



Days Gone By

by

Mina Giebelhaus

“DAYS GONE BY” – by MINA GIEBELHAUS

JANUARY 1991 to MARCH 2000

Mina Giebelhaus has dedicated her writings of “Days Gone By” to her grandchildren. She presented her booklet to her grandchildren attending her 90th birthday celebration held in Edmonton on May 4, 2002.

HOW THIS BOOKLET CAME TO PRINT

For many years, Mina’s family encouraged her to do some writing about herself. To attract her attention to writing, special hard covered books with lined pages were given to her on special occasions such as Christmas or on her birthday. It wasn’t until February 2002, after she had moved to the Elk Point Heritage Lodge, that one of these books was located and ‘stories of her’ life were found written within. A poem was also written on the last page of this book. Writing poems was an interest she had and she would write one on the spur of the moment when she had a special thought in mind. Other poems were located in her safekeeping and are included in this booklet.

The border of music notes on the front cover acknowledges that Mina was a member of the Lion’s Senior Choir in Edmonton for eighteen (18) years – from 1974 to 1992. This was a form of entertainment she enjoyed after many years of hard work.

Included in this booklet is a list of Mina and William’s children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and names of their ancestors.

Some of the many ‘Special Memory Stories’ Mina received for her 90th Birthday on May 1, 2002 are also included.

This booklet was prepared by Mina’s daughter, Joanne (Juan) with the assistance of her sons, Jayson and Kevin Bates, her brother Rodney, and Ron Onusko from the Elk Point Historical Society.

It was printed in April 2002.

- DAYS GONE BY -

Written By

Mina Giebelhaus

“1991”

Today already Sunday 6th of January, 1991. The days seem to roll by and the years as well. Very bright with the sun doing its part today but the temperature is 28 – 30 minus, no wind to speak of. It is a day like what we were used to years back. Winters were winter! Cold! I am comfortable in my rocker with Christmas gifts on the floor surrounding me and I've been enjoying Christmas cards from friends and families. Christmas is a time to keep in touch. Have been re-reading them with many memories following of great times together.

January 5th, yesterday, was my first day home after spending Christmas in Calgary from Dec. 21 – Jan. 4th. Home to re-organize and get in touch with choir friends to see what's being organized this coming year. Since our pianist and director both retired, we have a project to conquer and organize with someone new. A decision has to be made.

Speaking of cold winters way back, when I was a very young teenager and having grown up on the farm with a family of twelve, (9 sisters and 3 brothers), there was much to be done. Social life was one of the weakest then, but friends were around in the same boat. Provision to exist was number one. Everyone had to pitch in, giving a hand of whatever they were capable of doing. Hours were kept regular, work was done at a scheduled pace and when bed time arrived everyone was happy to hit the 'sack.' I think it was the happiest time of day. Our family home was situated in the Martin's District between Vegreville and Holden, Alberta.

Waking up time, I remember at a young age, when we heard the coffee grinder going that was our call to get down for breakfast. Us kids never drank coffee, as then it was not recommended, only the smell of it. Breakfast was never later than 7:30 a.m. and earlier. The day was started off with old-fashioned porridge. Dad often had soft-boiled eggs, his favorite. A workingman needed it, who carried a responsibility of a family of twelve children. Imagine washing clothes for such a large family every week on a washboard! The old copper boiler was a useful item then, now an antique. Fun was all in just getting things done. Sundays were for rest, plus going to church was the thing to do.

I remember times when the earliest ones arrived at the church to wait around for church time. That was a time when the neighbors could do a bit of 'chit-chatting.' Also, I noticed that some one would ask a neighbor if he could change a quarter because he didn't have the correct change for 'collection' plate. Ten cents seemed to be the favorite for the collection plate offer. Wow! Wasn't money precious then? I'll bet you would never find a lost penny!

Christmas time was an exciting time when we were children. There was usually a Christmas program at the church Christmas Eve with recitations, etc. The Christmas tree was nicely decorated. Candles were lit and someone had to be close at hand so as not to catch the tree on fire. Nothing ever happened as much precaution was taken. When everyone had done their part all were given a bag of goodies consisting of an apple, orange, peanuts and some candies. This was an exciting moment and time. There were many happy faces. All went home merry and happy. With looking forward to the evening of the concert that night, no one could settle down to supper for excitement. It was the only time we ever saw the stars at night being the only time we were ever up that late. Our usual bed time was eight o'clock p.m. except for the oldest ones of the family. Sometimes they would surround the organ to sing hymns, etc. By then, we, who went to bed early woke up thinking it was time to get up.

At a very young age my oldest sister (Elizabeth), who then was married, often came home driving two miles with a team and wagon. Then, was the only way to travel. They many times took me along back to their home for a stay, which was a real treat. I assume that I felt like someone's pet. Maybe they felt I was neglected at home. My parents had very little time to cuddle – only sparingly given when needed. I presume we never even expected or noticed the things we were missing, as routine was the order of the day. Very unnoticeably, for some unknown reason, I seemed to have been my Dad's pet. I recall, when I first started school, Dad remembered my birthday. When I came home, Mother told me to look in the sideboard - there was something waiting for me. Surprise yes, a cute little blue hat. I still remember it and wish I had a picture of it. It was so special.

