

WOMEN

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When we first came to Ruskin there were just four families of us; four men, four women, two young ladies, three teen-agers, and five little fellows.

We were self-sufficient - not needing the natives to make us happy - except for the two young ladies. I know know they must have had some pretty lonely and bleak moments - I should say hours and days.

This is to be about the four wives primarily. I'll just say this about the four men. Not one of them smoked or used tobacco, nor drank, nor cheated on their wives. You may ask, "What else is there to worry about?" Lots of things, but mostly money - or lack of it.

First was Aunt Addie, the wife of Dr. Miller. Dr. Miller was Mother's brother. Dad was Mrs. Miller's brother, so there was a double relationship there. Next was my Mother - the wife of A. P. Dickman. Then there was Aunt Lizzie, the wife of L. L. Dickman. Aunt Lizzie, "Elizabeth" was Mother's neice and L. L. Dickman was Dad's brother, so Aunt Lizzie was both my cousin and my aunt. Aunt Pearl was the wife of N. E. Dickman. Uncle Dan had married a neighbor girl back in Missouri. Years later the husband of one of the "babies" when we were trying to explain our relationship said, "I never heard of such a mix-up without somebody committing incest."

Aunt Addie was the oldest, the best educated and a college teacher. She was our organizer. She organized the Ruskin Woman's Club, Sunday School and church services, and later college classes. She became the first post-mistress when Ruskin got mail service. She managed our local telephone company during the First World War and until it was sold to the Tampa Phone Company and we had contact with the outside world. She was a pretty woman, medium size, well built and had beautiful blue eyes.



Mother was next oldest. What can I say about her? She was my Mother. She was considered a large woman, with straight black hair, rather thin. I can see her now with a curling iron in the old herosene light, curling her hair to go somewhere - and some times burning a strand of hair. That wasn't good. Mother always looked good in her clothes when she went out because she always wore a corset. She never wore one at home and looked pretty sloppy as she wore "Mother Hubbards."

Oh, yes, she had beautiful big brown eyes, a gorgeous voice - without any effort she could be heard all over Ruskin. Besides all this she had what is now called charisma - or personality. She loved people - not just special ones, but everyone and she let them know it. And did they eat it up!!! She could make a plain little old cracker woman feel like a queen. They loved her.

Mother was a natural leader - she drew people to her with her personal magnetism. It didn't make any difference that she didn't organize anything to lead them to - except church. Mother never tried to draw people to her - they just came - like steel to a magnet.

You can understand that this might cause trouble between Aunt Addie and Mother, but to my knowledge it never did. They were the best of friends until Aunt Addie died in 1935.

Next was Aunt Lizzie - L. L. Dickman's wife and Mother's niece. She was a beautiful lady with brown eyes and lovely red curly hair. She was not much older than Aurora and Georgadda, but she was married and had three kids, which of course, put her in the "old married class." She was ambitious and when the college opened she took some subjects.

Aunt Pearl was the wife of N. E. Dickman. She was rather small and not very good looking. She had black eyes and black hair. She was not interested in college. There was one thing she did have and that was a capacity to



work. Another thing - she got better looking as she got older.

Then there was Aurora and Georgadda, the daughters of Dr. and Mrs. Miller. They were beautiful gifted girls. Georgadda was younger than Aurora. She was an accomplished pianist and singer. She taught music in college - piano and vocal. She had red hair and green eyes and was more like Aunt Lizzie - reserved and held herself aloof. She was a follower rather than a leader and depended upon Aurora to a great extent. In music, however, she was the outstanding one.

Then there was Aurora! What can I say of her? I can't find the words to describe her. She was beautiful - she was accomplished - she was the peace maker. She had the mostest of everything! She was a natural leader, a marvelous teacher. She was like Mother in that she drew everyone to her and they all loved her, both young and old. She was my favorite cousin. She sang and was a natural actress. She could and did give whole performances by herself. Mother loved to show her off. Both Georgadda and Aurora left Ruskin during the First World War. Aurora became a leader in the cities and towns where she lived.

Last and least, there was me. I was just a little girl. I had no particular talent, was not beautiful - passable - and had a terrible inferiority complex. How could I help it with all the beauty and talent around me? Georgadda gave me enough piano and vocal lessons, that had I had any natural ability I would have been an accomplished artist. Aurora taught me dramatics. I learned how to conduct a public meeting in our Literary Club. Mother just could not sew. If I wanted something to wear Aunt Pearl or Aunt Lizzie had to make it. So they taught me to sew and by the time I was fourteen I was doing all the sewing for Mother and myself.



