

MY EARLY CHILDHOOD  
FROM BIRTH IN ENGLAND IN 1898  
TO HIGH SCHOOL DAYS-AND BEYOND

This record tries to replace what I told Mary Ehbrecht about my early childhood.

My first memory is of May, 1900. My father told me my grandmother, his mother, wanted to see me. He carried me into her bedroom. He told me I must be very quiet and still because she was very ill. He did not tell me she was dying.

I remember looking down from my father's shoulder to a beautiful face on the pillow. I was very happy that my grandma wanted to see me. Within a few days she died. A very few days later, my sister, Joyce, was born on May 22. She is exactly two years and one week my junior.

The next early experience I remember is when my father took me to a concert at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester, England. I thought it was night, because it was dark. Winter darkness comes before 4:00 PM there. I remember moving my foot to the rhythm of the music. I liked the music.

Several years later my father's sister, my Auntie Gertrude, took me to Kersal Moor. It is a barren, wild hill. The only growth was heather and gorse. Auntie Gertrude told me, "Kissing is out of fashion when the gorse is not in bloom." There are always a few blossoms on the gorse bushes. Small pools of water had polly wog's eggs. We took them home to watch them develop into frogs. I remember one frog developed. A few days later, it was missing. A short time after, a flat form was found on the dining room floor, shaped like a frog.

To go back some years: At age 2, I was not yet toilet trained. My diapers were wet. My mother was ashamed. She whipped me very hard, with the flat side of a wooden hair brush. Such was the custom in England in 1900.

My brother, Ronald, pulled me in a go-cart when I was about 2 or 3. I enjoyed that. He was always a good, kind brother. Aunties Gertrude and May took us to a park in Manchester. There was a pond with ducks. We could feed them small pieces of bread. That was great fun. We had to walk on the paths. No one could step on the grass. Wire hoops separated the grass from the path. The paths were made of something like asphalt. This was most of our outdoor life before school. We had a nice garden at No. 9 Duncan Street. The house was at one end of a row of five or six houses. They were called Row Houses. We could run and play outdoors, but not on Sunday. No running on Sundays.

At home Mother was busy. She supervised our maid servant. She helped to make the beds. She supervised the cooking. She made the desserts. She supervised all the cleaning, especially the Spring cleaning. Rugs and small carpets were taken outside, hung on a line, and beaten with a reed carpet beater. Much dust flew out. I remember seeing my mother with a kerchief around her head. She looked like an American nanny. She would clean the slats on a venetian blind. It seemed all wrong to me. I felt there should be a quicker, easier way.

On a brighter side, Mother had a social life . . . Once a month she had "an at-home day." All her friends were notified. The "drawing room" was opened. (The "drawing room" was the "with-drawing room," to which after dinner the ladies withdrew.) They could have coffee or tea,

perhaps cakes, and talk. Meanwhile, the gentlemen could sit at the table and drink more alcohol, and/or smoke. They could tell dirty stories, which were "not fit for ladies' ears."

The dining room was the family room. At meals, children could not come to the dining room, until they had learned good table manners. Then they could eat at the table, but not talk. Literally, children were to be seen and not heard. If you talked, you were sent upstairs.

Our house had a nice entrance, a small hall, with a black and white tile floor. The drawing room was on one side. The stairs were behind that, forming the other side of the hall. The hall led to the dining room. An opening under the stairs led to the kitchen. Behind the kitchen was the scullery. That led to the back door. The scullery had a big sink. All the vegetables, direct from the farm, were washed. All boots and shoes were cleaned here. The dining room at the back of the house looked out to the garden, which was very pleasant. Each room in the house had a fireplace. Soft coal was kept in a bucket on the hearth. Each room had a small 4" to 6" opening to the outdoors, with a grate over it high up by the ceiling, to prevent carbon monoxide.

