

Remembrances of Aunt Helen

From Dean –

There are two things for which I owe my mom a deep debt of gratitude. The first was that she helped foster my creativity. Early on, I think she saw in me a desire to draw and be creative. I think it began when I discovered a treasure trove of drawings she had done of horses. These were amazing and it was almost as if someone had told me my mom was a secret agent, it was that revelatory! Wow! My Mom is an artist! I think my interest led to her encouraging me with art including private lessons as well as direct instruction by her. I still remember her showing me the subtleties of shading with pencil at the last minute before I submitted my drawing to a Bethel Local art contest. It won best of show in large part due to her instruction! As time has gone on, I have channeled my creativity in other areas but hope to go back to drawing and painting again when I retire. When I pick up the pencil again, I will think of her.

I think growing up the three of us developed an appreciation of animals as companions, largely due to Mom. We always had pets around and they covered a range of animal phyla from small furry things like gerbils, rats, and bunnies to reptiles and birds. We even had a horse! But the best pet of all was the goose that she brought into my life, my beloved Sam. Sam left an indelible mark on me (and a few bruises on my sister) and I think this was in large part due to how mom introduced me to the young gosling that was Sam, and her three duck companions, Huey, Dewey and Louie. I still remember the day she brought the gosling and her three duck friends. She taught me how to care for the young waterfowl and soon I was leading my merry band of quackers around the yard. I will never forget Sam and will never forget Mom introducing me to so many animal friends. Perhaps in that way, she can take some credit (or blame) for me becoming a biologist. Unfortunately, I did not become an ornithologist but I think Sam has forgiven me that small sin.

From Greg –

Dean, Susan and I have all gained some wonderful, complementing attributes from both of our parents. From Mom we gained a very practical approach to solving problems which I can illustrate with the following stories.

In my junior or senior year in high school I had a ceramics project that I spent quite a bit of time on. I had fashioned a vase by painstakingly forming a round, smooth, foot long, oval stone. I cut it in half to remove it from the stone and rejoined it and added a base. For some reason, I put a hole in the side of it. My teacher eventually called mom to inform her that she thought that I had made a bong for my end of year project because of the hole in the side. Mom's curt reply "Plug it up and Grade it". Problem solved. While I did receive a grade for it, I never saw my vase again.

As Dean mentioned Mom had a deep appreciation for wildlife. She rode horses allowed us to keep various critters. Even snakes which made Dad's skin crawl. Again, mom was very practical. Dean had a goose. Geese are very territorial and his goose would attack us from time to time. I learned to hold my hand out flat so the goose could peck but never cause any

harm. Susan on the other hand would fall to the ground while the goose happily pecked away at her. Mom's approach was the country girl approach. She grabbed the goose by the neck and shook it vigorously. The goose steered clear of mom from that point on. Thanks Mom!

The favorite,
Greg

From Susan –

One of my fondest memories of mom is her love for horses. Mom enjoyed riding horses and competed in barrel racing. She was good friends with a local veterinarian, Doc Eversole. He owned a farm with an indoor riding arena where mom and I would ride in the winter. Because I was small, Mom and Doc would put me on the colts when they were breaking them in. Fortunately for me when I was bucked off the horse, I did not suffer too much pain because the ground was soft.

An excerpt from Uncle Dan's Memoirs...

... The reason this became significant was that I went in the Army on May 12, 1954. The Korean Peace negotiations were completed soon after this and in January 1955 the government eliminated the GI Bill. So by lucky happenstance I was eligible for the GI bill benefits for College. Without the GI Bill I never could have afforded to go to college. This means, I never would have gotten my degree in Aeronautical Engineering and I never would have gone to work in R & D at Wright-Patterson AFB and wouldn't have experienced the wonderful life I've had. If I had not been double promoted, and my life had taken the same trajectory, by the time I went in the Army there would have been no GI Bill and therefore no college degree. An interesting side note is that I probably would not have the wife and family I have now if it wasn't for this timing. I will explain. Back when I was a senior in High School, since I was a "big time" varsity football player, after one of the games with the neighboring school of Almont I asked one of their cheerleader for a date. The cheerleader's name was Jean Milan and we had a couple of dates, but nothing really clicked romantically. However, one night when I picked her up for a date her younger sister Joan Milan was there with her pretty little friend Helen Tank. I thought she was quite pretty and nice but she was only a freshman and I was a senior so I didn't think too much about it (even though, as I later found out, our ages were only 2 and a half years apart). However, after I got out of the Army on April 27, 1956 and shortly after that I was walking down one of the streets in my home town of Imlay City when who should drive by, honk their horn at me and stop but Joan and Helen. They offered to give me a ride which I immediately accepted. I was quite taken with little Helen Tank. She was a senior about to graduate from High School so I figured she was now fair game so I asked her if she would go on a date with me. She agreed and the rest is history. Here again, if we follow the alternate timeline, this encounter never would have happened because I would have still been in the army at that time.