

Looking at, Aug 3 1998 comments in bold

JO DOUGAN SCHMIDT: Tape 1, side 1: Jo and Jackie, 3/15/79 trans beg.
3/2/93

Oh yeah, the first time I heard me over the radio, I thought, that's Patty. That's not me. Now I know what it sounds like. ///

4-H this seems a continuation; I've used it in 4H story

But you thought it was the responsibility of the leader, too. How could Grampa and Dad not know that I hadn't had the training, that no one had told me. But when you've known something for so long, you just assume that other people know it. That's one of the pitfalls of teaching. You assume what the students know. Even to assume what no knowledge consists of is hard. So that Grampa and Daddy were so used to 4H for so many years, it was probably hard for them to conceive of somebody who knew nothing of 4H. Because I heard about it for years, too. But I didn't understand it. Did you ever belong to 4H?

No, I never did.

Just Craig and me. I don't think Patty did, either. I'm not quite sure why we did, but we did.

What did you do? You had a calf?

I had a calf. And Craig had a calf, too. His calf was named Perry and mine was named Pierre. Or was it vice versa? I forget. They were both little bull calves. Do you remember Jeff the horse? We make a great long list of names, and I think you spearheaded Jeff. We had about forty names. We went down the list and eliminated this and that and the other and finally decided to call him Lord Jeff. Dad, of course, didn't call the horse Lord Jeff any more that they called the pony Star. They called her Mona.

I remember that, Mona.

Wasn't that an awful name?

I guess that was the name she had when she came, or something

Anyway, you don't remember naming a horse?

No. I don't.

Do you remember riding the horse?

I think so. But I...horseback riding for me was much more romantic thinking about it then when it actually happened. I was scared. I didn't like being that far off the ground. I didn't feel I had any control. The horse knows it I guess. They literally take the bit in their mouth and go. That's...

(Jo goes to get an eyelash out of her eye.)

(Something about over the great room over the milkhouse)... Aren't you the

one who mentioned Busy Lizzy?

No.

That must have been Patty.

I'll never forget that time.

Well, tell me! Cuz that was **like having Christmas without any warning.**

I don't remember when it happened or that it was like Christmas without warning or anything like that. I just remember it being there. The feeling of being up there playing. What fun it was and how we spent hours...and turn around and you'll see a beautiful purple finch on that cedar there, see it? They like sunflower seeds. I just remember there were a lot of breakable things. Paper things, and little wooden things and things that, now that I look back on it, I can't understand how they had survived long enough for us to get our hands on them.

And they were also unrelated things--parts of games and things like that. So that you could find intriguing things but you didn't quite know what to do w/them. So that we'd have to make our own games.

We found magazines and books. The old...what the name of that magazine? I've forgotten now.

ja--Boy, I wish I'd saved those. Grama, did you hear Grama tell Vera that Eunice just bundled all that stuff up and sent it out to Trever, just out of the blue. Said they hadn't had their share. What a shock.

She was an old tyrant! That Grama!

Yeah, that was a nasty thing to do. I remember the bear with the broken wheel.

Oh! It went RRHH! RRHH! RRHH!...

When you pulled the ring....I always wished that somebody had fixed that wheel. It would have been so much satisfactory if he didn't have a broken wheel. You had to balance him just right so he'd go.

jo Things never got fixed. Dad's not a fixer. He never had the dexterity of that sort.

One of the things I did for my kids, which they may not realize, that I found it so frustrating to have things unfixed and things never all together. For instance all our toys got dumped into that window seat and we'd go and rummage, but you could never find anything. I spent, for years, I would spend many hours a week reassembling games. You know how they have all those little parts. And reassembling bits and pieces and keeping them all in order on the kids' toy shelves. So that they had the parts of everything all together. And of course, they'd scatter them. Instead of just shoveling them all into a central spot, like the window seat, I'd put them all together. And I'm sure it was because of my own frustration at not having things together. We had quite a

few toys.

