

Occasionally I've mentioned that I'm a 1959 graduate of kindergarten from West Concord Elementary School. It was the same year my big sister Karolyn graduated from WC High School. Back in those days we had six weeks of kindergarten. We started in mid-April and then ended with all the big kids at the end of the school year. There was morning kindergarten, which I was a member and there was afternoon kindergarten. The teacher that year was Mrs. Osborn.

The picture to the right is the morning kindergarten class of 1959. I'm the one in the back right. If you scroll all the way to the bottom of this column I'll have the picture again with the names of most of the students pictured. This was an old Polaroid picture that took a beating over all these years.



This is the picture Mrs. Osborn gave to each kindergarten student in 1959. You'll notice my cursive writing of Mrs. Osborn's name on the picture.

I did not really know a lot about my teacher. Even all these years later I did not really know much about Mrs. Osborn. That changed recently when my classmate, Joan Rundquist Lindstrom, shared with me a writing of hers about her Aunt Bet. Betty May Osborn used to be Betty May Rundquist, daughter of Alvin and Edna Ellen Thomas Rundquist. Betty was the 3rd of 6 children. Robert was the oldest followed by Mary Alice, Betty May, Gerald, Royce and Alan. Joan is the daughter of Royce and Cherie. Cherie's maiden name was Glarner.

I only had Mrs. Osborn as a teacher for six weeks and only for a few hours each morning of those six weeks. And with 32 kids in this particular class, there just wasn't much time to get to know the teacher on a real personal level. That changed a little when I read what Joan wrote about her Aunt Bet. I asked Joan if I could share this story in the Messenger as I know many of you remember Betty and Clayt. My thanks goes to Joan for sharing this

personal story.

She entitled it *'Remembering Aunt Bet'*

Betty Osborn was my godmother. She held me when I was baptized as an infant. The photograph taken on that occasion shows a radiant smile as she looks into my face. Uncle Clayt stands close to her.

She taught me how to speak Pig Latin shortly before my family moved from Rochester to West Concord. It was her way of calming my flitting butterflies. As a fourth grader, would I know enough? Would I be smart enough? Would I have anything to say to kids I didn't know?

I was soon giggling with delight as Aunt Bet dialogued with me in my newly acquired language, "ig-pa, atin-la." She was an expert at making me feel smart; I was her godchild. I wasn't scared on day one at my new school.

Every summer Aunt Bet invited me to her and Uncle Clayt's farm to spend a full day cleaning her bedroom drawers and jewelry chest. My nine-member family was a beehive, but I was Queen for the-Day at Aunt Bet's house. My job consisted of removing all lingerie, nightgowns, and stockings from the cedar drawers. Then I used a damp cloth and a dry cloth to wipe the insides, fold and smooth each one flat, and finally place each piece in its place.

After cleaning the drawers, I spread Aunt Bet's jewels on her bed. As a kindergarten teacher, she daily wore bright beads, earrings, and pins. Even brighter were her ruby lips and flowing laughter. She didn't rush me as I tried on all her treasures; I was her godchild.

For our lunch break, every space on the round kitchen oak table was covered with food. I liked the elegant bear-claw table legs, too. Clayt and Bet were court jesters, cracking jokes one after another until my sides hurt. Finally came dessert: frisbee-sized cookies piled high on a blue-tinted glass plate. And I could have as many as I wanted.

Many years later she wrote me a note: "Thanks for all the special cards and encouraging messages. The last chemotherapy treatment has left me with a touchy stomach. I do lots of sitting with a bucket in front of me. No picnic." That was all she said about her suffering. She added, "Your folks enjoyed your night out to see A Prairie Home Companion and the fancy meal. It means a lot to parents to have their children do special things for them." She was an expert at the art of love, especially imagining herself in another's shoes. Aunt Bet was my godmother.

Three months later her I visited her at the farm. Her skeletal frame was visible through her bedclothes. She could only eat a few spoons of Gerber's baby food at a time. I remembered how she used to joke about her clothes shrinking two sizes and that she would need to get out the sewing machine. Her smile was weak, but her eyes were bright. As I held her hand, I remembered what she had written in my autograph book when I was a little girl: "Life is easy when it flows along like a song. But the girl worthwhile ... is the girl who can smile ... when everything goes dead wrong."

A few days later she wrote another note: "The radium is burning my skin so I am uncomfortable. I'll be very glad when this is all over. My doctor tells me that it will return. Faith, hope, and love will help me to win each battle as it comes."

A few days before she died, Aunt Bet told me that Gabriel would very soon be coming to take her home. She spoke with such strength, peace, and matter-of-factness. Then she asked me to look in the box on the dining room table. A paper towel was wrapped around each dish, goblet, bowl, candle stick, and serving piece. She explained that each piece, called "Caprice," had been a wedding gift to her and Uncle Clayt. Aunt Bet said she would feel honored to know I would use the entire set.

I could think of nothing to say but "thank you." We held each other for a long time. I was Aunt Bet's godchild, and she was God's child.

Joan Rundquist Lindstrom

Aunt Bet's morning kindergarten class of 1959



Front row left to right: Joel Sackett, Richard Eichens, Steve Johnson, unknown, Mark Gillard.

2nd row l to r: Barb Johnston, Cheryl Finsteun, Bruce Hanson, Jim DeFlieger, Bob Kolb, Kyle Benson, unknown, Colleen Courson.

3rd row l to r: Karen Hubner, Carol Hythecker, (you see we weren't good at making rows)

4th row: Cindy Henry, Bonnie Everts, Denise Putrah, Karl Flormoe, Chris Sathrum, Sherell Benson, Mary Kay Roberts, Doug Rhodes.

5th row: Dan Granger, Betsy Crouch, Vickie Urch, Crystal Paulson, Helen Gillard, Darwin Lund, Matthew Fellows, Steve Ray, Emery Kleven.

Below is the venerable school house where 'Aunt Bet' taught. Her kindergarten room was on the upper level on the far right of the building (North end). Picture is from 1957.