The kitchen was large and had a big range, burning coal. It had a large wooden table, scrubbed white. Sugar came in huge chunks. They were rolled with a rolling pin into granules and put in bowls for use. A small decorative one was for the dining room table and a larger one was for kitchen use. Salt also came in chunks, smaller than the sugar. Salt was rolled into granules. These granules were put in tiny salt dishes, about an inch and a half wide. One was placed for each person at the dining room table. A larger bowl was filled for the kitchen. I remember watching all these processes. The kitchen range had a large tank at one side for hot water. That was the only hot water in the house. All water for personal washing was carried upstairs.

Upstairs, this long, thin house had a master bedroom over the dining room. A guest room came next. A small hall by the stairs led to a day nursery. Our day nursery had a cork floor. It was a joy. It was so comfortable. In the doorway my father put up a bar. We could use this as a trapeze. The third floor had two rooms. One was our night nursery. The other was the maid servant's room. While we were very young, Mother had a nurse maid. So the two servants slept together.

Mother taught us to read and write before we went to school. That was the custom. I remember seeing my mother write with a quill pen. It was dipped in an ink well.

Auntie May taught me to play "Long, Long Ago" on a very small pump organ I pumped with my feet while playing. Auntie Gertrude taught me to dance the Irish Reel and the Scottish Highland Fling. Only the simplest steps were used, by keeping the feet close together. The movements were toe-heel, toe-heel. This was done while making little hops. Irish Reel held hands close to the body or on the hips. Highland Fling held one hand on the hip, the other curved high overhead. I liked that better. It was more interesting to me.

#### MEALS

Breakfast was always a bowl of oatmeal with milk and sugar. This was followed by a soft-boiled egg. It was eaten with a special, small egg spoon. The spoon dipped the egg from the shell. The shell was held in a special egg cup, made of china. Last, buttered toast was eaten with marmalade. A knife cut the toast in pieces and put marmalade on the pieces. Children drank milk. Adults drank tea. Usually, a little milk was put in the tea.

I don't remember lunch. There was no lunch.

Dinner was served at noon. My father came home from work. The dining room had a side board. The maid servant put a metal platter of roast beef on the table. The metal platter was covered by a large, metal, dome-shaped cover to keep the red meat warm from the kitchen.

Red meat was good in those days. It had not been fattened up. Only a thin layer of fat was on the outside of the roast. It could easily be removed. Vegetables such as potatoes, cabbage, and rutabagas came with the meat. Dry whole-wheat bread was laid on the tablecloth by each plate. It was broken by the fingers to be eaten. A condiment holder held three bottles. One was for oil, one for vinegar, and one for mustard. A special mustard spoon put mustard on the side of the plate. Vinegar was used on cabbage. Oil, I don't remember. Perhaps it was for rutabagas and potatoes.

Dessert was sometimes heavy suet pudding. The name describes it. Good, sweet treacle made the suet pudding palatable. In warmer weather, cooked fruit was served for dessert. Always, cooked fruit. Sugar came with it. The sugar was dipped from the sugar bowl with a special sugar spoon. The spoon had holes in it, so sugar could be sprinkled over the cooked fruit.

Sometimes at a formal dinner, a piece of raw fruit was served, perhaps with a small piece of cheese. The fruit was cut with a special fruit knife and fork. The blade of the knife was silver. The handle of knife and fork were pearl. The fork was used to put the fruit in the mouth. Fingers put the cheese into the mouth for small bites. The whole dinner was picturesque and entertaining. A great deal of washing up was necessary. Beverages included water and wine and all liquors. Each beverage required a special-shaped glass.

In the kitchen, all glass must be washed first. Next, table silver must be washed in separate water. After that, the dishes were washed. Everything, each piece, was dried with a tea cloth. Then came my entertainment. It was the knife cleaner. About a foot wide, about a foot high, about 4 inches thick, it was made of wood. The shape was a circle. Two or three slots at the top were used. Into these slots clean, steel-blade knives were placed. Inside the knife cleaner was emery powder. Only the steel blade touched the emery. A handle turned the inside round and round and round. If I was allowed to turn the handle many times, I enjoyed it. The steel blades came out shiny, bright, and sharp. To me this knife cleaner, sometimes called knife sharpener, held an honored place in the kitchen. In 1906 when we came to this country, it was difficult to teach Mother's new maid that the knives must be washed before being put in the knife cleaner. For a few years after 1906, Mother had a maid. She got green girls from Germany. She could teach them English and American customs and give them a home for about one year. After that a girl could get a good position. Mother could get a new girl from Germany.

