

CHAPTER 2 – WE BEGIN AGAIN

MY STEP-FATHER, MY DAD

During the nine months of 1951 that I was in the hospital, my mother and Dale were dating each other. They were married in Stevenson, Washington on Groundhog Day, February 2, 1952.

At this point, I would like to give you background on Dale's life and family. Dale Wallace Berglund was born May 23, 1930 in Isle, Minnesota a small town of only 500 people on the shores of Mille Lacs Lake, as the youngest of five children. He had a sister named Lavern and three brothers named Donald, Kenneth, and Milton. His parents Knute and Anna Berglund were of Swedish and Norwegian descent respectively and were each the first generation born in this country to immigrant parents.



**Donald, Kenneth, Lavern, Milton
Anna, Dale, Knute**

Being born in 1930, Dale was too young to be among those who went to serve in World War II but his brothers all went off to serve their country. During the seventh grade Dale began cutting school and it wasn't long before he had dropped out entirely. He took a job driving truck on short runs for a man in their little town, but kept it a secret from his parents, acting as if he were going to school each day. When his father Knute found out what he was doing, he put Dale to work driving truck for him. He had to be up very early in the morning to collect the full milk buckets from the dairy farmers and take them to a dairy for processing and bottling.

During 1944 when Dale was 14, the family moved to Portland, Oregon where Knute began working for the Port of Portland as a longshoreman, loading and unloading ships. This may have been a good move for the family in regard to Knute having more lucrative work. Dale tried to go back to school, but didn't stick to it. He was becoming a rebellious teen, generally causing problems.

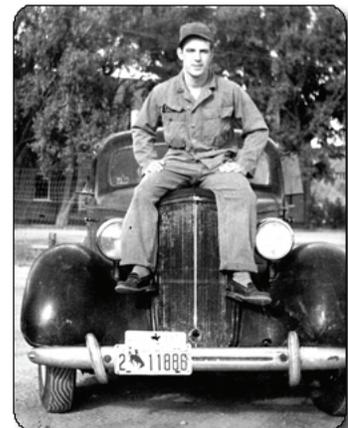
By the time he was 16, his family had become concerned that one day he would get himself into some kind of real trouble. They decided that the only way to prevent that was to get him into the military service. His mother and a sister-in-law used a typewriter to alter the date of his birth on his birth certificate from 1930 to 1928! That made it possible for Dale to enlist in the Army as an 18 year old even though he was really only 16.



Dale with Equipment

Off Dale went to boot camp at Geiger Field, an army base near Spokane, Washington. Thanks to driving truck for his father, Dale already knew a bit about the operation of large trucks. Now he was taught to operate bulldozers, cranes and other kinds of heavy equipment.

The work that was done while he was stationed there, turned Geiger Field into a civilian airport which is still the airport at Spokane, WA.



After the field was converted to civilian use, the military personnel were relocated to Warren Field at Cheyenne, Wyoming. Dale stayed at Warren Field until he was sent to Europe.

The war in Europe ended on V-E Day, Victory in Europe Day, on May 8, 1945, the date the Allies formally accepted the unconditional surrender of Nazi Germany. Dale was shipped over to Germany as part of the occupation force following the surrender, so he never had to experience combat.

With his knowledge and skill using heavy equipment, his work in Germany around the area of Munich, involved the construction of roads, repair of airport runways and land cleanup.



In later years Dale talked about his work with heavy equipment, but didn't say much about the other things he saw. Such as the concentration camps in process of clean up, the displaced persons, the battered forests, fields and landscape; the bombed out cities with their rubble and misery, the people maimed and homeless, nor the children now orphaned.



**Dale & Doris Berglund
Dad & Mom, wedding day**

When Dale and my mother married, his parents were living in the northwest part of Portland in a section known as the St Johns area. Their home was on Tioga Avenue in the first block south of Fessenden Street. I stayed three days with his parents while mother and Dale went on a short honeymoon.

During their honeymoon, the very first morning at the Berglund's home, I awoke to the lovely smell of coffee and bacon! YUM! Making my way shyly to the kitchen I saw Knute and Anna sitting at the table. Knute was reading from a book. Anna motioned me to sit beside her on the red vinyl upholstered bench of the nook, which surrounded the table on three sides. We sat quietly as Knute continued to read and then he closed his eyes and began to talk.

I do not remember ever seeing anyone pray before. I had a powerful feeling then that there was Someone present, besides just the three of us, who was hearing those words! That moment is the first time I remember ever being aware of God. I was nine years old.

When they returned from those few days away, Dale's father Knute, said to him, "Take her home and feed her!". Which Dale did, being a meat and potatoes man, but somehow mother never did gain much weight.

