**Arbuckle Stories**

**From Belle Vue Farm**

**Chapter 22**

**“ Voice of Long Ago”**

**Jim Arbuckle**

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The following is both a fictional and factional discovery I made at Belle Vue when I was 14 years old. The actual informative information was not received until several years later.

This chapter also remembers the life of Helen Lewis Lindsley, who was an important part of this chapter. I hope you enjoy, **“ Voice of Long Ago.”**

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Spring time is always a popular time on a farm. The cold winter is over and tulips and warm weather are welcomed by all. I also did a lot of things in the spring that are now memories. And the spring of 1965 became just that.

The mother of Belle Vue, Carrie Arbuckle had just returned from visiting her family in Missouri, and now she had turned her attention to cleaning the large Belle Vue farm house. Her daughter, Virginia Lewis had offered to come and help, but Carrie insisted she could clean the big house all by her self. Her son Lockhart had just plowed the garden a month earlier and her husband Alex would work planting the garden early every morning and sometimes until dark. And while all this was going on, Carrie took on spring cleaning the house. See, Carrie not only was a cleaner, but loved to clean. Carrie simply loved to clean!

It was also a time when the grandchildren loved to come to the farm. Johnson, Jane and little Alex were always there on Sunday evenings enjoying their time and Carrie’s delicious suppers. Davis was there much of the time on his mini bike and so was Jim on his horse.

Jim also rode his horse to the farm some afternoons after school, and Alex usually always put him to work. This was the case on this certain spring day.

“Alex,” Carrie said as her husband ate lunch. “I’m not sure if Jimmy is even coming over today. I do not need him to help me clean! But you and Lockhart could use him to help you in the shearing of the sheep.”

“Oh, I reckon,” Alex said as drank the last of his milk. “He never gets here until the last sheep are sheared and he still can’t tie the wool as good as he should. You need some help in cleaning! I want him to help you clean!”

It had only been a few hours since Alex had echoed those words than Jim rode in on his brown and white horse. No sooner had Carrie scolded him for eating so many cookies in the kitchen than he met his grandfather coming from the barn.

“Might as well unsaddle your horse, squirt,” Alex said as he got in the truck. “I want you to help Carrie spring clean the house!”

“Spring clean?” Jim frowned. “Cleaning is for girls. Nana likes to clean by herself.”

“Well,” Alex laughed. “Since you like the little girls so much, you can clean like a little girl and help Carrie.”

“Why can’t Jane come down and help clean?” Jim whined.

“Cause Jane is not here and you are!” Alex said. “Now stop trying to get out of work and go on in the house. Carrie shouldn’t be turning those mattresses at her age. You go on to the house and help, and I’ll see you later.”

Carrie was almost finished cleaning for the day when Jim came in to help. Since she was ready to prepare supper, she told Jim to go out and ride his horse and they would begin cleaning early the next morning.

It was a warm afternoon to ride. Jim jumped on his pinto and galloped off through the field east of the house.

The next day was a pretty sunning Saturday morning as Carrie and Jim began cleaning. He would drag a mattress out on the upstairs portico and beat it with a broom. Jim usually slept in an upstairs front bedroom, which was once occupied by his Aunt Virginia Lewis when she was a girl. It was a large room with two large beds with a fireplace and the mantel carved by Conrad Burgess. Looking out the two front windows, one can see a nice view of the pond down over the knoll. The bedroom is directly over Alex and Carrie’s bedroom, and looking out the door, you can see the old grandfather clock down on the stairwell landing. Like many other rooms in the house, it has many old papers, pictures and books. All sentimental, but many lost in time. Some days Jim would look at old pictures and papers under the old chandelier hanging on the ceiling.

“Nana,” Jim said holding an old paper. “Who is this?”

“Let me see,” Carrie said as she walked into the room.

“It looks like an old program,” Jim said handing it to his grandmother. “It looks like a young girl in an old dress with a fan in her hand, and it says, “ Voice of Long Ago.”

“Oh mercy me,” Carrie said with a laugh. “I think this was probably a program from a lady who once performed in Lewisburg. It was years ago and I’m not sure how the program even got here.”

“This must be a portrait of her,” Jim said opening the old paper. “It must have been in the 1800’s.”

“No, it was not that far back I don’t think,” Carrie said looking at the old paper again. “No, here someone has written, but I cannot read it. It is so faded, but it looks to me, Mrs. Orwell Baker, January 20, 1914. It is so old and faded, but still not sure how it got here.”

“You all must have gone,” Jim said flopping down on the bed and looking at the old paper. It’s evident that she was a singer.”

“Oh Jimmy, Carrie laughed. I did not marry Alex and come here until 1920. I cannot recall Alex ever saying anything about it” I would say that Emily may know, but again not sure why or how it got here.”

“Here it is Nana!” Jim yelled. “Her name is Kristen Flagstad. “Songs of Kristen Flagstad by Lola Drumheller.” Is she Kristen Flagstad or Lola Drumheller?

“I do not know,” Carrie said.

“She must have been about your age,” Jim said.

“I am not sure,” Carrie laughed. “Come on, Jimmy, let us get to work cleaning.”

