

**THE LIFE AND TIMES  
OF  
NELLIE REHFELDT DAHL**

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Nellie Rehfeldt was born on election day, November 3, 1885, the 7th child of Paulina Bruckner Rehfeldt and John Charles Rehfeldt. Election day in those days was not like today, it was a day full of hoopla, parades, and beer drinking. It was a carnival type atmosphere which caught up most of the population of the City of Detroit in one gay whirlwind of activity. It was a very party like atmosphere and there was hardly a sober soul in the city by the time the poles closed for the day. (Little Nellie might have thought that everyone was celebrating her arrival on this earth that day!) They lived at 220 Alfred, one or two houses from Paulina's brothers Edward & Charles. Nellie's parents, Paulina Bruckner and Charles Rehfeldt were married on the 8th of July, 1867. Paulina was 18 years old and John Charles was 19. John Charles was a painter by trade from the time of his marriage to the time of his death some 34 years later. John Charles stated that he was born in France, and Paulina was born in Germany in the Kingdom of Hanover, in the dukedom of Schwartzburg. Paulina and John Charles were married by Joseph Kuhn, Justice of the Peace. The witnesses to the marriage were Charles Bruckner, brother to Paulina, and Matthias Schied, relationship to the couple unknown at this time.

Nellie's brothers and sisters who witnessed her humble entrance into this world were John A. aged 15, Elizabeth born the 18th of August, 1873, and who passed away on the 25 of August, 1877, some 8 years before Nellie was born, Edwin Rehfeldt who was born on the 11th of January, 1876 and who died on the 25th of July, 1876, some 9 years before Nellie was born, Mathilda, Nellie's favorite sister, who was born in 1878, Hattie who was born on the 7 January, 1881, and Charles, who was born in 1883.

Nellie's sister Mathilda was a very warm motherly type of person who loved Nellie very much and did her best to spoil her favorite sister to no end.

Nellie's mother Paulina Bruckner Rehfeldt was a very happy, friendly soul who did her best by her children, which often was not enough as Paulina was worn out with work, having born 13 children in total, which she fondly referred to as her "baker's dozen". Paulina cheerfully worked long, hard hours to keep her family clean and neat. Paulina used to put a big wooden wash tub in the backyard and fill it with hot water and scrub the family's clothes over a ribbed washboard. Paulina used to scrub the white clothes clean on Monday and the colored clothes on Tuesday. It took 2 days to do the wash because she had such a large family. Nellie used to help her mother with the wash now and again as did Tillie and Hattie. Hattie remembers scrubbing the clothes down

with her mother on Monday and Tuesday, and then ironing with her mother on Wednesday. Paulina did the ironing by putting the very heavy iron irons over the flame on the stove in the kitchen, and when one iron would get hot she would iron with that iron while the 2nd iron sat over the flame getting hot. When the iron she was using got cool she would put that one on the flame while she used the freshly heated one to iron with, and so on until the wash was all ironed.

Nellie was a very exhuberant, happy, boisterous child, in other words, a real tomboy ( a term which she had used many times to describe herself in her earlier years.) Nellie was the faovrite of her father, by far. As far as Charles was concerned, the sun rose and set in his dear little Nellie. Nellie was very fond of telling this story over and over again. Nellie says she was about 9 years old and was riding her bike around the corner when a big bully in the neighborhood knocked her off her bike. Nellie said that that particular boy really irritated her father because he was such a bully and loved agrevating Nellie and other littler kid in the neighborhood. It seems that when this boy knocked Nellie off her bike that day she was just furious and figured that she had had just enough of this kid and his meanness. Nellie's anger at this kid suddenly got the best of her and she just tore after him. He ran into a field and Nellie ran after him. Nellie jumped on him, knocked him down and then looked around for something to beat him with. She saw a pump handle right next to her and she figured that was just what she was looking for; she picked up the pump handle and started beating the bully over the head with the pump handle! He screamed like he was being murdered, and the more he screamed, the more Nellie let him have it with the pump handle! Unknown to little Nellie her father Charles was coming down the street at the time and saw the whole fight. Charles so loved his little Nellie and encouraged her in her tomboy ways and when he saw her getting the best of that mean bully, his heart just burst with joy over his little tomboy! When Charles got within speaking distance he shouted to Nellie with much enthusiasm, "that's my Lolly!, Give it to him good, Lolly!" Charles gave her repeated enthusiastic encouragement, and Nellie enthusiastically beat that kid in tune to her father's priase. It's a wonder that little 9 year old Nellie didn't end up getting sent up the river for murder!

Another interesting story that Nellie had told to me occured about 3 to 4 years prior to this story. Nellie said she was a young tyke of about 5 or 6 years old and had gone about 2 blocks from home to play in Clark Park. Nellie said she was in the park, playing near some bushes when a strange man stepped out of the bushes and grabbed her. Nellie said that before she even had time to realize what was happening to her that her older brother Charles had seen the man grabbing his little sister, so her ran over toward Nellie and the man shouting for the man to let go of his little sister. When the man heard all the commotion that Charles was causing he let go of little Nellie and ran away. Charles took little Nellie by the hand and protectively brought her safely home to her mother.



Nellie told her daughter Mildred another one of her favorite childhood tomboy stories. Nellie was about 8 or 9 and some neighborhood kid was teasing her unmercifully. Nellie got so mad that she saw red, then without contemplating her actions, she picked up a paint can and flung it right at the kid's head! The kid ducked, it missed his head, and yup, you guessed it!, it sailed right through a store window! The storekeeper recognized little Nellie, so he went to her parents home with the tale of Nellie's hot temper and the poor Rehfeldts had to pay for that big store window. I bet Charles' enthusiasm for Nellie's antics dampened a little over this little incident.

Nellie told her daughter Marie that every one of the kids were assigned regular chores to do around the house and that one of her chores was to polish the oil lamps, getting all the old soot off them.

Two children were born after Nellie that survived childhood, her brother William who was born about 3 years later, and her sister Elizabeth who was born about 1891. Nellie feels a lot of guilt when she thinks about her sister Elizabeth, for to her dying day she wonders if she caused or added to her sister's affliction by her one moment of carelessness in handling her sister. Elizabeth was doomed to a life of tragedy from the moment she entered this world, it seems. Everyone in the family had uttered aloud that they wonder if being named Elizabeth after her long dead sister didn't start her run on bad luck, for the women in those days felt that it was real bad luck to name another child in the family after a dead child, feeling that a like tragedy might strike the namesake of the dead child. Well, when grandma Rehfeldt was in labor, she used the chamber pot, and never believing that she was ready to deliver, bore down real hard as she felt a great deal of pressure. Lizzie popped right out at that point and cracked her head on the bottom of the chamber pot. Later Nellie said she picked up the infant Lizzie and suddenly dropped the new born right on the crown of her head! Nellie was horrified, and when her sister turned out to be not quite right as she was growing up, Nellie continually harbored the hidden fear and guilt that that injury prevented Lizzie from enjoying a normal life. Nellie voiced that concern as an old lady just a few short years before she died.

One day years later Nellie was looking at a picture of herself taken when she was 10 years old, and she smiled and said to her daughter Mildred, " I remember the day this picture was taken, I was 10 years old, it was in the middle of the summer and it was a real hot day. I was down on my hands and knees scrubbing the floors when a traveling photographer came to my parents house and the photographer asked my mother if she would like a picture taken. She thought for a moment and said yes. Mother told me to change my clothes, I was getting my picture taken. I was covered in sweat from



vigorously scrubbing the floors on such a hot day, and try as I may I just could not stem the sweat. I put all those hot clothes on and I felt like I was going to smother in all that heat with those clothes just sticking to me. So when you look at the expression on my face you will know why I wasn't smiling. I was feeling so miserable, and getting that picture taken was just not my idea at all, so I wasn't one bit happy, and I wasn't about to pretend that I was". Well, Nellie, I'd like to say here that there are a whole lot of us who agree with your mother's decision that day and are so very glad you had your picture taken that day, frown and all. Your few minutes of aggravation has produced a legacy for us that hopefully will live on for many generations to come.

Nellie loved her father so very, very much and told us all so many times. Nellie sorely missed her father after he passed on, and he was as dear to her in her last years on earth as he was on the day he died. Nellie worshipped her father and he worshipped her in return. Nellie used to beg to go with her father to work, and in the summer time Charles used to let Nellie tag along with him. Charles was painting many, many houses on Grosse Isle when Nellie was a child and she has many fond memories of going along to Grosse Isle with him and helping him paint, as well as just playing around the neighborhood with the other kids while he was working. We are uncertain of what method of transportation Nellie and her father used in getting back and forth to Grosse Isle.

Nellie's father used to love his beer and on the weekends he would give Nellie or her sister Hattie a nickel and tell them to go to the Forkel saloon down street and buy him a pitcher of beer. The kids would give the nickel to Mr. Forkel and he would fill the pitcher with beer and give it back to the Rehfeldt girl and send her on her way. Mr. Forkel and his son often remarked on how good looking all of the Rehfeldt girls were. Hattie or Nellie would bring the pitcher of beer home to their father Charles, and he would enjoy his pitcher, and he was known on occasion to allow his darling to have a sip or two of his cool suds. Hattie more and more took over the task of filling the Rehfeldt beer pitcher and Nellie eventually found out why. Hattie soon noticed that Edward Forkel was taking a shine to her, and she grew very fond of him, so Charles got his beer and eventually Hattie got her Edward! In time Edward took it upon himself to ask one of those beautiful Rehfeldt girls for her hand in marriage, and she shyly accepted.

Nellie's father was an accomplished musician and Nellie was very proud of her father in this respect; Charles eventually conducted orchestras, which he did both on wooden stands in the local parks, as well as on the "rooftop gardens" as they called the roofs of the saloons in those days. People used to climb onto the roofs of the saloons in Detroit, which in those days were decorated and a band would go up to the roof and play for the benefit of the saloon customers who would sit up there to catch a breeze and drink their 5¢ pitchers of beer while they listened to the German music. Well, on this one day it seems that Charles must have had more than his share to drink as he was conducting the band, for when they had an intermission from playing, Charles stepped off the edge of the roof! Charles fell about 1½ stories onto the pavement below and his leg was very badly injured! The doctor repeatedly told Charles that they would have to amputate his leg in order to save his life. Charles refused to let them amputate, and so for over a year he lay in bed and suffered horribly with his injured leg.

Little Nellie quit school in the 5th grade in order to care for her father while her mother and sisters went out to work to support the family. Nellie remembers the day her mother came to her in school and told her that her father had been badly hurt and that she must come home at once. Little Nellie never went back to school again.

Tragedy struck that family twice in a short period of time. Nellie's 25 year old brother John became sick for a short period of time and suddenly died on the 11th of March, 1896. The doctors listed his death as being from tuberculosis, but Paulina and her family insisted that John was well and healthy until shortly after he received a vaccination. The family insisted that he died of the side effects of that vaccination. In looking at the picture of John taken shortly before he died, I would agree with the family's diagnosis as John in no way appeared to be an emaciated young man on the verge of dying from tuberculosis. On the contrary, he looked the picture of health.

Charles, the father was in bed suffering from the effects of his fall and therefore there was precious little money to be had, and the family was in no position to bury their beloved John. Charles' sister Theresa Rehfeldt must have had a strong affection for young, handsome John, for she got a job working as a domestic for Paulina's brother Charles Bruckner, and she took the money she earned at Charles Bruckner's house and bought graves for both John and her brother Charles, whom she must have figured was not long for this world.

Nellie had nursed her brother John as well as her father Charles. John's death was such a tragedy as he was the most talented of the Rehfeldt children, and he was such a handsome young man. John was a tinsmith by day, and in his spare time he painted with charcoal and oil. Charles painted several pictures, the most famous being his huge painting of



"Coxies' Army" and a self prtrait. When John died, his paintings hung in his mother's parlor until she died some 40 years later. Everyone who saw "Coxies' Army" never forgot that painting as it was so huge and so well done. It was of a covered wagon and depicted a battle scene.

Nellie nursed her father day in and day out, and she cherished every moment with her father as she had a terrible premonition that he would soon be leaving her. Paulina tried desperately to talk her husband Charles into letting the doctor amputate his leg, as she felt that that was his only chance for survival as the doctor repeatedly asserted that unless the leg came off Charles would die. Charles repeatedly refused to let them remove his leg, and by the day his condition grew graver. Nellie continued to nurse her father and to hope and pray for a miraculous recovery. But that was not to be. On the 13th of July, 1898 Charles Rehfeldt quietly slipped from this life and joined his sons Edwin and John and his daughter Elizabeth in the next life. On 3 months to the day after Charles fell from that saloon rooftop, Charles was now irrevocably gone from little Nellie's life. It was a blow that Nellie was never fully able to overcome, for Nellie missed her father as much when she was an old woman talking to me as she did on the day she lost him. Yes, Nellie sat in their parlor at 692 Beaubien that day, and she knew that life would never again be quite the same for her. The most important person in her life was gone, nevermore to return to her in this life. The death certificate listed laryngeal tuberculosis as the cause of death, but if he indeed had tuberculosis, it was secondary to his fall as the true cause of his death. Charles was buried in the German Lutheran cemetery on Mt. Elliott St. near the I-94 x-way in Detroit. Charles lies on the right hand side of John as you stand on the grave facing the tombstone. John has a tombstone, purchased by his loving aunt Theresa Rehfeldt, but our dear grandfather Charles has no stone as the family was so desperately poor that they were happy to be able to eat and pay their bills. So little Nellie's beloved Charles lays in an unmarked grave, gone but never forgotten by his beloved little tomboy.

Life went from bad to worse for Charles' little girl after his untimely death. Nellie was never able to return to the classroom after that fateful May 13th, but rather had to go out to work at the tender age of 13 years in an attempt to help make the ends meet. Whenever Nellie could not find gainful employment, she did most of the housework to help the family have a pleasant place to come home to, and to take some of the heavy burden from her mother's shoulders.



At this point we are assuming that both Charles and Pauline's parents were deceased when Charles died as there was never any mention of them being around or attending John's or Charles funerals. It is assumed that Louisa Bruckner lived until at least 1891 as there is mention of Pauline talking to her mother about Charles youngest daughter who he named Louisa after his mother. Great great grandmother Louisa was very pleased that one of her grandchildren were named after her. There was never any first hand information given about her husband William Charles Bruckner, so we assume that he may have been dead at the time that Tillie or Hattie were born. We do not know the names of Charles parents at this point in time and no mention was every made of either of his parents by Tillie, Hattie or Nellie. We have no pictures of any of these great great grandparents, either.

One of Nellie's early jobs right after her father passed away was babysitting for an infant. Nellie liked telling the story about when she put the baby in his huge buggy and took him for a walk on a beautiful late summer day. In walking the baby Nellie came across a tree laden with ripe apples. Nellie decided that she would like to take some free apples home to her family so Nellie busily set about picking apples and throwing her newly acquired prize into the baby buggy. Nellie got so industrious that she filled the baby buggy so full of apples that she ended covering the baby with apples too! She said the baby just screamed his head off from the weight of the apples on top of his legs! Nellie said she was wheeling him back home as quick as she could manage, when she took a curb at an angle and the whole buggy tipped over into the street, baby, apples and all!

Nellie also took great relish in telling this next story: She said that there was a neighbor that absolutely nobody seemed to like, a real long-tongued busy body. Well, it seems that it was Halloween night and Nellie was full of the old devil and was hell bent on creating some mischief that year. So when Nellie thought about who would be the recipient of that mischievous streak of hers, it didn't take too much thinking to come up with the perfect victim, the old long-tongued neighbor. Nellie went over to that person's house, found another neighbor's dog wandering loose, grabbed a piece of rope, and tied one end of the rope to the dog and the other end to the old nosy neighbor's door knocker. Then Nellie ran off the porch and started teasing the dog that she had tied up. The dog went wild!! He barked and barked and repeatedly lunged at Nellie. The busy body ran to the door to see what all the commotion was about and found a very irate dog tied to her front door knocker. So while the busy body was busy untying the barking dog, Nellie snuck around to the back of the lady's house and tipped over her out house!! Nellie was a little devil in those days!!

When Nellie was 11½ years old her sister Hattie received a proposal of marriage from her suitor, Edward Forkel which she promptly accepted. Many preparations were made for the coming marriage, and as would be expected, warm hearted, generous Tillie was in the heart of these preparations. Hattie and Edward were married on the 19th of October, 1897 on Tillie's 29th birthday. Hattie was married in the Windsor Ave. Methodist Church in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. Tillie Rehfeldt Doench, Hattie's beloved sister, was her matron of honor, and Tillie's husband Charles, known in the family as "Chuck" was the best man.

Little 11 year old Nellie was perplexed as to what to buy her big sister Hattie for a wedding present and finally settled on what she thought would be an appropriate wedding gift: a yellow vase with an oval of a beautiful girl set in the middle on the front. Hattie always treasured this vase given to her by her little sister Nellie, so much so that she carefully guarded it through the years of raising her children, and when she was an old woman and was assigning all her earthly possessions to her children for them to keep as her stay on earth was nearing its end, she fondly regarded the vase and said to her daughter, "This vase was a wedding present to me from my sister Nellie". This vase still exists today in the home of Eleanor Forkel Pierce.

Nellie's sister Tillie had been married for some years now to a fine man by the name of Charles Doench. Charles Doench was a healthy, robust man who loved his Tillie very much. Tillie had no children as yet, her first and unfortunately only child having been born some two or three years later around 1900.