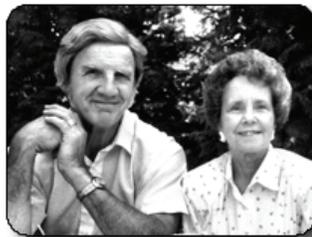
My life was suddenly full of good times, as there was now an extended family around me who made me feel welcome. I loved to listen to stories of the families of these grandparents and began to feel a bit as if I was also a Scandinavian like them. Dad's parents were now my grandparents. His three brothers and one sister were now my uncles and aunt. They became the family I felt were truly mine rather than the family of my father Vincent or the family of my mother, who all lived far away, and who were people I had no opportunity to know. In addition I now had nine new cousins! Suddenly I was rich in the best way possible; I belonged to a large extended family!



Anna & Knute



**Lavern & Willard
Anderson**



**Milt & Mabel
Berglund**



**Ardy & Don
Berglund**



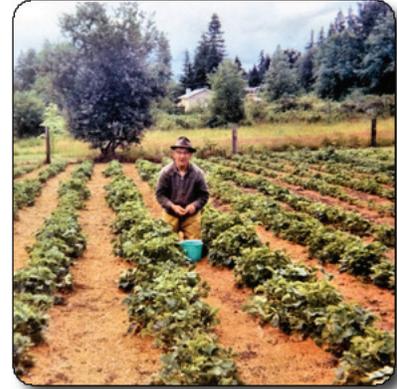
**Lou & Ken
Berglund**

Dale was eleven years younger than mother, only thirteen years older than me. He had quite an adjustment becoming an instant parent to a child as old as I was. I will refer to my new step-father as dad now in this writing, although I continued to call him Dale for four more years. My last name never was changed from Taylor to Berglund. I do not know why Dale did not adopt me.

Mother and I moved from Vancouver, Washington across the Columbia River to Portland, Oregon where dad's family was living. At first the three of us lived very briefly in a couple of different apartments. At one of them we had a pinball machine in the living room which we fed wooden nickels so we could play the game.

Soon we moved into a small trailer house, situated on the large double lot where dad's parents lived. Our little trailer house was heated by a kerosene stove in the tiny living room. Since there was only one bedroom, I slept on the couch. The big yard was a wonderful place to me. There was a walnut tree and a cherry tree with a rope swing and a board for a seat.

When Grandpa Knute was not working he kept a large garden from which all the relatives were supplied with fresh produce. He had strawberries, peas, beans, corn, rhubarb, and potatoes. There was a grape vine on a horizontal trellis that we kids could hide under when playing. I loved helping Grandma Anna shuck peas and husk the corn.



Grandpa still at it years later in WA

Dad and all his brothers loved to go fishing in the rivers and streams that abound in the Pacific Northwest, especially Uncle Don. He was almost constantly after those fish! He would bring home a bunch of salmon and all the family would gather for dinner.

Grandma Anna had a huge goldfish. That goldfish always had the cleanest fish bowl I ever did see! There were only a couple of marbles on the bottom and Grandma must have cleaned it every day.

When someone talks about Grandma, most of the time mention is made of her having a sharp tongue. She did, I remember feeling it's cut twice. But my memories of her are ones of kindness and love.

She let me help her and showed me how things are done. She let me watch as she mended Grandpa's clothes or made a dress or apron on her treadle sewing machine. She let me practice using it. She wore an apron all the time unless she was having company or going out some place. It was a big cover up apron that had arm holes and buttoned in back. Her apron was a great carry-all. She would gather produce from the garden and carry it to the kitchen in the front skirt of her apron.

She let me put trash or a fresh piece of wood in the trash burning section of the stove in the kitchen. The stove had gas burners which could be covered over with circles of cast iron, turning the stove top into a big, flat piece of metal. There she cooked the large round circles of lefsa that she made at Christmas. Lefsa is Norwegian potato bread, rolled out very thin, and baked on a hot, flat surface. Then it is buttered and sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon and folded in half. Repeat that sprinkling and folding again and again until it is quite small and then cut it into wedges shaped like a piece of pie. Yummy!!

Grandma taught me to knead bread and how to tell when it was kneaded just right. When it feels like your ear lobe, it's ready. Grating raw potatoes for potato dumplings was a fun chore at first. Until I scrapped my knuckles on the grater and bled into the potato mush as it turned gray from exposure to the air. Those dumplings were heavy as lead, but yummy and my uncles competed with each other to see who could eat the most!

The house had a basement that was half cement and half dirt. Grandma did laundry in the cement half with a wringer washer. I would help her pass the clothes through the wringer on the machine, letting them drop into two large sinks for the rinse, then through the wringer again to get the water out so we could hang them on the clothes line. Grandpa stored the potatoes and walnuts in gunnysacks in the part of the basement that had the dirt floor. I still remember the smell of the walnut husks as they turned black and slimy, rotting off the ripening walnuts in the gunnysacks.

