

PART SIX

FAIR OAKS VALENTINES

JULIA A LOVE STORY

As the train let out the last tired puffs of steam a young woman stood in the door. She looked out across the American River to the bluffs and her new home of Fair Oaks.

Her mother nudged her, it was time to forget and move on, so the trim ankle clad in thick cotton stockings stepped down from the train. Julia Schraft became a part of Fair Oaks history.

Julia had been born up on the big mountains of Colorado, a weeks trip from the nearest supplies. Later they moved to Eckert where Julia grew up. As a young woman she taught school there in the town that clung to the side of the Grand Mesa. Often on a day while she was teaching school, Frank Forrest, a tall lean cowboy would come riding by and stop to see Julia. He loved the little children and would visit with them. One day a young lad was sent to school without any shoes on. Frank held the little fellow on his lap. Taking the small feet into his big hands, he rubbed them over and over, pretending to warm the child's feet, Frank made note of the exact size of boot that was needed. Before the day was over he was back with a pair of boots for the child. Julia fell in love with this dear kind man.

Maria Schraft, Julia's mother would not hear of a marriage between the two. I have been told many reasons all of which could have been true. This was the reason, I was told, that the mother brought the thirty year old the long way from the Big Flat Top Mountain in Colorado to start a new life in California.

The Schraft's arrived in Fair Oaks in about 1920, bought a lovely home and acreage on Sunset Avenue at 8241. Julia was a very capable young woman, she did home health care, she worked in the fruit harvest and they had a very self sufficient little farm. She never heard from Frank again until . . .

Fifteen years later Frank came out to Oregon by train to visit his brother. While he was there he asked his brother if he ever knew what happened to Julia Schraft. His brother said he guessed she lived in California near Sacramento. So Frank thought he might just go see if he could find her. He took the train to Sacramento and was given the directions to Fair Oaks.

"You just go over that bridge there and you will be in Fair Oaks."

He wasn't told it was over twenty miles. So it was late in the evening when he arrived at the driveway that led up to the house. Frank was tired and all of a sudden not so sure this was such a good idea, he sat down on his suitcase and stared into the draw across the road.

About this time Julia came around the corner of the house on her way about the evening chores. Down the driveway she spotted the figure of a man sitting on a suitcase. He was just a dark silhouette against the willows of the draw in the darkening night.

She called down to him, "My good man are you traveling? Are you tired? Are you hungry? Come, we will make you something to eat."

When the man stood up and began to turn towards her it was her beloved, Frank. Love's chord struck again and it was still in tune after fifteen years.

Maria Schraft still said no. Julia was a middle aged woman of forty five. Frank came back three more times. On the third trip he drove his car and it was still sitting in the driveway with a boiling radiator when the old mother discovered he had come back again. Maria was a tiny little thing, but a stubborn German and as ferocious as a wild bee. She came out of the screen porch after him in a flurry. Frank, a man of great height, at least six foot six inches, picked her right up off the ground set her on the very warm hood of his car.

Frank Forrest and Julia Schraft were married and lived here in Fair Oaks. Childless - we were all their children. Their love was shared with neighbors, all of us children, and so many in Fair Oaks who remember a kind note, or a bag of tangerines or a nice German Christmas Bread. Maria was finally reconciled to the marriage and lived with them until her death. In her final feeble years Frank carried her about in his arms.

The three of them now lay resting on the side of that mountain looking out over the great Colorado - waiting. Love is Forever.



THE COUNTRY KITCHEN

As I took four golden crusty loaves of bread from the oven one day a picture came to me of my childhood. Maybe it was the waft of yeast that swirled around the house. My thoughts went to Julia's kitchen.

I learned to retreat to Julia's kitchen when I was quite small. I must have been told the story a hundred times of my mother chasing me down Sunset Avenue with a big black iron skillet. She would have hit me with the thing for sure had she caught up to me. Julia could hear me yelling at my mother, "Sass me not" as I ran. Julia came and my mother held back on the frying pan.

Julia's kitchen was always a haven for me, even today the recalling of it brings a place of peace. How many old timers will remember stepping into the screened back porch, being met by diminutive Julia at her kitchen door, having heard the crunch of the car tires as you came up the gravel drive.

As you came to the screen door you passed the old smoke house with the smell of ham curing over apple twigs. Into the porch you stepped and there was Julia's apron and sun bonnet. Side by side sat Frank's large boots. Most often there were buckets of apples to be canned and corn to be shucked. The tiny woman framed by the kitchen door is what I like to picture, Julia Forrest, my neighbor.