Nellie had an Uncle Louis who was alive when her father died (he was a brother to her father), and also an Aunt Theresa Rehfeldt who purchased her brother and father's graves. Unfortunately, Nellie has told none of us anything about these relatives, so what little we do know about them is sketchy and comes from historical sources, rather than from family narration. Nellie was a lot closer to her mother's side and often visited her Aunt Louise Bruckner Schoenau Herbertz and her Uncle Charles Bruckner. When Nellie was born she lived 1 or 2 houses from her Uncles Charles and Edward Bruckner. Uncle Edward died in March 6, 1892 when Nellie was only 6 years old, so she would have remembered little or nothing of this uncle, who was only 53 when he died of pneumonia.



The 14th year of Nellie's life was probably the most memorable of her entire life for her. Her mother decided to have Nellie's picture taken again and sent her to the local photographer in the neighborhood. The photographer took Nellie's picture and he was so impressed by the beautiful picture he had taken of Nellie, who was stunning in appearance in those days, that he put Nellie's picture in his studio window. Nellie's picture remained in the window for over 6 months and the family said that they often overheard strangers looking at Nellie and exclaiming over what a beautiful girl that was in the window. Nellie was very proud of having her picture in the window.

Secondly, Nellie started her most substantial job, as she found steady work in an old fashioned book bindery in downtown Detroit. Nellie rather enjoyed that job and held it for over 6 years, when marriage and children forced her to give it up.

And thirdly Nellie was an accomplished dancer and loved dancing, especially waltzes. Every Sunday Nellie would go to the dance hall downtown and she would dance all day Sunday. By the time she left the dance hall her legs would ache so bad that she would just rub and rub them, but still the pain would not go away. Every Sunday evening Nellie swore that she would never go dancing again as her legs hurt so bad, but the next Sunday always found her back in the dance hall again. William Frederiak Dahl I also frequented the same dance hall, but not because he like to dance. William was there for one reason only, to find a nice, pretty girl to date. Well it didn't take Bill very long to notice that beautiful 14 year old Rehfeldt girl as she was waltzing around the floor. Nellie was a hard partner to get a dance with as her dance card was also filled early in the day every Sunday as she was such a stunningly beautiful girl and also a very good dancer. Well, Bill managed to get a spot on Nellie's dance card before very long, and in no time at all he made himself her steady boy friend. And every Sunday afternoon poor Bill would find himself in the same old dance hall with Nellie as Nellie just loved to dance, and if he didn't dance with her someone else surel would, and there was just no telling who she might have met on that dance floor if he was not there to divert her attention from the other young would be suitors of his day! So Bill waltzed away almost every Sunday for the next 6 years of his life.

Bill and Nellie had something in common at that time, they had both just lost their dads at a very tender age, Nellie having lost her at 12 years old and Bill having lost his at 14 years old. And both children adored their dad and was very attached to him. And both dads died very suddenly and unexpectedly.



In 1900 Nellie and her family moved to Canfield between what is now the I-75 x-way and St. Antoine, right across the street from St. Josaphat Church that now sits on the edge of the x-way right near the Stroh's brewery just outside of downtown Detroit. Nellie's mother loved to tell the story of how she used to sit in her parlor on Canfield and watch the comings and goings of the St. Josaphat Church. Her favorite pasttime was watching the priest drive past in his buggy with his girlfriend inside! Such was the spice of life in those days!

Nellie and her family watched the present day St. Josaphat's Church go up. Nellie and her family moved into that house just as the construction of that huge church was in full swing. I bet they suffered through one or 2 very noisy summers until that church was completed. The members of that church must have seemed rather foreign to the Rehfeldt family for two reasons : first, they were Catholic, a religion that seemed rather different to the Episcopalian Presbyterian Rehfeldts, and secondly, all the members of that church were Polish people just off the boat from the old country, and most of them spoke only Polish. Rather strange folks indeed.

Bill's courtship days weren't too strenuous despite his lack of a horse and buggy as he lived only about 3 blocks from his girlfriend Nellie, as Nellie lived on Canfield while Bill lived on Russell between Forest and Canfield. One of Bill's and Nellie's major differences in those days was religion as Bill was a staunch Catholic who attended the Sacred Heart school on Rivard and Mack and who was very close friends with several of the priests of that church, while young Nellie was what she termed an "Episcopalian Presbyterian" who was very relaxed about the practice of her religion and knew very little about her, or any other religion, for that matter. Religion was a central focal point in the Dahl household, while it was a matter of very casual concern in the Rehfeldt household. Grandmother Pauline Bruckner Rehfeldt believed very strongly in her God, read her bible and was a God fearing woman, as were her daughters Tillie and Mattie, but Pauline preferred a private communication with her God, seldom taking advantage of organized religion or the established churches in her area. The Dahl family, on the other hand, lived in church, so to speak, as the Dahl children attended Sacred Heart Church school and attended all of its activities. But the religious differences were not given that much importance at the time by Bill and Nellie. They just accepted the differences in their background. Bill just assumed that if they got married, they would assume his religion, and Nellie gave little opinion on the matter as the matter of organized religion was just not that big of an issue to her at that point in her life.

Nellie commented to her daughter Marie Dahl Bender years later that she did find one thing very strange when she visited Bill's house in those days : All the 7 Dahl children, including those big teenage Dahl boys, sat at a long wooden table on 2 long benches. She thought those 2 long wooden benches looked so odd. She said there seemed to be so many children in that house - 5 big boys, and 2 beautiful young girls, brunette Clara and Blonde baby Anna. And poor widowed Minna Kaiser Dahl trying desperately to feed all those children and pay the mounting bills.

Young Bill Dahl was old beyond his years due to his father's death and his need to help support his family. Bill fervently courted his Nellie for 6 years, from age 14 to age 20. By 20 years old Bill felt himself to be quite of an age, very mature, and very impatient to get settled and get started living as the mature adult that he envisioned himself to be. Bill and Nellie presented quite a contrast at that point in their lives, for Bill was the overachieving first born who was always overeager to prove his worth and to take his place as an intelligent, hard working up and coming young man who was not afraid of work and was hoping to rise in stature in the work world at the earliest possible opportunity. Nellie, on the other hand, was the little girl of her family, adored and petted by her father, who expected nothing more from her than for her to be his little tomboy who worshipped the ground he walked on. Charles and Pauline had older children who were achieving quite nicely in the work world, and they were more than content to let their little Nellie linger on in childhood for a few years longer than they had allowed for their older children. Nellie was one of their babies, the 3rd youngest of their baker's dozen, and there was just no need for her to grow up in all that much of a hurry. When Charles died, Nellie was still suspended in the world of childhood for she was too young to earn any significant amounts of money to support the family, and the major financial burdens were born by her mother and older siblings. Nellie thoroughly enjoyed childhood and adolescence, they were fun, happy, carefree times for her and she was wise enough not to want to close the doors on those enchanted years any sooner than she had to. So when Bill started asking for her hand in marriage, she was very reluctant indeed, for she saw very clearly that these were the happiest times of her life as life was relatively carefree as her mother bore the majority of the financial and emotional burdens of the household, and Nellie was free to enjoy her free time after work to the fullest. She knew that at the time she was merely playing at life, and that after marriage, life could become dead serious when the children started arriving, and with them some very awesome burdens. Nellie was just not willing to say goodbye to such happy days just yet.



But Nellie heard the clock ticking, ticking away the last hours of those happy childhood days, for Bill was getting more and more insistent, insisting that they get married, and get married now! Bill said he was getting older now, and he just didn't have any more time to waste, either they get married now or he would just have to look for another wife. Finally Nellie knew he was serious about either marrying now, or her would leave her and find another. Bill felt very strongly that he had spent too many years courting her, that 6 years was such a long courtship for a man of his mature years, and that he simply had no more time to waste in courtship as time was marching ever onward. Nellie thought this latest ultimatum over long and hard, as she knew Bill was getting dead serious about his need to marry someone, and she was reasonably sure that if she said no again he would look elsewhere. Nellie spent many a sleepless night thinking over this most uncomfortable dilemma. Nellie loved Bill very dearly and just knew that he was the fellow for her, but at the same time Nellie felt that this was just not yet the time for marriage, that she wanted to be young and have fun and be carefree for just a little while longer. She felt that they were both very young yet and that there was just no need to rush into all that responsibility and potential heartache. No, she didn't want to get married just yet; but no, she did not want to lose her Bill either. Finally Nellie said a very reluctant yes for marriage and the wedding date was set for the 6th of September, 1906 in the Church of the Sacred Heart at Rivard and Mack, early in the morning. Nellie took instructions in regard to what would be expected of her as the wife of a Catholic. Nellie agreed to have all her future children baptized Catholic and to assist her Catholic husband in bringing up the children in the Catholic faith as far as she was able. Nellie promised to put no roadblocks in the path of her future husband or her future children in the practice of their Catholic faith. As we later saw, Nellie took these promises very seriously and carried them out all the days of her life, being much more serious in her obligation to the souls of her children than her husband who had received all that formal instruction from his church over the past 20 years.



Nellie and Bill's wedding day dawned clear, bright and warm. Nellie's wedding dress had been lovingly fashioned and sewed by her oldest sister Tillie. Tillie had put many weeks of diligent work into putting all the tucks, pleats, frills and ornamentation into her sister Nellie's wedding dress. Tillie always thought her little sister Nellie was such a beautiful girl and she set to work creating a wedding dress that would bring out all the best features of her favorite little sister Nellie. Tillie did indeed create a masterpiece and Nellie was so very proud of both her beautiful wedding dress and of her beloved sister Tillie who had fashioned such a dress for her. The morning of the wedding Tillie and their mother Pauline Rehfeldt nervously but proudly dressed their beloved little Nellie in her wedding dress in preparation for the trip to Sacred Heart Church. They couldn't help but notice how Nellie's eyes were swollen from lack of sleep and from crying all night. It was a very nervous and indecisive Nellie that 6th of September, 1906. Nellie greatly feared what lay ahead for her and Bill.

In the meanwhile a very nervous and sleepless young Bill was being preened by his mother Minna and his brothers Frank, Frederick, George, Anthony. And there was 2 year old Bobby Henkel who was no doubt constantly underfoot. I am sure that Minna Henkel had very mixed feelings about her young "Willie" getting married as she had so strongly depended upon him for support since the death of her first husband Fritz. But now her Willie was about to strike out on his own and he cut a very handsome figure in his new dark blue suit. There was probably bedlam in the Dahl household as all those children attempted to get ready for a wedding, no doubt while stepping over each other's toes all morning.

Things were probably in better order in the Rehfeldt household as only Charles, William and Elizabeth were still at home and they were considerably older than the Dahl's children.

It is unknown how the Dahl and the Rehfeldt families got to church that day. They could have walked as they lived only 4 blocks from the church, but this is unlikely, especially in Nellie's case with such an elaborate long dress. Possibly Tillie's husband Chuck Doench might have had a horse and buggy and drove the family to the Church. The families also had to get to Chuck and Tillie Doench's house on the near west side of Detroit for the reception afterwards. Either they had relatives and friends with a horse and buggy or they took the streetcar.

A very nervous Nellie and her family arrived in the Sacred Heart Church at Rivard and Mack that early morning of September 6, 1906. The Rehfeldt family no doubt felt rather strange in a Catholic Church as that religion differed a great deal from their customary Presbyterian faith. They probably found the angels and saints depicted in stained glass rather unusual, and the statue of the Blessed Mother may have drawn their attention as such an image of the Blessed Mother simply would not be found in a Protestant Church. It is unknown who gave Nellie away that day, possibly her older brother Bud whom Nellie was very fond of and had spent many a good hour with in their childhood days, riding bikes, skating and just sharing fun times together. No doubt Nellie thought of her dear dad, Charles, and with a very heavy heart she fervently wished that he was here this day to give his precious little girl away. How proud Charles would have been of Nellie, to have seen what a beautiful young woman his little tomboy had developed into!

Bill Dahl, in the meanwhile came into the Church accompanied by the very large Dahl clan, all dressed in their Sunday best. Bill had a very heavy heart too, thinking of how very much he would have loved to have his beloved father Fritz with him this day. Losing his dad so abruptly 6 years ago was a shock that Bill would never overcome. His dad was gone, but certainly not forgotten on this beautiful September day. Minna was probably uttering a sigh of relief that she finally had the whole tribe dressed and in their pews. Now to just keep all those young children quiet for one whole hour! I am sure that Minna smiled fondly as she looked at her brother Julius's child Otto Kaiser who was her Willie's best man this day. How handsome young Otto looked all dressed up in his fine suit!

No doubt Nellie's best friend Theresa (Tracy) Schneider, who Nellie had chosen as her maid of honor, was helping Nellie make any last minute adjustments in her wedding dress, preparing for the big march down the aisle.

Bill found the Sacred Heart Church surroundings very comforting to him that day. He was fondly remembering all the weekday and Sunday masses he had attended as a student at the Sacred Heart School, and he was comforted at the thought of the ceremony being performed by one of his favorite parish priests. Yes, Bill felt very comforted and very much at home in his beloved parish church.



Then, finally, the big moment had come! The music started, Bill came out the side door of the altar and stood at the altar rail at the front of the church, and then the bridal party began its march down the main isle from the back of the church. First came Tracy Schneider, then came the most beautiful, most radiant young Nellie! Nellie! How young! How beautiful! Marching serenely down the aisle toward her Bill and a most uncertain future. Nellie was never so afraid of anything in her life as she was of taking this so momentous, so uncertain step. Nellie might have had a brief glimpse into the future, where she might have had a vision of hardship and heartache.

At the front of the church stood young, handsome, prideful Bill Dahl. How young and restless he looked! So determined to take life by the horns and succeed! So certain of a future that would be his to mold. And how proud he was of his Nellie as she slowly marched down the isle towards him. Soon his Nellie Rehfeldt would be Mrs. William F. Dahl! How impatient he was to marry this beautiful young girl and to start really living!

In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. We are gathered here together on this day to join this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. If anyone has any objections to this marriage, let them voice them now or forever hold their peace. Kyrie Eleison. Christe Eleison. Kyrie Eleison. Gloria in Excelsis Deo. The Confiteor. The Epistle. The Gospel.

"Do you, William Frederick, take this woman Nellie, to be your lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, do you promise to love her and keep her in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, for better or for worse, until death do you part?"

"I do".

"Do you, Nellie, take this man William Frederick, to be your lawfully wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, do you promise to love him and obey him in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, for better or for worse, until death do you part?"

"I do".

I now pronounce you man and wife. What God has joined together let no man put asunder.

The offeratory. The Consecration. Communion. Bill can receive, Nellie cannot as she is not a member of the Catholic Church. The concluding rite. The processional march begins. Young Bill and beautiful Nellie being their life together by marching down the aisle hand in hand, radiant and happy, ready to handle all that life might send their way. Would that Bill and Nellie could have maintained the feeling of closeness and comradeship that they felt that day. Would that that love would have sustained them both for the rest of their days! Nellie's love grew and deepened while Bill's did not.



Bill & Nellie now form a reception line at the back of the church. First they greet Minna and her husband Robert Henkel, then Nellie's mother Paulina Bruckner Rehfeldt. Then all the Dahl and Rehfeldt brothers and sisters. Then The Kaiser, Dahl, Bruckner, Rehfeldt and Rose families, including probably Nellie's cousin George Rose, who later became a Detroit policeman. Nellie and Bill's grandparents were dead, as were both of their fathers. When the reception line was completed, Nellie & Bill stepped outside the church into a shower of rice, the symbol of fertility. (Perhaps not quite so much rice should have been thrown that day). Then off to Nellie's sister Tillie at 686 Baker St. on the near west side of Detroit for the reception. Tillie loved Nellie dearly and she baked her heart out to assure that Nellie had the best reception ever. And could Tillie ever bake! Tillie's cooking is still spoken about to this day.

Tillie lived on a pleasant, quiet tree lined street about 4 blocks from Clark Park on the near west side of Detroit. Tillie lived in a big white frame house that she and Chuck were renting. Tillie had invitations to the wedding printed and fortunately Nellie saved a copy which we still have today. It is interesting how young Bill added a touch of dignity and class to his name; the youngster who had been born as "Willie Dahl" some 20 years 5 months and one day back, now suddenly became "William Frederick Dahl". Yes, young Willie had visions of going places and becoming somebody. Nellie, on the other hand, wanted to be a good wife, start her married life together in a place of their own, and hopefully not grow old too fast or have children too soon or too close together. But the patron saint of fertility had other things in store. But today was a day of happiness and high hopes for Bill & Nellie, today had lots of food, dancing, music and drinking. Today all the birds sang in the trees and there was narry a cloud in the sky. Today was the pinnacle of Bill and Nellie's relationship. Today the Dahls and the Rehfeldts joined together to wish the new couple every happiness and success. Finally the merrymaking came to an end, and one by one the guests murmured their well-wishes to the new couple, and took their leave. Finally the house was strangely empty, housing only Tillie, Chuck, Nellie and Bill. Tillie and Chuck again expressed their wishes for happiness and then bid the new couple a warm goodnight. Then each couple retired to their bedrooms, Tillie and Chuck to their customary bedroom, and Nellie and Bill to their bridal chamber. Tillie could hardly contain her mirth as she headed for her bedroom. I am sure that Tillie had to bury her head in her pillow to smother her laughter! Oh, Tillie had such a great sense of humor, which Bill and Nellie were soon to find out!

