

## Gramma Eunice and Grampa Kile

"Doctor, the baby is turning blue!" said Gramma Eunice. She was in my mother's bedroom in the first floor apartment at 218 Park Avenue, East Orange, NJ where I was born in 1924. Dr. Lauterwasser, a German hydrotherapist, was busily trying to stop Mommie's bleeding. He looked at me, ripped a membrane off my face, threw it in the waste basket, and got me to breathing. Then he swore at himself for throwing away the veil.

"I could have gotten \$5.00 for that veil from a sea captain. Sailors think they are good luck." I didn't think it was very good luck.

Five dollars was a lot of money in those days. A loaf of bread cost five cents or less.

Was I named Eunice because Gramma Eunice saved my life? I feel sure that was Mommie's decision. Evidently it meant a lot to Gramma.

When I was three, Mommie and I went to Tryon near Ashville, North Carolina to visit Gramma Eunice and Grampa Kile. Grampa Kile liked to play golf, and so in the winter he went south where there were very good golf courses.



This is Gramma Eunice and the car they had in North Carolina in 1927. I don't know if this was the same car they used at home in Providence, RI. It may well have been. Gramma and Grampa had cars almost from the time cars were first made. Back then Grampa Kile had to carry his own gasoline and tools to fix the car as he drove over the dirt roads with no filling stations, no car repair places. In those days train travel was very uncomfortable, but it was the fastest way to travel. If the windows of the train were closed, it was too hot in a train going south. If we opened the windows, soot blew in. Trains were usually late, especially those going south of Washington, DC.

Mommie and I must have gone to North Carolina by train. Gramma and Grampa no doubt met us at the train in this car. I know Daddy stayed at home working at his job.

What fun I had with a sand toy Gramma bought me! It had metal figures who swung round and round on big hoops. Others did hand stands and cart wheels. Sand ran through the funnel would to make them go. Gramma loved to see me having fun.

"Where will she play with that?" Grampa Kile frowned as he spoke.

"On the square granite landing at the front door", said Gramma.

"What will you use for sand?"

"Salt."

"You can't do that. It will destroy the plants!"

Well we did. Gramma Eunice and I carefully swept up the salt. I played with that amazing toy all morning and afternoon every day.

Mother and Gramma were so excited about the locally made, homespun, and hand woven

wool cloth for sale. What's the fuss? So what? Cloth meant nothing to me. Gramma bought some blue homespun wool cloth. She took it to her home in Providence, RI and made me a coat. Mommie was thrilled.

"You should be very grateful to Gramma for making you such a nice coat."

"But I want a straw hat with a big brim and a wide black grosgrain ribbon around the crown with streamers down the back."

"Shame on you."

Gramma Eunice gave me just the hat I wanted. Oh how I loved it! Gramma understood me! Gramma loved me!

When I was five years old, I stayed with her and Grampa Kile for a month while my parents went to Europe. I had short blond hair and an enormous bow in my hair.



Here is Gramma Eunice and her niece Ida, the daughter of her sister Ida. This is her big house in Providence, RI. Her long brown hair was in a bun in back just above her neck. She wore dresses which fell to just above her ankles. Her shoes had one or two straps across her foot. Sometimes she wore a dark velvet ribbon around her neck to cover the wrinkles. I never noticed any wrinkles.

She had a beautiful rose garden behind her big brick house. The roses were infested with lots of Japanese beetles which ate the leaves of the rose bushes. Gramma gave me a pint jar with kerosene in it. She told me to catch Japanese beetles and put them in the kerosene to kill them. I caught oodles of beetles. I was doing important work.

Gramma took lots of pictures of me in my dresses that hung from the smocking at my shoulders which Mommie bought me. How I hated those dresses. The dresses Mommie bought hid the fact that I was quite thin. What's wrong with being thin?

I wanted dresses in pastel colors that fit at the waist. Every year Gramma Eunice made me a dress. It always fit me perfectly and was a style and color that I liked. I loved the dresses Gramma made for me.

I always wore dresses. Girls did in those days. Daddy's Aunt Minnie told him that I must never be allowed to wear bloomers. They were scandalously revealing. In seventh grade gym class we had to wear black, sateen cotton bloomers down to our knees. We hated them. In high school we could wear shorts for gym.

After meals, when I was five, Grampa lay down on the sofa and let me bounce up and down on his tummy while he talked philosophy and psychology to me. Bouncing is fun. I loved it. He encouraged me to act like a child while talking seriously to me as if I were an adult. Wow! Grampa studied a different subject each year as long as he lived. He went to high school but only until he was sixteen. However he was far better educated than most college graduates.

