

Shirley Mohorter Allen Loomis Statement of Mohorter Family

When Uncle Doug, Linda and I, brought your mom back to your house when she was visiting in June. I was so intrigued by the fact that you had a picture of Janis and my mother (Grace Brownell Mohorter) on the wall in your living room. I was so glad to know you are interested in your great grandmother. I was pondering this all the way home and I was quite sure you knew very little about her since she died when your mom was only 11 years old, therefore she doesn't remember very much about mother herself.

I will write as my memory serves me. I probably won't have all the dates right but I'll try.

Grace Brownell Mohorter was born in the Kirckville area on April 21st 1904. Her siblings are Howard Brownell, Lester, Carl, Dorothy and Vernon Brownell.

Mother (Grace) became a hairdresser in the 1920s. This was way before permanents were available. I think curling irons were the only method of curling the hair. This was called marceling. It is so wonderfully interesting to me that she was very skilled at hair cutting. Always cut all of our hair in a way that many years later would be called geometric haircuts. Beautifully done I might add. Always looked perfect. She was highly skilled at marceling too. Often times when there was a Christmas pageant at our church she would curl Dolores hair, Bev's hair and mine too. We felt so gorgeous of course. Janis always had beautiful long curls anyway but she was too little for these affairs.

I forgot to mention that mother (Grace) married our father, Cecil Amer Mohorter, in the late 1920s.

I (Shirley) was born in 1927

Monte was born on July 22nd 1928

Dolores was born on January 31st 1931

Beverly was born on November 29 1931

During part of this time when there were four of us, we lived on Devaul Rd in a house that belonged to mother's uncle, Uncle Horace Brownell. A truly wonderful man. This was at the height of the depression when so many were out of work. Uncle Horace helped us in so many ways. Daddy (Cecil) lost his job for quite a while. He would work for Uncle Horace in the summer and would get paid with food from the farm.

I was just a little girl at that time but I remember that mother canned everything she could. Mother would bake homemade bread and daddy would sell it door to door. I guess it kept us going.

Uncle Horace worked the land around the house where we lived and often he would put Money and I on the horses backs and we would ride up and down in the field holding onto the harness. Such wonderful memories they were, Molly and Rose (horses). We were about five (Monte) and six (Shirley) at this time.

At this house we had no electricity, no plumbing, a coal stove for heat, gas or kerosene lamps at night. Us kids loved it but it must have been difficult for mother with a large family and no conveniences. Never a word of complaint, of course. Difficult for daddy too.

Mother always made most of our clothes at this time. Her own also. She made most of her own designs and patterns. She was very creative. She had a "Singer" sewing machine that was powered by your feet. I can see it now.

Dolores and Beverly we're just little girls at this time.

Janis was born in 1936 and Bob in 1937 while we were living in Saintsville, just outside of Kirksville.

At some point near this time mother in daddy bought the property on Brownell Rd. It had belonged to Grandpa and Grandma Brownell (Edgar Levi Brownell and Elizabeth Louise DeVaul). There were 30 acres here, so it's became to us "The Thirty Acres". We would go there and have picnics that mother had made and play among the beginnings (being built) of our house. We moved there in the house when I was 12 years old. Shortly thereafter Doug was born, now there are seven of us.

Janis was born April 28, 1936

Bob was born November 26, 1937

Doug was born May 18, 1939

As you can see there was about a four year time lapse between Bev and Janis. So to the rest of us kids these last three became forever and always the "Three Little Kids", for the rest of our lives, I still call them that.

Now you have to know there was no running water, no inside plumbing, very primitive actually. But this is mother and daddy's dream to own their own home where they just love the area - this place. It's theirs to keep.

Now about this time mother is diagnosed with congestive heart failure. I think about 1941 or 1942. I remember at the time we were told that daddy was taking her to the doctor. It seemed that we sensed that this was very grave. I said to the other kids we'll gather around in a circle on the living room floor and we'll pray to God for him to take care of her and not let anything happen to her. Because he knows that we need her so much. And it was like an order we were requesting to him and we believed completely that he would take care of her at that time. I'm the oldest and I think I was either 14 or 15. Mother is about 38 years old now.

When you think about it, mother was very talented. She made beautiful crocheted things, designing and making clothes, doing our hair. She was a creative cook and canned everything.

She was patient and kind, understanding and didn't raise her voice. How do you do that with seven kids. She was the epitome of a lady of her time.

Daddy is very enterprising too. By trade he was a machinist/tool maker. For many years he always fixed his car when it needed it. I came home one time and there is an automobile engine on the kitchen table, he is repairing it and then he would put it back. He was a very hard worker. At that particular time in history Brownell Rd was not always plowed in the winter time. He would leave the car on Taylor's Corner and walk down. He carried a sled in the car because he had to bring home a 50 pound bag of coal every night after he came from work because they couldn't buy more than that at one time. Later they were able to do that. It had to fuel two stoves in our home. They always had to do things themselves because there is no money to pay others to do things. It's still the depression.

In 1941 daddy was offered a position at Savage Arms Company (still in business, Utica location closed) in Utica. World War II is raging and we are now involved in it after December 7th 1941, Pearl Harbor.

It was a munitions factory and now a defense factory because of the war. Our whole country became mobilized at this time to support the war effort to protect our country and our freedom.

He was a Superintendent of one whole floor at this factory. He was said to be extremely skilled at making parts himself if a machine broke down. During the war it was very difficult to replace parts so he would make them himself. Several young men from our area worked for him there.

His job there for four years help them have a better time and a better life at that time.

I think during about the second year there, don't know the dates, they decided to buy 4 cows. Had a small farm built for their food and for them. It was wonderful because now we will have our own milk, butter, buttermilk etc.

