Jean Martin Brooks

My husband **Jerry Martin** and I moved to Brockport from Rochester in late 1954. Jerry had been working for my father in the city, and when Dad bought the Brockport Vinegar Works in Brockport, NY, Jerry was moved here as manager of the new facility. Relations between the two men were never very good, and Jerry was let go in April of 1955.

Meanwhile, my husband and I had fallen in love with, and purchased, a beautiful old home in the village where we now resided. Jerry soon found work at the local General Electric plant, and life went on. With 3 small children, and lots of space, we decided to rent a room to college students. With college inspection and approval, we were assigned two very nice young college boys. They were roomers—ate at the college, and most of their free time was spent there. The children loved them, and the feeling seemed mutual. This arrangement went on for several years, with different students.

I had been involved musically with our Catholic Church in Rochester, and the word had spread. Shortly after we arrived in Brockport, I was approached by the new **Pastor, Rev. Edward Lintz**, of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, to see if I had any interest in acting as Organist-Substitute for the Church. I was delighted at the idea, and have been playing organ there ever since. It's a wonderful job—dovetails nicely with family obligations, and is esthetically satisfying.

Jerry worked at GE for several years and went on to hold a variety of other jobs. Our family continued to increase. We were both involved in Church activities, and the children were enrolled at Nativity School. They walked to and from school every day, carrying lunch. During free time there was usually a kick-ball game in the side yard, climbs (and falls) from the plum tree next to the house, "big wheel" [a low-slung, all plastic, three-wheel bicycle with a huge front wheel], trips up and down the sidewalk, and "secret" trips to the local railroad track.

Jerry belonged to the local Kiwanis Club, Silsby Hose Company, and the Republican Party. I was involved in Nativity Mother's Club, Child Study Groups, Women's Republican Club, Nativity Choir, and several Bridge Clubs. The children participated in Little League, Boy Scouts, and Brockport School sports activities. We were so fortunate with our home location—the children could walk or bike to almost every activity—no need for Mother (me) to be endlessly driving here and there.

In 1959 we had bought a 16 foot travel trailer, so fairly frequent camping trips in the Summer were a big family activity.

Besides the organization memberships and "fun" things, simply living in Brockport was "special". For me, endless laundry, mountainous piles of groceries were near daily occurrences. A supportive and helpful mother, whom the children adored, was a regular part of life. Children took turns at chores, and meals were pretty regular. The eating area in the rear of the kitchen had succumbed to the laundry (we had moved the laundry equipment to the main floor), and we ate all meals in the dining room. The children came and went as they needed to—doors were never locked. There was always a dog, (or a hamster, canary, Guinea pig, or cat). Friends were welcome.

In 1964 we bought the Brockport Tastee Freez franchise on Route 31, just south of the village (where the Brockport AutoZone store is presently located) on the north side of Brockport-Spencerport Road. We sold a soft-serve product (Tastee Freez), hots, hamburgers, and pop (soda).

Jerry would operate the stand during the day with the help of the two older children, and myself later in the day as time went on. We would open April 1, and close end of September.

It's hard to visualize the thriving commercial area now, along Route 31, as a wide-open rural area. Our stand was the only structure on either side of the road. Shortly after we took possession of the stand, construction began on the Plaza (across from us), on the south side of Route 31. As we had the only food and phone up there, Jerry and the construction superintendent became good friends.

Business was slow. Our equipment was temperamental, and the resulting product was unreliable—either frozen stiff, or too soft. We were able to purchase a sink and freezer from a failing business, and decided to try hard ice cream in addition to the soft product—not a good idea. However, we limped along—Jerry would try to augment his 'stand' income with other work during the year.

In 1971 Jerry died as the result of a tragic auto accident. He was in Intensive Care (ICU) at Strong Hospital for 3 months. The children and I tried to keep the business going. My mother practically moved in. I alternated time between hospital, home, and Tastee Freez stand. We all survived—nine children (**Michael**, **Maureen**, **Jerome**, **Patrick**, **Christopher**, **Mary**, **Anne Marie**, **Colin**, and **Joseph**) and Mom.

That winter, thanks to a dear friend, and his invitation to a Restaurant Trade Show in Syracuse, I was introduced to a new machine which transformed ice-milk into a delectable frozen product. I purchased one machine, and soon after, bought another. We got rid of the food (hots, etc), eliminated the hard

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ice cream, and the business took off. It became wonderfully profitable—and continued to be so through 1978, when we closed the business.

Meanwhile, I had begun to teach piano privately at home, and classroom music at Nativity School. I continued the lessons at home after the school closed. I also served on the Village Planning Board, and was asked to run in the election for Town of Sweden Board as Council Person. This was very rewarding for me. In 1983 I was elected Town Supervisor. **John Sodoma**, former Town Supervisor, conceived the idea for a Senior Center to be built on village land, along the canal. It's a wonderful place, and I'm happy to have had a part in its creation.

In 1980 I met **Bob Brooks**—another great chapter in my life. We were married in 1982, and split up our homes. I left Main Street and the remaining children but two, and moved in with him. We soon moved to Hillcrest Parkway, and were wonderfully happy until his death in 1990.

Several more moves followed. There's still some Bridge, walking, music making (I play and sing whenever I can) and line-dancing, etc. The children enhance my life. Five of them live in the area, four at quite a distance. Fourteen grand-children, and 5 great grand-children round out the picture.

Brockport is still the place of choice. The character has changed, but I have no desire to live elsewhere.

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