

1930, the United States was having a depression. Many, many people were out of jobs. There was no government assistance as there is in 1991. For people who lived and worked on a farm it may not have been as hard since there was garden produce, maybe some fruit, cattle or hogs, chickens and other fowl for meat.

Life was the same as before in some ways because babies came into the world, people died of old age or sicknesses. And in this setting I arrived into the world. On February 20, 1930, I was born to Arthur and Fredericka Landow Wendler. My sister, Adeline, who is 6 years older than I am, tells me it was an unusually warm day for February and no snow.

As was customary in those days, I was born at home, the home that was my father's birthplace also. He bought the farm from the estate of his parents after they died and the rest of his family agreed to it. In fact, his parents, my Grandpa and Grandma Wendler, lived together with my family for a period of time in that homestead. I do not know how long this arrangement went on. Sorry to say, I never asked many questions about my grandparents, from my father's side or my mother's. I do not have any memories of them because they had all died by the time I was old enough to have memories of my childhood. My family lived in that same house until 1957 when my father decided he was getting too old to try and operate a farm as well as working in a factory, which he did for probably close to 20 years.

I was the youngest of 3 living children. My sister, Adeline is the oldest, and a brother, Arthur, who is 3 years older than I am. There was also another sister, Margaret, who died in infancy and who would be the oldest.

My life during my growing up years was very simple compared to living in the 1990's. My heritage was having large families on my father's and my mother's side, so there were many, many aunts, uncles and cousins. My grandparents all came to the United States from Germany in the 1850's and settled in the area of western New York and the place was called Wolcottsburg. It consisted of a T shaped intersection of county roads and there was a general store with gas pumps, a church and a tavern.

The church was established in the 1870's also, probably by my grandparents along with other folks who had settled in that area to have farms. St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church was a very pivotal point in my life, as my parents were very active in it, and many of my nicest memories are of activities we participated in at the church or with other Lutheran churches in western New York. Each summer two things took place at the church, or in my earliest recollections, they were at a grove of trees nearby. One thing was the annual Mission Festival and the other was the Sunday school picnic.

The Mission Festival was for a time of reports from the various missionaries and the mission fields that were supported by the Lutheran Church. Speakers came to report and most of my memories of them were dull and uninspiring, never really giving me a desire to go to the mission field. Instead I remember the food that was served at a noon meal, and stands that had ice cream for sale and soda pop, candy bars, peanuts and things everyone today has an abundance of and is commonly called junk food. For a small farm girl who had very little of this type of thing, it was a great feast and delight.

The Sunday School picnic was much the same as far as food was concerned; potato salads, macaroni salads, hot dogs, hamburgs, pickles, watermelons, pies, cakes and of course ice cream, pop, candy, etc. Instead of a service with speakers though, there were games to be played and prizes to be won by the children of the Sunday school

classes. Three-legged races, dunk for the apple, eating a donut tied to a string with you hands behind your back, pie eating with your hands behind your back. Oh! the fun of those hot summer Sundays for a gal who didn't get out much.

Another annual affair in association with the church was a spring and fall chicken supper, held in the parish hall. People from miles away came to feast on chicken, biscuits, mashed potatoes, gravy, hot vegetables, rolls, and pies the likes of which you never saw before. For a very nominal fee this feast was served family style and you ate till you were stuffed. It was a fund raising event for the church but it was also a time of fun, fellowship, hard work and excitement for everyone, to see friends and relatives other than at school or Sunday services. An event of importance for the girls was to be old enough to wait on tables here.

A highlight of the summer for me was a Sunday at Niagara Falls. We lived about 25 miles away from it and I had an aunt (my mother's sister), uncle and cousin who lived quite close to the Falls. Each summer that family and mine made a trek to the Falls for a huge picnic dinner, walk around Goat Island, crossing the Rainbow Bridge in to Canada.

There was also another significant occurrence for me as I got around 10 years old and up. The Mission Festival at the church was the last Sunday in July, and this particular aunt and family would attend. (Actually, many of my relatives who lived in the cities of Lockport and Buffalo came back to their roots of youth for the Festival.) But back to Aunt Rose and her family. The son, my cousin LaVerne, was near my age and my brother's, so we were good playmates when we had the opportunity, and when they came for the Mission Festival LaVerne would then spend the following week at our home. Then our picnic at Niagara Falls would be the first Sunday in August and my brother Art, and myself would stay at Aunt Rose's house the week after that. That was joy beyond belief to stay at her house; we had real city living, an inside bathroom, electric stove, a Victrola to hear records on, and just a completely different way of life than the farm. Aunt Rose did have a vegetable garden and we helped her to can green beans, peas, etc., but it was fun there.

My memories of growing up do not go back to when I was three or four, and many other incidents are only spasmodic of my growing years. Mostly I remember life on a farm was very hard, there was always work to be done. Very seldom could we go away for a day and stay long into the evening because there were afternoon "chores" to be done. Feeding and watering the chickens, the hogs, the cows, which also had to be milked, hay to get down from the mow for the cows to be fed, wood to be brought to the house for the wood/cook stove, eggs to be gathered. For myself, the jobs I had mostly to do were bring in the wood, get hay down, and when I got older and my sister and brother were gone from home, I had to clean out the cow barn and do more of the chores. A vivid memory is when I was a junior in high school and had one of my girl friends come to visit me, she couldn't believe I had to do that type of farm job because even though she lived on a farm she had brothers who did that work.

Another thing about farm life, especially in the summer of course, was garden work and harvest time, as well as mowing the lawn, helping with laundry, cleaning eggs for my father to take to the city to sell, butchering chickens once a week to sell, butchering hogs in the fall for some of our meat supply through the winter, making apple butter outside in a huge black cooking kettle, having the threshing crew come to thresh the wheat and oats which we had hauled into the barns and making silage for the cows to

eat from the corn we had planted in the fields. Wheat was planted in the fall, and in the spring, oats, buckwheat, and corn was planted. One particular distasteful job was hoeing the long rows of corn to get weeds out that the cultivator couldn't reach, for a pay of 5 cents a row. Hay was another crop that we harvested a good deal of each summer to have winter-feed for the cows and 2 horses we had. Much canning of vegetables and fruit was also done by my mother, with my help as I became old enough. We didn't go to the store for a can of corn or green beans. We went to the cellar (basement).

In connection with these harvest times, there are good memories too. Each October we had a school holiday on the 12<sup>th</sup> (Columbus Day) that was many years spent digging potatoes. We had enough potatoes in the garden so we didn't have to go to the grocery store to buy them. My father had a farm implement called a potato digger, but all that did was loosen the ground, lift up the potato plant and bring the potatoes to the surface of the ground. It was the job of myself, my mom and brother if he was home to pick up the potatoes, put them in burlap bags and have them ready to be hauled to the cellar. Another thing was in the latter part of October, there were 2 days of no school. Probably some kind of teachers meeting, I can't remember. What I do remember was this was apple butter making time. On our farm there were some large orchards with lots of apple trees. In our yard it was mostly pear trees, but we had plenty of apples too. In the fall they were picked by my father and a good supply of them taken to the cider mill to be pressed for cider, which was stored in large wooden kegs in our cellar. As the winter wore on it fermented from enjoyable sweet cider to "hard" cider, which the elders drank for social times. But also, from the apples, we made apple butter. Several relatives and friends in our community would come to our house on the first evening of our 2 day holiday and help peel apples and core them. We had a couple of apple peelers that made that job go pretty fast, but coring and cutting took a while. It was also an evening when cousins came along for me to play with, which was great. On the second day of that holiday we were outside, standing by a huge black and bronze kettle, set up over a roaring wood fire cooking the apples, adding some of the cider and seasonings. It usually took most of the day because it had to be "cooked down" to the "correct" consistency and stirred continually with a large wooden paddle type of stirrer. I was always glad to see fall arrive because it meant a reprieve from cutting the lawn and raking up the pears and apples which would fall from all our trees, and with a push mower too!

Christmases always were a special time too, even though perhaps we didn't get a lot. I really don't remember that part, I do remember I got a doll every year for quite a few years and played with dolls until I was quite old, probably 12 or so. On Christmas Eve our church always had it's children program, which was the same every year, recitations as we called them, songs, and questions and answers about the Christmas story. Each year I had a new dress, which was home sewn by my mother. The one I remember the most was a lovely blue velvet one with a white satiny collar, being sewn on as we were getting ready to go to church. My mother was always very busy, worked very hard, having much to do, so that's why she might be sewing yet when it was time to go.

As I have looked back over those years, I have asked forgiveness for my lack of love and helpfulness with regard to possibly making things easier for my mother. Oh, I had jobs and I did them, but I'm sure I could have been more of a helper than I was.

Santa always came to our house on Christmas Eve while we were at church and when we got home, one of my aunts and uncles would come too for gift opening and

Christmas cookies, fruitcake, smoked sausage and other home made goodies. Then on Christmas day we would have Aunt Rose and family to our house for the day, as we had spent Thanksgiving day at her house. Here was an example of working things out because we lived on a farm and evening chores had to be done. Thanksgiving was not as big a celebration, so it was OK to not stay out into the evening, but Christmas we all wanted to last as long as possible so they came to our place. We were home to do the “chores” and they could stay for supper and the evening too without having to hurry home. As things changed in our lives, some of those traditions changed too, but Christmas was shared and spent with Aunt Rose, Uncle Alvin and LaVerne even after I was married.

To prepare for our Christmas Eve church program, we had to have rehearsals and these took place on the three Sunday afternoons preceding Christmas Eve. December 7, 1941, the day that shall live in infamy, as we were told the day after, was a Sunday. I will always be able to remember that I was at the church practicing, but when we got back home that late Sunday afternoon, I found out there had been a big change in all our lives. We heard on the radio that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. We had been aware of the war in Europe, but it had not affected us much in our small farm community, and little did we know what would happen next or how long it would last.

I was an eleven year old girl in about the 6<sup>th</sup> grade of my one room schoolhouse where there was much security, but many of my cousins, who were older than my brother and sister, soon were in the Armed Forces. One of my mother’s sisters, who lived just down the road from us, had six children – three boys, then three girls, and all the boys went away to war. One girl married a soldier during the war. Another Aunt who had five children, three of them boys, also saw her sons go off to war, and another cousin served in the Air Force. These relatives were on my mother’s side. The cousins on my father’s side were mostly girls or they also lived on farms and were needed at home to help there.

Life for us on the farm was not nearly as hard as it was for folks who lived in the city. Here again, having our garden, milk from our cows, chickens and eggs gave us an advantage even with having rationing of sugar, meat, butter, gas, shoes and lots of shortages. Because we raised chickens, my father had people in the city of Buffalo who were regular customers, buying the chickens and eggs and he also sold some to a small grocery store. This was a help because the grocery man would keep some meat and butter for us. We did have blackouts even out in the country, where when the sirens blew we had to turn out lights and be prepared if the war ever would get to America’s shores.

By 1945, when surrender was announced by the Germans and then the Japanese after the atomic bombing, I was in high school and was thinking of myself as a young grown-up lady, and not a child living in the security of a small town. High school was 16 miles from home and I rode a school bus every day. Sometimes I had to walk to our corner store to get the bus, but the last year or so the route was changed and it came by the door. I guess I was a typical teen-age girl. I liked boys and had dreams of dates, boyfriends and the things I thought went with that part of life. By living in a small farming area, going to a one room school and most of the neighbors who lived in our town going to the same church, my friends were all known by parents and many were cousins as well as being friends to play with.

