

PEACHEY FAMILY STORIES

AS WE TOLD THEM

Edited by Jane Lind

INTRODUCTION

I think of the term "home-coming" as a special name for our family gatherings. I've always had the impression that other families have reunions, but we have home-comings. The name for our gatherings probably originated when my older brothers and sisters were away, and came home, and certainly at first our get-togethers were at our family home.

The family stories in this collection are those we have told over and over throughout the years. I decided to keep them as close to the oral telling as possible. In fact, I placed them in this collection according to which year we told them, which means there is some repetition. But I enjoy seeing how we tell the same stories a different way at a different time. The story of our Bender ancestors coming to the United States is an example.

I decided to use a three-ring binder format so that we can easily add our stories later on--and we can also make corrections if I misinterpreted anything in the editing.

For future generations who might not know who is who, at the end of the stories I listed "the siblings," those high-spirited people born to Salome Bender and Shem Peachey.

Long live our stories, and those who told them!

--Jane Lind
Rockwood, Ontario, Canada

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FAMILY STORIES

1985 FAMILY HOME-COMING

PAUL'S SHEEP STORY

Mark was two years older than I and we did a lot of things together in our childhood and youth. We had one experience that we didn't tell our parents for many years--I'm not sure if we ever told them. On our farm, which was of the Old MacDonald kind with a variety of fowl and four-footed beasts, one of our projects was sheep. The lambs and wool were important sources of a little cash that a farm like that brought in then, but one of the plagues of the sheep industry was the stray dogs that roamed around in the spring and killed lambs. I think one spring five of our lambs were killed by stray dogs, a serious blow in a small flock. In some cases these dogs did belong to someone, but sometimes they really were strays. We knew who the one owner was, and we considered him an irresponsible neighbour.

We had two guns on our farm, a 22-rifle that we used at butchering time to shoot pigs. The other one was a shotgun that came from an auction, a double-barrelled shotgun with only one barrel working. One day when Father was away and Mark and I were

working one of these dogs showed up behind the barn. We went for the gun. Mark, of course did the shooting because he was older--I was probably eleven. He shot the dog, which went into a circle, whined and rolled over and died.

Now we had a much bigger problem, because we were pretty sure it was the neighbour's dog, and if it was, we were in serious trouble. And we knew if Father found out about it, he would have to face the neighbour. What to do?

Well, there was time for us to dig a grave in the orchard. We knew if the dog had no license on it we were clear, because the county had "dog catchers" who would come around and look after stray dogs. If you shot a dog without a collar or license, you were in the clear. But this one had a collar and a license. So what to do? Now, I don't advise children to keep things like this from their parents, but we did not tell them. We kept the collar and license for many years, and I do not remember whether we ever told our parents about it. Nothing came of the whole thing, but we had one less dog eating our lambs.

LABAN'S COW STORY

This story is from the summer when Anna and Ruth and I were looking after the farm--I was seventeen or eighteen. We had a field we called the "hivel felt," the hill field, which we used for the cows' night-time grazing. It was above the farm buildings, and routinely we would take the cows out there after

milking. They knew the way and went on their own. On the back side of the barn we had barn doors that hung on rollers and we often had these doors open behind the barn. After doing the chores, we were in the house and the cows were in the field. We had one brown, long-legged cow named Sally. She was an individualist, and she often left the herd to explore things.

One evening after supper I went to the barn and finished up some work and closed the barn doors as usual. I turned on the barn light and away over in the corner I saw two things moving. I went closer and closer. Soon splinters started to fly and then manure with them, and something was kicking. Sally had broken through the floor with her front feet. What in the world will I do? How will I get her back up? It wasn't necessary. The logs supporting the barn floor boards were close together. She kicked some more and came down through the narrow opening and flopped on the long side of her belly right down to the floor. I don't know, I imagine she thought she was being reborn, but I wondered if she would die. I was filled with consternation. Finally, she got up. I penned her into the orchard behind the barn. Later I went out to make sure she was all right.

The next morning I just happened to wake up early and went out, found a few boards, nailed them over the holes and scattered some lime, fertilizer and dirt over them to make it all look like antiquity. The cow survived and there was no harm done.

ESTHER'S CHICKEN STORY

Laban and I raised chickens. One winter for some reason the brooders stopped working (A brooder is a stove with wide, horizontal "wings" that keeps the baby chicks warm. The chicks hover under it--it's a modern hen.). The chickens crowded together in the chicken house was cold, and often if they do that some get killed. There was a flood.

LABAN: I tell this as I remember it. The chicken house was a two-storey building. It was winter time and there were no chickens in the second floor area. I was making some plumbing repairs and also doing something down below. The chickens had enough heat to keep them warm, so in the meantime, I was trying to repair something. I needed a plug to plug the pipe and could not find any. There were no chickens upstairs, the water was frozen, so I took the plug off. I made the repairs and somehow forgot about the removed plug and forgot about the sunshine falling on metal and that evening I came to feed the chickens and saw the water dripping. Chickens were huddled in the corner and everything was wet, and I thought, "Oh, the plug! The water thawed." I think I talked Esther into helping me.

The family was going was going somewhere on a Saturday evening and the chickens were old enough that we were going to move them to another house before long, but not quite yet. So that evening when everybody was gone, we got the tractor and the little wagon, gathered up all the chicks and moved them. Later I

told mother, I decided to move the chickens!

ESTHER: I think we had several similar experiences because the one I remember--it could have been the water--for some reason when we moved the chickens there were many that did not make it. I mean, there were lots of them, and the family were at home! So we had to do some fast-tracking and we had to watch while we fast-tracked to the manure pile, hands full of chicks, and covered them up with manure. This was serious. We never told Papa.

ANNA: Father was ready to give up on raising broilers. We were so poor and he wanted so desperately to raise broilers. They had coccidiosis and they were dying like everything and Papa said, "We will do it one more season." That was the time Esther was hiding out.

ESTHER: Laban for some reason would sometimes get uppity with me so what I did--I needed him to help me and so to keep him from tattling on me about things I did, I said, "Ah, ha, remember the chickens!"

LABAN: I learned later that is bribery.

ESTHER: It worked.

ELLEN: A point is being missed. In those days children really had--and took--responsibility. It was your job. You had to solve your problems.

URBANE'S TRACTOR STORY

When I was sixteen, our parents left the farm, moved from Grantsville to Lancaster County. Several years later, things were not going well at the farm and someone had to go back there and look after it. We had chickens and hogs and milking cows. I went back on the farm and during that time I usually had my dinner at Mark and Fannie's place and my suppers twice weekly at Lois and Allen's place. I always remember those meals.

Then the time came when we decided to sell the farm and I was responsible to get everything together. During the preparation, I had to get the tractor repaired so it could be put on auction. I was preparing to take the tractor to Meyersdale to the repair shop. I do not recall the details but I was to load the tractor on a truck, and I had a close call.

