

*(Taken from the middle of the chapter)*

Mother would run her own little checklist on our appearance, while we were in these close quarters. Occasionally, she would remove breakfast egg from around a mouth. ‘Sweet potatoes’ that had been overlooked in one of our ears... she just burrowed them out with a little spit on her handkerchief.

All the way to church, her eyes were not off us for long. When we strode in review up the church sidewalk, I believe Mother felt pride, pleasure, and perhaps even an inner peace ...motivations that held her to our primitive island home ...that held her in a dedicated relationship with her children's father ...that made the weekday drudgery bearable. I believe she silently longed that her children's native habitat would not stifle their development.

She eyed her children, the extension of herself, climbing the church steps to the large white doors. The girls were radiant and gorgeous in their Montgomery Ward Sunday outfits. Water from the rain barrel left their hair soft and shiny. Brightly colored ribbons in their hair glistened in the sun.

She glanced at her sons: mild mannered Raymond, who was her stepson, and her very own son "Jackie." She, for an instant, imagined us fine young men ...grown and handsome. A visualization of her daughters, as beautiful and refined young ladies, flashed before her. The precious product of her years of toil and tears were on display this day. She may have congratulated herself; I hope she did.

On this day she, herself, enjoyed a brief trip back into her days of excellent grooming and elaborately-fashioned dresses as a girl. It just lifted her morale to sport one of her few stylish dresses. It stirred in her an elation, like queenliness, to wear her airy wide-rimmed hat. Though she had few hats, she shared her mother's love of them. (A millinery in Quincy employed her in her teen years. She handed a part of each paycheck over to her mother, a common practice in those days.)

Dad was quietly proud of us, too. He looked confident in his Sunday brown suit and dress hat. Dad liked to wear hats, whether it was an old tattered one in the field or his fine dress hat. He sported a dress hat like a dude --tipped slightly to the right and forward on his head. However, he instinctively removed it at the church door. Inside he reached up and placed it on the rack along with the hats of other men. That someone might switch hats with him after the service struck him with a slight twinge of concern; he did so lose his favorite hat one time.

Our appearance was drastically elevated on this day to take our place in the sea of the dressed-up church attendees. It was there that our teachers finally turned our thoughts to the eternal, while we sat in our little Sunday school chairs before them. And when we gathered in the awesome sanctuary, Reverend Baker, a venerable white-haired old man, opened his Bible at the pulpit and talked of God. When his speech became vague, or our attention spans became exhausted, we would look up and over his head to study the unforgettable stained glass window behind the baptistery. The scene was of John The Baptist baptizing Jesus in the Jordan River.

The whole experience affected our perspective for the better. After our brief morning exposure to the world of refinement and culture, and a glimpse or two into things unseen, we would return to our own adorable homey, but fascinating world. There we felt more at ease in our everyday clothes, and with our bare feet back under Mother's dinner table. Dorothy remarks, "I remember being so very hungry, for we had to wait for Mom to fix the meal after we got home."

Those Sunday excursions were not only our weekly occasion to parade our finest qualities as a family but they wrote indelible etchings upon our hearts. The cost Dad and Mom paid to get us to the Lord's house each Sunday helped us develop the same tenants of faith and devotion that they had, in our own lives. Each sibling still practices weekly worship and the hearing of the Word of God from the preacher-man to this day.

*And the story continues...*