

Wilma Daugherty

fragments:

Stories of Another Time



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Stuff Gramma Taught Me

Gramma taught me how to skip! I couldn't get the hang of it. She showed me how to hop on one foot and then the other and go faster and faster and there you are skipping. We must have been a funny looking pair as we hopped unsteadily on our way to school.

Gramma taught school where I attended the first grade. We walked together each morning. We usually sang *Off We Go into the Wild Blue Yonder* or *It's a Grand Old Flag*. If it got late we sang a little faster. If we came to a walk with a hopscotch, we both jumped through it without a hitch and without missing a note. Sometimes we went by way of the field where there was a path which we called (and rightly) Dog Do Alley. If Gramma told me we had to hurry I told her I'd make my legs go in and out faster. Gramma always laughed.

One day I asked her, "What does feisty mean?"

"Feisty, who told you about feisty?"

"Dad said you were feisty." Gramma chuckled. "Feisty, why that means I'm a good gramma."

"Will I be feisty, Gramma?"

"I hope so."

Gramma taught me all kinds of neat things, like how to crack my gum. It's hard to explain about making the gum all flat inside your mouth, then sticking it against your teeth and somehow drawing in your breath. Over and over I tried

and nothing happened, and then suddenly a wonderful pop.

"What's all that racket?" Father asked from the front seat.

Gramma just laughed. "A kid's not worth his salt if he can't pop his gum."

In our backyard she taught me how to make wonderful sounds by blowing through a blade of grass. A thin narrow blade made a weird screech like a cat caterwauling she called it. A thicker blade made a lonely sound like a train going far, far away. That's the sound I liked best, although it could make you happy and sad all at once. A thick blade made a blubbery sound that Gramma said wasn't quite polite.

When we traveled with Gramma, we counted cows. My sister always won. I guess there were more cows on her side or maybe she counted faster. Or maybe I had more cemeteries on my side where I had to bury my cows. One long trip I was way ahead for the first time. We were almost home and we came to this big cemetery. There go all my cows! Gramma looked at me but didn't say a word. A road divided the cemetery in the middle. Gramma turned in and there went all my cows and my sister's cows, too.

"Oops! Wrong turn!" was all Gramma said.

"Could we fly, Gramma?"

"In a plane, you mean?"

"No, like a bird, if we flapped our arms and got a good start."

"We'll never know till we try, will we? We'll climb on top of the chicken coop and look over the situation," Gramma said.

It looked pretty high. "Just in case," Gramma said, "we'll pile straw on the ground for a safe landing."

We stood up there on top of the chicken coop and flapped our arms just for practice. Chickens squawked and our old dog barked furiously. Then we took off. Next thing I knew, we were all tangled up in the straw.

"We flew, didn't we Gramma?"

"We sure did!" Gramma said, and she laughed.

"Are there really elves, Gramma?"

"I never really saw one," Gramma said, "but that doesn't prove there aren't any, now does it?"

"Well if there are elves, where would we find them?"

"In the woods, under a bush very early in the morning."

"Tomorrow?"

We walked hand in hand, very early, the dew still on the ground. "Do you see anything?" Gramma whispered. "Be very quiet, just barely breathe."

"I saw a flash of blue under that bush. Do you think that was an elf, Gramma?"

"It could have been. That's probably nearer than anyone has ever come to seeing one."

"We're lucky, aren't we Gramma?"

If you lie down in a meadow, away from houses and people, and put your ear flat to the ground and close your eyes and be very, very still you can hear a soft whirring sound. Gramma said it was the world going around. We kept that secret, a wonderfully exciting thing to do, like you knew something no one else knew.

... excerpt from Wilma Daugherty's *Fragments: Stories of Another Time*