

Not too many things stand out in my memory of the years between Leland's death and the next traumatic experience---that of my father being killed. Three years passed between those two happenings in our family, but I don't remember much of those years. I remember little of my father--he was a plumber for R. O. Mudgett Hardware Co., and worked long days either at the shop or out on jobs, some in town, others away. I remember his sending us a card from Swanton where he was in charge of installing the plumbing in the new High School there. I remember another time when there was a bee's or hornet's nest up in a tree in our front yard, and after work one night he got a long pole, put a rag soaked in kerosene on the end of it, and just before he lighted it to stick up in the tree and burn out the nest, he in no uncertain terms told Lester and me to keep away. Well, I got too close and his sympathetic comment was, "Those stings on your face improve your looks. " I bawled a lot but nobody cared much. Another time he was papering a room upstairs in our house on School Street and I kept going up and asking questions. In exasperation, he gave me a shove, and I reappeared at the foot of the stairs, going down head over heels. Usually he was very good-natured, always whistling or singing some outlandish words he would make up to a popular song, causing Ma embarrassment, but quite pleased with his rendition himself. He had a lot to do with the church and Sunday school, but my memories of Sunday School in those days were mainly of my teachers, Mrs. Roswell Place and Mrs. Will Place, one small, the other big, who made Sunday School interesting enough so I never seemed to want to miss it. Lucky for me it was so, because Ma would have pounded my butt if I had skipped any.

Papa took me down once, at least, to the plumbing shop, and I watched him make stove pipes and thread pipes.

Every summer he had a week's vacation and we would either go to Mallett's Bay, renting a camp for the entire week, or taking the Rutland Railroad train and go across the islands to New York State and through Cherusco, Altona, Irona, and all those other funny named towns on our way to Brushton where we would stay the week with Uncle Clark and Aunt Mina on their farm in Dickenson. That was fun, riding on the stone-boat to the creamery with the milk, or fishing in the nearby brook, or playing in the fields, or for 5¢ a hundred killing flies on the porch.

One time Lester and I were up in the bedroom and with a mirror were flashing a reflection into the windows of the schoolhouse which was just beyond Willey's cow pasture from our house. I remember the teacher sent over a note to Ma, but I don't remember whether Lester or I got the licking. Tennis was the craze at that school then, and while the older kids were playing (using their tennis shoes) Lester and I would go around and spit in their other shoes. It seemed to be fun at the time.

On Sunday afternoons we would usually go for a walk, as Ma was pretty strict and there was no playing of games around our house on Sundays. The big thing was to walk down to the river where they were building a big new dam, and each week we would see how it was progressing. Most of the workers were Italians, so Papa said and we kids kind of hoped we get a chance to see what Italians looked like.

Mrs. Putnam, who lived diagonally across the street, had a sister--an old maid--- who taught school, but at this time I remember she was being courted by Jack Sharpley, a bachelor who lived down at the end of the street, and we liked to sneak up fairly close to watch the kissing games being played. I don't remember if we learned anything or not. She roomed at the Putnam's and one Saturday we knew she was in her room so we sneaked out on the back roof and serenaded her--- her name was Natalie Crocker, so our idea of a serenade was to yell at the top of our voices, "Old Lady Crockerdile--Old Lady Crockerdile" She came out with fire in her eye and the nearest I got to getting away was to run in Mrs. Carroll's shed (she lived next door) and hide behind a barrel. I remember that well because I believe I stayed cooped up behind there what seemed like three hours, but probably wasn't more than two. We were scared of her ever after that. Every time I saw her she had fire in her eye and murder in her heart. I always tried to give her a wide berth. That probably helped slow down our romance with the Putnam girls, Lois and Maida, but that was a good thing for everybody concerned.

In case you are wondering, I did go to school. In fact I started when pretty young. I was four years old when I started in the brand new building up on the top of Prospect Street. I can't remember very much about the first grade. I can't remember the teacher's name ---I usually didn't like teachers--- and the big events ^{annus} seemed ^{Buddy} when some kid couldn't hold his bladder and zoom---on the floor it would go and guess who cleaned it up--the teacher, as far as I can remember. In the second grade I got our famous or infamous second cousin, dear old Del Holley, who taught in Essex Junction for several thousand years (Harold had her in the first grade). She was a pain, but I survived. In the third grade, my fondest recollection was that of wearing my first belt; I don't know whether I had had suspenders before that or pants that buttoned to my blouse, but there it was--my first belt., I was proud of that. Pride goeth before a fall, they say and it was the same year that I was hurrying home from school because I had to go real bad---and you know what I mean--and I never went at school for two reasons: first, I was naturally shy about undressing in public, and second, old Del Holley always went not only down to the basement, but also way around to the back where the stand-up booths were to see that we didn't do any fooling. That couldn't have been all she saw. But here I was hustling home with a missile ready to be exploded and the house only a half the street away, when going around the tree by the edge of Nel Stanley's yard, relief came, but not to my joy. The rest of the way I limped home dragging one leg and whatever was causing it to drag. You can bet Ma didn't like my heroics in trying to get home "to be with my family". Besides cleaning me up, she administered an after-cleaning lotion that had a sting, and like the ads say "Thanks, I needed that", wasn't my response to Ma's touch.