I started school when I was 6 ½ years old, going to first grade. There was no kindergarten grade in my area, although there may have been in city schools. It was a one-room school with all 8 grades involved. I guess learning came fairly easy for me as I was promoted to third grade the next school year. There was one other person in my grades with me the rest of my school days. Bernice was her name, she is six months older than me, and basically we were inseparable all our school days. I had one big problem in my grade school time: I liked to talk a lot. I can remember one occasion where I was still too young to know how to print and spell the words, but I had to write on a sheet of paper "I must not talk" until the paper was full. And on most of my report cards in subsequent years, I had the space checked which said "Whispers too much".

I do not remember exactly how old I was, perhaps 10 or 11, but I remember getting my bicycle for Christmas. Even though the bicycle was a Christmas gift, my parents gave it to me in October, so I could learn to ride it well and have some fun and use of it before winter. Usually our winters produced enough snow that you didn't do bike riding. The bike was a 28 inch Sears Roebuck, which I was allowed to ride to school when the weather was OK. School was about a mile away and no bus service was provided, so it was either walking, sometimes a ride with the milk truck which had picked up milk to be taken to the dairy or when the bike was given to me, to ride that.

During the last year I was in the grade school, 1942-43, the government began the program of foods for schools I guess, because I can remember we got cans of pork and beans for lunch. But in a small school with no kitchen, how do you heat them? Well, different mothers took turns heating them at home and the child rushed home to get them and take them to school. I can recall I did this a few times, hurrying home on my bike, having the beans in a covered kettle with a handle on it that slid on the handle bars of the bike and hurrying as fast as possible back to school so they wouldn't be cold for lunch. What a treat!!

There were other pleasant memories and fun times, which in these high-tech, fast paced recreation times would be scoffed at. But there was a creek that ran through our farm land and though every spring it caused many problems with overflowing its banks from snow melt, it also gave some fun in the winter if it was cold enough to freeze solid enough for ice skating, which it did many winters. We did a considerable amount of ice-skating, and I remember one time even skating to school on the ice from this creek. It went back of our farm and on toward our school and was very close to the schoolhouse. One winter we had a man teacher who let us go out to play on the ice during recess time. He came out to join us and our 15-minute recess extended right up to lunchtime we were having so much fun. As I look back, I wonder if he really didn't know what time it was, or if he was kind hearted enough to just let us have some fun. There were usually some big snow drifts on the baseball diamond beside our school and we would make tunnels in them, and also played a lot of "fox and geese" in the snow. In the summer time and spring many great ball games were played on that diamond and that was one sport I enjoyed much and could do pretty well.

In September 1943 I started high school! My goal was to be in some type of office work, not a homemaker/wife, thinking I would work in the city and an office, so I took all business type subjects: typing, shorthand, secretarial practice, business law, business arithmetic, as well as the required English, history, social studies, science and P.E. I really enjoyed high school, meeting and making new friends, though Bernice and I

stayed close through high school too. Her dreams were different though and we did take different subjects. She liked art, and then went on to go to beauty school and had a shop until recent years. As for myself, my ideals were good; to be in an office and I would not even take home economics, as I wasn't going to get married. But then in 1946, when I was still a junior, I met this ex-sailor who had the neatest brown eyes and cutest grin, most of my dreams shifted gears almost immediately. I did continue my business studies and graduated in June 1947 with a major in business but I never used what I learned except for about a year right after high school, and then many years later while working at Meadowdale Ranch.

Living in a small farming community, Wolcottsburg, was very different than being in a city, or even a larger town such as the Rapids or Clarence Center. Those towns had several stores, churches, fire halls, more homes and people of course and Clarence Center had a Post Office, which was our postal mailing address. Incidentally, postage rates at the time of the 40's was 3 cents and remained that rate for many years. The nearest city was Lockport, about 10 miles away, and we went there to do clothes shopping, and visit relatives who lived there. There were 2 movie theaters there, but that was something I rarely went to. I'm not sure why, maybe because my parents didn't think it was a way to find entertainment. The city of Buffalo was about 20 miles away and this was where my father took chickens and eggs to sell. He bought groceries there, we did some clothes shopping there too and there were relatives living there too that we would visit occasionally. One highlight for me in going to Buffalo was that they had a baseball team, which was part of the International League. This is no longer in existence, but we did go to see baseball games a number of times and to me that was a fantastic treat. Not the least of it being enthralled with these players in a big league, with classy uniforms and dreaming of really meeting one and swooning at his feet. Of course, I never did but dreams were always real.

Another almost annual occurrence in our area was the "spring flooding". There weren't things like "state of emergencies" for aid from losses, there wasn't anything done to help stop the flooding as there is flood control now. If it had been a hard snow packed winter and a quick warm spell with a rapid thaw, the waters coming from the Tonawanda Creek out of Batavia and Attica brought water over the banks of that creek into Black Creek, which was right behind our farm house and it spread through much of the town. Our road had water over it. The road our school and church was on was flooded. The water came over a large portion of our land. Sometimes coming into our barns and many times taking out the bridge we had to have to get from the house/barn area into our fields. Each time my father had to re-build the bridge, cattle had to be moved around and also we would have water in our basement. In more recent years, I understand there has been flood control procedures that prevent much of this type of disaster.

There are many, many other aspects of my life that bring me memories, laughs, and sometimes tears, but of course, the one thing that is no doubt the most important is to go back to 1946 and my junior year in high school. Leading up to that, is to tell how entertainment was achieved in my teen years.

Square dancing is as old, probably, as our country, but I was introduced to it in about 1943 or 1944. There was a town north of Lockport that had a very nice modern fire hall and, as all fire companies in the rural areas were volunteer, they had to raise money to buy equipment, uniforms, etc. This particular place, Wrights Corner, did so by

having a dance each Saturday night. There was square dancing and round dancing with a small band. Refreshments were served and there was no alcohol there. I do not remember how it came about that I went the first time or exactly when, but by 1946 my friend Bernice, and another girl we had become friends with in high school, whose name was Jean, went to that dance about every Saturday night. Our fathers used to take turns taking us and getting us home, though sometimes we could get a ride home some other way. The time in April 1946 I had a date with a young man, but he said we were going to pick someone else up. Don Rigerman was just home from his stint in the Navy and he had known my date before the service. My first meeting with him was no bells and lights, but he tells me that he decided "I was the girl he was going to marry someday". I stayed with my date for the evening, I can't even remember if I danced with Don that first night or not, but of course he is the one who I have shared my life with since October 16, 1948.

I wish I could say that life was beautiful, our courtship was flawless and I was a picture of sainthood, but alas that is not true. The young man I was dating at that time was someone I had gone to school with but he quit school and went to work where my sister was working. They talked together at work and he told her he liked me and wanted to date me. My mother did not approve of him, so I went out with him behind my parents back. Other people, including Don after I had met him, would pick me up, and bring me home, but someplace along the route I became the date of the other guy. This went on for perhaps a year, and even when he went in to the Army I wrote to him. When he'd get home on leave I went out with him, until one time I was convicted of my guilt of the situation and called it all off. Don had been my most frequent driver at that time and one night I called him up and asked him to come to the dance that Saturday night because I wanted to talk to him. I had no idea if he would or not, but when I got there, he was there. Over a cup of coffee I told him of my decision. I told the other fellow too and from then on it was Don and Barb.

I have often wondered if my mother didn't actually know that I had been doing, but was too wise to confront me, knowing I would probably have defied any restriction she made to me. After I personally accepted the Lord Jesus, I realized how very sinful I had been, and I asked God to forgive me of that as well as for the way I had treated my parents, who had been the best and greatest always, doing what they could with what we all had at the time.

Perhaps at this point in the story it would work best to go year by year in my life beginning with 1946.

1946 – I met Don in April of 1946, and in October I became his girl. In that summer I had my one and only experience of going to camp. The Lutheran church had a new camp on the shores of Lake Erie call Camp Pioneer, and because a favorite cousin of mine was going with girls from her church, they invited me to go too. I really enjoyed the experience. We lived in a dormitory style building and there were many of us girls sharing the room. We ate meals family style in a large dining hall, went swimming in Lake Erie, had Bible studies, and for me I learned a little about camp life and about other young people and life in general. It was good. In 1968, Deborah, as a newly confirmed member in the Lutheran church we attended in Ohio, also spent a week at that camp.

One other event occurring in our family life was my sister had a boyfriend. I do not remember when she became engaged, but I would imagine it was sometime during this year as she was married the next April. And for a Christmas present this year I received a lovely string of pearls from Don, which I wore for my wedding, Deborah wore them for her wedding and I still have them, in September 1946, Don's brother Dick married a girl who had been my next door neighbor when we were growing up. We had played together, went to grade school together, and in fact, I had a school girl crush on her brother when we used to walk to and from school together.

High school was lots of fun for me, though I suppose at the time I didn't think of it that way. Studies came quite easy for me except math. I never was good at it and when I started high school I tried taking Algebra. I was in class about 2 days and decided this was not for me, so I dropped it. I did take Business arithmetic one year and I got through that quite well. American History was one of my favorites and I, at that time, had memorized many of the dates of historical facts, and had to memorize the Preamble to the Constitution, Declaration of independence, and the Gettysburg Address. I wonder if present day students still do that, but with so many continual changes in history, they probably don't. World War II brought about so many changes in the world as well as small wars after it, and the fright of nuclear war, that history, no doubt, is a completely different subject.

1947 – This year had several prominent events for me to remember. Not the least of which was the remodeling of our farmhouse kitchen. We changed from a pump bringing only cold water up from our cistern in the cellar to running water, both hot and cold, and inside bathroom with flush toilet, a bathtub and a kerosene oil cook stove to replace the old wood stove in the kitchen. A refrigerator was placed in the kitchen and the remodeling changed a pantry arrangement into cupboards and work area in to the kitchen. Having a bathtub eliminated the use of a large galvanized laundry tub for our "Saturday night" baths taken in front of the open oven door of the old cook stove, as well as no more trips outside in all kinds of weather to the outhouse, or use of a chamber pot in the back stairway at night in the winter time.

On April 19, 1947, we had an addition to family by the marriage of my sister to a young man from a farming community about 15 miles from us. Earl Schubel was introduced to Adeline at some kind of party she had gone to and love took over. They were married in our church and I was her maid of honor. The one highlight of that day was I had the ring she was to give Earl and when it came time in the ceremony to exchange rings I proceeded to drop the one I was to give Adeline. Nonplussed she quietly bent over, picked it up and went on with the ceremony. Ever grateful was I that it didn't roll down the aisle to the grate of the floor furnace and be lost forever or roll anyplace for that matter. My parents also gave her a beautiful reception at the Clarence Center Fire Hall with a chicken dinner, round and square dancing and enough to drink to keep everyone happy. The Lutheran faith does not object to drinking and beer, liquor, cider and wine were always readily available and used. Adeline worked at a place called Niagara Textile in Lockport and Earl worked at the National Gypsum in Clarence Center and since times were still pretty tight after the war, they lived at home with my parents for a period of time. I cannot remember at this time, 3/92, a lot of things about my brother and his stint in the service. I do remember that he was an usher for Adeline's

wedding and he met his bride at the reception. Lorna is a cousin of Earl's, so she and her family attended the wedding and Art met her, and that love story took off from there. But I'm not sure if he was still in the Army or back at home too.

June of 1947 was also significant for me as I graduated from high school. In New York State, school is in session until the middle of June or so, and my graduation was June 23, 1947. My senior year had been pretty neat for me. We had a school newspaper called "The Keyhole" and much of the work to publish it was done by people taking typing and office type studies. Consequently, I had done work on it for a couple of years and was elected Editor-in Chief of it my senior year. That was fun, though lots of work, as well as an honor. Because of the journalism part, several of us also made a trip to Syracuse, NY for some kind of convention relating to that. I can't remember the exact name or nature, but it was the one and only time I rode on a train, as we went to Syracuse by train. An incident with regard to that was, I was supposed to go home after the train arrived in Lockport, but since it was a Saturday night and that was square dance night, Don met me at the station and we went right to the dance. Needless to say my parents were quite upset with me.