I don't remember ever feeling that I might have been special and that I was favored and had never found myself being 'bratty' over the fact. Rather accepting with the feeling of it being a very natural thing. My Auntie Kay and Uncle Richard also used to drop in at home, returning on their way home after seeing their parents. They would take me along to stay with them for a week or so. While with them one evening, my Aunt went for their cows in the pasture to bring home to milk. I had to stay alone, supposing, I was too little to follow. She was gone quite some time before coming back. It was getting darker and darker and I was feeling more and more uncomfortable, so I decided to lie on the couch covering up my head and all except my feet, feeling no doubt I was safe and went to sleep. My uncle was amused when he knew what I had done, realizing I had covered my head and all feeling safe but my feet sticking out was a give away. He brought it to my attention one day when Auntie was gathering the cream together for Uncle to deliver to the creamery. While doing this, I watched her. She saw that I was amused and instead of her using a spoon to scrape out all the cream, which had to go into one container, she used her fingers like a spatula. She then asked me if my mother also did it that way and I said 'no', she uses a spoon. Aunty was such a particular person, which probably made me more aware of what she was doing.

Also, another time when I was there, Aunty gave me a sheet of cut outs (pictures of dolls, etc. and dresses) to cut out. She told me not to cut them out, to take it home and hang in my room on the wall. Evidently I wasn't too happy knowing what they were meant for, so when she wasn't around I cut them out anyway. I hid them in a book to take home. When I left I had forgot them. After being home I thought of it and reminded myself of 'now she will find them sometime and will know I cut them out anyway.' You see, she was so particular she didn't want scraps of paper around. I assume she found none anyway. I seemed to have appreciated I was cared for and suppose they enjoyed the whole bit. They never had a family of their own.

Times to Remember:

We never had toys like of today. We always accumulated things and used imagination – always trying out things we saw our parents do. One time, I remember, we dramatized 'going to church.' There was my sister, two years older than me, and my brother, two years younger than me. The three of us got ready for church, taking dolls (that were pieces of wood, wrapping them as babies) and setting out to where there was a fence. My sister and I with babies were the audience and brother had to be the minister. What do we do now. Of course we decided he should sit on the fence and we would listen to what he would say. I don't remember what was said or what we sang. This was an example of what we did in our free time. This way of life made us creative. We would set up a meal with ingredients for food, taking flat long leaves as bacon, using daisy petals for cheese slices and the center of the daisy for buns, etc. To us this was fun and doing something. As we grew older we often went to the river on my father's property. There were patches of wild strawberries to pick. Sometimes we would paddle in the shallow river water before returning home. Enough strawberries could be gathered for a dessert for seven people.

One time we meandered around and then decided to climb trees to see who was able to climb the highest. Of course my brother, the youngest, had the best chance and went too high. The trunk of the tree broke off and he came tumbling down. Were we ever so very thankful that he didn't get hurt, as then we would have been 'grounded' forever! It was a lesson we didn't forget and a secret too. We kept it 'hush.'

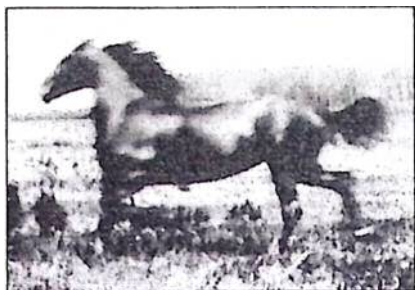
These instances were not the last of our surprises. One day in fall after harvesting was over and a straw stack having been blown 'by way of the threshing machine' looked like a good place for us to climb upon. The youngest of our clan decided to do so. Of course the straw was very light – not packed solid like it would be later. The trees and shrubs underneath the straw pile left hollow spaces – like hiding places. Unknowingly, however and unexpectedly, one by one, three of them disappeared. Luckily my younger sister noticed what happened and ran to call Mother and another parent to the scene. He went to rescue and so did I, and we both went down into where the rest had landed. It was rather dusty down there since the straw was new and chaffy. The boy who could climb helped us up the tree and then was able to get himself out too. All of us were pretty happy to be rescued and the party was over! In all of this a couple of toques (caps) were lost that Dad had bought for my sister and me. We hated the color of them but had to wear them. One was orange with black stripes, the second a real green and red and black stripes. We were quite happy they were lost in that straw stack which was later burned down.

One of my chores was that when the milk was separated in the evening after supper hour and after the cows were milked – I was to save enough of the evening separated milk for breakfast use. The milk, which had been left over from the day before, was disposed of after supper. Each day a different fresh lot was saved. Dad never liked warm milk, the more reason and important it was at night to save enough milk for breakfast. My chore was to be sure we had this supply for breakfast. I had been quite reliable doing this errand, however, this once I forgot! I never thought until I was in bed – wow – I forgot to save milk.