Bill and Nellie went to their room and opened their suitcases and removed their nightclothes. They were so very shy and embarrassed as they prepared to get ready for bed, and when they started to put on their nightgown and night shirt to their acute embarrassment the arms and bottoms of their night clothes had been sewn shut ( now, I wonder who might have done that?). Bill and Nellie sat on the edge of their bed, faces beet red, patiently removing all the stitching from their night gown and night shirt, while Tillie lay in the next room shaking her bed with her paroxysms of laughter. Bill and Nellie finally got all the stitches out, got into their night clothes and opened the covers of their bed to find, (you guessed it) a bed full of rice! Bill and Nellie were about to strangle Nellie's favorite sister about now. Another 20 minutes of brushing all the rice out of the bed and they could finally settle in for the night. It is not known whether or not Nellie and Bill spoke to Tillie the next morning over breakfast after her little pranks of the night before. I'm sure that years later Nellie found the whole episode amusing.

The next morning Tillie and Chuck took Nellie and Bill down to the train station where Nellie and Bill boarded a train for Niagara Falls where they spent their honeymoon.

When Bill and Nellie returned from Niagara Falls they lived with Nellie's mother Pauline Rehfeldt for a short time.

One of the fun times that Bill and Nellie had as newly weds was going to Bill's cousin Bill Dahl's farm in Woodslee Canada for a Sunday afternoon of fun, food and drink. The reason the Dahl farm in Canada was so popular no doubt was due to the fact that we had prohibition in Detroit while the liquor flowed freely on the Canadian side of the river. Poor Aunt Jenny did not approve of the consumption of all that alcohol on her farm, but she had little choice as she was heavily outvoted by all her husband's Detroit relatives. As soon as our grandfather crossed over the border into Canada his first stop would be the local liquor store where he would load up on all the good stuff to cart to the farm. Bill's brothers and sisters would all load up too, and they would all have a good time. One of the things that galled poor Nellie as a young bride when she visited the Dahl farm in Woodslee is that she was barely married when Uncle Bill bought a new horse and named her, of all things, Nellie. Boy, did that every upset our grandmother to no end! She took that as a personal insult!



Bill and Jenny Dahl of Woodslee were wonderful host and hostess and our family had many a wonderful time visiting the Canadian Dahls. Sometimes they would go to Suzy and Fred's house down the road, but mostly they went to Bill and Jenny's house. Bill and Jenny and Suzy and Fred all had children about the same time as the Dahls of Detroit, and Mildred, Elenore, Marie, Bill and Shorty, and their cousins Geroge Jr, Virginia and Harry as well as Aunt Anna's kids all remember many very happy hours spent on the Dahls' farms outside Woodslee. They also remember spending fun times at the Dahls' cottage on Belle River. They were happy carefree times for all of the Dahl tribe.

Nellie quit work in the book bindery and in August, 1907 Nellie found to her delight that she was expecting her first child. Bill and Nellie moved into their own house at 693 Hastings St in Detroit, and on the 3rd of May, 1908 their first child, Mildred Pauline Agnes Dahl was born. Nellie reflects on the birth of Mildred, and remembers how the trees were just coming into bud, and the flowers were just starting to bloom, and the birds were back and singing. She said that everything was so fresh and new when Mildred came into the world. Nellie delighted in playing with her new baby, but at the same time that nagging fear of hers returned; she so fervently hoped that the children would not come too close together so that the responsibilities would not overwhelm her. Her mother had had a "baker's dozen" of children and Nellie was so fervently hoping that this would not happen to her and Bill.

Nellie and Bill moved in again with Nellie's mother Pauline Rehfeldt and while they were living with Pauline on 236 Canfield their second daughter Dorothy Dahl was born on the 27th of December, 1909. Nellie loved her second child but was fervently hoping for a respite before any further children were born. Nellie's sister Tillie, however, was delighted with Nellie's two children as Tillie had had one daughter in 1900 and was unable to produce any more children. Tillie was heartbroken over not being able to have more children and she doted on Nellie's two daughters. Tillie sewed many, many dresses for Mildred and Dorothy and often made matching outfits for the 2 girls. Mildred and Dorothy were delighted with their new dresses and Mildred used to call the dresses she got from Aunt Tille her "ta-ta's". Aunt Tille would come over to Nellie's house just beaming with happiness with an armful of dresses, and she would say to Mildred and Dorothy, "See what I've got for you?" And Mildred would answer her, "Oh, pretty ta-ta's!"

Nellie dreaded the advent of each new child, and Tillie longed with all her heart and soul for such a new addition to her family.



Hattie often told the story of how badly Aunt Tillie longed for another child. Aunt Tillie started drinking mineral oil, eating heartily, and desperately longing for signs of a new pregnancy. Tillie longed so fervently for a child that she started imagining all the symptoms of pregnancy, morning sickness, weight gain and all. Tillie had virtually convinced herself that she was far advanced in pregnancy. One day Hattie convinced Tillie to go to the doctor with her for a check up. The doctor checked both of Nellie's sisters and told Tillie that she wasn't pregnant, and told Hattie, who was up to her ears in kids, that she was pregnant again. Tillie cried and Hattie groaned. Life can be so unfair, giving one sister an abundance of that which she has no wish for, while depriving the other of that which she so desperately wanted. After her bout with infertility Tillie no doubt would have taken a half a dozen kids without a word of complaint. Tillie used to "borrow" one of Hattie's sons and forget to give him back until Hattie would ask for his return. Then Tillie would beg Hattie to let her keep him as Hattie had so many and Tillie had only one. Hattie would compassionately tell Tillie that the boy was hers and that he belonged home with his brothers and sisters and mom and dad. Tillie would very reluctantly part with the boy.

Nellie would go over to her mother's house at 236 Canfield on her mother's day off and she would enjoy her mother's luncheon parties in which Pauline would invite her lady friends over for lunch in which they would have a fine lunch and then sit and visit with one another.

Nellie's mother in law Minna Dahl Henkel often used to grate on her nerves. Minna would come over to Bill and Nellie's house and soon she would be sitting with her son talking to him in German, a language that Nellie understood little of. Soon Nellie would hear the phrase "die Nellie" mixed in with German and she would be furious that Bill and Minna would be talking about her and she would have no idea of what they were saying. The relationship eventually deteriorated to the point that when Nellie would see Minna coming down the street toward her house she would say, "Oh, no! Here comes old lady Dahl!" Minna was quick with criticism of Nellie, as well as with other people, and this just the way to win over her daughter in law. A critical mother in law is just what Nellie felt that she did not need with a house full of kids and more housework than she cared to handle.

Nellie thoroughly enjoyed going to the Saturday evening show with her mother Pauline and watching the newsreels and the serial movies. The "perils of Pauline" was the most memorable of these movies. Pauline would get into the darndest fixes every week, and just when the suspense was the greatest the movie would end, and the show would tell the patrons to come back next Saturday to see what happened to her. And when you came back the next Saturday, you would see her

work her way out of that fix, but by the end of the movie Pauline would be in an equally messy situation, and you would have to come back again next Saturday to see what happened to her next. The movies were silent, and the words were written on the screen for the audience to read, and in every theatre there would be a piano player who would play music to match the scene on the movie. The more perilous the situation on the screen, the more frantic the music would become. By the time the crisis was reached, the piano player would be playing the music fast, furious and frantically. Grandmother Rehfeldt was unable to read English, so when Nellie would go to the show with Pauline she would read the writing on the screen to Pauline. My mom always wondered if the people sitting around Nellie and Pauline would get mad at Nellie reading the screen out loud. I told mom that maybe some of the other people around them couldn't read English either and might have been grateful for the translation.

Bill and Nellie's third child Elenore also had the dubious distinction of being born on Hastings St. in Detroit. Just before Elenore was born Nellie had a horrible sinking feeling that Bill was no longer faithful to her as Bill would disappear frequently at night with no explanation. Nellie said she was great with child in January of 1912 when Bill left home and she decided to follow him to see where he was going. Bill got on the street car so Nellie was unable to follow him further. But Nellie had a strong conviction that another woman was involved in Bill's disappearances. Those were very sad times for dear Nellie. Elenore was born at home on the 12th of February, 1912. Bill and Nellie had had their heart set on having a boy from the first child, so they probably expressed mild disappointment at having a 3rd girl and no sons.

On the 13th of November, 1913 Marie Henrietta Dahl was born, the 4th daughter of Bill and Nellie. Both Bill and Nellie were in open rebellion over having another girl, and when Marie was born and Nellie asked the sex of the child and the doctor replied that she had a daughter, Nellie replied, "Another girl, take her away!" What a fine reception for a dainty little 4 to 5 pound little girl. But Marie decided that she would put them on their toes and take proper notice of her -- first she was so small at birth that she alarmed both the doctor and her dad Bill. The doctor took a look at that frail little baby born in the dead of the winter and he feared for her ability to survive, so he put her in a cigar box and put her into the oven to keep her warm! After warming her up in the oven, he wrapped her very warmly in blankets and warned Nellie and Bill to keep a close watch with this one or they might lose her. Bill took this warning to heart for on the 23rd of November, 1913 he had his little Marie baptized "just in case". While he was having Marie baptized he took care of some unfinished business -- it seems that he forgot to have his little Elenore baptized, so he had them both baptized at the same time. Little Elenore walked down the aisle, and the priest was none too happy with Bill for this oversight. Aunt Anna Kraft Rehfeldt was their godmother.



The day little Marie was born was a busy one for 5 1/2 year old Mildred; Marie was born about 4:30 pm and both Bill and the doctor were hungry after watching the baby come into the world, so Bill told Mildred to make supper for him and the doctor. Mildred obliged them by opening up a can of spaghetti and a can of beans and heating them up over the stove and then serving them to her father and the doctor. Bill made a comment about what a poor meal spaghetti and beans made, but the doctor assured Mildred that it was a simply delicious supper.

Marie was not about to let her parents off so easy after that rotten remark about "another girl, take her away", so she put some excitement into her parents lives, figuring that she would teach them to cherish her and take notice of her, 4th daughter or not. When Marie was 10 days old she developed whooping cough! Was she ever sick! Her father Bill used to put his finger down her little throat and pull out the phlegm. Marie and the other kids all survived that bout with the whooping cough, and Bill and Nellie did learn that their little Marie was a precious commodity, one that they did not want to lose. Bill always had a soft spot in his heart for his little Marie, his "wee-wee", which probably had its origins in this time when he almost lost her.

William Frederick Dahl, Jr was born on the 17th of February, 1915. As tired as Bill and Nellie were of having children, this one was an absolute delight to both of them, this boy that they had so longed for. They spoiled Bill rotten, and Bill spent most of his childhood whining, knowing that if he whined, he would soon get his heart's desire. Both Bill and Marie were born at 6292 Holcomb in Detroit, near the I-94 x-way.

When Nellie found out she was expecting another child in February of 1917, her nerves were totally frayed. Bill and she just had no need for any more children. She was beside herself with anxiety and anger. When Nellie was 3 months pregnant she was cleaning her stove when a cramp developed in her foot. The cramp then spread up her leg, and by evening she was paralyzed and in a great deal of pain from all the cramping. She was unable to rise from her bed as every time she tried to move, the pain became unbearable. Nellie remained in bed her entire pregnancy and when Harold (Shorty) was born on the 21st of August, 1917 she remained totally paralyzed and in great pain. Nellie and Bill were now living at 2414 Seyburn in Detroit. Nellie and Bill's mothers helped out with the children as often as they could, as well as some of Nellie's sisters. But everyone had their own houses to keep up so often Nellie would have to make do with help from her 3 oldest daughters during the day.



One such day was on the 10th of November, 1917. Mildred and Dorothy were in school all day and 5 year old Elenore, 3½ year old Marie, 2 year old Bill and 3 month old Shorty were home alone with Nellie. Only the Lord knows how Nellie managed to feed and care for those 4 children while she lay in bed paralyzed! At 3 p.m. Mildred and Dorothy came home from school and both children were sitting on the back porches of the house on 365 Kercheval, Mildred on the upper porch belonging to Bill and Nellie and Dorothy on the lower porch with her friend, which belonged to Bill's mother Minna Dahl Henkel. Mildred started spitting at Dorothy who was sitting directly below her. Dorothy asked Mildred to stop spitting at her and Mildred refused. Dorothy and her friend got up from the porch to keep from getting spit at. Dorothy, her friend and Elenore left the back yard and went to the front of the house. Dorothy saw a friend of hers across Kercheval and waved and shouted at her. The friend told Dorothy that she had just checked some books out at the library and would Dorothy like to come to her house and look at the books. Dorothy then started running across the street to walk home with her friend, and as she darted into the street a truck just missed hitting her, but she was then struck by a car that was travelling in the next lane. The car never saw her until she ran out in front of it. Mr. Zanith struck little Dorothy, throwing her into a brewery truck. Mr. Zanith was horrified as he thought he had struck his own daughter who was that size, had the same blond hair and played in this area. Meanwhile, little Elenore was standing on the curb witnessing the whole accident. Elenore knew her sister was very badly hurt, but she didn't know just how bad, and at 4 years old had no concept of death, so never for a moment did she think she might lose her big sister. Elenore stood on the pavement debating to herself whether or not to tell her mother as she knew how sick her mother was and she didn't want to upset her. Finally Elenore decided that she had better tell her mother so she ran around the back of the house, up the stairs shouting "Dorothy's hurt!, Dorothy's hurt!" Nellie was unable to get out of bed and she was sick with fear wondering what had happened to her young Dorothy. In the meanwhile the spectators lifted the little broken body of Dorothy and carried her into the corner drugstore to make her more comfortable. Dorothy had broken every bone in her body, including fracturing her skull, and she was rapidly exsanguinating. While her little life was rapidly ebbing her father Bill was at the corner of Mt. Elliott and Kercheval, angry because the traffic was so backed up and he couldn't get home from work. In exasperation, Bill got out of his car and walked to Kercheval and Townsend to see what was hilding up the traffic. There was a great crowd of people gathered around the drugstore on Townsend and Kercheval, and when Bill approached the crowd he heard the repeated murmurings of the people as they repeated over and over, "Here come's the father now!" Bill was led into the drugstore and shown

the battered, now lifeless body of his daughter. Bill looked at the lifeless body of that little blond girl, all covered with blood and dirt, and he went into shock. Bill crossed the street, walking towards home and saying over and over to himself, "My Mildred, my Mildred!". Mildred heard her father and walked up to him and said, "It wasn't me pa, it was Dorothy." Bill then had a new tragedy to think about, for he had gained Mildred and had now lost Dorothy. On the 10th of November, 1917 29 year old Bill, who yesterday was the father of 6 children, and now of 5, walked into the rectory of St. Charles Borromeo Church and sadly made arrangements to have a funeral mass said for his daughter who just an hour ago was full of life and who had seemed to have her whole life ahead of her. Now Bill had to face the horrible reality that little 7 year old Dorothy now had her whole life behind her. Dorothy was laid out in Grandma Minna's parlor on Townsend and Kercheval, had her funeral mass celebrated in St. Charles Borromeo Church, and was buried in the babyland section at Mt. Olivet Cemetery on the 13th of November, 1917, her sister Marie's 4th birthday. Mr. Zanith, the man who fatally struck Dorothy was inconsolable. He was an honorable, upright family man who knew that but for the grace of God the dead girl could have been his own. Mr. Zanith tried to pay for the funeral, and when grandpa would not take the money, Mr. Zanith bought Nellie a new coat to wear to the funeral. And after the funeral Mr. Zanith paid for a massager and doctor treatments to make Nellie well again. A car from grandpa's place of work used to come and pick Nellie up and take her to the mineral baths in Mt. Clemens. Several months after the funeral Nellie was up and about again, but for the rest of her life Nellie showed signs of neurological damage, and in her 50's she began suffering from a parkinson like disease which created stiffness and tremor in her arms and legs. Nellie walked with a fast pidgeon like step, threatening to fall forward. Her whole body was stooped forward and she had rounded shoulders. She shook visibly, her head would jerk to one side, and her mouth would move uncontrollably. The shaking got worse when Nellie would try to hold something in her hands.

About this time, when Shorty was a small infant, Bill came and knelt at Nellie's bedside and asked her for forgiveness as he had contracted a venereal disease. Nellie was furious and very hurt. Nellie went downstairs and found Minna, Frank, Celia and Anna there, and told all of them what Bill had just said to her. Minna was furious at Nellie for telling this in front of the others and Nellie replied that she wanted to shame Bill for what he had done.

The marriage went from bad to worse from this time on. Bill, like his brothers became quite "fleet of foot" about this time, and loved all women, any woman who paid him some bit of attention.



1917 and 1918 were tragic years for Bill and his mom and brothers and sisters. In 1917 the United States became involved in the First World War and two of Bill's brothers, Tony and Fritz, enlisted to fight against their parents' mother country. It was a sad day indeed for Minna to watch two of her sons march off to war against Germany. Fritz never made it off American soil. Fritz jumped a box car in New York on his way to the ship to sail to Europe when he was crushed against a projecting fence as he was hanging onto the side of the boxcar. The U.S. government buried Fritz in upstate New York.

Then on the 12th of October, 1918, one month before the war was over young Tony was killed serving in France. Minna was beside herself with grief, and she requested that the body of her son Tony be returned to her for burial in Mt. Olivet cemetery. 3 years later the U.S. government honored her request and shipped the body of her son Tony back to Michigan. Minna purchased a 10 grave family plot and had her beloved husband Fritz moved from a single grave to the newly purchased family plot.

Tony's body was shipped its final leg by train and Minna was notified that the body could be picked up at the local train station. Bill and one of his brothers went to the train station and claimed their brother's body. The body had been shipped in a sealed wooden box. On the way home from the train station, Bill and his brother's curiosity got the better of them and they both decided to pry open their brother's casket and see what he looked like after having been dead for 3 years. Both brothers swore each other to secrecy as they knew how totally hysterical their mother would become if she had ever knew that they had pried the wooden box open. So the brothers set to work prying the box open with the tire iron. They finally got the box open and what they saw were far too many arms and legs. It was very doubtful if any of these pieces was really their young brother Tony. It was obvious that Tony had been blown to bits and it was no longer discernible which parts were Tony's and which were his fellow soldiers. Minna was never told that her son Tony was not intact in that wooden box.