Having heard tales from their parents of starvation in the old country and having lived through the Great Depression and two World Wars, Knute and Anna were very frugal. If the toast got burned in the toaster, Grandma would scrape the burned layer off and serve that toast at the table. If no one else ate it, she would.

She perked a pot of coffee at breakfast and if there was any left, she would heat it for the afternoon break from house and garden work. She liked her coffee HOT so brought it up to a boil! Grandpa didn't like his so hot so would carefully pour a bit into the saucer and lean down close to the table to blow on it and then slurp it up from the saucer. She would grumble and he would chuckle.

I loved being at Grandma and Grandpa's house with my cousins whenever possible. Grandma would read aloud to us. In particular I remember her reading Heidi and another wonderful book titled Treasures of the Snow by Patricia M. St John. Us girls would gather with Grandma on straight backed chairs around the furnace grate in the center of the living room floor. The heat coming up would warm us all over, just as the stories warmed our hearts, or sometimes made us cry together.

Knute and Anna attended the Temple Baptist Church in Portland. Church began for me then when I was first taken to Sunday school with them. I remember sitting through the worship hour next to Grandma. She would pull me close to her as I grew bored and restless. It was a comfy time for gathering some extra TLC. I learned to sit quietly and to sing along with the hymns. Music spoke to my heart, the songs becoming a part of me that I have cherished ever since.

While we were living in the trailer house, I attended third grade at a nearby elementary school, now called George Middle School. My only memory of that school was the taking of our class picture. Unintentionally the photographer humiliated me that day.

The class was positioned along a retaining wall outside with the girls in the front row. The photographer looked at us through his camera, came over to me, took me by the shoulders and turned me side wards.

It took me a few seconds to realize he had done that because of the way my bowed legs looked! Standing facing the camera straight on really showed the degree to which my legs were bowed. However, standing side wards did not hide the bowing and being positioned differently from the other children draws attention to me in the photo.



Looking at the class picture now, I recognize a few faces, girls who must have been my friends, but I have no memories of being with them in class or games we may have played during recess.

A LIGHT HOUSE

For one month during the summer of 1952 following the third grade, we lived in a lighthouse! We had purchased a new home but it was still under construction.

The Willamette River Lighthouse was situated at the confluence of the Willamette and Columbia Rivers northwest of the city of Portland.

Dad must have been in between jobs, and the Portland Port Authority must have needed someone to fill in until another lighthouse keeper would replace him.

The Willamette River Lighthouse was not the typical tall, cylindrical tower that one thinks of as a lighthouse. Its construction was octagonal, or eight sided.



Willamette River Lighthouse



There were two stories, the upper story being the living quarters with three bedrooms, bathroom and a stateroom or living room. The lower story had the kitchen, watch room, and a small workshop. There was a verandah most of the way around the lower level. The lighthouse stood on pilings up above the water with a long raised wooden walkway going inland to higher ground.

There was no light on top even though it was called a lighthouse. The reason was because the area is prone to rain and frequent fog, which made a light difficult to see from a distance. The fog signal was very important to warn ships of their closeness to the confluence of the two rivers. The fog signal was a large bronze bell on the veranda that

was struck by a clockwork mechanism. This signal sounded over and over the entire time the fog lasted.

Ships would enter the Columbia River from the Pacific ocean, travel east up river, then make a right turn to the south into the Willamette River at the junction of the two rivers where the lighthouse was situated.

There was a non-rotating lantern mounted on the lighthouse deck railing. This lantern was very bright, visible for over a mile away when it was not foggy.

The light would let the pilots of the ships know that they were approaching the junction of the two rivers where they would have to make the turn to enter the Willamette River.



**Cargo ship going past toward
the Port of Portland**

When a ship was expected, the Portland Port Authority would telephone dad at the lighthouse to let him know that a ship was coming, giving him the expected time of arrival at the junction. When the ship arrived there, dad was supposed to telephone the port authority, which would then notify the longshoremen what time they were to report to work for loading or unloading the ship after it docked. Dad was also in contact with the ship's pilots by radio as they passed.

One night dad forgot to set his alarm clock for the expected arrival of a ship. The captain of the ship blasted us all out of bed by sounding the ship's horn! He thought that was some joke, ribbing dad about it on the radio. Once past the lighthouse, the ships traveled south to dock in Portland at the shipyards.

I remember that month at the lighthouse as an idyllic one and have loved lighthouses ever since. Those summer days were spent playing alone on the beach accompanied only by two dogs. I do not remember any houses on the shorelines near there.

