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Being wakeful the other night, and my thoughts running vividly back to my boyhood, I made a sudden resolve to write my recollections of my grandfather, Dr. Abraham Lennington Small. There cannot be many people living who remember Dr. Small. My memories of him are sharp enough that I believe they may be of some interest, and that I should record them while I am still here.

I was born in Dr. Small's home, now the Len Small Memorial building. Just what the circumstances were that brought my parents back to my mother's girlhood home at that time, I do not know. My father, David S. McKinstry, had lived and worked for a number of years at Kankakee State Hospital prior to his marriage, and after the marriage they built or bought a home on Kankakee's south side. My sister, Allis McKinstry Klamm was born there. Soon after I was born our family moved back to the State Hospital.

But the old stone house was our second home. My mother, Mable Small McKinstry, was very devoted to her parents. As often as she could, she loaded us children into the buggy and drove us over. It was but a short ride. When I was a youngster, Grandfather must have held me a lot. Quite a number of studio pictures were taken of us, with me first in his arms, then on his lap. Among my earliest recollections are those of sitting on his lap and playing with the massive gold chain he wore across his vest. After Grandfather's death, Aunt Susanne Small, remembering how much I admired the watch and chain, sent it to me in Washington State. It is now in the Kankakee museum.

When I became old enough, I accompanied Grandfather on his walks around his extensive place. He always carried a spade to dig up the burdock plants, which he regarded as an enemy. He told me that even though dug up, if they were left in contact with the ground they would take root again. So he always left them elevated in some manner so that they would dry up and die. I soon became an avid burdock searcher. From what Grandfather told me I believed in my childish

nation that if we did not search them out and eliminate them, they would
ckly take over the place.

We often walked on the winding road that led back into the woods. The woods were dense in those days, and they seemed endless. Grandfather had been in the tree nursery business long before I was born. When he stopped selling trees, they grew up into a forest. The old mule team was pastured in the woods and adjacent grassy areas. Grandfather watered them daily at a big wooden tub near the back door. A family flock of Barred Rock hens occupied the stone chicken house that has now been converted into rest rooms.

One of Grandfather's outstanding attributes was his sense of humor and his deep, hearty laugh. Hearing it, one could not help but laugh with him, whether one understood the joke or not. My sister Allis was particularly successful in provoking his mirth. One day we were out in the yard, looking up at the huge elm tree that, until its death a few years ago from Dutch Elm Disease, was a hallmark of the place. Allis asked, "Grandpa, if you were standing on the tiptop leaf of that tree, what would you do?" "I think I'd take a great big fall", he replied, appreciatively. When she had learned to write, Allis decided to write a note to Grandpa. After much effort she came up with "Dear Grandpa: Turn a handspring, why not?" This struck his funnybone, and that of everyone else present.

I remember hearing Grandfather give the explanation of why, in his belief, the tree had grown so much larger than others. He had planted the tree himself, presumably when he established the home in the 1850's. He had dug a well near it. Later he dug another well on the other side of the house, and capped the first one. Years later, he said, he took the cover off the first well, and on looking in to it found that it was filled with huge roots from the nearby elm. He theorized that the tree's extraordinary growth was due to this special water supply.

Grandfather had purchased a Regina music box before the turn of the century. By the time I was four years old I was allowed to stand on a chair and crank it.

Its tinkling music was part of the charm of the old house. There were no phonographs, radios or television sets to compete with it. This nostalgic instrument also was given to me after I reached adulthood. Now it is back in the old house, and still plays as well as ever. So far as I know, in its seventy-plus years of life, it has never suffered a mechanical breakdown. The mechanism is superbly built.

Since well back in the 19th century, Dr. Small had grown rhubarb commercially. He is said to have originated the process of "forcing" rhubarb indoors. The story I have heard in our family about this is that he had some imported rhubarb roots in his cellar during the winter. One day he noticed that sprouts had appeared on some of these roots, which he found to be tasty and succulent. He found that if watered and placed in a warm but completely darkened room, the roots would produce a luxuriant crop of long, pink stocks, which were very saleable during the winter, when fresh fruits and vegetables were scarce and costly. The leaves on this forced rhubarb were small - almost nonexistent. If any light were permitted to enter the forcing room, the leaves would immediately begin to grow at the expense of the valuable stalks. Daylight had to be completely excluded. Harvesting, or "pulling", was done by lantern light. Grandfather was still engaged to some extent in rhubarb forcing within my memory. The business was carried on by his children and grandchildren, until it ceased to yield any profit, and was abandoned. I still have in my possession the five-foot-long iron poker Grandfather used to stoke the fire in his forcing house, a gift from Cousin John Humrichouse.