On the 1st of November, 1921, 31 years to the day that Fred Dahl had become a citizen of the United States he was removed from his single grave and laid to rest in his new family plot. A few days afterwards the body of his 18 year old son was laid to rest beside him. Minna had now buried 2 husbands and 3 children in her 57 years on this earth.



Nellie and Bill moved to 1763 Baldwin around this time. Marie remembers the move only vaguely. She states she remembers sitting on the steps and seeing her mother in high buttoned shoes carrying a baby up the stairs and into the house.

William advanced rapidly in his job in the following years, going from machinist to foreman to inspector to engineer. Bill was highly regarded at work and he would bring both his work and the men under him home to work on a new project. Marie remembers Bill bringing home a fellow engineer and his wife after work. While Bill and his friend worked on the blue prints, the man's wife proved to be most unsociable and took to sitting by herself next to the warm base burner stove in the dining room. Very soon indeed, the woman nodded off to sleep with the feather in her cap bouncing back and forth in time with her nodding head.

Bill never got over the shock of his father dying suddenly of an intestinal obstruction and he was determined that he and his family would not die of such an affliction if he could help it, so he devised the following routine for keeping everybody's bowels open-- he would talk everyone into taking a dose of a physic by the name of Sal Hepatica (yukky foaming stuff, per Marie) every Friday night and then he would reward everyone by buying and serving ice cream. (How sad he would have been if he had known that his little Mildred was destined to die of an intestinal obstruction in March of 1984. His great granddaughter Laurie had a dream a week before Mildred died, not knowing that Mildred was dying at the time. Laurie dreamed that she went to a funeral and although the woman was laid out there were no mourners there. Laurie was very puzzled in her dream wondering why no one else was there, when suddenly she was approached by a very very old man with white hair who asked if he could help her. She replied that she was there for the funeral, but where was the rest of the family? The old man replied that very soon every one would be here also, then the old man looked at the dead woman very sadly and said to Laurie, "She was my daughter". And that, I am sure, would be how grandpa Dahl would have felt if he had been there at his Mildred's funeral.)

Mildred, Dorothy, Elenore, Marie, Bill and Shorty attended St. Charles Borromeo Church and school at Baldwin and St. Paul Sts. in Detroit, just down the street from their home. Those were happy years for the children. Marie remembers being in church every morning long before mass started, just enjoying praying in solitary before daily mass started. Marie remembers only 3 teachers - Miss O'Connor in the 5th grade, Sr. Mary Angela in the 7th grade and Sr. Mary Florence in the 8th grade.

The visits back and forth with the Dahls of Canada continued. Mildred tells a cute Easter story about her Canadian cousins. Mildred stated that just before Easter Uncle Bill and Aunt Jenny and their kids would drive across the border to Detroit and would conduct a big shopping tour in Hudsons in downtown Detroit. After picking out Easter outfits for all of the children and themselves, they would stop over and visit Bill and Nellie and the kids on Baldwin and show off all their new Easter finery. Then the whole family would wear their new clothes and leave all their old clothes behind at Bill and Nellie's house. The Canadian Dahls would purposely wear their oldest clothes knowing that they would be leaving them behind for awhile. Then when Bill and Nellie would go to visit Bill and Jenny Nellie would wrap up all the old clothes in a bundle and tie them to the back of Bill's car. Then at the border Nellie and Bill would tell the custom's officer that they were bringing old clothes to donate to some very poor relatives in Canada. That way Bill and Jenny never had to pay duty on their new Easter clothes.

Grandpa used to love to visit the green house on Belle Isle and enjoy all the flowers contained therein. Whenever Nellie would be a little late in getting the meal on the table Bill would go over to Belle Isle and enjoy the flowers, sometimes alone, sometimes with a friend.

Grandpa also loved to go with his family and listen to a musical at the Fisher theatre. After watching and listening to the musical at the Fisher theatre, Bill would turn on the radio at home and he and Nellie and the kids would listen to the music all over again on the radio.

Bill had a car of his own which was a few years old and he would also have the use of a company car through his work at Graham Paige and Dodge. Whenever Bill's tires would be worn out on his own car, he would jack up the new company car and exchange the new car's tires for his own worn out ones. Somehow he always got away with it.

Bill used to ride past their home on Baldwin in a company car and once grandma Nellie was furious when she saw a woman in the car with grandpa. Nellie never knew whether the woman was in the car on business or not, but either way she figured Bill didn't need to ride past the house with a woman in his car.



Marie remembers playing on the porch on Baldwin with her girlfriend and she would see her dad come up the walk with a newspaper in his hand and he would reach over the rail with his newspaper and affectionately tap her on the head with the paper and call her his little "wee-wee". Bill did love his children.

Marie remembers the LaPointe's who lived next door on Baldwin to the north. They lived in a big two story house with a false red brick covering. Upstairs lived the old man who was the father of Mr. LaPointe. Marie thinks he may have been senile as he used to walk back and forth for hours and she thought he looked so spooky!

Nellie used to put the kids to bed at 4:30 in the afternoon on Baldwin so she would have some time for herself. Well, no way were those energetic little kids ready for bed at 4:30! They would jump up and down on the beds and have pillow fights and play cowboys and indians. Bill and Shorty would jump from the dresser to the bed and from the bed to the floor. Elenore said that there were ruts in the soft wooden floor where the boys would rock the furniture back and forth from all their jumping.

When Dorothy died Nellie saved her teddy bear and her little stool and put them in the parlor, first on Townsend, then on Baldwin. Marie remembers never being allowed in the front parlor on Baldwin, and standing in the doorway of the parlor and staring at the teddy bear and stool that everyone was forbidden to touch. Marie always wonders what ever happened to that teddy bear and stool as Nellie had so treasured it all through the years.

Nellie had always promised her wedding ring to Dorothy when Nellie eventually died. When Dorothy died suddenly Nellie stated that shortly afterwards her wedding ring broke into several pieces and could not be repaired. Nellie said it was as though nobody but Dorothy was meant to have that wedding ring.

Nellie used to visit her sister Tillie and receive a very warm welcome and lots of good things to eat. Tillie was always a very warm, loving person.

In 1918 when Shorty was still a baby Mrs. Lechner came over to Nellie's house to visit and brought her little son with her who was about Shorty's age. Nellie asked Mrs. Lechner if she could hold her baby as she thought he was so cute and so much healthier looking than her Shorty, who was such a tin child. Mrs. Lechner held Shorty and played with him while Nellie held and played with the Lechner baby. Then Mrs. Lechner mentioned that she didn't feel well and went home in the afternoon. Hours later Bill came home from work and Nellie was busy making supper. Bill told Nellie that she better go to the Lechner house as the funeral wagon was over there. Nellie couldn't imagine what was the matter as she had just talked to Mrs. Lechner and she



didn't mention anything about anyone being gravely ill. Much to Nellie's shock when she got over there she discovered that Mrs. Lechner herself had died of that terrible flu of 1918! Nellie was speechless as she had just visited with Mrs. Lechner. (And probably scared silly too, wondering if she would get the same flu and also die. Then after supper Bill again told Nellie that she had better go over to the Lechner house again as the funeral wagon was back there again. Nellie went over there and found to her amazement that that plump little baby that she had played with that very afternoon was also dead from the flu. What a shock! And suprisingly neither Nellie nor Shorty ever came down with the flu!

Nellie and Bill used to do their weekly gorcery shopping at the Eastern Market at Russell and Gratiot in Detroit. Marie remembers waiting in the hot car in the summer time until her parents were done shopping.

Bill used to play hooky in the middle of a work day sometimes. He would sneak over to Baldwin and take Nellie and the kids for a ride in the company car. He would then take them back home and complete the errand he originally left work to accomplish.

Nellie used to suprise her family by baking them a big layer cake - but it was always the same kind of cake - a big home made yellow cake with chocolate frosting on the top and bananas between the top and bottom layers.

Nellie and Bill also had an interesting clandestine activity between the two of them. Bill would make "bathtub" gin and "near beer" in the bathtub, and Nellie would make beer and root beer in the bathtub. Nellie would then bottle the concotions and store them up for future use. One time Bill told her to keep a bathc of "near beer" behind the stove in the kitchen so it wouldn't freeze. So Nellie stored it where Bill told her to, and although the supply became somewhat depleted as the winter wore on, still there were a number of the bottles left come spring. Well Nellie never gave those remaining bottles a thought as spring appeared and the days got warmer. Well, eventually, the days got a whole lot warmer, and one day Nellie was cooking on a real hot day when suddenly it sounded like someone was shooting at her in the kitchen.-- Nellie looked around and then burst out laughing -- all the beer bottles were exploding with all that heat and beer was flying everywhere as the corks shot into the air! What a waste of good beer.

Bill no doubt helped his brothers out making gin and "near Beer" during the prohibition days to keep them in business. Frank and George owned tavern before the prohibition set in, and when liquor went out their businesses were listed as "soft drinks" but what they in actuality sold was anything but soft. They made more money running "blind pigs" than they did when liquor was legal.

One time grandpa was standing on a corner at Kercheval and Baldwin waiting for a streetcar in front of Dr. Lesperence's office when a man came up to him, pulled a gun out of his pocket and demanded grandpa's cash. Grandpa was not about to argue with a gun- he gave the man the contents of his pockets.

Another time grandpa went to Uncle Chuck's house to help build a garage. Grandpa helped frame the garage in a pouring rain, and afterwards grandpa and Uncle Chuck went inside and took a good stiff drink to overcome the chill brought on by the rain in the cool spring day. Chuck warned Mildred that she had better take good care of herself as she had a cold. Mildred told Chuck that he was the one who had better take care of himself as he had been working in a cold rain. Chuck told Mildred that she didn't have to worry about him as he had his liquor to keep him warm. Less than two weeks later Chuck was laid out in a casket in his living room - a victim of pneumonia from working in the rain.

Grandpa was waiting for a streetcar on VanDyke by 9 mile after he had visited his mother on Harding St in Centerline. While Bill was waiting for the streetcar a car drove past him, circled around and drove up to him. The man was holding - you guessed it - a gun, and grandpa gave him - yup again - the contents of all his pockets.

One time Nellie was sitting in her kitchen on Baldwin when grandma Henkel came to visit and as grandma Henkel was walking between the two houses she came across one of the Rheam kids who had a safety pin on his shirt where a button should have been. Grandma took a look at the shirt with the safety pin and the missing button, reached out and grabbed the kids shirt, shook it up and down on the kid's body and said to the kid in a loud voice, "Nanu, the clobber pin, is the ma too lazy to sew the button on?" Nellie heard every word and she died of embarrassment! She just knew that her dear friend Mrs. Rheam must have heard every word too!

Grandma Nellie used to use words that one seldom, if ever, would hear today. Grandma used to say, "Lets sit on the davenport in the parlor", which translates into modern english as, "let's sit on the couch in the living room". Grandma als would say, "go to the pinstock and get me some water". Our reply would be, "get the water from Where!?". Pinstock meant the water tap.

Nellie would like to make pork chops for dinner, and the pork chops would just drive grandpa Dahl wild! He hated pork chops! Whenever he saw pork chops on his plate he would swear and get out of his chair and leave the kitchen. How he hated pork chops!



All of Nellie and Bill's children made their first communion at St. Charles Borromeo Church at Baldwin and St. Paul. Mildred was living on Kercheval near Townsend upstairs of Grandma Henkel when she made hers and the other children made theirs when they lived on Baldwin near St. Paul. Marie made her first communion in the morning and her sister Elenore made her confirmation that same evening. They were dressed so prettily in their white dresses and big white bows in their hair. Marie remembers being so tired at Elenore's confirmation as it was so late at night.

Shortly after that the hand of God made itself felt in our family. Seven year old Bill sat on the steps leading to the upstairs on Baldwin and just whined and whined that he wanted candy. He just wouldn't let up with his whining. Finally in desperation Nellie turned to 12 year old Elenore and asked her to go to the store just about 6 houses away from their house on the same block and get Bill some candy to quieten him down. It seemed to be a safe enough errand to send Elenore on; she didn't even have to cross one street and she would hardly be out of sight of home the whole way. On the way home from the candy store 3 houses away from home an arm came out of the darkness which changed Elenore's and her family's life permanently. On the 23rd of December, 1924 little John Dahl was born to a beautiful innocent little girl, and on the 6th of January, 1925 John and his mother were parted through no fault of either of them, never to see one another face to face until the 10th of November, 1983, some 58 years, 10 months, 18 days later. Elenore's sister Mildred did see little John in his bassinet, though, while he was still in Women's Hospital. Mildred always had a burning curiosity, and this was certainly no exception. Mildred took the street car to St. Antoine and Mack and got off at the corner of the hospital. Elenore saw her get off the streetcar and then sneak next to the building to surprise Elenore. Mildred stopped in the nursery and saw little John. Elenore always knew that her little one was named John Dahl as Mildred saw that name on the bassinet. However, we would never have found John if he had not found us as the little stinker changed his name to John Dale when he was 16. On the 6th of January, 1925 Elenore went home to Baldwin but John remained behind at Women's hospital. John thus began his earthly journey without the benefits of the large Dahl and Rehfeldt families that the rest of us so cherished throughout our childhood. It is truly sad that our Mildred, who carried her avid curiosity to the grave with her, should have been deprived of the opportunity to meet John again. Mildred talked of John just before she went into her final coma on the 7th of March, 1984. She was so happy that Elenore had found him that she cried and cried with joy. Mildred retold her story of how she sneaked into the nursery of the hospital and looked at John in his bassinet, and how she saw his name tag. Mildred had said after telling this story, "There are so many things that I want to do yet, and now there is no time left to do them".

Nellie seemed to have little or no say in John's future. All arrangements were made by Bill.

Life in the Dahl household was turned upside down that year of 1924, for at the same time Bill's girlfriend, Edna Giesregen got pregnant and presented Bill with a son about the same time that John was born. Edna was a secretary where Bill worked and evidently did not give up her job as she did not herself care for their son. Bill found a boarding house on the west side of Detroit where he put their son. The boy was raised by a kindly older woman who was paid by Bill to look after the boy. Again, Mildred's curiosity got the better of her and she took a street car over to the boarding house and visited her half-brother when he was about 3 or 4 years old. She said that the boy was very thin and appeared rather sickly. She said that when she visited him he was quite ill, was wrapped up in blankets and had a runny nose. She never saw the boy again, and she wondered what ever became of him when her father disappeared.

Bill and Nellie would occasionally visit Bill's brother George, his wife Amelia and their children George Jr, Harry and Virginia in George's bar on Chene St. on the east side of Detroit. Bill and George never got along too well for very long as the Dahl bows were known to be argumentative, picking a fight and then taking sides, 2 brothers against 3. But Bill and George were somewhat close despite the bickering. It was Frank Dahl that none of the brothers were able to get along with for very long as Frank had a talent for creating dissention among his brothers.

Bill loved his mother Minna Henkel very much, so much so that it was a cause of friction in his and Nellie's marriage as Minna would come before Nellie or anyone else in Bill's heart. This attitude was probably fostered in the days when Bill's father died and Bill at the tender age of 14 was his mother's support, both financially and emotionally until she married Robert Henkel. That close relationship never faded. Bill used to take care of all his mother's financial and legal matters. Minna wouldn't take a step without first consulting her Bill. George used to be jealous of his older brother's favored status in his mother's eyes. George used to do so much for his mother and all the while he was doing for his mother Minna would speak to him of Bill this and Bill that. Minna could never quite get enough of extolling her Bill's virtues. George would go home just furious. All it ever is at ma's house is Bill this, and Bill that, George would say. What about George? George would say to Amelia. I never get any credit for being a good son too.



Nellie and the kids had many a good time with Grandma Henkel when they joined Grandma in her Arbeiter's club picnics on Belle Isle. This was a German worker's club which Grandma Henkel belonged to, and they sure knew how to throw a swell picnic! They would have German music, lots of congenial company, and all the beer and ice cream one could consume, and all free! The kids used to love to eat all that free ice cream and play with one another on the island, and Bill and Nellie enjoyed both the free beer and free ice cream. Those were very happy times and are fondly remembered by all of Grandma Henkel's grandchildren.

Nellie's mother Pauline Rehfeldt had been ill for some time with Bright's disease and on the 12th of November, 1926 dear Pauline succumbed to this illness at the age of 76 years, 3 months old. Pauline then left the rest of her inheritance to her children that she had received from her sister Louisa Herbertz. Nellie made all of her inheritance available to her husband Bill and he went through that \$3,000 like it was water. Bill bought himself a new car, built a garage at the back of the house to protect the new car, and then completely redecorated the house on Baldwin with new paint and wallpaper. Bill no doubt had a few dinners with Edna on Nellie's money too. Bill never gave a thought to paying off the small mortgage left on the house, and this giving Nellie and kids some security should hard times hit the family.

Nellie was such a loving, forgiving soul! She knew exactly what Bill was up to with Edna and Lord only knows who else, but still she loved him and stuck by him emotionally. This was her Bill for better or for worse. Nellie did all she could in her simple heart to keep Bill and happy. She cooked his dinners for him and had them on the table on time, washed his clothes, pressed them and had them ready for him, and took care of his house and his children. But still Bill paid her little attention. Greater attention was needed for the frequent eruptions he was having in his relationship with Edna. He and Edna were having many a rough time, so much so that the letters Edna sent to him bordered on the insane. Edna was very jealous of Bill and had even obtusely threatened to kill him if he left her. Shorty and Bill found these love letters and a picture of Edna in Bill's new garage and brought the whole packet into Nellie to see and read. Poor Nellie was heartbroken.

