

**A Collage of Young Memories of King Street
Where Grandpa Willy and Grandma Jennie Lived
By Grandsons Don, Phil, and Larry
October, 2006**

They lived in a four square workman's house situated on a brick street in Decatur, IL. The milkman delivered on that street in a horse drawn milk wagon. As the milkman ran from house to house, the horse just waited and walked up when he needed to. Off the brick street there was a grass strip, then the side walk, then the walk up to the front porch which had a porch swing on the right. Once we saw Mom (Kay) and Mom (Opie) bring the porch swing down with a crash (Don & Phil). In the front yard on the right as you face the house was a big tree with a really big rock at its foot. The big tree in the front yard was a maple and the roots had caused the side walks to bulge up. The rock was painted white.

Through the front door of the house was the living room. To the left of the door was Grandpa's rocker, then on the left wall was a couch. There was a window on the front and on the left walls. In the living room there was one of those old floor model radios. It sat on the front wall that was along King Street. I remember we all gathered around it to listen to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth of England. Dad said we had better listen to it because that is something that may only happen once in a person's lifetime (Larry).

The bathroom was at the back left corner of the living room. At the right wall of the living room there was a door to the front bedroom. At the back right of the living room was the opening to the kitchen. Going through to the kitchen there was a wall hung sink with counter space and a curtain under on the left, stove to the right and what I recall as a giant table in the middle. On the right kitchen wall to the rear was the door to the back bedroom and on the back wall to the left, the ice box. And I mean an ICE box. The Ice man brought a block of ice through the back door and put it in the ICE BOX.

The back door was to the left of the ice box. There was a little mud room in front of the back door. If you walked through the kitchen passed the ice box on the left and into the mud room, with your left arm toward the front of the house you could reach out that left arm and point to the cellar. I don't know much about the cellar. I guess we weren't allowed there (Don).

I think there were some stairs going down to the back door. I remember them because I think I fell down them several times (Larry). I think there was a landing near the back door where you could go straight out of the back door or turn right and go down some more steps to the basement. Speaking of the basement, I think the walls were dirt and there was a shelf at the top. This was because the basement was dug after the house was built and enough soil had to be left so that the foundation would be supported (Larry). The Basement had a coal furnace, I'm pretty sure, and I think Grandma had a wash tub down there with one of those old crank ringers. I'm fairly sure about the ringer 'cause I left part of my fingers there (Phil).

Out the back door there was a step and a small back yard that stopped at the alley (dirt). Just this side of the alley and to the left was a rhubarb patch that ran parallel to the alley. Also, out there was (in my limited experience at the time) the most wonderful smell possible. It was, of course, a small potato chip factory (Don). I think, but I'm not totally sure, that it was a Crane Potato chip factory (Phil).

I remember some rhubarb that was planted on the right hand side of the house as you were facing it. We used to pull a stalk, cut the leaves off, and dip the end in sugar to eat it raw. That was with Mom's permission of course. I remember playing with the whirlygig seed pods in the spring or early summer. We would throw them in the air and watch them auto rotate to the ground (Larry).

In my limited recollection, Grandpa was always in his rocking chair and Grandma was always in the kitchen making either a rhubarb or butterscotch pie (Don).

Memories of the Neighborhood:

Across the alley in the back, a man had a welding shop. You could see the bright blue-white light from his arc welding rig from Grandma and Grandpa's back yard as the man worked on something.

The neighbors next to them had a mulberry tree in their back yard. I remember that the birds sure liked those berries.

As you went out of the front of the house and turned right on King St. you would come to where King St. ended at Van Dyke Street (actually King doesn't end there but it makes a jog to the north by about a half a block so that King appears to end at Van Dyke). There was somewhat of a hill in King St. at that point. I would go down to that end of the street and watch the Inter Urban trains travel on the tracks across Van Dyke St.

If you turned right on Van Dyke St. and went down a ways there was a barber shop on the right. I think we may have gotten our hair cut there sometimes.

If you went down the street even farther and came to where Van Dyke St ends at Eldorado St, that is where the Polar Ice Company was on the left. Grandpa had a balloon tire bicycle that he used to ride everywhere since they didn't have a car at that time. I remember one time he brought a block of ice for their ice box on the back carrier of that bicycle home. I guess that was after the iceman had stopped making deliveries. He was pushing the bicycle with the block of ice strapped to the carrier up King St. from Van Dyke St. I guess he had gotten the ice at the Polar Ice Co.

I think the ice cream company where Dad worked was to the right at the intersection of Van Dyke and Eldorado. I remember Dad use to point it out to us as we went by there (Larry).

If you went out the front of Grandma and Grandpa's house and turned left, that is where you came to the corner grocery store. When we lived on Lincoln St., I was taken by bus to Washington School; but when we moved in with Grandma and Grandpa for a while until Mom and Dad could get our garage house built I had to walk to Garfield School. I finished the second part of kindergarten at Garfield. I would go past that store every day as I walked to school (Larry).

Editor's note: William and Jennie Rhodes moved to 979 King Street in September, 1941; Jennie moved away to an apartment around 1953, after William's death on October 31, 1952. Don's and Phil's memories of King Street cover their early childhood up to age 6; Larry's memories cover his childhood up to age 9.