



A Rainbow of Tributes for My Family & Friends

Anna Maria Malkoc

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To celebrate my 89th birthday recently, I have taken stock of my earliest childhood recollections; first of all, on a visit to my Grossmutter Harms, who lived on a small farm in Wilbur, Washington. I must have been about five or so, when my grandmother taught me to sing an old folk song in German. She was standing with her lady friends from church as I practiced the words and the dance steps in the circle. The ladies smiled as I sang and danced. My grandmother kissed my cheek and gave me two pennies from her apron pocket. That was my first foreign language experience. The next was several years later, with our Swedish neighbor's daughters. They taught a group of girls to sing Christmas carols in Sunday school and performed at the "Old Folks Home" in Swedish. I learned the words without learning the meaning; it was enough to follow the melody, apparently. The elderly residents loved to see the children. It must have reminded them of their childhood in Sweden. I always loved to hear my father sing in his rich baritone as he sang his favorite old songs; he would be in the world of his youth and sailing days. It seemed to refresh his soul. My mother, on the other hand, loved to recite long, epic poems in dramatic tones, as we children sat and listened, some poems even sending chills down my spine. I heard these poems so often, I memorized many myself. (This was the era of the popular Chautauqua circuits, which were a form of social entertainment where well-known poets and storytellers would perform their works in public.) As a result of these early influences, I grew up loving music and poetry and drama. --Anna Maria Malkoc

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