Even after he found rhubarb forcing, with its fire-tending, lifting of the heavy roots, etc., too strenuous for him, Grandfather continued to grow outdoor rhubarb on a rather large scale. The only really heavy task, harvesting, could be done by hired help. He had plenty of trouble with this help, however. The seasonal, short-term job seemed to attract the least desirable element. If any had latent rascality in their makeup, harvesting rhubarb seemed to bring it out. To us children, Grandfather was the kindest, gentlest man we had ever known. But

to those who tried to cheat him, he was a tower of sternness.

Each harvester, or "puller", was supplied with empty crates, into which he fitted the stalks after pulling them and whacking off the leaves. Payment was on a piecework basis, by the crate. It took a lot of stalks to fill a crate, and some pickers would eye the big, hollow seed stalks that stood in the middle of each plant. Avarice getting the better of them, they would cut these worthless objects into lengths and fit them into the crate, covering them with rhubarb stocks. Wise to this trick, Grandfather would walk down the rows, hefting the filled and partially filled crates. If he found one that was suspiciously light-weight, he would dump its contents on the ground, and if there were seed stalks in it, would "fire" the worker on the spot.

A mule was used to pull a small wagon that carried the empty crates out to the field, and the full ones back. Finding a competent driver was not easy. One day Grandfather told Mother that he had just hired a "green nigger" to drive, and was now going out to see how he was getting along. Allis and I clamored loudly to be taken along. But on arriving on the scene, we were crestfallen to see that the "green" man was black, like all the other Negroes we had seen.

After Grandmother died, Grandfather lived alone, or Aunt Susanne kept house for him if she was there. She was in Paris for several extensive periods. I remember an incident that occurred while he was keeping house for himself that appealed to my childish sympathies as being particularly poignant. It had been prearranged that we would stop at his house and take him with us to view a Memorial Day parade. On arriving at the house we could not see him anywhere. We called inside the door, and called again loudly in the yard. Father and Mother decided that through some misunderstanding he had gone with some other family party. So we drove on to town, saw the parade, then returned to Grandfather's house. He was standing at the door, and on seeing us said, "I'm ready", picked up his hat and came out to get into the buggy. My parents had the painful duty of telling him that the parade was over. Missing a parade meant but little to him, of course, but

it is a measure of child psychology that I regarded this as a real tragedy. To a child, I still remember, having some planned and looked-forward-to pleasure suddenly cancelled, was no small thing.

In the late winter of 1908-9, Father went out to Washington State to negotiate for land on which to plant an orchard in that booming new country. This left Mother and us three children alone. We were living in the Henry Mensing house, a few blocks north of Grandfather's. Because of uncertainty of their plans, my parents did not want to break up housekeeping and move in with Grandfather, so we stayed on in the little house. Grandfather insisted that for protection Mother must take his revolver, a weapon with which she had had no experience whatever. So Grandfather undertook to teach her its operation. Mother, my sisters and I gathered in the big dining-living room of the old house. Grandfather had us stand at a safe distance, while he pointed the gun away from us and started to manipulate it. Suddenly there was a thunderous roar as the weapon discharged. Grandfather said something like, "See, I told you it was dangerous". He was relatively calm, but the rest of us were thoroughly scared. He must have pulled the trigger, since a revolver does not fire of its own accord. The bullet went through a cupboard door on the south side of the room. It was never repaired, and I noted it many times in later years. Unfortunately, the workmen who converted these cupboards to glass doors in the restoration of the building did not know the significance of the bullet hole, and the panel was not saved.

An early mechanical device of considerable historical significance that was also lost in the restoration was a "thermal" engine in the basement that Grandfather used to pump cistern water to the attic storage tank. Thermal engines utilize the power of expanding air to drive their pistons and develop power. Because their efficiency was low, they never competed successfully with the "gas engine" (the internal combustion engine). They are a scientific curiosity and collectors' item today. Because I was always interested in anything mechanical, Grandfather one day fired up his engine just so that I could

Father did buy the orchard land, and in the spring of 1909, when I was seven years old, our family moved to Washington State. This was a big step for a family whose members had never lived anywhere but in northern Illinois. Grandfather was as fond of my sisters and myself as we were of him, I believe, and leaving him was one of our major regrets. After much preparation we finally entrained in early May, wondering when we would ever see our beloved Grandpa again. But to our great surprise and pleasure, we saw him again that same fall. Three generations of Smalls, Grandfather, Uncle Len, and Cousin Leslie decided they would like to see our country for themselves, and on short notice came out on the train and upriver on the steamboat. What a reunion that was! They were there for only a short time.

