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I don't know if you remember Rosie Retzer or not. She was the youngest of your Mom's family. Thought you might be interested in this bit. I did it a few weeks ago.

Before she left her home at Wadsworth Towers, she made a tape for me about her family. She was 87 years old at this time. I have listened to it and tried to record some of her stories. If you remember Aunt Rosie as I remember Aunt Rosie, you know well that she was one terrific story teller. I will put some of them on paper for you folks who knew her.

She starts with Grandma Ingram's grandfather, Peter Fine, who came from Indiana, clear back during the Revolutionary War. Over there, they loved their preachers. They were all Lutherans. The preachers are buried right by their little church. Peter came in a covered wagon with his wife, Eliza, and 9 children. He wore a tall silk hat and a long-tailed coat. He could preach or be a lawyer.

When he got to Iowa, he reared his family and my father also reared his family there. Of course, their last name was FINE. When I was a little girl, I thought everyone's last name was Fine because there were so many Fines in our county. One of my cousins said that you had to go out of the county to find a wife, because everyone was related to the Fines in our county.

The name FINE is Jewish. Now our people think that they are not Jewish. I don't know anything about it. They claim that they came from the Dutch people. Back to Grandpa now and how he named his children. Uncle Aaron Columbus, Uncle Alonzo Washington, Uncle Jasper Ephraim, Uncle John Marion and my papa, whose name was Stephen Arnold Douglas. I think that would possibly give away his politics - not sure.

Then the girls - I don't know whether Martha was named for Martha Washington. I don't know whether Harriet was named for Harriet Beecher Snow. The third was Aunt Amanda and I don't know any famous Amandas. When they married, Grandpa gave to each of the boys adjoining acres of ground - 80 acres to each son. When the girls married, he gave them 2 horses and 1 cow which was the equivalent of the 80 acres at that time. He might have helped the sons-in-law get their homes. Their farms were always close. We had adjoining farms. So you see I grew up with a lot of cousins and aunties and uncles and how I thought the whole wide world belonged to the Fines and mama's people, the Smiths, who lived not too far away.

I love this story about my mama.

Grandpa Joseph Smith, her Daddy, was married 4 times. His first wife died and left a family of 5. Aunt Mary Cook, Uncle Isaac Smith, Uncle Edward Smith, another Smith. Then after she died, he married and had a little girl named Adney.

(Aunt Adney married a fellow by the name of Washington. Washington Duncan . We called him Uncle Wash. He had had a fight with someone when he was young and they bit a piece of his ear off and when they came to see us, I always wanted to feel of his ear. I thought it was so funny to have that piece chewed off.)

Then Grandpa was going to marry an old maid named Mary Wharton. Mary was so excited about it that she had her cousin, my mama's mother, Sarah, come to help her make her wedding dress because Sarah was a very fine needle woman. So Sarah came. Now she was a widow and Grandpa was a widower, and this old maid didn't know much about what it was all about. My mama must have kinda looked at grandpa, and grandpa must have kinda looked at her and.....do you know what they did? They left that old maid just sitting there and they went off and got married.

They had a little girl. Her grandpa was Tom Neal. He was quite a well to do fellow and he would give her an inheritance. He wanted to name her Tom. But she was a little girl, so he said to name her Neal. So Mama put a Y on the end of it and names her Nealy. So far as I know, that name was never anywhere except in our family. NEALY.....

Uncle Cleve in Wyoming had just one little girl and named her Nealy.

When Grandma was pregnant she was helping grandpa lift something. This caused a miscarriage. It caused the baby boy to die and the mama died, too. They didn't have doctors and hospitals close by like they have today.

So then, after the tears were dried, grandpa looked at the old maid again. She got out her wedding dress, kinda yellowed by now, and he married this old maid. She disliked mama because her mama had taken grandpa away from her. Mama would never say one unkind word about the step mother. Her sister, Aunt Mary, told me stories about it and Mama said, that it was true. But she didn't want to talk about it. Grandma Smith, her step mother, would make her wash all the dishes alone, even though she had other children who could help. If Mama didn't have them done in an hour, she's put her in a closet and they tell her that there were rats in that closet.

They didn't have real silverware in those days and they had to scour their silverware with brick dust. Mama went to school one day and didn't clean the silverware with brick dust. Grandma came to school with a switch, and switched her all the way home and made her do the knives and forks like she wanted them.

