

Thoughts From Hugo

Jessie Edie Walker's¹ Memories: II

September 11, 1999

Jesse and Mike Walker went fishing September 11, 1999 at Emigrant Lake. Mike caught one small bass. Dad was skulked.

1930 - 1936 Bed Bugs. I lived at home with my Dad and younger brother, Albert, during my high school days until I joined the Navy in 1936. Albert and I would sleep in the one bedroom and our father would sleep on the couch in the living room. All his other sisters had grown-up, married, and started their own families.

They had trouble with bed bugs in those days. Albert and I just hated to sleep in the house. The first sunny day when it was not snowing or raining we would drag the bed springs and mattress out of the house to the backyard under the tree. Rain did not bother us as we would pull a tarp over themselves and the bed. We would stay outdoors until the snow drove us back inside.

I just hated those bed bugs. Albert and I would pull the bed away from the walls of the room and put the legs of the bed in cans of kerosene, but those bugs would climb the walls and fall onto the bed. They just came out of the walls at night. Those bugger bugs were like vampires; they just liked blood.

1930 -1934 High School Girl Friends. Jesse did not have any girlfriends when he was in high school. He had good friends that were girls, but none that he held hands and all that shit.

One time when he was a Sophomore he was surprised by a girl. A girl clear on the other end of town baked an angel food cake for me for my birthday. Was I surprised, man oh man. I did not think that this girl and I knew each other that good.

Little Electric Carnival Cars. Later in the Navy my girlfriend, Elsie Hlobil, did not know how to drive those little electric carnival cars very well. These little cars seemed to go pretty fast on the wood of their circuit, but there were some narrow places you had to go through. Every time Elsie came to the narrows she would hit the sides and bounce off.

1955 Famous San Francisco Road. There was a windy road in the city of San Francisco that was famous as it was made of brick and had lots of beautiful shrubbery and flowers, but it was very steep. One day all the family went sight-seeing in our modern bath tub Nash to the brick road. It was so steep at the top that I actually stopped the car and got out to see if there was a road there. Everyone laughed, but you could not see any road through the front window of the car at the lip of the road where it started to sharply descend, just air.

1956 - 1960 Howard and Mary Cockran. The Walkers met the Cockrans in the late 1950s as they were both in the chicken business. At the time the Cockrans were living on Highland Avenue in Grants Pass.

1956 - 1959 Jon Whalen Is Baptized Catholic. Ten-year old Jon Whalen was of the Protestant faith when he came to Oregon in 1956. Sometime in the next few years Elsie Walker talked him into being baptized Catholic. I think Howard and Mary Cockran were his god-folks.

1952 - 1954 Rental. Edith Halstead rented the Walker's home sometime during 1952 - 1954.

1956 - 1960 Father Heart. Father Heart would drink wine with my wife Elsie's father, Rudolph Hlobil, and they would talk about the church. He was a good friend, especially during mother's cancer time.

One time Father Kelly was over at the coast on a few days off. Father Heart told Father Kelly that he was going down to Oakland to visit Elsie Walker in the hospital. Father Kelly got mad as hell and when Father Heart came back from California he was fired by Kelly. Father Heart went to a monastery in Portland, Oregon for awhile to figure out what he was going to do. The last time the Walkers heard from Father Heart he had left the priesthood and was on the east coast in Canada.

One time Elsie told Father Heart to please chase the deer out of the garden.

1957? - 19 Newlaid Feed Store Gene Stores (sp?), VanZee (sp?) "Van", and I worked at Newlaid Feed store in Grants Pass, Oregon. Forty-five (45) tons of feed would come to the store in railroad boxcars. The boxcars were divided into three containers so you could get three different kinds of feed if you wanted.

Every month I had to climb way up this ladder to the top of the feed storage containers and measure how much feed they had. I just hated climbing way up that ladder — it was a long ways up there. I had a line that I took with me and I would drop the line down into the container until it hit the feed. There were always slopes in the feed, but if you always measure in one place it would even out over time.

One month I went to Gene after doing his monthly inventory and told Gene, "They never sent us any 40 ton of feed, there is only about 10 ton, maybe, up there in the container." So Gene called the supplier in Eugene and told him about the discrepancy. The guy told Gene, "No we just send you whatever we can. It may not match your order. It might be 5 ton, 10 ton, or what." Before this Gene and I had figured that they were getting up they had ordered.

It was a month or so after that they claimed that we were misplacing or losing feed.

Talley was working part-time with me at Newlaid for over a year. Talley asked me if he would

join the Teamsters with him. Jesse told him, “Hell ya.”

Catholic Church. I liked to go to masses when they were done the old way. I got pretty good at reading the rosary.

There was a big dance in the old St. Annes’s Catholic Church after the Hugo TNT kids went to dance lessons where they had learned the Poka and other types of dancing.

1958 - 1960 Cancer. In 1959 I finally took Elsie [wife] to the Oak Knoll Naval Hospital. I wished I had not took Elsie’s medical records down to Oak Knoll as the naval doctors listened to her doctor in Grants Pass, Dr. Pertzner (sp.). Her naval doctor did not pay any attention to my idea that it was cancer.

She had a general practitioner Navy lieutenant doctor who could not find the cancer lump either. Mother would feel the lump and tell them and they would try to ex-ray the lump, but it would move before they could take a picture. So, she just lay in the hospital.

She finally had an operation at Oak Knoll. “Female trouble” doctors operated on her and opened her up and found cancer. They told the cancer doctors, you got her.

Elsie would end up having surgery and a ostomy bag, her spud-nick. She named it after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957. This was because she could not control her bowel movements and would fart in public.

1951 Troop Ship. In 1951 I went to Japan on a troop ship. “What a sloppy stinking place that ship was.” They had lots of bunks on the ship (four or five bunks high). Guys would be in the top bunks and get sea sick and throw-up all over the floor. So, you were walking through shit all day, everyday. Those floors were never dry after we once put to sea.

1951 Chief Quarters. I lived in Chief Quarters in Japan before my family followed me (wife Elsie, and children Mike, Dale, and Susan). The sleeping quarters was one big room with lots of bunks. The Chief Quarters was another big Japanese building in Atsugi that the Americans had taken over after WWII.

These Japanese buildings had big underground facilities that went down about a 100 feet. They had machine shops down there.

1. Jesse Edie Walker: born 1915 in Iowa, retired U.S. Navy Chief to Hugo, Oregon in 1955; 48-years later he died April 1, 2003, 87-years old in his Hugo, Oregon home. From 1999 interview by his son, Mike Walker.