



10-15-1991

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Recommended Citation

Ward, Darsi L. (1991) "Tribute to the Pillsbury Philosopher Whose Garden Has Gone to Seed," *Westview*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 1 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol11/iss1/3>

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TRIBUTE TO THE PILLSBURY PHILOSOPHER

whose garden has gone to seed

by *Darsi L. Ward*

It has been years since my grandmother, the "Pillsbury Philosopher," last walked her garden footpaths. Seasons have traversed her earthbound home unfettered by human hands. Brick, mortar, and plank have fallen prey to the cold, hungry winters that sleep through Eldorado, Oklahoma, year after year. The howling winds and the frozen ground have claimed the primadonna roses, the temperamental violets, and the fickle fruit vines. Yet, not all that she planted has succumbed to the wrath of winter or the passing of time. Childhood memories of the Pillsbury Philosopher are still fragrance to my heart.

During my early years, if Grandmother wasn't tending her garden, she was filling her kitchen with the smells of hospitality. Some of my favorite times were spent at her old oak cooking table. Words of wisdom shook loose from her repertoire of life as she pounded bread dough. The table trembled on its pedestal leg, and whiffs of snow-white flour rose and fell as she spoke. Often I would lean closer—attempting to sharpen my visibility and steady the table at the same time. These table sessions taught me much about how to steady myself as well. Although Grandmother remarked about the multitude of questions that I asked, she never failed to calm my troubled mind, pique my curiosity, or simply fill me with food for thought.

It was during these private discussions that I became more acquainted with the Pillsbury Philosopher's early experiences. I learned, for instance, that she was engaged to my Grandfather Eph at the young age of 13. I also learned that although he died when my mother was only a

toddler that the memory of Grandfather's love sustained Grandmother throughout the remainder of her lifetime. In the years following her husband's departure from this earth, Grandmother Carter fostered a restaurant business, nurtured her four children, and helped those friends and strangers whom she considered less fortunate than herself.

Bad times prevailed when the Great Depression of the 1930's "leached" relentlessly at the roots of the "American Dream." Although Grandmother struggled to take care of her own family in those lean years, no hungry straggler was turned away from her door. Her hospitality was heralded along the vein of hobnob tracks that wound beyond Eldorado and back again. She once confessed to me that she fed more people at her kitchen door in those days than she served as customers. Such were the times. Many "down and outs" entered her garden gate looking for shelter and sustenance. No one left her portal without partaking of the warmth of human kindness and the seeds of hope.

The jubilant larkspur and the brassy trumpet vines orchestrate another spring show of wild profusion in a garden "gone to seed." I think about the important things that were cultivated in the Pillsbury Philosopher's earthly abode.....I have seen love and faith grow abundantly there. I believe that crop will persevere and spread from its own propagation. As I watch her great-grandchildren "blossom," I know that her garden has "gone to seed"—gloriously. ■

DARSI WARD is presently a SOSU graduate student in Art and English. "Tribute to the Pillsbury Philosopher" is dedicated in loving memory to her grandmother, Frances Cain Carter.