

Sally Hirsch's Memory Book

In Dec 1998, granddaughter Marcey Nolan sent a copy of "A Grandparents' Memory Book" to Marcella Marie ("Sally") Hirsch, with the note: "To Grandma Sally – Thank you for sharing your memories with me and giving me so many special ones of my own. Love, Marcey." The book consisted of questions wanting answers about their grandparents' lives, as asked by 'real grandchildren.' In Dec 2003, Sally returned the book with this note: "Dear Marcey – I'm sorry to be sending you an unfinished book. I wrote in it a little when you first gave it to me and then it got put away somewhere. I had to search for it to write in it for Maggie & Alan's Christmas. My handwriting is so poor anymore that it isn't as nice as I would have liked. I wrote until I thought I'd better get it in the mail. I Promise if you return it I will attempt to finish it as much as it applies to me at age 89 years. Marcey you have always been special to me. I love you dearly. Grandma." Here are the questions with answers as written by Sally Hirsch.

Did you spend the night at your Grandma and Grandpa's house?

Yes, many times. My Grandma lived alone most of the time as my Grandpa was a insurance salesman & traveled all the time. I lived with her part of my freshman year in high school.

What is your fondest memory of Grandpa/Grandma?

When Grandpa would come home for a weekend or ? was the best time of all. He was fun loving and would sing to us & play the violin. One song I remember was "Old Dan Tucker." He would tell us to jig & he would show us how. He liked it when we had a family get-together & all of his grandchildren were there. It was so special to get to spend time with Grandpa.

Grandma was a quiet, stern "old" lady. For as long as I could remember, she looked & acted "old." She had a pretty hard life. Her first husband died very young as did both of their young sons.

What did your grandparents do? (for a living)

My paternal grandfather was a carpenter. He lived in Missouri & we never visited in his home (which wasn't unusual in those days, as transportation was a problem). Grandma Hirsch was a housewife & home maker as most wives were. She died when my Dad was about 12 years. My maternal Grandpa was a traveling salesman & Grandma a house wife & home maker.

What is the best lesson you learned from your parents? What values that your parents taught you did you pass (or try to) on to your children?

My Dad would tell us to live by the golden rule. "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." He said we would need no other law, no police, no one in authority over man if we lived by that rule.

As I recall most of our upbringing was left to my Mother and I believe that was the way it was in most family's back then.

Mama would encourage us to read. She loved to read and liked to read aloud to we children. Mama had a very hard life, and I think the only way she could escape was lose herself in books

about other times & places. She was a school teacher before she married and she was very good at writing poetry or stories. That is one trait that was passed on to me.

When were you born? Where were you born?

I was born at home on a farm in Boone County, Nebraska (section #15). The farm land in the mid-west states was divided up in sections. A full section was 640 acres. My Dad farmed a quarter section, plus 20 acres on a neighbor's land, 180 acres in all.

I was born November 30, 1914, the fourth child of Fred & Ellen Hirsch. Our family grew to include 10 children, 6 girls & 4 boys.'

Were you named after anyone in particular? What is the story behind how you were named?

I was named Marcella Marie Hirsch. I was named after a great aunt, I never met her. She was my maternal Grandmother's sister.

I always liked my name but got the nick-name of Tootsie when I was small & later was called Sally & that name stuck. It made my mother sad to hear me called Sally. She loved my given name too.'

Did you get along with your siblings? (Explain.)

As we were growing up I think we got along quite well. I dearly loved my older sister Eugenia, we called her Genia. She was 6 ½ yrs older than me. My brother Donald was 2 years older than me and I got along with him just so-so. I felt quite motherly to the three youngest as I did a lot of the care-taking of them.

In my teen years I didn't get along very well with my sister Genevieve (4 yrs younger than me.)

Did you have family activities you did together? (Explain.)

Sometimes after supper my Mother would gather us around the big dining room table & read to us. She would be reading from a library book and we always hated it when she would say continued until tomorrow night. Most of us were old enough that we could read but the way she did it was welcomed by all.

Where did you live when you were little?

I lived on a farm all of my younger years. I can recall three different homes, but I lived on the last farm from age 9 (I believe) until I graduated from high school. Some of the high school years I lived with my Grandmother (9th grade). The last 3 years I roomed in four different homes in the little town of St. Edward, Nebr. during the week.