The waters at the confluence of the two rivers are quite turbulent, which was demonstrated to me on one occasion when dad took me out on the rivers in a small boat with an outboard motor. As we crossed the point where the water from the Willamette merged with the water from the Columbia, it was very rough and frightening to me. The waters really crash into each other.

Several years before we were there, the Willamette River Lighthouse had been mechanized so there had not been a resident light keeper living there. I do not know why a resident light keeper was used again briefly during the mid 1950's when we were there. Another man came to live there for a short time after we left.

Not long after that an electronic monitoring system, which did not need a resident keeper, was put in and the lighthouse was completely decommissioned. Then a little while later, the empty lighthouse mysteriously burned down. Nothing remains of it today, not even the pilings that it sat upon.

Today the city of Portland has many miles of trails for hiking, walking and biking. Kelley Point Park is now where the lighthouse once stood, and is part of the system of parks and trails that has been developed for recreational use in Portland.

A REAL HOME



Our first home on Hodge Avenue

After leaving the lighthouse in late summer, we moved into the first house we ever purchased. The next couple of years were the happiest of my grade school years. Our new home was located on Hodge Avenue, a short street only one or two blocks long, and was brand new, as were all of the other houses. Curbs, sidewalks and pavement were not put in yet. But our house was ready to be occupied, so we moved in. Several times daily we had to spray the yard with water to keep the dust down while the construction workers continued to complete the last few houses, lay pavement, and put in the sidewalks. I remember standing outside watering the dirt yard.

Earl and Gloria Glasscock, who had just one child, a daughter named Janice, moved into the house across the street from us.



Janice and I became best friends for the years that I lived there on Hodge Avenue.

Janice and I were inseparable friends. We never were in the same classroom at school, even though we were both in the same grade. That was all right, we did everything else together!

We walked together to Portsmouth School, took clarinet lessons together, played together, went to church together and took tumbling lessons at the local recreation center together.



**Gale & Janice -
Easter**

Reading was always a favorite past time for me. One time I checked out the book *Black Beauty* from the school library when our class went there. The teacher looked at each of our books as we returned to our classroom. When she saw my choice, she insisted that I had to return it to the library as I could not read a book that was above my grade level! I tried to argue with her that I had already read a couple of chapters so could indeed read a book above the class level, but she made me take it back anyway. Later I went to the public library and checked it out!

Paper dolls were one of the favorite past times for Janice and I, each of us having a suitcase full of them. By the time we got them all laid out, each doll with its proper clothes, it was always time to clean up and go home! We each had a number of dolls with many clothes too.

We loved to play outside under a huge weeping willow tree in our back yard. The tree had a wide, strong limb that curved downward. This limb made a perfect “seat” and became our covered wagon where we sat to “drive” our oxen across the plains.

As young girls will, we danced around the clothesline pole and twirled all through the house, leaping off the sofa pretending we were ballerinas. We loved to roller skate using the kind of skates that clamped onto our shoes, and had leather straps around the ankles. We skated all around our neighborhood, our skate key on a string around our neck swinging from side to side as we skated along. Stopping was something I never was very good at, so had to roll into the grass or grab a bush or tree branch to keep from flying out into the street.

On Halloween the two of us would dress up in costume running all over the neighborhood gathering candy, homemade popcorn balls, apples, bubble gum, sometimes even quarters! We never had adults with us. The streets were perfectly safe. No one ever thought about candy or popcorn balls being unsafe!

At the end of our short street was one vacant lot. It seemed like such a huge place, growing tall grass and weeds. I remember burying dead birds there, having a memorial service over their little graves. Another girl lived on our street who was a couple years younger than Janice and I. Her family was the first to get a television set. There was a children's program on in the afternoons called Mr. Moon. The person who hosted the program wore a huge moon over his head. We went to her house for a while to watch television, but I have to say we were not very good friends to her. As soon as Janice got a television, we didn't go to her house or play with her any more! How mean children can be to one another!

The coronation of Queen Elizabeth on June 2, 1953 was shown on television and our family watched it at Janice's house. Lots of things were for sale with Queen Elizabeth on them, dolls, color books, paper dolls! We spent hours coloring pictures of her and her coronation!

The Miss America pageant, which started in 1921, began to be broadcast on television during those years. Along with most other little girls across the country, I think both of us girls thought we would grow up to become Miss America!

A local Evangelical Free church sent a yellow school bus around the neighborhoods picking up children for Sunday school. Janice and I rode the bus each Sunday morning for Sunday School and again each Wednesday night for the Pioneer Girls program. Pioneer Clubs still exist today. A quote from their web site, PioneerClubs.org, on the internet reads as, "...a Christ-centered mid-week club program for the kids in your church and community."