We had to be most responsible of whatever we were expected to do. I thought, boy, what do I do now! The first thing that came to my mind: "I will go down and mix cream with water and I will have milk." I did so, stirring it up well, feeling quite safe now. I went to bed sleeping quite good now that my duties were fulfilled. Of course, when Mother went for breakfast milk, what did she find – this jar of water with the cream on top – no milk! I never heard a 'comment' about it, assuming they knew I had faltered. When pressure is on you, it makes one think and I did do the best I knew how. When I became of age I had to share the help of milking cows. Learning came quite easy to me. Most times there were about nine cows to strip. During harvest time when the threshing crew arrived there were always at least ten hungry mouths to feed which meant early and long hours. Mother and I fed these people three times a day, plus an afternoon lunch to prepare for them. We gave this crew their breakfast, then did the milking, separating the milk, feeding the hogs, etc. Then on to prepare a dinner of pies, etc. This hungry crew always looked forward to meals. This harvest time would last for three and four days and longer if it happened to rain and harvesting was postponed until later. After the crew left, it was a lonely few days - all the action and activity was missed, however, a relief when it was all done.

Mother and I always got along harmoniously. With all her burdens of raising a family of twelve she was humbled and humorous. She never ever hurt anyone's feelings and always seemed to hit the 'nail on the head' with exactly without fuss or harm. We sensed that she wanted or expected the best always and we seemed to abide to please her. She was great to have around. When I was fifteen years old I refrained from going to school. I had just entered grade eight, however, was more interested in being Mother's helper, which she by then appreciated since her life was then slowing down. I agreed to be her right arm. We had many nice times and happy moments together. Mother didn't ask me to leave school. It was my own decision.

Working seemed to be my 'highlight' in life and still is. I am happiest wherever there is action and when I can be of help. On the farm, I learned to drive a team of horses. My Dad seemed to feel I was reliable. One time, I remember he put me on a sleigh loaded with grain to haul to the town elevator. I, with my team tagging along behind his team, not realizing he gave me an old team of horses that would naturally follow his and that I was only with my team to hold the reigns! Not knowing this at the time, I felt pretty good to be relied upon as a driver of a team of horses, driving ten miles into town. Later on, I was able to ride "PADDY", a pony that had gone through training in rodeo events. She was elegant and quick. When I would 'drive home' the milking cows from the pasture she seemed to know her job. One time when I gathered the herd, one of them was missing so I headed off the ones I had and returned to find the missing one. She evidently didn't like this - and I had to hang on - her speed in the bushes was quick. I had to watch the branches and when the missing cow was found without guidance, she rammed that cow keeping at her heels to catch up with the rest of the herd. She would lay her ears back when she was persistent. The neighborhood friends were quite envious of my pony and me. I dared not to allow anyone ride her. As soon as your foot was in the stirrup she would be raring to go! We became very good 'pals.' I would often go to the barn to talk to her and pet her as she mostly was left alone all day. After a time, when she would hear me coming, she would 'whinny' to greet me. Because we became friends I was able to handle and manage her. She respected me and minded me. I took a picture of her running in the pasture where she grazed alone most of the time. I got her in the center of the picture by dashing ahead of her as she was running. A lovely 'snap' was taken with an old-fashioned Brownie camera that I purchased by selling garden seeds. In those days it was a way of earning spending money - the only way at that.



The only money we ever had given to us those times was if and when there was a picnic in the neighborhood to go to. Our spending money was at the most 25 cents. Actually we didn't seem too concerned about the money part; it was a treat to join others in some fun time.

When still in school, our male teacher would expect us to join in sports at noon hour. While there were five boys, some of us girls joined playing baseball and I mean baseball. The boys threw hard balls. I was catcher for our team behind the bat with no mask, etc. for protection. I was seemingly a good catcher until one day I missed and the ball hit my mouth. My lips immediately swelled up. The teacher brought out his jackknife, the only thing somewhat cold to take down the swelling. However, no way would I let him touch me not knowing why he was doing it. I guess I figured a jackknife was only meant for cutting.

I recall many instances while still in school of some experiences not so pleasant. In the summer it usually took us fifteen minutes to walk one mile. In winter we had to venture through deep snow. At times my father or brother would come for us, which was very much appreciated. Sometimes the temperature was such that we'd have to wrap up well, or given a ride to school and dropped off.

Our neighbor who lived across from the school was given the janitor job. He had to get the school furnace going to get the school warmed up before the scholars arrived.

The janitor would over load the furnace fire with coal before the fire was hot enough. Then the coal would simmer and cause a lot of smoke in the schoolroom. Instead of us being able to enter for a warm up, we'd have to open all the windows to release the smoke inside. This was rather provoking.

At fifteen years of age, I chose to stay at home to give Mother a hand and experience everything that was on the farm to do. The experience I have had growing up on the farm is a prize to me and very different than what it's like today "1991". Today, life style is as such: social life is number one and the work needing time is second, due of course to many more conveniences taking less time to do. Things like automatic appliances, like electric washers and dryers, etc.

Time moved on when finally I wanted to cut the apron strings and wanting to see what the outside world had for me in store. By this time the Dirty Thirties had arrived. Wages were at a low and jobs weren't enough for all who were seeking employment. However, I got a start at \$15.00 per month. One couldn't afford to move around very far with that. Sometimes I felt guilty leaving home feeling that Mother missed me. I left behind one younger brother and two sisters. I had very little knowledge of how to approach people. At home there was no time to socialize. It seemed very hard to know what rights I had. I went ahead and acted the best I knew how.

