

Janet Louise Detter Hippensteel

The Story of My Life

Written in late 2002-early 2003



This is the story of my life as I remember it.

I am Janet Louise Detter Hippensteel, a daughter of George O. Detter and Ethel Mae Lerew Detter. They produced eleven children: Beatrice, Lerew, Anna Lee, Frank, Eleanor, Janet, Dale, Vivian, George, Phyllis Jean, Ethel Mae. My father was a farmer.

We lived on an approximately 250 acre farm. Spring was a busy time, planting wheat and oats and corn. Then came hay making and harvesting the grain. My job in haymaking was to stomp down the hay when it was put up into the hay wagon by the men with pitchforks. Then enjoying the ride back to the barn where the hay was stored. Then came the thrashing of the grain. Mr. Anderson the local farmer owned a thrashing machine and thrashed for all the neighboring farmers. This was also a job of the women as it seemed they always got to our farm around noontime, so we had to feed them which were about 10-15 men and hungry to boot. In the fall the silo had to be filled for the winter so we went through the same routine with mother having to serve a meal. Then the corn had to be husked, thrown in piles and taken into our corn crib, stored for the winter.

After this came our butchering time. My Uncle Harper and Aunt Rosie came to help and brought their tools. This was an all day job. Of course I had

to go to school and couldn't help but I remember some of the procedures. In addition to the hams, pork chops, etc., they made scrapple (my dad made the best) and sausage. We smoked the hams and hung them in the cellar to cure. Pork chops were canned. Next came making apple butter. My grandfather Lerew gave us apples from his fruit farm and a copper kettle to cook the apple butter in. The night before our neighbors, the Crones, came up to help pare the apples and put them in big buckets filled with water. Of course I had to go to school but remember being told that the kettle had to be stirred constantly so it wouldn't scorch. With all these chores over winter was routine. Caring for the animals (pigs), milking the cows and digging out from snowstorms. I did plenty of walking over drifts going to school which was quite a distance from my home.

When I was six years old I went to a country one room school, Mine Bank, drilled for iron ore [magnetite]. My first teacher was William Wallace, a likeable man, and because he thought I was a brilliant student, and in order to shame the 8th grade students, he gave me the 8th grade speller to study and the next day I trapped several of the 8th graders. I don't think they liked me very much. School was sometimes happy and not so happy. Some of the teachers in my estimation were not

teaching material. High school was an enjoyable time for me. I enjoyed being in the plays. I formed a friendship there that had started when I visited my grandparents in Wellsville. Her name is Mildred (Mim) Apple Krone. She lived next door to my Grandma and Pa Detter. We went through Wellsville High, a three year high, and onto Dillsburg High for our fourth year. After High School I worked in a sewing factory and hated it, at Grantham. (??) Then Eleanor and I went to live with my married sister, Bea, in Harrisburg and worked in a sewing factory there. Then Eleanor and I went to evening classes at a business school. I was just ready to go into speed typing when I got a call from Mim to take a position as assistant bookkeeper at Dillsburg National Bank. That finished my business school education. I took the position. Eleanor and I moved home and she went to work at Mechanicsburg Naval Supply Depot. I stayed with the bank until I got married to Clark Allen Hippensteel, Jr., a student at Temple University and recently discharged from the U. S. Army. We lived in Philadelphia with Allen's grandparents, Mrs. Jacob M. Weber. We had a daughter, Laura Lou, who was the apple of everyone's eye. A vary vivacious child and a handful. After graduating from the University, we moved back to Wellsville. Allen acquired a position with the *York Dispatch*. Because the pay was not adequate, he took a position with Metropolitan Edison in Reading. We moved to Dauphin to the Hippensteel family home in Stony Creek. A lovely place to interview nature in all its glory every season.

Because Allen's father was not well we moved back to Wellsville because Mother Hippensteel's parents the Webers were not well and she had to spend some time with them. Laura Lou was about seven at the time and enrolled in school at that time. I became active in Girl Scouts. Allen's father died at this time Allen was offered a position as sales rep with M. Hohner selling harmonicas, accordions, and various instruments. Then Nancy was born. We lived in an apartment in Germantown. We bought a home in Levittown, Pa.,

a Jubilee. After Nancy came John. When John was about five or six we sold our home in Levittown and moved to Newtown into a Victorian 14 room house. Lou spent her [junior and] senior year there and the other two went through grade and high school. I became active in the Episcopal Church, sang in the choir, and was president of the Episcopal Church Women. I am a charter member of Questers (*note: she probably refers to her chapter*).

