

## A Simple

By Joan Day

Inspiration to write a second book came from an unusual source – people. After the publication of my first book, *Sylvan, the Gift of Unconditional Love*, many people who had purchased this book continually asked me “when’s your next book coming out” or “what will you publish next.” I would comment that I might write about my childhood memories of growing up on my family’s farm in Bath, NH with my parents, Steve and Natalie Burton, and my three siblings, Ray, Mary and Steve. And that is how my second book, *Thinking of Yesterday Today* began. However, it is more than a story of farm life. It is about a time when life was simple, comfortable and focused on family togetherness; a time many will recall in their own lives. My book invites readers to journey with me back in time and experience a slower pace of life.

My childhood memories take me back to times of my parent’s words of wisdom. If we didn’t want to do something, Mother would always say “You don’t want me to tell your father, do you?” Mother also often said “Waste not, want not,” a lesson that has served me well for my entire life. When we were whining and wanting too much, Mother would remind us “If wishes were horses, beggars might ride.” Dad, of course, would have his words of wisdom, especially when

it came to warning us about the Dragonfly.

My siblings and I knew it as the “Darning Needle” because Dad had told us that if we swore and a Darning Needle was around, it would sew up our lips. I don’t recall that we swore much.

In the spring, everything came to life and that meant our days were filled with making our own fun and helping Mother with planting the garden, mixing a spring tonic of manure and water to cover the soil for tilling before beets, carrots, cucumbers, corn, radishes and other vegetables were planted. Our garden had the best vegetables! Mother used many of the vegetables for her pickled beets, sweet cucumber pickles, bread and butter pickles, along with the apples, elderberries, blackberries for the jams and jellies. The vegetables and berries saw us through the long cold winters and lean times on the farm.

This time of year also found us in the pastures, racing along the worn-down cow paths and sampling the cows’ salt licks and grain. We built a fort to throw pebbles in a game with our cousins. And we built dams in the brook, which made our neighbors believe there were beavers in the brook. Our “homemade stagecoach” was our pride and joy and, Dick our workhorse, took us on many a journey up around the back roads of

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Bath. We even journeyed up in the woods with Dad to help with maple sugaring, gathering the sap and returning to the sugar house to unload the sap into the holding tank. Dad would have tin cups for warm delicious maple syrup, and we'd pour it on snow. Sugar on snow was just the best treat!

The summer days were marked with Dad's work of rotating the crops and reading the earth for corn and wheat. We'd play Ollie Ollie Humphrey and we had plenty of places to hide, from the upstairs rooms and clothes closets to the dark scary potato bin in the cellar, and the barn's haylofts and silo. The sawdust bin was not a hiding place, but was a fun place to dive into when freshly delivered sawdust arrived.

If we tired of this game, we would spend balmy summer nights chasing lightening bugs all over the big field in front of the house. We went barefoot most of the summer and never noticed the stubble cut hay. We would put the lightening bugs in our canning jars and watch them flash their lights at us, wanting to get out into the cool night air. We would let them go, only to start the chase over on another summer night.

One activity that we loved on a hot afternoon was having the Burton relatives, who had come up for a picnic, watch our theater play, which we performed up in the 100+ degree shed chamber. We had hung old blankets from the roof beams that served as back drops and the curtain and we wore "theater clothes" that had once belonged to Grammy and Grandpa Burton. They never said no when we asked them to watch us lip sync and dance.

Winter time would find us staying inside when it was 30 below. We kids would get out the Monopoly game. Brother Ray always insisted on being the banker and we always ended up in jail. He had all the money and what little we did have, he would

take it when we landed on Boardwalk. We'd get so mad at him, we refused to play - the banker always had the money! So we would turn our attention to Dad when he came in from the barn. We would play Rummy, Fish or Checkers - and win!

Family time was spent around the Mahogany console combination radio and record player. This was a special time we gathered to listen to the radio and favorite programs. We would listen to the Lone Ranger and slapstick comedy with Fibber Magee and Molly; George and Gracie Allen; Jack Benny and Amos and Andy. We would gather close to our parents when the whisper came over the radio "The Shadow Knows" or the creaking door ushered us into "The Inner Sanctum." Mother had her soap opera, "Porcia Faces Life" during the day.

We not only had our fun times, we also had our work times. During the hot summer days, we would help Dad in the fields, driving tractor, helping gather the loose hay or stacking the baled hay on the wagon for the barn. Fall was for gathering the potatoes for the potato bin in the cellar or readying the corn for the silo. We would help Dad in the barn finish up the day's work of feeding warm milk to the calves and cats and feeding grain and hay to the cows. By the time we were ready to head to the house, the barn was quiet and hushed. All we could hear were the cows, now settled down for the night, crunching their hay. The chores were done.

Growing up on a small dairy farm provided many opportunities to experience the value of our parents' strong work ethic, perseverance, integrity and love of their children and the farm life, along with their quiet sustaining faith in God. This is what my siblings and I have brought forward to this time in our lives.