Janice's dad was a city bus driver during his entire career. He loved the public and they loved him! When it came time for Earl to retire years later, the people on his route gave him a retirement party.

While we were living on Hodge Avenue my dad tried his hand at driving the bus too. Sometimes Earl and dad would take us girls along to the huge bus barn where we got soda pop out of an ice machine and played pool at the billiard tables. Dad was not as enamored of the public as Earl was, so eventually gave up bus driving to get back into truck driving.

Minor league baseball was popular during those days. Our families were fans of the local team called the Portland Beavers, so of course Janice and I had to be fans too. Our dads sometimes took us with them to the games. Being a sports fan never really "took" with me, but Janice enjoyed it and today she and her family are avid baseball fans.

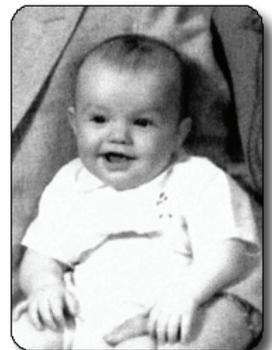


Janice & Ron Hotrum

was quite exciting to have a baby brother!

As the years passed into the future, Janice and I have remained good friends. The years have taken us far apart with only a few short opportunities to see one another. But the U.S. Postal Service has kept us in touch. Our letters have been our sounding boards as we told each other what was going on in our lives. We have been able to encourage each other and pray for one another for more than 50 years! Janice married a minister and their first son, Brian, was born when our first son, Stephen, was three days old.

Until the age of 11, I had been an only child and probably a spoiled one. Being the only one does not encourage a child to share or think about what someone else may want. This was somewhat remedied when my half-brother Keith Allen Berglund was born on June 28, 1954. It



Six days later on July 4, mother's father Carroll Bucknam, died of pneumonia in the hospital following a surgery. Mother was unable to travel to Boston for the funeral because of Keith's birth less than a week previously. I remember hearing mother crying as she lay in bed with the new baby. It is my first memory of any death.

These happy childhood years on Hodge Avenue were interrupted briefly by a ten-day hospitalization at Doernbecher Children's Hospital in Portland. I was confined in a private room for ten days for the purpose of trying out more new medications, followed as they had been at Shriner's, by numerous blood tests every day.



Multnomah Falls

During my stay in Doernbecher, Uncle Carl and Aunt Evelyn, my mother's sister, and their daughter Gini visited from California. Since Gini was too young to visit in the hospital, I was going to be unable to see her at all.

Much complaining by my mother and dad, finally convinced the hospital staff to let me have one eight-hour period to leave the hospital on a pass. It was such a fun day!

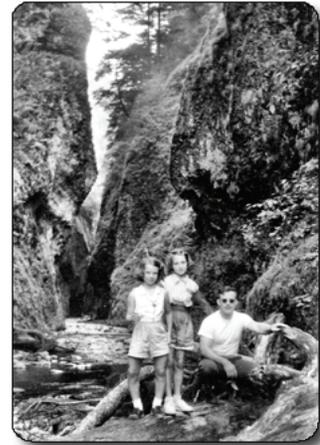
We took a picnic lunch to the Sandy River and lovely Multnomah Falls along the Columbia River. Multnomah Falls was then, and continues to be, one of my favorite places!

I will say at this point, because I am unsure where else to mention it, that my childhood had some hurtful times in it. But then everyone's does, doesn't it? Mine were mostly associated with moving

to a different home, a different neighborhood and a new school. Each time this happened, I had to meet new school children and was often called names such as shrimp, and bowlegged. Sometimes I was asked if I was born on a horse. Although my deformities were not anywhere near as severe as some people's are, I was very aware of them. I was not athletically inclined nor could I run well, so no one wanted me on their team. Instead, when teams were chosen up, I was the last person left that one team or the other got stuck with.



Gale & cousin Gini



**Gale, Gini, Dad
at Sandy River**

In those days there were no advocacy programs for people with special needs. No IEP programs at the schools, no accessibility such as curb cuts, no foot stools for reaching drinking fountains or to keep feet from hanging all day while sitting at our desks. Today in our country, it is well known that parents can and should be the advocate at school for a disabled or physically challenged child.

When I quit growing, doctors told me that I had "lost" nine inches in height due to my bone condition, ending up at 4 feet 6 (maybe 7) inches tall.

The Endocrinologist whom I have been seeing for more than 20 years for this medical condition, Dr. Robert Eckel, has told me that in this disease the bone does not harden properly but remains sort of gelatinous, as all bone is when forming. So that is probably how the short stature occurs, the bone slowly squishing down into itself because of weight bearing, instead of growing longer.