We moved to York in 1979 [?—I think 1978] and because of Allen's instability I secured a position as sales associate for Bon Ton department store in the women's department. Because Allen suffered from manic depression our relationship deteriorated and he filed for divorce. My mother had first passed away. I lived with my sister Eleanor for a few months until this mess was settled. Then I rented an apartment in York, still working at the Bon Ton.

Three years after my divorce I was diagnosed with Addison's disease, put on medication, and resumed my normal lifestyle. Now I have Addisons Disease, diabetes and glaucoma. I am still able to maintain my efficiency apartment. Activities in the building, church, OWLs (On With Life) at (Betty Woods' church) occasional movies and dinners out.

February 22 [2003] I will be 80. Lou has made plans for me to accompany her and Roy to Tucson to visit Jean and David.

Occasionally my father would go to Lancaster County Livestock market. One time he brought what we called two bucking broncos for us to ride. Their names were _____. Another time he bought a riding horse (Babe) and he rode her in our Wellsville Farmers' Day parade. Quite a display of a man in a derby with a horse keeping time with the band music. My father was a handsome man. This was quite a parade – floats, people in costumes and children in costumes. Each store had a prize for produce brought in by farmers. Our high school class had a stand selling hot dogs, candy, etc.

I went to church in Wellsville. Its name has changed from Evangelical [United Brethern] to Methodist. We had lots of plays at Children's Day and Christmas. Of course, being the ham that I am I was always in them. I also liked to sing and still do so. I sang lots of solos. One time one of the members of the church said she would like someone to sing for some occasion and without my knowledge my mother said, "Janet will sing for you," and so Janet sang.

This is the occasion that I met my husband. I was asked to sing a solo at church and since his mother was directing our choir I went to his house to practice and Allen was first home from the army. We talked and he walked me out to my car and asked me to go to the movies. I thought he was so nice and he played the French horn, which impressed me no end. We started dating and we became engaged the night of my high school reunion.

Summertime was a busy time for my mother. She canned fruits and vegetables. Fruits peaches from my grandfather and vegetables from our garden and truck patch. My mother baked her own bread, cakes, cookies and cinnamon buns. When I came home from school there were lots of dishes to wash but the table was full of goodies – bless her heart with so many people to feed. On occasion we also had hired hands.

In the summertime two highlights – the Sunday School Picnic. We went to Williams Grove Park for the day. An amusement park. Mother prepared food for two meals and since my father didn't drive an auto we made arrangements with a neighbor to take us there and come back in the evening. This was enjoyable because there were many other churches in the county. We enjoyed rides and other amusements in the park. It is still in existence. The other was an evening affair. The Grange Picnic held on a Saturday night with a band playing, usually the Dillsburg Band. A cake walk and seeing and chatting with old friends.

On Sunday afternoon the neighborhood kids would get together in one of our newly mowed fields and play ball. One year an airplane landed in

our field because of engine trouble. It was there for a few days. That's all I know about it. It was a small plane. All I remember her saying when they were starting it, "All the way over, Joe."

I have four lovely grandchildren: David Van Horn, Laura Lou's son; Randi Hippensteel, John's daughter; Laura Lee and Christian Rodemich, Nancy's children. David lives in Tucson Arizona and I plan to visit him in September. Randi is a student at Lehigh Valley College – plans pediatrician. Laura Lee – grade school, piano lessons, trumpet. Christian, 2nd grade.

Christmas was a delightful time this year. I baked and gave away 28 boxes of cookies, had the family here after church Christmas Eve and hosted our family Christmas get-together in January. I made chicken salad, a cake, and baked corn pudding. Alex brought the veggies and dips etc. We had a good time even though the space was small. Lou and Roy came up on the train and John came by auto. Randi and David couldn't make it.

