

Recollections of Viola Edwards Herrman (Written by Jerry Herrman (son) in 2006)

Before living in SD my parents lived in Cowling, Illinois.

My mother's maiden name was Louisa Jane Painter. Her first husband was Alfred Durley, and they had one son Amon. Alfred died after Amon was born. My mother then married Lee Edwards. His father was a traveling Baptist preacher in North Carolina who fought for the South in the Civil War. My parents had a son Charles, who at a young age got a disease, typhoid fever, maybe. Everyone kept praying that he would live, until one day the doctor told them to quit praying, because if he lived, he would be abnormal. So they quit praying and Charles died immediately.

After Charles, the other children were Raymond, Chloe, Leona, and Martha Jewel. In 1907 the family traveled by train to western South Dakota to live on a homestead. In Chicago Raymond dislocated both shoulder blades. Another family traveling to South Dakota asked what had happened; the family asking was Mary Herrman and children (John was already in South Dakota). Our family was on the first train to travel on the new bridge over the Missouri River at Pierre.

I was born May 31, 1911 at home attended by Dr Whaley, a woman doctor. I was born 17 years to the day after my brother Raymond. Our home was a sod house, built into a hillside, that was called a dugout. It was warm in winter and cool in summer. We lived in the Hartley neighborhood, the Hartley store and post office being about five(?) miles south. To the north was the Cheyenne River with rough ground, called breaks, between.

West Fork grade school was a mile east near where the Hanrahans lived. The Bakers lived east of the school. The Laurence family lived south of the school on the left near the creek, and the Jim Bell family lived further south, also on the left, in a two story house. They had two daughters my age; Hazel later married Eli Ferguson and lived in New Jersey, while Lucille married Clinton Harry and lived in Midland. The Wedemans and Bennetts lived north of the school, which had about twenty pupils.

My parents told me that an old white bulldog named Don guarded and protected me. He watched for rattlesnakes and wouldn't let me travel far.

Isaac Council Bear also watched over me. He was like a babysitter and watched for rattlesnakes, etc. The Council Bear family lived on the creek down from the homestead. Their children attended Hanrahan School.

During the first years there were animal bones scattered on the prairie. My father would gather these and sell them in Philip. I think they were used to make potash.

I was a late bloomer and did not talk until I was 3 years old, thus causing my parents much worry. My first utterance was a complete sentence.

One of my early memories is when my folks bought a wood frame house from a neighboring family that was moving away. My father (papa) and neighbors used several teams of horses to move the house which was put on skids. I was playing in or around the house and somehow got my foot caught. When the building started to move, I was caught and was very frightened and started to scream. The men heard me and stopped moving the house so I was not hurt.

Mother was a very good cook. She and my sisters gathered wild fruit including plums, chokecherries, currants, sand cherries, strawberries and grapes along the creek. She canned and preserved the fruits and the vegetables from the big garden that mostly mama tended. We had a well with soft water for the garden.

Papa grew wonderful, flavorful, small watermelons on dry land. I remember stopping, breaking open a melon, on my way home from school, and just eating the best part, the heart.

Papa liked to hunt and fish, so we had rabbit and grouse to eat. My parents raised pigs and chickens. They also milked cows, and I had to be careful not to drink too much milk. We churned butter with a dasher type churn. I remember my mother forming butter in wooden frames to sell to the store as well as eggs that I helped clean.

My parents bought a pump organ. I remember Papa playing while he, Leona and Jewel sang. They had good voices: Leona sang soprano, Jewel alto, while Papa could sing any part, but usually tenor.

I remember going to Illinois to visit relatives. While at Aunt Martha's place Sereno and I ate a whole jar of pickles after which we did not feel so well.

Relatives from Illinois visited us, including Amon, Phoebe and family. Many worked for the railroad so had free passes including Uncle Phillip and Aunt Josh and their family.

During my first grade a cistern was being dug near the school house. Over the weeks it was dug deeper and deeper. Several big eighth-grade girls thought it was fun to throw several of us first graders back and forth across the hole in the ground. One day Leona came by the school and saw this; she grabbed one of

the ringleaders by the hair and said “if you do that again I will come back and pull out the rest of your hair”.

Marietta was a thriving village with a bank, a store run by Mr Nash, and a school.

Milesville had a bank, hotel, an eating establishment, a blacksmith shop, and two grocery stores. One grocery store was the Harvey store on one side of the street and the Kertzman store on the other. I remember a second-story apartment in one building where I visited Clarence and Lottie Case.