#### SCHOOL DAYS IN ENGLAND

At age 7, I went to the Manchester High School for Girls. It took girls from Grade 1 to Grade 12 at age 18. I believe it is still there. In those days England had no public schools.

For poor boys, there was a "board school." It was run by a Board of Education. The education given was not very good and treatment was brutal.

This Manchester High School for Girls was an excellent school in a beautiful building. I was there for first and second grade. The building belonged to the Greek Consul. It had a domed skylight, and many colored windows. It was a joy to go there. All I can remember about classes,

which were very small, was when one teacher took some moist sand to illustrate mountains. She sprinkled some sugar on the top of the mountains, to illustrate snow.

At recess we played "Rounders." Essentially, it is the beginning of baseball. A batter with a small tennis racquet tried to hit a tennis ball, pitched by a pitcher. When the ball was hit, the batter tried to run from home base, to first base, to second base, to third base, and home. The batter must do this before the fielder could catch the ball and throw it to home base. We all enjoyed that game greatly.

One thing more about school days while I was attending the Manchester High School for Girls: Some large drain pipes were laid on the sidewalk, ready to be put underground. I was small enough with one or two other small children to bend over and run through a drain pipe. It was satisfying fun. But it was one thing I never told my mother.

A little Greek boy came to our school. He was in my class. The teacher called me up to the front of the class and said to me, "I want you to be the guardian of this new boy. Make sure he understands what he should do. Give him all the help that you can. Protect him from any harm." I was extremely proud to be the Greek boy's guardian. Now, I think she put me in charge because otherwise I might have been his chief tormentor. We got along very well together. One Sunday my father asked the Greek boy's parents if the boy could come for a Sunday walk with us. The parents agreed. It was a nice day. Near the end of the walk, my father put the little boy on his shoulders. We were out in the country passing a nice field. Suddenly, the boy called out, happily, "Maroli, maroli." Later we found out it meant "a field."

To go back to 1901, when I was 3, Queen Victoria died. Everyone made such a fuss. That made a great impression on my mind. After the appropriate ceremonies of the Queen's death, the new king, Edward the Seventh, came to visit Manchester. My brother and I were taken to the second floor of my grandfather's office in town. We could watch from the window. We were never allowed to be in crowds. A vivid picture is still in my head. I see the gold coach, the white horses, and the king, in red, with the queen beside him. The king and queen waved, and smiled graciously, to the cheering crowds of their subjects. It was a spectacular event, never to be forgotten.

The day was unusually hot. The crowds were unusually dense, tightly packed together. Someone fainted. There was no room to fall. That man dropped straight down. At age three, I thought it was funny, because it reminded me of my father's black silk top hat. That hat had springs in it, so it could be collapsed and opened easily. Mother told me, "You should not laugh. That poor man will be taken to the hospital." Two men with a stretcher came and put the man on it and carried him away. This was done with difficulty, considering the crowd. The situation was an entertainment for me.

For the ceremonies of the queen's death, my mother bought me a purple velvet coat. I loved that purple velvet coat. It was put in the bottom drawer of a chest in our day nursery. Frequently I opened the drawer and stroked the purple velvet. One day Mother saw me. She took it away, and put it somewhere else, lest I become vain. I don't remember ever seeing that coat again. But I am sure I must have worn it again.

Memories evoke memories, but not always in sequence.

To go back again, long before Queen Victoria died, I had a picture of her on the day nursery wall. I was taught to revere what I called "my toya queen." All I can remember was a figure in a long, black dress. What I do remember was the carved lion's claw on the arm of the chair. No adult could tell me that so I know it is my own memory.