My work always seemed to be appreciated. When I got to the second job or on to any other work, there usually was the question of who have you as references? I would tell them my Mother taught me. I was never turned away from what I attempted to do. It wasn't easy not having had experience away from home. Work suited me since I had nothing else to fall on anyway so I carried on with the experience when I had helped my Mother.

I got to meet and know many people of whom I felt were friends. It was interesting to meet the different nationalities. I found Jewish folk very interesting and learned many of their traditions and habits. One family said: "I could move in any time with them".

I was married at the age of twenty-one to Wilhelm (William) Giebelhaus. We were married in Edmonton, Alberta by the Justice of the Peace on April 28, 1934. I really didn't think that I was ready to settle down, however, I did and took the responsibility seriously. We started out in 1934 with next to nothing. We were very happy doing like others around, just trying to keep our heads above water. We moved often since Bill had mostly seasonal jobs. We managed to get places reasonable re: I always fixed and improved leaving homes in better shape when we left than when we took over. I always enjoyed making things look better and ended up with much comfort therefore very little to work on.

One, very dry summer we took over my brother's farm, however we made the best of it. One day a sales person came to the door insisting on me buying his paper. After refusing and telling him I really couldn't afford a thing just now, he suggested after seeing chickens on the yard he would take them in place of money. The chickens were running loose and it was a very hot day. To satisfy him I said: "okay, if you want to catch them". He was happy to do so and when he came back to the house to settle for them I had been annoyed over his persistence and I said: "I changed my mind". He turned pretty pale after having run around for his catch. I did let him have his catch. I only felt like putting him in a spot as he had done to me by being determined himself. I shall always remember his expression when I said: "I changed my mind". I do feel sorry for people who make a living by selling. I would have starved as a sales person. The first time I'm turned down I would have had it.

My way was usually the hard way, but I always enjoyed my work what ever. On several occasions I took over assistant cooking finding it a learning experience and an opportunity at meeting people. These jobs I did after our children were independent. However, while the youngest still were at home, I also did cooking in restaurants. This was interesting as when you have customers building up the business, it indicated that your food was well liked.

One time in fall at one of the restaurants I was getting almost more orders than I could handle of beefsteaks. It was because I had to go into the freezer room and cut my own, not having known how large to cut them. It soon became aware to the public that the steaks were big ones. The boss didn't seem to mind but when he got in a new order of meat he called me in to show me what size to cut the steaks. This was in fall during hunting season when a steak and mushroom dinner was very special to them. They were getting the largest steaks in town and we got the business. When I first took the job, a customer asked for potato salad. I didn't like what was prepared and made my own after which I was getting more and more orders for. It was challenging and fun. It seemed everyone ordered potato salad.

Bill was mostly away from home due to his work, which left me with all responsibility. I handled it with three children: oldest a son, second a daughter and thirdly another son. Later I had the pleasure of twin girls. We had five talented children who didn't get much help from home due to finances so they accomplished what ever. The eldest, Ron, an electrician, second, Rod, A.G.T services, Patricia, a nurse and the twins, Juan and Wanda also advanced doing several different jobs. It gives me a good feeling to know our children were capable.



Ron must have been born to be a pilot. When still in school, he carved a plane out of wood, painted it like a warplane. Later he set up model plane packages and finally took up flying and purchased a small plane. Soon after had a two-seater and finally flew and ultra light plane. For a time, he reconditioned airplane motors and sold them. Say it, and he could do it. He even was the handiest in the house; keeping it clean and well organized.

We lived through the Dirty Thirties, but when I got the news five years ago my son (Ron) was dead, it was the hardest thing to accept. The only consolation I have is that I'm happy he was the most talented that he could be and did accomplish as much as he did while still young and was still ready to do more. Earlier, we had lost our possessions in a fire, but to lose a son is much worse than having a fire. Life has many heartaches. When the family has grown up, one's heart and mind hangs in hoping their lives are filled with blessings. Seems as if life here on Earth is a test for the hereafter. When you are left behind, you must still go on and make the best of it.

I always appreciated my family's coming home holiday weekends etc. After retiring in an apartment, the first Christmas morning was more like a shock to find ourselves alone compared to when we were younger and everyone came home a day or two before Christmas. That's the way I think it should be. I'm missing those times. It's expected that each one in their own way are slowly advancing and entering where I left off. Some moving out of convenient reach for jobs, etc. and carrying on with responsibilities of their own. So is life. However, in heart and mind we're still together forever.

"1992"

Already we are moving on into the middle of January. It is a new year of preparations and looking forward to a new life.

Since I've been with a choir from 1974 until now, it has taken much of my time. So not to dwell on the past, however, the past will always be a close friend and many memories are treasured. Sometimes one feels like living the past. It's been a great experience one cannot buy.

When I was eighteen, I ventured away from home trying myself out in a world like no mans land. Things already then were slowing down as we were entering into the hard times of the hungry thirties. My first job was ten to twelve miles from home in a small town named Holden. I had inquired knowing this lady who had three children and operated the town switchboard. She was looking for a helper and in return was teaching the operating of the switchboard. It looked to me to be very interesting so I applied and was accepted. Within two weeks I was adjusting well and handling calls long distance. Evidently I was accomplishing more rapidly than my host expected. She then kept me busy with the household, which didn't allow me the time on the board. I did enjoy the housework, part; however, felt her promises were fading so I moved on to the city of Edmonton.