When we needed to get to Philip or someplace else we would catch a ride with the mailman.

There were several atheist families living in the neighborhood, including the Andersons and Hills, which caused some discord. Mama was a Sunday school teacher.

Papa and I both had the Spanish flu. Coming down with it I laughed and laughed and went to bed and don't remember much for a week or two. Chloe came home from nursing school in Deadwood and took care of us. Leona came home from business school in Rapid City and entertained me.

When Mama got false teeth it was a shock to see her with big white teeth. I was scared and hid behind Jewel. Mama was so proud of them and was disappointed I didn't like them.

My first- through fifth-grade teachers included Beatrice Bennett, Miss Collins, Effie Diebler, George Africa, and my brother Raymond.

I started sixth grade at Moenville with Leona teaching and finished at a school south of Nowlin with Jewel teaching. Upon returning home after the school year my mother was disturbed and distraught because I didn't know how to milk cows or take care of chickens. She said I was always playing. To get started I should help her clean the chicken house. It was a dirty job and then we whitewashed the inside. While we were doing this I began to feel sick. My eyes hurt and I had a headache. I complained so much she let me go to the house and lie down while she finished. I had a high fever and began to break out with measles. Mama felt so bad for me and took care of me, and for the rest of the summer I didn't have to milk or take care of the chickens. It was not my mother's nature to be critical, so when she had become disturbed and distraught it was not like her. I think that my eyesight was affected by the measles.

I attended seventh grade at the Elbon school with Leona teaching. One day during the school year Harold Ferguson, his sister Helen, and I drove to Moenville. I stayed at Sandals and visited Esther. We were in a Model T with

side curtains. Near Deep Creek Lutheran church we hit icy roads and the car tipped over; I was thrown out the back and received a bump on the head. We drove back to Elbon after getting the car back on its wheels. Back at school I was sick. Looking back I think I lost some memory from the bump on my head.

My parents and I moved to the Hardingrove community and lived on the edge of the flat. We could look over the creek to the Hartley area. Leona and John Sandal later lived nearby.

I started eighth grade at Moenville with Leona teaching. I finished the school year at Hardingrove, where I graduated from the eighth grade.

I started ninth grade at the King School near Milesville. I lived in the dormitory during the week. My folks did not have a car and it was difficult to get back and forth. I went to the King School for about a month. The rest of the year I stayed with Chloe and Fred Carlson at Pine Ridge where Chloe was a nurse and Fred was an auto mechanic.

I attended tenth grade at Marietta consolidated school. The teacher was Mary Kennedy. I stayed with the Teeples, who lived west of the Deucher home. Rosy Mercy, an orphan girl who later married James Beaton, and Marie Mercy, a sister of Rosy, was also staying there. A little school bus driven by Tracy Walker took us to school. Marietta School had big sliding doors to separate the grade school from the high school. Gordon Stevenson, an eighth grader, sat where the doors came together, while I sat on the other side. He would give a signal and I would put my hand out and he would give me candy or something else. One time he did this and I put my hand out and he put a dead mouse in my hand. After this experience I never put my hand out again.

I attended eleventh grade at Philip high school. Mable Parsons and I batched in a room with an oil stove. We slept and cooked our meals there during the week. It was in the Michaels (Ainsley) house on the hill.

Just before I was ready for the twelfth grade Chloe and Fred, who now lived in Alliance, Nebraska, visited us. They said that in Alliance I could take normal training while in high school and then teach right after graduation. Jewel and Harold took me to Chloe and Fred's in Alliance and then left. When I went to the high school to register the superintendent said "You can't do that, it is a two year course, plus you must pass tests. The program is to be done during the junior and senior years of school". He said it would be impossible to complete the course in one year. I told him "well, I am here, my ride has gone back, can I try it?" The superintendent said I could try. I did pass the classes and passed the teacher tests. While going to school I worked at the home of Dr Bowman (a pioneer doctor) for room and board. I went home that summer and slept for six weeks.

I went back to Alliance, but it was too late to get a school. I worked at a “nice” clothing store and boarded at the owners home and cleaned their house for my board. I learned a lot at the store and their home - it was a fancy home. Later I got a job at the telephone office and stayed in the Martin home.

I taught at rural schools in the Alliance area for five years. I also attended Chadron Teachers College. I worked summers at the telephone offices in Alliance and Deadwood. While in Deadwood I stayed in the Stewart home on Williams Street. I stayed at home one summer.