

# **Nancy Bender Stephens**

## **Her Life in Picture & Story**



Nancy Marie Bender was the first child of Edward Paul Bender and Marie Dahl Bender. She was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August, 1935 in St. Joseph hospital on the Grand Boulevard in Detroit.

In order to fully understand how Nancy came into being and was born full term we have to go back in time and reminisce a while over events that had their beginnings in the early months of 1934.



**Marie Dahl**

On February 7, 1934 Marie Dahl had a day off from her nanny position and was visiting at home with her mother Nellie Dahl and brothers Bill & Shorty. Her sisters Mildred and Elenore were both married for the past 4 years and were out on their own with their husbands and young children. Her sister Dorothy was dead these past 17 years, having been struck and killed by a car. Her younger brothers Bill & Shorty were still single and living at home with Nellie. This particular evening they were sitting at a kitchen table in Nellie's upper flat playing cards with the one of the downstairs flat tenants, Norman Bender. Nellie and Marie were

sitting in the kitchen watching the card game. Everyone was having a really good time, with lots of mirth and laughter.



**Norman, Edward & Marie Bender**



**Henry, Norman & Elizabeth Bender**

Suddenly there was the sound of someone bounding up the stairs from Elizabeth and Henry Bender's lower flat. An impatient, brisk knock on the door. The door then flew open and in whisked Edward Paul Bender, the second youngest son of Elizabeth Ott Bender and Henry Charles Bender. He was looking for his younger brother, Norman to show him his "new" used car he had just purchased. Edward was full of enthusiasm over his newly acquired car and wanted to bring Norman outside to show it off to him. Suddenly something happened to Edward as soon as he set foot into that room. Something overwhelming, earth shaking, life altering. He suddenly set eyes on a beautiful little slip of a girl. Her name was Marie. Shy, beautiful, 4' 11", 98 lbs.



**Norman Bender**

The “new” used car was totally forgotten, no longer the focus of attention. Fetching Norman was no longer an issue. Marie instantly became Edward’s total focus of attention. He could not take his eyes off this vision of beauty. In one small instant Marie had managed to smite his heart. He was totally, forever, completely in love with her. He said over and over again that it was love at first sight. He said his heart skipped beats. She was forever, from this moment forward, the central focus of his existence, unwaveringly throughout his entire life, right to the last day of his life. (His last words to Marie on June 28, 1982 were, “I love you, Marie”.) Thus began this 47 year journey of love & devotion on this 7<sup>th</sup> day of February, 1934 in the humble upstairs Dahl family flat on Townsend.



**Marie Bender**

Edward spent the next few hours in light banter with Marie. Marie, who had been badly hurt emotionally by her father’s abandonment, was very stand offish to Edward’s attention. Nellie asked Marie to go to the grocery store for her. Edward spoke up and said he would go with her. Marie, said no, she preferred to go alone. Edward’s feelings were really hurt. At the end of the evening Edward asked Marie out on a date the next week on her day off. Marie did not want to go out. Nellie coaxed Marie, telling her Edward was a fine fellow and she should go out with him. Marie finally agreed. Edward proposed that they go roller skating on February 14<sup>th</sup>.

On February 14<sup>th</sup> Edward appeared at the appointed time with a box of candy in his hand, his heart on his sleeve. Marie took the candy from Edward, gave it to her

brother Shorty and asked him to give it to Nellie for safe keeping until she got back from her date. (Nellie made sure that nothing bad would ever happen to that box of candy. Before the evening was over she would have eaten the whole thing!) They started out for the skating rink but never went in. Marie had never roller skated in her entire life and Edward soon realized that such a date would be a total disaster so he took her to a movie and saw a Claudette Colbert movie "It Happened One Summer". Afterwards they went to a soda parlor for a malted milk. From that night on they dated steadily on her every day off. Three weeks later Edward asked Marie to marry him. Marie told him that was way too early to consider marriage. Edward didn't think so. He wanted to marry her the very minute he found her. But in deference to her wishes they waited 6 months before he again proposed and this time Marie accepted.



**Marie Dahl Bender, 1934**

Marie was very nervous about getting married, afraid that Edward might one day leave her as her dad Bill Dahl left his family. Marie prayed very hard and often that she was making the right decision. Edward was very nervous for a different reason. He was afraid Marie would back out of the engagement. Edward was so in love with her he felt his life would end if she ever left him. Never for a moment did he doubt wanting to marry her.

Edward bought Marie a lovely engagement and wedding ring set, a very expensive purchase considering that this was in the height of the depression and money was very tight. He and she went to a soda parlor the night before the wedding and Edward gave her the wedding set for safe keeping. The next day when Edward picked Marie up to go to the church she was crying. Edward said his heart was in his mouth as he was so deadly afraid that Marie had changed her mind about marrying him. When she told him she had lost the wedding ring set a great weight was lifted from him! All that mattered at this point was that Marie was in one short hour to become his forever! The wedding set mattered not at all to him.





**Edward & Marie Bender**



**Our Lady of Sorrows Church**

Marie and Edward were married at Our Lady of Sorrows Belgian Catholic Church in Detroit on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, 1934. They eloped as there was no money for a traditional wedding in the middle of the Great Depression. Afterwards they lived with Edward's mother and father, Elizabeth and Henry Bender in their flat on Townsend Ave in Detroit.



**Marie & Edward Bender**

Three months after their wedding is when Nancy's life story begins. The week of Thanksgiving in 1934, or perhaps even that Thanksgiving day, November 22, 1934, the first miracle of life began in this new little Bender family. Nancy was officially on her way! What wonderful news this was for the whole family on that cold, crisp Tuesday, that Christmas of 1934. Wonderful news in the heart of the Great Depression. Nancy was truly their gift from God, one that no amount of money could buy, that Marie and Edward revealed their first Christmas morning as husband and wife.

Marie's pregnancy was mostly uneventful with a few exceptions toward the end. She had little discomfort and little morning sickness throughout those nine months. The major discomfort began in July and August of 1934 due to the hot summer months. The first major traumatic event took place in Grandma and Grandpa Bender's house in June when Marie was 7 month's pregnant. She was walking down the 2 flights of stairs to the basement when she lost her footing, grabbed for the ledge on the wall to steady herself, but was unsuccessful and instead knocked

down a whole bunch of canning jars and fell all the way down the stairs with the canning jars banging all the way down the stairs with her. Marie was sure she was going to miscarry as she fell down the stairs really hard and landed on her stomach with great force. But to her great relief the pregnancy continued on uninterrupted. And maybe I should interject, to Nancy and her offspring's great relief as that big fall down the stairway could have cost the lives of a whole branch of our family tree. Marie had no idea at the time that she was carrying within her womb a child, 4 grandchildren, 9 great grandchildren and 3 great great grandchildren. Yes, indeed that fall was fraught with very great danger indeed!



**Grandma Elizabeth Ott Bender**



**Norman Bender**

Grandma Bender and Norman heard Marie fall so Norman raced down the stairs to assist Marie. Other than pain and having the wind knocked out of her, she appeared to be okay. After taking it easy for a few days Marie realized that the danger was over and life returned to normal.

That July and August of 1934 was a very hot one, especially for a woman 8 months pregnant, so Marie persuaded Edward to take her to Waterworks Park on Jefferson to cool off by sitting on the park bench and feeling the breezes roll in off the water. On the way to the park Edward saw a stand selling dark, sweet cherries, so he stopped and bought a sack full. And thus, on that hot Sunday afternoon Edward and Marie whiled away the afternoon sitting in the park, eating dark sweet cherries and watching the ocean going ships come and go up and down the Detroit River. (It was not long after that that the public was no longer allowed to enter Waterworks Park as that contained the water refining works for drinking water for the entire metropolitan Detroit and hence once WWII loomed on the horizon the park was permanently closed to the public for the safety of the drinking water system.)

Marie said shortly before Nancy was born it was so unbearably hot in that upper flat on Townsend so when Marie saw it had begun to rain hard she got a brilliant

idea – she ran down the stairs, out the front door, stood on the grass and let the rain soak her to the skin Marie said that felt so good!



**Marie**



**Edward**

Marie and Edward had no money and in those days health insurance had not yet come into vogue so when Marie got pregnant she enrolled in the St. Joseph hospital obstetrical clinic and thus acquired the moniker “clinic patient”. She detested that name because “clinic” patient was equivalent to “welfare”. But they had no choice as a clinic patient paid only \$15 for the entire prenatal and delivery package, including delivery and 10 days hospital confinement. And they could pay that in installments throughout the pregnancy. \$15 doesn’t sound like much, but one has to consider that Edward was making only \$25 a week in his job in those days.

Marie was very sensitive about being a clinic patient, and in fact detested the label, but on one of her visits to the clinic for her prenatal check up she got a real emotional boost when Dr. Mayne, her previous employer, recognized her, spoke very kindly to her and admonished his fellow physician to take good care of her as she was a friend of his. Marie had worked as a nanny for Dr. and Mrs. Mayne’s children before and shortly after her marriage, quitting this job when she found out she was expecting Nancy. The Maynes were very good and kind to Marie, treating her with dignity and respect, and in fact Mrs. Mayne saved up Marie’s wages and when she had enough took Marie downtown and bought her a fine dress and coat with a matching hat. Marie was so proud of these clothes and said she wore them on her wedding day.

The next “we almost lost Nancy” and this time even Marie! came in the 9<sup>th</sup> month of pregnancy. Suddenly Marie started swelling up all over. Really severely. She went from a 98 lb pre pregnancy weight to 168 lbs, most of it water weight gained in the last few weeks of her pregnancy. The doctor told her she had toxemia and he was really worried she might go into eclampsia, convulsions, etc.



**Nancy Marie Bender**

But luckily she went into labor on schedule and delivered a fine, healthy baby daughter weighing 7 lb 7 ozs on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August, 1935, at 7 am in the morning, 3 days before her 1<sup>st</sup> wedding anniversary. The water quickly flowed out of her after the birth of Nancy and Marie was soon once again weighing in at a little over 100 lbs.

Edward and Marie discussed a number of alternatives as to what they wanted to name their baby when it came. They settled on Michael Edward if it was a boy. Edward was sure it was a boy. Even his sister Beatrice told him by the way Marie was carrying the baby she was sure it was a boy and she was never wrong in her predictions. Edward said he was sure that all of his children would be boys, that he was the kind of guy who had boys. Oh, well, even the best laid hopes and plans can go awry. When the cute little baby was born it was obvious the Michael Edward name would have to be saved for a future child, this one needed a feminine name. Marie chose two names she liked, either Cynthia or Nancy. Edward said he preferred Nancy, so that was the name given to their first born child. They named her Nancy Marie.

Edward got a little friendly ribbing about choosing the name Nancy as that was the name of one of the team of horses his father Hank drove in the sod cutting business. Hank's boss, Huntz Manzel, named the pair of horses "Nancy" and "Jim". Nancy's Grandma Nellie Dahl said that happened to her too. When she was first married into the Dahl family the Dahls of Canada named their new horse "Nellie" and she got a lot of razzing about that as a new bride.

Marie had to lay flat on her back in St. Joseph's hospital on the Grand Blvd. for 10 days as that was the custom for treating maternity patients in 1934. The baby remained in the nursery. Marie only got to see and hold her during set visiting

hours. Edward was not allowed in the labor or delivery room at all. He had to sit in the hall and wait. Marie said she started into labor early in the morning on a Sunday, August 21, 1934. She said it was so hot that day that Ed and she slept on the living room floor. She said she started feeling tightness at first that she later realized was the beginning of contractions. She said she was in labor all that day and delivered Nancy the next day, a Monday at 7 am.

Edward was in shock when he was told that the baby was a girl. Edward Bender had a girl!?!? That just didn't seem possible in the grand scheme of things. But there she was, bigger than life, as he stared at her through the glass of the nursery window.

Marie had a very pleasant surprise while in the hospital. Mrs. Mayne, her former employer, visited her in the maternity ward and brought a nice present for the new born babe. Marie felt much honored by this visit from the doctor's wife.

Edward went baseball playing on a fine Sunday afternoon while Marie and Nancy were still in the hospital. Ed slugged a single, that he figured with one good slide he could just possibly squeeze out a double. But then reality hit home. Oh my gosh, I'm not a single man anymore. I've got a wife and a new baby to support. If I break my leg sliding into second base I won't be able to go to work to support my new little family! Ed had to be content to stand up on first base. Safety first before the glory of sliding into a double. His carefree, reckless days were at an end.

Marie spent her first wedding anniversary flat on her back in the hospital. A new baby took precedence over candle light and flowers that anniversary. Then on September 1, 1935 the big day finally came. It was time to get out of bed for the first time and take the new baby home to start life together as a new little family of 3. Marie said she was as weak as a kitten when she got out of bed for the first time and had to learn to walk all over again. And she was afraid of dropping the baby due to her weakness and inexperience as a new mother.



**Elizabeth & Henry Bender**

The hospital staff dressed Nancy in the clothes Marie had brought with her, wrapped a blanket around the new born babe and wheeled Marie out to Ed's car for the ride home. There were no infant seats in those days. Marie rode in the front passenger seat next to Ed with baby Nancy in her arms. Ed drove home to Grandma and Grandpa Bender's flat on Townsend and Marie climbed the flight of stairs with newborn Nancy in her arms. Once in the apartment Marie walked into her and Ed's bedroom and placed little Nancy carefully on the bed and then burst out crying! Grandma Bender came into the room and asked Marie what was the matter. Marie replied that she didn't know what to do with Nancy now that she had her home and was totally responsible for her care. Grandma Bender just smiled and told Marie that a baby was a gift from God and that she would soon fall into a routine and taking care of a baby would become second nature. Marie said Grandma Bender was right, caring for Nancy very soon became second nature.



**Mildred Bender Neff**

Before Nancy was born Marie and her sister in law Mildred Bender Neff spent hours and hours sewing for the coming new baby. They made all the diapers by hand and Mildred sewed many little nightgowns and trimmed out and also knitted little blankets.



**Nancy Bender**

Being good Catholics Edward and Marie had Nancy baptized on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September, 1935 in St. Anthony Church, the Church where Edward attended and



went to school as a boy. Nancy's Grandparents, Elizabeth Ott Bender and Henry Charles Bender were her sponsors.



**Marie & Nancy Bender**

Nancy was born on one feast day of the Mother of God, her Assumption into Heaven on August 22<sup>nd</sup> and was baptized on another feast Day of the Blessed Virgin, her birthday, on September 8<sup>th</sup>.



**Nancy Bender**

Marie used to take Nancy for lots of buggy rides that fine but waning summer and in strolling around the neighborhood she found a sign outside a home that read flat for rent. Marie came back home and told Ed there was a flat for rent in the neighborhood and that they were about to rent it and have a place of their own. Ed balked as he was trying to save up money for the future but Marie said she had enough of living in his parents' home which was very crowded because Norman, Evelyn and Virginia, their infant daughter also lived there. Grandpa and Grandma Bender were very clean but Evelyn was a real pig. Marie said she would go into the bathroom and find maggots crawling over the dirty diapers that Evelyn had slung in the bathtub. Marie did say in Evelyn's defense that Evelyn became



deathly ill every time she was pregnant, so much so that she was laid prostrate and often had to go to the hospital she was so ill. But still, Marie was a very clean person and had no intention of living like that and she felt really bad for Grandma Bender having to put up with Evelyn in her house.

Grumble and complain Ed did, but it did him no good in the end because within a week they were moving their meager belongings into their first house at 3898 Crane in Detroit. Marie said that at first they sat on milk cartons and threw a cover over others and called it a table, but they were happy. A bed was all that they had to call their own in the beginning, and Nancy's crib. Not having to live with others was heaven to Marie, and also to Ed, he grudgingly had to soon admit. Marie dusted and scrubbed and Ed worked and saved up money and piece by piece they furnished their little patch of paradise. They had little or no money in those days but that never detracted from their happiness. Often they had to scrape in order to buy Nancy milk and baby food just before pay day, but they always managed to get by. On two occasions Ed was forced to go to the corner grocer and give him his lucky dollar for Nancy's baby food, but Ed always begged the guy to hold it aside and Ed would redeem it on pay day. Ed always got his lucky dollar back come pay day.

(One word of caution for the superstitious among you regarding loss of lucky coins. Edward always had a stash of lucky coins in his pocket. In his retirement years he walked 3 to 5 miles a day and always picked up stray coins which he called his lucky coins and kept separate from his pocket change. He was very adamant about keeping the lucky coins safe and separate. In June of 1982 Ed had a major heart attack. Marie was given his trousers with 2 pockets full of change, one ordinary, one filled with his lucky coins. Marie, not believing in such nonsense, mixed the two sets of coins together. Ed died right after she adulterated his lucky coins!)



**Nancy Bender**

Nancy was a very smart infant and readily soaked up all the knowledge Marie presented to her. Nancy walked early and was talking in complete sentences by the

time she was 1 year old. Everyone was amazed by Nancy's extensive verbal abilities at such a young age. This was due in part no doubt to Nancy's native intelligence, but also to the fact that Marie devoted a lot of time and attention to Nancy, encouraging Nancy to speak and to form complex sentences.

Marie used to take Nancy on a lot of walks in the summer time, usually to a local park. She used to meet the neighbors along the way. Most of Marie's neighbors used to comment over and over again how much Nancy resembled Marie. Even when Marie moved into Alter Rd later and had 3 children Mrs. Schneck used to smile and tell Marie that all three kids looked just like her!

Mrs. Pritchard was Marie and Ed's landlady and lived downstairs in a 2 family flat. Marie and Ed and Nancy lived upstairs. Mrs. Pritchard was always amazed at how precocious Nancy was, that very tiny infant walking and talking with a strong mind of her own. Nancy would walk down the front stairway and visit Mrs. Pritchard on her own. Mrs. Pritchard greatly enjoyed Nancy's visits and found them to be very entertaining. And when Nancy was upstairs in their apartment she would find nuts and bolts lying around because Ed used to make and repair radios in his house. Nancy would take these loose nuts and bolts and walk over to an open floor register and drop them in and watch as they would fly down through the open hole in the floor and land in a glass bowl on Mrs Pritchard's dresser. Nancy loved to hear the clink! clink! sound of the metal hitting the glass. "You little dickens!" Mrs. Pritchard would call up to Nancy through the open register.

Mrs. Pritchard had a grandson about Nancy's age who used to come and visit her and Nancy and that little boy used to really enjoy playing together.



**Nancy Bender**

Nancy's superior command of the English language at an early age also landed her in hot water one day. Ed had a car accident and gave the other man his home address and told the guy to get 2 estimates, one from a collision shop Ed trusted and that Ed would pay for the repairs. The man didn't do what Ed requested and instead ended up at the house while Ed was at work demanding to know where Ed worked. Marie did not want this man disturbing Ed at work and wasn't about to give him this information. But dear little Nancy, who had just learned all of the above data was very eager to show off her knowledge. She rattled off Ed's full name, and his work address and phone number. The man duly copied the info and was on his way. Marie was furious with Nancy and dusted off her posterior. Poor Nancy hadn't a clue as to what she had done wrong!

When Nancy was a year old Marie discovered that she could get a cute sundress with matching ruffled pants for only \$1. Marie loved buying Nancy those cute outfits. When Ed would grin and admire Nancy in her ruffled pants he soon called her "Fancy pants Nance". He also called her another affectionate name, "Nacky". Mildred Neff continued to sew cute outfits for Nancy. Aunt Beatrice Bender Gamache used to buy Marie cute dresses from a second hand shop. Marie loved Bea's selections but Bea's husband got mad, saying he thought Ed might be offended by Bea buying second hand clothes for Marie. But quite the contrary, Ed and Marie loved the stylish outfits Bea would purchase.

Money remained tight as the Great Depression dragged on year after year with no let up in sight. Ed managed to land another job as one would dry up due to lack of work. Ed worked at Great Lakes Steel and Bohn Aluminum and Brass. He also worked as a driver for the Good Housekeeping Appliance shop. He earned \$25 a week when he was first married and later earned \$35 a week a few years later. Their rent was \$35 a month and groceries were in the neighborhood of \$6 a week when Nancy was an infant.



**Marie said 1934 – 1935 was the year for infants in the Bender family**



**Virginia Bender**



**Mary & Don Gamache**

Norman and Evelyn had their first born, Virginia in July of 1934. Art and Agnes had their last child Carol in February, 1935. Bea and Ed Gamache also had their last child and only daughter, Mary Gamache in 1935 as well.



**Virginia**



**?, Virginia , Sally, Richard, Gary, Nancy, Mickey & Mary Delores**



**Richard, Virginia, Nancy  
& Gary Bender**



**Richard, Gary, Delores  
& Virginia Bender**

The Bender family was close in those days and visited back and forth regularly. In the summer time they loved to go on picnics together. We have several pictures of the young Bender children all together on a picnic. Nancy was a good baby and behaved herself quite well on picnics. She gave mom little problems except for a brief period when she was about 9 months old.

For several months until she was about a year old and gradually grew out of it Nancy gave Marie problems in that she was excessively shy around strangers and would bury her head in Marie and just cry. Marie attributed it to the fact that Nancy was not seeing much of anyone except her and Ed at this point so Marie started socializing Nancy more with others to get her over her shyness. It worked. Several months later Nancy became her sunny old self again, presenting a smile to all who came around.



**Nancy & Mickey Bender**

There aren't a whole lot of baby pictures of Nancy taken in those early years as picture taking just wasn't as prevalent as it is today and no one had any money for fancy cameras or film buying and developing. There were a few studio pictures taken but these occurred on rare occasions. So we are very lucky to have the few pictures that did survive those early years.

Nancy never had allergies and was able to eat any kinds and types of foods that Marie offered her. Nancy was bottle fed as Marie tried to breast feed her but the milk just did not come in abundantly enough and Nancy was always hungry. So Marie switched to formula and knew exactly how much milk Nancy was consuming. Within a few weeks of her birth Marie also added pabulum (baby cereal) to her diet as that was standard fare in those days.

Marie used to get the biggest kick out of listening to Nancy at 5 am when she would imitate the sounds of the horses' hooves walking down the paved street delivering milk. Using her tongue against the roof and sides of her mouth she would make the sounds "Klock Klow, Klock Klow!" as she would listen to the horses going by. Marie always was amazed at how closely Nancy could come to imitating this sound.



**Mildred Stocker & Sandy**

Nancy's halcyon existence took a major turn in August, 1937. She started hearing her parents talking about strange stuff. She kept hearing the word "baby" over and

over again. Then in May, 1938 strange stuff started happening. Her parents set up the crib again. She didn't need a crib, she's a big girl now! Why the crib? Then her Mama started talking about getting a baby sitter for her. Why a babysitter? She never had one of those yet. Then on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May, 1938 her daddy took her over to Mildred Stocker's house and left her there! That was a wild and scary place, like landing in the middle of a zoo! They had two bigger kids, Earl age 7 and Doris age 4. Those kids were the epitome of 2 wild Indians, hooping and hollering and jumping all over the place day and night.



**Harold & Mildred Neff**  
**Bruce, Sally and Robert Neff**

The next day her daddy came to visit after she was put down to bed for the night. She might be in bed but she sure was not about to fall asleep. Those two horses of kids were taking flying leaps off the dresser and landing on the bed where she was lying. When daddy came in and saw those kids landing right next to Nancy he picked up his little girl and carried her out of there in her pjs and put her in his car. Ed then drove to Gratiot ave and found a pay phone which he used to call his sister Mildred Neff. "I've got Nancy in the car and I don't know what to do with her", Ed told his sister. She's only 2 ½ years old and those wild Indians were jumping off the dresser and landing on the bed. They would've killed her if I left her there, he told Mildred Neff. Mildred Neff knew just what her brother Ed was hinting at. "Bring her over here and I'll take care of her for you", Mildred said to Ed. What a relief that was to Ed! He quickly drove Nancy over to that safe haven before his sister could change her mind. Mildred Neff had a daughter Sally a few years older than Nancy but Mildred Neff's children were under control and didn't present any threat to Nancy's well being.





**Michael Edward Bender, 1938**

Marie was again confined to St. Joseph Hospital on the Grand Blvd in Detroit for the birth of her second child, Michael Edward Bender who was born on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May, 1938 at 3:47 pm. He was delivered by Dr. John E Clifford, MD whose office was at 2200 E. Grand Blvd in Detroit. Marie went that day for her regular scheduled prenatal appointment to the doctor's office. She was accompanied by Mildred Neff and driven by Stewart Neff, Mildred's nephew. While in the office Marie remarked to the receptionist that she thought she was in labor. "Don't have the baby here!!" the receptionist shouted at Marie. The doctor confirmed that Marie was indeed in labor and sent her directly to the hospital. Michael was also a clinic baby as Ed and Marie still had very little money and no way were they able to afford to be a private paying obstetrical patient. But Michael cost Ed \$10 more because he was a boy and they charged an extra \$10 to circumcise a boy. Marie once again remained in the hospital flat on her back for another 10 days, not allowed to get out of bed for any reason. Again on the 10<sup>th</sup> day when she got out of bed she was as weak as a kitten.

Marie and Edward took Michael home from the hospital to their rented home at 3898 Crane in Detroit. Edward then went to Mildred Neff's house to fetch Nancy and bring her back home. Edward found his sister Mildred to be in a bit of a stew when he got to her house. Nancy had been good and stayed close to her house the entire time Mildred had her, she told Ed. But then on the last day Nancy got up from the curb on St. Clair St in Grosse Pointe City and ran away! Mildred was in a dither until she found little Nancy in the next block. She said the entire 9 days she had her, Nancy would sit on the curb and tell everyone passing by Mildred's house that she had a new baby brother. Mildred was glad to be relieved of this responsibility.

But looking at things from Baby Mickey's perspective, I bet he wished Mildred had kept his big sister for a while longer, like say for another 2 years or so! Nancy was introduced to her new baby brother on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1938. A few days later while Nancy was playing in the house and Mickey was sleeping in his crib Marie ran down 2 flights of stairs to put a load of wash in the wringer washer. Mickey woke up and started to cry while Marie was down stairs in the basement. Nancy felt sorry for dear little Mickey being so unhappy so she decided to be a helpful big sister and take care of him all by herself while her mommy was busy. Nancy went over to his crib, picked him up by a hammerlock to his little neck, carried him hanging from her arms from his bedroom to the couch, plopped his little flopsy body on the couch, ran to the kitchen and drew him a nice big, tall glass of water and ran back into the living room to give her new baby brother a nice fresh big drink. Marie arrived back in the living room just as Nancy started to pour this glass of water straight down Mickey's throat. Boy, did she put a fast kibosh on that charitable work of mercy!

Poor Mickey! With an attentive, helpful sister like Nancy it was a miracle he ever lived to see 4 years old!

You think that drink of water was bad?! Wait till you hear what else she did to that poor little guy! (I think deep down in her heart Nancy really wanted to remain an only child).

But first, before we put little Mickey in mortal peril, perhaps we should baptize him first incase he should make a U turn and rejoin the angels! Michael Edward Bender was baptized on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, 1938 in St. Catherine's Church at 4151 Seminole Ave, Detroit, Michigan by Father Paul Hennes. Mike's godparents were George and Mildred Dahl Stocker.

Marie was more attentive in watching Mickey around Nancy after that. But maybe she should have been watching Nancy better too. One Sunday afternoon Marie was taking care of Mickey, changing him, feeding him and putting him down for his afternoon nap. After she got him settled she looked around and no Nancy! She looked everywhere, Nancy was no where to be seen! But then she noticed that Ed had left recently so Marie fervently hoped that he took Nancy with him. Marie was on pins and needles until Ed came home with Nancy in tow. What a relief she felt, having Nancy home safe and sound! But her relief was short lived when she heard what happened to Nancy while in her father's not so safe care. Ed, it turns out, took Nancy with him to Pop Wagner's in Hamtramck. Pop Wagner's is located on two of the busiest streets in that city, Conant and Jos Campau. When

Ed parked his car on Jos Campau he told little 2 year old Nancy to stay in the car and wait for him to come back. Well Ed crossed both busy streets and went upstairs to Pop Wagners. Nancy sat in the car and watched where he went. Then while Nancy waited and waited and waited, Ed had completely lost track of time as he enjoyed shooting the breeze with his good old friend. Nancy got tired of waiting and decided to go find her dad. Suddenly Ed and Pop Wagner heard lots of honking of horns and screeching of car tires. They looked out of the upstairs window and saw little two year old Nancy standing smack dab in the middle of the double intersection with cars slamming on their brakes and maneuvering around her to avoid hitting her. Ed ran down stairs and scooped her up and ran her out of traffic. Did Ed blame himself for the near tragedy? Nope. He hollered at little Nancy, "I told you to stay in the car until I got back!!". Guess who Marie blamed for that? Boy, did Ed ever get an earful that afternoon, first for taking Nancy without telling her and then for leaving a little 2 year old in a car unattended. It was a close call! Little Mickey could have become an only child that Sunday afternoon!

Speaking of little kids and tragedies, Marie's sister Mildred suffered her second child tragedy less than 2 months after Mickey was born. Mildred lost her first born son in August 1930 when her father in law crushed the boy's skull delivering him as fast as he could so he could get back to his practice. And now at the end of June, 1938 little Earl, who Mildred nick named Mickey, came in from playing and told his mom and his grandmother Nellie that he had a pain in his side. Nellie told him to lie down and maybe it would go away. It didn't. it got worse. Little Earl's grandfather was a doctor of medicine. He knew it was appendicitis but tried to freeze it with ice as he was too cheap to pay for the surgery and resulting hospital bill. The appendix burst. Earl was operated on, but the poison spread through out his abdomen and even though he looked like he was getting better he suddenly died at the tender age of 7.

Marie got a babysitter for Nancy and Michael and attended Earl's funeral. When Marie got back home to her children after the funeral it started to rain. Marie cried and cried and cried that day as she thought of the rain falling on that beautiful little boy's body.



**Marie & Mickey Bender**

(No, Sandy did not cut off half of Marie's face – Marie did it back in the 1940s because she didn't like how she looked in the picture. Aw, Mom!! )

One beautiful summer Sunday afternoon Ed and Marie were at the dinner table finishing up their meal. Nancy was done eating and darted off to play on the front porch she then decided to run downstairs to play with a friend she saw on the sidewalk. Suddenly Marie had a horrible ESP thought wash over her – where is 18 month old baby Michael!! Marie looked around and to her horror she found him – hanging by the tips of his fingers on the outside of the rail of the 2<sup>nd</sup> story porch, his face beet red as he was about to let go as his strength was giving out. Marie knew not to panic and scare him as that would cause him to let go and fall 2 stories to the pavement below. She tiptoed very quietly out onto the porch, walking fast but steady, reached over the rail and firmly grasped both of Mickey's wrists and pulled him back up over the rail and onto the porch. Nancy had unlatched the door to the porch which was always kept fastened so baby Mickey would not go out there and be put into danger. And while everyone was eating he toddled out there and Lord knows how he managed to get over that rail. To this day how he got there remains a mystery.



**Marie, Mickey, Nancy & Edward**

Then another “Nancy almost killed her little brother” story. Edward was babysitting. (He would never be nominated for babysitter of the year award, that’s for sure!) Ed, Marie and the kids were about to go on a picnic that beautiful summer day. Marie ran to the store to buy hot dogs and buns and left Ed with the 2 kids. Nancy once again opened up the apartment door, this time the one leading to the stairway leading down to the street level. Mike was in his walker toddling around in it as he was still too young to walk on his own. He was entranced by the open stairway and toddled over to it and started following his big sister down the stairs. Ed, who was working on his radios, heard the walker crashing down the stairs, heading for the plate glass door at the bottom. Ed, who had visions of his son being cut to shreds by the glass door, ran so fast down the stairs that he beat the walker to the bottom. But Mickey had been pretty badly bruised in the fall, so instead of going on a picnic Ed and Marie and the 2 kids spent the day in the emergency room of the hospital getting Mickey checked out.



**Nancy Bender**

When Mike looked at the above picture of Nancy a few months ago, he said looking at that picture gave him a nervous feeling. He said after hearing all of these “Nancy almost killed Mickey” stories he now realizes why this picture made him nervous. He said it gave him flash backs!!



**Nancy Marie Bender**

This picture probably makes him even more nervous when he looks at it because she sure looks like she just thought up some new scheme to do her little brother in. I wouldn't trust this little kid at all! Uh,uh! Just look at the devilment in those eyes! Watch out, baby brother!



**Nancy & Mickey**

Mickey was a very stoic infant. He showed very little emotion from the time he was born through most of his childhood. But guess who could rile him up real good? Bring a full blown waterfall to his eyes? The guilty party is to be found standing right behind him.

Mickey also almost did himself in too. Ed used to test the radios with his leads. He would put one lead on one end and the other lead on the other end to see if there was current going through the wire. When the leads showed current Ed would say, "Connect". One day Mickey decided to do some testing on his own. He put both leads on his chest and said "Cornect!" The 2 leads burned holes through his shirt!



**Michael Edward Bender**

And then there was the time Marie could have killed little Mickey when he was only two years old. Mickey was playing in a room by himself when Marie came in and noticed that there was an ugly old wire running along the outside of the wall. So she got the bone handled butcher knife and started sawing on the wire. When she hit the live wire inside the insulation the knife flew clear across the room. Marie panicked! I could have killed my little son, she cried!

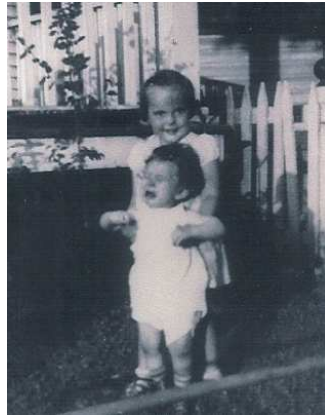


**Nancy Bender**

Nancy got herself in a real pickle one day all by herself on the front porch. It was a beautiful sunny summer day and Nancy was standing next to the porch rail, looking around the neighborhood, swinging her little leg to and fro in happy abandon, when all of a sudden she realized she had poked one of her legs through the slats in the porch rail and she was stuck fast. She tried pulling her leg out, wiggling it out, and moving her leg without success. Nothing would free her leg from those boards! She cried out for help. Ed, nearby, heard her cry and came to help her. He tried everything to no avail. That leg was indeed really stuck fast! He was now really concerned and called Marie. She came down from the apartment to see what Ed wanted. When Marie saw Nancy's predicament she told Ed, just a minute, ran back upstairs and was soon back down again with a stick of butter in her hand. She smeared the butter all over Nancy's leg on both sides of the slats, then gently working her leg slightly back and forth, out popped her leg, safe and sound, albeit a bit red from its entrapment. Ed was amazed at how fast and



well this little remedy worked, but Marie merely laughed and told Ed that this was every pregnant woman's solution when she had to get her wedding ring off her overly swollen finger!



**Mickey & Nancy, 1939**

And then there was the time that Mickey's big sister Nancy saved him. Once again, Marie was running downstairs to do the wash. She put the clothes through the wringer on the washer, put them in the wash basket and then ran up the stairs from the basement to the back yard and began hanging up the wash on the wash lines there. While she was out of the house little Mickey took his little stuffed pig, turned on the burner on the gas stove, and dropped his stuffed pig into the flames. Nancy saw the stuffed pig catch on fire and knew it was dangerous so she grabbed the flaming pig ran clear across the kitchen with it, opened the door on the back porch and hurled it through the air and into the yard where Marie was hanging the wash. Imagine Marie's shock to see a flaming pig come flying over the horizon!

Oh, oh, she probably thought, I'd better get upstairs before those 2 kids burn the place down!



**Mickey Rich Delor Nancy**



**Grandma Elizabeth & Henry**

Speaking of burning the place down, when Mike and Nancy were little kids one Sunday afternoon Grandma and Grandpa Bender were over Marie and Ed's house visiting when the young foolish woman downstairs told them that they had better get out of the house as she had put too much coal in the furnace and the house had now caught on fire. Marie had just had surgery on her ingrown toe nail and was in a lot of pain and could hardly walk so Ed and his parents helped both Marie and the 2 little kids down the stairs and safely out of the house. The fire department came and made a holy mess out of that house. They used their axes to smash huge holes in the walls in Marie's apartment to see if the fire was traveling up in the walls. It wasn't but what a mess Marie had to contend with when she went back in the house.



**Mickey, Nancy, Harold, Virginia, Gary, Evelyn, Norman, Mildred, Marie, Grandma Elizabeth Bender**

Marie and Ed used to go on a lot of picnics with both sides of the family in those days as picnics were a lot of fun and really cheap. They used to eat hot dogs and bring a dish to pass. We have a really cute picture of Marie with one year old Nancy and all of her little cousins.



**Top left, Nancy Bender**

When Nancy was 5 years old Marie gave her a surprise birthday party when they lived at 3898 Crane Ave in Detroit and invited all of Nancy's little neighborhood friends. They had a great time eating sandwiches, ice cream and cake and playing lots of fun games like pin the tail on the donkey. Mom bought a donkey poster that came with a tail with a pin on it. Mom would blind fold each kid in turn, spin them around several times, then point them toward the donkey and have them pin the tail on. Whoever got the tail closest to the fanny on the donkey was the winner. (That poster of the donkey lasted in our family through Bill's childhood and then was thrown away.) Well, Nancy and all of her little friends had a really fun time at that party, but at the end Nancy tired of all those kids in her house and she found a sure fire way to get rid of them – she went out into the yard with the kids and then turned the hose on all of them! It worked! In less than 5 minutes, no more little pesky kids! They all figured out in a hurry that it was time to go home! (There must be something genetic to this – Doug did the same thing to his party goers at his 5<sup>th</sup> birthday party).





**Nancy Bender & Judy Roedding**

Nancy's favorite play mate in those days was Judy Roedding, the next door neighbor's kid. They used to play together on each other's back yard porch and also in the wagon. Judy and Nancy caught whooping cough from each other and spent over a week quarantined in the back yard coughing themselves inside out. Mom felt so bad about how hard all the kids coughed with this illness that she made sure all her younger kids got the vaccine against this illness as soon as that vaccine became available.



**Nancy, bottom & Judy Roedding**

One day Marie got a nasty shock from her landlady, Mrs. Pritchard. Mrs. Pritchard said she decided to split the upstairs flat where Marie and Ed and the kids lived into two apartments. She fully expected Marie and Ed to consent to living in half of an apartment for the same rent. No way, said Marie and she started looking for a new place to rent. She found what looked like a really nice house on Sheridan St in Detroit. She rented that new house and moved in in good weather. But when the dead of winter set in Marie, Ed and the kids got a nasty shock. Marie just could never heat up that flat no matter how hard she tried. Ed, Marie and the kids froze that whole winter. And Marie said the kids were sick with one cold after

another due to being cold until spring finally set in. With the coming of spring Marie had the determination to find a home of her own, one she could keep warm the entire winter. Sheridan was the last home they rented. After that they always owned their own home.



**Edward & Marie Bender**

In 1940 Ed and Marie took Nancy and Mickey to the Tashmoo Amusement Park near Belle Isle for an afternoon of fun. Marie put Nancy and Mickey on the Octopus ride with her. As the ride spun around at odd angles little two year old Mickey slipped out of his seat and started falling toward the wide open opening. This Octopus was high in the air and if Mickey had fallen out he most probably would have been killed. Marie was almost beyond her strength trying to keep Mickey from falling out and she kept screaming for them to stop the ride. By the grace of God the whole little family got off that ride without any tragedy occurring. (Ed hated amusement rides that spun around or went high up in the air. Marie liked the rides and even became a bit of a daredevil on them. When they were first married Ed and Marie went on a Farris Wheel together. The Farris Wheel stopped at the top to let people on. Ed was turning white from fear of height. Marie, unaware of Ed's fright, started rocking the seat violently back and forth till they were looking straight down on the forward rock. Ed was terrified of both of them falling out. Not Marie. It was all in a day's fun for her.)



**Nancy, Marie, Harold & Harold Neff & Mickey**

Ed and Marie took the kids a number of times to Belle Isle for a picnic. In those days it was a beautiful, safe place to spend a pleasant Sunday afternoon. You could change your clothes into your bathing suit at the Belle Isle Bath House and then go swimming in the Detroit River. It was a nice sandy beach there and they had a life guard on duty. The best part of Belle Isle was after dark Ed driving to the Scott fountain and parking there so you could watch the water coming out of the mouths of the gargoyles, angels, etc. as the fountain continually changed colors from yellow to red to blue to green to purple and back again. It was a magical sight on a warm summer evening. If the evening was really hot and stifling there were times that Ed would put all the kids and Mom in the car and go for a night ride with the windows down and the breeze streaming in the car. And we would often end up in Belle Isle and at the Scott fountain in those days. The cars would just continually stream around the island on a one way street and we could either stay to the left and keep going around the island or get to the right hand lane and get off the island and over the Belle Isle bridge back to mainland Detroit. But sometimes the traffic was so heavy and so tightly packed that dad would be forced to go around the island one or more times when he wanted off. He would get so upset when that happened!

Nancy lived through all of the World War II years, which started in 1941 for the United States and ended in 1945. There were restrictions on what one could purchase in those years. There were ration stamps for meat, fish, milk, nylons, and many other foods. One could not even get certain foods such as bananas until the war was over. Marie got extra ration stamps once she was pregnant with Sandy and she would also use her pregnancy to beg extra meat, milk and fish out of the local grocers. Most of the time she was successful in getting a little extra. So during those years Marie was not able to feed Nancy and Mickey all the protein she otherwise would have.



**Nancy Marie Bender**





|       |  
**Mickey   Nancy**

In September, 1940 Nancy attended kindergarten in the public school half days. Marie said she would attend school in the morning and then come home for lunch. Marie would feed her lunch and then put her down for an afternoon nap. This routine continued through out her kindergarten year. In April, 1943 Nancy made her first holy communion at St Catherine's parish in Detroit. She had started 1<sup>st</sup> grade there in 1941. We have some cute pictures of Nancy in her first communion dress and veil.



**Nancy**



**Nancy & Mickey**



**Nancy**

When Nancy was about 5 or 6 years old she, Mickey and the neighborhood kids came down with the whooping cough. Boy, was that ever nasty! They coughed themselves inside out for several weeks. They all lost about 5 to 10 lbs. from this illness. Nancy also got all of the childhood illnesses about this time, measles, mumps and chicken pox. But they did manage to avoid the dreaded polio that was striking many of the children of that day. Nancy's neighbor kid friend's sister,



Marie Goetz came down with a severe form of the disease and was out of school for many years and when she returned walked hesitantly with heavy braces. Also around the same time the city shut down the swimming pool at the local middle school, Jackson Junior High because several children who swam there in the summer came down with polio. Marie made sure Nancy and Mike did not become overly tired as that was thought to make one susceptible to acquiring polio.

Marie left the house on Crane Ave when the landlady was splitting her apartment into two apartments and charging the same rent. Marie had no intention of living in a postage stamp sized apartment so she looked for a new flat. She found one on Sheridan Ave. It seemed to be a nice roomy flat. Everything went just fine until winter set in. Boy, was that place ever cold! A real refrigerator! Nothing they did warmed the place up any and the kids were sick all winter with one cold after another. So Marie knew they had to get out of there and she decided it was about time that they bought a home of their own. So Marie and Ed went looking for their first owned home. They almost bought a home on Manning St near Gratiot and 7 Mile but decided instead to buy the home on Alter Rd. In July, 1943 they moved into their first home.

Knowing Nancy's abhorrence of creepy crawly things, it was a good thing she wasn't watching Marie clean out the cupboards on Alter on moving day. Marie had put all the dishes, pots, pans, silverware, etc. on the kitchen table and began wiping down the inside of all the cupboards before placing her dishes in them. As she was wiping one bug came sauntering through. Woosh!! Marie whapped and killed him with the wet rag. Then came another from a different direction. Squoosh!! Another dead bug. Then Marie got serious about just standing and watching. Within 5 minutes she was horrified! The cupboards were full of cockroaches!! Marie called an exterminator and then called Mildred Neff. Marie, Ed, Nancy and Mickey moved in with Mildred Neff for a few days until the Alter Rd place was fumigated. The guy did a good job for Marie never saw another bug in her cupboards again.



**Nancy Bender**



**Michael Bender**

Nancy started school at St. John Berchman's grade school in September, 1943 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Her brother Mickey started kindergarten at Hosmer public school as there was no kindergarten in the Catholic school.

The saying goes that with every new home comes either a birth or a death. So it was with the Edward Bender family. First at Easter in 1944 Marie announced to the family that she was expecting a new baby. Shortly after her announcement Nancy and Marie went to a mother daughter breakfast at St. John Berchman's School and Nancy announced to everyone that her mother was expecting a new baby. Marie was really embarrassed as she says she wasn't even showing yet and in those days one did not discuss such things. She kept her pregnancy secret as a rule until she showed, but with Sandy's pregnancy Marie found out that Park Davis drug company was paying several dollars a jug for a pregnant woman's urine and Marie said that was just too good pocket money for most house wives to pass up, so by her second month all the neighbors saw the Park Davis truck stop at Marie's house and so everyone knew that she, Mrs. Reichard, Mrs. Spears and Mrs. Ligotti were all expecting as the truck made lots of stops in that block.



**Mickey Bender**

In May of 1944 Mickey made his first Holy Communion at St. John Berchman's Church. Marie had a professional portrait taken of him in his fine white communion suit. (That white communion suit brought back very sad, frightening memories for Marie that day as she remembered that right after Mickey was born her sister's little boy was buried in his little white first communion suit. Marie kept an even closer vigil over her 2 children for a while after that so that history didn't repeat itself.)



**Elsie & Al Bender**

In June of 1944 the whole Bender family got a big surprise – Uncle Al, Edward’s brother, announced that he had just got married to Elsie Dalton Rhodes. What a major surprise that was! Al had lived with Hank and Elizabeth Bender all of his life and now that he was 40 years old he suddenly marries a 52 year old widow! But after the shock wore off it became very apparent that Elsie was really good for Al. She took very good care of him until her death in August of 1955.

Then when she was 5 months pregnant, on her 10<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary she received the news that her grandma Minna Dahl Henkel had passed away. Nancy heard her mom speculate as to whether Grandpa Dahl, who disappeared in 1929 was going to show up from his mom’s funeral or not. Marie really wanted to see her dad again, but he apparently wasn’t at the funeral, at least none of the Dahl kids saw him when they went to Anna Galvin’s house where she was laid out.



**Edward & Marie Bender**

Marie also received a very special gift on this anniversary – Ed bought Marie a new wedding and engagement ring set. This is the first time that they had replaced the wedding ring set lost the night before their marriage.



**Elizabeth & Henry Bender, 2 Aug 1944**

On August 2, 1944 Nancy's paternal grandparents, Elizabeth and Henry Bender, celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. They had a wonderful party and all of their children attended. Elizabeth got very jealous when her Hank would dance with other women at that party, but Hank replied, the women asked him to dance with him, so what was he to do?



**Billy Bender**

Nancy's little brother Bill started 1<sup>st</sup> grade at St. John Berchman's School in September of 1955. Bill was a really sweet, loving, easy going kid from the first grade till the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. In the fourth grade kids started picking on him and teasing him and calling him names. That changed his personality and he never again was the same sweet easy going kid. Those rotten bullies did permanent damage to his sweet demeanor.



**Henry Charles Bender**

Then in November of 1944 Nancy was told that her grandpa Henry Charles Bender was dying of heart failure. Nancy heard her dad say he took his dad to the doctor and the doctor told Ed to “get that dead man out of my office. I don’t want him to drop dead here”. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of November Nancy’s grandpa died and was buried in Mt. Olivet cemetery. Nancy does not remember a lot about her Grandpa Henry Bender as she was only 9 years old when he passed away. She has only a fuzzy memory of a tall, very thin blue eyed blonde Grandpa who was very mild mannered, friendly and always had a smile on his face. He was very quiet, didn’t speak much, but had a wonderful way of telling a funny story.



**Sandy Bender**

Then in the morning of December 5, 1944 Marie went into labor. They got Marie’s mother Nellie Dahl to come and take care of Nancy and Mickey while she was in the hospital. Marie said when she went into the hospital on December 5<sup>th</sup> there was no snow on the ground and there was only a vacant field across the street at the corner of Voigt and Alter Rd. When she came back home 10 days later there was a layer of snow on the ground and there was a bungalow constructed across the street on the southeast corner.



**Nancy, Marianne & Sandy, June 1945**

This pregnancy was the only one in which Ed remained with Marie during the entire labor. He left only during the actual delivery. What a terrible

disappointment it was to Edward that after all that stress and strain the child was once again a girl! What a let down! The doctor asked him after the baby was born if Ed would like a shot, which he gratefully said yes. When the doctor showed up with a needle, Ed said, "Not that kind of shot, I meant a shot of liquor."



**Nancy, Marianne, Sandy & Mickey, June, 1945**

When Ed left the hospital he parked the car in front of the house on Alter Rd and told Nellie that Marie had a girl. He then walked to Chalmers and Warren and went into the drug store there asked for a pint of bourbon that he heard was really smooth. He paid for it, went out onto the street and was walking along in the pouring rain drinking the bourbon straight out of the pint. He then said he wasn't sure if it was really good and smooth so he walked to Dave's drug store at Maryland and Warren and bought a second pint of the supposedly very smooth bourbon and drank that on the way back home. Ed, who normally seldom drank, sure was drowning his sorrows that night! All that work and stress, helping Marie with every labor pain, and then to get a girl!



**Nellie Dahl**



**Sandy Bender**

Relatives started dropping by Alter Rd to ask Nellie what Marie had and what did she name the child. (There were no phones in the house in those days so no one was able to phone to learn the news.) Nellie's reply was that Marie had a girl and that they had named her some damn name she couldn't pronounce but they were going to call her Sandy.



**Nancy Bender**

A few weeks after Marie bought Sandy home Nancy was getting ready for school when she heard Marie call her for help. Nancy came running and found Marie passing out. Marie asked Nancy to run next door to Mrs. Meeseman's house and call for help. Nancy got help and Marie recovered but she was very shaken by this experience and thought what would have happened if the kids had been in school and she would have been all alone and passing out. So that month the Bender family got their first telephone. Their phone number was Tuxedo 20692. It was a 2 man party line. Mrs. Ligotti was our party line for a number of years but Ed got so mad at her talking for hours in the morning with her Tootsie Mary that he called the phone company and change party line partners.