The little kitchen was always painted apple green. There was a most beautiful stove of apple green and cream porcelain. So often from this stove she would just be taking large loaves of bread or a pan of perfect cookies. Along the morning side of the kitchen the sun dappled in through the Catalpa tree. It was through these dotted Swiss framed windows she would see a friend coming, or she could see what was going on in the neighborhood and come to rescue some of us cousins who lived near her.

My sisters gave themselves a birthday party one day when my parents were gone to sell fruit at the market. Julia looking out of her window saw the number of cars that were dropping off children. Being perceptive she gathered from the kitchen the makings of a party and went across the street and cared for the children.

There was always more than enough from their little farm to stock Julia's kitchen. They raised their own beef, pork, chickens, and had all the eggs and milk they needed. There was a tidy little garden that her neighbors came and helped her continue into her old age. There were just enough fruit, nut and citrus trees. Christmas was a time that some of the neighbors took her and she delivered bags of walnuts, tangerines and homemade German breads to her friends all over Fair Oaks. A rich memory of a good neighbor.

MRS. HAGA'S CRUSTY WHITE BREAD

This bread is not complicated. It takes a morning or an afternoon when you are home. Actual time spent with it is only minutes. It freezes and keeps well. This recipe was dated 1926 and probably is close to what we all remember. Mrs. Haga was my friend and lived in an old house with about 50 cats.

1 five pound bag of bread flour
1 1/2 quarts of warm water
4 tablespoons butter melted
4 tablespoons sugar
2 tablespoons salt
2 tablespoons dry yeast

Into a very large bowl pour the warm water, add the melted butter, sugar, salt and dry yeast. Stir until the yeast is dissolved. Let set 10 minutes to "proof" yeast. Next, add all of the flour at once. Stir until all the liquid is absorbed. Turn out onto a floured board and knead for about eight minutes. Set dough into a large bowl that has been lightly greased.

Let rise 3 hours.

Punch down.

Let rise 1 1/2 hours.

Punch down.

Let rise 45 minutes.

Punch down and let rest 20 minutes.

Shape loaves and place in four greased bread pans.

Set oven for 400°

Let loaves rise for 45 minutes.

Place loaves in 400° degree oven and set timer for 15 minutes.

After 15 minutes decrease oven temperature to 350° and continue backing for 40 more minutes.

Take loaves from oven and brush with melted butter.

- circa 1926

ANOTHER LOVE STORY

Fair Oaks does not lack for historical love stories. There hides behind waxen eyes, warm memories of romance and far flung passion. This is my story for Valentines Day.

Dorothy Smallwood first saw Marcus McKenny when she was 12 years old. Her widowed mother worked in the fruit packing sheds in Fair Oaks to support herself and her children. Dorothy played around the sheds with the other children. She watched as Marcus drove in with truckloads of peaches.

Marcus is remembered by old-timers as being a tall fellow with the darkest eyes and a head of black hair. He could have easily passed for Clark Gable. He was usually dressed in faded, stained, well worn Levi's and most likely a graying old black shirt. I never saw him in my day without his cowboy hat. This hat was held together with sweat and dust. It drooped in scallops down over his face. Most people remember him in that outfit streaking down Sunset Avenue on a huge Harley Davidson Motorcycle, big black steel toed boots cutting the wind. This is the Marcus that the little girl saw and fell in love with. Marcus saw her too, and at 12 years old, in his own words, "She was just a snot nosed brat!"

Six years later, that was no longer so, when he met her again at the Lincoln-Washington Dance in Fair Oaks. She was beautiful. She smiled and talked pleasantly. Her hair, brown and short, was waved and fit about her head like the most stylish cloche. She had on a white rabbit fur coat. They danced and stayed out all night. She took him home to her mother's house and cooked him a breakfast. For lack of anywhere else to go, he showed up to start a new job early that morning. The owner of the Natomas Company was so impressed with his punctuality that he made him foreman of the crew. All of the other men had come in late that morning.

It was a whirlwind romance. On the first date he took her on a plane ride and they saw the whole countryside from the air. The second date was no hamburger joint according to Dorothy, they went to a real restaurant with real tablecloths.

They were married just as the almonds were blooming the next February. Marcus was late picking Dorothy and her mother up for the ten o'clock wedding at the minister's house. They went to honeymoon in a small company cabin on the Merced River near Yosemite. On their honeymoon night Marcus killed 26 mice in the house. Dorothy says it was 24, but she must not have been paying attention.

