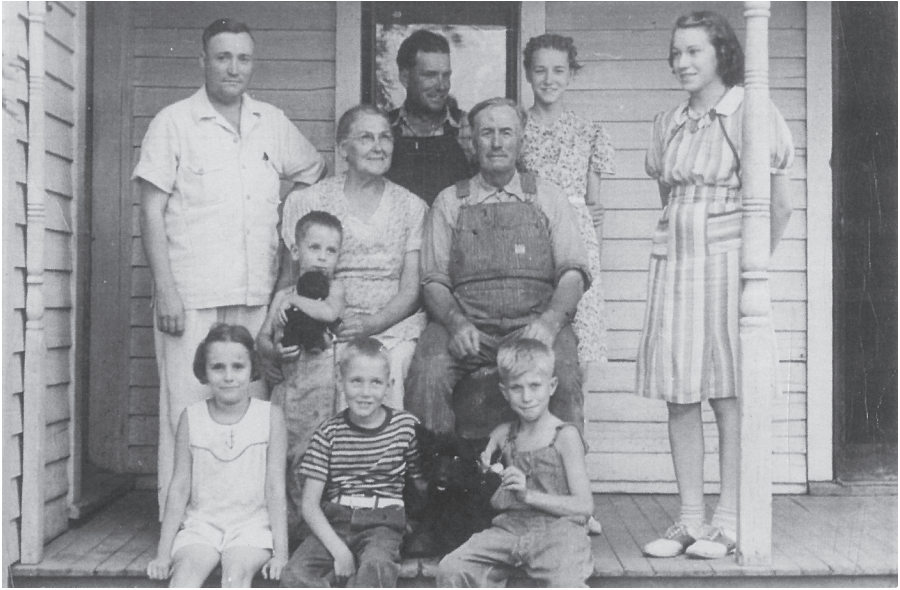
July

Uncle Fred and Aunt Gladys' family often came for the Fourth of July. It was great to have our cousins Orin, Ruth, Naomi, Maurice and Freddie visit for a few days. They made the Fourth a day to remember.

At the crack of dawn, Maurice shot firecrackers under our windows to begin celebrating. He and Orin shot firecrackers throughout the day.

Our dog Lady crawled under the dining room buffet and stayed there until everyone had gone to bed. The sharp bursts of fireworks caused her to whimper because her eardrums were very sensitive.

We girls hung around Ruth and Naomi, doing "big-girl" stuff, like baking and decorating cookies. By the end of the day, those cookies were gone, Yum! Whenever we heard someone drive by, we hurried to wave our flags in greeting.



Summer Gathering

When it became dark enough, we raced around the yard, wildly waving our sparklers. We then watched Dad set off the fiery Roman Candles to explode high above us in a colorful display. We thought they were magnificent.

One year Orin filled a saddle horn with gunpowder and tossed a match into it, then waited for it to explode. When he thought he'd waited longer than necessary, he went over to strike another match. Boom! The explosion burst in his face. Fred and our grandparents hurriedly bundled him into the car and sped toward Des Moines. A policeman stopped them, and then sped ahead, escorting them to the hospital. Thankfully, Orin's eyes weren't damaged. He recovered, but there would be no more experimenting with gunpowder.

August

The Iowa State Fair was (and still is) held each fall. We wished we could camp on the big campground like Grandma, Grandpa and other relatives did. However, we always enjoyed spending those days visiting another set of cousins: Richard, Phyllis and Kenneth, living in Des Moines.

We spent a lot of time together at the Fair seeing exhibits, especially in the 4-H Building. There were many 4-H items that we looked at, especially the needlework, sewing and woodworking projects.

We marveled at the tallest corn stalk, the huge hogs, the baby pigs, the

goats, the cattle, the horses and especially the fluffy sheep. We felt proud watching Dad's cousin, Stuart Hoover, judge cattle.

While walking along, we enjoyed ice cream cones as a treat, even though they dribbled onto our clothes. Cotton candy was a very special once a year extravagance that we thoroughly enjoyed.

We were satisfied with a ride on the Merry-go-round because we couldn't afford more. We enjoyed other events, like the car races and the airplane stunt riders that everyone could watch. Dad was excited one year to help a parachutist fold his 'chute.

