The Girl With The Tan Hair

JEAN PITTENGER

I was the long desired baby sister with the “tan” hair. My brother, who was six years old at the time of my birth, had ordered me specially. Because he greatly admired the blond baby sister of one of his boy friends, he made numerous and serious appeals and accepted my arrival with the same enthusiasm as he had displayed when given his highly-prized, red tricycle. Although most people called me a “tow-head,” Bob still considered me his little sister with the “tan” hair.

I arrived in a small hospital in Muncie, Indiana, in August of the year 1925. Perhaps if I could have realized it then, I would have enjoyed the distinction of being the only girl to share the nursery with five baby boys.

A modern, one-story, ivory-colored house surrounded by a level, green lawn with a terrace that sloped gracefully to the street was my home during the first three years of my life. I can recall distinctly the patience and diligence with which my parents toiled to make our home an attractive one. Mother carefully arranged rock gardens of petunias, planted peony bulbs and set out a line of rose bushes that extended from the garage in the back yard to the edge of the terrace at its descent, while father sodded the yard, rolled the grass, painted, and constructed swings, a sand-pile, and a basketball goal for my brother and me.

I’m sure I shall never forget the view from our front porch in the summer. Our home was situated directly across the street from the most beautiful estate in Muncie, one with which our unpretentious little home did not compare. There was a huge, white rambling house, situated on a terrace knoll and perfect in balance and the construction of every detail—the gigantic corinthian columns in the front, the immense bay windows, the spacious veranda, and the grandeur of the rooms within. The grounds of the estate covered several acres and nearly halfway between the house and the street was an oval-shaped, cement swimming pool. The driveway which curved from the street to the house was constructed in such a manner as to cross over one end of the swimming pool as a graceful bridge. Although all I have described presented a beautiful picture to my child-...
seriously needed spanking or two, the mental anguish after which far exceeded any physical pain I might have suffered.

My mother began my intellectual training at an early age. I could recite accurately almost every nursery rhyme ever composed as well as the alphabet and a few children's stories that I had memorized word for word.

My brother, of course, was my idol. I felt that he possessed supernatural powers and was superior to all other children of his age. I watched him hour upon hour as he played football, basketball, and other games of skill with the neighborhood hoodlums. There were never less than eight or ten boys in our back yard. I tagged after him to the point that it grew monotonous, however he usually tolerated my presence good-naturedly. I have no doubt that many times I unconsciously took advantage of his unselfishness and generosity.

My city life was interrupted rather abruptly at the age of three when my parents moved to the farm of my grandfather, but I shall never regret the time I spent living close to nature.

It was a hundred acre farm containing all of the qualifications necessary to rural life, a dense woods, a small stream, widespread fields, an immense red barn, cows, sheep, pigs, cats, a collie dog, a haystack, a squeaky gate, two corn cribs, and an orchard.

The house was a typical country home, but quite a little bit older than the average, I imagine. It has been in our family for a number of years and was built by my Great-grandfather before the Civil War. It was a large house, at one time constructed entirely of logs, but since then two frame additions have been made. Each room contained a fireplace, the largest one being in the living room. There was no electricity. At night the rooms were lighted only by a kerosene lamp and the fire in the fireplace. I recall plainly the kitchen from which five doors opened into five different rooms, the circular arrangement of the rooms downstairs, and what good times my brother and I had playing hide and seek there. I remember the long, narrow stairway and the frequent falls I took when sliding down the banister, and how frightened I was of the upstairs regions of the house at night.

In the summer our house was shaded and in the winter it was protected by three stately pine trees in the front, a mammoth locust tree on the west side and allanthus trees on the east and in the back. There were numerous flower beds, rose bushes, and peony bushes. To me it represented paradise.

My daily activities on the farm were quite different from what they had been formerly. On rainy days I passed away the time by coloring and painting in drawing books. I completely filled several volumes at this pastime. On sunny days or in moderate weather, dressed as usual in little blue, striped overalls, I followed closely the footsteps of my Grandfather as he fed the pigs and sheep, milked the cows, or worked in the fields. On one particular occasion I remember taking off my shoes in the middle of a cornfield and not being able to find them when I returned. This called for a search which was none too eagerly executed by the whole family.

During this time spent living on a farm, I enjoyed pleasures of which many children have no knowledge. There were picnics in the woods, hikes to the grave of the Indian boy who had been buried in our woods shortly before my Great-grandfather settled there, egg hunts in the hay mow of the barn, wading in the creek, and successful wild flower hunts.

We had lived on the farm little more than a year when my parents moved once again to Muncie. Perhaps this was for the
least, since I was to start to school very soon, but I shall never forget the feeling of sorrow I experienced when we waved goodbye to my grandfather. Life in the country had offered background and experience to me so that even at so young an age, I had profited greatly. Upon moving to the city, I resumed a more natural life, playing with other children, going to movies, and eating chocolate sodas. I can think of no other background or living conditions that I would trade for my experiences in a perfect balance of country and city life.

The Heart of America

EILEEN HOOVER

Do not allow Pete to deceive you with his modern ideas and speeches. He is really quite a character from out of the old world with all his old-fashioned ways.

Italy can boast of the birth of one Peter Galbo about half a century ago. Having been reared there until he was eighteen years old, Pete to this day has the dialect and mannerisms of a true Italian. Surprising, yet true, Pete's ancestry has never caused him to be partial to his native land. America has never had any truer immigrant. Pete expresses his greatest pride when he steps into the bedroom of his two young sons, now gone to war, and says, "The best of me and my America is in this war!"

Before Pete came to our country, he had learned the cobbler trade. Today there is no more modern and gay, but small and successful shoe shop on the east side of Indianapolis than his. His only assistant is his wife, Helen. Since so many cobblers are, at the present, in service, Pete's business has picked up so much that he has to work half the night as well as the day in order to turn out his "small production" as soon as possible.

Although quite a dowdy little man, Pete has a snappy step in his limited gait. His bushy hair is streaked with gray in such a way that it looks as if he has run a chalk covered hand through it instead of a comb. His tongue is absolutely tied unless he uses his hands; therefore, he gestures frantically as he tries to make someone understand a new plan he has for post-war-peace or a new type of gun. The quickest way to insult him is to jest about his ideas or to ignore him.

Truly a religious man, Pete attends every church affair besides weekly Mass. He practices what he believes, too. Most important of all, though, is the fact that he has not an enemy.

Since the war began, Pete has spent every Tuesday night plus extra hours in his one big love, a sector wardenship. Someday when this war is over, America will be able to point with pride at a man like Pete and say, "This man was a perfect example of an American on the home-front!"