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Memories of Grandpa Lee G Kibbe:

Arriving home from school it was always exciting to see the old Model T parked outside our barn. Grandpa had come for a visit. In 1950, I suspect it was the only Model T driven in the County if not the State. At McGraw, school kids commented on the strange man who drove the old car through town. We were happy to inform them that the man driving the antique car was our Grandfather. He seemed wise and mysterious, wearing old clothes from another era, and speaking with a unique tone of voice that immediately captured your attention. On one visit, he had worked on the old hand pump at our farm, having completed his work all the tools were carefully laid out to dry. His tools were never put away wet, or left to rust. My fascination got the best of me and I began playing with his drying tools. When he discovered what I was doing he spoke to me very sternly. I ran in fear to my mother who informed Grandpa that she and dad were the people who disciplined me. I probably would have fared worse if they had caught me, but Grandpa's voice convinced me never to mess with his tools again although he had many tools, and I was fascinated by all of them.

Because of my age as the youngest in our family of five, my memories are more limited than my sisters. After Grandpa's death, Mom made sure that all five of her children had copies of the 4-part series on his life and legend from the Cortland Standard. I previously scanned and e-mailed the series to you. As Justice of the Peace a highlight of his term was when he performed a marriage ceremony for a couple requesting his services. His detailed records of the weather were adopted as the counties official records prior to Cortland County keeping weather records.

There were numerous social gatherings at the Mill, lots of fun, food, games, and good conversation. Usually the entire Kibbe family was there for these special occasions. All of Grandpa's daughters attended and usually Uncle George and family were there as well. My very first fishing experience was at Solon Pond. The old casting reel backlashed, and my line became tangled more often than I successfully landed a line in the water. Still it is a memory I cherish. The men and boy's played games like horseshoes, or testing the boy's skill at driving a nail straight into a board. We all laughed when one of us kids hit the "wrong nail". That may sound boring by today's standards but we all interacted and became a close family.

I remember being fascinated with what Grandpa accomplished at the pond with the water wheel. I recognized the accomplishment of building an electric plant for the Mill and for the Grange Hall, at a time when much of Rural New York was still without electricity. Everything at the Mill was designed for less physical work. He could pull a trap door and let the cat out three stories down. Logs were not manually rolled in to be sawed; he had a combination of ropes and pullies that pulled the log in place. I remember the large saw blade used to saw the lumber. I loved the smell of the newly cut boards. The saw mill was on the lower level of the Mill. The next level up was the Store. My memories of this level are limited. This level was where the 200 year old Grandfather Clock consisting of all wooden parts resided. His disdain for Daylight Savings Time was reflected in a sign that spoke of ambitious city folks who got up an

hour early but his clock refused to lie an hour to get the lazy cuss's out of bed. He carried two pocket watches one reflecting real time, the other Liars Time.

On one occasion I was with my father when Grandpa Kibbe fired up the forging shop to modify or design a part my Dad needed. I watched in awe as the fire and steel got red, then with skill he hammered the part into shape. Years after his death I was at the mill with my mother. As we walked along the road and bridge between the upper and lower pond there was a beautiful wrought iron railing that I mentioned to mom, she indicated that in all likelihood Grandpa had forged it.

Mom confirmed the legend of his Native American lineage. She told of the way he walked very quietly, and his knowledge of herbal medicine. Occasionally when I was walking with mom she would identify a plant that Grandpa used for medicinal purposes. She always acknowledged her limited knowledge of the herbs.

I am attaching a few photos of the Mill and the first "Official Kibbe Reunion" held at Aunt Ruth's home in Wellsboro PA. The cake is held proudly by Grandpa Kibbe. The cake indicates that 1st celebration was held in 1949, and the tradition lives on. I will also attach a photo of the Mill Stone Grandpa chose and placed for his memorial Stone. His children have died but the bond of the cousins remains strong, and as many as possible gather annually for the Kibbe Reunion.

Respectfully submitted
Walter Elwin Kelley

