

Laura's Memories of the Rice Family

Remember, I was the last to arrive to this generation, so my memories might not be as true as facts.

Grandma and Grandpa Rice.

I know that my mom Eleanore adored her father, so I felt bad that I had no good memories of him. Too me he was a skinny old man in a bathrobe, carrying his spit can around. I could hardly understand him because his emphysema was so bad. Grandma Grace was different. She was jolly and fun. I always remember her sweeping the crumbs off the table and counter and calling Tilly, Mike Davis's dog in to lick them up. Something Eleanore would have been totally opposed to.

Eleanore told me a story about Grandpa, who was quite bossy, telling Grandma just how he wanted his funeral done, and Grandma replied, "That's one thing I'm going to run the way I want."

My Dad, Pete, said Grandpa wasn't much for working, and wasn't much of a farmer. That he would rather sit around with the old men and talk about old times. (Of course, he never said that in front of Elenore!) Grandma worked at the canning factory, and also used to go and be a housekeeper at a nearby boarding house during the week, leaving Grandpa to tend the kids.

Eleanore also told me that the Rice's would take in vacationers in the summer. The adults would stay in the house and all the kids would sleep out in the barn or corncrib. They thought it was great fun. The original VRBO? There is mention of these folks in Uncle Bob's memoirs.

I have no memory of the grandparents living in Kibbie. They were living with Aunt Shirley and Mike, on Jones Ave in South Haven. Nancy Gabriel and Dick Ingrahm were living in the Kibbie house. I used to go spend the night with Mitchell and Margaret. One night we played and wrestled all night long, until one of us bumped their head on the window and realized it was morning. They also taught me to eat Purina Dog Chow. They kept a bag behind the kitchen door and we would grab a handful on our way out to play.

Grandma would keep me some days when Eleanore was teaching. Mike would torture me. He'd pin me down, then poke his fingers behind my ears, or in my armpits, or use his knuckles to rap on my adams apple. I guess bad attention is better than no attention.

Aunt Alice and Uncle Gabe Gabriel. I liked going to their house on 68th street. Uncle Gabe was always so welcoming and gentlemanly. Uncle Gabe always kept a big garden. He enjoyed sharing the produce with the neighbors, but said he wasn't going to pick it and take it to them, they had to come and get it themselves. He had a dog named Judy, a German shorthair. Every night, before bed, he'd call her to the kitchen, he'd reach in to get her a Brach's chocolate star. Her treat for the day.

Aunt Alice would sit on her haunches and pull weeds for hours. Mom told me that Aunt Alice was a secretary, born in 1900, was a "flapper" in Chicago. She lived through the Spanish Flu when she was 18 or 19. She had been living in Chicago, and came home with the flu. Grandpa sat by her bedside and spoon fed her liquids to keep her hydrated. Aunt Alice, by the time I knew her, pretty much sat at the end of her couch, smoked cigarettes and read books. She also

helped out at the Red Cross blood drives, back when volunteers did all the intake. She would sit at her typewriter and type up doner cards.

When we Rice's gathered at their house for picnics, we kids would go down to the river and swim. I remember coming up with bloodsuckers between my toes. Also, that Beechnut tree in the yard, always trying to eat them before they were ripe.

Nancy Gabriel Ingrahm Butler Neuman Polzoes, was a lot of fun. Dick Ingrahm was first husband, father of Mitch and Margaret, then Charlie Butler, then Bill Neuman, father of Mary, and lastly Jim Polezoes. A great nurse, smart and fun, and after she retired, she sold her place on 66th street, across from Suttons, and moved to Uncle Gabe's home place in the Ozarks. She didn't get to enjoy that for long, as was soon diagnosed with lung cancer and passed away, Margaret lives there now, with Dan Rumiez, a classmate of mine from South Haven.

Mitchell sold the Kibbie house a few years ago, is married to Donna Onken and they live in South Haven. Their grandkids are in the same preschool as ours.

Uncle Ashley lived in Lansing and Mason. He owned a car dealership. Eleanore told me that during WWII they were looking for intelligent men to come in as engineers and he went in as a non-commissioned officer. When the war was over he just came home and back to business. Uncle Ashley and Aunt "Bert" had one daughter, Roberta, we called Bobbie, but later in life she went by Robin. She married Runyan, and had four kids: Laura, Colleen, Claudia and Charles. Sorry to say, I have lost touch with all of them.

Aunt Elva and Uncle Cal Wheeler: Children are Lois and Jack. Lois was an RN and married to Robert Hess. They had three kids, David, Carol and Kathy. They raised their family in Ft. Wayne Indiana. Jack lived and worked in Sheboygan Wisconsin. The Wheelers lived on the corner of Indiana and Michigan? We used to have our 4th of July picnics at their house. Cooked out in the back yard, Jack always bringing Wisconsin Bratwurst. At dusk, we would all troop down to the South Beach, settle down in the dunes below St. Basils and watch the fireworks.