To look at this picture, I stood on a box couch. That box couch is now in the South Bristol cottage. It is useful for storing linens and blankets. It is a real antique.

In Victorian days, everything had to be proper. A girl had to be a lady from the day she was born. She was taught to point her toes out as she walked. To this day I cannot point my toes straight.

Victorians could not talk about any part of a woman's body except face, hands, and feet. Arms and legs were called limbs. The body whole was called the trunk.

Even though the new king, Edward the Seventh, was much more liberal, customs die slowly.

Though my mother was rather narrow in her thinking, and much too strict for me, my father was very broad-minded, always gentle and kind. He was very well read. I think he must have read much of Rufus Jones. The whole Mather family admired the Quakers. One Mather was named "William Penn Mather." He came to the United States.

I remember once my father took a very large piece of brown paper. He held it close to the fire to warm it. Then he shook it and rattled it to imitate thunder. We were very small. This was not a scientific demonstration. It was meant to show us that we need not be afraid of thunder.

Once we went on a summer vacation to a farmhouse at the end of a woods. The owner of the house climbed up on a ladder and closed our windows at night. He believed that night air was bad for your health. This is just one illustration of how many superstitions were held long ago. Science has disproved some. Sadly, some religions will not accept the findings of science. At this farm at the end of a woods sometimes a "hunt" (many people hunting together) came through the woods in the morning with their hounds. We enjoyed hearing their bugle calls. My brother, Ronald, was always a dear, good, kind brother to his sisters. As a small child, I was a meany. Once I threw his favorite toy horse down the stairs. It broke. All I said was, "Easily mended with fish glue." I never even said I was sorry.

My sister, Joyce, two years and one week younger than I, was a mild little girl. She had childhood tuberculosis. We all survived, partly because we took cod-liver oil daily. Manchester was smog town. My grandfather lacked the geniality of his older brother, the first Sir William Mather. He used the patriarchal system of ruling their children until the father died. My father was almost 40 years of age. He had not been given a partnership in the firm, even though he had done some exceptionally good work. As a chartered accountant, he had won a case for an important client. When my father was invited to come to the United States for an interview with a CPA firm who wanted a chartered accountant, he took the invitation. In those days, chartered accountants had better training and a better reputation than CPAs.

My brother, Ronald, was allowed to ride with my father in the horse carriage to the train. I was jealous. I always wanted to do what my brother did. He was the Boy, 2½ years older than I. Joyce and I were only "the girls."

In the United States my father was offered a job. He took it. He cabled Mother, "Bring the children."

Aunties Gertrude and May helped Mother dismantle the house and pack things to go to the United States. Mother took us three children to Cambridge to spend the summer with our grandma. She was Mother's mother. Her name was Winifred Proctor Smart. The Proctors were mostly educators. Grandma Smart was a strict person, but very kind to us children. We invaded her house, being pests to three uncles who lived there: Charley, a lawyer; Roger, a lawyer; and Ernest, who ran the business. Charley and Roger retreated to their tiny office, filled with smoke. Ernest was usually at the business. The business was a good men's clothing store, near the marketplace. The uncles had bought this nice house, at No. 5 St. Paul's Road, for their mother. Previously the whole family had lived in the rooms behind and above the store. Grandma Smart was an imposing lady, with commanding dignity. Everyone respected her. Auntie Dora lived with her, as her helper. She was never married. Grandma Smart felt she owned and tried to control her children. She had given all her boys a good education. Uncle Roger was an Oxford graduate of Lincoln College.