It was a frosty morning and I was using wide planks for a ramp for getting the tractor onto the truck, and these planks were covered with frost. Now you have to know that in that part of the country, there is no place that is level. Even in the grave, you lie on a slope! So on our farm there was no flat place. I was backing the tractor on the truck and, fortunately, for some reason the brake pedals were unlocked that morning, which meant I could work the brakes for the two wheels independently. I had my right foot firmly on the brake, backing on, but the tractor started to slide. I had only inches to work with. Somewhere early in my tractor career, as the rest of you did who had experience with tractors, I learned how to control

the movement of the tractor just with the nuance of my foot. The tractor went into a slide. The front end started sliding, and that is how I saved my life. That is how I kept the tractor from going down over the side of the truck just by controlling the brake pedals. If they had been locked I would not have had independent action to control the brakes. I worked the brakes almost intuitively--there was not much time to even think about it.

THE STORY OF THE BENDERS COMING TO AMERICA

PAUL

Between the cities of Marberg and Castle in West Germany, there was a little village called Hesse. Two hundred years ago, the Church kept census records and records of births and baptisms. This was before the State took on the task of keeping records of statistics, so if you wanted to look up your ancestors you would look in the old church books. The problem with our ancestors was that they were not entered because they were not baptized as infants so you would find a gap in the family records when they joined the Anabaptist movement.

LABAN

The best we can tell is that they, along with others, were employed by the princes or the small rulers before Germany was

united by Bismarck into a nation, so they were the farmers renters, or tenants. It was a time of social unrest, including heavy taxation and conscription to the military, so the Bender family sent their fourteen-year-old son overseas as an indentured servant to avoid military conscription. He had to pay the shipping company for his travel after he arrived and he was not a free man until he had paid the charges by working. He landed in Baltimore in 1829.

A man named Kinsinger, a Mennonite who migrated here and was on the boat going to Grantsville, Maryland, told an Amish bishop "One of your boys is in Baltimore at such and such a place." The Amish bishop saddled two horses, rode 180 miles to Baltimore and paid the indentured fee and picked up this young Bender and hired him. He probably worked to pay off the debt. Young Bender ended up marrying one of Kinsinger's daughters and they had many children when she died. We are not descendants of that marriage. He remarried a woman named Petersheim, and we are descendants of the second marriage.

PAUL

I am not sure if the Bender boy was sent by the family, or if he just felt he did not want to serve in the Prussian army. At any rate, he came to escape the draft. Emigration was becoming widespread in Europe, and the expectation was that the rest of the family--parents, brothers and sisters--would come later. Eventually he established a farm, the one now at the end of our

lane. He built the house there, which we call the Clyde Ash farm.

LABAN

My understanding is that in the 1830s a second brother came and they together raised money on this side and sent money to Germany to help cover taxes. They were heavily taxed in those days by their government, and raising money was difficult.

Part of the story that is always moving to me is that when the rest of the family came from Germany, they travelled by boat to Cumberland. Then they had to find their way to the farm, and I'm not sure how they did that. They walked from Cumberland to the area between Springs and Grantsville where their son lived. They inquired along the way how to go. They had no money and no food. They stopped at a farm, and the people there let the Bender family sleep in the barn and gave them bread and potatoes. They ate the potatoes in the evening and saved the bread and ate it the next morning. The next afternoon they walked twenty-five miles across the country and arrived near where great grandfather Bender finally settled.

Now Wilhelm and his family had been saving a fatted calf to kill when the family arrived. Because they didn't show up, Wilhelm gave up waiting one day and killed the fatted calf. That evening Wilhelm's family saw some people walking across the field, but there was one too few if it was the rest of the family from Germany. The father had died meanwhile, which was one reason for their delay.

PAUL

Apparently there is some mixing of stories here as would be inevitable. Jump down another generation to your grandfather, our father. He used to, with great pride, look at his growing family, eventually ten, and loved to quote the Old Testament statement of Jacob who commented on the fact that he had left as a fugitive and then came back later on with a big family, tribes and flocks, and the favorite statement of father (Shem) was: "I came across this brook with only this staff, now I have become two companies." I am sure if he would see the crowd here tonight he would say this again with some real feeling.

COW STORIES

ESTHER

There was a time when Papa was always going to Kansas to preach. He had to leave the farm in the hands of his children when he was gone. When an older brother was getting ready to go off to school, a younger brother was chaffing at the bit to take over to be the manager. And the younger brother was giving older brother hell about cows' tails and all kinds of things.

LABAN

In 1940 Paul went to school. I was thirteen. Being next son in the line-up, I had major responsibilities for feeding cows when

Father was off the farm.

I don't know if Paul remembers this story. I'll explain that in the barns the cows stood in rows with gutters behind them to catch the ah...

ESTHER: Drippings.

LABAN: Our stable was not level so there were places where moisture accumulated. Paul read the dairy papers and wanted the cows to have nice bushy tails, so he would curry them. And we had this one Jersey cow named Jenny that was sort of a laid-back cow--she laid her tail back in the manure! And then if somebody walked by she swished her tail. I used to recommend to my older brother that he trim these tails short--a more pragmatic thing and get rid of all this fancy bushy tail so there would be less of this manure-slinging kind of thing. Well, he being the manager, and I being the little brother, I had no influence on how the cows were groomed.

I do not remember analyzing my motives--that came after the fact, and as a sort of a revelation to me. The evening before the morning you were to leave for school, Paul, I took the sheep shears, which was the cutting tool, and cut this cow's tail down to just a stump and so there was no bushy tail on it anymore to prevent her habit. I could just as well have waited until the next day. However--was I eager to get a rise? The next morning Paul came to the barn and looked at this thing and said, "I see we're under new management."

JANE'S HILLIGAS STORY

We had in our neighborhood a hobo or tramp named Hilligas. Our parents were very kind to him. I think I remember mother serving him his breakfast on a beautiful blue glass plate that I did not get to use. Whether that part is fact or fiction, I'm not sure.

Hilligas had an uncouth habit of hawking and spitting. Now, our porch was very long, and when he arrived you could hear him coming, clump, clump, hawk-spit, hawk-spit. We always knew when he was coming. I was scared of him and Esther was too.

One day Esther and I were in the house alone and it was dark. It was about 6:30 in the evening and everybody was out doing the chores except us. We heard the noise--clump, clump, hawk-spit. Of course, he got closer and closer. We ran to our parents' bedroom and hid under the bed. From there, we heard the kitchen door open. Our house had an outside door into the kitchen and an outside door into the dining room. After we heard the kitchen door, we heard the lid of a pot on a stove rattling. Usually there was corn mush or vegetable soup simmering on the back of the stove. After the noise from the pots, we heard Hilligas going out the door and back across the porch again, clump, clump, spit, spit. We waited under the bed for a while until everything was quiet, and then we came out.

When the others came back to the house we told them that Hilligas came into the house and rattled the pots on the stove.

Then Anna came from the barn singing, and we told her that Hilligas was here, and she couldn't keep a straight face. She burst out laughing. "I got you, I got you!" It was Anna pretending to be Hilligas to scare us.

