

*Part 1*

Editor's Note: Ida Grace Smith Menoher is a 94-year-old from Hemet, Calif., who spent her early years in Grant. Her father, Ivan W. Smith, built a house on the north edge of town. She has jotted down thoughts and bits of history that she recalls about those years—timely for the county's 125th anniversary.

"I wish I had a journal that would remind me of dates and names, but as a child keeping such a diary was unheard of," she said.

Although her first three or four years were spent in Grinton, her early school life began in Grant and left a great impression on her.

"They were happy, carefree years that I fondly recall," she said.

Here is her story:

My name is Ida Grace Smith Weeks Menoher, the daughter of Ivan W. and Eunice F. Smith, former residents of Grant, Nebraska.

I was born in Grinton, a town named by my father—I was the first baby born there. My father managed the granary and the small general store. The area was devoted to farming, wheat being the primary product. When "mom" and "dad" moved to Grinton, there was nothing there but the grain elevator and the store, and they and my older brother Dayton, a small baby, lived in a small apartment attached to the store. They later bought or built a house where we lived until our move to Grant.

My father said he submitted several names for the town, one of which was "Dayton," but it was turned down because, presumably, there was a "Dayton, Ohio." The name "Grinton" was accepted, I presume, because it was a grain center.

I wish I had kept a journal or diary so I could supply dates. I was born in 1918 and we moved to Grant probably when I was two or three years old. We lived in a rental house until the house my dad built was completed. Dad went to work for the lumber company—Adams Lumber Company as I recall.

I don't believe the streets had names at that time. Our house was built on the main street that ran north and south in the town—the house was on the north end of town. As the house was under construction, Dad made daily visits to the site to check on the progress.

One day he took me with him. I was barefooted, and walking around the construction site was dangerous. Of course, I had to step on a nail, and all Hell broke loose. I don't remember much about it except that my foot was bandaged and everybody had to "tote" me around until it was healed.

I remember that we moved into the house before the bathroom was completed, and we had to take our Saturday night baths in a wash tub on the kitchen floor. We had a cook stove that burned wood. I don't recall when we got our first electric stove.

There was a large house north of ours, owned by the Flynn family. I believe he was a car dealer (probably Ford). Their son, Gerald, was about the same age as my brother, Dayton, and his sister, Catherine, was a bit younger than me—the four of us played together quite a bit.

### **Some of My Antics**

Mom and Dad were singers—Mom had a beautiful mellow contralto voice and Dad was a tenor. She played the piano at the Methodist Church and Dad directed the choir. Both were active in church. Actually, that was about the only source of entertainment in the small town.

Mom loved to tell the story about when an evangelist came to the church. Naturally, the choir was on duty at the evening services, so Mom sat with me and the parson's wife in the congregation. The evangelist called for "testimonials"—church members were to stand and recite a Bible verse from memory.

All of a sudden I stood up, and my Mother's heart dropped— "What is Ida Grace up to now?" is what she was thinking. I primly said, "Jesus wept," and sat down. The parson's wife later told Mom that I kept saying, "I want to do that," so she gave me the verse to recite.

There was a theater (silent movies, of course!) but it was open only on weekends. Mom played the piano for the movies. She was even given a score to use for the bigger epic-type movies. At that time, a violin teacher, Jay Cochran, also played his violin as part of the music ensemble. Mom took me with her a few times, and I had to sit in a front row seat right by the piano so she could keep a watchful eye on me.

My parents were good friends of the town's only physician, Dr. Bell. He and his wife had two daughters, Loneta and Jane. The former was a couple of years older than Dayton and Jane was a year older than me.

I found my first love in Grant, probably when I was in the second or third grade—Charles Daugherty. The kids called him "Barney Google" because he had big eyes! Charles used to walk me home from school in the afternoons.

We went to school in a building on the east edge of town. The principal was Mr. Flory, and his daughter, Edna Marie, was a good friend of mine. Another good friend was a girl named Viola Mae Keller—I believe her father was the sheriff.

In our school room, Viola Mae sat between Edna Marie and me. One day she whispered to me that Edna Marie was mad at me and wanted to meet me for a fight at a designated place after school; she then whispered the same to Edna Marie. So we met, and proceeded to fight like a couple of boys—I ended up punching her in the stomach and knocking the wind out of her, and she went home screaming.

By the time I got home I found Mom on the telephone talking to Mr. Flory, and I heard her tell him that whatever punishment he meted out to me would be duplicated at home. Well, I knew then that I was in trouble.

The next day, the three of us girls were sent to the basement where we met Mr. Flory in the furnace room. He had two pieces of lath in his hand. After a short and stern lecture he positioned each of us, one by one, over a bench and gave us a couple of whacks on the bottom. Oddly, we three girls remained friends and forgot the "fight" and the "whacks." And, no, I didn't get another spanking at home, but was "treated" to another lengthy and stern lecture.

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