

MY GRAMPAW

MEMORIES OF GRANDPA GOLLA

Gramma Golla died in 1927. I think it was in ~~December~~ ^{November}. I do not remember her well--only of going to her house and she made "big" cupcakes. I also remember going to church with her once. We went to the Catholic Church in Tyler. The priest was Polish and he talked Polish. Between the Latin Mass and the Polish sermon I couldn't understand a thing he was saying. He shouted. He shook his fist in my direction. He scared me.

In December 1927 we moved into Grampa's house. There was Mom, Dad, Paul who was seven, Grace who was two and I was five. Nonie was fifteen at that time. Living there meant that Nonie, Paul and I had about three-fourths of a mile to walk to school. We usually ran home at lunch time and back to school, then, of course, we walked home in the evening. I can't remember that Grandpa was friendly. Any playfulness on our part brought the warning, "Be go@t!" In the evenings Grandpa sat in his rocker and read his prayer-book and said his prayers. Mom always warned us, "Be quiet. Grandpa is saying his prayers." Sometimes he joined us in playing dominoes. As he waited for each of us kids to play he would look at the dominoes in the bone-yard and shove them back in place. When he needed to draw from the boneyard he knew exactly which domino to pick.

When summer came Dad told us that Grandpa had a long rope in the barn with which Dad could make us a good swing on the apple tree if we would ask Grandpa's permission. We had to approach him separately and we each had to kiss him. It was probably the hardest thing I ever did but the Swing was worth it. I spent many hours on it every summer.

I was awakened on many a summer morning by the sound of Grandpa swatting flies on the back porch. As he did this the chickens came up and ate the dead flies.

Those were Prohibition Days but Grandpa liked liquor. He often took the noon train to Tyler. Tyler was a coal-mining town four miles away. It was a town where one could always get booze. The train came back from Tyler at five o'clock. We kids always had to watch for the train at that time to see if Grandpa was on it. We lived right near the railroad track. He usually sat on the side of the train nearest the house. If we saw him on the train we would go up by the barn after a few minutes to see if he were walking down the railroad track toward home. If we didn't see him walking Dad would go after him and help him home. On a few occasions Dad would have to take the pony-car (a little flat cart with two railroad wheels mounted on it and a long handle to push it with) and walk to the station. He would load Grandpa on it and push him home. Grandpa usually came home singing "Ach du Lieber Augustine".

Grandpa probably spent an equal amount of time with Aunt Verona's family. He had a railroad pass and could travel free. He visited relatives in Omaha, Nebraska and Detroit, Michigan several times. When he returned from a trip he would bring fresh meat. We had no refrigeration so I can remember Mom covering it with salt and keeping it in the cellar. He often brought a five-pound bag of ginger snaps. These were good if you ran cold tap-water over them to soften them up.

Once he sat in his chair counting money. He made three piles of three dollars each--one for Paul, one for Grace, and one for me. Never before had I had so much money of my own.

In the summer of 1934 Grandpa was sick. It was finally decided that he would have to go to the hospital in Dubois. He had hardening of the arteries. Mom wakened one night (near 1:00 a.m.) thinking she had heard Grandpa say, "I'm going up on the hill now with Maw". He always referred to the cemetery where Gramma was buried as the Hill. Soon Uncle Joe and Uncle Johnnie came to the house to say that Grandpa had died.

Grandpa is buried in St. Michael's Polish cemetery in Dubois. When you stand at the altar there his grave is just ahead of you. It stands out with prominence.

My older half-sisters probably have many more reminiscences than I about Grandpa. There are stories as to how he came from Germany and left his young wife and baby behind until he could find work here, how he worked without pay because he couldn't speak English, how he and Grandma were re-united in this country. I hope that some of these tales may be told so we can remember Grandpa.

I forgot to mention Grandpa's most distinguishing feature--his long white beard. It was always clean. He washed and combed it daily. Once he rode in a parade in Dubois. The parade was to celebrate Franklin Roosevelt's election to the presidency. As Grandpa rode by, children along the route were heard to exclaim, over and over again "There's the real Santa Claus!"