

Trips

I needed to make a trip to HEB. I had kept putting it off. Because my meals are prepared for me, I don't need to keep a supply of groceries on hand. But it was time! I had waited until late in the day. Not wise. I got my cane, credit card, shopping list, and HEB bags. I hadn't gassed up when I got home from my trip to Muskogee to see my brother. The tank was well below the half-way mark. Frank always told me never to let it get that low. I took care of that first. Wow! Sixty dollars for fifteen gallons! Why, I remember when people used to buy "a dollar's worth!"

It was hot! And you know about HEB's parking lot. Always full! People circling, hoping for a space closer to the door. I finally parked, noting that I was in row H so I would be able to find my car. (I learned that from experience.) I was next to a cart storage. I took a cart and used it as a walker. A sweet young woman got out of a pickup, smiled, and asked if she could help me. Must be the white hair! I told her, thanks, but I was fine. I really was, despite my increasing problems with balance, poor hearing, and memory that sometimes makes me wonder where I am and what I'm doing there. And who is that nameless person behind the face that looks so familiar?

I love HEB! I enjoy looking at the beautiful produce. Melons and peaches are especially nice now. And the beautiful candies, cakes, cookies, and macaroons! The selection of breads, cheeses, and on and on. Bacon! This little piggy went to market, and it takes a king's ransom to bring him home! They say we have a supply problem. Maybe they're conserving the supply by pricing it out of our reach. But there was still so much to enjoy. It's hard not to be an impulse buyer. And it's so easy to just whip out the credit card. I had a big basket for my few things, many of which I could have done without. And it's often around a hundred dollars. I look at the young mothers with two or three little ones and huge carts filled to overflowing! May Our Father bless them and keep them from hunger and want. And protect their little ones wherever they may be.

As I walked up one aisle and down another, in my own little world, I remembered Frank and how he loved to grocery shop. He bought what he wanted without worrying about the number of servings or price per ounce. Even after his illness was beginning to take its toll, and he was in a wheelchair, he loved to go to the store. So many things at his eye level wound up in the basket. When I consider faults he could have had and things I could have complained about, this must surely have been the most minor. And for years he did the cooking and clean-up! He deserved better than a fault-finding wife.

I walked, pushed my cart, and wondered who on earth bought all these things. Deep in my own little world, I was surprised when an attractive woman asked, "You're Tess aren't you?" I looked at her. She was one of those familiar faces whose name went that-

away. When she reminded me, I remembered that she and her husband were members at Faith years ago. We visited for a while. She asked whether I was still writing? I told her, "Not so much anymore." For years, when I was Frank's caregiver and after his death, I wrote "Little Stories." Pastor Selle encouraged me and put them on the Elderberries page in The Grapevine newsletter. I developed a following, and self-published two little books. They were well received and are still available on amazon.com. Simple little stories from my childhood on the old homestead, school days during WW2, early days of our marriage, raising our children, seeing them grow to adulthood with families of their own. Our work, play, travel, and retirement. Our involvement in Church and community. Our life in Sun City. Frank's long illness, death, and my life without him. I told you about my trip to Germany with Paul and Lois Howe. How we traced the steps of Martin Luther. I told you about going to Africa on safari, to Italy, to Mackinac Island, to the Great Smokies and other wonderful trips. Frank and I traveled to many wonderful places. And I'm blessed to have seen many more with mutual friends. I told about my travels in my Little Stories. Every once in a while, I get the little books out and read again of people who influenced my life; places we lived and where we traveled. I read about little boys in my Sunday School classes. I love remembering them. I don't know why it is that I remember the little boys better than the little girls. Writing those Little Stories were comfort and therapy during the long years of Frank's illness and the grief filled years following his death. Perhaps I should start writing again. Now might be an appropriate time. Even if just for myself. Moving into my nineties, I'm walking a new path. One that's not as smooth and well lighted as those on which I've walked to this point. But I have a Guide. He's a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. I pray: Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home...

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