

# Back Story

*Footprints from the Past*

February 2018



Well, now I'm confused. Punxsutawney Phil, the popular Pennsylvania groundhog that many people look to on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, saw his shadow, so the prediction is for six more weeks of winter. (Drats!!)

But...it's also admitted that since 1988, the groundhog was "right" 14 times and "wrong" 16 times.

Across state lines, in New Jersey, Milltown Mel – who's been predicting the weather for the past ten years – had different results and predicted an early spring.

Meanwhile, in New York, Staten Island Chuck agreed with Milltown Mel that there was no shadow and forecast an early spring.

Who knew there were so many ground hogs to look to for this annual weather report? Not me. So for myself, *not* a fan of winter, I'm going with two out of three and look forward to an early spring. The sunflowers that started sprouting in the front flower bed this week concur. I only hope we're right and they don't have a rude surprise headed their way in the next few weeks.

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## Publication News

**Purpose** magazine accepted several articles for 2018, for the February, June, and September issues. The themes are ministry (February), being content (June), and each day is a gift from God (September).

A new publication, **Prairie Times**, accepted a piece for their February issue: Sharing the Love – Loveland Style.

## Monthly Book Sale – Three New Journals

The three new journals were delayed a few weeks in the printing process. They will be delivered by the end of February, so I've extended the sale through the end of the month.

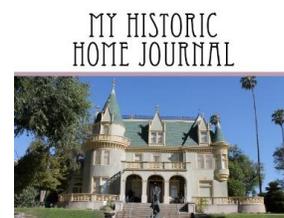
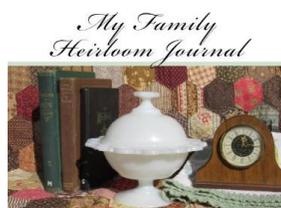
The journals are:

[My Family Heirloom Journal](#)

[My Historic Home Journal](#)

[My Museum Journal](#)

They're regularly priced at \$10.99 each. During February they're priced at **\$7.00 each** or **\$20.00 for a set of all three**. (Postage \$2.75 for one, or \$3.25 for all three)



## MY MUSEUM JOURNAL



## Spoonful of Sugar - Excerpts



**A Spoonful of Sugar: A Daily Dose of Inspiration and Encouragement** is scheduled for publication in November. It will feature an inspirational quote, reflection, and affirmation for each day of the year. Each month addresses a different topic.

January: Embracing Life  
February: Healthy Living – Mind, Body & Soul  
March: Finding Your Tribe  
April: Whistle While You Work  
May: Following Your Dreams  
June: Personal Power  
July: A Life of Energy & Vitality  
August: Your Authentic Self  
September: Ageing with Grace  
October: Finding Your Purpose  
November: Thanksgiving & Gratitude  
December: Moving On – Choices, Possibilities & Being Done

### **JANUARY 1 New Year's Day**

*Imagine if we treated each new dawn of each new day with the same reverence and joy as we do each New Year.*

Angie Lynn

New Year's Day greets us with the exuberance of a new year ahead, a clean slate filled with new possibilities. We feel the old behind us, and the newness looming ahead. We are filled with the joy of new beginnings. Even if we don't make resolutions or write down new goals for the coming year, many of us have mental images of what's going to be different in the New Year.

I always enjoy the feeling of a fresh start. Even though I don't make New Year's resolutions, I still have a list running through my head. This year I'm going to pay off a bill. This year I'm going to put money in the savings account. This year I'm going to exercise more and eat healthier...I'm going to learn something new...I'm going to send handwritten letters to my friends...I'm going to have more balance in my life...I'm going to take that dream vacation...

And then...the newness wears off and the realities of life settle around my shoulders like the mantle of a well-worn and familiar coat and life resumes, largely unchanged. Until next New Year's, when the cycle begins again.

This year, let's make it different. Let's embrace life. Let's celebrate the breath we draw, the blessings that fill our lives and embrace the opportunities and choices ahead of us - not just today, on New Year's Day, but on each new day that greets us in the year ahead.

