

Tom Marshall's Weekly News, June 22, 2015

Summer 1933: This nine-year-old was not aware of what was really going on as he “graduated” from the fourth grade at Wilmington Friends School, but here are some remembrances. Even though I had no siblings, I don't know how my parents accomplished all that they did.

In May and early June, my mother would have subjected Auburn Heights to a major house cleaning, which would have included taking up the Oriental rugs, beating them on a heavy clothes line in the yard, and rolling them up for the summer. Smaller “throw rugs” would be put down in their place. Possibly some of the draperies would be taken down and cleaned, leaving only lace curtains at the many windows. Even lighter bedspreads were used during the summer months. The screened doors and window screens would have been brought from the basement, washed, and installed by mid-May. Seasonal awnings overhung the front porch, and outdoor summer furniture and “rope rugs” were conveniently placed for my father's evening cigar or for visiting neighbors. She did have domestic help: one cook/housekeeper and the part-time services of Clifford Murray, the “outside man” who worked at Auburn Heights for 50 years.

In addition to seasonal changes around the house, my mother's rock gardens were in full bloom in May and June but not without work. The big garden at the foot of the hill beyond the present pond (the pond was not built until 1970) was in its first full season, and I remember some early evening entertaining there with pre-dinner snacks served on a rustic patio near the mill race. If this was not enough, the Yorklyn Gun Club was made ready for an Old Timers' Shoot on June 30, and the five-day Marshall tournament in early August. More house cleaning!

The Yorklyn activity was not exciting enough, so about mid-June the family moved to its ocean-front property on Queen Street in Rehoboth. My grandmother Shallcross and her cousin Gertrude Whittock (all in the family called her “Cousin Gertie”) were always invited and had their special bedrooms. Not long after we got settled in 1933, however, the American Legion Post in Kennett Square staged a pageant based on Bayard Taylor's “Story of Kennett” at the Longwood Open Air Theater. My father, heavily involved with amateur photography, was on hand for the dress rehearsal taking pictures (in later years, he gave illustrated talks on the Story of Kennett). This nine-year-old was much impressed with the show and can remember most of the local people who took the parts. All this occurred when we were living in Rehoboth.

The Old Timers' Shoot (on June 30) was the brainchild of my father, and he made every effort to invite prominent eastern shooters who were in their primes when he started serious shooting in 1914. Very successful in accomplishing its goal, it was never repeated. Fortunately, 16 mm. movies on the event have been transferred to DVDs. My father was president of the National Bank and Trust Company of Kennett Square from 1929 to 1938, and during the early Depression years, two Board Meetings were held each week. He would leave Rehoboth about 4:45 A.M. Standard Time, arriving at Yorklyn shortly after 8:00 Daylight Time, and be at the bank well before 9:00. On the return he could leave Yorklyn at 5:00, gain an hour on the clock, and have dinner in Rehoboth with the family before 7:00 P.M. Two or three times each summer, I would make the trip with him. The big straight eight Packards served him well.

In late July, we would move back to Auburn Heights for two weeks. The first week would be preparing for the big trapshooting tournament. The clubhouse had to be thoroughly cleaned, and the kitchen prepared for the serving of hot meals for four or five days. All the cookware, dishes, and utensils had to be hand washed (my mother supervised the women of the Kennett New Century Club who served the meals as a fund-raising project). The kitchen contained two wood-burning cook stoves, two old-fashioned sinks, two long tables, an electric ceiling fan, and fly paper hanging from above. My father supervised the unloading of a railroad box car of clay targets (about 100,000) packed in wooden barrels, trucking them up the hill from the railroad, unpacking them and filling the eight trap houses. All other supplies required for the staging of a tournament were obtained or arranged for.

My hero, 26-year-old Joe Hiestand of Hillsboro, Ohio, won the 500-target “Marathon” that year with a score of 497. He also had a date with my cousin, 21-year-old Lorraine Marshall, who was a waitress in the dining room. Joe was captivated, as were many other young men, but the romance never went anywhere. For many years thereafter, whenever I would see Joe, he would ask for Lorraine. The week after the shoot, we would be back in Rehoboth and stay until just after Labor Day, when we would return to Auburn Heights to “get ready for school.” This was a typical summer for the Marshalls of the 1930s, and one I remember particularly.