

My Thoughts

I've been thinking ever since I viewed the video that Rachel so lovingly made of Maple Hill, my Grammie and Grampie's home. Dad always used the phrase "up home" when speaking of Maple Hill and Springfield. It was his rock, his restoring source. Even though he traveled a great deal and spent a lot of time out of the country he would return up home and refresh his core, his heart. He was a dutiful son and he loved his Marm and Pa and they loved him.

Grammie and Grampie's was my special place too. It was where I felt most like me, and loved and accepted at the same time. So all that is associated with that place is dear: how the pantry looked and smelled, the barn, the smell of hay and manure. The chickens and picking eggs and the smell of their grain. The sound of the piazza door and the squeak of Grampie's Morris chair. The special old toys and games and well-worn dolls and stuffed animals and the swing on the maple tree in the dooryard. The summer house and the feel of the different patches that made up the quilt on the bed. No water ever tasted better than that dipped from the pail in the pantry.

Boy, did I eat! No one has ever made Grammie bread quite the same somehow — and then the homemade butter, pickles, jams and jellies, and all the fresh vegetables from the garden. I even drank the milk and liked it.

Then all the things to do: jump in the hay, wash dishes, and I loved all the dishes because they were there, stick your fingers in a calf's mouth, pick berries, shell peas, snap beans, go get the cows, listen to stories, play with my cousins and laugh a lot. The woods and fields were places for adventure; we all knew Elephant rock. And they smelled so good: balsam, sweet fern, cedar and warm grasses and Indian paint brush. Grammie's big clump of phlox smelled like home. Then there was the rain barrel ... and the baby-chick pen and apple trees and green applesauce from the duchess apple tree. I would be so excited I could hardly stand it when our car turned up the drive and around the corner into the dooryard and there were Grammie and Grampie and Aunt Ruthie waiting for us on the piazza. Nothing looked more beautiful to me than the sight of that house and barn, and when we had to leave we would wave and wave and strain for our last look at Grammie waving to us out of the pantry window. That's why the views of the outside of the house caused me to cry. This was supposed to be for forever and even though I couldn't go back very often of late years, the fact that it was still there was a grounding and gave weight to memories that can seem so ephemeral. I could always go back and touch them again. Pretty soon no more.

But I brought Grammie's phlox here and musk and lupines so I can see and smell them.

And I planted peonies on either side of my porch steps — and the porch itself is a copy of sorts. I've tried making her bread, and often make jellies and jams and pick berries to make rasbry pie, and grow green-mountain potatoes, telephone peas, and chard — and I've also made boiled dressing for leaf lettuce. And I love beet greens. I've never been able to grow sweetpeas like Grammie's. And that's why I wanted some pretty simple homey things to remind me of where I come from.

The Letters

It's like looking through the windowpane while standing outside at night and the people inside are in full view in the light of the even song. Not only can we see them but we can hear them too, as they talk of school, socials, parties and plans, and of family close at hand and seen quite frequently but also those far away, but not far away in heart. How clear the love seems seen through this window pane. The work was hard and the need sustained by Pa and Marm and kids. This window pane is evidence. As a grandchild these window panes are tinted rose and I'm eternally grateful for it.

These window panes are evidence itself of steadfast love pursuing all who received them. And most of all I see a legacy of love and decency, intelligence and humor which I hope continues with me and mine and you and yours.

As I stand and gaze on the scene I perceive the passage of time and that I am now behind the window and in the evening glow as well. Letters I have written are here so not only am I standing and looking in, I am also a part of what I am seeing. Many of the letter writers who have created this window pane have forever joined the group inside never again to gaze in from the day outside. And someday I too and you will be behind the window pane forever. I hope there will always be loved ones looking in at us being gazers and the seen.

I wrote this after reading a small box-worth of letters written to my Dad by his Mom during his first year away at college. There were letters from his brothers and sisters and his Gram Ardron and aunts. I'm so thankful they weren't thrown away. It makes me want to write more letters.

Love,

Manda