Nellie went back home after Marie came home with the new baby, but Marie soon experienced such severe back pain that her sister Elenore came and stayed for awhile and did the housework and especially the wash, which was a real chore in those days as you had to wring the clothes by hand on the overhead wringer, then pull the wet clothes out of the wringer and hang all those wet items on a line in the basement in the winter and up the stairs into the back yard in the warmer months.



**Nancy Bender**

Nancy was a good little helper to Marie, but she was in school full time so her time for chores around the house was limited.





**Sandy Bender, June 1945**

Nancy's little sister Sandy was baptized in St. John Berchman's Church on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January, 1945. Her godparents were Harold (Shorty) Dahl and Mildred Bender Neff. There was a big to do over having Mildred and it was hard to get the priest to give in, because Mildred married into a protestant family who forbid her to practice her Catholic religion, but in the end she was allowed to stand up. In her waning years Mildred once again became a staunch Catholic once her mother in law passed away. Anyway the family had a big laugh over what Sandy did as she was being baptized. Did she cry as they were pouring the water over her head, someone asked Mildred. Mildred started a strangled laugh, then said "no, she let out a big fart!!".



**Nancy Bender**



**Mickey Bender**

Nancy helped Marie with the new baby which was her first experience with a new sibling as she was too young when Mickey was born. Nancy remained pretty close to Mickey as they were close in age and were the only two children in the family for the past 10 years.

Marie's brother Bill Dahl got married to Dorothy Dolato on 24<sup>th</sup> of August, 1944 which created a crisis for Marie and her brothers and sisters as Marie's mother Nellie lived with Bill and now that he was getting married they had to provide shelter for Nellie. The kids got together and they decided that every one would

take Nellie into their homes for 3 months every year. So Nellie was given a wardrobe for her dresses which they put on the top of their car and drove it to the next home. Nellie lived in Marie's house every summer and slept in the front lower bedroom. Nancy had to share her bedroom with Nellie during those summer months until 1947 when Ed had the upstairs finished with 3 bedrooms up and now he had 5 bedrooms for his growing family.

Ed and Marie had had the back bedroom on the first floor and Nancy had had the front bedroom on the first floor. Mickey had slept in the unfinished attic. Then when Sandy was born things got a bit more crowded. Sandy slept in Ed and Marie's room as an infant and then when she got bigger Marie talked Ed into finishing off the upstairs. Ed hired his brother in law Harold Neff who was a very meticulous carpenter. Harold had built his own home on St. Clair St in Grosse Pointe City all by himself so Ed knew Harold knew carpentry. Marie asked Nellie to watch 3 year old Sandy while Marie helped upstairs. It didn't take long for Nellie to start hollering to Marie that the darn kid just ran away and Nellie was too disabled to run after her. So Marie ran down the stairs and took off running to darn near Canfield till she finally tackled the kid. Harold had to put in plywood flooring instead of hardwood flooring because due to the war hardwood flooring was not available at the time. Marie later had hardwood flooring put in by Bob Barr's dad Clarence and then later had a bathroom put in upstairs. Marie said she should have had the bathroom put in years earlier when she was pregnant. But in order to have a bathroom poor Ed had to lose his dark room. Ed was really into photography the end of the 1940s and he used to develop all of his own pictures in that darkroom. Mickey also tried his hand at developing the pictures. After developing the pictures upstairs Ed and Mickey used to carry the pictures downstairs and wash them in our big high footed bath tub. That bath tub was really high and deep and the edge of that tub curled out and over. The bathroom also had a really unusual tile floor. It was black and red squares and was made of a rubber like material. The sink bowl had handles that had about 5 "fingers" sticking out of them and the hot and cold water spigots were separate. If you wanted to mix the water you had to put the plug in the sink drain and then run both into the bowl. And the hot water heater was not automatic. You had to turn it on when you wanted hot water and then turn it off when you were finished. If you did not turn it off the water would keep boiling more and more vigorously and eventually reach such a dangerous level that the tank could blow up and fly through the roof of the basement like a rocket.



**Sandy, Marie and Nancy at the Neffs**

Mildred & Harold Neff were really good to Marie and Edward and their children. Mildred used to sew a lot of the kids clothes for Marie's family. The sun dress Sandy has on in the above picture was sewn by Mildred.



**Mildred Bender Neff & Elizabeth Bender**

Back in the latter half of the 1940s Edward brought home a machine that cut 78 speed records. Dad cut records of Nancy singing several songs including "I'm looking over a 4 leaf clover". We also have a record of Grandma Elizabeth Bender talking to us and Grandma Nellie Dahl singing several songs including "Wait till the sun shines Nellie" and "I wish I knew of an Eagle". That is a very sad song. Nellie sings at the end of the song "I wish I knew of an eagle, I'd borrow his wings for to fly, and I'd fly to the arms of my Willie, and right there I'd lay me down and die."



**Nellie Rehfeldt Dahl & Marie Dahl Bender**

Nancy found Nellie quite aggravating as she was unable to help with most household chores and spent most of her day sitting in her wooden rocker in the living room.

Nellie contracted the flu of 1918 in 1917 and was paralyzed for over 9 months and had to have physical therapy for months before she could regain the use of her extremities, but from age 32 on she only had limited movement capabilities and from age 50 on shook violently her entire waking hours. She could barely walk as she was very stooped over and pigeon toed and shook terribly. So it was safer for her to sit most of the day. Mickey and Nancy, not understanding disability in those days, just thought Nellie was lazy.



**Mickey, Nellie, Marianne, Nancy & Marie**

One thing Nellie would ask all the grandchildren to do was to pick up “Schniddles” off the carpet. When she would be sitting there all day fuzzies on the carpet were a major distraction to her so she would point them out and ask us to pick them up and throw them away. Nancy remembers to this very day how aggravated she would get when Grandma Dahl would ask her to pick up the schniddles on the carpet. “Schniddles!” Nancy remembers saying to Nellie. “You and your

schniddles!” Remembering how she talked to Grandma Dahl about the schniddles makes Nancy ashamed when she thinks back on it now.



**Michael Edward Bender, May 1945**

Nancy was confirmed at St. John Berchman’s Church in the spring of 1945 by Bishop Donovan. Juliette Meeseman, our next door neighbor was her sponsor. Nancy took the confirmation name of Elizabeth, in honor of her grandmother, Elizabeth Ott Bender. Her brother Michael received his First Holy Communion the same spring. Marie and Edward had professional studio pictures taken of both children for this event.



**Nancy Marie Bender, May 1945**



**Nancy, Marianne & Sandy**



**Elenore & Herman McKinin**

In June of 1945 Marie and Edward went to Elenore and Herman's house on Coyle for an outdoor BBQ. Boy, did Herman ever make wonderful tasting charcoal hamburgers! And his yard was an unbelievable riot of flowers! Elenore and Herman spent hours and hours cultivating their garden. They owned a vacant lot next to their home which they completely planted with flowers and vegetables.



**Mickey, Sandy and Nancy, 1946**

In April of 1946 Marie dressed up her 3 kids Mickey, Nancy and Sandy for Easter Sunday and they went over to Marie's brother Harold's house for dinner. Then in 1947 There was a big falling out with Shorty and Jean and Nancy and the rest of her family did not see Shorty or his family again until 1968.





**Nancy Bender, July 1944**

Ed bought Nancy a used 26 " bike, a Rollfast. It was vanilla colored with brown striping. It was a basic balloon tire bike, all that was available in those days. Nancy seldom rode that bike, usually preferring to walk to her friends' houses.



**Sandy on her new tricycle, Dec 1947 Sandy, Marie, Bill, Nancy & Mickey**

For her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday on December 5, 1947 Edward bought Sandy a deluxe tricycle. Nancy was all excited, and was hardly able to wait to see her sister's overwhelming excitement at receiving her gorgeous new Bike. Marie woke Sandy up from her nap and had her come into the living room. Sandy looked at the new bike and walked up to it, saying in a dead pan voice, with no enthusiasm whatsoever, "Oh, my bike" and got on it. Nancy said that was such a let down, expecting great enthusiasm from a 3 year old and getting a dead pan response instead.



**Mickey Bender**

That same year Ed bought Mike a 26" bike, a generic all black second hand bike that he rode until he was 15 years old and bought himself a Schwinn Panther very deluxe bike.



**Billy Bender with Sandy's tricycle**

Billy inherited Sandy's new tricycle but he never rode it. Instead, with his harness and rope on to keep him safe, he would tip the bike on it's side and spin the wheels in the dirt. Bill had coordination problems learning to ride a tricycle and later a bicycle. Bill was 9 years old when Ed bought him a bike and Sandy ran behind Bill holding on to the seat until he was able to ride without being held up.



**Mickey, 1948**

Mike and Nancy had very little in terms of toys growing up as that was usual for middle class families in those times. In the 1940s Mike would get a play garage with trucks and also an erector set with an electric motor. Mike also used to go alley picking and brought home some fine looking big metal trucks he found in the garbage up and down the alley. Nancy by this time was more interested in getting fine clothes, nylons, make up, etc.



**Nancy Bender**

Nancy and Mickey used to read the comics in the Detroit News or the Detroit Sun Times or the Detroit Free Press in the Sunday edition. Comics were in color only on Sundays in those days. Early in the morning a boy selling the Detroit Free Press used to walk down our street calling out in a sing song voice, “Free Presssss Paaaperr!”



**Nancy Bender**



**Michael Bender**

One day Marie got a call from the next door neighbor, Mrs. Elodie Meeseman who said the Mickey and Nancy were playing with fire and had set the garage on fire. Marie and Ed ran out and soon put the fire out with no damage to the structure. But that sure gave them a devil of a scare!



**Nancy Bender, age 12**

When Nancy was 12 years old she and her friend went to an afternoon show. While the two girls were sitting together watching the show a man came and sat next to Nancy. Suddenly he exposed himself to Nancy. Being only 12 years old Nancy had no idea what to do and just froze in her seat. However there was a middle age woman sitting behind Nancy and the man and she did know exactly what to do – she got an usher, who came down the aisle and arrested this man. This man later had to go to court on this charge and Marie took Nancy to court to testify against this guy.

One day Nancy was looking over all of her childhood pictures and she held one up and said to Marie, “Hey mom, here is a picture of me where I am nice and thin, but this is the only thin picture I can find.” Marie looked at the picture and said, “Oh, that’s where you were recovering from the whooping cough”.



**Nancy, Sandy, Marilyn, Marie, Bill & Mickey**

Nancy had loads of friends and also loads of boyfriends from the time she was 8 years old. Mickey said Nancy always seemed to have boyfriends lined up on the porch. She also was very popular with the girls too. Her best friends were Marilyn Spaulding and Sally Valentine and Pat Buckle. She palled around with them for many years. She also had a friend named Josephine. The boys who were around her in her earlier years were Eldon and Gary Schneck and Jay Bayer. Jay Bayer

and Nancy used his pocket knife and carved their initial in each other's arms. Fortunately it was very superficial, leaving no scars.



**Nancy, age 12**

Mickey had his share of boyfriends too but one of the most upsetting things that happened to Mike's pal who lived down the street from us was when the babysitter sent Tommy Cronin to the dime store on Warren Ave to buy her nail polish. Tommy took his bike to the store and on his way back home he was struck and killed by a car. What a shock that was to all of us!

Nancy was also shocked when she learned what her little brother Mickey had pulled one afternoon in the middle of the winter. Mickey used to walk home for lunch and then go back to school for the afternoon session. Well this one beautiful winter day with a blanket of fresh, crisp snow on the ground was just too much of a temptation for well behaved little Mickey who never did anything wrong, well, hardly ever, that is. Mickey started back to school after lunch and walked down to his pal Joey Cronin's house to walk back with him when Joey told Mickey it was much too nice a day to waste going to school. Let's get my sled out and go sledding all afternoon, Joey said. Joey's mother wasn't home and Marie was secure in the knowledge that Mickey was back in school so those two boys had free reign all afternoon. And where do you think they found a hill to go sledding on in our pancake flat neighborhood? Why Joey's front porch steps, that's where! They would put the sled on the top of the porch, one would wait till no cars were coming and then give the go ahead for the other kid to come whizzing down the stairs and into the street and clear across busy Alter Rd. Well, neither kid got killed by this peccadillo and Mickey didn't get in too much trouble as he never did this sort of thing before and really, it was all Joey's idea. But Nancy was stunned that her well behaved brother would have pulled such a stunt.

Nancy got along very well most of the time with her brother and sister, but occasionally enough was enough and she felt she had to put her foot down. One time Nancy was standing at our driveway that we shared with the Meesemans

talking to a group of her friends when Mickey came riding up the driveway on his black bike, stopped in the midst of the kids and stood there listening. Nancy told him to move. He didn't. She decided to showoff in front of her friends and smacked him a few times to get him to move on. Boy, was she ever surprised when her mild mannered brother decided to start smacking back! That was the first time he ever pulled that!

And then another time Nancy was asserting her authority as the older sister when Marie went shopping and left her in charge of Mickey and Sandy, who was only 3 years old. Nancy and Mickey got into an arguing session and just when Nancy thought she had the upper hand Mickey just got aggravated enough and decided to turn the tables on her. He went into the kitchen and returned to the dining room with a huge butcher knife in his hand. He started chasing her this way and that way around the dining room table telling her just how he was planning to carve her up. Boy, was she ever excited and could she ever do a fast job running first this way and then that around the table keeping away from him. That continued for a few very long minutes until Mickey wearied of the game. Sandy spent the entire time in the kitchen watching that, wondering if she would be safer running away.



**Nancy Bender**

When Nancy was 12 years old it was decided that her tonsils should be removed. The doctor decided to remove her tonsils in his office. He used ether as an anesthetic but the ether was not deep enough and in the middle of the surgery Nancy became partially conscious and put a death grip on both of the doctor's wrists and he was not able to break her grip for awhile. The operation was half complete and Nancy's half clipped tonsils started bleeding all over the doctor's white coat. Finally he was able to break loose and complete the operation. But Ed was shocked when he saw all that blood all over the doctor. The doctor was also greatly stressed and told Ed about Nancy grabbing him in mid surgery.





**Mickey Bender**

Mickey also had his tonsils out without the trauma during the surgery, but Mickey said his ether was also not enough and he was aware partially of what was happening. And afterwards his throat hurt so bad he refused to eat for days. Marie gave him aspergum to soothe his throat. He did eat some ice cream but that was about it.

Edward heard about Marie's former employer, Mrs. Mayne losing 20 lbs on an orange juice only diet, so he decided to try it himself as he was always upset over having a round face. He figured if he lost weight his face would thin down too. So he went on the orange juice diet himself for about a week. He got so sick on that diet that he stopped it and never tried it again. A while later Ed heard that Mrs. Mayne died while on this diet.



**Edward**



**Marie Bender**

Nancy was often cold in the middle of the night while growing up as furnaces in those days were fueled by coal as there was no natural gas fueled furnaces in those days. Ed would fill the furnace with coal before going to bed, opening the door in the front of the furnace, shoveling out the cinders and ash and then shoveling in the new coal. About 4:30 am Marie would nudge Ed in the ribs and tell him the furnace burned all the coal and now the house was rapidly cooling down. Poor dad would haul his tired body out of bed, go down to the furnace, shovel out the cinders and ashes and shovel in the new coal. The house would stay warm until about mid day when Marie would have to go down and do the same to keep the

house warm. The huge white furnace was called an octopus style one as it was very fat, and had huge fat round arms going out in every direction, sending heat upwards to the first and second floors. The furnace took up 3/4s of the floor space from side wall to side wall.

We had a coal shute on the side of the house on Mrs. Meeseman's side. The coal delivery man would drive the truck close to the coal shute, tip up the back of the truck and the coal would rumble down the shute on the truck and land into the coal bin in the basement. One time the coal delivery man had an excess of coal on his hands so he offered his customers a real big deep discount if they took a double or triple order. Dad was unable to pass up such a deal so he ordered a huge delivery of coal. The coal rumbled down the shute and just came coming. It filled the coal bin and then spilled out all over the basement floor. It spilled right up against the furnace and over to the other back side of the furnace. Dad and Mike went down there and shoveled the excess coal away from the furnace and into the fruit bin on the other side of the back part of the basement. That coal lasted all through that winter season and into the next year. That was the last time dad did that as it was dangerous with the coal being so near the furnace for so long.

The water heater was also potentially very dangerous in those days too. You had to turn the water heater on in order to take a bath and then you had to remember to turn it back off again when you were through. One time mom went to church at St. John Berchman's and while in the mass she remembered to her horror that she forgot to turn off the water heater. She ran out of church to a pay phone and called Mike to ask him to go downstairs and turn off the water heater. But she was unable to make the call, for you see Marie was unable to remember her own phone number! I never call myself, Marie said, so how would I know the phone number, She went home right away and averted a crisis.



**Sandy**



**Billy**



**Mickey**

Once more they called Mickey at home late at night from the show as Marie forgot to turn off the hot water heater. She told Mike that if he didn't turn it off right away it might build up enough steam so that it could go off like a rocket, flying

right threw the floorboards. She told Mike to get Bill and Sandy right out of the house first due to the danger and then shut off the water heater. Billy and Sandy were sitting on the dewy grass after having been awakened out of a sound sleep wondering why they were so rudely torn out of their beds, But Mike got the water heater turned off and the kids snuggly tucked back in their beds, none the worse for wear.



**Nancy Bender**

Marie took Nancy on the bus shopping with her a number of times. Marie always made sure that Nancy dressed up prim and proper to take the bus as that was the custom in those days. No one dared get on the bus in casual or skimpy garb. The best shopping trip was to downtown Detroit. Marie and Nancy shopped at the J.L. Hudson Company which was the finest of the department stores. They also shopped at Crowleys and the Kern store. The Kern company had a huge clock outside and Marie and Elenore used to arrange to meet under the clock when they went shopping together. Marie and Nancy used to take the Warren bus that went downtown. There was also a Warren crosstown bus so they had to be careful to catch the right one. That bus used to go down Warren till it crossed Gratiot Ave. The bus then turned on Gratiot Ave and proceeded down Gratiot to Farmer street where the bus run ended at the back door of Hudsons. On the way back home they caught the bus on Farmer and it went down Gratiot to Forest and took Forest to Mc Clellan. On Mc Clellan it went back to Warren Ave and thence eastward and stopped at Alter Rd.

While going down Forest Ave. Marie used to always point out Pingree Park to Nancy and tell her that's where Marie used to take Nancy in her buggy and then swing her on the swings there. They also went past Dr Hassig's office on Mc Clellan where Marie also took the kids. But most of the time Marie took Nancy and Mickey to Dr Mc Kenzie who also delivered Sandy and Bill. He had his practice on Rivard St. Grosse Pointe Park and was a recommendation by Mildred Neff who also used him.

Later on, when Nancy was driving a car she used to love to go to J.L.Hudsons and have one of their famous Maurice salads in their restaurant in the mezzanine downtown or their not so fancy restaurant at the Eastland mall. Everyone in Nancy's age group that lived in this area and shopped at Hudson's readily remembers Hudson's delicious, famous Maurice salad.



**Sandy Bender**

Nancy was as lousy of a baby sitter as Ed was. One time Marie told her to watch Sandy while she went shopping at Gratiot and 7 Mile Rd in Detroit. Soon after Marie left Jay Bayer came over and Nancy and Jay Bayer were sitting on the front porch together and Sandy was right there with them. Jay turned to Sandy and told her he would give her a 50 cent piece for her liberty piggy bank if she would get lost for awhile. Sandy took the 50 cent piece and gladly obliged. She lounged around in the alley wondering what to do when some time later she spotted the telephone pole at the end of the alley. Boy, would that ever be a neat thing to climb, 3 year old Sandy thought. So down the alley she strolled to the telephone pole at the corner of the alley and Canfield. That pole had ordinary nails pounded in at the bottom and then heavy sturdy spikes that went right up to the top of the pole. Sandy stretched to reach the first nail and after that climbing that pole was a piece of cake. In no time Sandy was standing at the very top of the pole surveying the entire neighborhood from her new found aerie. Nancy suddenly realized how late it was becoming and figured Marie would be coming down either Forest or Canfield from the Chalmers bus line any time now, so she set in earnest to find 3 year old Sandy. When Nancy stood in the alley and saw Sandy at the top of the phone pole she panicked. What if Marie came walking down Canfield and saw Sandy at the top of the pole. Nancy ran down the alley and hollered at Sandy to get down from there. Sandy said okay but for Nancy to back up away from the pole which Nancy did. Sandy climbed down and when she reached chest level Nancy ran forward and pulled Sandy off the pole, but in so doing she caught Sandy's foreleg on one of the nails and put a tear in her leg. Sandy started wailing. Nancy told Sandy if she would shut up, let Nancy clean the wound and hide it

under a pair of long pants she would give Sandy a quarter. Sandy agreed. All went well until Marie discovered 75 cents in Sandy's liberty bank and knew bribery money when she saw it. Marie confiscated the ill gotten 75 cents, much to Sandy's chagrin.

Gary Schneck, as well as his brother Eldon, liked Nancy and so one day Gary decided to tease her when she was home babysitting her 3 year old sister Sandy. Gary told Sandy to come to the front door as he wanted to talk to her. Gary told Sandy he would give her 25 cents if she would run really fast into the kitchen and stuff a lighted firecracker into her shoe. (Gary knew that Nancy always took off her loafers when she was sitting at the table.) So Sandy ran the fire cracker into Nancy's shoe and then Gary rang the front door bell to get Nancy to put her feet into her shoes to go answer the door. The fire cracker went off before Nancy could put her feet into the shoes so she immediately got really mad at both Sandy and Gary Schneck.

Nancy liked collecting 8 X 10 pictures of various movie stars. She kept these pictures in a thin box that her nylons came in. She kept these safe from the younger kids in her room, the back bedroom downstairs on Alter Rd.



**Edward & Marie Bender, Niagara Falls**



**Marie, Horseshoe Falls**

In the summer of 1950 Marie and Edward decided to take their first vacation. They chose to go to Niagara Falls. Nellie stayed with the kids that week. Marie said Bill was such a whiner it drove her half crazy but when she got back from the Niagara Falls he didn't whine any more. That was such a relief for her!



**Bill Bender**

Marie gave Bill a record player for his 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday. He loved his records! He played them by the hour in the kitchen. His favorite record was “Froggy in the Meadow”. He played that over and over again until Marie wanted to hide the thing!

Mike and Nancy used to go to the show quite a few times. Almost always they walked to the Uptown Show at Chalmers and Mack. Mike said he didn’t like going there as it was so far away that by the time he walked all the way there and all the way back it ruined his whole day. Shows in those days were always a double feature with some cool cartoons in between. They also showed news reels as a feature between movies. The price of a show was at first a dime, and was later raised to a quarter by the early 1950s.



**Nancy & Mickey with their innocent “who me get into it look”**

Mike says he and Nancy used to go entirely separate ways most of their young lives, only coming together to clash now and then. Probably because he was a guy hanging out with the other boys and Nancy hanging out with her girlfriends most of the time.

Nancy and Mike never had to cut the grass on Altar – we had mud. But every so often either Marie or her mother Nellie would ask us kids to go outside and sweep the mud clean. (Later on Mr. Schneck, who was a landscaper, planted grass first in the front yard and then several years later in the back yard.) We had tiger lilies planted on both sides of the front porch steps by previous owners. They came up



faithfully year after year the entire 17 ½ years we lived there. We also had a large spirea bush in front of the porch. That also came back year after year and flowered with a profusion of small white flowers.

The front porch overhang was supported by 3 columns – 2 of them on either side of the steps and one on the far end by Mrs. Meeseman's. One beautiful summer evening Marie, Nellie and Sandy were sitting on the front porch enjoying the warm summer evening's breezes. Nancy came out of the house beautifully dressed up with her hair perfectly coiffured heading out for a date with her friends. As she started to go down the steps a strange black cat, which none of us knew was there, had been resting on top of the lip of the pillar. When he was startled by Nancy coming really near to him he freaked, jumped off the pillar and landed right in Nancy's hair! Boy did she scream with surprise and fear! It all happened so fast that none of us put it together until the cat had sprung out of her hair and was long gone into the night air.

One day late in October, 1950 Sandy asked Marie where her skirt with the shoulder straps were as she could not find it in closet. Marie told Sandy that Nancy had borrowed her pleated plaid skirt as part of her Halloween costume as she was going to a party at the school. Sandy could not believe that her 15 year old sister could fit into a 5 year old's skirt, but I guess she did as she wore it to the party.

There was a really funny Christmas day story. In 1950 Marie had all of her Dahl relatives over for dinner and later dessert. When it came time for dessert Marie decided to serve Faygo Rock and Rye floats with ice cream. Marie was busy entertaining the relatives in the living room so she asked Nancy to serve the floats. Nancy went out into the kitchen, got the pop out of the refrigerator, and the half gallon of vanilla ice cream out of the freezer. She then started cutting the ice cream into generous cubes and then she decided to be really sanitary and not touch the ice cream with her hands. Instead she slid the knife under the cube of ice cream and then deftly lifted the ice cream into the tall glass and would then pour the pop over the ice cream. All worked very well until she came to the last cube of ice cream sitting on the cardboard ice cream carton. By this time the last cube had started to melt quite a bit, so when she tried to slip the knife under the piece, the cube started slipping all over the carton, then off the carton, then she chased that piece of ice cream all over the kitchen table, and finally the piece squirted off the end of the table and landed on the kitchen floor. Nancy looked at that last piece on the kitchen floor with great consternation, and then realized that she needed that last piece in order to serve everyone in the living room, so she leaned over and picked up that piece with her bare hand, putting

finger dents into both sides of that piece. She slopped that piece into the eight glass and then totally hid the evidence by pouring the opaque pop over and around the ice cream. She then took all 8 glasses two at a time into the living room and served everybody. She then later looked around the room with a frown on her face and then said, “Aunt Elenore, I think you got the one that gave me all that trouble”. But she never did elaborate what the trouble had consisted of!



**Mickey, Billy & the snowman of 1949**



**Mickey, Sandy & snowman of 1948**

Mickey used to make fabulous huge snowmen in the winter in our back yard on Alter Rd. Sandy never could figure out how Mickey got those extremely heavy middle and top of the boy on top of the base. He made the 3 pieces of the snowman by rolling the snowball all around the yard on his hands and knees till it picked up all that snow. Above is a picture of Billy admiring Mickey’s snow man as he puts the finishing touches on it.



**Edward**



**Mickey**

Nancy and Mickey had no real interest in playing ball but did so occasionally in order to please Edward who lived and breathed baseball.



**Nancy & Mickey**

We have a cute picture of Nancy and Mickey batting and pitching, but that picture shows that neither one of them looked like Mickey Mantle.



**Bill Bender & Nellie Dahl**



**Marie & Bill Bender**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January, 1948 Nancy had another brother, William Henry. He was a very small baby weighing only about 6 lbs. Marie said that was her easiest birth due to his small size. Bill was a good baby, calm and easy to care for. But he didn't hold his head up on his own and he was never able to crawl. He would roll wherever he wanted to go. He was slow walking and talking. On Easter Sunday 1949 Ed and Marie had him walk back and forth all day until he got the rhythm. He had speech therapy in kindergarten so he could speak clearly and understandably.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, 1948 Mickey was confirmed at St. John Berchman's Church. His sponsor was Marie's brother, William Dahl Jr.



**Edward & Marie**



**Marie**



**Marie**



**Mildred & Marie**

Around 1948 Ed and Marie went on one of their first vacations since they got married. In the above pictures Marie and Edward went to Idle Wild, a camp near Traverse City with Mildred & Harold Neff. They stayed in cabins and did a lot of fishing and riding around the country side “exploring”. Nancy, Mickey, Sandy and Bill were taken care of by Grandma Nellie Dahl while Ed and Marie were gone. Nancy and Mickey found Nellie quite fussy and aggravating but Sandy loved Grandma Dahl. Nancy got awfully tired of picking up “schniddles” off the carpet!



**Nancy & Sandy Bender**



**Bill & Sandy, Plymouth Park**

From about 1948 onwards Ed and Marie no longer went on picnics with the Benders but instead went just with their own children. One time we went to Plymouth Park and Nancy decided to put 3 year old Sandy on a very tall slide. Sandy did not want to go on that slide, but Nancy insisted, saying it was a lot of fun. Sandy had a sun suit on that day as it was very warm out, which is what caused the entire problem due to all that exposed skin. Nancy half carried Sandy up the slide, standing below her with her arm around her. Nancy then got Sandy to the top and then set her on the slide. As Sandy went down that red hot slide that very hot metal burned the little kids arms and legs. Marie put butter on the burns which caused it to burn even more.



**Marie**



**Nancy**



**Sandy**

Another picnic we went on was on Memorial day in 1949. It was a warm day, the first warm days of the year. Marie always brought along either sandwiches or hot dogs and potato salad. After we ate Nancy said she wanted to swim in Lake Kensington at Kensington State park. Marie said okay and Nancy had a wonderful time in the water. Sandy wanted to go in too but Marie said no, it was too chilly yet. Then why Nancy can go in, Sandy asked. Because she is older and can take the cold better, Marie replied. We loved to go to Kensington State Park for a picnic but you had to get there early in the day because it was so popular that they were often filled to capacity by noon. A very nice swimming beach was the main attraction, plus they had many picnic areas scattered throughout the park.



**Nancy, Sandy, Marilyn, Marie, Bill & Mickey**

Quite a few times Nancy used to take her best friend Marilyn Spaulding with her. We have a really cute picture in which Marilyn was also in the picture with our family at a picnic.





**Mickey, Marie & Nancy Bender**



**Marie Bender**

Nancy used to have a beautiful, longish hairdo in the 1940s and 1950s. In those days all the women set their hair in pin curls at night and slept in them, taking them out in the morning before leaving the house. Sandy remembers Nancy and Marie rolling their long hair around their finger, deftly pulling their finger out from the middle of the curl and then opening the bobby pin with their teeth and slipping it over and under the curl. They would then put a second bobby pin cross wise over the first bobby pin to keep the curl securely pinned all night. Mom and Nancy would then wrap a turban like cloth over the finished pinned up hair. They would then sleep in the turban over their pinned up hair. The next day they would remove the pins and then brush out their hair. This created a very attractive hairdo.



**Nancy on what could have been the last day of her life**



**Mickey thinking, "oh boy, they're gonna kill her for sure!"**

Uh, by the way, have you noticed that nice pink flowered cover on the couch those 3 are sitting on? Grandma had that new slip cover no more than 1 week when Nancy dropped a pot of permanent ink on that new slip cover that Marie really loved. That spot never came out. (All you guys who came after Nancy should feel very lucky to be here – Marie could have easily killed your mother, grandmother, great grandmother that day!)



**Sandy lying under the UV lamp in the winter**

But on the other hand, due to misinformation from the medical profession, Ed and Marie could have killed us kids with kindness in the winter time. The medical literature was full of information about how beneficial sitting under an ultra violet (UV) lamp in the winter time was for our health. It was supposed to simulate sun shine and thus produce vitamins A & D in our systems. So Ed bought a UV lamp and all of us kids took turns lying under it getting our daily dose of “sunshine”. We put goggles on to protect our eyes but we still could see the blue florescent lamp if we looked into it. The machine ticked a fast tick and one could smell the ozone that the lamp powerfully gave off. Mom also gave us kids cod liver oil in the winter, again, a whopping dose of vitamins for those cold, dreary days.



**Nancy, Sandy and Bill Bender**

Nancy always dressed very classy, in a very sophisticated manner. She always looked much older than her stated age due to the way she dressed herself, wore her hair and used make up.





**Mickey, Marie, Sandy, Nancy and her friend Marilyn Spaulding**

Marie gave Sandy a surprise birthday party which was attended only by the immediate family and Marilyn. Marie made the cake which her mother made all through her childhood. It was a vanilla cake with a chocolate icing and bananas in the middle. (And by the way, Sandy didn't squirt anyone with a hose when her birthday party was over!)



**Nancy Bender, 1950**

When Nancy was about 15 years old she applied for a job at Johnson and Johnson Real Estate office at Mack Ave where Warren Ave ends at about the area of Balduck Park on the far east side of Detroit. Nancy lied in order to get the job, saying she was 18 as she feared he would never have hired a 16 year old. Mr. Carroll, her boss was very impressed with her maturity, friendliness, and very professional appearance and hired her for the job as receptionist. Nancy liked the job and also liked her boss, Mr. Carroll, who treated her very well. Nancy maintained this part time job for maybe a year, quitting after she got married to Don. Mr. Carroll was invited to Nancy's wedding and was shocked to learn that she was only 16 years old, and that in fact she was barely 15 years old when she went to work for him. He stated over and over again how shocked he was as he felt she had the grace and maturity of one far older than her present age. He was very sorry to lose her when she left his firm. She was a very valuable employee to him.

Nancy and Mickey had a radio to listen to as they were growing up and heard many an early radio show such as “The Shadow Knows”, “The Lone Ranger”, “Fibber Magee and Molly”, and the “The Life of Reilly” and “Dragnet” , among others. T.V. didn’t come into vogue until about 1949 when Nancy was 14 years old. Ed brought home a Philco in 1949. All shows were in black and white only and all went off the air by midnight. All night long they broadcast a test pattern with their station logo and number in it. There was a steady noise broadcast with this. The last show on at 11 pm on weekends was “Shock Theatre” which broadcast scary movies like “Frankenstein” and “Dracula”.

We used to watch Jackie Gleason, Lawrence Welk, The Red Skelton Show, the Ed Sullivan Show, and Dragnet, among others. The screen was small, the picture was in black and white and not that great and the shows were mostly hokey. Most of Nancy’s TV viewing was done as a married woman in her own home as we had a TV less than 2 years before she got married.



**Evelyn Bender**

Nancy palled around some with her cousin Virginia Bender, Norman’s daughter, as Virginia was just 11 months older, having been born in July of 1934. Marie wasn’t too comfortable with this friendship. Virginia was always a nice girl, friendly and felt that her Aunt Marie was her favorite aunt, but Virginia being around meant that Evelyn would also come around from time to time, and Evelyn was a sister in law that no one wanted to see coming. She was a real trouble maker and a real teller of tall tales, none of them pleasant. And Marie was telling that Evelyn always came up with wild gossip about family members which Marie said that the most disconcerting part of those tales was that Evelyn had a way of guessing pretty close to the truth!



**Virginia Bender**

One time Evelyn came over to Marie's house and told Marie that when Nancy had a holy day off in the Catholic school that she went over to the public school and deliberately stood outside Virginia's class room and distracted her from her school work. Marie was on a ladder wiping down cupboards as Evelyn was telling her this lie, and Marie got so angry with Evelyn that she turned around and faced Evelyn with rag in hand and told Evelyn, "Get your lying face out of my home and don't come back! My Nancy is a good girl, I always know where she is and what she is doing, and she is never doing any of the things you come around here lying about and I've had enough of your lying tongue! Now beat it!"

Nancy probably doesn't remember the lesson she learned from her Aunt Evelyn about how not to serve a Thanksgiving dinner when you've invited company over. Evelyn invited Marie, Edward, Nancy and Mickey over to her house for a turkey dinner on Thanksgiving. Marie, Edward and the kids showed up at 4 pm, thinking they would be shortly sitting down to dinner. When they walked into the house, not only was there no smell of roasting turkey but when they walked into the kitchen there was Evelyn stuffing a raw turkey, getting ready to put it into the oven! They didn't eat that day till after 11 pm!

Nancy probably doesn't remember the lesson she learned from Aunt Evelyn in how not to preserve meat either. One time Evelyn invited Ed and Marie to stay and have Sunday dinner with them. Mom looked at a piece of very off color beef chuck roast with flies roosting all over the top of it and suddenly remembered a reason they all had to go back home and have dinner.

When Nancy was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade at St. John Berchman's she begged Marie to let her transfer to Jackson Junior High as she said she was not popular at St. John's but would be at Jackson as they were a different group of kids that she fit in with much better. Marie gave in and let her transfer, the only child Marie let leave the Catholic School system. Nancy was indeed much happier in this much freer environment where she was free to dress in her fine outfits, date and go to dances, ball games, etc. Nancy dated a lot and participated in many school activities.



**Audie Murphy**

It was at one of these basketball games that Nancy looked across the far bleachers and pointed out Don Stephens to her friend and said that she was going to marry him because he had beautiful blue eyes and looked like Audie Murphy, a very popular superstar at that time.



**Billy Bender**

Here is one of Marie's methods of child care that Nancy definitely did not emulate. In the picture above Bill has a harness on and is tied to a tree by a rope attached to the harness. Bill didn't have enough sense to stay out of Alter Rd which is a very busy street. Marie found him playing in the middle of the street several times so she finally devised a way to let him play outside and keep him safe while she finished her work inside. But twice Bill untied the rope from the tree and the walked in the back door on Alter and handed the free end of the rope to Marie. Oh, well. So much for that sure fire safety idea.



**Sandy & Bill Bender**



**Nancy Bender**



**Sandy & Bill melting under the hot flood lights**

Edward acquired a number of very fine cameras in the late 1940s and started taking pictures of all of us kids. He used very hot flood lights which he put right in front of the kids and then took forever focusing the camera and setting the f stop and speed. By that time we were all melted from all that heat! The first pictures we all looked content but as we got hotter the younger kids would burst out crying and walk away. Mike and Nancy, being older, used to just sit there and endure it.

Nancy's brother Michael was often busy and out of her hair because he went to work of his dad when he was only 12 years old. Edward had 12 year old Mickey drive the delivery van because he was disgusted at Kay Fraser always smashing up the truck. Ed figured Mike could do better and he was right. 12 year old Mike was a safe and sane driver. He only had one accident on the Grand Blvd in Detroit that wasn't his fault. Someone else plowed into the back end of the truck. A policeman called dad when he came on the scene. Dad came right down and the policeman told dad that Mike was almost in shock from having an accident and that he was much too young to handle the responsibility of driving a delivery truck. But neither Mike nor dad got into any trouble as the accident was not Mike's fault. (In today's world Ed would be in a passel of trouble for having a 12 year old drive a truck.



**Mickey tearing down Harold Neff's house**

Mike also had an interesting weekend job in those days. Uncle Harold Neff bid on a house on Grosse Pointe City property that had to be moved. He got it for only \$400 with the stipulation that he had to tear it down and move it. So that's what he did with Mike's help. 12 year old Mike loved ripping into the boards and pulling them loose, protecting them so Harold could put them in to the new house he was building in Clinton Township.



**Sandy Bender**

Nancy also lived pretty much in a different world from her sister Sandy who was almost 10 years younger. Sandy was only 6 years old when Nancy got married and moved out into a home of her own. Sandy was only 9 when Nancy had two children of her own so they were worlds apart in interest and experience.



**Elizabeth & Henry Bender**

In the late summer of 1950 Nancy overheard her mom and dad talking about Ed's mother Elizabeth Ott Bender. They had learned that she had stomach cancer which was too advanced to do anything about. Mildred Neff said the doctor wanted to operate to see what kind of cancer it was, but Mildred Neff put an end to that nonsense talk really fast. In August of 1950 Grandma Bender went to live with



Mildred Neff, Ed's sister where she remained in their home until she died 6 weeks later. Grandma Elizabeth Bender spent the last 6 weeks of her life talking to her beloved husband Hank, who she believed was physically at her side in her last hours.

Ed got a call on a beautiful Sunday afternoon on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, 1950 that he should get over to Mildred's house right away as his mother was close to death. Mildred Neff was at the Red Cross rolling cancer bandages when she got a call to get home as her mother was going fast. Ed and Mildred got over there and stood watch over their mother Elizabeth. At about 3 pm Elizabeth stopped breathing but her heart kept beating. Mildred called Dr Mc Kenzie with this dilemma. He told her to hold her mother's eyes shut and wait a few more minutes till her heart would stop by itself. He told Mildred that her mother must have had a really strong heart.

Nancy and Mike went to their grandmother's funeral. Young 12 year old Mike, Nancy's brother was a pallbearer at his grandmother's funeral. He said that was a very heavy load for a 12 year old thin kid to bear.

Elizabeth was laid out at Verheyden Funeral Home in Grosse Pointe and was buried at her husband Hank's side in Mt. Olivet cemetery.



**Nancy Bender**

Nancy held a Halloween party for all of her friends on Alter Rd in 1949. Marie made all of the food and treats and was dressed up in a fine dress that night. Marie mostly stayed upstairs except to bring the food down to the kids. But then when it came time for bobbing for apples Marie slipped into a complete black witches' costume, slipped downstairs and using her famous "witch voice" started telling fortunes to all of the kids there. One of the boys became really sassy with Marie, mouthing off to her and pushing her. After the fortune telling the kids started one by one bobbing for apples. When the smart mouthed kid knelt down and put his face in the wash tub to try to bite into an apple, Marie sprang forward and kicked the kid really hard in the butt. He went flying to the bottom of the water in the washtub. Marie then ran upstairs and changed back into her finery. Later on when

Nancy tried to tell her friends that the impertinent witch was really her mother, no one would believe her! That beautiful, refined, well spoken, well dressed woman was just not capable of such crude antics!



**Edward & Marie Bender**

Oh, boy! Those kids didn't know Marie's temper! When she got mad you had better watch out! In the picture above Marie was just pretending to be mad with Ed but us kids saw first hand when mom really did get mad at dad or us. She seldom got really mad but when she did it could be a doozy! Around the time of Nancy's Halloween party Marie got really mad at Edward when they were both on the kitchen and she hurled a butcher knife at him and it stuck right in his thumb, with blood spurting out! Dad removed the knife from his thumb, ran to the bathroom, and ran water over it. Marie was petrified at what she had just done and ran into the back bedroom and hid in the closet. As Ed stood with his thumb under cold water his sense of humor took over and he started chuckling. He often said afterwards that as long as mom aimed at him he was safe because she was a rotten aim, but that if she threw something wildly then she might get him right between the eyes!



**Sandy, Marie & Michael in the New Baltimore Park**

In the summer Nancy used to go with the family swimming to the New Baltimore Park. That swimming area was scary to the kids younger than 5 as the beginning

of the swimming area was a drop off about 3 feet deep as there was a sea wall holding the water back. Nancy was the oldest of the kids so she used to walk along the dock to the end and then she used to dive off the dock and swim back in, doing that over and over again that afternoon. She also sometimes went into the shallow area just off the drop off and hold the younger kids in the shallow water. We had to sneak into that park as the park was for residents of New Baltimore only and we lived in Detroit. Dad used to park down the road from the entrance and then tell us kids to run ahead and go real fast around the fence and into the grassy area and wait for mom and dad to come later. There used to be a really high water tower in the park that you could see a long way off and across the street from the park Nancy used to walk over and visit an old friend who moved there from Detroit a year ago.



**Nancy, Sandy, Mickey, Nellie, Sharon and Marianne**



**Sharon, Dorothy, Sonny, Mildred, Nellie, Marie, Elenore, Herman & Bill**

On November 3, 1949 when Nancy got home from school she saw that her mother Marie was very busy cooking and baking and setting the dining room table for many guests. When Nancy asked what the occasion was Marie answered in a whisper that it was a surprise birthday party for her mother, Nellie. Mildred, Elenore, Bill and their families would be coming tonight to celebrate. Nancy helped Marie put the finishing touches on the food while Nellie was wondering what all that cooking and baking was all about. Then Ed came home early and offered to drive Nellie to her son Bill's house. Nancy said to Marie that I thought you said we were having Nellie's birthday party here. We are, Marie replied. I just had Ed get Nellie out of the house so she wouldn't see me putting up birthday balloons and streamers and setting the table with birthday stuff.

Ed brought Nellie back home, pretending he couldn't find Bill's house and when Nellie walked in the darkened house everyone yelled "SURPRISE!!" Now Nellie was truly happy. Nancy did not sit at the dining room table with the adults as there wasn't enough room. She sat in the kitchen at the kitchen table with her cousins Marianne Mc Kinin and Doris Stocker. After dinner Edward took some wonderful color pictures of the family.



**Elenore, Dorothy, Mildred, Nellie & Marie**

Nancy also used to go for picnics and swimming to the Grosse Pointe City park with Aunt Mildred Neff who had a resident pass as she lived there on St. Clair street. That was such a gorgeous park! Mickey loved going there with Aunt Mildred and Marie.

Nancy used to go to Edgewater Amusement Park on occasion on Telegraph Rd and also to the Jefferson Beach Amusement Park on Jefferson on the edge of Grosse Pointe. They were both a lot of fun, with Fun Houses, Roller Coasters, the Whip,

The Bug, and so on. On Tuesday evenings it was only 10 cents a ride, otherwise each ride cost 25 cents.

Don taught Nancy to drive right after they were married and Nancy was now old enough to get a driver's license. Both Nancy and Don had quite a few accidents in those earlier years until they got the hang of driving safer. These were only fender benders. No one ever got hurt.

The summer of 1950 Nancy went with Marie, Ed, Sandy and Bill to Barker's cottage in Lakeville. We went along with Mildred and Harold Neff and Beatrice and Edward Gamache, Edward's two sisters. Barkers was sure a slam bang place! Noisy from morning to night. It had screen doors and every time someone opened one they just let it slam shut. That slamming went on all day long. Mildred Neff had the cottage number 3, which means it was the third cottage away from Lake St. Clair. Beatrice had cottage #4 and Ed and Marie and their kids had cottage #6. None of the cottages faced the water. They were on a narrow strip of land and all the cottages were in a line extending away from the water toward the road.

Nancy went swimming in the lake along with Mildred, Sandy and Marie and Edward. The waves were fairly high that day so Sandy had to stay fairly close to shore as she hadn't learn to swim yet and the waves were half her height. Nancy was out much further and yet she was mostly out of the water as she was standing on a sand bar out there. She told Sandy to come out with her but Sandy told her it was over her head in between, so Nancy came back and picked up Sandy and brought her out to the sand bar. Mildred was sitting in the water on the sand bar and letting the waves wash over her. Nancy was bouncing up and down in the waves. Suddenly Sandy noticed that both Nancy and Mildred had left the water and went back to their cottages. Sandy was stranded! The way back to the beach was over her head and she was the only one in the water! Sandy just started hollering! And she just kept hollering! Help! Help! Aunt Mildred Neff, who was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> cottage, heard Sandy and went out and carried her back in.

There was one bad aspect to this cottage complex. Mr. Barker's 12 year old son went around exposing himself to the little kids renting there and tried to induce them to go under a blanket with him on the beach at night. Sandy and Bill went and told Marie about him and Marie went really mad to the owner and that was the last we saw of his son that week.





**Mickey in front of the destroyed curtains**

Mickey brought home a stray dog one day and put it in the house on Alter Rd. The whole family was out of the house for a few hours that evening and when we returned we found that the dog had been frantic to get out and had torn down all Marie's brand new curtains you see in the above picture. Marie opened the front door and booted the dog right out of house into the cold, dark evening! Today's modern housewife would never believe how much work those lace curtains were to keep clean. You took them down and soaked them in a bath tub full of bluing solution. After they soaked for a while, you swirled them around in the bluing water. Then you pulled them out of the bath tub, rinsed them, wringed out the excess water and then you stretched them onto a frame full of sharp nails made for stretching and drying those kind of curtains. When they finally were dry you took them off the stretching frame and re hung them.

That was the end of pets, except for Mickey's god fish. One day Mickey brought home a gold fish and a bowl to keep him in. Marie was insistent that if Mickey wanted a fish he was going to feed it and clean the fish bowl. Well, you know how it goes with kids – in time the fish bowl got grungy. Well, Marie did take care of that problem, but not how you might think – She took the bowl over to the toilet and flushed that fish right down the toilet! Bye, bye fishie! No more having to swim around in a grungy bowl! Now you have the entire sewer system to swim in!



**Mickey & Sandy**



**Bill, Sandy & Marie Bender**





**Sandy on Halloween**

Marie used to make home made Halloween costumes for all of her children. We have no pictures of Nancy or Mickey in their costumes when they were little as Marie and Edward didn't have a camera in those days, but Edward started taking pictures of Halloween costumes in the late 1940s. Nancy followed her mother's lead and so when her children were little on Franklin she also made home made Halloween costumes for Linda and Warren, and later on Saar for Donna and Craig.



**Warren & Linda on Franklin**



**Mickey Mouse, (or is it Craig?)**



**Sandy Bender & her Easter basket, 1948**

Every Easter Marie would color eggs using vinegar and Paz egg coloring tablets which she would mix together in large china cups which Nellie normally used to drink coffee out of. (Nellie's whole body shook so violently that she needed a large cup to partially fill with coffee so the liquid would not slosh out of the cup.)

These larger cups made it easy to put a spoon in to lift the egg out once it absorbed the color. She then put the eggs on an upside down dish drainer to dry off. Once the kids were in bed she would put the green fake grass in a very fine new Easter basket and then load the basket with a large bunny and lots of candy, from jelly beans to chocolate eggs to marshmallow chicks and eggs, and all kinds of chocolate covered goodies. The eggs went in the baskets last. Marie would then hide all the Easter baskets around the house, making them relatively easy to find for the very young kids and very hard to find for the older kids. Once Nancy had children she also followed her mom's footsteps in regard to Easter basket making and hiding. Boy, could Nancy ever do a bang up job of hiding Warren's Easter basket!



**Billy & Sandy, 1950**



**Sandy with her cowboy hat**

While Nancy was dressing up in elegant clothes, going to work at a prestigious real estate office and standing up in a beautiful bridesmaid's gown, her sister Sandy and brother Billy were running around home dressed in cowboy and cowgirl outfits. They sure were living in two different worlds those days.



**Marilyn Spaulding & Nancy Bender**

Nancy palled around with Marilyn Spaulding a lot all through the years. Here is a real cut picture of them together wearing the same blouse. Marilyn was not happy

that Nancy was about to marry Don. She felt that Nancy could do a lot better and she told her so. Nancy insisted on marrying Don now because she said if she waited until after she graduated from high school all the good guys would already be taken. Don probably felt that Marilyn didn't like him as he discouraged Nancy from hanging around with her and so the friendship soon ended.



