

## **GENEVIEVE RYAN SCHAAK**

### **THE SHORT DRESS**

This story was told to me by my Mother.

When I was four or five years old my Mother made me a new dress. Up until that time little girls' dresses were very long. The new dress was above the knee, so this dress was short.

I wore the dress to Grandma Ryan's. Not knowing about the new style, she was shocked over how short the dress was. She proceeded to let the hem down.

I guess I was a pretty mouthy kid, so I chewed her out all the while she was letting down the hem. I guess Grandma thought that was kid of cute and she laughed so hard that tears ran down her cheeks. I thought she was crying and said, "Sure, now you are sorry for what you did."

### **CHRISTMAS**

One of my fondest memories of my life on the farm was Christmas Eve. Mass was held at midnight at St. Patrick's Church.

My Father would put fresh hay or straw on the floor of the large sled, which was pulled by two horses with bells on them. Mother and Dad sat up front and all of the children sat on the hay covered with heavy horse blankets, which kept us cozy and warm.

As we rode along, sometimes singing Christmas carols and listening to the sleigh bells, we all tried to see who would find the Christmas star first.

The Church always looked so beautiful. The evergreen trees were brought in from the woods and being there was no electricity at that time, small candles were put in holders on the trees and the candles were lighted. Yes, actually lighted. I do not know why the trees never caught fire.

The music was beautiful and many of my relatives sang in the choir. Grandpa Cummings played the violin.

I'm afraid we children did not pay too much attention to the sermon as our thoughts were on what would be in our stockings in the morning. Although we did not get as much as children do today, we were always happy and excited over what we did get.

## **THE DUMP**

When we lived on the farm my sister, Helen Ryan, had a boyfriend who was very fond of her. Helen was not interested in him and in fact, she was trying to dump him.

One night they were sitting on the porch. She was in the rocker and he was sitting on the arm of it. Helen got up to go into the other room and as she did the guy fell off the arm of the rocker and landed flat on the floor.

He picked himself up, ran out the door to his car, got in and drove off into the sunset. She never saw him again. That's one easy way to dump a guy!

## **SOCIAL LIFE**

About the only social life my parents had was going to the dances at Cavanaugh's Hall at St. Patrick.

Mr. and Mrs. Cavanaugh lived in back of the store. The Hall was upstairs. All of the people brought their children to the dances and how the kids loved to dance with each other. Although they just bumped around on the dance floor by the elders.

After the children got tired, they went downstairs and slept on Cavanaugh beds. A midnight lunch was always served at those parties which consisted of ham, rolls, pickles, coffee and cake. One woman always brought a delicious white cake with walnuts on top.

Of course, before the children went to bed they would go to the Kitchen for a snack. They had no permission to do this but did it. After their trip to the Kitchen there were never any walnuts on the "special cake" and the frosting on many of the other cakes were tested. It was strange that none of the adults ever complained about this.

I guess they realized that kids will be kids. Those were fun parties where we all learned to dance. When we got older we went to Doyle's Pavillion at Spring Lake. We all loved the place. Dances were held all summer, but the building was closed during the winter.

We always knew the music would be good at Doyle's because many name bands played there. The Pavillion is no longer there and houses have been built on that spot, one of which is the home of my granddaughter's in-laws. So, Mary Kiwus Wiseman and her husband Bill and their children often visit Bill's parents.

I never thought that my granddaughter and family would often visit the spot where old grandma did most of her dancing when she was young.

### **That Way**

My Aunt Mame Ryan was a real Saint. She walked two miles to Church every morning regardless of the weather. She led a very holy life.

Each morning on her way home from Mass she would stop at our house to visit with Mother. In the Summer time the bottom of her dress was soaked from the dew. At that time the dresses were ankle length. No slacks.

I loved to listen in on the conversations between my Mother and Mame although at times what they said went over my head. One thing I could never figure out until I got older was this: At that time no one ever talked about pregnancy and certainly not before the children.

Very often my Mother or Aunt Mame would mention that some woman was "That Way". For the life of me I couldn't figure out what "That Way" meant. Did they mean that that person was "goofy" or what? But why were there so many women "That Way"? Was it something that they ate?

When I got older, I was very relieved to have the puzzle solved.

### **Grade School Years**

Some of my fondest memories are of my grade school years at St. Patrick.

Early morning, I set off to school with my brother Vernon and sisters Vi and Gen (Gen was my teacher) as we walked through Garry's pasture, we hoped and prayed we wouldn't run into their mad bull.

When we arrived at school on the bitter cold mornings, Tom Hart always had a rip roaring fire going in the huge stove in the corner of the room.

Lots of excitement was getting ready for the Christmas Program, we had hours of rehearsals with all the children having a small part. When the big day came, we spent the morning putting sheets up for the curtains. The program always seemed to go well.

When we sang the last carol, "Silent Night", we were all excited because we knew Santa would arrive soon with the candy.

When I see children sledding, I think of the fun we had sleigh riding down the long long hill next to the school. We never seemed to mind the longwalks back up the hill.

Another special memory was when all the school children were allowed to go to Hickey Woods to pick wild flowers. Our last days of school was a day of games and prizes and sometimes a special treat of a boat ride in Father Farrells boat.