

TUALATIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Letter #28

Annie Pearl Comb Shaw Remillard

By Toni Martinazzi

(This a letter Toni wrote upon the death of Annie Remillard.)

On Thursday, March fifteenth, 2001, Pearl Remillard was buried. This lovely lady with the flashing dark eyes lived through more than nine decades. It got me to thinking about what I knew about this long-time Tualatin family. Mrs. Remillard had once told me that she was an orphan and that she had two names: one was her birth surname and the other the name of her adoptive parents. She also told me a very romantic story of how her young French Canadian lover came to get her one night when she was very young, and eloped with her. They came to American and stayed! The news of her death came via the family grapevine and I was as saddened to hear it as I had been a few short years ago when the news came that her beloved daughter Donna had passed. Our wonderful modern communication system put me in touch with three of the remaining four children. Melvin and Dale and Virgil shared their memories and between them they filled me in on the rest of the story.

I had grown up knowing that Jim and Pearl Remillard lived next door to Jim and Alice Hiller and that the children of both families were first cousins. The men were brothers-in-law because Jim Remillard was Alice Hiller's brother. Both families had previously lived in Portland – the Hillers near Mt. Scott and Remillards first lived on Bush Street and then moved to the Johnson Creek Boulevard area until around 1939. At that time the families pooled their resources and bought land a mile or so outside of the little village of Tualatin, that had an old house on it. It was on a rural route of the Sherwood post office at the time but now is a Tualatin address on Herman Road. Jim and his wife, Pearl, and their kids, Virgil 10, Melvin 8, Donna 3 and Dale 2 moved into the old house first. The plan was for Jim and Pearl and their family to move into the old house first and to build another house nearby for themselves and John and his wife and daughters, Wanda, Pat, Shirley and baby Joanne 3, would then live in the old house.

Times were really tough back then and so they started with the garage for the new house, and while the hope was to build another house there, they decided they couldn't afford it just yet. So Jim turned what was to become the garage into a snug and cozy little two story cabin that provided a loving shelter for the family that grew to see the birth of the last child, Rick.

I remember the Old Hiller house when it was painted yellow and there was a little pump/well house out back. It had a nice little sidewalk between it and the big house. There was always a garden, it seems, between the two houses. John Hiller had a beautiful garden and his vegetables, berries and flowers always looked so neat.

I remember the first time I met Donna Louise Remillard. It was at a pre-school health clinic where we both got vaccination shots and we both bawled our eyes out. It was at the old Odd Fellows Hall by the railroad tracks across from the old Ladd place and near Barngrovers on the corner. Donna and I went through all eight grades together. We rode the same bus and even in high school, we were in most of the same classes. She was a good student and a really nice, cheerful and fun girl to be around. Like her mom, she was a little lady.

I remember being on the school bus when we were in grade school and ours was the Jurgens Park run. Our bus didn't take us home until the bus had come back from a shorter run. I remember riding the bus past the Hiller/Remillard place and stopping for the kids there. There were no houses on the other side of the gravel road that paralleled the railroad tracks at all, and very few on their side. The Hillers had other cousins who had a boy named Bobby Hiller who was about Joanne, Donna and my age. They moved into the old house when we were in high school, I think, in the early 50's. The father was Joe Hiller, John's brother. Joe moved his wife and family into an old house that was on the other of John's. So the John Hillers had family on both sides of them for some years.

John Hiller worked for a door manufacturer in Portland. Jim Remillard worked for many years for the Southern Pacific Railroad as a machinist and must have been very proud when his eldest son, Virgil, followed in his footsteps at the same occupation and for the same company.

Once I got to stay all night at the Remillard house. It seems like I was about in the 6th – 8th grade. The bigger boys were not there. I was so surprised at how tiny the house was and that they all slept upstairs, in beds so close together in what seemed like the same room. Donna was the only girl and that was a novelty for me, one of five!

Pearl Remillard was a great cook and baker. It was always a delight when she brought treats for a birthday party to our beautiful Tualatin Elementary School. I especially remember wonderful cakes and cupcakes, beautifully decorated and, oh, so luscious! She could make perfect "Seven Minute Icing" and it usually was the type of frosting on her cakes, if memory serves me.

I was in St. Anthony's Catholic Church for the first time because of Pearl Remillard. It seems that there was going to be an important dignitary attend a confirmation class and she wanted a good choir so she enlisted the help of local youthful singers of which I was one. Mrs. Remillard was a devout Catholic but she never pushed the religion on anyone. I remember though, that she thoughtfully answered my curious questions about the crucifix and the confirmation exercise. Years later, when I was confirmed myself, in the Catholic Church, I asked Mrs. Remillard to be my sponsor, and she graciously accepted.

My father, Art Martinazzi, Jim Remillard, and John Hiller were all long time Tualatin Volunteer Fire Department members. It seems that later, Joe Hiller joined them also. They were cordial friends and good neighbors. Remillards and Martinazzis have a history.

Their oldest son, Virgil James Remillard, married my eldest sister Jo, in 1950. Then their second son, Melvin, and his wife Marge, had a daughter, whom they named Yvonne. Yvonne married Thomas Clay Foster, the eldest son of my younger sister, Rochelle. Now I live in north central Florida about 50 miles north of where another niece, Susan Caswell, the daughter of Jo and Virg lives. Both of us are so happy to have another member of our family close by! So the Remillard and Martinazzi families are intertwined and news travels fast!

When thinking back on our parents and other ancestors who no longer tend the fields around Tualatin, it makes me keenly aware of my own mortality, and the old farmers ever pressing need to mend fences before the horses are gone from the barn forever.