Senior plays and proms were something to be excited about too and I had a part in our senior play, playing the part of a nurse. I had also, in my freshman year, sung in a music chorus type group in connection with a class I took called "Rudiments of Music". We presented a musical program that year called a Minstrel Show and I was one of the dancers in the opening number. Quite a thrill for me. And for our senior prom, I was in charge of the decorations. Proms were held in the school gym at that time and my theme was "Stairway to the Stars". On the stage of the auditorium we had a small stair with flowers and trellis like affair and the King and Queen were presented there. I had no date though because Don had gone to Canada to spend the summer helping someone build a fishing camp. It was permissible to attend the dance without an escort and there were many other girls and guys who went stag.

For commencement, nothing elaborate was done afterward. I think some of my aunts and uncles came to the house for refreshments. I had graduated with a business major to get an office job, but living in a farming community and not being able to drive a car rather limited how I was going to use this knowledge I had. For that summer I stayed home and helped on the farm, in the garden and with the housework. I never liked or learned cooking much, maybe because my mother was not a fancy cook. She cooked meat and potatoes usually, and used things from the garden etc., so in one way there wasn't a lot to learn I guess. Of course, if I had taken home economics in school, as my sister did, it would have helped me to learn new ways to do things. To this day my sister is an excellent cook, baker, gardener and can do all kinds of neat things with food.

In the fall of 1947 I did get an office job at Beck's Dairy, which wasn't too far away, but we had to do some juggling with neighbors to get me transportation back and forth. An irony of the job was that when I was being interviewed the manager asked me if I was planning on getting married soon and then leaving the job. I said "Oh no, not for a while." But a year later I took the step. I did like my job; the people I worked with and I really learned to love the hot fudge sundaes from the ice cream parlor in the dairy. The ice cream from that place was well known through all the area and folks drove for miles to get an ice cream cone or some other delicious tasting dessert.

By September of that year, Don came back from Canada and the fishing camp ceased to exist. One reason being a tornado went through the area and soon after that Don came back and went back to work at the job he had at Central Foundry. My job gave me Wednesday afternoons off, so Don would come from Lockport to pick me up and take me home and then go back to work on the afternoon shift. Our social life was the weekends and Wednesday afternoon. Saturday night was still square dance night and Sunday was movies and visiting his grandmother, who was very special to him and became special to me since I had never remembered any grandparents. They had died while I was too young to remember or before I was born. Or we might spend time with friends or other relatives.

As 1948 got under way I do not recall anything significant until my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday in February. On a Sunday (I can't remember if it was actually February 20<sup>th</sup> or not) our plan had been to go to church in Lockport and then to spend the rest of the day at a friend of Don's and the friend's family. As we were in the car starting for church, Don said to look in the glove compartment. There was a small box wrapped up. That was for me he said and to open it. There was my engagement ring and that was his way of proposing to me. Nothing real flowery or romantic, but driving down the road. I tried it on; it fit, and said yes. I was very apprehensive about telling my parents because I knew they thought I was too young and I've wondered if they were not happy with my choice. He was a city boy, was not a Lutheran, the family lived in a different style than mine did, etc., etc. I finally showed them the ring a day or two later and my mother didn't say much at all and my father said, "You're awfully young aren't you?"

Winter, of course, left and spring came and Don and I decided to get married in the fall. My sister was expecting a baby, so we set October 16 as the date since the baby was due in August and that would give her a couple months to get over child birth, lose some weight and feel like taking part in a wedding. Life gave us a few snags as it usually does and the most serious was with Don and his car. He had bought a really neat car finally since he had a "good" job. The first thing that happened was one Wednesday afternoon after he had brought me home from work; he was ready to head back to Lockport and his job. Now, living on a farm as I did, we had a very large area for cars, and farm equipment to be parked, but this particular Wednesday there was an oil truck in the area delivering fuel oil for our use in the cook stove. When Don went to back out, he didn't judge how close he was to the truck and in the process got too close thereby scratching a long line on the side of his car from a piece sticking out on the fuel truck. It did not render the car inoperable but it sure left a large mark and the story of his inability to drive because he was saying "good-bye" to his girl spread through town like wild fire. We took a lot of ribbing about it.

But worse than that, when summer came he was spending time at his grandmother's who lived in Lyndonville, probably 20 –25 miles from Lockport. His mother and father had gone to Canada for a month of vacation and fishing so Don decided he would spend some time with his grandmother. Actually, Don, two of his buddies and myself had gone to Canada to the cabin where his parents were for a long July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend. That is another story too. But anyway, he always said he could drive the road to Lyndonville in his sleep. I guess he wanted to try it, because this one night after working the midnight shift, when he started for Lyndonville, he did fall asleep. When he woke up he was up against a cherry tree in a farmers large orchard. He was

unhurt, but his neat car was a mess, and this time inoperable. The crux of the story was that it was taken to a garage in Lockport and, for some reason, the repair people kept saying they couldn't get the necessary parts to repair it. Consequently we were without any means of transportation. Being the very compassionate person I was, I talked my parents into letting Don stay at our home until his parents got home from Canada, because there was a man from our church who lived nearby and he worked where Don did and on the afternoon shift too. For a few weeks then he stayed at our home. Funny how it didn't occur to me that he could have stayed in his parents home and walked to work??!! After his folks came back from vacation he could use their car to come see me and have some dates, though it was inconvenient. He usually needed to get back to town with the car in time for his folks to get home from the bowling alley they were operating at the time.

Plans went ahead for our wedding though. I was saving money from my job, which paid \$35.00 a week and I saved enough to buy the bedroom suite and a cedar chest we had for our first home. We used the suite until 1977 when we moved to Colorado and we bought a new Ethan Allen Black Pine bed and dresser. I also bought my wedding dress; a heavy ivory satin, with seed pearls around the sweetheart neckline, a beautiful long train and long sleeves. I would wear my sister's fingertip veil and the single strand of pearls Don had given me for a Christmas gift in 1946. To round out my something borrowed, something blue, my mother had made a half-slip, floor length and sewed blue bows on it. The girlfriend, who had been through thick and thin with me all our lives until then, hosted a bridal shower for me and also was in my wedding party.

As was my mother's idea of a wedding and reception, if you invited folks to share in the joy of the occasion, you served them more than cake and punch. So, as my sister had for her wedding just 18 months earlier, we rented the fire hall in Clarence Center, invited all our relatives, Don's relatives and many friends. My parents prepared a chicken and biscuit dinner, with mashed potatoes, cole slaw, and other things, including salads for later in the evening, and wedding cake and other cakes. A band was hired for square dancing and round dancing as we called it and, since in the Lutheran faith drinking was acceptable; we served beer and even some stronger liquor.

Leading up to the day, there was much preparation and excitement on my parts, yet in our family emotions were never displayed to any extent, so I really don't know what my mother and father felt. We had a rehearsal the night before, but no party or dinner as was or is now a tradition. One picture I have in my mind of that night is of my mother working in the "back room" of our farmhouse making or cutting cabbage for the cole slaw.

October 16<sup>th</sup> was a warm cloudy fall day in 1948, with feelings of rain and storm since it was quite warm. We went to the fire hall to put up decorations and other details for the reception. My mother had hired some ladies from the church to help with the dinner, too. So as I look back on it, my parents had everything under control. The ceremony was set for 4 PM and in the Lutheran church at that time it was all very short, so by 4:15 it would be over. My father drove me to church all ready to go and when the man who always rang the church bell saw us coming he thought it was time to start, so he rang the bell. As all of us were there and the church was quite full of guests, we began. Afterward someone said it was a few minutes before 4 but, no problem, everything was

ready. I had a young gal, who my brother and I went to school with, sing solo's including "Because", "O Perfect Love", "The Lord's Prayer" and the "Benediction".

My maid of honor, my friend from school Bernice, wore a gold dress. My sister and another friend from school wore green dresses. They carried lovely mum bouquets, and my bouquet was calla lilies, a flower I always liked for weddings. Don's best man was his good friend Bob Wall, and ushers were his brother Dick and my brother Art. As we were driving from the church to the reception, about 4 miles to the town of Clarence Center, it was decided to stop in a bar for a drink. The thing that I have in mind about that is the school chum who was a bridesmaid would not go in. Her religious beliefs did not approve of drinking, and as I have looked back on that, I really admire her for sticking with her convictions, and now I would agree with her.

It was a very nice reception, with many relatives and family present. I imagine over 100, as I had a large extended family. Don's was much smaller but they were all there, and one of his uncles never forgot that day, and being served a complete chicken dinner. He had never heard of such a thing, plus having food later in the evening, and wedding cake. The dancing went on until quite late, 12 midnight or so, but Don and I left earlier than that and drove to Wrights Corners to the dance we had gone to almost every Saturday night and where we more or less met. We went in with our wedding clothes and danced a few, were honored by everyone and then went to our "home".

At that time people opened their gifts at the reception too, so all could share in seeing what we received, so we had done that and the best man was in charge of getting the gifts from the hall to home, as well as family members, etc.

Our "home" was an apartment on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of Don's parents home in Lockport. We had bought a living room suite, stove, refrigerator and bedroom suite new and had some things from his folks. Wedding and shower gifts were mostly practical things that we could use in our home. We spent our wedding night there and the next day my new mother-in-law prepared breakfast for us in her apartment.

Since Don's car was still in the garage, inoperable, my parents graciously let us use their car for our wedding trip. We had plans to drive to New York City. Being a small town farm girl, that was someplace I thought I needed to see. The problem with it though was we didn't have money to spend lavishly, but I can say I've been to the Big Apple. We saw Central Park, the Empire State Building, walked on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, saw Sak's store and the big F.W. Woolworth 5 and 10 cent store. We did not go to Ellis Island or the Statue of Liberty, or any kinds of museums or those kinds of things. We were very much showing a "hayseed" yokel type I guess though, because as we walked along the street near Times Square, there was a vendor hawking getting your picture taken. Not being street smart we did it and then had to pay \$6.00 for the photo. Now in this day and age that doesn't seem like much money but 45 years ago it was a lot. We left for our New York trip on Sunday, and we had to be back to my folks by Friday because my Dad needed the car for his Saturday trip to Buffalo to deliver eggs, sell chickens etc., so reality set in very quickly. Many small incidents about taxiing us, and getting to places, I don't recall, but I'm sure it was inconvenient for everyone.

I had kept my job at Beck's Dairy and Don would take me back and forth to work with his parents car, all before he had to go to work at his night shift job at Central Foundry. After 2 weeks of hassling like that, I quit my job and my bosses reminded me

of my statement when they hired me that I wasn't planning marriage or quitting my job so soon. I had worked a little over a year at it.

Married life was exciting and yet I had much to learn. I was not much of a cook, but I tried, bought some recipe books and asked my mother-in-law a lot. She was a big help.

Before 1948 was over, we had 2 new things come in our lives. The nice one was I was pregnant. Birth control was not something that was stressed in those post-war days, so we did not practice much, and anyway, I thought it would be great to have a baby. The bad thing that hit us was Don lost his job. Newly weds, expectant parents, no car for transportation, and now no job. Central Foundry was closing its doors, and some of it was moving to Defiance, Ohio. Don was more or less offered a job there, but the moving expenses would be our own and there was no guarantee as to how long he'd have a job. I said I would take the opportunity and move, but it was 10 years and more before we did make a move to a different state and new adventures. Instead, we stayed where we were – close to the family.