Since I had this experience, I found an ad in the *Journal* where the Hotel McDonald needed a switchboard operator. It was during a winter month when I went for an interview. Not being experienced enough of how to present myself dress-wise; I wore a very nice voile dress. However, it was not appropriate. After the interview, the proprietor quoted "You're wearing a nice summery dress". Well that finished the job for me. It was an insult. If he would of hit me I wouldn't of felt worse. I decided I wasn't taking the job and never showed up again.

This was during the hungry thirties when jobs were scarce. I never gave up and pushed on for whatever I could get. I tried waitressing and ended up doing housework for folks that needed help. I was always appreciated. I did like to work and my Mother taught me how. She didn't need to teach me, but she was a very good example and I always tried to please her. My Mother was never demanding. She was appreciative and happy for my help.

It is May 1992 and I am now eighty years old. I still have my teeth also a hearty appetite and do my own housekeeping, etc. I'm wondering, am I brave or just lucky? My life persists on action and outdoor whatever; snow, anything but wind. The best in life that is free such as fresh air, flowers, birds, and everything human or normal. We have much to be thankful for and must count our blessings every day. Life is what you make it!

October 1992 and approaching winter now. So far we have had off and on weather not knowing what the next day would be like and many a windy day. In years gone by, September was usually nice, quiet, hot days. Fall was special to me remembering harvest times. Men were out doing fields of harvest. Then came threshing time when farmers looked forward to working together. I believe the cooks whom they relied on for all that good food were much appreciated too. It seemed to be a very happy time. Today has had many changes with all the modern way machinery. Everyone does their own thing and the communities are becoming strangers.

Interests and all are changed. We've heard of wars- today there is so much crime and politics galore. Times have certainly changed. Technology wise, the best in life has become worse. Violence every day is a grave concern. Seems like anything goes. Many countries are in worse shape than here in Canada, but is it going to stay that way? Seems like the old saying goes, "money is the root of all evil". It's becoming a money world. To sum it all up, the best things in life are free. I look out over our city September 27th and see the beauty of colored trees. The lighting at night across the city is a beautiful sight. Nature has all money beat. You can't buy that. Since May, I'm over the hill now past eighty years old. I still hope to climb a mountain, which was always in the back of my mind.

While in B.C. for a few years (5 ½), my husband and I traveled through mountains often. We even went up one that was totally black, having been burned down that year by lightning. We drove up several miles and found birds fluttering and chirping about which seemed peculiar since there wasn't a green thing in sight. The Roger's Pass highway was unreal with many canyons to be seen. I will always remember the many times we went back and forth from B.C. to Alberta to see families and people we left. When we first thought to move there (B.C.), it came to my mind "Oh when will I again get back to see folks we left?" Not realizing we would come back, and did, nearly once every month. Gas was less of a concern then and since we drove a V.W., it didn't matter how many miles we drove.

After our home trailer burned down in 1972, we came back to Alberta to retire. Since Bill's health was failing, I felt it best to return to where we had lived most of our time. We were lucky Meadowcroft, a retirement place for seniors, was being constructed so we had no problem to settle down in Alberta. I now appreciate all the conveniences around me. It was difficult to adjust to at first since I had never lived in a rental. Since we lived on the 9th floor, I had to time myself to catch the elevator down and a bus when I got down. It also depended on how many times the elevator had to stop on the way.

If I didn't plan, I often missed the bus. I always had to leave earlier to wait for elevator. Another experience of life in an apartment is every time on your way out you meet people and you are greeting everyone with a "hi" and what you mostly hear of is conversation about the weather. By the time you get to the bottom floor you feel pretty weathered. After you get more acquainted, you hear a lot about people's troubles which we all have. It's quite an adjustment to make.

This month, now September, we here in Meadowcroft Apartment Building, celebrated the 20th year and found only about thirty original tenants that still reside here. This building shelters four to five hundred people. Living here also tells a story in that I have added twenty more years to my life. In June of 1993, it will be 21 years since I moved into Meadowcroft.

AUGUST 6, 1994

I am now 82 years of age as of May 1st of this year. Time marches on! This year the good Lord provided us with much needed rain off and on, all through May, June, July and August in between some very hot days.

With much leisure time since I have retired from the Lions Senior Choir, in which I was a member for eighteen years, I am seemingly quite busy enough with the 'daily dozen' – my pace is slower and progressing yet slower. Still, I am happy to accomplish my chores and housekeeping and thankful to feel able enough to do so.

I am on the ninth (9th) floor in Meadowcroft Seniors Apartment Building with a beautiful sight of the city, much traffic and noise. One cannot have your cake and eat it too and I love it here. The only problem here has been the pigeons whom I have scared enough times so they are not happy coming back to the balcony again. Poor birds, they need a place to be too. A robin appears at times - chirping is music to one's ears.