Marcus worked the dredgers until they were shut down when W.W.II started. They moved to Napa where they worked in the ship yards. After the

war they returned to Fair Oaks where he worked the dredgers again. One night when Aero Jet first opened he found a note on his car after his shift with the Natomas Company asking if he would like a job at Aero Jet. He was hired on as a Field Engineer and worked there until his retirement.

Marcus and Dorothy were married 61 years. Life was sweet for them. Gramps has gone off to ever-ever land a little ahead of time. He is going to paint the fence and mend the stairs. He will be waiting at the Gate when Dorothy comes.



LEMON PIE

You will need pie crust for a double crust pie.

Lemon Filling:

Combine: 1 1/4 cups sugar
2 tbs flour
1/8 tsp salt

Blend in: 1/4 cup soft butter
mix thoroughly

Add: 3 eggs well beaten
(reserve 1 tsp egg white for crust)

Grate: 1tsp lemon rind
peel lemon, removing all white
cut lemon into paper thin slices, about 1/3 cup

Add 1/2 cup water, lemon rind, lemon slices to sugar mix
blend well

Pour mixture into pie shell and cover with top crust. Cut slits in crust to allow escape of steam. Brush with egg whites and sprinkle with sugar.

Bake at 400° F for 30 or 35 minutes.



A LABOR OF LOVE

So often when stories of history are written we remember those who were on the forefront of community activity. The person who labored silently in love goes unnoticed until one sunny morning a writer sits down and thinks, that was a business in Fair Oaks that perhaps no one knows about.

Some of you may be familiar with the Carpenter Rest Home. No one has probably heard of the home that Marcus and Dorothy McKenny and their children shared with patients from the State Mental Hospital at Dewitt.

After returning to the Fair Oaks area in the early 1940's from working in the Navy Yards in Vallejo, the McKennys bought a large piece of land at 5018 Hazel Avenue. It was the type of a small farm that we all dream about when we want to drift back and wish we had lived in another generation. Surrounding a large Victorian home were orchards, pastures, and garden areas big enough to have a couple of rows of corn mature every week all summer.

At first the McKenny's rented out rooms to families of military personnel who came to Mather Field. It was not too long before they heard about the outpatient care for the elderly folks who were in the State Hospital because of simple maladies of old age. The McKenny's did a little remodeling and came up with thirteen nice bedroom accommodations in the downstairs of their home. The upstairs was made into family quarters. The home had a screened porch that went around the west and the north side. The porch looked out into shady, almost tropical gardens of ferns, flowering scrubs, and tall shade trees. On the morning side was a huge kitchen with one big family style oak table in the middle.

What a utopia for those dear homeless, helpless old folks who would have withered away in the confines of a state hospital. Dorothy McKenny became the thinker for all of them. She showed the men how to dig almost an acre of garden by hand. Some spent all day in the pasture looking for cow manure, then brought it in and buried it deep in the trenches the men had dug. Later it was all raked smooth and planted to corn, tomatoes, squash, and rows of tender leaf lettuce. They raised their own beef and had fresh milk from their own cow. Out back of the big barn was a small chicken house where every day they could gather fresh eggs. Little Joe would often go out with the egg basket to collect the eggs. He would forget and put the eggs in his pockets. How many times I have seen him come back up to the house with broken eggs running down his pant legs. As well as I remember that, I can never recall Dorothy losing patience with him, even though it mean't she had to stop what she was doing and take him in and clean him up.

The children, Michael and Mary Ann, who were my childhood friends, were most often in charge of doing the wash for the household. This mean't

clean clothes and bedding most every day for all the patients. They did the wash down in the barn with an old wringer washing machine and hung it out to dry on long wire clothes lines on the side lawn. Often strange critters would take naps in the wash and Michael recalled days of little things popping as they went through the wringer on the washer.