In the meanwhile Bill had more anxiety than he could handle as the economy was going from bad to worse, and no one was affected more in 1928 than the car companies. Bill was an engineer and held a very important position in the company, but when the company wasn't selling cars, even an engineer isn't much needed. Finally the dreaded day came in 1929 - Bill got his lay off notice from the car company as they just didn't need an engineer right now. Bill was lucky in that he found a job with Graham Paige in Syracuse, New York as an engineer. He lived in a boarding house in Syracuse with a family and 5 other boarders. Bill wrote to his daughter Elenore that he was very lonely in that boarding house and that he missed his family terribly. He said that he couldn't accept another family's hospitality every night as he was afraid of wearing out his welcome. Evidently, Edna was not with him in Syracuse as no one ever mentioned Edna being with Bill.

Bill sent for his family one fine summer day in 1929, and the whole family came by car. Mildred, who was just married in June of that year, came with Sonny who did most of the driving. Bill seemed genuinely happy to see his family. The family was lodged in Bill's boarding house, and the whole family went for a picnic in the Catskill mountains. The children were so happy to be with their dear dad once more! But the happy times came to an end when the family had to pack up Sonny's car and head back to Michigan. When the children hugged and kissed their dad goodbye they had no way of knowing that never again would they set eyes on him again, nor hear from him or of him. It was a terrible loss for Nellie and the children, far worse in many respects than if he had died.

Elenore received letters from her father in July of 1929. Elenore treasured those letters as she could see in them the love her father had for her. There was no indication whatsoever in those letters that Bill was planning to leave the family for good. In fact, when the family visited Bill in June, Bill had begged Sonny and Mildred to move to Syracuse to be near him. We can't help but wonder if Bill became the victim of foul play and perhaps his identity was never discovered. It is so strange that Bill did not keep in contact and visit his mother Minna as he was so terribly attached to her all of his life, and it was inconceivable to everyone that he would go away and never visit or talk to her again.



While Bill still lived with the family on Baldwin Mildred gave Nellie and Bill a few harrowing moments. Mildred was told that she had to stay home and do dishes on night. Well it seems that Mildred had different ideas. Mildred docily obeyed her mom and dad on the surface by taking the plate and fork with the garbage on it to the garbage can where she was supposed to scrape the garbage into the can and bring the plate and fork back and wash it. Mildred walked out the back door of the house on Baldwin, plate, fork and garbage in hand, and when she got to the garbage can she dumped plate, fork, garbage and all into the garbage can and then went on her way to what she had planned before her parents plans had threatened to cancel her own. Boy, did she ever get it that night from her pa when she got home!

Another time a neighbor across the street from the house on Baldwin came over to tell Nellie that a bunch of sheets all tied together were hanging from Mildred's bedroom window upstairs! Nellie went outside to look, and sure enough, hanging from Mildred's window was all the bedsheets from everyone's beds! Mildred had been told by Nellie that she was not going out that night, and that was that, and she was to go to her room and stay there till the next morning. Mildred went straight to her room, and then to the boy's room, took all the sheets off the bed, tied them all together, hung them out her window after having tied one end to the bedpost, and then she went merrily on her way! She sure got it from her pa for that one too!

Mildred said to me that she was always getting it from her pa and that none of the other children ever got it like she did. I wonder why?!?!?

Mildred said that she was always intrigued over the way that Nellie would place the children's socks in the dresser drawer. All the socks went in the same drawer in a dresser that was in the dining room. The three oldest girls socks would be placed in parallel rows one row next to the other, and Marie's socks would be placed in a perpendicular row in front of the other rows. All the socks were rolled up with one sock inside of the other.

Another funny story that Mildred would tell was that everytime Bill would take the family for a ride in his car when he would approach a traffic light he would nervously and anxiously ask Mildred or whoever was sitting next to him what color the traffic light was. Mildred thought that was hilarious as everyone knew what color the light was unless he was blind! But Bill was dead serious and would get very angry as he desperately needed to know what color the light was before driving through it. Bill, it turned out, was very color blind, a trait that he passed on to his grandsons Michael and Douglas Bender.

One day when George was serving one of his favorite customers in his bar on CHene and Superior, the customer asked him if he ever heard of what had ever become of his brother Bill. George, not realizing that one of his kids was sitting outside listening, told his patron that his brother Bill told him that he had a job offer from the Russians to help set up the Ford plant in Gorky, Russia and that he thought that he might take the job. George was nonplussed by this declaration on the part of his older brother. George's son and daughter told me that to the day she died George's wife Amelia accused George of having contact with his brother Bill when he first disappeared as George would get letters which would never end upstairs in their home with the rest of the mail, and he would get phone calls in the bar where he would stop talking if a family member was within earshot. George would deny that these communications were from his brother Bill.

When I was speaking to the Canadian Dahls in the summer of 1982 Beatrice told me that the Dahl relations in New York (Cronmiller was this Dahl girls married name) told her in a letter that in 1953 or thereabouts a William F. Dahl who worked for a car company as an engineer was in the society column of the Syracuse New York newspaper as his daughter had gotten married, and she just wondered if that Bill Dahl was Nellie's missing husband?

In 1930 Grandma Nellie was just furious as Edna was inquiring around about Bill. Nellie was very curious as to what kind of a person Edna was and what she looked like for Bill to have dated her for so many years. Norrie Day, and in law of Mildred's arranged to invite both Nellie and Edna over to his house on the same night and not tell Edna about the dual invitation so that Nellie might meet Edna. Nellie was there first and then in walked Edna, bold as day. Edna became thoroughly obnoxious when faced with Nellie and started flaunting various jewelry she was wearing that night and telling Nellie that Bill bought all of it for her, and what did he buy for Nellie? Nellie saw red by now, and she walked over to Edna and slugged Edna full force with the back of her forearm and knocked Edna sprawling right over the back of the couch and onto the floor behind the couch. The family cheered Nellie. Edna however had a distinct purpose for talking to Nellie, for it seems that Bill had disappeared from Edna too, and Edna desperately needed to find him. Edna said that Bill wouldnt DARE to leave her! The family strongly believed that the reason Edna was so desperate to find Bill was that she was pregnant again.



All the while Bill was in Syracuse, New York his car sat outside the family house at 1763 Baldwin. That is why the family is fairly sure that he returned to Detroit before disappearing as suddenly one morning when the family got up the car was no longer sitting in front of the house.

After the depression was over Dodge got in touch with Nellie and asked for Bill's whereabouts, but Nellie was unable to give them any concrete information as to where Bill could be. Dodge searched for him, but could not find him.

Grandma Henkel hired a private detective to try and locate her wayward son, but to no avail. The detective came up with no solid information as to Bill's whereabouts.

In 1941 Marie's husband Edward was in court for a traffic accident and while waiting for his case to be called he noticed a very nervous man take the stand. What caught Ed's attention is that the man kept searching the faces of the audience, and that he kept his face turned at an odd angle as he sat in the witness box. When dad saw him leave he was startled to see that that man had the same facial disfigurement as Bill Dahl had from his mastoid operation. Ed went straight home and relayed this information to Marie. But they never went into the court records to see what this man's name was.

Bill was an expert at changing his name. In centerline he listed himself as William F. Hall on a post office box. Another time he used the alias of William F. Black. Another time he listed himself as Paul Dawson. And after William Dahl supposedly left the boarding house in Syracuse a William Frederick appeared on the census as living there. No doubt William Frederick is no other than Bill Dahl using his sister Clara's married name as his last name.

Bill's disappearance was a shock to all who knew him, but especially to Nellie and her children. The girls were in shock. How could their loving dad leave them and not come back? Surely he would write or call eventually! He always did before! Nellie and the kids looked for him every day for the longest time. The girls cried and cried and cried. This disappearance was far worse than if he had died. At least if he had died his abandonment of them would have been involuntary. But voluntary abandonment? This was just not possible! The boys were in shock. They were so young and so in need of their dad for strength, support and guidance. And the embarrassment! No one wanted to face their neighbors or friends once the word got out.

And now came the biggest shock of all -- while they waited and watched for Bill's return a bomb arrived in the mail -- it said that Bill had not been making the mortgage payments on the house and they had to either catch up the payments or lose the house! Where was Nellie going to get that kind of money? Nellie couldn't get enough money together to feed the family. The whole situation was just a bad nightmare to the family. Surely they would wake up in the morning and find Bill sitting at the breakfast table, providing the love and guidance that the family had come to depend upon, and meeting all of his financial obligations so that the family would continue to have the financial security that they had come to rely on all these years. But the nightmare wouldn't quit. Bill was nowhere to be found and they were facing an eviction date!

Finally the sad day came. Nellie and the children had to pack up all that was near and dear to them, and then give up their dearest possession, their home, the only home that the boys and Marie could ever remember. And now how would Bill know where to find them when and if he did return? It was a black day indeed. Nellie had all this heavy furniture such as her player piano that she had accumulated during her long marriage to Bill, and now she was faced with moving all these heavy objects and she had no place to go and no way to pay the rent on another place. Norrie Day saved the day by allowing Nellie and the kids to move in with him until she could get on her feet. Nellie and the kids took one last long look at that beloved 1763 Baldwin house before sadly walking down the front walk for the last time. Those ruts in the bedroom floor where the boys had played cowboys and Indians and wore down the floor, and the old basburner stove in the kitchen, and the parlor where only company was allowed to sit, and the new paint and wall-paper that had cost enough money to have been able to pay off the existing mortgage, they all belonged to someone else now. Part of each of that family would always remain in that house on Baldwin. That house was in their hearts, minds and blood. That was their childhood home.

Nellie moved in with Norrie but felt terribly guilty for she had no means of support and couldn't let Norrie support her large family. Norrie talked to his friend down the street who was a case worker for the welfare department and in no time at all the caseworker had Nellie's application completed and Nellie was receiving a support check for the children. What an adjustment that was for Nellie and the kids -- one month they are the wife and children of an engineer, the most educated and highly paid man on the block -- and the next month they find themselves on welfare.



In those days one had to go to the welfare office and stand in line all day to get one's check every other week. The neighbor knew in what poor health Nellie was so he would call her name as soon as she got there and he would have her out of that office right away.

The league of Catholic women got involved with the family when they fell on hard times, and they had decided that Marie should quit school after the 8th grade and go to work and help support the family. What a poor decision that was as Marie loved school and was not ready to quit. And after all the turmoil she had just been through over losing her dad she just didn't need to be separated from her family just yet. But separated she was. They found a job for her as a governess in a well-to-do household so she graduated from the 8th grade at St. Charles Borromeo and took her first post. Whenever one job would end they would find her a new job. She would earn \$5.00 per week which she would turn over to Nellie for the care and feeding of her mom and brothers.

Bill and Shorty were facing expulsion from the Catholic school as the family now had no money to pay for tuition. But Nellie was firm in her resolve that her boys should learn about their Catholic faith which her husband Bill had apparently held so dear throughout his life, so she went to the Catholic school and pleaded with them to keep her sons without tuition. The school agreed to do that, so the boys' Catholic education continued uninterrupted.

From the standpoint of Bill's Catholic faith it was strange that he should desert his family as Catholicism was very important to Bill. Bill had always remained good friends with the priests of Sacred Heart Church long after he had moved out of that parish, and Bill went to Church faithfully every Sunday and was very strict in insisting that the children go regularly too. Bill had joined the Knights of Columbus and had attained considerable rank in that organization at the time of his disappearance.

Mildred, having been married and out of the house by the time her dad disappeared, and being of a kindly nature, readily forgave her dad for what he did. For years and years Elenore did not forgive her dad, but when she got older and thought it all over, she felt that the person most hurt was Nellie, and if Nellie could forgive him, then she should too. Marie and Shorty were bewildered by their dad's actions and never knew what to make of it as they were never able to sort the whole mystery out as there were just too many unanswered questions. Bill simply said that that was a rotten thing for his father to do to the whole family, that it was unthinkable for such an apparently good man to leave like that, and that he would never forgive him for it.

In 1954 I asked Nellie what she would do if Bill ever came back, and she softened and told me, "I'd go live with him if it was alright with him". How Nellie felt about her Bill can be summed up in the song Nellie made up and sang for my dad when he was recording her voice on July 29, 1944. The song goes:

There's a fine ship that sails on the ocean  
Lined with silver and with gold,  
And it swings when they bring down the windsam  
So I'm sure that my bonnie lives alone.

Oh please don't meet me by the moonlight,  
Oh please don't meet me all alone, all alone,  
For I've a story for to tell you,  
Must be told by the moonlight all alone..

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 lived her Bill with all her heart and soul and no actions on his part could dampen her love for him. She took that love for her Willie to the grave with her. Nellie may no longer have Bill in her home, but she had him in her heart for the magic power of memory gave him back to her again.

Nellie was now left to pick up the pieces of her life and try to begin a new life without her Bill. But life was never the same after he left. Nellie was always a happy soul and was always ready to share a smile or a joke with you, but inside her heart was breaking. All she really wanted out of life was the return of her Bill.

Life was very rough for Nellie and the boys from then on. Life was a series of hardships. They moved often as they could not pay the rent with the welfare check. They got surplus food that had to be flushed down the toilet as it was not edible. One ate alright the first week after the check and went very hungry the latter part of the second week while waiting for the second check. They only fried onions for supper on many an occasion. Life was tough and embarrassing for Nellie and the boys. With each new move Nellie lost some of her precious possessions, and finally on one move she lost her beloved player piano as the family simply refused to move that heavy piece of furniture again. Then Nellie moved in with someone else and stored all her possessions with Ivory Moving and Storage. When she got her own place again she no longer had the money to pay the storage bill so she thought that she had lost all of her possessions.



In 1934 Nellie moved to an upstairs flat at 4768 Townsend. Her neighbor downstairs was a friendly woman who was about 55 years old by the name of Elizabeth Ott Bender. Elizabeth had her husband, Henry Charles and 3 children living with her, Harold, called Al, age 30, Edward, age 25 and Norman, her baby, age 21. Nellie and Elizabeth met through their children Norman, who played cards with Bill & Shorty, and Al who visited Nellie. Elizabeth was quite concerned when she thought her son Norman was playing cards too long at the Dahl's kitchen, so she would bang on the kitchen ceiling which was a signal for Norman to come down and let poor Mrs. Dahl get to bed. Ed and Al did not play cards with the Dahl boys as they were older. Ed did go upstairs to talk to Nellie one day and met Elenore, who he thought was really pretty. Edward asked Nellie a few questions about Elenore, and Nellie told him that Elenore was already married. Edward was disappointed to hear this, but then added as an afterthought, "Mrs. Dahl, do you have any more daughters?" And Mrs. Dahl replied, "Yes, I have one more single daughter, Marie. She comes home on Thursdays to visit us." (Ed was in the bathroom brushing his teeth when he heard Nellie come home, so he had stepped out of the bathroom with his towel tucked in his pants to talk to Nellie about her daughters.

On the 7th of February, 1934 Edward bought a used car which he was very proud of, and as soon as he got it home he looked for Norman to show him his new car. It was a little 2 seater car with eisenglass. It had a top that snapped shut in cold weather and snapped off in warmer weather. He ran into his house and asked his mother Elizabeth where Norm was and Lizzie replied, "Upstairs playing cards with Bill & Shorty". So dad bounded up the stairs and knocked on the door. Nellie answered the door and said, "Hello, Ed". Ed said, "hello, Mrs. Dahl, is Norman here?" And Nellie answered, "Yes he's right here playing cards, come on in". Then when Ed walked in the upstairs flat, Nellie immediately introduced Ed to her single daughter, Marie. Ed often told me the minute he set eyes on Marie he knew she was the only girl in the world for him. He couldn't take his eyes off her. She was so little, so shy, so unpretentious, so natural. She was everything he ever dreamed of in a girl. While the boys were playing cards, Marie mentioned that she wanted to go to the store to buy some candy. Ed immediately piped up that he would go with her, and Marie replied, "No, I'll go by myself". Ed said that he was so hurt to think that Marie would trust anyone she might meet on the street that night more than she would him. Marie went alone to get her candy, leaving Ed to make small talk with Nellie and the boys. Marie came back, and later that evening Ed ask Marie to go roller skating with him next Thursday (February 14th). Marie said no. Nellie said, "Ah, Marie, why don't you go out with him?!" So Marie said yes and the date was made. Norm and the Dahl boys got tired of playing cards, said goodnight and Norm went downstairs. the Dahl boys went to bed, but there sat Ed making small talk with Nellie, thoroughly enamored of her daughter Marie. Ed's mom Lizzie started banging on the ceiling, telling him it was time

he got home. Ed said he heard the banging but chose to ignore it as he was hoping that the evening would never end. Finally the banging got so loud and so insistent that he just couldn't ignore it any longer. He said a very reluctant goodnight to Marie and Nellie and went down stairs. Nellie thought Ed was a fine young man and she hoped something would come of their first meeting.

The next week Edward picked up Marie as planned and they started out for the roller rink. When Ed got to the roller rink, he took a look at the fragile little thing sitting next to him and he had serious doubts as to whether she could safely roller skate. Marie had serious doubts as to whether she could stay on her feet, and no doubt this fear conveyed itself to Ed. Ed looked at the crowd coming out of the roller rink, and suddenly suggested that maybe it was too crowded in there and maybe they had best go someplace else on their first date. Marie agreed, and they ended up going to a show and then to the Sander's ice cream parlor. Ed asked Marie what she would like to have, and she replied, "A pineapple sundae". Ed thought that that was a rather strange request, but they ordered a pineapple sundae. Then because it was valentine's day Ed bought Marie a box of chocolates. Marie had them in her lap on the way home and when they got home and Ed was saying goodnight in the car, Marie's brother came along so Marie reached out of the car and gave the box of chocolates to her brother and told him to give them to Nellie. Marie meant for Nellie to keep them safe for her, but the brother conveyed to Nellie that Marie said to give them to her. Nellie took this to heart and by morning all of the chocolates were long gone. Marie didn't get so much as a sniff of the chocolate.