It didn't take long in 1949 before Don had a new job. In Lockport, the big company where the majority of folks worked was a General Motors Plant, Harrison Radiator. It had been there many years and, in fact, still is. Don went to work there and our problems were over, or so we thought. But the thing with this company, it was a union shop, and after being employed for 60 days you were a member with good benefits and wages, if they really needed you. After about 50 days, or maybe 59, the company decided they didn't need Don, so he was "laid off". He could collect unemployment and be called back when they had a big order or something. Don did not like that uncertainty, so he was able to find a job in a small company that supplied automotive parts to retail outlets and some garages. Promises were made that he'd be taught a trade and he did have a job. For us that was important.

After I was 4 or 5 months pregnant, I went to a doctor, an OB in the city. We had no health insurance, so I didn't want to start too early with doctor visits.

Finally, in May, almost a year after the accident, Don's beautiful Chrysler car was repaired and we had "wheels" again. Only problem was, on our first outing with it, a visit to his grandma, the tires blew out. After sitting in the garage so long, I guess they rotted out. Anyway, now we had to spend money on tires. Where does money come from to do things like this when you are already living hand to mouth? Visa cards, MasterCard, etc. were not around, as I recall, at that time. Rather, what you did was have an account with the individual stores where you bought something and you could pay weekly, monthly or what was best for you. Usually, you could pay in 90 days and not have interest charges, so that was the way we acquired most of our goods and services. The items like our furniture, you paid for over a longer period of time, but no doubt the tires were paid off sooner, and also we were able to purchase automotive things from the company that Don worked for at a discount.

Spring moved into summer and it turned into one of the hottest summers on record. My being pregnant made it doubly uncomfortable for me, as women didn't wear shorts that much when they were pregnant. I wore dresses all the time, and did have a couple "sun dresses" which I had borrowed from my sister who had use for them the summer before.

As we lived on a second floor apartment, it was extremely hot and by afternoon when it would be dinnertime it could be unbearable. So to make things more pleasant, I would prepare the meal and when Don got home from work we would take our dinner to Outwater Park, a city park about a 10-minute drive from the apartment. There, we could cool down a little, enjoy the outdoors, watch a ballgame maybe, if one was being played at the ball field across from the park and enjoy our meal. Most weekends we would visit my parents, my sister and family, Don's grandmother, his Aunt Alice, after having attended church on Sunday mornings.

One Sunday there was an exception that stands out in my mind. The company picnic. One of the employees owned a cottage in the lakeside town of Olcott, located on the shore of Lake Ontario. As well as having a cottage, this man and his wife owned a very nice outboard motor boat. The picnic was held at the city park in Olcott and we were able to all get boat rides and have a fun time, eating lots of hamburgs, hot dogs, salad, etc. Even in my condition and weight gain, I loved having a boat ride.

Preparing for a new baby for someone who not too many years before was playing with dolls was quite a thing. We, in our 4-room apartment, had a small room that we planned to use for a nursery. To prepare it, I had to wash walls and ceilings, which were very dirty and then paint it. In the '40s, a cleaning product called Spic'n'Span was very popular and supposed to be the best. I used this product and never had the sense to wear rubber gloves. Well, it wasn't too long after that; my hands broke out like you wouldn't believe. Itching, small blisters covered my hands and it took a long time to heal. The upshot was that for quite a few years after, my hands were very, very sensitive to different kinds of soaps, detergents, and other cleaning products. Ivory soap, which was advertised as 99 and 99/100% pure was the worst thing I could use, so we always got a chuckle out of the advertisement.

Because my parents lived on a farm, they also had a vegetable garden to raise produce for home canning as well as eating fresh during the summer. Don and I were glad to receive some of these things to help our food budget and I also canned things like green beans, corn, and tomatoes. I had some uncles from my father's side who also had fruit farms, raising peaches, cherries, apples, pears, etc. We would go and pick some fruit and I canned peaches and cherries. Tomatoes didn't ripen until into August, and that was what I was doing the day before Dennis arrived. It was an extremely hot August Wednesday and I had canned. My due date had been set for August 28, but it was already August 31, and still no pain, until that night I woke up about 3 AM with some contractions. I laid in bed trying to decide if I should get up and wash my hair so it would be clean for my hospital stay. I'd wake up with a pain, go back to sleep, wake up wondering what to do, but never did get up until morning, and then got Don ready to go to work, after calling the doctor and him not being too concerned to have me get to the hospital quickly. Don went to work and I waited for more pains. About 10 AM they got more severe, so Don's mother called the doctor again and he said go to the hospital. So with Don at work and out making deliveries, which was what he did, Gram R. took me to the hospital. Baby delivering in the late '40s was not a natural birth experience as it is in the '80s & '90s. I was given medication for relaxing in the labor room. Don had been called at his job and, although he had been making deliveries, he was located and able to come to the hospital, and allowed to be in the labor room. When it was time for the baby to be born, he had to leave, go to the waiting room and I went to the delivery room and

had enough medication to not feel too much of the delivery. Our first child, a son, Dennis Howard, was born about 1 PM on Thursday, September 1, 1949. He was in perfect health, had red hair and blue eyes. As I was coming out of the delivery room and the anesthesia I was babbling, "We have a red-headed baby boy and his name is Dennis Howard" over and over. Another big difference of child birth in those days; I was in a room with several other new mothers, I stayed in bed for almost the whole length of my hospital stay, which was a week in length. There were only certain times for visitor hours, only certain times for seeing the baby. The grandparents did visit, as did Don, and a week after Dennis was born, we were allowed to go home. My mother felt she should help me with this new baby, so we went to spend a week or two at the farm; I'm not sure how long. That was nice to be waited on, etc., and not to have to be cooking and doing laundry right away. Though in "modern" times things like that aren't always possible and new mothers deal with it.

Since we were committed Lutherans and since the teaching was infant baptism for salvation, we had Dennis baptized when he was about 18 days old at the church we went to in Lockport, and he, as well as Laura and Debby, attended church with us every Sunday it was possible. There were no nurseries then to place babies in either, so babies and children sat with mother and dad. 1949 ended up quickly, with taking care of a new infant, but we were thankful that Dennis was a healthy baby with only normal baby type problems.

I guess 1950 must have been a kind of uneventful year since I can't think of many things to write about. We would spend most weekends or Sundays anyway at relatives, either my parent's home at the farm, my sister's home where we could compare notes with bringing up babies. David was over a year now so he had gone through all the things Dennis would go through.

One nice incident was that Don changed jobs again, but this time it seemed like it would be a more stable, better paying situation. It was a factory job again, at Western New York Container, a small locally owned company. As it turned out there were changes in the company, but for us they were good changes and Don worked for the company for 15 years. He had different jobs within the place, there were buy-outs by an Ohio company, a 2 month strike in 1957, a fire at the plant which had to be rebuilt then, he held jobs in the union and had the opportunity to go to a training school for being a foreman which he did in 1959, and thus began the family moving out of New York state.

Another nice thing in 1950; my brother Art was married to Lorna Bruning, a cousin of Earl's, who Art had met at Adeline and Earl's wedding. That was a fun occasion, with the reception being held at the Wrights Corners fire hall, the place where Don and I had spent so many Saturday nights, but after marriage and a baby we never went back. Since their wedding was in July, the hall was not being used for square dances.

For Dennis' 1<sup>st</sup> birthday, we had a nice party in the backyard of our apartment, which was also Don's mother and father's home. What we did was have the party on a Sunday afternoon, invited my brother and Lorna, my sister and Earl, with David, who by now was 2 years old, Don's brother and Norma along with David, their son who was 2 years old in March 1950. Of course, we had Grandma and Grandpa Wendler and Rigerman. We had some tables outside decorated with balloons and had a picnic supper. As the years went on and our children were all born in the summer, we tried to celebrate

their birthdays with picnics, with just family members invited, nothing elaborate at all. Actually, our Sundays were usually spent in some way with the extended family, going to different ones: aunts, uncles, grandparents and not much other types of entertainment like movies, dances, etc., although occasionally we would go to a drive-in movie as the whole family could get in for \$1.00 or so.

The rest of 1950 passed quickly I suppose, being busy with a baby or 1 year old by now and soon it was Christmas and 1951. Again Christmas was spent with grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and also my aunt and uncle and Don's aunt and uncle.

1951 seemed to start out good; a healthy child, a place to live, a car to drive, a job for Don, times with relatives including Don's grandmother and step-grandfather who I haven't mentioned too much but they were an important part of our life too. His father's job was to operate a small bowling alley in Lockport, which he did after he had worked in a larger place for a time when I first met the family. He was an avid bowler, and Don's mother was too. She bowled a couple of nights a week in different women's leagues. In April, she was to bowl in some kind of tournament, which was held in central New York State, near Syracuse as I recall. She asked Don, myself, and Don's father to go with her to watch. It was an opportunity for us to have a time without a child, as we had Dennis stay with Grandma and Grandpa Wendler. He always loved to go to their farm and spend time with them. We went early on a Sunday morning and returned home late that night, rather than spending any time overnight, which had been an option. It was a long day, but on Monday Don's routine was the same, going to work, and we were to get Dennis when he got home from work. His father's day was to go downtown, work at the bowling alley, but this day he walked back home mid-afternoon complaining he didn't feel good. He had a headache and hurting in his arm. I can't remember if they called the doctor or not, but by the time Don got home it was decided the hospital was the place to go. He had a heart attack, he was 52 years old and it was hard to believe.

That day was the beginning of many changes in all our lives. One of the first ones being we did not go to pick up Dennis when we had planned to, and didn't even think about calling Grandma W. to say what had happened. Sometime in the evening, after things quieted down at the hospital, we got Dennis, explained to my folks and Dennis what had happened. Grandpa R. was in the hospital for 3 weeks that time but had to be rushed back, as I recall, sometime around Memorial Day in May, so he wasn't home very long before he had another attack and this time I do remember he went in an ambulance. For me, being only 21 years old and not having been around illness of this nature, it was hard on me and all of us. There never seemed to be much we could do, except try to keep things as normal as possible. As I look at our photo album from that time I see we still spent time with our families, we went to the Memorial Day parade and Don marched with the American Legion unit he belonged to. We also, on the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday, took a long ride to Letchworth Park, a little Grand Canyon of New York State. It was a nice day for some relaxation for Don, little Dennis and myself. Grandpa R. was still in the hospital but soon after that was released as I recall, although by September he had to be hospitalized again, this time to a hospital in Buffalo, about 25 miles away from Lockport. This time a heart specialist was called in and his determination was he couldn't do much to help either. All this then required some changes again, as Grandpa could not work or support his family any more, they had a house mortgage with no income and although we

were living upstairs and paying rent it wasn't that much. The decision was finally made for them to move upstairs and with us in our 4-room apartment and they would rent their downstairs out for income. They rented it furnished to a young couple expecting their first child. Ironically on December 1, 1951, the lady gave birth to twins and on the same first night she was in the hospital, the man had a woman in. December 1 was also Grandpa's birthday; he was 53 although in quite poor health. This also was the time when Don's grandmother had to have a complete mastectomy of one breast because of cancer. Patients were kept in the hospital much longer then, than they are now, so we made several trips to the cancer hospital in Buffalo, like we had done when Grandpa was in Buffalo General in September. Grandpa was very upset about the goings on of the downstairs tenant but decided he would let them stay until spring since they had their hands full with twins.