**Marilyn Morford & Nancy Stephens**

One day years and years later Nancy visited Marilyn when she was in Michigan for a visit with Marie. Marilyn lived in a very modest house the size of the one in Berkley and her husband Jerry Morford was still a mechanic. Marilyn's three boys were grown by now and her daughter was about 13.



**Nancy Bender, 1951**

In 1950 Nancy was chosen by her cousin Sally Neff to stand up in her wedding. Nancy had a very beautiful bridesmaid's dress and stylish hat. And when Sally threw the bouquet 15 year old Nancy caught it. "OH, Nancy will be the next one to be married", Mildred Neff said to Marie. That's ridiculous, Marie responded, my daughter is only 15. But it was far from ridiculous – one year later, 2 months after her 16<sup>th</sup> birthday Nancy was married.



**Nancy & Don 1951**



**Nancy & Don 1951**

Marie kind of knew that Nancy was dating Don but she had no idea that things were that serious. Nancy and Don had two pictures taken while they were dating. The one where Don is holding Nancy is her favorite one which she still cherishes.



**Don & Nancy Stephens**

Nancy planned to marry when she was still 15 years old. She knew she had to wait until she was 16 and then discovered that she also had to wait until Don was 18 years old. So on October 24, 1951 Nancy and Don decided to get married in Angola Indiana. They chose that state as there was no blood test requirement to get married and Nancy was squeamish over having their blood drawn.

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### **Red, Don, Nancy & Josephine**

So Nancy, Don, Christine and Hunter Stephens, as well as Don's buddy Red and Nancy's girlfriend Josephine drove to Angola and went to a Justice of the Peace to get married. When the Justice of the Peace saw that Nancy was only 16 he told her she would have to go back home and get a parent to sign for her as she was underage. So the entire entourage drove back home to Michigan and told Ed and Marie that they had already been to Indiana to get married but had to come back to get one of Nancy's parents as she was underage. Marie and Ed were flabbergasted as they had no inkling that Nancy had been planning to marry. Marie said that going to Angola was not right, that they should plan a proper wedding here at home and have a traditional ceremony. Nancy got really upset and insisted that they had to get married right now. Marie, puzzled at the urgency of the matter, asked Nancy if she was pregnant. Nancy replied no. So Marie then said there was no reason to go back to Angola. Nancy became so upset and so insistent on going right back that Ed said "okay she wins, Marie go and witness the marriage." So Nancy, Don, Marie, Mr and Mrs Stephens, Don's friend Red and Nancy's friend Josephine drove right back to Angola and Nancy and Don were married on the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, 1951 by the Justice of the Peace in Angola. Marie was horrified by how crude that man was. She said he swore through the entire marriage ceremony and then afterwards handed Nancy and Don his attorney's card and said he could handle the divorce if the marriage didn't work out.

Red drove his car there and back. On the return trip they were driving at a very high rate of speed when suddenly Red's tire came right off the car and flew ahead of them right across the highway. Marie was near hysterical, saying they all could have been killed.



**Hunter, Donald, Nancy & Christine Stephens**

Marie wanted Nancy to have more than just a fast out of state wedding so she planned and gave Nancy a lovely reception on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, 1951 at Harmony Hall on Chalmers in Detroit. Almost all the relatives on both sides of the family were invited. Just not Aunt Clara, Marie's aunt, as she felt Clara wouldn't be interested in coming. But Clara was interested and showed up without an invite. Clara said to Marie, "I don't take hints. I came even though I'm not invited." Her husband Ray when he heard Nancy was only 16 said, "Oh, she'll be married 3 or 4 times, getting married at this age." Boy, did Marie get mad when she heard that. Then Aunt Mildred Neff made a sly remark that maybe Nancy had to get married. Marie boiled over at that one too. Ed got so mad when he heard what his sister said about his daughter that he let one of Mildred's deepest secrets out of the bag that night. No, my daughter did not have to get married, Ed said, but my sister Mildred did. But the baby died at birth so my sister buried her secret."



**Don & Nancy Dec. 1, 1951**





**Edward, Donald, Nancy & Marie**





Most of the relatives were not impressed with Don due to his young age and his lack of social skills due to the nuclear family he came from. Don was quite shy and seldom spoke in the company of Marie and Ed's relatives, for one thing, I am sure, he was overwhelmed by meeting all these relatives considering the fact that in his own family he hardly knew anyone as he was isolated from them, being in Detroit when all of them were still in Tennessee. When he would be in a family gathering at Marie and Ed's house in those early days he would sit in a chair with his legs folded up sideways into the chair and he would just sit and observe the others, which made some of the relatives nervous as some of them thought he was staring at them. But one person who saw through the façade and predicted that Don would someday make something of himself was Uncle Herman Mc Kinin. Right from the beginning Herman said to the family that Don was intelligent and a real go getter and that he would do well for himself as he got older. Which is exactly what happened as time went on.

Nancy and Don were well aware of all those people making all those predictions as to how long their marriage would last and so they took as their theme song, "They tried to tell us we're too young". And that marriage did last for over 35 years, far longer than many marriages of that day.

Marie was very upset at Nancy's reception for a different reason. When Nancy ran off and got married Marie had just found out she was pregnant with her 5<sup>th</sup> child. And now at this December reception she was just beginning to show. She felt totally miserable. She said mothers shouldn't be having babies as their own daughters were getting married.

Don got a big surprise right after they were married. Nancy started having severe pains in her right side and Dr. Mc Call recommended that they do exploratory surgery to see what the problem was. It turned out that Nancy had chocolate cysts

on her right ovary, which was so bad it was almost pre cancerous. They had to completely remove the right ovary. Nancy's friend, in all her superior medical knowledge solemnly told Nancy that because she lost one ovary she could now have only children of one sex. Nancy was so relieved to find out that her friend was reading unscientific articles once she had Linda! Don used to tease Marie and Ed, saying that they pawned Nancy off on him just in time for him to have to pay her hospital bill. (They had no health insurance in those days so a hospital bill was cash out of your pocket. But the hospital room rate in those days was about \$12 a day.)

Nancy was concerned that Don treat her properly and she insisted that he never raise his hand against her. He would tease her and twist her hand behind her back but he never struck her.

After they got back home Nancy and Don lived for a short while with Christine and Hunter Stephens and then they rented an upper flat in Mrs. Van Heusen's house on Alter Rd right across the street from Marie and Edward.

It was a cozy little flat, small but adequate. Nancy had only 2 complaints – one, that Mrs. Van Heusen often ended up in a big loud fight with her husband and ended up banging his head into the wall, and 2. that Mrs Van Heusen considered her cow picture hanging in Nancy's kitchen to be so valuable that she was not to move it or disturb it in any way. Nancy hated that stupid old cow picture and would have loved to store it in a cupboard some where out of sight.

Nancy was very upset with her mother over one piece of advice that Marie gave her. Marie told her to make sure she wouldn't get pregnant for at least one year to make sure the marriage was going to last. Nancy thought that was terrible advice for a mother to give to her daughter. But Marie was only thinking of how hard life would be in 1952 for a 17 year old single mother.



**Michael Bender**

In June of 1952 Nancy's oldest brother Michael graduated from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade at St. John Berchman's grade school and entered in Servite High school in the fall of 1952.



**Mike Bender**

Mike used to do almost all of his homework at the dining room table on Alter Rd. The dining room set in the above picture was a beautiful one. It had hand carved scroll work with claw feet and ball with inlaid carvings in them. (Mike's name went from Mickey to Mike when he started the 9<sup>th</sup> grade in Servite High school. His best friend Bob Barr started calling him Mike and the new name immediately stuck.)

Nancy and Don both left the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in order to get married and neither one of them returned to high school after the marriage, which wasn't allowed in those days anyway. (Nancy did value education and did go back and study and get her regular high school diploma on Saar in Sterling Heights. She wanted to continue on after that and go to college but Don discouraged her as he was uncomfortable with her getting a much better education than he had.) After marriage Don got a job in the factory on Jefferson and St. Jean in Detroit.

Don had set up pins by hand in the local bowling alley evenings to earn extra money. Sometimes he would come home so angry when one of the bowlers would throw the ball ahead of time to try to hit Don's legs which he sometimes would accomplish. Don would want to wring the guy's neck when he did that.

They only had one car in those days so on days when Nancy wanted the car she would drive Don to work in the morning, do all her errands with the car that day and then pick him up at the factory after work. The entrance to the factory was a broad old cement street with plenty of room to pull over to one side. Nancy would wait in the car until Don came running out. He would then jump behind the wheel of the car as Nancy slipped over into the passenger seat. Don would try to hurry as fast as he could to get out of there because a very crude, rude mid 50s

woman named Madeleine was always looking for a ride home and Don hated that woman and didn't want her in his car. But once in a while he wasn't fast enough and he'd see her come running out of the factory and down the old cement drive way hollering, "Oh, yoo-hoo, Donalddddd!! Wait up!!!" "@#\$\$%" would be Don's response when he saw and heard her coming.

And then between the factory and Alter Rd on Jefferson about half way there was a plump middle aged crossing guard that would stop traffic on Jefferson to let the pedestrians cross the street. Don hated her really bad too. And she soon learned to hate him too. She would lay in wait for him and when he would approach her corner she would always make sure his car was the first car she would stop and make him wait while she leisurely helped the people cross the street. Don would get so mad that he would put one foot on the gas and the other foot on the brake and rev the car, threatening to run her over as he sat waiting. She would glare at him and he would scowl back. One day when she stopped him she was busy eating a nice big ice cream cone as she sauntered across the street and back. Don lost it that day. He hung half way out the driver's window and shouted at her, "Hey fat ass, cram that all in. You really need those calories!!"



**Carol Bender**

One year after Nancy was married she heard her cousin Carol Bender had joined the Servants of Mary convent in Omaha, Nebraska. She took the name Sister Mary Hugh. Later we heard she had left the convent and got a job at Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Then in 1962 Nancy, Marie and Sandy went to her wedding in Detroit. She married Louis Meyer and later had two boys. Both of Carol's boys looked remarkably like Craig and they both were around Craig's age.



**Warren, Diane, Nancy, Don, Dick & Betty Brochu**

Once they were married Don did not much like Nancy's friends so they socialized mostly with his friends. The ones they were closest to for a number of years was Dick and Betty Brochu. Even after Don and Nancy moved to California they still visited Dick and Betty every time they came back to Michigan for a visit. The friendship dissolved after Don left Nancy and when she talked to Dick he was 100% for Don so Nancy never spoke to him or Betty again.

Nancy and Don discovered they liked to bowl so they joined a mixed league in the Parkside bowling alley on Frankfurt and Warren area just off Ashland. It was about 25 cents a game to bowl in those days. Don was always a very good bowler and was sought by others as a team mate. Nancy did very well bowling too, but not as good as Don as a rule. Bowling is something they continued to do all through their marriage, both in Michigan and later in California.



**Marie & Douglas Bender**



**Billy, Nellie & Doug Sr.**

In June of 1952 Nancy had another brother, Douglas Paul Bender. He was a really big baby, weighing 9 lbs, 2 ozs. He was a normal, intelligent child but he was a pistol to raise, especially for the first two years. He screamed day and night every 2 hours those first two years. Marie was totally exhausted from lack of sleep and shot nerves. There was no day care in those days so she had no break from his



care. Marie did have a colored maid named Lou for about 3 years to help with the housework but she was little help with Doug's care.

Lou did take care of Marie's kids for 2 weeks once when Marie and Ed went on vacation. One day Lou took Doug on the bus back to her house while the rest of the kids were in school and Lou said a lot of white people on the bus gave her the strangest look when she had a little 2 year old white boy sitting next to very black Lou.



**Mike, Donald and Douggie Sr. Marie & Douggie Bender**



**Doug in Sandy's baby buggy  
on a very hot July, 1952**



**Doug, Nancy & Don, Thanksgiving  
1952. Nancy is expecting Warren**



**Marie & Doug**



**Marie & Doug**

Marie was upset having a new baby just when her daughter was getting married. She felt that her daughter should be the mother of the infant, not her. Nancy, Don and Mike had a lot of fun teasing little 5 month old Douggie on Thanksgiving, 1952.



**Edward & Bill Bender**

Edward loved little Bill and he gave him quite a bit of attention when he was home. Dad used to look at Bill and say, “Boy, boy, it’s Big Bill!!” He used that pet name for Bill until Bill was in his teens and asked Ed not to call him that anymore.



**Marie Bender, 1947**



**Marie & Sandy Bender**

Mom used to like to read in the evenings on Alter Rd in the 1940s. She also liked to work the puzzles in the local newspapers. Marie also used to read fairy tales and children’s stories to all of us before putting us to bed at night.

Shortly after Nancy’s first anniversary, around Thanksgiving of 1952 Nancy had a happy announcement to make – she and Don were expecting their first child in August of 1953. In light of this, Nancy decided she wanted to get married in the Catholic Church before their first child was born, so she went to St. John Berchman’s Church and in November of 1952 they were married at the side altar.

In those days if you married a non Catholic you had to be married at the side altar rather than at the main altar as it was considered to be an irregular but valid marriage. It was a simple quiet ceremony with only the immediate family present. Nancy was somewhat taken aback about this side altar business. She felt it was no way for the Church to treat one of its parishioners. But she was comfortable that this marriage was indeed going to last so she wanted it to be blessed by the church and in the future she intended to baptize all of her children Catholic.



**When this picture was taken Nancy was 3 wks pregnant with Warren. Shown here, Doug, Nancy & Donald**

Thanksgiving of 1952 Nancy had a joyous announcement to make – in the first of August, 1953 she was expecting her first child. Due to the fact that Marie's last child Douglas was totally exhausting her from all his day and night screaming she was not as thrilled as she otherwise would have been had she not had Doug to contend with. Plain and simply stated, Marie was totally exhausted and totally overwhelmed with a baby of her own. Edward could not reconcile himself to being a grandfather. He felt he was far too young for that. He would rather that the child call him Uncle Ed.

Sandy went to church at St John Berchman's the middle of July with Nancy and coming back from church Nancy ran into an old schoolmate and they stopped and talked for a while on Forest before we continued on home. Nancy said to Sandy why couldn't she have met her friend after the baby was born and she was thin again!

When Nancy was almost 9 months pregnant with Warren Marie mentioned to her that Douggy needed a potty chair so she could toilet train him. Nancy offered to drive Marie to Sears at 7 Mile and Mack Ave to get that potty chair. So one day they had dinner together at Marie's house and then Nancy drove Marie to Sears. On the way back home with the potty chair in the trunk they drove back down Warren Ave. It was close to 9 pm, closing time in Dad's store, so while Nancy was driving by she looked into Dad's front window to see if Ed and Don were still

in the store. They were there. But when she looked back the car in front of her had stopped and she didn't have enough time to stop. Knowing a crash was inevitable, she threw up her arms and started crying. She hit the car in front of her and started crying harder. The owner of the car got out, walked back to Nancy's car and was sorely distressed to find a very pregnant woman crying her eyes out. He was really scared – was she hurt in the crash? No, she said, she wasn't hurt. Then please stop crying, he asked. She only cried harder! Please stop crying! He begged. She kept crying. Please stop crying, I'll pay for my own car! He said. At that point Don and Ed came out of the store and comforted Nancy. Don drove her home to Marie's at Alter Rd. Nancy laid on Marie's couch and just kept bawling, for hours it seemed before she calmed down.

But that potty chair was a fine one and helped Doug and then Warren learn how to use first the small potty, then the house one. And the car wasn't too badly smashed.

Nancy and Don and Marie mulled over possible names for the first child. Nancy settled on Linda for a girl, the same name Marie was going to call Doug if he was a girl. But a boy's name was harder to come by for Nancy. She didn't like any of the boys names she was considering. Finally one day as Nancy and Marie were looking at the street sign for Warren Ave which was 2 blocks from where they lived, they both decided that that was a very fine name for a boy. This decision was made only a few weeks before he was born.

The last 2 weeks of July Marie and Ed and the younger kids went to Lion's Head for a vacation. Mike stayed home and kept the store open. Nancy was now living across the street on Alter Rd in Mrs. Van Heusen's upper flat. Marie, Ed and the kids came home about 7:30 pm on July 31<sup>st</sup>. Don and Nancy saw them pull in so Don ran over and told Marie that Nancy was in labor and she wanted Marie to stay with her. Marie said she was way too tired from Doug and the trip and she was going to bed. She said that that's what Nancy had a husband for, to be with her in labor. Doug learned to walk on that very day. He tried to get back down on his hands and knees on the carpet. Marie grabbed him by the suspenders and pulled him back on his feet, and said to him, "Oh, no you don't, buster! I'm tired of scrubbing dirty knees. You're gonna walk!" And he did from that time on.



**Warren Donald Stephens**

Warren Donald Stephens was born the next day, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, 1953. After several days in the hospital, Nancy was discharged and came back to her flat nights and when Don went to work Nancy would come over to Marie's house with the new baby and sleep in the back downstairs bedroom during the day. Nancy tried breast feeding Warren but that soon turned into a horror. Nancy called Dr. Mc Call and told him that her breasts were red, hot and very painful. He came to Marie's house on Alter and discovered that she had abscesses in both breasts. Several times he performed surgery, cutting out the abscessed areas. Finally he told her that she had to give up breast feeding as the abscesses kept coming back.



**Edward & Marie holding Warren, christening day**

Warren Stephens was baptized at St. John Berchman's Church in September of 1953. His maternal grandparents, Marie and Edward Bender were his god parents. He was such a small little bundle in his grandmother's arms that day in front of the church.



**Warren & Marie, Dec 1953**

The Bender family enjoyed celebrating Christmas of 1953 with Nancy's first child, Warren. He was fascinated by all the glitter of the season and was often seen staring at the Christmas tree bulbs, lights, etc. He personified the wonderment of a new generation come into our family.

Warren was Nellie Dahl's first great grand child. Her next great grandchild Laurie De Maria was born on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, 1954. All other great grandchildren were born after she died. These were the only two she had met before her death.



**Marie, Nellie, Warren, & Nancy**

We celebrated Warren's first birthday on 1<sup>st</sup> of August, 1954 with a big birthday party at Nancy's house on Montclair in Detroit. We have a very precious 4 generation picture taken with Marie, Nellie, Warren and Nancy. We also have another picture taken this day with all of our family and all of Don's family in that one picture.

Nancy used to bring her wash over to Marie's house as Ed had bought her a modern washer and after the birth of Doug a new Hamilton dryer. So Marie and Nancy used to spend the day running up and down the basement stairs changing wash loads and enjoying a happy mother – daughter chat together while taking care of the 2 infants. But boy, did Doug ever present problems in those days as he was



so jealous of Warren and every chance he got he used to slap and slug and push him down when the women were looking the other way.

Warren learned to walk on the front side lawn of Marie's house on Alter Rd. We have a cut video of Warren taking a few steps, then falling down. Sandy would pick him up, put him back on his feet and he would take a few more steps. Nancy took a lot of time with Warren and he was the first and only child in those days. Warren learned to walk at 7 months of age. he also talked early, just like his mother before him.

When Warren was bout 5 months old Nancy decided she wanted a roomier apartment so she soon found a big flat for rent on Montclair near Harper in Detroit. Marie helped Nancy move her stuff, but Marie was so upset when she was carrying a very big statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, tripped, and the statue fell and broke into many pieces. That statue was special because it belonged to Grandma Elizabeth Bender, so it was a real loss. Nancy was very upset about this, but knew it was an accident.

Nancy was happy with this apartment but Don sure wasn't when it came for time for him to go to work, that is. In the cold dark mornings Don would walk out to the garage and listen to all the rats scurrying about. One time a rat ran right up the inside of Don's pant leg. He grabbed his leg just above where the rat was so it couldn't get any further up, but he was scared that the rat was going to bite him! He reached up his pant leg and pulled the rat out and by some sort of miracle wasn't bitten.

One time Nancy had her friend over who also had a son 5 months old, the same as Warren. They decided to go shopping so both women changed the baby's diapers so they would start out clean and dry. Just as both women took the diapers off the babies both babied peed, right in one another's faces! First the mothers were shocked, then they saw the humor in the situation!

Nancy and Don had very little money in those days so when they wanted to go to the show they asked Nancy's 9 year old sister Sandy to baby sit Warren. She did so gladly, watching TV while Warren slept. When Nancy and Don got back from the show they would bring Sandy a chocolate malt as her reward for sitting. Warren was never any trouble, he slept right through.

One time Ed and Marie came over with all the kids to Nancy's flat on Montclair. The second story was very high up as the house had 10 foot ceilings downstairs.

We were all sitting in the kitchen with Doug, less than 2 years old, sitting right next to the open kitchen window.

Faster than any of us could see Doug picked up Nancy's new hand mixer and threw it out the kitchen window. It landed downstairs, smashed all to bits. Marie had to buy Nancy a new mixer.

Nancy celebrated Warren's first birthday on Montclair. Present at his birthday party was Nancy's mom and dad and her brothers and sister. Nellie, Nancy's grandmother was also there and a very nice 4 generation picture was taken that day. A group picture was also taken with Red and Christine Stephens and their daughter Shirley present. Warren was Nellie Dahl's first great grandchild, and also Marie Bender and Christine Stephen's first grandchild.

One day Nancy invited her sister Sandy to stay with her the Friday after Ascension Thursday in 1954 as the Catholic school traditionally had those two days off. So Sandy stayed with Nancy and they enjoyed beautiful weather all day that day. At the end of the day Marie called a taxi to take Sandy back home to Alter Rd. Sandy altered the route home as she wanted the taxi driver to take the route through the park as that was the route Ed always took and she knew that route by heart. So Marie had to pay a little more for the scenic route home.



**Sandy Bender, 8 years old**

That same year Our Lady of Fatima came to the movies so Nancy took Sandy out of school one afternoon and they both enjoyed that show. Nancy wrote a note for Sandy to take to school the next day. The nun in school had Sandy get up in front of the class and tell the story to the other kids.



**Sandy Bender, Feb 29, 1956**

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of February, 1956 Sandy made her confirmation. Nancy was Sandy's sponsor. The confirmation took place on a very cold, dark evening at St. John Berchman's Church.



**Bill Bender, 1<sup>st</sup> Communion**

On Sunday, April 29, 1956 Nancy's brother Bill made his First Holy Communion at St. John Berchman's Church. We had a party for him afterwards. Nancy and Don came with their children Warren & Linda.



**Michael Edward Bender, 1956**

In June of 1956 Nancy's oldest brother, Michael graduated from Servite High School in Detroit. Nancy's oldest brother sure was a handsome fellow! In Servite the nuns administered IQ tests to all the seniors. Michael scored the highest in the entire school! After high school he went on to Henry Ford Community college to

take some classes. He then joined an electrical apprentice program at Dodge Main in Hamtramck. Later he took classes in electronics and then in computer programming and in his later years in the plant did all their computer work.



**Doug & Warren**

Warren & Doug got along like a cat and dog through their first 6 years. Mom and Nancy had to continually separate them when they got into it. One exception was when Doug got his Tom Corbett Space Cadet uniform. That night he and Warren got along so well that dad took pictures of them together. They were standing on top of the dining room table for some crazy reason when this picture was taken.

One day Nancy decided she would like for her and Don to have a home of their own so she began in earnest to find a suitable, affordable house in a nice neighborhood. Nancy found just the home she was hoping for – a cut 2 bedroom ranch at 2324 Franklin in Berkley. Ed and Marie gave Don and Nancy the down payment on this home, so in 1956 Nancy moved into her very first home of her own. It was a very nice, cute, well built home in a very nice section of Berkley, in the 11 Mile Rd and Coolidge area.



**Nellie Rehfeldt Dahl**

Well, they always say that with every new home there is always a birth or a death, and in this case both occurred. Nancy's grandmother Nellie was living with Aunt Mildred Stocker on Gunston in Detroit when she suddenly became very tired and started sleeping day and night. When they couldn't wake her up the Stockers got scared and told Elenore and Herman to come and get her and take her to their

house, which they did. Elenore had her doctor come to the house to look at Nellie and he said she was in a coma and called an ambulance and took her to Plymouth Hospital in Detroit. They started her on insulin and in a few days she came out of the coma and was even better than her old self. The family visited her almost every night and Nellie would shake her arms with the IV's in them and cuss them out and tell them she wanted them taken out. The doctor cautioned Elenore that he could bring Nellie out of the coma but that her heart is weak and could fail at any time from the burden of being greatly taxed by being in a coma. But by the evening of March 24, 1955 the crisis seemed entirely over as Nellie was very ready to go home. Marie was told she would have to take Nellie for a few weeks as Elenore and Herman had a vacation planned for a long time and were ready to embark on it. Marie agreed to take Nellie but was really scared of having to give Nellie insulin shots. It was totally out of the question for Nellie to do her own injections as she shook violently. Mike said he has never seen anyone shake as violently as our grandmother Nellie did.



**Elenore Mc Kinin, Nellie Dahl & Marie Bender**

But fate stepped in without warning. Elenore got a call at 4:30 in the morning on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 1955 saying her mother Nellie Dahl had just passed away quietly and unexpectedly of heart failure. The nurse took her blood pressure, left the room, then came back a short time later as she forgot the blood pressure cuff. When she returned she found Nellie had expired. Elenore called Marie at 4:45 am to tell her she had just lost her mother. So instead of having Nellie in her home, Nellie was now on her way to Van Lerberghe's funeral parlor at Warren and Lakeview in Detroit.

Nancy was 8 ½ months pregnant with her second child, Linda at the time she attended her grandmother Nellie's funeral. Nancy got to meet many of Nellie's and her husband's family those 3 days. She met Aunt Clara who had earlier crashed her wedding reception, Aunt Anna, who had taken care of Great Grandma Minna Dahl Henkel in her last hours in 1944, Uncle George, Uncle Frank, Aunt Hattie and her daughters Ruth Lingenfelter and Eleanor Forkel. Marie's cousin

Margie Moran came with Nellie's brother Charles (Bud) Rehfeldt. Marie's Dahl cousins from Woodslee, Canada came to the funeral. Nellie's one wish was to have lots of flower arrangements at her funeral. Her wish was more than granted. Nellie had 25 beautiful flower arrangements setting all over the funeral parlor. Nellie would have been so pleased! But what Nellie would not have been pleased with was how they did her hair. Nellie hated curls, she wore her hair sort of a short page boy style, with just a hint of a curl in her hair. But in the casket her hair was done in tight curls and her face was all made up. Nellie never wore make up. She would have cussed out her appearance that day! But she looked wonderful, but totally not like herself. Sandy and Sharon did not recognize Nellie at all. But the older members of the family who knew Nellie in her youth said she looked just like she did on her wedding day. The surprise visitor that day in the funeral parlor was Nellie's old boyfriend who dated her before she married Bill Dahl and who always held a torch for her. But he warned the people there never to tell his wife he was there that day or there would be the devil to pay.



**Nellie Rehfeldt Dahl**

Nellie's funeral was more excitement than poor Nancy could handle! First Nellie in her casket was taken from the Van Lerbergh's funeral parlor next door to St. John Berchmans. Her poor brother Mike was once again chosen to be a pall bearer, a job he was not physically fit to do at his young age and the fact that he was so thin. And this was one heavy assignment! It was a heavy casket to begin with and Nellie's body in the casket was over 250 lbs gross weight. And the pall bearers had to carry that casket up two flights of stairs to get to the upper church. (There was an upper and a lower Church. Nellie was buried through the upper Church ) Mike said they had to carry the coffin at an angle going up and he could hear the body shifting and banging up against the walls of the casket.





**Last picture taken of Nellie Dahl**

After the funeral mass was said the body was taken back out of the church and placed in the Van Lerberghe's hearse. We then drove down Connor Ave and passed the billboard advertising the Ojibwa's herbs. Marie mentioned that our neighbor is 69 year old, the same as Nellie was, and had taken these Ojibwa herbs for years and years. So she wondered if Nellie had taken these religiously too, would she still be alive and well today too.

Nancy was in the funeral procession too and attended the Catholic Rite of Burial services at the grave site. There was a tent over the open grave at the Dahl family plot and we all stood around the open grave as they placed Nellie's casket on the straps over the open hole.

Father Verweil, OSM, the Catholic priest said the Final Commendation and Farewell prayers over Nellie's casket and then the funeral director told each of us to come forward and place a rose on the top of Nellie's casket before they lowered it into the ground. As 8 ½ month pregnant Nancy walked forward on the broad side of the hole some of the loose dirt started giving way and Nancy did a fancy two step backward to keep from falling under the casket and into the open grave! Boy, was that ever a scary moment!



**Marie Bender at her mother Nellie's grave side**

Marie said as she stood next to her pregnant daughter she was thinking back to Grandma Minna Henkel's funeral, which took place on the same spot in August

1944. Marie was 5 month's pregnant with Sandy then and her mother Nellie was standing at her side. The priest had everyone kneel at the grave side services of Grandma Minna Dahl Henkel. Nellie knelt with great difficulty at Marie's side. When it was time to get back off one's knees Nellie was not able to get up, so she put her arm on Marie's shoulder and with all of her weight on Marie, was finally able to slowly hoist herself back up on her feet. Boy, was Ma ever heavy! Marie said.



**Grandma Minna Kaiser Dahl Henkel**

And now, Marie with tear filled eyes, was saying a final goodbye to the dear, dear mother who such a short time ago stood at her side on this very plot of land. And now Nellie was about to lie below it, forever at Minna's side in this cold dark plot of earth.

A very shaken Nancy and her mom got back into their cars and traveled back to their houses to start a new chapter in their life, one without a grandparent as Nellie was the last of the 4 grandparents. Marie said her mother's burial made her feel very upset and shaky as she suddenly realized that now with both parents gone she was the next generation to stand before an open grave.

Close on the heels of this shock to Nancy's nervous system came 2 even greater ones in April. First when Nancy was 8 ½ months pregnant she received the shocking news that Mrs. Stephens had just had a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized in Northville hospital. Nancy visited Mrs. Stephens several times in the hospital but each visit was a horror. Mrs. Stephens was in a locked ward and was so terribly drugged up that she made no sense and on one visit she stood up, walked over to the heavy steel door and just started licking the door! This was way to hard on Nancy's nervous system. It was so horrible seeing Mrs. Stephens in such a sad state.



**Shirley & Linda Stephens**

As if this wasn't enough for a pregnant woman to bear, on one beautiful April spring like afternoon Nancy came over to Marie's house on Alter Rd totally shaken up. Nancy had gone to visit Shirley in the Quonset hut on Algonquin St. and found Shirley to be totally immersed in the throws of a serious nervous breakdown. Shirley was screaming at Nancy, throwing things and then started attacking Nancy, poking her in her pregnant belly. Nancy was totally terrified, afraid Shirley would hurt her and the unborn baby, as Shirley appeared to have a lot of strength due to her breakdown. Nancy managed to get away from Shirley and drove right over to Marie's house. Marie met her on the front steps and Nancy poured out the whole story to Marie that afternoon. Shirley was hospitalized for months with this breakdown and had many repeat breakdowns in the future. Time and again Shirley would feel a breakdown coming on, and when this feeling would betake her she would pile up all her belongings in the living room of the rented house and then set a match to all of her earthly possessions. She would then jump out the 2<sup>nd</sup> story window to evade the blazing inferno in the living room. They would then cart Shirley off to a mental hospital for repeat treatment.



**Christine Stephens**

Mrs. Christine Stephens worked for the cafeteria in the public school as a lunch room worker for years so when she had her breakdown she received about 6 months sick pay from her job. The checks were picked up by her husband Hunter Coyle (Red). He would spend the money on cigarettes and booze. Not a penny of it went for Christine.

Marie, Ed, Nancy and Don went on a nice little picnic in May just a week or so before Linda was born. Nancy got really tired after eating the picnic lunch so she spread out a blanket and took a little nap to recharge her energy. Boy, did Nancy ever get aggravated with her dad when she found out he took a picture of her (and the baby to be) while she was sleeping.



**Sandy, Linda & Nancy**

Around the same week Nancy's sister Sandy got an autograph book and walked around having everybody she could think of write a cute saying in the book and sign under it. Sandy handed the autograph book to Nancy when she was 9 months pregnant and asked her to write in it and sign. Nancy took the autograph book and had real fun writing in it. Hers was one of the most original and cutest entries. It read: "To my delicate horse of a sister, built like a battleship with weak kidneys". (You would have had to have been older and living at that time to realize the poignancy of that written statement. It fit.)



**Linda**



**Linda**

Six weeks later Nancy's second child was born, a daughter which she named Linda Marie Stephens. Everyone was astonished when they looked at the new infant born just 6 weeks after Nellie's death as Linda was born with the same deep crease over the top of her nose, just like Nellie had. Linda had a full head of jet black hair which surprisingly all fell out a few weeks later and was replaced with blonde hair which she kept into adulthood. Nancy had to bottle feed Linda due to the severe problem she had with the painful cysts in the last pregnancy which she did not want to chance having a repeat occurrence this time.



**Linda & Nancy**

**Linda & Donald**

A few weeks after Linda was born they baptized her at Our Lady of LaSalette in Berkley. Johnny Goldwater was her godfather. All through the years Linda complained that none of her godparents every visited her or sent her presents. We have a really cute picture of this little family in front of their home on Franklin street in Berkley, Linda in Nancy's arms and Don's arm around Warren's head.



**Doug, Warren & Nancy with her 20<sup>th</sup> birthday cake**

On August 22, 1955 Marie gave Nancy a nice birthday party on Alter Rd. Mom baked a nice chocolate cake and decorated with her age. 2 year old Warren and 3 year old Doug were sitting on the dining room table watching her open her presents. Marie made a nice dinner for all of us that night, like the dinner she made earlier that year for Mike's birthday when Nancy had to leave before dessert as she was in labor with Linda.



**Marie and Edward in Nassau**

Ed used to win trips to the Caribbean through his sales of appliance and TVs. Ed took a trip to Puerto Rico and Nancy stayed on Alter and took care of the little kids. When Marie came back home from that trip she started unpacking the souvenirs at the dining room table and all of a sudden a huge cockroach type bug jumped out of the bag and started to run. Nancy and Marie screamed to high heaven, Marie ran lickety split after that huge bug and splat! she stomped him flat dead with her foot! Bug crisis now over!





**Linda Stephens**

A few weeks later Ed gave Nancy and Don the other Puerto Rico trip and now Marie took care of Warren and Aunt Elenore Mc Kinin took care of new born Linda. Elenore said Linda was no trouble at all and she enjoyed having a new baby in her house for two weeks. Nancy was very glad to get back home as she dearly missed her two infants and worried about them even though she knew they were in good hands.

For the Puerto Rico trip Don borrowed Jack Jackson's suit for evening wear as Don did not own a suit of his own at that time. Jack asked him to take good care of it, it was his only suit. Well, Don did take very good care of the suit until the night of the pool party. One of the other salesman went hand over hand out on the diving board from the beginning to the end, turned around, and went hand over hand back to the edge of the pool. He then challenged Don to do it next. Don was real game and was about to take up the challenge. Nancy had a fit, reminding Don that he was wearing Jack Jackson's suit. The suit ended the evening no worse for wear.

Jack Jackson was Don's sister Shirley's husband. He was a delightful screwball. He attended many of the family's back yard picnics and got along fairly well with the rest of the family. Shirley and Jack were married for about 5 years before they decided to divorce. They had no children together, but each of them had children after the divorce with other partners. Shirley later said that Jack was quite cruel to her during the duration of their marriage together. Shirley was a real sweet young kid before her breakdowns and we all liked her and got along well with her. Her nervous breakdowns would turn her into an entirely different person. She would become very paranoid and very hostile. But once she was put on different medication in the hospital and they stabilized her, she would once again become that same sweet person until the next breakdown occurred.



**Mike & Marie**



**Bill, Doug, Sandy & Warren**

In June of 1956 Nancy and Marie decided to rent the Vale family's cottage in Algonac together and spend a week there while their husbands remained at home and worked. The husbands then came out to the cottage for the weekend and then bring the families back home. The cottage was at best third rate. It was right on Lake St. Clair, but the beach was sand for only a little way, then further out it was full of green reeds and muck. Your feet would sink in the muck once you were about 3 feet out into the water. The cottage was old and dark and was full of spiders, and if you know Nancy at all, you know what she thinks of spiders! She freaked! Over and over again that whole week. She ran into them repeatedly inside and out. It was really a vacation from hell for her! But we have a really cute picture of 2 year old Warren sitting on a chair at the kitchen table with Doug and Bill. Ed and Don drove us there in Ed's old light blue delivery truck. He put folding chairs in the back for us to sit on and it was a wiggly ride trying to remain perched on those folding chairs all the way there. There were no freeways in those days so we drove out Gratiot Ave to get there. Mike used to walk with Marie to the grocery store on M 29 during the week to get the groceries.



**Warren**



**Linda**



**Warren & Linda**

Both Warren and Linda were good babies and settled fairly early into a regular routine. They were fairly close together in age, Warren not being 2 years old yet when Linda was born. Nancy was a warm, loving, wonderful mother to her children. She kept them immaculately clean and well fed. They were always dressed in very fine looking clothes, especially on the holidays, such as Christmas,

but especially at Easter. Their Easter outfits were a sight to behold year after year. Warren was dressed in a suit and/or top coat and the girls were dressed in beautiful, pastel, frilly dresses that stuck out of their fancy spring Easter coats. And the paten leather shoes and fancy white socks always completed the outfits. They certainly were the grandest children in the Easter parade!



**Warren & Linda**



**Greg, Michelle, Mike and Linda**



**Marie in California with Nicole**

Nancy's mother was present for every Christmas and every Easter when she lived in Michigan, but once Nancy moved to California Marie's Christmas visits were few and far between and were cherished by Nancy and all of her family. It was so very special to them to have GG in California to celebrate Christmas with them.

And Nancy and Don dressed up really nice on these occasions too despite the budget crunch. And Nancy used to fix her hair so beautifully. She had nice thick auburn colored hair in those days.



**Linda in her perm curlers**

Nancy always had her hair beautifully permed and curled so once Linda was one year old and had a full head of hair Nancy decided to make her beautiful too. So Nancy gave Linda a permanent. It turned out beautifully and Linda looked so extra beautiful for her 1<sup>st</sup> birthday that May of 1956.



**Warren & Linda**

Nancy really loved this picture of her two oldest children hugging one another. This picture was taken when they lived on Franklin in Berkley.

Nancy kept an immaculate house. There never was anything laying around and all was always neat, clean and in its place. Floors were always scrubbed, and furniture dusted. Beds were always made up fresh.



**Linda, Nancy, Don & Warren**

Nancy and Don never had much money in those days but they both were experts in stretching what they had to the nth degree. Nancy and Don were very careful with their purchases, getting the best available for the money at hand. And poor Don, he always had to juggle all the bills as he never had enough money to pay all of his bills as they came due. So he juggled every month. And somehow he managed to get it all paid just before his creditors got too nervous waiting for his check to come in.



**Nancy Bender**

Nancy did her part by being a very prudent shopper. She bought only what they needed and avoided squandering money on frivolities. When she would shop for items like socks, she would look them over good and make sure they were made to stand up over time before purchasing them. Nancy was also handy with a needle and thread and made good use of her sewing machine.



**Nancy cutting 1 yr old Doug's hair on Alter Rd.**

Nancy also gave herself and Linda home permanents and home haircuts rather than spending excess money on a beauty parlor. Nancy used to cut the hair for the whole family and she used to do a pretty professional job. She cut Don's and Warren's hair and even her little brother Doug when she went over to visit Marie on Alter Rd. She bought a pair of electric clippers like the barbers use. She also did her own manicures and always had beautifully shaped and colored nails.



**Linda, Edward & Donald**

But all that nerve strain of having a wife and 2 kids at the tender age of 21 was at times just too much for the poor guy. Suddenly without any warning Don's hair began falling out in huge clumps in 1957. From having a full head of hair in a few short weeks he ended up having huge gaping bald areas all over his head.

Finances were always a big issue in their early marriage. When they were first married he quit school and went to work in a factory on Jefferson Ave near St Jean St in Detroit. When the factory laid him and many others off he showed up at Edward's store on 16389 Warren Ave in Detroit the next day and started working. Edward said nothing to Don but when he went home that night he was really nervous, telling Marie he never hired him and that he didn't have enough money to be able to pay another employee. But Marie told him he was Nancy's husband and he would have to find a way to take him on. So Ed did but at a rather low wage as that was all he could afford, about \$85 a week to start. A few months later Nancy went to Marie and told her they couldn't live on that salary, that Don needed more to pay all his bills. So Marie talked to Ed and told him he needed to raise Don's salary to \$100 a week. Ed did it, but felt the squeeze as there was a long and major recession in the works at this time and people were no longer coming in to buy major appliances and TVs as money was tight all over. Don was worth his wage, just that there wasn't money available to use.

They still had milk men in those days who drove their trucks through the residential neighborhoods, delivering milk and juice right to you house. Nancy had a milk chute on the side of her house on the drive way on Franklin. She would put her empty milk bottles in the chute and leave a note sticking out the top of one of the bottles telling the milk man how many bottles of milk to leave that run.





**Marie & Ed in Don's finished basement**

Don was very handy with his hands and once Linda was born they were short a bedroom so they decided to build a bedroom in the basement for Warren. Don did a really nice job of finishing out the basement, putting a bedroom for Warren and a bonus sitting room there. He used a lot of knotty pine in the walls which was very attractive.



**Hunter Coyle Stephens**

After Nancy and Don were on Franklin for a little while Don's father became homeless so Don decided to take him in to their house. Don put his father into the basement bedroom which he shared with little Warren. Red drank continually and excessively and he soon became a major problem. Then on top of every other nasty habit he had he started touching the children inappropriately. That was the last straw for Nancy. She told Don he had to evict his father. It was very hard for Don to do but he knew he had to. So Don found his dad a place back in Detroit and now the little family had their peace and privacy back again.

Shortly after Don's father left their house Nancy's furnace broke down so she called a furnace company to get it running again. The two furnace men worked on it for hours and when they got it working and came up to the kitchen to get paid they looked at Nancy like she was dirt, smirking and sizing her up. Nancy was very nicely and modestly dressed and had no idea why they were treating her like that. However when they left and Nancy ran down to the basement to put a load of wash in she knew why they were acting like that. Red had stowed all his many

empty booze bottles over the heating arms of the furnace and the repair guys pulled them all down and over filled a large wash basket. They thought Nancy was a secret drinker!



**Christine Stephens & Marie Bender**

Nancy used to have Red and Christine, Don's parents and Don's sister Shirley over for family picnics and other get togethers throughout the years. Christine was a very sweet, kind, considerate person and used to help Nancy get the food on the table. Shirley was also a very sweet person and very friendly. Red, however, was nothing short of disgusting. He drank continually and then tried to paw the women and kids. When we learned to walk a wide berth around him he would retaliate by throwing beer all over you. There was nothing pleasant about that man.

Nancy and Don adopted a boxer dog named Reddy. She was a nice, gentle dog. Reddy ended up having puppies which they were able to adopt out. After Reddy Nancy and Don never had a dog again until they moved to California and got their two 5 lb Terrypoos, both named Tuffy.



**Linda Stephens**

One day while Nancy was busy with housework Linda went across the street to the school playground and played on the swings and slide. However one time when she got to the top of the slide she lost her balance and fell from the top of the slide, landed on the ground below and fell unconscious. A neighbor man saw the unconscious child, picked her up and carried her to Nancy's house, rang the bell and asked Nancy if this was her child. Nancy was scared to death, had the man put

Linda on the couch and then frantically called Don at work to ask him if she should take Linda to the hospital. Money was very tight at that point so Don told Nancy they had no money for a hospital emergency room so he asked her to watch Linda for a few hours and see if she would come out of it on her own. Linda did regain consciousness shortly after that and showed no apparent side effects.

Nancy made friends with a number of other mothers of young children in the neighborhood and they visited back and forth and their small children played together as their mothers chatted together. Two funny things happened to the kids in that neighborhood. First Mrs. Ball had a daughter and invited Nancy over to see the new baby. Nancy went over and tried very hard to keep a straight face and not show her amazement. The little baby was totally covered from head to foot in hair, just like a baby chimpanzee. In a few weeks the excess hair did fall off and the kid then looked normal.

Then a woman in the next block had twins and one day she called Nancy and asked her to come over right away. Nancy did. The woman asked Nancy to count how many fingers the babies had. Nancy counted at least three times, not believing her eyes after each count. Both babies had 6 fingers on each hand! The woman took the kids to the pediatrician and they cut out a middle finger on the hands of both children, making them look normal afterwards. The babies were identical and the mother kept getting them mixed up when they were first born. She had to keep bringing them back to the hospital to have them matched to their footprints. After the hospital staff got sick of doing it they permanently solved the problem by tattooing a small dot on the bottom of the foot of one of the twins and then putting a blue dot on that twin's hospital birth certificate so when she got confused she just had to match the dots.

Mrs. Ball then had a son and Nancy went over to see that new baby and again that boy was totally covered from head to foot in thick hair, and again in a few weeks he dropped all his fur.



**Linda**



**Linda in front**

Nancy used to have adorable birthday parties for Warren and Linda in the Franklin back yard. Nancy dressed Linda in a beautiful frilly party dress and all of her little guests were also similarly dressed in beautiful party dresses. Sure is different than today's casually dressed kids.



**Warren & Linda**

Linda and Warren got along very well together in those early days. Nancy has an adorable picture of Linda and Warren hugging each other on the side of that house. They were happy, well behaved kids. Don and Nancy bought them some very nice toys. Warren had a fire engine type pedal car and Don bought both Linda and Warren nice bikes. He took some very nice movie pictures of them riding their new bikes. Nancy and Don also bought them some very nice toys every birthday and Christmas. They have movie footage and also still pictures of the kids opening a pile of presents every Christmas in their pajamas.



**Donna, Linda**



**Linda**



**Linda**

In the summer time Don and Nancy bought them a cute swimming pool and also a swing and slide set for the back yard. That was a very conducive play area for children allowing many of their play mates to come and share the play equipment.

Edward closed up his appliance and TV store around 1959 due to the never ending deep recession which greatly hurt his business. Ed found it safer to go in with Thern Baxter at 7 Mile and Gratiot and to sell off his left over stock. Don soon found a new position with Krazy Kelly at 12 Mile and Coolidge in Berkley which was only less than a mile away from his home. He worked very long hours, from 9 am to 9 pm so Nancy adjusted very well to his being gone long hours as they had no choice. Don walked to work and then as quitting time approached in better weather Nancy would bundle up Warren and Linda and walk with them up Coolidge and then west on 12 Mile Rd to Kelly's where she would meet Don at closing time and the little family would all walk home together. This was a very happy little ritual that was repeated over and over again over the span of several years. Often Don and Nancy would take the kids to the Dairy Queen on the way home and treat them to an ice cream cone.



**Linda, Nancy, Don & Warren**

But one day could have been the end of Don's whole family but for the intervention of a benevolent Divine Protector. The going to meet Don day started out like any other. Nancy looked at the clock, knew it was time to get ready and started dressing the kids. It was a cold day, but not too cold to go out for their nightly promenade. Nancy dressed up Warren and then Linda. She was ready to go, putting Linda in the stroller when Linda peed her diaper. Nancy undressed her, changed her diaper and then put her back into the stroller. Then Nancy smelled something – pheww! Warren laid something big in his pants. Oh boy, are we ever going to be late for Don! So Nancy changed Warren's pants, taking off all his outer clothes, then the street clothes, and then putting all those layers back on again. Then she set out knowing she would probably be meeting Don half way as she was so late in starting out. So they walked down Coolidge, with Linda in the stroller and when Nancy turned down 12 Mile as she did every night there was mass confusion there with people and cars everywhere. When she got closer and asked what was going on they told her that a car had jumped the curb on the north side of 12 Mile Rd and barreled down the sidewalk for over a block! Had it not

been for the kids filling their diapers one at a time, something they had never done at that time before, the family would have been right in the path of the out of control car! God and His angels certainly saved Don's little family that day!

Ed and Marie always went out on New Years Eve with Don and Nancy to a cozy little family bar on 6 Mile Rd called Carlottas. It was a family oriented clientele that went there and it was an orderly place to celebrate New Years Eve with conducive music and a fine lunch spread at midnight. The drinks were reasonable and the midnight lunch was free.

But on one particular New Years Eve they decided to go to a local bar close to Don and Nancy's home. It sure was a good thing they decided to go close to home that particular New Year's Eve. That night when Marie, Ed, Don and Nancy were leaving the bar about 1 am they saw the patrons who had just left ahead of them crawling on their hands and knees to their cars. Boy, are they ever loaded, Marie laughed to Ed, Nancy and Don. He who laughs, laughs last, is the old saying. As soon as they cleared the overhang they got a really rude awakening – the sidewalk and parking lot was one thick, slick sheet of ice! They also ended up on their hands and knees inching their way toward their car. Marie and Ed always drove home to Alter Rd and Nancy and Don drove home to Berkley, but not this time. They all got in one car and inched their way at 20 miles an hour to Don's house where they stayed overnight. Sandy was watching Bill and Doug and got very worried when she woke up and found that mom and dad were not at home. What a relief it was when Ed and Marie pulled up in front of their own house on New year's Day!



**Linda Stephens**

One day when Nancy and Don and the kids were visiting Marie and Ed on Alter Rd, Linda had her first driving lesson. Don had parked his blue Plymouth in Ed's driveway, putting the car in gear to keep it from rolling backwards as it was parked on an incline. Warren and Linda decided to jump into the car and play that they were driving around town. Due to Warren's suggestion to Linda as to what she



should do the driving lesson became a little too realistic for everyone's comfort. Linda got into the front seat, slipped behind the wheel of the car, then reached down and pulled the shift lever, shifting it into neutral. The driving lesson then began, fortunately not with too big a bang! The car with the two tots in it rolled backwards down the driveway, clear across busy Alter Rd and gently hit the car parked across the street from the driveway. Fortunately little damage was done to either car. Don pulled the car back into the driveway and whapped Linda a couple of good ones even though she insisted it was Warren's fault as he was the one who told her what to do.