Uncle Harold was the only one who escaped. He was studying chemistry in London. When qualified, he came home and told his mother, "I am going to Africa." "Oh no, you're not," said Grandma. "Yes, I am," said Harold. "I have bought my ticket." Uncle Harold went to Africa, to Rhodesia. He found a partner. The partner robbed him, so they split. Harold took to drinking. Very soon he realized that was no life for him. He came back home to find a wife. That was 1906. It was the summer that we stayed with Grandma, while my father was in the United States of America. Uncle Harold was very jolly. He enlivened us all. He bought a fizz bottle of soda water. The bottle was encased in a silver-colored metal openwork holder. It entranced us children. Uncle Harold became engaged to Auntie Nellie. He brought her to meet us. We all liked her.

That summer, in the kitchen, Grandma and Auntie Dora made jam. Wasps came buzzing on the windowpanes, indoors. Houses had no screens. I remember watching Grandma with a knife expertly squashing a wasp on the windowpane. To me, it was dramatic and exciting.

We three children could play outdoors in the garden. A long, green lawn had a large roller to keep it in good condition. On all three sides, by the walls, the uncles cultivated hollyhocks and other tall flowers. At the far end of the garden was an open air "summer house." A roof, held up by a few posts to the floor, formed the whole thing.

Behind the back wall was a street called Cambridge Place. Poor, uneducated people lived there. They did not speak good English. They used poor pronunciations. We were not allowed to play in the summer house, lest we copy their bad speech. This was 1906.

That summer was one of the two happiest summers I can remember. The weather was lovely. Mother took us to the deer park. She took us to see all the beautiful Cambridge College buildings. King's College is the most beautiful. It has an immense lawn reaching down to the quiet River Cam. The Cam is like a canal. It is narrow, too narrow for rowing. People punt small vessels called punts. The punter stands and pushes the vessel along with a long pole. Passengers sit, enjoying a slow ride on the water. (The Cambridge rowing crew rows on another river.)

Mother showed us the "Cambridge Run." It was a very small stream of water from a spring. It flows down the gutter of the main street in Cambridge. Mother showed us the Milton mulberry tree, planted by John Milton, the famous English writer. On one of the college campuses, it stands, propped up at each branch. Recently I asked a Cambridge don (a professor), if the mulberry tree is still alive. He answered, "Yes, and it is still growing mulberries."

That summer's chief joy was a garden party. Mrs. Cadbury, of Cadbury chocolate, was a friend of Mother's. She invited Joyce and me to a garden party, a costume party, with a prize for the best costume. Mother dressed us as fairies, in green gauze dresses with gauzy wings. We went barefoot on the fabulous lawn. That was a delight to our feet. On the large lawn was a huge rocker. It looked like a boat. It had several seats at each end. Many children could ride and rock in it at the same time. I think Joyce and I were given second prize. But that was not important to us. The party and walking barefoot on the lawn was what we remembered. I think Ronald must have been sent to a boarding school. I only remember seeing him at the beginning of the summer in Grandma's house. He told us to jump from the lowest stair step to the floor, then from the second stair step, then from the third stair step. It was easy for him, but difficult for us to learn.

At the end of that glorious summer, in September 1906, Mother and we three children took the train to Liverpool. We boarded the *Baltic*. It was a White Star liner, one of the largest vessels afloat. After putting the bags in the state room, Mother hitched Joyce and me up in little baby reins, and drove us around the deck. I was eight. Joyce was six. We were mortified. Joyce agreed with me. We went down to the state room and said, "Here we sit until the reins come off, even if it takes the whole voyage." We staged the first sitdown strike in history. Sit-down strikes did not come until the 1920s. The reins came off. I think Mother had seen babies crawling free on deck.

The first day out, the *Baltic* stopped at Queenstown (it is now Cobh, Ireland). I wanted to go ashore. Mother would not let us go ashore. Women came on board selling Irish lace, and hand-carved objects of bog oak. Bog oak is wood which has been buried in a bog for thousands of years. I still have a tiny hand-carved kettle. Bog oak is black.