And 1951 did come to an end. All of us hoped 1952 would be better and were sure in one way it would be, since I was pregnant again and as we had in one way planned for our family, we eagerly looked forward to a 2<sup>nd</sup> baby. Some time in the spring the folks downstairs did move out although I'm not sure when, although I have pictures of Grandpa R still upstairs in April. I believe that Grandpa and Grandma moved back downstairs soon after the tenants moved out.

Then on May 6, 1952, we received another blow to our life. At Western New York Containers, where Don had a good job, he had an accident. One of the employees came to our apartment to tell me that Don was in the hospital. A 1-ton roll of paper had fallen on his leg, injuring his knee. Since I had no driver's license, Grandma R took me to the hospital to see Don, and we left Dennis home with Grandpa. Nothing was broken in his injury, but maybe it would have been easier if something had been, because it hurt his knee, cartilage and at that time they didn't have knowledge about helping that type of injury without surgery. He was in the hospital for 3 weeks that time. Now we had 2 breadwinners who were unable to work; Don and his father. More decisions to be made. His folks decided to sell the house, so one sunny day brother Dick and I were outside putting up some siding on the house, as the back part of it had never been completely covered. I was about 6 months pregnant, Don was on crutches sitting in a chair and Grandpa was just sitting, he couldn't help either, but we got it done. As I recall, during that time Don was exercising his leg trying to get it good enough to not have to have surgery, and I can see him sitting on the chair in our kitchen doing a swinging exercise while tearing up newspaper to be used as packing material. Another decision was for us to move in with my parents on the farm until we could get back on our feet, thus Don was tearing up papers. This move meant having our furniture put in an upstairs bedroom at the farm and our bedroom furniture in it too where Don and I slept and Dennis had use of the small bedroom that had been my brother's. My folks used our refrigerator in their back room but our gas stove went to the barn until we would sell it. We moved there around July 4<sup>th</sup>, but one incident we can remember was going to the town of Wilson on Lake Ontario, renting a boat and my carrying Gramps' old 7 HP martin motor to the boat so we could go fishing and relaxing, Don on crutches yet, he thinks and me 6 months pregnant. We must have quite a sight.

Soon after we moved to the farm, the doctor decided Don should go to Buffalo General Hospital for knee surgery – removal of the cartilage. That was in July and he was in the hospital for about 2 weeks. Again after this, rehabilitation was needed by

some exercises and finally in September he was able to return to work. But before that time a couple of other things happened. The first was that a week before the baby arrived, I bravely took a driver's test so I could have the option of getting us around. As I was growing up after age 16 I had had a learner's permit to get a license but never carried through on it and the permit expired. Now we felt it was really time to go all the way. When we got to the motor vehicle bureau, I passed the written test and as I was to do the driving part, Don asked the tester if he could ride along in the back, as he was still on his crutches making it hard to stand and wait. The man said yes, and when he saw I was almost touching the steering wheel with my big tummy, we feel he took pity on us, because I had a very short drive with mostly right turns and parallel parking was done in a space the size of a field, not like usual. I passed that test, which by the way, was taken in my in-laws car, which I had never driven until that morning because ours didn't have a speedometer in the dash. Can't remember what happened but it was broken. From there I went to my doctor appointment and he commented on my blood pressure being elevated somewhat. I didn't tell him where I had just been. He also said everything looked good, baby would soon be here. It was a week though before Laura Jean decided to make her appearance. She was going to be sleeping in the bassinet that Dennis had used, and actually was my sister's, but I didn't have it ready yet, nor all of the clothes I wanted ready for a new baby. Wednesday, August 27<sup>th</sup>, started out much like any other day. Don had gone to the field with the tractor to do some farm work and about 9ish or so my water broke. I told my mother and we called the doctor's office. They said go to the hospital. Mother said, "I'll walk down to the field and get Don", which she did, but since I wasn't having any contractions yet, I decided to clean up the bassinet and make it ready for the arrival of the new baby. Don hurried home and found me washing and both he and my mother said get ready to go to the hospital. I did that and the trip was about 10 miles to Lockport. My pains did start soon but were not close together so I'd say "slow down" to Don, "no need to hurry", then another pain would hit, I'd moan, and he would speed up, but we got there in good time. I had changed doctors from when Dennis was born but the routine was the same; go to the labor room, Don could be with me, they give you medication to not feel the pain, then when it's time for delivery, no men allowed except the doctors, and around noon Laura entered the world. A beautiful little one with red hair again like her brother, and my dialogue then was now Dennis has a sister to play with. Again I stayed in bed for almost the whole week I was in the hospital and even missed Dennis' 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday, which was not very much of a celebration. Grandma Wendler baked a cake for him, he got some gifts but that was about it. Children were not allowed to visit in the hospital, so he met his sister when we were discharged and went home. Grandparents visited us but that was about it. And we didn't go straight to the farm, but stopped at Grandpa Rigerman's place so he could see the first granddaughter in the Rigerman clan for who knows how long. Don's brother Dick and Norma had all boys, Aunt Alice had boys, Aunt Florence (Gram's sister) had boys, so everyone was very excited and Grandpa did enjoy seeing Laura Jean. This was September 3<sup>rd</sup> when I was allowed to go home and Gramps' health was not improving so we wanted him to see the kids as much as possible. Laura was baptized by the time she was 2 weeks old at the church in Lockport, so we took her to see Gramps then and as I recall both children stayed there on a Sunday in September, when we went to an event called "Lutheran Hour

Rally” which was held every September at Outwater Park, and had a prominent Lutheran speaker.

Laura was in excellent health and a very good baby, she was not fussy, slept good, ate good, and grew at normal paces. Living in with parents as we were could get tense occasionally but my mother was never one to lose her cool, have angry words, she was gentle, calm, and an extremely hard worker. I tried to help as best I could with housework, etc., but didn't cook much since they had only an oil cook stove, which was much different than our gas stove. Dennis enjoyed all the territory he had to play in on the huge lawn and farm, which had chickens, cows and not much else. Grandpa still did some farming but also had a full time factory job in Buffalo at Pratt & Lambert Paint Co. Recalling back a year to 1951, my parents along with my sister and her family, were able to take a trip to Portland, Maine to visit a sister of my Dads who with her husband lived on Peaks Island in Maine and were lobster fishermen. In order for the folks to do this, Don, Dennis and myself moved out to the farm for the length of time they were gone, so we could take care of the animals, the garden and fields. This was in the summer and 2 things I recall; I picked a lot of green beans from the garden and canned them, and there was hay that had been baled and needed to be brought to the barn, which Don and I did after he got home from his job in Lockport. As I'm writing this, I wonder what we did with Dennis while we were in the fields. Oh well, the Lord took care of us all. My folks had a good time and saw some country they had never seen before, and got a taste of lobster fresh from my uncle's traps. My sister and hubby went back to visit our aunt many times after that too and always enjoyed Maine.

Now back to 1952, Don finally was released from doctors to go back to work about the middle of September, after 4 ½ months of being off. Our income had been Worker's Compensation pay, and our health insurance was intact for which we were thankful and Laura's birth was taken care of with that. Don's bills were paid by Compensation, but the salary from them was not what he would normally earn, so although we were never destitute, we weren't flush with money. We were thankful though that Don could work but the doctor's had determined there wasn't any more to be done except watch his injury. I can't remember if he started working the night or afternoon shift right away but I know he did before too long, and that brings us to another hard time in 1952.

Grandpa and Grandma Rigerman knew they could not keep their home, with no income, poor health, mortgage payments, etc., so the house went up for sale. Finally in the fall some folks bought it, they got some money, paid the mortgage and had to decide where to move to. Grandma's sister, Florence and her family, lived not too far from where my folks lived and they told about a tiny place for rent which at one time was a chicken coop, so you know how small it was, but it was about 5 minutes from where Florence lived and 15 minutes from where we were. It had a tiny bedroom, living room, kitchen and a little dinette area, located by Tonawanda Creek, and probably was used as a summer cottage on the creek as folks from Buffalo would come to the country for weekends, summer or what have you. So in they moved, after having to get rid of furniture they had in their place in town.

As I look back, I wonder how they lived, with no income, and Gram did like to spend money; what with bowling, shopping, her lodge, eating out, which she and I did quite a few times since I came into the family. A big day was to go to Buffalo, shopping

and eating in a nice restaurant, while my mother took care of the kids. I guess Gram gave up quite a bit, but that too is part of life.

Well, fall days moved on, December was soon upon us, Laura continued to grow, be a good baby and Dennis grew too and was well behaved. Grandpa's health just deteriorated more and more and in December, when we buried Don's cousin Rodger Graff, who died 6 months after he was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease when he finally graduated from Cornell Veterinary school, Grandpa said, "I'll be next".

He was so right. Rodger was buried on Saturday, December 13, 1952, after he died on Wednesday, December 10, and just one week later to the day, December 17, Grandpa died too, and was buried Saturday, December 20. On that Wednesday, Don and I had gone to Buffalo in the morning to finish Christmas shopping and the children were with my mother. When we got home, she said Grandma R had called and wanted us to come over. We decided to leave Dennis with my mom and we took Laura to Gram's. Grandpa was mostly just sitting in his chair, not responding much to anything, but it was decided that Don should still go to work for his afternoon shift and Laura and I would stay. Grandma and I spent some time discussing Christmas and gifts, had some supper, and when we went in to where Gramps was, I checked him and told Gram, "He isn't breathing". She just looked at him and didn't know what to do next. I called the doctor, he said he expected it, he had been there that morning, so there was no need for him to come or anything, call the mortuary, I did that, called Don at work to come home, call his brother Dick and Aunt Florence. I also went to the landlord's house to tell him. He said, "Where is he? Did you close his eyes?" I said, "No, he's still in the chair, the funeral director is coming." But the man said, "We can't leave him like that, I'll come and help you." So he came over and he and I lifted the body out of the chair and on to the bed, closed the eyes and mouth and tied a diaper around the head so the mouth would stay closed. At 22 years of age, I had no previous experience with anything like that so it was good I went to the landlord to tell him. A weird thing always sticks in my mind, that when I went to his house, they were watching the Arthur Godfrey Christmas show on T.V., a show I had not ever watched, but for many years after, we did. Don finally got there and the people from the funeral home, who were shirttail kin of Gramps'. Another thing I recall was when they took the body out, Grandma fainted. I guess the shock of it all just got to her. Such a void and emptiness there was now. We took her to her sister's, but it was bedlam there, so she spent that night with us at my folks place, sleeping with me in my bed and I guess Don was in with Dennis. The funeral, as I said, was on Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, on a cold snowy day, and life tried to get back to normal. Grandma spent some time with Aunt Alice and at her little place and for Christmas we all went to Aunt Alice's for Christmas Eve after church in Lockport. The topper of that year was we parked the car in front of the church with our gifts for Alice and Dick's family in it, and I guess we must have left a back door open, as someone broke in and stole some of the gifts. Not all of them but some. We looked forward to a new year and better times ahead and more changes.

One of the first things in January 1953, a month after Gramps' death, an aunt of Don's, a sister-in-law of Gramps', died. And we had another funeral and three young children left without a mother. It seems like life means there are always decisions to be made. Some of them are more difficult and involved than others, which could be very simple, and so in 1953 some more decisions had to be made. With Grandpa R. gone

there was a certainty of no income from that source for Gram R. At only 54 years, he had been too young for Social Security, Gram was too young too. She had some money from the sale of the house but her options were not very many. Don and I were hoping he was going to get a nice settlement from Workman's Compensation for his knee injury, and after we heard different people say, "Oh, you'll get a bunch", our hopes were soaring. Living in with my parents was not the easiest thing either, so it was decided we would look for a house to buy. Gram R. would lend us the down payment, and it would be big enough for her to live with us.