I used to do that, too, for my kids when they were little. Pretty soon I realized that if they wanted things kept together, they could jolly well do it themselves.

Well, do you remember any specific toys of that bunch up there?

jo I remember a nesting egg. You know, an egg within an egg within an egg within an egg with little wooden shells.

Patty remembers a little wind-up toy called Busy Lizzy with a carpet sweeper.

I guess I do, too, now that you mention it.

I think I remember that, too. And she'd go SSWWS, SSWWS here and there with this little carpet sweeper. I remember the bear and I remember, what you said, paper things and odd things.

jo There were little tiny bottles that had held perfume and they still smelled of the perfume that was in them. Little interesting bottles. Different, lots of different bottles. Little ones.

Like the sort that Patty collected? That's probably what started her.

Probably.

What I remember about that space, in addition, and they were in a barrel, and we would dig into this barrel. We got it around all over the floor and nobody ever made us clean them up!

Yeah!

Ja We could go up there and everything would be just like we left it and here would be all these toys all over the floor. Which might have given Grama the impression that we weren't paying any attention to them. But there was no supervision up there. We would just go up and play. And I'm sure that after the crampedness of the Little House, and I do recall that Mother let us leave the things out. We'd build some things out of blocks and I remember she let us keep it up for several days. Sort of a floor plan, of a house. We had all our little animals around in it and we were making up stories.

(More about the purple finch in the bushes.)(Three of them!)

So Vera did let us keep our stuff out, but it was so cramped, the Little House, that things had to be picked up pretty regularly. And I'm sure one reason I remember that one particular thing being left out three days is because they probably usually weren't left out that long.

Do you, speaking of the Little House and the crampedness, do you remember the time I invited the whole class to my birthday party?

No.

The idea was not to have everybody from class, but I just couldn't

imagine not, I guess. I went around asking everybody to come to my birthday party. And Mother was horrified to find out that I had invited the whole class. Thirty kids in that little house. A March birthday.

That's right--it had to be indoors.

It was indoors. I remember, not very much about it, because the place was absolutely wall-to-wall kids! I remember sitting under the dining room table with my food, with my refreshments. Other kids under the dining room table, too. Kids everywhere. And that's all I remember about that party. How horrified Mother was that it was going to happen that way and sitting under the dining room table eating.

I remember when I was coming along with parties that we invited everybody because Mother didn't want anyone left out and feeling bad.

I probably started it! The tradition! Of course, you had a May birthday. Yours could be outside.

Yeah, we would have it out at the woods. I remember birthday parties only every other year. That's what we could afford.

Afford probably had nothing to do with it--it was probably Mother's energy!

I remember a very splendid **Halloween party up in the barn**. Do you remember that one? That's where we passed the witch's eye, the peeled grape and all that? Were you in on that?

I think so.

Was it sort of a general party that we invited our friends to, all of us? Cuz I don't recall...

I remember Dorothy McCall, I think.

I think it was your party and I was in on it.

I really don't have much of a memory of it. We did things like that up at the lake, too, so I can't remember...

Well, I remember you guys fixing up a spook house underneath the Welles' cottage. And that was the basis for the spook house in my Ghost Boat. And my feeling that you couldn't have a decent spook house under your own cottage. It had to be under somebody else's cottage. An abandoned cottage or something like that. Which is why I put it under Fisherman's Rest in the book.

The cottage we had would have been good for that. Didn't we have a spook house under our cottage?

We probably did. But I remember one specifically under Welles'. I don't know as if I was in on, so I had to pay admission to go in...So I remember that one very well. Patty and I got trapped in a closet up there over the milkhouse. You weren't in on that. It was Patty and me and Craig not paying any attention

when we yelled. Would you remember the Christmas when we were taken out for a walk. And I was old enough to remember this but not very well, so you'd remember it better. Grampa took us tramping all over the farm and we finally ended up behind the Little House and that's where the playhouse was.

Oh, no, I guess I don't remember that. Most vaguely.

