

MEMORIES FROM A NOBLETON GIRL

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I had the odd distinction of really being a Nobleton-Schomberg girl. Yes, I resided in Nobleton until 1968. I moved to the “farm” when I was 6 years old and my Father moved there when he was 6 years old also. At the same age, we both went to Nobleton Public School too.

However, My Mom came from Schomberg. She always said she just went around the block: Schomberg, Nobleton and back to Schomberg. Mom’s family was huge and I had dozens of cousins. Back in those days it seemed I was pretty much related to everyone in Schomberg, somehow or other. My Dad, on the other hand, had one brother, who had one child-so I had one ‘Bishop’ cousin. The multitude of ‘Cabell’ cousins was always a lure to Schomberg. In 1960, Dad built Schomberg Supplies, and then really I spent most of my time in Schomberg or in arenas somewhere. To put this all in perspective, my memories are different than most on the committee.

Some of these are stories told to me by my Dad who was quite a storyteller and some are my memories.

When Dad came home from the war, the town folk of Nobleton threw him a ‘Welcome Home’ Party and presented him with a Gold Maple Leaf Signet ring that Dad wore till the day he died. He was very proud of that ring and of course his part in the war. Believe me, I heard those stories over and over and over....

Mom and Dad married and they rented a little white ‘shack’ a few doors up from what is now known as Nobleton Jr. Public School. The

town, eager to help my Dad, strung a Hydro wire from the Arena (3 Arenas ago) and thus Mom and Dad had power. The man who rented the house to Mom and Dad rented it to them for \$1.00 a year and his name was 'Wayne.' The story goes that he came to their door when Bruce was born (1946) and said he would give them \$1,000.00 if they called their boy 'Wayne.' I guess my Mom was sorely tempted because that was a significant amount of money when they had none, but Mom knew a boy that wandered around town and he was mentally challenged and his name was 'Wayne'. As much as Mom wanted that money, she just couldn't name him Wayne. So, Bruce was called Bruce! Two years later Susan Mae came along and six months later she had succumbed to what we would now call SIDS 'Crib Death.' My Dad blamed himself for what he thought was not properly providing for his family so he decided it was time to build a house. I guess in the meantime he had opened up the Nobleton FeedMill (Master Feeds) where Budweth's Feed Mill now operates. Dad worked around the clock hand building the cement blocks for the house he was determined to build for his family. He was able to purchase the lot immediately to the east of the Nobleton Community Hall. He called in the "Block Inspector" who promptly condemned each and every one of them much to Dad's chagrin. He just wanted to sit down and cry but he couldn't so he dusted himself off and went about the task of building more cement blocks which were summarily passed. The Bishop family moved into the cute little red brick house in 1950 and in July of that year I was born.

Right off the bat I seemed to be a problem, as my parents couldn't agree to a name. My Dad wanted to call me Susan and couldn't understand my Mother's shock and dismay that he would even

consider that possibility. I guess he figured I was like a replacement! After a couple of months of being called “Baby Bish” for lack of a better name, my mother’s sister, Ruby Turton, intervened. She went to each of them and read them the riot act, telling them I would go to Hell if I died, since I couldn’t be baptized without a name. That evening Dad came in the door, sheepishly threw in his hat and said well, I like the name Wendy-and we’ll call her ‘Wendy-Sue’. So, in a roundabout way he got his own way but it explains why I so diligently correct people when they shorten my name. In over 38 years of marriage, I can honestly say that is the only time I know about (because obviously, I was too young to remember)my parents disagreeing so vehemently.

That same year the Feed Mill blew up with my Dad in it. He made a lucky escape but there he was looking to start over and make his way, once again. Johnny Sheardown bought the foundation from my Dad and ran the feedmill right up until Alf Budweth came along.

Dad worked at Woodbridge Freezers, Real Estate and even a Grocery Store-the Red and White. He did well at everything he turned his hand to but his real love was agriculture and especially milling. I really can’t remember too much of those times but one little story he always used to tell me from the Red and White Store. I guess I was about 7 or 8 years of age and undoubtedly a little ‘pudgy.’ A very pregnant woman came up to me, in front of the butcher counter, where Dad was standing behind, listening to the whole conversation. She pokes me in the stomach and says “My, My, Wendy-Sue, you’re getting a little pudgy now aren’t you!” to which I promptly poked her in the stomach and retorted “You are Too!” Apparently Dad almost jumped over the counter but the woman assumed the blame rightly, and all was well in paradise, once more! But Dad was drove crazy by the women

squeezing the lettuce, not the 'Charmin'. He couldn't stand it anymore so he sold the store and returned to his beloved milling. With a partner he bought a garage where Schomberg Supplies now sits. They did mobile milling for a couple of years and then Dad became the sole owner and built the elevators and the Mill as it is known to-day. At one time he cleaned seed for a 50 square mile radius and the elevators were hopping 24 hours a day!

