

grandchild, and great-grandchild would receive a gift on Christmas Eve. Expensive gifts? No way! A small doll, toy truck, flannel shirt, or whatever, but given with a lot of love.

Her Christmas tree was so packed with toys and gifts, you could hear such remarks as, "Well, I just don't need anything," or "Why did you go to all that trouble?"

One Christmas when Grandmaw was in her early 80's, she was given a beautiful black dress. After trying on the dress several times and hanging it back up instead of wearing it, she was asked what was wrong with the dress. She replied, "Hummmph, this is a dress for an old woman!" This was just one of many humorous things my Grandmaw would come out with. Being of German descent, she pronounced all her "V's" as "W's": Vinegar was "winegar"; Neighbor Vernon Lail was "Wernon Lail"; Cousin Vallie Herman was "Wallie Herman". Instead of being "very tired" she was "wery tired." But most of all we loved to hear her say "Wim, wigor, and witality."

Not only did her words strike me as funny sometimes, but her actions were just as comical. She was a wonderful cook, and I loved to watch her in the kitchen. It always amazed me how she never did a lot of measuring ingredients. I remember once how she made cookies for my sister Audra and myself. We watched with open mouths as she dumped flour, sugar, and (no lie) about a fourth of a bottle of vanilla flavoring into a bowl. We were convinced her

concoction would be the death of us, but, instead, we were thrilled as we tasted the best sugar cookies we had ever put in our mouths. My mom summed up her way of cooking as she wrote, "Mom had grown up feeding threshers, her dozen kids, grandchildren, and many boys at Sipe's Home. Some people paint pictures, some have musical talents, but Mom Lail whetted appetites. No meticulous measuring of ingredients, but 'a little of this and a pinch of that' was the way she cooked." Grandmaw Lail was, indeed, a wonderful cook. Often the food took up so much room in the kitchen that no one could eat at the table. Many times my parents have remarked how the Lail's had more leftovers than most people began with. Grandmaw's reasoning behind all this was that everyone would stay all day and help finish up the leftovers in the evening.

How did one person do all this? Especially if this same person also made sure that Sipe's Home for Boys also had all the same wonderful "fixin's"? According to my mom, Grandmaw Lail "had a very unique way of recruiting volunteers." Somehow you were made to feel that it was your idea: that you were the greatest gift wrapper in the world; that you loved decorating that tree (while she smiled her approval); and that you loved cleaning up all those pots and pans and dishes; and that you knew in your heart that Christmas was the greatest time of the year! And, heaven forbid, you were so busy that you had little time to worry about what you your-