In March we found, bought and moved into our first home of our own at 24 Juniper St., Lockport. It was an old house, being sold as an estate sale. The owner had died and his daughter wanted to sell it, as it was her inheritance. Her asking price was \$12,000 I believe, but she came down to \$10,000, and now we needed to get a loan. The bank didn't want to give us a loan, didn't have a job earning enough money, but we were told that the people who lived next door to #24 would make loans to people with 6% interest; payments 2 times a year. They had quite a few such transactions as we could see when people stopped there to make their payments. This was how we got our home, such excitement to have a home. It had 3 bedrooms with a good-sized closet/room and 1 bathroom upstairs. Downstairs there were 2 living rooms, a den, dining room and small kitchen with a small, not very good basement. One nice thing was that we got to keep a lot of the furniture that was in the house, like the dining room suite, chairs, kitchen stove, window coverings, rugs on dining room and living room floors. The children have always chided me that they were not allowed in the one living room, which was true, but we, in the '50's, were ahead of the trend with having a "family room". We had a TV and some easy chairs in it and it was used all the time, whereas the "front living room" had our sofa, chair, etc., and we'd put the Christmas tree in there each year and generally only used it for company.

Soon we all settled into a routine of work, childcare, household duties and it seemed to work out well with having Grandma with us. Baby Laura was growing, always a good baby, no serious illness', and Dennis too was growing up without serious illness.

One day in the summer of 1953, Don was picking cherries from the sweet cherry tree that was in our back yard. It was coming up vacation time so I had the brilliant idea of going on a vacation. The idea snowballed and we took off on a trip to the Thousand Islands, an area in northern New York State where there are a thousand, or maybe more small ones, islands in the St. Lawrence River. It is a prominent vacation place with towns around that cater to vacationers. We stayed in cabins overnight, cooked our own meals, took a tour boat ride on the river, crossed over the river into Canada and came home via Ontario, Canada and Niagara Falls. I don't recall any big problems with our first trip with little children and I suppose we had a fun time.

Another fun thing for the summer was going to a place in Ontario on the Lake to spend a week fishing. This trip was Gram R's idea, as her sister Florence and her family, had been there. It was an OK time but the owner of the place wasn't the most congenial woman so it could have been nicer. We celebrated Dennis' 4<sup>th</sup> birthday there and his gift was a tractor we had taken with us and Don had to put it together there. Laura traveled well and was a good vacationer, her 1<sup>st</sup> birthday had occurred just before we went on the trip. Fish were caught but I don't remember how many. As I've looked over old

pictures, I also see that Gram R had already bought the big white boat that we used for a number of years on fishing trips. Her and Grandpa had had a 7 HP motor that they had used on their trips to Canada in former years, so that was used on Gram's newest toy.

1953 also saw me have my first big entertainment party. My school best friend, Bernice, was going to be married in September, so I hosted a bridal shower for her, inviting gals we had gone to school with. I made decorations, food, etc., and really had a fun time.

There were other events of the year; picnics, a wedding of my bridesmaid Sharon Swain, birthday parties, holiday celebrations, Christmas of course, spent with relatives, enjoying our own home and 1953 did end on a better note than 1952 had.

1954 was a more or less quiet year, without any traumatic events, except that Don's step-grandfather, Milo Deming passed away in the fall of that year. That was difficult for his grandmother, who was left alone in her small home in the small town of Lyndonville, which was quite a distance from where we were in Lockport. A good thing happened though, Don's Uncle Ed, who was Grandma Deming's son from her first marriage, as were all the adult children in that family, namely Don's mother, her sister Florence, 2 brothers Jack and Ed. Uncle Ed was a bachelor, had fought in World War I, had lived with brother Jack in Detroit, Michigan most of his life, and in his senior years he lived in a Veterans Administration facility in Bath, NY. At some point, and I can't remember just when because I believe he was still there in 1956 when we went to visit him, he did leave Bath and moved in with his mother and was able to help her with her homemaking, etc., which was a relief to her other children.

As I recall, it was in the late winter or early spring when there was a devastating fire at Western N.Y. Container. It did lots and lots of damage and production was halted for a day, but since Don was operating a machine that was replaced by one brought in, he didn't lose much work time, for which we were very thankful. Rebuilding was begun right away, which took a year or so and in 1955 an Open House was held for a Grand Re-opening of the place.

This year again had holiday celebrations with the extended family, picnics, and birthday parties for the kids, who were growing fast. Dennis started kindergarten, attending Washington-Hunt public school, which he walked to. It was located near the hospital in the city and in those days there wasn't a lot of fear about walking alone and so on. He went to the afternoon session and enjoyed school.

By Christmas of 1954 I was once more pregnant, with our third child, which we were glad to be awaiting. Life seemed good; we had a home, a job for Don, our health, Dennis and Laura in fact had very few illnesses, and visits to doctors were not frequent. One thing that happened in 1953 or maybe it took til 1954 was Workmen's Compensation settlement of Don's injury in 1952. What a surprise that became. People told us we'd get lots of money, we could pay off some of the house mortgage, and on and on. When the deal was settled we received about \$700 cash. The rest of the monies were considered what he received as sick pay while he was off work and doctor bills, hospital bills, etc., and it was classified as a 10% disability. He signed off on it thus releasing them of any more responsibility. So much for getting rich. He did not require much in the way of more medical treatment. He had a brace made at one time to wear but never did wear it a lot, and he participated in activities with our children, as well as bowling, for a good number of years.

So here we are in 1955, my pregnancy went well, not a lot of morning sickness, Laura and Dennis growing more and more. With another child on the way, we felt we needed to do some changing for sleeping arrangements. The large bedroom in the back of the house was shared by Dennis and Laura, but we needed another room now, so where the quite large room was beyond the bedroom and being 2 nice walk in closets on each side of that room, we decided to take part of one of those closets, open it up and use that with the room that was already there. It would require walking through the large room to get to it, but it seemed the best solution. Then when the baby arrived, if it was a boy, he and Dennis would get the large room, Laura would get the new room. If it were a girl, Dennis would get the new room, which is what happened. Don did the work, putting up wallboard for where the closet had been cut; I did the painting and also repainted the big room too. I remember I did that in the summer and even did the klutzy thing of falling off the stepladder, causing me concern if I hurt the baby but it didn't bring on labor pains or anything.

I was always pregnant through the summer and it seemed each summer was the hottest on record. 1952 and 1955 weren't as hot as 1949, but it seemed like it. My due date was August 13 and on that day we had a terrible rain and windstorm, which was called the fringes of hurricane Connie, which had gone through parts of the eastern U.S., but still no baby. I had some apprehension too, since my doctor was planning to go on vacation on August 14, and the doctor who would take over had just lost a mother to a hemorrhage about a month or less before. He was the same doctor who had delivered Dennis, but I was still concerned.

But at 3:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 14, I woke up with pains which were quite intense and frequent. We quickly called the doctor, who was still home, and went to the hospital and 5:30 a.m. Deborah made her appearance, all in fine shape we thought. Family was told; Don went home and went to church with Dennis and Laura that morning. All we had to do was pick a name, and wait for the week to go by so we could go home. Things didn't turn out quite like that though; as sometime during mid-morning or so the doctor came into the room and I said, "How come you haven't gone on vacation yet?" He began to tell me everything wasn't all right with the baby, there were problems and since he was planning his vacation he wanted to transfer the baby to Children's Hospital in Buffalo, where she could have more constant care and doctors who could check her over to see what problems there were. He did say there was a cleft palate, which I had never heard of, didn't know what that meant or how serious it was. I agreed to his plan, so it was set up with an ambulance to transport her. I had not seen her, nor had Don and since we, as Lutherans, believed baptism was the most important thing to be done to your child, I asked to have that done, but I still had no name. Options in my mind had been Rebecca, Susan or Deborah, but Don and I hadn't confirmed one yet, and he was not coming back until after lunchtime. They did bring the baby into the room for me to see and said a nurse could baptize her, so I decided on Deborah Lynn for the name and tried to stay calm. Later when Don did come in, I said, "Did you hear about the baby?" He said, "No, but they just let me see her." They never did tell him about it, so I had to tell him all as best I could and of deciding on the name myself. We were both in shock, wondering what was happening, how serious, what caused it, etc.

Visiting hours and bed rest things were still the same as in '49, so only grandparents and Don could visit and I was there for a week even though I had no baby to

take care of and didn't know if I'd have one when I got home. In the 1950's things were different than they are in the '90's in many ways; I didn't question nurses, doctors, I didn't know about medical problems especially in babies so we muddled along as best we knew how. I can't remember if Don went to Buffalo to visit the baby, but I know we had been told she could go home on Saturday, which was the same day I was discharged and she had only a cleft palate, no harelip, and we were told of no other problems. But we were not shown how to feed her or what to expect; except to use a lambs nipple to feed her, which was a long nipple she should be able to suck on.

Don got me home from the hospital on a Saturday, and then he and Grandma Rigerman went to Buffalo to get the baby, Deborah. So I wouldn't have to be alone during that time, Aunt Alice came from Medina and stayed with me and Dennis and Laura. Don went to a drugstore also, to get the nipple we were told to use. Needless to say it still didn't work very well and for quite awhile we had very frustrating feeding times. Finally we decided to cut the hole of the nipple larger, so the milk practically just ran out. The problem was that Deborah's tongue wasn't strong enough to suck with enough strength for the milk to come out. The other problem we had was when the milk wasn't swallowed good, she would have it coming up out through her nose, and that made it uncomfortable for her and hard for us to deal with and for the rest of the family too.

As the days went on we became more accustomed to the feeding procedure, and Deborah was a pretty good baby as far as sleeping, eating, etc. Still I was concerned about caring for her, wondering if more was wrong, how serious her problem was and dealing with people. In the 1950's, handicaps, disabilities and some one different were treated differently than I the '80's and '90's. The only contact I had had with a handicapped person was a young girl whose parents went to the church I grew up in. I never did know what her disabilities were, but she always just sat in a carriage-like bed the parents had made for her, as she grew older. She didn't talk, walk or seem to have much use of her hands either, though actually I'm not sure because only very seldom was she seen in public. Always kept at home, and because she had a sister who was my brother's age and went to our one room school with us, I was in their home several times and saw her there. She died after we were married, but nothing was said about it, and I felt my mother was concerned there was more wrong with Debby than we were told at her birth. Of course, as it turned out there wasn't, but I thought for a while there was a stigmatism there. It was never talked about. Our doctor was not too worried it seemed, so I tried to take my cue from him. One other thing that became a concern because my mother mentioned it, and I had noticed it too, was that her chest seemed to be sunk in or depressed. I spoke to the doctor and x-rays were taken which showed no problems, and as Deborah grew and developed we laughed about it, since her "chest" really did develop with no problem.

Even though Deborah had been baptized in the Lockport Hospital before being moved to the Buffalo hospital, we had the baptism re-affirmed in the church by the pastor when she was about a month old. This was an opportunity for our family to get together which always had been a highlight in our lives. And with this baby I did not go to Grandma Wendler's house to spend time as I had done with Dennis and had been living there when Laura was born. Since Grandma Rigerman was living with us she was able to

help. Really I can't remember too many things about the remaining months of 1955, perhaps Dennis or Laura have some insights into that time from baby books.

I do need to put a parenthesis in here as I have thought of different things that happened in past years and forgot to put them down before.

