

# IRENE MARSA REMEMBERS THE NORCROSS TRIBE

3/12/06

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*Walt*  
My memories of the Norcross "tribe" begin with my grandfather, Orin Norcross. I think he was born in Grand Haven, Michigan. My grandmother, Nellie Morse, was from around Montpelier, Vermont. They had four children; Glen, Gerald, Gertrude and Nina. A fifth child, a girl (whose name I can't recall) died at age five from the 1917 influenza epidemic. Grandma used to talk about her often.

Granddad was feisty and wound-up. He liked things to move along on schedule. Grandma was more relaxed and easygoing. When my parents came to visit them, my Grandma would ask my father, "Walty, how much do you weigh?" "Why, one hundred and sixty-five pounds!", he would answer. (I think she always would ask because she weighed the same!) Grandma would laugh and laugh until her top plate of false teeth would drop down!

One thing I remember about Granddad were his fainting spells. Grandma would call up my mother, Gertrude, on the telephone and say "Poppa has fainted - come." My father would crank up our old Ford and pile us in and away we'd go, through our fields to the road below to their house. Granddad would be in the parlor on the sofa, all pale and prone. Grandma would tell us that he ate strawberries which made him faint. I think he had diabetes. Another time, I remember Granddad fainting was when he was driving the horses on the cauliflower planter. My father would keep an eye on him and when Granddad started to weave, my father would make him stop and get off. Granddad loved to drive the cauliflower planter because he was adept at making very straight rows. It takes a very steady hand to drive a cauliflower planter and that's what Granddad had.

Sometimes on Sundays, my family would take Grandma and Granddad to Ball's Head Mountain in Saugatuck for a picnic. This mountain was part of the sand dunes in the area. There was a rope swing hanging from a tree on the top of the mountain. You could grab the rope and swing out high over the ground and then drop down into the sand. One time, Granddad decided to try the rope swing. He grabbed hold of it and swung out. When he was at the furthest point out, he lost his grip somehow and fell. He fainted and his belt snapped! We were all scared for him.

When I was in high school, I liked to work in the garage with Granddad making cauliflower crates. He was a carpenter as well a farmer and could really work fast. He would lay out the sides of the crates and I would nail the slats onto the sides and the bottoms.

Grandma had an interesting pantry. She liked dried codfish, which came in a little wooden box with a sliding cover, which fascinated me. She made codfish gravy with milk which was very good served over potatoes.

When I was around eight or ten years old, Grandma and I would do the dishes after the noon meal. She would then take my hand and say, "Let's go see Mrs. Jones!" Mrs. Jones was her nickname for the outhouse! Once you got there, you would sit down, relax and look at the scenery - there was no need to shut the door!