I skipped from the fourth grade into the fifth, mainly because the teachers thought the work wasn't hard enough to keep me busy. The sixth grade was the one that gave me my life-long hatred of school teachers. Our teacher's name was Miss Smart, and it was a good name for her. She made many of us smart you-know-where, and that included me. One day she heard a marble drop near my desk and she called me up to ask if I had any (she had a strict rule--no marbles inside the school room) Of course, I said "No.", but that darn hole in my pocket revealed otherwise as several other marbles clunked down my leg onto the floor. So there was a licking right in front of the other kids. But I was brave. I laughed--licking number two came up.. That was a very uncomfortable year, and I was glad to be able to go on to greater things, such as the seventh grade where we had the best teacher of my grade-school days, Miss Fitzimmons. By the time I got into the eighth grade, which she also taught, she had married another Irishman, Tom O' Grady, who worked in the railroad station. She was a little grouchier after that, but we blamed it onto matrimony).

It was during one of those years that we were given the opportunity to take a few hours a week to knit washcloths for the boys overseas, and boy, all I know is that if some poor soldier got my washcloth, I had a feeling he would use it on the other end. It was between my sixth and seventh grade years that my father was killed by an accident August 20, 1917.

You may wonder why I haven't mentioned my older brother and sister as yet. Well, to tell the truth, I remember very little about them in those ten years of my life spent up on School Street. About Harold, who was , and is, ten years older than I, I remember practically nothing. He must have been gone a lot or couldn't stand his kid brothers, or both. Helen, I remember vaguely as being very athletic--- she played tennis a lot --there was a grass court over at Hartwell's house across the street from our house ---she played toss and catch a lot, and I seem to recall that she could throw with either hand. And musically, she was right up there with the best. The piano was going a lot at our house--both popular and classical music,

With Helen handling a lot of it. She could play Grade 8 classical music and play it memorized (as Ma used to drum into me when I was practicing my piano efforts). But I remember that she had times when she would stay in her room with the curtains drawn, and Ma would say ~~for~~ ~~us~~ for us to stay away--she was having one of her moody or depressed times. Afterwards we learned that she had had an operation for a goiter problem, and it was not successful, so that every so often the imbalance of the thyroid gland would cause her to have these very depressed periods. These kept getting so much more frequent and so much more severe that she never did graduate from high school, and after months in and out of the Hospital at Waterbury, she finally lost out and died in 1924---only 25 years old. I remember the letters she would write from Waterbury (in fact, I have some of them) where she would tell of her activities there--playing the piano for their church services and friendly walks with some of the young nurses---in that unmistakable flourishy handwriting of hers. I can remember times when she would entertain us kids by writing first left handed, then right handed, then, believe it or not, with both hands at the same time. I liked to practice that latter, so that I can write in the same mirror-like fashion (in a way).

Then on August 20, 1917, the pleasant, suburban life of School Street came crash^{ing} down around our heads. I remember the day well. It was about supper time, and Ma had supper ready, and was out in the yard talking with Mrs. Putnam, by ~~the~~ ^{the} side door while we kids fooled around. Then we heard this loud crash down by the railroad crossing on Park Street, and looking down ~~we~~ ^{we} could see the crossing from the yard) Ma said, "Looks like ~~there~~ has been some kind of accident; the train has stopped and people are gathering." Mrs. Putnam said, "We've got some time; let's walk over and find out what's going on." So Lester and I, Ma and Mrs. Putnam started over by the schoolhouse and down the walk. But we hadn't got very far when coming slowly up the walk was Papa's employer, Mr. Mudgett. When he got up to us, he took Ma in his arms and, crying, said, "It's Guy". I remember my taking on and groveling (I guess that's the word) in the sand there; Lester just didn't seem to comprehend (he was about 6 years old); Ma took it as she always took all the tragedy that came our way. She kept in control. We found out afterwards that Papa had taken Elbert Keith home from work down on West Street with Mr. Mudgett's truck, and on the way back he waved cheerily as he always did to someone walking along by the crossing and he never saw the shuttle train (as it was called) coming from the station. It hit the truck in the right front end and started dragging it along the track while it was slowing down. The eyewitness said that for some unknown reason, my father opened the truck door on the side nearest the engine and ~~dried~~ ^{tried} to jump out and grab the ^{hand} rails on the side of the engine, but he missed and was hit by the cowcatcher and thrown about twentyfive feet and killed instantly. What a profusion of flowers at the house and at the funeral!

