

Amy Schoon
(Jody Smith)



Hello, ladies and gentlemen,

How nice of you to come by to visit me today. I've been here in Olena Mound in my final resting place for about sixteen years now. Sixteen years doesn't seem like such a long time when compared with how long I lived – ninety-five years, to be exact. And I'm proud to say that nearly all of those years were lived in Buffalo Center.

Oh, how I loved Buffalo Center! The only time I left Buffalo Center for any length of time was when I went off to college at Central College in Pella... Please excuse me; I'm getting ahead of myself!

Anyway, for those of you who never knew me, or don't recognize me, my name is Amy Schoon. I was born in 1900 in Buffalo Center, of course. My parents were Henry and Jennie Wagner.

My goodness, times were different in Buffalo Center in 1900 – trains coming to town, a fancy hotel, so many businesses, even a Chinese laundry!

My father, Henry, was a bank officer and owned one of the hardware stores in town. He also owned a couple of farms so life was pretty good for us. Our needs were pretty well taken care of. However, we had some dark times, too – watching all three of my brothers die before reaching adulthood was very painful.

In 1900, my parents built the beautiful home that I also lived in for a good share of my married life. I think it's one of the prettiest homes in town – stands prominently at 214 2nd Avenue NW, and oh, the hours I spent enjoying that wonderful wrap-a-round porch on the east side!

I don't remember a lot of details about my childhood. (That was a long time ago!) But I can tell you that I graduated from Buffalo Center High School. I was one of the lucky few young women from this area whose parents could afford to send children to

college, so off to Pella I went. Central College was a natural choice since members of my family were charter members of the Reformed Church here in Buffalo Center.

Upon returning home from college, I married my high school sweetheart, Jerry Schoon, in 1922 at the age of 22. Being born in 1900 sure makes figuring easy, doesn't it?

It so happened that Jerry's father was the minister at the Reformed Church so it was he who married us.

Two years after we were married, Jerry purchased the hardware store from my father. Jerry's business partner was a cousin of mine – John Slaba – and their store was known as John and Jerry Hardware. Jerry was a good man – so passionate about helping those who struggled. They operated the business successfully for many years, until Jerry died in 1956.

My life in early adulthood was similar to my parents'. My husband was a businessman and active in the community as was my father. Since being active in the community is good public relations for any businessman, I also became, like my mother, very involved in my church and community.

And then the babies started to arrive – first there was Geraldine, then Peg, then Lydia and finally little Alvin. It was getting to the point that I felt like the Old Woman who lived in a shoe – had so many children that I didn't know what to do!

So, one day, when Geraldine was eleven and little Alvin was two, my mother was introduced to a young girl, just twelve years old, who might be able to come and live with us and lend a hand.

When I heard about young Norma, I was touched – her story was so sad. It seems that Norma and her two sisters had been left without a family to call their own. Their mother died when Norma was just one and a half years old. The three girls spent their youth staying with various relatives and families in the area.

It was at the Sterrenberg farm near Thompson that my mother met Norma. She had just completed the eighth grade at country school. I invited her to move in with us. She could be a part of our family, and she could help me with the other four children.

Besides tending to the demands of four young children, being active in the Ladies Aid, Literary Circle and American Legion Auxiliary, Jerry and I also rented out two rooms in our home to teachers in the local school.

During the early part of our family's life, we lived in the house kitty-corner from the Catholic Church, where Merry Lynn Webb and Steve Newton live now.

In 1939, my mother passed on, and Jerry and I moved with our family into my mother's home, which gave us a great deal more space for the children to roam.

Our children were a little hesitant about moving to their grandmother's home. You see, they commonly referred to one of its front rooms as the "funeral home" since it seemed that many townspeople were laid out there when they died.

Taking young Norma in turned out to be a wonderful thing for our family. Norma was so capable and willing to work very hard. After school, Norma would come right home and start in on the bushel basket full of ironing – remember those days, ladies? I would have them all sprinkled (I used the mangle for the large flat items) and Norma would iron away until it was time for her to make supper. After supper, Norma would help the children with their homework and help me put the children to bed, and then maybe work at the ironing a little longer until it was bedtime for Norma herself.

Norma surely made life easier for me; I loved to sit in the same brown wicker rocker that my mother sat in for all of those years. Norma was excellent at following the instructions I gave her from that old brown rocker in the kitchen – my command central. I also enjoyed reading, daily Bible readings and knitting afghans in that rocker.

Well, time moved on. Eventually Norma stretched her wings after high school graduation and left for college in Ohio. It was so hard to see her go – and to have the children leave the nest, one at a time.

Sadly, I became a widow at the age of fifty-five. By that time, our four children were scattered about the US – from Minnesota and Missouri to Tennessee. I cherished the time I spent visiting each of my children and their families – a couple of weeks per child throughout the year. I also looked forward to summer visits from the grandchildren in my home.

Also sadly, my daughter Lydia took her own life one day, and I never quite got over that.

My son Alvin started up a big color photo processing lab out east – now that was a big deal back then!

Geraldine and her husband had a few kids, and Peggie had an interesting life, too; her mother-in-law was a sister to Charles Lindberg, a name you might recognize from the history books.

Perhaps some of you read in this week's *BC Tribune* that Peggie recently died. Now all four of my children lie in their final resting place.

Well, I'm starting to tire. Overall, I had a comfortable life – a beautiful home, a family, and plenty to eat. I enjoyed many afternoons of bridge with my friends, Adah, Mae and Oral. I "had my mind," as they say, until I died up at St. Luke's in Blue Earth. And I enjoyed the finer things in life, right up until the day I died.

Yes, sir, on my last afternoon on earth, Norma and Jim came to call. I couldn't help but admire Norma's golden shoes. Norma asked me if I would like a pair for myself. Now, always having a weakness for shoes, I responded that I would like to have a pair just like hers.

However, as the afternoon went on, something inside of me told me that I wouldn't be needing fancy golden shoes any longer. Before Norma said goodbye, I whispered to her, "Don't worry about getting me the shoes – I'm going to a far better place." And that night, I did.