“Who would know about her?” Jim said laying the program aside.

“I can ask Emily,” Carrie said. “Jimmy, bring the other mattress back in here. Mercy me, we are doing more talking than cleaning.”

The next Sunday when Jim went over to Belle Vue, he stopped to see his Aunt Emily Sydenstircker.

“I have no idea,” Emily said as she looked over the old program. “It probably was in Carnegie Hall. That was before I was even a dean at the girl’s college. Have you asked Helen Lindsley? Helen may know.”

Several weeks passed, and one day Jim asked his grandmother Nana if he could take the program for his mother to see.

“Well yes,” Nana replied. “Jimmy, you can have the program. I certainly do not know or care about it, and I know Alex does not either.”

Jim quickly went home and showed the old program to his mother.

“I wish I could help you,” his mother Louise said. “But this was over ten years before I was born.”

“Aunt Emily says that Helen Lindsley may know something about her,” Jim said. “Could you call Helen or have Aunt Virginia tell her?”

“I see Helen a lot at church and in the grocery store,” his mother said. “Write the lady’s name down and if and when I see Helen, I will ask her.”

That suited Jim just fine. Not even he knew why he was so interested in the old program, and a lady who sang at Carnegie Hall so many years ago. It was probably because the mysterious lady performed in Lewisburg.

Jim had no idea how much time had elapsed since he talked to his mother about the old program, but one day, probably a few months later, Louise Arbuckle informed her son that she had seen Helen Lindsley at the church the night before.

“Did you ask her about Kristen Flagstad?” Jim asked excited.

“Yes,” Louise said. “She said that she had an idea and may be able to help you. She said for me to bring you down sometime and she will tell you what she knows.”

Well Jim was ready to go. He had seen and known Helen all his life, as she was a cousin to his Uncle Cary, Johnson, Jane and Alex Lewis. But since she was born near his Uncle Cary, he assumed that Helen still lived on Savannah Lane. So he was a little surprised to learn that Helen actually lived in Fairlea.

“I’ll give Helen a call,” Louise said to Jim. “And when it suits Helen, we will go and visit.”

**Note: The remainder of this story is written in first person.**

At least a month or more had passed, when my mother drove me down to Fairlea, where Helen greeted us at the door.

Mother told Helen that I had been driving everyone crazy with this old program, and hoped she could tell me something.

“A Voice of Long Ago,” Helen laughed when I showed her the old paper.

As I sat down with Helen in her living room, she told me that she knew some about this singer, as I opened a spiral note book and began to take notes. Helen told me that Kristen Flagstad was of course, a great opera singer. She was not sure where she was born, but knew that she was European. As I began to smile and feel as though I had discovered something rare and big time, Helen explained that the girl on the cover of the program may be a portrait of the famous singer, Kristen Flagstad, but the voice that was heard long ago in Carnegie Hall was probably the voice of Lola Drumheller. As I looked confused, Helen explained further that Lola Drumheller was probably a wonderful opera singer herself, but that she was just an impersonator, of the more famous Kristen Flagstad. As I became more confused, Helen told me that singing impersonators were very common, if done legally. She said that she had seen several singers on TV impersonating famous celebrity singers. She used several examples, but the one I knew and remembered was Jimmy Durante. Asking why Kristen Flagstad just did not come and appear as herself, Helen laughed and said that Kristen Flagstad probably felt that she was too famous for a small town like Lewisburg. As Helen continued to look at the old program, she pointed out that the song and music itself of “A Voice of Long Ago,” was written by Alfred Solman, and another selection “Where Memory Dwells,” was written by Louis A. Drumheller, probably a relative of Lola Drumheller. Helen also pointed out that Lewisburg’s Carnegie Hall was only twelve year old when this performance occurred. And she did not know or had never heard of Mrs. Orwell Baker, whose signature is just barely readable on the cover, nor did Helen have any idea if Kristen Flagstad or Lola Drumheller were alive or not.

I quickly thanked Helen for telling me what she knew about these two opera singers.”

Helen told me that she wished that she knew more, but was glad that I had discovered this old program, and I was able to remember and recall a little of this talented voice of long ago.

Soon Helen and my mother were talking about the Women of the Church program at Clifton Presbyterian Church. After a few minutes, I thanked Helen again as we left for home.

*Many years later, I learned of the Actor and Writers Guild. Not knowing if any information could be found about Kristen Flagstad, I took a chance and wrote the organization. Several weeks later, I received a reply that read.*

*“Kristen Flagstad, opera singer was born July 12, 1895 in Hamar, Norway. She grew up in her grandparents house in Oslo, Norway. For many years, she gave performances with her beautiful opera voice all over Norway and Europe, then later in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Sweden and other countries. Like many successful singers, the aging process marked the end of her career. Flagstad grew old gracefully in her later years singing at charity functions. She died December 7, 1962 from bone marrow cancer. She is buried in an unmarked grave in Oslo, Norway.”*

Note: Kristen Flagstad would have been one year younger than my grandmother Carrie, and although she probably never actually sang in Lewisburg, she died just three years before I discovered the old program. And if this year 1914, written on the program is correct, Kristen Flagstad would have only been 19 years old, which would have been very young to be a world famous opera singer. Years later when I got a computer, I found a Lola Drumheller, born in Texas in 1894. I am not sure if this is the same Lola Drumheller, but she sounds about the right age. Whatever the case, I am grateful for the information that Helen provided to me.

