

Dec. 25, 1980

Reminiscences of My Boyhood in Roslyn

Christmas memories

ROY W. MOGER

Copyright 1980

My friend Carl Nelson and I were in first grade in 1914. For me it was a great year of opportunity. It was my first chance to be out in the big world, to choose my own friends, to make (within reason) my own decisions, and to go on errands for myself.

Carl Nelson was my special friend. We first met at school and took to each other right away. To my joy, my mother approved and we played together as much as we could. Carl would come to my house after school or I would go to Carl's house.

I believe Carl liked to come to my house for I was an only child and all the toys were mine and did not have to be shared with a brother or sister. I also had a whole room of my own to play in.

I liked to go to Carl's house for he had brothers and sisters; a younger brother and a still younger sister, an older sister, and even more astounding, two much older half-brothers and a half-sister. Not having any brothers or sisters I found this household very exciting.

My favorite member of the Nelson family, however, was Carl's mother. Not that my mother didn't always have a snack for us after school when Carl came to my house or that she wasn't concerned for our welfare, for she was, but Mrs. Nelson, as far as I was concerned, had a special touch. This special touch was at its height on Thursdays.

It was on Thursdays that Mrs. Nelson did her week's baking. It was on Thursday, shortly after we returned from school, that she took the hot steaming loaves of bread out of the oven of her wood stove and the heavenly smell filled the house and made Mrs. Nelson's kitchen a very special place. She knew just when to cut the bread while it was still warm. She knew just when to spread each piece of bread with honey which came from the beehives her husband kept in their back yard.

Carl and I always conspired to play at his house on Thursdays. As I walked back and forth through the village to Carl's house, I passed Joshua T. Hicks' General Store and each day as Carl walked back through the village to school he passed Joshua T. Hicks' General Store.

Now this store had two large display windows which were quite low and very handy for small boys to look into. This was especially true as the Christmas season drew nearer, for Joshua T. Hicks put toys on display in one of these windows. This particular year there was a small box of lead soldiers on display. There were eight infantrymen, a color bearer and an officer on horseback.

World War I had begun in Europe that summer and talk of war was all about us. Carl and I yearned to have toy soldiers so we could play war. In later years when I thought of this I would shudder. Now I realize that it is never too early to teach our young

people the folly and horror of war.

In 1914, however, we had no idea that war was other than a game and we knew that the more soldiers we had, the better game we could play. Ten soldiers were not much of an army. Nevertheless, each time we passed the window we stopped and pressed our noses against the windowpane to get a better view. It was harder for Carl for he had to pass the window twice a day going back and forth to school. It all seemed so hopeless to us for our combined allowances wouldn't even buy one box of soldiers.

Then, but a few days before Christmas, my mother asked me what I would like to give Carl for Christmas. I could tell by the question that she would pay for the present. Light dawned. If I gave Carl a set of soldiers and he gave me a set of soldiers for Christmas we could have an army. I didn't tell all to my mother. I just said that I knew Carl would like a set of soldiers.

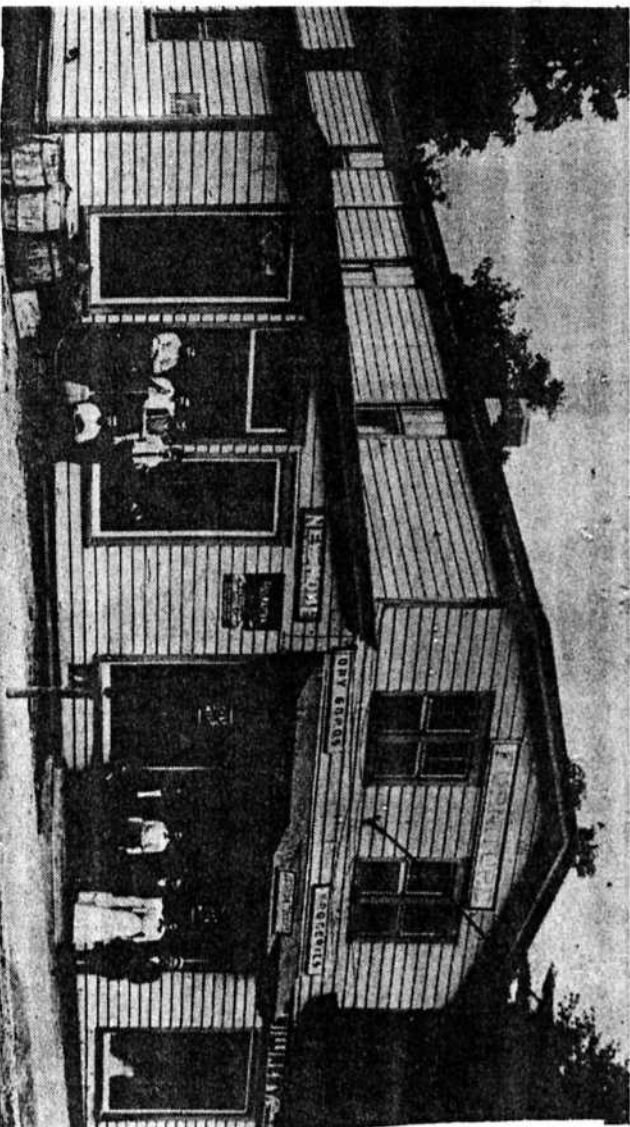
I could hardly wait to meet Carl at school the next day to tell him of my idea. He was delighted with the idea and proceeded to persuade his mother to get him a set of soldiers to give me for Christmas.