**Linda Stephens**

Linda also took 1<sup>st</sup> prize in our family for being a very sound sleeper. A number of times when Don and Nancy would be visiting on Alter they would put the kids to bed as they were very tired. The problem came when Don would try to wake them up to go to the car when it was time to go home. A very sleepy Warren would do a zombie like walk to the old blue Plymouth. But in Linda's case absolutely nothing could wake her up, and I mean nothing. Don tried everything as carrying those kids all that way was very tiring. Nothing, and I mean nothing, could wake up Linda. She finally ended up hanging like a sack of potatoes over Don's shoulder on the way to the car. He would lay her on the back seat and drive home like that. There were no seat belts in those days.



**Warren & Linda**

Nancy used to make Halloween costumes for her children to go trick or treating in. One time she made Indian costumes for the kids, sewing them from scratch. The kids sure looked cute in them.



**Nancy in black, Don in the skirt & blouse**

But the most outrageous Halloween costume she ever made was the ones she made for Don and herself. She made herself out as a man and Don as a woman. I'm surprised Don never burned these pictures! Oooh la la!! What a pair of legs!



**Nicole White**



**Michael & Michelle**



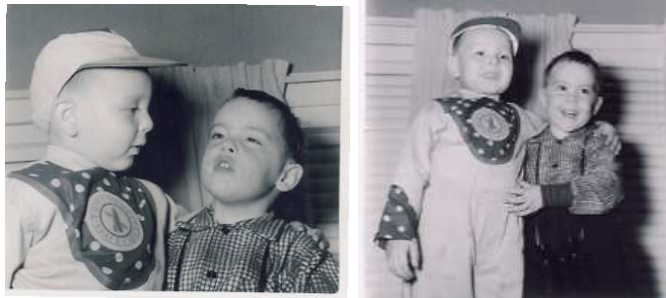
**Nicole**

Nancy's children also carried on the tradition of making Halloween costumes for their children. They were as often as creative in making adorable costumes as Marie and Nancy were.



**Linda Stephens**

Nancy used to go on picnics to the local park at 12 Mile and Coolidge. One fine Sunday in the summer Marie and Ed went on a picnic with Don and Nancy. Marie and Ed brought Sandy, Bill and Doug. Nancy and Don had Warren and Linda. Linda was in a playpen. Doug was about 4 years old, Warren 3 and Linda new born. While we were eating Marie noticed that Doug was looking kooky, his head was down and he looked like he was going to fall asleep. When they looked at him later they noticed that he started breaking out all over his chest with little red spots. He had the measles! And before the week was over so did Warren.



**Doug & Warren**

Doug and Warren got along like cats and dogs. Doug was always pushing, shoving, smacking Warren. But they also learned to play together as they started getting a little over. One time Marie bought Warren and Doug Tom Corbett space cadet suits. They looked so cute in them. And they also had rubber swords too, even though swords didn't match with a space cadet. Those two boys looked so cute standing on Marie's dining room table in those outfits so Ed could get good pictures of the two tots.

Nancy's friends, the Balls, who lived on the street behind her in Berkley, moved to Florida. Once they were settled, Mrs. Ball invited Nancy and her family to visit her in Florida. They decided to go. They went in summer and had a really good time but the stifling heat and 100% humidity soured Nancy and Don on ever considering moving there. And Nancy also freaked when she found lots of little bugs in the cereal, the cupboards and other unsealed foodstuffs. Mrs. Ball told her they were impossible to keep out of the food and the cupboards due to the heat and humidity.

Nancy and the kids went to Sea World there and really enjoyed themselves. But that was their last trip to Florida due to the miserable summer weather.



**Donna**

In May, 1957, around Mother's Day Nancy discovered that she was expecting her third child. Nancy was always concerned about her weight and so she decided to carefully watch her diet throughout this pregnancy. At full term Nancy weighed 8 lbs less than when this pregnancy started. From that time on she was very weight conscious and never again regained any of the weight.



**Donna**



**Warren, Don, Donna, Nancy & Linda**



**Donna & Bill**

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of January, 1958 Donna Christine Stephens was born. Nancy and Don muddled through a lot of baby's names and finally settled on Donna as a tribute to Don.



**Gert Crane & Donna Stephens**

Donna was baptized in February, 1958. Her godparents were Gert and Art Crane. All through the years Gert was faithful to visiting Donna and remembering her at Christmas and her birthday.



**Linda, Warren, Donna & Nancy**

Nancy has a really cute picture of her dressing baby Donna on the kitchen table as little Linda and Warren look on at their new baby sister.

A few months after Donna was born Nancy had lost so much weight that her periods stopped and her hair started thinning and falling out. Marie went with Nancy to University of Michigan hospital for treatment of her medical problems. The doctors at the University hospital were not familiar in those days with the side effects of losing all that weight so fast so they were not cognizant of the fact that this was a normal side effect of becoming too thin. So they called the medical problems Simmond's Disease.



**Donna, Linda and Warren**

Nancy had a picture taken of her 3 children when Donna was about 5 months old. Nancy bought a package of pictures from the Bill Williams portrait studio in Royal Oak and took advantage of the package that year. Nancy did not have a lot of spare cash for such luxuries, but she felt that good quality portraits of her family were important enough to put out the money. We are so glad she did that for us. These pictures are priceless.



**Donna & Billy**

When Donna was 5 months old Don and Nancy decided to go to a Dude ranch on vacation. A Dude ranch was no place for an infant, so Marie and Ed decided to take care of Donna on Alter Rd for Nancy for those two weeks. Donna was a real joy to have, she was a perfect baby, such a happy and easy going child. Sandy took a picture of her on Marie's kitchen table with little Billy admiring the baby.





**Warren, Don, Donna, Nancy and Linda**

When Donna was one year old Nancy decided to have a family portrait taken at a professional studio. It was a beautiful picture. That portrait studio always did a fine job on all the portraits they did for Nancy and her family.



**Sandy Bender**

In June, of 1958 Nancy's sister Sandy graduated from St. John Berchman's grade School. She then entered Servite High School, both schools run by the Order of the Servants of Mary. And no, Nancy is not responsible for that haircut Sandy is sporting in the above picture, Aunt Elenore is. Elenore came over to Marie's house to cut Nellie's hair, which looked very nice when finished as Nellie had a natural wave which gave her cut style. When Elenore was done with Nellie's hair, Marie was in the basement changing the wash. Elenore asked Sandy if she would like the same kind of haircut. Sandy jumped at the chance to have that kind of hair cut which would match to her tomboy clothes. So Elenore cut her hair. When Marie came up from the basement and saw Sandy's hair she could have died! But it was too late. The deed had already been done.



**Nancy cutting Douggie's hair on Alter Rd**

Nancy used to do wonderful haircuts on Warren, Bill, Doug and Donald. Her haircuts were very professional looking. You couldn't tell that the haircuts weren't done by a barber. Out of sympathy for poor Billy she took over the haircutting from Marie. Marie used to put a bowl on Bill's head and cut around the bowl, leaving a full head of hair under the bowl and shaving all the hair off below the bowl. (Nancy had a hard time cutting Don's hair when he was actively losing huge hunks of hair on Berkley due to the alopecia ariata. How much to cut off? Can she use longer hair to hide the huge bald spots? In the end the bald spots were much too large and prominent to cover with his existing hair.)



**Warren**

In 1958 Warren began kindergarten in the public school in Berkley and in September, 1959 he began 1<sup>st</sup> grade in Our Lady of LaSalette grade school which he attended until the family moved to Sterling Heights. He made his first communion at Our Lady of LaSalette before moving out of Berkley to Sterling Heights.

Nancy used to take her children to the Detroit zoo in Royal Oak where they would enjoy strolling among the animal exhibits, looking at the beautiful fountain with the bronze bears and having a leisurely picnic lunch in one of concession areas.

Marie used to come with her sometimes bringing little Douggie along with her. Marie's older children did not get to go as they were in school.

Nancy and Don's home on Franklin in Berkley was really crowded with the birth of their 3<sup>rd</sup> child as this was only a rather small 2 bedroom home. Don had made a 3<sup>rd</sup> bedroom in the basement for Warren but they couldn't put a new baby in the basement. Donna shared a very small bedroom with Linda but it was a very cramped situation.

Marie and Edward had been searching for a new home since about 1957 but had not yet found something in the proper price range that would be big enough for their 4 children. Every Sunday Ed and Marie would drive all around the suburbs looking for new homes. Edward got enthusiastic over a home on Joan Street in St. Clair Shores but Marie was fervently praying they wouldn't get that home as it was only 3 bedroom and just wasn't roomy enough for a larger family. The next big nibble on a new home was with Ruzanne who was building homes near Christ the King Church near Mt. Clemens in Harrison Township. Ruzanne was a real loud mouth . really high pressure salesman who did his darndest to push this sale through. I almost worked with one major snag – the house on Alter just did not sell so the whole package fell through. Again, Marie was really relieved.



**11284 Diamond Drive  
Sterling Heights, Michigan**

Then on Marie and Edward's 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary they drove to Sterling Heights on the border of Utica and there Marie found her dream home. The models were called the Giant homes and Marie was so happy to see they had 4 bedrooms and a roomy family room. Ed found out he could have a partial basement under part of the home. He wanted a full one but the builder balked. Edward chose a lot that day, one away from Delvin St on Diamond Street. Marie and Edward put a down payment on that house on August 25, 1959. Ed chose orange brick and a picture window in the family room.

On this wedding anniversary Nancy came over to Ed and Marie's house to watch the children for the day so they could be alone. As soon as Ed and Marie drove off

Nancy and Sandy and Nancy's kids and Doug and Bill walked over to the bakery at Mack near Chalmers to buy decorations to put on a 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary cake and also 3 tier cake pans to bake a wedding cake in. We then brought all this back home and Nancy set to work in earnest making a chocolate swirl 3 tier wedding cake to surprise them with when they got back home. However Marie and Ed surprised Nancy instead – big time! Just as she got all the stuff scattered all over the kitchen table and counters Ed and Marie come strolling back in! Oh my gosh, Nancy said to Sandy, we have to hide everything real quick or the surprise will be ruined! But we got lucky. Marie and Ed never went into the kitchen. The reason they came back so soon is that the heat went up to 100 degrees that day and Ed and Marie were melting in long slacks, so they both ran up to their bedroom and put on cooler shirts and shorts and then said goodbye and started out again on their trip. Nancy then assembled the cake into the 3 tins and got them into the oven. When the tiers came out she let them cool and then iced them. The icing job was a fancy special job just like professional wedding cakes. And then Nancy put the bride and groom on top and the 25<sup>th</sup> silver anniversary decals and the white bells around the sides of the cake. That cake was as professional looking as any bakery could have done! Nancy always had a fine artistic flair to anything she put her hand to and this wedding cake was no exception. So it sat there all afternoon waiting for the anniversary celebrants to return. They finally did return late that afternoon, totally soaked in sweat from that horribly stifling day but very happy. They just bought the house of their dreams on their very special day.



**Ed & Marie with Nancy's wedding cake**

And they were so impressed with the wedding cake that Nancy had made them. They thought at first she bought it as it was such a professional looking cake. We took pictures of Marie and Ed in front of their cake that day but poor Ed was so prostrate from the heat that he looks drunk in those pictures. He didn't even have a drop of liquor but he looked as though he had celebrated his anniversary very well.

Nancy bought her parents a beautiful crystal serving bowl with a silver rim and 2 silver serving spoons. Nancy had wished she could have bought her parents something more impressive but Sandy thought that was the best present she could have gotten them. Marie thought so too. She used that serving bowl over and over again, especially when she had company over. Marie was proud of that bowl.



**Bill Bender, 1961**

In June of 1961 Bill Bender, Nancy's brother, graduated from St. John Berchman's Grade School in Detroit, Michigan. In September of 1961 Bill enrolled in Sterling Junior High School in Sterling Heights as the family had moved to Sterling Heights in September of 1961.



**Sandy Bender, 1962**

In September of 1961 Sandy moved in with Edward's brother Art Bender and his family in order to complete her last year at Servite High School. She went to school by DSR bus or her bike and on weekends she took the bus to Schoenherr and 8 Mile and Edward would drive her home to Utica after he got off work at 9 pm.

When Don and Nancy drove out to Sterling Heights and looked over Ed's house going up on Diamond they were both impressed with what a good deal that house was for the money. The base price of that house was \$12,990 and the house on

Alter Rd finally sold for \$10,000. Don and Nancy both thought that was a solution to their cramped quarters as well.



**11251 Saar,  
Sterling Heights, Michigan**

Shortly after Ed and Marie's house started going up Nancy and Don designed their new home at 11251 Saar around the corner from Marie and Ed's. They had 3 bedrooms, a wonderful laundry room and no basement. Don kept the 2 windows in the family room and used the standard brick the builder offered. Both Nancy and Don and Ed and Marie moved into their new homes in the fall of 1961. Warren had his own bedroom and the 2 girls had to share a bedroom but this bedroom was considerably roomier than the one in Berkley.



**Back of house at 11251 Saar**

Don and Nancy were very happy to move into their brand new house in a brand new neighborhood in Sterling Heights after having lived in a neighborhood over 20 years old in Berkley, but looking at the two neighborhoods in 2002 the Berkley neighborhood with its smaller houses looks much more upscale than the Sterling Heights neighborhood. The neighbors in Sterling Heights have started letting their homes deteriorate whereas in Berkley the have resided their homes, put in new upscale windows and even put second stories on some of the homes. One never



knows what the future will bring to their neighborhood. When we moved into Alter Rd it was a solid German and Belgium neighborhood with well kept houses built in the mid 1930s. By 1960 we knew we had to flee the neighborhood as the blacks were now crossing Conner Ave and every neighborhood they went into the houses were soon trashed, burned and boarded up. And we escaped just in time. We sold the Alter Rd home for \$10,000 and could have bought the Sterling Heights one for \$12,990 without upgrades. Today the home in Detroit is still selling for around \$10,000 and the one in Sterling Heights is selling for around \$190,000.



**Our Lady of La Salette**

But in 1961 moving to Sterling Heights was the right thing to do from a standpoint of a much bigger home for less money in a nice neighborhood. The down side of the move was that Warren had to be taken out of Our Lady of La Salette Catholic School in Berkley and put into Dresden public school in Sterling Heights. Nancy tried to enroll Warren in St. Lawrence Catholic School but as he was going into the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade all the openings in that grade level had remained full since these children had entered into the first grade and none of the original children had dropped out. Linda was also enrolled in Dresden Elementary school in the first grade.



UR - STERLING HTS.		\$20,500.00 CASH OR	
Good & Delvin, Rr. 19 Mile Rd.		CYEM. CONV. OR CYEM.	
Dresden Village Sub. #1			
Map	36x41	Lot 60x120	Over \$13,000.
1st Fl	4	2nd Fl	3
L-R	12.6 x 20	Basement	1st 5-3/4x67.5
D-R	"	10x10	2nd 5-3/4x67.5
Kr	12.6 x 20	10.5x12.5	C/line Total
SR	"	10.5x12.5	C/line Total
Gar	SR	Bath C.T. Ash.	\$290.
SR	"	Class 12-5	
PAV. IN	12.6x20		
Bath	5 x 6		
Ver	CR	S & S Alum.	Paints 2
F.P.	FI	Fence Cycl.	Ann
W. Stephens, 11251 Saar, Sterling Hts., 731-3011			
and Met. 2. Monday 10:00 AM Van Dyke, 731-8700			
IS HTD. & FIR. DRAPES & VALANCE NOT TOLD. KIT. W/-			
731-8700 HOUSE IN CO. AREA. CREDIT IN L.R. & P.M. H.			

**The Stephens home on 11251 Saar, Sterling Hgts, Michigan**

When Nancy first moved into the home on Saar getting the house in order was her first priority, especially to get drapes on the front of the house where neighbors

could see in. Nancy went shopping and soon found the perfect living room drapes to go with her entire décor. She bought the drapes, hung them and we all admired them. They were beautiful, stylish and a perfect match for the living room. We were all so pleased with her choice. However when Marie and Sandy came over a few days later those beautiful drapes were gone and pure white ones hung in their place. We were so nonplussed and disappointed., Where are those beautiful drapes, we both asked? They were so perfect. Ya, Nancy replied until I went outside and looked at my living room from the front sidewalk. I was horrified! From the street all I saw was that fire engine red color blazing out of my living room window. I simply could not have that kind of color showing on the outside of the house!

Donna was only 3 ½ years old so she was pre school. Nancy had bought her a big wheel tricycle which was a brand new concept in those days. Donna used to ride the big wheel around the block to go visit Grandma Bender. She used to be so cute pedaling away on her plastic tricycle, sitting so low to the ground.



**Linda in backyard on Saar Linda, Doug & Warren**

All three of Nancy's kids loved visiting Grandma Bender on their way to or from school or on weekends. They frequently popped in unannounced just to spend some time with their dear grandma. Poor Warren was so confused, however, as he attended school in the same class as Duggie so he wasn't sure just who his grandma was other than Duggie's mother. So in the beginning he took to called Grandma Bender "Duggie's mother" until Nancy and Marie set him straight that she was his grandma as well as being Doug's mother.

Nancy helped Marie move into their new home and also helped her hang the drapes. Marie was never mechanically inclined so when she first hung up the curtain rods in the home they pulled right back out of the drywall and hung precariously at odd angles. When Nancy saw that she told her mom that she'd hang the rods right. So Nancy went up to Larry's hardware in town and bought the

proper drywall anchors and then set to work drilling holes in the dry wall after measuring where the rods should go. Once she sunk in the anchors and screwed in the screws into the expanding anchors the curtain rods then hung nice and snug and stayed that way. (Drywall was a new concept to Marie and Nancy as their old homes had wet plaster, not drywall.)

Moving day for Marie and Ed was a Beverly Hillbillies affair. They hired an open trailer and hooked it on to the back of their car. They made about a half dozen trips with trailer and cars moving all of the stuff out of Alter Rd. Mom lost a nice, brand new lampshade in one of the last moves. It simply blew out of the trailer and was never seen again. A few weeks after that Nancy and Don moved and it was basically the same sort of operation, a real do it yourself and save money project.

Nancy had one catastrophe on her moving day. Don and Nancy had a big heavy mirror on the trailer so one of the new neighbors offered to help Don carry it in the house. Some how the neighbor dropped it and it smashed into smithereens. The neighbor offered to pay for it but naturally Don and Nancy refused to consider that. But one of the house insurances did pay for it later.



**Emma & Don Remsing**

Nancy and Don found they had delightful neighbors. They got along well with all of them. I guess they bonded so well as most of them had kids right around the ages of Nancy's kids so all the kids played with one another. Nancy's favorites was Don and Emma Remsing who lived catty corner across the street from them on Saar. They were delightful people and Nancy and Emma spent many an afternoon together, talking and playing scrabble together.

Disaster struck the Remsing family within a year of Nancy moving there. Around Easter of 1962 Emma noticed bruises developing on her 2 year old child Laura. When the bruising continued Emma took Laura to the doctor. The doctor sent Emma with Laura to Children's Hospital in Detroit. There Emma and Don heard the horrifying news that their baby had leukemia. They were having some luck with leukemia treatment, which in those days was in its infancy, but with Laura no treatment helped. She had one of the rare forms of leukemia that chemotherapy did not help. They later determined that Laura got her leukemia from their dog

who had had distemper. While the dog was sick they let him stay in the house and Laura used to lay with him and cuddle up to him. She caught his virus. Emma took Laura back and forth to Children's Hospital but nothing they did for her helped. She just got worse as the months came and went. She started bruising all over. When Emma took the child out in public people would give her really dirty looks, thinking she was causing the bruises on her child by either abuse or neglect. Emma felt so bad when she saw their dirty looks. She not only was not responsible for the bruises but her baby was dying and there was not a thing she could do about it.

Nancy remembers one time Emma was sitting on Nancy's kids' swing set with Laura in her arms, gently swinging the child. The child looked just awful, all bruised up and now swollen looking. Emma gently started to cry looking at her once angelically beautiful baby. Laura said to her mother, "Don't cry, mama, there is nothing that can be done about it." As the summer came and waned Emma was forever going to the hospital with Laura, trying to ameliorate her horrific symptoms. Nancy helped watch Emma's older children until Don Remsing came home from work. He was a potato chip delivery man and was usually home by 4 pm. He used to take the older children to the outside of Children's hospital to see their sister. They were not allowed inside so Don would take them to the lawn outside the hospital and Emma would come to the window of the hospital room and she and Laura would wave to the kids. They would see her little finger bandaged as it was infected due to what was happening in her body. Then in August of 1962 the unthinkable happened. Emma came and told Nancy that it was all over, that they had lost their precious little blue eyed blonde angel. She was laid out at the Ford Funeral Home in Centerline. Nancy and her family went and sat with Emma.

Laura was buried in the Baby Heaven section of the new Catholic cemetery in Clinton Township, Resurrection Cemetery on Romeo Plank. In memory of her precious child Emma had oil paintings made of Laura and her older daughter Caroline which she placed in her living room. (Caroline bore a remarkable resemblance to her younger sister. Had they been the same size it would have been difficult to tell them apart.)

Tragedy struck the same neighborhood within that same year. Caroline Schulte, who lived across the street from Nancy was the adopted daughter of the Schultes. They discovered when she was about 5 years old that she had juvenile onset diabetes. That summer the child contracted Reyes syndrome after an illness and passed away. There were whispers that Caroline's diabetes was not kept in good

control which could have contributed to her demise. Nancy talked to Caroline Schulte's mother about the children being adopted and the woman admitted that it was better than having no children, but you just can't love them the same as if they were your own flesh and blood.



**Sandy Bender**

In June, 1962 Nancy's sister Sandy graduated from Servite High School in Detroit. Sandy had attended that school all 12 years – St. John Berchman's for the 1<sup>st</sup> through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and then Servite High from 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. She completed those 12 years in 10 years as she was double promoted from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. She graduated in June, 1962 and then went on to Wayne State University.



**Linda Stephens**



**Linda & Warren Stephens**

Linda received her first Holy Communion at St. Matthias Church in 1963. Her family and her grandma and grandpa Bender and their family were there that day.





Warren and Doug were in the same classroom in Dresden Elementary school in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. All through the Sterling Heights years they sure got into their share of trouble together. Here is their 5<sup>th</sup> grade picture where they look like little angels. (They weren't, just ask Nancy).

Nancy and Don continued on a bowling league in Sterling Heights. They usually bowled at the Colonial Lanes in Utica and went for a snack with friends to the Big Boy restaurant at 21 and Van Dyke afterwards.

Warren had two scary incidents happen to him while they lived on Saar. The first one occurred when they went to the Dude ranch. He got brave, went out of the canoe and started swimming for a long stretch to get back in the canoe. Linda was afraid he was going to totally give out and drown. But he made it back to the canoe, totally tuckered out.

The second incident was nothing short of being totally disgusting. He was in a field a ways from home and somehow fell into a field full of shit. He was totally covered in the stuff and smelled, well, let's say, not like a rose. He couldn't stand himself and got home as fast as he could. Nancy was totally horrified when she got a whiff of what he smelled like and wanted him to take off all those horrible reeking clothes in the laundry room. You better believe Warren spent a long time in the shower that afternoon! I bet in his mind's eye he can still remember what he smelled like that day! Wheew!



Also in 1963 Don and Warren went to a father – son breakfast at St. Matthias Church. After the breakfast they had a bunch of contests with the winner of each contest receiving a prize. One of the later contests was who was the youngest father with the oldest son. Don just sat there listening to a bunch of men raising their hands and telling their and their son's age. After listening for awhile it dawned on Don that none of those men came near to the spread between his and Warren's age, so Don raised his hand and gave his and Warren's ages. No one raised their hand after that. Don and Warren won hands down! They won the prize for the youngest father with the oldest son.



**Linda, Warren & Donna**



**Donna & Linda in front of 11151 Saar**

Donna received her First Holy Communion at St. Matthias Church in 1966. . Her family and her grandma and grandpa Bender and their family were also at her communion that day. Nancy had a celebration for her back home afterwards.



**Bill Bender, 1966**



**Doug, Marie & Bill at Fort Rucker, Ala.**

In June of 1966 Bill graduated from Utica High School in Utica. He was very proud of his accomplishment and his picture in suit and tie turned out to be exceptional.

Bill worked for a while at Food Fair at Canal Rd and Van Dyke. After that Bill enlisted in the Army, went to Fort Rucker, Alabama and then to Vietnam. He was sprayed by agent orange and suffered terribly from it for the rest of his life.



**Sandy, Nancy & Craig**

Nancy always dressed Craig sharply just as she had her older children. She often came over to her parents' house on Diamond to visit, always taking baby Craig with her. Here is a picture of Craig in front of Ed Bender's house on Diamond with his mom and Aunt Sandy in the summer of 1966.



**Don Remsing**

When the weather started turning cold around the first of November Nancy decided to take down the screens and put up the storm windows for the winter. The one huge picture window she had was in the living room. She took down the huge screen, cleaned it and put it away. She then cleaned the huge window pane and climbed up on the ladder to put it in the picture window. Just then a gust of strong wind blew up, caught the window and Nancy was twisting all over the place trying not to drop the pane of glass and trying desperately not to fall off the ladder. Nancy started screaming for help. Fortunately Don Remsing heard her and came running across the street and grabbed the pane of glass just in the nick of time.



**Don Remsing**

Don Remsing also saved the day another time, more for Warren than for Nancy, that is. Warren was on the Dresden school playground swinging on the swings. He and his friend were seeing how high they could go and jump off the swing. On one of his jumps Warren did not land as he had planned but instead fell hard on his arm, not only breaking the arm but actually having the broken portion of the bone come right through the flesh and was exposed. Warren saw what happened and ran all the way home as fast as he could. He came into the house and when Nancy saw what happened she went into shock. She started pacing back and forth just hollering and hollering hysterically. Once again Don Remsing heard the “air raid siren” from across the street and just came running over to help out. When he saw Warren’s arm he piled Warren and Nancy into the car and drove them to the hospital. The doctor set Warren’s arm and put it into a cast and as suddenly as it began, the crisis was now over. Don took them back home and now Nancy gradually calmed down while Warren nursed his very sore arm.



**Nancy on Saar**

Not too long after Nancy moved into Saar she was washing dishes by hand one evening and noticing that there was some dried up residue in the bottom of one of the glasses Nancy pushed the dish rag down into the bottom of the glass and then with her hand began turning the dish rag around and around to loosen the crud on the bottom of the glass. Suddenly the rim of the glass shattered in one spot and the sharp edge sliced right into Nancy’s finger cutting it right to the bone! Nancy wasn’t sure what was going to come first – to get to the hospital ASAP or pass out from sheer fright first! (She did manage to get to the hospital first. But that remained a major traumatic event for years to come. You better believe she never put her fingers into a glass and twist like that again!)

Nancy had one other major trauma on Saar. It occurred in her laundry room off the side door. Her washer and drier were there, very convenient, no basement stairs to climb. We were all in the family room relaxing when we heard a hair raising scream coming from Nancy in the laundry room.. OH LORD! What horrid thing happened to Nancy, we asked as we ran to her aid. There she stood, in

distress but no visible reason for this distress could be discerned. What happened? We asked. Answer: She found a cricket in her wash! Boy, she hated those things almost as much as she hated spiders. A cricket in the wash continued to elicit the same response no matter how many times one of those darn things got in the clothes or sheets.

There was another near tragedy that was avoided we are sure, by Divine Intervention. Nancy walked out of her house, walked to the driveway and just as she was getting into her car she got an overpowering urge to get back out of her car, walk behind it and look. Nancy has always been very psychic and this sure was one of those times. Sitting behind the car totally out of sight was 3 year old Nicky Martin, the next door neighbor's kid. Had she not heeded her ESP warning the Martins would have lost their only son that day.

The first winter we were in the new house we had a humungous ice storm. All the streets of the Dresden Village were covered in ice. When Nancy saw all that ice she got a brilliant, fun idea. She called Sandy around the corner and said, "Let's put our ice skates on and go ice skating through the streets of the village." So that's what they did, along with Nancy's kids. We all had a marvelous time that day. But by the next day the ice was gone and so was our impromptu ice skating rink. But it sure was fun while it lasted! And that was the only time the roads iced over like that.



**Sandy, Nancy & Craig**

But also in those early years we had a whopper of a snow storm. Sandy had to shovel a 3 foot high drift out of the driveway and Nancy and her family had the same strenuous task. But the man across the street from Nancy was scheduled for heart surgery and not only was his driveway snowed in but also the village streets from Saar through Penny to 19 Mile Rd. The major streets had been plowed but not our subdivision. The neighbor and his wife were in a tizzy. He did not want to miss his surgery and no way could he shovel snow. So when his wife let the other neighbors know of their predicament the neighbors took over and solved the

problem. We were all off work that day due to the snow storm so as all the neighbors spread the word most of them got out their snow shovels and shoveled not only his drive but one side of the street all the way from his house to the main road. The man was able to get to the hospital thanks to the caring assistance from his new found friends in the neighborhood. Everyone who helped felt really good about themselves that day.

In the summer Nancy and Sandy thought up another fun thing to do on one beautiful sunny afternoon. With Marie watching Nancy's kids, Nancy and Sandy rode down Canal road on their bikes to the Rose Gardens near Mt. Clemens and then back home down Clinton River Rd. It was a very pleasant ride except for one big dog that went after our legs on Canal road. We pedaled with one foot till we got past that darn dog, then we were home free. We had a wonderful time that day, except for the sore muscles we had that evening. But it was well worth the effort and a memory we carry with us to this very day.

Nancy and I used to go to Metropolitan Beach with the kids in those days and go swimming in Lake St. Clair. We would take a picnic lunch with us and enjoy eating in the pavilion area. Just before Nancy moved to California Stoney Creek park opened up to the public so we went a few times there too. It had a private man made lake for swimming. It also had nice picnic areas for enjoying a leisurely lunch.

The second year we lived in Dresden Village Marie and Sandy made a nice Blessed Mother shrine in their back yard. Nancy liked the concept so she also put a Blessed Mother shrine to one side in her back yard. Both Marie and Nancy planted nice shrubs and flowers in their back yards. We also both built detached 2 ½ car garages on our property.

One Christmas eve day in the early 1960s Don was driving home from work down Penny St. Looking ahead he saw a man getting out of his car who didn't look right to him so he slowed down as he approached this man and his car. Just as Don got almost up to him the man fell straight down like a felled log right into the street right in front of Don's car. Don put on his brakes and stopped in time. He drove around the guy, leaving him laying in the street. Hopefully the guys wife retrieved him soon.

One time Don was coming off of Hall Rd crossing Van Dye to get to Canal Rd. Edward was on Canal Rd trying to get across Van Dyke to get to Hall Rd. Traffic was very heavy so it was a real trick getting across Van Dyke. Suddenly Don

found a key hole opening in traffic and took it, zooming full speed ahead across Van Dyke. At the same time Edward saw a small opening in the traffic and hit the gas too. Boy, it was a small miracle that they both didn't hit more than the gas, namely, each other!! Their cars missed by no more than an inch or two! Edward was really shaken up by the near miss and the next time he saw Don he discussed how upset he had been by that near miss. Don just grinned and said to Ed, "It was a miss and that is all that counts. An inch is as good as a mile!"

Don and Nancy used to pay all their bills and then give each other an allowance with what was left over. Nancy used to get \$25 a week for groceries and whatever was left over from that was also hers to spend. So money was tight for both of them so they were both very careful of what they spent. Gas for both cars was always a bone of contention as it was a major chunk out of their spending money. They traded driving cars back and forth which compounded the confusion. Nancy liked to take the car which had the most gas if she got to the garage first. Don also soon learned the same trick. On more than one occasion Nancy would take the Chrysler Imperial, a huge tank of a car, and find it was almost out of gas. She would drive it to town and back anyways, hoping for the best. Several times the Chrysler Imperial ran out of gas as Nancy drove down Clinton River Rd on the way to Utica. She was able to make that car cruise very close to the gas station on the corner of Clinton River Rd and Van Dyke. She would get a gas can filled with 25 cents worth of gas (1 gallon of gas, believe it nor not!) put the 25 cents in the gas tank, start the car, drive to the gas station, hand the attendant the can and keep on driving around town in that 25 cents worth of gas. Many an attendant would stand there with his mouth open as she drove off without filling the tank.

Nancy was also a real big daredevil when it came to driving to the Eastland shopping mall with her little red Valiant. She would actually drive the 20 miles to Eastland and back with the gas gauge on empty! And most of the time she got away with it – she made it there and back practically on fumes! She said that the tank on that car was not totally empty when it said empty and also the valiant got good gas mileage. But there is an adorable, almost unbelievable story about Nancy running out of gas on her way home from Eastland. It was dark outside as Nancy stayed at the mall longer than she intended to. And now she was lost to boot as she was on Utica Rd at Garfield Rd and wasn't sure how to get home. And then as she approached the Garfield light her car sputtered and ran out of gas. She coasted into a gas station at the corner of that intersection. (She was also darn lucky to coast in to a station as there weren't that many of them on that road.) Now that she was in the gas station she found to her consternation that she had no money! Now what?!?! Nancy thought as she stood looking south on Utica Rd while pondering



what to do next. Guess what!?! Guess whose car was idling at the red light on Utica Rd waiting for the light to turn green!?!?! Her brother Michael, that's who! (Chalk it up to one more case of Divine Intervention, we guess.) Nancy frantically waved Michael into the gas station, borrowed money from him to pay for gas and then followed him home! Whew! What a good end to a very scary situation.

We had another crisis near Garfield on Clinton River Rd, this time with Michael, Nancy's brother. He bought a dirt motorcycle and had lots of fun on it, especially as he rode with her friend Jim Clark. He also used to go riding with his friend Pat Barr. But the one time he went out riding he decided to go to Mt. Clemens and back by himself. He had had little sleep the night before and then had had a beer for lunch. He then went for a leisurely ride on a beautiful summer day. On the way back just before he got to Garfield he fell asleep in the motorcycle and woke up as he was flipping over the handle bars heading into a pile of thick bushes. Those bushes cushioned his fall and prevented serious injury but gave him a rough cut over his eye. The little old lady who owned the property the bushes were on came running out, and then called an ambulance. Mike asked her to take care of his motorcycle until he could come back and get it. The hospital called us and Sandy and Nancy went to visit him in the hospital. He very rapidly recovered but before he left the hospital we went to the old lady's house to retrieve his motorcycle. That poor old lady didn't know what to do as she promised that nice man she would take good care of his motorcycle for him. She had it in her barn. She made us show our driver's license to her before she would let us have the motorcycle. She sure was a sweet woman.

The little red Valiant was good on gas and really easy to drive. The Chrysler Imperial was like driving a tank it was so big and bulky and much harder on gas. One time Nancy had the Chrysler Imperial and went with Warren to the Food Fair super market at Van Dyke and Canal, right behind her "cruise in" gas station. When she was done grocery shopping she and Warren put the groceries in the trunk and then hopped in the car, started it up and was ready to head home. It was a tight parking spot so Nancy was closely watching the car next to her and behind her as she was pulling out. Warren said, "mom". Nancy said "don't bother me now, I'm trying to get out of this tight parking spot." "mom", repeated Warren. "I said don't bother me now!" "MOOOMMM!!" That got Nancy's attention. She looked at Warren. he pointed out the car next to him. Nancy had driven into the car and was in the process of lifting that car right off its tires on that side! Nancy quickly pulled back in the parking spot and the car next to her fell back down on its tires. She then got out of that spot and lickety split headed for home.



**Edward & Marie in Pacey's Lion's Head cottage**



**Marie, Bill Sandy at Lion's Head**

Marie and Edward took their kids to Lion's Head on vacation almost every year since 1953, so one year Nancy decided to try going on vacation there too so she made a reservation with Wilbur T Pacey and went up there in July. Nancy was there less than a day, and got panicky, saying there was nothing to do up there. She contacted Mr. Pacey and got her money back and then drove back to Michigan and went to a dude ranch instead. The dude ranch was more comfortable for Nancy as there were plenty of planned activities for the whole family. While Nancy was at Lion's Head one of the other guests at Pacey's cottage fed her infant the bay water, which we were told not to drink and as a consequence the baby became very ill and dehydrated. The doctor lived next door in the adjacent cottage and said they should go back home and seek medical treatment for the baby so he drove them back home.



**Trudy & Jack Stephens**

Out of the blue Nancy got a call from the Wayne County welfare department. They wanted to know if Don and Nancy would take and possibly even adopt Shirley's 7 year old son and her new born daughter. Nancy and Don talked it over and said now because Shirley would be on their door step on a regular basis. Nancy also said she was uncomfortable taking the children because Shirley was single and had them out of wedlock. The welfare department also contacted Jack and Trudy Stephens in California but they also did not want to take on Shirley's 2 children so the boy went into foster care and the infant girl was adopted out. (Shirley's son found her again after he turned 18, but the daughter remains lost. Shirley said she does not want to pursue finding her daughter as the daughter would be ashamed of Shirley. So Shirley wants to remain anonymous.)

Nancy had had a lot of problems with her remaining ovary and was told she would never have another child, so in April, 1964 Nancy got a surprise when she went to Dr. James Finn who confirmed her suspicions – another baby was on the way, 7 years after the birth of her last child. There was some confusion by the family members as to what to think about this surprising development as the family was very entrenched in their comfort level of being a mother, father and 3 children. All the children for the first time were old enough to understand what it meant to have a new baby on the way and Don and Nancy were very resigned to the knowledge that there would never be any more children. It certainly was a shake up of this complacency to find a new one suddenly on the way.

For the first time Nancy had a lot of problems with this pregnancy that she never experienced with the first three. From the beginning she was very nauseated which did not ease up after the third month. She was so sick she was begging Dr. Finn for antiemetic medication. But for the first time the medical profession started worrying about the effects of most medications on the unborn fetus so the doctor said no for a long time but it got so bad that he finally gave her a small amount of this kind of medication. She also had a lot more problems with her nerves with this pregnancy. Edward, her dad, used to sit next to her as she lay on her family room couch giving her pep talks about what a good person she was and how she should try to develop a positive outlook on life and try to get over her nervous problems.

About a week or two before Craig was born Nancy called Marie and asked her to go with her to Topps department store at Van Dyke and 13 Mile Rd as they had the perfect set of curtains on sale. Marie said to Nancy, "Oh, no, we can't go this afternoon, there is a big snow storm coming!" Nancy replied that she just had to have those curtains and she was going this afternoon with or without Marie. Marie

again tried to talk her out of going. Nancy was insistent, she was going. Out of fear for Nancy's safety Marie went, but with great trepidation. They were in the store quite a good length of time by the time Nancy finally made her selection and took it to the cash register. When they started for the car Marie as so upset to see that the snow storm had already had a good head start. The snow flakes were coming fast and furious. Nancy and Marie got into the Chrysler Imperial and started for home. The snow storm was bad enough in the Topps parking lot but was totally snarling up traffic as it was getting very dangerously slippery and slushy. Marie was so scared and praying furiously for their safety. Nancy was white knuckle driving, trying to keep the car in one lane and trying not to slip into the other cars. Braking simply sent the car skidding out of control. By the time they got to 17 Mile and Van Dyke Nancy was so scared and upset she simply could not drive any further so she pulled into the parking lot of a hardware store and asked him if she could use the telephone to call her brother. She called Mike who just got home on Diamond from the factory. He was already exhausted from driving in that mess from the Highland Park Dodge Main plant. He really got upset with her when she asked him to come out again in that rapidly worsening stuff and pick her and mom up. I have a brand new car, he said to her between clenched teeth. You expect me to put my car in danger of being smashed up just because you needed to get curtains in the middle of a snow storm!?! But Mike came and got them. Meanwhile the owner of the hardware store told them they had to leave his store right now because he wanted to close up and drive home before it got any worse. But mom pleaded with him to let them stay inside till Mike came as Nancy was 9 months pregnant. The man angrily stayed till Mike came.

A cute story – a week before Craig was born Nancy saw Sandy coming around the corner coming back from Wayne State University so as soon as Sandy got in to the house the phone was ringing – it was Nancy – she was afraid she might be going into labor and it just dawned on her that if it was a girl she needed to know how to spell “Deborah”. She chose the name earlier and then wanted to know the usual spelling of the name. She had just picked the name Craig if it was a boy. She had narrowed a boy's name down to Robert or Craig and after talking it over with her family they all picked Craig over Robert, so Craig it was. And now she had the girl's name nailed down so she was ready no matter if was a girl or a boy.

n January 18<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 am Don called Marie and told her he would be right over to pick her up so she could watch the kids as Nancy was in labor. Nancy called Dr. Finn and woke him up out of a dead sleep and told him she was on her way to the hospital and told him to meet her there as her labor went really fast with Donna

and was going even faster with this pregnancy. He said he would meet her there. Don brought Marie over in less than 5 minutes and they were on their way to the hospital. The labor was rapidly progressing and Nancy was terrified she would have the baby before she got there. Don drove over 80 miles an hour down a very bumpy Canal Rd and managed not to land them in a ditch, which was a feat in itself that road was so torn up. Don got her there in about 10 minutes, a trip that usually took almost twice that long. Nancy was met at the emergency room entrance by the nurse's aides. Nancy was in great distress saying she was delivering that baby right now as she was walking in. The nurses pushed her into the elevator and as the elevator went up they were tearing the clothes off her. Nancy said if that elevator stopped before the maternity ward she was going to die of embarrassment. They all rushed into the delivery room and Craig came immediately. Craig came right away that is, but not Dr. Finn – he turned over in bed and fell back to sleep! Craig was delivered by a black nurse's aide. Nancy told Dr. Finn that he had better not expect to get paid for that delivery! Craig's entry into the world from the first "gas pain" to delivery was 18 minutes! The doctor told Nancy if she had another baby she would probably drop it on the spot.



**Craig Stephens**

By the time this pregnancy was coming to an end Nancy had a lot more problems to worry over. The doctor told her that Craig was an Rh baby and that his blood was being destroyed by Nancy's immune system as she had a major blood interchange with Donna when she was born sensitizing her blood against Rh positive blood which was Craig's blood type. (Nancy's blood type is O negative). Craig was born two weeks early which probably added to his ability to survive this assault on his red blood cells. As soon as he was born the doctors knew he was in serious danger of dying. Dr. Finn told Nancy there was no way for him to tell her whether Craig would live or not. They began to completely exchange his blood with new blood. They did four blood exchanges in one week. Blood is very expensive so Nancy asked her brother Michael if he could donate one of his pints of blood as he gave blood regularly at work for the Red Cross.

Nancy was in the hospital for 3 days after Craig's birth but found this life and death struggle overwhelming and said she had to go home to be with her husband and her older children to put some normalcy back in her life. But every day Sandy drove Nancy to the hospital and she would stare at Craig through the nursery glass. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of visiting Nancy started to cry. The kindly nurse asked Nancy why she was crying. Nancy replied that she had never heard her baby cry and the thought that he might die without ever hearing his little voice was overwhelming to her. The nurse said, "Oh, sometimes he cries. Do you want to hear him cry?" "Oh yes!" replied Nancy. So the nurse walked over to Craig's bassinet and pinched him on the arm. He puckered up his little face and let out a pitiful cry. And he kept crying, and the more he cried the pinker his skin got. (He had been a sickly yellow color before he started to cry – due to the destruction of his red blood cells by his mother's blood.) And from that time on he remained pink and started on the road to health.



**Emma Remsing**

Where Don had been feeling a noncommittal, oh well, just another child, he now was fully committed to the emotional roller coaster of that life and death drama that took place over the past week. Nancy and Don had poured their whole heart and soul into saving that little guy and they were totally committed to saving his precious little life. Nancy had poured her heart out to Emma Remsing about how scared she was that week over the possibility that Craig might die. Emma told her to pray, that it was in God's hands, but if it was to be that Nancy and Don had to lose him it was much better to lose him at birth rather than later on when the child had a personality. That talk was of no comfort to Nancy – she wanted Craig alive now and later.

He was born around 5 lbs in weight but fell below that weight as they didn't feed him while he was receiving his blood transfusions. They insisted that his weight return to 5 lbs before they would let him go home. SO once he reached 5 lbs the great day came – he was going home! When Don and Nancy got him home Don had to take off back to work and Nancy noticed that she needed stuff for the baby so she jumped into the car for a quick trip to the supermarket. But she got stuck in the snow in her driveway. She gunned and gunned and gunned that car but she just



couldn't get it to break loose from that snow drift. When the brakes started smoking on the Valiant Nancy gave up and went back into the house until Don got back home. Oops! It wasn't the snow drift that kept the car from going, Don had put the emergency brake on! He didn't dare say one word about it!

The first 24 hours Nancy had Craig home she held him the whole time, not letting anyone get a turn at holding him that first day. She waited a long time to hold that baby and for today at least she was not about to share this treasured moment. Boy, was this 5 lb baby ever light! Usually one's arm becomes tired from holding a baby, but not Craig! Sandy knick named him "plastic bones" because he was so unbelievably light. And he remained slight throughout most of his childhood.



**Don Remsing, Sandy & Craig on christening day**

Nancy called the Catholic priest at St. Matthias to get the baby baptized when he was still in the hospital in case he died. The priest told her to call the hospital chaplain. Nancy called the chaplain. He said he would not baptize Craig unless he was dying for sure as he preferred that Craig have a normal baptism in the local church with family and friends present. Well, Craig did make it, and Nancy chose Don Remsing and her sister Sandy Bender for sponsors for Craig's baptism. So a few weeks after he was born we drove Craig over to the church in the dead of winter and had him properly baptized.



**Marie (hidden), Sandy and Emma**

Emma and Don had Nancy, Don and all of Nancy's family over to Nancy and Don's house for a nice celebration dinner. I am sure we used Nancy's house because she had a nice large family room that was able to accommodate all those people from both families. Emma's small house with a small living room and no family room could not have handled all those people. We have a picture of Sandy, Emma and Marie cleaning up the dishes afterwards.

When Craig was about 2 or 3 weeks old Nancy decided to bundle him up in the car and go shopping at Eastland shopping mall, about 20 miles from Utica. The shopping trip went well but when she left the shopping mall she suddenly remembered that she didn't park in her usual section, but horror of horrors, she couldn't remember where she did park! With a brand new baby in her arms she couldn't go walking all over the 4 sides of the parking lot looking for her car so she went to security and explained her dilemma. They piled her and new born Craig in the nice warm security vehicle and started cruising the whole mall lots. Nancy said they drove through the majority of the parking lanes before she found her car, much to her relief. She said that was a lesson to her – from that time on she paid close attention to where she parked her car when leaving it in a huge shopping area.

Nancy said she got a lot of dirty looks from people for taking such a tiny infant out in the dead of winter with such a small, pathetic cry but she was suffering from post partum depression with that pregnancy, the only pregnancy where she had such a problem and she just needed to get out away from the 4 confining walls of her home. She used to have to call Marie for help in the first 6 weeks after Craig was born when things just got too bad with the depression. On the advice of her doctor she joined Recovery Inc. and found that to be quite comforting. She also made a number of friends who were in her group. She was glad that was to be her last pregnancy as she didn't want to suffer that physical and emotional upset again. That had been a new experience for her – she never had any of that with her previous pregnancies and it took her a while to get over this depression and get back on her feet again. To make sure they didn't have another child, Don had a vasectomy. 6 weeks later he had a sperm test to make sure he was now sterile. The doctor made a frantic call to Nancy and Don, continue using birth control, they somehow missed one of them, and Don was still very capable of still being a father!

Dr. Finn was her doctor from the time she moved to Utica and she liked him so much she recommended him to her mother and her sister Sandy. We all liked him

a lot, even after he missed Craig's birth. But we gradually came to understand that we liked him for his great happy, mirthful, Irish personality and not for his skill as a physician. One of Nancy's friends was in St. Joseph hospital to deliver a baby and was into all kinds of complications. Dr. Finn was her doctor. A registered nurse took that woman's husband into a janitor's closet, shut the door and turned on the water in the sink and then said to the man, "Get your wife another doctor right now or she and the baby are going to die. And if you tell anyone I just said this, I will deny it. But Nancy, Marie and Sandy stayed with this doctor until he retired early due to a failing heart as he was such a lovable guy. He died when he was only 54 years old due to a bad heart, just like his father did. We missed him dearly. No other doctor cared as much about the whole patient as this doctor did. And he was a very humble, honest guy. He apologized to Sandy when he missed the fact that her thyroid gland failed. How many physicians would admit their mistakes to a patient in this sue happy world. But on the other hand what patient could sue such a sincere doctor who confessed his error with such a repentant look on his face?



**Linda, Donna, Nancy & Warren**

When Craig was 5 months old Nancy and Don and the older children went to a dude ranch but Craig was too small for that sort of milieu so Nancy asked Marie to take care of Craig for those 2 weeks. Marie said yes and put Craig's crib in her bedroom. From the first day Craig was posing a cute problem for Marie and Edward. Every beautiful summer morning he woke up at 5 am and started cooing and making cute little baby sounds. But at 5 am the cutest baby sounds are not so cute when you want to get a few more hours of sleep. So Marie found a solution to the problem – she moved Craig's crib so when he woke up and lifted his head to coo and make those cute little baby sounds the sun would hit him right in the face. He had to put his head back down over and over again as the sun was so strong on his little eyes. And once he put his head back down he fell back to sleep!

After Craig was born Nancy's nerves still bothered her, so on the advice of her doctor she joined Recovery, Inc. She really got a lot of comfort out of this group and formed some important friendships with some of the fellow participants.



**Donna, Linda & Craig**



**Donna, Craig & Nancy**

The older 3 children had quite an adjustment getting used to a 4<sup>th</sup> child in the family. In time they got used to the new addition but it was quite a shock in the beginning.



**Craig Stephens**

Just like she did with her older children Nancy took Craig to a professional studio to have his baby picture taken. But this time instead of going to the Bill Williams studio she went to the Forman studio. His picture matches the other family pictures in color, quality and thickness of paper.

On December 5, 1965 Nancy came over to Marie's house and they celebrated Sandy's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. They had a nice dinner and their home made cocoa cake with home made white icing for dessert. Sandy had on a red corduroy jumper with a white blouse underneath and had her hair done up nice in a bouffant hair style. Nancy was dressed up really nice in a royal blue dress and a bouffant hair style.

After dinner Sandy walked Nancy out to her car and they said their goodbyes for the evening. But Nancy's goodbye sounded a lot more like a permanent one! She said to Sandy, "Happy last birthday. Then she realized what she had just said and she then said "Oh, Oh!!" Now I won't rest easy until you have your next birthday and I know my words weren't prophetic". They weren't Sandy has lived to see many more birthdays since this momentous one.