*My grandmother Carrie gave me the old program that I now have safely tucked away in plastic, and in a file cabinet in my home.*

*Please scroll down for another story about Helen Lindsley.*

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Have you ever known something happened, but can’t quite recall?

I know I was very young when my mother asked me if I remembered the time when Helen Lindsley told us about St. Frances of Assisi.

By “us” she was referring to my brother Davis, cousins, Johnson, Jane, Alex Lewis and me. I told her that I remembered, but just vaguely. Mother laughed and said that Helen took us out in the yard and gave us a short talk on St. Francis. My mother would laugh and talk about this every few years.

When my mother was alive, I was never interested enough to ask her where all of this took place. It had to be in the yard at Belle Vue or up at my Uncle Cary’s. I really to this day have no idea, except I remember that it was outside. Of course, I cannot recall any of her exact words, but to thank and remember Helen, I’m sure that she filled us in on information such as this.

*“St. Francis of Assisi is one of the most appealing personalities of the middle Ages and many backyard gardens have statues of him. He was the son of a wealthy Indian merchant, but after hearing the sermon on Matthew 10:7-10, Jesus instructions to his disciples to preach the kingdom of God, and give no thought to their material possessions, he decided to give up his worldly belongings and live poor as the apostles had. He attracted a following and in 1212 and the Catholic Church gave its official approval to his followers, the Franciscans. The “brothers” as they called themselves, met every year at Pentecost, but the rest of the time they wandered about Europe, preaching and aiding the poor, and begging for what little food they had.*

*In the middle Ages, Christians practically forgot the New Testament commands to preach the gospel to the world. St. Francis was one of the few medieval Christians to be a missionary, carrying the gospel to Syria and Morocco.*

*Some of St. Francis’s followers claimed that his body showed the same wounds as Jesus received on the cross, the stigmata. St. Francis of Assisi was born in 1182 and died in 1286.”* **Information by J. Stephen Lang**

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In the 1970’s and early 1980’s when Dr. Spencer Hamrick was pastor of Clifton Presbyterian Church, he allowed, each Sunday, members of the church to write opening prayers that would be read in unison by the congregation. Below are two such prayers written by Helen Lindsley.

*Our Father and our God, in all seasons we bring to Thee our gratitude for life and love and daily care; but in this month of our Lord’s Nativity, especially, we praise Thee, we glorify Thee, we joy in the radiance of Thy salvation.*

*We confess that we have come short of reflecting that radiance. We confess our several sins.*

*And now we petition an ever-spreading awareness that all men live and move and have their being in Thee. Let Myriads and Myriads sing “Glory to God in the Highest,” now in this our day.*

*Amen and Amen*

Written by: Helen Lindsley for worship - December 17, 1978

The following Sunday was Christmas Eve and once again Clifton Church used another one of Helen’s wonderful prayers.

*Our Father: The time draws near the birth of Christ. Fix our minds we pray Thee, upon Bethlehem of old, and let us feel the majesty of the hour riding in the words of the poet.*

*To an open house in the evening*

*Home shall men come*

*To an older place than Eden*

*And a taller town than Rome.*

*To the end of the way to the wandering star*

*To the things that cannot be and that are*

*To the place where God was homeless*

*And all men are at home.*

*We praise Thee for the things that cannot be and that are. We praise Thee for our home.*

*Amen and Amen*

Written by: Helen Lindsley for worship – December 24, 1978

Helen Lindsley

Helen Lewis Lindsley was born Helen Lewis on December 24, 1905 in Maxwelton, WV. She was the daughter of Clarence and Rachel Bell Lewis. Her brothers were Charles Irving Lewis and Frank Bell Lewis. First cousins were George Henry Lewis, Cary Johnson Lewis and Katherine Lewis Watts. Helen was educated at Savannah School, a one room school house near her home. She later graduated from Lewisburg Female Institute and Agnes Scott College. After college she became a Wave in the US Navy, and for many years was an instructor at Greenbrier College for Women, her alma mater. She was a member of Clifton Presbyterian Church, scholar and an interesting lady. Helen sadly passed away in 1987.

**To view the old program in a musical slideshow of this chapter, plus to see the mantels of the Belle Vue house, and a facial picture of Helen Lewis Lindsley click on VIDEO, “ Voice of Long Ago.”**

Come with me in Chapter 23 as I tell you about the water system on Belle Vue Farm. This is Jim Arbuckle and I hope you enjoyed.

Voice of Long Ago

Written by Jim Arbuckle in 1993 & 2012

Photos development - Tammy Mounts/Heather Massie

Slideshow Music Ann Hallenberg

References from – “Wandering Children of this Valley”

Photo of Helen Lewis Lindsley – from her book, “Wandering Children of this Valley.”

Other References from - J. Stephen Lang, and Clifton Presbyterian Church.

Written in 1993 and revised in 2012.