People here too, chirp and everyone has problems, you hear telling of them often to each other. Ask 'how are you', and you get many surprises. I remind them: 'well, that's why we are all in here.' In case you look able to walk yet, you may be thought of as to not having any problems. Anyway, it is a consolation knowing you may not have the biggest problem! Someone said: 'I guess the golden years are not so golden.' The experience has told it all, rich in surprises.

Since this is the "*STORY OF MY LIFE*", I shall continue with instances I had such as: -

One time I had been given a blood transfusion donated by a male. A nurse walked in to see me and I said to her: 'Listen to me and I 'crowed' like a rooster, then said – see what they did to me.' She had a real chuckle out of this. Perhaps I made her day. I felt good.

Another time, while with my daughter, I was standing over her kitchen counter preparing a turkey for dinner that day. As I was looking over this turkey, I began to wonder what a turkey would say if it could do more than 'gobble, gobble.' I got serious and thought – probably this bird would say:

'Yes, oh yes,
A turkey lurkey, yes I am.
A turkey, truly that's what I am.
And when I'm done and in the pot.
You'll know I was a real good shot.
Next time you really are in doubt
Put on your hat and think it out
I've satisfied a lot of folk
So take me not, a great big joke.

Since I am talking 'fowl', I always enjoyed life, growing up on my father's farm. It was a real time of many experiences, hard work but at the same time, interesting.

My Father and Mother were very organized in their daily work. They probably had to be, since we were a large family and work was important with many chores to be done. Everyone had to give a hand when they were able. I took a liking to horses. I was able to ride a pony who became a good friend of mine. These times are now all memories – much water has passed under the bridge since. I believe life is a time of being tested. I haven't regretted my experiences, not 'all' had always been pleasant ones.

A nice time was the spring season when one looked forward to trees blossoming and the different bird- calls coming back after a cold winter. These moments were pleasant. It was also calming to see and hear the running waters of snow melting. Much more snow than we get today. It was common to see huge drifts covering fences. How good it felt to be indoors when strong winds blew. Spring was much appreciated after a long cold winter. Melting snow, water running, birds arriving, even the first (usually a crow) – cawing, sounded welcome. Days becoming longer and brighter was a good sense of feeling that life has again begun. One looked forward to summer activities such as picnics, sports, etc. Work, however, was foremost every day.

Now that I have been a 'Grandma' for some time, I am also a great grandmother. My 'grandkids' all mean so much to me. I was fortunate to have spent much time with them as they were growing up. They have left me with many memories. These little 'gaffers', now teenagers plus, left impressions with me that remain as my treasures.

Four of my son Rodney's boys were boisterous little guys. Many times while I'd be their baby sitter during the day, they would scuffle and often get hurt. I would approach them to see what happened and they would deny who was at fault. I didn't wish anyone of them to get hurt, so without them knowing, I would watch them. I was then able to see which one of them did exactly what. When I would approach them, asking who did 'what' – the answer always was: 'no one did it or did anything.'

I would reply by saying: 'Don't tell a lie and at the same time, I would point a finger towards whoever did 'whatever' and said – your face gives you away when you tell a lie. I can always see it in your face – so don't tell a lie.' That seemed to cure the problem. It took away from some of their 'scrapping' and 'hurts' and they ended up with no scars.

These boys were all sports minded and played hockey, soccer and baseball. Darryl was an enthusiastic soccer goalie. He was 'right on' at the job. One time, during 'play-offs', Grandpa and Grama were left in charge, as Mom and Dad had gone away to a wedding. The boys played before noon and won the game. They played again at 2:00 p.m. winning once again. The third game was 'tied' and again winning in overtime. Once home and having supper and boys were in bed, Darryl came out of bed and was meandering around seemingly upset. I said: 'Darryl, what are you looking for? He replied: 'I am looking for a book. I want to know what 'tish' means. The coach had called him a 'tish' because he felt Darryl went out of his way too often to protect the net. Darryl was there to do the 'job' and he did. I knew at the moment that Darryl was feeling badly, but I hadn't had a chance to talk to him and console him about it. I explained to Darryl that the coach could have called you anything else, but you were doing what you were supposed to do and 'tish' didn't mean a thing. He then went to bed and slept.

The boys also had a pet dog, Maxie, an all black terrier and a real clever little guy. He always recognized me when I would return after being away for a holiday. At that time they lived in a town house, which we shared with them. I slept on the top floor and would you believe it – if Maxie wanted to go out in the morning, he wouldn't go to the family to call, he would come to my bed and wake me to be let out. He must have been aware that my services were quicker. I was a little annoyed, feeling why me, he was one of the family. Maxie had three flights of stairs to go up in order to call me or awake me – the little 'devil.' He had a limp since he had hurt a leg when he was a pup but he could climb stairs quite well. I would answer his sweet little call.

Grandson, Kevin, attended a play school at a very young age. I was quite delighted to see him soon after he had started playschool. I asked him if his mother gave him lunch to take along to play school. He approached me and directly into my face said, 'food.' I was rather amazed, feeling I had interfered, so I kept silent until later. I again asked him, 'I guess your teacher gives you a time to eat your lunch at school.' Again, he did the same and quoted 'food.' It was several days before it dawned on me that at playschool when they say their little prayer before eating, they don't 'thank' for lunch but for 'food'. When it came to me, I phoned his mother, Joanne, to let her know what was so important to Kevin and truly so.

