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 When we moved to our new house (new to us) I thought what a beautiful place to build an outdoor grotto. We moved here in April 1943 and I started to gather rocks, etc. and made the foundation first, about 5 by three feet, just a square. It seems whatever I tried to make would fall down, so I wrote to Father Doberstein, builder of the West Bend Grotto, who told me how to mix the cement, build projects on the flat ground, then after five days when the cement was hard, to stand it up.

I built a niche to house the Blessed Virgin. We went to Dickeyville Grotto, they had a large pile of rocks there, and I told Father I wanted to build a Grotto and asked if I might have a rock, he told me to take as many as I wanted, so I took four, so those rocks went into my first niche. The next year I still had rocks and shells and old jewelry people gave me, so I built another niche on either side of the first one, one housing the infant Jesus of Prague and the other St. Joseph. Of course I had to build on to the foundation to house these two niches. But when one gets started there is no quitting, so I kept on adding each summer, toward fall. I bought cement and asked for some sand from the sand boxes they had at school which was going to be dumped anyway, so on and on it went.

I built two rosaries, one on each side of the two niches. I didn't know why, but they were hard to build and weren't pretty. I built them on an old door back of the house, then set them up.

Next I built a replica of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. I wrote to Bishop Binz for directions, then next I built the Grotto of the World Rosary surrounding the children of Fatima.

My Girl Scouts gave me money, so I bought a statue of St. Anthony and built like a pagoda for it. The next year I built one to St. Francis, and so on. Shells were given to Betty from the IC Museum which they were going to discontinue. Then Mary Lucas saw a bushel of shells that were going to be dumped, so she asked if she could have them for me. Then I built one to the Sacred Heart of Jesus with the small niches made in ham cans then cemented them all together, mostly shells and rocks from the boys in service.

Next I built one for the 14 stations, using two milk bottles I mean quart milk cartons taped together, and when I had made 14, cemented them together and Adel got stations for me in Milk. I fished snails out of the water while Frank fished, and surrounded the outline with snail shells.

Next I built the one to the Sorrowful mother holding Jesus with a chain of rocks and shells extending to each post, with the center post holding the statue in a rounded niche. I couldn't get cement for that, had to use motor mix, so that one isn't holding up. I made rosaries out of marbles, dishes, beads, etc. for almost each grotto.

Had room in the center of these grottos so I made one from shells with Blessed mother on top of the round niche, with statues of St. Joseph, Infant Jesus, St. Theresa, St. Ann holding baby Jesus.

## Grottos 1945 to 1957

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Now I thought I would be finished, but no, We took a trip to St. Ann's shrine in Canada, where I bought a statue of Blessed Mother. We picked up rocks at the St. Lawrence river as the tide went out, and I saw a Grotto at Dodgeville one time, in the shape of a star, so I remembered that, and decided that would be my next Grotto. I had told Frank I thought I was finished and wouldn't bother him anymore to do any more lifting.

I started the Grotto in the garden, star shape, with a decade of the rosary on each point made of flowers from broken dishes. I made a foundation for it, using many rocks from the St. Lawrence river. Well it got so large, the star part that I had to get the Latham Construction Co. to move it on the foundation and when Frank came home from work, he didn't know what had happened, as there were ropes and wires all over the yard, fastened to trees, etc. until could mix enough cement to hold it.

Then I thought a large vase with flowers would look pretty on each side, so that is what I made next, using two old lamp shades for the bowl, covered with cement and rocks and shells, put on a 1 foot by 1 foot stand also of rocks and shells. Now that was pretty.

When we came back from West Bend and the Black Hills, I had rocks, petrified wood, and shells and coral I had bought at West Bend, so I made a long planter along side the house. Used paper plates to make the rounds in the back at the top, and used many milk cartons to make oblongs for the bottom part, using rocks, shells and old jewelry. This is really pretty and Frank and Carl filled the two foot center with ground and I planted flowers in it. So I guess that takes care of the Grottos.

One picture appeared in the Telegraph Herald telling all about the one Grotto, and how the cats would get in the wet cement and leave their foot prints.

Then later on it appeared in the Des Moines Register, and people as far as Freeport came to see it.

Now when I look back I wonder how I did it, a lot of work, but a great satisfaction to see the accomplishment.

Of course, some children gave me many little things to put in, and just loved to see where their items were put.

Some other children just came, broke shells, etc. threw them in the back yard, didn't want them, just to be destructive.

Don't know what satisfaction they got from that. I would try to repair, but its never easy when something is pulled out and new cement has to be put in to hold something else, because the cement has to be soft and likes to drip on some of the good things already cemented in.

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Its time to tell you that way back in 1946 I started to build Grottos in our yard, as we had a lot of space, and it would be an ideal place, so I started with the foundation. I wasn't very successful with mixing the cement so I wrote to Father Doberstein that built the Grotto at West Bend, Iowa. He told me to take one part sand to two parts cement and add water just to make a creamy mixture. It worked real good. and he said to make it in forms on the ground, let it set for five or six days then set up where I wanted it. Told me he built the Grotto at Mt. St. Francis at West Bend, in Circles, had it hauled here by truck, then set it up here.

I always wanted to go to West Bend to see Father, but Frank wasn't the going kind, but one summer I had talked Frank to go during his vacation, but we didn't make it as Father died the week before. Since then I visited the Grotto several times, once with the Ladies Catholic Benevolent Society, and another time when we went to the Black Hills.

I suppose its like other hobbies one gets started and wants to keep on, which I did. After I had the first one built, it seemed every summer I got the urge to add on. Frank liked to go fishing so I went along, fished snails out of the river with a hoe, or if he went where there were pretty rocks, I would take a bucket along and fill it with pretty rocks. We used to go on a rock pile down near Bellevue, and found some agates there. Also we went to the Rock Quarry out here, off Prescott and got larger rocks, but there are houses built there now. Also when we moved up here there were only two houses beside ours in the 1500 block, none across the street, and when the old Marshall school was demolished and the new one was built, the debris was thrown down toward the tracks on Garfield in the 1400 block.

I didn't feel very well in 1958, so the doctor wanted me to go to the hospital for tests. It was found I had pockets in my intestines and when I ate the wrong food the pockets would get irritated and cause pain, so I was put on baby food for six months. It didn't taste too bad, and I felt better.

Now houses are being built in our block on our side and across the street, and the block on the 1400 Garfield. We had bought a lot across the street which I thought would be nice for a garden and for Carl to raise chickens, but it didn't work out, so we sold the lot to Wm Gross. who erected a house on the lot, then he and Pauline got married. Beyond our house the street wasn't paved so at our intersection it was sort of a turn around.

Now in May 16, 1960 Frank Jr. took Dad and I to Texas. It was a most interesting trip, We stayed at Eldon, Mo. the first nite, then on to Camden, Mo. a sort of resort and amusement center. We went through Okla. and the further south we got the more oil wells we saw and more sand. We had missed a big thunder storm on the way down near St. Louis, but the sand storm that was really something. Sand was piled as high as some of the garages. All the cemeteries down there were sand, no grass.