About this time Nancy made up her mind that she wanted to go back to high school and earn her high school diploma. And she had no intention of copping out by simply taking a GED test which she knew she would pass, but rather she wanted to earn a bona fide high school diploma. So for several years Nancy went to night school and took all the classes she needed to get a diploma. She studied hard and some classes were difficult and some were a pleasure but she persevered and did well in all her classes and in the end earned herself a very treasured diploma. As soon as she graduated she was all set to continue her studies in college but Don put the kibosh on that, saying that she would grow too far apart from him if she pursued a higher education. So she didn't go. Too bad Don didn't realize that he also was a very intelligent guy and could have taken classes in college as well. But he had no interest in pursuing a higher education. His main interest was in earning a good living.

Nancy met some very good friends who were in her classes in high school. Her favorite and dearest friendship from those days was a delightful, happy woman named Delores Hardoin. She was always full of enthusiasm for life and her enthusiasm and happiness could be contagious which made her a very good friend for Nancy. Don met and liked Delores' husband Johnny so they spent many a pleasant evening in each others' company. One funny story was when Delores and Johnny adopted a brown and black fluffy puppy which they thought would be a cockapoo type dog but their dog kept growing and growing and by one year old he was a 65 lb Benji type dog. But a second surprise awaited them in the second year of that dog's life. Their all black and dark brown puppy turned solid white and stayed that way!

Nancy and Delores remained friends to this very day and they visit back and forth whenever Nancy comes to Michigan for a visit. But these two happily married women later suffered a horrible setback in their lives. They both lost their beloved husbands. When these two met afterwards they talk of their adjustment to life without their husbands. Delores is very proud of her volunteer activities and her ability to get out and meet the public.



**Craig, age 2**

When Craig turned 2 years old for a brief time he started to stutter when he tried to talk. Don was scared as he had a school mate who stuttered terribly and was the object of other kid's unkind remarks. So Don stopped the stuttering the only way he could think of – every time Craig would start to stutter Don would scream at him to stop stuttering. Craig was shocked every time Don would scream but Don's methodology served its purpose – Craig would stop talking and stare at the guy screaming at him and soon he stopped stuttering. I don't think I every saw that stuttering solution propounded in a text book!



**Warren, Linda, Donna, Craig & Nancy**

Once Craig started on table food he had a very poor appetite. It was so hard for Nancy to get him to eat. Nancy explained this to the pediatrician. The doctor told Nancy she was trying too hard to stop pressuring the kid, if she relaxed and left him alone he would eat on his own. So Nancy tried this for a month then took Craig back telling the doctor this just wasn't working, the kid was even skinnier. The doctor took another blood test and saw Craig was now anemic. He gave Nancy a diet for the kid and told her she was right, that she would have to get firm about his diet. So Nancy did the best she could. She had Craig eat with the kids, then eat with Don in the morning and then go around the block and have Craig eat again with Grandpa Bender. By picking a little here and a little there he finally ate a little more than before but still remained thin. Marie remembers putting food



down in front of Craig and then went into the refrigerator to pour him a glass of orange juice. She turned back around and he hadn't eaten anything. Craig, eat what I put in front of you, Grandma Bender said to him. Craig replied in his "I know it all" tone of voice, "Ya dink owange joos fiwst".



**Craig Stephens**

Marie and Ed loved little Craig. Ed called Craig "The sunshine kid!" as he was a happy upbeat sort of kid, even if meal times were a real battle. For Father's day Craig carried in Edward's present from Don and Nancy. Craig came running in the back hall, calling out, "You got compan... - the "y" never got iterated as Craig lost his balance and landed flat on his stomach, squashing the present underneath him. (Fortunately, it was not breakable, just clothes).



**Craig, picking flowers for Grandma**

Then one day when Craig was 2 he was playing in Edward's back yard and he bent over and started picking clover out of the lawn. Sandy ran in, grabbed Edward's expensive Rolliflex camera, called her dad on the phone and asked him to look outside and tell her what speed and what aperture opening she should use. He told her f 16 at 120 second. Sandy loaded the 120 film into the camera. set the settings and ran back outside. Craig was down on his haunches, picking clover and looking intently at the flowers. She snapped several pictures of him that day. The best picture got it's name from what Craig told Sandy he was doing when she asked

him. He told her he was “picking flowers for Grandma”. We blew that picture up to an 10 X 13 and framed it. When they moved to California that picture went with them.



**Donna, Warren, Craig & Linda**

Craig was a really good kid, but so were all of Nancy’s children. They were all well brought up and were all well mannered, well behaved, intelligent children. Ed and Marie loved and appreciated all of those children, but they had more time and more energy for Craig as their own children were now mostly grown and didn’t take near as much of their time anymore. And the first 3 were close together in age and was more or less a single package and mixed in with Marie’s package of 3 kids, Sandy, Bill and Doug. Craig was an only child due to the 7 year age difference from the rest of the family.

But Edward and Marie loved all of them equally even though showing more time to Craig.



**Linda Stephens**

Edward used to get a big kick out of Linda when she was little and he used to say over and over again, “She’s not a door, she’s a winda!”. He used to smile at seeing little 3 year old Donna peddle her way over to Diamond on her big wheel. He admired how well dressed the 2 girls were and he thought their hair was so cute when Nancy curled it. He loved Donna’s little sausage curls and her blue eyes.

Marie and Ed always wanted a child with blue eyes but never had one of their own. So they were thrilled to get a grandchild with blue eyes.



Nancy was very sad and upset to hear that her brother Bill had enlisted in the Army right in the middle of the Vietnam war. Bill was not a survivor and we were all so afraid he would die in Vietnam.



**Doug, Marie & Bill at Fort Rucker**

Bill was enrolled in helicopter repair at Fort Rucker, Alabama. After that he was flown to Vietnam for a tour of duty. While in Vietnam in the Da Nang area he was severely sprayed with agent orange. He was put in a hospital in Saigon, then to the hospital in Japan for several weeks and then they brought him states side and put him in Bethesda Naval Hospital for over a month. Then he came home. He was so poisoned by the agent orange that he just paced the floor day and night, unable to settle down and sleep. Nancy and the whole family was very saddened about how Bill's nervous system was destroyed by the poison. Bill immediately went into a juvenile form of the diabetes from the agent orange and had to go on insulin. The government realized that his disability from agent orange was permanent and so they gave him 100% disability, both service connected pension and social security disability for the rest of his life.



**Warren Stephens**

Ed used to be very pleased with Warren's natural athletic ability. To Ed sports were always important so he really appreciated having an athletic grandson. All of Nancy's kids used to see their Grandpa Edward playing ball at the ball diamond behind their house so they would all grab their baseball mitts and jump over their yard's 6 foot fence and run on the field to play with Edward. All the kids, that is, except Craig. He was only 2 years old and Ed told the kids not to hoist him over the fence as he would get hurt by the ball or a thrown bat. So Craig would hang on the back fence and just moan and sob the whole time we would be playing out there unless once in awhile Nancy would take him inside and distract him with some other activity. All us older kids had a wonderful time playing ball with Ed. Ed was a wonderful ball player. Even in his 60s he could still hit a softball right out of the ball park. He used to compete and win against Mike's friend Bob Barr and his buddies.

Don worked for Krazy Kelly until about the mid 1960s. Don hated selling and used to spend his time as much as possible in Kelly's repairing furniture and appliances. He got very good at doing that, fixing furniture until one could never find the boo boo when he was finished. Don realized that he could earn a living doing this so at first he branched out to other furniture stores on his days off and when the repair business grew he quit Kelly's and started out on his own as a free lance repairman. He was very successful. In 1968 he was earning \$30,000 working only 32 hours a week. For once in their lives Don and Nancy's financial problems were mostly over and they now had enough money to not have to struggle to pay their monthly bills. They were able to buy a house full of new furniture all at once more than once.

Now, that is another story that bears telling. Nancy was out shopping for most of the day and when she got home she saw her neighbors carrying out her furniture. What are you doing!?!? She asked them. Don sold us your furniture they replied. She went into her home and found most of her furniture gone, even her bedroom set. She called Don at the store. What are you doing!?!? She asked him. Oh, I

sold the furniture as I just bought a whole new house full and it has just come in from the manufacturer. Nancy was hot over this as she had no advance notice and no choice in the picking of the new furniture. And Don made her feel foolish in the sight of the neighbors when it was obvious she had no idea what was going on as the furniture was leaving her home.

Nancy acknowledged that Don had good taste in furniture choices but Nancy also had excellent taste too and she wanted to have a say in the style of furniture that came into her home. She was not too happy with the second bedroom set as she preferred her own previous set which was now firmly ensconced in her neighbor's home. Nancy had a big serious talk with Don about not doing that without Nancy's input. But guess what – in a few years later Don did it all over again! Don said that the new furniture cost him nothing as he was able to sell the old furniture for what he had paid for it new and yet the neighbors felt they were really getting a wonderful deal. Such beautiful almost new furniture at half price!

Nancy loved to make a big bowl of ice cream for all of her children on Saar, an event that carried over into California as well. Nancy used to make the kids a chocolate milk shake with the ice cream as well in the evenings.



**Marie, Craig & Edward**

The older children were now all in school in Dresden Elementary school and Craig, age 2 was at home with Nancy. One day Nancy was cleaning all of the upper bedrooms as Craig was tagging along after her, watching her as she worked. When she got into her and Don's bedroom which still had Craig's crib in it, she started dust moping under her bed. Craig giggled and said, "Mommy, there's a monster under your bed!" Nancy pretended to get really scared and started talking about the scary monster under her bed to Craig. Craig was just so full of mischievous glee over scaring Nancy with the monster. Nancy decided to turn the tables on him with him acting so cocky. She took the dust mop, and pushing it violently out from under her bed and then swept it very fast from under her bed to under his crib. "Oh, Craig", Nancy said, "I knocked the monster out from under

my bed and now he's under your bed!!" Craig became very pensive, and after a few minutes of serious reflection, Craig said to Nancy, "Mommy, there's no such thing as Monsters, right?!" Nancy looked at Craig with mirth in her heart and said to him, "When it was under my bed there was such a thing as monsters but when it was under your bed then there is no such thing as monsters anymore, right!" Right, Craig replied.



**Craig**



**Warren**

Shortly afterwards Nancy moved Craig into a bed in Warren's room. That's when Warren's aggravations began. That little kid could be a real snitch when provoked, Warren found out. One day Craig came down from the bedroom and sat down at the dinner table and started eating. Suddenly Craig made the announcement, "Warren 'mokes!'" What? Said Nancy "Warren 'mokes!'" What do you mean, show us, Nancy said. That little rat fink went up to the bedroom, into the closet and brought out a half smoked pack of cigarettes and an ashtray full of butts and with an air of great importance brought them downstairs and dropped them on the kitchen table. Linda thought it was great stuff what her little brother pulled. Warren would have gladly wrung his neck if he had had a few moments alone with him. That revelation surely livened up the dinner discussion that night.



**Donald Stephens**



Don was very hard on Warren all the while he was growing up. He knocked the boy around a lot, something he never did to any of the other children. But Warren was intelligent and resilient as well as being spunky and full of devilment on occasion so he survived the rough treatment quite well.



**Warren**

In 1963 Warren was confirmed at St. Matthias Church.



**Sandy & Linda at St. Matthias**

In 1965 Linda was confirmed at St. Matthias Church. Sandy was her sponsor.



**Marie & Donna**

In 1968 Donna was confirmed at St. Matthias Church. Her grandmother Marie Bender was her sponsor.

Ed and Don used to get home from work very late every night and they were usually exhausted but on Saturday night they used to get their second wind knowing they had the next day off. Sometimes Ed, Marie, Sandy, Nancy and Don used to go to Mighion's restaurant in Mt. Clemens and order their famous broasted chicken with the curly fries. It was a real treat that we would enjoy a few times per year. One time Nancy, Marie and Sandy decided in the dead of winter to go to Mighion's wearing our brand new fashionable suede coats with real fur collars. Yes, they were very fashionable, but had hardly an ounce of warmth, especially considering they had  $\frac{3}{4}$  length sleeves and only a satin lining. And dad's car had a very poor heater. Boy, did we freeze that day!

Sandy heard of a wonderful folk music band that sounded like the Kingston Trio were playing at a tavern in Detroit called the "Poison Apple" on Jefferson Ave. so she talked Ed and Marie and Don and Nancy into going. This was the first and only time Sandy went to the tavern with them as she was too young until just recently as she is 10 years younger than Nancy. So we all went and had a wonderful time, until just before it was time to leave. The music was everything Sandy hoped it would be and the tavern was decorated very upbeat and trendy. Then Ed, who almost never drank, but when he did had a bottomless capacity, started ordering margaritas. Nancy took a notion to match Ed with Margarita for Margarita. They each had 7 of them. It seemed an okay idea until she went with Sandy to the bathroom. In the bathroom the liquor hit her all at once and she cried out to Sandy that she was so sick! She couldn't get out of the bathroom she was so sick. Sandy ran and got Don and then returned and helped Nancy out of the bathroom and into Don's arms. We all got our wraps really quick and got to our car. Nancy cried all the way home that she was so sick from all those Margaritas. 7 Margaritas for a 100 lb woman who never drinks was a very bad idea indeed!

The only other time this happened to Nancy was on Berkley she invited family and friends over to celebrate New Years at her house. Again, just before midnight the liquor hit her and she felt just awful. She told everyone the food was in the oven ready to come out and that they would have to serve themselves as she didn't feel so good and she was going to bed.



**Mildred Stocker & Elenore**



**Marianne**

All through Nancy's married years she and Marie would take turns going over to either Elenore's or Marianne's house for lunch in the middle of the week while the kids were in school and getting back home before supper. They would alternate as to who would cook and host the get together. One time it would be Marie, then Elenore, then Nancy then Marianne. We always had a wonderful time at each other's house. And all of the women put on a very elaborate dinner for lunch. I remember once going to Elenore's and seeing big, fat, juicy pork chops being placed on the lunch table. And they always put on the best table cloth, and served on the best china with the best silver ware. All those 4 women really knew how to put on the dog! And when we would walk into each other's house after that really long car ride we would always say, "Where's the bathroom and when's lunch!" It was a standing joke that never diminished with the retelling.

After lunch we would sit and talk or play scrabble or cards. One time that really stands out in my mind is when Nancy hosted the party at her house in January, 1965 when she was 9 months pregnant with Craig. The dinner went very well, the clean up was a breeze with 5 women doing the carrying away and the dishes and then they all sat down for a serious game of scrabble. And I do mean serious! At the end of the game the scores were really close and there soon got to be a big argument over the last tiles put down and both Marie and Elenore claimed that they won. The argument got more heated and the next thing you knew both Marie and Elenore picked the game board up and the tiles flew everywhere! All over the floor, the table, under the table and even under the refrigerator! Then the heated argument began – "You pick them up!!" "No, YOU pick them up!!" No, YOU!! No, YOU!! (Oh, those stubborn Dahl sisters!!! Neither one of them would budge from their chairs. And while this argument continued, 9 months pregnant Nancy was on her hands and knees, reaching under the refrigerator, picking up the tiles that had flown there!

We cherished those visits back and forth. In those days we all dressed up really classy to go to one another's house. We all so very much miss not living close enough to be able to continue visiting back and forth.

We had one or two incidents on our visit to Elenore's house. On one visit Craig got really close to Deeda, Elenore's standard size Schnauzer and Nancy said that Deeda nipped Craig. Elenore was in a huff over that, saying Deeda did not bite. Another time when Craig was two years old he had finished eating and was about to get off his chair to play with Judy who was a year or two older than Craig. Uncle Herman, who was a neat freak and kept everything inside and outside of his house absolutely spotless, saw that Craig's hands had food on them. So as Craig got off the chair, Herman grabbed him by the wrists and marched him to the bathroom and washed and dried his hands before letting him loose to play with the other kids.



**Mildred Stocker & Elenore Mc Kinin**

Aunt Mildred Stocker, Marie's other sister, never invited us to her house for dinner but she did come as a guest to Marie's and Elenore's houses for our big family get togethers. Mildred was a lot of fun, always laughing, always ready with her quick wit and latest joke. She had a serious case of Parkinson's in her older age, almost as bad as Nellie's so she wasn't physically able to entertain due to her infirmities. She shook so bad she couldn't hold a cup of coffee without it sloshing all over and her hands shook so bad she had a hard time getting food into her mouth. And oh boy! Seeing that lit cigarette flying all over the place gave many of us heart failure.

Nancy used to take Marie grocery shopping with her once a week as Marie didn't drive when she first moved out to Sterling Heights. In the city all of the older women took a bus to wherever they wanted to go so there was no need to have the expense of a second car. The bus line only cost 25 cents, and transfers to a different bus only cost a nickel or a dime more. And also Ed did not want Marie to drive as he was very afraid that something might happen to her if she had a bad

accident. Ed and Marie had gotten into a very bad accident on the night of their 7<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and mom had her front teeth knocked out on the dashboard. Ed was always afraid for mom's safety as he loved her dearly, but he was especially vigilant after that bad accident on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August, 1941, 3 days after Nancy's 6<sup>th</sup> birthday.

One funny grocery trip story. The boys had been down to the Clinton River drinking and they crawled their way up the bank and were starting to walk home in the cold when they spotted Nancy coming with Marie in her car, returning home from grocery shopping. Doug said, "Let's hitch a ride, but remember, our reflexes are very slow so when you get into the car speed up so they won't notice we're drunk. So Nancy stops, the boys darn near rip the doors off their hinges as they spring into the car and forcefully slam the doors shut. "You're drunk!!" Marie hollers at the boys. So much for being discreet.

Nancy was a very prudent grocery shopper as she wanted to get the best quality and the best value for her money so she used to cut out the ads and the coupons and then she would drive to 4 different supermarkets buying what was on sale at each market. Marie thought all that driving around was a bit tiring and somewhat confusing. She bought most of her groceries at the first super market and then tagged along the rest of the trip.

One time Nancy was shopping at Food Fair and had her purse in the basket. She turned her attention to the produce and when she turned her head back her purse was no longer in the basket! Nancy ran to the front of the store and guarded the exit. Sure enough, a man came toward the exit carrying Nancy's purse. That's my purse! Nancy shouted as she reached for and took her purse back. The man mumbled to Nancy that she shouldn't have left her purse unguarded in the cart.

One time Craig was in the shopping cart and got restless and made a big fuss about wanting to be put down so finally for the sake of a few minutes peace Nancy put him down. She then intently studied the groceries in front of her and when she looked around Craig was no longer there. She got frantic and started searching all over for him. She found him in another isle very scared as he knew he was lost. Just as she was about to chastise him for walking away he got really upset with her and said in a loud, aggravated voice, "You yost me!" Nancy looked down at him and replied, "No, you mean you wandered away from me!"

Most of the time Nancy left Craig in the cart all the while she was shopping, but that didn't mean that Craig was kept out of mischief's way. On the contrary Craig

could reach a lot more things on the shelf from the perfect vantage point of the elevated cart seat. When Nancy was lucky she would catch the extra items on the check out counter belt, but just as often she would catch them at home as she was putting the groceries away. “How did the cocoa puffs, candy bar, oreos, etc. get into my order” Nancy would wonder aloud. Looking down at the little whirlwind running around under her feet she soon figured that conundrum out.

Nancy had Craig in his stroller in Hudsons just before Christmas. She was trying to get something for Mike which was no mean task as he was hard to buy for. So Nancy meandered on over to the swanky men’s department and started looking over discreet jewelry. She found a tie tack she liked which was a good choice as Mike dressed up really fancy to go to the Yacht Club with the doctor and this would hold his tie in style. SO she bought it. She then walked around the corner to where she had parked Craig out of the way. Craig, it turned out was very content which was surprising as we felt he would be hungry by now. He wasn’t hungry – can you guess why? He found a large Hershey’s chocolate bar and he was sucking contentedly on it, dribbling it down his front and onto the leg of a \$250 suit which he was using as a towel to clean off his hands. Nancy quietly moved Craig out of the area and in fact all the way out of the store as she feared that if they saw what Craig had done to the suit they would have made Nancy pay for it.

One time Nancy, Sandy and Craig went shopping at Topps department store. Sandy and Craig got bored and Craig suddenly spotted a car racing game at the entrance to Topps. I wanna play!! Craig animatedly sang out. So we went over to the machine looked it over and discovered in short order that Craig was so short that at 2 years old he could not reach the foot pedals to control the speed of the car. He was also too short to see the screen or control the steering wheel. But he wanted to play, that’s for sure. So Sandy sized the situation up and decided that there was a way to skin this cat. She scavenged around and found a shopping cart. She then hoisted Craig into the cart, wheeled him up to the machine and positioned him in front of the screen and steering wheel. She then slipped the quarters into the machine and started the game. Craig steered the car and Sandy controlled the gas. This was not satisfactory to Craig. He was howling that Sandy was not slowing down or speeding up the car in concurrence with his steering as she was causing him to lose! And it would be years before he could control both by himself so he just wished his Aunt would stop messing up!

Once on the way to going shopping Nancy decided to use the brand new Van Dyke freeway that had just opened up that month. She had little 2 year old Craig in the



car with her as she was cruising along on ever increasing speed as she enjoyed the almost empty freeway. Suddenly she, doing close to 80 mph drove right into a huge flock of birds who met their untimely deaths all over her windshield. The entire windshield was filled with blood and guts and feathers. She couldn't see a thing! Quickly she hit the power window button and stuck her head out of the side window as she rapidly decelerated. Craig was oblivious to the danger and Nancy's terror. Rather, from his vantage point in the passenger front seat, he was totally fascinated. "Oh, mommy, yookit the fevvers!" He said with a voice filled with wonder.

Craig used to play with Nicky Martin, Don and Marlene Martin's youngest child, born one year before Craig. Don hated that kid because he felt that the kid was always overpowering and causing trouble for his son Craig. But Craig was a sunny dispositioned kid and didn't mind in the least. But Don did. Nicky was conceived after his dad had had a vasectomy which apparently had reversed itself. They wanted a son but after 3 daughters they gave up their hopes for a son and decided 3 kids was enough. But God had other plans and sent them Nicky. But God also sent them a big cross to bear – when Nicky was 5 years old he developed juvenile onset diabetes and had to have daily insulin injections. One wonders when one sees that Nicky and the girl Carline Schulte both came down with juvenile diabetes around the same time whether there was a virus present in the neighborhood that the susceptible children succumbed to. Nicky later married and had a couple of children ,but then like most juvenile diabetics, he died in his thirties of the complications of the disease. The Martins moved out of the neighborhood before Don and Nancy but Nancy was so saddened to hear that shortly after they moved this couple got a divorce.



**Linda & Donna**

Linda and Donna played with Caroline Schulte and Laura Remsing till they died and then played with the 3 Martin girls and Caroline Remsing. They all got along very well together.



**Emma & Don Remsing**

Several years after Laura Remsing's death Don Remsing kept trying to talk Emma into having another girl. She resisted saying she didn't want to feel like she was replacing their dead daughter. But Don finally prevailed and Emma got pregnant again. Don talked enthusiastically about his coming daughter. But what if it is a boy, Nancy asked him. God wouldn't do that to us, was his answer. Don wanted to call the new baby Lorraine but Emma was very upset, saying that was too close to the dead child's name. But Don kept hanging on to the thought of calling her that name. Until one night he had a very vivid dream in which the dead Laura came to him and said "Don't use that name. Don't do that to me. Let me rest in peace". That dream was so powerful that Don heeded the advice given to him and they picked the name Julie instead. Julie was also a beautiful blue eyed blonde like Laura and Caroline. But one day when she was 16 years old she had a big fight with her boyfriend, ran out into the street to get into her car, was struck by a passing car and died of her injuries.

Caroline did not fare too well in her adult life either. She married a very abusive older man and suffered a crippling permanent injury to her leg. Emma made the remark to Nancy that I guess I haven't been too lucky with my girls. Such tragedy to have happened to such wonderful people!



**Warren**



**Doug**

When Warren and Doug got together, trouble wasn't very far behind. Doug got into Marie's liquor cabinet which Ed won from his business in 1957. It was filled with a variety of booze as Ed and Marie never drank and so that stuff remained in the cabinet year in and year out. Remained there, that is, until Doug and Warren hit their teen years and decided they were thirsty. It took Marie a while to find out

they were draining the various bottles. Marie blew up at them and then marked the liquid level in all the bottles so she would know whether they got into them again or not. They did. Mom poured the liquor down the toilet. It took Don a while to realize that now the liquid in his bottles was shrinking, so he blew up at Warren and then started marking his bottles. The boys caught on to the marking and started bringing the level back up to the marks by putting water in the bottle. Don served some liquor to a friend and discovered that the liquor was seriously watered down. Warren got some marks that day to match the ones on the bottles!



**Linda**



**Warren**

Linda was the first one to have driving lessons on Alter Rd but when he was about 14 Warren also took up driver's training. But not the boring kind where you sit in a car with 2 other teenagers as you drive slowly around town. Nope. None of that boring stuff for him. He "borrowed" his dad's van and other kids' father's cars and they did the motor city speedway routine on the main roads around Utica in the middle of the night. They got away with it for quite a while until 1. Don discovered his tools slung all over the interior of his van as they flew out of the tool box when Warren took the sharp curve on Utica Rd at 80+ miles per hour, and 2. when Mr. Clayton woke up in the middle of the night and discovered his son and his Mustang missing. He called the cops. He named Warren as one of the kids who was driving around in his Mustang. The cops went to Don's house at 3:30 am and woke him out of a dead sleep ringing on the door bell. When Don answered the door in his pajamas the cop asked him where Warren was. In bed, Don replied. You'd better go check was the cops reply. Don went up to Warren's bedroom and there he was sound asleep. The real mc coy, too, not a bed roll. In bed, just like I said Don told the cops. Now for the rest of the story as Paul Harvey would say. Warren was invited to go on their nightly excursion that night but for some reason Warren had a really bad feeling about that night and decided to bow out. Boy, was he ever right! The cops caught those kids cruising in the stolen car and they got in a heap of trouble! But to tell the truth Mr. Clayton was not the one to rat on

someone for improper driving. He used to drive with a fifth under his belt and once after a fight with his wife Mickey he got into the car totally bombed and drove all over his lawn, his neighbors the Wells lawn, over both sides of the street and on and off several curbs before aiming the car back in front of his own house.

Warren like his grandpa Ed and his mother Nancy is quite psychic. The most dramatic thing that happened to him as a child is one time he saw a manly ghost standing at the foot of his bed in the middle of the night. He has no idea who that was, he only knew he saw him.



**Don & Nancy**

Sandy got an elaborate horoscope set up for Christmas that year so she set about figuring out everyone's natal chart based on the date and time of their births. She did both Nancy and Don's charts and was surprised, to put it mildly, to find that both of their charts showed the same thing in regard to their financial futures. Both charts showed that each of them would have a meteoric rise in their financial fortunes and then later on in life their fortunes would fall as suddenly and as dramatically as it had risen. Nancy was shocked by that prediction and thought about it often through the years, and then after the divorce and the reversal of financial fortune for both of them she recalled how the horoscope had predicted just that back in 1968. It seemed that indeed, just like the above picture shows, their fortunes were tied together and hand in hand they went up and hand in hand they came back down. The catalyst in the downfall of their fortune was Don's greed. In wanting it all, he had in fact lost it all.



**Warren & Nancy**



**Mike with another unwanted gift**



**Warren, Linda, Donna, Craig & Nancy**

Marie and Nancy used to alternate having each other over for Christmas and Thanksgiving. Whoever had Thanksgiving that year, the other one would have Christmas. One Christmas when Warren was about 14 years old Nancy had Christmas at her house. It was the nicest Christmas we had that year, even better than all the other nice Christmases that went before. Nancy always had the children open up their presents on Christmas morning after Santa Claus came with only Don and her present but this year she decided that since Warren was older she would let him open one very desired present that evening so the whole family could watch his joy in getting what he really wanted. But she decided to make it a really fun experience for all of us to enjoy. Instead of giving him his present she gave him a piece of paper which cryptically explained to him where he could go to find his next clue. He figured out what she meant, went there and found another clue. And so on, through several more clues. Sometimes he figured out right away where she meant, other times he had a few false starts before figuring out where she meant. But finally after much laughter and anticipation on all our parts, he finally found the much coveting special present, brought it to the living room and opened it.



**Nancy**



**Edward & Marie at Christmas**



Nancy played beautiful Christmas music all that evening. The later it got the more solemn and religious the music became. That year Nancy and Mom decided to go to midnight mass at St. Mathias. So at 11:30 pm we all bundled up and went of to church. Mike stayed behind, Church was no longer his thing. Dad loved going to midnight mass but it turned out that after working all day and his advancing age when he got into church and sat down and things got quiet he found it impossible to keep from nodding off. When Father Partensky started in on his sermon Ed started nodding his head forward, and as the minutes passed his head bowed ever more forward and now it was to the point that he was about to bang his head on the pew in front of him and to top it all off he began to snore! Marie jabbed him in the ribs and told him to wake up. He jerked his head back up and said in a loud voice, “Huh!?!?” Boy, was he embarrassed when he figured out what he just did! After mass we went back to Nancy’s and had a very late supper. But the mood was broken due to the late hour and people just wanted to eat something and then go off to bed. Thus ended our best Christmas eve ever.



**Don, Nancy, Warren, Donna & Linda**

Nancy and Don used to take all the kids to 11 am mass every Sunday and since Marie and Ed attended the same mass we always met in church. Nancy or Don would carry Craig in their arms up to the communion rail and on the way back Craig, always dressed in his red blazer, white shirt, blue boy tie and blue slacks would look for his grandparents in the congregation and when he would spot them he would get a big smile on his face and wave and say, Hi Grandpa! We looked for him as much as he looked for us. The girls were always dressed so nicely too, but Craig always stole the show as he was the baby.

Warren and Doug both had paper routes in those days. They would get the papers delivered to them and then they would have to fold the papers in a roll and tuck the lose end into the middle. Warren and Doug had bikes they used to do the paper route. They were pretty good at it and didn’t get too many complaints. The worse



part of that route was probably trying to collect the money out of the few dead beats on the route.

Warren was losing his enthusiasm for church by this time. He was ditching out of catechism and when he and Doug would go to early Sunday mass before delivering their paper route they would sit in the back of church and talk and carry on. One time the usher came up to them and tossed them out of church. Typical teenage stuff. No worse than their uncle Mike who said going to church once every 7 or 10 years gave him a warm feeling, but even then he would prefer to be the one to hold the baby so when he got bored he could pinch the baby, make it cry and thus have a reason for leaving church.



**Edward & Marie Bender**

Ed, on the other hand was very religious, having come from a home where his mother Elizabeth Ott Bender was a very fervently religious woman. Ed went to mass every Sunday since 1956 and when he was dying prayed very fervently for the Lord to receive him into His kingdom. Marie was a more practical Catholic. She went to church every Sunday with Edward but was more doubting about religious truths. We'll see when the time comes, was her philosophy.

Father Partensky was the pastor of that church and he sure had a way of angering and alienating all of the young couples in that parish by preaching fire and brimstone against birth control. Most of the young families that Nancy knew had 3 or 4 children and that was the most they could handle and then the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vatican Council comes out with the statement that the women were not allowed to use the new birth control methods that had finally just become available. Fr Partensky was almost gleeful in his pronouncements against birth control. So the young people scorned at his hypocrisy when they found out that he was sneaking over to the Dresden Manor apartments nights while the husband was working and having sex with a woman who he was counseling to become a Catholic.

I've just described the best Christmas we ever had, now let me describe the Thanksgiving from hell. Mildred and Harold Neff were celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1968. They invited Nancy and Don and Marie and Ed and our whole family to their home for the occasion. So we went there and had a very nice time. They had tables set up in the basement to accommodate all the relatives and friends they had invited. They served turkey and dressing and all the trimmings that day. It was a very fine dinner and we all really enjoyed ourselves, eating dinner, visiting with relatives and watching Harold and Mildred open up their many wedding anniversary presents. And we all laughed when Harold gathered all the presents together, frowned at all the stuff and then said in his usual frank Harry Truman style, I see I'm going to have to build extra shelves in the cupboard to accommodate all this stuff!

Nancy had planned all along to have Marie and Ed and their family over to her house for a belated Thanksgiving dinner the following Sunday as this would be our final Thanksgiving dinner all together as they were moving to California in January, 1969. But only Marie ended up going to that Thanksgiving dinner. The rest of her family were home dying of the worst flu they had ever had. Mildred's children were coming down with that horrible flu when they served us that dinner and ended up infecting us all. Sandy said that was the worse flu she ever had. Her back was arched almost in two from that virus.



**Trudy & Jack**

The so sad beginning of the end of our happy life together culminated in our trip to the Chuck Wagon fine restaurant in Dryden Michigan on one very cold January evening. It was our farewell dinner to our beloved Stephens family as they were leaving us for good the end of January in order to start a new life without us in California. The California move began a year or two previously when Don decided to visit his brother Jack in California. The family had a wonderful time on that vacation and Don fell in love with the climate there and also was very enthused over the houses available in his price range. So he decided later to uproot his family and begin a new life in the far away state of California. He flew out there again alone and found a home he loved in Orange county at 10461 Santa Elise, Cypress, California. He put a down payment on that house and then called

Nancy and told her he bought them a house out there. Nancy started sputtering – wait a minute Don – is this house in an area with better climate and closer to the ocean or are you buying in the hot desert!? What kind of floor plan does it have? What kind of neighborhood? How many bedrooms? Don, you know I don't like you doing those things without my seeing and approving of them! Oh, I know you'll like this house, was Don's reply. And when Nancy got out to California she did like the house and everything about it.

When Don got back he put the Saar house up for sale for \$30,000 which he got for that house. He then bought the house in Cypress for \$38,000, which proved to be a brilliant move as the house in California skyrocketed in value over the years which Michigan houses did not do. He sold the house in Cypress for \$275,000 in 1985.

Nancy had Don give her the measurements for all the sliding door walls in the family room facing the back and side yard and she went out and bought the material and wore herself out sewing all those drapes on Saar for her new house in California. But they were beautiful when they were finished.

Back to the Chuck Wagon. All of Ed's family was there and also Sonny and Mildred. Elenore and Herman had moved to Florida the year before in 1968 when Herman retired as he hated the cold weather too so they weren't there. As usual little Craig stole the show that night. We all went up to the carver who asked us which cuts of meat we wanted and then carved them and put them on our plates to order. We were allowed to go back for seconds which many of us did as the food was delicious that night. Craig went up by himself with his plate for more meat. He was so small the guy couldn't see him as he didn't reach the glass area of the serving cart. The carver finally saw him, asked him what he wanted and started carving it for him. The carver then got in trouble with the boss for carving meat before there was a customer to serve it to. But I have a customer he said,. Stop being impertinent the boss replied. But I do have a customer, there's a little squirt out there on the other side of the glass holding his plate up, her replied. And indeed there was – a guy named Craig!

Nancy never wanted Craig to go to the bathroom in a strange place by himself so when he later slid off his seat Nancy assumed he had to go to the bathroom and asked him if he needed to go. Nope, was his reply. I just came back from the bathroom.

Craig then decided to entertain us with the new songs he had learned. He sang "Hey Jude" for us. he also sang "I'm in the Lord's Army" and a few other songs.

He thus brightened up what was a very sad time indeed. They would soon be taking all those children away from us to a far away place where we could no longer watch them grow up on a day to day basis. They were tearing half the family apart.

Uncle Sonny Stocker also entertained us that day as well. As usual he was moaning and groaning that he couldn't afford this expensive place and was looking for the cheapest thing on the menu. Marie listened to this nonsense for awhile then she piped up and said to Sonny, "Hey, Sonny, cheer up and enjoy the evening. Ed and I are paying for this dinner for everyone." Sonny cheered up, perked up, and ate a hearty dinner now that he didn't have to worry about lightening up his wallet.

The big day finally arrived, much to our sorrow. First Don filled a van he purchased with what furniture he decided to take with him, and he sold off the stuff that was too bulky or wouldn't fit in the new home's décor.

Once Don drove there and put the furniture in the house he called Nancy and told her it was now time for the family to fly out to meet him and move into their new home. Warren drove out with Don and was very sorry he went along on what he thought was going to be an adventurous journey. Don drove day and night stopping for gas and little else. It was so exhausting that Warren felt he should hang his head out the window by the time he got to California. Nancy was beyond exhaustion from work in packing up and making her new curtains and also from the emotional exhaustion of the strain of knowing she was leaving her mom and dad and brothers and sister for good. Visits would no longer be daily, they would now be few and far between due to the distances involved.

When Nancy got on that plane she was beyond exhaustion. She told the stewardess to watch the children on the flight and to give Nancy a pillow and blanket and to let her sleep, don't even wake her up for lunch. When Nancy got off the plane she was met by Don who drove his little family to their new home and new life in California. Nancy found she was pleased with the house and with the location. Don always had good taste but not necessarily the same taste as Nancy in some things but in this choice they did agree. Don had what furniture he brought by truck put in place so Nancy had a table to eat on and a bed to sleep in. And she had the beautiful drapes she had made and hung them right away so she had privacy.

Her front and back yards were dirt and she had no walls up yet, just open space.

Don got back in the truck and drove to Michigan for his second and last load. Nancy was alone in California with the kids. A few days later her sister Sandy flew to California to visit and help her put the house in order and to keep her company while Don was gone. They had a wonderful visit those two weeks. The house was quickly in order and they spent a lot of the time exploring the new neighborhood and having fun at the local attractions.

Nancy put the older 3 kids in school right away as it was February, the middle of the school year. Warren was the child most affected by the move. He was very popular in the Utica Community school and had lots of friends, and was active in lots of school activities. Being uprooted in the middle of the school year and going to a totally strange school in a new state was very traumatic to him. He never settled in to the same level of comfort in the new school as he had back in Utica.

Linda wasn't happy about the change either but being younger and in a lower grade she fared better with the change. Donna took to the new school just fine due to her young age and being in grade school.

Craig was not much traumatized by the move but he was very traumatized by the fact that his father was only there for a day or so and then drove off back to Michigan. Craig was really worried about the absence of his father and was upset about it until his dad returned.

The day after Sandy got there Linda had just gone through the garage and walked off to school. Sandy went out to the garage after breakfast and was sweeping it out. Nancy's neighbor came over and asked Sandy if she could speak to her mother. With tongue in cheek, Sandy smiled and went in to Nancy and told her that the neighbor just said to her that she wanted to talk to Sandy's mother, so Nancy should go out and talk to the new neighbor. Boy, was Nancy put out, the neighbor calling Nancy Sandy's mother! Nancy said she did not know this neighbor but she did know one thing – that she would always hate this neighbor!

Meanwhile Don is back on Saar loading up the rest of the family's things. And Marie was also back in Nancy's family room loading up Nancy's family room ceiling fixtures! It turns out Marie liked Nancy's fixtures much better than her own so she removed her fixtures from her family room, went over to Saar, unscrewed Nancy's fixtures and replaced hers with Nancy's. Oh, mom! Nancy said when she heard about the fixture switch. That house wasn't ours anymore – it belongs to the new owners. You stole those fixtures! I don't think they'll put me

in jail for it, was Marie's reply. She got away with it as she knew she would. The new owners never noticed the switch.

Mike, Nancy's brother, agreed to accompany Don on this second trip. They loaded up the truck and also Don's Vista Cruiser station wagon. They hitched the truck to the back of the station wagon and drove the car as it was heavier and more stable. Again they drove day and night, one person sleeping while the other one slept. In Texas they almost took the big sleep! They were driving about 75 to 80 miles an hour through miles and miles of boring plateau land. Suddenly without warning the plateau ended and as they suddenly were going down hill the entire road was one solid sheet of ice! They knew they could never dare to touch the brakes or they would spiral out of control! So they went down the side of that mountain full speed ahead! Somehow, maybe thanks to their guardian angels, they made it safely off that slanted sheet of pure ice! The rest of the trip was an anticlimax. They pulled into Don's driveway on Santa Elise safe and sound.



**Craig with his monkey bank**

Nancy and Sandy had gone to Knott's Berry Farm a few day before and Craig had bought a plastic monkey bank as a souvenir. They put it in a box and taped up the box at the store. When he got home Nancy told him to take the monkey out of the box. Craig refused. he said the monkey was going to remain in the box until his daddy got back home. When Don appeared a few days later Craig greeted him effusively and then within a half hour ran up stairs, brought down the monkey and took him out of the box, just like he had said he would.

Mike had to fly back home as he had to return to work at Dodge Main in Hamtramck. So he left the next day.





**Craig at Disneyland with Donald Duck**

Sandy stayed for the 2 weeks then also flew back home.

While Don was gone Nancy and Sandy went to Disneyland with Craig. The whole day Craig looked all over the place to see Mickey Mouse. Looked as we did, none of us ever found him. At the end of the day Craig was so exhausted from all that walking that he fell asleep and Nancy was carrying him all the way out of the park on her shoulder. When we were just about at the front gate, Craig, who had been sound asleep, suddenly woke up, saying Mickey Mouse! and scampered out of Nancy's arms, turned around and found Mickey Mouse. There was no way Craig could have seen Mickey Mouse ahead of time as his face was turned in the opposite direction. Nancy and Sandy never could figure out how he could have known, being sound asleep and in the wrong direction! Must have been ESP!



**Craig & Nancy at Knott's Berry Farm**

Nancy and Sandy also went to Knott's Berry Farm with Craig those two weeks also. But Knott's was a very small attraction in those days,. mostly shops and a little bit of western décor. But it was a lot of fun walking through and buying a few things.

Nancy also had to drop a few things off to a dry cleaners while Sandy was there so we looked in the yellow pages for a dry cleaner and Sandy stopped at a gas station to get a local map so she could see how to get around. SO we dropped the clothes off and then went sightseeing, with the help of our newly acquired map. When Sandy was back home in Utica for about a week she got a call from Nancy – where

did I drop my clothes off? Fortunately Sandy remembered what street it was on and Nancy was soon reunited with her clothes.



**Craig trying to fly his kite**

Sandy bought Craig a kite and then took him into the back yard and they tried to fly it together. There was so little wind there that it took the whole afternoon to get that kite up in the air any distance, but by 4 pm we got it up the entire length of two balls of string. Craig and I had a lot of fun running back and forth across those bare mud encrusted back yards. (As you can see, there was no chance of falling into a swimming pool or slamming into a brick wall that day.)



**Don, Nancy, Craig, Warren & Linda**



**Warren, Linda, Donna, Sandy & Craig**



**Donna, Linda, Sandy & Craig**

Sandy bought a Polaroid instant camera that trip and took a bunch of pictures. They were lousy quality pictures, but invaluable memories were captured on them. The pictures Sandy likes the best are the ones of Nancy and Don and their kids showing what they all looked like the week of that big move to California.



**Don & Nancy Stephens**

Don brought the rest of their furniture, clothing, and personal articles from Saar and Nancy and Don set to work putting their new house in order. They went out and bought what they needed to complete the furniture in the house after all the stuff from Michigan was put in place. They then started their new life together in California.

Funny, isn't it, that it was Don's brother Jack Stephens who brought them out to California in the first place and yet once they were out there Don didn't get along too well for long with his younger brother. It was always an on again, off again relationship between the two. Don's children and Jack's children got to know each other but it never developed into a close relationship. Linda does occasionally see and likes to be with one of Jack's daughters. But that is about the extent of it.



**Craig with Jack's daughters**



**Craig, David, Donna & Jacks dtrs**

When Don first moved out there Jack and Trudy came to visit with their children. We have some cute pictures Sandy took of that first visit in February, 1969.

Nancy used to cook Don's favorite foods for him, both on Saar and later in California. She made pinto beans from scratch in which she would first soak the pinto beans all night and then cook them all day the next day. She would serve them for dinner with corn bread. Nancy also made meatless pizza on Saar for Friday dinners. Her pizzas were delicious but were a lot of work for her to make. In Berkley on Fridays Marie discovered a great tasting meat substitute that Nancy also served her family until they took it off the market. It was tuna hot dogs, and

boy, did they taste good! Nancy and Marie figured that they took them off the market because they really did contain meat. Once Nancy went on a diet to remain thin she always made a cottage cheese based bread for dinner. Nancy was the one who mostly ate the cottage cheese bread, eating mostly the crust and discarding the middle.

When Nancy's children came over to Marie's house on Diamond after dinner, Marie used to laugh and say that smelling the kids' breath she knew Nancy was very liberal with the use of garlic!

In California on Sunday mornings Don used to cook a big dinner for the family and it was a really good one too and always contained one favorite southern dish, grits. The first time Sandy tried grits on one of those Sundays she felt it tasted a lot like cream of wheat but needed a little salt and a little sugar too.



**Donna, Craig, Warren and Linda Stephens**

Soon after Nancy settled in to every day life in California she took the 4 children to a professional photographer and had all 4 of them photographed together. This was a stunning picture and was widely circulated to many family members.

Don started up a furniture repair business in California but it was so hard for him to break into this line of work, selling this new concept to the various furniture stores that he was down to his last \$1000 and was seriously thinking of returning to Michigan in spite of how much he hated Michigan's winter climate. But once he reached this low point suddenly the concept caught on with the various furniture stores and he started building up his business to where he could once again make a good living.

Don got to get one up on Charlie who was the man in Wards who steered Ward's business his way. Don had to lick up to Charlie as Wards gave Don a lot of repair business. Charlie made Don pay him a kick back under the table for every repair he steered Don's way. And now Charlie came to California to visit Don and he liked the climate there and decided that he also wanted to move out there and he wanted to ride Don's coat tails. In Michigan Don and Nancy had to go out socially with Charlie Chiaravino and his wife Shirley and pretend that they liked them as Ward's business was a major portion of Don's bread and butter. But now in California Don could tell Charlie exactly what he thought of him. It was pure joy to Don to give Charlie the royal brush off.

Another furniture repair story that Sandy got a big kick out of was when in a subsequent visit to Don and Nancy Sandy was spending an afternoon in the swimming pool on Santa Elise when Nancy said she needed to go grocery shopping and asked Sandy if she would answer the phone in the dining room every time it rang as that was Don's life blood. All his service calls came through that phone. So while Nancy was gone that phone was very busy, all with Don's business calls. Sandy had to hop out of the swimming pool 8 times in several hours to answer 8 future service calls. All were routine – the name of the company, and name and address of the problem piece furniture, and what the problem was. But boy, that 8<sup>th</sup> call was a real humdinger. The owner of the furniture store was beyond being obnoxious. He started hollering at Sandy as soon as she answered the phone in a really loud, demanding, obnoxious tone of voice, telling her that Don was going to go out tomorrow to this address he gave me and fix this person's problem. I told him that we could not guarantee any date or time, that Don had to work it into what area he was going to be in that day. That furniture store owner just started screaming at me to tell Don he was going out there tomorrow and then hung up on me.

Don came home around 5 pm. Sandy gave him the list of 8 calls, briefly explaining each one, but once she got to the last one Don blew up. "That god damn kike! I told him I'd never do any of his work and to not call me again." "Give me that phone, I'm gonna call that g.d. kike!" He ripped his fingers around that phone dial, the Jewish guy answered the phone and Don let loose with a string of expletives, told him "I told you I'd never do any work for you and you know damn good and well you can never promise a client a certain day or time. So never call me again you g.d. kike!" And he slammed the phone in that guy's ear! Sandy felt so good that that miserable obnoxious guy got his come uppance.

Marie and Edward went out to California in order to visit Nancy and her family and to see her new home. Nancy's parents enjoyed the beautiful weather in California and enjoyed seeing all the sites, but as much as Nancy and Don tried to talk Marie and Edward into moving to California they both felt that Michigan was their home and they wanted to stay put. Don was even seriously thinking of buying a condo complex not too far from where he lived and said they could rent one of the units for a reasonable price and be close to Nancy and her family. But they wanted to remain in Michigan, the home of their birth.



**Marie & Nancy**

Nancy used to take all of us to a very fine restaurant on the Pacific ocean for lunch. Here is a picture of the parking lot belonging to the restaurant.



**Edward, Marie, Nancy & port authority man**

Nancy drove Edward and Marie sight seeing and when they were about to drive across the Vincent Thomas Bridge at the Port of Call they were pulled aside and Nancy found out that she was the 1 millionth car to cross that bridge so she was singled out for a photo session and a ceremony. We have some wonderful pictures of the bridge authorities shaking Nancy's hand over her Vista Cruiser. Mom and Dad are also in some of these bridge ceremony pictures.





**Marie At Knott's Berry Farm**

Nancy took Mom and Dad to Knott's Berry Farm and Marie had a ball lifting a huge rock over her head with a gleeful smile on her face. We all had a big smile on our face when we saw that rock in mom's hands as Marie had the strength of a new born kitten all the days of her life. Her touch on your arm was like the brush of a feather it was so light. And now here she is lifting a 400 lb rock with ease! Ya, sure mom. You weren't fooling anybody for a minute!



**Don Stephens**

Well, maybe she fooled Don!? He just had to show off his muscles too! Uh, Don, I think the purse Marie is carrying is heavier than that humungous rock!



**Craig, Edward, Marie & Donna**

Another visit to California by Marie and Edward had a sad short ending for Ed. He drove Nancy's car on the California freeways and those 5 lane freeways made a nervous wreck out of him. Edward was over 50 years old when the first freeway systems came into being in Michigan so all that high speed multi lane driving was new to him in his later years. He got so nervous driving in a strange state on those freeways that Nancy got him into her doctor to get him a tranquillizer to settle him down. Her doctor refused and so he took the next flight home. Marie stayed with Nancy for the rest of the visit.

Edward did get a visit in to Disneyland before he went back home.



**Blessed Mother, Donna, Marie, Craig & Nancy**

When Marie and Edward visited Nancy the first time they saw the beginning of landscaping being done in front and back of their house on 10461 Santa Elise in Cypress. Ed and Marie were especially happy to see a Blessed Mother shrine having been placed in the corner of Nancy's back yard.



