

Memories of Twyla R. Bowyer Boone  
Written in 1995

I arrived as the second child of Ralph and Susie (Skavdahl) Bowyer on May 31, 1938. At the time, Mother and Daddy were living in Greeley, Colorado. Daddy was employed at Hansen's Greenhouse, and Mother was a busy homemaker. Daddy was also active in the National Guard. He was called to active duty in 1941, and was discharged in 1946. He remained in active reserve until he was eligible for retirement.

During those military years, Mother and her children moved from base to base as Daddy was transferred. They kept the home in Greeley until Daddy was discharged. They then located in Hugo, Colorado, until 1954, when they moved to Longmont for the remainder of their lives.

Daddy was stationed in India in 1944 and 1945. During this time, Mother and the children lived in Greeley. Mother was active in the Methodist Church and the Red Cross during those two years. She would occasionally leave Ray and me to take care of Anita while she was gone. One particular time, we had changed Anita's diaper and prepared her for bed, but she wouldn't stop crying. I looked at Ray and suggested we check to see if maybe we had pricked her with a pin. Much to our dismay, when we took the diaper off, we found a lump on her side with two pin holes in it—we had pinned the diaper right through her skin. We were afraid to pin another diaper over the lump, so we put her to bed without one. It didn't take Mother long to realize why Anita had no diaper on when she got home.

Sometime during these two years, the Greeley Safeway grocery store burned down. Afterwards, Mother and I went to the "burned-out sale," where they sold everything that had the labels burned off. Mother made sure none of the cans had any bulges or dents, and she purchased them from where they were located in the store, as she knew approximately where the cans of her desired products were stocked.

I recall coming home from school always hopeful of a letter and/or a package from Daddy. He always could write the most interesting letters, and sent us many lovely things of India culture. He also enjoyed taking pictures of interest and describing them in detail. Following Daddy's discharge, I often had him bring many of our India items and the pictures he took to school whenever it would fit in with our studies.

My first memory of Grandma Grace Skavdahl is in December 1943 or January 1944. She came to Greeley and stayed with us for several days (perhaps a couple weeks or more) when Anita was born. Daddy was overseas at the time. I don't remember much about Grandma's stay—only that she and Mother sure did talk a lot.

When Daddy came home from overseas, he did not tell Mother he was coming to Colorado on leave. He and his brother Tom Bowyer (whom Mother did not know at the time) drove from California to Colorado and arrived very late one night. Daddy had Uncle Tom knock on the door while he stood just out of sight. When Mother answered the knock on the door, her first reaction was to lock the door against this strange man. Then Daddy stepped out to surprise her. This was around Thanksgiving of 1945. When I awoke to discover my father home after being gone for 24 months, it was very difficult going to school.

The next two years were spent in California—one in Marina, near Monterey, and the other in Rodeo, near San Francisco. During these years, when Daddy would have

some furlough time, we took some vacation trips. We visited aunts and uncles in California and Washington, and took camping trips to the redwood forest, petrified forest, and others.

After Daddy's discharge in 1947, he drove to Colorado and purchased a dry cleaning shop in Hugo, where we lived until the spring of 1954. I remember Mother saying she didn't understand why he purchased a dry cleaning shop—he was so unaware of fashion he never knew if she wore a new or outdated dress. Mother, Ray, Anita, and I returned to Colorado via the Greyhound bus. I enjoyed talking to all the various passengers. At one stop in Utah, a kindly gentleman purchased some candy and offered me some. I had not been eating very well, so when I ate the sweet candy it made me very ill. The driver had to stop due to my "motion sickness." This terribly embarrassed Mother.

Life was very good in Hugo. Daddy was very active in civic affairs—holding the office of mayor, being an active volunteer fireman, being a Justice of the Peace, and being the County Veteran's Service Officer, to name just a few. Mother was very busy with church activities, 4-H leader, helping as needed at the cleaners (she did all the alterations), as well as having one of the loveliest gardens and yards in an area of bad soil and hot, dry climate. Often in the summer at the noon meal, Mother would run to the garden to get some fresh lettuce to eat, but would find some weeds to pull and forget to come in till the rest of us were through eating. Many Sundays during the summers, Mother's flowers would adorn the altar at church. Also, Mother's garden would provide most all of the vegetables required to feed her growing family. The years of living in Hugo are probably the fondest of my youth, and definitely the most secure I ever felt.

