

Remembrances of Pearl P. Phelon

This is rather a homespun remembrance of a long-time neighbor and friend;

As a small child I remember Pearl Phelon coming to our house with milk that our family purchased from his parents farm. He always liked to come to our house because he loved music and playing cards. My mother and father loved both also. Pearl played the cornet, my father the stringed instruments and my mother the piano and organ.

Pearl's mother made butter and sold eggs; they also raised their own meat, vegetables and fruit. Those days everybody made their own bread and most of their clothes were hand-made or bought in the General Store or sent away to the Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward catalog.

My girlfriend June was sent over to the Phelon farm with fifty cents for a pound of butter. On her way she lost it. By the time she arrived at the farm she was crying. Money was very scarce and she knew her parents would be very angry with her. Pearl quieted her fears and said, "That's all right June, here's another fifty cents so go and get your butter from my mother." What a friendly gesture that was.

Pearl Phelon was a tall, ruddy complexioned, blue eyed, brown haired handsome gentleman. He was soft spoken, smiled easily, and loved God and people. He loved Granville especially-----

His love for the outdoors and farming was his life-style and life-line of Pearl's life, although at an earlier age he studied to be a Machinist at the Trade School and earned his board by stoking coal stoves to heat the Westfield Normal School, (now the City Hall). It's ironic his wife [Ruth (Foster) Phelon] studied to be a teacher there, so did my mother [Minnie (Williams) Webb] and Ruth and my mother used to go to the Reunions together.

At one time Pearl's love for music was eminent by playing cornet with the 1st Infantry Regiment Band of Massachusetts decked in uniform and all. (I once saw his picture at his home in uniform) I thought I was looking at his son John, the resemblance was so great.

Pearl Phelon was active in church affairs and came to all our church suppers, called "church socials". Our Congregational church ladies group had a church supper every two weeks. This was the Community center for the top of the hill, known as Granville Center. The suppers were located in the ell part of the Congregational church parsonage; now Edward Jensen Jr's apartment house. We did not have a special menu like Chicken Pie, or Ham and Bean supper like our church does today. Although one dear soul always made her social beans, light colored pea bean variety, and the Chaplain sisters who made their living in dairy farming always brought [end of page 1 in original document] whipped cream cake.

I ended up washing dishes in front of the old wood stove; in the summer I sweat my head off, in the winter I welcomed the heat. I chose this job because I was too shy to wait on table[s]. It was like pulling teeth to get me to serve some one a glass of water- at my mother's insistence. (I know you'll say it's hard to believe now.)

Pearl Phelon was always at the church suppers and many invited guests, teachers, and summer folk attended. Many came for the fun after supper. The games we played are not heard of now like: Reuben and Rachel, Winkum, Fine or Superfine and what do we do to redeem it, sitting in a circle with a wooden ring on a rope passing from person to person. One person stood in the middle of the circle and had to guess who had the ring, then they were "it". We also played Spin the Platter with a large kettle cover. The person in the center of the ring of persons called a name and they had to catch it before it stopped spinning; if it flatted it was their turn.

Pearl's wife-to-be was a teacher in Granville who also came to our church suppers. When she saw Pearl she liked him right away and said, "He will be my husband". Eventually Ruth Foster and Pearl Phelon were married and a couple of years later Philip was born. The cutest blonde with curly hair and blue eyes. They lived where the Egertons do now. Philip was my first baby-sitting job. This was a long time ago now for Philip made his parents and family proud by receiving his doctorate in education and is retiring this year as President of a college.

Soon I was working at the house Pearl had built for their retiree home and I worked there before I worked at the farm house. I remember Ruth when she was carrying John, Philip was about two years old or so. John was another blonde, blue-eyed baby minus the curls. Later he also made his folks proud by running the farm, having his own retail store in Granby [CT.?]. Both boys made their parents happy grandparents, John topping the score [by] having ten, nine boys and one girl. All the grandchildren are hard working [end of page 2 in original document] nice people like the rest of the Phelon's.

I learned to bake at Pearl's house. If I ruined one cake Pearl's wife would say bake another and learn to do it right. All this baking was done in an old iron cook stove; wood fed. I also learned how to can and cook for the Phelon family [who] were very frugal.

Pearl and Ruth Phelon were both twins. Pearl's twin did not survive but his wives (sic) twin lived nearly as long as she did.

