

CHAPTER LXVI

GROWING UP

By Ruth

Ruth should have been a tomboy. Her first seven years in Wausau were spent with a gang of boys - the only girls for blocks around! But did she play Indian, climb trees and do all the other things boys love to do? Yes. But only half of the time. The other half of the day she inveigled the boys into playing "house" and "school" with her. There is even a picture cherished among the family archives showing Ruth wielding the teacher's stick over Wallace Laut and Mark Rick.

Oddly enough, at no time within her memory, do Ruth's older brothers appear as the teasing, tormenting villains that brothers are often accused of being, but rather were they her champions at all times from the days when they built great snow houses for her to play in, to the time when they took her, just a "high school kid", to their college dances. What a thrill! But more about that later.

The move from Wausau to Boston was just a joyful excursion. No tears shed at leaving favorite companions but what fun riding on the moving vans to the freight station!

During the four years in Boston Grandfather traveled a great deal. He would be gone for six weeks or two months at a time. As children we took it as a matter of course, never questioned the why or the where, but waited anxiously for his return and the presents he never failed to remember. The doll and the trunk full of doll clothes which he brought to Ruth after one such trip is still a vivid memory. We used to joke Grandmother about the

fact that it was lucky she did not cry each time Grandfather went away for fear she would not get dried off from one trip to the next, but looking back now, it must have taken a lot of courage for her to be left with four children and Grandfather often thousands of miles away. Because accidents would happen even in our well-regulated family!

One night when Grace and Ruth were still quite small, we were all upstairs preparing for bed (Grandfather as usual was away on a trip) when we heard the most unearthly crash downstairs. Grandmother insisted she must go down and see what had happened and Grace and Ruth hung onto her skirts screaming that something terrible would happen to her if she did. What a help we must have been! Managing somehow to pry herself loose, she made her way downstairs, turned on the lights - to discover that the plaster ceiling had fallen in the dining room, landing on the best china which had been piled there after dinner. The largest piece fell exactly on the spot where a couple of hours before a guest had sat at dinner. But fortunately the guest was no longer there. Several of Grandmother's wedding presents were broken, but the damage was not as great as it might have been.

One of the outstanding episodes of these four years was our first automobile - a five-passenger Paige. We all piled down to the freight yard to watch it being taken out of the freight car and for weeks thereafter, I verily believe, it was not out of the sight of any one of us. If the car went anywhere we all went, which proved the undoing of Ruth upon one occasion. Someone shouted, "We're going to the baker's for a loaf of bread!" so Ruth dropped whatever she had been doing and made a bee-line for the auto. Just as she ran up to it, someone threw open the door so that she ran into the corner of it. Much excitement! Grandmother brought a wet towel and it was decided that the best thing was to take her directly to

the doctor's office. We passed the doctor in his car and tried to hail him, but he thought we were waving at him so went blissfully on. Probably we did not dare to drive faster than the break-neck speed of twenty miles an hour - at least we were left far behind and did not receive medical assistance until some hours later.

The automobile opened up a whole new world to us. We took day trips (much to Charles' disgust) and later, long auto trips.

But life wasn't all play even then. We had to go to school, too. Up until this time Ruth had never had much regular schooling because every time there was an epidemic in Wausau, Grandmother took her out of school. Then Ruth promptly caught the disease, whatever it happened to be, and so much time was lost. Hence upon arrival in Boston, she entered the Second Grade in the Froebal School under Miss Newell and later Miss Monk. She stayed there through the Fourth Grade, but her most vivid memory is of the time she took the part of a rosebud in a play. We will refrain, however, from any details.

From the Froebal School Ruth went to the Pierce School for Fifth Grade under Miss Seitland, whose chief contribution to her mental equipment (now remembered) was her constant drill in story-telling. Apparently she was successful because one day Ruth was practicing by telling a story to Grace while riding in the auto and Grandfather, who was driving, said, "Ruth you mustn't read in the car. You'll strain your eyes."

Pierce School will also be remembered for the Japanese Operetta which was given that year, in which Ruth took the part of a fairy and did a little dance with several other little girls. Grandmother had worked hard and had made a beautiful costume out of white tarlton with bright gold stars on it. At the performance someone near Grandfather and Grandmother was

heard to remark, "Who is the nice plump little fairy on the end?" but as far as Ruth knows, they did not own up that it was their cherub.

At the end of that year, when Ruth was eleven, the family moved once more, this time to Philadelphia, where Ruth entered Sixth Grade in the Harmer School. It was a long walk - over a mile - but Ruth did it four times a day except in the very worst weather when she carried a lunch. She soon made the acquaintance of a girl in her class by the name of Marjorie Watson, who lived very near her and was her constant companion back and forth from that time until the family left the Penn St. house. Mrs. Watson used to say that she left the front door open and when she heard them laughing she knew it was time to put lunch on.

Harmer School was a horrible place as far as physical surroundings were concerned, but nevertheless the memories of the three years spent there are pleasant ones. Miss Carrie Mortimer, Miss Lottie Mortimer, Miss Sharp and Miss Arnold all helped to contribute to Ruth's education, and she feels very grateful for what they did, despite the fact that she has never quite forgiven Miss Sharp for the time she marked her down when she reported (having received the information from Grandfather) that something had increased 200 per cent. Miss Sharp said that nothing could increase more than 100 per cent.

Yes, the memories were pleasant ones except for one other incident which was quite painful at the time - but, like many other things, was too true to be funny. At the final class party each member of the class was given a mock present with a verse. Ruth's present was a jumping rope with the following verse:

"Use this faithfully every day
The more you use it, the less you'll weigh."