

Work and Play

Moving to Uncle Bub's place the next year was no big problem, for it was close by. No need to worry about changing schools, as they were still in Piney district.

Nellie loved to visit her grandparents. Most of Mommy's sisters had married, and moved to their own homes. Grandpa would never allow a daughter of his to marry until they were 18, and he was careful to discourage them from flirting with any boys he disapproved of. Aunt Jessie told Nellie, that one time he had stopped the wagon and team he was driving, got out, cut a switch and switched two of his daughters that were riding in the back of the wagon. He had seen two boys waving at the girls. The daughters felt they were unfairly punished, because the boys had waved at them. Grandpa must have thought the girls had encouraged the boys, or they would not have been bold enough to wave.

Grandma often needed some things from the store, so she would send some of the children to the hen house to see how many eggs they could find. Aunt Jessie and Nellie would then walk to Garfield to the Burchett store, and trade the eggs for what was needed. During these long walks the girls shared many happy hours together.

Once when Nellie went to stay overnight, one of the neighbors of Grandpa and Grandma were planning a play party for the young people of the community. Obie was coming by to escort Aunt Jessie. Aunt Jessie told Nellie she could go with them. At some point during the party Aunt Jessie told Nellie to be Obie's partner in the game they were playing. Then when time came to leave she told Nellie to walk with Obie on the way home because Al was walking her home.

The next day when Nellie related these details to her parents Poppy thought it was hilarious. My, how he did laugh because Nellie had taken Aunt Jessie's beau, but Mommy clicked her tongue with disapproval. So that is how Aunt Jessie managed to get around her overly strict parent and get to date the boy she was struck on. Later Nellie wondered if Obie was jilted, or if he was in on the scheme.

Life for Nellie was not all visiting and play parties, for the next summer when the blackberries were ripe, she, Dorothy, Opal and Floyd were sent to the berry patch very early in the morning, to pick

berries until noon. They would carry a lard stand and a water jug, and each would take a bucket to pick the berries in. Each time they filled their buckets, they emptied them into the lard stand. After filling the lard stand and their buckets, they returned home. Nellie and Dorothy carrying the lard stand between them and a filled bucket with their other hand. Opal would carry her and Floyd's filled buckets, and Floyd would carry the water jug, which was usually empty by then.

In the Ozarks blackberries grow large and juicy. They are so delicious to eat with cream and sugar. Mommy had 100 half-gallon canning jars and she always filled 50 of them with blackberries. She also made blackberry jelly. The other 50 jars she would fill later with peaches if they had a good peach crop. After the noon meal the berries were washed and canned. They had to be canned that day, because there was no refrigeration then. Canning is a very hot job, especially in July. There were no air conditioners, not even electric fans, for no one had electricity in their homes. The berries were cooked in one of Mommy's big dishpans, and the half-gallon canning jars were heated in boiling water in another dishpan. When the berries were cooked just enough, and the jars had boiled until they were sterilized, the berries were ladled into the jars. Always one had to handle everything carefully, as not to get a burn.

Over and over, until berry season was over, the family worked together until 50 half-gallon jars were filled. Mommy had always stood at the hot stove and done the canning until this summer, but this summer when Nellie was 12 years old, she took Mommy's place at the stove and canned the berries, for recently they had been blessed with a new baby sister, and Mommy had to care for her. Mommy had Nellie get down the family Bible and write the baby's name and date of birth in it.

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