The big splurge at the Fair was the Circus. The elephants paraded, then amazingly sat down on big drums. The clowns were funny in their outfits and with the tricks they played. The trapeze artists held us spellbound as they soared from one swinging bar to another, to be caught by their partner. Watching the circus from the grandstand was frustrating because we couldn't see all three rings at once. However, we loved every minute of it.

Back home after cherry picking time, Dad put iron pipes from tree branch to tree branch, and we mimicked those acrobats on our homegrown jungle gym. One year we cut newspaper into strips to make hula skirts for a circus act. It wasn't long before we had very skimpy skirts and the paper strips dangled from the tree branches. We continued having fun being circus performers, twirling around the pipes and creeping across like tight-rope walkers. We dreamed of flying on a trapeze someday.

September

Each fall Dad gathered a pile of gunny sacks (burlap bags) and we all piled into the Chevy for a ride to the walnut grove. Dad climbed a tree and shouted, "Stand back!" He gave that tree a big shake and the nuts tumbled down. Being hit on the head by one of those nuts usually left a painful lump.

We were kept busy filling bags with those big black walnuts as he shook other trees. The thick outer covering of those shells was difficult to hammer away. At home, Dad just laid those sacks in the driveway and drove the car back and forth over them. De-hulling the walnuts left a greenish-orange stain on anything they touched; what a mess those sacks became! Stains on our hands took days to remove.

Those baskets of nuts now ready to be cracked were tempting. We would put a nut on the anvil and whack it hard with a hammer. We quickly had a new respect for the squirrel's ability to gnaw through that hard shell. Black walnuts had a richer flavor than the English walnuts we bought in the grocery.

October

Each Halloween was celebrated with a town-wide event in the Redding School gym, which was decorated with corn shocks and jack-o-lanterns.

Kids and adults arrived in costume and judging was done. One year Alice and Grandma sewed many dry leaves onto her costume and she was awarded a prize. Bobbing for apples got us soaked. Feeling 'parts of the body' such as peeled grapes for eyes, wet sand-filled gloves for hands, and spaghetti for innards was a creepy game. Before the evening was over, Alice's leaves had crumpled onto the floor and we felt sorry for the school janitor, Mort, who had to sweep them all up. Mort was a talented entertainer, and that evening he had performed skits and danced, dressed in black-face.

November

Thanksgiving was a time for us to bake pumpkin and apple pies. Changing the pumpkin into a pie was a lot of work, but we helped. Apples were easier to get ready for the pie. To make a tasty relish for our feast, we used our meat grinder to grind the cranberries and oranges, then added sugar and put it in a pretty cut glass bowl. Mom roasted a plump chicken or turkey to a golden hue. Sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, vegetables, and salads filled the table.



Thanksgiving with Family

To add some fun to the feast we made Native American headdresses with chicken or turkey feathers, and Pilgrim bonnets from white paper. It was fun wearing our headdresses to welcome our guests. In mid-afternoon, we kids put on a skit about Indians introducing pop corn to the Pilgrims as a new treat. Even after our big dinner, we ate a big bowl of fresh popped popcorn.

December

December was filled with keeping secrets and mysterious packages arriving in the mail. We transformed our home by hanging paper chains we'd made, and standing Christmas cards on the buffet.

Christmas preparations kept the month of December busy because we made many of the presents we gave, such as embroidered handkerchiefs and tea towels. We helped Mom make fudge and fondant candy, decorated with our black walnut meats. Candies would be nestled in Christmas packages to be sent east to our relatives in Maine.

Each year we put on a Christmas play. Practicing in large borrowed bathrobes was challenging because one or another of us tripped. When John was a baby, he played Jesus. Alice and I were Mary and Joseph. Margaret was busy being everyone else, and did very well.

We shouted whoops of joy as Dad led us out beyond the cattle barn to the hedge of prickly cedar trees. We checked for height and fullness before choosing our tree. Then it was chop, chop, chop until it fell onto the sled, ready to be pulled to the house.