Did you have a big backyard when you were little?

Since I lived on a farm we had a lot of room to roam & play. We had a huge grove of trees that bordered on the North of our farm. We made play houses in the trees by roping off rooms & raking the leaves. My sisters & I liked to play up there.

Did you have crayons?

Yes we had crayons but I think there were only 4 or 5 to a box. We treasured our crayons.

Did you have your own room when you were little?

No, I never had my own room. I shared a bedroom with my older sister Eugenia (Gena) until she left home and then I shared a room with Genevieve (Gen) & Mary. We slept three in a bed and had to take turns sleeping in the middle as that was the less desirable position.

Even today I sleep right on the edge of the bed even if I'm sleeping alone. Grandpa Don could never understand why I used only the very edge of the bed.

Did you ever jump on your bed when you were little?

I suppose I did but I don't remember doing it.

Our beds didn't have much bounce as the mattresses were filled with corn husks or straw.

What was your favorite meal? Who fixed that meal?

My favorite meal was the special one that Mama fixed for Sunday's or for company. Fried chicken, mashed potatoes & gravy, creamed new peas, cabbage slaw, home made rolls and cherry pie.

Did you eat carrots when you were 7 years old?

I loved carrots and I liked to go out in the garden & pull up some carrots, rub the dirt off & eat them fresh.

Did you have popsicles when you were little?

No we didn't. I was just thinking it would be interesting to know when popsicles were first made.

Did you ever go out to dinner or did you eat at home?

If you mean going to eat in a restaurant, I believe I was in the eighth grade the first time I ate out.

For a long time I was very uneasy when eating in a restaurant. I was sure everyone was watching to see if I had good manners.

When we moved to Omaha (after I was married) we could go to the 5 and dime store & get a hot dog or burger and eat standing at the eating counter.

What did you look like when you were little?

I have been told I was a nice looking little girl. I had blondish hair and gray blue eyes. Mostly when anyone spoke of my looks they always said what beautiful eyes I had.

When a teen age, I worried because my nose was too big. When I got my first eye glasses in 1945 (age 31), the eye Doctor said it's a shame to put glasses over your beautiful big eyes. When Beth was born, I said "she has my eyes."

Did you ever play card games? (Which ones?)

I recall playing a card game called "canasta." I don't remember now how to play it.

My Dad liked to play "pitch" and he taught the boys how to play it. They also played cribbage with a deck of cards & a cribbage board.

What did you do for fun? Did you run, did you jump and play?

Having so many brothers & sisters made it a great time for outdoor games. We played hide & seek a lot and I remember one summer evening's game especially. I was the seeker and had caught everyone except my brother Donald. He fooled all of us. He had climbed up on the roof of our house and sat hugging the chimney. The best hiding place ever.

Did you play any sports? (Tell me about them.)

In country school we played lots of out door games. It seems we always had a baseball game going & continued it in to successive recesses or lunch time.

In high school I played soft ball, basketball, tennis & archery. I didn't have a tennis racket so had to borrow one as well as a bow & arrow. The school didn't furnish equipment as they do now.

What kind of kid were you? Did you stay inside or play and build forts and things?

I liked playing outdoors. The weather dictated what and where we played. In the winter we took our sleds to "Sedlicks" hill for some great rides. My brother would have me lay on the sled on my stomach & he would [start] pushing & when he got up a good speed he would flop down on top & we would take a fast trip.

In the summer running & playing many games took up our days.

How did you make friends?

I never thought about making friends. It just came naturally that our classmates became friends as did our neighbors.

There wasn't the class nor race distinction that we see today. We did have 2 Polish families in our school but there was no anti-feeling towards them.

Farmers were all poor to middle class folks.

Did you ever do anything really bad when you were a kid? If so, what was it?

I don't remember doing anything really bad. Maybe the story below counts as really bad.

What pranks do you remember from childhood?

One time when our city cousins came we decided we would have a "black face" play. We got into the stored lard (we had a room upstairs where we stored food, lard, 10 gal. tubs of sausage, etc., etc.)

We smeared the greasy lard on our faces, we got soot from the chimney and smeared it on our faces and pretended we were negroes.