When my mama married, she eloped. She became a school teacher and when she got old enough to run away, she'd go to Aunt Mary's and Aunt Mary would bring her back. Aunt Mary Cook was the oldest one of the family. She didn't have children. She loved my mother and wanted her very much.

Grandpa Neal was going to Oregon in a covered wagon and he told my mama that she could go with them. They had given her material so she'd have a lovely dress and Mama could sew, too. Mama was like her mother. She was a beautiful seamstress. When Grandpa came by to get her, Mama came downstairs and the stepmother looked at her and said, "Huh, you can't go anywhere with that dress on. It's too tight. You made it too tight." Grandpa must have been a very meek and subdued man by this time with this old maid, so he didn't dare cross her and Mama didn't get to go to Oregon with her Grandpa. So she ran off and went over to Aunt Mary Cook's house. Aunt Mary kept her. I guess probably the step mother was glad to get rid of her.

When she married my papa, they eloped. They were married down at a cousin of my papa's in Kansas City. Mama's taught school and she taught the school where my Grandpa Fine had given the ground for the school and had the school house build and it was called the FINE school. So that is a little bit of the story of the early Grandpa Fine and Grandpa Smith.

Well, then we get down to my papa. Of course, you know there was the 6 children. My mama always said, "I don't want to name any of my children so they can have nick names. I don't like nicknames." So she named your grandma Elma. Elma never had a middle name. She took the name of Fine for her middle name, as she grew older. Uncle Claude Oliver , Uncle Clarence Cleveland, Aunt Mary Ethel, Ralph Douglas and my name was Rosie Maude. I didn't like the name of Maude -(I was named for a cousin) - because of my brother, Ralph , who was 4 years older than I - there was a comic strip of Maude, the Mule. They almost had to light a fire under that old mule to get it to go. So I didn't like the name Maude. I wouldn't talk if they called me Maude and I didn't care for Rose either because Aunt Mary Cook came over - now Mary Ethel was named for Aunt Mary Cook - and Aunt Mary Cook came over and said, "My, Lord, Nealy, couldn't you find any names? You've got so many kids, you have to start in on the flowers! Why didn't you just call her Hollyhock and be done with it?" Now Aunt Mary was a fine Christian. But she had her byword was "Lord". She didn't mean it was Our Lord. She just meant it as a byword. But she was a fine Christian and never missed a Sunday going to church and giving her money to the church. She was a fine woman.

Your Grandma Ingram was the only little blue eyed girl in the family. My papa had blue eyes and your grandma was a very popular young lady, very pretty. She taught school. She had a boyfriend by the name of Archie Moore. Archie came to see her and his face would get so red. He had reddish hair. I don't know what happened to them. She had another boyfriend that I thought a great deal of. He was a Swede. Oscar Gustafson. Oscar would give me a whole nickel if I'd run out and play. Well, you know how much your Aunt Rosie can talk and try to find out things. I imagine I stuck pretty close to find out what I could hear and see. I was very much in love with Oscar.

Then something happened.

Your Grandpa Ingram was a preacher out in the area where your Grandma Ingram was teaching in the country school by the name of PINE school. I was delighted when they got married. They were so good to everyone. Uncle Benton (your grandfather) gave us a little doggie and we got to name it. Ralph was 4 years older than me and he was just my ideal in everything but I wanted to name that little dog for the president of the United States. I thought no name could be too good for that little doggie. I wanted to call him Theodore Roosevelt. I thought that was a beautiful name for a dog and Ralph wanted to call him FRISK, so when we had company he said, "I'll pass little papers around, (our uncle and aunt was there), and everybody write the name - do they want the dog to be named Frisk or Theodore Roosevelt." Well, of course, there was about 7 of us there. There was about 14 or 15 little ballots cast and they were all for FRISK - but 2. My Mama and I named him THEODORE ROOSEVELT. So then I cried because he was such a super dog and he should have had a better name. So Ralph said he could have Theodore Roosevelt for his middle name.

He was my pet. Oh, how I loved Frisk. I'd sneak him up to my room so he could sleep on my bed at night. I put my doll clothes on him. He didn't like that very well, but I put them on him. One time Ralph and another little boy tied a tin can on his tail with some little rocks in the tin can and when he ran, that frightened him and I cried and ran barefooted, over the field after him, calling him back, but Frisk didn't trust anyone. He was done with boys and girls. He just wanted to catch that tin can on something and get it off of his tail. I don't know how he got it off. It was hot, hot, hot. I cried and cried and ran after him, but I never caught him.

