

INTRODUCTION

Although I didn't know it at the time, the seed for writing this book was planted in January of 2000 when we moved my Mother from her home at 210 Debbie Drive in Scranton, to Elan Gardens, an assisted living facility in Clarks Summit. The move left behind a house full of her countless possessions and memories, and while the memories were mine to keep, most of the possessions had to be disposed of. On a Saturday afternoon Margie and I, along with Sally and Jodi, visited the house to survey the contents and come up with a plan for dispersal and disposal. Sometime during the course of that afternoon we came upon a box which contained a few hundred three by five inch index cards with recipes from family and friends which had been accumulated by my Mother over the course of her life. Many of the cards had the names of the women who had given her the recipes, and leafing through them I was struck by the sense of familiarity that came over me. At the time of that Debbie Drive visit, Mom was about 93, and most of her family and friends from her generation were gone, many of them having died several years ago. But here, on the pages of these recipes, these people still lived on, and with each new card I turned a new flood of memories gushed forth from the page.

The mere sight of these names, some of which I had not heard nor seen in print for perhaps fifty or more years, brought back memories of these women and their husbands as well as specific incidents that I associated with these people or the recipe. The most poignant memories came from a few recipes which my Mother made when I was a kid but had probably not come out of the recipe box for four decades. Pickled tongue, prune tsmmis and candied fruit rind might cause you to cringe today, but back then they were a kind of gourmet fare. Oh, but how times have changed!

It was on that day at the house on Debbie Drive that I realized I had a responsibility to my Mother, if not to my family, to somehow preserve those recipes for posterity and as a part of my family heritage. The solution was quite simple; I would sort through the pile of recipes, select the meaningful ones and copy them onto a computer so that I could give each of my children, grandchildren and nieces and nephews their own personal copies. However, a month or two later when I began the process, a funny thing happened. I found that as I typed many of the recipes I couldn't suppress the associated memories long enough to do the typing. My mind kept wandering, and it seemed as if each new memory in turn shook another one loose from places in my mind that hadn't been visited in many years. It was a very special experience because virtually all of the memories were quite pleasant and from a time very early in my life.

After laboring for several days with this problem, I finally realized that the *problem* was actually an *opportunity*, an opportunity to relate and preserve a lot more than just the memory of my Mother. I would use these recipes as the vehicle to write a book that would include some of my family history and heritage to the extent I could with the knowledge at hand. Too many of my family died at an early age, and perhaps this book would give my children, grandchildren and others an opportunity to get to know them a little before there was no one left to pass along their memory. And with that thought in mind, I began what turned out to be one of the most enjoyable and satisfying odysseys of my life. As it turned out, the recipes are not the primary focus of the book, but rather the glass that holds the wine, and nothing would make me happier than to have

this book passed down to my grandchildren and for them to share it someday with their children and grandchildren.

Shortly after I began this effort, I realized that I needed to establish some guidelines for what would be include in the book. After much deliberation I decided that the book would be mainly about my generation and the generations which preceded me. Accordingly, most material about my children and my Sister's children is incidental to the main theme and has been included only as necessary to tell the story whether that be with the written word or with photos. I will leave it to the next generation to tell their own story and to finish my story as they see fit.

And that brings me to my primary concept for and of this book. Each hard copy book comes with a CD which has everything in it that the book contains and in the original and editable computer program. Some years down the road it is my sincerest hope that the next generation will add to this book and continue telling the family story and preserving that bit of history for the young of our family and family yet to be born. You might even think of it as a genealogical chain letter of sorts which I hope will be passed from one generation to the next. You will undoubtedly find some typos or misspellings which I missed. But I ask that you overlook them and instead try to focus on my primary objective which was to tell a story. After all, isn't that what I'm known for!

This entire enterprise, from start to finish, has been a true labor of love, and I thank my family, both past and present, for providing me with the material and assistance to complete the task. Many of my most vivid memories of my Mother are of her in the kitchen or of my family at the dinner table. Cooking and baking were not chores to her, but rather something her generation enjoyed and took great pride in, and like many women of her day, she was an accomplished cook and baker. Because of that, it is particularly fitting that she and all of my family should be remembered in a cookbook, and I know she would be quite pleased with my efforts. This is obviously not a book for everyone, but for those who do relate to it, I hope (and think) you will enjoy reading it as much as I did writing it.

PS As you read through this book, as I have more times than you can imagine, you can expect to find a number of typos which I have missed. Please keep in mind that I have no editor, so either adjust to it or send me the money to hire one!

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