

My Early Childhood in Rural Kentucky  
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I was born in rural Kentucky during World War II. My father joined the navy after Pearl Harbor and spent the war with a construction battalion (CBs) on Island "X" which was really several islands, Adak Alaska, Saipan, Okinawa and Guam. Never did talk much about it all though. We moved into town, more to rural Louisville and had a rural route number on our mailbox. Our subdivision was just a paved street with a few houses and we were the 5<sup>th</sup> house. Had plenty of kids to play with though. My mom was stay at home and took care of the household and dad was working for the city. I grew up in a household with parents who loved me and my sister and always wanted the best for us. We were encouraged to make our own mistakes unless the mistakes were dangerous and to be the best we could be no matter what we were doing. Dad always said that if I wanted to dig ditches for a living, just be sure I dug the best ditches around.

We were a church-going family, Sunday school and other church activities. Dad taught several Sunday school classes and he sang in the choir for many years. Church was a central part of our lives and I can remember several things about it. The church, which was a German reformation church, would have a yearly turtle soup barbeque. It was delicious along with hotdogs, burgers and German potato salad. Pastor and some of the other older men would sit on folding chairs under a big tree, smoke cigars and drink beer. We also had Easter egg hunts with the golden egg as the prize. Then there were the dreaded Easter and Christmas plays. I seemed to always have some speaking part and was petrified on remembering my lines.

We have always been family oriented and celebrated birthdays, anniversaries. Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving and New Year were all celebrated with family. On New Year's Eve, mom and dad would go to the Rotary party and then be home by 12:30. They were not real social with parties.

I was foolhardy, headstrong, willful and wanted to do what I wanted, when I wanted and how I wanted. One of my most vivid memories is trying to go off the roof of the house using an umbrella as a parachute. Mom saw me go out the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor window and raced up to grab me as I was going off the edge. This was one mistake she was not going to let me experience.

I was also the household lawn care specialist and hate it to this day. When my mom passed away, a neighbor lady came up and told me one of her memories. She said the weather was really hot and sunny and I was out cutting the grass. I was pushing the lawn mower with my right hand and holding a

shade-producing umbrella with my left. She said she laughed so hard she had to sit down. Every night I had to share the dishwashing chores with my sister and hated that as well. I also had to take the trash out every night. We had to do our own laundry but mom did the ironing. I even learned to sew and was quite good at it, making a Davy Crocket coonskin cap. I learned to cook as well. My sister and I made a Lord Baltimore cake with 13 egg yolks and used literally every pot and pan in the kitchen. Dad pronounced the cake the best he had ever had and mom threw a conniption when she saw the kitchen mess.

My parents were not really disciplinarians but I did get paddled when I deserved it. One time I did something so terrible that I had to wait until my father got home. I just knew my sister was going to be an only child or I would not be able to sit for a week. So, I took a comic book and put it in my pants. Dad took me into the bathroom for the paddling and when he saw the comic book, he started laughing so hard he had to stop. He took by by my shoulders and said to never do it again and do not ever put a comic book in my pants like that or he would paddle me twice as hard. I lucked out on that one.

I felt as though I could always talk with them about what was bothering me. I talked with my dad about me being bullied at school. His words of wisdom were that if I was hit to hit back. I was and I did and was never bothered again. We had a fireplace and had fires going almost all the time. My drawings of the house would always have the fireplace which I understand is the sign of a loving, healthy and stable household. Ours certainly was.

I consider myself very fortunate to have had the parents and life that I had. I felt loved and tolerated at the same time. I gave my parents many sleepless nights but they were always there for me and I trust I was always there for them. I was a picky eater but could not get my fill of mashed potatoes and gravy. I remember many cold weather Saturday lunches of homemade chili, soda and grilled cheese sandwiches, love it to this day. Comfort food. I loved my parents and didn't realize until years later how smart they really were and I wasn't the genius I thought I was. Reckon all kids feel that way and then one day the epiphany occurs.