Dad had grown up on a totally self sufficient 100 acre farm 1 ½ miles east of Nobleton, just beyond the 8th concession. When my grandfather died my Dad had purchased the farm from my Granny Bishop with the proviso that she would live there for as long as she chose. In the meantime my parents were in their little red brick home in Nobleton. In 1956 Granny Bishop passed away. My parents sold their home and off we went to the 'farm.' My Dad had plans. Immediately he sold off 3 parcels of land from the original 100 acres and kept 33 acres. I grew up surrounded by millionaires-Croelus , a Greek magnate to the west, Jim Brydon of Brydon Brass, Rexdale to the NorthWest and Mr. MacDonald, a reknowned Criminal Lawyer from the big city to the east. Dad always referred to our place as "Poverty Slopes" for obvious reasons but eventually it was called "Lake Lenora" a mix of my parents first names. Dad had it wrote in cement on the hill facing King Side Road and my job every summer was to keep it painted and trimmed so it really showed up-it must have worked because everyone I know always referred to it as 'Lake Lenora!'

What a dream it was to grow up at Lake Lenora. Our house was on a hill, actually in a valley surrounded by the three millionaires. My Dad and Bill Kitchen immediately got the bulldozers charged up and dug out a beautiful lake with an island in the middle. The lake faced King Side

Road and was fed both with natural springs and the Humber River. I was six at the time and Dad built the lake so that I could walk out to the island but deep enough that three motorboats could be racing around our lake at the same time with skiers behind them all and we did! Every Sunday was like a Cabell reunion with hoards of Cabell cousins, Aunts and Uncles. Uncle Jess taught us all how to ski and surfboard. He would entertain us all by sitting on top of a ladder, which was on top of a chair all while riding a surfboard and smoking a cigar. It became like a regatta. Cars were parked on the side of King Side Road. People would bring picnics, sit on top of their cars and watch the show! As a child I was oblivious to all that but looking back it really was something, wasn't it! Remember, this was 1956, 57, 58-before most people had cottages or even a lot of TV availability-so I guess we were their Sunday entertainment!

One of the best things that happened from all that was a Toronto Telegram reporter came in and did a piece on my brother and I growing up on Lake Lenora. It was a whole inclusion in the Saturday Telegram and that was exciting for us! We talked about rafting down the Humber River like Huckleberry Finn. We would raft to our cabins, which our Uncle Harold donated to us from Bolton Fresh Air camp-one for Bruce and one for me. Dad built us a barbeque down by the cabins and when we would have a sleepover, Mom and Dad would bring the tractor down to the cabins in the morning, bring us our breakfast and Dad would cook it up.

Dad would often take me into the MacDonald's bush, behind our property and we would tap the trees and make maple syrup. The old original Milk House, on our property, was transformed into a life-sized Doll- House for me. Dad built on a porch, a pretend fridge, stove and

dish-washer-even my Mom didn't have a dish-washer in her house! My Mom and I would have Tea Parties as Mrs. MacMurchy and Mrs. McGillicuddy. We would wear hats and dress up the dog, Foxy.

Thinking back, it was a charmed life. I might not have had a computer, iPod, iPad, Blackberry and TV was just rearing its ugly head; but it was a charmed childhood and I wouldn't have changed it for the world!

Speaking of Television, we were the first house to have a TV in Nobleton. I was about three. Every Friday night some of Dad's friend would come over and watch the Friday night fights. I guess this particular night I was acting as a bartender in reverse and emptying out the glasses as they were set down. I met my Mother at the door on her return and not only was I not in bed but I appeared to be a bit wobbly. Those poor men received my Mother's wrath and it probably was a few Friday nights before they got to watch the fights again!