Kevin's older brother, Jayson, when having started school, one day someone asked him what he like doing best when at school and he said: 'sharpening pencils.' Well, he turned out to be a good scholar too.

I would visit at Wanda's, in Edmonton often. Knowing that I wanted to be doing something while there, she would save me something to fix or mend. One day Wanda called me and said that Karina's shoe needed some repair and Karina suggested that Grama would fix it!

Grama's seem to be very important people and are number one in a grandchild's eye. I love them all.

Poor little Jennifer (Wanda's first born daughter) once had to be taken to a clinic to have minor surgery done. Wanda and I took her and as the surgery was being done, Wanda was at her side to assist in keeping her down. It was quite heartbreaking for me as I waited and could hear Jennifer feeling upset while her mother had to help with the performance until the doctor completed the task. Jennifer, in distress, called out: 'Grama, help! I, of course, couldn't interfere. How heartbreaking for me.

One time I was asked to keep my niece's two sons, Gregory and Kevin Eberhart overnight as Katherine and Ernie (their parents) passed through Vegreville for a reunion in Vermilion. I was happy to do so and enjoyed their company. All went well until bedtime came and the boys looked at each other and said: "We forgot our teddy bears." Feeling their loss, I immediately thought of my twins having sleeping bags for pajamas. One was a dog with large black and white dapples and the second was a skunk. I presented the boys with them and asked who wants which one. The youngest one of the two quickly spoke up and said: "I'll take the pup and you can have the dirty skunk." His brother didn't mind and accepted the skunk. When bedtime arrived I slept in the same room, they in one bed and myself in the opposite bed. No problem going to sleep. When morning came, they awoke quite early and I pretended I was still asleep knowing they would want to jump out of bed if I spoke. When I felt it was time to get up I asked them: "Did you sleep good?" The oldest one, Gregory, spoke up and said to me: "You bothered me." This was a surprise to me, so I said: "What did I do to bother you?" He replied: "You were snorting!" All these instances give me thrills. They were well behaved boys, no trouble to me. I wonder if they would now appreciate my telling of this.

My son, Ronald, must have been born a pilot. I have no idea when airplanes entered his mind, but he whittled the nicest plane with only a jack knife and maybe sand paper. Later one he assembled model planes. After that he took flying lessons and received his pilots license and finally owned his own plane. He also did well with the mechanics of airplanes and restored engines to sell.

I shall never forget his first haircut at a barber shop which he didn't like. After the first time, I was never again able to convince him to go to the barber for a haircut and had to do the job myself.

Bill (William) was never home that much to have time with his boys. Rodney, our second son, wanted a bike and did much coaxing for one. Money was scarce and we could barely get by with necessities.

However, being Dad was away, I got all the 'brunt' of begging for this bike. When Dad was home, I would tell Rodney to ask his Dad, feeling that because father couldn't afford one, he would talk him out of it. The unexpected happened. Rodney went along up town and to my biggest surprise they came home with a bike that we couldn't afford. His son got the best of his Dad's gander! Then later on he had to have a speed bike as did many of the neighbor boys.

Ron and Rod both enjoyed taking their twin sisters for bike rides. At an early age, the twins were also fortunate to have motorcycle rides with their brothers. I even had one, but never learned to ride a bike, which was always a wish of mine. I tried but when I did, I fell and skinned my knees. That scared me! I felt if I got hurt and was laid up, who would take responsibility while Dad was gone. So I never did learn and still wish I could. Swimming was another fancy I had, however, never accomplished this sport either. There seemed to be no time for 'play.'

DECEMBER 31, 1994

The year has run away on me, leaving me with more to catch up on. It is really hard to say that this can be possible. Christmas was spent together at Wanda and Ken's home in Edmonton. Christmas Eve we took in a lovely church Christmas program with a huge crowd in attendance. The turkey and all was never ever so good. Memories are treasures since time slips by so quickly. Tomorrow already is a New Year to begin.

JULY 27, 1998

Do you suppose I will ever catch up? Much has come and gone since I last wrote. Today I have been thinking of all the times I saw Wanda and Juan leave for school from our house on the hill in Vegreville. I never missed going to the window to watch them on their way. What a joy.

Now preparations are in the making for a school reunion of their classes. Wanda is going to be missed by classmates who cared and loved her. It will be a happy event, but also sad. I am sure Wanda will always be remembered and missed by her friends. As for myself, I suppose I have to settle for the times I had her in my life. It is not easy to lose a loved one. Memories linger on and are treasured. Wanda passed away September 3, 1996 at the age of forty-seven (47).

MARCH 26, 2000

I am wakening up to the fact that I am going to be 88 years of age in one month's time (May 1st). The years go by so fast. There is no way now that I can keep up with the times, however, my penmanship is still good enough so I better proceed in a hurry to catch up in my writing.

I have now been alone since 1976, since the passing of my husband, Bill, on August 8, 1976, at the age of 75. I am still carrying on with regular duties of the day at a slower pace but in a fashion, day by day, as I go on, sometimes struggling. Those golden years are not like what it sounds. Age brings along many difficulties, as everyone at my age would agree. I am now in a senior apartment in Edmonton (Meadowcroft Apartment – 135 St. and 111th Avenue) since 1972. I am surrounded by people of all ages with various problems. One day someone remarked about a problem she had and I said: "That's why we are all here."