While Ruth was pregnant for John and I was baking I can see Ruth darning Pearl's socks. Not until much later in their marriage did she find out he never wore darned socks.

Such memories I visualize!

Once Pearl worked in Springfield at his trade. John, Philip and his mother ran the farm harvesting apples, blueberries and whatever duties were to run the farm. Apples meant

pruning, spraying, picking, sorting, packing, etc. Blueberries were a shorter summer job but meant picking, scooping, sorting, and packing. I rode as far as Westfield with Pearl on his way to work and he picked me up on his way home.

Pearl was a Cornet player along with my mom [Minnie Williams Webb] and dad [Ethelbert Tyler Webb] playing for dances over the old Gibbons store where my 6th, 7th, and 8th grade was held. Kay Phelon was my teacher, then Miss Kearns. Every two weeks Pearl, my mother and my father would walk up and down Granville hill in all kinds of weather to play their instruments; my father usually on mandolin, my mother on piano and Pearl on the Cornet. I can't remember if this was before Pearl's marriage or after, but I have a feeling I should have put this in the first part of my remembrances.

Dr. Philip Phelon lived across the street from us for a while with his children in his Aunt Lucy's house. From there he worked days and traveled to Albany NY. To get his doctorate nights. Such an industrious feat-----

When Pearl run the farm across the street from us our daughter Linda had the Mumps. John [John Wells Phelon] was still home, in college. I needed a couch moved, so Pearl and John came to help for my husband [Carl Bloomberg] was at work. Poor John caught the Mumps [end of page 3 in original document] and must have missed school.

When John was married he run the farm and Pearl moved to the retiree home. John and Kathy [Kathryn Rich] were blessed with ten children and John became Bishop of the Mormon Church.

I couldn't ask for better neighbors than the Phelons. Pearl always was generous with his vegetables and apples, and the rest gave of themselves or whatever good neighbors were required to do.

Pearl's later years were spent with his garden, caning chairs, his music and playing cards with the Seniors. He attended church when he could and sat right up front for he was hard of hearing. Sometimes when his wife didn't go I'd bring him with me. He was a faithful giver and loved the church, Granville people and especially Granville.

Pearl Phelon believed wholeheartedly in what he believed and was strong in his convictions. He loved the church on the hill and he and his wife were very active there. Pearl was a choir director, sang bass, and played the Cornet often. As he grew older and his eyesight dimmed, he'd cut out the sides on the large cardboard cereal boxes and especially winter's he would rewrite the musical notes larger to his favorite songs. This way when he wanted to play his Cornet or sing, he could read the music. Whenever I'd invite Pearl and Ruth for dinner, I'd say bring your music so you can play for us or sing, and he would.

I had the privilege of being Pearl's elderly companion for a couple of years and bring him meals on wheels, did errands for him and saw to some of his needs. He was always very grateful.

Pearl Phelon will be sadly missed. Those of us who have grown up here in Granville and really had the privilege to get to know the person over the years will miss him most.

It is as if one of the pillars of town has crumbled away, for the Phelon roots are deep in the soil of Granville. We are hoping now that Philip is retiring, he or some of the Phelon family will once again tread the paths of this [end of page 4 in original document] town so we can remember that Granville was a better place because Pearl Phelon once lived here.

I will end with Sam Walter Foss* "The House By the Side of the Road"

There are hermit souls that live withdrawn
In the peace of their self-content;
There are souls, like stars, that dwell apart,
In a fellowless firmament;
There are pioneer souls that blaze their paths
Where highways never ran—
But let me live by the side of the road
And be a friend to man.

Let me live in a house by the side of the road,
By the side of the highway of life,
The men who press with the ardor of hope,
The men who are faint with the strife.
But I turn not away from their smiles nor their tears—
Both parts of an infinite plan—
Let me live in a house by the side of the road
And be a friend to man.

I know there are brook-gladdened meadows ahead
And mountains of wearisome height;
And the road passes on through the long afternoon
And stretches away to the night
But still I rejoice when the travelers rejoice,
And weep with the strangers that moan,
Nor live in a house by the side of the road
Like a man who dwells alone.

Let me live in my house by the side of the road
Where the race of men go by—
They are good, they are bad, they are weak, they are strong,

Wise, foolish—so am I
Then why should I sit in the scorner's seat
Or hurl the cynic's ban?
Let me live in my house by the side of the road
And be a friend to man.

May God bless you all-----Marjorie Bloomberg

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