RUBBER DOLLS

ESTHER: The rubber doll for Urbane. For some reason he hated the old-fashioned rubber dolls.

URBANE: And rubber gloves. I still don't like rubber dolls.

ESTHER: Why?

URBANE: I prefer living dolls.

FREEMAN MILLER'S STORY ABOUT FINDING TRACES OF RUTH IN
PHILADELPHIA

A couple of years ago I was sitting in my office in Philadelphia where I am pastor of a church. I get all kinds of phone calls, and I never know who will be on the other end of the line.

This time it was a cranky lady. She wanted to know if I was a Mennonite pastor of a Mennonite church. She had found my name somewhere in a phone book. I said, yes, we have a church here in Philadelphia. She asked all kinds of questions and when she found out the church was in a Black neighbourhood she asked, "Are you sure you are a Mennonite because there are no Black Mennonites."

I said, "Oh, yes, there are. There are quite a few." She said you can't have Black Mennonites because you have to be born

a Mennonite." I said, "No, you can get in in some other ways."

She went on asking questions. She asked me how many Mennonites there are. I said, "Do you mean in America or in the world?" She said, "In the world." I said I don't know for sure but I could look it up. She said, "I don't know about you if you don't know that. I don't know if you are a Mennonite minister or not."

She went on. "My parents were Mennonite. I used to be a Mennonite. I have a cousin at Temple University. That is not far from where you are."

I said, "Yes, four blocks away."

She said, "I'm going to ask my cousin to check you out and see whether you are really a Mennonite and whether there is a church in North Philadelphia." She gave me the name of this person. I called and went to see him. When I got there, he closed the door to his office and we began talking. He was Director of Planning at Temple University, the university president's right-hand man. We talked for about an hour. He was born of Mennonite parents who had come from Russia but his father was no longer living. He had left the Mennonite church. I asked him, since he was in education, whether he had ever heard of Laban or Paul. He said, no, but he knew a Ruth Peachey. He said she used to be one of my students over at University of Pennsylvania. We found out that Ruth had even adopted his mother as her adopted mother while she was in medical school and she still stops by sometimes. His

name was Herman Niebuhr.

I found out about all this just because his cousin, who has some mental problems and makes weird phone calls and runs up phone bills, called me one day asking me to visit her cousin.

THE STORY OF SHEM AND SALOME'S WEDDING

PAUL: About ten miles east of here (Camp Albryoca), on old Route 40, is the place where the ancestors of those of us here tonight were married on January 2, 1916. Two counties spanned the community where our parents lived, Allegheny County and Garrett County, both in Maryland. There were also two county seats, one was in Cumberland and the other in Oakland. People would go for official papers to either one as they had opportunity. It turned out that they had the opportunity to go to Cumberland to get the marriage license, which was in Allegheny County, when they should have gone to Oakland, the county seat of Garrett County in which the church was located where they were to be married.

They came to Maple Glen Church on a Saturday morning at ten o'clock, which was customary for weddings then. It was to be an all-day affair. They were going to have the wedding service at the church and then go home for the wedding dinner for the guests that had been invited. The good bishop, Salome's uncle Chris Bender, opened the license envelope and looked at the license and said, "I can't do it here. This has been issued in the other county." So what to do?

They improvised very quickly--I'm not sure whose clever idea it was, that they would have the service at the church, but the actual vows would be exchanged seventeen miles to the east on Route 40 on the county line. This was during the time of transition from horse and buggy to automobiles, and there were just a few automobiles available. They quickly hired two automobiles, took the whole party these seventeen miles down to the Allegheny County line. In the middle of the road, January 2, 1916, the ceremony was performed and they started home. And of course, in those days, as was typical of cars, one of them broke down. There was to be a wedding dinner at noon. They put the women in one car and took them home and the men started to walk to get as far as they could. The first car came back and picked them up. Everyone finally got home for the wedding dinner, which was well cooked. On old Route 40 two stakes are still there dividing the two counties, but there is no sign commemorating this wedding.

PAUL

We have said a lot of things tonight and told many stories. We really ought to take a moment just to remind ourselves that there was something in these people, however "quaint" they may seem-- these were people who were informed and inspired by deep faith.

And if there is anything they would hope for the rest of us who are living, it would be that our faith be something beyond ourselves. We are in a very mixed-up world and we are all coping in different kinds of ways but as we talk about our grandparents, and our parents, what they would want to be remembered for was that faith. Something beyond ourselves. A wonderful song I remember, which we sang at breakfast and other times, was "Father in Heaven." Let's sing it.

LOIS: Papa and Mama before they went to bed used to say: "Winsh euch Gottes sekeh." [We wish you God's blessing.] And we would say, "Euch auh," which means, "You, too."

1991 HOME COMING

STORIES ABOUT SONGS

URBANE

I remember Mother relating this story very often and with a lot of fondness for her father. He would come home from a day's work with the horses and wagon late in the evening. He did not want to get down from the wagon to open the gate, so he would sing, "Twilight is Stealing Over the Sea," and Grandma (Salome) would go out and open the gate so her father would not need to get off the wagon. He would start singing at the curve in the lane so Salome could hear him. Over the last couple of years I have thought of this song as a thread, or a cord, on which the legacy was passed on--from Enoch to grandmother and to us.

RHODA

I remember that song the Papa and Mama would sing together. They would sing it and then he would raise his hands at a certain point, so we would listen because it was to sound like three people: "Though your sins be as scarlet." Papa would sing high and Mama would sing alto. He would raise his hand when he wanted four-part harmony instead of two.

URBANE

By the time Jane and I came along there were three parts. It was almost like a round. At some point Mother came in like a mellow alto. Song: "When the Children Are Small."

JANE

I want to comment on that song. I watched everybody leave home and I particularly remember Mother's reaction. She always cried. No matter who left home, she cried. Every time. Right on down to Urbane and Jane. I was not there to see her cry when I left.

LABAN

When I was about twelve or thirteen, we would be on our way to church, what we called "the lower church," and we would get to a

big, nice maple tree and Papa would take his hat off in the summer time and start singing this song on his way to church-- "Father in Heaven."

URBANE

This song is about mother: "So Nimm den meine hande"

PAUL

Let me tell you when I first heard this. In 1946 when I arrived in Amsterdam on the way to Belgium for my assignment to work with refugees, Peter Dyck took me along (he was a veteran worker with refugees from Russia). He took me across the border to Gronau. At that time the Mennonites from Russia were stateless and the Dutch government began to issue to them what they called "Menno Pass," which meant they would be free. This would be something unusual in diplomatic history that they took upon themselves to issue a Menno Pass and then give them a visa to enter. However, the Russians were catching up and putting enormous pressure on the Dutch government to stop issuing the Menno Pass, which they finally did.

