Little Jean

By Judy Denison

DEDICATION

This book is for the children who are in isolation because of the novel coronavirus.
It is about third grade level. It is suitable to read to younger children.
It may be freely distributed.
The author is Little Jean's daughter.

This book is designed to be printed double-sided.
It works well on 32-lb paper, high quality printing, in 3-prong binder with clear cover.

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BABY JEAN

Here is Little Jean! She was born on October 23 – in 1909! How long ago was that?

Does Little Jean look happy? What does she have in her hand?

She is wearing a beautiful embroidered white dress. Do you think she wore that every day, or just for the picture?

Little Jean lives in New York City, with her parents Jessie and Fred. Little Jean's Grandpa Jimmy, Aunt Jean, Aunt Tibbie, and Uncle Rob live nearby. Aunt Muggie lives in St. Louis, Missouri.

Jean's father sways from side to side when he walks. He had hip problems when he was born and in those days they couldn't fix it. He is a teacher.

Grandpa Jimmy was born in Scotland. Here he is in his kilt and medals for dancing. He loves to read and to write poetry. He's funny.

Here is Little Jean and her mother. They live in New York City. They are going for a walk in the park. Doesn't her mother look beautiful? She is all dressed up! Why? Because people are expected to take care and dress nicely when they go out. She is wearing a long dress and coat because that is the style.

It looks cold out! Do the trees have leaves? Maybe it is March and Little Jean is five months old.

Look at Little Jean's baby carriage! Did you ever see a baby carriage like that? It's easy to reach the baby. And the mother and the baby can look at each other and talk to each other while they are out. The carriage is made of wicker, like some porch chairs. That makes it not be so heavy. The baby is dressed very warmly too.

Here is Little Jean and her mother in 1910. Jean is about a year old.

What beautiful dresses! Little Jean's white dress has lace and embroidery. Look at the gold ring on Jean's finger! And the buttons on her shoes!

What kind of a dress is her mother wearing? Did you guess? She is wearing her very best dress – her wedding dress from two years ago! It is silk satin, ivory colored, and embroidered. It has lace on the front and on the high neck. Do you like her hairdo?

LIFE IN NEW YORK

Jean lives in New York City. It is very hot in the summer, and the air is polluted. Do you see how dusty the air looks further down the street?

The tram is running on tracks on the street, like a train – but it is pulled by horses. Most traffic is with horses rather than cars. How do horses contribute to pollution? What kind of dust could be floating in the air? Is that healthy?

There are a few automobiles. Do you see the wheel of a car in the lower corner? Do you see its shiny headlight above the fender? People are happy that cars are becoming common, because they pollute much less than horses do!

People get sick from the heat and bad air.

The last days of horse-cars in Manhattan, c. 1917, public domain archival image

To stay healthy in the summer, Little Jean and her parents take a boat up the Hudson River to stay in the mountains at a hotel by a lake. This is where they stay, the Hillside House.

Everyone loves Jean, and the waitress wrote a poem for her:

> The pet of all the Hillside
> Was little Rose-bud Jean,
> She won the heart of everyone
> Wherever she was seen….

Here is Jean, three years old. How do you like her wooden sled?

Here is Little Jean and her mother.

Jean has embroidery on her white dress. Do you think Little Jean likes her hat?

At Christmas 1915, Little Jean is six. Her Grandpa Jimmy wrote:

> Little Jean was swamped with books and dolls and things and like a genuine descendant of the Kennedys nobody was allowed to touch them.

Do you let others touch your new Christmas presents?

ILLNESSES

In January 1916, there is an epidemic of "grippe" which is another name for flu. Grandpa Jimmy is very sick with it. He thinks he will die. Neighbors come and tell him of all the people they knew who had died. Do you think that was helpful? Uncle Rob, the doctor, comes to see him but can't stay because there are so many patients in the hospital with grippe. Aunt Jean lives with her father and she got sick too.

Little Jean gets bad ear infections. They hurt a lot! Why can't they be cured quickly? Because antibiotics have not yet been invented.

Jean needed surgery on the mastoid bone behind her ear. They had to cut her hair short for the surgery. In this picture, her hair has not yet grown long again.

Jean has thick blonde hair, and green eyes like her father.

Here is Jean with her mother, and her cousin Billy who is three. Billy lives in St. Louis, Missouri. He is Aunt Muggie's little boy.

They travel by train. It takes a whole day and night to get to New York! Why didn't they fly? They didn't have airplanes yet.

In the summer of 1916, Little Jean is six years old. There is a terrible polio epidemic in New York City and many have died.

Polio is a terrifying disease that especially strikes children and affects their muscles so they cannot walk, or their backs get twisted, or sometimes they cannot breathe and have to be put into an "iron lung" to breathe for them. They have the muscle damage for the rest of their life.

Parents try to protect their children by not allowing them to go places where there would be other children, like swimming pools or parks or movies.

Why don't we worry about that now? Because there is now a vaccine that is given to children when they are very young to prevent polio, and we no longer have the disease in most of the world.

Little Jean is in the mountains for the summer with her parents. Her father, "Pippy," had to return to the city to teach school in the fall, but Jean and her mother Jessie are staying in the mountains to be safe from the polio sickness.