#### **Affirmation:**

**I treat each new day with joy and reverence.**

## **MARCH 31**

*We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.*

Maya Angelou

My tribe – my friends, my acquaintances, my supporters – are a diverse group of many backgrounds and all with various interests. They range in economic status – from one that's nearly destitute and barely surviving to one that's been at millionaire status the whole twenty plus years I've known her. They range in knowledge – from high school drop out to doctorate degree. They range in interests – homemakers, mothers, artists, students and academics, retail workers, writers, municipal employees. My tribe is a blended nationality with members from many different races and ethnic backgrounds. Some heal with their herbs, some with their medical knowledge, and some heal with their hands. Some are musicians – some can't carry a note to save their lives.

And each member of my tribe, regardless of the color of their skin, their religion or spiritual beliefs, or what hobbies and activities they participate with in their spare time, whether they're single or married, mother, grandmother, or childless – all bring a rich and varied diversity to the tapestry of my life.

What members are in your tribe? How do their strands complement the tapestry of your life? And turning it around, how do you contribute to their tapestries?

#### **Affirmation:**

**My tribe adds a rich and varied texture to the tapestry of my life.**

## **Vintage Daze Short Story**

### **A Diary of Flora's Life December 1947**

"Anything I can help you with, Flora?" The proprietor watched Flora carefully searching through the dry goods stacked on the shelves that filled the wall adjoining the counter.

Flora shifted her pocketbook to her other arm as she continued looking through the paper supplies all jumbled together. "Do you have any diaries, Mr. Franklin?"

"A diary?" He tipped his head and stroked his chin between his thumb and forefinger, deep in thought.

"Yes. You know, those little ones that cover five years, with lines for each day?"

A bemused expression lit his eyes up with golden sparkles. "I know what a diary is, my friend. I was merely trying to recollect if I had any in stock. I don't recall ordering any for some time. If I had any, they'd be on the shelf with the envelopes and stationery where you're looking."

"I'm not seeing any. Maybe I'll take the bus into Fayetteville tomorrow. I'm needing a new one for January."

Mr. Franklin straightened the cardboard boxes on the counter that held an array of Clove and Blackjack gums. "Might want to rethink that idea. Heard we might have ice tomorrow."

Flora shuddered. "You may be right. Way that driver takes the turns into town, there's no way I want to be on that bus on icy roads. Don't mind a bit of frost, but I sure don't want to be a passenger if he hits a patch of black ice."

"After the storm passes," the proprietor soothed. "You've still got a few weeks. Old year's not over yet."

Flora laid her few selections down on the counter next to the register. "True. But we're getting mighty close to Christmas then. And my women's group is thick in the middle of plans for a Christmas Eve dinner at the church."

Mr. Franklin rang up Flora's purchases and put them in a brown paper sack. "That'll be two dollars fifteen cents, Flora. Your children coming in for Christmas?"

"Most of them. Dot's in college, but may get a friend to drive her home for a day or two. Thord, Melba, and their children will drive in from Fort Smith. Wade and Gaila won't drive out. Not with her being so close to birthing their first little one." Flora coughed slightly and felt her face heat up at the audacity of mentioning Gaila's delicate condition, even though the shop owner was far from a stranger. She burst out in continued conversation to try to mask her embarrassment. "But the best news of all...Margie and little Stug are coming in from Florida. They're staying with us a few weeks."

"Bet the tyke is growing up." Mr. Franklin didn't seem at all affected by Flora's indirect mention of Gaila's pregnancy. He'd heard far more intimate details during his tenure as proprietor in a small town.

"He surely is. Why, he just turned two last week. He'll be going to school before I can blink."

"Bring him in for a candy while he's here." Mr. Franklin patted the top of the glass decanter that held an assortment of penny candy.

"I will. I'm sure Margie will be wanting to say hello too. Oh...and Papa...almost forgot. He'll be with us on Christmas too."

"Naturally. I'd figured that your father would be there for the meal."

"Been saving one of the larger roasts from the black calf for Christmas dinner. I surely do love having my family all around on special days." The door opened and a gust of cold air blew in around the two as another customer entered the store. Flora clutched her bag tighter and turned towards to go. "I'll be sure to bring Margie and Stug in for a visit after they arrive."

