

Chester--late 40's and early 50's

by Aline Chistenot

My earliest memory of Chester was when our house was where Bill & Doris Fraser's house is now. The year was probably around 1946 or 1947. A motorcycle was in the yard. I remember looking out the bedroom window & seeing the bike. I also recall some flames. As I was recalling this to my Dad, Howard W. Eveland, he explained to me what I was "remembering". Ed Kenney was 16 and had a motorcycle. As he was driving past our house, his bike backfired and his pants caught on fire. He jumped from the bike and started running while he screamed. By the time my Dad caught him, he was on fire up to his waist. He had to spend some time in the hospital, and his bike was probably in our yard for awhile.

Across the street lived Hank & Mabel Kolstad. (Their house was where Neal & Pat Eveland now live). I remember their daughter, Doris, babysitting me at her house. (Maybe I was just 'visiting'). She was teaching me how to dry dishes. I had to go to the bathroom & she had to teach me to wash my hands again before I went back to the dishes.

When my Mother was expecting her 3rd child, I was 4 years old. I went with Grandpa & Grandma Stipp to stay on Charlie Lincoln's farm, while my Mother went to the hospital in Great Falls, (They are not my real grandparents, but grandparents to my cousins.)

Nevertheless, I was ironing doll clothes while Grandma Stipp listened to the radio to hear news of my Mom. We didn't have an electric iron. First I heated my iron on the stove & then rubbed it on the waxed paper wrapping that was around the bread from the store. As I was doing it, the radio announcer said my Mom had had twin girls. Grandma Stipp got very excited and shouted to me and told me. I was very intent on my doll clothes and my answer was something like "So?"

My Grandpa Ed Furlong was a blacksmith. At first my Grandma Ina Furlong was a homemaker. Later on, after Grandpa died, she took in laundry, roomers and boarders. My Dad had the Chester Alignment Shop and was a mechanic. My Mom, Lilly Furlong Eveland, was a homemaker then the Librarian for Liberty County.

I remember when my Grandpa Furlong's blacksmith shop was across from where we lived. Our house had been moved, and was where Almira Brevick's house is now. The blacksmith shop was about where the Lutheran Parsonage is now (maybe one house south).

I don't recall all the circumstances, but I do recall my brother, Neal, sitting on a red ant hill, screaming and Mom tearing his pants off in public. I remember because it really wasn't like her.

I also remember that Kenny Brandvold didn't quite believe people when they told him not to look at a welder's arc with his naked eyes too long. He hid across the street and watched my Grandpa Furlong weld. He ended up a believer because his eyes caused him so much pain and he kept telling his Dad "Mr. Furlong TOLD me not to watch! Mr. Furlong TOLD me not to watch!" His Dad called my Grandpa and asked him what Kenny was talking about. He was hurting VERY badly and Grandpa had some medicine they could use. He had it on hand all the time, because periodically HE needed it as well.

There were a LOT of my relatives here. My mom was the 6th of 10 children, but she was the 1st girl. Her oldest brother, Russell "Bing" Furlong was 31 1/2 when I was born on 3 July 1943, and her youngest brother, David Keith Furlong was only 5 1/2.

Not only was my Dad here, but his brothers, Dick, Wilbur and Chet Eveland and their families and a sister, Alice Pettapiece and family all lived in Chester. Uncle Dick and Aunt Gladys had 2 boys, Uncle Wilbur and Aunt Ruth had 6 kids, Uncle Chet and Aunt Evelyn had 3 kids and Uncle Bob and Aunt Alice P. had 5 kids. So there were 16 cousins there alone. Even though some of my Mom's siblings moved away, there were still plenty here. My Uncle Bing and Aunt Evelyn had 3 kids, Uncle Philip and Aunt Iris had 3 kids, Uncle Miles lived here, but he didn't marry until I was 6 1/2. He was only married 8 years, but he had a step-daughter who was my cousin. Also living here was my Mom's sister, Alice Morrison, who we called "Auntie". She and Uncle Artie had 2 kids, so 9 of these cousins lived here while I was growing up and 15 cousins from that side of the family living elsewhere.

Of the 3 uncles and 1 aunt who were siblings of my Dad and the 16 cousins who lived here, my Dad had 3 siblings (Bess Hoverman, Martin Eveland and Myrtle Owen) who WEREN'T here and they had a total of 20 children.

We lived next door to a teacherage. One of the bedroom windows we had that faced the teacherage was a "slider". When my teacher got the mumps at the same time as I did, I used to slide open my window and talk to her.