The last contingent of several hundred of the Mennonite refugees were camping in some bombed-out buildings, bombed-out railroad stations, and Peter had to go and tell them that their Menno pass had been denied. They began singing that song in German--So take my hand O Father (Addressing God). The second

stanza: "Even if I do not feel anything of your presence, yet you are bringing me to the goal even during the night." When you think of these people in a bombed-out building with bed blankets hung up to give a bit of privacy. They were at the border. It was a long tiring trip with horses and wagons traveling in some cases hundreds of miles, coming west. They were right there at the goal expecting to get to go over the next day and at the end they found out they could not. They did not know what their future holds. I remember them singing that second stanza.

1995 Homecoming

STORY ABOUT GOING TO ARTHUR ILLINOIS

JANE

The years I was five, six and seven, we went to live near Arthur, Illinois in the summer. Father was the pastor of a church there during that time. We took the train to get there. On the way, I remember the train lurching back and forth--and I don't know if this was the first summer or the second summer. Esther was thrown against the seat. I don't know if she was crying, but the conductor came along and asked, "Is the girl hurt?"

I also remember something about living at Arthur that still puzzles me. I didn't have any shoes, and it was always cool and raining. We lived in an ugly yellow frame house that had bees in the chimney and they came into the house. My older brothers and sisters think I had this wonderful childhood because I got to go

to Illinois, and do all these wonderful things.

[HEAR, HEAR!]

However, I remember having to contend with these bees, plus there were horrendous thunderstorms, and the land was flat, and I remember balls of fire all around--barns burning because they had been hit by lightning and I was terrified. I did not like living in Illinois. But I do remember at the one house where we lived there were huge yellow and black spiders outside in the grass and bushes. I was not afraid of them, I just found them fascinating. Yellow and black--I had never seen large spiders like this before. These are the highlights of my memories, except for one more thing. In the church we went to, when children misbehaved, their parents yanked them by the ears. To father's credit, he was horrified. I don't know whether or not he preached against it.

URBANE

We changed trains in Terra Haute, Indiana to make the last leg of the trip. Arthur was on a little old spur on the railroad. There were not enough people going from Terra Haute to Arthur, so they'd take one passenger car and hook it up as the very last car on a freight train. You know how a train takes off? So much slack between cars, so you can hear it when the locomotive starts off and you can hear the slack being taken off all the way back. Bang, bang, bang, so by the last car there is a huge jerk. And Anna and Esther were standing together.

Anna: That's a lie.

Urbane: Oh, you weren't there. [laughter all around]

I guess it was Jane and Esther. Anyway, Esther was hurt. She got thrown against the seat. Strangely, I was sitting down and then the conductor of the freight train came--"Is the girl hurt?" We were fascinated with being in the passenger car on the same train as the hogs and the livestock. And there was a legend on the train among the passengers that one hog had escaped from the hog car and came into the passenger car. I can't imagine how that would have happened.

JANE

You know about father's curiosity. He had to figure out how things work. Before we got on the train, he walked to the side of it to look underneath, much to mother's embarrassment--this man with a black hat sticking his head under the train.

CONVERSATION ABOUT WEARING "FUNNY" CLOTHES

KRISTINA: Did people ever look at you funny because you were there in these dresses and coverings?

URBANE: All the time.

JANE: I don't remember, but I'm sure it happened.

GARETH: I guess you were used to it.

ANNA: Gareth, that's something I never got used to, even if I wasn't on that train.

GARETH: Did you accept it as just a state of affairs, that this was just the way life was, or did you question it?

ANNA: Now we're on a different track, but for me--and I don't know how it was for the other siblings--but for me it was always waiting to get out of there. I had no idea what "out of there" was, but I had some indication from older brothers and sisters who went to EMC. When I got to EMC it wasn't that different.

LOIS: I remember how I felt when I wore my big bonnet and went with Papa to Meyersdale. Mary Maust made these most enormous bonnets. Absolutely ludicrous. And Papa always wanted us to keep our hands down, not in our pockets, and I always felt a little like something on exhibit. And I felt a little special because people would look at me, and it kind of had a meaning for me. I didn't react the same way Anna did. I just remember it kind of felt good to be noticed.

LABAN: Talking about Mary Maust making your bonnets too big--she used to make my suits. And when mother bought clothes for me they were always too big for me because I was so little! I always worried that my clothes were too big because they made me look little. Now I thought if Mary Maust makes my clothes, they would fit, but she made them so huge and she'd say "Dah boo vachst!" (This boy will grow).

LOIS: It's the same idea as the bonnets.

KRISTINA: Something I'd like to hear, I know I've heard it before, but I was trying to tell somebody about my past, and I

didn't remember everything about the story and that's why I'd like to hear it again about the cow and the people came the day the cow was slaughtered, and I don't remember exactly who these people were. Calf--by that time it almost got to be a cow, but I'd like to hear it again.

THE BENDERS COMING TO AMERICA AND THE FAMILY HISTORY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TIMES

PAUL

It's the story of how the Bender ancestor, Wilhelm, came to this country as a teenager.

In the wake of the Napoleonic wars, there was conscription for the first time. The Benders were living in the central part of Germany in Hesse, Frankfurt at the present time. To escape that draft, he leaves the country and comes alone to America but does it by becoming an indentured servant which meant an agreement that he would work for a certain number of months or years until the cost of his voyage was paid off.

There were always enterprising businessmen who were willing to arrange for that, willing to foot the bill and make money on it. So Wilhelm makes the trip and arrives in Baltimore and somehow the word filters back to the Grantsville and Springs area and the bishop in the Amish church there, Benedict Miller, hears about this Amish boy in Baltimore. So he goes to Baltimore by

horseback and has gotten money to pay off this debt to the person who brought him over and brought him to Springs and the young man eventually married one of his daughters. Whether he had that in mind in the first place, one doesn't know.

The story about the fattened calf was, when he had been here for some time, he had arranged for the rest of his family to come, which would have been his parents and I don't know how many brothers and sisters, so the word was filtered back. It took several months to get the word across the Atlantic at that time. They were preparing for the arrival of the family had a fattened calf for that occasion. There was a delay, and the Benders here had no way to find out, and so they finally just figured the rest of the family was not able to come. The family here in America, so the story goes, finally butchered the calf and the day they were going to eat it, they looked up and there was the family coming on foot. They counted and one was missing. And the father had died during the ocean voyage and was buried at sea. [That he was buried at sea is incorrect and is corrected later in the story.] So there was sadness as well as celebration.

I was going to suggest that one of the very important contributions to family history occurred during the last two years and had direct connection to the forebears who came because of the German kaisers' conscription. It also has something to do with the military. That is, that Titus, since we last met two years ago, spent six months in Laos in pioneering work. I don't

know how much was his initiative, but he was spearheading an effort of systematic clearing of landmines left from the Viet Nam war twenty years ago. This came about because a group of people who sensed the awful demonic nature of land mines, which endangered the lives of peasants in their fields, began working and getting international governments involved in a program which is now underway. The program includes government sponsors, the public, with international support, to clear up these awful land mines.

What's the connection between that Bender ancestor who left to escape the military and Titus going to Laos to do this work? A direct connection, and it is that connection that I would hope we could sometime spend a bit of time on in our family gatherings. We have so far told the part of Wilhelm coming here, we've had the story of the Peacheys, and the question is, why did they come? What's the significance of this young man's coming--was he a coward, or did he decide as a pacifist to try to change his history? That's a history we haven't talked very much about.

