

# Secrets of Success

by Dory Rockenbach – February 22, 2006

(transcribed from the original hand-written notes)

Mom and Dad worked as a team. On the surface, it appeared as if Mom "ruled the roost". But Dad was always there when decisions were made.

Because they were both so occupied with keeping all of us busy and fed, the decisions were no doubt made after they retired at night. We could hear conversations in the bedroom adjoining the dining room.

I never heard them discussing our family affairs in front of us. They never revealed any personal problems, or financial, or business problems. Discipline seemed non-existent. The only time I heard Dad threaten us was when he came to the foot of the front stairs when we girls were giggling and talking incessantly late at night in our bedroom. Dad said "If you don't settle down I'll come up there with the board with a nail in it!" Did we believe it?

The only meal that was disjointed was school morning breakfast when we each went to the kitchen to get our hot cereal (oatmeal or cornmeal mush in the winter). Jugs of milk fresh from Lucy our Guernsey cow were on the table together with churned butter and homemade bread. In the event there had been time for us kids to turn the churn, we dipped the bread into bowls of thick cream. If Mom wasn't looking, we sprinkled sugar on the top! Summer breakfast consisted mostly of cornflakes or shredded wheat.

The other meals were structured with each of us in our designated places Philip, the youngest, was between Mom and Dad and I was on Mom's right (as I was next youngest). We weren't sure if "Tuffy" was in this favored position because he needed discipline, or because he was the favorite!

The table was always laid correctly with knife and spoon on the right hand, and fork on the left of the dinner plate. The 72 inch diameter table was covered with an oilcloth. Rarely, a white damask linen cloth was used when the minister and his family came over after church which was the only time I remember prayers being said before we ate. (Also when Phil Taylor was there).

We didn't grab, over reach, or yell at the table. We waited. Decorum wasn't absolute, but Mom and Dad tried! One of the favorite challenges was when we had soup. On a signal from one of the boys we would each eat a cracker and see who could whistle first. What a mess!

Johnny cake was one of my favorites-laden with butter and syrup-and sometimes honey from Wallace's woods or sorghum. Dad used to take wash tubs, copper boilers, and soup kettles across the highway to Wallace's woods and smoke out the bees in a hollow tree. By the time all these containers were filled and ensconced on the screened-in back porch the bees would come to life. What a sweet mess! All the doorknobs in the house were coated in honey. To this day I get heartburn just thinking about eating my fill.

Sunday dinner was always at 1 o'clock. If it wasn't ready Dad would sit there with knife and fork poised for action.

Sunday was also "high tea" with homemade bread and other goodies. The beautiful teapot was loaded with tea leaves, steeped well, and refilled many times over with boiling water. Our well water was reputed to make the best coffee and tea. People even came to fetch jugs of it. But it was horrible for washing dishes and doing the wash.

Although Dad was not a mechanical genius, he had a fantastic workable system of switching from the well water to the cistern in the basement. That rainwater was a sudsy alternative and much appreciated. We were conservators long before the ecologists showed up.

Hard times tips-(not for lazy people)

Save the potato water for breadmaking (or soup).

Save the extra juice from fruit for cobblers or Jell-O.

Save the pickle juice to make salad dressing.

Keep a list on freezer door of contents (especially leftovers).

Empty fridge on garbage day (or eat leftovers).

Dory 2-22-06

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## More memories from Dory

Swimming in Crystal Lake was so special. When we moved there in 1927, I was seven and Liz made us swim suits from woolen dresses she bought at rummage sales. The boys wore cut-off jeans and were not allowed in the water.

Joe taught swimming when an instructor in the Navy. He never had learned to swim!

Liz made costumes for a dancing class while she was recovering from an operation (kidney removal). Those yellow baby chicken costumes

were beautiful. Liz could make anything! The dresses she knit were designer perfect.

We are very fortunate to be part of such a talented and productive family.