"I'd appreciate that. I enjoy seeing the young ones as they grow up and start their own families. Oh...Flora...meant to ask you and kept forgetting...you have any extra eggs you could part with?"

"I'm sorry. I sure don't. The hens are hardly laying now that it's turned cold. Leo Ball bought my last dozen eggs yesterday."

"That's too bad. I'm short here. My usual suppliers are having the same problem. Mind if I ask what you get for a dozen?"

"Forty cents."

Mr. Franklin nodded his head in approval. "Fair price. I'm asking forty five cents in the store. Pay my egg ladies thirty five cents. You've got a better deal with Leo. You ever have any extra – or extra milk, cream, or butter, come see me."

"I surely will. Especially with work at the canneries being so sporadic. Every little bit extra helps. And once it heats back up, I'll have eggs coming out of my ears."

Mr. Franklin burst into laughter, his sides jiggling so bad Flora thought he'd give himself a heart attack. "Out of your ears...oh my...just the image..." The man could hardly speak for laughing so hard.

Fortunately, the other woman approached the counter with her few selections in hand, giving Flora the opportunity to ease out of the door.

The next morning, the first thing Flora did, after setting the percolator on the range, was to crack the kitchen door and take a peek in the yard. She turned to her husband, Al, who sat at the kitchen table putting his heavy barn boots on. "No ice. Clear as a bell. Think I'll take the bus on into Fayetteville later this morning and pick up a few items."

Al lifted a socked foot boasting a huge hole on the heel. "Mind picking me up a new pair of socks while you're in town?"

"Not at all. I'll get you a pair." Flora didn't add that she'd already thought about stopping by the department store to look for a new work shirt for him. If they had a nice one – at a good price – she planned on setting it aside and saving it for Christmas. Maybe she'd pick up several pairs of socks, give him the one pair, and save the others for his yuletide gift too.

Later that evening, after finishing a full plate of roasted chicken and boiled potatoes, Al leaned back in his chair and patted his extended belly. "Mighty tasty, dear. That hit the spot."

"Why thank you." Flora took a brown paper sack off the counter, reached inside and tossed a pair of thick, white socks in his lap. "These might hit the spot too."

He picked up the socks and stroked the plushness between his thumb and forefinger. "Ahhhh! Nice and thick. Perfect. They keep my toes nice and toasty tomorrow. Find anything else while you were in town?"

"Bus passed by The Ozark. They're showing Miracle on 34th Street. Thought maybe you'd want to go one night next week."

"Sure would. Johnny at work said he and the wife had gone to see it the other night. He thought it was all right, but the Mrs. really liked it."

Flora pulled a brown, rectangular object from the bag. "Found this too. The diary I've been looking for." She stroked the

leather cover lovingly before handing it to her husband to examine.

Al held the diary and gave a cursory look and nod before handing it back to Flora.

"Isn't it grand?"

He snorted and shook his head. "Suppose so. Don't reckon I see what's all fired important about you writing down in a book every night before bed."

Flora allowed a rise of indignation to surface in her voice. "Al Luper. I've written in my diary every day since before we were married. I thought you understood how much I enjoyed this practice."

"Now dear, don't get all riled up. Didn't say I didn't know how much it meant to you. I simply don't understand why women feel the need to write down all these details about life."

"Men..." Flora muttered softly.

"Women..." Al retorted but softened his response with a chuckle.

With the potential disagreement averted, Flora dished up a slice of apple pie for each of them. After dessert Al turned to his Bible to read a passage before bed. Flora penned a few lines in her current diary while Al banked the fire and they turned in for the evening.

The next morning, Flora shivered as she entered the kitchen to start their breakfast. As Al stoked the fire, she drew the kitchen curtains back and gasped. "Good thing I made a trip to town yesterday." She surveyed the winter wonderland out back. Pristine snow covered the meadow and the pine boughs in the woods aligning the meadow dripped with the crusty weight of a heavy snowfall.