Daddy was able to buy a large barrel churn made from wood and he made a frame for it and attached it to a little washing machine engine. Now we had an electric churn, imagine that!!!

Now we could make 8 or 10 pounds of butter at a time. You haven't eaten delicious pancakes until you've eaten them with homemade jersey butter. Fabulous!!! We used to sell some of it for \$0.50 a pound.

Mother used to have to walk outside during a warm summer rain. She said it made everything fresh and new again. She loved the smell after the rain. She would check all her beautiful flowers and everything outside. She had a passion for her flowers.

There was an old apple orchard between our house and where Janis and Bernie's house would be built years later. It was fenced in for the cows. She would walk there also. Now one of our cows named Clementine must have thought she was mother's friend, because she would trudge along behind her. She probably didn't know she was a cow but we didn't tell her because we didn't want to hurt her feelings. Silly cow!!! These were all jersey cows.

During my junior year in high school Monte became a student at Morrisville Agricultural College. He had always wanted to be a farmer since he was a very little boy. So this might have been a dream come true. That meant that someone else needed to take care of the animals. Dolores, Bev and I talked it over. Dolores did not want to work with the animals so she preferred doing the housework in the house. Bev and I took over the animals while Monte was in college for two years. We were absolutely delighted. I think Bev was 12 years old because I was 16. It was sort of an adventure for us that meant getting up at 5:30 or 6:00 o'clock in the morning because we had to water them, feed them, and milk them and to finish in time to go back in the house and get ready for school in time. I think Bev was still in grammar school on Fyler the first year. I would run down to the corner and get the bus when it was time. Sometimes I was late but Mr Hildreth would be on the corner waiting for me. Imagine!!!

When we came home from school we would let the cows outside and clean the barn. Then feed and water them again. We were very busy because there were many things that needed to be done for mother to.

During my high school years there was definitely a role reversal going on at our house. We were very protective of mother because of her illness. It was as if we older ones became the parents and mother became the child. We would not allow her to do most things. We would just do those things ourselves. There was no fussing or whining or fuming going on, that was just the way it was.

You see our father was working in Utica during these years (1941 - 1945). He stayed there during the week and came home on weekends.

During the second year of Bev and I being farmers I think she would have been in high school by then. So she would have been on the bus with Dolores and I.

Sometimes my 84 year old mind fails me and I am a little foggy about events that happened years ago, or maybe even about 20 minutes ago.

After his position at Savage Arms daddy always had a management position. Right after the war he worked as a government inspector. Many factories were filled with machines that belonged to the government because of the war effort so they had to be maintained as government property. So they had to be inspected periodically. When he died in 1957 at age 63 he was at a factory in Pulaski as a Superintendent there.

Mother worried terribly during the last years about having to leave her small children. She had been told she had little time to live, she was very sad about leaving especially the three little kids. At that time bed rest was very often prescribed as the main treatment for her condition. She used to say that she hadn't had the opportunity to get to know them like she would have liked. That meant great sadness for her, at times she had not had to stay in bed and she savored those times.

About six weeks before she died she announced that she wanted to have a picture done so that everyone of us would have our own picture of her. So one day she rode to work with me into Syracuse and I dropped her off at the Gold Jones Studio on South Salina St.

When she was finished she walked over to the shop where I worked about two blocks away. She was very tired as she rested there until I was finished and then we came home.

Daddy's picture was the only one that was tinted and ours were in the sepia tome. The one that was colored was very beautiful with her purple dress.

I remember these little stories about the three little kids that I must tell you. When Janis was about 5, I think, mother had taken their pictures separately at the drug store, they used what may have been like a watercolor effect to color her dress so that she now had a green one, a pink one and a yellow one. She then asked mother if she could wear the pink or green one. Hers was actually yellow. I don't know how mother explained to her about that.

Bob was definitely an outdoor boy but Bob used to love to feed his chickens. I have an old picture of him when he was a very little boy feeding his chickens.

I just remembered a story about Monte when he was in school in Morrisville. Mother and daddy bought him a little old Ford coupe. He was coming home from somewhere one day when a bee flew into the car. In his attempt to get the bee out he ran into a deep ditch up at the top of Brownell Rd. No harm done though. I think cars were more sturdy than. We kidded him for a while. I wish Monte was here to defend himself. I'm absolutely sure he would do that. Make no mistake about that.

The little anecdote about Doug that I'll always remember. Mother said that when we first moved into our house there were no storm windows. That meant that in very cold weather the windows would be covered with very thick frost. At some point well he's very little he asked her how they became so pretty. She told him Jack Frost had done it. So guess what? he wants to watch him do that!! does that not sound like Uncle Doug!!

I should say at this point that each and everyone of us kids had a special place in the order of our family. By the same token we each have a very special and different remembrance of that family and what it was like and where each of us fit. I hope this gives you at least a very small picture of the Mohorter family.

I often wish that mother and daddy had lived to see all of us grow up. I'm very sure they would be very proud of us.

Monte became an excellent farmer. Bob and Doug were stone masons and excellent builders. Dolores retired from New York telephone after many years. Bev became an optician while in her early 50s and only recently retired. Janis and I were like lifelong hairdressers. And they would have loved their grandchildren beyond measure.

So I would like to think this was a success story about a large family who grew up without their mother.

Our parents did not know they had left us with a wonderful legacy even though they didn't get to stay long.

To become hard working, honest and honorable people, it doesn't get any better than that.

Mother (Grace) was 43 when she died on August 4th 1947.

Daddy (Cecil) was 63 when he died on February 6th 1957.

Shirley was 88 when she died on January 25th 2016