KRISTINA: So, Wilhelm was Salome's grandfather?

PAUL: Yes, it goes: Wilhelm, Enoch, Salome, Esther, and so on.

ANNA: One question--our family and a lot of other families, they wanted to get away from the war. Where do the Anabaptists come in?

PAUL: One of the settlements was in the Marlburg area of Germany.

ANNA: I'm not talking about that so much as the thought. We are

in some way a part of that stream, so I'm looking for that connection.

PAUL: Well, these people were persecuted. To baptize somebody as an adult who had been baptized as an infant was an act of civil insurrection. It was like being a Marxist or Communist in this country. The psychology of the sixteenth century was the psychology of the Russian world. So this developed a persecution complex. They were urban people, they lived in cities. As they were persecuted, they went into the mountains and hid out and they came out, and were more and more isolated and then they came to this country. It was a black and white circumstance. You are standing on the river bank and you either recant or someone will drown you. It's a black and white road and you make that decision and that's what they did and saw themselves as part of that heritage and eventually they were totally cut off--the Amish are still cut off from the rest of society. What is so tragic as Mennonites is that the notion of being separate from the world gets telescoped into the ethnicity, which is a part of all of us. A family has to have a certain kind of we-they mentality. A man's house is his castle. I'm happy when the doors are shut and everybody's home, it's just us. And it even gets so bad you are glad when it's just the two of you and all the children are gone!

[LAUGHTER]

You can't have a "we" without a "they," and what I'm saying is, when you confuse that with the religion--we have the truth

and the rest of you are heretics, you are pagans--that's what we got. I grew up in the same climate as what's being described here. Where we grew up at Grantsville, we had five levels, Old Order Amish, Beachy Amish (I remember when they started up, 1927, I was nine years old.) Amish Mennonite--that was us--Old Mennonite and then a few stragglers General Conference Mennonites. So we had five possibilities, and we of course were in the middle. We fraternized a bit with those immediately above us and we went to many, many events in the Springs Mennonite Church and had some feel for the Mennonite world. We fraternized a bit, dates.

GARETH: So "up" means less conservative in this case.

PAUL: The conservatives at the bottom. One of the reasons Mennonite projects such as disaster service operates successfully is because you have a constant filtering of people. You could say the stock is being bred by the Conservative communities and the possibility for connecting with the outside world is provided by the more liberals, then they constantly filter up and that's what our family did. And that's what's going on the whole time and in fact, that's where it started and what's important for us is to know what the deeper reasons were. To put it in a global context...this county was formed by a free-church tradition. This country was formed by people who said "no" to a top-down religious establishment--free church in American society, but that's chaos. I think it's still important for us to know about

that.

LOIS: Were our family Amish in Europe?

PAUL: Absolutely. Amish is a Swiss split among the Mennonites in 1683, partly revival and partly conservative throw-back, and partly personality conflict. [laughter]

STANLEY: In the early sixties I was aware of the differences and at some point I wanted to see what the real world was like. So I went to Europe in the early sixties and went to Marlburg in '64 and had been told from some document that Daniel Bender and Wilhelm had come from Langendorf. I looked up in some book and there were four Langendorfs in west Germany. One of them was only about 20 kilometres away, at Marlburg. I went out there one afternoon on my bike and looked up the local Protestant pastor. He opened the old church record, which listed this Daniel Bender who died in 1842 in this very place. That was meaningful for me.

GARETH: So this was near Marlburg.

STANLEY: Yes, Wilhelm's father, Northwest of Frankfurt.

LABAN: Was there any hint about how they got there?

PAUL: The assumption would be that sometime between 1683 and 1842 these people either migrated from Switzerland, or, the name Bender, I'm not sure--it's also a Jewish name, but not necessarily, but it's conceivable that these were people who joined the Amish after they left Switzerland or that they came actually from Switzerland. As I say, I don't recall the name being Swiss.

JANE: I have a question. I never had heard that he died at sea.

LABAN: That's always been a debate, but more recently--what Stanley found--

ANNA: I remember Mother saying that the reason they were later than expected was that he was ill, and they had to wait till he died and then they came.

PAUL: See how oral history has to be corrected.

ANNA: What was the year that Wilhelm came?

Paul: 1830

URBANE: So twelve years later he died.

RHODA: Could this have been another Daniel Bender?

LABAN: No, this has been thoroughly researched. I have documentation.

JANE: So, Wilhelm came in 1830, and his family came in 1842.

LABAN: Yes, that's pretty clear.

PAUL: Also, just to pay attention to oral history and the way the tradition can easily perpetuate an error--this distinction between dying at sea and being delayed because of sickness and death--obviously I was wrong on this because I was repeating the older story.

JANE: I think the one of him dying before they came is the one that's in the Bender book.

LABAN: There's another piece to Anna's question--how did these people become Anabaptists? They had a fair amount of religious freedom in Germany. The princes wanted dependable farmers to take

care of their estates. To find these people, there's one line in the Bender book--it would have been our great uncle, Enoch's brother, Wilhelm's son--there's a line in that book that says the princes wanted people to work for them if they were dependable. And these people were dependable. The line says, "Loss sie glauben was sie vollen, wen sie czallen wen sie sollen." (They can believe what they want to if they pay when they're supposed to.) [laughter] The princes would stay off their backs about their religion if they did the work for them. And they moved farther and farther east, some of them, to find those kinds of princes. Wilhelm worked in that kind of setting but he left right before his fifteenth birthday because at fifteen conscription took place. He sailed for Baltimore right before he was fifteen.

URBANE: I don't know if this is too specific, but I think it could have gotten muddled in all this. There was in the beginning, in 1525, a small cluster of people who decided they were going to break from this big establishment. So one unordained, unofficial person did this illegal act, of baptizing other lay people, and then this baptized person turned around and baptized the others. His name was George Blaurock, along with Conrad Grebel. So here you had a small cluster that disagreed with the religious establishment, and believed that membership or religious participation in the religious community should come by way of voluntary participation rather than by being identified religiously just because you were baptized as an infant, so it

was illegal not to baptize infants. So these people did not baptize their infants and they were being sought out, so then they were people without an identity. You had your national identity and your ethnic identity through having your children baptized so they were in effect in the same category as people who come to this country without citizenship. Illegals, stateless people.

JANET: What was the conscription for?

PAUL: In 1830, just after the Napoleonic years, which ended in 1815, there was still fighting going on. Europe was fighting in that period, and one of the things that happened in the Napoleonic wars and the French Revolution was that as Napoleon's army went across Europe, it evoked opposition--nationalism--it was a strange mixture that the French Revolution put forward the notion of a nation with sovereignty of the people, which then left each of these peoples to rebel. But on the other hand, Napoleon himself was imperialistic and sent his men all over the place...and you had the situation of these people being awakened nationally just like the Palestinians became a nation since the independence of Israel. The Palestinians were not a nation, but they are now a nation. This same thing was going on at that time in Germany. The German nation did not become unified as a nation until 1870, but all this was part of its development. So they introduced conscription and conscription says that being a citizen means that you take responsibility to defend the country.

