

# FOUR SHORT ESSAYS BY JEWELL SCOTT VOSS (1911-1990)

(copied from an undated typewritten manuscript)

[Notes in red added by Gary Scott, July 2018]

## School Days at Huffman

There's a picture of my first day of school when I was seven years old [1918]. Standing by Geo Watts. Mom had packed "our" lunch in a paper (heavy cardboard) box with wire handles—regular lunch box. You put the lid on then folded the handles over the top. Mr. Watts boarded with us so she put my lunch in with his. We sat at the teacher's table and ate together. I was rather embarrassed to eat with the teacher, although proud too, I guess. Mr. Watts had a wooden or cork leg and it squeaked as we walked together through the woods to the school. We must not have talked much. I can remember so vividly the squeak. There's another vivid memory of that first day. Mom felt the moment as being history making or important. She no doubt felt the way mothers have felt the world over when their first born starts to school. She led me into the bedroom and we knelt by the bed and said the Lord's Prayer. There again I was embarrassed and something inside me rebelled but through the years that has been a precious memory. (I might add at this time the memory of kneeling at Mama's knee and saying "Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep". When we visited Aunt Ella her family did the same before going to bed.)

When we walked to Huffman School it seemed a long trek although it was only a quarter of a mile. There were little steep places where the sun beat down unmercifully on a hot day. There were cool shady places or stretches where we wanted to linger to listen to the bobolink and kick our bare feet in the falling leaves. The rocky hill where once we found a baby crow and grandma helped us feed it. We kept it for a while.

As we walked along we could hear trains passing in the cut not far away and I could imagine hobo's hiding over on the edge of the wood although we never saw any. The last long incline that led down to the school passed through or over a branch - a small stream that was dry in August perhaps or so small it was simple to step over. But in the spring it sometimes became a problem to cross. There was an old log road that came into the "Main" road and it was up this old road way up on the hill there was a spring we often went to carry water for the school. Usually a big girl and a little girl would go together, or a big boy and a little boy.

At one time trees were very close to the school building. Later some were cut. I believe it was Mr. Blair that cut down trees and we used the stumps for bases for a ball diamond.

There were two Silcox families. One was Dink Silcox - the other may have been John. There was a girl named Alice Silcox who was quite pretty. One was named Carlyn. (She pronounced it Cahr-lyn with the broad A.) She was from the other Silcox family. She once found a ring that I had lost and would never give it back to me! Morris Wallen, later known as Morris Phillips always wore the cleanest overalls! Geneva Phillips always was late and lanky - wore dresses sort of apron style that buttoned down the back. She was the school tomboy and didn't care much for books. Her brother Fred always wore an old army coat. Ted had red hair, was saucy one that thought well of himself.

There was a family of Griffiths we called Griffies. Effie Bowling lived with the Silcox's. She was a sylf-like little thing with blowy hair - quite nice but babyish. There was a nice family that came from Glenmary way. I cannot just recall their name - it almost comes, but just escapes. Then of course there was my Romeo, Raymond Young. (The nice family: McCartts)

There was a little organ in the building at one time. We must have made short work of it. I learned to play by ear, "Twilight is Stealing Over the Sea" all on the black keys. We wore high top laced shoes ordered from Sears Roebuck and dresses Mom made for us. We wore long underwear in the winter and we needed it!

There weren't many residents at Huffman Switch. Remember Welch? Did he run the store at one time? A Mr. Wilson had a store and after he got sick the Holberts came.

### **Games We Played At Huffman**

"Games" we played included everything from riding stick horses to making play houses out of rocks upon the rocky hillside right in front of the house - the hillside that extended back or above the path to the right of the path as we went from the house to the barn. There was a large walnut tree there and under the tree large rocks just right for cracking walnuts. Have you ever had your hands stained from walnut hulls?

There used to be a gate not far from the house - seems to me it was a place for turning out the cows, milking, and feeding hogs at one time before we built the new barn. The barn must have been built when I was very small but I think I can remember when the

only barn on the place was the one built around the old corn crib by the back of the house. On the back side of this old barn was a shed for keeping the hay rake and mowing machine. I spent many hours sitting in the seats of these machines pretending to be manipulating them. (Like we used to run the sewing machine pedal, pretending it was some sort of vehicle, remember?)

Other games included trips in wagons, bicycles, stick horses, the British (or was it Irish) mail hand cart, around the house. Grandma used to complain because there was no grass around the house in this path. If I can look back correctly this path was a right good idea on a dewy morning. It kept your feet out of the wet grass.

We were told to stay out of the hay loft - we might fall through a hole, and I think I did mostly (stay out). We used to go into a little woods nearby and climb trees - the area behind and above the chicken house.

I used to venture out beyond the garden to the little ravine and do some "looking around". I was always a little afraid of snakes. If one went far enough he would run on to the road from Millcreek. I used to look for trailing Arbutus up this ravine.

When real warm weather came in late spring we would pick the large "johnny jump ups" or violets that bloomed in the meadow. I can remember picking great bouquets of them.