Daddy was always very conservative with money. Mother often said he was the only person she knew who could save a dime from every nickel he earned. He felt purchasing ready-made clothing was an unnecessary expense. As a result, Mother sewed all my clothing until I was 12 or 13. By this time, she had shown me how to sew, and it became my responsibility to make any clothing I wanted to have. She continued to assist in any way necessary, but made sure I learned how. As a result, in the lean financial years of marriage, I was able to sew clothing for all my children.

While living in Hugo, my younger brother, Dean, was born on April 9, 1948. Mother had a blood clot in her leg (which bothered her the rest of her life), and was bedridden for several weeks. Anita was an excellent help while she and Mother were home alone with Dean. I found it a lot of fun to "play House" as I assisted with meals, etc., after school.

Hugo was very small, with a population of 900 to 1000. The dry cleaners Daddy owned and the grocery store were one block from our home; school was two blocks away; church was two blocks away; and the drug store, dry good store, post office, and doctor's office were three blocks away. Consequently, Daddy didn't take the car out of the garage. The church always sold food at a booth at the fair and rodeo, which Mother assisted with. Daddy got the car out for her to use during this time, and what a thrill. The only other times the car was out of the garage was when we would travel to Eads to visit relatives, or to Denver to visit a school-era friend of Mother's. It was always an adventure when we could travel in the car.

At Hugo, I was active in 4\_H clubs (learning sewing, cooking, and gardening), Methodist Church youth activities, music programs at school, and Pep Club. I learned to play the piano, organ, and clarinet. In eighth, ninth, and tenth grades I played the piano accompaniment for fellow classmates performing at the spring music festivals, played for the school choir, and also for church services. School band was great fun. The marching band played at all the home football games, and participated in the state band competition at the Colorado University campus in Boulder.

I also had my first experiences of employment in Hugo. I did a lot of babysitting (both evening and full-time during the summers). My first regular paycheck came from working for Daddy at the cleaners, at the age of 13. My first job was to go through all the clothes, making sure there was nothing left in any pockets. Later, I learned how to press and finish clothes, how to "spot" (removing spots and stains without damaging the material), and waited on customers. At the age of 15, I was hired as the usher in the movie theatre, a job I held until we moved.

During these years, Grandma Skavdahl would often come to stay with us for several days at a time. Uncle Howard would occasionally be with her. She would always help with the cooking, and made lots of desserts. I loved seeing Uncle Howard, but if he was visiting also, I had to share licking the bowl with him. Grandma would knit mittens for us to wear, often-times using the yarn from a sweater outgrown or for some other reason no longer able to be worn by the original owner.

It was during these years that I started to know my Grandpa Skavdahl better. He owned a ranch near Sedalia, Colorado, and I was allowed to spend two or three weeks with him on the ranch each summer. I truly loved being with him during haying season (he never baled his hay). I can still picture him standing on top of a haystack—pitchfork in hand, layering the hay just right so it wouldn't tumble to one side or another. I was allowed to sit in the vehicle used for stacking or to ride with the hired hand who was driving the rake. The vehicles used for haying were old cars with no bodies—just a frame, motor, and front seat. Grandpa sold the ranch in the early '50s and moved to Lakewood, Colorado, for a few years, then to Englewood, Colorado for the remainder of his life. It was my great fortune to have been close to him.

While Grandpa lived in Lakewood, Esther (his wife) purchased their first television set. He was not pleased with the purchase, considering it frivolous and unnecessary. If the set was on, he did not enter the room. However, after a few weeks, we would see him steal a glance while walking from one room to another. It was not very many months until he discovered westerns, and became an avid fan of any western movie.

Grandpa would often drive to Nebraska to the Skavdahl ranch there. I was lucky enough to accompany him a couple of times. Each trip, he would stop at a particular restaurant in Mitchell, Nebraska, for a cup of hot milk. That was the only thing he would purchase for himself. He appeared to be personal friends with the owners and/or the waitresses.

