

Mary Rose Rouck and William Joseph Bezy



MRS. CARHART - RESIDENCE.

William Joseph Bezy; B 1 Nov. 1890, Floyd Co., IN; D 29 Oct. 1967, Phoenix, AZ.

I have only a few early memories of Grandfather Bezy, known in the family as Poppo. One day he drove to our house, picked me up, and took me to a lot where he was building a house. It was hot and we visited the soda fountain of a nearby drug store so many times I thought my stomach would burst from all the root beer floats. Another day, he took me to the circus grounds to watch the elephants erecting the tents.

He also could be frightening. As a child I was terrified of the peacocks that often perched on the fence at the back of my grandparents' yard and emitted a horrible blood-curdling scream. Poppo admonished me to be good, because these large birds attacked bad boys. I had a pet Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) and he warned me sternly that they bite and do not let go until lightning strikes. Once, he held me up to a slot machine in a bar and helped me insert a nickel and pull the lever. He then pointed to the sign that indicated minors were forbidden to play the machines and he said that I was a minor and the sheriff was going to put me in jail.

Sometime during the 1940's, Grandma decided that it was too hot in Phoenix for Poppo to spend all day in the sun building houses. They moved to Yarnell, which is much cooler, situated at an elevation of 4800 feet in the Weaver Mountains of Arizona. One day when he was walking on his property south of Yarnell he came upon a mine. The miner was sitting in a rocking chair at the tunnel entrance with a large sack of gold in his lap and laughing hysterically. Poppo went back to his office in town and began selling shares in the gold mine.

The next day he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and was taken to the hospital in Phoenix. The right side of his body was paralyzed and he was able to speak only a few words. He remained an invalid for the rest of his life and Grandma took loving care of him in Phoenix. The Yarnell property was sold.

But, periodically Poppo would take a wild streak. Once he boarded the bus and the whole family got in the car and retrieved him from downtown Phoenix where he was walking around in his nightshirt. Sometimes he would convey that he wanted to go back to the gold mine. A relative, D. B., came to Phoenix from Indiana for a visit and decided we should all go to Yarnell and look for Poppo's gold mine.

It was a hot afternoon in mid summer. Grandma wore a huge straw hat and walked arm in arm with Poppo who struggled along dragging his paralyzed right leg. On the other side of Poppo walked DB. Strung along behind was our family procession, Aunt Marguerite, Mom, Dad, Linda, Bill and I. The procession slowly wound its way around the boulders and through the chaparral. After every few steps, DB would ask, "Which way, Will?" Poppo would point the direction with his good arm. With each step there was squeak. After some time I figured out that it came from DB's wooden leg. We eventually retreated to the car and Poppo never again expressed an interest in his gold mine.

Mary Rose Rouck; B 14 June 1889, Floyd Co., IN; D 30 June 1980, Phoenix, AZ.

Grandmother Bezy made a large impression on me. I guess it is the principle of the alternation of generations. Mom was just "too close" for me to relax and accept when I was in college. Dad often seemed too distant. Grandma's affections did not seem a threat. I found her to have a sort of serenity, a person who was thoroughly comfortable with herself and her life.

We probably talked most often about "her valley." She greatly enjoyed her childhood growing up on the farm near Floyd Knobs, Indiana. Grandma felt my pre-occupation with biology was a misdirected instinct for raising farm animals. She said that if someone were to drop me into her valley and give me a sow to raise, I would be content not to chase around the world looking for amphibians and reptiles.

She marveled that all seven of her brothers and sisters made their way in the world with a sixth grade education. They learned to read and write and memorized the times tables. All of them were healthy on her farm and she noted that not one ever came down with hookworm. It was when she moved to New Albany and had to deal with the city that she became ill.

Her infirmity was never spelled out in detail, but it seemed to be gastrointestinal. One doctor told her that she should consume nothing but cow's milk, another said she should never have any milk. She began administering an enema to herself every day, whether

she needed it or not. She said she lacked ear drums, yet she seemed to hear quite well, and she frequently cleaned her ears with needles wrapped in cotton.

The family moved to Phoenix for Grandma's health. When they arrived at the Arizona border, the agricultural inspectors tried to take away their lug of peaches, and she, Poppo, and the kids sat at the inspection station and ate as many as they could. She said that when they arrived in Phoenix, she saw only one tree. The family seems to have prospered in Phoenix, Poppo building one house at a time.

Sex is something that seems foreign to my view of grandparents, even though we all are living proof of the contrary. Grandma expressed that she thought sex was wonderful and that it was unfortunate that the only knowledge of male anatomy she had when she married Poppo was what she imagined from looking at the Sears catalogue in the family out-house. She thought "the pill" was a fabulous invention, "Just think of having sex without being afraid of getting pregnant." "Maid, you will burn in the fires of hell for talking like that," replied Aunt Agatha, whose views on nearly everything were the opposite of her sister's.

But, Grandma and Aunt Geth could get into incredible laughing fits. One such occasion was when Grandma described how the circus came to Indiana and Geth went into a tent to have her fortune told. The teller put his hand on her knee and Geth yelled and pulled the entire tent down. Another time we were riding in the car near Sedona and Geth said that all the rock formations were monks who had evil thoughts and God turned them into pillars of stone. She and Grandma got to thinking about all the evil thoughts of the monks and began laughing and couldn't stop.

Perhaps the happiest times were when her brother Joe and his wife Maud came to visit from Greeley Hill, California. Joe was a music teacher and could play several instruments. They would set up chairs in the shade of the tree in the front lawn to play music. I recall Joe on the violin, Maud on the mandolin, Marguerite on the banjo, and Grandma on the harmonica. Grandma's favorite was "The Red River Valley."

Grandma was a "Southern Democrat" and recalled how the family hid under the beds when the Republicans came through. John F. Kennedy was her favorite president.

Grandma managed to survive all those years after Poppo's cerebral hemorrhage by investing in second mortgages and by renting out the other two houses on her property. Mr. Terkins would come by, show Grandma a portfolio of houses on the "south-side," and they would get into the car and drive by the homes. Then she made her choices for the mortgages and she never lost a dime.

She and Poppo were Roman Catholics. The priest came by once in a while to hear her confession and give them holy communion. She worried because one of Poppo's few expressions was, "Oh, Pip!" which she thought might be a swear word. "How could Poppo confess that sin if he could not speak?" I am sure the priest did his best to console her, but she still worried about the topic. She watched "mass for shut-ins" on television every Sunday.

Her faith was a great source of comfort to her. She was happy to know she and Poppo would be together in heaven forever, and she never tried to push religion off on me. The question of whether spouses would still be together in heaven led to one of the few terrible arguments between my parents.

Aunt Marguerite often lived with Grandma and Poppo. Marguerite and Mrs. Henderson, a neighbor, did a lot to help see Grandma and Poppo through difficult times.

Their life was also sustained by liberal access to “my blue heavens,” sleeping pills they took each night. Poppo went to bed earlier than Grandma and was given his pill. About a half hour later it entered his system and he would make a pilgrimage to the bathroom. In his night shirt, he would stop and wave to us in the living room with a broad toothless smile and say, "Willie, Willie, Willie." We knew Poppo and Grandma were happy together.