One thing was vacations were not a common thing in the first years because of money, job changes, babies, new home, etc. But in 1951, over Labor Day weekend, we had the opportunity to go to Canada and Journey's End. Grandma Wendler would take care of Dennis for us and our best man, Bob Wall and his wife Vi, were going with us. She was not an outdoors person, who enjoyed primitive lifestyles like Journey's End would be, but she was willing. We had made arrangements with the owners, Harold Gunter, to have the boat at the dock in St. Ola to go to the cabin. We left on Friday afternoon, planning to drive through the night to get there, and our first problem came when we ran into a very severe rain and thunderstorm in Canada, which then led to a horrendous traffic tie-up because of some sort of accident. This delayed us for a long, long time, so when we got to St. Ola it was very dark and very late. Then we couldn't find the boat or the storage place where it would be stored. We ended up trying to sleep in the car til daylight, not too comfortable for 4 adults in a 4-door car that didn't have tilt-back seats and we had no blankets or anything. Morning finally came, and Harold came from his other cabin; we got the boat and put the motor on that was Don's dad's that we had brought with us, but our problems weren't over, since half way up the lake the motor stopped. Now what? After some feverish trying, Don gave up and we started to paddle to the cabin. Fortunately, Harold came upon us and towed us in. By this time it was past hunger time and the cabin had to be made ready, as Rita had already put it in order for the winter. I had to get blankets out, get beds ready, Don had to get fires going and the rain the night before had cooled the temperature down, with a good taste of fall. We did get some fish, in spite of the cool, cloudy days, and no motor but truly it was not an ideal trip for relaxing and for Vi's introduction to this type of fun. Harold towed us back to St. Ola and we had a good trip back to Lockport but Bob and Vi never vacationed with us again. They had been married in '49 or '50, had then had 3 children over the next years, so maybe that's why we didn't. Who knows? Once we moved away from Lockport, we basically lost touch with them as with most of the friends we had.

Also in 1951, in the fall, while Grandma and Grandpa Rigerman were living with us it was discovered that Don's Grandma Deming had a lump on her breast, so she went to Buffalo General Hospital for a mastectomy. She was 71 years old, but she went through the surgery fine, though things were much different than today. She was in the hospital for several weeks as I recall and had therapy and rehabilitation right there. We would go to visit her and she wasn't in her room, "oh, she's out visiting other folks" we'd be told and sure enough, she was. The surgery had got all the cancer and she did have scars that had to be cleaned, so when she was discharged, Don's mother and father went with her to her home in Lyndonville and helped her through this time. And after Gramp Deming died, even though Uncle Ed went to live with Grandma at some point, she used to come to spend time with us too at the house on Juniper Street. Don had always been very close to Grandma and his name was put on her bank accounts and he helped her with finances, but as so many times in other peoples situations like this, hard feelings and problems came up with some relatives saying Don took money for himself, so he had his

name removed and Aunt Florence had her name put on. Funny how many families have troubles where money is concerned.

In my photo albums there are pictures of one event that happened in 1954, and that was a very huge rock slide at Niagara Falls, where tons and tons of rock broke off the American Falls tumbling into the river gorge. It changed the face of the Falls and the Park as regards to where you could walk, how close you could get to the Falls. Of course, now the whole area has become a state park, admission charged with little train mobiles taking you around, though you can still do lots of walking.

Now back to 1955 and life then. The year ended on a good note I'd say. Deborah was growing, as was Dennis and Laura; Don's job was going good. Uncle Art and Aunt Lorna had their first child, Paul, born on October 16, so with Tim Schubel born in 1953, Tom Rigerman in 1952, plus David Schubel and David Rigerman (1948), there were cousins for the kids to play with and Sundays many times were spent together with our families as well as holidays, especially Christmas. So not only was a new baby another change in our lives, but a baby with a cleft palate really made changes, which extended out for many years after 1955, what with doctor evaluations, surgery, speech lessons, and my concern about what having another child would bring. I had always said I wanted 4 children but after this I said I didn't want to take another chance, so no more.

Another way for one to get insights and ideas about these years can be had by looking at the photo albums and looking at the old movies we had put on videotapes, which show vacations in Canada and many other aspects of our lives. We actually didn't have movies until 1956, I believe it was, when Grandma Rigerman bought an 8 mm movie camera and a projector and we got to use it a lot.

As I look back and think things through, I am sure I have not included things that might be important to our children but hopefully these are important things. Some tidbits could be: Don's work was pretty steady, he sometimes worked shift work, especially the afternoon shift, 3 – 11, so our routine was different so I could fix him a good meal before he went to work. One winter, but I'm not sure when, our car sat in the garage on blocks because it needed some repair work done and we didn't have the money to do it. Fortunately because his mother was living with us we could use her car for some things, but Don would walk to work, I many times walked or took the city bus to Lockport's downtown for groceries or other shopping. In the spring he did the repairs on it. I never worked outside the home during those years, but I had opportunity to work with Grandma R at a catering service that was contracted with the General Motors plant of Harrison Radiator. We would help when they had special dinners at special occasions. In fact, the day before Debby was born we were supposed to work at a picnic (which we had done before too) but because the weather was so bad from the fringes of hurricane Connie, the picnic was cancelled. It was hard rains and high winds so a picnic was out. I earned a little money doing that which was nice and also Grandma R got a job. I don't remember what year it was but I do remember at one point she was talking about her money getting low and she didn't know what she would do. I asked her if she thought maybe she should consider getting a job. Well, yes, but what could she do. As it turned out her 2 good friends helped there. Their mother owned a small diner on Market Street in town and the 2 women worked in it. They thought Gram could get a job there, which was what she ended up doing. She cooked there, the place wasn't open on Sunday so she always had that day off. They had excellent fish fries every Friday and we sure liked to eat there on

Friday. Gram didn't earn a lot of money, but she did pay us \$7.00 a week for her room and board. I did her laundry, cleaned her room, she had meals with us, and she did buy lots of food too. All in all, we did seem to get along pretty good with her. I could get along better with her than my own mother. It did seem like she scolded the kids and had less patience with Laura than Dennis and Deborah. I don't know why, maybe because their personalities were too much alike. She also would take me with her lots of times to Buffalo to shop and eat out and of course, she did lots of babysitting for us, though we really didn't go out a lot but she would do it when we needed her, or else my folks did lots of babysitting too. My folks came to Lockport from the farm for shopping, to visit Mom's sisters and to visit us too.

I'm having a hard time remembering any particular incidents of early 1956. I guess things were going fairly smoothly. Back to Christmas of 1955, I believe it was that year that Laura had an accident with Dennis, resulting in her falling off the piano bench and cutting her head on the heat radiator. In the old houses you had large iron radiators in each room and this is what Laura hit. We took her to the hospital emergency room and the doctor put some stitches in it. Laura was awake during the procedure, her face and head was covered with a cloth to protect the wound from dirt etc., and Laura did not like it that she could not see. This happened on December 23, on December 24<sup>th</sup> the church's Sunday School presented a Christmas program, and Laura and Dennis both would have participated in it. Since the doctor had said to keep Laura calm and quiet, we decided not to have her take part, and also Laura, Deborah and me didn't go to Dick and Norma's for our Christmas Eve get-together. We used to take turns having Christmas Eve; one year at their place, one year at ours, and also going to Aunt Alice's some years too. Then on Christmas Day we went to Grandma Wendler's, with the rest of the family and a sister and family of my mothers. This year we kept Laura home Christmas Eve, but she and all of us went to Grandma's Christmas Day and Laura was OK. Had to get the stitches out in 10 days or so. But in 1956 we didn't have any incidents like that.

Some snapshots I have show we went for a day picnic to Caniduagua with Aunt Alice, Uncle Fred, and Grandma R. This was in what we call the Finger Lakes region of Central New York State. But the big thing of that summer was our vacation. After several years of not going back to Journey's End, we took that trip for 2 weeks. Now, taking a vacation in a place like this, with 2 children and a year old baby was quite a feat. We were taking the boat Grandma had bought and her motor, so we packed that boat full. I remember that I took the dresser drawers out of the dresser, with kids clothes in them, and put them in the boat. Taking enough food too was our idea of the trip, though we could buy some in the town of Madoc. We left on Saturday night, drove all night, getting to the dock of Limerick Lake on Sunday morning. Harold, Journey's end owner, met us at the dock and took us people to the cabin, Don running our boat filled with our gear, including the playpen, which Debby slept in. There were no disposable diapers at that time so I had to spend quite a bit of time washing them by hand for Debby. But fortunately we had good weather so I'd wash in the morning, hang them out, then go fishing each day. We spent lots of time out on the lake and catching a bunch each day. That year Grandma came up on our second week, so we went to the dock to pick her up, had to get ice for the ice box and maybe a few items at the store in St. Ola, run by Dick Woods. Wood stoves heated the cabin, so lots of wood had to be chopped too. We would go to bed early and lots of days stay in bed until 10 a.m. because it would be chilly

in the cabin and we'd have to wait for Don to get up and get the fires going. Because Grandma was there that year, when it was time to go home she didn't want to make the trip in the one day so we stayed overnight at a motel in Toronto. She paid for the room and bought our breakfast on Sunday. When we were ready to leave the area, Dennis rode with Gram and they were supposed to follow us out of town, through Hamilton and over the Burlington Bridge. Someplace she made a wrong turn after she couldn't see us at a signal light, and the 2 of them were lost for a while as to how to get back on the main highway, the Queen Elizabeth Way. We went on home and they finally got on the right road too. One interesting aside from it was they stopped to ask a man for directions and he couldn't help, then they asked another man and he didn't know what city he was in, a visitor he said.

The next day or so after we got home it was Deborah's 1<sup>st</sup> birthday and we were thankful we got through her first year of life, and she had done quite well, though there were still hurdles ahead. We had more picnics, parties, etc., for birthdays, and spent time at Aunt Adeline's, Aunt Alice's, Grandma Wendler's and holidays were special and spent there too.

Sometime during 1956, we were given another opportunity to test our "nettle", as I would say. Don had a good job at Western Container, it had been bought by a paper-board company in Rittman, Ohio, called Ohio Boxboard, which helped the local company with more money, more customers, etc., and it was OK as far as we were concerned. And sometime in '56 they announced a program where blue-collar workers could try for a chance to go to Supervisory training classes and become a foreman or something, thus improving the job situation. It would mean going to Ohio for the schooling and probably being placed in a position somewhere other than Lockport, and the schooling lasted a year. Don and I discussed it between us and felt it was a good opportunity, so he applied for it. I guess I need to inject here because of questions about our talking things over; that we had made it a practice not to talk about the many affairs one encounters, in front of the children. We did this between ourselves, and now I don't even remember if we talked about it to my parents or to Don's mother. We knew it all was a "long shot" and had no idea what his chances would be, since he didn't have a high school degree. Also, I can't remember all the details or the time frames, but the process started in 1956, and Don got far enough that he took tests, had interviews and went to Rittman for more interviews. That was probably in early 1957, as the classes would begin in the spring. We were apprehensive as to how our lives would change, but we had a spirit of adventure and felt Ohio wasn't very far away. But for the class in 1957, it was not to be. Don missed out, was not accepted, but he was told to try it again when the next opportunity came along. As it turned out there was no class in 1958, but for the 1959 class, he tried again. Went through all the steps again and was accepted. He left for Rittman on April 6, 1959 and from then our lives were completely changed.

The reason there was no class in '58, will take me back to '57. As I had said before, this was a union company; Don held some union positions too and then of course contracts had to come up for renewal. In 1957 this was the case, there was much negotiating and Don was involved in all of it, but no agreement could be reached, so a strike was called in early September. This meant no income for our family, since you could not get unemployment benefits, but you could get a small sum if you walked the picket lines. What to do? Well, Don got odd jobs; picking apples and peaches, and

driving taxicab. I tried to take in ironing, but there wasn't a lot of call for that, though I did have a couple clients. The strike lasted for 2 months and we did get behind in our utility payments, but fortunately we only paid the mortgage payment 2 times a year so by the time one was due in January, we were able to pay it. But because of the upheaval in the company, they didn't have any training class for 1958 scheduled.