But the next spring Grandfather decided to come out and see us again, alone. He was nearly, if not quite 80 years old, presumably in good health, but not robust. He became ~~sick~~^{ill} on the way out, and was a very ~~sick~~^{sick} man when he arrived at the ranch. It was midsummer, and our summer weather could be very hot, (though never humid). The heat of the day was very hard on him, but he always felt better when the evening brought cooling breezes. He later said that it was the cool nights that saved his life. Mother dropped her heavy schedule of work to nurse him, and he slowly regained his strength. We have pictures of Grandfather at the orchard on that visit, particularly one of him standing by the Sweetbough apple tree, in his characteristic stance, straight but leaning slightly forward. He loved those summer apples, as did I at that time. He returned home after a few weeks, his health and strength at least partially restored.

The following winter, Mother received an earnest plea from Grandfather to return "home". Aunt Susanne was overseas again, and he was alone. He wrote Mother that if she and Father would give up the orchard and return to take care of him during his remaining days, he would reward them well by leaving them a major part of his extensive real estate holdings. My parents could not bring themselves to give up their dream of an orchard empire in the Pacific Northwest. Much of the land was cleared. The fruit trees were growing in nursery rows.

The pumping plant for irrigation had been ordered. Besides, Father had five partners in the venture, whom he felt he could not let down. In two years of western life, we had all become enthusiastic "Westerners".

But the picture of Grandfather's being alone and not sufficiently well cared for in his declining days could not be put aside, so a compromise was reached. It was agreed that Mother and we children would go back to Kankakee and stay with him until other arrangements could be made. After a tedious train ride to Chicago, we changed to a train for Kankakee. But instead of getting an Illinois Central train, which would have put us off only a mile or so from the house, we somehow boarded a "Big-Four" train, that dropped us a good two or two and a half miles away. The hour was about 2:00 A. M. No one knew we were coming at this particular time. No streetcars were running, and no taxi was available. There was nothing for it but to walk. Sleepy and tired from the trip, we children made hard going of it, buoyed up only by Mother's reassurances that very soon we would see Grandpa.

Aunt Susanne had returned home, and it was she who greeted us at the door after much pounding, at about 3:00 A. M. She insisted that Grandpa must not be awakened, so we tried to go through the long upstairs ^{hall} quietly to our beds. But Grandfather called out, "Who's there?", and in a moment we were in his room, being hugged in turn by the wonderful old man in the white nightshirt and with the long white beard. All our fancied ills from the long trek disappeared in an instant.

In the days that followed it seemed as though the clock had been turned back. We took up our life there much as we had left it two years earlier. Now there was a question whether Mother was needed, since Aunt Susanne was back. But Grandfather wanted us to stay, and tried to arrange a life for us. I was to go to the postoffice every day to get his mail. But at nine I was not very self reliant, and was afraid of the bigger boys who tested me with taunts as I passed them on the way. The rhubarb harvest was under way. Grandfather wanted me to take part in it, but about all I was qualified to do was post myself in

the barn loft and slide new crates down a ramp when called to from below. I was not even very good at this, and went to sleep on the job, until awakened by loud and exasperated shouts from the men below.

But in all other respects the life and the association with Grandfather was idyllic. One of my favorite pastimes was rescuing bees from the watering trough. Honey bees were plentiful, and in their efforts to get water from the trough many of them fell in and foundered helplessly in the water. I provided each one with a life raft -- a chip of wood. They crawled up on it, and when dry enough, took off. One stung me, which I didn't think was showing proper gratitude. As they tested their wings, they propelled their rafts over the water surface, making them miniature power boats.

By now Uncle Len and his children had fast Kissel-Kar automobiles. Grandfather and his guests enjoyed unforgettable rides through the countryside in them. So far as we were concerned, the horse and buggy era had ended in Kankakee. At our home in Washington it was not to end for another five years.

But Father was sending appealing letters to Mother to return, and in a few weeks this strange interlude was to end. We bid goodbye to Grandfather with regret. None of us would ever see him again. Three years later, in 1914, came telegraphed news of his death, a peaceful one. Later we received the Kankakee paper telling in greater detail of the gentle expressions of the old gentleman to his family, asking them not to mourn too much for him. To me, his spirit lives on in the old house.

I am indebted to a Nevada editorial writer who recently quoted the words of Ralph W. Sockman, which I would like to apply with great sincerity to Dr. A. L. Small: "Gentleness is a divine trait; nothing is so strong as gentleness, and nothing is so gentle as real strength".

Bruce L. McKinstry

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