

(Taken from the middle of the chapter)

However, times of challenge and urgency I remember with greatest clarity and detail. For example, one night Raymond slid down off a haystack. That act of play would have been forgotten, like much of the normal content of our childhood world, had he not landed on a sharp garden hoe with his bare foot. That accident and the details that followed are unforgettable. Out of the dark night Dorothy came running into the house, beside herself, announcing the emergency. She was our Paul Revere galloping through the house. She was shouting, not "The red coats are coming!" but "Raymond's hurt! Raymond's hurt!"

He had cut an awful gash in the bottom of his foot and the blood was running. Dad and Mom laid him down on his back in the kitchen on the piano bench. They put his foot up in the air, hoping to decrease the blood flow. Blood ran down his leg but the gash was too gaping for it to clot. Mom and Dad were both troubled and worked at stopping the bleeding. To a child the lurking fear was "will all the blood run out ...will he die?" It was a serious hemorrhage. They put bread flour on the cut. Flour dusting was everywhere and the blood still oozed through the flour. Mom and Dad were troubled and, of course, we children were most worried. Eventually the flow stopped.

Obviously the impress of the urgent, the highly irregular, is the most powerfully remembered, like the day Dad started to Missouri by himself in the motor launch. When the engine started, he scrambled back to grab the steering wheel. (See *Ribbons in Their Hair*.) The universal joint grabbed his trousers' leg. Instantly he was jerked toward the spinning drive shaft that ripped off his pants leg and wound it into a ball of shreds ...all so fast it left him breathless. Unnerved and in tatters, he landed and came limping back to the house with a chewed-up leg. Doctor Mom was his first line of medical attention.

And then there was the day Dad was mowing weeds out on the northeast bank of the mound: He got off the steel seat to service the sickle bar of the horse-drawn mower. He and the hired hand were working on it together. The hired hand slid the cutters in the bar when Dad was not expecting it. He came to the house with bloody hands; one of his fingertips was sheared off. Doctor Mom administered first aid, before he journeyed to Missouri to see a doctor.

Thousands of times we came together as a family, face to face, around the meal table. Our family togetherness was nurtured there and our bodies nourished. We started as a family with a combined weight of three hundred pounds (just Mother and Father) to a total combined weight of eleven hundred twenty pounds ...many years and many bushels of potatoes later.

One of those many mealtimes stands out in our memory: All was well at the table until Mother looked over at Wandnetta. Her eyes were rolled back in her head. Suddenly we were all taken with a sense of urgency. Mother and Dad rose to their feet in alarm and were at her side. Everyone stopped eating. They hurriedly exchanged remarks about what was happening and what to do about it. They lifted her from the high chair. There was commotion, and in about a minute Wandnetta had been placed in a dishpan on the floor. Her body was stiff and turning blue; she was having a spasm. Father poured water over her, and Mother brought the water up over her body repeatedly by hand. They got her to the doctor, but no definite cause was diagnosed. In time, under anxious parental vigilance, her spastic proneness passed.

*And the story continues...*