SHRINER'S AGAIN

In January 1955, shortly after I turned twelve years old and was in sixth grade, I was admitted a second time into the Shriner's Hospital where I stayed for almost five months, January through part of May. It was now the second time that my legs were broken for me, both at the same time, in order to surgically straighten the bones.

Imagine a "W" being cut through the bone and the upper and lower sections of the bone being separated from each other. Then the two halves being off-set sideways a "notch" so that each half of the bone had a point from which new bone would grow to fill in the notches. That is how the curve in the bones was straightened.

For several days following surgery I was isolated in a glass room called a cubicle. There were two of these rooms next to the nursing station so the nurses could observe us constantly. Mother was allowed to visit with me daily. Pain was controlled by hypodermic injections of painkiller into the large hip muscles about every four hours, alternating the shots from one hip to the other. After a few of those “hypos”, I dreaded having them because they hurt so badly, but the bone pain was worse than the “hypo” which gave relief from pain and escape through sleep. After about 5 days, I was moved into the older girl’s ward with the other 12 to 14 year olds and mother’s daily visits came to an end. From then on she could only visit during official visiting hours, which were for two hours every Sunday afternoon.

In the evenings we were allowed to have our beds pushed next to one another so we could play games. Often there would be a cluster of three or more beds all together. One night about a month following my surgery, the evening nurse became impatient with us at bed time. We were supposed to clean up the ward by putting games and books away, but like all kids, we weren’t always quick to do what we were told.

When we did not clean up as quickly as she wanted us to, the nurse began to grab at beds angrily jerking them away from one another into their proper positions. I was sitting on the edge of my bed with my heels resting on the next bed. When she suddenly pulled the other bed away from mine, my casted feet crashed toward the floor. Fortunately, I did not land flat on my face, but in a standing position with my arms flung out to each side, hands grasping the bedcovers on my bed. I hate to think how I would have landed if she had pulled my bed out from under me instead of pulling the other bed away from under my feet!

Turning quickly, and angrily, to grab another bed, the nurse did not see that I had fallen. I hung there speechless gripping the bed covers, as the other girls began screaming. When the nurse saw what had happened, she was horrified, of course. However other than being badly shaken, I was not injured. The casts held me upright and no damage was done to my broken legs. I think we had all been sufficiently frightened, and were probably asked not to tell anyone what had happened. Anyway, there were no consequences to the nurse. We continued to get our beds pushed together, but I think all of us were more careful about draping ourselves on two beds at the same time!

The experience of falling off the bed was educational in that we all realized it was possible to stand on casts! It was not long until I could sort of walk around the room by balancing on the feet of the casts and my toes. Those of us who had only our legs in casts became the “gophers” for those who had casts over parts of their bodies as well as on their legs.

Whenever there was not an adult around to do it, one of us would go around the room picking up things that were dropped or carrying things from one bed to another. The nurses did not want us doing this, of course, because it smashed in the bottoms of the feet on our casts, as well as the possibility someone could get hurt. The smashed bottoms of the casts looked ugly but did not bother the location of my surgery.

We got around discovery by having one girl, whose bed was near the door of the ward, be the “look out” to warn the rest of us when a nurse was coming toward our ward. That way we could scramble back to our bed and hop back up before getting caught. We did sometimes get caught and were scolded for it, but it didn’t really stop us.

I remember some of the girls who were there with me and will tell you about a couple of them now. One girl had a leg amputated below her knee. She did so well, was so brave; we were all amazed at her. She was our “hero”; we were so in awe of her.

Another girl was admitted for correction of clubbed feet, a condition where the foot is deformed so that it points downward and inward. It was a fairly common deformity among the children in Shriner’s so others who were in the hospital had the same surgery she’d had. Following the removal of her casts, she complained and cried terribly that she would not ever be able to wear high heel shoes without the scars showing. The rest of us were very impatient, even scornful of her, because we also had scars, and ours would always be visible too. She was experiencing an adjustment to her medical condition and its therapy. All of us were going through adjustments to our own experiences so were not very compassionate toward her. Again, how cruel children can sometimes be to one another!

Patsy was another girl who I remember so well. She came from a rural area in British Columbia, Canada. Patsy was in the hospital when I arrived and was still there when I left five months later. Patsy was born with two dislocated hips. One had been corrected surgically in the past. She had now had surgery to correct the second hip. Her cast reached from under her arms, down her body to the hips, and then down to completely cover the leg on the side where the hip had been operated on. Her other leg was free so she could fold it under her to use for balance and sit up on the side of her bed with the casted leg hanging downward over the edge. Patsy's bed was next to mine most of the time. Whenever I had visitors she would be included in our family group. I never saw her parents. They came when she was admitted, staying until after her surgery which was usually done a week after being admitted. They did not come again until she was discharged sometime after I had already gone home. Patsy was the same age as I, in fact we had been born the same day.