We lived in the middle of the block. To the North of us was an old "dance hall" when we moved there. It WAS the old Opera House on 1st St. East. My folks had bought the lots from A. C. Strode.

The Opera House had been moved in from somewhere else, but it was already there when A. C. acquired it. My Grandma Furlong had the house on the corner and after the Opera House was torn down, there was nothing between her and us. My Mom had a garden and would make green tomato pie whenever she could. I hated green tomato pie and would give any green tomatoes to the teachers when I could.

Before we had plumbing, we had a 'slop jar'. I never liked meat much. I set the table with the 'silver drawer' by me. I would slip my food in the drawer or sometimes my pocket. I usually had to sit at the table by myself while everyone else went into the living room. Then I would deposit what I didn't want to eat in the 'slop jar'.

My Grandpa and Grandma Furlong used to live where Alice Morrison lives now. (They were her parents.) I remember Grandma telling me she'd pay me a nickel for every gopher I caught. There was a field where the Sports Complex is now and it was across the street from where Grandma lived. I would sit by a gopher hole with a looped string around the hole and wait for a gopher's head to come so I could pull the string and earn a nickel. I'm not sure if I EVER earned any money!

I've had various "feelings" in my life. One that comes to mind involved my cousin Denice. To our way of thinking (my brother and sisters) Denice (Denny), her sister Doris (Dory) and their brother Doug, got away with WAY too much. They were considered "bullies". One time it rained and rained. It was a nice rain as it was warm and still sunny out. But we had a lot of puddles.

Aunt Iris, Denny, Dory and Doug sought refuge from the storm at our house. When the rains quit, all us kids wanted to go out and play in the puddles, but we all knew there were dire consequences if we got our shoes wet. Denny was sneaky--but ingenious--she figured if she got MY shoes wet, SHE wouldn't get in trouble. So she wore MY new shoes out. I had a fit--yelled and cried and tried to hit her. Then I figured I'd get even and wear HERS out in the puddles. But my Mom got to me first. She reprimanded me for yelling and trying to hit and FORBADE me from wearing Denny's shoes outside. I never got over the feeling of unfairness and Aunt Iris just laughed at Denny. No punishment of any kind for her. I had MANY feelings with that one.

Life with the 3 D's (as they were known) wasn't all bad. They lived in the County Yards and we loved going there to visit. We had lots of nooks and crannies and hills and machines to explore.

I remember having May Baskets left on the doorknob. It was a race to see if I could see who left me a May Basket.

I also recall having a cat I called "Bunny" because she looked like a rabbit. She was killed by a car.

My mother was sexton at the Methodist Church. It was across the alley from our house at the end of the block. The museum is in the old Methodist Church. I used to help dust pews on Saturday. I would "play" on the piano. A couple kids took lessons there and their lesson books were in the bench. I used to try to teach myself a little from them. I was quite active in Sunday School and other church youth groups. I recall winning a prize of "Evening in Paris" cologne for memorizing the books of the Bible--in order. Another remembrance is ordering a white dress to be worn for my confirmation. It didn't come and didn't come. Our postmistress, Ruth Ish, even went to the post office Sunday morning before our services to see if maybe it was forgotten in a corner. No such luck! But it WAS there Monday morning. Needless to say, we sent it back.

Rev. Donald Brown was one of our ministers. He had a daughter who was in my class at school. We did all sorts of things together. We really loved to play Canasta and would play anywhere we could, but our favorite place was her Dad's study. When he wasn't using it, we were. I recall, too that Donna loved horror movies. I really didn't like them, but when we weren't together, that's usually where she was.

Another friend I had was Caroline Ward. She came from a la-a-rge family. Her house had been converted from the hospital where I was born. The main thing I remember about her was that she was such a good storyteller. She would write a story that was notebook length. It always had a beginning, a middle and an end and was always very interesting.

My friend, Janice Rockman, lived on the corner of the next block and across the street from me. (I lived in the middle of the block.) I would go and eat supper with her. Sometimes I would stay all night. Her mom would make us what she called "potato pancakes". We would make a pile of syrup on our plates, roll up the "pancakes" and dip them in the syrup, bite and dip again.

After I married, I searched for over 30 years for a recipe for potato pancakes made with mashed potatoes. Finally my mom said "I'll bet it was lefse." Sure enough, it was.

Every so often my mom brought home a "plastic bag looking" thing with a red dot in the middle. It was a privilege to be able to break the red dot by squeezing it and kneading it all to a yellow color. It was oleomargarine.