



MEMOIRS

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An Autobiography

By

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DEDICATION

I gratefully dedicate my memoirs to my parents, Isidore Lorentz and Louise Doppler, and my brother, Clement, for their love, support and encouragement all during my life.

I also wish to dedicate my memoirs to Mother Mary Frances Clarke, foundress of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as one of her children from the "far, far West."

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QUITE AN ADVENTURE: FROM ALSACE LORRAINE TO SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

After the Germans took possession of Roeschwoog in Alsace Lorraine, France, all young male members of the family were forced into the German army. They had to prepare to take up arms against the French. Grandfather Lorentz had four sons and three had already been taken to camp. My father, Isidore, was the youngest and the time was quickly approaching when he would be taken; however, Grandfather decided he would send Isidore to America. Albertine, the oldest child in the family, had married Charles Halm, an American serviceman, and immigrated to Fremont, Ohio, in the United States. They had been there about six years when my father, Isidore, arrived to live with them. Immediately he proceeded to carry out the wishes of Grandfather, namely – keep the faith; become an American citizen; learn a trade and get work to support yourself. After several years he had fully established himself so he sent back to Roeschwoog for his schoolmate and sweetheart to become his bride. Louise Josephine Doppler was given the blessing of her family and arrived very soon thereafter.

Louise Josephine too became an American citizen and soon they were married in St. Joseph's Church in Fremont, Ohio. They lived in that city for about five years and during that time they were blessed with a daughter, Isabella, and a son, Clement. Unfortunately my father developed a chest condition that brought on very severe asthma attacks. The doctor advised them to move either to the West Coast or East Coast. My mother had met, through a mutual friend, the Benedictine Abbot from Mount Angel, Oregon, so she wrote to him and explained the problem. The Abbot responded at once and encouraged them to come out there. Within a short time they took their possessions and moved westward. Shortly after arriving, the asthma cleared up and my dad was able to look for work. He was an accomplished molder, constructing framework of statues, etc. used as decorations in parks and buildings. He had to pour the hot metals, thus completing the work of art.

There were no openings for jobs of this kind in Oregon but there were several in Seattle. He heard of these and went to apply. He was given a job so he moved Mother and the two children to a little section in South Seattle called Georgetown. Less than a year later, Isabella and Clement came down with diphtheria and Isabella succumbed. A few months later, September 27,

1911, I was born. My brother Clement, who was seven years old, wanted me to have a name that began with the same letter as his did. Since Mother and Dad were active members of the Third Order of St. Francis, they named me Clara after the saint who, with St. Francis, founded a religious order of Sisters. The middle name, Gertrude, was after a favorite aunt on my mother's side.

My early childhood was a very happy time. My best friends were Ellade Sinnett, Ruby Wellman, Elizabeth, Katherine and Mary Eibert. Since we had no Catholic schools nearby all of us attended Maple Public School. Mrs. Moore was our teacher in grades one through three. She was a very kind, understanding person and taught us well. The parents of all of us worked together to help us develop wonderful values.

MY FIRST HOLY COMMUNION

The Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, founded by Mother Cabrini, came to our parish church, St. George's, every Saturday to teach Religion. They had the older children in the morning and the younger ones in the afternoon. Since the pastor lived in the sacristy he had no dining room. Therefore my mother had lunch at our house for the sisters and priest. In those years boys had to be ten years old and the girls twelve to make their First Holy Communion. Father questioned each individual child. I too met with Father and he decided to make an exception so I, at the age of six and one-half years, was blessed with the opportunity of receiving our dear Blessed Lord with the class. It was a day I shall always remember.

THE WAR YEARS

My home in Seattle was 5112 Swift Avenue. We had no electricity wired in the entire area. I learned at an early age how to clean the glass chimney of the Kerosene lamps. It was quite a task. I was about seven years old when finally we had electric lights and our house was enlarged. It was painted inside and out. I was so happy because it was beautiful.

War had started in Europe in August, 1914. Our president, Woodrow Wilson, had tried very hard to keep our country from becoming involved; however, on May 7, 1915, the Germans sank a British liner, the Lusitania,

killing 128 Americans. On April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany. My parents tried to explain what *war* meant and why some of the nice young men in our neighborhood went to another country to protect us. We said many prayers for our friends and I remember that we had to do without some things that we would have enjoyed.

On November 11, 1918, the war was over. Gradually some of our servicemen and women returned to the United States. Unfortunately they brought back some germs that led to an outbreak of influenza. It became a real epidemic. All schools, churches and most public buildings were closed. Some grocery and meat markets were open a few hours a day. Anyone going outside of their homes or to the stores had to wear medicated gauze masks across their noses and mouths. I was about seven years old but big for my age so I was dressed to go on errands. I was given a basket, a purse with money and a list of things to get. I would walk over the bridge and down the steps. When the owner of the store saw me he would come to take me across the busy street. After he filled out the order and put it in the basket with the change of money, he would take me back to the top of the bridge. From there I was on my own. Some days I would make several trips including the neighbors because nearly all were very ill.

SEARCH FOR TEACHERS

About this time the Franciscan Order had sent priests to assume responsibility for our parish. Father O'Brien, who had come from Ireland and served St. George's very well, was returning to Ireland because he was not well. Father Clement, the new pastor, began the task to supervise the completion of the school building, which Father O'Brien had started. Looking back, it took a long time to finish. By late 1919 Father Clement was busy trying to secure sisters to staff the school. He contacted three communities in the area but none had sufficient members to accept the invitation. Father, while stationed in California, had met the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary and knew several members very well. He had also met mother Mary Isabella and had asked her if any of the order were in the Northwest. She answered, "No, but maybe in the future sisters of the order might go there if asked and the community had enough members."