Several years in a row my father had a livestock sale. He bred cows and sows and with the produce from them auction them. That was one way of making income. We sold milk. Every morning the truck would come to pick up our milk which was stored in cooled containers in our milk house. Milk inspectors came to check on the conditions and I remember one whose name was Pfaltzgraff who did not approve of our milk stirrer, that he threw it in the barnyard, and my father, a mild man, did nothing about it but later, thinking about it, if it were me I would have made him go out and pick it up and bring it back, because they wanted my father to use it in the first place. I'm afraid I don't have the tolerance of my father.

One summer there was a glut on the milk supply so they stopped taking our milk for a time. During that time Mother made cheese and we stored it in the attic to age. I can remember it tasted pretty good. Mother was a handy woman. Sewed dresses for us. One time she mended the bottom of a broken lamp with plaster of Paris so it would stand up.

October – Halloween was a fun time for us. We had lots of Halloween parties held in the barn with hay bales to sit on and everyone dressed up and we tried to guess who they were. Of course pumpkin pies, homemade ice cream and lots of other goodies. No one was allowed to smoke or use matches with all that hay around or the barn would burn down. We had a rope on a pulley that we would jump with it from one floor to another. It was a dangerous undertaking and my sister Vivian broke a tooth on it. We made mud pies and put them out to dry. We made a play house and had it all furnished nicely, but during the night it stormed and everything was wet and laying flat. We were unhappy kids.

Our neighbor kids would come to visit us. When it was time for them to come home their mother put a white cloth on her line. Several times the kids would ignore the signal and that resulted in a period of suspension. No playtime for a week at the Detters. One time they were visiting, mother was baking bread. She gave a loaf to Roy Jr. He tucked it under his arm and ran home and I think he hid it from the rest. I don't know if they got to eat any bread or not.

On the 4th of July our neighbors came to our house. We had ice cream, cake, etc. and one of the boys brought firecrackers and put them off. I think they were Roman Candles and those spritzies.

The procedure in making hay. The hay was cut down in the morning after the dew was gone. Then it laid until it was dry. Then a rake driven by a horse was piled in clumps. Then we would go with forks and put them in mounds at which point it was ready to be put on the wagons. That's where my job began. Stomping it down.

Bushels of wheat were sent to the mill to be ground. Mother made bread etc from this. Corn was taken from the ears, put into our ovens to toast, then taken to the mill to be ground into corn meal. Oh that good tasting mush, milk and molasses! Some was put into pans to cool and fry mush.

If you think laundry day is a drag – listen to this. First the wind pump pumped water up to our

reservoir and then water into our pipes in the house – then water in kettles to heat. Take them into the wash house, pour them into a double-decker tub (two tubs) then start the gasoline engine (if you were lucky the first time) to get the machines going. Run them through two tubs and finally rinse tub. Take them out to the line to dry. Bring them in and start to iron. Shirts and dressy dresses had to be starched and dampened. And then you were ready to iron. No air conditioning. Flat irons heated on the stove because when I was very young we had no electricity.

At one time my father had some sort of lighting installed in our house. I remember it called carbide. There was a big tank in the ground at the corner of our yard which was covered with rose bushes. After it was installed it was too expensive to operate so we didn't use it. It was a godsend when electricity was put in as they could go through all the fixtures and made easy. We got electricity in 1946. I was a teen-ager. [??? – in 1946 Mom would have been 23. Maybe she meant 1936?]

This is how the hay was taken from the wagon to be put in the hay mow. First you have a hay fork to grasp the hay which was attached to a pulley (a strong rope) then it was attached to a horse and pulled up into the hay mow. All this required many trips to get all the hay to the mow.

Spring and fall housecleaning. All curtains washed and put on a curtain stretcher until they were dry. All rugs taken out and put on a line and knock the dickens out of them until no dust remained. Floors were scrubbed. Wire springs on the beds were dusted and then all bed clothing washed and dried. Walls were washed down or dusted.

Stove pipes were dusted. Some taken out and hammered on to get the soot out.

It took a couple of days to mow the lawn with a hand mower.

*Janet Hippensteel passed away peacefully
the afternoon of May 25, 2007.*