Mama said later that she had an awful time getting the soot & lard out of our skin & hair. She was very upset with us, but we had company so she was nice about it.

Did you and my parents ever fight as bad as me and my parents?

I imagine we had many arguments. I wouldn't call it a "fight."

Were you happy as a kid?

I believe I was quite happy. When you are in a large family you always had someone to play with. We made up games to play or made toys to play with.

What was the greatest hardship you endured as a child?

Being raised during the depression years there were probably many hardships. But everyone was quite poor then so we didn't really feel any difference.

I always wished we had a piano or victrola for music, but my Dad didn't believe in spending money for something foolish.

Who was your childhood hero? Why?

I believe my "Aunt Edie" was my hero. She would take a couple of us kids home with her and it was a great time. She had a daughter "Twyla" just my age and she would make us dresses alike. Then she would take us to the candy store for treats. She took us to the library where we could borrow books to read. She would make us a tea party etc. etc. etc.

What kind of pets did you have when you were younger?

I was given a little puppy when I was six years old. My Uncle George Kealy came to see me when I came home after being in the hospital when I broke my arm. I called her "PUPPY." I was so proud that she was mine.

She lived to be quite old.

What did you always want to be when you "grow up"? What did you turn out to be?

I loved the nurses who worked in the hospital where I was taken when I broke my arm. They really impressed me, so I wanted to grow up to be just like them.

Since I grew up during the great depression, there was no money for a college for nurses so I couldn't be a nurse.

My occupation turned out to be a wife & Mother. This was the best and I was very happy with this job.

What did you do at your house for Thanksgiving? What are some of the favorite foods at Thanksgiving? Maybe cranberries, bread, turkey, mashed potatoes or gravy?

At Thanksgiving time we had a special meal but we didn't have turkey. We would have a roast chicken and oyster dressing. Of course we had mashed potatoes & gravy, cole slaw, cranberries etc. Oh yes, pumpkin pie. (My Mom was a good cook.)

What was it like to trick or treat at Halloween? What was your favorite costume?

I never heard of trick or treating on Halloween while growing up. In later years sometimes farm boys would do mean tricks like tipping over an outhouse (an outdoor toilet).

Do you remember a special birthday or Christmas? What was the best present you received as a child?

My first surprise birthday party was when I was in the 6th grade. Some of my classmates and some of my cousins came to our house. I had a very good time.

Did you get lots of Christmas presents?

We each got one gift. Maybe it would be only an apple, orange & candy or in good years a gift, usually something Mama had made.

When did you open your Christmas presents? Did Santa come to visit you?

When I was small I remember one Christmas I got a china head doll and another one when Mama had made me a coat & muff to match.

Did girls just wear dresses?

Yes. Girls wore dresses and boys wore pants or overalls.

I remember one summer when my "city cousins" came to visit. Mildred & Sally had street pajamas, they were like long very full legged pants. Of course I wanted a pair so Mama copied the pattern & made me "my first day time pajamas."

What did you do in your spare time as a teenager?

Reading was my passion so I read every book or magazine that I could get a hold of.

I could read very well when I was 6 years old. I don't remember learning to read it just came so natural.

Did you really walk five miles to school?

No ... we walked two miles to school. We could take short cuts by going through the corn or wheat fields at a diagonal.

[photo at right] Our Old School House (District #54, "Mount Echo").

1 room school. One teacher taught all 8 grades. (no electricity, no water except pump outside, no indoor plumbing - 2 outhouses out back.)

[photo & caption from Sally Hirsch]



Where did you go to school?

I went to a one room country school.

The one teacher taught all 9 grades. Beginners & one through eight.

Our school was named "Mount Echo."

When you went to school was it kids of all ages in the same classrooms or different classrooms? (Explain.)

When I went to High School, the school was located in "town" and that was several rooms and a different teacher for each subject.

TOWN – as we all called it was a small country village (population about 800). It seemed so big to a girl who always lived on a farm.

What was your favorite subject?

My favorite subject in school was English, writing, composition, etc.

What type of grades in school did you get?

I was an average student and got good grades in the subjects I liked.

I was not good in Math.

Was education important to you? (Why or why not?)

Going to school was just pretty much what was required so of course I went. I didn't think much of it as an education just a necessity.