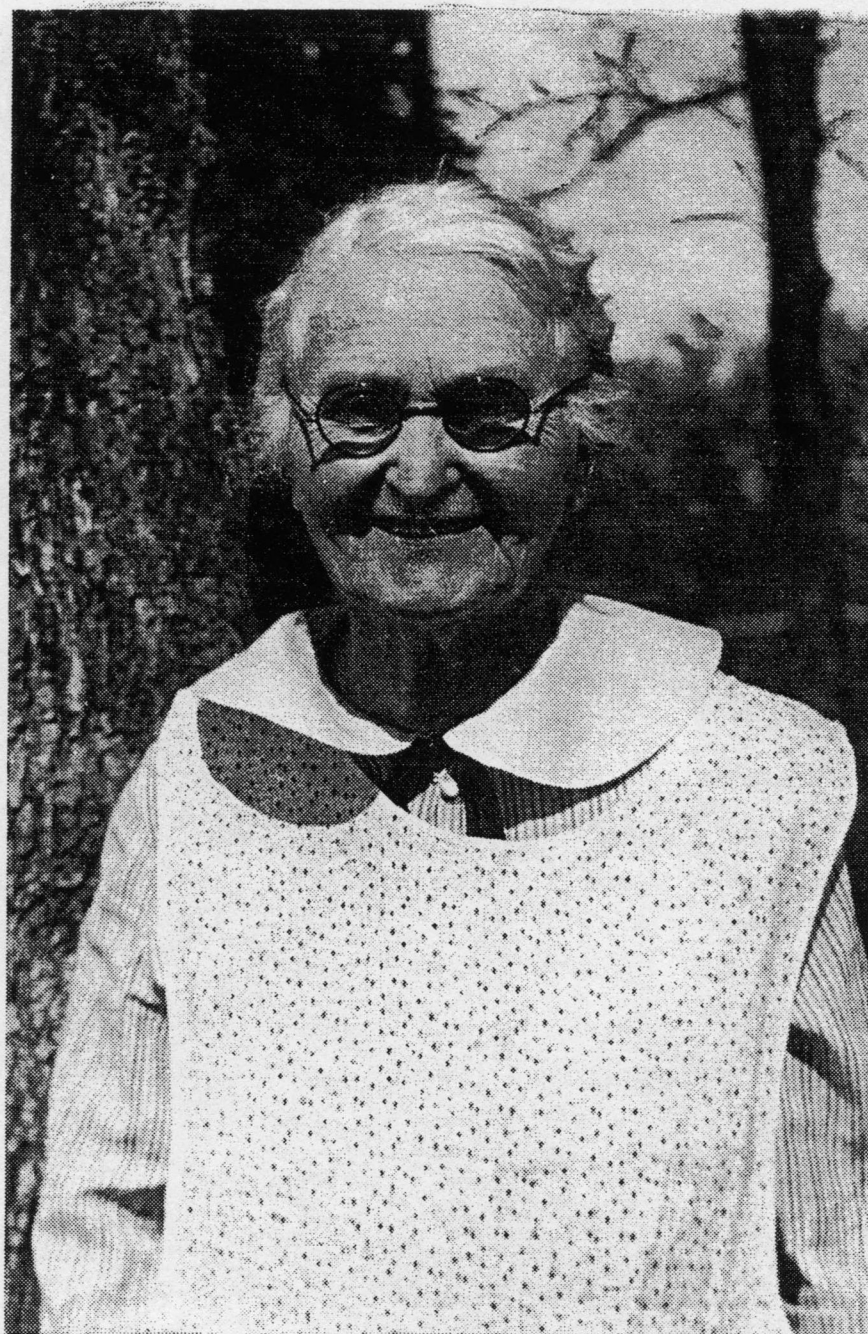
The patients were always served their meals first at the huge oak table, and I always hoped to come by just after they finished eating. Walter, who I remember had long yellow fingernails, always shut the kitchen door, cleaned up the table, washed, dried and put away all of the dishes. When he was done the door to the kitchen was opened so the teenagers could go in and see what was left. At the end of the table, covered by a clean table cloth would be huge meatloaves with ketchup baked on top, bowls of mashed potatoes, cooked summer squash, and fresh cooked fruit from the orchard and fresh milk with cream floating in it, cold from the ice box.

I remember one lady who liked to bake cakes and there was a year or so of cakes. Then that lady got well and went on to live a normal life on the outside. I shall never forget the last letter that came from that lady. She was doing so well and Dorothy decided to read us her letter while the family sat around the table eating breakfast. As Dorothy, immersed in the letter, read on and on, we decided it would be fun to eat up everything on the table. It wasn't easy, but we did it, and when she finished the letter and looked down to start her meal the platters were empty. Unlike her patience with little Joe she totally lost it with us. I have never seen her so mad. Backing off these thirty five or so years it seems pretty funny to me.