So it was a continuation of that evil notion that the state takes priority over the individual, and in a sense these people were saying, no, an individual has certain inalienable rights and these things were simply being formed at that time.

FANNIE: How do you explain that my Lutheran grandfather also came over to escape the draft? [Lutherans are not traditionally pacifist.]

PAUL: Well sometimes it was religion, sometimes it was economics. The Amish and Mennonites are not the only ones who left--a great many Europeans came to this country.

URBANE: It might have been for religious liberty, not necessarily because he was a conscientious objector.

FANNIE: His brother came and later the brother and his father came and the mother had died there.

LABAN: And did you say that they came from the same general area as the Benders?

FANNIE: Yes.

ANNA: Coming to current day--I couldn't but be impressed with the patriarchal strain all the way down, even in the present day --us and them--and one of the many things people aren't paying attention to is the approach to life. I think that's something that's a legacy, which we could look at with a great deal of question. Life goes on, and one of the things we need to pay attention to is the patriarchal strain and what it has done in our own lives and the lives of the church.

PAUL: Are you suggesting that the we-they is also the men and the women?

ANNA: I did not think of it in this way, --the castle, close the door, it's an approach to life that comes from the patriarchy.

URBANE: It's ethnocentric. The we-they mentality is perpetuated by hierarchy.

THE STORY OF SHEM AND SALOME GETTING STARTED

RHODA: Before we get too far into what is theoretical and maybe even controversial--[laughter]--I want to ask Paul a little bit about when the folks started out, where they lived. They moved into the house where mother was born, where her family lived. Can somebody tell about that?

LABAN: Why did they move in there with Grandmam [Salome's mother]? Enoch had just died. Can you tell us that?

[discussion about where they lived after they married]

PAUL: After they married, they lived there [where we grew up] first.

LABAN: Salome's father died just before they were married, so they moved in there to replace Enoch, possibly. That's what I'm trying to figure out.

ANNA: I have the memory that father was not happy moving onto that farm.

PAUL: Of course he wasn't.

ANNA: Say more.

PAUL: The two years you talk about here I do not have any information at all. I'd be very eager to learn about that. What I know is that I was born in a log cabin in the Bissel place. I was born October 10, 1918. When my father came to Springs initially it was to help with the maple syrup harvest and I guess when he came here he became acquainted with mother and they got married.

JANET: Do you know any more about their romance or how they met.

RHODA: They didn't tell those stories.

URBANE: Just a minute. They've gone to the Bissel place.

PAUL: So, the Bissel place was a farm that was hewn out--the larger farm was divided into two. Chris Bender, our mother's uncle bought the smaller farm. It did not have a set of buildings. All that was there was a log cabin and they immediately set about building a new set of buildings and the assumption was--see, my father had worked for Chris Bender, so there was a trusting relationship and he was willing and able to buy the farm and put up the brick house and the barn, and these were apparently being built at that time when my parents moved into that log cabin. I don't know how long before I was born, but it's that log cabin of which we have photographs. And then we moved, not too long after that, into this nice new brick house. And here I connect directly to your shock (Jane) in going to Illinois because my shock about moving to Springs affected me the way you described yours. We were living in this brick house and we moved [back to the Enoch Bender farm where we grew up] in

February of 1923 when I was four and a half years old. I have a whole slew of very happy memories from my childhood up until that time. Then I remember the day we moved. We moved, travelled by horse and buggy, came in the lane, big ruts in the mud, partly frozen, and here after having been in this nice new brick house with a nice bathroom and all the rest of it, here sits this unpainted gloomy house. Uncle Levi [Shem's brother] and someone else, I don't know who, were moving the kitchen range into this empty, dark, gloomy, cold house. I remember that and from then on it's blank. I'm sure that was a traumatic shock.

Urbane: Didn't grandmam live there?

Paul: No, I don't think she lived with us. I think the whole place had been cleared out. So it was a shock on a February day going to this gloomy house. If it had been a sunny day and the furniture had been in, I might have had a different impression.

Rhoda: More about those pleasant memories.

Paul: All kinds of things. I remember one morning they were eating breakfast and someone from St. Paul had been hunting and we went out and he shot a rabbit and he gave the rabbit to us to eat. That's a nice childhood memory. We had the sawmill coming in. It's interesting that they had the saw mill down at the Bissel place and at the Springs farm we had the saw mill put in as well. Uncle Mark and I went out; people were cutting trees and so on, and we had a handsaw and a hatchet. So we were going to imitate the big men. We were very small. I was probably three and

Mark was five and one of the things we did then was to see if we could reinforce the saw with the hatchet. I don't know how stupid we were. Anyhow, I can remember that saw always had a notch on the top because one of us was taking the saw and one of us was using the hatchet on the saw. [LAUGHTER]

We had horse and buggy, it was the tail end of the horse-and-buggy era and there were always horses and buggies around. I remember we got animal crackers and I remember going out and walking up to this buggy and putting this animal cracker down to the buggy.

When they were doing the saw mill there was this lumber truck standing there and in those days the technology of the trucks was quite primitive. There was a big chain going from the motor to the back wheel instead of a drive shaft, a big chain to connect the motor to the axel. The truck was parked, so Mark and I got up on the truck and we discovered on the instrument panel a little bag of animal crackers. We stole them. We sat there and ate those animal crackers.

Once an Amish bishop came along the road in his buggy and Mark and I had been out playing and Mark had a pocket knife or something and he carved for me a sharp stick. And when this buggy came driving by we were out on the fence. Mark had the knife and I had the sharp stick and we were going like this [pointing] so he stopped and talked to us, a Pennsylvania Dutch conversation. We asked him where he gets his buggy whip. And we told him our

father just gets one in the woods. Then when we were done with the conversation, we said, "Now kanst do vidder ahn geh." (Now you can go on again.)

Laban: What I'm going to say is just an impression, but mother's father died unexpectedly, and I don't know what arrangement they had for where they would live, but I think papa was happy to temporarily move into the Enoch Bender place to take care of things. Then he was also very happy going to the Bissel place with the new buildings. I think his sadness was in moving back to the Enoch Bender place--it was a step down. Is that the right impression?

Paul: He bought and had aspiration to become a top-notch short horn beef cattle breeder and in the period right after World War I the economy went up and down; he had bought beef cattle when the prices were up and then he felt the pain when he had to sell and the prices were down. They couldn't make it on the Bissel place and they moved to the family farm and the farm was sold for \$6000 but the \$6000 was divided equally among the six children who inherited it so that meant that the thousand dollars was what we started with, and over the years we struggled with paying off the rest of the \$5000. So it was that disappointment--the farm was hilly, rocky, and he was always restless, coming from Big Valley, as he well might have been.

