

Memories of Grandma Frei (Anna Margarete Nageli)

I probably should have written about my Grandmother Frei long ago because I remember so little. As a small child, I loved to run to the home of my grandparents, but I remember most my grandfather because he always praised me because I could run so fast and do his errands in a hurry.

I loved Grandmother's interesting stories which she told me in the Swiss language and her good food. Her pancakes, scones, and fritters were very crisp and delicious. Before she joined the church, she worked in a factory. She had lots of stories about her work and her friends. She talked in her own language and felt we should learn it. I would give anything if I had listened to her. How I would appreciate knowing another language and having my children use it.

At Easter time we colored our eggs in the Swiss style which was tying flowers and leaves to the eggs before we boiled them in liquid from red root or onion skins. We always ran to Grandma's for her contribution of brightly dyed eggs.

All the fun and gladness at my grandparent's ended when Grandfather became ill very suddenly. He was bed fast for several years, and Grandmother was sad and worried. After his death She was afraid to stay in her home alone at night. My cousins Rhoda and Emma Reber and my sister Della and I took turns sleeping at her home. She was sweet and kind to us so we loved to spend the time with her.

Before my grandfather became ill, one of my favorite nights of the year was the time when we made our sausage. We put it in the cleaned part of the entrails of the pig we had butchered. Grandfather brought his sausage mill and supervised the grinding of the pork and beef. Grandmother flavored it just right. Then we prepared it for the entrails. Next day the men smoked the sausage and hung it in the cellar to use as we needed it. Before my grandparents went home later that night, we had a fine meal serving some of the delicious sausage. When I left Santa Clara, I missed most our cellar with the sausage and beautiful hams, the delicious apples and pears in the bin, and the preserves and jellies on the shelves. Those happy times were over when our grandfather left us, and we settled down to keeping grandmother comfortable and happy.

My father always went to the hills for a load of wood and a Christmas tree December 24th. If he got home after sundown which happened often, dear grandmother kept coming to the house, and then walking up the street looking for him. He always came in smiling and tired, so we were late for the big town Christmas program.

One spring I promised to go to St. George to go to the opera house to see "Ten Nights in a Bar Room." I was on my way home to get some water for my grandmother when the friends came along to pick me up. I had to choose between hurrying back to Grandmother's or leaving my bucket with a neighbor who promised to get the bucket to my family. When I got home at midnight, my sister told me I was to get a good whipping because no one had taken the water to Grandmother. When Ernest Reber went to his corral that evening, he heard Grandmother screaming. She told him I had left her to die. I made my peace with my father who never struck me in his life and then went to face my grandmother. She was slow forgiving me, but she needed me, so we were soon good friends.

Grandmother's eye sight became bad, so she couldn't read long before she died. There were no doctors to prescribe glasses, so she had no help. I remember she used to come to our house and walk into the room where we all sat and not see us until her eyes adjusted to the change of light. She had a bad cold one winter and was ill for about three weeks. When she got up again, she had aged terribly. Her hair was white, and she was much more feeble.

She still love her chickens. She used to go out and feed them and talk to them. She used to say in her language, "Come all my pretty beloved chickens."

I remember taking food to her and helping with her work. I especially liked house cleaning time with our cousins there helping clean the house. We whitewashed the walls with lime, cleaned the woodwork and floors, and then scattered clean straw on the floor and stretched the homemade carpet over it. We also laundered all the bed ticks and filled them with corn husks. The beds were high and noisy. We loved them until the corn husks became mashed and heavy.

My grandparents lost a beautiful daughter 20 years old. She had tuberculosis. Grandmother grieved and cried until everyone worried about her. One night she dreamed she saw Emma who was smiling and looked very happy. She said, "Please, Mother, stop crying for me. I am happy here teaching young children." Grandmother felt that it was a message to her and was much happier. When Mother lost a lovely baby twin to Vivian, she felt that Aunt Emma had come for him.

Grandmother was deeply religious. Each Sunday she checked to see if all of her children and grandchildren had gone to church. She advised us to live clean upright lives so there would never be a moment of regret or shame for us. Grandmother spent her last years with her daughter Mary Reber. (Crossed out-We saw little of her then. She longed to die.) She was independent to the very last day and insisted on waiting on herself. She was a good woman, and we all loved her.

Elsie, you could write the story of father's long hair and the way he had it cut on a Sunday afternoon for wine. Also how he loved the bear and basket cookie cutters.

Note: I don't know who wrote this but think it might have been Aunt Effie. Loretta Adams