

Ruth and Didi

They were sisters, but you never said....Ruth or Didi...it was always the Ruth and Didi.

Ruth committed suicide at 57....four years later Didi died of cancer.

Neither married... we could only speculate on why Ruth killed herself.

She was a nurse, and she died from an overdose. After Ruth died, Didi was alone, she was teaching math in Butler High., I don't know why she decided to retire so young, perhaps then you could retire with a pension at that age. She graduated from Douglas...I remember I was in grammar school. My mother Unkie and I went to the graduation; I remember wearing a pretty dress. It was a special occasion.

I remember their house....Ruth and Didi were adopted by Unkie...

Unkie's wife had a sister and she was married to a no good guy it seems...they had two daughters, Ruth and Didi. When the girls were four and two, Ruth was the oldest, their mother died. Fred Gulbransen, their father was not able to care for them. He barely could take care of himself. Unkie's wife, I don't remember what her name was, It might have been Andrea . Anyway they brought the girls to live with them.

In.....Unkie adopted them in ----- ...Fred was still alive, and I remember him taking the Susquehanna from New York and coming up to visit them...periodically. The girls had no use for him. They were polite to him, but there was no affection for him what so ever...They loved Unkie.....

Now Unkie is another story I know very little about....I have no idea how he ever came to America...I have no idea who sponsored him. He was a Neilsen...He had three brothers.I called all of them Uncle. They were all sea captains...Uncle Anders, Uncle Hans and Uncle Nils. Uncle Nils was the tallest and was loved by the family the most....but not as much as Uncle Alf...or Unkie....I can remember all of them. They all wore vests and were tall and had stomach's with gold watch chains that stretched across the front of their vests....I wonder why Unkie never went to sea like his brothers? But he didn't, and he ended up living in a little town in Northern New Jersey called Oakland. He became a builder. Some of the homes he built are still standing in town. The last one he built is right on Oakland Ave....The McDonald's lived in another one on Oak Street. I don't know what year it was when he moved to Oakland. He had a wife Andrea and they had a son Hans. She died from cancer....and soon

after his son was killed in an automobile accident. It was after she died that he officially adopted Ruth and Didi.

Unkie had a big house on Oakland Ave....almost directly across the street from the Pond's reformed Church. There were five bedrooms upstairs. One was tiny, another small the other three were really quite large. There was one bathroom with a tub right in the middle of the room with a window along side of it. You could sit in the tub and watch the world go by. I don't ever remember doing that. There must have been a big curtain there....There was no shower fixture that I can remember...years ago, everyone took baths, at least once a week. The bathroom was off the center hall and had a door that connected to Unkie's room. I don't ever remember being worried that he might walk in while I was in there. I do remember at times going to the bathroom late at night, and I would always hear Unkie reading the Bible. He was a religious man, not too much so that it was invasive, but you knew he believed. He never missed going to Church on Sundays.

The house was white, and had a round ringer for a door knob....and when you walked in the house, the living room was to the left, dining room that was even bigger than the living room. But in the middle of these two room was the best thing ever. A large grate that if you stood over it and you were a girl, your skirt would billow up, and it felt so warm and good.

The house also had the steepest staircase I've ever seen in my entire life....It was good I was young, I had no trouble going up or down, fast. The kitchen was huge by even today's standards....It had a table in it, but there was also a breakfast nook....with a bench that went all around three sides, and that was where we always sat. It looked out on a wonderful big back yard....There was a grape arbor...those big purple grapes flourished there. There was a small red barn on the hill going up to the big garage and barn on top....In back of the white barn there was a chicken coop. I remember the chickens. Once when he went away, I think it was a trip to Nantucket, he let me feed the chickens. I was so proud. I remember walking in the coop and they all attacked me; it was feeding time. I dropped the pail and ran out crying. The chickens weren't far behind me. I never ever had such guilt...but my father assured me they would all go back in the coop. They did, and I did tell Unkie, and he just laughed.

He was the nearest thing I ever had to a grandfather, I loved him and felt very lucky that I had him in my life.

Hansen house was built in 1850's or thereabouts. Wealthy woman had the house built no one knows to this day. It had three floors, many bedroomfive fireplaces to heat the house...She had an artist come over from Italy to paint a mural on the ceiling in one of the downstairs sitting rooms....Boone family lived there for several years...Mr Boone was president of the Sunshine and Health Nudist Colony in Mayslanding NJ.....The house stood empty for at least 10 years before my parents bought it for back taxes. It was about to be torn down...

I don't remember how many years ago I jotted this down....Journals are wonderful I never thought I kept a journal, but lately I've been finding writings that I'm delighted I kept...Must have written this particular piece when I first got my computer...

I remember when I retired from Bloomingdales the Store Manager, my big boss called me in to show me a collection she had kept of all the memo's I'd sent.I managed the restaurant in Short Hills. I'd request new equipment, her approval of the new employees I hired etc. (Human Resources didn't have the control and power they do today) They called it Personnel in those days; I could make changes on my own, yet I always kept her informed .

I was surprised she had kept my memo's, looking back, I must admit they were either funny or clever or both....She suggested I take a writing course when I retired. I signed up for one a week after my retirement at a Community College within walking distance of our home. I loved it....I do so enjoy writing. I've even been published three times. I'm very proud, yet always intimidated by those of you that know where a semicolon goes, or knows enough not to start a sentence with the likes of...But.

I have hesitated sending out my writings....that is until one evening when we went to a Chinese restaurant...and I got a fortune cookie that read,

“ Don't let what you can't do stop you from doing what you can do.”

I have been writing ever since. You just have to contend with my errors. I do travel with with a Strunk & White Elements of Style in my purse,

but it doesn't seem to help. I haven't the time to look it up when I'm on a roll. Like now for example.

I'm getting published in our local community newspaper in May. They publish everything that anyone sends in. It's not a big deal, but it's special to me. I might just forward it to you...