One year when I was seven Gramma Eunice and Gramps Kile came to visit us in West

Orange, NJ for Christmas. It was so warm that I greeted them wearing a summer dress and a light sweater. After Christmas they asked me if I'd like to visit them for the rest of my Christmas vacation. A friend would give me a ride back to my parents. Boy, I could hardly wait to go.

At Gramma's I got bronchitis and had to stay in bed for a month. Gramma filled a toy pottery churn with heavy cream. She showed me how to stir the cream with a butter spreader to churn the cream into butter. It was so exciting to see the drops of butter form and the buttermilk separate out little by little. The butter milk tasted rather good, not at all like the dreadful stuff they sell in the stores as buttermilk. I was fascinated. I made butter over and over. Gramma decided she liked the unsalted sweet cream butter better than the commercial butter made of sour cream with salt. She had the maid use an egg beater to make a larger amount of sweet cream butter. That was cheating.

Years later I tried making butter with an egg beater. I added salt to see how much it took to make my butter taste like commercial butter. Lot and lots! I thought I'd never get it as salty as store bought butter.

The year I got bronchitis at Gramma's house, my baby brother was born. Mommie had Dr. Lauterwasser, the same doctor who didn't check that I was breathing. I never understood hiring that same doctor who nearly let me die. There were plenty of other doctors available.

Mommie and Daddy had a nurse who wouldn't let me see my baby brother. I didn't like her at all. He was my brother wasn't he? I was entitled to see him. How could I get rid of her?

"Jean Losey and Ethel Mae Baker had a much nicer nurse than that woman who won't let me see my baby brother." It turned out that Daddy didn't like that awful nurse either. We got the nice nurse that took care of my friends' families. Back then all babies were born at home. Newborn babies and their mothers had a nurse to take care of them for a month.

Why was I at Gramma's house for three months before my father came to get me? They knew Gramma was taking good care of me. Were my parents glad to have the baby to themselves?

Starting when I was ten or eleven years old, Gramma invited me to visit in her house in New London, NH for two months every other summer. It was a wooden house with a big livingroom just like the one in their brick house in Providence, RI. Grampa designed the floor plan. From the front windows we could see Kearsarge Mountain on the right and Ragged Mountain on the left. From the porch in the back we saw Mount Sunapee. About two miles from the house was one of the best golf courses in the country. Grampa chose the location.

For years my parents went to Cape Cod one summer and to New Hampshire the next. When my parents and my brother Will came to NH, I stayed with Gramma and Grampa. Some years my parents and Will stayed next door at Miss Chidsey's cottage. I liked that. Miss Chidsey had blue and white china, blue and white curtains, and blue and white throw pillows, my favorite decor. Years later when I had my own family in New Hampshire, I, too, had Blue Willow china.

Some years Will got to stay at the Brockelbank Hotel with Mommie and Daddy. Will got to ride on the hay as the horses pulled the wagon back and forth on the field while men pitched hay on the wagon with pitch forks. Will got to milk the goats. Will jumped on the hay in the barn. Will ate Addie Gay's delicious food in the dining hall. Addie Gay wrote poetry. Her son Paul Gay ran the farm and later became a member of the NH legislature. Will got to hear the concertina's play in the Brockelbank Annex at night. Will was the lucky one.

Why didn't Gramma Eunice and Grampa Kile invite Will to visit sometimes? Maybe Gramma wanted me to visit because I was named for her. Perhaps they didn't want an active boy around.

Gramma taught me about gardening. I still love the Johnny-Jump-ups, delphinium, and sweet william she taught me about.

I had great fun driving all over the countryside with Grampa Kile. I was pleased that he liked my company too. He wanted especially fresh food. It was better. At a farm he bought fresh peaches. Gramma and Grampa preferred the sweet cream unsalted butter which Grampa bought at a farm far from the first. Maybe Gramma and Gramps liked sweet cream butter because of all the butter I had churned when I had bronchitis at their house.

Just before Grampa and I went back to their house in New Hampshire, we went to the Grey House, a grey shingled house with porches on the back with a beautiful view of Mount Kearsarge. The Grey House served only ice cream. Across the street was the Edmunds' farm where they raised their own cows and made ice cream. That's the ice cream we ate at the Grey House. Grampa always ate ginger ice cream in a dish. I ate my ice cream from a cone, any flavor I wanted!

Once Grampa brought home a pint of ice cream from the Grey House. Gramma complained that she had no chance to choose what flavor he brought. Maybe she didn't like ginger ice cream. I didn't either.

Years later the Grey House enlarged into a restaurant with two dining rooms on the first floor and one in the basement. All looked out on Mount Kearsarge.

