

Personal Biography for: Frances Marie Tobinas Kolenda
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As a child, many happy times at grandparents farm. Frank (pop) grew up on a farm in Ringtown (Tobinus). Mom (Eva) grew up on a farm in Ringtown (Charnick). Shenandoah, playing games in the alley with neighborhood kids; buying 5 cent jumbo cones from the ice cream man; 2 cent ice cubes at the corner store and 1 cent candy or gum and sometimes a penny cigarette for mom; a 10 cent loaf of bread and sometimes going in the back entrance of the neighborhood bar for a 25 cent quart of beer for mom and dad. Then there was the “shenny man” with his horse and wagon who bought junk and the “ice man” who delivered a block of ice for “ice boxes” (no refrigerators then). I can still hear him holler, “Yo ho – ice!”

Growing up – Monday was wash day (laundry) which meant totally cleaned bed linens, bath from head to toes; clean PJ’s and reading the coming Sunday’s paper (which we had walked uptown for). Then they were passed to an aunt on Cherry Street and then to an aunt on Chestnut Street (mom’s sisters) whom we visited with frequently. I spent lots of times with Aunt Theresa both on the farm and in Shenandoah walks, movies, etc. (she treated).

High School – Dad taking the family out picking huckleberries with his old jalopy (Rita [Kolenda], Joe’s sister and my best friend and classmate almost always with us.) Picnics; away football games. Home games were fun, marching from and to the games behind the band; riding in the back of a pick-up truck on picnics and to amusement parks; Saturday matinees (double feature) or Saturday afternoons trying dresses on at Tobias department store – if not babysitting (and maybe even buying on at least once a year!) Sunday afternoon parading on Main Street with a ten cent scoop of ice cream at Burke’s drug store with a glass of water with maybe a walk up the highway or to the park or to Shenandoah Heights where there was a swimming pool to enjoy in the summer. School picnics behind the cemeteries and many walks through the woods. Waiting by the theater exits and walking (sneaking?) in backwards as people were coming out (12 cents saved – 18 cents on Sunday). Not too often though – too risky!

Polka dances with friends at picnics (summer) and at firehouses and the VFW on a Saturday night. One rum and cola (all we could afford, thank goodness) and we nursed it all evening.

Winters – walks to and from school sufficed; hot tea and saltines; read a lot; listen to the radio; bed early; up early. A curfew always had us indoors by 9 PM.

[Washington] DC – 1952-1955 – Fun riding busses and streetcars. St. Ann’s church dances on Sundays or YMCA. Stage shows and movies downtown or long walks to movies and ice cream parlors and church. TV and ping pong table at Gallatin Street where we lived. We packed our lunches and Dorothy (our charming landlady) made our dinners. (We helped with dishes and cleaned our rooms.)

Then came marriage and children. After a wonderful wedding in Shenandoah (arranged by both mothers). And relocation to Norristown, PA where Joe lived and worked after his stint in the Navy. Never missed a day of work in all the 30 years he spent at E.J. Tavino – later Kaiser, which closed its doors in 1982. Even walked in one “four-foot of snow” day!

E.J. Tavino annual picnics at the Lakeview Amusement Park and West Point Park (Two dollars a family which included beer, birch beer, chips, pretzels, peanuts in a shell, hotdogs and amusement rides.

St. Mary’s church picnics at Oriole’s Meadows Grove near a creek included a polka band, games and refreshments ‘tho we mainly packed a picnic lunch. Little league games at Plymouth; basketball games at the fellowship house in Conshohocken.

1966, 67, 68 camping vacations at Promised Land Lake in the Poconos. 1963 on week there in a cabin thanks to Uncle Chainer [Francis Kolenda]. Many trips to the shore fishing and boating. Annual trips to Canada from 1968.

Many happy schooldays; Baptisms, Communions, graduations, weddings, wonderful grandchildren; many, many blessings.