In 1954, we moved to Longmont, Colorado. Daddy bought a Case implement dealership, but it was a poor investment. He then became employed at the Colorado Department of Veterans Affairs in Denver, where he remained until his retirement. The first summer we were in Longmont, Mother worked nights as a cook in a small drive-in restaurant, and went to school in Greeley to refresh her teaching skills. The fall of 1954

she started teaching at the Lyons, Colorado, elementary school, and taught there until 1958. She also remained active with church activities, gardening, and family.

My first year in Longmont was my junior year of high school. On the first day of school, I was lucky enough to meet Eileen, a classmate who remained one of my closest friends for life. Longmont High School was much larger than I was used to, and the adjustment was difficult. Eileen did much to ease the adjustment. During that junior year, Eileen, another friend (Melva), and I were walking on Main Street, as none of us had access to a car to “drag Main.” A car with three fellows from Berthoud drove alongside of us, and asked if we wanted a ride. We replied that we did not ride with strangers. After stopping a couple of times and repeating the invitation, they parked their car and walked with us to Eileen’s house, where we were spending the night. The next week, they saw us again, and said, since they had walked with us the week before, it was our turn to ride with them. We accepted the offer. Melva married the one she liked; Eileen dated another one for several years (who became my brother-in-law); and I dated the third one for several months. The boy I was dating enlisted in the Army, which ended our relationship, and I started dating a brother of Eileen’s friend. One night, we had a date but he wanted to break it for some reason. They had another brother (Ted) at home, who offered to take me out, and I married him in June of 1956.

The summer between my junior and senior years of high school (1955), I got a job in a restaurant on Main Street. I bought a 1935 Chevrolet during this summer, which I have fond memories of—we three girls had many adventures in this car. I graduated from high school on my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, and married Ted two weeks later. Our honeymoon was spent in a cabin near Tiny Town that Grandpa Skavdahl owned.

Our first home was on a dairy farm north of Loveland, where Ted was employed. We then moved to a dairy in Keenesburg, then to Denver where Ted worked as a security guard for a while. In the spring of 1957, we moved to the Loveland-Fort Collins area, where Ted held various farm and truck-driving jobs. Our first daughter (Vi) was born the spring of 1957. As I had a doctor in Denver, but was living in the Loveland area. Grandpa Skavdahl and Esther invited me to live with them until Vi’s birth. The spring of 1959, while living in Fort Collins, our second daughter (Barbara) was born.

Mother enjoyed her two granddaughters, and they enjoyed her. Mother did a lot of sewing for them. We were saddened by her death from cancer in December of 1960, when the girls were 3 ½ and 1 ½. Just prior to Mother’s death, Grandpa Skavdahl came to see her. Realizing she was weakening, I recall him patting her hand and saying “Go in peace, Susie, I’ll soon be with you.” Grandpa never stopped grieving for his oldest daughter.

In January of 1961, I moved to Denver, and started working in the engineering department of the telephone company (Mountain Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company). I continued working there (with a leave of absence in the spring of 1962 for the birth of Robert) until the birth of Tom in November of 1963.

During these years I was able to talk to Grandpa Skavdahl almost daily, and spent many a weekend afternoon with him. One of Grandpa’s hobbies after his retirement was to do all the grocery shopping. The newspaper ads came out on Wednesday evening, and Grandpa would take Esther’s grocery list and check out all the ads. If an item on her list was on sale, he would note which store and get an adequate supply. If it was not on sale, he would put it on a future list, waiting for a sale. The

years I was not working, I would take the children to Englewood and take Grandpa shopping. He always went to a minimum of three stores—and more if there were sale items to purchase. If an item was limited to a particular amount per customer, he would give me money to go through one check-out line with the maximum quantity, and he would go through another, thereby doubling the maximum. He never allowed the clerks to help take the groceries to the car, as he did not want them to know he was shopping more than one market.

I enrolled at Metro State College in the fall of 1965, and completed two academic years by December of 1968. Ted was killed in an auto accident in July of 1967 (the children were 3, 5, 8, and 10). In January of 1969, I decided to start working until I could decide what I wanted to do as a career. I started working for Isbil Associates, Inc., and worked there until retirement. Isbill Associates, an engineering company specializing in airport development, was just getting started, and I was the first clerical employee. Over the next twenty and more years, as the company grew, and additional clerical people were hired, I was able to delegate the parts of the job I didn't enjoy, and keep the ones I liked.