Grampa Kile and I climbed Mount Kearsarge when I was five. The top is bald because long ago a fire burned off all the trees. On the top is a windy fire tower which most people climb to get an even better view. Near it was a house where a fire warden lived. He could see fires for miles around. It was a lonely job. The house is no longer there.

Some people climb Mount Kearsarge from Wilmot Flat on one side. Others have an easier climb from Warner on the opposite side. Grampa and I climbed on the steep Wilmot side a mile up to the top and a mile down.

"We'd better stop and rest here. You know you have a heart murmur." True, but my heart murmur was, and still is, unimportant. No doubt his heart trouble was the reason for our frequent rest stops. I've climbed Mount Kearsarge every year since then, sometimes from Wilmot Flat, sometimes from Warner. Both sides have lookouts along the trail with lovely views of the houses, churches, schools, distant mountains, and nearby lakes. Near the top was an old red private airplane wreck. I can't find the plane now. No doubt it was removed.

Over the years the dirt on the trail from Wilmot Flat has washed away leaving bare stones. Water trickles down all summer making the rocks slippery and much harder to climb. Sometimes I have slipped down and gotten my clothes wet. A new trail goes a mile and a half each way instead of the one mile of the original trail.

On my visits in New Hampshire Grampa had three rules. I must be dressed and eat breakfast with him every morning promptly at 8:00 AM. I must eat turnip greens when they were served. I forget the third rule, but I figured out that Grampa wanted me to do the things that Gramma Eunice didn't do. Gramma slept late in her bedroom. Grampa's three rules taught me that, when bringing up my children, I should try to teach them only three new things. When they learned those things, I could go on to teach them something more. I much preferred his method of having three well known rules to my parents random requests which I felt were

confusing and unpredictable.

In Providence, RI Gramma lived in a big brick house at the top of the hill at 295 Olney Street. There were huge rhododendron bushes in front of the house. In the back yard was the large rose garden where I killed so many Japanese beetles. That's where Mother and Daddy were married. As Gramma remembered Mommie's and Daddy's wedding she remembered Eleanor Wall who played the piano at Mommie's wedding. How could she explain who Eleanor Wall was?

"You remember the woman who played the piano at your mother's wedding." We both laughed.

In Gramma's big kitchen was a fascinating piece of furniture with big drawers below, an enamel counter top, and a built in flour sifter filled with flour in it. I cranked the handle round and round sifting more and more flour.

On the opposite wall stood a coal or wood stove with circular metal lids, that covered the fire beneath them. Sometimes the lids had two or three rings, one inside the other. We lifted the lids with a metal handle that hooked into the lids. We heated flat irons on that stove. When we thought the flat irons might be hot enough, we licked our index fingers and lightly tapped the flat iron on the hot surface. If it sizzled, it was warm enough to use. When the flat iron was warm enough we fitted curved wooden handles into the tops of the flat irons and carried them to the ironing board. Criss-cross legs could adjust the height of the ironing board and collapse it when we finished using it.

I never saw another piano like Gramma's. Her grand piano could play piano rolls in a drawer under the keyboard. For hours I put the rolls into the drawer, pushed the on switch, and watched the piano keys go up and down. How could a roll of paper with holes in it make piano keys go up and down? It was magic.

Just inside the door of the living room was a closet with Trueman's toys. Trueman meant nothing to me. He died as a soldier in the flu epidemic in 1919. I stayed with Gramma and Grampa while my parents went to Europe in 1929, the summer before the Great Depression. Gramma doted on Trueman. She kept a red rose by his picture as long as she lived.

I loved Trueman's toys. They were so different than the ones I played with at home. At home at 16 Oxford Terrace, West Orange, NJ. Ethel Mae Baker and Jean Lossey and I played dolls for hours on end on the square glassed in front porch. We washed doll clothes with my toy glass wash board in the toy wash tub. We hung the doll clothes with doll sized clothes pins on a chord strung in the back yard. We ironed doll clothes with my small electric iron on my toy ironing board just like Gramma's.

We dug potatoes from my vegetable garden behind the garage. Ethel Mae and Jean Losey thought that Mommie would scold me for digging potatoes without her permission. No. That was My vegetable garden. We baked the potatoes in the two ovens one above the other on my toy electric stove. Mommie said my potatoes tasted better than the ones from the store. They were fresher.

Mommie put tomato soup in the top of her double boiler on all four toy burners of my toy stove as if it were a hot plate. I had toy pots and pans, but things spilled out of them quickly. I stopped trying to cook with them.

