

A Biography of Sue Tyson

Written by Anna Rose Walter

Sue Tyson, who was named after Susannah (her father's little sister who had died) was born in 1943 on a farm in a little town called Bridgeton in South Jersey. Sue was the middle of three girls. She had a truly happy "old fashioned" childhood.

Bridgeton was an old time, family town with mostly farms. From her house Sue could only see four houses. In Bridgeton there was a lot of freedom for children. It was safe just to walk around with no grownup to accompany them. However, the town was very remote. For example, the newest invention Sue remembers is the airplane! Once or twice a year an airplane would fly by and Sue and her sisters would run out yelling, "An airplane! An airplane!"

Sue remembers that her father was very easy going, but her mother very strict. Her mother would constantly be saying, "Stanford! (that was the name of Sue's father) The girls need to be spanked!" One particular time Sue will never forget. Her mother had been telling her father she needed to be spanked so often that he had lost his patience. He came in and took Sue by the seat of her pants and ripped the pocket off. "How *dare* you rip my pants!" Sue yelled. "I could call the authorities on you!" The father just continued to give a her a good, sound spanking. Sue never talked back after that!

Sue had a lot of fun playing on the farm and in the house. Her sisters and she would always play school. They all wanted to become teachers when they got older. They played with the neighborhood's cats and dogs too. Sue's family even had their own dog named Patsy. In Bridgeton no one really owned their own pet as most of the pets were shared. Aside from all these games, their favorite game was playing cowgirls. When Sue was little, cowgirls and cowboys were all the rage. In less remote towns TV shows had stars like Roy Rogers and Dale Evans. Sue enjoyed pretending to gallop away on horses and shoot guns like a cowgirl. At night Sue would go under the covers and read mystery stories like *Nancy Drew* and *The Bobbsey Twins*. Her mother would come in and tell her not to read too much longer. "All right. I'll just finish this chapter." Sue would reply. But at the end of the chapter there was always such a cliffhanger that she would have to peek at the next page.

However, not all time was spent in reading or play. On a farm there was a lot of work to get done such as cleaning out hay, getting eggs, canning, bringing in wood and keeping the house clean. Sue hated all this work and was very lazy. One of the only chores she enjoyed doing was getting the eggs because that was an easy job. In the winter there was also school to go to. Sue went when she was six years old. She would have gone when she was five, except she was recovering from a deadly disease called Bacterial Meningitis. She was very ill from when she was four and a half till she was five. She remembers sitting in bed hearing voices getting softer and louder, softer, louder. Twice a day her aunt came over to give her a shot of penicillin. Her mother says she thinks Sue would not have lived except for those shots.

When Sue finally did go to school she went to Kindergarten which was then called Beginners. When you went to Beginners you already knew how to read. First grade was a continuation of Beginners. Sue was ahead of her class so the teachers told her she could go to second grade. Sue remembers all the good and the bad public school teachers. One of her best teachers was named Miss Cutter. Miss Cutter had bright red painted fingernails and lipstick. She was very kind and nice and a good teacher. Sue remembers just sitting staring fascinated at her. She wondered, "How could a lady with painted fingernails actually be so nice?" Sue's father would not let his girls wear makeup or paint fingernails. There was no use for it on a farm! One of the bad teachers Sue remembers was named Mrs. Vanlina. Mrs. Vanlina was a mean Italian teacher, who would not punish the bad boys in class. Sue could not study with all the distraction going on.

At home, Sue and her sisters took music lessons from their father's cousin. He taught them piano even though he knew how to play many instruments. Sue hated practicing. She thought, "If only I could play guitar like a cowgirl...I would love practicing if I could learn guitar!" Sue saw herself nonchalantly strumming while singing. She asked her mother if she could take some lessons. Her mother was smart, "You may take guitar lessons." She said, "But you have to pay for them yourself if you don't practice!" Sue started lessons enthusiastically. Then she saw that guitar takes work too! The lessons didn't last for six months after that.

On Sundays Sue and her family went to the presbyterian church. There were only two options of churches to go to. The OPC church and the presbyterian

church. Sue's family had been going to the presbyterian church for generations and were expected to go there. Soon, however, Sue's father noticed that the sermons were not based so much on the Bible as "doing good." He visited the OPC church a few times and told his family that that was the church they would be attending from now on. Sue was a little lonely as all her friends were going to the other church. When their grandmother found out they had moved churches she was mad and called them on the phone. Her mother and father picked it up and told Sue to get out of the room. Sue does not know what was said, but she noticed that her grandmother didn't like her father as much after that.

Sue and her family only went on a few vacations. Her uncle wanted his sons to learn farming so he said they would do all the farm work if Sue's family could live in their home in Massachusetts. It was a deal. However, it only lasted for five days. The uncle soon called in telling that they were done. Farming took a lot of hard work and they were exhausted. A few summers later her family went away again. This time they went to the beach. Sue became grateful that she learned to be content with her life and not to expect grand excitement all the time.

There was not a lot of money to spare in Sue's family. Clothing was either made by her mother or "bought" from her Mother's sister's friend. That friend had a daughter who was just Sue's size. She would come over with lots of clothing. Her mother would see what she liked and bought each piece of clothing for five cents. She bought it just so that it would not seem like charity. Each week Sue and her sisters got a small allowance of five or ten cents. They would save a little bit, but use the rest at the five and dime store for either doll dresses or candy. One of the most expensive things that they bought each year was postage for Christmas cards. Starting the day after Thanksgiving, Sue's mother spent all her free time writing Christmas cards! Almost everyone in the neighborhood got one. It was a sort of contest (even if it was not an intentional contest) each year between neighbors to see who would get the most. Everyone would tape it on window frames and door frames until the whole house was covered with them. Then they went to peoples houses to see how many *they* had.

Sue enjoyed her pleasant childhood. She did not like growing older however. She didn't enjoy the changes that come with growing up. She did have some funny things happen in high school. Her family was given a record player and they had a few records for it such as little kiddy songs and Christmas carols. In

high school one of the “cool seniors” named Keith offered to take Sue home. Keith had a fifties pompadour hairstyle and was very trendy. She accepted. At home they walked into the living room. “Oh you have a record player!” Keith said. Let’s put on some music! He put the needle on. The refrain of “The Teddy Bears Picnic” filled the room. Sue was so embarrassed. Keith had probably been thinking it was an Elvis record. Sue was not allowed to listen to any of the new rock music that was so popular, but sometimes on the family radio when her family was out she sat huddled by the radio and listened to a bit of it on a quiet setting. When her parents came in the room she quickly turned it off.

After high school Sue went through college. One of her favorite subjects was geometry. She got a job as a waitress for a while at a home town deli. Often there were only two options of food for people to choose from. It was soon after that, that Sue met David Tyson. After knowing him for three years they got married. They eventually had three children. Now the Tysons have 7 grandchildren and live in the most charming, cozy and tiny apartment. Sue often thinks on her life and childhood and how much she has learned. Things were simple and happy then.