

Darlene Stice van Werkhoven is one of the three sisters who grew up in what is now the DUP Cabin in Heritage Park. She would like to share a story about her early life in the cabin.

ALL IS WELL

By

Darlene S. van Werkhoven

My father, born in 1903, wrote an essay when he was in the 8th grade which formed the rest of his life. The gist of it was that he wanted to be an independent farmer so he could produce food for others to eat and work outdoors in the fresh air. In living his dream the word “independent” seemed to take precedence over all else. He was the type of farmer who preferred to sleep late in the mornings. He didn’t have the slightest intention of getting started on his days work before the sun had appeared behind the high mountain a few miles to the East. By the time the sun’s rays finally shown on his house daylight had been present for a couple of hours. Neighbors whispered with their hands raised to their lips like the sun behind the mountains just to the east, gossiping about his quirky habits but they could not criticize him of the fact that he didn’t quit working until long after dark when many of them had gone to bed.

On one occasion the electric submersible pump which was buried deep in the well which stood beside his house stopped working and the family nor the farm animals could go for very long without water. Because he was not on particularly good terms with his neighbors to call on them for help, he decided that my mother, sisters and I would have to lower him down into the well.

He methodically gathered a ladder, a few tools in a bucket, and a sturdy rope tied to the top of the ladder. He gathered us around him and explained the plan. First he placed the ladder down into the well, we then wrapped the rope one full revolution around a large tree nearby with Mother and we girls holding onto the rope, easing him down as he stood on the ladder. Down, down he was inched into the deepest recesses of the well until he called to stop for he had reached the pump. He straddled himself on the sides of the round cement forms and worked, banging and tightening the metal parts for a long period of time until he was satisfied he had repaired it.

We rescue participants on the other end of the rope were relieved when he finally called up, "All right, haul me up." Our hands were sore from the extended period of holding tight to the rope, and leaning our weight in the opposite direction of our hero down the well. We heaved and pulled with all our might a few feet at a time until the black hair on his head finally became visible. He climbed over the top of the well and onto the ground out of the black, deep hole.

We girls and Mother hugged and patted his narrow shoulders under the denim jumper he wore under his blue overalls. He always wore that outfit summer and winter and his image is emblazoned in my mind to this day. We were extremely relieved that the trust he showed us was justified. He actually had trusted his life to us, who, until that time, had been unproven because of our lack of stamina and strength. He continued to demonstrate trust in us daughters as we matured.

The neighbors gossiped about how he had allowed his daughters at a young age to work in the field with horses raking or cutting acres of hay. Most of his neighbors had sons to work in the field but he had three daughters and he was determined that we would absorb his independence, love of nature, and his work ethic. Since we daughters are, or soon will be, octogenarians it is apparent by now that because of our experiences on the farm we did become strong women with a tremendous work ethic and a sense of independence.