Family Institution

HAPPY MEMORIES for me still hover over the empty lot at 12 W. Main St. in Sheffield, Pennsylvania.

It was there, in 1951, that my parents began a new life as proprietors of the Sheffield Tavern and Hotel.

It was difficult to leave our big home in Kane, Pennsylvania and move 16 miles to Sheffield, where we occupied living quarters in several of the eight hotel rooms above the barroom area.

My father, concerned with the noise and cigarette smoke that penetrated to the hotel rooms, remodeled the tavern and added private living quarters on the back of the building. At times, parishioners from St. Anthony's Catholic Church and Lincoln School across the street used our quarters for religious education classes.

After Don, my brother, graduated from eighth grade at St. Callistus School in Kane, he enrolled at Manlius Military Academy in Manlius, New York. My sister, Norma Jean, began seventh grade, and I started fifth grade.

The tavern became our home, and my faith-filled, loving parents made certain that unacceptable language and boisterous conduct were not allowed. Customers were reminded that if they slipped up and used profanity, they needed to place a coin in my mother's "bad word box."

My parents kept the tavern spotless. Every Sunday, after Mass at

St. Anthony's Church, the day was spent scrubbing and cleaning the barroom and dining room. I liked to help clean the hotel rooms.

At dinnertime, the kitchen table was filled with Mom's good cooking, and she always provided food for individuals who were in need of a proper meal.

We sold candy bars, potato chips, peanuts, hamburgers, pizza, soups, and Grandma's hot peppers and pickled eggs. My dad's specialty was his hot chili—he'd make it really hot with a generous amount of chili powder.

Norma Jean and I helped my mother in many ways, but we especially enjoyed preparing for the weekly Friday night fish-fry dinners by washing and slicing potatoes for french fries.

I remember seeing my mom's face dripping from the effects of the heat and humidity in the kitchen area, which had only exhaust fans. She didn't complain as she deep-fried the battered fish and french fries.

During hunting season, Norma Jean and I arose early to help prepare breakfast for the hunter guests. Mom prepared lunches and smorgasbord dinners for them as well

Some of my fondest memories are when my parents closed the tavern for Norma Jean's ninth-grade Halloween party in 1953 and my after-prom party for parents and classmates in 1958.

Most of all, my best memories were from the Friday night dances with polka music from my father's accordion that made my heart sing! He often accompanied other musicians.

Our family was deeply saddened in 1957 by the loss of my dear sister, Norma Jean, who was just 18 and suffered from childhood rheumatoid arthritis. The day after my high school graduation, in 1959, my family ventured to Baltimore, Maryland to begin another new chapter.

By this time, Don was a senior at The Johns Hopkins University, and I became a freshman at Towson State Teachers College.

Our father is no longer with us, but our mother, soon to be 89, lives in Bel Air, Maryland. Mom and I often recall with happiness and sometimes tears in our eyes the wonderful moments of the 1950s in our beloved Sheffield.