Curvature of the spine, known as Scoliosis, was a surgery often performed at Shriner's. The cast for this was very extensive, covering the entire body, the neck and enclosing the back of the head. The cast covered the thigh of one leg and the body was curved to one side. This cast was very bulky and heavy but the girls who had it got pretty good at wiggling around on their beds to join us in the activities we did together.

The hospital had a television, which we were allowed to watch for only one or two hours each evening. There were lots of jigsaw puzzles, coloring books, and crafts to fill our time, as well as our school lessons. The same two ladies, who had come as teachers when I was hospitalized as an "up patient" in 1951, were still coming daily as our teachers in 1955.

Saturday mornings the doctors always did their rounds. They came as a large group along with several of the nurses, circulating through the wards one bed at a time. Beside each child's bed they stopped to discuss the individual medical problem, the treatment for it and the healing progress of that child, sometimes holding up x-rays for all to see. Decisions which had been made about such things as additional surgeries, changes of casts, braces, and therapies were reviewed at this time. Dates for discharges were decided on or delayed during these rounds.

This was often a disappointing time especially if a girl was looking forward to having the casts removed or being discharged, and then being told that she had to remain for further surgery or that the bones were not healed enough yet to remove the casts. Because there was no privacy for much of anything in our lives, these sessions were always difficult for all of us. We heard everything that was said about ourselves, as well as about each of the other children. We saw and shared in the sadness and disappointment of this girl or that one, as well as the joy of another girl in the very next bed who was told she would be able to go home.

After lunch every Saturday, we had what we called Sunday school. Of course everyone attended because all of us were in one big room. Two elderly ladies (well they seemed elderly to me) came every Saturday to teach us a Bible story and help us memorize a Bible verse for that week. They used cut out figures of people and animals, which they moved around on a felt covered board to tell the stories. In later years I learned that this method of story telling is called "flannel graph", and learned how to use it myself. We learned songs and tried to earn prizes by learning to say the Bible memory verses.

Looking back after all these years, I am sure that this was a ministry of the mission organization known as Child Evangelism Fellowship and our little hospital class was what is known in CEF as a Good News Club.

Sunday mornings we were all given sponge baths, after which each of us received a clean dress! This was an exciting event in our week, one that everyone eagerly looked forward to. The clean dress we got each Sunday had to last the whole week! A long clothing rack on wheels, full of hanging dresses was brought into our ward each Sunday morning. After a while, we got so we knew which dresses fit us best without being several sizes too large. Each of us had favorite dresses and always hoped we would be able to get one of those before they were snatched up by the other girls who liked the same ones. It was a free-for-all of yelling for this dress or that one! More often than not we ended up wearing something we didn't really like and wearing it all week, like it or not! There were only so many dresses after all!

Sunday afternoons were the only visiting days. Our parents and other people, two persons at a time, could visit for two hours. That was all the time allotted and only once a week on Sunday afternoons. If more than two persons wanted to visit a patient, they had to rotate who came in so that there were never more than two persons visiting at a time. I remember waving and yelling out the window to Janice. You had to be at least 14 years old before you were allowed to come inside to visit. I don't know why. It was the rule and rules were not questioned as much in those days as they seem to be now.



A clean dress & Sunday afternoon visiting hours with Mom

During the two hours allowed each Sunday for our personal visitors, there were always large groups of Shriner's and their wives who would tour the hospital. They always came through the wards during the Sunday visiting hours, stopping at each bed to greet us children and hear from a staff member, a short summary of our medical problem and our treatment. These visitors were always kind to our families who were well aware that donations from these polite folks were providing, at no charge to us, the treatment we were receiving. I remember that the men all wore the red Fez hats so typical of Shriner's when you see them marching in parades. I doubt that it is any longer the practice of the Shriner's to tour the hospitals in groups. It is also no longer the practice to retain the patients in the hospitals for such long periods of time. For many years the Shriner's Hospitals have provided orthopedic and burn care for children and I think that most or all of the treatments are still received at no charge.

Every month there was a huge party for all the children having birthdays during that month. We gathered in the large gymnasium for the party. The boys and girls were brought from their separate wards at opposite ends of the hospital. The girl's beds were lined up on one side of the gymnasium and the boy's beds lined up on the opposite side.

It was our monthly chance to see the boys, try to find out the names of the cute ones, and look for them at the next monthly party. Of course, being bed-bound, we could not do much to get acquainted except wave at each other and giggle if we got a wave back! If one boy was not there for the next monthly party, we always knew he had been discharged.