Nellie liked Ed and she encouraged her daughter Marie to go out with him. Both Ed and Nellie had a good sense of humor and they both enjoyed getting together and having a good time. Nellie enjoyed Norman and Evelyn Bender too and spent many an hour with them having a good time. Nellie would go to a tavern with Norman and Evelyn and they would play their favorite songs on a juke box, have a few beers and a real good time. Nellie would tell one joke after another to Evelyn, and would never fail to poke Evelyn in the arm or the ribs when she would reach the punch line. Evelyn would say the next day what a good time she had with Nellie the night before. but, oh, how her arm and ribs hurt!

Norman continued coming up to Nellie's place to play cards with Shorty and Bill and they were all good friends for many years to come.

Nellie never owned a car after Bill left and would use the streetcar whenever she had to travel any distance. The streetcars ran fairly regularly on all lines and the fare was only 10¢.



On the 22nd Of February, 1930 Elenore married Herman McKinin. They were married by a Justice of the Peace and no one knew they were getting married until Elenore and Herman came home to Nellie and told her that they had just gotten married. Nellie looked at her daughter Elenore all dressed up in a fine black dress and she said to Elenore, "Oh, Elenore! Why did you get married in a black dress? You know what they say about getting married in a black dress, "Married in black, wish you were back"."

Herman paid the rent for a house on May St. in Detroit and Aunt Tillie paid the Ivory moving and storage bill so that her sister Nellie would have all her furniture back for the new place she was renting. So Elenore started out their married life with Nellie and the boys under their roof!

A year or so later Nellie and the boys moved to 6618 Mc Clellan in Detroit. Marie was still a governess and came home once per week to visit her mom and the boys and to give her mom the \$5.00 she had earned that week to make life easier for Nellie and her brothers. The boys attended Nativity school as again Nellie succeeded in getting the boys in with no tuition.

Nellie's friends and relatives would ask her from time to time if she ever thought of marrying again. Grandma was taken aback with this question as she was married to Bill for better or for worse and she had no intention of forsaking her wedding vows. One time Grandma Nellie and her friend Arsenia (what a name, huh), went to the zoo for the day. Nellie and Arsenia were tired so they rested their feet by the monkey cages. Suddenly Arsenia said very excitedly to Nellie, "Look, Nell, there's a man for you!" Nellie, shocked, looked up and saw what Arsenia was pointing at. A great big ape was looking straight at Nellie and was beckoning his finger at her! Nellie didn't think that was in the least bit funny!

Tillie was wonderful to her sister Nellie and to Nellie's kids. Tillie would invite Nellie and the kids over, would feed them a great big dinner of fresh homemade delicacies, and then would give Nellie and the kids armfuls of groceries and street car money so they could take the street car home. The family was so grateful for everything, even for the street car money as they had walked over a mile to get to Aunt Tillie's house so it was a comforting thought to know they could ride home. Tillie welcomed Nellie with open arms and would have done even more for her except that Tillie's husband drew the line at just giving money to Nellie. Groceries dinner and car fare yes, but money, no.

Grandma Henkel's conscious was very sore about what her Willie had done to his family. Grandma Henkel seriously considered taking Nellie and the kids into her home, but her daughter Clara persuaded her not to do this as Minna was quite advanced in age and Clara thought that all those extra people would just be too much for Minna.

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Mildred Dahl Sotcker's mother in law, Mae Stocker was very generous to Nellie and Bill from before Mildred was married to Sonny Stocker, and Mae continued her unbridled generosity after Bill left the family. Marie remembers how embarrassed her dad Bill was when they went over to the Stocker residence at Christmas time and received very expensive gifts from Mae. Marie remembers her dad receiving an expensive humador with the pipe holders from Mae, and Marie received a doll which she just loved. Mae was always very generous to everyone, especially around Christmas time and her generosity was especially touching as she was spending her own, and not her husband's, money. Poor Mae Stocker did not receive much reward on this earth for her generosity as she passed on when she was only 53 years old. Mae was playing cards with her family and she started talking to her family in what she thought was normal conversation, but her family looked at one another thunderstruck as what Mae was saying was garbled and didn't make too much sense. Mae passed on a few days later. Mae is gone, but she has never been forgotten for her warm heart and her generosity to all who graced her doorstep.

Nellie loved to go for rides with Mae to Richmond where Mae went every Thursday or Friday afternoon to play the slot machines. Nellie, naturally, had no money to play the machines herself, but she just loved to go along for the pleasant ride and to watch Mrs. Stocker play the machines. I wonder if Nellie thought of Enda Giesregen when she drove through Mt. Clemens on the way to Richmond as Enda lived in Mt. Clemens when Bill was dating her.

Aunt Tillie was also very good to her sister Nellie and she tried to cheer her up as much as possible after the disappearance of Bill. Tillie used to take Nellie to the Fisher Theatre back in 1930 and 1931 and they used to watch the dance marathons where the young folk of the day would dance with their partners until they collapsed with exhaustion. The Fisher Theatre used to have doctors and nurses in attendance to care for the young folk when they would drop from fatigue. The last couple to continue dancing would be the winner of the dance marathon. The couple that won would dance all day, all night and at least into the next day before winning out over the other contestants. Nellie and Tillie would get a kick out of watching the couples dancing hour after hour, trying to be the one to hold out to the end. Nellie, no doubt, was reminded of her girlhood days when she and her Bill would dance the Sunday away and she would be so sore the next day that she would swear that she would never go to another Sunday dance again.

On the 24th of August, 1934, Marie admired the ring on Nellie's finger and she told her mother that she liked that ring so much, could she wear it for the day? Nellie looked at her big brassy ring and wondered if her Marie had been out in the sun too long the day before. What was stranger still was how small Marie's fingers were as compared to Nellie's, and any ring of Nellie's would fall right off Marie's finger. But Nellie slipped the ring off her finger, and without too much thought, gave it to Marie to wear for the day. What Nellie didn't know was 1. Ed had asked Marie to get married in secret to him and Marie had agreed as neither family had the money for a wedding reception, and today was the big day, and 2. the ring was desperately needed as Ed had given Marie a beautiful wedding ring the night before when they were on a date in a soda parlor, and somehow when Marie put the ring into her purse, she lost the ring, and despite frantic searching, the ring was nowhere to be found. A ring was needed to be slipped on her finger during the marriage ceremony, and thus, Marie needed to borrow someone's ring, and that ring turned out to be Nellie's big, brassy ring. I wonder what that priest thought of Edward when he saw that huge, old ring on the beautiful satin pillow? I bet the priest thought that Marie was in for a real rough life!

Nellie did not find out about her daughter Marie's marriage that day, or for that fact, for another 3 months! Both Ed and Marie were helping to support their parents, and neither kid had the heart to tell their mother that they were married so there would be no more support money forthcoming. So for 3 months each kid gave his and her mother most of their weekly earnings and continued to see each other on Marie's day off as though they were still dating.

Something momentous happened to Nellie after Bill left that Bill had never really attempted to accomplish while he was married to Nellie. Mae Stocker often visited Nellie, and Mae started talking to Nellie about the Catholic faith. Mae started teaching her what Catholicism was all about, and then encouraged Nellie to take religion lessons from a Catholic priest. Nellie agreed so Mae Stocker sent Father Lechtner from St. Anthony's parish. Father Lechtner went to Nellie's house once per week for 6 weeks and taught Nellie the basic prayers and the basic tenets of the Catholic faith. When Nellie memorized these lessons Father Lechtner baptized her into the Catholic faith, and from then on Nellie was one with her children in the practice of Catholicism. The children were very happy that their mother had chosen to adopt their faith.



Aunt Tillie used to have Kate Smith records which she would play for her sister Nellie. Both Nellie and Tillie would enjoy this music.

Nellie had oil lamps in most of the homes she rented as she couldn't afford an electric bill. In one of her homes she and the boys were well used to the oil lamps when Sonny Kraft had just got out of jail a few hours before and had stopped in to visit Nellie and the boys. Sonny asked for a piece of toast and Shorty told them that they couldn't make toast as they had no electricity. Sonny replied that they certainly had electricity, it was just a matter of getting it into the house. Nellie replied that they did not get it into the house as she couldn't afford the electric bill. Sonny took Shorty aside and told him he would teach him something. Sonny showed Shorty where the electricity came into the house and how to jump the wires. Sonny had the electricity on in no time and made himself some nice hot toast. Nellie was horrified at Sonny's little trick.

Nellie resumed going to the Dahl farm in Woodslee, Canada once her boys were old enough to drive her. Nellie enjoyed visiting with all of her cordial Dahl in-laws and they received her with open arms. All the Dahls felt so bad about what Bill had done and Beatrice and Isabelle years later, in 1962, timidly asked Marie if she ever again heard from her dad. They then related the story about a Bill Dahl in Syracuse who was an engineer for a car company being in the society section of the Syracuse newspaper because his daughter was getting married. They wondered if that was Nellie's Bill. Shorty remembers how handy the Dahl girls were with fixing flats on their father's model T Ford. The car was always getting flats and the girls would fix each flat expertly and in record time.

Nellie had allowed her children to stay over the Dahl farm for a vacation when invited, and the Dahl children have many fond memories of that farm. They especially remember the big high feather beds and the wall paper on the bedroom walls. They also remember the geese and the big farm dogs which had always terrified little Marie. Marie also remembers being put on a horse, and how far up that had seemed to her! Nellie, of course, never got on a horse herself. She just sat and talked, and immensely enjoyed the company while they all ate and drank to their heart's content.

When Shorty got married in 1941, Nellie then lived with her son Bill who was now her sole support. Bill was very good to Nellie and Nellie had some happy years with Bill until Bill met Dorothy Dolato in 1944 and decided to get married. All of Nellie's children got together and decided that the best solution to Nellie's housing problem would be for her

to live with each of them for a few months at a time as Nellie was a very gregarious person and would never want to live by herself. Nellie liked this idea very much, so a schedule was set up for her to visit each child. Jean, Shorty's wife did not want Nellie to visit her home just yet as she was just married and wanted some time alone with Shorty first. Unfortunately, some of the children blew up over this suggestion, and it was years before poor Shorty was welcome in some of his brothers and sister's homes. So Nellie spent the summertime at Marie's house, the fall at Mildred's, the winter at Bill's and the spring at Elenore's.

Nellie had a large wardrobe for her clothes. It was of wood construction, about 6 feet tall, about 3 feet deep and about 4 feet wide. It contained almost all of her earthly goods. Nellie prized her wardrobe and its contents and became so, so worried on moving day!! She just couldn't let that wardrobe out of her sight! The sons and son-in laws would tie the wardrobe on the top of their car and drive Nellie and her wardrobe to her new destination. Nellie, beside herself with nerves, would shake and fret until the wardrobe was safely delivered into her new bedroom. Nellie would then spend hours sorting, patting and rearranging her clothes in the wardrobe, making sure that all was again in proper order.

At Marie's house at 4651 Alter Rd Nellie slept in the front downstairs bedroom next to the living room. She had to sleep with her granddaughter Sandy. I remember that the mattress was not flat, but rather was high in the middle and fell off at both ends. Nellie would sleep in the middle and I would be wedged between the end of the mattress and the wall. That was a very precarious spot to be in as underneath the mattress was an old fashioned spring, and a child had to be careful not to get poked in the eye by the ends of the spring. It was a miserable way to sleep. I dearly loved Nellie and would so greatly miss her when she left, but sleeping was so much more restful when one had the whole big bed to oneself and could sleep in the middle and not dodge the big spring under the mattress.

At Mildred's house Nellie slept with Doris, first on Crane, then later on 12012 Gunston. Doris loved Grandma dearly and they had many a laugh and many a good time together. Doris and grandma used to daydream about getting a place of their own when Doris was older. Grandma was also a great eating partner and could be the ruin of one's figure if one did not learn how to say no. Nellie used to love to have "a party" in which she would purchase a grocery bag full of meat, cheeses, bread, pickles, olives, and dessert and pop. She would have Doris buy the food as she was no longer steady enough on her feet to get the food herself. Doris would bring back all the goodies, and then Nellie would



set about creating a feast for herself and whoever was home at the time. Nellie would make sandwiches piled high with meats, cheeses and bread, and would top it all off with garnishes of olives and pickles. One time Nellie finished off a great deal of the meat and cheese and bread with Doris, as well as a whole jar of pickles and two jars of olives. Nellie then gave Doris some more money and told her to go back to the store and get another jar of olives! Doris, full to the gillnets, told Grandma that she just couldn't go back to the store and get another jar of olives, that if she looked at another jar of olives that she was going to get sick on the spot!

At Elenore's house first on Coyle, then on San Jose Nellie slept with Marianne. Marianne also loved Nellie and eagerly looked forward to her visits to their house. Most of the grandchildren eagerly awaited the coming of Nellie and would often ask their parents how much longer it would be until Nellie came back to their house. It was no exception with Marianne. Marianne loved Nellie's fun loving nature and couldn't wait until grandma would come and they could share lots of humor and funtimes together until the sad day would come when Nellie would pack up her wardrobe and go on to the next child's house.

At Bill's house Nellie would sleep with Debbie and Sharon would sleep on the couch. Sharon and Debbie loved Nellie. Nellie was often their babysitter as Aunt Dorothy would often have a job as a saleswoman for Winkelman's.

One time Nellie, Marie, Ed, Norman and Evelyn went out to a local tavern for a good time, and Nellie and Evelyn found a new song they liked entitled, "I'm packing my grip and going to California". Nellie and Evelyn played that song over and over again, until the bartender finally came over to their table and asked them to please stop playing that song as it was aggravating some of the other patrons.

When Nellie first came to stay with one of us for 3 weeks she would be full of gossip about what went on at each of the other's homes. No one had any secrets in those days! The family members would eagerly listen to the tales of other's lives unfold before their imaginations, but about 3 weeks after grandma came, she would run out of news, and would then sit rather quietly for the rest of the visit.

One day Doris and her cousin Rita decided that they would like to see grandma with hair curled as she always wore her hair straight, with just the slight natural wave she had showing. Well, the girls curled her hair up real tight and then put makeup on Grandma. Nellie was just furious when she saw her frizzed up hair in the mirror! She said she looked like a Jew woman, and now what was she going to do about this hair! Doris laughed and laughed and then told Nellie she could wet it down to straighten it out if she wanted.

One time Nellie was living with her daughter Mildred on Crane Ave. when suddenly Mildred spotted a mouse in her kitchen. Mildred grabbed her broom and shouted to Nellie to help her as she was going to kill the mouse with her broom! Well Nellie was just terrified of mice and she wouldn't go near one to save her life! Nellie ran out of the kitchen, shut the kitchen door, put her skirts between her legs to keep the mouse from climbing up her legs if it got loose, and then Nellie held the door shut with both hands while standing outside the kitchen! Meanwhile she heard all the commotion coming from the kitchen as Mildred kept slugging the mouse with the broom. The mouse was knocked punch drunk by Mildred's lambasting it with the broom, but it wasn't dead yet. Butch, Mildred's dog, calmly watched the whole three ring circus. and when Mildred stopped hitting the mouse, Butch went over to the mouse and started batting it around with his paws. Just what Nellie wanted to watch on a quiet evening!

On August 7, 1930 Nellie's 2nd and third grandchildren were born, little George Earl Stocker in the morning to her daughter Mildred, and Marianne McKinin to her daughter Elenore in the evening. Nellie stayed with Mildred overnight from the 6th of August, 1930 to the 7th when George was born at 6 am. Mildred had adifficult labor, compounded by the fact that her husband was hysterical with fear for his wife's safety, and kept hollering to his father, George Stocker. Sr., M.D. to save Mildred. The doctor delivered little George by using forceps and in the process he had used too much force on the forceps and had badly damaged little George's skull. Later that day Nellie had heard that her other daughter Elenore had went into labor and she then went over to Elenore's house to help her out. Nellie stayed the weekend with Elenore as Mildred had her mother in law to help her out as she lived with the Stockers in their house. Nellie enjoyed playing with Marianne, and on Sunday she went back to Mildred's house and found to her shock that little George was dead! The doctor said it was best that he didn't live as he had considerable brain damage from the forceps and would never had been right. I wonder if Nellie thought of her 1st grandchild that weekend and wondered how the little 5 year old fellow was faring and who was taking care of him? And I wonder if her husband Bill ever knew he had had other grandchildren after John?

It was 2 years later before Nellie's next grandchild was born, little Earl Stocker, Mildred's 2nd son. He was a beautiful sturdy child and there had been no complications with this delivery. Nellie would have manv a fun time with this child as she watched him grow out of babyhood, start school and make his first communion.



In 1934 Mildred's 3rd child was born, her Doris. Doris and Nellie were destined to spend many a happy hour in each other's company.

In 1935 Marie's first child Nancy was born on August 22nd. Nellie went to visit the first of her youngest daughter's children. Nellie was collecting quite a grandchildren by now.

In 1938 Marie's 2nd child. Michael Edward was born on the 16th of May. I wonder if Nellie remembered back to the beautiful May day in 1908 when her Mildred was born? Michael and Nancy were Nellie's only critics among the grandchildren. They never learned to enjoy Nellie and her good humor like the rest of us did. but rather chose to dwell on her shortcomings. (Nellie had her shortcomings. of course, as we all do, but the way I feel, let those among us who are perfect cast the first stone at our dear Nellie).