We used to play in that playhouse a lot. Every now and then we'd decide to give it a cleaning. We'd haul everything outside and sweep it and scrub it and so forth. We were usually tired of the job before we had everything moved back in again. But we might have. That also disappeared for a while. After we moved up to the other house, they moved the playhouse up and put it at the end of the lane. For us to stand in while we waited for the taxi. And not be cold.

I remember that now.

So that was there for a couple of years and then it vanished. It was one of those things where everybody said they didn't know what happened to it, but years later I found it as a rabbit hutch down at the dairy.

I had a rabbit hutch--do you suppose I took it?

Not down to the dairy, in there behind, where all those goofy rabbit hutches were.

Oh no, I guess not.

So apparently they had taken it and decided to use it as a little outbuilding since the kids weren't using it anymore. I can just see Dad saying Oh sure, sure, and not paying any attention to it and just assuming we didn't use it anymore. Then when we would ask about it, just being very vague. Not wanting to say, Well, I gave it to so and so. Cuz I think Dad grew up in the path of least resistance. Just say you don't know where a thing is and that's it....But when Dad says he wasn't a very good father, in many ways he wasn't in that he didn't do things with us. I pointed out to him that he was a good father in certain ways that he didn't know. For instance, how many kids could step outside the front door and go watch their father at work and their grandfather? That the mere presence of Dad and Grampa on that farm was very valuable--that you knew where to find Dad. I told him that he was always either in the office or at the bottle-washing machine. He says he doesn't remember spending that much time at the bottle-washing machine. It seemed to me he was always inside that bottle-washing machine. It was always breaking and I said you were always cursing and having to go down and climb inside it and do this and that and the other thing to it. But we'd go in and he wouldn't kick us out of the office for awhile. We'd sit around, you play with things, you make the machines go, you'd hang around for a while and then he'd say scram. But he was there! And you could go and find Grampa and whatever he was doing you could watch him for awhile. So that the whole way the life was lived and an earning was made was right there visible. It wasn't like some father disappearing in the morning and taking some commuter train or even going off to a job in town. But I consider that of great value, even though it didn't take much effort on Dad's part. It was just one of the circumstances. Do you remember when they started looking for a place to

move to? from the little house. Mother says they bought the Snide (?) farm cuz we put up such a hue and cry because we didn't want to live in town.

That's what I heard. I remember the house that they wanted in town.

It was out on Sherwood Drive.

It was a beautiful house.

We could have swung it, Mom and Dad say, I was talking to them about it last night. They said you kids were just so distraught at the thought of leaving the farm that they decided they'd better look in the country. They'd already been renting the Snide farm for a year, they said. They took a closer look at it. It was so beautiful up there. Grampa and the rest of them would sometimes come up and sit on the edge there of what's now the lawn and just look at the view across the town. They thought we're renting this place anyway, let's buy it and Ron will be close by the farm. But Mother said that the Gardner house was close to Todd school and just a jump from the dairy and was just an ideal location.

And it was a very elegant house.

Except that it was in town. She said you wept, you children wept. And I said well, thank God we wept! So we must have had a strong affection for the place.

Life would have been quite different, eh?

Oh wow! Wouldn't it have been! I said we would have been town kids and she said that's right. Horrors! I've always felt sorry for my kids because not only have they been town kids, but they've been shuttled from town to town. But you don't remember going around and looking at the Gardner house and looking around...

I'm not sure we did. I thought that Mother and Dad did all that.

Well, there was one that we looked at cuz I remember looking later but maybe they just told me that that was one they thought of. On the corner of Chapin and Wisconsin. One of my school friends lived in it later and they had a terrible lot of trouble with it. I guess Mother and Dad went into the kitchen, it was a very old house, and there was ice on the stone walls in the kitchen. On the inside! And Mother said she didn't want to live in any house that had ice on the walls in the kitchen....Do you remember Christmas dinner at the Big House?

Yes, indeed. Those were the fondest memories of my life. I remember that we used to eat in the dining room mostly, and the men would eat in that anteroom that you'd come in...