Actually we didn't venture very far away from the house. When I think back on it now I am surprised we didn't go further away from the house. Because the boys did but they were pretty young when we left there. I had a sort of fear of the unknown when I got very far away. Over toward the railroad I could always picture tramps that might molest one. So I stayed away from there.

I can remember climbing the crooked apple tree that had what we called Early Harvest apples. They taste so good fried! But also good raw. Mom had a time keeping us from eating green apples.

I guess we spent lots of time listening to the phonograph for we didn't have a T.V. I always wanted to play on the piano but we weren't allowed to bang.

We must of done a lot of pretending in our games for day dreaming was a great pastime of mine. We always had dolls. Remember "Dollie Dimple" in one of the Woman's magazines?

After learning to read there was reading of anything available. There was a book I didn't remember reading but saw around - "He Fell in Love with His Wife". The book "A Million Dollar Mystery" I must have read several times. They found the money in a picture! Aunt Ella [Clark] used to give me little books from David C. Cook. One, "The Tale of the Tubs", was fascinating. It was so real to me.

Much time was spent by the stream watching minnows, building little dams, just playing around imaging thins (always taking care of the smaller children).

### **Relatives and Other Visitors At Huffman**

The titles of this remembering or relating of things at Huffman has to be more or less artificial for there will be a mixture of everything. I go ahead and write what I recall for if I don't I will forget it later on. But visitors at Huffman was a treat and anyone can see why. Actually we didn't suffer from boredom for there were so many of the family. And certain relatives who lived close and were almost part of the family; like Uncle Bill's [Scott] family. Clyde and Wilbur who came to help Grandpa. There were times away back when Aunt Sylvia [Othenia Sylvia Griffith] was with us a lot - perhaps about the time Uncle Bill passed away [1917]. That was a long time back for it was when the kitchen was at one end of the front porch. In fact most of the front porch was used for cooking and eating. So Wilbur and Clyde were sort of like big brothers. They teased us (particularly Wilbur). At one time Aunt Eunice [Scott] was still at home and for quite awhile [Uncle] Clarence. I can remember her wearing those high top shoes. All women must have worn them! (This would be about 1917.)

Eunice helped to entertain us. I can remember her playing certain records over and over on the phonograph - "It's a Long Way to Tipperary, ... But My Heart's Right There" - and she would have us put our hand on our heart as we sang that. She was jolly and would laugh with us. We would always try to get Caroline to say things. When she was little she could say very few words.

How we would watch the path after the local train ran and someone was expected (sometimes they surprised us). But I can see Grandpa Clark with his long beard stooood back, and little satchel coming along. We would run and kiss him and he seemed to be so glad to see us. He and Grandpa Scott had long talks together.

I can remember when Grandpa Clark would awaken in the morning and he would make "stretching" noises. It seemed so good to have him there.

Aunt Laura's [Scott] girls, Rheba and Mildred, came once in awhile. We had lots of fun with them. They always had on a pretty white dress and their curly hair - red and black - was always an envy. Harold Woolfolk was a tease - we were sort of wary of him.

Once Cousin "Hallie" came and decided to stay awhile although her clothes were all at Aunt Mary's. We missed the mailman for two or three times as she was trying to write for her clothes. How angry she became! I hope I am right about her name.

A few times Aunt Ella [Clark] came but it was rare; guess she was too busy. Aunt Dora [Scott] came and picked blackberries for canning - always got poison ivy. I can remember her so miserable, fanning her legs. She used to say, "I didn't come to work, but to visit" when it was time to wash dishes.

After Eunice [Scott] married [Rudisill Smith, 1921] she would bring her little girls, Mildred and Eveylin, to see us - often Aunt Fannie [Scott] came with her. When they left they always dressed in real nice dark blue crape dresses and hats etc. I remember kissing them through veils over their faces - making a little round wet place.

It was always exciting to wait for the local train at Huffman Switch. The train would come roaring around the curve - we would wave it down and it was hard to believe it would stop. There we would see off the guest or board it ourselves to go to Lancing. How exciting to sit on the red plush seat and watch the scenery fly by - the conductor to collect your money, the "newsbutch" with little toys and crackerjack.

At Lancing I used to enjoy the fact that Bob Scott knew me - he worked at the depot. He always would say, "Hello, Jewell!" and tease me. I felt like Caroline used to always say, "He speak to me!"

### **Saturday**

It is Friday night again and a certain felling of repose comes over me. For tomorrow my loved ones are nearby and a difference prevails. Each weekend takes on a certain holiday air even though our occupation is just plain old work. For somehow or other it is

different. It reminds one of the Jewish Sabbath which began at sundown on Friday. For Saturday was the Sabbath. For them they washed themselves, put on clean clothes and lit the Sabbath Lamp. My life sort of works out that way. Perhaps I have washed my hair; clothes have been prepared for the weekend; the house must be cleaned. (Once I didn't clean the house and a Sunday surprise guest came in and was I embarrassed!)