In 1941 Shorty's first child Patricia Dahl was born on the 11th of March. Now 4 of her 5 children had children of their own and the family was growing quite large.

In 1944 Nellie had 2 additions to her growing family, Thomas Dahl. born of Shorty and Jean on the 27th of November, and Cynthia, called Sandy by the family from then on, born on the 5th of December, 1944, to Marie and Edward Bender.

When Sandy was born Nellie was asked to come over to Marie's house and babysit for Nancy and Michael while Marie went into the hospital to have the baby. Nellie gladly sat for Marie's children, Nancy 9 and Michael 6. When the baby was born Nellie's other children all asked her what Marie had named her new baby. and Nellie would reply to all of them, "Some damn name I can't pronounce. but they will be calling her Sandy".

While Marie was in the hospital Nellie slept in Ed and Marie's bed and Ed slept in the living room on the couch. Nellie was sleeping in the bed for about 3 days when suddenly the bed broke! Uncle Harold Neff came over to the house. and when he found out that the bed was broken he fixed it, but he asked Nellie what she and Ed had been up to that the bed broke! Nellie turned scarlet with embarrassment, and protested her innocence! And the more she protested, the harder Harold Neff would laugh!

On the 13th of December, 1945 Bill and Dorothy's first child Sharon Dahl was born. Now Nellie had grandchildren by all of her children. Nellie was truly blessed to be able to live to see her children's children and peace resitng upon her family. The war was now over and none of her children had had to go off to war, and only one of her son in laws, George Stocker went into uniform. and that was only for a relatively short period of time when he came home due to stomach trouble.

In July of 1938 Nellie went over to Mildred's house to visit Mildred and her children. One day Nellie was all alone with Doris and Earl. Both children were out playing and Nellie was enjoying the beautiful midsummer day. Earl suddenly came and and said to her, "Grandma. I have a stomach ache". Nellie said to Earl, "It's probably from drinking too much Coke. You've had an awful lot of pop in the past several days. Here, lay here on the couch and you'll probably feel better real soon." But it was not in the cards for Earl to get better. Earl's grandfather Dr. Stocker looked at Earl and had said in Elenore's earshot. "The boy needs an operation." The doctor put ice packs on Earl's abdomen to try to avoid the expense of surgery. Earl's apendicitis got worse, and shortly thereafter Earl's appendix burst and he became one sick little boy. Mildred remembers taking him to the hospital that night. Earl sat on Mildred's lap and he had heard all the hushed, serious, ominous whispering of his grandfather and the other adults as they spoke of his burst appendix and of how sick Earl was now. Earl said to his mother, "Mommy, am I going to die?" And Mildred answered. "No. Mickie. I wouldn't let you die!" "You'll be alright". Earl was admitted to the hospital and had surgery. His burst appendix was removed, but the doctor noted that Earl had extensive peritonitis. The doctor who operated on Earl looked at Dr. Stocker and said to him in a very stern tone, "George. you knew better!" Mickey was in the hospital several days and his mom and dad went to see him every day, giving him encouragement while hoping with all their heart and soul that their son would fight off that overwhelming infection and live. But when they looked at his so sickly looking little body they somehow feared the worse. One day Sonny went first to the hospital to see his little boy. Soon after he was there he called Mildred on the neighbor's phone as the Stocker's did not have a phone of their own. Mildred came back across the street in shock, her eyes brimming with tears. Mildred said to Nellie. "Ma, my boy is gone, my Mickey is gone?" "What am I going to do. my little boy is gone!" Nellie felt so bad about little Earl, and somehow she felt guilty that she had told him that it was just a stomachache from drinking too much pop. And Mildred to her dying day never forgot that she told Mickey that he wouldn't die because she wouldn't let that happen to him. When Mildred went to the priest to have the arrangements made for the funeral mass, she told the priest the dream that her Earl had had a few months back when he was very healthy. Earl woke Mildred up in the middle of the night and said he had the strangest but nicest dream. Earl told his mother that he dreamed that Jesus came to him in his dream and asked Earl if he would like to go to heaven. Earl told Jesus yes, that he would like to go. Jesus then told Earl that he would be coming back to take Earl's soul to



heaven. Earl then asked Mildred, "What does a soul look like?" Then Mildred proceeded to tell Earl what a soul was, and Earl said, "Oh, I thought it looked like the soul on the bottom of your shoe?" Earl then sat on the edge of Mildred's bed and spoke of Heaven and Jesus. Earl said to Mildred, "Jesus sure was a nice man, mommy".

Earl was laid out in the parlor of Mildred's house on Crane. Doris was in bed listening to the pounding of the hammer as they put up the black crepe behind the casket. Doris was only 4 years old but she knew that something strange and very frightening was going on. Her brother was laying in that box in the living room and he looked and felt very strange indeed. He wasn't at all the brother she had rough and tumbled with a few short weeks before. Doris didn't understand death but she knew that she didn't want to go anywhere near her brother anymore as he was just not the same. Nellie had to have found the experience of having the casket in the house with her very frightening as Nellie was one who very easily got upset over such matters. Marie said that the first time it rained after they had buried Earl she just cried and cried to think of that little boy in the ground dressed in his first communion suit with the rain seeping in his casket. Earl was a beautiful child and his death was a shock that our family never got over.

Mildred had two miscarriages after Earl's death but unfortunately was never able to produce a live child again. Out of 4 pregnancies she was left with only one living child.

Nellie would often speak of Earl after he was gone, saying what a good and beautiful child he was and what a tragedy it was that he had to die at only 6 years old. Nellie often compared Earl's death with that of her 7 year old Dorothy some 21 years earlier. Having a child cut down in his or her prime is such a tragedy. If Dorothy had looked both ways before crossing the street on the 10th of November, 1917, and if Earl's grandfather had more concerned with the life of his grandson than with his pocketbook, both children would still be with us this day.

George and Earl Stocker were the only grandchildren that Nellie had lost during her lifetime. Her grandson John Dahl was fostered out and Nellie would never again see him in this life, but she knew that he was out there somewhere growing up. Nellie seldom talked about John as she did not want to hurt Elenore in any way. Nellie told Doris about John when Doris was a teenager, but then she told Doris not to say anything to anyone as she did not want to hurt Elenore's feelings or to injure her good name. Marie would ask questions of Nellie about John and Nellie would answer them, but she made it clear that she did not Elenore hurt, especially since we did not know whether Herman knew about John or not.

On the 2nd of January, 1948 Marie's 4th child William Henry Bender was born. Bill was a happy, easy going child and gave Nellie less trouble than the rest of us.

On the 13th of May, 1951 Debra Dahl was born to Bill and Dorothy. the last of their children. Nellie would babysit for Debra and Sharon while Dorothy went to work at Winkelman's.

On the 20th of June, 1952 the last of Nellie's grandchildren, Douglas Paul Bender was born. It was a sizzling hot day when Doug was born and grandma lived with us when Doug came into the world. Doug cried a lot and I am sure that Nellie got a little weary of the crying baby in that 90° to 100° heat with that high humidity we had that summer. It sure was a scorcher! But if Nellie was uncomfortable, she barely let on as she was never one to complain. She used to fan herself a lot with a newspaper and sit in front of the big green living room fan most of the day to try to get a little relief from the heat. but there was precious little relief to be had that summer!

Back in 1948 or thereabouts Nellie suffered through another tragedy with her daughter Mildred, for Mildred had been so very happy to find out that she was expecting another child, and one night while they were all playing cards, Sonny and Nellie got into a big argument over the fact that Sonny did not want Nellie to talk to one of his neighbors, and Nellie insisted on talking to that neighbor as Nellie liked the woman very much and couldn't see why she had to give up seeing that lady just because Sonny didn't like her. The argument got so steamed up that Mildred was greatly upset, and as a sudden, Mildred started into labor, and shortly thereafter Mildred lost her little girl. Mildred never had another child after that.

One story all of us grandchildren loved to share was how Nellie had her routines in the morning, and you just couldn't budge her from them. Everything had to be done in a timely manner, and then she could play with you. First Grandma had to eat breakfast, always ending up with her daily orange, then she would sit on the dining room chair that faced the bathroom and rock back and forth, saying, Oh! Oh! until Marie would notice, take pity on Ma Dahl, and tell Ed would he please get out of the bathroom long enough to let Nellie go. Ed would say sure, get out and to Nellie's immense relief, the only bathroom in the house would be at her disposal. Then the big ritual of the day would come. Nellie always did the breakfast dishes, no matter what. Then she would go into their bedroom, open up her wardrobe, and pat all of her clothes. She would move each dress slightly, patting it after moving it. She would then move and pat the next dress, and so on until all the dresses would be moved and patted. After that she would inspect the rest of the contents of the wardrobe and would then make her bed. At times I would sit on the edge of the bed while watching grandma. That would never do, to sit on the edge of Grandma's bed! Grandma had to remake the whole bed if I sat on it because sitting on the bed would make a dent in the covers and she couldn't stand to see that impression in the covers!

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Nellie had the "runs" and had to go to the bathroom very frequently during the day, especially when she got nervous or upset. Nellie would often decline an invitation to go out so she could stay near the bathroom. One story that Elenore gets a kick out of telling was the time that Herman decided to tile the bathroom floor of his house. Herman got all of the supplies together and then proceeded to tackle the big job. Herman wasn't in the bathroom 15 minutes when Nellie timidly asked Herman if she could use the toilet. Herman gladly let her in, and a few minutes later was back hard at work. 15 minutes later Nellie timidly asked Herman if she could use the bathroom. Herman let her in. 15 minutes later .... yep, you guessed it, and yep, he let her in without comment, and yep, 15 minutes later .... and so on the entire day! Herman felt like a revolving door, but never did he say a cross word to poor Nellie, he just quietly shared that oh, so popular bathroom with her the entire day!

Nellie was visiting Marie one year, and like all years. Nellie would tell Marie who went by the house, what they were wearing, and who had a new Easter bonnet that year. One day Nellie was in our bathroom, and while she was sitting on the pot she was looking out the window at the McCubbin residence, when she noticed that Mrs. McCubbin walked into her bedroom and went to the bed. lifted up her mattress, and then hid some money under the mattress. Nellie pulled up her britches, smoothed out her dress, tore out of the bathroom, and found Marie, and said to her breathlessly. "Guess where Mrs. McCubbin hides her money!".

Another thing all of us cousins would laugh about was the fact that Nellie wouldn't play checkers with us because she said that the checker board made her dizzy. And she would only play rummy with you if you agreed to the rules that you could only pick up the top card on the discard pile, as picking up the whole deck got Nellie too excited!

Another thing that bothered Nellie to no end during the last years of her life was seeing "schniddles" on the rug. "Pick up that schniddle for me, will you"? was a phrase Nellie would say over and over again to her grandchildren. She really couldn't stand to sit and look at a "schniddle" on the rug!

Nellie loved to sit on our front porch on a hot summer day and a cooler evening. but as soon as it got dark she felt compelled to come in as the misquitos used to eat her alive. probably because she had sugar diabetes. but didn't know it.

In her last years. Nellie was famous as a babysitter. Our parents would leave for the evening and it would be grandma and the kids home alone. I was a miserable kid. for I knew how terribly simple it was to scare Nellie half out of her wits. so invariably, when my parents weren't out of the house 10 minutes, I would listen to all the funny noises an old house would have. and I'd say to Grandma Dahl, "What's that?" The floor boards would always go "Creak, creak, creak" right after I had asked her "What's that"? And she would get a very worried look on her face indeed, and I would then add, "It sounds like someone got in through the cellar window and they're walking around down in the basement! With that statement, you would see a genuine feeling of alarm and total panic creep into Nellie's face. Then I would say, "It sounds like they're heading for the basement stairs!" "What will we do if they come up here into the living room?" Well by now I had managed to believe every word that I had spoken and I could just see some mean, rotten 6 foot murderer heading up our back stairs and into our kitchen. Well Grandma Dahl had the same vivid image seared into her brain by now, too, and suddenly Grandma got up out of her wooden rocking chair, walked to the kitchen as fast as her pidgeoned toed gait would take her, propelling herself first to the dining room table, where she would grab for the edge of the table. then holding the table she would ease herself towards the kitchen. then she would reach for the doorway, the stove, and then hold onto the cupboards for a steady influence. Grandma then came back out of the kitchen shortly and I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw what she had in her hand -- a big butcher knife! And she was waving that butcher knife wildly in the air due to her shakes, and I was sure that she was going to fall on that thing and stab herself to death before she got back to her chair in the living room! Then she safely made it back to that chair, and she sat with the butcher knife pointing upwards, and waving madly in the air due to her shakes. I, at that point, was far more afraid of grandma than the boogeyman and told her I would be going to bed. Well grandma always got slightly hysterical if her babysitting charges dare suggest that they might want to go to bed and leave Grandma all alone with all those strange noises in the basement! That was just unbearable! Grandma did anything to keep the grandchildren with her and wide awake. Grandma would tell me in a very nervous voice that she would play checkers with me, play rummy where I could pick up the whole pack, or anything I wanted to play! Then I knew poor grandma was serious about me staying up. We would stay up until we heard the car outside, then she would shoo us off to bed and tell us to look like we were sleeping.. The next day us kids would be blurry eyed and cranky, and grandma, feeling thoroughly guilty, would say to our mother, "Marie. I tried to make them go to bed. but they just wouldn't go!" Mom would let a faint smile curl up at the sides of her mouth, as she was well aware that we were all equally guilty, and besides she didn't really care how late we stayed up when she was gone as she didn't have to put up with us, grandma did.



Nellie had several record recording sessions with Edward and Norman Bender from 1941 to 1944. Nellie always thought that they were pulling her leg. that they weren't really recording her voice. just pretending. Norman assured her that they were recording her voice, but that they would only play it back to her and to no one else. Little did Nellie know that those records would still exist some 43 years later and that her grandchildren and greatgrandchildren could be listening to her sing "Wait till the sunshines. Nellie". I bet grandma would have put her best singing voice forward if she knew that the records would last that long.

Nellie used to get a kick out of watching Ed mix up a big bowl of ice cream and then down it with a glass of beer. Nellie always thought that beer and ice cream was such a strange combination! Nellie and Ed really liked one another and had many good times together, probably because both had such a good sense of humor. When Ed and Marie would get into an argument, Nellie would invariably take Ed's side of the argument. Nellie would say to Marie, "Marie, you've got such a good man!" And Marie would say to Nellie, "Ma, you keep out of this!"

Nellie was always a champion for the grandchildren whenever they were in trouble with their parents. Nellie would always read the child's cause to the angry parent. Nellie would always succeed in getting a softer judgement for the child.

One day in the summer time Nellie was sitting with Marie in the parlor resting when suddenly 3 year old Sandy came bursting into the back door, up the stairs into the kitchen, where she found her father sitting at the kitchen table eating, yep, beer and ice cream, and reading the comic section of the Sunday paper. Sandy said to Ed. "G.D. It!, SOB!. \*&#@\*! Ed. eating and reading, natted the little kid on the head and said, ya, uh-huh. Nellie said to Marie. "Marie. did you hear what Sandy just said?" "And did you hear what Ed answered her?" Sandy kept saving those words. and Ed just kept saving uh-huh and reading the paper. Sandy had heard the Westingburger neighbors fighting over the fences, and because no one made a big deal out of what she had said, she had quickly forgotten all those choice words. But Nellie did not soon forget what her grandchild had said in the kitchen.

Once we talked grandma into going for a ride down Lake Oirion Rd by promising to stop for a bathroom whenever Nellie had to go. Dad started telling Nellie that there were bears in the woods. and Nellie believed every word he had said, and was she ever afraid of the bears! I told grandma how could she be afraid of bears when we were whizzing along the highway at 40 miles an hour, but that logic escaped her. She was simply terrified!

Nellie was frightened of bees, too, but for a better reason as she had been stung by a bee on a ride and never forgot that experience. Once dad stopped the car to get ice cream cones and 2 bees flew in the car. I never saw Nellie move so fast as she did when she got out of the car to get away from the bees. She had no intention of being stung again.

Nellie wouldn't eat chicken as she had a gall bladder attack after eating chicken. and she was sure that the chicken had caused the attack. She ate no more chicken and she had no more attacks. She also would not eat peppermint ice cream as she said that that also made her sick. Nellie loved grape suckers and she would eat the majority of the grape suckers out of our sucker box that mom used to keep in the cupboard over the stove on Alter. Nellie also loved a candy called squirrels, so one day I bought her 17 squirrels for her anniversary as she had mentioned to mom that it would have been her 47th wedding anniversary. She loved every piece of that candy, but had to share some of it with my brother Bill as he just kept pestering her for some of her squirrels. Nellie also loved pepsi. and one day she had me go to the beer store and buy an 8 pack of pepsi which we all split that hot summer day. It hit the spot for all of us, but when mom got home from the store she was mad at us for drinking grandma's pop as she said that grandma had so little money to spend and what she did spend it on should be strictly for her own enjoyment. But grandma had gladly shared her treat with us and was happier for having had a little party with us that day.

Mom always tried to talk grandma into getting a new wardrobe as she felt that the present one was showing its age. But grandma said no, that she was saving her money to help pay for her funeral expenses when the time came. But Marie urged her to spend what little she had to get some pleasure out of life. Nellie's other children tried to get her to spend some of her money on herself, but Nellie was stubborn in that regard.