**Don & Nancy with newly planted shrubs**

On another visit to California Marie went with Nancy to a nursery and bought a lot of shrubs and trees and plants for the front yard. Marie then watched Nancy plant them all. Marie thought they looked very nice when Nancy was done. But when Don got home that was not what he had in mind for the front of the house. So the

next day he went out and bought what he wanted for the front of the house, tore out all what Nancy had planted the day before and put in what he just bought. When Marie and Nancy came home that night and saw what Don had put in Nancy was displeased as she didn't like that arrangement at all. So the next day she and Marie went back to the nursery and bought a whole new 3<sup>rd</sup> set of shrubs and spent that afternoon pulling out Don's shrubs and putting this new 3<sup>rd</sup> set in.



**Don, Nancy & Marie**

Then Don came home after this was done, looked at the 3<sup>rd</sup> set of Nancy's shrubs and got so upset he hollered at Nancy, "Why don't you go back home to Michigan and take your god damn mother with you!" Marie was standing right there when he hollered those endearing words. So from that time on, for at least the next 7 years, every time Marie sent Don a birthday card she signed it "from your God damn mother in law". Don used to get a silly grin on his face reading those cards from Marie. He really didn't mean it the way it came out. (Did he?)



**Marie & Ed at Knott's Berry Farm**

Oh, Oh. The above picture looks like there is a family history story that up to now remained untold! Before all of you guys get all fired up about a hidden scandal, let me burst the bubble by saying this is just a fun picture taken at Knott's Berry Farm during one of their visits to California.



**Nancy in the Vista Cruiser**

About a year after Nancy moved out to California she gave all of us a really bad scare. Don had driven the Vista Cruiser the day before and had ridden over a sunken culvert at a higher rate of speed and there was a possibility that one of the brake lines might have broken. But no one was aware that that had happened. The next day Nancy was scheduled to take 12 kids in her Vista Cruiser to Sea World in San Diego. As she was getting dressed that morning, as she was putting on one of her favorite blouses she suddenly said to herself, “Why would you want to ruin that blouse?” It was one of her ESP moments kicking in again. She has no idea why she would say that for herself, but it was a very prophetic statement. On the way to Sea World as she was going down the mountain she suddenly discovered to her horror she had no brakes. She tried several times to put the brakes on to no avail. Warren hollered for her to pull the emergency brake. She did, the brake was broken. She saw there were two lanes up ahead with two cars stopped for a traffic light in each lane. She had two choices – either to plow into the Volkswagen or to plow into a huge brand new station wagon. She chose to hit the big station wagon figuring the occupants of that car had a better chance of survival. She hit that station wagon so hard she accordioned it. When Warren saw the accident was about to occur he wrapped his arms around Nancy to protect her. (He was in the seat directly behind her). The girl in the front passenger seat shoved 5 year old Craig behind her. Donna, who thought Nancy had pulled the emergency brake and they were slowing down, slid down in the front seat. When the car hit Nancy was knocked unconscious. Craig got a shard of glass in his lip which he was so proud of himself as he pulled it out by himself. Donna had two broken ankles as her feet took the brunt of the crash thus saving her face from injury. The girl who was in front of Craig had multiple lacerations to her face. All 13 people were taken to the emergency room for treatment. Nancy was the only serious injury. Her heart kept stopping in the emergency room. The resident on duty that day has to be credited with saving Nancy’s life as he refused to give up.

The doctor told the resident to give up as there were 12 other people in this accident to treat but he refused to give up on Nancy. Nancy was blind and paralyzed and couldn't speak but she heard the doctor say to give up on her and she was horrified. She wanted to cry out, "No, don't give up, I'm still alive!" But she couldn't utter a word due to the physical and vocal paralysis. One time when her heart stopped again, she suddenly came right out of her body and floated up toward the ceiling and saw everything they were doing to her body. Then when he shocked her heart back into normal rhythm she dropped back into her body. Nancy had said over and over again to all of us that she will never be afraid of dying as she had left the body that day and she now knows there is life after death and she was on her way that day in the emergency room when she was suddenly pulled back into her body.



**Nancy wrote on the back of this picture  
"Linda snuck this picture while I was sleeping."**



**Nancy wrote: "The flowers left from Don, middle from you, right from kids. Far right, plant from Delores. The beautiful doll in red is from Betty. The cards are just some I received. I could never fit all on the table."**



**Nancy wrote: "My kids gave me these flowers the day I got home from the hospital. My scar is more prominent than these pictures show. But I am lucky it is not much worse."**





**Nancy wrote: "Your beautiful flowers."**



**Craig's black eye from the accident.**

Nancy survived that day by the grace of God and the persistence of that resident who refused to give up on Nancy. And I guess it was just not her time yet. Nancy went home but was feeling really in pain, woozy and out of it. She had obvious wounds on her face and head from hitting the windshield. Then about a week later all of a sudden she started violently lurching to one side and had a horrible headache. She went to the emergency room and they discovered she had been bleeding into the brain as one of the injured areas suddenly started seeping blood. In time the bleeding stopped and she regained most of her balance. But she never completely regained all of her balance back and for the rest of her life the ends of her fingers felt numb. She often lost one of her fine rings as she never felt they slipped off her finger.

Several weeks after Nancy started feeling better she received a visit from the emergency room resident that saved her life. He was very taken with Nancy and frankly had a crush on her. She saw him several times but had to discourage his romantic feelings as she told him she was a married woman.

As for that poor Vista Cruiser, it went to station wagon heaven. It was far beyond saving. As did the huge station wagon she plowed into. The driver of that wagon was a doctor of medicine but he refused to offer any medical aide to Nancy or the occupants of her station wagon. To put it mildly, he was really ticked off. He just picked up that station wagon that same afternoon and took the afternoon off from his practice to take his family for a drive in the new family vehicle. His car lasted for about 2 hours from pick up to being towed to the local scrap yard. It was



amazing that no one in his vehicle was seriously hurt. It was also amazing that the doctor and no occupants of Nancy's car sued her insurance company.



**Don, Craig & Mike Bender**

Mike came to visit Nancy by himself shortly afterwards. Nancy had him sleep in Craig's room and Craig slept in a sleeping bag in the bonus room. Nancy took Mike to see all the usual tourist attractions and they had a wonderful, memorable time that visit. But all good things must come to an end and so 2 weeks later Mike was packing his suitcase, getting ready to once again catch a plane back to Michigan and return to work. Craig came up to his bedroom as Mike was packing and watched him folding his clothes into his suitcase. Little 5 year old Craig asked Mike, "Are you going home now?" Mike said yes. Craig then said, "Good, now I can have my bed back!"



**Craig & Donna**



**Nancy & Donald**

One early morning soon after Don and Nancy moved to California and were settled into their new home they were rudely awakened in the early hours of the morning but a big earthquake. Nancy heard Craig, only 4 years old, hollering for help as the first big jolt knocked him right out of his bed and subsequent jolts were knocking him all around his room and his furniture was dancing was coming after him and he was barely able to keep from getting clobbered by that stuff. Right away it was Nancy's intention to jump right out of her bed and run to her little son in his room, but believe it or not the earthquake was so powerful jolting her bed violently that she was unable to get out of it! She would crawl to one side and that side would heave up into the air so she would crawl to another corner and then that corner

would heave up into the air keeping her in the bed. She was unable to get to him until the jolting stopped. In the meantime she was looking down the hall and could see the children's bathroom next to Craig's room – she saw the walls of the bathroom heave so violently that the hanging globe bounced all over the place and the bathroom walls actually looked like they were coming together and touching one another! Boy, that was some humdinger of an earthquake, the worst one they ever had while living there.



**Craig on his new 20 inch bike**

About 1 ½ years after Craig moved to California Sandy bought him his first bicycle, a 20 inch with training wheels. His mom Nancy bought him a crash helmet in the days when helmets were not yet in vogue. Craig was a little resistant to wearing it as most kids did not wear them in those days, but in learning to ride the two wheeler Craig took a hard fall and landed on his helmet and put a significant dent in it. He was then very impressed with the preventative nature of the helmet in preventing head injuries so he wore his helmet after that.



**Craig, giving his bunny a sniff of the roses**

One day Craig just got off his bike and still had the bike helmet on when he walked into the backyard on Santa Elise and took his stuffed bunny and put him up to the rose bush. Nancy asked him what he was doing and he replied that he wanted his bunny to be able to smell the roses too, what an adorable, goofy, lovable little kid Nancy thought.



**Craig, middle & Linda, right**

Nancy gave Craig a birthday party for his 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A fifth birthday party was a sort of a tradition with Marie and Nancy was carrying it on with Craig. Nancy invited all of his new little neighborhood friends and decorated the room with balloons, hats and party dishes and cups.



**Don, Craig & Linda**

Nancy and Don used to take the kids to the mountains for a day trip, Here is a picture of Don with Craig and Donna in the mountains.



**Don & Nancy**



**Linda & Nancy**

Don and Nancy continued to enjoy bowling on a mixed league in California too. Later on Linda also bowled on the same team with Nancy on a ladies' bowling team. And again after bowling they would go out to a local restaurant with their friends for a light repast before heading home to bed.



**Warren**



**Linda**

In their teen years Warren and Linda both had jobs in the same restaurant. Boy, was that ever a battle ground between the two. Linda was lucky if she ever got what she asked for when Warren was cook. They were always after each other's throats. Sibling rivalry taken to greater lengths, it seemed.



**Donna**



**Craig**

Remember all the stories about Grandpa Edward Bender being a bad babysitter? Well, I guess some of that trait of his rubbed off on his grand daughter Donna. Nancy left Donna to babysit Craig who was 7 years younger than her. One time when she was sitting she asked Craig if he would like some pop corn. Sure! he replied. So Donna put the pop corn kernels in the corn popper and waited and waited and waited for that darn pop corn to finally pop. It just never wanted to pop, it seemed. So she lifted up the lid to see why it wasn't popping. Just then it started popping hot and heavy! All over the kitchen as Donna stood there with the lid on her hand amazed at how it all at once started popping just as she lifted the lid. She sure had one big clean up that day.

Another time Nancy and Don went out of town for a few days and Nancy left a package of hamburger out on the counter thawing so Donna could make hamburgers for her and Craig. Well that hamburger just sat on the counter over night as she made something else for supper. And then it sat out another day and finally on the third day she decided to make hamburgers. She then gave Craig one and herself one. She didn't eat hers as she thought it tasted funny. But she never

told Craig who ate the whole hamburger. He got sicker than a dog later on from eating spoiled meat!

We also have pictures of Craig in the back yard with Uncle Mike and Don. Don had his arm around Craig. That is also a really impressive picture.



**Nancy, Craig, Mike & Marie at the airport**



**Mike, Nancy & Craig**



**Sandy, Craig, Mike, Marie**



**Craig & Marie**

Nancy and Craig came back to Michigan by plane to visit us about a year after she moved to California. We were all ecstatic to see them again after a year's absence. Marie, Mike, Bill and Sandy went to Detroit Metro airport to meet them at the gate. They flew in on American airlines which they took for the next several trips in and out of Detroit as they were direct flights and they had a good reputation. (Sandy had also flown to California on American Airlines. She was surprised to find in February, 1969 that they never asked her for her ticket. As she was sitting on the airplane she wondered if they would have known the difference if she had gotten on the plane without a ticket.)





**Craig on Marie's cot   Sandy on cot in family room**

Nancy and Craig stayed at Marie's house on Diamond. Nancy slept in Sandy's room upstairs and Sandy and Craig slept on 2 cots in the family room. We had a wonderful visit together. Nancy always loved to come in October as the weather was usually gorgeous and the trees were all in full color before losing their leaves to winter time.



**Emma Remsing**

Nancy had a wonderful visit with us and also with Emma Remsing and her other friend Delores Hardoin. Marie, Nancy and Emma Remsing would once again play a game of scrabble together like they did when Nancy lived on Saar.



**Marie & Craig**



**Craig & Taffy**

When Nancy and Craig came to visit the first time there was a new addition to Marie's family – a little white cockapoo named Taffy. Taffy was an adorable puppy, all white with taffy colored ears when Craig first came back for a visit. Craig played in and out of the house with that adorable little dog. We have many adorable pictures of those two together in Marie's house and her back yard. We



especially love the picture where Craig is with Taffy and smoking a fake cigar while sitting on Marie's steps.



**Bill, Craig & Taffy**



**Craig, Sandy & Bill playing cards**

Bill loved Craig and spent a lot of time with him when he came for a visit to Marie and Ed's. During one visit Bill was playing Old Maid with Craig. Craig won a few times and then never again, He was so crest fallen, not understanding why he could never win. Sandy came home from work, watched the two of them playing Old Maid and noticed at once that the ear of the Old Maid card was bent. No wonder Bill never ended up picking the Old Maid! He marked it! I then bent the ear on every other card and Craig then won a few more games,. then started losing again. I checked the cards, The second ear had now been bent. I bent the second ear on all the other cards. Craig said to Bill with a little boy's feeling "you would cheat a little kid!?!?" Bill laughed. In the end Sandy had bent all 4 ears.



**Taffy, Marie & Craig**

Craig put Taffy on Marie's dining room table and let her clean up the left overs. Looking at the above picture can you guess what Marie's reaction was to a dog on her dining room table?!



**Nancy, Marie & Craig**



**Ed, Marie, Craig & Nancy**



**Craig, ?, Nancy**



**Sandy & Craig**



**Edward & Marie Bender**



**Ed, Craig, Marie, and Nancy**

We went a lot of fun places together while they were here. We went to Frankenmuth and had their family style chicken dinner. (It is akin to a full course Thanksgiving dinner). We took some wonderful pictures that day. We also went for a walk in Rochester State Park and took a wonderful black and white picture of the family nestled in a huge tree in the park.

We also went to Metropolitan Beach park and enjoyed doing a lot of the activities there. One of Craig's favorite was to climb up the fat, tall pole at the park and grab the rope at the top and ring the bell at the top of the bell. The first couple of times skinny little Craig was here he effortlessly climbed that pole right to the top. But in a later subsequent visit he had a lot of trouble climbing to the top. He has visibly straining to haul himself up that pole. Uncle Mike was full of mirth and decided to add to Craig's discomfiture. Mike grabbed that pole in his hands and climbed right up to the top and rang the bell, slid back down and told Craig who easy that was! Boy, did Craig ever resolve to make it up to the top again and ring that bell. With stark determination he grabbed that pole and hauled himself up that pole and rang that bell, but with a lot more physical exertion than in previous years. Craig sure took a lot of fun filled razzing from Sandy and Mike that day! He was shocked at the difference in his ability to haul his avoirdupois up that pole this trip.



**Craig on the Schwinn spider bike**

Sandy had a Schwinn 20 inch fancy 10 speed with a banana seat that Craig liked. So she lowered the seat for him and he drove that bike up and down Diamond Drive. Sandy and Craig went bike riding together all over the subdivision and even through the fields. We had a lot of fun on those bikes.

Later when Craig got bigger Sandy sent Craig a 26 inch Schwinn green 10 speed bike.



**Marie, Sandy & Nancy**

On Sweetest Day of the first year Nancy came and visited us Edward did a very sweet thing for his 3 girls. He brought home 3 Sweetest day cards, one for Marie and one each for Nancy and Sandy. We really were touched by his thoughtfulness.



**Ed, Nancy, Marie**



**Edward & Nancy**



**Nancy & Craig**

When Nancy came to visit us she also went to the 3 par golf course at Metropolitan Beach with Sandy, Marie and Edward. It was a very short course and was a lot of fun for all of them that day.



**Craig, Nancy & Marie**

During Nancy's visits to her mom and dad, at the end of every day everyone was pleasantly tired after a long day of fun and visiting with one another. It was always such a short 2 weeks and such a long period of time between visits that we all tried to cram as much visiting as we could into each of these visits. We cherished every moment together and we were all so unhappy when it came time to say goodbye till next time.



**Craig**

On later visits Sandy took Craig fishing, buying him all the usual fishing paraphernalia. We went all over trying to have Craig catch a fish, with little luck. We caught one tiny perch and 2 tiny sunfish. We had to throw them back as they were undersized and useless as eating fish. Sandy felt so sorry for Craig not catching any fish that she took him to a trout pond. Craig said that was no fun as the main game there was to keep the fish off your hook as they grabbed the hook as soon as you lowered it into the water with no effort n your part and each fish cost \$2.29 per pound. Craig caught 3 fish, spending the whole time trying to keep each of those fish off his hook.



**Craig**

Craig was really sensitive, not wanting to hurt the fish. He was so careful in taking the hook out of their mouth and then keeping them in a pail of water. After we were done fishing he checked the fish and was disturbed that they were still alive. He took the fish to the owner of the pond. She lickety split grabbed each fish, turned them upside down and slit open the entire belly and pulled out the guts. Craig almost passed out he was so upset at what she was doing to those fish that he was so careful to treat humanely. What a butcher! Craig said of that woman. I can't believe what she did to that fish! Craig took the 3 trout home to Grandma Bender. The next day Marie fried up the trout for lunch and served them to Edward, Craig and herself. Sandy came home after putting in a half day at work and took Craig to miniature golf on 23 Mile in New Baltimore. We paid and started playing. Craig walked off to one side and threw up the fish. He couldn't stand to eat what he fished out alive from that pond.



**Craig on Sandy's moped**

When Craig was about 14 years old and was visiting us on Dino Circle in Chesterfield Township Sandy let Craig ride one of her mopeds while she rode the other one. We rode all around that area and even a bit out into the country having a lot of fun feeling the breeze in our hair.





**Craig fishing in New Baltimore**

Craig kept asking Don to take him fishing all through the years but Don just never took him fishing. Craig even had all the fishing gear in California but it never left the house. That used to make Nancy so sad seeing that little boy with his heart set on fishing and his dad never taking him.



**Nancy Stephens, Dick & Betty Brochu**



**Emma & Don Remsing**

Nancy and Don also made several visits together to Michigan to see Nancy's family and their friends. They went out with Emma and Don Remsing, also with Dick and Betty Brochu. On one trip to Michigan Don was fascinated by Edward's 1050's era all metal vacuum cleaner. Don asked Ed if he could take it home and display it in his store, which Ed said okay.



**Nancy & Donald**



**Marie & Sandy**



**Edward**



On one visit to Michigan Marie, Edward and Sandy took Don and Nancy back to Detroit Metro airport. As we got into the main body of the American Airlines terminal Marie spotted an insurance kiosk (they were all over the place in those days. Put \$5 or \$10 in it, fill out a policy and it would cover you for \$250,000 or \$500,000 for that particular flight.) Marie looked at the kiosk, put her hand on Don's arm and said, "Hey Don, just a minute. I want to fill out one of these policies on your life. I feel lucky today!" Don gave Marie a sick smile, but then bought insurance on himself. But you better believe he did not make Marie the beneficiary, because as she said, she felt lucky tonight and Don was not about to press his luck as Marie has always been very lucky all through the years and he had no intention of increasing her lucky streak at his expense.



Marie went out to Nancy's quite a number of times through the years, often by herself. On one of those visits Nancy drove to her cousin Virginia Clayton's house in Sunland, California and picked her up and drove to a mountain where Marie, Virginia, Nancy and Virginia's teen age daughter walked a mountain path. The path continued downhill but then when they had to go back uphill to get back to the car Marie started having trouble with the uphill walk and also she really got upset when the path got very narrow and she could look straight down the steep drop. Virginia's daughter saved the day by taking Marie's hands and leading her back around the narrow places and back to the safety of the car. (Virginia Bender Clayton is the daughter of Edward's youngest brother, Norman John Bender).

Nancy took Sandy and Craig on the same walk around the mountain on another visit. First we walked down hill and around to the desert side of the mountain, then we had to walk back up again to get to the car. Craig had a ball chasing and catching lizards on the path. Sandy thought it was a beautiful walk but on the way back she had a scary thought – what if a major earthquake should hit as they were on one of these narrow mountain shelf paths? Surely we would all be thrown off the mountain! Thank goodness we never had so much as a trembler when we were on that mountain.

(Years later Linda and Greg were not so lucky. They went with some friends up to Bear Mountain to stay in a log cabin up in the mountains. It was a gorgeous vacation retreat and the cabin was fairly new and beautiful. On the way up to the cabin they stopped at a restaurant in the foothills and had a very nice dinner. They then wound their way up the mountain to the cabin. In the night an earthquake struck as Linda and Greg were sleeping in bed. They looked up and saw the main beam over their bed dancing and swaying in the air, pushed around by the earthquake. Greg said that was not safe and that they should get out of bed and get out of the cabin and back down to civilization before another earthquake or a strong aftershock should hit the area. So they quickly dressed and wound their way down the mountain. At the bottom of the mountain the restaurant had totally collapsed under the stress of the first earthquake. Further aftershocks hit the mountain after Linda and Greg left the area and one of the aftershocks rained down enough debris to force the closure of the only road leading to and from the cabin. Linda and Greg were so glad they got out of there when they did!)

Not too long after Don and Nancy moved into Santa Elise in California Don put a beautiful swimming pool in the backyard, complete with Jacuzzi and a self cleaning apparatus that turned itself on regularly and ran around the entire pool. It was a gorgeous pool and stood up very well all the years they owned the home. When they first completed the pool the entire family each poured themselves a nice refreshing drink, got their bathing suits on and jumped into the Jacuzzi together. They all enjoyed their drink and the nice warm water bubbling up all around them. It was such a relaxing experience, so relaxing, in fact, that when they tried to get out of the Jacuzzi they were unable to! The drink plus the warm bubbling water relaxed their muscles so much they were unable to climb out! They all sat in that Jacuzzi amazed that none of them had the strength to get out! But before long someone came in to the back yard to gaze at the brand new pool and when they saw their predicament they pulled all of them out of the Jacuzzi.

The family swam in the pool regularly in the beginning, but like most pools in time the novelty wore off and one seldom saw anyone in the pool. But even after not many people used the pool it was a thing of beauty to sit in the dining room and look at the pool. The cost of the pool back then was \$7,500. A bargain, even in those days. Don was very pleased at the amount of money he was able to save by overseeing the installation of the pool himself.

The neighbors next door were nasty people and when they got aggravated by Lord knows what Nancy or Don did they decided to get even by planting the dirtiest,

messiest trees on the lot line. Those trees grew fast and regularly shed all its dirty messy branches, leaves, etc. right into Don and Nancy's pool.



**Betty Reno & Nancy**

Nancy and Don had two neighbors called Betty and Tex Reno. Whenever Don and Nancy went to Las Vegas if they figured out they were about to go there, they would run over and say they were going too. Especially Betty. She was a real inveterate gambler. One time she went with Don and Nancy and by the time they were ready to leave Betty was very dejected as she had lost all of her money gambling. (She was such an inveterate gambler that before she parked her car in Vegas she would fill the tank for the trip home so she wouldn't be in the awful position of having no money and no gas. A full tank of gas would get her back home to Santa Elise.) SO Don went to get the car while Betty and Nancy remained in the casino and waited for Don to pull around front. Suddenly Betty found a \$5 bill in her purse she didn't know she had. So she hit the table and started playing with her \$5. Don was out front for over an hour as Betty just kept winning and winning and winning. Finally Nancy pulled her away from the gaming table as by this time Don had to be furious. Betty went home a very happy camper – she had won over \$300 from her lowly little hidden \$5 bill.

In the future Don and Nancy tried to dodge Betty as they preferred to go there alone. Sometimes they were successful in evading her, sometimes not.



**Nancy in Las Vegas**

Nancy loved going to Vegas and doing moderate gambling but most of all she loved seeing the shows. Her favorite, naturally, was Elvis Presley as she had a big time crush on him since she was a teenager and he appeared on the screen in the 1950s. He was without a doubt her most favorite performer. But in Vegas she also liked going to see Liberace as he also put on a great show there. In those days the cost of the shows was quite reasonable.

Don and Nancy used to go to the desert for another reason. Nancy and Don and some of their friends used to load their motorcycles in the truck and drive out into the desert. They loved riding their cycles in the unfettered vast, vacant land out there. They used to rent one spot in a campground so all of them could use the showers there to wash the desert sand off their bodies when they were done riding at the end of the day. There was only one near tragedy from their motorcycle riding desert days. Toward the end of a fun day of riding in the desert Don decided to take a fast run up a big mogul of dirt. When he reached the top he found out the other fellow had the same idea and was running up the dirt mogul from the other side. They ended up running into one another on the top of the hill and Don ended up with a broken shoulder. He was in horrible pain. They drove him back home right away. His shoulder was set in the local hospital and he spent quite a number of weeks in a sling.



**Nancy on her motorcycle**

Nancy looked really cute on her motorcycle. We have some cute pictures of her sitting on her cycle in front of her home in Santa Elise.

Later Craig bought a cycle in secret and was riding it around the streets by his home for awhile before Nancy found out he had it. She did not approve of him riding a motorcycle on the city streets as she told him it was dangerous and she knew that teenage boys are reckless on a bike as they all think they are invincible at that age.

Craig did most of his motorcycle riding with his good friend Jeff. One day Nancy mentioned to Craig that she hadn't seen Jeff around the house for several weeks now and she was wondering why as he was always hanging out around her house. Craig was quiet and gave Nancy no real answer. The reason he wouldn't discuss it with her was because Jeff had just been killed on his motorcycle and Craig figured if he told that to Nancy she would forbid him to ride his motorcycle. Craig kept riding but less often and a lot more careful. A few weeks later Craig was riding normally when all of a sudden an idiot pulled out right in front of Craig and he had to stand on his brakes to keep from hitting that car. Craig stopped before hitting the car, but in the act of stopping that fast he flew right over the handlebars. That shook Craig up enough so that he put the motorcycle in the garage and didn't want to ride it anymore. That was just a little too close for comfort.

One day Nancy looked at Craig and noticed he was wearing clothes she had never seen on him before. They were nice clothes and fairly new looking. Where did you get those clothes, Nancy asked Craig. From a friend who used to work at Don's store and just recently died, Craig replied. He died of AIDS! Nancy said. Did you wash those clothes before you wore them, Nancy asked Craig. No, Craig replied. Wash them all first, Nancy told him.



**Sandy Bender**

In June of 1970 Nancy's sister Sandy graduated from Wayne State University. Unfortunately Nancy was not able to attend the graduation ceremony at Cobo Hall in Detroit but she did send a nice graduation card congratulating her sister. The distance between Michigan and California was often a terrible thing in that there were so many family events we were unable to share due to the distance and time and money involved.



**Nancy, Marie, Craig & Sandy**

In October of 1970 Nancy and Craig once again visited us in Michigan. One of the nicest pictures we took that visit was a black and white one in which Nancy, Marie, Craig and Sandy were perched in the two huge trunks. It was very unusual that this picture was in black and white as we were no longer using black and white by this point as color had since come out as the most popular medium for pictures. Edward too this picture.



**Craig & puppy Taffy with her favorite toy**

Craig loved playing with Marie's puppy, Taffy. This was Marie's first dog that she did not kick out in record time. (Her first dog was brought in by Michael on Alter and she kicked his butt out literally the same night. The second dog was brought home by Sandy. Marie answered an ad in the lost and found and told a little boy she found his lost dog. He and his mother came over to Diamond, saw it was not the boy's dog but they took it anyway.) Marie and Ed learned in record time to love little Taffy. She was beautiful, intelligent and frisky in a good sort of way. Craig had a wonderful time chasing after Taffy in Marie's back yard and throwing her toys for her. We have some really cute pictures of Craig with Taffy.





**Shirley & Linda Stephens**

A few years after Don and Nancy moved to California Jack Stephens got a soft spot in his heart for his sister Shirley and invited her to visit him in California. He paid her plane fare as she had no money of her own, and she was so glad to go out there to the land of sunshine and palm trees.



**Shirley Stephens**

Jack had her stay in his house, giving her one of his daughter's bedrooms. All went well for about a week and then Jack discovered to his horror that Shirley started a fire on top of his daughter's dresser. That was it. Jack and his wife Trudy had enough and they changed the departure date on her ticket and the Shirley was winging her way home that very day. They knew that no one could sleep in that house till she was gone as they were so terribly afraid that she was going to set the papers on fire over night and burn the whole house down with all of them in it. That was the last time anyone ever invited Shirley to their home overnight. She was just too great of a threat with her frequent pyromaniac tendencies. (Back home every time she would go into a breakdown she would pile all of her belongings up in the middle of the living room floor, and then set fire to them and escape injury by jumping out of the second story onto the lawn below. That kind of behavior was just too big of a scare for Jack or Don to take a chance on. Nancy would never invite her into their home as Shirley physically assaulted Nancy when she was carrying Linda and so Nancy was terrified of her.)



**Warren Donald Stephens**

In June of 1971 Nancy and Don's eldest son, Warren graduated from Los Alamitos High School. He was planning on working during the summer and going on to the community college in September, 1971.



**Douglas Paul Bender, Sr.**

In 1971 Doug graduated from Stevenson High School in Utica and the whole family wanted him to go on to college. But we were all discouraged as the crowd he was hanging out with were anything but college material and as the saying goes, "Birds of a feather flock together". Well Nancy and Don did a wonderful thing for Doug. They invited him to come live with them for a year and to attend the local community college near their home which at that time was free if you were a resident. Nancy pulled strings and got him resident status. Doug started college in the fall of 1971 in Cypress and completed one year there. That was just the impetus Doug needed to keep going and get his college degree 4 years later. Warren went to the same college that year and Don and Nancy paid Warren's expenses. When Don saw Warren's final report card at the end of the year he blew up! Warren got an "A" in softball and flunked everything else! Don was so mad he insisted that Warren work for a year until he grew up a little and could

appreciate a college education. Warren went back to college one year later and from then on he took education seriously and got good grades from that time on.



**Doug, Tuffy & the 62 Ford Falcon**

Doug drove home to Michigan at the end of the first year of college and moved in with his brother Michael as Marie and Edward had retired that year and moved into a one bedroom apartment after having sold their home on Diamond to Michael. Doug had bought the red Ford Falcon station wagon from Jack Stephens which he used to get around California and then to drive home. His drive home was a very rough one as a major hurricane was blowing up the east coast of the US and it was so strong it affected the weather right through the mid west states. Jack's red Falcon came to a sad end. One night a neighbor kid set Michael's garage on fire and the Falcon burned up as Doug was not able to get it out before the fire entirely engulfed the garage. Doug tried to run in the burning garage but Mr. Russell Clayton, the neighbor across the street held him back from going into the garage. The fire exploded just as Doug would have been in the garage and that would have been the end of him. The kid set Mike's garage on fire on Marie's birthday. It cut her happy celebration short when Doug called telling us what was happening. Sandy had to save Taffy. The house was full of smoke and Taffy was so terrified that she hid in all that smoke and wouldn't come out when called. Sandy was on her hands and knees trying to find the dog and only located her when her dog tags clinked against Mike's table.



**Donna, Marie, Edward & Sandy in Lion's Head**

Donna came to visit her grandparents, Ed & Marie Bender in the summer of 1972 when she was 14 years old. They took her on vacation through 9 eastern States and then on to Lion's Head. She had a good time other than sleeping in the back seat of Ed's car through most of the eastern states and then having to dodge Mr. Szulc, the owner of the Cedar Grove cottages, who was a disgusting voyeur. One of Donna's most vivid memories is the cows blocking us on the road and dropping lots of cow pies as they ran down the road. Sandy got out of the road to shoo the cows along but quickly jumped back in the car when the bull came after her.



**Trudy Stephens**

When Sandy came to visit Nancy in 1976 Nancy took her to see San Juan Capistrano. As we watched the swallows there Nancy remarked that Trudy certainly would never come here the day all the swallows return as she is terrified of birds. Sandy found it so sad that they spent all those years and effort building San Juan only to have it half destroyed by an earthquake a few years later.



**Craig & Tuffy II**

Nancy and Don one day brought home a gray and white 2 lb bundle of teri poo fur that they named Tuffy. Boy, was he ever adorable! He was a very playful dog, he loved his toys.



**Marie & Tuffy I**



**Craig & Tuffy I**

Marie fell in love with little Tuffy I when she came out to California to visit Nancy and Don. She loved holding him and thought he was so little he almost like a stuffed toy.



**Tuffy I**

Don and Nancy used to take him for a lot of walks. He learned to walk of leash, obeying them when they told him to stay at corners before crossing the street. Then one day the unspeakable horror happened. As Don and Nancy were walking Tuffy, without warning he simply stepped off the curb right into the path of a car. He died in Don's arms. Nancy and Don were in shock and inconsolable. Nancy called the breeder where they got Tuffy from and she told Nancy that there would be another litter scheduled to be born this year. So when the puppies were born Nancy and Don went there and picked out a new puppy. It was almost and exact duplicate of the first Tuffy in looks. They also called this dog Tuffy, Tuffy II.

Tuffy II was not fond of playing with toys like the first Tuffy was. He was a more mature dog. Both Tuffys reached a mature weight of only 5 lbs.

Tuffy II fell into the pool once and was too small to get himself out. They had to fish him out. He was much more careful in the back yard after that.



**Don & Tuffy II**

One of Don's favorite memories was Tuffy thinking he was going to kill the neighborhood cat who used to jump over the back fence and walk along the side of the pool. When Tuffy would see that cat in his back yard he went nuts with indignation and would want to tear that cat apart, so Tuffy would run through the family room doggy door, "floop, floop" we would hear as he flew through that first door, then he would fly through the garage doggy door, "floop, floop" and then he would fly through the back yard doggy door, "floop floop" and would then find himself outside. He would run around the side of the house and turn the corner and run along side the pool. He would fly toward that cat and when he would get almost abreast of that cat he would suddenly realize that the cat was twice as big as him so in order not to get ripped up by that big cat Tuffy would walk right past him like he never even saw him. Don would laugh heartily and told Sandy that Tuffy does the exact same thing every time that cat comes into his yard.

When Tuffy was about 1 year old Nancy's neighbor asked Nancy if she would let her put her poodle in Nancy's back yard while she ran some errands that day. Nancy said sure, go ahead. Tuffy saw the big poodle in his back yard so he went through the doggy doors to check that big poodle out. When Tuffy got there the poodle cocked his leg and peed on one of the plants. Tuffy, who up to this point always peed like a girl dog, intently watched the poodle. The poodle walked a little and then peed with his leg up again. Tuffy kept watching him then tried to do that himself. Tuffy lifted his leg, started to pee, fell over on his back and kept peeing, now on himself as he laid upside down with the urine going up and coming down like a fountain. Nancy laughed so hard at her cute little doggy.





**Sandy & Tuffy**

One time Sandy came to visit and decided to take little Tuffy II for a walk. Boy was he ever a handful to walk, he was all over the place, continually crossing over in front of the person walking him. Many of the neighbors were out side that day but happy little Tuffy paid little attention to all the smiles he was receiving that day. but when we were walking past the only black guy in the neighborhood Sandy was so embarrassed as Tuffy saw the black guy and went wild. he barked a very angry bark and tried to get to the guy to rip him up. Sandy had to really hold tight to the leash as Tuffy tried his best to break loose and get that guy. As soon as we passed him Tuffy calmed right down and became his lovable happy self again for the rest of the walk.

Tuffy was calm that is, until he saw a cat walking down the street by his house. Tuffy broke loose from the leash and tore after that cat. The cat jumped up on a low slanting roof and headed upward. Tuffy tried his hardest to also jump up on the roof. (Had Tuffy been able to hop on that roof Sandy never would have been able to get him down from there.)

Don used to do a fun trick with Tuffy. He would clap his hands and then hold out his arms and Tuffy would jump really high into the air and land in Don's up stretched arms. One time Don was in the store talking to a customer and in response to something he said Don clapped his hands against his legs. Tuffy took that as his signal to jump so he jumped up really high and Don never saw him jumping so poor Tuffy flew back down and landed on his face. Don suddenly became aware of what had just happened to poor Tuffy and felt so bad as Tuffy gave Don such a sad, "you didn't catch me!" look.

Mike told a cute story about teasing the daylight's out of Tuffy when he was out there visiting. Mike said that Tuffy got so worked up that he opened his mouth, showed all his teeth and went after Mike meaning business! Mike said he never saw a dog open his mouth so wide and show so much teeth that you couldn't see

any other part of the dog's head. Mike said he avoided being bitten by staying just out of Tuffy's way. He quit teasing the dog to get him to settle down.



**Don & Tuffy in Don's store**

Don used to take Tuffy II to the store with him every day. Even when Don wasn't at the store all day someone else would come to the house and get him and take him to the store for the day. Toward the end of his life it was so sad as Tuffy would cough a lot because his heart was failing. Tuffy would spend the majority of the day in his last days sleeping under Don's desk. One day an employee said to Don, "Is he breathing? I don't see him breathing. Don checked under the desk, and sure enough, poor dear little Tuffy had just quietly slipped away into the next world. Thus ended the life of a beautiful, loving little 5 lb doggy.

In 1976 Nancy got the joyous news that her youngest brother Doug was getting married to Karen Otter, a very fine, well educated farm girl from Waltz, Michigan. All the family really liked Karen right from the beginning. Nancy wanted to go to Michigan for Doug's wedding but Don said she couldn't go because her family did not fly to California for their kids' weddings. So Nancy sent Craig instead. Craig was put into the wedding party as the ring bearer.



**Shelley**

Then in July of 1977 came more joyful news. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of July, 1977 Doug's first child, a darling baby girl named Michelle Marie was born in Seaway hospital in Trenton. The family nick named her Shelley.



**Marie & Shelley Bender**

Marie loved little Shelley, the first child in the family since Craig left for California in 1969. Marie often took little Shelley for the weekend to her house in Chesterfield to give Karen and Doug some time for themselves.



**Bill Bender**



**Mike Bender**

Nancy used to give all of us back in Michigan wonderful Christmas presents every year. We were so thrilled with the beautiful, unusual presents she gave us that we would always save the box she sent our presents in till the last as we wanted to savor what might be in that box as her presents were almost always the best. At the end we would open the cardboard box it came in and then pass out the presents inside one by one. We were never disappointed in what we received. They were expensive gifts that came from her boutique area in their Walker store. Mike especially savored wondering what was in his box from Nancy every Christmas. Mike always said that a lot of thought went into what Nancy picked for each of us. We have a picture of Bill holding a beautiful polished brass crab that Nancy gave him for Christmas. That sat on prominent display in his condo on Dino Circle in Chesterfield Township.



**Marie on sofa from Don & Nancy**

One time when Nancy and Don visited Marie and Edward on Grant Park in Utica Nancy noticed that their sofa was getting up there in years, so when she returned to California she ordered a couch special for her mom and had it drop shipped to Town Furniture in Utica who then delivered it to Marie and Ed's house. What a wonderful surprise that was for mom and dad! Nancy said choosing the right couch for mom and dad's house was hard because their multi shaded brown rug was hard to harmonize with. So she chose a mostly off white couch as that was neutral and would not clash with anything in the living room.

Another time just before Christmas the door bell rang and Marie got up and answered the door to see who it was. It was the postman delivering a very fine porcelain Lhasa Apso dog. Mom was thrilled with it. But Taffy wasn't! Taffy recognized it right away as a dog. First she stood back, wary of it. Then she moseyed on closer, standing a bit sideways. Then since it hadn't attacked her yet, she walked clear around it, sniffing it from all four sides. Then she lost all interest in it, saying to herself, "It sure might look like a dog, but it sure don't smell like one – I think it's fake!"



One day out of the blue Don decided he would like to build his own furniture store. So he looked around for land suitable to build on. He found a good piece of land suitably zoned on Walker street. Don contacted the owner and gave him an offer to purchase. Don was in luck as the man just got his annual property tax bill and

was disgusted as to how high the taxes were. So to get out of paying all those high taxes every year he sold Don the property. Don then set to work being his own contractor, designing and building the furniture store of his dreams. It was so beautiful when it was finished. And he and Nancy were so talented when it came to decorating the interior and exterior of the store. Don had a really good knack for picking very esthetically pleasing furniture. They were immediately successful in attracting buying customers. The store took right off. And the overhead was manageable as Don was able to keep construction costs way down by doing so much of it himself.



**Nancy in Cypress store**



**Cedric in Cypress store**

Nancy worked in the store along with Don and Linda. They also had non family help, including Cedric, Chris and later the infamous Margie.



**Greg White & Don**



**Don in front of his Cypress store**

Linda later said that she felt that she and Greg did a lot of the work that went into the building and decorating and they both felt that they should have been equal partners in the business. Don felt otherwise and a rift developed. Craig also worked in Don's store and he told Sandy and Mike on a visit to Michigan that he was confident that when he was older his father was going to give him the business with nothing going to the other children. Warren said that Don wanted him to be in the business with him but Warren had no interest in that line of work and struck out on his own by going to college and getting a law degree. Don put no store in



college, figuring he had a good business going and his children did not need a college education, that they could make a very good living working in the store with him. Mike and I tried repeatedly and very hard to convince Craig to go to college and get a degree but he listened to his dad and went into the store right after college. Once the store evaporated into thin air after 1986 Craig was so sorry he hadn't listened to his aunt and uncle.



**Linda & Greg's store**



**Linda & Marie**

Linda and Greg branched out on their own and started a store called "No Place Like Home". Linda said she worked very hard in that store and it would have been very successful if it wasn't for the fact that the monthly rental payment was so terribly high. One time when Marie came to visit she stayed with Linda for the day in that store. Linda had some furniture from her dad's store in that store that caused her a lot of grief when Don started dating Margie hot and heavy. Don sued Linda saying the furniture was there on consignment. Linda countered that she paid her dad for that furniture. Don took her to court. Don's brother Jack testified that Linda did indeed pay for that furniture. Linda won her case but the bitterness that ensued from that lasted to this day.



**Don & Nancy Stephens**

Nancy worked in that store along side of Don and she did such a wonderful job of setting up the knick knack area. That area was so enchanting that it attracted many persons who came in just to browse through and buy some of those beautiful pieces. And then they later came back and bought the expensive furniture after they got a taste for the upscale furniture on display there.

Nancy and Don often walked the 3 miles to and from the store in order to help Don lose weight as Nancy was concerned about his heart due to the extra weight he was



carrying. When Marie came to visit she also walked back and forth to the store to home in order to keep fit. Marie was easily able to make the 3 mile jaunt except on one occasion. And it wasn't the legs or feet that was giving her the problem either. It was the part that goes over the fence last. All of a sudden Marie got a "nature call" and there was no way she could hold it until she could get to the store. So Nancy saw a woman outside her house and asked her if mom could use her bathroom. The woman readily agreed and to mom's relief she was able to go to the bathroom and thus end her crisis. Nancy was surprised a bit that this woman left mom in the house alone as we here so many stories about one person distracting the home owner while the other one ransacks the house. But I guess she realized that Marie and Nancy had really honest faces, and were in fact as honest as they look. (If you disregard the time that Marie removed the light fixture on Saar when the house now belonged to another woman.)



**Sandy & Werner Wilhelm**

One time when Sandy and Werner were visiting Don and Nancy at store closing time Nancy suggested that they all walk the 3 miles to her house. So Werner, Nancy and Sandy set out on foot for home. Don must have figured how little Werner enjoyed walking as Don pulled up along side Werner about 3 blocks from the store and asked Werner if he wanted a ride home. It sure didn't take Werner long at all to hop in Don's car and be on his way!

It was also about this time that Nancy had read that white wine helps one lose weight so she started serving Don white wine on a daily basis. This proved to be a bad move as Don had apparently inherited Hunter's gene for alcohol abuse and in a short time Don was putting a gallon of wine at a time in the refrigerator and was replacing it with refills on a frequent basis.



**Craig Stephens**

Craig made his First Holy Communion in California in 1973. He was the only one of Nancy's children to make his communion in California. The Bender family was not able to make it out there for this event. The great distance between our families made us lose out on attending many momentous event in each of our families.



**Don & Nancy in Rome, Italy**

Nancy and Don took a once in a lifetime trip to Rome, Italy in 1973. They spent a week touring all the magnificent sites in that Eternal City.



**Warren & Sally Stephens**

Nancy's oldest son Warren came home and introduced to the family to Sally Smith, who he intended to marry. Sally and her family were from Oregon and she met Warren when she moved down to California. They were married in a church

ceremony on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, the same wedding day as Nellie and Bill Dahl.. We have a wonderful group picture of Warren and Sally with Don and Nancy and all of their children in front of the altar.



**Nancy Stephens**



**Nancy & Craig**



**Nancy**

In 1973 Nancy and Craig visited Marie and Edward in June and was invited to Laurie De Maria's high school graduation. We had a wonderful time that day and we had many wonderful pictures taken by Sandy's telephoto lens. Craig was caught on several shots being quite snoopy that day!



**Linda & her Gremlin**



**Don & Tuffy**

When Linda was old enough to drive Don bought her a car. But Don gave Linda no input into what kind of car he was purchasing for her and Linda said when she saw what he bought she was so unhappy. Don favored the Gremlin as he felt it was a good value for the money. Linda hated the looks of the car and was tired of people teasing her by asking her what happened to the rest of the back end of the car. She groaned when Don bought Donna the same car, in orange instead of blue like Linda's.



**Nicole & Linda Stephens**

In 1973 Bill was visiting his sister Nancy for 2 weeks. This was his last visit to California before his death. One day Linda pulled up in her car and wanted Nancy to come out and talk to her in the car so they would have some privacy. She was very upset and scared and told Nancy she was expecting a baby and that Richard Miston did not want to get married or to take any responsibility, financial or otherwise, for the coming child. Nancy took the news very well. She told Linda that this child would be welcome into the family and that together they would get through this pregnancy and that the child would be a wanted one. Both Nancy and Linda strongly agreed that abortion would not be a consideration, that this child would be born and cared for.



**Linda**



**Marie**



**Nancy & Nicole**

Grandma Marie Bender was excited to hear that her first great grandchild was on the way. Just before Nicole was due to be born Marie flew out there to be present for the birth of her first great grand child. Marie told us one very amusing story. Marie, Nancy and Linda went out to dinner shortly before Nicole was born. Linda ordered a meal with a baked potato. When the meal was served Linda opened up the baked potato, forked up a piece of the potato, and while in the middle of an animated discussion she was waving the piece of potato in the air on her fork. Marie's attention was diverted to watching the potato wave around in the air, and all of a sudden Marie let out a shriek. There was a cockroach perched on top of the piece of baked potato Linda was waving in the air! Yucch!



**Marie & Nicole after 1st bath**



**Nancy, Nicole, Linda & Marie**

Linda was overdue so they decided to induce labor. The first induction didn't work as hoped, so they sent her home. When Aunt Mildred Stocker, Marie's sister heard that Linda was due, she said she fervently hoped that the baby would be born on her birthday as all through the years she always wanted someone to share her birthday but so far it never happened. In this case it didn't happen either. Nicole finally entered this world on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, 1974

When Linda was old enough to drive Don . Grandma Bender was present for the birth and when Nicole was brought home Grandma Bender gave her her first bath. A number of very good, very cute 4 generation pictures were taken on that visit.



**Nicole & Mrs. Miston**

Mrs. Miston was also very interested in Nicole's birth and also visited and held Nicole around that time. She felt very bad that her son was not taking his responsibility seriously but she fully acknowledged that Nicole was her first grandchild and she dearly wished to establish a relationship with her flesh and blood.





**Linda, Nancy, Nicole and Sally**



**Linda, Marie, Nicole & Sally**

Linda had her own little apartment and Nancy and Sally Smith Stephens came and visited little brand new Nicole. Sally held Nicole, really enjoying the baby. Linda sure did have a cute little yellow dining room set in this apartment which looked so cheerful. Marie loved the color of that set.



**Nicole & Nancy**



**Nicole & Craig**



**Nicole & Linda**

It was during this visit that it was discussed that Marie was now a great grandmother and they all decided to call her “G.G.” for short. So as the great grandchildren came on the scene through the ensuing years Marie became endearingly known as “G.G.” to all of them.



**Linda, Marie, Nicole & Sally**



**Nicole, Linda & Marie**

Marie stayed with Nancy and Linda and the new baby for a few more weeks and thoroughly enjoyed her stay in California. We have a lovely picture of Marie

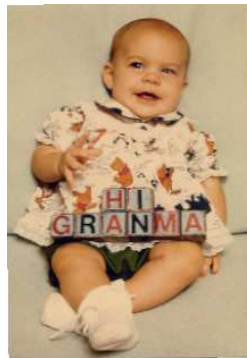


sitting with Linda and Sally on Linda's new kitchen table that she purchased when she moved into her own apartment.



**Nancy babysitting Nicole with Craig in her pool**

Linda went to work to pay for her apartment and necessities for her and Nicole and Nancy babysat a lot for Nicole in those days.



**Nicole Stephens White**

But nights were pure hell for Linda as Nicole would not sleep nights and would be playing and banging around her bedroom with all her toys most of the night. Poor Linda – she was so worried about Nicole's safety being up all night, but Linda had to get her sleep in order to go to work the next day. God watched over Nicole, other than one incident when she was two she grew up without any major casualties.



**Nancy, Nicole & Craig**



**Nicole**

The only near tragedy occurred in Linda's apartment complex when Nicole was 2 years old. Linda lived on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and one day Nicole went out of the apartment and squeezed her way between the bars of the railing and fell two stories to the ground. After a fast trip to the hospital it was determined that no permanent damage to the child had occurred.



**Linda in hospital**

A second near tragedy occurred in the same month. Linda had her family over to her apartment and was carrying a bag of trash to the dumpster when a man attacked her, slugging her in the side of the face with his fist. She screamed and Warren came running to her aide. When the guy saw Warren running toward them he took off. Linda suffered a concussion and was taken to the hospital for treatment. What a way for Linda and Nicole to celebrate their birthday month!



**Nicole**



**Nicole**

Nicole stayed up in the night many nights, disturbing Linda's badly needed sleep for about the first 2 years of her life. By the time she was 3 years old she had pretty much settled down and slept through the night, much to Linda's relief. The accompanied picture shows Nicole at an age where her maturity allowed her to sleep through the night.



**Nancy & Don**

Nancy and Don made a number of trips to High Point North Carolina to view their new furniture lines and to place an order. On one of these trips Don stopped in Knoxville, Tennessee and visited his mom's relatives, Mary Ellen and her husband. They were quite well to do and were quite hospitable to Don and Nancy. They later refused to have anything to do with Don when they found out that his mother (their aunt) was in a nursing home and that Don didn't even visit his mother when he went to Detroit.