Urbane: Our father's sadness about leaving the Bissel place was told me in the last years--I only ever heard it once, but he said

after they had moved up by horse and buggy and moved their things, he walked back to the Bissel place, these three and a half miles to check something out and he found the cat that had stayed behind. He was so sad, he cried when he left and this cat walked with him all the three and a half miles and kept him company, and he said "It was just me and the cat together and I think the cat felt a little bit like I did."

Paul: If you ever get to visit the farm [the Bissel place], be sure to look at the windows on the second floor. SYP is carved into the wall.

Janet: Could you give us a little bit of a chronology, because you have been referring to the Bissel place and could you give us a chronology of where they moved when.

Laban: 1916 to the Enoch Bender place where we grew up.

1918 to the Bissel place, where the log cabin was and then the new house and barn.

1923 they moved away from the Bissel place and went back to the Enoch Bender place, where we grew up.

Urbane: There are two farms. There is the Enoch Bender farm where your grandmother was born. My parents lived there for two years, from 1916 to 1918. Then they moved to the Bissel place in 1918 and lived there for five years. Then back to the original farm again in 1923 and stayed there until 1951 when they moved to Lancaster County.

Stanley: Lois, you had a story about their romance.

Lois: Romance and the wedding. I did some interviews with a couple of women in the community. One was Lura Folk and one was Myra Bender. Lura Folk remembers when Papa came to court Mama. She said he was different from the other young men. He would help her into the buggy. The other young men didn't do that. I remember someone else saying that they'd talk about the Valley boys. I think there was another young man who came with Papa. The Valley boys were very popular.

Myra told me that she is ten years younger than mother and she remembers their wedding, when she was at their house waiting for them to come because the car had broken down. When mother and father got married, they had gotten their license in the wrong county. They went to Maple Glen church to get married, and lo and behold, their license was from Allegheny County so they couldn't get married legally at Maple Glen, so they had to go down to Allegheny County and they were married on the road just across the line. To get there, they borrowed a car and it broke down, one of the wheels came off. The wedding party couldn't all come home together. So they sent the women home and the men had to walk--I don't know how many miles it was--to the dinner. And the people at the house didn't know what was going on, why they didn't come for hours. Myra was one of the children who were waiting. She remembers the wedding cake. It was two layers, just a small cake, and of course they didn't have decorations in those days, but it had candy on it. These little hearts. Anyway, there

was a little boy on the bench in front of the cake, and he reached in and got some of this candy.

Rhoda: Myra is Mother's first cousin, Chris's daughter.

Stanley: When the men walked back and the women came in the car, were Shem and Salome separated at that point?

Lois: Right.

Jane: Who drove the car?

Lois: I thought they walked the whole way.

Paul: No, they walked until the car had taken the women home and then came back.

Janet: Good question. Who drove the car?

Paul: We don't know.

Urbane: We may be about to wind up. I wanted to get back to Kristina's question about the fattened calf--if you want to look at this sometime visually. Correct me, Paul and Laban if I'm wrong, but this happened at the farmhouse at the end of the lane that now goes into the Enoch Bender house, the place where Wilhelm was at the time was at the Clyde Ash farm. That's at the end of the lane that goes in to the family farm now. So you can imagine, just turn back and look over the ridge, and that's where the people were coming from.

Janet: And they would have been coming from where?

Laban: The story is they came by stage coach from Baltimore to Cumberland. They were out of money so they preceded to walk these 30 miles from Cumberland to Grantsville. They stopped at a barn

over night and asked if they could sleep in the barn. The people let them sleep in the barn and gave them bread and potatoes to eat because they had no money to get food. They ate the potatoes in the evening and kept the bread for the next morning and then they walked all day to get there.

Jane: What's this about the Clyde Ash farm?

Urbane: That's where Wilhelm was. The Clyde Ash farm was built by Wilhelm Bender.

Jane: I didn't know that.

Urbane: The original barn burned down and the Clyde Ash house has three sections to it and I think it's the middle section which is the original, built by your great grandfather.

Ellen: I think instead of calling that the Enoch Bender place, call it the Peachey place where we grew up.

Laban: A quick word on what has happened to the Peachey home place. The Schrock family had bought it and then neglected it and no one lived there for years. Now someone named Noah Yoder lives there, the grandson of Albert U. Yoder, and would be our third and half cousin. They own that farm that was Milt's "Ahnah Plotz." They now bought the Shem Peachey home place. They have not yet fixed up the house. It had been vandalized some because it was sitting empty, so they have rented it to another Mennonite family, I don't know who they are. But they are farming it, beginning now to fix it up and to get it back into shape. This family has about seven or eight children, some of them are about

twenty years old, married, so one can assume that one of these times they'll fix up the house and one of their children will live there. Helen and I stopped in and they invited us into the house. They were very friendly. I said I'm coming back in September. They are already making plans for that. They want me to walk with them over the whole farm and tell them about it. And they treat you like somebody they are glad to see.

HONORING FANNIE

Jane: On the table is a card that Fannie's children sent her piece by piece for her eightieth birthday coming up in September. An eightieth birthday--that's really something. Fannie, could you stand up. [much clapping]

Fannie: When one of my brothers was 80, someone asked him how he was and he said he's much better than he was eighty years ago. He couldn't even walk then.

SINGING OF HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Fannie.

MEMORIAL FOR ESTHER

Gareth: We want to do a memorial.

Stanley: This is a page from a book written by Naipul during his tour south. He travelled around three or four months in 1988. He spent some time with Esther and had this to say.

"We went to a community and craft center. It was run by a woman with a beautiful name of Esther Lefever. She'd come to the

settlement many years before as a folk singer. A ten-year-old photograph in the Atlanta Constitution showed her as a pretty woman with a guitar. But then being moved as a response to her singing, an old woman got up and did a special dance. And other people cried. She had become more deeply involved with the Appalachian community and had even become a city councillor. She was small and slender, with a clear voice. She was not herself from an Appalachian community but she understood their closeness. She was a Mennonite from Pennsylvania, the eighth child of a preacher. She spoke of what it had meant to her to move from the strictness of her Mennonite background. She fought alone, she said. What did it mean to be alone? She said she had a picture of being the last tree on the hillside. The other trees had all been cut down. It hadn't been easy for her even to give up the bonnet. All her life she had been taught to wear the bonnet out of respect for God and man. Even when she was in her twenties, it made her nervous to be in the streets of Chicago. It wasn't a fear of black men so much as a fear of white men who, according to what she'd been told, drank liquor and were gross. [laughter]"

When you grow up in that kind of community, you have a sense of grossness, how it smells and what it looks like.