My Dad and Uncle Harold went to Nobleton Public School and it was a one-room school-house. My brother and I also went to Nobleton Public School and I always remembered it as a one-room school house when we started but apparently not-it was a two room school house-wonder what ever happened to that other room? I just remember when I was in Grade 4. There was Grade one to eight in the room and Mr Campbell was the teacher. As hard to believe as it may be, I got into trouble for incessant talking, so Mr. Campbell brought me up in front of the whole school and spanked me! That would surely never happen to-day-would it! I would have never told my parents but of course I had a brother and he couldn't wait to divulge my indiscretion. Back then parents never blamed the teachers, so needless to say I was disciplined at home too. It never stopped my talking.

In the early 50's, My Dad was a school board trustee. Bruce got into trouble at school with Mrs. Downey. He stood up and retorted angrily 'You can't give me trouble. I'll tell my Dad and he is a 'Board On The School!'

Kendra Brown was a grade ahead of me. They lived in the little white house east of the school. One day I forgot my lunch and after Kendra endured my tears she invited me home to have lunch with her and Mrs. Brown. I liked it so much that I would deliberately throw my lunch in a ditch on my way to school and go to Mrs. Brown's for lunch and good company. It took my Mom a couple of years to figure this out. She called Mrs. Brown, appalled that I would do that and offered Mrs. Brown money for all the lunches she gave me. Mrs. Brown just laughed and said absolutely not. 'As long as Wendy-Sue wants to come and have lunch with me, she's welcome' and I did right up to the end of grade eight. Kendra had already gone off to high school that year so I had Mrs. Brown to myself. Right up to the day that Mrs. Brown died, I always felt close to her and I had adopted myself as her third daughter!

John and Ziggy Bragg opened up Bragg's Pharmacy in 1958. John loved kids and was a great tease. For 5 cents you could get an ice cream cone and he would let you go behind the counter and make your own. It could be one scoop or ten scoops so of course the kids loved John too!

My brother and I went to the Nobleton United Church Sunday School. I always thought my parents were both United. I only found out in later years that my Mom's family was Anglican (My Uncle Pike's name is even on a plaque in the Schomberg Anglican Church) and my Dad was Presbyterian. The only reason we went to the United Church is because at that time it was the only church that had a Sunday School! Every

Sunday I would get all dressed up in my Sunday best and black patent shoes and after Sunday School I would walk down to the Witherspoon and Goodfellow Pool Hall to meet my Dad. There, the likes of Nip Hill would poke me and tease "Ah you don't like your old Man, do you?" Of course I would stomp my feet and declare that I did. I guess even Sunday School couldn't take that quick retort out of me.

Marilyn Hill had been my teacher at Sunday School the year she died from Cancer. Jeannie Peddle was my Grade one and two teacher. Of all my teachers and role models throughout my life, I still remember these two girls who played such an important role in my life when I was 6 and 7 years of age.

Actually my first day of school was kind of representative of my life. My Dad took me and tried to hand me over to Ms Peddle. I clung to my Dad's leg and and cried and screamed and wouldn't let him go. As Dad is dragging me along as he is trying to leave, Ms Peddle said, just go Mr. Bishop, she will be fine. At 3:00P.M. Dad came to pick me up and I did the same thing only in reverse, I clung to Ms. Peddle's leg and I cried and screamed I didn't want to leave school. Obviously my allegiance is quite versatile!

Two things I remember from Sunday School. Santa Claus came to our Christmas party. I was terrified and hid under a table and refused to come out. I guess it was so bad that they had to call my Dad to come and drag me out from under the table. We were already at the 'farm' so it had to be after 1956. There was a Hallowe'en costume party in the basement of the church. I think it would be around 1958. There was a prize for the best costume and I was really focused on winning. My Mom dressed me up like an old woman and told me not to talk and

give myself away. Well, no one could figure out who I was. I won the contest. Maybe no one could recognize me because I was so quiet for that long.

We used to have Community Bridal Showers in the basement of the Nobleton United Church. As a little girl I remember trying to peek around the big poles and all the tea cups and saucers that the brides used to get. Sharon Clarke and Carol Reid were two of the brides that I can remember. Back then a bridal shower was like a high tea. Everyone got dressed up and wore hats. A regular gift would be a tea cup and saucer and a wedding gift would be a set of dishes-it's quite different to-day, isn't it!

My Mom used to send me to Edna Pringle for Piano lessons. I was not musically inclined and every lesson I would get whacked over the knuckles, by Edna, for not practicing. The more she did it, the less I practiced. It became an eternal fight at home. One day I came home and the piano was gone. Mom had got so mad that she actually gave it to the Nobleton Lions to put in their annual auction fundraiser. Now I wish I could play the piano!