Aunt Elva had a cat that used the toilet, and could flush it when it was done. My folks often left me with the Wheelers in the evenings and spend the night. I was always happy and welcome there. Uncle Cal was goofy. He would always ask at Christmas, "What did I get you?"

My Dad was with Uncle Cal when he was shot hunting up north. I remember him coming home, walking into Mom's arms and sobbing. A terrible loss of a great friend.

Aunt Nina and Uncle Bill Pryatel. If I have this right....Aunt Nina was engaged to Uncle Bill before WWII, and had silverware engraved with "P", then the war broke out and they split up to go into service. After the war ended, they ran into each other by chance, and this time they got married. Uncle Bill was an optometrist, Aunt Nina, an RN.

Mom told me a story about Aunt Nina when she was stationed on a ship on the East Coast. Eleanore Roosevelt was to visit that ship, and they needed someone to take her on the tour. Eleanore was taller than most women at the time, and they wanted someone close to her height, so Aunt Nina got the job.

They adopted Bill and Faye, and lived in Texas for sometime, before moving to South Haven, and built the house on 73rd St. Next door to Sicard's. That's when we started having Christmas gatherings at their house, because they had the most space. We did have a couple

of Christmases at the Leisure Hall prior to that. After Bill and Faye graduated from high school, they moved back to Austin Tx. My first trip on an airplane was with Mom and Dad on a spring break visit to Austin. I remember going to LBJ's library.

Aunt Nina was the first person to feed me carrot and celery sticks. After the Pryatels retired, they would come up to Michigan with their travel trailer and set up in Pete and Eleanore's back yard. We ran electric and water out to the trailer, and they would use the shower in the basement. Uncle Bill loved to help on the farm, and was especially fond of running the 2010 with the loader, unload bulk boxes of cucumbers, load them on the International and haul the load to Hartford to the packing house. Aunt Nina took long walks on the farm. It was a pleasure to have them living here every summer.

The end came one evening, Faye and then husband Mike Moody were visiting with newborn Joshua. They left Josh with Aunt Nina and went to Sherman's for ice cream. Aunt Nina was in our house with the baby, Uncle Bill was out in the trailer. Dad was in the basement taking a shower, and I was sitting out on the cement steps waiting my turn. A storm was rolling in and as I sat and watched the clouds roiling, I heard what sounded like a train. I ran inside and yelled to Aunt Nina to grab the baby and head for the basement. Just as we got there, the lights went out. Dad came out of the shower, stood up on a stool and looked out the basement window. He said, "the trailer is on its side." We hurried out, called a couple of the young men who were living in the camp to come and help, and they snaked Uncle Bill out one of the windows. Just a little banged up. But that was the end of their summers at the farm.

Uncle Bob and Aunt June. (Look up Uncle Bob's memoirs. If you don't have a copy, I would be glad to send you one.) Uncle Bob was in the 11st Airborne during WWII, and was sent to Korea later to help boost moral. They lived near Fort Bragg. Five kids, Rob, Sharon, Cathy, Maureen and Cindy. I don't have much in the way of memories, other than what Mom told me, but I do remember a Rice family reunion we had back when I was a kid, and the Rices came to stay here at the farm, I think. Uncle Bob was the type of guy who didn't fuss over you, but rather hung back and let you come to him, and Aunt June was just "classy". She always dressed so nicely. We also had a reunion just a few years back, and Rob and Connie came with Sharon. Cathy had already passed away. It was a nice time, Jim and Jan Buck were here as well as my brothers. It was during the harvest, and since I wasn't old enough to remember their memories, sorry to say I wasn't in on much of the discussions.

Aunt Shirley Davis: Aunt Shirley was first married to Harold Buck, and son Jim came from that marriage, then divorced and married Davis, Mike's father. I don't remember any of that, as Aunt Shirley was living in the house on Jones Ave by the time I was 3 or 4. After Mike graduated, she took a job as a Resident advisor of a dormitory at Ferris St. She would stay at our house when she came to South Haven to visit.

Aunt Janis and Uncle Irwin: They always hosted the Thanksgiving gatherings. The two dachshunds, who didn't much like kids and I learned to avoid them. Uncle Irwin gave himself insulin shots while sitting at the dinner table. My Dad enjoyed Uncle Irwin's company and they were both farmers and had that in common. Mitch and Margaret and I would play some crazy game in the dark bedrooms, later letting David Hess join in.

4th of July was moved from Aunt Elva's to any one of the Bennett homes. Susie and Tom Riemer's, or Jane and Gil Denbesten's where we would play many volleyball games then cool off in the swimming pool. One of the last ones I remember was at the Bennet house on 12th

Ave. I think Harold and Besty Cullum may have been living there by then. We played softball in a recently mowed wheat field out in front of the house.

It seems like around that time, the families got bigger, kids grew up and we stopped gathering, as the "Rice's"