In high school the teachers impressed on us the need for education in our lives. I decided then that I would like to be a teacher but money was lacking for me to go to college.

Who was your best friend in high school?

My best friend was a girl my age.

She had beautiful red hair and we liked the same things, the same subjects etc. Her name was FERN POTTER.



In what activities did you participate in high school?

I joined in all the sports that I could in High School. It was necessary that I could find someone who would loan me a tennis racket, a bow & arrow, a basketball, etc. because the school didn't furnish them.

Girls weren't allowed to play basket ball in competition, we could play only for fun but we were a team.

The rules were different as girls were the weaker sex & couldn't play hard.

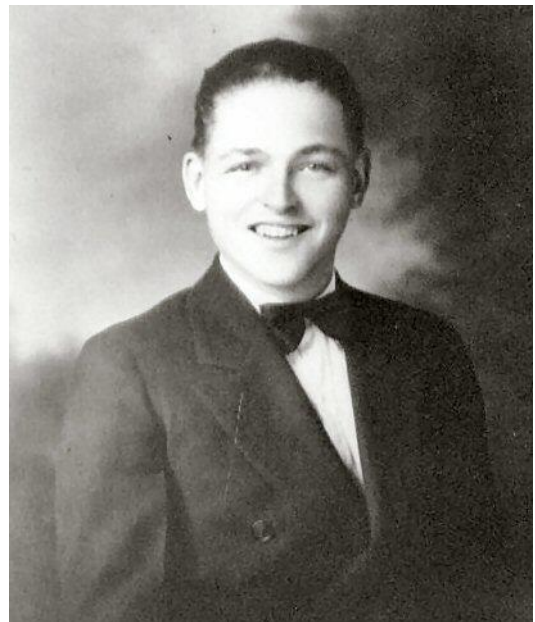
Figure 1 (at left) Marcella Marie "Sally" Hirsch, High School graduation, c. 1931, St. Edwards, NE

Did you play any musical instrument? (Which ones?)

Sad to say we never owned any musical instruments as I grew up.

I always wanted to be able to play a piano but that was only a dream as we were too poor to own one.

Figure 2 (photo at right) **Donald Eugene Armes, High School graduation, St. Edwards, NE c. 1931**



How much was it to go to the movies?

A dime each or family night was 3 for 25 ¢

What kind of dances did you do as a teenager?

We didn't go to dances but we knew how to do the Charleston. When we girls got together we would practice dancing.

Did you go to the prom? (Tell me about it.)

We didn't have proms. At the end of our high school years we had Junior banquet and a Senior banquet. We decorated the school gym or a church hall for the occasion. We dressed up and had a dinner and a program for the evening. It was quite special.

What clothes did you wear?

In country school years my Mother made my dresses & slips. My shoes and under wear came from Sears catalog. My Mother made the boys shirts and their overalls came from Sears.

How did you entertain yourself without many (or any) electronic toys?

We made most of our own toys. We made paper dolls by cutting figures out of the old Sears catalog. The dresses we cut from old wall paper catalogs.

When did you first fall in love?

In second grade in school I was smitten with a class mate his name was EMIL SELOZINEK. We would hold hands at recess time. (He was Polish.)

In high school I really fell in love in my Junior year with your Grandpa DONALD ARMES. We were married three years after we graduated from high school. We were married for 51+ years.

What was your first car?

I never owned a car when I was growing up.

My brothers and sisters (& me) drove a horse hitched to a cart for transportation to school & back. This was when we were in country grade school.

How much was a car in those days?