Trueman's toys were fun. I could be a boy with Trueman's toys. One of my favorites was a cast iron fire wagon. I lifted out the firemen dressed in red coats. Could the seated firemen ride the horses? I unfastened the horses and had races with them. I took the ladders from the sides of the fire wagon and had the firemen climb the ladders here and there. Trueman's old toys brought back such pleasant memories that I recently bought a cast iron fire wagon pulled by horses just like his.

Grampa Kile bought me a toy lumber yard. Small metal marbles ran from a funnel to make it work. Men with a two man saw moved back and forth sawing a log. Men swung their hatchets at logs. Other men with axes cut down trees. No sand or salt this time.

When I was older, Gramma took me up in the attic to show me some old dolls like those that she had played with when she was a child. I never got to play with them. They had china heads, arms, and legs. Their bodies were cloth stuffed with cotton. Because kids carry such dolls carelessly, the dolls were provided with two sets of legs. I imagine that she hadn't played with those dolls either. The dolls she played with would have had at least one pair of broken legs. That would have been in the 1870s. She was born in 1868. These dolls were treasured memories of her childhood. I still have those dolls in a closet in our house in New Hampshire. Like Gramma I show them to my children and grandchildren. Like Gramma, I don't let children play with them. They are very valuable.

Gramma Eunice often told me about growing up on the family sheep farm in Orwell, Ohio. I loved that story! She and her sister Ida looked over all the ewes to find the biggest one. They saved their money to buy lambs from the ewe they chose. The ewe soon gave birth to two lambs, but would feed only one of them. The girls fed the other lamb with a bottle every 4 hours. While they were playing with the lambs out doors at night, one lamb got lost. They searched and searched, but couldn't find their dear baby lamb.

"Girls, come in out of that raging thunder storm!" called their worried parents. All night Gramma Eunice and Ida worried and worried about their baby lamb.

Next morning they saddled the huge farm horse with enormous feet. They rode the horse here and there until they found the little lamb shivering in a stream of water. They dismounted, picked up their little lamb, lifted it on the horse with them, and rode home with their shivering wet lamb. At home they put the miserably cold wet lamb in a box with warm cloths snuggled around it. The girls put the box with the lamb in it behind the cast iron wood stove, in the farm kitchen. They fed it a bottle of warm milk and dried its fur. Soon it was scampering around with them.

Sara Josepha Hale of Newport, NH wrote "Mary had a little lamb". The sheep mother of Mary's lamb would not feed it. Mary did. That's why the lamb followed Mary to school. Gramma's lamb, like Mary's, must have followed Gramma Eunice and her sister Ida wherever they went. No wonder they loved the lamb so.

Sara Josepha Hale was also the editor of Godey's Ladies' Book. It was the fashion magazine from 1850 on to the 1870's. Once Gramma bought a couple copies at an auction. Grampa thought that was foolish. Gramma framed some of the pictures, ink drawings with pastel water color paint. The women pictured all have tiny waists produced by terribly tight corsets. An end to those corsets was the top priority when women first campaigned for freedom. Each page showed the picture of a different fashionable woman. Women with long hair and curls wore dresses with bouffant puffs cascading down the bustle and train of the dress

to the floor. Each cascade was decorated with ruffles on each side. Other women wore hoop skirts to the floor. Those framed pictures are some of my prize possessions.

Years later in the Orwell, Ohio library my husband Chip found an 1875 tax map in a book of sundry historical papers in total disorder. The map gave the street names and showed the location of all the houses at that time. The stream the little lamb had shivered in was shown wandering through the farm. Using a xerox of that map we found the farm house in Orwell where Gramma had lived as a child. I took pictures of it. The present owner, a lady in a pastel cotton house dress, was gracious and welcoming. She told us about all the many changes to the house since Gramma Eunice had lived there. The outside walls of the house were the same as they were when Gramma lived there, but this room used to be the livingroom. Now it's the kitchen.

It's a quite small house. In that small house lived Gramma born in 1867, her brother, her two sisters, her two half brothers, her father, and her mother Mary Augusta Bigelow born in 1828, and her grandmother Eunice Wilder Bigelow born in 1790. Where did nine people sleep? Did they have trundle beds? Or did the children sleep on hay in the attic as Noah Webster and his eight siblings did as children in New Hampshire?

The present owner of Gramma's childhood home took us down to the dirt floor in the basement so that we could take pictures of the old stone foundation. The old barn had burned and is no longer there, but we saw its foundation.

In Orwell we found what had been the old one room school house when Gramma went to school. Oxen pulled the one room school on skis over the snow to the place nearest the homes of the school children. It is now an artist's studio on a firm foundation.

