***Great Grandmother Speaks of Summer Days***

*By Lynda McKinney Lambert*

*Memories of her own long-ago world of summer days seemed to silently move in the thoughts of the Great Grandmother today as she remembered the little girl who stood alone, surrounded by a yellow-green world.*

*Great Grandmother’s memory was taking her back to a distant summer day in western Pennsylvania. She thought it must have been in the late 1940s because she was so very young at that time. The little girl was sensitive to the natural world of trees, flowers, birds, grasses, and the brilliant blue sky. She loved to be outdoors in all kinds of weather but summer time was particularly pleasant because she did not have to wear shoes. She could splash through the falling rain as it saturated her clothing and made her long auburn hair stick to her wet shoulders. She liked to stomp down with her bare feet because the water would splash up onto her shorts. Her toes dug into the puddles of cool squishy rain water in the yard. She moved them around to explore the wet ground, and it felt so good when she moved both of her bare feet through the thick, wet, dark mud. She wiggled her short toes and laughed out loud because she loved the rain puddles so much.*

*On sunny days, she climbed into the back yard walnut tree quickly and liked to hide amid the foliage to survey the entire world of her deep green grassy yard. From there, she could watch her father working in his gardens. There were two of them, separated by a path down the middle. When she thinks about her father, in her mind’s memory book, he is always laboring in his garden and bringing fresh vegetables to the house for their dinners. Father brought other delights, too. There were rabbits and squirrels, wild game birds , and deer. All were brought by the Father for his family. Her father had taught her how to skin and dress the rabbits. She had begged him to teach her how to do this. And, so he did! She felt proud of this skill that the other three children did not have.*

*There were fresh fruits, too, from his trees. And, chickens from the chicken coop behind the gardens. Great Grandmother’s favorite gift that was gathered by her Father was the assortment of fresh mushrooms he gathered in the woods. He knew exactly what each mushroom was, and exactly when each would be ready for picking. He was a woodsman who knew the ways of the woods and brought the bounty of the woods home to feed his family of four children. There was always plenty to eat because of her Father’s skills in hunting and gathering.*

*If she was not high up in a tree, then she might be found in the gardens, making trails and roads through the dark rich soil. She liked to play there in the dirt with her dump trucks and brightly painted metal cars. She was a little girl who did not play with baby dolls or have tea parties with her friends. She read about little girls who liked those things in the books she brought home from the library. She enjoyed reading about the tea parties under the lilac bushes, the fancy dolls dressed in lace, and the adventures of chatty little girls in the books. But, that was not really her world. It was the Earth that she connected with. The Earth in all its many manifestations was her muse from the earliest days of her life.*

*Great Grandmother was in her late 60s and she still loved the Earth. She liked to feel it in her hands. She often sat on it, with her legs spread out as though she wanted to cover as much ground as possible with her short body. She urged the family to lay on it under the trees in the shade. Her children would often lay there on the Earth with her and they all would laugh and tell stories, and dream together. It felt so good to lay there as she looked up through the sky holes in the tree above. The children would lay on their backs, with their body pasted down onto the surface of the earth like a magnet. They remarked that their bodies felt so heavy when they were laying on the soft pine covered hillside. She taught the children that the Earth was a Positive charge, and that people were a negative charge. It was necessary to join their bodies with the Earth’s surface for them to be complete. Just like a set of magnets, the positive and the negative charge have to be together for the magnet to work properly.*

*Great Grandmother believed it was probably mid-July when she reflected on it because the days were smoldering and languid because the sun was high in the sky very early in the mornings that particular summer. The grass was dry, like straw that snapped as she walked on it. There were some leaves, all dried up, there on the grass, too. She could hear the sound in the hot afternoon breeze. It was the sound of insects, all singing together like a high pitched chorus. Was it the locusts? She could not recall exactly what the sound came from, but it permeated the dry air and surrounded her. She walked across that dry grass, and she could smell the slight musty scent in the air that day.*

*The days were so intense and hot that her skin felt sticky all the time. Her hair felt wet from sweating as she played in the trees that summer afternoon. She was aware of the stifling heat of the early afternoon. The child’s stature was quite small as she stood beneath the large leather-textured tree. She was small, but very strong. Neighbors often said she was athletic and wild.*

*She had glanced up into its gnarled branches, with their downward movement towards the earth. The Apple tree had a central trunk and then very quickly it has split itself somehow into three parts not far above the Earth. She remembered how it felt to put her bare foot into the low separation to begin the climb upwards into the tree.*

*The strong and crackled branches reached out in every direction over her head. The tree trunk and branches felt cool and rough. It was so shady under the tree. There was only dapples of sunlight that flittered through the leaves to light up the ground all around her. It was light being on a stage, with lights streaming all around.*

*This hulking giant was her favorite Apple tree - a protective, sheltering hide-away. This ancient Apple tree stood just behind Mr. Corbin’s gray concrete block garage. As Great Grandmother recalled, it was the only tree that stood in her neighbor's yard. She could not say that there were no other trees, but it is this giant one that was remembered. It must have been very old and looking back on the scene through the lens of memory. It seemed to her to stand as a sentinel to separate the garage from the rows of garden plants. But,Great Grandmother knew for sure that even as this tree separated and divided Mr. Corbin’s back yard it was also the connection between Heaven and Earth. It was the space between Here and There; between the Present moment and the Future. The tree stands in her childhood memory as a vertical division in a horizontal verdant landscape – an axis mundi.*

*The Great Grandmother knew then just as sure as she knows now about secret things. She has always known about hidden things and what they mean. She knew about the life inside of rocks, and the tears that were there. She knows about the silent and quiet things that most people never see. Some people call Great Grandmother a “seer.” But she really cannot see because she is now blind. Great Grandmother talked about seeing wit her inner eyes. She calls this her “intuition.” She says she sees the very special places that people with good eyesight have never seen.*

The secret places are all tucked away in her memories. One by one, over the years, she will share them with her children and her grand children and even now, today, she shares this memory with her Great Grand-daughter. It is the Great Grandmother who is the Storyteller. Just like the Griot in an African village, Great Grandmother is the One who preserves the memories for the family and tells the stories that will give them the information they will need on their journey in life. She holds the secrets in her memory until the time is right.

*Lynda McKinney Lambert. Copyright, 2013. All Rights Reserved.*