That certainly brought about a great change in our living style. As soon as possible Ma sold our nice house on School Street and bought --for \$1000, I think)-- a semi-run-down smaller house on Grove Street. I remeber it had no indoor toilet, and poor heating equipment. By Spring, Harold must have been the one--plus others I don't know about --- who began to make the house more like a home as far as "comforts" were concerned. I still remember that for a while he had transformed our playhouse which I think my father had made for us kids into a temporary two-holer until the indoor seat was installed. Then I remember a one-pipe furnace was put in, and things began to look up.

Ma took in boarders, for several years. I remmeber some of them were the Gypsy Moth boys ---young fellows who spent the summer chasing those pests. The thing I remember most about them was that they ate enormous amounts of food, and even their lunches that Ma packed for them were enough to choke a horse. I remember another boarder who took Ma for a ride. He had two sons and was a great talker but was always behind in his money, and then when he was two or three months behind in paying for those three mouths and bed usfers, he silently picked up those two boys and stole away. Never did find out anything about them. I would say that he was a professional gypper, and he made my mother, who was a hard-working lady, appear to be a sucker for his scheme. We always hoped that he would get caught up with sometime by somebody and have his ears and tongue cut off. That was the height of "rip-offery"

Of course we kids had to work. I mowed lawns--Hartwells, Putnams, Huntleys, the Methodist Church, the Masonic Temple ---and others. And remember, those lawn mowers were the old-fashioned push and push kind--powered by leg and shoulder muscles. As was the custom in our family, I became church janitor, and I became Free Press delivery boy. Those two episodes have enough stories connected woth them to make a few more pages in this story. I'll just mention a few. I learned the paper route from a colored boy, who not only taight me the route, but taught ~~me~~ to walk on my hands, whi~~ch~~ I continued to do until I broke my arm in 1960--aged 52. He also taught me how to avoid George Bressette, who regularly tried to hit the paper boy with a well-aimed stream of water from his second-story bedroom. I also learned by being observant how many of the prettier wives got up and dressed in the early hours of the morning. You see, for all those years of my high school days, I had to get up at 4:00 A. M. to meet the train bringing the Burlington Free Presses to the station at 4:20, and then get the 200 or so papers delivered by 7:00 or 7:30 in order to get to school on time. When it was winter time, I also had to get up at 4:00 AmM. on Sundays too to build a fire at church. So you see what a thrill it was for me to know that on Christmas Day there was no Free Press, and that was my one day I didn't have to get up at 4:00 A.M.

My friends of School Street days began to appear less and less as time went on at Grove Street, and we gained new friends there--Lyndon Bevins and Howard Mobbs were the two that came to mind. We had others too, boys and girls, but fewer are my memories of those days. A few things stand out, such as the time we were playing Red Light at a neighbor's house, and because the girl in that family wouldn't let her kid brother play with us, he gained revenge by piddling on a broom, and then coming out and swinging it at everybody, giving each of us a chance to taste his brand of tea. Yuch! Another time I was at Eloise Clark's house, swinging with her in her lawn swing, when she sidled up to me and I had my first real kiss. ~~X~~ Wow! I must have ^{been} twelve years old, at least.

I remember when Lester had a contagious disease (I forget now what it was) and I stayed next door with the Ed Smiths. The thing I most remember about that was her fried potatoes. k As she fried them, Mrs. Smith would turn each one over individually, getting each a perfect brown. "If I remember, that was some different than Ma's piling and repiling ~~of~~ of potato hunks till they were either burned or not done---and usually a bit of both.,

Ma was a great hand to want to go on picnics or trips, so many were the times we took the trolley to Ethan Allen Park for a day of fun, or went on board one of the steamers--Ticonderoga, or Vermont, or Chateguay, and had a great trip up or down the lake.