Since there were so many of us? Cuz usually they'd eat in the dining room, too.

Yeah, but this was at Christmas. Or else it varied, it wasn't always the same. Mostly it was that way. We probably had a buffet and then we'd go sit in the

living room and the men would still go into their room to eat.

I think that Christmas was a buffet. It was all over the sideboard and all over the table--great bowls of mashed potatoes and gravy and chicken, roast chicken. It would be carved already and lying out in pieces.

You'd go in there and help yourself to whatever.

Cranberries, I remember that, and lots of pies.

Oh pies! My goodness!

Then after the big eats and then there was a program.

Oh! Always a program! We were always having to play our violins before we could have our presents.

ja I remember once that we sang 'We three kings of orient are': you and me and patty. We were each a king, we each had a verse.

And I remember once Gramma had written a poem, about Christmas paper.

She was so proud of that.

And Mother so scornful.

Right. (laugh)

jo Mother said Gramma always had to do what she did. She always had to prove that she could do what Vera did. (laughter.)///...always seemed to be crabby. But you can't always blame that on the crabby person. Sometimes there are extenuating circumstances. They're sick, they're uncomfortable. It awfully hard not to be irritable when you're hurting somewhere. Somebody her age, I'm sure, must have been having all kinds of physical problems. Menopause and whatnot. In those days you didn't talk about it.

We always had the program, I remember once Hazel playing the piano in the Big House. and telling the musical story of the selfish giant. I remember you and Patty would sing a duet of Fairest Lord Jesus. And you sang the melody and Patty sang a little descant that went way high. Do you remember that at all?

Sort of, now that you mention it.

I could almost sing that descant myself if I put my mind to it on some long car trip. I think I could produce it by the end of the trip. I remember that Patty was the soprano, but you really had to get high to get that descant over you, the way it was pitched. Do you recall any other programs?

I remember playing the violin. Something quite fast, with a lot of notes. And Gramma wondering how in the world I could learn all those notes. First time it ever occurred to me that there was anything unusual or scary about learning all those notes. I think she instilled the first bit of fear in me! Up to that point, everything was sort of natural.

ja The Christmas tree was always in that side room. There were two rooms, the living room had two rooms. The Christmas tree would be down in the second room where the piano was and where the old Victrola used to be. Do you remember when we discovered all those old records and started playing them and Gramma got all upset that the sacred songs had been turned into parodies? Remember ? We used to sing them like that? Wasn't you who told me that she finally smashed it all up and burned it right there in the stove?

No.

It must have been Patty. She took "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum," maybe Craig said that. Do you remember "HIAB"?

Sure, I could sing it. Do you want me to sing it?

Sure.

"Hallelujah, I'm a bum. Hallelujah bum again. Hallelujah, give me a hand out to revive me again."

Do you remember any of the verses?

No.

Okay. Craig remembered a verse. I didn't either. These were obviously Depression records. And we discovered them shortly after the D. I think what happened is that radio came along right about them and the men got a radio, up in their room. And there was less interest in the Victrola. Probably we kids discovered it. It got moved into the next room, out of the boys' room. It got moved back into the back section of the living room and we kids got it. Because I don't remember seeing it. I remember the men sitting there listening to the radio. We discovered all sorts of wonderful records. "Two Little Blackberries," and... Craig has all those. I told him to put them on cassette and send them to me.

Oh yeah. I remember the Harry Louters.

Let's ask Craig to get some copies of those records. I think that'd be a nice thing for the families to have. To listen to those..."Stumbling." (hums). Weren't you the one who was going to tell Mr. Conway that you didn't know the answer but you knew what he was whistling?

No.////

Well we both know "Two Little Blackberries." Well, Gramma got all upset over "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum." and there was one other that was a sacred song that she got all upset over.

There's nothing sacred about that word, the word 'hallelujah.'

(Jackie sings an old hymn). You see it was an old hymn.

Oh, I see.