**Nancy in front of her new Toronado**

On another trip to Detroit Don had specially ordered a Toronado diesel car and he and Nancy flew in to pick it up. Don had an extra 25 gallon diesel tank welded into the trunk so he would seldom have to stop to fill up on the way home to California. Don always made out well on his sale of his old vehicles as they were worth more in California than in Michigan. That truck he purchased for moving his furniture was sold for considerably more than he paid for it. Don was very pleased at that turn of events as leasing a U Haul would have cost him a small fortune, so now not only did he save himself that cost, but also made money.

It was around this same time that Donna came home with a boyfriend and said she was intending to marry him. Nancy talked her out of marrying him, saying he was just so ugly looking. So Donna gave him up.





**Freddie & Donna Pacheco**



**Mrs. Pacheco, Freddie, Donna, Nancy & Don**

The next year Donna made the announcement that she was about to marry Freddie Pacheco. Nancy and Don gave Donna a very nice wedding in their own home on Santa Elise. Donna had a beautiful wedding dress and Linda was her maid of honor and also had a very attractive dress on. Linda made the statement at that time that she always knew that Donna would get married before her.



**Donna on her wedding day.**

Donna was sad that her Grandma Marie Bender could not be there for her wedding, so during the wedding Donna picked up the phone and called Marie. Marie was so happy to hear from Donna on her special day and Nancy took a picture of Donna calling Marie.



**Linda, Donna & Nancy**

Nancy, on the other hand, was very happy to see her young Donna getting married and starting her new life with Freddie.



**Donna & Michelle**



**Don, Michelle & Nancy**



**Michelle & Linda**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of September, 1975 Donna gave birth to her first child, Nancy's second grandchild and Marie's second great grandchild, Michelle Marie Pacheco.



**Marie, Nancy, Donna & Michelle**

Marie later made another trip out to California and once again Marie had another 4 generation picture taken with Nancy, Donna and Michelle Marie.





**Donna & Michelle   Sandy & Michelle**

Donna would come over to visit Nancy so when Sandy was out visiting we took some pictures of 9 month old Michelle with Donna and with Sandy in Nancy's backyard in 1976.



**Michelle & Donna**



**Michelle**



**Michelle**



**Michelle**



**Michelle**



**Michelle & Nancy**

Donna had some really cute professional pictures taken of Michelle from baby hood through early childhood.



**Donna & Michelle**

We also took some cute family snap shots.



**Warren & Sally Stephens**

Warren made a sad announcement to his family – he and Sally were not getting along and they would soon be divorcing. That really upset Nancy as she really liked Sally and would hate to lose her as a daughter in law. Once they divorced Sally moved back to Oregon. Nancy kept in touch with Sally occasionally by phone and through letters as she thought Sally was such a lovely person. In fact, in the summer of 2002 Sally showed up at Nancy's house with her husband and her two children. They had a wonderful visit together.



**Nancy babysitting Nicole with Craig in her pool**

Linda and Donna would come to Nancy's house on Santa Elise for a visit often, bringing their daughters with them. Nancy really enjoyed these visits and the

opportunity of playing with her grandchildren. We even have a lovely picture of Nancy in her swimming pool with baby Nicole. But one thing about the visits that Nancy was not overly fond of was the fact that when the babies would wet their cloth diapers the girls would take the wet diaper off the baby and sling it in Nancy's washer. When Nancy would lift the lid of the washer to do a wash the smell of urine would hit you in the face. Nancy had to wash the load of diapers first before doing her own wash.



**Linda Graduating**

Linda graduated from High School in California in June, of 1970. She was so proud of her achievement as she walked up upon the stage to receive her diploma that June. Her parents Nancy and Don were also very proud of her too. Now Nancy had two children safely graduated from High School with just two more to go.



**Linda Stephens**

As Linda would come and go at Nancy's house she would often run into Greg White, who worked for Don in the furniture repair business. Greg was a very good looking man with a very nice personality. He started noticing Linda and Linda him. In the summer of 1976 he started asking Linda out for a date. They found they were very compatible and planned to be married in February, 1977. As the wedding date approached Linda found she had to postpone it because she was in so

much pain she needed surgery. But as soon as she healed from the surgery the wedding date was reset.



**Linda & Don Stephens**



**Greg & Linda White**



**Don, Nancy. Greg & Linda**

They had a lovely wedding in a church. Don gave Linda away. Linda chose a unique, lovely old fashioned turn of the century theme for the dress for her wedding party. She and Greg were very well suited to one another and very much in love and their marriage has lasted over 25 years.



**Don Stephens & Gene White**



**Nancy & Marge**



**Nicole & Marge White**

Every one was happy with this couple except Gene and Marge, Greg's parents. They were upset because Linda couldn't have any more children and they wanted Greg and Linda to produce a grandchild for them. Greg's parents caused a lot of heartache for Linda and Greg through the years by not fully accepting Nicole as

their grandchild. Linda would notice that Nicole's picture was not displayed with the rest of the pictures in Gene and Marge's house so she had a lovely picture of Nicole framed and gave it to them and still they did not put that lovely picture on display with the rest of the pictures.



**Craig, with a mouth full of metal**

Guess which one of us kids had to have braces? Nancy felt that Craig absolutely had to have braces because he inherited Edward Bender's mouth structure. Sandy felt very bad that Craig lost his distinctive upper lip that is a trademark of Edward and several of his other family members, including Uncle Arthur Bender. But Nancy said that lip had to go as it was created by teeth that were protuberant.



**Michael Douglas Bender**

**Marie & Mike**

In 1978 Nancy received another piece of joyful news, her brother Doug now had a son, Michael Douglas Bender, born on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July, 1978. It was such wonderful news that now Doug had an heir who would carry his name.





**Michael Pacheco**



**Michael Pacheco**



**Freddie & Michael**



**Donna & Michael**



**Michael & Michelle**



**Michael Pacheco**



**Michelle, Nicole, Mike**



**Donna & Mike**



**Marie & Michael**

In 1978 Donna announced that she was expecting her second child. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, 1978 adorable little Michael Joachim Pacheco was born. Donna had a birthday cake baked for him and put the baby in front of the cake. The cake said, “Michael, welcome to our world”. Donna wanted to give Michael the first name of Joachim as she said she always loved that name. Nancy talked her into giving him Michael as his first name as that name was much more accepted by most people and would be more comfortable for the baby throughout his lifetime.





**Donna, Craig, Linda, Diane, Warren, Nancy & Donald Stephens**

Warren then announced that he was getting married to a very elegant statuesque lady name Diane Parks. Nancy was upset that Warren divorced Sally as she like Sally very much. Nancy said Warren married Sally as that is what Nancy is on the inside and now Warren is marrying Diane as that is what Nancy appears to be on the outside.



**Diane & Warren**

Warren graduated from college in California and Warren decided to move to the Washington, D.C. area and take up the study of law. Diane moved with him and she worked as a secretary as Warren studied. Warren had to contact Nancy and Don from time to time to ask for funds while He as in the university as there were times that the budget just didn't stretch far enough. Don and Nancy were very proud that their son was in law school but Don was upset also as he wanted Warren to be in the business with him in California.

Then one summer Warren went on a trip to Russia and Poland during the summer. Don and Nancy helped him pay for this trip. It was certainly a trip of a lifetime for Warren, one he still talks about to this very day. He got to tour through Poland and to see the major cities of Russia. In Poland one of the native students there talked him out of his jeans as they really wanted jeans and couldn't afford them and also couldn't get them in their country as that was western wear. A Polish girl even asked Warren to sponsor her to come to the United States. After Warren was back at the University

studying for his finals this girl gets off an airplane and calls Warren from the airport. Warren had to get to the university for his exams. A Polish woman at the airport took this girl home and got her settled in America.



**Diane Parks Stephens**

As Warren was busy studying day and night Diane became discouraged with him having little time for her and soon this marriage began to unravel. They divorced and Warren was once again single.



**Donna & Freddie Pacheco**

Donna in the meantime started having marital difficulties as Freddie started being unfaithful to her and also started physically abusing her. Donna had lived with Freddie's family in the early years of their marriage and she felt that Freddie learned his unfaithful and abusive behavior from his uncles who lived near by. Finally this behavior became unbearable and Freddie refused to change despite Donna repeatedly telling him it wasn't right and so in the end Donna had no choice but to get divorced.



**Craig Stephens**

When Craig signed up for football Nancy realized that her little boy wasn't so little anymore, in fact he would soon be graduated from High School and on his own.



**Donna & Dave Catron**

In 1980 Donna remarried to Dave Catron. They moved into a nice home in Ontario, California. Donna had a nice store where she sold nick knacks. Dave played in a band evenings.



**Donna & Dave Catron**

Things didn't work out so well so Donna eventually divorced Dave. The judge gave Dave Donna's store, probably under the mistaken idea that he was the bread winner.



**Nicole**



**Nicole & Linda**



**Greg & Nicole**

Nancy attended the “graduation” of her first grand child, Nicole – from Kindergarten! Complete with cap and gown! Oh, well, kids are growing up much faster these days, it seems.



**Douglas Paul Bender, Jr.**

In 1980 Nancy received another call from her family back in Michigan. Her brother Douglas just had his 3<sup>rd</sup> child, another son, Douglas Paul Bender, Jr. born on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, 1980.



**Jackie & Warren**



**Warren, Jackie & judge**

In 1980 Warren met and dated Jackie Prince. But Jackie felt that Warren was not serious about their relationship so she broke off with him. Then in 1981 Warren called her back and said he wanted to date her again. This time it worked. He was

serious about dating her and she was comfortable with him. So on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 1981 Jackie and Warren were married in the courthouse by the judge.

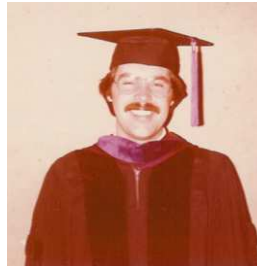


**Warren & Jackie**

Shortly after that Warren and Jackie flew out to California so she could meet Warren's family. It was a very rough trip for Jackie as she was terrified of flying and to make matters worse she had a very bumpy flight on the short flight from San Francisco to Los Angeles. That was the first and last time Jackie flew. After that Nancy had to be the one to do the flying to visit Warren and Jackie.



**Warren**



**Warren**



**Nancy & Warren**

Warren graduated from American University and passed the bar exam and was admitted to the bar to practice law.



**Don, Craig, Warren & Jackie**



**Nancy, Linda, Warren and Craig**

Warren's family flew out to Maryland to celebrate with him this major accomplishment in life.





**Craig, Linda, Warren, Nancy & Donald**

Nancy was so very proud of her oldest son's completion of law school and she was just beaming with joy as she shared in his special day. For Don, Warren's completion of a law degree was bittersweet. He recognized the value of the degree but he was so disappointed that his oldest son was not going into business with him. Considering what happened to the business after Margie came into Don's life Warren was doubly blessed that he pursued this profession. Especially after Warren talked to Don in about 1986 when the marriage was falling apart and Don bold face lied to Warren. If Warren was in the business with Don at this point what a horrible mess he would have been in. As it was, Craig was caught right square in the middle of that whole mess and lost his job and his home due to the Margie-Don mess.



**Sandy & Werner Wilhelm**

In 1981 Sandy and Werner came to visit Nancy and Don and stayed for about 5 days. Sandy came there in time to celebrate Thanksgiving dinner with Nancy, the first Thanksgiving dinner they had together since 1967 at Marie's house on Diamond. Nancy set a wonderful table. She had the finest of china and the finest silverware. And the meal was fit for a king. Turkey and all the trimmings. We all thoroughly enjoyed that meal, all except for Don. He had a splitting headache that whole afternoon. Nancy said his headache occurred when he and Linda had gotten into it earlier that day.



In May of 1982 Nancy received horrifying news – her brother Bill had gone into a coma and was in intensive care and not expected to live as he had severe brain damage when the food he was eating landed in his lungs and had created aspiration pneumonia, thus cutting off all blood supply to the brain. Nancy was really upset that whole month as Bill just lingered in a coma. Then in June, 1982 Sand and Werner came to Nancy's house for another 5 day visit. While Sandy was there we received news from Marie that Bill was expected to die in the next few days. Nancy got so upset that she was unable to eat breakfast or lunch that day. When she said there would be no supper either Sandy walked to the corner convenience store and bought the only food they sold – cake donuts. Werner and Sandy ate a few donuts. Nancy was too upset. Craig came home just then and Werner passed the container of donuts over to Craig. Craig ate a few. Nancy was upset with him as we were going to eat supper in about another 4 hours.



**Craig**

Craig was Sandy's buddy that trip to California. It was the middle of June so Nancy had the heat turned off. It was plenty warm during the day but at night it got really chilly. Sandy loved to hear the sound of the trickling water in the pool in the backyard but at night she had to shut the window to keep the chill night air out. But still she was cold so she wore her spring jacket to bed. Every night she went to sleep chilly and woke up in the night roasting. Craig would come home about 1 am, walk over to the thermostat and crank it up real high – it felt like 90 degrees! Nancy would get up in the morning and turn the heat off again. I never could figure out why Craig didn't just zip the heat up to 70 degrees. Maybe because he couldn't see the dial in the dark.

Werner had only planned to stay at Don and Nancy's house for 2 or 3 days and then go on to San Francisco for a few days before flying home. But he was so comfortable at Nancy's and Nancy and Don treated him so well that he stayed there most of the time enjoying Nancy's beautiful house and back yard. Werner

and Sandy also used the pool even though it was no longer heated as no one swam in it any more. But they sure did enjoy it.



**Lladro statue to left of Don**

Werner was very impressed at how beautifully decorated Nancy's house was – all that beautiful furniture and every thing appeared to be in just the right place. The Lladro and other knick knacks were breath taking through out the entire house. And naturally everything spotless and nothing out of place. The house was a show place of taste and beauty.



**Craig guarding the Lladro with his life!**

We can see from the above picture how impressed Craig was with the Lladro statue next to him in the living room.

Werner and I flew in and had no car so we asked Don if we could borrow a vehicle as Werner had a doctor's appointment in Encino. Don said that he could spare his oldest delivery van, an orange colored one with 298,000 miles on it. The body was kind of on its way out too – the front fenders flapped in the breeze as you went above 60 mph on the freeway. Werner made me drive as it was a stick shift and he was used to automatics. It drove as good as a newer van and got us where we were going and back again just fine. When we got to Encino all the parking was high cost parking lots so Werner had me drive into a residential area to see if we could park for free. I found a free parking spot –right in front of a \$1 million, 250,000 dollar home! Boy, that van sure looked a bit out of place in that fancy neighborhood! But the parking was free and we were able to walk only 4 blocks or so to the doctor's office. After the doctor's visit we walked back to the van. The guy who owned the house was waiting for us and walked right up to Werner as we were getting into the van. Werner was just as friendly as could be to that owner,

asking the guy what his name was. The guy replied that his name was Mintz. “Hey, that’s the name of my CPA!” Werner said to him. “Are you any relation to him?” “Hey, by the way I see you have a for sale sign on your front lawn – how much are you asking for the place?” 1,250,000 Mintz replied. Do you want to see the inside of the house? So Werner and I piled back out of the van and toured his home. He had an indoor swimming pool right in the middle of the house. But the house was really old looking and rather depressing on the inside. Werner shook his hand and told him he would think about it.

Werner then rented a full size GM car and we then drove to Mexico for the day. Neither one of us had ever been to Mexico so that was an experience for both of us. Werner stopped at an out door eating place and ordered a hamburger and a shake. I died when I saw him eating that fly infested food. (The flies were all over the meat before they cooked it!) I was sure Werner was going to get deathly sick, but he didn’t even get a rumbling of a belly ache. But when Don heard Werner ate a burger in Mexico, Don said to him, “I thought you liked dogs?” Werner replied that of course he liked dogs. Don then said, “Then why did you eat a dog burger when you were down there?” “You know they kill dogs and use them for hamburger?” Don then said to Werner, “I knew you ate a dog burger. I can hear an “arf arf” deep in your belly!”

Werner and Sandy flew back to Michigan on June 13<sup>th</sup>. Werner wanted to stop in the VA hospital on the way home from the airport but Sandy told him it was already after visiting hours. Bill died before Sandy could get there to see him so she was sad that they didn’t try to get in there after visiting hours to see him one last time.



**Bill Bender**

The VA hospital called Marie on the morning of June 15<sup>th</sup> and told her Bill had passed away and she needed to come down and sign some papers. Ed was in total shock and was unable to drive or even to ride in the car so Sandy drove Marie to the VA hospital in Allen Park and Marie signed the papers and received Bill’s few

personal effects. We then returned home at lunch time. That was the queerest lunch time we had ever experienced. We were all in so much shock we couldn't get a simple sandwich on the table! We just walked in circles, unable to perform the simple tasks of getting bread and lunch meat on the table.



**Linda, Mike, Mike, Nancy, Doug, Karen, Dougie, Sandy & Edward**

We called Nancy and told her Bill was gone. She immediately made travel plans and flew into Michigan for Bill's funeral. Nancy stayed for a whole week and had a nice visit with her mom and dad. She had a lot of quality time alone with both of them that week as the rest of the family was working. Nancy returned home on the following Wednesday to California. The next Monday evening she received another bombshell of a phone call. Her dad just had a massive heart attack and was in the intensive care unit at St. Joseph's hospital in Clinton Township. We told her that 75% of dad's heart was gone but he appeared to be holding his own.

Then at 7:54 am the next morning, on June 29<sup>th</sup> Marie got a call from St. Joseph's hospital that Ed went into cardiac arrest at 6:54 and they worked on him for a whole hour but were unable to get his heart to restart. Edward was gone.

Marie and Sandy went to the hospital to see Ed one last time and to sign the paperwork. While we were there Werner called Nancy and told her that her father had just passed away. So Nancy once again had to make travel arrangements to come back to Michigan for her father's funeral. Don paid for the entire family to fly to Michigan for the funeral. That cost him a fortune as it is top dollar to fly unless you have a week or two advance notice. Nancy and Don got to see Warren and Jackie again as they drove in to Michigan for the funeral. Warren had a hard time driving to Michigan and back as his car was really acting up.

When Sandy was standing in Marie's basement and Warren was standing upstairs on the landing Sandy was taken aback at how much Warren's body resembled Ed's.

At Ed's funeral Marie was in shock that she lost Bill and now Ed just 14 days apart. Marie kept saying over and over again in the funeral parlor, "this is a rerun, this is a rerun. The same funeral parlor and the same people coming for this funeral as came to Bill's." When they dug the grave for Ed's casket it was right next to Bill's grave so Bill's vault was totally exposed on the left side. It was a really weird feeling to see Bill's vault after we had just buried him 14 days previously and now it was exposed again.

Marie, being very pragmatic all of her life, handled Ed's death remarkably well. She held up well during the funeral and entertained all of the people who came to the funeral luncheon at the Sweden House and even invited all of them to come back to her back yard afterwards. Marie, being only 68 years old, settled into widowhood quite well. She took over all of the tasks that Ed had done and was quite self sufficient.

Nancy and her family had to return home soon after the funeral as they all had jobs they needed to go back to. Marie was now on her own to start her rather lonely new life without Ed. But Ed scared the daylights out of Marie in those weeks after his death. One day Marie was vacuuming the carpet in the living room. a job Ed always did. Ed appeared just over Marie's shoulder as she was vacuuming. Marie freaked and ran away

with her heart beating 200 beats a minute. Another time Marie was pinning a corsage on the dress of Sandy's girl lamp when once again Ed's gauzy, tall body appeared right behind Marie. She flew into the living room barely able to catch her breath. The third time Marie was sitting by herself in the living room when she looked over to Ed's chair and saw his legs and feet appear in the chair. Just legs and feet, she said, not the rest of his body. And the fourth time Marie was laying in bed when she heard Ed say out loud just one word to her, "Marie".

Sandy took Marie to Lion's Head a month after Edward died and then in the fall Marie got an invitation from Nancy to come to Nancy's for her birthday and to stay there with Nancy through Thanksgiving and Christmas. Marie accepted the invitation and spent time with Nancy from the 1<sup>st</sup> of November through Christmas. Marie celebrated all those holidays with all of Nancy's family. Nancy and all of her children and grandchildren were thrilled to have their GG with them for all of that time. And mom was very happy to be there and enjoy being with all of her California family and to bask in the warm California climate. Marie came back to Michigan on the 28<sup>th</sup> of December and her Michigan children celebrated a late

Christmas with her that year. Nancy has some wonderful pictures of Marie visiting with them that year.



**Marie**



**Marie**

Mom was always wonderful company, always pleasant, always cheerful. Even when mom got steamed up she was still cute! We would love to see her get her dander up, but it would never last long and she would be back to her same old happy self again. And mom had a very fine sense of humor. She could always see the funny side of life. Come to think of it all of the Dahl family were happy go lucky, fun people to be around. Marie's brother Bill had a laughter so infectious you had to laugh along with him even if you didn't hear the joke he just told.



**Marie at Knott's Berry Farm**

Nancy took mom everywhere on her visit that year. Mom went to see all of the grandkids and great grandkids and also all of the local attractions. Mom loved going for car rides and seeing the country side and Nancy was quick to oblige her. They had a wonderful time that fall, even though their hearts were heavy with the loss of Edward. For the first time when Marie flew back home Edward would no longer be there to greet her and welcome her back home. She'd be returning to a totally silent house. But in a way mom didn't mind that too much as she was alone for 13 hours a day when Ed was at work and Marie seemed to enjoy solitude. She did enjoy her own company and would entertain herself by keeping a very clean house and reading a lot of books in her spare time. Once dad died Mom's taste in



books gravitated to the macabre. She loved V C Andrews and Stephen King. She also read Koontz but thought he was a bit too bizarre. And mom reveled in horror movies, the gorier the better! The rest of us would get faint watching people get slashed up, but not Mom – she would gobble that stuff up. I don't know where she got that from – her mother Nellie was scared of her own shadow and if she were to watch anything like that she wouldn't sleep for a week. Marie was not as meek as she looked on the outside. Inside Marie she had an inner core of steel. She could be as fearless and tough as nails when the situation called for it.



**Nicole**



**Michael & Michelle**



**Mike, Nicole & Michelle**

Beginning in 1974 Nancy's Christmases revolved around her newly born grandchildren. For over 13 years the main planning for Christmas revolved around Craig, Nicole, Michelle and Michael, both in taking them to see Santa Claus and to plan the family celebration around them.



**Craig**

Craig was so handsome in his suit the night he went to his high school prom. And his date that night had an absolutely gorgeous dress that night. They looked so handsome and so happy together.



**Craig Stephens**

Craig was Nancy's last child to graduate from High School. All 4 of her children were now adults! Nancy had a very handsome picture taken of Craig for his graduation from high school, see above.



**Michelle Pacheco**

Nancy, Donna and Michelle Pacheco came to Utica to visit Marie in 1984. That was Michelle's only visit to her grandma Bender until attending Marie's funeral in 2002. Michelle and Donna had fun touring around Utica on our bikes.



**Michelle, Nicole, Don, Mike & ?**

The picture shown above is one of Don with his grandchildren. This era in his and his family's life is the epitome of Don's height of respect as the head of the Stephen's family. He was the undisputed head of his family and is highly respected by one and all. Well, Don was about to find out that the more respected you once were the harder the fall when you destroy your reputation and lose the love of your entire family.



**Margie**

The next visit Marie made to Don and Nancy's she met Margie (the infamous Margie) at Don and Nancy's furniture store. Nancy would point out to Marie how well dressed Margie always was. Marie was not impressed and didn't pay too much attention to Margie. To Marie, Margie was just the hired help, plain and simple. But Nancy soon suspected that maybe she was more than at first met the eye. She told Marie that when Don and Margie were planning to drive for several hours out to the desert to measure for drapes she had a strong feeling that she had better go with them, she told Marie as that situation could look a little too cozy for comfort. At the time Nancy did not yet know just how right she was. A lot was going on behind her back, and when she would voice her doubts to Don he would tell her she was nuts, that she was imagining everything, that there was nothing going on between them. Ya, sure.

Don then leased another store further out and put Nancy and some of his other help in that new store. That left the coast clear for Don to dally with Margie, whom he was getting friendly with. (Margie had worked on getting Don to play around with her for the past 4 to 6 years. Don resisted until now.)

Margie, Nancy learned, was in the process of getting a divorce from her husband. Nancy heard scraps of information here and there that this was a very messy divorce, that Margie was doing her husband dirt and getting away with it. As the divorce was coming to an end Nancy then learned that Margie was buying a large, beautiful, expensive house on Rocking Horse Way in Orange. Nancy wondered how Margie could afford such an expensive house on her salary.



**Donald**



**Nancy**

Then Don told Nancy that he wanted to sell their beautiful house on Santa Elise and also buy a house on Rocking Horse Way in Orange. Nancy had mixed feelings about such a move but went along with it. In a way she felt it was the right thing to do as a lot of undesirable people were moving into her neighborhood and she was afraid of what that would do to property values in the near future. She also had to consider the safety issue if less desirable people were moving in. So she reluctantly agreed to put her lovely house up for sale. It sold for \$275,000.00, which was a huge increase over the \$38,000.00 Don paid for it in 1969. They then moved into another beautiful house on Rocking Horse Way, which was 5 houses down from Margie's. Margie's house was on a hill so Margie could look right down into Nancy's windows from her house on the hill.

The horror story was about to begin for Nancy. Nancy loved to take long walks with Don after work in the evenings. Don kept suggesting that they walk over to Margie's house and have her join them on the walk. Nancy didn't like this a bit – as the saying goes, 3's a crowd.



**Don & Tuffy II in Don's store**

Tuffy II was getting very old by this time, which was breaking Nancy and Don's heart as they saw their beloved 5 lb Teri poo age with each passing year,. Now they noticed he had a cough which the vet told them was from a bad heart. Every day Tuffy went to work with Don and every night he came back home with him. At work in those last days Tuffy II started sleeping under Don's desk at work. One day someone said to Don that they didn't think Tuffy was breathing anymore. Don went under the desk and looked. The man was right. Little Tuffy had quietly passed away in his sleep. That was such a sad day for Don and Nancy, losing their companion of so many years.



**Don & Nancy Stephens**

But at about that time Nancy had to face the niggling doubts she had been feeling for some time now – it appeared that she might also be losing another long time dear companion. Don was doing some mighty strange and some mighty sneaky things lately. When Nancy would confront Don with the things that were going on she told her she was crazy, that nothing was going on. And when Nancy would discuss these things with her children and the children would confront Don he would tell them that their mother was nuts, that nothing at all was going on. The children were becoming very confused. They didn't know what to believe.



**Craig**

Meanwhile Craig was going through the front closet of their house and he found a large sum of money in one of Don's coat pockets. Craig asked Don about all that money being in the closet. Don told Craig he was stowing money away in case he wanted to make a new start in life. Craig accepted that answer and never discussed with Nancy what he found until after the fact.

Things started getting really ugly at the Walker store due to Don's duplicity. Nancy got into an argument with Don and Don got furious and struck Nancy's head against the desk in the store. One of the customers called the police to protect Nancy from further abuse. The police came and broke it up.



**Mary Anne & Scott Stephens**

Then Don called Craig and told him to fire Mary Anne and one other employee in the store. Craig was going steady with Mary Anne at this point and was very much in love with her so he told his dad no, he wouldn't fire them, Don would have to do the firing. Don came into the store extremely angry and started in on Craig. Craig answered Don back, telling him he was wrong. Don punched Craig and threw him to the floor, jumped on top of him and was strangling him. The police were called. They came, pulled Don off Craig and arrested Don for assault. Don's wig ended up full of grease in the parking lot and was beyond repair. Don was screaming obscenities to and about his children. He called Linda some horrid names. One cop turned to the other and said, "That's his own daughter he's talking about, isn't it?" The other cop put his head down in sadness and replied, "Yes." Don was hauled off the jail and outward peace was restored. However for all involved inwardly they were seething. There was just no reason for all this brouhaha except for the fact that their dad was sneaking around behind everyone's back playing around with his employee Margie and lying through his teeth to everyone when asked about it.

Things kept getting even uglier. Don started sneaking out of bed in the middle of the night and visiting Margie in her house. He'd then sneak back home in the middle of the night. Don and Margie started having fun and games over the phone, lying to everyone and then laughing and giggling over the phone about how clever they were.



**Jack Stephens**



Don then sued Linda and Donna, saying that the furniture in their stores belonged to him and that the girls never paid for it. The girls said they did pay for it. Don took his two daughters to court. Don's daughters talked to Jack Stephens, Don's brother about the upcoming court cases. Jack agreed to testify in the girls' behalf. Jack got up on the witness stand and testified that he had personal knowledge that the girls did pay for the furniture as he was in the store and personally witnessed the transactions. So Don lost those cases. But the permanent damage was done and the girls lost much of their love and respect for that man. How could he do that to his own flesh and blood?



**Warren, Nancy & Donald**

Nancy called Warren and told him all that was going on with Don and Margie. And told him of all the lies and dirty tricks they were pulling. Warren flew out to California, talked at length to Nancy and then went to Don to discuss what was going on. Don lied through his teeth to Warren and told him nothing was going on, that Nancy was making it all up. It was right there in front of Warren. He could see for himself what was going on and he realized that his father was lying through his teeth to him. Warren realized there was nothing he could do in the circumstances so he flew back home to his wife Jackie.



**Jackie & Casey Shea**



**Warren & Casey Shea**



**Nancy, Casey Shea , Jackie**



**Warren & Casey Shea**



**Warren & Casey Shea**



**Casey Shea**



**Casey Shea Stephens**

Jackie gave birth to their first child, Casey Shea Colleen Stephens on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May, 1987. Warren sent Don picture of his new born daughter. Don made the crass statement that it was no concern of his. That broke off the relationship between Don and his oldest son until June of 1999 when we all received the call that Don was dying of bone cancer.



**Nicole White**

Nicole White, Linda's daughter used to spend time with Nancy, her maternal grandmother. They had quality time together until the divorce fiasco took over all of Nancy's time and energy.



**Mrs. Miston**

Nicole also spent quality time with her paternal grandmother, Mrs. Miston. There was one stipulation Linda put on Mrs. Miston's visits – she was never to tell Nicole that she was her grandmother – she was merely to present herself as a friend of the family. In order to be able to see Nicole and spend fun filled times with her, she agreed to this stipulation. About the time Nicole was 12 years old she let slip a part of a sentence that made Linda believe that she had figured out who Mrs. Miston really was and was now playing the game of pretending to not know her true identity.



**Craig & Scott**



**Scott & Mary Anne**



**Scott & Craig**



**Mary Anne & Scott**



**Scott**



**Mary Anne, Craig & Scott**



**Mary Anne, Craig & Scott**



**Scott**



**Scott Stephens**

Shortly thereafter Craig's fiancée Mary Anne went to the doctor for a visit and when she came out of the doctor's office she told Craig the momentous news – she was expecting his child. Craig got so emotional over this news that he turned white, leaned out of the car and threw up! (What a beginning to Scott's family history story!) Craig's first born child, Scott Michael Stephens was born on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June, 1988. Mary Anne and Craig were mulling over what to call their child if it was a boy. They were pretty uncertain as to what they wanted to call him even just before he was about to be born. It was his grandmother Nancy who chose his name. What about the name Scott, Nancy said. That's a nice sounding name. Both Mary Anne and Craig agreed so that's what they named him.

Scott was born right in the middle of all this divorce mess, complete with all the lying, cheating and stealing. While Nancy was living in her house alone Don and Margie broke into her house and stole her jewelry from it's hiding place under the floor. Nancy got an attorney and he got a court order to search Margie's house. But the search order was not carried out for days, and to make matters a complete screw up, one of Margie's friends was a police officer and tipped her off as to the coming house search. So by that time she moved all the stuff, probably to her brother's home. Nothing was found in her house.



**Craig Stephens**

Craig tried so very hard to help his mother out through this time of total turmoil. Craig went and talked to Margie's daughter who was also disgusted with all this cloak and dagger stuff and so she agreed to help Craig out. With her help to get

inside the house Craig bugged the phone. He put the tape recorder in the eave and every couple of days Craig would remove the old tape and replace it with a new one. Those tapes made it abundantly clear how deceitful Don and Margie were being and how cute they thought their deceitful little game was. Linda later transcribed one of those tapes so the whole family could see just how rotten those two were. It was like the bible says, "what you do in the dark of the night will become known in the daylight".

Don took the best car down to Margie's house. Craig used Nancy's keys and switched the cars. When Don bought the new really expensive license plates for the car he was driving Craig took that plate and put it on Nancy's car as she couldn't afford those expensive plates. (But it didn't do her any good in the long run because when she went to buy plates for the car the next year they made her pay for the plates for both years.)

Don asked Nancy to trust him and not get a lawyer for herself. He told her he would support her if she trusted him. Nancy knew better from what she had experienced. Nancy ended up hiring 5 different lawyers before the divorce was final as there were so many shenanigans going on that the lawyers were not competent enough to counteract all these monkey wrenches that were being thrown and all the skull duggery that was going on. One honest lawyer told Nancy right out he couldn't take her divorce case as he was an honest man and he just didn't operate like he would have had to to keep up with her case.

Don had one attorney who had cost him over \$250,000 by the time the divorce was final. Don hated that attorney and felt he did him dirt. When Don was dying he was laying in his hospital bed in his living room watching the early evening news when he let out a whoop of joy. His divorce attorney had just been shot dead by a disgruntled client. That made Don's whole week it made him so happy!

The Judge in Nancy and Don's divorce was so angry over all the finagling Don had done over the years which was now coming to light he said that after the divorce case was over he was going to turn Don in to the IRS.

The divorce case was going so slow due to the tremendous back up in the California court system that Don and Nancy consented to have their case heard by an alternate court run by retired judges. Nancy was not so sure that this was a good idea but being she wanted to get this whole mess behind her and get on with her life, she agreed, but wondered whether she was playing into Don and Margie's hands.



Meanwhile behind Nancy's back Don and Margie were really busy hiding assets from Nancy and the court as well as from Don's creditors. Margie it became apparent, was a past master at deceit. Don claimed that the Walker store had no business and so he closed it and let it go into foreclosure. The store full of furniture he moved all in one night in the middle of the night to a rented warehouse and then claimed to his creditors that the stuff was sold and he had no funds left to pay the loans due on the furniture.

The warehouse belonged to a friend of Don's who knew the game Don was playing, so the friend sold and/or moved all of Don's furniture and told Don tough luck, it's gone. He knew Don didn't dare report it stolen as he claimed it was no longer in his possession. So much for honor among thieves, I guess.



**Donna, Ashley & George**



**Ashley & Donna**



**Nancy & Ashley**



**Ashley & Michelle**



**Ashley**



**Mike, Donna, George and Ashley**

In the middle of all this confusion and hurt Donna announced first that she had married George Meyer and then later announced that she and George Meyer were expecting a child in the second week of September, 1988. Oh, please don't let the baby be born on Don's birthday, Donna said.





**Ashley**

Oh, oh, guess what day Ashley Meyer was born on? Don's birthday, September 11, 1988. Oh, boy! No one was happy about that date!



**Mike, Michelle, Ashley and Donna**

With the birth of Ashley Donna took this opportunity to have a professional photograph taken of herself with her 3 children.



**Michael Pacheco**

Nancy loves all of her grand children, including Michael Pacheco. He had an especially appealing personality when this photo was taken.

Don then declared bankruptcy after he had hidden all of the assets of the company. The bankruptcy went through successfully as none of this duplicity was detected and Don even got out under the lease on the other store which had about 9 more years to go. So when the lesser of this store found out Don was uncollectible they went after Nancy for the funds. That gave Nancy quite a few years of fright and was one of the reasons she moved out of California.



**Mary Anne, Craig & Scott**

Craig lost his job when Don closed the Walker store and to make matters worse Craig's house in Diamond Bar was in Don's name. Don was angry at all his children, including Craig so he let Craig's home go down the drain. Craig then moved in for a while with Don and Margie and Mary Anne moved in with her family. That was a very difficult time for Craig and Mary Anne to be separated like that. And to make matters worse Margie would treat Mary Anne just awful when they were alone together but would act so sweet around Don and Craig so at first Mary Anne wondered if Craig even believed her about Margie.



**Nancy**

Nancy was living at this time in the \$440,000 house on Rocking Horse Way while Don was living 5 houses away in Margie's house.



**Donald Stephens**

Don had the nerve one day to come to Nancy and ask her if she would fix his wig for him as Margie didn't know how. Nancy told him no. After that Don no longer wore a wig as he didn't know how to pick the right one out and had no idea how to groom and care for one. Nancy had done all that for him through the years.

That house was making Nancy a nervous wreck as she was not able to afford the monthly mortgage payments. Don was supposed to be making the payments but it wasn't up to date. Don suggested that they sell the house and came up with a buyer which Nancy learned later was a personal friend of his and Nancy felt that the sale was probably not wholly kosher. Don and Margie were pulling so many fast ones that one would have to be as devious as them to keep up with all their scheming. Nancy was fully exhausted with all their fast moves that she just wanted out and separated from them as soon as possible, so she consented to the sale of the home she was living in.



**Nancy**

The judge awarded Nancy a cash settlement in the divorce but it was far less than she should have gotten as a wife of over 35 years who had worked along side her husband in the store for years because the judge was unable to document the amount of money that Don had hidden and given to Margie over the past 10 years so he could only award what was left to be seen. The judge also gave Nancy another \$90,000 in order for her to give to Craig as his equity in the home that Don had taken away from him. The judge was unable to give the money directly to Craig as he was not party to the divorce.



**Craig**



**Nancy & Donna**

At the time Donna was working for a stock broker. The stock broker told Donna that he was handling a deal that would double their money in a year, paying huge dividends right off the bat. So Donna suggested to Nancy and Craig that they invest in this sure fire offer. They both invested large sums because the people who invested before them had already received large dividend payments. Nancy's brother Michael strongly advised her against doing such a thing as it sounded like it was a deal that would fail as no legitimate stock deal makes that much money in that length of time for the investors. But Nancy and Craig felt it was too good a thing not to be in and invested. Within a year the man Donna worked for moved out of state and their money was entirely lost.



**Greg & Linda White**

Once the house was sold Nancy moved in for a short while with Linda and Greg until she could decide where she wanted to live. Nancy was looking at a lot of homes in the area but none suited her as to lay out or cost. She did not want to be stuck with a large mortgage as she was now going out to work on her own and wanted something she could afford on the amount of money she would be making. Nancy's head was spinning with all what she had been through and all the decisions she was now faced with. While with Linda she talked over all what she was being faced with and what she should do now, but in the end Nancy realized that only she was able to make all these decisions by herself.



**Nancy's glamour shot**

One day out of the blue Nancy decided to do something really cute. She posed for a glamour shot session! See what a cute picture she chose from this session!



**Casey Shea**



**Linda**



**Nicole**

Glamour shots are popular in Nancy's family. See the glamour shots done by Casey Shea, Jackie, Linda and Nicole.



**Nancy**

And here is a very attractive picture of Nancy carrying a present and birthday card to her card after a happy birthday celebration.



**Casey Shea, Patrick, Nancy & Jackie**



**Patrick, Jackie & Casey Shea**

Nancy flew out east to visit Warren and his family in 1992. She had a wonderful visit with Warren, Jackie, Casey Shea and Patrick.



**Casey Shea & Patrick**

Nancy's favorite picture of that visit is the one she took of Casey Shea and Patrick bending over at the waist and facing each other in gleeful play.



Looking at Patrick's facial expression, I bet Nancy figured he didn't believe a word of that fairy tale Jackie was reading to him!





**Casey Shea**



**Patrick**

The day Nancy was leaving Casey Shea got so upset that her grandmother Nancy was leaving she just started bawling. She was crying so hard when she got to school that the teacher sent her to the principle's office. When the principle asked her why she was crying she told them it was because her grandma Nancy was leaving her and going back to California. Patrick did not cry when Nancy was leaving. Probably because he was too young to realize that he would not see his grandma again for years. (Or maybe like Craig when Michael left, could Patrick have just been glad to get his bed back!?)



**Warren, Jackie, Casey Shea & Patrick**

Here is what Warren and his little family looked like the day Nancy had to say a sad goodbye to them as she left their house in Davidsonville, traveling back to her home in California.



**Emma & Don Remsing**



**Delores Hardoin & Nancy**

Nancy also flew in to Detroit and had a wonderful visit with Marie for a week. Marie was in good health then so they had a wonderful visit. Dad's car was available then so Nancy and mom were able to drive around town. Nancy also had a wonderful visit with Don and Emma Remsing and with Delores and Johnny Hardoin.

Nancy asked Mary Anne to go with her to dances so she could meet someone new. Nancy met and attracted many fine men. Just like in her teen years she found herself to be a very sought after date. When Mike and Marilyn were out visiting Nancy they really like a fellow named Gordon that Nancy was dating. He was a very fine fellow but he just wasn't Nancy's type. Mary Anne really liked the judge that was really sweet on Nancy, but again, he just didn't suit her. Finally at one of the dances Nancy attended with Mary Anne she met Bob. Nancy was immediately attracted to Bob and began dating him. Bob looks a lot like Don and Nancy was very comfortable with him. Dating turned into love and Nancy and Bob decided they were meant for each other.

They decided to find a place of their own, and after much discussion Nancy and Bob decided to move to the Las Vegas region rather than staying in California. They had several reasons for this. Houses were much more reasonable there than in California. And Nancy was afraid that the owner of the store Don leased was going to find her and sue her for the unpaid lease amount so she figured she'd be much harder to find in Las Vegas. The owner of the store had already tried to serve papers on Nancy but she sent them to the Rocking Horse address and the new owner received them and never turned them over to Nancy so she didn't even know about them until after the fact. Nancy felt that this was also a deliberate ploy on Don and Margie's part to get her stuck with the balance of the lease.

So Nancy and Bob gathered up their belongings and put them into a rental truck and they were off to begin a new life together in Las Vegas. Nancy had had all her

belongings stored in a storage room so she had to go through all those things and just take with her what would fit in the truck and what were the most important things to her.

They drove to Las Vegas and looked for a home. They finally found the perfect lot on a corner overlooking the dazzling lights of Vegas. They then found an attractive modular home to place on the lot. So in short order they had a home of their own in nearby Henderson, Nevada.

Nancy was very worried about the lady who owned the store Don had leased finding her so when Nancy went to the license bureau in Nevada she told them her name was Nancy Wellington. She got a license in that name without a hitch. So she felt more secure with a new name. She said when she decided to take on a new name she just went through the phone book looking at the various names until she found a pleasant sounding one. Wellington had a nice classy ring to it, so that was the name Nancy decided on.



**Jackie, Patrick & Casey Shea**



**Patrick & Casey Shea**



**Warren, Jackie, Casey Shea & Patrick**

Warren called Nancy with some wonderful news. On June 10, 1990 Jackie gave birth to Warren's son, Patrick Kyle Stephens. Warren sent Nancy a really cute picture of new born Patrick in Casey Shea's arms with Jackie next to the two of them.



**Marie and Sandy at Sun N Lake Towers in Florida**

In September of 1989 Nancy heard that Werner bought a retirement center in Florida and that Sandy and Marie moved down there for awhile. Marie had her own apartment in Florida, A 203, and went back and forth with Sandy and Werner from Florida to Utica. Nancy smiled when she heard her mother was the Belle of the Ball, so to speak, down there and was sought out by the most prominent residents to be their friend.

On November 13, 1990, on Marie's 77<sup>th</sup> birthday, Sandy discovered that she had breast cancer. After having gone through surgery, 6 months of chemotherapy and 31 days of radiation Sandy has remained cancer free. At the same time our cousin Patricia Dahl Nowicki discovered she also had breast cancer. She had surgery and chemotherapy and remains cancer free. (Our cousins Doris Stocker and Patti Bartos and most of Marie's Canadian cousins have also had breast cancer so this is definitely something all of the women in our family should keep a close watch for.)



**Nicole White**

Nancy was so proud of her oldest grandchild who was now the first to graduate from High School in 1992. (Of course, if you remember this was Nicole's second graduation, she accomplished this the first time at the age of 5 when she graduated in kindergarten. It sure took a lot more classes and grades before she was able to accomplish her second graduation. That poor little kid had no idea how much work would go into preparing for her second graduation. It would have made her tired just thinking about the enormity of the situation!)



**Nicole White & Nancy Stephens**

Nancy, of course, was always proud of her oldest grandchild Nicole, and she has always had a close relationship and a special feeling for her as she was the first and Nancy often sat for her when Linda went to work. Nicole, in turn, has also felt very close to her beloved Grandma Nancy.



**Michelle, Donna & Michael Pacheco**

Nancy also had a lot of love and affection for her other older grandchildren, Michelle and Michael Pacheco. Donna brought the children over often to Nancy's house and in those days Nancy was able to stay at home during the day and enjoy the children's company as they shared their love for each other.

Naturally as the rest of the grand children and great grandchildren were born Nancy loves and cherishes them equally, but with the horrific divorce and all the problems Don caused in the family and the subsequent need for Nancy to move to Las Vegas her visits to all of her progeny are short and not so frequent. Time is mighty and time can be cruel to us. Time has turned leisurely days with a faithful husband and father filled with time for family and friends in nearby Cypress, California into days in far away Las Vegas filled with disability and hardships. We must all adjust to the hand fate has dealt us and make the best of it. We must learn to cherish and savor what time we are able to share with one another.



**Werner Wilhelm**

In January, 1993 Nancy received the news that her sister Sandy had lost her husband, Werner. He had died of heart and kidney failure at the age of 64.



**Donna, Nancy & Linda**

Then in February of 1993 Nancy received the news that her daughter Donna had been diagnosed with breast cancer. Nancy was unable to be at her daughter's side as she would have liked to be because she now lived in Las Vegas. But Nancy prayed fervently for Donna and also put her in the prayer chain that has worked so well for Nancy when she has a crisis. Donna was found to have an aggressive form of cancer so she had surgery and chemo therapy. Linda remained at Donna's side through this most difficult time in her life. Donna was lucky. The cancer never returned in spite of the fact that it was diagnosed as being aggressive. She was very lucky. Donna had reconstructive surgery which didn't take well the first time. She then went to a more experienced plastic surgeon and was pleased with the results the second time around.



**Donna**



**Ashley**



Donna later had a very frightening experience. One night in her home she suddenly went totally blind in both eyes and everything went totally black. She hollered for Ashley and walked blind, feeling the wall, until she found the bathroom. She went in and found the toilet and sat there for about 15 minutes. As suddenly as her vision left, it returned to normal again in about 15 minutes. When we talked to Warren, Linda and Craig, we have discovered that all of Nancy's children have had the same frightening experience, Warren more than once. The doctors feel that it is related to migraine. All 4 children suffer from migraine attacks, especially poor Linda who has been in such excruciating pain she cannot even let her head touch the pillow and has had to have many trips to the emergency room. This must come from Don's side of the family as no one on Marie or Edward's side of the family have suffered from a migraine attack. (Don had suffered a very painful migraine attack on Thanksgiving in 1981 when he had a disagreement with Linda earlier in the day.) Nancy doesn't remember Don having migraines.



**Mike, Marilyn, Marie, Kathy, Doug Sr, Doug Jr**

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, 1993 Marie celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Only two of her children were there with her to celebrate this important milestone in her long life. Nancy was in Las Vegas and Sandy had to travel to Florida on urgent business at Sun N Lake Towers. But we both called her to wish her happiness and a long and healthy life. Mike and Marilyn and Doug and Kathy were there as were Pat and Chet Nowicki and Aunt Jean Dahl, Shorty's wife. Douggy Jr was also there to help her celebrate. They went to Fillippa's for dinner and then back to Marie's house for ice cream and cake. Ann Kay took professional pictures that day. Mom looked so good in her red suit jacket. She was totally well at that time, not having suffered a stroke at this point yet.



**Doug, Kathy, Marilyn, Doris, Jean, Chet, Douggie, Pat, Mike, Marie**

Nancy had sent Marie flowers for this memorable event. Nancy had often sent Marie flowers for important dates since she was not there to celebrate with Marie in person. Marie enjoyed her flowers. She put them in a prominent place in the living room and nursed them with water and TLC to get as much life out of them as was possible.



**Marie with flowers sent by Nancy**

Craig and Mary Anne had planned to get married. They had all their arrangements complete and were now just waiting for the appointed day. Then just before the wedding day the unthinkable happened. Mary Anne got a call – her son Gabriel had died. She went from anticipating a very joyous event to having to live through a very grievous one.



**Scott, Mary Anne, Valerie**



**Valerie**



**Nancy & Valerie**



**Valerie**



**Valerie & Nancy**



**Mary Anne, Craig, Scott, Valerie, & Nancy**

A while later beautiful little Valerie was born. A beautiful, svelte, willowy, slight built little princess. Scott now had a baby sister! And Craig and Mary Anne now had their little girl. Nancy came to California from Henderson in order to meet and hold her precious new little grand daughter.



**Nancy**

Nancy had worked at 3 day blinds in California after the divorce and so now that she was in Vegas she was able to get a job at the same company there. But she was so unhappy to find that the pay was less and the benefits were much worse. The medical benefits were especially much worse which was upsetting as in California 3 day blinds had good Kaiser insurance and here the benefits were much less. Over the next 5 years or so Nancy tried out a variety of different jobs but all of them weren't much better. A lot of stress and low pay and poor benefits and a lot of guff from the boss.



**Roxanne, Oct 96**



**Craig & Roxanne**



**Roxanne & Valerie**



**Marie & Roxanne**



**Valerie, Nancy, Roxanne, & Scott**

In 1996 four wonderful things happened in Nancy's family. First little Roxanne was born to Craig and Mary Anne. She was a very cute, adorable little girl. Marie and Sandy were able to meet her when she was only a little over a month old as we came out to California in May of that year. Nancy, Sandy and Marie were able to hold Roxanne and enjoy cuddling that sweet little kid.



**Mary Anne Stephens**

Roxanne's birth was not without danger, however. Mary Anne could very easily have bled to death if Craig had not been in the room and was observant that the tray under the bed was filling with blood. Craig needed medical help right along with Mary Anne when he saw how serious the medical personnel considered the blood.



**Craig**

Craig got so scared for Mary Anne that he came close to passing out. But the medical staff staunch the bleeding and soon had everything under control. Craig was so happy to have another little girl as was Mary Anne. Scott probably had a foreboding that he was about to get ganged up on!