mas.

Both our mothers wrapped our presents in white Christmas paper and tied them in red Christmas ribbon. On Christmas Day we each gave the other a set of soldiers and pretended to be much surprised.

Yes, it all worked out as planned. For weeks afterwards each time one of us went to the other's house to play, we carried our box of soldiers to add to the others. We were very pleased with ourselves. It must have been when Carl and I were in second grade, for we

(Continued on Page 18)



JOSHUA T. HICKS General Store stood on the Mill Dam (now Old Northern Blvd.) The proprietor is fourth from the right.

REMINISCENCES

were big boys, old enough to be entrusted with a grave responsibility. It was a few days before Christmas and Carl's mother had been to the grocery store on the Mill Dam to do her shopping for Christmas dinner. The order had been too large for her to carry so she left her purchases at the store to be picked up by Carl and myself after school.

Enough snow had fallen so that the roads, sidewalks and paths were covered with packed snow making it possible for us to bring home the grocery order on Carl's sled. The grocer tied a large crate on the sled and then placed within it the large and small paper sacks. The sacks filled the crate to overflowing and it had to be adjusted several times before we started from the store to Carl's home. We felt very important, and very responsible. The fate of Christmas dinner for two grown-ups, three grown children, and three small children was in our hands.

As we started out the grade was level and the sled moved easily. Carl was in front pulling on the sled rope and I was behind pushing on the crate. After we passed the Grist Mill the grade changed from level to a slight up-grade and I had to begin to push. As I pushed on the crate my face came very near the paper sacks and I became aware that the sack nearest

my nose was filled with large red grapes. If it had been the turnips, or the potatoes, or the onions there would have been no temptation, but no, it was the grapes.

As we turned into what is now Lumber Rd., then it was the road leading through Isaac Hicks' Lumber Yard, the grade was downhill and my face was no longer in the grapes. All was well. We went through the lumber yard, past Isaac Hicks' house, past Miss Rachel Hicks' house, then through the woods on a path which led to Fred Seaman's house and the Roslyn Water Works.

As we went through the woods, it started snowing, nice fine snow. At the Water Works the grade became steep, uphill to West Shore Rd. which we had to cross to get to Mott Ave. where Carl lived.

It was the up-grade that really put me to the test. We had to pull and push and dig our feet into the snow to get a foot hold to move the loaded sled inch-by-inch up the hill. My nose was getting nearer and nearer to the grapes.

Just before we reached West Shore Rd. I could no longer stand the strain. I called to Carl to stop and rest so that I might share my struggle with him. We rested. We looked at the grapes. We looked at the rest of the load and then we looked back at the grapes. We discussed our responsibility and then looked back at the grapes. It was getting dark. It was snowing. We must get home with the groceries. I must get home before my mother started to worry.

There in the woods just below West Shore Rd. we decided that

we better each have a grape to give us strength. There in the dark we each had a grape.

We were strengthened. Carl took the rope and began to pull. I put my hands on the crate and began to push. The sled began to move up the hill. My face was in the grapes. We made West Shore Rd. We crossed the road. We had come to Mott Ave. Carl lived in the second house. The grade became steeper. We stopped to rest again and each had another grape. Our strength was again renewed and the sled went up the hill.

When we reached Carl's driveway, which was level, it was easy getting the sled to the back porch. Mrs. Nelson came out to greet us. She took the large sacks out of the crate and we took the smaller ones and carried them into the kitchen.

The kitchen was warm from the wood stove. Mrs. Nelson was so glad to see us that she thanked us over and over again and praised us for bringing the groceries home in the snow. We could not understand. We had failed in our responsibility. We had broken our trust. We could stand it no longer. We told her that we had eaten four grapes.

It is sometimes very difficult for small boys to understand mothers. Instead of scolding us as we had expected, she hugged us both and kissed us. Then she opened the bag of grapes and gave us some more. I didn't know why she gave any to Carl. I assumed mine were to strengthen me for my trip home through the snow.