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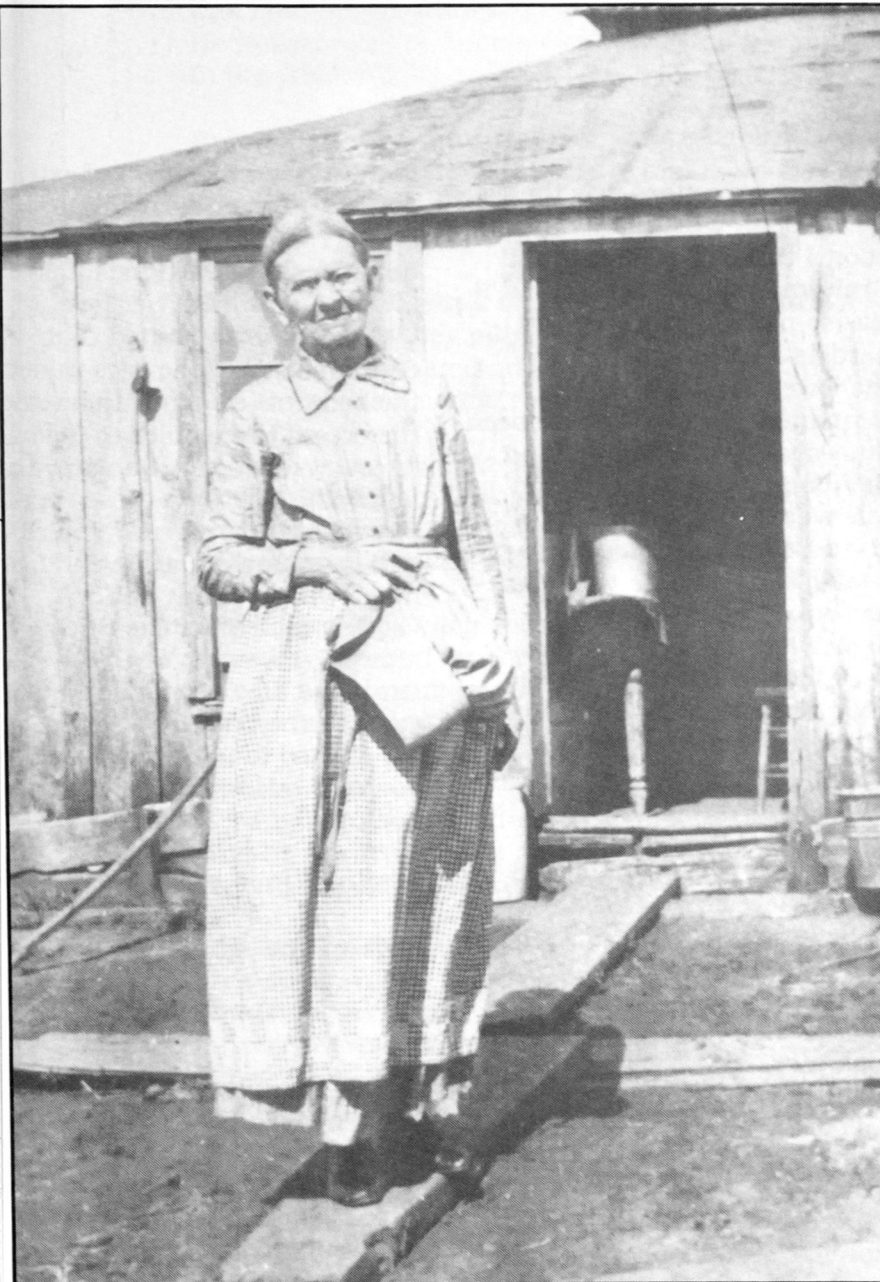
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To My Granddaughter On Her Tenth Birthday

By Margie Cooke Porteus



DEAR CINDY,

In the late 1930's, when I was your age, Grandmother gave me three bowls. Although they aren't fancy and may have come in boxes of cereal, I want you to have them.

Grandmother may have given the bowls to me to start a hope chest. I want you to have them, not to start a hope chest, but as a tangible way to help you realize the importance of family love as it goes from generation to generation. Maybe that love is why Grandmother gave them to me. She was poor and didn't have much to give except love; maybe she thought the bowls would remind me of that love--as they have these many years.



Grandmother's life was interesting and often sad. Her mother died when she was thirteen; soon after, her father disappeared when he went West, perhaps to search for gold. Sarah Rebecca Abshire, that was her name, was left to care for the three younger members of the family. Later she married John Wesley Speelman; they had eight children, including my mother, Francis (Frankie). When

Frances was eight, the family left Missouri by covered wagon to seek a new life in Oklahoma.

I remember Grandma as a rather small woman with gray hair pulled into a bun. Her long dresses were drab, but she wore a long apron that she had brightened with a bit of lace or embroidery.

Grandma and Grandpa Speelman lived three miles east of Thomas in a small house that had two main rooms: a bedroom and a kitchen-dining-living-wash room. The bedroom had a bed, a dresser, a chair, and Grandpa's trunk--all brought from Missouri when they moved.

Down three steps was the other room, which had a dirt floor. I thought it funny that Grandma swept the floor, but it was so packed that it was as hard as a rock. At one end of the lower level room was a permanent bench that had been built against the wall behind the dining table. That bench was where I slept when I visited. By the outside door was a table that held the wash pan and a water bucket with a dipper. The pan, which was used for the washing of faces and hands, and the dipper, which was used for the drinking of water, were for the entire family and guests. At the other end of the room was a door which led to a tiny shed room where Uncle Bill, the bachelor uncle, slept and where I wasn't allowed to go. Also, at the end of the room were the wood cookstove, the cream separator, and the cupboards. I don't remember much about the cupboards, but there couldn't have been many because there wasn't much space.

Because there wasn't much storage, Grandma couldn't have

me the bowls to get rid of extra dishes and not for my hope chest; I still think it was because she wanted me to have a tangible proof of her love.

Space was so limited that Grandma stored the eggs under the bed until she took them and the cream three miles to town once a week to sell. She drove a horse and buggy on these trips, even after most farm families had cars. Sometimes I would go home with her, but I only vaguely remember the rides; after all, I wasn't very old. Grandma died soon after she gave me the bowls.

I started to tell about those bowls. If I don't stop, I'll write a book.

With all my love,

Grandma 