"And then she had discovered the cruelty of the world outside, the cruelty of America. How did she discover that? She told the story. One of the Appalachian women came to her one day and said she needed a job, maid work. Esther Lefever took the

woman to see someone, a woman with a lot of blonde hair, a woman just a step or two above the woman looking for maid work, and the blonde woman said, 'Why does she want maid work. That's for coloured people.' It was a simple incident, I thought, something that should have been passed over. The blonde woman herself was as much a sufferer as anybody else. But the incident had many layers of meaning and Esther Lefever had been upset and humiliated by it. She said, 'They want to keep you in the slot they picked for you.' Who were 'they'? She thought and said, they were the people who had arranged the system and wanted to keep everyone in their place. I asked her in what way identity was important and whether there was some practical way in which it helped. She said that if you moved to a new neighbourhood or took a new job and people were not too friendly, then it could be a help if you knew who you were. You could lash out at the hostility. If you didn't know who you were, if you were dependent on other people for your own worth, then you were in trouble. She was given the view from below, the view of the poor people she was concerned about. And from what she said, I got the impression that these people had raw sensibilities and lived on their nerves."

[We followed with some singing including "I Owe the Lord a Morning Song," a song Esther sang every morning the last week of

her life.]

KRISTINA: I have some very strong memories of my mother a couple of days before she died. Before she went to the hospital the last time, she was at home and she did exactly what Jane said, she'd get up and sing this song and I have this vivid memory of her standing between her bathroom and her bedroom and those of you who had seen her--she had very little hair, she was very skinny and very little strength, and she stood there just as strong as she could be, singing that song, and I'm sure I'll have that memory for the rest of her life.

JANET: Kristina, you had told a story about a bird flying down the fireplace. Could you tell that.

KRISTINA: Sure. One other thing before I say that. Myself and Carla and Dimitri and Jane were in the room when she died. Erika was not able to be there--her children were sick. All three of them say, and unfortunately I missed that, that when she died they actually saw a greenish colour above her. I did not see that. There was a very peaceful feeling in the room.

Later when I got home--I lived in a house that had fireplaces. In the bedroom I had hung one of her paintings she had done, one of her first ones. She had painted this, knowing she had cancer. She called it "Fire," an image to her of this cancer. It's actually a very beautiful picture, vibrant colours, blues, greens, oranges. And I had it hanging above the fireplace. When we got home the day she died, for some reason, I guess I was

showing the painting to a friend and I looked down and there was a bird in the fireplace. I had never seen a bird like this before or since, but what was odd was that the colouring of this bird matched the picture. I'm not exaggerating here. It was lying there, and the friend I was showing it to said, this is wonderful. Her tradition was that if a bird is dead in the house when somebody dies, then that means their spirit has gone on and it means things are all right. I took a picture of this bird, and I loaned the camera to a friend and the camera was stolen, so I have no pictures of this bird. But it was there and I felt this was my link to her. I did not see the green colour the others saw, but I saw the bird, so I felt that was my communication with her after she died.

CARLA: What it was, it was like an orb, you could see through it, it was clear, and we were standing around the bed, and it kind of hovered over her belly, and it rose up and went to the ceiling. I said to Dimitri, did you see that? and he said, yeah. I've never seen anything like that in my life.

JANE: I don't think I've ever seen auras before, but I saw that.

CARLA: One thing is, she doesn't want us to be sad. I know we miss her, but I don't think she wants us to be sad.

JANE: I was struck by that in this book, about the lone tree, but to me it's the opposite of what has happened in our family, she fell first, she being the tree, she fell first. Mark went before, and I think this also applies to Charles because he fell too

young, as did Anita, and that's why we're burning the candle for all these people, and for us.

I don't know if everybody knows about Urbane and Gwen and their family, the trip they did to the Middle East. It's a beautiful thing they did, remembering Charles. I wanted to mention that there's the photograph album. What they did, that's living, in a way taking the dead along but in a way of life. I'm really mixed up about life and death, but as you can tell, I'm trying. [laughter]

RHODA: It's kind of unusual to be mixed up about that. [laughter]

URBANE: You came to the right place. It might make the transition easier.

STANLEY: I was struck by a sentence. Naipul asks about identity and how that functions, and this reminded me of our legacy discussion this morning, if you have a sense of your origin and a sense of belonging, it can provide a useful function.

BARB: I wanted to say something about Esther. The memories I have of her, I remember her telling there's a bigger gap between her and some of the others. She told about seeing her new baby brother for the first time, and the other story she told was how she would go upstairs on the pretext to Salome that she was going to clean her room and waited till her mother was distracted and then she would sneak out to the woods and after a while Salome would look around and say, "Wo ist die Esther?"

TITUS: Jane's statement about life and death and being confused--

When my father was ill, we had a lot of conversations, he was always open about what he was thinking and feeling. He said "I would have been better off a long time ago if I had known you can't always figure things out."

CONVERSATION ABOUT ESTHER AND MORE MEMORIES

JANE: I don't think I've told this thing that Esther did to me. We always had this big thing in our family about getting ready for church in time on Sunday mornings. One Sunday morning she was really teasing me. She pretended she was really bonkers. I don't know if any of the rest of you know this, but she was leaping around on the bed, and going wee-ee-ee, making really weird noises and making really weird movements.

RHODA: She never stopped doing it. [laughter]

JANE: And she distracted me to the point that I wasn't ready for church in time and I remember running downstairs carrying my shoes and not being quite finished dressing and that's one of my early memories of Esther.

JANET: How old were you?

JANE: My guess is six, something like that. She would have been twelve or thirteen. Maybe I was younger at the time.

BARB: This isn't about Esther, this is about you. I remember being in your house when your mother was packing you off to EMC for the first time. I was there to see the last week of her actually raising children. Janet would have been a baby.

JANET: Are you older than all of our generation?

JANE: I'm three years older than Nona. In a way, the grandchildren were just a continuation of kids. But on the other hand, they also weren't--somewhat of a paradox.

NAOMI: I remember you playing games with us, Jane. Grand-mammy Tippytoe and we'd all follow you around saying that, and at one moment you'd turn around and say, "Whose children are you?" Then we'd all run and you'd chase us.

JANE: In this context, it's interesting that we played that game. The game I remember, we'd each have our dolls and my doll would say to your doll, or vice versa, "That baby's ugly." It was a game we played frequently.

SALOME BENDER, born February 29, 1896 (LEAP YEAR!) died 1972

SHEM PEACHEY, born September 26, 1889 died 1973

Mark, born October 23, 1916 (deceased February 5, 1979)

--married Fannie Beitzel, born September 21, 1915

Paul Levi, born October 10, 1918

--married Ellen Shenk, born November 4, 1923

(Clara) Lois, born June 17, 1920

--married Allen Yoder, born July 10, 1918

Rhoda, born June 10, 1922

--married Norman B. Moore, born December 7, 1926 (deceased)

Ruth, born January 2, 1925

--married Nejat Ali Aydin (divorced)

--married Rod Happel (divorced)

Laban, born April 6, 1927

--married Helen Mumaw, born April 2, 1929

Anna, born June 20, 1929

--married Paul Shenk (divorced)

Esther, born March 17, 1931 (deceased December 6, 1991)

--married Harry Lefever, born December 7, 1931 (divorced)

Urbane, born January 23, 1935

--married Gwendolyn Wenger, born February 9, 1934

(Mary) Jane, born April 22, 1938

--married Loren Lind, born June 14, 1937