

# A Mother

By Sam Neno

Down on Salmon Creek, across from where the gravel pit is now, there used to be a small house with a large front porch that overlooked the creek. Although the sun shines in that hollow between two hills just a short time each day, it seemed to shine on that gray house the longest. A woman named Jessica Mandy lived there for eighty-six years, so I'm told.

My father was one of her proteges, if I can use that word. He was the son of a farmer, and his mother died while he was young. Aunt Jessica was like a mother to him. Each year under our Christmas tree was a present labeled for her, and a few days after Christmas it would disappear.

It was when my cousin, Joe, got married that I met another of Aunt Jessica's proteges. In the bridal party was a young woman named Amy. I was all of thirteen and thought she was beautiful. Joe had included me and I was paired with her. I hung on her every move and word. She was kind, too, for she listened to me and answered my questions about anything that came to mind.

The only time I was ever in Aunt Jessica's house was the day before Joe's wedding. We were at the wedding rehearsal when the bride decided she wanted to include a poem in the ceremony. Amy said she had the poem at home. I volunteered to go with her. Amy welcomed my company, and soon we were bumping down Salmon Creek Road. The sun was setting behind the hills in the west, but somehow cast a rosy glow in its last moments on Aunt Jessica's house. An old Ford Maverick sat in the driveway, rust free but faded from years of sun.

"Do you want to go in?" Amy asked.

I didn't really want to. I figured some legends are better left as names on Christmas presents. It would be like meeting Vince Lombardi for a handshake but no time to

ask how he'd built the Green Bay Packers into a powerhouse.

"Come on, Sonny," Amy said and winked, and I was sunk and followed her in.

Seated in a rocking chair with a blanket over her lap was Aunt Jessica, an elderly woman with grey-white hair pulled back in a bun. Her face was suntanned and not as wrinkled as I'd expected. She smiled and said, "You're Sonny Nedrow, aren't you?" She held out her hand to me, and when I took it I was surprised by her strength.

"You look like your father did at your age." She winked—the same wink Amy used. "You'll be a fine man, too."

Amy got her book and kissed Aunt Jessica, who told her to have fun and that she'd leave the light on for her.

On the way to the church, Amy told me that her mother and father had been killed in an automobile accident when she was young and that Aunt Jessica had taken her in and raised her.

"Where's her husband?" I asked.

"He was a glider pilot in World War II," Amy said. "He was killed in the war, and she never remarried. She never had children of her own, but she's raised many. I'm just the most recent."

"You mean there were others—more than you and my dad?"

"Yes."

We rehearsed the wedding that night and then went through it the next day. I wished very much that I could marry Amy, but she was going to college the next fall, and I was not even in high school yet. I saw her a couple of times after that at family get-togethers but never Aunt Jessica. Then one year the present for Aunt Jessica was not under the Christmas tree, and so I asked about it. It was the first time I saw my father cry. The memory of her firm handshake warmed me, and that night I stood beneath the stars and thanked God that I had someone to love me as she had loved so many.



Photo: STAFF

**FACE OFF** - Lansing's two semi-pro basketball teams met April 29 in what may become America's newest cross town rivalry as the majestic Lansing Fire-Rescue hoopsters overcame a 20-point morning line deficit to edge the indomitable Lansing Faculty Coaches 67 1/2-67.

## Firemen Frolic Over Faculty Coaches 67 1/2-67 As Lansing Boosters Win

By Geoff Wright

The Lansing Fire Rescue basketball team, led by Coach Marty Dean, scored a half point upset victory against a heavily favored Lansing Coach's team 67 1/2-67 on Tuesday evening at the Lansing High School auditorium. The evening was billed as a fund raiser for the Lansing Sports Booster Club and was sponsored by the Lansing Fire Rescue team. The game was played in front of over 150 paying spectators. The Lansing Firefighters presented the Lansing Sports Booster Club Board members Linda Drew, Judy Howell and Sharon Bowman a check for \$384, which represented a donation from the Fire Rescue workers plus the gate receipts.



Photo: STAFF

The game was close throughout, but the Rescue Squad took the lead for good when Chris Burris sank a free throw at the end of

of the Lansing Coaches. Outstanding defense was played by David French, Brad George, Mitch George, Kenny Hancharick and Scott Hollister. Todd Mix, Ken Sears and Tom Sill were the top rebounders for the Rescue squad.



Photo: STAFF

The Lansing Coaches were led by a trio of women coaches that combined for 26 points. Carolyn

Connors, Cathy Haight and Robin McColley consistently scored on fast break lay ups. Strong rebounding was provided by "Twin Towers" Hank Neubert and Adam Heck. Jason Eade was the top outside shooter, knocking down 12 points from long range.

With three minutes remaining and behind by 5, player coach Ed Redmond pulled out all the stops and reentered big guns Stu Dean, Steve Buchanan, Dennis Eade and Dave Wolf. Redmond cut the lead to 3, nailing a 12 footer from the baseline. Eade stole the in-bounds pass and fired a bullet pass to Wolf underneath for an easy lay in. Jamie Spencer then dribbled the length of the floor and made a lay up, to put the firefighters up by three. Steve Buchanan was then fouled on a three point attempt. He made the first two to pull the Coaches to within one. In an attempt to go for the win, Steve Buchanan hit the rim but the firefighters rebounded the ball and ran out the clock.

The highlight of the evening was the officiating by Gary "Nutsy" Christopher and Doug Bowman. Time and again the crowd roared as these two performed their officiating duties. Both Christopher and Bowman were former Lansing High School sports stars.

According to Booster Club Treasurer Sharon Bowman, the proceeds will be used to fund unbudgeted sports needs and/or to buy plaques for our championship teams.



Photo: STAFF

the first half. The Rescue Squad never trailed again. The firefighters had to fight off a furious rally, but prevailed on a last second basket by Jamie Spencer.

The Fire Rescue team was led by Tom Dorward's 15 points. Butch Crozier chipped in 14 and Chris Purcell added 8 points along with 11 rebounds. Slick ball handling by Dale Oplinger, Scott Pronti, Tom Sill and Gary Argetsinger were key to the firefighters attack. Tough defense by the Lansing Rescue team helped shut down the inside game

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