Bill Dalton would deliver our milk to us in a truck with no doors, so he could jump out either side. When we lived at the farm, so it would be after '56, if I was a good girl, I could go on deliveries with Bill-I always looked forward to that. Again, I can't imagine that happening these days.

I took swimming lessons from Core and Corrie Iliohan at the Pottageville Community Pool. For some reason it was condemned around '56/'57 and the Iliohan's had nowhere to give their lessons. My parents offered our lake and for two summers I got to swim with all

ages. After that the Iliohans put in an outdoor pool in their backyard in Schomberg and taught three generations from all over our community.

Many people have memories of Hurricane Hazel. I was 4 and really can't remember it. We were still in the house in Nobleton and then everyone was on a party line. Dad was out at the farm trying to keep his turkeys alive. He always used to say that they were the stupidest animals in the world because they would just go to the water instead of away from it. He was doing his best to keep them alive in the face of this terrible storm. Mom was hysterical and calling him, begging him to come home since the water was up to the bottom step of the second floor. I guess she was pretty scared and Mrs Brown would listen to her calls and try to calm her down. Finally Dad could do no more for the turkeys and decided he needed to get home to his family. He was driving the tractor and when he got to the bridge at Beaver Hill there was a car just parked there. He didn't see it until it was too late and he ran into it, pushing it into the rushing torrential Humber River. That saved his life because if that car hadn't been there he would have driven right over the bridge that was already washed out. He jumped off the tractor and ran the rest of the way home. I think my Dad was blessed with nine lives.

Growing up on the farm Bruce had a dog named Foxy and I had a kitten named Fluffy. It would have been in the late 50's, but one day Hubby Goodfellow came and took Foxy away. He had gotten into the neighbour's sheep and there was nothing else to do. I will never forget my Brother's crunched up face against the kitchen screen as Hubby drove off with his best friend. These were the trials of rural life.

I can't remember exactly when this happened, but we were still at the 'farm' so it was probably in the 60's, but my Mom received the first speeding ticket on King Side Road by Beaver Hill. Apparently during the night, speed limit signs were put up and the speed was reduced to 30 MPH. Of course Mom was exceeding that and she won the questionable title as the first recipient of a speeding ticket at that spot. Mom always had a temper but she spit nails about that one for a long time!

When I was a teenager, you had to be 16 years of age to work. I lied about my age and got my first job at John Reid's restaurant at King Side Road and 27 Highway. It was a lot of fun and I met a lot the town's characters that had been denied me living out in the country. I was told about Gladys Banting walking up the street with curlers in her hair in a housecoat and Lorne Cherry and I did meet up with both of them. They were all part of what gave small town Nobleton, character, in the 50's and the 60's.

At one time, all small towns in Ontario had a bowling alley and Nobleton was one of them. Ceil Reid gave lessons to all the kids in town and for me it was one of the social focal points in town.

I went all through Explorers and then graduated to the CGIT. I only lasted one meeting with that as unfortunately that night they taught us the correct way to wash dishes. I had been washing dishes all my life and one night of CGIT was enough for me!

Living out of town gave me different memories than the kids in town but I suppose the highlight of my childhood was always the arena. On Fridays we would walk up to the arena and have a public skate. Saturday night Public Skating was a very important part of our social life

and the worst punishment you could get from your parents was not to be able to go to Saturday night skating. We could all lip synch Russ Hoover as he would announce “INTERMISSION Everyone off the ice – Give the scrapers a chance. Okay Skaters Now we are going the other way”

The arena was a big part of my total life. I took figure skating lessons all through my school years and in the 60’s skated at Schomberg, East York, North York and Tam’O’Shanter” Skating Clubs. I certainly wasn’t the best skater but I am sure I had the biggest heart. Every spring our highlight was the carnival. We had a carnival every year, with lights, costumes, guest skaters and the arena would be packed for three performances. To this day figure skating is one of my greatest loves and best memories!

Recently one of my Horoscopes seemed to be very apt.

History is a funny subject. They teach it to us at school as if it were incontrovertible fact. Yet think back for a moment over your own past. Are not several of your memories (if not quite false) at least “carefully embellished” and adjusted? When you talk to someone else who has shared an experience with you, does their version match yours in every respect? All history is, at least to some extent, negotiable and rewriteable. If, in your emotional life, you now want to improve tomorrow, look at yesterday in a different light.