Al joined her at the sink to survey the brilliant whiteness covering every inch of their property. "It's going to be fun getting up the hill by the college."

"Do you have to go in? Doesn't seem safe to drive in this."

"I'll be fine. I'll take it slow. Long as there's no ice hidden under the snow."

While Al braved the snow laden streets to drive to the cannery Flora stayed inside and tended to the multitude of daily household tasks. She enjoyed a cup of hot coffee while she wrote out a few Christmas cards for the ladies in the women's group at church. While a pot of chicken soup simmered on the stove, she mixed up a batch of snickerdoodles for the church social. Once the cookies were cooled and tucked away in the empty tin from cookies past, she washed the dirty dishes and tidied the kitchen. She put Al's new socks away in his drawer and then tenderly placed her precious new diary in her nightstand drawer.

That was the last she thought of the diary for several weeks. The rest of the month was a blur as the holidays descended. Flora was all aflutter, as was most of the nation, as families came to visit, gifts were exchanged, and the community in

north Arkansas tried to stay warm and keep the chickens, horses, and sows alive.

Christmas soon was over and life began to return to its even keel. Dot returned to school and her nursing program. Thord and Melba returned home to Fort Smith. Wade and Gaila stayed close to home, since Gaila was about to give birth at any time. Margie and little Stug remained with Al and Flora, visiting for a few more weeks before she had to return home to Florida.

With Margie and her toddler in the house, Flora didn't get much time to herself, other than when she turned in for the night and scribbled a few lines in her current diary. Before she knew it, she was filling out her entry for the last day of the year. Closing the book, she laid her pen down and turned to Al, lying in bed with eyes closed and mouth slack, just about to drift off in slumber. "That's it. Last day of the year. A brand new year tomorrow."

Al shook his head and mumbled in confusion. "Wha...? Huh? What about a new year?"

"New year tomorrow. I get to start filling in my new diary. A brand new book, with blank, empty pages. Just waiting for me to fill them."

"That's nice, dear. Gotta sleep. Work tomorrow." He turned away and snuggled deeper into his pillow.

Flora waved a hand in the air that he didn't see. She grabbed the pen off the nightstand and opened the drawer to retrieve her prized new possession. She opened the brown leather journal and with neat, tidy penmanship, wrote in tiny letters under 'The Property Of':

Mrs. Flora Cardwell Luper  
Route no two  
Fayetteville Ark.

"There. All ready to go for tomorrow," she muttered softly to herself. With Al snoring away she knew he wouldn't hear, and at that moment he couldn't care less about one of her treasured daily routines.

The next morning, a busy day followed. She was excited to have something fun to write in the first pages of her new book.

*January 1, 1948: Alice was home, but not James. Cold and snowing today. Al went to work. Burl stopped for Margie, Stug and I to eat N.Y. dinner with them.*

As she laid the new book with its first entry back in the nightstand drawer, her mind wandered to the possibility of a new year. *What will the New Year bring? Why am I even writing this all down every day? Will it even matter? Why am I recording everything that happens in my life? Will anyone even care once I'm gone? Are all my words for naught? Will anyone ever read this nonsense that I write that seems so important to me the day I record it?*

With a jumble of thoughts racing around in her head, she soon drifted off to sleep.

The next day Margie walked into the kitchen where Flora stood washing the breakfast dishes. "Mother, would you mind watching Stug this afternoon for a few hours?"

"Not at all. You know I'll always tend to any of my grandchildren. You have something planned?"

"Donna Mae said she'd drive Virginia and I into Springdale to go see a show."

Flora rinsed the last dish and sat it on the drying rack. "What show?"

*"Out of the Blue."*

"That's an old one. You father and I saw that months ago." Flora stayed in motion drying and putting away the clean dishes the entire time she chatted with her daughter. She wasn't one to just sit and talk. She had to stay busy. There was always chores and household tasks to be done.

"I know. Edwin and I saw it in Florida when it came out. I really wanted to go see Road to Rio. But Donna's driving, so she got to choose."

