

## The Staircase

*By Molly Hegman*

I was visiting my sister when this unusual event took place. Her home was over a hundred years old ... with high ceilings, large rooms and beautiful wood work. In the parlor there was an ornate curved staircase. With all of this loveliness there was a strange object that I did not understand. There was an outdoor open wooden ladder-like staircase that went to the second floor porch.

It was during this visit that I experienced this staircase. I was outside with the children when I fell and scraped my leg. My sister told me to go up the outside stairs as it would be quicker to get to the bathroom to take care of my bleeding leg. I followed her direction and began climbing. As I got half way up I noticed that I felt insecure on the ladder. It began to sway ... just slightly at first. I tried to hurry up the stairs to reach the top before it got worse. As I reached the top the ladder pulled loose, turned and swayed and dipped toward the edge of the upstairs porch. Oh my! I wasn't sure what I should do. Instinctively I tried to catch onto the porch ... all the while I am trying to call for help but my screams came out in whispers and no one heard me. At last I was able to grab the edge but my hands were slippery or the edge was slippery, and I could not hold on. Again the ladder swayed back and forth and again I tried to catch the edge. This time I succeeded in getting a grip on it. As I steadied myself and tried to figure out how to get onto the porch I heard laughter close to me. As I looked to the side, there sat my other sister, on the edge, watching me and seeming to enjoy my dilemma.

"Molly, you were always good at climbing. Just put your leg up and climb on over!"

Oh my! Could I do it? As I tried to get my leg on the edge it kept slipping off. And my sister ... she just kept laughing.

After several times swaying back and forth I managed to get a firm grip and threw my bleeding leg over the edge. Now I had one leg on the ladder and one on the edge ... oh my! And my sister still laughed!

Did I manage to get onto the porch? No ... but I did wake up ... still swaying at the top of the ladder. Later, I called my sister to ask why she was laughing at me and why she could sit on that slippery roof. Her husband answered the phone. I could hear him telling her who was calling. We talked for a long time. Mostly, I asked her questions that I thought she could answer. As soon as we hung up, I called her daughter. She has been officially diagnosed as being in the early stages of dementia. Oh my.