

GRANNY'S HOUSE

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My Granny was born in the early 1900s just after the turn of the century. She saw two World Wars, the Depression, and lived through much more. She married when she was 20 years old and went on to have nine children. While caring for kids, she worked the farm with Grampa, cared for the garden, and made every meal from scratch. As the “girls” (her daughters) got old enough, they pitched in.

Everyone in my family has their own memories of Granny, but nearly all of us can tell you about Sunday dinners at her house and her cooking. She's been gone 45 years this summer, yet her influence as matriarch is still felt throughout the family. She is and was one of the most influential people in my life and I still wish I could go and talk to her over making biscuits or snapping beans. I wrote this free verse poem centered around the five senses and sense-memory in one of my classes and made some updates for *Pe&R*.

Sights

Granny, in a gingham dress, in front of the stove

The big light in the middle of the strawberry patch

The barn across the street

The old gas station, forlorn and empty

Extended family gathered around the table for Sunday dinner

Mashed potatoes with gravy bursting over the sides like a dam that can't hold back the fury

Full stomachs being patted and smiling faces

A quilt frame hanging from the ceiling

Needles darting in and out of multi-colored fabric

Mom smiling as Dad teases her

My grampa's goofy, toothless faces made just for the grandkids

Sounds

The boys playing basketball in the old broiler house,

the ball bouncing on the hard ground, hitting the backboard,

people grunting as they bump each other, fighting for the ball,

the occasional shouts or yells as people cheer

Mom singing or Granny humming in the kitchen

Cindy playing her guitar

Eddie and kids jamming in the living room: steel guitar, mandolin, banjo, fiddle

The dinner bell

Jinx's booming voice and deep laughter

The slapping of feet and shoes on the porch as we raced back to the house for dinner

The murmur of adult voices punctuated by laughter

Kids yelling or sometimes crying

The wind through the tree tops

Wood crackling in the fire

Lightning and thunder, howling wind as a storm blew in

The snap of beans and *thud* as we tossed the pieces in the bucket

Mom's exasperated "Larry!" as he teased her some more

Touch

The feel of biscuit dough on my hands as I cut a piece,

dip it in oil and place it in the pan,

Granny's hands guiding mine

Heat in the kitchen from the stove

The texture of Granny's braids on top of her head

Warm dish water as I stand in a chair in front of the sink

Thread pulled through bees wax

The feel of tying a knot before quilting

The texture of fabric on my hands as I quilt

The heat on the back of my legs from standing inches from the wood stove

Hugs that wrap you in love and warmth

Smell

Pine tree sap & cones in the front yard

Freshly mowed grass

New hay freshly baled

The sweet, sticky smell of hay sitting in the barn and broiler house

under the blistering summer day heat

The smell of the barn during cow milking

Frying chicken and baking biscuits

Fresh strawberries

Homemade butter

Fabric, thread, and filler in a new quilt

The acrid, smoky smell of wood burning in the stove

Taste

Freshly fried chicken, processed the same day

Illicit strawberries snuck from Granny's berry patch

Ice cold water from the hand pump – the way it refreshed us

and froze our teeth

Mashed potatoes and gravy

Green beans and biscuits

Fresh milk from a cow

Homemade ice cream