Uncle Benton, your grandfather, gave Ralph a pig. It was a high-bred pig. It had a name. It was registered as Forest Eubell, a red pig. I don't know what breed that is but Ralph would let me ride the pig. That was quite a beautiful, wonderful thing to do and one day when our Mama was washing and we had to turn the machine, - we had to turn a wheel that made a little thing go round to wash the clothes. We took turns. Ralph said that if I would take his turn and wash that batch of clothes that I could ride the pig. I was so happy, boy, I would have run half a dozen of those cycles of clothes through that washer to get to ride the pig. I got on and the pig went close to the little barbed wire fence, and I tore my dress. I started to cry. Ralph says, "Oh, don't cry, I'll get a needle and thread and fix it." You can imagine how that would be fixed by him. Mama saw it, of course, and was gonna spank me. I guess probably she did. She spanked me every day and then she didn't spank me enough to make me as good as I should have been - as thoughtful as I should have been.

So when Elma and Benton had their own little children, I stayed with Uncle Benton and Aunt Elma . When I was a sophomore and junior in high school, they lived in Boone, Iowa and how I did love your mother, Mildred Ruth.. She was the prettiest little girl you ever did see. Naturally curly hair, brown eyes and of course I loved those boys, Ralph and Merrill. Ralph was so dignified, he didn't like to get his hands dirty. He didn't like to get his clothes dirty. Merrill was hail fellow well met with everyone. One day Ralph came to me and said, "I wish, Aunt Rose, that you'd get Merrill to come home from the park. (They had some swings in the park nearby.) There's a little girl in a swing with a snotty nose and Merrill is talking to her."

One day when they were playing Indian. Oh, it was a hot day and they had hot blankets over them. They didn't even know it was hot and the rest of us were fanning and fanning and fanning.

I want to tell you a story about your Grandma Ingram. They were having company. I think they had company every day for dinner. I can't remember ever being there but what there was someone coming in. There was always room for one more. Put on another plate. There was always room. Some way with the little salary they had, still there was always money enough. I never knew whether my mama paid anything for my board or whether she didn't. I have no idea. I imagine she must have made it right some way.

One time there was a convention there and there was a preacher who came. I never did like him. He was very abrupt and he just ordered us around like we were little servants - to get him a cup of coffee NOW and he wanted it HOT. When he knocked at the door, it was big and loud. Elma was getting her pumpkin pies out from the oven. She had two of them, one in each hand. She had gotten them out of the oven, set them up on top of the stove, and she was taking them over to the table so they could cool for dinner. This preacher yelled something from the door. I was doing something with the dishes and I didn't hurry. I was kinda like a stubborn little old mule, but Elma was trying to hurry with those pies and those pies flipped over and fell upside down on the floor. I thought surely Elma will say some little byword or something, surely she will get mad. But she didn't. The pies weren't pretty now. I don't know whether we ate the top part or what. I have never forgotten this story. When I said, 'Aren't you mad?' She said, "You'd just as well whistle as whine." Another thing she always said was, " What cannot be cured, must be endured."

I stayed with Elma and Benton when they lived in Shenandoah, Iowa. That's the year I was married. I had been in the Chautauqua work. I had taught school.

Here's an interesting story about the town where I was born. This town was close to a little town named Siam. There was no Siam in Iowa at that time. It was called Buchanan and there was another Buchanan. I guess the post office people decided it was time for a change. This was the time that the Siamese twins were in the news. So they named our little town Siam.. Like the twins. Our mailing address was Hopkins, Missouri, right on the state line. So our mail came out of Hopkins, Mo. It sounded like you weren't telling the truth when you said you lived in Siam but got your mail from Hopkins, Missouri. I have always liked that little story.

In Shenandoah, after I was in love with Floyd Young, we were planning to get married, Elma and I both worked at Henry Field Company. They put me in as a first seed analyst. They didn't care if I got married and they would send me to school if I would be their head seed analyst.. We had to take a little spoonful of seeds and weigh it and see how pure it was, if it had any weed seeds, and such. Elma did secretarial work of some kind for one of the executives, one of the lady executives.

In Shenandoah, little Betty was with us then. Gracie wasn't born until after I was married. I remember one time when Mildred was coming home from school and a little boy had always carried her books. He was a good looking little boy. Mildred was popular. No one could help but love your mother. This little old boy was carrying some other girls books home.

