



Gwen Braidwood, 1946.

came along in 1880-81, Gwen's mother, who was an only child, and her mother were taken prisoner at the siege of Johannesburg, South Africa where Grandpa was captured by the Boers who were going to hang him. Fortunately, he came up with 10,000 pounds sterling, and the British government also came up with 10,000 pounds and got him off.

Gwendolen was born at home in the big white stucco house on the corner of John and Bridge Streets in Belleville, opposite St. Thomas' Church. She was the third child of Florence May Lingham and Stephen Dunbar Lazier.

Gwen attended Belleville's St. Agnes School which had been founded by her grandmother as a school primarily for the daughters of Anglican ministers. Mrs. Lingham felt that a minister might have enough money to send a boy to boarding school, but likely not a girl. The school was in operation from 1905-1922.

One well-known student of St. Agnes School was Beatrice Lillie, the internationally famous comedienne who had been born in Toronto. Grandma had heard Bea Lillie perform in Cobourg and had recognized the girl's talent. In spite of the fact that Bea's mother said she couldn't afford it, with Mrs. Lingham's help the girl was educated at St. Agnes.

Miss Lillie used to make her pocket money singing at the little theatre on Front Street in Belleville on Saturday afternoons. Then she would come up to the Lazier house for high tea. Gwen remembers that the girl

could pick up a tablecloth and do tricks with it. "She had a lovely sense of humour," Mrs. Braidwood recalls.

Gwen had always been interested in dancing, but her mother insisted she study music first. "I couldn't play my first piece off by heart after three years," Gwen admits. Then she took singing lessons from Dr. Stobie's wife. After two years, Gwen thinks, Mrs. Stobie gave the money back to Gwen's mother. "This child will never sing," she said.

During World War I Gwen's mother went to Beamsville where her oldest son, Fred (living today in Owen Sound), was instructing in the Air Force. "I was left in Belleville with the housekeeper to finish school," says Gwen. About 12 years old at the time, she had a part dancing in a play, *The Girl From Kokomo*, which had come to Belleville. The director wanted to take the play to Deseronto to entertain the Air Force there.

Gwen asked the housekeeper if she'd call her mother and ask if it would be all right if she went. Mrs. Lazier's answer was a definite 'No'.

The housekeeper locked her in her bedroom, but Gwen tied the bedsheets together and slid down off the verandah roof to make her escape.

She was entranced by all the young officers in the audience at Deseronto. After the performance, Lady Wellesley, the wife of the commanding officer, invited everyone back to her house. In the middle of it all the police walked in. "And that was the end of my travelling that way," says Gwen.

When school was out for the summer, Gwen went to Beamsville to join her mother. Mrs. Lazier didn't say a thing about the escapade. But on a shopping trip to Eaton's in Toronto for new fall clothes Gwen discovered she was being sent to Bishop Strachan, a private school for girls in Toronto.

"You were a very disobedient girl," her mother said, after informing her that the Bishop Strachan middies were for Gwen, not for her sister. "This is your punishment."

"So I was at Bishop Strachan for three years, and finally the headmistress, Miss Walsh, said, 'Gwen shirks her duty for pleasure, her school work for dancing and gymnastics, and the school can get along very well without her'."

It was back to Belleville where she went to high school for a year. The family home in Belleville was the big stucco house at 91 Bridge Street East. After Grandma and Grandpa Lingham died the family moved next door, into their house of red brick. Gwen's dad's parents moved in from the paper mill on the Moira River at the Lazier dam and took over the house where all the children had been born.

Gwen's father, Stephen who died in 1940, was a lawyer, although he never practised law. He worked at Canadian General Securities in