The real voyage began with rough weather. Mother was so seasick, she spent all her time on a deck chair. We children went to the top deck. Here, the life boats were kept. A space between the curved end of a life boat and the handrail allowed us to crawl to the edge of the ship. We hung over to look at the water. If the ship had lurched, we would have been gone. This was one of the things we never told Mother. In the dining room, the tablecloth was dampened, to prevent dishes from sliding around. Our twelve-day voyage included all kinds of weather. Some days were very pleasant and calm. Other days were rough and difficult. Some were rainy days.

We landed in New York harbor one evening. We saw the Statue of Liberty all lit up with torch and crown. It was a thrilling sight.

The next morning there was a notice on the bulletin board. It read, "Do not go out on the lower deck." I did not read bulletin boards. They were for adults. I went down on the lower deck. I was alone. Immediately, an officer came and locked the door. He did not see me. I was trapped.

Next, groups of steerage immigrants were led across the deck to the lounge. These steerage immigrants were the poorest and most ignorant people from places like Russia, Germany, and many other countries.

The women carried the total family belongings, tied up in a sheet. It was an amazing sight to me. I could never have imagined people in such circumstances. I was afraid I might be mixed up with them.

A sailor came along, and I ran to him saying, "I do not belong with these people. I belong on the upper deck. An officer locked the door. How can I get up to the upper deck?"

The sailor looked at me. Obviously, by my clothes, and the way I talked, I did not belong with these steerage immigrants. He said to me, "Can you climb?"

Could I climb? I had wanted to climb a ladder, made of plain iron rings, from lower deck to upper deck, during the whole voyage. But I had not dared because I had to be a lady. A lady could not show her drawers. They would be shown if I climbed that ladder.

Now the sailor was helping me to climb that ladder. I climbed with glee, plus a great emotional satisfaction. At the top, standing by the railing, was Mr. Baines Griffith. He offered to help me over the railing. This was one more episode never told to Mother.

I sauntered down to the cabin. Mother had been very busy packing. She asked, "Where have you been?" I casually answered, "Up on deck."

After all the steerage immigrants had been taken off the ship and sent to Ellis Island, the Immigration Officer interviewed the passengers. All citizens and new residents showed their papers and were allowed to leave the ship. Then came the non-citizens. My mother, with her three children, was interviewed last. All her papers were in order. The Immigration Officer asked Mother, "Who is meeting you?" Mother answered, "My husband." The officer said, "Sit here and wait for him."

In explanation, no immigrant woman was allowed off the ship without someone appropriate to escort her. This was to avoid her being picked up by some unscrupulous person.

In the meantime, my father, on the dock, attempted to go up the gangplank. The guard at the foot of the gangplank asked, "Why do you wish to go up?" My father answered, "To meet my wife and children." The guard said, "Then wait here until she comes off." The two parts of the Immigration Service had failed to communicate.

If my father had been unable to contact Mother, we should have been sent back to England. Fortunately, Mr. Baines Griffith, who had known both Father and Mother for several years, came down the gangplank, and explained to the guard that Mother had been told to wait for her husband. The guard was convinced. He allowed Father to go up to the lounge. Of course, we were all delighted to see Father. Our anxiety was at last relieved, after waiting a very long time.

Father took us to a boarding house in New York City. In those days, children were not taken to hotels. We stayed a week or two in the city while Father found an apartment in the Bronx. In 1906, the Bronx was like country. While in the city, Mother took us each day to Central Park. We watched city children going to school. We were privileged to play in Central Park. We felt superior.

After moving to the Bronx, we liked our novel situation. High up on a hill, we saw trains coming and going to the city below us. We could see the Hudson River. In winter, large blocks of ice floated up and down with the tide. Across the river we saw the Speedway. Horses pulling buggies ran races there. Near our apartment was a nice hill where we could toboggan on the snow.

We went to public school No. 13. The children laughed at our English clothes. They teased us. Joyce and I still loved our warm knit winter bonnets. They covered our ears. Joyce was in the first grade. I was in the third.

After all of us were here, Father planned to move to Montclair, New Jersey. He had learned that Montclair had one of the ten best schools in the country. He knew how important a good education is. He could not find suitable housing in Montclair, but found a nice, small house in Glen Ridge, the next town.