Mildred came in and put her books down and said, "Well, the Lord will get after him. The Bible says, 'The Lord will repay.' and I know he's going to get what's coming to him."

Little Mildred Ruth was voted the prettiest girl in school when she was in high school. They wanted to have her in the parade, but her daddy said that he didn't want that. So she could not be in the parade. She had every right to be there. I dearly love Mildred. To me, she is as near perfect as any human being could be.

When she came to marry, there was a little Free Methodist boy who wanted to marry her. She had plenty of boy friends but she fell in love with Warner Parks and he was our boy who married her and how he could sing. I just loved to hear Warner sing better than anything.

Now I didn't tell you much about the Ingram side of the family. I used to love to go with Elma and Benton down to the Ingrams. Oh, how I loved to go. Aunt Bertie made a cookie. Now I can't believe it had ammonia in it. But she always called them her Ammonia Cookies. They were a sugar cookie, and they weren't little tea cookies, believe me. They were big and round and one of those cookies would just about fill you up and they were delicious..

I remember GB telling a story about when he did something kinda naughty and his daddy was going to spank him. So he ran upstairs to get away from his daddy and his daddy came right up the stairs and GB jumped up on the bed and then jumped down to run away but he fell and bit the end of his tongue. I remember him showing us his tongue with the little dent was out of it.

Ollie was a sister who had fallen as a baby and did not develop mentally. She could do little things. She could peel potatoes and things like that but she didn't have the chance to get an education and to go like the ones who were normal.

I remember how proud GB was when he told us how he worked to go through high school there in Hopkins, Missouri, and how he did janitorial work. He did all kinds of work and then he had ambition to go on to college. I'll tell you GB was a remarkable man. You've got a wonderful ancestor. And that sweet little Elma . I wouldn't take a million dollars for the hours I've spent in their home. I can't tell you how dearly I loved them. I spent quite a bit of time with these folks. Beulah Taylor and I went to Boone, Iowa, to go to school and lived with Elma and Benton. I don't know what financial arrangements my folks made with Elma and Benton. I remember I wanted a coat. Coats were made with kinda of a little cutaway around in the front part and it came to a square part in the back and I thought that I would be happy the rest of my days if I could have that coat. Everything depended on it. But I knew my mama wasn't going to spend money on a coat when I already had a coat that was warm and I knew my sister and brother in law wasn't going to take my side on that, because they knew, too, that I didn't need it. But oh, how I looked at that coat in the window and I figured if I could write and tell my mama that I needed some books or something, that she would send me the money. I knew she would and I don't know how I finagled to get all of it. I don't know if I told little white lies or not but anyway I got the coat and my boyfriend from the time I was in the 8th grade - Roy Cannon, from Bedford, Iowa, was coming up to spend Christmas with us. I would have that coat to wear. I would have the world by the tail and swing it around my head and nothing else would ever be necessary.

Oh, how much fun it is growing up and how much fun it is growing old.

Now I want to tell you about some funny things that happened when I was at the GB Ingram home. GB was a man that was very cleanly. Every Saturday night we had to have baths and the water was brought in. He had the first tin bath tub that I ever saw. At home we used the old wash tub. That was what we'd get in. We'd sit down and mama would get the dipper and pour water down our back. Oh, I thought that was the nicest thing in the world. I couldn't visual the shower bath as we have it today. I couldn't visualize a bathroom as we have it today. We had little round chambers we called them that went under the bed. You had to sit down on them and your knees were up almost on top of your chin. I remember when we bought the first slop jar. Now that was a potty but it was about a foot up, about two feet high, and you sat on that and your feet came down and I thought nothing could ever be made better than that. I couldn't visualize the modern bath room. Of course, living on a farm, we didn't have running water. But that was sufficient for us. It was carried down every morning.

Now back to GB's tin bath tub. Of course, the kids left their clothes and Elma or I would gather up their clothes and put them in the clothes basket but one of the youngsters was in the tub. Now the tub was in the living room because that was where the heater was. Someone knocked on the door. GB went to the door and here was a couple that wanted to get married. You can imagine how Elma and I flew around there and how that tub was scooted out and Elma and I were witnesses to the wedding. I hope they lived happily ever afterward.

A sweet thing I have to tell you is this. The doctor who took care of GB there in Canon City told me one day, "You know, just when I enter the house of GB and Elma Ingram, I feel like there's a sort of a sacredness, a sort of a blessing that I get. I don't know what it is but it speaks a whole lot about these folks."