

MEMORIES OF MERTLE BREYFOGLE SHUSTER MY GRANDMOTHER

By

RICHARD MURRAY

DOB 4.14.46 Middletown Ohio

My memories of Mertle Breyfogle Shuster are the most wonderful moments in my life. During this brief window in my early life I had the feeling of security, comfort, love, and a strong sense of promise in her family unit. Her impact was positive, warm, and lasting. She teased and joked with family and was light hearted. She was short, round, wore glasses, and had brown wavy hair.

After moving from Middletown Ohio, about 1947, there was a period of time that we lived with grandma Shuster while our father worked at a paper plant in Beloit Wisconsin. My sisters went to White Pigeon Michigan School.

About 1947-48 I do have multiple memories at the White Pigeon Michigan Company Street home. The most significant recollection was of a winter or the cool spring late afternoon, but inside the home was warm and pleasant. This most likely was a Sunday dinner in which Mertle's chicken and dumplings, mashed potatoes with gravy were the main course. She as well was an accomplished baker of fruit pies, and cake with frosting.

I have memory of much happiness, laughter, excitement, and hustle and bustle in the kitchen with many cooks. I was standing in the kitchen, watching with amazement as Grandma opened the oven door, then mother decided things were too hot and I was in their way. I was first to be seated and strapped securely in my wooden highchair next to the huge table in the dining room

The table was carefully set in anticipation of guests and the glasses and dishes sparkled. Many family members arrived, and took off their overcoats, mingled in the parlor, then gradually set themselves around the table. The atmosphere was of anticipation of special guests yet to arrive, and they did at the last moment, everyone was elated and relieved. There was abundant conversation, laughter, and joy during the meal.

The front door on the street side opened to the staircase going up, or you could turn right to enter the front living room [parlor]. I believe the floors had carpets and some sort of wallpaper with a hanging light. I think there was a piano too. There were doilies placed on the furniture. The kitchen was on the rear of the house with a back porch where items were stored. There was a driveway, garage, and a side entrance with a concrete step. That is where I dropped my last glass baby bottle, as I remember my mother Hazel said, "all gone, no more bottles." What a disappointment and rude awakening! Oh well, still had my blanket!

About 1949-52, diligently every Saturday I would go with my mother in our 1941 Plymouth to visit Grandma at the Klinger Lake Nursing Home. She was in bed mostly, would sit in a chair next to her bed, or use a walker to shuffle along. Apparently she had a minor stroke, and developed Parkinson's disease. We would spend several hours visiting her. Getting restless, I remember walking outside on the lawn waiting for mother to finish. This must have been early summer as it was sunny and warm and the plants were beginning to flourish, probably May or June. I would set on the lawn-facing west looking down at the beautiful lake, a gentle breeze blowing in my face then turn South to watch the truck farm workers in the rows of plants across the road. My thoughts were searching for a reason why grandmother was not getting better. I was about six when grandma died.