

THE MORAVIAN WOMAN WHO INSPIRED ME

The Moravian woman who inspired me to write this essay is Elise Chamberlin Krause Desh who was born August 9, 1888. I lived with her from first grade into my second year at college. She was a remarkable person considering she had but one leg, though not considered a handicap for her, who, with her interests and activities, got around well with her pair of crutches. Elise, whom I called Mrs. Desh, was an inspiration not only for me but for others, too.

In 1911 she married, in 1929 she lost the use of her leg and, in 1932 she lost her husband, Albert Krause; before his death, Al asked his good friend, Bob Desh, to look after Elise. Then, in 1933 Elise and Bob were married quietly in Central Moravian Church. Elise was remarkable, who after being off her feet some four months, could learn to walk again, with one leg and the use of crutches and realize a fulfilling life in her second marriage.

Nevertheless, she was well organized in her activities- cooking, canning, baking, cleaning, even removing old wallpaper with the assistance of her devoted husband, who I called Bob. She was a member of the Needlework Guild and at Church - the Busy Workers and Women's Fellowship, as secretary for her group.

As a five year old I observed her, rolling out dough to make thin Moravian cookies while standing on one leg - an unforgettable picture of her. Then, before Christmas we drove with plates of baked cookies to deliver to homes of friends, an example of their

combined efforts and generosity. Her example inspired me, having two legs, to learn to make these special cookies, as she did, with one leg.

As the youngest of the living five out of seven children, I was born January 28, 1932 into the Faust family on Bethlehem's Wall Street when they already knew the Deshes who had provided them many happy times on outings and at their home across the street.

In the first grade at nearby Neisser School I recall the day I was late and Mrs. Desh, on hearing that, said to me, "It will not happen again." So, the Deshes, already in their late forties, welcomed me into their home, a memorable event, recorded "January 12, 1937-Helen Faust's first overnight here," by diarist, Mr. Desh, who I called Bob. Attending school regularly I learned the importance of school and wrote on February 15, 1939 - "I go to school at 8:30 and work so I can pass," a thought I wrote often in the diary from Bob.

Mrs. Desh's standards were high and my feeling of not living up to them gave me thoughts of returning home. It nearly happened one evening when I was not aware of her, standing at the head of the stairs, where she saw me at the front door and asked where I was going. I told her. She said, "Please, don't go home." What an effect her words had on me. Immediately I realized my hurtful words to her, deciding then never to think such thoughts again, no matter what. Her words to me that evening were the most expressive ones she ever said to me. What a dramatic scene that evening, one I

still think upon.

Mrs. Desh also showed interest in my general wellbeing. I began wearing glasses to correct a crossed eye; next the removal of tonsils and adenoids. For my 7th birthday she arranged for a marionette show, Sleeping Beauty, put on by neighbors Ann and Mary Borhek for nine other youngsters. For my 9th birthday, as a Brownie, she arranged a party with ice cream and pretzels during a regular pack meeting. She encouraged me to accept invitations for meals with Mother, also Moravian, and for dinners with all the family on special occasions. With the Deshes I attended Church and a Certificate of Promotion to the Junior Department, October 5, 1941 indicated my attendance in Sunday School the same years Mrs. Desh assisted Mary Knapp in the Junior Department. A favorite service of hers at Central Church was the Children's Lovefeast, concluded outside on the Green near the Old Chapel under lighted Japanese lanterns, the singing accompanied by trombones. Her concerns often involved Bob, too, when Father died in early August 1939, cutting short our out-of-state visit, and a year later, getting 17 year old sister, Johanna, with fever and ear ache, to the hospital. She, especially, encouraged me to visit Mother weekly when we played her piano, she by ear until her desire to learn by note. Earlier, when 10 years old, I began piano lessons with Miss Hoch at the Bethlehem Conservatory of Music. Practicing the piano gave me many pleasurable hours and Elise often sat nearby, crocheting or knitting sweaters for me.

Elise enjoyed automobile rides and to make sure I could see, had me, at first, sit on her leg. A highlight for me during the drive along the Delaware to Trenton, N. J. to visit her sister, Jennie, was coming to a tiny house by the side of the road, the Dashes called, old mammy witch's, when Bob stopped so I could get out to knock on the door and return before she opened the door. Later in 1950 to celebrate my graduation from high school, we had a memorable two week drive through Canada and the Gaspé Peninsula.

The Dashes made possible my attending Moravian College for Women where as a Freshman, along with regular courses, I began lessons on the organ under Mark Davis. She also arranged for my membership in a sorority through a neighbor and student, Rosemarie Greenwell, who was in Phi Mu Epsilon sorority. The next trip she had in mind, my graduation gift from college, was - to our National Parks - but her death in April 1952 changed our plans, however leaving me an idea for a future trip. Then, no longer my guardian, as was Mrs. Dash, he adopted me, and living with him, I finished my studies at Moravian College ^{for Women} in 1954, *The last year of The Women's College..*

Nearly 60 years since her departure, Elise Dash, with her great vitality, through all her setbacks and losses, of her sister, too, remained a caring, thoughtful and generous woman with a positive outlook, one who by her ideals, words and actions inspired me to write this essay.

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