Putting the last dry plate on the stack, Flora draped the damp flour sack dish towel over the edge of the sink. "You go have fun with your girlfriends. Your father and I will watch the boy. Besides, your vacation here is about up. Edwin will be wanting you back home soon."

The days passed. There wasn't time to be bored. Even though it was frigid outside, life didn't stop. Flora and Al attended their regular church services. Grandad stopped by once a week to visit Margie and Stug while they were visiting. If neighbors weren't stopping in to see Flora and Al, they were stopping in at the neighbors houses.

One day Edwin called from Miami to talk to Margie. "Guess Stug and I will be going home shortly," Margie reported to her mother.

The next day, Thord, Margie's older brother, drove in from Ft. Smith to pick up Margie and Stug and took them back home with him for a few days. Their visit didn't last long. Margie's husband called after she'd been at Thord's house for a few days. "Edwin's sending me the money go home. I've got to get back to Mom's and start packing."

Two days later Flora's other son, Wade, picked Margie and Stug up at the bus station and drove them to their parents' house.

On January 16th, Flora wrote in her diary:

*Margie washing, ironing, packing to go home on a plane from Ft. Smith. She can take only 2 bags. Shipping the others.*

The next day, Flora had something entirely different to write:

*January 17th: Wade came out at noon after us to go to Ft. Smith to catch a plane for Miami Sun. Marg got the \$100, but he wired not to come.*

Flora didn't mind. She enjoyed having her daughter home for a visit, and especially little Stug. But then again, plans changed. Again. That night she wrote:

*Edwin wrote he had a house for Margie to come on down. Iron & wash. Wash & iron. Mop. Margie tell them good by then don't go.*

The next day as she served Al his coffee in the morning, Flora peeked into the living room to make sure Margie wasn't up yet. "I just wish he'd make up his mind," Flora grumbled. "Come home. Don't come home. Here's the money. No. Don't come home yet."

Al merely shook his head, a bemused expression on his face. "Now, dear, don't go getting all riled up. That's all between Margie and Edwin. Let them figure out their own affairs. After all, we never wanted people getting all up in our business when we were newly married."

With all the back and forth about Margie and Stugie going back to Miami, Flora tried hard to keep her mouth shut and not speak up. She didn't really mind. She enjoyed having her daughter and grandson in the house for an extended visit.

Margie walked in the kitchen one morning and made an announcement. "We're going home. Tomorrow." She worked hard all day getting things ready to leave in the morning.

Until morning came and Stugie woke up sick, changing all the plans yet again. "I can't leave today. Stugie's sick. I've been up all night with him," Margie said. "He tossed and turned and moaned all night."

Margie was in and out of the kitchen all day, getting wash rags wet with the cold sink water and wiping the little tot's sweaty brow. She confided to Flora on one of her trips back to the bedroom, "I'm worried, Mom. He's not eating or taking his bottle. I can't get his fever down."

Later in the afternoon, Flora took over nursing duties so Margie could sneak in a short nap and rest for the next shift of taking care of her sick boy. The fever finally broke late that night. Once that threat was gone, the family felt a bit better, but Flora still worried. "He's still not eating enough. Can't have him losing any weight. He doesn't have any to spare. Little tyke is skinny as a twig as it is."

Slowly over the next few days, with his mother and grandmother's ministrations, Stugie finally recovered and soon was rushing around the house like the busy toddler he was before the illness slowed him down.

A snowstorm blew into northwest Arkansas, but it wasn't heavy enough to stop the world from turning. Buses still traveled, Al still drove into Fayetteville for work, and a few days later Margie and Stug boarded a bus for Fort Smith. The next day they caught a flight to Miami.

Flora settled back into her regular routine. She took her friend Jean an apron she'd sewn. She went to Jean Cox's baby shower. She received a check in the mail - Dot's income tax return for \$5.20. She laid that on top of the icebox to save for Dot on her next trip home from school. And she kept up with

her church attendance, despite the snow that still covered the countryside weeks later.

The first part of February Flora received a letter from Margie. She reported that they were paying \$25 a week in rent at the new place. Margie didn't share any further details about Edwin and what had caused the waffling of Margie's return home. Flora wanted to know. But yet, she didn't want to know. Maybe Al was right, maybe I need to keep my nose out of my children's business.