Under the shade trees around the house was a nice lawn and to one side a huge apple tree surrounded by outdoor furniture and a table. Most summer evenings the family ate out there. Often a huge church potluck was held there. The old folks were able to be with the church people and have some sort of normal social observations. Most of those dear old people were dressed and taken to church on Sundays. Old age is an unending process. How good it is to know that those old people at least were sent off with hope and faith in their hearts.

Dorothy Mckenny and her family shared their home, the bounty of their little farm, seven days a week around the clock of their time with some old folks. Their's should be remembered as a labor of love.





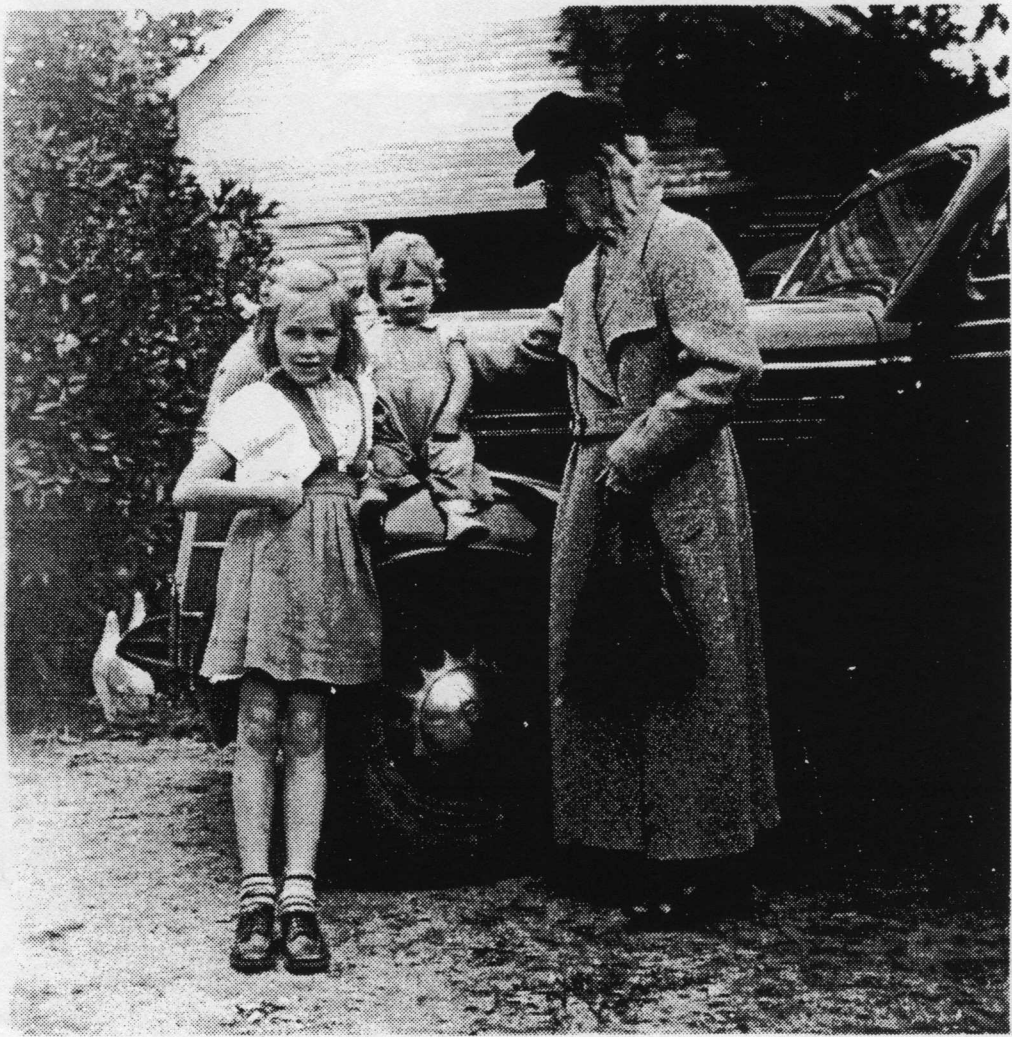
Great Grandmother Charlotte Whitney Kennedy



Frank and Julia Forrest, 1951.



Whitney Kennedy with Grandsons, Billy, Dickie, Johnnie, Tommy and Wootie down by the American River at Horseshoe Bar, about 1943.



Aunt Sadie with Sarah-Ann and Katherine, State Fair time in 1944.



Grampa and Grama Kennedy, 1950.