

RECOLLECTIONS FROM THE DISTAFF SIDE

By
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(Aunt Sister)

Recollections from the Distaff Side

For eight years I was the lone daughter in the Eichelberger household. named for *My* paternal grandfather "Helen Mar" must have sounded a bit overwhelming, for I became "Sister" to family and friends. It proved a bit embarrassing in school when some of *my* teachers who lived at Aunt Millie Eiehelberger's boarding house next door to the Store, continued to call me Sister in the classroom, causing boy classmates to chant " A teacher's Pet", meanwhile pulling *my* hair ribbons.

Trying to be a tomboy and keep up with *my four* big brothers here was a frustrating role. You see, I had broken up that continuity of male offspring which the boys optimistically had helped would develop into a "baseball nine".

Mather anal Daddy assured *me* that I was the little girl they had "prayed far." They backed up *my* belief in the acceptability of girl children by having a second daughter, Betty. The big brothers, new elder, were overjoyed with the new girl baby, and she became the favorite of us all. I recall Bob helping Aunt Martha Sweet wean Betty to the bottle when Mather was hospitalized with appendicitis; and Dick and Eli vied for the privilege of wheeling her in the baby carriage up and down the sidewalk.

With the advent of Betty into the family , I gave up trying to be one of the bays, and assumed the more feminine activities, helping Mother and looking after Betty.

My best friends these early years, were *my* young cousins, Marcia Sweet, Martha Shannon, and Edna Sweet. Our summer days were spent in endless theatricals presented on the natural bank "stage" in our back yard. Using

old blankets hung over the clothes line as stage curtains, we could usually prevail upon Diak and his pals to pull curtains and move props. I do not recall that they ever qualified as actors.

We girls were not given the freedom to explore the boys' haunts beyond the limits of the Knob. That was considered safe area because Aunt Martha Sweet and friends were usually playing tennis on the court at the foot of the hill, and so could keep an eye on us.

If we wanted to go swimming when our families were not using the Cabin, we relied upon our older cousin Sarah (Sitty) Shannon to chaperone our hot, dusty hikes out to "Cat Fish". Of course, my brothers and their friends were already there, and with forbearance, allowed us to share the river. Actually they were very kindly at times and taught us little girls to swim, not the side stroke style of our mothers, but "over hand" (Australian crawl to you).

Belonging to a family with older brothers became a social asset as I progressed into the upper grades and high school. The Eichelberger kitchen was the favorite locale for us girls to make fudge or taffy; and in warm weather we made ice cream, with willing big brothers and friends to churn the freezer. If this ruse did not entice the boys. Daddy would provide the cash for us to buy a couple quarts of strawberry ice cream over at

Joe Benners or up at Moritzs.

Among my warmest recollections are the musical evenings at home under the aegis of mother at the piano. Bill, a drum player in the Scout Band, was a talented violinist in our family ensemble, with Daddy and Bob on the coronet, and Eli the clarinet and later the saxophone. Dick and I were still struggling with beginner piano lessons, so we were more or less the captive audience for their harmonious efforts. These soirees usually ended with refreshments, ginger ale or ice cream and cookies. And so to bed after another happy day in the Eichelberger household.