I was born in a year of history, the year of 1912, when the Titanic sunk. Much more has gone by since. Tornadoes caused tremendous damage in the northeast and south areas of Edmonton. An experience I remember well.

My own life is full of adventure and experiences, that of which no one can buy. I have no regrets and have filled many a gap. One decision I made on my own was to discontinue school at the age of fifteen. Helping my Mother was more interesting and she enjoyed my company and was very happy with my help.

After sometime, like everyone else, I wanted to venture out on my own and see what the world would have in store for me. It was sad to leave Mother but there were two younger sisters still at home. Sorry girls, but their time would come too when they would leave home. Finally Mother was left to plunder on and eventually she lived close to me. So again, I was her companion, willfully helping her in whatever I could. There were times she was hospitalized and I took her in to my home. My Dad was of no help. He had been a strong person but didn't know much about health and caring for someone who needed it. I didn't feel burdened and never regretted my capability. However, a time arrived when I was over burdened. We had twins to care for without much convenience. My husband was helpful in making things handier for me. He had the knowledge to fix things with what little there was to work with. All in all we handled it to the best of our ability.

Our family of five children, all born in Vegreville, Alberta grew up healthy and talented. They each carried on and had a profession using their own discretion and abilities.

Ronald, the first born of five, on August 23, 1934, was a genius in my mind. Say it and he could do it. He had a list of accomplishments. Flying seemed to be his foremost interest, besides canoeing, swimming, deep sea diving, etc. He was a good homemaker also. Each time they moved to a new residence, he left the place they had lived in, in much better shape than when they purchased it. He always did a perfect job with improvements. I cannot say enough about him. He is sadly missed since his passing on October 24, 1986. He was only 52 years of age. I am grateful that he accomplished so much in his short life.

Our second child, Patricia, born May 7, 1936, at a very young age, decided she would become a nurse. She carried on her hopes and dreams and became one of the best nurses ever and has recently retired from her career.

Our second son Rodney, born March 9, 1940, worked with the telephone company until retiring at an early age.

Our twin girls, Wanda and Juan (Joanne) were born December 18, 1948. They each went into secretarial work. Both became well established.

My family, including all of my grandchildren and great grandchildren, mean so much to me. I love them dearly. My son-in-laws as well as my daughter-in-laws have all been a blessing and part of unforeseen living at times. I have nieces and nephews surrounding me of which I am most thankful for. They are precious.

My life is full of blessings and adventure. I believe I could write a book on the many experiences I have had in all these years. There are so many stories in what I have accomplished. I consider the life I had growing up on my parent's farm a learning experience. It is difficult to 'cram' it all into one episode.

As of today, I am thankful that I can still climb out of the bathtub myself, feed myself, and keep my suite respectfully clean. Although a times it has been a struggle.

POEMS WRITTEN BY MINA**THE PRICE OF TIME**

Time had come, it also went
What e'er it cost had no intent.
No place to go without some dough.
There was no choice but to rejoice.
And be alive, just to know
There is another way to go.
With hope and faith, tis no disgrace
The clouds will fade, the sun will shine
To give us all a better time.
Thanks be to our good Lord above
For giving us his splendid love.

CHOIR FESTIVAL

(Calgary in Edmonton)

We left a lot behind to see and hear.
All that was done - to make the year.
Unwind from all the work it took
To make them look like stars
upon the stage.
We hope to fill the show with action.
Then all the glitter and glow
Will brighten up and shine.
Until once more it will take a lot
To keep up with all time.

THREE MAYBE FOUR

When I entered this world, and looked all around
The future looked great, there was much to be found.

As time went by, I grew stronger each day
Never knowing what the future might say.
Remembering times I was three, maybe four
I realized then there was more to explore.
I had sisters and brothers, ancestors galore.
It's great to be one of them and add to the score.
Patience and love will lead to success
A rainbow of color to caress and to bless.
Be it winter or summer, even snow in the fall
You'll know now you've entered a real 'overall.'
Give thanks to our beauty, wherever you are.
You may be rewarded and become a real star.

IN FORTY-EIGHT

There was no doubt when Christmas
Came reaching out
To open up the doors of joy
Not knowing was it girl or boy.
Two dear angels came to see
And added blessing to our tree.
A surprise it was, but nothing more
Could have blessed this time for us in store.
And to this day it is a treat
Nothing in the world will ever beat.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR MOTHER
WHO PASSED AWAY MARCH 2ND, 1956

Eight years have passed and day by day
We'll never forget the precious way
She won her crown with humble grace
So kind and gentle, no one disgraced.
And when we see her face once more
She'll have the same for us in store.
Because she left us with her son
"Her Maker" she so wondrous won.
We'll never erase the love she had
For us and for our dear old Dad.

ALL THE WAY

All the way, without a doubt
He walked along, no change in route.
It was the light, a humble way
He carried the cross on his way.
Without a fear, because he took
A road which led to a grand new book.
And, if you take it in your hand,
I know it will lead to a promised land.