Sometimes Nellie would tell Marie she needed some new house dresses, aprons, slips and underwear. So Marie would hop the bus and go downtown or to Gratiot and Six Mile and get grandma some new house dresses, slips and underwear. Nellie would look over all her new dresses, declare she liked them all, but one or two she would wear out and the rest would sit with the tags on in her wardrobe.

Nellie loved watching Jackie Gleason on television in the early 50's. The one episode that made her laugh the most was when Jackie Gleason drove his bus over to Ed Norton's manhole for lunch, and Ed Norton came up out of the sewer and asked Jackie for a \$5.00 loan and when Jackie asked what ever did he need money down there in the sewer, Ed replied that he was having a floating crap game. Nellie laughed so hard she almost fell off the chair and her face was beet red.



One day Marie was baking all day and Nellie was surprised at all the good things Marie was making. Marie often had a spur of baking lots of goodies, so it wasn't out of the ordinary this day although Nellie thought that Marie had really outdone herself this time. In the evening Edward came home a little early and he told Nellie that being it was her birthday today would she like to go visit her son Bill on Parkwood. Nellie lit up at this idea and said of course she would love to pay a surprise visit to Bill. Nellie and Ed got in Ed's car and off they went. About 1½ later Nellie and Ed returned to Alter Rd, Nellie very down in the mouth as Ed had driven all around the west side and was unable to find Bill's house in the dark. While Nellie was feeling very down about not seeing Bill, suddenly all of her children jumped out from hiding and shouted, "happy birthday, ma"! Nellie was dumbfounded with joy at seeing all of her children at Marie's house. Nellie had a wonderful birthday party that night, and Ed had taken pictures of Nellie and her children. and Nellie and her grandchildren.

Another time Elenore said that Grandma asked Elenore to go shopping with her on her birthday, and Elenore told Nellie that she couldn't go shopping with her as she had things she had to do at home. What Elenore had to do that day was to cook for a surprise birthday party for Nellie that night. But Elenore said she often thought over her refusal to go shopping as Nellie really wanted to go shopping, and Elenore often wished she had gone shopping with Nellie and then served cold cuts that night for the party.

One summer we had managed to talk Nellie into going to a cottage near Lion's Head, Ontario with us by promising her that we would stop for a bathroom anytime she had to go. Nellie so enjoyed that 5 hour ride to the cottage as most of the trip had a view of the water, and one passed a lot of quaint towns on the way to the Bruce peninsula. We spent about 10 days in Lion's Head and Nellie loved every minute of that vacation. Our cottage was right on the Georgian Bay and there are big craggy bluffs on both the right and left sides as one overlooks the Georgian Bay. Nellie used to look out of the window every day and her favorite pasttime was watching the huge fishing boats as they fished commercially. The weather was perfect that July and Nellie enjoyed her vacation. Every afternoon Nellie would lay down and take a little nap while breathing in all that fresh air as it wafted in from the bay. Those were happy days for Nellie.

Grandma used to be worried when riding in a car, and one thing I always remember is how grandma used to hold on to the strap that hung between the front and back windows and was meant to help the back seat passenger in and out of the car. Grandma not only used that strap getting in and out of the car, but also hung onto it for dear life all while the car was in motion.

Speaking of grandma and cars, that brings to mind the big insult Sonny hurttled at poor grandma on day when she was a passenger in his car. Sonny actually ha, the nerve to ask grandma to sit in the middle of the back seat so as to distribute her weight so she wouldn't break his axle!

Nellie was a good but nervous babysitter. Mom used to go to Dr. Simich for treatments for exzema on her hands several times per week and used to leave grandma to babysit us kids for several hours each time. Bill and I weren't much trouble as we would go outside and play or sit and talk to her. But Doug was a different story. Doug was a baby and a very verbal one at that. Grandma used to rock and rock and rock him while sitting on the dining room chair and finally Doug would fall asleep. Grandma would then gently and quietly carry him from the dining room to a bedroom to lay him down. As soon as Doug would hit the pillow, he would wake up and start screaming his head off! Grandma would pick him up and rock him to sleep again, and then as soon as she would lay him down, the screaming would start and she would have to pick him up again. This whole process was very hard on grandma as she could hardly balance herself, let alone try to walk with a baby in her arms.

One day grandma was babysitting and this being the only time I can remember such an occurence, grandma had a few harsh words and my feelings were hurt so I walked around the dining room table and then crawled under the table and sat and thought about what had just happened. The table was always covered with a lovely hand made lace table cloth which mom had crocheted. After sitting under the table for half an hour and thinking the whole situation over, I decided that this incident wasn't worth brocding over so I got up and came up from under the table on grandma's side right at her feet. Grandma did not know I was under the table and I scared the daylights out of her when I came up from under the table!

One time I was telling grandma that she was the only grandparent that I had left, an, I decided that I had better change the subject as I could see that the subject of death was frightening her. But Nellie recovered enough from her fright to lunge forward at me, saying as she lunged, "When I die, I'm going to come back and haunt you!" Then she smiled at me and said that she would never do such a thing.



On the 24th of October, 1951 Nellie's granddaughter Nancy Bender married Donald H. Stephens. Nellie was worried whether or not this marriage would last as Nancy was only 16 years old. I am sure that Nellie must have wondered at this time if her first grandchild John was married, what he was doing, and if he had had any children. Nancy moved into Van Heusev's upstairs by the time Nellie came to visit the Benders in the summer. Nancy stopped over often to visit, but she was never as interested in Nellie as the resto of us were.

On the 1st of August, 1953 Nellie's first great grandchild, Warren Donald Stephens was born. He was a robust, intelligent child and Nellie got to see him in the summers of 1953 and 1954 when Nancy would come over to visit us.

On the 22nd of February, 1954 Nellie's granddaughter Marianne McKinin got married to Frank DeMaria. Frank was a fine man and the whole family felt that Marianne was making a good amrriage. Frank came from a good home and he wasa polite, intelligent, well-mannered young man.

On the 24th of December, 1954 Nellie's second grandchild was born, Laurie DeMaria. the daughter of Marianne McKinin DeMaria. When Laurie was born, Elenore thought so much of her son John who she was parted from 31 years ago and she wondered how he was getting along. Elenore said that when December would come, she would pray especially hard for her young son that the good Lord would watch out for him and protect him wherever he might be. John told Elenore recently that her prayers must have been answered as all through the years whenever he was in a bind someone would always manawe to come along at the right moment and help him along. I am sure that when Laurie was born Nellie also silently relived John's birth those many years ago, too.

Nellie was winding down about this time in her life. She was old beyond her years and very tired. She was very quiet and withdrawn and had a far away look in her eyes. Nellie shook very visiblv from her Parkinson like disease, and the more she would try to control her shakes, the worse thes got. Nellie could not hold a paper in her hands. rather, she would have to lay it in her lap, and tren the paper would shake a little because her lap would shake some. My mother would say to Nellie, "Ma, do you want me to read the paper to you?" And Nellie would always reply, "No. Marie, I'm almost done". And she would keep squinting at the small type and shaking. Grandma's favorite story at the end was about the doctor who killed his wife. Grandma would say about the doctor everytime she would read something about him or his trial, "Oh. the rup!"

I shall never forget the Christmas of 1954 for as long as I live. Everyone was over to our house for that Christmas and mom made some wonderful tasting dishes, as she always did. On that particular day mom, Elenore and Mildred were all out in the kitchen putting the last minute touches on the food. Dad, Sonny, Herman and Bill were telling tall stories, each one seeming to be taller than the last. The one I remember is how Sonny single handedly held off a group of desperados at the City Hall while waiting for the reinforcements which never seemed to come. I remember Nellie sitting on a hard chair in the middle of the living room all by herself. I kept thinking that I should go over to grandma and talk to her so she wouldn't be sitting there all by herself, but those wild stories were so entertaining that I just couldn't pull myself away from those stories to go and visit grandma. Till the day I die I will always regret not going and talking to grandma when I had such a golden opportunity to have her all to myself for that hour. Grandma then joined the rest of us for dinner, and sat with the women afterwards, but as so many people get just before they depart from this earth, grandma was very far away in her thoughts. She contributed little to the conversation, and was content to just sit back and listen. That Christmas was the last time I saw Nellie alive.

Grandma then went home with Sonny, Mildred and Doris to 12012 Gunston. Nellie went to a foot doctor for treatment of a foot sore that would never heal. The doctor treated her foot faithfully, but never even hinted to the family that maybe the foot that would not heal was a symptom of some other illness.

In the beginning of March, 1955 Nellie became very tired and decided that she just wanted to sleep most of the day and night. Mildred and Sonny took grandma to their family doctor Dr. Baumgarten who said, "The old lady has the flu, let her go home and rest". So Mildred took her home and let her go to bed to rest. Several days later Mildred noticed that she could barely wake grandma up, and when she did wake up she really wasn't all that alert and drifted right back into unconsciousness. Mildred became very frightened and asked Elenore if she would be willing to take Nellie as she really didn't know what to do for her anymore and she was frightened of her present condition. Marie went over to Mildred's house a few days before and she knew that something wrong with her mother as she was somewhat awake, but in bed and seemed a little disoriented. I begged mom to take me to see grandma that night but she thought that at 10 years old I was too young to see grandma that sick. Sonny and Mildred put Nellie in their car and took her over to Elenore's house. When Elenore saw her mother in that condition she realized that Nellie needed medical help and fast. Elenore called her doctor and he told Elenore to get Nellie to Plymouth General Hospital as it sounded like a diabetic coma to him.



Elenore fixed Nellie's hair really nice, and trimmed the hairs on the growth that Nellie had on her chin. then when Nellie looked nice. she called an ambulance and had Nellie taken to the hospital. Nellie always hated hospitals and she refused ever to go to one as she said that the only time she would end up in a hospital was to die. Well, Nellie was too ill to protest against her trip to the hospital at this time. The doctor ran a few tests and confirmed that Nellie was in a diabetic coma. Insulin was started via IV and in a few days Nellie woke up and was her old self again. The doctor took Elenore aside and cautioned her that most people come out of the coma alright, but that the big danger, sudden heart failure, still lay ahead. Nellie felt better than she ever did, and was happy, boisterous and full of life on Wednesday and Thursday in the hospital. All the kids came to see her on Wednesday night and they all started making plans as to whose home she would go to next. Both Marie and Elenore were planning on taking her and they were going to iron out who would have her. It looked like Marie would have her as Elenore and Herman were planning on going on a vacation in a short while. But while the family members were planning for Nellie's return home, Nellie, who had a well developed fear of anything to do with death or dying, said very ahppily, and matter of factly, "I saw little Earl today. He said he is coming back to get me". "He was standing in that corner over there and talking to me."

That was the last time all of the children except Elenore ever saw Nellie alive. Elenore sat with Nellie all day every day, and often came back with Herman in the evening to see her again. Then at 4:30 am on Friday, March 25, 1955 Elenore received that dreaded call from the hospital. Nellie was dead at 4:30 am when the nurses checked on her. She had very quietly slipped away in her sleep sometime during the early morning hours. Her heart had simply stopped beating.

Elenore got dressed and rushed down to the hospital, but she was too late. Nellie had already been removed from her room.

Thus ended the life of our beloved Nellie. She was a wonderfully jovial, friendly, amiable mother and grandmother. She was always ready with a smile and would always be your quiet companion in times of need. Nellie was always welcome wherever she went because she was so friendly and so unobtrusive. She was always good company and never any bother. It was said of her that she was a good but lax mother. This is true. She was a peaceful, good soul and strong discipline was just not in her nature. What she wanted most for her children in life was happiness and peace. And she was indeed a peaceful person. It would be rare indeed, to hear Nellie raise her voice in disapproval or anger. I never once heard my grandmother raise her voice in the 10 years I knew her. When we remember Nellie we remember goodtimes, happiness and a peaceful, contented smile.

Elenore started calling her brothers and sisters around 5:30 am and telling them that Nellie was gone. I remember the phone ringing early that Friday morning and wondering what that could be. I was too young to dread an early morning phone call as I had had no experience with death yet. I heard mom's muffled voice over the receiver, but knew of nothing that was spoken of. Then mom came back upstairs and I heard snatches of what she was saying to dad. "We'll put her next to Grandma Henkel. There is a place for her. We'll make the arrangements." And then I had the awful feeling that grandma was no longer on this earth. And then I heard funeral, and I knew that our Nellie was indeed gone. I buried my head in my pillow and cried, as much for myself as for Nellie, as I knew that life would never be quite the same without Nellie in our front parlor for the summer. It was impossible to envision a summer without grandma, but I knew that come summer there would be a horrible vacant spot in our parlor, a spot that no one else would ever fill. Our Nellie was gone forever.

I remember my mother and I crying all day for the loss of our Nellie. But when my dad came home from supper he had said that Nellie was safe in heaven with her Creator, and that she would never approve of us crying like that over her and that we should remember all the good times we had with her instead of crying.

I remember going over to VanLerberghe's funeral parlor on Lakeview and Warren at noon on Saturday, March 26, to see Nellie when she was first laid out. Mom and I got a big shock when we saw her as she looked nothing like she did when we last saw her, but rather years and years younger with a much finer nose. When Nellie's brothers and sisters and in-laws came to the funeral parlor and saw her, they were all astonished at how much the body looked like Nellie of age 25! They couldn't get over how she looked the same as when she was a young woman. But all of us wondered what Nellie thought of her tightly curled hair! We all knew what Nellie thought of her hair being curled!

Nellie had a wonderful funeral. She was the first of her family to die so everyone was there. Aunt Tillie was too sick to make it so she sent her best friend to tell her all about Nellie's funeral. And Nellie would have been pleased with all the flowers she got. Nellie often said to Marie, that she hoped she would get a lot of flowers at her funeral. Well she got her wish as she had 25 flower arrangements! Nellie's old boyfriend showed up too! He said that he always loved Nellie and hoped she would marry him, but that she was so in love with Bill that she wouldn't seriously consider him for a



Shorty sat in our living room that day and told my mother some of his life since he had last seen her some 7 years ago. But hard feelings still ran deep and Marie and Elenore were not yet ready to bury the hatchet. That would not come for another 13 years.

But on this day they all sat as one family and paid their bills. The funeral bill was surprisingly inexpensive as unknown to all of us until after Nellie's death, when grandma Henkel was dying she put aside \$400.00 in a special bank account and told her daughters Annie and Clara that that money was to sit in that bank account and draw interest until Nellie died and then the money was to be given to Nellie's children to pay the bill. So at the funeral Aunt Clara gave Elenore the \$400.00 with no interest. Clara told Elenore that she had had use for the \$400.00 but now that Nellie was dead she was handing over the principle.

Nellie was very fortunate to get a spot in the Dahl family plot. Her husband's brother Frank decided to move to Florida when he remarried after retirement, so he visited Nellie and gave her the deed to his grave, saying he had no further need of it as he would be buried in Florida some day. So Nellie was buried next to Frank's first wife Celia. But the story doesn't end there. In 1958 Frank became desperately ill and begged his sister Clara to fly him back to Michigan. Clara bought Frank 4 seats on an airplane and had him flown back laying down. She then put him into a hospital here where he succumbed to a variety of serious ailments, one of which was the famous Dahl ulcers. One of Frank's last requests was that he be buried with his mom and dad, so Frank now lies at Nellie's feet.

After the business was settled with the children, we all looked out the window and noticed that a thick white blanket of snow was gently falling on Nellie's new grave.

husband. He added to Mildred not to tell his wife that he was at Nellie's funeral or she would be jealous!

Mrs. Rheam, Nellie's next door neighbor on Baldwin, came to the funeral too. She said to Marie, "I hope you were good to your mother!" Marie wondered how Mrs. Rheam's children were treating her that she would make such a statement at Nellie's funeral.

Father Verweil. O.S.M. from ST. JOHN BERCHMAN'S CHURCH said the rosary and the funeral mass. The funeral mass was in the upper church in ST. JOHN BERCHMAN'S CHURCH at 9:30 am on the 28th of March, 1955. Michael Bender never forgot how heavy that casket was to carry up all those stairs and into the church. And Michael was the shortest of the pall bearers so he had the worse share of the load. Grandma had a nice mass and afterwards the body was then carried down all those stairs and into the waiting hearse. And then began the slow procession to Mt. Olivet Cemetery. via Outer Drive. I remember driving down Connors and seeing the Olibway herb place on Connor and wondering if Nellie had taken the herbs like our neighbor Mrs. Meeseman did. if she might still be alive.

We then pulled into front entrance of the cemetery and then began our slow descent through the winding roads leading to the Dahl family plot in section 47. We came to the plot, all got out of our cars and watched as they carried our Nellie's body to rest over the big gaping hole in the ground next to Fred & Minna Dahl. It was a sickening feeling. to commend Nellie's body to that small open grave. To love someone. care for them, and then dispose of them into a hole in the ground is just hard to understand, let alone comprehend, especially when your'e only 10 years old. We each put a rose on grandmother's casket, and my sister Nancy, who was 7 1/2 months pregnant slipped on the loose mud and thought she was going to fall into the open grave. She never forgot that moment!

Finally Father Verweil said the final prayers on commendation and we were on our way home. The burial was now complete. We all went back to Marie's house and had a light lunch and settled up on the cost of the funeral. All went very smoothly and there was never a word from anyone about not paying his equal share. Elenore feared that she might lose her happy home when Nellie was ill as the ambulance had to be paid so she gave them \$100.00 and every other day she had to give the hospital another \$100.00. Herman wanted to know where the other children were when it came to paying bills. But now all the children were together, adding up hospital, ambulance and funeral bills, and dividing the total by 5.



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*Mellie Rehfeldt Wahl*

*Jan 1955*



The Dahl family plot in section 46 of Mount Olivet Cemetery, Detroit