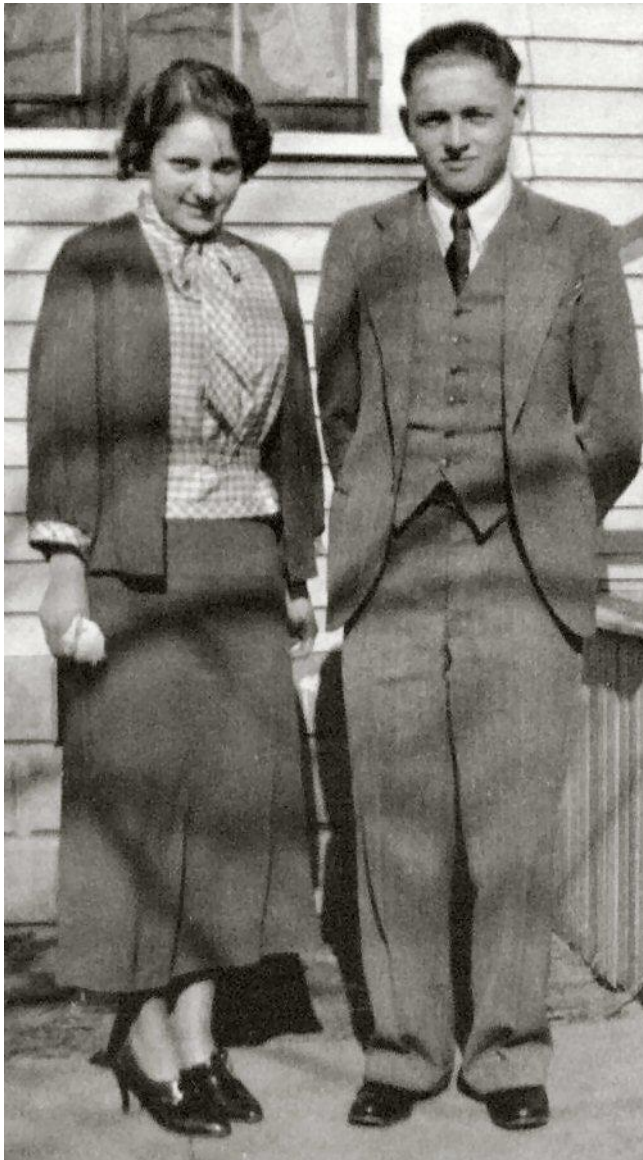
A used Model T Ford was sold to a friend of mine for \$8.00. 1920 model.

How did the Great Depression affect the way you spent or saved your money?

As a child I had no money. Children didn't get an allowance as such.

After I was married, my husband handled the money until his job sent him away from home. I had to take over the funds from then on.

Figure 3: [photo below] Marcella Marie "Sally" Hirsch and Donald Eugene Armes, probably their wedding photo c. 1934, St. Edwards, NE



How old were you when you had your first child? Your last?

I was not quite 21 when Mollie was born and not quite 30 when Bonnie was born. 23 when Ruthie was born and 29 when Tommy came.

Were you nervous about being parents? (Explain.)

I was excited about being a Mother. I had been around babies and toddlers all my life so I wasn't afraid.

I had lived in Doctor Sullivan's home so I trusted him and wasn't scared of the birth (little did I know!!!)

Have you ever been on a train?

I have been on a train many times. The first time was when I broke my arm. My Mother took me to Omaha, Nebraska to special Doctors. Later when I was married & living in Omaha, we rode on the train many times to go home to St. Edward to see my folks.

When was your first airplane trip?

I was married when I first rode on a plane. Don & I belonged to a square dance club & the club chartered a plane to go to Fontana [Resort], South Carolina to a square dance fiesta. We had a wonderful time.

Did you have spaceships?

No, they came much later.

Who was president when you were born?

Woodrow Wilson was president in 1914 when I was born.

How much was a cheeseburger when you were younger?

We had hamburgers but I don't believe I ever heard of a cheeseburger. Mama made the catsup & canned it so we always had catsup for our burgers.

Do you remember when stores were closed on Sundays? What year did they open for business on Sundays?

Yes I definitely heard of stores being closed on Sundays as that was the custom during my childhood years.

How much was a bottle of Coke when you were a kid?

I didn't know about "COKES". We drank Root Beer from a bottle or root beer made at home.

If you could keep one thing from your childhood the same, what would it be?

The family unit was always important. Father, Mother, and children. Family meal time was important as everyone in the family was there together. Sundays were a day of rest or a day when the entire family visited a friend's home. I wish the family unit was still strong.

Was life as fast as it is now?

Life was at a much slower pace back then. Not as many cars, not as many people. Pleasures were simpler. No television, few home radios. Gangs were unheard of.

You trusted your neighbor, you didn't need to lock your doors.

How did you feel about computers?

I don't know anything about computers except that I don't like the way computers have changed our country.
