

Chapter 7 - Edgewood Elementary School *(North Garden St. about a mile and a half from Walnut).*

Big build-up to first grade at school. I have a cigar box with crayons and pencils. I have a red big chief tablet. I wear long pants and shoes. Mother combs my hair.

Mother takes me to the school. She walks me in the classroom. I am not used to being around so many other kids, especially noisy girls. Mother approaches the teacher, introduces me. The teacher, Mrs. VonWontock, takes me to my desk and reassures me. I vaguely remember Mother saying something to the teacher..”keep an eye on me”. Although I do not like the confinement in the classroom, I stay because the teacher is nice and pretty. I see freedom out the classroom windows.

I learn the color purple on my first day. I learn the nice smell of the long hair of the girl sitting in front of me. I learn to print my name...barely. I learn that recess and lunch time playing soccer is what I want to major in.

I do not yet know the way back to Walnut and home yet. I know that MomMom lives close by. I do not run away from school. Mother is happy. She knows Father will use the belt.

I do not remember much about next three grades in school except how much I enjoy the third-grade teacher. We sing so many great songs. I also remember rebelling against the cursive writing drills of doing overlapping circles, between the lines, across the page. I throw a fit one day in class for being forced to circle within the lines. I throw my pencil hard on the floor. I did not scream any ‘cursive’ words. I was a slow learner in writing. I made a ‘D’.

I become much better at soccer during the third grade. I am the fastest and the best dribbler. Everyone wants to play on my team.

At the beginning of fourth grade, Mother tells me that there may be some ‘Negroes’ coming to the school. I sort of remember that there is a small ‘Negro’ school on the southeast side of town. It is closing. It is 1953-54. I did not know any ‘negroes’. I am very curious.

Part 1 - Times and Places

First day of 4th grade, I see one...only one. He is in my class with Ms. Raabe, who taught Father as well. At recess, I greet him and ask him if he wants to play soccer. OMG!..he is good. We become great friends along with some boys from Chahuahita. Good players!

I learn other important things at school. I learn the yo-yo, spinning wooden tops, marbles, lagging, and playing chicken with pocket knives.

I ride my bike to school in 4th grade. My hands freeze because I do not have gloves. Once at school, I learn to go into the classroom early. Inside, the hands and fingers hurt worse. I find that by opening a window a little and sticking my fingers outside in the colder temperature, the pain subsides as the fingers thaw out. The teacher seems to understand.

I love going across the street during lunchtime to the little Mom and Pop store. Kids buy sweets and little toys. The owner is nice. Twice a year, he hires a traveling Yo-Yo exhibitor to do shows in and outside the store. I am so impressed. I must have the best Duncan best yo-yo. I practice incessantly. I begin spinning wooden tops and keeping them inside the circle. I learn to knock other spinning tops out of the circle.

During 3rd and 4th grade, I learn to walk to MomMom's, my favorite place. Often Mother tells me on a Friday to walk to my favorite place and spend the weekend with MomMom. Heaven!! ... (except for having to go to church)

