

## Cousin Mary visits MOM

4-20-2015 by Harry Zirkelbach

The family move to Erie in 1932 removed Mom from from visitations fo most of her relatives.

In Erie she would spend her years with Dad's relatives, his friends of youth. These would meld with the new acquaintances both would make. Did she complain? Never a word was heard by the children.

Mom had one regular visitor many summers, her sister, a Catholic Nun of the St Joseph's Order, based in Baden Pa. Aunt Sister Marie was a tall, slim, imposing figure, the oldest of three girls, in the convent from the age of 16. By the 1930s' Sister Marie was the Principal of a grade School in Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

Aunt Sister Marie loved the family life her sister had created, visiting other families and friends. And especially, journeys to the Erie's Peninsula where occasionally she replaced the Nun' Habit, cowl, bib, all, for a non-revealing ladies bathing suit; she'd walk the warm sand, wade in the water of Lake Erie.

My sister and I enjoyed this summer visits for Aunt Sister Marie for she made children comfortable in her presence.

Mom had one other other relative visit in Erie. This was the was a singular trip of Mary Mills, of Warren Pennsylvania.

Mary was Mom's first cousin, the daughter of the sister of Mom's father.

Mom was short of five feet tall. Mom's brothers were large, couple inch over six feet, heavy in weight. Her sisters, also tall, remained thin with age. The Mills family had two daughters Mary and her sister Nora,. In 1935 the time of the visit, Mary and her sister Nora were 70 inch tall 200 pound. They were six and eight years Mom's senior. Mom had spent had spent 14 years living as part of their family in Warren Pa. In reliving her youth with her children, the Mills family was rarely mentioned.

There was no remembered reason for the visit of Mary Mills that summer. She was given my sisters bedroom on the second floor. Initially there was nothing to make her visit memorable.

Until the day the children learned that Aunt Mary had fallen down the stairs from the 2nd floor. The result was a broken leg. This unplanned moment extended Mary's couple day visit beyond a month.

The small house was refigured. The invalid was provided a bedroom, all of the renovated living room, and she was cared for as royalty. She was never allowed to ask for anything twice, sometimes before the expected request.

A spinster, she used many of these recovery moments as cause to adopt my sister and me as her responsibility. With Mom's encouragement, we accepted this transfer and replied with smiles to any of her suggestions which in fact were not unreasonable or that different from the treatment we had from Mom.

Aunt Mary was on crutches in a few weeks, further improvement was delayed because of her weight. Now mobile she was less demanding; it was not difficult to be gracious to her in those days of recovery.

Dad drove Aunt Mary to the bus depot for return to Warren Pa. My sister and I, parents too, most likely, shared in the freedom provided by her recovery, for the house seemed much larger without her immobile presence and unrestricted access we gained to every room of the palace called our home.