**Greg & Linda White**



**Nicole & Mark Blais**

Later that year Linda & Greg announced that their daughter Nicole was graduating from college in May. Then hot on the heels of this announcement Linda called again and said that Nicole had met the man of her dreams and was getting married in June of 1997 so she could go to Hawaii with him as he began his stint as a Navy Seal. Then fast on the heels of this announcement came another wonderful one – Marie told her daughter Nancy that she would be flying out for the wedding and would be bringing Michael and Sandy with her. And that they would also be spending a whole week in Vegas to visit with Nancy after work.



**Nicole, Linda, Nancy & Marie**



**Nicole, Minister & Mark**



Marie and her family flew to Vegas, visited with Nancy and then Nancy and Bob and Marie and her kids rented a car and drove to the hotel in Santa Ana where Nicole was getting married at. The wedding was wonderful. Nicole and Mark were married by Nicole's aunt who is a minister under the gazebo in the hotel.



**Nancy, Linda, Marie & Donna**



**Nicole & Nancy**



**Nancy**

**Marie**

**Michael**

**Mitzi**

Afterwards we moved around the corner to the banquet room for the rest of the evening. GG was in the wedding party and walked down the aisle in front of the bride. She made the cutest little “okay” like sign with her fingers as she passed by the videographer.



**Bob**

(Bob was one of two videographers who took videos of the wedding. Bob's videos were so far superior to the man that Nicole hired. We were all so happy



that Bob so graciously filmed that momentous event as we now have such a wonderful memory of that day.)



**Mary Anne, Roxanne, Scott, Valerie and Craig Stephens**



**Mark, Nikki, Nicole, Nancy & Marie**

The day after the wedding was a very busy one for all of us. Nancy, Marie, Mike and Sandy met Craig for breakfast in the atrium of the hotel and afterwards we went to Linda's house to watch Nicole and Mark open their wedding gifts.



**Ashley**

We then moved out to the back yard and young Ashley ended up swimming in Linda's waterfall pool.



**Valerie, Craig, Mary Anne & Roxanne**



**Nancy & Roxanne**



**Marie & Roxanne**

We have a number of wonderful pictures of that day. Afterwards Donna came and drove to Craig's with us following in our rented van. There we met Mary Anne and her children and then Craig when he came home from work. This was the first time Marie saw her great grandchildren Valerie and Roxanne and it was the first time Sandy met all three of their children. We took some wonderful pictures of Marie and Nancy holding new born Roxanne and then we all went to a family restaurant for dinner.



**Marie, Nancy & Bob**

Nancy had to be back to work at her blinds place so on Wednesday we all had to drive back over the desert. Bob had to be back home earlier so he took Mike's rented car back over the desert and returned it to the rental place in Vegas. That car had broken down on Mike in the desert so he warned Bob about that. It also happened to Bob on the way back. The car got overheated and quit so Bob had to stop until it cooled off and then it would start again.



**Michelle, Ashley & Donna**



**Nancy, Marie, Craig**

We then visited with Nancy daily until it was time to fly back home. Craig and his family and Donna and Ashley and Michelle drove out later in the week and we had a wonderful visit that weekend with the whole family.

A very interesting thing happened when Sandy went to the counter to pay the bill. She told them she was also paying all the Stephens rooms. The clerk replied that one of the Stephens, Donald Stephens had already paid his bill and checked out at 6:30 am. Don and Margie were there spying on us! They were able to see the family at the swimming pool from the vantage of Craig's room which overlooked the pool. And Don's room overlooked the atrium which led to the casino so he could watch the family coming and going. Don later bragged that he was there those days.



**Bob**

Bob found someone videoing their house and car in front of the house while Nancy was at work. Nancy got really upset and thought it was the lady who had the lease on Don's store. It wasn't. Later on Margie bragged that she hired a private investigator to find Nancy and film her home.



**Elenore, Nancy & Marie**

In 1997 Sandy called Nancy and told her that Elenore was coming to Utica to visit Marie in May and then they were going to drive to Maryland so Elenore could visit with her son John and celebrate her first Mother's Day ever with him and his wife Virginia. Sandy asked Nancy if she would like to fly out to Utica too and drive with us and spend Mother's Day with her son Warren. Nancy jumped at the idea so plane tickets were purchased for Elenore and Nancy and by the first week in May they were all together visiting Marie in her house.



**Marie, Nancy, Mitzi, Sandy and Elenore**



**Mike, Mitzi, Elenore, Marie and Nancy**

They also went several times to Mike's house in Bloomfield Hills for a visit and to go to a Jewish Deli. We took some nice pictures of that visit both at Mike's and in the restaurant. Marie had no problems in standing or walking at that time.



**Doug, Doug, Kathy, Shelley, Mike, Marie, Nancy, Elenore, Mitzi & Mike**

They had a wonderful visit together and on Monday we decided to take off on Tuesday morning and begin our trek to Maryland. But fate would have it otherwise.



**Marie, Elenore & Nancy in St. Joseph Hospital**

On Monday night Elenore was climbing Marie's stairs and when she got one foot on the porch she lost her balance. She fell backwards and landed on the pavement, striking her head hard on the cement. She had a very bad concussion and was in too much pain to get up so Sandy had to call an ambulance. Elenore did not want an ambulance called as she knew they were expensive but we had no choice given the severity of her injury. They took her to St. Joseph hospital at Hayes and 19 Mile Rd in Clinton township. As we were waiting for the ambulance to come Nancy and Marie came out on the porch and were leaning over looking at Elenore. Sandy asked them to step back, if they lost their balance we'd have two or three bodies on the pavement!

We visited Elenore every day in the hospital. Sandy was with her the first night she was in the emergency area. We were all so scared she might die of her concussion she was in so much pain, and was throwing up. Sandy thought real hard about how she could distract Elenore to keep her from going into shock over her injuries. Sandy thought up a song from her childhood that seemed to fit the bill. So she sang it to Elenore as Elenore was laying on the gurney dying of head pain. She sang to Elenore her childhood song that Marie used to sing to her when she got hurt, "I was walking down the street, oh so neat, down the street, when



somebody moved my street, I fell down and went boom! I sighed and cried, and went home to mommy dear. Oh how my aching head was hurting. Mommy put me straight to bed, oh my head, straight to bed, when somebody moved my bed, I fell down and went boom!”



**Elenore Mc Kinin**

Elenore then moaned out loud and said, “I’m dying and she’s singing to me!” But it worked it took her mind off herself and onto how aggravated she was over that darn song!



**Warren, Jackie, Marie, Casey  
Shea, Nancy and Patrick**



**Warren & Jackie's house in  
Millersville, Maryland**

Thursday at noon Sandy picked up Aunt Elenore from the hospital, drove to Marie’s house and picked up Nancy and Marie and then we all went to the Uptown Restaurant in Utica. 2 pm, we finished our lunch and as we were all sitting in the corner booth Elenore says to us, “Well, we all had lunch, we’re all packed, we’re all neat and pretty, so lets start out for Maryland. Can you travel with a concussion, Sandy asked her. Oh, sure, she replied the doctor just said to sit in the front seat and look straight ahead and I’ll be okay. So a very surprised group of people drove back to Marie’s, picked up the luggage and we were off to Maryland to spend Nancy’s first mother’s day in 20 years with Warren and Elenore’s





**John & Virginia Dahl Dale**

first mother's day ever with John and Virginia. We stayed over night in a motel in Pennsylvania and arrived about 4 pm at John's house in Laurel, Maryland. We said hello to John and Virginia, dropped off Elenore and her luggage and were on our way to Warren's. We got there in time for supper. Nancy got Casey Shea's bedroom, Marie got Patrick's bedroom and Sandy got the guest bedroom. We all got to use the kid's bathroom that visit.



**Marie**

I told Marie never to lock the bathroom door in case she needs help. That first night she locked the bathroom door and then fell in front of the toilet. She called out for help and Sandy couldn't get in as the door was locked. I told Warren. Quickly he reached over his door and pulled down the key and unlocked the door. Having kids in the house, Warren and Jackie always kept the key handy for just such an emergency. So Sandy got in and got Marie off the floor. She had some nasty bruises but no broken bones.



**Good old Patchie**

But then we had another scare a few nights later. Patch, the Stephens' family trusty old dog, was the hero that night. 4 am Patch started barking. We all jumped

out of bed to see what was the matter. Here was Marie standing at the very edge of the top of the stairs! If she would have taken one more step forward she would have fallen down that whole flight of stairs! But some how Patch knew she wasn't supposed to be there and so he stood in front of her, blocking her way and barking. Warren so her first but had to run back to get his bath robe. In the meantime Sandy came out, ran forward and got in front of Marie and turned her back to her bedroom. Thanks to good old Patchie, a potential tragedy was averted.



**Casey Shea**

Then the next night in the middle of the night Casey Shea was standing at the head of the stairs listening to a strange sound downstairs. Sandy got up and heard that sound too but was unable to place it. Suddenly Casey Shea realized what she was hearing. She ran down the stairs, pushed the cat aside and retrieved Marie's hearing aide. The cat went into Marie's bedroom while she was in the bathroom, jumped up on the high dresser and grabbed her hearing aide which the cat mistook for a mouse. She ran it to the dining room and started batting it around. Casey Shea retrieved it before the cat did any damage to it.



**Nancy**

Warren, Nancy, Sandy and the kids went to an older mall together to do some shopping. Nancy took her walker with her, thankfully, for when we got a long way from the car Nancy found she could walk no further, that her legs were giving out. So she sat down on the walker and Sandy ran and brought the car closer to the entrance to the mall. Warren was then able to wheel Nancy out in her walker to the car. That sure was handy! Once back in the car Nancy got her strength back.

The next day we went to the Schwinn bike shop so that Patrick could pick out his birthday bike. He had a ball looking over all those bikes trying to decide which one to get. Nancy and Marie enjoyed watching his happiness as he picked out the bike, helmet and accessories. Casey Shea got the money as she already had a bike. But when she saw how wonderful Patrick's bike was she decided to spend her money on a bike too and she gave her almost new first bike to Jackie to ride.



**Patrick      Casey Shea**

Nancy walked to the school yard with Sandy to meet her grandchildren after school. We walked the beautiful wooded paths back home. The kids stopped along the way to play on the monkey bars while Nancy and Sandy enjoyed watching them hang upside down, etc.

Nancy was careful walking as she was unsteady on her feet. Sandy had brought a \$2000 printer, scanner, copier machine with her and was copying all of Jackie's favorite pictures into 8 X 10s. One time Sandy was sitting in front of the machine and Nancy and Marie were sitting on the couch when Nancy decided she had to get up. She took several steps away from the couch avoiding mom's feet when suddenly she lost her balance and started falling directly into the path of the copy machine. When she saw where she was about to land she was able to do a very fancy pirouette and land on an empty space on the carpet instead. It was almost magic how she managed to avoid that copier!



**Marie & Nancy**

Nancy, Marie and Sandy went to the ball field to watch Patrick play baseball. We all enjoyed watching the game, but Marie and Nancy had to bundle up from the cold!



**Marie, Nancy, Casey Shea, Jackie, Patrick Elenore, John, Virginia, and Warren**

We decided to all have Mother's Day dinner together that year. Jackie had made reservations at a local Holiday Inn. When we spoke to Elenore she said that Virginia did not want to go to a restaurant in an all white neighborhood. So John made reservations at his favorite restaurant and Jackie cancelled the Holiday Inn reservations.

When we first met at the restaurant we had grave misgivings as the place looked like a really old diner from the outside. But when we got inside they led us in the back to a brand new addition which was very tastefully decorated. We were the only party in the back for most of the dinner time. We were a really big party: Nancy, Marie, Sandy, Warren, Jackie, Casey Shea, Patrick, Elenore, John and Virginia. But we were wonderfully accommodated and had delicious meals. Everyone was stunned at how well behaved Casey Shea and Patrick were the entire time. And we all had a wonderful time together that day. It was truly a memorable Mother's Day.

A few days later we said goodbye to Warren and his family, picked up Elenore at John's and were on our way to Niagara Falls. We had to stay overnight in a

smoked filled dumpy motel in the middle of no where as we got a late start as Nancy needed to get vitamins. What a dark, rainy night that was when we stopped at 9 pm. Those 3 women scared the death out of Sandy as they all got out of the car at the same time and Sandy was so scared one of them would fall. But we all made it in to the restaurant safe and sound. And they all told Sandy she was being bossy.

The next day we made it to Niagara Falls in time for lunch. We got beautiful connecting rooms overlooking the Falls. What a beautiful sight that was! We no sooner put the luggage down in the room when Elenore said to Sandy, "let's go". Where? To the casino, naturally, Elenore replied. So we all went. Elenore had a ball, before the afternoon was over she had won \$218.

The next day we had lunch overlooking the falls and dinner up on top overlooking the falls in the dark. We walked around the American and Canadian side of the falls all day, Marie in a wheelchair as she couldn't walk too far on her own as she was too weak. Nancy walked with a walker and Elenore hung on the Sandy.

On departure day Nancy, Elenore and Marie got out by the horseshoe falls and enjoyed the scenery and felt the mist rolling off the falls. We then got in the car and headed for Lion's Head. Unfortunately in the confusion Nancy's walker was left behind and we had to buy a new one when we got back to Michigan.

By supper time we were in Lion's Head. We had dinner at Mom's Restaurant in Ferndale and then drove to the cottage for a wonderful 2 week stay. Both Nancy and Elenore said several times how peaceful and safe they both felt at the cottage. They felt like they didn't have a care on the world while they were up there. We had lunch and dinner out and also went sight seeing daily. The most scenic was our trip to Tobermory, a quaint diving and fishing village at the tip of the Bruce Peninsula. It was so much fun just walking in and out of the shops there. And you can eat lunch there outdoors overlooking the harbor with all the huge ships docked there.

And we also went shopping at the mall in Owen Sound, some 50 miles south east of the cottage. (Nellie Dahl also went shopping with us in Owen Sound in 1953, but she had to sit on a bench the whole time as she was not able to walk around by herself due to her nerve and muscle disorder. ) We had a great time going in and out of the shops there, mostly window shopping, except that Marie always finds something she wants to buy, especially if it is yellow.

Nights at the cottage we all played some kinds of cards together. Elenore is a really sharp card player, so if you sit on her discard side you're gonna have a really dry night as far as picking up the pack goes. We had a lot of fun at cards, but Elenore did kind of accuse us of throwing the deck to one another. Oh, well. Edward often did it to please one of his kids, so why shouldn't we do it?



**Marie, Nancy, Marilyn, Sandy, Elenore at Marilyn's house**



**Douggie, Doug, Kathy, Shelley, Mike, Marie, Nancy, Elenore, Marilyn, Mike & Charlie at Marie's house**

It was kind of a sad day when we packed up the car and started for home for we knew we would soon part. We went to Mike and Marilyn's house for one last visit and took some pictures to capture the memories of this visit. Nancy left for home 2 days after we got home and Elenore left right after that. This ended a wonderful vacation.

We almost drove to Connecticut that vacation as Nancy was seriously thinking of going to the bank that Don's life insurance check was drawn on and cashing it there but in the end she just decided to make an appointment with a stock broker and deposit it there instead.



**Ashley Meyer**



Nancy's grand daughter Ashley is very talented in singing, dancing and acting. She takes part in many plays and has ongoing singing and acting lessons. She has recently been accepted into a school that specializes in acting. Nancy watches Ashley in her performances and in her singing lessons when she is in California. If Nancy cannot make a play Ashley often supplies her with a VCR tape so she can view her performance that way. Nancy is very proud of Ashley's talents and hopes she continues to succeed in her chosen field.



**Warren, Craig & Donald Stephens**

In June, 1999 Nancy's kids and sister and brother started getting calls from Margie. Don had prostate cancer for the past 10 years and it had since gone to his bones and he was dying. Don wanted to see his kids one last time before he died. His kids, with the exception of Craig, did not want to see him.



**Donna & Donald**



**Linda & Donald**

Sandy suggested to the other 3 kids that they should see him for their own sakes so that after he was gone they would be at peace knowing they saw him for one last time. It was discussed that this would not be a pleasant visit as he had done so much wrong to them and to their mother Nancy, but it would be good to have closure by saying goodbye.



**Donald Stephens**

Sandy called Nancy and told her the news. Nancy was very sad to hear Don was dying and would have liked to say goodbye to him too but not with that evil Margie around. The kids said goodbye to him, but with very mixed emotions. They could not forgive him for what he had done to all of their lives, and they were also so upset to see him in such bad condition. They were also very upset at having to deal with Margie who ever true to style, still was throwing monkey wrenches, even right to the last.

Warren flew out there in July and spent a few days with Don. Margie was throwing herself at him. Warren didn't react. He was there to see his dad and kept it on a polite basis. Then in August while Warren was in Lion's Head with his family he started getting calls from Craig that Don was in the hospital and Margie was trying to kill him. Jackie asked Warren if he was about to leave the family at the cottage and fly out. No.

Craig called the complaint division of the health department and also the administrator of the hospital and said they were trying to kill his dad. There was a big hullabaloo over the whole incident and in the end Don's morphine was greatly reduced and he was sent to a nursing home for a few days and then back home. Margie didn't really want to care for Don and had been looking for an easy way out was the consensus of the family. And now that everyone was looking she had no choice but to take him home and wait for the natural end.

Craig and Mary Anne were really upset when Don wanted pea soup as the only thing he could eat and Margie said no, she wasn't going to the store for that and also she didn't want to spend that much money.

Here Don is, laying in a hospital bed in the living room and dying and he is worrying that she will be okay financially after he is dead and she can't be bothered to buy him a can of pea soup. Sad.

Don also talked to Mike on the phone just before he died and he was hoping that Nancy or the kids wouldn't sue Margie after he was dead so we have to wonder

where the vulnerability lie that he knew there was a chink in her lying, stealing, thieving armor.

Warren went out there by plane when he heard his dad was going to die within a few hours. When Warren got to Don's house he went right to his bed and told him he was there. Warren thinks Don knew he was there. That was Don's last moment of consciousness. He died around 5 pm on December 19, 1999. Warren was the only child there at the moment of death. The body remained there for a few hours and then was removed. Margie had him cremated. Craig wanted the ashes as he wanted part of Don buried so there would be a grave to visit. Margie kept the ashes. There was a memorial service for Don but his own family wasn't there. It was Margie and her kids.



**Wm Flory & Margie**

Don did not leave one red cent for his children or grandchildren. So sad. What kind of a father would totally forget his own flesh and blood. Our feeling is that it would be a father influenced by a woman like Margie. She inherited his home and all his money and possessions.



And in April she sent out a wedding announcement with a picture of her and her new husband. I wonder what Don would think of her living in his home with

William Flory, her new love so soon after Don's demise. And we also wonder if it was William who sent her that big bouquet of fresh flowers as Don lay dying.

By court order Nancy got his life insurance in the divorce but Margie also had life insurance on Don too.

Margie also took over Don's furniture repair business when he got very ill. Craig had to leave Don's employ by August as he said Margie was really doing him dirt.

Craig got Don to sign a quit claim deed to Craig's house in August but Don wouldn't do it until Margie knew about it and didn't object.

Nancy hopes that Don is doing okay in eternity and she continues to pray for him. But Nancy is so glad to have Margie out of her life and wants it to continue that way. No one wanted to sue Margie after Don's death as they just wanted her out of their life for good.

Fortunately no one has seen or heard from Margie since.



**Nancy**

Nancy went through a series of MRI tests as her one leg was shrinking and was a lot thinner than the other. She was having more and more trouble walking and not losing her balance. The first idiotic doctor told her there was nothing wrong with her health. When Nancy went to another doctor and gave him her MRI and other tests he immediately saw white matter changes in the brain and said she had MS. He started her on a series of injections to slow down the progression of the disease but in the end Nancy felt that these difficult injections into her leg were not helping and stopped them.



**Michael Pacheco**

Nancy congratulated her oldest grandson Michael Pacheco on his graduation from high school. He looked so handsome in his cap and gown. Nancy was so proud of him that day!



**Doug, Sandy, Marie & Linda**



**Marie & Linda**



**Linda & Marie**

Nancy heard that her daughter Linda had to fly to New York for a business meeting and decided to stop over in Michigan to visit Marie before flying back to California. That worked out very well for Linda as it saved her company almost \$1000 because plane fares are a lot cheaper with a weekend lay over and she only lost one day of work by staying through Monday. And Marie was so happy to see Linda after a several year absence. Linda visited all her old haunts from her childhood and had a very happy weekend visit. And like Nancy, she really loved the beautiful fall colors of our falling leaves. (Nancy used to mostly schedule her visits for October for that reason – beautiful falling leaves and also much milder weather.)





**Marie smiling at Linda**



**Marie, with tongue out**

And true to her nature, Marie did not fail to give Linda a view of her sassiness before this visit was over. First she laughed, then she stuck her tongue out at the Old Town restaurant in Utica.



**Marie**



**Toni & Marie**



**Marie on new ramp**

In June of 1999 Nancy received some disturbing news from Sandy – on June 16<sup>th</sup> Marie had fallen and broken her hip at the cottage and had to be taken by ambulance back to Michigan and had to have a hip replacement on Friday. The operation went very well but the recovery and rehabilitation was slow and painful. On July 16<sup>th</sup> Marie was discharged from the rehab center and went back to her own home but now had to have 24 hour a day care givers. She also now had to have a handicap ramp installed in front of her house so that she could get in and out of the house. (That was her salvation as now she was able to get in and out of the house on a daily basis, so she could continue to go to restaurants, shopping trips, doctors, etc.) Nancy knew that her mother's life had taken a decided turn for the worse. Never again would her mom be able to walk around her house at will and be able to live alone like she was so fond of doing.





**Nicole carrying Nancy's great grandson, Devon**

Nancy heard a wonderful bit of news in May of 1999 – she was about to become a great grandmother. Nicole was expecting her first baby in January, 2000. And if it didn't come early it would be the first baby of the new millennium. Nancy called her mom Marie and told her the good news. Marie was thrilled. Marie loves babies and she wanted to get out to California to see her first great great grandson and to get her pictures taken with him. Marie was all fired up and ready for the big event. Nancy was so happy to think that not only would she have a new great grandchild but that she would also get to visit with her mother once again.



**Nancy & Marie**



**Nancy & Marie**

Nancy visited Marie in Utica in 1999, the first time since Marie had broken her hip. Nancy found Marie was now walking with a walker and had a lift chair and an electric double bed where the head and foot end rose and fell at the touch of a button. Marie got around outside the home by means of a wheel chair. Nancy had a wonderful visit with Marie and was so happy she was able to see her mom again as she knew time was getting short for her dear mother.



**Shelley Bender & Nancy**

While visiting with Marie Nancy got to see all of her family again as they came to Marie's home to see her. Nancy had her picture taken with Shelley Bender as she has always had a special affection for her only niece.



**Marie Bender**

But then in November, 1999 Nancy got a most disturbing phone call. Marie's health was failing fast and we didn't think she would make it to see the new baby. The doctor felt she would be dead before her birthday, and certainly before Thanksgiving this year. But Sandy talked it over with the doctor and the doctor put Marie on a new very expensive heart pill and in a very short time Marie's heart strengthened and she became stronger and more alert. She pulled out of her near death slump. We figured she pulled out of it by sheer strength of will for two reasons: 1. ever since she was 13 years old she always wanted to live to see the year 2000, and 2. she really wanted to meet her great great grandson in January.



**Nicole carrying Devon, her 1st child**



**Marie, determined to live to see her 1st great great grandchild**

Come January 5, 2000 Marie was on the plane to California with her daughter Sandy and her caregiver Rochelle. Marie was pretty strong that month, holding herself up by sheer strength of will and she really enjoyed meeting her whole family. Devon got stubborn and came kind of late. He was due between January 4<sup>th</sup> and January 11<sup>th</sup> but he didn't start to make his appearance until January 16<sup>th</sup> at Donna's house as they were celebrating Donna's and Craig's birthdays. Suddenly Nicole's water started to break and so she and Mark were on their way to the Irvine Hospital.



**Mark, Devon & Nicole Blais**

But for the week before that Marie and Nancy visited with Linda and Nicole and went shopping with them and out to eat at night with them and their husbands.



**Devon**

We got a call on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2000 that Devon was born at 3:30 am. Linda called the photographers and they showed up at the hospital at 4 pm.



**Nancy, Marie, Linda, Devon & Nicole**

We all showed up at that time too to have our 5 generation pictures taken. Sandy was very nervous to get these pictures, saying wouldn't it be a tragedy if Marie died in her sleep before we got the pictures taken. So at 4 pm on January 17<sup>th</sup> the 5 generations were forever captured on film.



**Marie & Devon**

Marie said to us in a very sad tone of voice that they probably wouldn't let her hold the baby. When Sandy told that to Nicole she made sure GG got to hold the baby although we were right there with our hands close by in case we had to grab the baby. But mom held on to him very securely and was very happy to be able to hold him.



**Nancy & Devon**

Nancy was also delighted to hold her first great grandchild. You could see the happiness in her face as she held that little bundle. Devon was a very loved, very wanted child. (All the children in our family were equally loved and wanted. What was so important in Devon's case was his place in the family, being the first of the 5<sup>th</sup> generation, just like Nicole's place had been special to Marie and Nancy as she was the first of the 4<sup>th</sup> generation.)



**Nicole & Mark's condo in Irvine**

Marie was very traumatized both times she went to Nicole's house to see Devon as Nicole's condo was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor and so some one had to carry Marie up an entire flight of steps and set her on the couch in Nicole's living room. Nicole's husband Mark was very strong as he was a navy seal and was used to carrying over 200 lbs over a mile so he had no problem carrying Marie 15 feet from the car to the stairs, up a flight of stairs and 15 feet across the living room to the couch. He wasn't even winded when he finished carrying her. But Marie was scared to death. Mark kneeled outside the car by Marie and slid her onto his bended knee, had her put her arms around his neck and then lifted her up and carried her with his arm under her seat and his other arm around her back.



**Marie scared**

Going down was pure scary for Marie and for all of us. The first time we had her walk down the stairs with Greg in front and Rochelle behind. Marie had an awful time moving her feet and descending all those stairs. The second time was even scarier as Mark decided to take her down the stairs in her wheel chair refrigerator cart style. He tipped her back wards and standing behind her bumped her down one stair at a time. She was really scared over that one!



**Marie, Sandy, Nancy & Devon**

Nancy had a wonderful visit with her mom and her sister Sandy that January. We all stayed at the Woodfin suites and visited back and forth every day. We also went visiting every day to some one's house or some one came and visited us. Mary Anne, Scott and Valerie and Roxanne had a wonderful time in the swimming pool at our motel and Nancy and Marie sat in the shade and enjoyed watching the children romp in the pool.



**Marie with Bearsie**



Just a little over 1 year late we received some more wonderful news – Nicole was expecting another child in November of 2001. A little later they then told us this child would be a girl. Marie was so very happy. She just beamed from ear to ear when she heard her next great great grand child was going to be a little girl. Whereas we thought Marie would not live to see Devon, we were pretty sure she would live to see this child as Marie's health had stabilized on the new heart pill. Marie was now going down on a very gradual but steady manner. Each season saw her weaker than before. Nancy later told Marie that Nicole was going to name the girl Kaitlyn Marie. Mom thought Kaitlyn was a pretty name but mom just beamed to think that Kaitlyn was going to be the 5<sup>th</sup> generation of Marie. (Marie, Nancy Marie, Linda Marie, Nicole Marie and now Kaitlyn Marie.)

Nicole decided to get a new home as the condo was way too small for two children, especially a boy and a girl. She found one she really liked in Anaheim Hills on Jutewood street. It was a good price as the owner couldn't afford it and had to get out from under the house payments. The house had been totally remodeled inside so it was a really clean house. Nicole was talking to Sandy on the phone about the house when she said she had to hang up as she was in labor. It was Mark's birthday.



**Devon, Mark, Nicole & Kaitlyn**



**Kaitlyn Blais**

Nicole had Kaitlyn the next day on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2001. Marie and Sandy decided to wait a few weeks before coming out as Nicole would soon be in her new house and Marie wouldn't be faced with the fright of having to go up all those stairs.



**Linda, Kaitlyn, Nancy, Marie & Nicole**



**Mark, Nancy, Linda, Nicole, Devon, Kaitlyn, Mark, Marie, Sandy & “Natasha”**



**Marie, Nancy & Kaitlyn Marie Blais**

So Marie flew out in November a few weeks after Kaitlyn was born. We had family pictures taken again at Linda’s house the Sunday after we flew out. Once again we had wonderful 5 generation pictures to treasure. As we feared, this was the last child to have 5 generation pictures with Marie as she passed away the next year.



**Nancy & Bob**

Nancy came over the desert with Bob and had an apartment in Woodfin suites catty corner from Marie's. Nancy was feeling stronger now than she felt in August probably in large part because the weather was now cooler. She got around much better and was able to handle being in the apartment by herself as Bob had to go back to Las Vegas.



**Marie & Nancy**

Nancy and her family was able to celebrate Marie's birthday in style as this was the first birthday she was with them in about 20 years. So the children gave her a wonderful birthday with one exception – Linda refused to be where Craig was so she wasn't with the rest of the family at the Claim Jumper. So Linda decided to celebrate her grandma's birthday by taking off work on the 13<sup>th</sup> and having Marie, Sandy and Nancy over for lunch. Linda put out a beautiful hot lunch with lots of delicious food. She also had balloons and decorations galore in her dining room which made a very festive mood. And after lunch Linda had cake and ice cream and we sang Happy Birthday to mom with gusto. Mom was very happy that afternoon and also that evening. One thing marred the after lunch time – Rochelle started up with a very nasty sassy mouth. It killed Sandy to not give it right back to Rochelle in the same nasty tone, but for Marie's sake we had to keep our mouth shut.



**Scott, Roxanne, Mary Anne, Michelle, Craig, Valerie**



**Michael, Marie, Donna, Ashley Marie, Craig & Valerie**

The Claim Jumper was lots of fun and we had a wonderful time there. Craig, Mary Anne, Scott, Valerie and Roxanne were there. Also there was Donna, Michelle, Michael and Ashley. Not present was Linda, Greg, Nicole, Mark and their children. Linda was mad at Craig and evidently Linda calls the shots with Nicole as she doesn't go if Linda doesn't. Everyone was so wonderful to Marie that night and mom was certainly up for that event. We got out our camera and took a lot of wonderful pictures of all of us with Marie on her 88<sup>th</sup> birthday.

At the end she told us she was tired and needed to go back to the motel and go to bed. At first Sandy ignored her as Sandy was really enjoying visiting with everybody but then Grandma got mad enough and tried to throw a fork at Sandy at the other end of the table. As Marie went to reach for something else to throw, Rochelle started quickly moving stuff out of her reach. Oh, well, I guess that signals it's time for bed!



**Marie Dahl Bender**

The next day mom was so cute as she admired and played with her helium balloons. Sandy cherishes these pictures.



**Ginger, Marie, Nancy & Sandy**



**Sandy, Ginger, Marie & Nancy**

Nancy had always kept in touch, mostly by letter or phone, with her cousin Ginger (Virginia Bender Clayton, daughter of Edward's brother Norman), so Nancy called her and made arrangements to go to Ginger's house and have lunch with her. We had a lovely afternoon together at a local restaurant. Ginger brought along a dear neighbor who like Ginger, had been an abused child. Ginger spoke at length of her mother Evelyn's cruelty and was so gratified to know that Sandy remembered many stories of Evelyn's cruelty to Virginia that Marie had told to Sandy when she was a child. Nancy and Marie had forgotten those cruel events due to their infirmities which tends to impair many memories as we age. Virginia told us that she was planning to write her life story but the same year poor Virginia suffered a stroke due to her cancer and her ability to write and talk are now both significantly impaired.

A few days later we went to Nicole's house as they were moving the stuff in. Greg and Mark were gone with the moving truck so Devon was cross beyond words because he wasn't in the condo and now his daddy was missing too. Boy, was he



cranky and whining. And no, this wasn't his house and he wasn't going to go to bed in this strange place. Things got a lot better when Greg and Mark walked back in the door. The house was lovely. Very new looking inside and out. Marie and Nancy liked it. We got a grand tour and saw Kaitlyn's and Devon's new bedrooms. Their bedrooms were totally put together and ready for them to bed down for the night. Marie was happy as there were no stairs to get into this house, just a slightly slanted walk to be wheeled up. So much better!

Thanksgiving was a real problem this year as Linda invited everyone to her home except Craig and his family. Marie, Nancy and Sandy were quite upset over this and Sandy had a serious talk with Linda about this in Nicole's house the day they were moving in. Linda refused to invite Craig and his family, knowing it was upsetting to the three of us. The blow up then occurred the night before Thanksgiving and again on the morning of Thanksgiving. Nancy had planned to go out with Craig and his family for dinner the night before. She was waiting for his call. When he didn't call she called him. That whole phone conversation was very unpleasant for both of them. Then the next day Mary Anne came over in the morning and explained how they felt about the whole situation. We felt the same way but were unable to remedy the problem. GG was very upset that the whole family couldn't be together and was very visibly shaken. We ended up never having dinner the night before or breakfast the next morning with Mary Anne and Craig and the kids.



**Michelle, Greg, "Tasha", Michael, Marie, Sandy, Nancy, Donna, Linda, Ashley & Gary**

At 2:00 pm we went to Linda's house. She had the house very nicely set up for company and served a wonderful dinner, but for Nancy. Marie and Sandy the festivity was marred in that Craig and his family were not there. We compromised by telling Craig and his family we would be at their house around 8 pm to finish the Thanksgiving celebration by eating desert with them. So we ended up leaving Linda's early and taking a very long drive out to Craig's with Bob following us. It



was a very dark, long ride along an unfamiliar freeway, but we made it there in good order.



**Roxanne, Scott, Valerie, Rochelle, Marie, Mary Anne, Craig & Nancy**

We all had a very happy, cozy get together at Craig and Mary Anne's. Mary Anne served all of us a variety of very tasty thanksgiving desserts. Everyone, that is, except Sandy. She asked Craig and Mary Anne for a turkey wing. They told Sandy that they don't eat turkey wings so they have already thrown them in the garbage in the garage. Sandy told them to dig them out of the garbage, wash them off and she'd eat them. They looked at Sandy like she had just gone around the last bend mentally. Then they looked at her again, waiting for her to laugh at the joke she just uttered. But she wasn't laughing, she was waiting for them to pull the things out of the garbage. So Craig and Rochelle went into the garage and rummaged around in the garbage can and found one wing that was sitting pretty much by itself so they pulled it out and brought it into the kitchen with a "She's nuts" look on their face as Sandy looked so pleased to see the wing. So Mary Anne warmed up the wing and some dressing and Sandy was happy eating the wing and dressing while the rest of the family were eating desserts fresh out of the refrigerator. Craig drove around to various party stores in the meantime trying to find diet root beer for Nancy as that is her favorite beverage. Craig soon returned with a happy look on his face – he found root beer. We all stayed and talked together and had a wonderful get together till 11 pm when we started for home as Sandy and Marie were flying home the next day. Then we all went out into the street and admired Bob's new Travelamerica RV. It is a very nice unit with lot's of comfortable amenities.

Bob bought the RV so Nancy can travel from Las Vegas to California in style. There is a couch she can stretch out on and a bathroom so she doesn't have to worry about the long stretches of no restrooms in the desert.

Nancy and Bob stayed in the travel America RV overnight and then said a sad goodbye to Marie and Sandy the next day. It was an especially sad goodbye for Nancy as she knew there was a good possibility this was the last time she would see her beloved mother. (And it was indeed the last time. One year later Marie threw her last stroke and it was so bad that all her traveling days were a thing of the past.)

Sandy was quite perturbed as Linda had planned a birthday party for Sandy which she was looking forward to but had to be cancelled as Rochelle threw such a temper tantrum in Downtown Disney that Sandy had to call the airline make immediate return reservations as

Rochelle started acting up and threatened to take a taxi to the airport and leave Sandy and Marie stranded with Marie, a wheelchair and a walker, 3 big suitcases and 4 carry on bags. So Nancy was cheated out of 4 precious more days of being with her mother for the last time and Sandy was cheated out of the only birthday party she would have had with Nancy and her family since her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

Nancy and Bob went home to Las Vegas in a sand storm while Marie and Sandy flew overhead and looked down at the desert, trying to spot Bob and Nancy in their RV. Nancy and Marie were never more to meet again in this world. Their next joyful reunion will have to take place in the heavenly world to come where there will be no more pain, and no more disability, where they will be able to run full speed ahead into each other's arms.



**Marie with her birthday dog   Marie, the birthday dog on Shu Shu**

As Marie's birthday was approaching Nancy asked Sandy what she could get mom as mom had everything. Sandy told her the two winning gifts were : 1. anything yellow or 2. a stuffed dog as mom loved stuffed animals. Nancy sent a big, soft, flopsy dog in a big box. Mom really liked that dog. She sat with it in her chair and when she got tired of holding him she made sure that this flopsy puppy slept on tip of Shu Shu, the china dog right by her feet where she could keep her eyes on him. Nancy had given Marie a dozen or so more years ago.



**Nicole Hopper & Michael**



**Michael Pacheco & Nicole**



**Michael & Nicole Hopper**

Michael Pacheco met and fell in love with Nicole Hopper. Other family members were telling Marie and Sandy about Nicole. Everyone said they liked her, that she was good to Michael and was protective of him.



**Nicole Hopper & Michael Pacheco**

In October Michael gave Marie some very happy news – that in April of 2003 Marie's 3<sup>rd</sup> great great grandchild was going to be born. They told her they knew it was a girl and they were going to name her Kaylee. Marie just beamed with joy to hear that she was about to have another great great grandchild. But what was sad was that Marie was not going to live to see the birth of this child. Marie died on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December. Kaylee was born in April, 2003.



**Marie Bender**

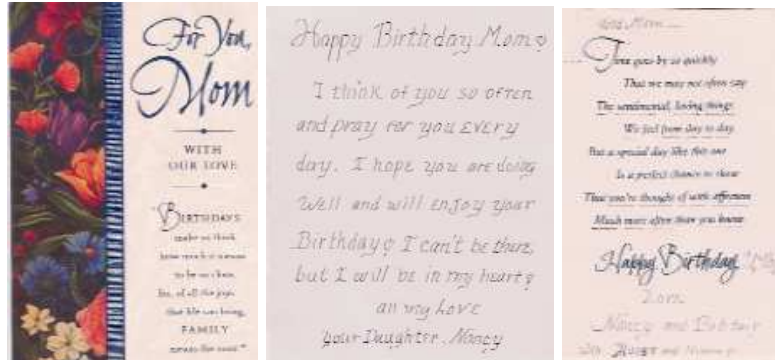
Marie's final decline began in earnest in March of 2002. She had another stroke that month which took her the better part of the month to come out of. But it left

her very weak and unable to walk any distance due to weakness and loss of ability to move her legs and feet.



**Nancy**

Nancy called Marie very often, as she usually did, that year. Some times Marie could talk pretty good to Nancy, other times she could barely make a few words come out. Marie's voice was always very soft and quiet, you had to strain to hear her.



Nancy also sent beautiful Mother's Day cards all through the years which she did this Mother's day too. Mom loved receiving these cards from Nancy. She would just beam with joy as she was reading them and then later she would pick the card up and read it again. When she would put the card down she would have us put it on the window ledge or on the TV so she could see it from where she sat.



**Nancy**

In August, just before her birthday, Nancy went through a series of medical tests and was then told by the doctor that she had early stage cancer. She went through surgery in August and heard the wonderful news that it indeed was very early cancer and that the surgery got it all. But the bad news for Nancy was that for the rest of her life she would have to stop taking estrogen replacement therapy as that promotes the growth of cancer. Nancy was very leery about stopping the estrogen but it turned out to be easier to do than she thought. Nancy really liked her doctors and the surgery was done very professionally. Too bad surgery couldn't cure MS! What a blessing that would be for Nancy if they would come up with medicine that would cure or put MS in check.



**Marie & Sandy**

Just as Nancy was preparing to call Marie for her 89<sup>th</sup> birthday, she got a call from Sandy on November 11<sup>th</sup>. Marie had had a severe stroke the morning before and was now unable to swallow. She also lost her ability to speak. She could no longer even bear any weight and was a total lift to get her from chair to chair or to bed, etc. Marie got her birthday present through the mail from Nancy the next day. She smiled at her present and her birthday card. Marie got many birthday cards from family that year. We displayed them all by taping them up to the woodwork in the living room. They remain taped there waiting for her next birthday as we didn't have the ability to take them down yet.



**Marie, Michael with “Tasha”, Sandy, Nancy, Donna & Linda**

Marie had wonderful news from California just before she had her last stroke. Nancy told Marie that Michael Pacheco was about to have a daughter in April, 2003. Marie smiled with joy at the news. She was so happy when we told her that she was about to become a great great grandmother once again.

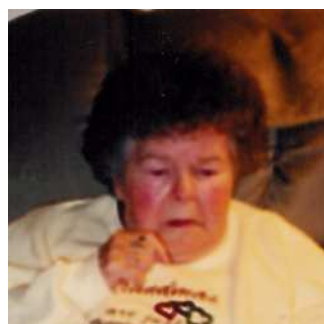


**Hayley, Toni, Marie & Chelsea**

Toni, one of her dear care givers, also got pregnant in July and so when Toni talked about little Kaylee Pacheco coming she would have Marie pat her pregnant tummy and tell her, “Grandma, one of your great great grandchildren is also on the way.” Marie lived to know that Kaylee was on the way but she didn’t live to see her born. At least not in this world.



**Nancy**



**Marie**



Nancy called Marie on her birthday but it was totally a one way conversation as Marie couldn't speak anymore. Mom tried to speak so Nancy did hear her but I guess that was a happy enough event to at least hear from her one last time.



**Sandy, Elenore, Marie, Pat and Jean**

Sandy notified her cousin Pat Dahl Nowicki that the end was near for Marie. Pat asked if there was anything she could do. Sandy told her to find a dress store that had Marie's size and appropriate dresses to be laid out in. Pat told Sandy that Lord and Taylor had some beautiful dresses and she had a few put aside. Sandy went there on the morning of November 22, 2002 and found a beautiful 3 piece cream colored suit to lay mom out in. It was \$365 but when Sandy took it to the counter it was on sale and so she only paid \$175 for it. But it had truly been worth \$375. I also saw an adorable red Christmas sweater for mom so I bought it too knowing she would be wearing it very little. I brought home the dress and when I got in the door I raised the plastic covering the dress and showed the dress to mom. She really beamed her appreciation of that very fine dress. Sandy wonders to this day whether Marie knew the purpose of the dress or not.

Sandy called Nancy the 1<sup>st</sup> of December and told her mom couldn't eat anymore and was sleeping 11 ½ hours a day and had no strength anymore. This for sure was the end. Nancy was very sad but she believes in life after death and like Sandy felt mom would be much better off and much more content and happy in heaven. Nancy knew it was time for Marie to let go and travel on into eternity.



**Marie on Dec. 5, 2002**

On Sandy's birthday, the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, 2002 Marie was in a deep coma. She would rouse briefly when we would change her and then fall back into a coma.

For two days we were giving her morphine as she was in pain due to the flesh falling off her from no circulation.

Michael came over at 4:30 pm and went to the Ocean Breeze restaurant with Sandy. We then returned and spent some time with mom in her bedroom. Mike left and Sandy, Toni and Cindy kept watch over Marie. On 10:28 pm on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, 2002 Marie very quietly passed into eternity.

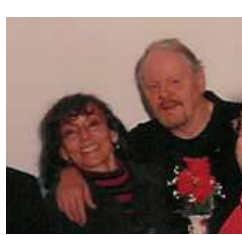


**Sandy**



**Michael & Nancy**

Sandy called Mike and told him to call Nancy and tell her mom had passed away. Mike was also told to call those in California and tell them. Instead Nancy called her children in California and told them that Mom was gone.



**Nancy & Bob**



**Craig & Scott**



**Donna**



**Nancy & Michelle**

Nancy wanted very badly to come to her mom's funeral but she was feeling very weak and the rigors of air travel seemed overwhelming to her. But once she heard that Donna and Michelle were going to be on the same plane she decided to get brave and go with Bob to Detroit. She also heard that Craig and his whole family were also coming to Utica.



**Elenore Mc Kinin**

Elenore was also afraid to fly to the funeral as she hadn't been feeling so well lately, but she was determined to go and she made it in good order.



**Nancy, Marie, Devon, Linda & Nicole**

Linda wanted to come and called the airlines to make reservations for herself and Nicole to go to Michigan. But Linda had a very bad ear infection so she went to the emergency room to see if he could clear up the painful fluid in both ears. The doctor gave her meds but told her she was in no shape to fly. Nicole wanted to come but Mark couldn't come as he was in the academy and the more she thought of trying to fly with 2 infants and sit in a funeral parlor for hours with two little kids the more she realized that that just wouldn't work. So neither of them was able to make it. Linda wrote a nice eulogy for Marie and faxed it to me just before the funeral. Sandy read it at the church and then placed it permanently in Marie's "memory drawer" in her casket.



**Warren**



**Nancy & Bob**



**Mary Anne, Valerie, Scott, Roxanne and Craig**

Elenore flew in on Saturday night from Minnesota. Warren flew in from Maryland on Sunday and was at the first day of mom's wake. Nancy, Bob, Donna, Michelle,

Craig, Mary Anne, Scott, Valerie and Roxanne came in at 5:30 am and were picked up by mom's caregiver Cindy and Werner's long time friend Rudi at Detroit Metro. We all went to the Uptown for breakfast and then went to the funeral parlor.



**Marie Bender**

Mom was stunningly beautiful in her 3 piece elegant suit and her jewelry. Marie was beautiful in life and if possible even more stunning in death. When Marie's niece Carol Bender Meyer came to the funeral she said when Ed brought Marie for the first time to meet the Bender family, her nephew Clyde ran back to the kids' bedroom and told the kids, "Uncle Ed's bride is really beautiful!" And all of her days Marie remained a beautiful, peaches and cream complexion woman.

Sandy wanted to keep all Marie's jewelry on Marie but Mike said to take it off and give it to family members. So we took some of it off to distribute but left on some given to her by Sandy and the care givers.

With Bob's help Nancy made it all through the funeral in good order. Nancy's long time friends, Emma and Don Remsing came the second day and sat with Nancy the entire day. Nancy also had a lovely visit with her children and grandchildren and also with her dear Aunt Elenore. Warren took a breathtaking picture of Nancy sitting outside St Lawrence Church in a black Limousine waiting for the ride to the cemetery. Nancy and Elenore sat in the tent in front of the casket. The funeral director gave Nancy, Sandy and Elenore the pieta from off Marie's casket. Craig, Bob and Sandy stayed behind to watch the casket go in the ground and Nancy and the rest of the family went to the Uptown restaurant for the funeral luncheon. The food was very good and the seating very satisfactory. But the bathrooms were inoperative which was crazy. Sandy's friends taxied the guests back to Marie's house to use the bathrooms and then back to the restaurant.



**Marie standing next to her grave stone**

Nancy is a firm believer of life after death, for when her heart stopped after that horrid Vista Cruiser accident in 1970 she left her body and was watching her body and what the doctor was doing from up above her body. So she said she would never fear death as she now knows that the soul leaves the body and has a life of its own. So if Nancy were able to stand along side of us on that cold winter morning she might have seen Marie standing by the side of the grave stone smiling at all of us, telling us that we should not weep, for she did not die.



**Emma Remsing & Nancy**

Nancy went for an afternoon with Emma and Don Remsing to a restaurant in the Port Huron area. Bob says he thinks Don got mad when Bob sneaked out and paid the bill in private. Don was miffed that he was railroaded out of being able to pick up the tab.





**Nancy & Bob**

The next morning bright and early Nancy and Bob flew back to Las Vegas to their own home.

Christmas was a sober one for all of us that year. Our loss of Marie was still so fresh in all of our minds that it dampened our spirits. Nancy and Bob drove to California and celebrated Christmas with Nancy and Bob's families.



**Michelle Pacheco & Michael Jost**



**Michael Jost & Michelle**

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of February, 2003 Nancy's second oldest grandchild, Michelle Pacheco married Michael Jost in Las Vegas, Nevada in a wedding chapel. This was very convenient for Nancy and Bob as it was close to home, but for the California branch of the family it necessitated a long ride over the desert.



**Michelle & Michael Jost**



**Michelle & Mike Pacheco**



**Donna, Ashley & Michelle**

Bob stays very close to Nancy since February of 2001 and does everything for her as she is weak and unsteady on her feet. One day he went out for an hour to run some errands and when he got back he found Nancy with the back of her head



split open and she was laying in a pool of blood. He took her to the emergency room where they put 17 clips in the back of her head to close it. A week later Nancy's family doctor took the clips out and she is healing up nicely.



**Bob & Nancy**

Bob has been Nancy's salvation since February, 2001. If it hadn't been for his presence and attendance on Nancy's every need she would not have been able to stay in her own home. She is so grateful to him for staying by her side and keeping her safe and taken care of.



Then on April 16th we received the long awaited news – Mike Pacheco's first child, Kaylee Pacheco had finally arrived. He sent us all pictures of his new daughter.



**Kaylee Christine Pacheco**

She developed a severe infection at birth and was in neonatal intensive care for a week. But the infection cleared and they were able to take her home and begin their life together as a family of 3.

Sandy had Mike arrange to have professional pictures taken of Kaylee and both sides of the family – Mike's and his wife Nicole Hopper's.

In June of 2003 Nancy and Bob came from Vegas to Donna's new house in Anaheim Hills and had their pictures taken with Kaylee and her parents. Then after the picture taking session Nancy and Bob visited a little with Donna and her children, then had to leave to go to Scott's graduation.



**Scott Stephens**

Scott was valedictorian of his class and was about to give a speech. Nancy did not want to miss that so she made sure she came to California in time to make that ceremony. Nancy said Scott did wonderful. He delivered his speech in a strong, loud voice and never stuttered or missed a point. It was a very fluid, very well delivered speech. Nancy was so proud of her grandson.

Nancy and Bob returned to their home in Henderson to rest up from the trip and await their next adventure in Nancy's family story.