There were after effects from it in another way I kind of think, because I got ill the first of December after we had been godparents for my brother's newest addition, Heather. I had terrible stomach pains on the right side. I couldn't get relief from anything, so after about 5 days, I was sent to the hospital. I was there 10 days and treated with penicillin. The doctor was not a very talkative person and none of us pushed to find out what was wrong, but believe it was an inflammation of the bladder and I felt it was caused from all the stress I was under. Whether that was actually the case I'm not sure, but I was cured, I never had a recurrence and was never in a hospital again until 1971

I'll skip back now to early 1957. I guess you could say it was a busy year. I had always wanted our house remodeled a bit, or even sell it and have a different one. I had sent away for blueprints for my "dream" home from a magazine about housing, but when we had contractors look at it and give us cost estimates it proved to cost more than we had read about in the magazine. Never one to give up though, we talked to one of the contractors about changing our dining room and making it into a large modern kitchen. We had ideas and plans and he told us we could do it for \$1200. Here again our neighbor lady lent us the money to have it done. It included putting in new windows, plastering walls, tearing out the cupboards that were in the dining room, custom built cupboards, a drop-in range top and built-in oven.

But before this was started, we had been doing things with regard to Deborah's physical condition, as going to doctor, plastic surgeons in Buffalo, determining to have repair surgery done on the cleft palate. In March 1957, the surgery was scheduled in Children's Hospital in Buffalo. It seems to me it was set for a Saturday morning, which also turned out to be the day my parents moved from their farm home, where my dad was born, to a home in Lockport just a few blocks from where we were living. My dad had decided to leave the farm since it was too much for him to take care of, none of his children wanted to run it, and it was deteriorating from neglect. My sister, brother and spouses helped them move, while Don and I were at the hospital for Deborah's surgery. All went well and we left her after she had come out of the surgery. She was in the hospital a week and we went to visit her one time. At 18 months she probably was fearful, but when we got there she didn't seem to recognize us or take to being fussed over and when we left I could hear her cry all the way down the hall, because I guess after we had been there awhile she wanted us to stay, but I said I'm not going in again, and cause her to be so upset, and needless to say I was pretty upset too, leaving her there. So we didn't go again until we brought her home the week after surgery. That turned out to be a wrong thing I did too. My folks' church in Wolcottsburg was having their semi-annual chicken supper and I wanted to go visit and I felt afterward I was responsible for Deborah getting a cold, as she was not used to being out in public. Her resistance had dropped from her surgery and hospital stay. Anyway, by the next week she had quite a cold, and one other thing she had to put up with was wearing what we called a straight jacket. It was a vest like thing with splints in the sleeves so she couldn't bend her arms to get her hands or fingers in her mouth causing more infections. She wore that a week or

so I guess. The other thing that happened on the Saturday she came home was that Uncle Earl's father died quite suddenly that morning. That incident made for lots of changes in Earl and Adeline's life, as did my folks having only a week before made a big change in their lives.

The workers came on Monday morning after Deb came home and began their work. Since that caused many changes, perhaps that helped too with her having such a cold. I don't remember how long we were torn up, but I do remember don and I did the finishing on the cupboards, so there was lots of sanding, applying varnish, sanding again, applying again, but when all was finished we had a beautiful kitchen. And my mother and I took off the wallpaper in the living rooms, den and stairway and repapered it all. So much for a new house.

That summer we again went to Journey's End for 2 weeks. This time Gram R did not come but the 2<sup>nd</sup> week, the Schubels came. We had a great time, catching lots of fish, laughing a lot, the guys chopped lots of wood and we all thought this place was paradise. We even picked out a spot between Journey's End and the cabin where Rita and Harold now lived and named it Dreamer's paradise, wistfully hoping we could own it one day. Of course, that fell through by the time we moved to Ohio.

In between all the other happenings, we again celebrated birthdays, holidays, had picnic, etc., and though Christmas was a little different because I had been in the hospital until December 15, and couldn't do much when I first came home, Grandma R and Don got gifts for the children, we did go to Aunt Alice's to celebrate as well as Grandma Wendler's in their new home on Remick Parkway. Grandpa had made the adjustment of not living on his farm or homestead very nicely. He kept on working at his job in Buffalo at Pratt & Lambert Paints. Grandma and I would walk downtown with little ones in tow and they came over to visit us a lot, including Grandpa stopping a couple of times on Saturday when he would have to run downtown for something. These were fun times with family! And one of the biggest and nicest celebrations of the year was on November 2, 1957. That was my mother's birthday but that wasn't what we were celebrating, even though my father thought it was. In October (28<sup>th</sup> in fact) it had been my parent's 35<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and my sister thought it would be nice to have a surprise celebration in their honor. I agreed, as did my brother, so we began making plans. For Don and I it was a bit difficult since he had been on strike, not much income, uncertain when the strike would be settled, but we wanted to do it and went ahead with plans. Since hindsight is better than foresight, we were glad we did it then, since my mother did not live until their 45<sup>th</sup>, and of course not 50<sup>th</sup>, and my father was gone by then too. We set the date for a Saturday evening at the church hall in Wolcottsburg where most of their friends were and some of the relatives too. I don't remember all the details, we had some type of sit down meal, invited many friends and relatives, had a wedding cake, had some help with the food prep, but Adeline and I did quite a bit. Art's wife Lorna couldn't be there, as baby Heather was due any time and she was born 3 days later, November 5<sup>th</sup>. One stickler was getting my parents there without them knowing why, so we had a sister of Grandma's, Aunt Minnie, say she would pick them up to go to Aunt Rose's house for a birthday party, and on the way they had to go out to Wolcottsburg to pick up another sister, Aunt Anna and her husband. I remember I made a quick phone call to Grandpa and told him to be sure and have Grandma dress up nice. He said, "Oh, OK, I will too" or something like that, and that tipped him off that it might be a big party for Grandma,

but he didn't say anything to Grandma. Believe me, they were both surprised! And it was great! A happy memory.

I guess 1958 must have been a pretty routine year, as I can't remember any earth shattering events. Laura would have started kindergarten in the fall of 1957, attending the same public school Dennis started in, Washington-Hunt. She always remembers an incident where her Daddy spanked her which was probably in the spring of 1958. The children had to walk to school and it was a fair distance. On the way they would pass a house where friends of Grandma R lived who we all knew too, as well as passing a neighborhood grocery store, which carried lots of goodies too. I don't recall the reason, but this particular day Laura was late getting home. She went to morning class and should have been home in plenty of time for lunch. Don was working afternoon shift then, so I prepared a big meal for us to have before he would leave for work. Well, Laura still wasn't home and we were concerned, so when she finally came home, Don was very upset, as well as angry and decided she needed a spanking. The severity of it I don't remember but to her emotions and feelings it was traumatic because her Daddy had never hurt her before, or afterward I would add. Now with her mother it was a very different situation. I would lose my temper, get angry and a number of times Laura, as well as Dennis and Deborah got spanked. And Laura did not dawdle on the way home from school for a long time after that.

This make me think of another incident Laura was involved in. It was probably the fall of 1954 or early spring of 1955. Dennis was going to kindergarten at the time and he went to afternoon classes. On the particular day, I had been over to the neighbors or outside for some reason for a short time, Laura was in the house playing and Dennis was at the neighbor who lived back of us playing with his friend, which makes me remember now why I had gone outside. Dennis had not come home to get ready for lunch and going to school, so I had gone out to look for him. When I tried to get back in the house at the back door, Laura, inside alone, had turned the key that was in the door keyhole. No matter how I tried to explain how to turn the key, she couldn't or wouldn't do it. We went to the front door and I tried to explain how to turn the little button to open that door. Same results, no luck, and no basement window to get in through, and all the time getting closer for Dennis to be getting ready for school. He did finally come home, and I went next door to Mrs. Salmons and called Don to come home with his key to open the door. Laura didn't get any spanking this time, she was only 2 or 2 ½ years old and I should not have left her alone, and from then on we didn't leave the key in the back door. Dennis did make it to school, Don got back to work (he must have been on the day shift then) and I supposed Dennis got a talking to about not coming home when he should. I don't think I spanked him either, but maybe he has a different memory of it.

We did go to Canada and Journey's End again in 1958 for 2 weeks. As before the weather was good, the fishing was good and Aunt Adeline and family came again. While there, David's 10<sup>th</sup> birthday occurred and so we baked him a cake in the old wood cook stove, decorated it with Life Savers and had a celebration there. There was a downside to their stay this year. They had to leave before us; on a Friday I believe because they had a wedding to go to in New York. Well, after all the excitement, noise and fun of having extra people, it got very quiet and lonesome after they left, so we decided to leave a day early too rather than staying until Sunday.

As 1958 came to a close and we went in to 1959, Don was again trying for the supervisory school that would begin in April of '59. This would be a big step for our family, but we thought we were up to the challenge, and he did make the grade this time. Don left for Ohio in April, he took the car, so the only wheels I would have would be courtesy of Grandma Rigerman or Grandpa Wendler taking me places. Don could come home some weekends but not every one. We put the house up for sale, Grandma R had to find some other place to live since she would not move with us. As a matter of fact, I think she had been spending her time between us and Aunt Alice's house. She would spend time at Alice's house and on her days off come to Lockport. It took several months for our house to sell, but we were glad it did before it was time to go to school. On August 25<sup>th</sup>, I got the money for the house, paid Mrs. Salmons her mortgage money, paid Grandma R back the money she had lent us for the down payment and had very little left. We made no profit on that sale. American Red Ball movers were there packing everything up and Grandma R and Grandpa Wendler took us to the Buffalo airport for our flight to Cleveland where Don would meet us and take us to our new home in Rittman. Grandma R had found an apartment in Medina, which was furnished so we took her bedroom furniture with us.

For me it was quite an adventure and that was the way I tried to look at it. An opportunity for us to move up and ahead even though it meant leaving family and friends we had in New York. I tried to get this idea across to the children, but I'm not sure they agreed that it was an opportunity to widen horizons. Dennis had been in Cub Scouts and made friends, there were neighborhood friends they had to leave and go into a different state, different neighborhood, different school and church. It was difficult.

There was no vacation in Canada this year, in fact no vacation at all. We now were living in a small town, in a large old house on Main Street, with the town park behind us. Dennis and Laura were enrolled in the public school, though they had gone to the Lutheran Parochial school in Lockport, and they could walk to it. We had been referred to a doctor for Deborah to be checked out and to see about her taking speech lessons. Don's schooling was a 6 month classroom session and 6 months hands on work in the factory. We had some company in our new home that fall. My parents, along with Aunt Adeline's family came for a quick weekend trip, Aunt Alice and Uncle Freddy came for a long weekend, and Grandma Rigerman also came to visit. And the year ended with us going to Grandpa Wendler's house to spend Christmas with our family in New York. We visited all the families and spent a week there in New York ending 1959 on a mixed emotion time. It had been nice to see the family, be "home" and sad to say goodbye and go back to "home" in Ohio. And though it was only a little over 200 miles and 4 – 5 hour drive, it seemed a long way away for our first time away from our roots.

I have been writing this journal over many years having started it when we were living in our 5<sup>th</sup> wheel and it is now 1998, and I have written quite a bit of these last years since January. I'm sure I have overlooked many things which may have been important to one or all of you. I had considered I wouldn't write any more since I have come to 1960, and thought you will remember things from the years since then. If I remember things that seem important, I will add it on though.