

THINGS REMEMBERED  
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I remember that we always had a lot of relatives at our house. Grandma and Grandpa Wright lived on the same street, and for many years, so did Grandma and Grandpa Leasure. Aunt Neva and Maynard were there a lot because they lived with Grandma & Grandpa Leasure until she married Monte and moved to Bluffton. She used to gather all the cousins in the living room and lead us in exercises. Aunt Anna, Frank & Jim always came on Sunday afternoons. When Aunt Gladys lived in Bellefontaine she had a shop where she sold children's clothing. We bought Mike's first outfits there - then it was a K-Mart. The Baxter cousins were there often because they lived in the same neighborhood. Most of the cousins were boys. Shirley Leasure used to visit and we would play cowboys & Indians. I always got to be Hop-A-Long Cassidy. We had a larger playhouse in the lot next door long before there was a home there. Climbing trees was one of my favorite things to do. When Uncle Gilson visited - I think before he was married - he always took Owen and me uptown to get an ice cream cone (strawberry). We didn't have an ice cream in the freezer all the time then (we didn't have a freezer) and it was a rare treat. We always rode in the rumble seat of his car.

Grandpa Leasure used to walk uptown every day. When Mike was born, Grandpa lived on West Elm St. and was nearly 90. He came to visit me at the hospital, but didn't want to come too soon and waited 5 days. He walked to Memorial Hospital and I had gone home. So he walked from there to our house on Catalpa (2 doors from where he used to live). I wanted him to stay and rest and visit for awhile, but he only stayed a few minutes and then walked all the way back home to West Elm St. When he was born he was so small that they put him in a cigar box.

I used to watch Grandma Wright when she killed one of their chickens for dinner. She would chop off the head and it always fascinated me to watch the chicken run around without a head.

When I was 8 years old I went with them to their cabin at Lake Michigan for a 2-week vacation. The cabin was in the woods and very primitive. One day I was walking by myself from the lake to the cabin and saw a snake. I ran all the way to the cabin where I found Grandpa and he walked back with me. The snake was dead. This is the only thing I remember about that trip. I think I was afraid of snakes partly because the boys in elementary school used to chase me in the spring with night crawlers. Because we lived so close to the school I would wait until the bell rang and then run all the way to school, just to avoid them.

I took tap dancing and ballet lessons for 5 years - from age 3 to 8. Then Mom got sick and I had to quit. It was a time when every mother wanted her daughter to be another Shirley Temple. For awhile I rode to lessons in a taxi. The same driver always picked me up. Later, I rode the streetcar alone. I couldn't read, but I knew which color light (green) to ride. Imagine sending a child on the bus like that today.

There was no mail delivery at our home until I was in high school. Our mail was always delivered to Grandma Wright's house and we had to pick it up. The Mailman, whose name was Brown, used to rest on their porch swing and read postcards he had to deliver while he was resting. I don't know how he had time. There were 2 daily mail deliveries - one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

Owen was 4 years older than I, and Loretta, 5 years younger, so I had to find playmates my own age in the neighborhood. Everybody knew everyone else and whose kids you were, so we couldn't get by with anything.

There was a man on Holmes Avenue who was - I suppose retarded - and we were a little afraid of him. But I don't believe he ever hurt anyone. His name was Herschel Brown and before and before Harold and Catherine built their new house across from us; there was a big field. He used to come and pick dandelion greens for his mother to cook.

I was always trying to figure out ways to earn money. I bought boxes of candy bars, which averaged out at 3 for 10 cents. Then I went door to door selling them for 5 cents a piece. I suppose people bought them just to get rid of me. Later, I went door to door asking people if I could do odd jobs for them until somebody called Mom and asked her if she knew what I was doing. Well, there was no TV for us!

In the evenings we sat in the living room listening to the radio (static and all) mostly to Jack Benny, Fibber Mc Gee & Molly, and others - and of course, the war news and Lowell Thomas. Long after we learned to read ourselves, Mom used to read to us while we played games or embroidered. Years later I could look at the embroidered piece and remember the book she was reading.

My most memorable Christmas was the year I got my "two wheeler." Dad came in on Christmas morning to tell me a friend was at the back door. She wasn't there, but a new bicycle was. I thought it was hers and that she was hiding. It took me awhile.

When I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade the teachers at Jefferson School asked Mom if she would fix lunch for them. She did this for at least two years, spending all morning cooking, and I'm sure she lost money on it. It didn't make me too popular at school, either. Our teacher was a man, which was unusual then, and when the war started he was drafted.

During the war many things were rationed including gas, sugar and shoes. We had coupon books to use with stamps. We never had many shoes anyway, and I convinced Mom that we needed to use every coupon or they would be wasted. We probably had more shoes then, than at any other time.

We would have "brown outs" when everyone was supposed to turn the lights down very low. It was a practice in the event that we were ever bombed. Each neighborhood had a monitor to see that this was done. Dad was chosen for our neighborhood and he had a good time walking up and down the street with a useless rifle on his shoulder.

He liked to play jokes on people - especially Mom. Once when she was entertaining her bridge club, he hid Limburger cheese in the house. Another time he put pieces of Ex-Lax in the dishes of chocolate candy. When she had a church group there, he bought some beer and put it in the refrigerator with the lunch, although he never drank.

Most of our vacations were trips we took with him when he had to work someplace. I do remember one time he took me to the top of one of the tanks.

One bad memory that stuck with me happened when I was about 12, I think. A little girl on Fairview Avenue was clowning around on her bicycle when she fell and hit her head on the curb. All of the kids in the neighborhood sat on the lawn waiting until somebody came out to tell us that she had died. She was an only child and her parents were not very young.

Living across from the tennis court was both bad and good. It was often very noisy. Too often it was full of tennis players. There were a few water faucets at the back of our house and we always had a cup there for them to get water to drink. When the court was empty we used it for a roller skating rink. In the winter we skated in our basement. We also had a swing in the basement.

When I started going to South Jr. High School we would go home by the railroad tracks to the stone quarry where we ice skated. We were lucky we didn't drown. One day the "railroad police" came to school and informed us that we were trespassing.

Because we were close to the railroad track that crossed Fourth Street, and because it was a pretty much vacant lot between our house and the tracks we had quite a few hoboes come to our back door. We called them bums. It was the depression, before the war started, and Mom never turned them away without giving them something to eat. It was said that they had a way of marking houses where they could find food. Although we never found any markings, I believe that it must have been true. I learned early to help those less fortunate.

The church was the center of our lives. Wesley Church was 1/2 mile away and we were there not only on Sunday morning and evening, but often through the week. We always walked home in the dark from Youth Fellowship, and were never afraid. (Although I think we crossed the street when we got to Husel Brown's house) I remember Sunday school teachers, choir practice, Youth Fellowship, Bible Study, even the annual Bazaar and soup supper.

Mostly as a child I remember feeling warm and secure at home. The house smelled of good food. Except when he was working, Dad was always home. He helped us with our homework. He worked at his workbench in the basement on long winter evenings while we played there (even in the coal bin).