Soon Valentine's Day was looming on the horizon. One morning she told Al, "I'm off to the post office today. I've got a box of candy for Stug. I've got to send it his way."

"What about the other grandchildren?"

"I'm baking cookies for them. Tomorrow. I'll mail Thord's children the cookies too. But being closer it won't take as long to get there. Stugie's further, so his box has to go out first."

Al picked up his lunch pail and headed towards the door. "Need some money to mail the box?"

"No. Sold some eggs to Marnie yesterday. Got forty cents a dozen."

The next few days sped by. With cookie baking, and painting the new kitchen cabinet that Mr. McC brought out a few weeks earlier, right as the bad weather set in, Flora didn't have a spare moment.

Valentine's Day dawned bright and clear. Flora was pleased to see that the snow and ice were slowly melting. She added another coat of paint to the new cabinets and then went and sorted clothes so when Al got home from work she'd be ready to head to Fayetteville.

Later that evening, as the two sat in the laundromat watching the clothes wash and dry, Flora started laughing.

Al looked around the small facility with a puzzled look on his face. "What's so funny?"

"Well, here it is the 14th – Valentine's Day – and you and I are sitting in the washateria. Guess this is romance once we become old and settled in our ways."

Al chuckled and reached for her hand. "Suppose there could be worse ways to spend the evening. Long as we're together, and still happy with each other, I'm guessing that's what's important."

Flora squeezed his hand in return. "You and me together against the world, with God on our side. That's all we need."

Al swiveled his head and gazed deep into Flora's eyes. "You don't mind I didn't do anything fancy or mushy? You don't mind I didn't bring you any flowers?"

"Pshhhaw!" The sound burst from Flora's lips before she could stop it. "If you would have paid the dear price for fresh flowers this time of year, then I'd be mad. Can't see you spending good money for frivolous items."

"Good to know. Wouldn't want to spend the night in the dog house tonight."

Flora leaned over and bumped his shoulder with hers. "Now you know we don't have any dog house and you'd never spend the night there. Besides, I'm enjoying those new kitchen cupboards with their fresh paint a load more than I'd enjoy seeing fresh blooms for three days before they died."

The dryer buzzed, signaling it's time was done. Al stood up and went to check. When Flora saw him pulling the dried laundry out and putting it in the basket, she went and helped him fold.

Later that night she pulled out her diary where earlier she'd written:

*14th: Clear weather. Snow & ice melting slowly. Painted on cabinet again. Have the clothes sorted. Ready to go to Fayetteville to wash.*

She added 'Went to wash' and tucked it in her nightstand drawer.

The next night, after a busy day, she added these words:

*15th: Al finished painting the cabinet. Thord's came at 2. We went to Fayetteville. Went to see Wade's baby. I got him to sleep. Fern, Francis & Frank came tonite.*

She smiled as she looked over and saw Al sound asleep, snoring up a storm. *A good man beside me, family, and friends. That's all I need for Valentine's Day.*

February kept moving along. Flora kept writing in her diary. Most events were fairly routine.

*Warm and clear today.*

*Papa came at 11:30.*

*Mopped. Clean. Put more things in the cabinet.*

*Al brought home first beef from locker.*

Some of what Flora recorded was out of the ordinary.

*Went to all day doing at Baptist Church in Springdale.*

*Letter from Margie. They're moving.*

*Gala (Flora's daughter-in-law, Wade's wife) to be operated on at 8 this morning.*

*Went to Hazel Luper's for dinner for the first time.*

Soon Flora was writing on March dates. On the evening of March 12th, she wrote:

*Cold this morning. Apples froze in the cellar. Al gone to work. Saw no one today. Cold and bad weather. Sewed some. Tea towels. Al about sick with cold.*

Flora sat in bed, reading back through some of her earlier entries. She turned to Al, who lay huddled in bed, thick quilts pulled up around his neck. "Look at this. Just two weeks ago, end of February I was writing about Skye's coming to prune and I tied up a row of grapes."