I turn back the pages and recall the special Saturdays of yesterday. What about the time we were taking baths in the wash tub in the bedroom - about six inches of water in the tub was an ample bath and make one feel "real fine" having removed an accumulation of dirt! Then the clean clothes that Mom had rubbed on the tub, rinsed in sweet "branch" water (so soft!) and lovingly ironed while we ran like wild Indians about the place - having often to be reproved - because of quarrels - forgetting little tasks we were asked to do - and just being plain ornery about things in general! But the bath! What if we used an old rag for a wash cloth (it was clean) and another bigger rag for a towel. Then would come the comb - and we felt like a new person.

One of those times Russel [Russell, Jewell's brother], who was about three - maybe four - was missing after such bath. We became quite alarmed when calls and looking behind all the "haystacks" failed to bring him to view. Mom probably was the one that thought about it - that he had it in his mind to meet Daddy who came home on the local train which stopped about a quarter of a mile away. The trouble being that the train was due about 3:30 in the afternoon and it was only a little past noon. I remember running toward the train stop (which was also the route taken when going to school, for it led past the school house). I would call as I stopped to rest - when I could get my breath - then hurry on. I imagine fearful that the small tot had reached the track crossing with the danger of fast freight trains roaring by. At last I reached the top of a hill where I could see quite a ways and sure enough there was the little "toe" headed figure plodding along, alone, wearing the pretty little suit with yellow pants and white shirt. I finally managed to catch him - and I can see him now, still not wanting to stop - looking up at me with his big blue eyes. "I'm going to meet Daddy." He was wet with perspiration and I can also remember how often I have regretted my scolding - taking him rather roughly by the hand and retracing our steps which was to him a long way home. He must have been quite young, for I remember he couldn't understand why he had to be taken back home without Daddy. We had talked to him about "meeting Daddy" during the bathing. He must have had real tears by the time his weary legs had brought him home.

A very vivid memory is the old hand bag Dad carried his extra shirt in with hardly anything else (a few changes of clothing). But the magic old bag always brought forth some goodie - cracker jack was a standby. Often there would be some special toy that we would share. It must have been a picture as we stood around him waiting for that hand-out - and of course the hug from each one of us. For many years Saturday meant just this - Dad's return. Actually a short weekend it was. For he returned early Monday.

Special grocery items would appear on Saturdays - fresh meat, which was not a common item, perhaps oranges or other fruits, pickles (a favorite of Dad's). He always said he got the dill pickles for me, special. The small grocery store really supplied rather limited variety. But extras came - jars of jelly, etc.

As we grew older the cleaning included the house - which was a time for making it shine for Dad's arrival and the Sunday guests we might have.

But Saturday night supper with a big pot of green beans (dried beans in the winter), sliced tomatoes and that perfect pan of corn bread - and new potatoes boiled in the beans - fried salt pork, fried applies, and everyone eating with zest. Don't let us forget the gravy!

A tiredness usually prevailed - that made the bath and bed a welcome relief. Sound sleep! No wonder we did not wake on Saturday night when our car was stolen when we lived at what was known as the "Hood" house [in Lancing]. That particular Saturday night we had been listening to the radio - the Atwater Kent we had bought from John French. There was probably an election coming up and we were listening to speeches. If the dog barked (which it didn't for the prowlers knew the dog!) we didn't hear him. What an experience! Remember how Dad took the timer button out every night after that. (That is after we got our new car.)

One Saturday at this same house Caroline made the name for herself by trailing me into the blackberry patch and going on instead of returning. She missed me someway and got lost. Anyone could do the same in that wilderness kind of place that had bushes growing over the large area - a former field that was starting to grow up again.

Dad came home in time for lunch and we weren't alarmed yet - although Caroline was up there picking berries some place - we all sat down and ate lunch. Then I went to find her - and couldn't!

It was 24 hours later that she was found and much had taken place. No one had slept. No church on Sunday morning. Everyone had gathered in our yard. Food had been brought in. And I can yet see the truck coming down the road with horn blaring and Caroline sitting between the two men - the men proud and happy. Caroline - dazed, happy, bewildered, tired, hungry, wild-eyed, jabbering about men who found her - about her ride in the truck. For days she talked about these particular men. I wish I could remember - one was Lyman Norris - the other the DeFord man?

Dad was a good buyer of clothing. He would often choose our coats and other items. I can remember a blue chinchilla - so warm; another time a heavy brown army-like coat - that was wonderful for the high school days in that cold wind at Wartburg. Again there was a tweed coat with grew fur collar. Bernice was the recipient of a purple coat - of which she was quite proud - and when the high school burned I remember our wondering if she got her new purple coat out of the burning building! She did!

As we grew older, too, the singing sessions about the piano. *[Question: Where is that piano now?]* Often the one that reached the piano could escape the dish washing - for Dad would want the accompaniment for his latest song book - singing. More fun than washing dishes.