That was one way Mother spoiled me. She was so happy that I could sew that she picked up after me. I would drop my patterns and scraps on the floor. I still throw everything on the floor, but now I have to pick it up myself. I did have a great capacity to work and have been given every opportunity to do so.

What did we do for amusement? There was no radio or T.V. No bridge. Everyone read. We took magazines that are out of publication - the American Magazine, Colliers, and the Literary Digest and others. At that time the Best Sellers came out in serial form in the magazines and we could hardly wait for the next month to roll around. We gave books for gifts and everyone read them.

Then when Georgadda was present we always had music.

At that time there was no refrigeration. Everyone baked their own bread. Everyone did their own washing. Everyone made their own clothes. Everyone did some kind of hand work they carried with them - except Mother and Georgadda. Georgadda couldn't do anything while she played the piano, so no one expected her to do hand work.

The native men wanted to date Aurora and Georgadda. Of course, they all picked Aurora so Georgadda had what was left. There was no great choice among them. But Aurora being like Mother could make them feel important. Georgadda, being like Aunt Lizzie, endured them. To show the mentality of one that, "carried" Georgadda around, after listing to Georgadda play said, "I would give \$10.00 if I could play like that."

Georgadda and Aurora did most of the house work for Aunt Addie. Aunt Addie seem to always have some writing to do, then when the college started she was really busy. She grew what flowers there were. Monday was wash-day for everyone. Tuesday was ironing, Friday and Saturday was cleaning and



baking.

Mother was a good cook but did not venture many new dishes. She made the best bread and lemon pies. All the others tried to make bread like Mother - but they did not have her big hands and wrists and could not kneed the dough like she did. Her apple pies could have been the ones that made the slogan "Apple pie and mother." famous. She had come from an apple country and could really fry apples. If you wanted to taste something, take a slice of Mother's bread, toast it, spread it with homemade butter, cover with hot fried apples and on top of that pour real cream - not the anemic stuff we buy - but the kind that goes plop when it falls. Boy, have you got something really good. Mother did not like to cook really, so Pauline got that job quite soon - except the bread. I never did make bread.

Aunt Lizzie and Aunt Pearl had the small children and had all the work to do. Aunt Pearl was not a very good cook and was always in a hurry - always putting soda in the beans to speed up the cooking - I'm prejudiced against soda to this day from seeing that yellow mess. Aunt Lizzie was a good cook, I guess. I did not eat at her house very often as I do not recall any idiosyncrasies. Aunt Lizzie had one baby - the first Ruskin baby - as Mother would say and Aunst Pearl had two; a girl and a boy. Those kids really got the attention. They went to public meetings - no baby sitting in those days. If for any reason, they needed looking after, Mother was the one - she really loved babies. If they had colic, she could put her big hot hand on their little stomachs and they would quiet right down.



One year Georgadda and Aurora went to Boston to college. I do not know what university they attended. That was before the school got started here as they were both teachers.

Our transportation was by boat - the Kilcare - a beautiful yacht - that Dad turned into a work horse. The front end was plush covered seats that could be turned into beds. The middle was the engine room and a room with a toilet and wash bowl. The back end was the galley for cooking and eating and had canvas curtains to keep out the weather. The back end carried the freight and the front end the passengers. It took about three hours to go to Tampa, usually about noon when it got there. So most of the time we stayed all night and came back the second day. Aunt Kittie's on Jackson street was the favorite lodging place. It was a small hotel but we called it a boarding house. Those of us that did not go to Tampa often would be so excited that we couldn't sleep the night before.

Georgadda and Aurora had made friends with those at Aunt Kittie's and of course, thoroughly enjoyed going to Tampa to associate with someone their equal. I recall one time some of the young people came out to visit them, and as usual the whole family gathered to enjoy the music and singing. Georgadda started to play Marching Through Georgia and one young man got up and left the room. It turned out that his home had been one that had been burned. You see, the Civil War was not far behind us at that time.

I forgot to mention that Aurora, Georgadda, Aunt Lizzie, and Mother made up a women's quartette and they were pretty darned good.

Sarah Bernheart came to Tampa and all of the adults made a special trip in to see her. There were other special occasions but they were few



and far between. The Tampa State Fair had just started and of course, that was a big occasion for us kids. We had lots of picnics and always got together on holidays. That was about it. I want to add that in all those years together to my knowledge - and I was a pretty noseey kid - there was never a real division among them - some small murmurings, of course - they were the best of friends until each one passed away - Aunt Pearl being the last to go.