Darwin Jones a hair stylist from a famous beauty salon in Hollywood, who styled hair for such people as Elizabeth Taylor, came with his staff one time. They did haircuts for all of us. My picture was in Portland's Oregonian newspaper after the haircut I received.

Many celebrities also came through the hospital to visit. I remember when Gene Autry and his horse Champion came. Or was it Hopalong Cassidy and his horse Topper? I don't think it was Roy Rogers and his horse Trigger, but it may have been. Yes, the horse was house broken! Really over the years it is possible that all three of these famous cowboy stars were there at one time or another. Danny Kaye and Lassie visited while my friend Janie was there.

Christmas was a festive time at the hospital, so I heard; I was not ever there during the holidays. As much as possible, scheduling for hospitalizations was organized to avoid having the children there over the Christmas holidays.

Only two children ever died at that particular Shriner's Hospital. One of these deaths occurred while I was there in 1955. Robin was a six-year-old girl who had Osteogenesis Imperfecta, commonly known as brittle bone disease. She had suffered many broken bones over her short life. It is a disease that causes many bone deformities. All the bones are extremely fragile, breaking very easily. Robin was in the younger children's ward and even though she was six years old, she slept in a crib. Those of us in the older girl's ward were sometimes allowed to have the younger girls come sit on our beds. We would play dolls or games together or read books to them. Consequently, we were acquainted with the patients in the younger children's ward. Late one night we were awakened by a commotion in the hall outside our ward. We were told that a child was ill and was being taken care of, so we were to be quiet and go back to sleep.

The next day was a very sad one for us all when we were told Robin's story. During the night, Robin had pulled herself to her feet in the crib. The side of the crib had not been securely locked into its upright position. As Robin pulled herself up to stand in the bed, holding on to the side of the crib, the side had suddenly gone down. Robin fell from the crib and was killed.



Aunt Harriet Bucknam
Mother's sister

My mother's sister, Aunt Harriet used to write to me every week while I was in the hospital. She sent me lovely "story book doll" greeting cards. I loved those cards and acquired quite a collection. Each card was cut in the shape of a doll wearing a beautiful gown and a hat with a real feather sticking out of the top. I always wrote back to Aunt Harriet. We carried on a lively correspondence throughout our lives until her death in 1984.

Since most or all of us were bed bound, the evening and night shift nursing staff was small, consisting of maybe 2 nurses, one to cover the ward for the smaller children and one for the ward for older girls. Every Wednesday night was "candy night", a night we eagerly anticipated! Behind the desk of the nurse's station was a locked cupboard where candy was kept. Only on Wednesday nights was this cupboard unlocked and all of us were given a piece or two of hard candy.

It did not take us girls long to discover that one of the younger nurses was a soft touch! When she was the night nurse on duty in our ward, we could get her to give us more candy if we teased her a lot. This was strictly against the rules!

In a letter to Aunt Harriet, I told her about this nurse giving in to our teasing. A day or two later, a supervisor of nurses came to ask me if "the candy story" was true. I admitted it was, but wondered how she knew about it. After a bit I realized that my letters were being read before they were being mailed! Within a short time, the younger nurse came to me to ask how I could have been so disloyal as to write about it. She had lost her job! This episode made me feel terrible! I felt that it was my fault that she lost her job. After that I was much more careful about what was written in letters, and I think the other girls were too.

During the five months I was there at the hospital, my casts were changed twice, I think. Then I was fitted for custom made braces and went to the whirlpool for therapy at least one time. The braces were full length with a joint at the knee for bending, but they were kept in the straight position unless I was sitting. When I began wearing the braces, I was so excited to be walking again that I was on my feet most of the time walking very well, not needing the help of a walker.

A couple of days later, during the Saturday session of doctors rounds, I was told that I would be discharged on Wednesday. That was an exciting surprise, because most of the time one had to be in braces and therapy for another week or two before actually leaving. Discharges were announced on Saturday during the doctor's rounds but actually took place on Wednesdays, I would be able to leave that very next Wednesday. Maybe all that scrambling around, against the rules, on the feet of my casts had been good for me after all!

Over the next two years, I continued to return to the hospital to the out patient clinic for more x-rays and blood tests, but I was not ever admitted again. No one over the age of 14 was treated in that hospital. One had to go to some other facility if more treatment was still needed.

The Shriner's Hospital is no longer located in that lovely old building that was used for so many years. Now it is located on the Oregon Health Sciences University campus, and so is Doernbecher Hospital, which I mentioned previously.

In 1991 on a trip to Portland, I visited the old hospital site at 8200 North East Sandy Boulevard. The old building had been designated as a National Historic Building and was in the process of being remodeled inside into condominiums. Much of it had been gutted but as I was shown around by the caretaker of the property, I could still see the floor plan of the way it had been inside when I was a child.