

Area Woman Wins Prizes In Women's Institute Contests

GOLDEN LAKE—Mrs. Agnes Lavigueur recently won two awards for projects she completed in women's institute competitions.

Her essay "My Most Unforgettable Character" took second place in the Eastern Ontario Women's Institute essay contest while "The Log House" which is a look at the history of the house she lives in, took a third place prize at the district level.

The Log House project is a photo-story series put together in a scrap book.

In it is an account of the first owners of the building—it was a school house—and the history of the subsequent owners throughout the years.

It contains an in depth look at Mrs. Lavigueur's own family and their life on the homestead.

The essay—My Most Unforgettable Character—is a look at Mrs. Lavigueur's mother.

Following is the essay which won the second place prize for Mrs. Lavigueur.

A lined, rosy-cheeked woman with mischievous hazel eyes, plump figure and quick of step—my mother; she is my most unforgettable character.

Her mother had died when she was a small child; her father remarried and she, her brother and two sisters were sent out to different homes to be raised. Brought up in the Lutheran church, she was sent to a Roman Catholic home where there was a large family and adopted that faith. She did not approve of the bigotry among churches that still exists today; she was ecumenical in her thinking and we did not "dare" criticize any church. She treasured the lovely old hymns that her mother had taught her just as much as the ones she learned when she embraced the Catholic faith. It was how you lived and how you gave good example to your children that helped her choose her

LARGE FAMILY

Her husband was a railway man, and they brought up a large family of seven children. Eventually they worked a thirty-acre farm which was mostly looked after by her. She milked cows, worked in the hay, kept ducks, chickens, turkeys and geese and also raised pigs. If we had a spirited horse, Mother was always elected to handle her as Dad was timid of a frisky, young animal.

She always kept a large garden and loved to give to the neighbours whatever she could, especially if their gardens hadn't fared so well. Whenever there was illness or hard times at a neighbour's house, off she would go with a roast or a couple of soup-bones. She would put on a fresh long white apron and always felt she could meet even the Queen—just as long as she had that clean apron, on made of course, of flour or sugar bags. Being in fashion by getting new styles occasionally in a dress or suit was never her cup of tea! Only when her clothing actually succumbed to wear did she get something new.

BERRY PICKING

When berry-picking season came, she would tie two pails (ten pound ones!) around her waist, take us along—sometimes we would pack a lunch—and go to pick in our bush or else the neighbours' fields. She'd be humming along, usually a favorite hymn, and when her two pails were full of berries (all immaculately cleaned at the time of picking), off we'd go home. Of course we would be lucky if we had picked a five-pound pail, and ours were never as clean as hers.

My Mother had a very loud voice, very commanding. However that did not deter the neighbourhood children from congregating at our house, after school and on weekends, to play with us children. They were chastized the same as we were and the other mothers knew that my Mother would look after the welfare of all



AGNES LAVIGUEUR

the children, not just her own. But always with a kindness. If we were especially obedient and didn't cause her too much worry, she'd make pull-taffy or homemade ice-cream on the old crank freezer. She often seemed to take time from her chores to play hide-and-seek, soft ball, horseshoes or some other game, even hop scotch!

She would often say with a far-away look in her eyes how she would like to travel some day, and had a yen for a plane ride. However my Father like to stay at home and money always seemed to be short, so we children were always excited when Mother got Dad persuaded to hire the chap across the road with his MODEL T and go about ten miles to my Uncle's house where they also had seven children. Mother would pack some fresh bread she had baked, perhaps a roast and some other baked goods to help out with the meal.

HIGH PRIORITY

Education took high priority in her thinking. She had had one year of nursing school training in Peterborough, but had met Dad and decided to get married instead of finishing her training. However Mother's early rudiments of nursing training came in handy when there was sickness at our home or at a neighbour's house.

As I said previously, money was scarce so only one of the family was able to go to high school. It meant walking to the CNR station a mile each way and then catching a train about thirty miles to Renfrew. Thank goodness my brother was able to get a free railway pass! Grade 13 was available in this difficult manner for my brother, and with Mother's encouragement, two of us were also able to get our Grade 10; and that was very elite for such a small public school.

Mother was superstitious and also felt that she had the ability to "charm" someone if they had a painful

toothache or if they couldn't stop the flow of blood. I myself did not approve of her using her so-called powers. However, once when I tried to pull out a wild fern in the bush, my finger gushed blood profusely, and when my sister and I got home I resorted to her using her "power" to stop the blood—and stop it did! If you had warts on your skin you were supposed to count them, put that many knots on a string, touch each wart with a knot and then bury the knotted string in the manure pile.

FAMILY UNITY

No need for family unity courses or psychiatric counselling! When dinner was over in the evening and dishes were done, Mother, Dad and all the family would play cards, and unless we had homework to do first, we played cards until bedtime, usually euchre or five hundred. My oldest brother wasn't obligated to play as often as he had a lot of studying to do, so his evenings were spent in his room, as he must not fail in high school!

My Mother's face, as I have mentioned, was usually jovial, with that twinkle in her eye. But when she said her prayers at night, and often we said them together as a family, her face would be so serious.

Mother died at age fifty-nine, and, although she never went on that plane ride she so deeply desired, nor did she do a lot of travelling in her lifetime as she had hoped she was able to live a full life even in her simple, humble way. I can still see her pink cheeks and twinkling eyes and that quick step—my most unforgettable character—my Mother.

PHOTO
AND STORY
BY WAYNE
LAVIGNE