Are you the one, earlier on tape, that we talked about watching the trains go by and counting the bums on them?

No.

That must have been Patty or Craig, then. It must have been Patty. The trains would go by, down there in the pasture. We could see the bums on them during the Depression. Let's get back to Christmas seeing how we've taken care of the Victrola. There'd be the programs and then we would have the Christmas presents. Would we kids take turns passing them out?

I think we did.

Do you remember any particular presents ever?

Yeah. Always we got mittens from Gramma. That she had knitted.

Those were our Christmas mittens.

We got other things from her, too.

I remember Grampa would be so hard to buy for, cuz you didn't know what to get him. What would Grampa enjoy? I remember one time we got him a goldfish in a bowl. We were so pleased with ourselves. And Grampa laughed and laughed when he opened it and there were these goldfish. I don't know how long the goldfish lasted. He couldn't hear, so I guess that we thought the goldfish would be something interesting to watch. Once we got him a book of sermons, us kids. It was very small print and I'm sure he never read a single one. But we thought, well, he was a minister and he would like a book of sermons. Those are the only two presents I remember getting Grampa and I can't remember ever what I got Gramma. And I don't remember what I got! Remember we used to carry them home in a wicker clothes basket. Those elongated ones.

We used to get clothes from her a lot. Mother would tell her what we needed. I remember one present that I got from Mrs. Moore. She was there once at least. I opened this book and I've forgotten what it was called. It had a plaid design on the cover. And I said, Oh I just love to read--thank you, thank you. And I opened it up and here it was a box of butterscotch candy. And fixed up like a book. And I felt so embarrassed that I'd thought it was a book. Kids get embarrassed over the strangest things. I was supposed to be fooled--that was the whole idea. There was no reason to be embarrassed, but I was. I thought, Oh, what'll she think--that I don't like the candy? That I was disappointed?

Then we'd go home and there would be the unbearable suspense...

That was fun--to have two Christmases.

Two! Then we'd hang up our stockings at home...

Sometimes we'd go to church for the Christmas eve program. And I remember popcorn balls.

Gramma always had popcorn balls!

And lots and lots of hard candy.

It never tasted very good. It was nice to have around but I never liked it.

Well, I do! Some of it. I like the filled ones.

Oh, the filled raspberries! But the ones like this with the flower design in the middle, I didn't much care for. They were pretty, but...

But I also liked the little sticks that had the chocolate down the inside, you know, the white sticks and green sticks.

Did they have a kind of peanut butter?

Those, too.

I liked the peanut butter ones.

Oh gosh, those were good. I wish I had some right now.

We remember Christmas pretty well, then. Do you have any specific memories of Thanksgiving?

I remember one Thanksgiving when we were given a sleigh ride. We were taken out on a...

Bobsled?

END OF TAPE

I printed this out:

Cuz I think Dad grew up in the path of least resistance. Just say you don't know where a thing is and that's it....But when Dad says he wasn't a very good father, in many ways he wasn't in that he didn't do things with us. I pointed out to him that he was a good father in certain ways that he didn't know. For instance, how many kids could step outside the front door and go watch their father at work and their grandfather? That the mere presence of Dad and Grampa on that farm was very valuable--that you knew where to find Dad. I told him that he was always either in the office or at the bottle-washing machine. He says he doesn't remember spending that much time at the bottle-washing machine. It seemed to me he was always inside that bottle-washing machine. It was always breaking and I said you were always cursing and having to go down and climb inside it and do this and that and the other thing to it. But we'd go in and he wouldn't kick us out of the office for awhile. We'd sit around, you play with things, you make the machines go, you'd hang around for a while and then he'd say scram. But he was there! And you could go and find Grampa and whatever he was doing you could watch him for awhile. So that the whole way the life was lived and an earning was made was right there visible. It wasn't like some father disappearing in the morning and taking some commuter train or even going off to a job in town. But I consider that of great value, even though it didn't take much effort on Dad's part. It was just one of the circumstances.