A highly prized enormous three piece wooden desk made in England had been handed from generation to generation in Gramma Eunice's family. All owners of the desk had been named Eunice as Gramma and I were. Much later Gramma gave it to me. I tried to learn about the desk's history.

The desk goes from floor to ceiling. The bottom piece had a foldout shelf covered with green felt to provide the writing surface at the right height for someone sitting on a tall stool. Below the writing surface are big, generous drawers. On the drawers in a separate piece are pigeon holes. Sliding wooden covers roll over the pigeon holes. Between the pigeon holes is a door to a cubicle. That door has a dark wood diamond shaped inlay decorating it. If the desk had been made in America the door would each have had an eagle inlay instead of a diamond. On top the third piece of the desk is book shelves behind doors that lock.

When did the desk come from England? Gramma's mother, Mary Augusta Bigelow Rice moved from Marlborough, Massachusetts to Orwell, Ohio by covered wagon between 1847 and 1857 when she was between twenty and thirty years old. That was shortly before the Civil War in 1861. With Mary Augusta Bigelow Rice went her brother, Gershom Palifax Bigelow and her mother, Eunice Wilder Bigelow my great great grandmother who was born in 1790. She would have been between fifty seven and sixty seven, rather old to be pioneering in Indian territory. She lived to be eighty three so she evidently thrived on pioneering. How crowded that covered wagon must have been with that enormous desk, all those people, and all of their belongings! It must have been a very bumpy ride as there were no roads nor even cow paths.

How much space would their clothes take? At that time men wore ruffles on their shirt

front and the ends of their shirt sleeves. Their jackets, fitted at the waist, fell to their knees. Their breeches just covered their knee stockings. They had big buckles on their shoes and wore wigs with lots of curls.

Women wore full skirts to the ground over many full petticoats. Pleated white cotton pantaloons trimmed with lace covered their ankles. A woman's ankles must not show. Her bodice fitted closely at the waist with a tight corset under it. Her long hair had many curls.

True people had only one or two outfits for winter and one or two for summer. Probably pioneering farm folk wore less elegant clothes. Certainly the skirts were just as long. Pioneers and even farm folk may have slept in their clothes. People thought it was unhealthy to bathe. That's why trade with the Orient was so important. They needed perfume.

The desk went by covered wagon to Ohio when the wagons formed a circle at night for protection from Indians. Only if it were treasured would a desk that size have been given room in that crowded covered wagon. Perhaps the family put the few clothes they were not wearing in the desk along with drawings and papers. No photos though. Cameras had not been invented.

Gramma Eunice gave money every year to her nephew Hugh Carpenter who managed the old family farm she loved so well. She went to the family farm in Ohio from time to time as long as she was able. One year she found that valuable old English desk in three pieces being rained on in the wood shed. She took the desk back to Providence, RI and had it restored. At that time she had the desk evaluated. It was worth a thousand dollars, a lot of money in those days. That was long ago. Now it must be worth much more.

I treasure the desk because Gramma Eunice gave me. It's a wonderful old fashioned desk with so many family memories connected with it. In it I keep sewing supplies, wrapping paper, stationery, favorite books, letters, Christmas cards, glue, keys, bus and airplane schedules. No jewelry nor clothes, but just about everything else. It's a little bit of family history right in the house with me.

After all my older relatives had died, the family letters and pictures all came to me. Gramma had taken many photos of me, some of us together, some in family groups, some the summer when I was killing Japanese beetles. On the backs of all her many photos Gramma Eunice had written, "My dear Namesake". Now and then I find a book she gave me with the same inscription.

#### Other Family Stories.

Gramma Eunice's great great great grandfather, John Bigelow was born in Watertown, Massachusetts in 1675. He and Jerusha Garfield were married in Watertown on June 12, 1696. His was the first of the family to move to Marlborough, MA. He was captured by Indians in Boylston, MA on Oct 5, 1705 during the King Phillips War. King Phillip was an Indian who predicted that the colonists were a danger to the Indians and went to war with them. The King Phillips War was before the French and Indian War in 1754 - 1763. The Indians gave John Bigelow to the French governor of Canada. He was a carpenter and his fellow prisoner, Elias Sawyer was a blacksmith. They proposed to built a saw mill on Chamblay River in Canada if the governor would set them free when they finished. In that Canada had no saw mill, the governor agreed to release the two men when the saw mill was completed. They built the saw



mill and were set free.

When he returned from Canada, John Bigelow had eleven children, including Thankful, Comfort, & Freedom and perhaps Grateful, all girls and a boy, Gershom named for his father.