

Plain Brown Rapper

News for the Tandy and Grace Brown Family

January, 2008

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!! – Here we are in 2008 and wondering where the time has gone. Santa brought me “Photo Shop” for my computer and as I try to get organized and scanning in old photos for future use I find them too terrific not to share. Some of these photos become “olden days” memories and I thought you might enjoy seeing them.



This is a picture of the house at 1717 Alexander Avenue on a wintry day. It sat at the back of a quarter block lot across the street from Holliday Park and Lake Minnehaha. From right to left there was the kitchen, dining room, living room a hall way and a den with two bedrooms on the back. On the second floor were two very large rooms and a bath. The large rooms became the girls room and the boys room. The park across the street provided us with a huge play yard. There were swings, slide, merry-go-round and etc. There was a big baseball diamond, not an organized one, just one we developed. There were two brick and stone structures. One was a band stand and the other a picnic shelter. The lake provided us with lots of ice skating in the winter and crawfish fishing in the summer. In the early days there was a canal that ran like a moat across to 19th Street, West to Morrie Avenue, South to 18th Street and back into the lake. Frank, Leonard, Charles and Dick used to pull us around the lake on a sled as they skated. Great fun.

During the summer, on Tuesday evenings there was a band concert. The City Band was around for years and at some time or other, nearly everyone of us played in the band. Roy played the longest and he could play any instrument they needed and many times was the conductor. Leah played Trombone; Frank, Dick and Dolfe played French Horns; Leonard, Charles and Nancy played clarinets; Mike played the bass and trumpet. While in the Marines, Mike was the bugler. It was a grand time. On the corner of our lot, the older ones had a pop stand and during the concerts they would pull the wagon thru the crowd and sell pop or candy.



Mother had a garden which produced all kinds of good stuff. Beans, corn, beets, peas, and etc. In the fall she canned many of the vegetables and we had lots to eat thru the winter. The garden was dug up by the boys. This was a yearly chore done before roto-tillers and etc. This is a picture of Leonard trying to dig up the garden while surrounded by beauty queens. Beauty Queens? Well not hardly, its Nancy, Dolfe and Pat. What can I say, its all there in black and white.

We were so blessed in endless ways. We had plenty of food, lots of room to play, brothers and sisters to either get in the way (see picture) or make a great friend, and parents who loved and cared for us. In a family the size of ours, the odds of success are slim so we apparently beat those odds. To have a family of 17 children, 14 of whom lived to adulthood and to have all of those college educated with 11 receiving degrees is awesome. During the time period from 1913 when Vivian was born until 1941 when Mike entered the world there were two World Wars and the "Great Depression" to make life more difficult. We made due with one car! Think about only having one car to cart around all those kids – we walked!

We didn't have TV, there was a radio in the dining room and one in the kitchen. We listened to serials (Jack Armstrong, The Shadow, The Green Hornet and etc.), played board games, went to the movies or – gasp! – played outside. A simple time which none of us would return to but we can tell our children about when they complain about how hard they have it.

Mother did her laundry on Monday with an old wringer washer. Heated her water on the wood cookstove in a copper kettle and the whites were white as snow. On Saturday the house got cleaned, changed all the beds and everything sparkled. Sunday was a great day, usually fried chicken and all the trimmings. Until 1949 she used a wood burning cookstove. If you've ever had a pie baked in a wood stove, you know a little about "livin' good!" She made melt in your mouth donuts and the only ones I've ever found to rival them were in a donut house in Virginia or at the coffee shop on top of Pikes Peak.

Thanksgiving and Christmas were very big at our house and when I think about how I have taken the easy way out by using so many short cuts and how everything mother did was from scratch, well, I can't even come close. We were well taken care of.



Dad was the breadwinner. He was in the Army when they met and when the Army decided they had too many children he became a civilian. He worked for Kelly Mercantile until he got a job with the Union Pacific Railroad. He remained with the Railroad until his retirement in 1959. He worked for 41 years until he was 70.

Because I came along later, I didn't know how tough it was, the older family members had to live thru a much leaner time. This picture taken in about 1935 is of Dick and Dolfe in front of the farm we lived on called the Bergman Place. We moved to 1717 Alexander in 1935 so this had to be taken just before the move. Dick would be 5 and Dolfe would be nearly 3. It doesn't look like we cared if we were poor.

There was a pony at the Bergman Place everyone rode. He was a bit ornery I've been told. He used to let the kids ride until he got tired and then he would buck them off or go under the clothes line to get rid of them.

A funny story you might have heard before. On the day I was born, Nancy was on the pony and someone was supposed to be walking with Nancy.

Seems, someone said Dolfe was born and they all ran inside to see the new baby, the pony took off, Grandma Eidam jumped in her old Chevy and chased the pony who ran faster and finally dumped Nancy in a cactus patch. I'm not sure why Nancy still speaks to me.



This is such a great picture. It is of Mom and Dad as they prepare to depart for New York City. In 1954 Grace was awarded "Wyoming Mother of the Year" and they went to New York City where they stayed at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

Mother was the first runner up for the National Title of American Mother which says a great deal about this remarkable woman. Mother always said she wanted the award to be about quality not quantity. On the way home she appeared on The Art Linkletter radio show.

On a humorous note, Dad got in trouble with Mother for his "Rose among thorns" remark and for pinching a lady on the train who was bending over her berth. He swore he thought it was mother but his timing was bad and she was coming into the car just as it happened and she didn't believe him. Of course, we all laughed at him but mother was not at all pleased.

CURRENT NEWS

The year 2007 started out on a high note for Martha Wyrsh (Dick and Marty's daughter) who rang the starting bell at the New York Stock Exchange. She had just been promoted to President and CEO of Spectra Energy Transmission (formerly Duke Energy Gas). Then in October she was named "Distinguished Alumna" at the University of Wyoming and honored at the Homecoming festivities. Congratulations Martha on your achievements and your family, Gerry, Peter and Molly for their support.

In June of this year, Vivian and Frank's great grandson, Robert Beardslee will graduate from the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He has qualified for flight school and will begin training sometime after graduation. His father and mother, Colonel Robert and Kim Beardslee are stationed at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs. Kim says its nice to be close to Robert as he completes his Academy Education.



Leah and Willis celebrated some exciting milestones. They have been married for 67 years, Willis turned 90 and Leah will soon be celebrating 86. They were honored at a reception by their daughters, Jeanne, Jerry and Jayne (and their families) on December 16th. It was a wonderful party and many of their friends were there as well as family.

Thanks for your many Christmas cards, pictures and letters. These are so important for maintaining family history records. Please continue to send notices of important events and honors you or your family are receiving. These are of interest to all.

Wishing all of you a very Happy New Year and keep in touch. My e-mail address is the same; dolfe96@aol.com and its an easy way to communicate. Dolfe