At our new school, Mother took Joyce and me to the principal's office. This was a 12-grade school, grade 1 through high school. Joyce was in first grade. She was sent to an overflow room. This overflow room held the overflow from first and second grades in the same room.

The principal of the whole school told me to write a sentence. I wrote one word with the English spelling. I had not yet learned the American spelling of that one word. The principal of this 12-grade school did not know that some English words were spelled differently. He thought my spelling was wrong. Instead of putting me in grade 3, where I should have been, he sent me to grade 2. I was sent to the overflow room where my sister was.

I was shocked and furious to find myself in the same class with my sister, who was two years and one week my junior. Spelling, in my mind, went out of the window, out of my life. From that time on, I would not learn to spell. Such is the result, to a child, of what is considered unfair treatment. My mother did not feel it was in her place to complain to the principal. This was part of her Victorian culture.

Even though in 1906, the Edwardian, more liberal influence had been felt by a few, the culture and habits of thinking changed very slowly. The culture and habits of thinking still change very slowly everywhere.

When at last my father had a house built and we moved to Montclair, I went to Montclair School. I always felt I was a year behind where I should be. So when I was in 5th grade, I was tutored one summer to enable me to go into 6th grade. At last, I was satisfied.

#### LATER LIFE

Montclair High School was very good.

After that I went to Columbia University. At Teachers' College, there, I earned a B.S. degree to be a teacher of health education. My minor was Physical Therapy, which I studied at the New York Hospital for Special Surgery. I am a registered Physical Therapist.

After graduation from college, most of my life was teaching. I taught health education. This included exercise and personal hygiene. These were taught on the personal, school, home, and community level. I taught for 35 years. Mostly I taught in New York City, but also at Washington State College, in Puerto Rico, and a New York Settlement House. During these years I traveled widely, including the complete Mediterranean Sea.

In 1934 I was living on Statton Island, New York City, and teaching in a public high school. A friend of mine and a fellow teacher, Margery Welter, wanted me to come to her summer cottage in Maine, on the coast, to help teach her children to swim. She invited me to her home to meet the children and her husband, Amthor. When I saw him and heard what he said, suddenly I felt something. It was really like the story of cupid shooting an arrow through the heart. But he was a married man and out of bounds. And that was the end of that. I was not about to break up a family.

That summer when I went to Maine with Margery and her family, the company for which Amthor worked had gone out of business. That same year, the second and third companies which hired him also went out of business. So Amthor was with the family the whole summer. I saw what a fine father he was. He taught the children much about the shore and the woods surrounding the house.

Each week we all took a motorboat up the river to Damariscotta for supplies. Damariscotta was a very friendly town. As the coastal water was too cold, we drove to a lake a few miles away to swim. There I saw and heard the loons.

When Margery died, her two daughters told me they hoped I would marry their father. In 1960, Amthor Welter married me, 26 years after I met him. At that time he had retired. He was two years older than I, and we both wanted to visit Damariscotta.

#### AFTER RETIREMENT

He moved from New York City. I moved from New Jersey. We came to live in Damariscotta, Maine. We traveled widely. We went to Alaska, Hawaii, and each of the continental states. Then we went to Japan and Hong Kong. We went to each of the Western European countries.

In Damariscotta we met Nancy Booth. At that time she was finding interesting materials to show in the schools. She knew that Amthor had made a documentary film depicting a whole year of the ice house activities. This included snow shoveling, ice cutting, storage, and selling ice in the summer. It was a very fine film and the schools were asking for it.

#### LATER LIFE

In 1970, I was widowed. Then I managed to find people who were willing to help me fulfill my 40-year dream. This dream was to make an ice house museum, in South Bristol, Maine. That is where I had spent many happy summers. The Ice House Museum is now flourishing, with a small endowment to keep it going.