She flipped through the pages back to the current day. "And look here. Since then 'blowing ice', 'snow real deep', 'most all the schools closed tomorrow, 'no mail', 'no paper', 'all roads out of Fayetteville closed this morning'."

Al shivered and burrowed deeper into the fluffy comforters. "Big change in two weeks. You've got it all. You record our whole lives there in that little bound volume of yours."

"Sure do. Even..." she thumbed back a few pages. "Wrote here, 'Our second beef roast from locker. Beef roast was good'."

Al licked his lips. "Sure was a tasty roast. Not that I'm of a mind for eating right now. That black calf is good. Good flavor. Not greasy at all."

Flora squinted her eyes and tipped her head in his direction. "Of course, you know that some of that deliciousness is due to the cook."

"Naturally. Stands to reason when a man is married to the best cook in Washington County."

"You charmer, you." Flora swatted at his knee. She giggled as she kept reading through previous entries. "Here's the day the horses got out. Oh, wasn't that a chore getting them rounded back up! Sold some eggs to Leo Ball that day. Forty cents a dozen. And, oh...here's the day that the women's group met here at the house. First day it started blowing ice. Ola left her purse here. Says so right here."

Al was sick a few more days. Flora recorded that religiously in her little brown journal. A week later he was well enough that they were able to journey into Fayetteville and go to the show. Al returned to work and Flora kept tying more grapes, selling her eggs, washing her hair, doing the laundry, and visiting with the women in the community. Mildred, Aunt Lizzie Nolan, Mozelle Graham, Eutha, and Mable Crum were some of the women enjoying Flora's company.

The cold lessened. The ice disappeared. The countryside began to warm up.

A few days later Al came home from the factory. "Spinach is starting to come up. They're looking for more workers. Want to get in a few days' work?"

"Sure. Every extra nickel helps. When do they need us?"

"Tomorrow."

"I'll work. Take me into the washateria after work?"

"Certainly."

After the supper dishes were washed and put away, Flora pulled the dirty laundry out of the hamper and started sorting it.

"We're not going tonight, are we?" Al questioned.

"No. Tomorrow. It'll save us some time since I'll be at work with you."

The next morning, Flora sat the breakfast dishes in the sudsy water in the dish pan. She pulled leftovers from the Frigidaire and started making two dinners. Al's went in his lunch pail.

Hers she placed in a crinkled paper bag that had seen many uses before this one.

By seven the sunlight was appearing over the horizon and spreading its light over the hills when Al and Flora pulled out of their driveway. By eight she was punching in at the factory – not a new experience, but not one she'd done for several months.

When the women walked back in from the fields at 4:30 that afternoon, Flora walked slower than when she'd arrived in the morning.

Al was at the car waiting for her. "Knees bothering you?"

"A tad. Haven't been on my feet for that long at one time for a while. By the time we put in the garden next week, I'll really be feeling it."

She eased into the car and winced slightly as she settled on the leather bench seat.

Al looked at her closely. "Still want to do the wash tonight?"

"Need to. Sunday is Easter Sunday. Our best church clothes are in the laundry."

"Just wondering if you wanted to pass. You've had a long day."

Flora rubbed her belly. "No. Need to do it. But I'll fix us some supper first, before we go."

"A day in the spinach make you hungry?"

The corners of her mouth turned down in a pouty frown. "Not so much the day in the spinach as the old dog that got my dinner. Hideous, mangy looking thing. Suppose he was hungrier than I was. Although now I'm hungrier than it is."

Life kept going. Day after day. And Flora kept recording in her little brown journal. Religiously she recorded every day in this five year period. I think she missed one day. That's not bad for a period of over 1,800 days. I'm sure there were more journals that went to her different children later in life, probably after her passing. This particular five year journal went to her daughter Dot. With no living children, after Dot's death the journal went to one of her friends, my step-mother, who passed it along to me. So although I never met Flora, or her daughter Dot, I became an inadvertent caretaker to keep her words and her memory alive in some small way. And so, in A Diary of Flora's Life, Flora Luper lives on, thanks to the words she so faithfully recorded each day.