Our folks soon had it standing steadily, awaiting ornaments. We let Mom hang lovely glass ornaments, and then we put up our paper ones. We gaily wound our long construction paper garland around and around the tree, then Dad attached the star to the tiptop. Mom had readied the candleholders with small candles and handed them to Dad to attach securely on the branch ends.

One year we were given a large cardboard nativity set. Carefully, we punched and cut out the many sections. We folded and joined each character until Mary, Joseph, Jesus in his crib, the shepherds and wise men, were all standing. We cleared the room of all the scraps, set up the crèche below the tree, lit the candles, and gazed in wonder at its beauty. For fifteen minutes each evening the candles were lit and we sang Christmas carols. Later, we gently stored this scene and used it for many years.

Dressing warmly, we all went to the Church's Christmas Eve service. We were happy to be part of the Nativity Pageant, and as we left church we continued singing carols. The night air was invigorating, sending us in to hang

our Christmas stockings. We each chose our largest sock to hang on the buffet drawer knobs. All night we wondered what they would be filled with. We even left cookies by the tree, to make sure Santa was happy.

Very early Christmas day, Dad quietly arose to do the morning chores. We curled under the tree, waiting for everyone to come down and open stockings.

One year, each of our stockings held similarly wrapped packages. We quickly unwrapped them. To our surprise and confusion, we saw colored tubes. Noting our puzzled faces, Mom said to look into the small end of the tubes, and then twist the larger end. When we did, gasps of wonder escaped our lips. Wow!

We carefully twisted the tube and saw tiny bits of brightly colored glass slide around to form fantastic six-sided designs. Mom said the tubes were kaleidoscopes, a name as strange to us as this wonderful toy. We tried to show the images to each other but every move of the kaleidoscope quickly changed the design. This toy became a favorite that we enjoyed for a long time.

Christmas on the farm seemed to last all week. All month I had been bold enough to remind everyone of my birthday on December 27th, and to please leave a package or two for me to open. Aunt Jennette's family often came down that day for a second Christmas so we had our gift exchange with them and I was never forgotten. Snowmen were built and sledding kept us busy until lunch, which ended with my fancy birthday cake.

New Year's Eve

Our new calendar from the Union Savings Bank was unrolled and hung on New Year's Eve. We were excited because some of Grandpa and Grandma's friends were coming to welcome the New Year. This was to be a party that lasted until midnight; which was unusual for farmers because cows needed to be milked early in the morning.

This last day of the year was filled with getting the house ready for company. Grandma had no end of ideas to keep us busy. We dusted, swept and put fresh linens on the table and buffet. Plates of cookies and candies were placed on the doilies. Like most Midwesterners, we weren't as fond of seafood as Mom was, but did keep her tradition of eating Oyster Stew on New Year's Eve. We kids just squirmed when spooning up those oysters and crackers.

Whenever they got together, Grandpa and his friends would exchange a lot of jokes and riddles that we would try to guess. One year two of Grandpa's friends brought their harmonicas and a fiddle; they played several lively tunes. Grandpa asked them to play "Buffalo Gal" so we could try square dancing. He did the calling to guide our steps, which weren't too successful, but we had a lot of laughs anyway.

Stifling our yawns about ten o'clock, we perked up when we heard that the ice cream was frozen. We all gathered round for a slice of ginger-bread with a big spoonful of vanilla ice cream. We thought of it sliding down to join those slippery oysters we had eaten. Everyone shouted "Happy New Year!" Mom escorted us upstairs, tucked us in, and wished us happiness. We soon fell asleep listening to the grown-ups play card games while they waited for the old year to bow out, and another to begin.

Time Passes

Time passes, farm chores fewer.
Harvests gathered, farm pace slower.
Thanksgiving celebrated
With family and friends.

Through bustle and wonder
Of Christmas festivities,
Peace, Joy, and Love
Enter hearts and home.

New calendar hung
For fresh New Year.
Time for annual
Neighborhood gathering.

Babes held snug in Grannies arms,
Children play childhood games,
Grown-ups shuffle decks of cards,
Friendly chatter fills the air.

Big boys crank the ice-cream maker,
Others fix the festive fare,
Birthday cakes with glowing candles,
Grace and Alice blow them out.