Each year the Ice House makes a festival for the population of South Bristol. The cutting and storing of ice in the Ice House is interesting to watch. Food and souvenirs are sold. Everyone enjoys it. This is a great satisfaction to me in my old age.

After Amthor died, when my sister was staying with me briefly, Nancy Booth invited us to a Quaker business meeting. I was interested because I like what George Fox said, "Read the Bible, and do your own thinking." I had always tried to think. I attended Quaker Meetings for three years. Then I became a Quaker member of the Meeting.

#### MORE

My memory is tricky. I forgot to mention what health education includes. It covers exercise, personal hygiene, safety, and nutrition. Even personal relationships are included as part of health. All these topics are considered under personal, school, home, and community.

Nutrition is extremely important. I have been studying nutrition most of my life. Knowledge changes from time to time as experts learn from studies worldwide. I try to follow the best sources of information which I can find. Information from different parts of the world differ. This is because people differ in different parts of the world. And even each individual is different. He or she may have different needs. I think *Prevention Magazine* is good.

#### EXTRA

Twice the U.S. Army has used me as a physical therapist. The first time, after World War I, I was a civilian employee. I was stationed at several different Army positions. My service was about two years.

The second time, during World War II, I served in the U.S. Army for two years. The first year I was a WAC. For the second year, I was a 2nd Lt. I am a war veteran, but I have no overseas experience.

#### ANECDOTES

During the Second World War, I was physical therapist in the Army Air Corp. I was teaching amputees to walk on their prostheses (wooden legs). This was in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The army had taken over the large hotel as a hospital. The work was rewarding, because the men worked hard at learning to walk well. They could not be discharged until they were able to walk smoothly forward and back, turn around, sit down, and get up.

One man in particular showed extreme coordination. All his movements were graceful. I asked him, "Were you perhaps a professional ice skater?" His reply was "No, I am a construction monkey." There is a special tribe of American Indians who can balance easily at great heights. This man was an American Indian, one of that tribe. His name was Mount Pleasant. He looked like his name. He was a big man, a genial one. I can easily remember Mount Pleasant.

My last assignment in 1946 was in charge of a small physical therapy department in Washington, D.C. A sergeant had been in charge before I was sent there. Naturally, he resented having a woman placed over him. This small department was used mostly by officers.

One day a major came in. He demanded "I want this, and this, and this, as treatments." I said, "Do you have a doctor's prescription?" He said, "I don't need that." My reply was, "I am sorry, sir, but as a registered physical therapist, I can treat no one without a doctor's prescription." He left.

A few days later, an elderly gentlemanly officer, with his arm in a sling, came in. He reminded me of some nice elderly gentleman who my father had brought home occasionally when I was studying on weekends at home, while working at school. This elderly man said, "Grow is my name. I am sorry I cannot shake hands because my arm is incapacitated." He was General Grow. He was the head of a large department. I still have to laugh at the difference between a major and a general.

#### THOUGHTS ON DYING

About six years ago I became legally and progressively blind. For many, many years I have worn a hearing aid. My loss of hearing is also progressive. Six months ago my sense of balance failed. On September 9, 2001, I became bedridden, spoon-fed, and completely helpless. My two home healthcare workers are excellent, but they are being worn out. I need two more, one for two days a week, the other for three days a week. I need people who, perhaps, have had a bedridden mother to take care of – people who have some experience in taking care of a very old lady. In May 2002 I shall be 104 years old. My short-term memory is tricky. My long-term memory is good. I cannot remember what I did a few hours ago, but I can remember when I was two years old.

The law tells the doctors what they cannot do. I think this is wrong. I wrote a letter to the Portland Press Herald about this. Many people agree with me. If you do so, please help spread the idea that lawmakers should not tell doctors what to do. Perhaps you know that the State of Oregon has a right-to-die law. It has safeguards to prevent abuse. I think the whole nation of the U.S.A. should adopt the right-to-die law. I wish you all the best in life.

With Quaker love and light,  
ERICA MATHER WELTER  
Damariscotta, Maine, 2002