Grandpa Jimmy loves to write and be funny. He thinks it is silly for Jean and her mother to stay in the mountains. At the end of September he writes:

> Jessie has not come back yet. Of course it would not do for little Jean to come back here as long as there is any cases of infantile paralysis within a radius of ten miles. There has not been a single case in Fordham but that does not matter. It might be there by and by, at least Pippy Johnston thinks so and Jessie and little Jean must stay in the woods like two bewildered chickens, but we are all hopeful that Pippy will be reasonable by and by, and trust to a wise Providence to guard his angel child. If not they will freeze to death in the high mountains where the snow is coming down already.

Do you think it is a good idea for Little Jean and her mother to keep away from the city?

By the end of October things have almost returned to normal, in time for Jean's seventh birthday on October 23, and her Aunt Jean's wedding on October 28.

WAR AND THE SPANISH FLU

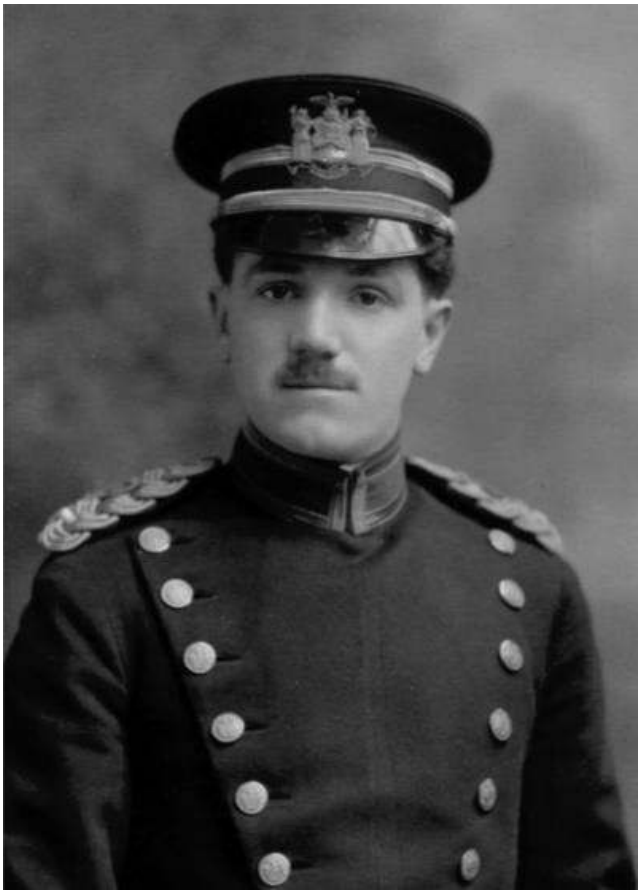
In 1918, the First World War is going on in Europe, and Scottish cousins are dying in the war, but the United States wants to stay out of it. They think Europe is far away and doesn't matter to them. President Wilson is re-elected because "He kept us out of the war."

Uncle Rob is stationed in Texas. He is a doctor with the soldiers guarding the border with Mexico. It is hot and dangerous and he wishes he were home. He thinks that Americans should stand up for what he thinks is right and help the Scots who are dying in the war. He is upset that his sisters and their husbands are having it so easy.

Texas is hot and has rattlesnakes and scorpions. What is the most dangerous thing there? Mosquitoes! They carry the yellow fever disease.

Uncle Rob gets sick with yellow fever. He returns to New York in December. He never gets better and he dies in June. Everybody is brokenhearted.

In April 1917, the United States joins in the war anyway.



In 1918 most of the world has been at war for four years and soldiers are traveling back and forth and living close together. Many of Jean's Scottish cousins have been killed in the war.

A new virus, the "Spanish Flu," appears among soldiers and is carried all over the world. It kills many, many more people than died in the war. It is the worst epidemic that ever has happened in the world. A Scottish cousin dies of the Spanish Flu.

The Flu hits the United States very badly in October and November of 1918. There is no cure, no test, and no vaccine. The only thing people can do is wash their hands, stay away from other people, and wear a mask. What do people do now if there is an epidemic?

Aunt Jean gets the Spanish Flu and nearly dies. She has such a high fever that her blonde hair falls out! And when it grows back, it is dark. This is a picture of Aunt Jean.

Little Jean's ninth birthday is October 23, 1918 – right in the middle of the epidemic! Do you think she can have a birthday party?

What a hard time it is! People were frightened about the war for years, and suddenly they are even more frightened about the Spanish Flu.

The First World War ends on November 11. Everyone is so relieved and happy! They want to celebrate! The mayor and the president and everyone wants to celebrate! So they stop staying in their homes and they go out in the streets and celebrate together! People think there will never be another war. That was "the war to end all wars." Is that true?

What do you think happens? Many people still have the flu. Soldiers are coming home and some have the flu. It is too soon to stop being isolated! The flu comes back and people start getting sick again. It lasts at least another four months, into the springtime.

Finally the flu is over and the war is over and people can begin to have a normal life again. So many people have died, so much has been destroyed, and now there is hope to build a new life.

Jean likes to read and write. She wrote a poem in her journal:

I pick a rose
And daisy too,
And violet
In shades of blue.

Grandpa Jimmy writes next to it:

I pick a rose,
I pick my nose.

How does Jean feel? Her feelings are hurt that Grandpa Jimmy is joking about her poem!

What does Little Jean want to be when she grows up?

Her father is a teacher. Her grandfather likes to read and is a writer. Jean wants to teach children to read and write.

About Little Jean

Little Jean Johnston grew up and still liked to read and to write poetry. While she was in college, the Great Depression started and people lost jobs and struggled to survive. Jean taught high school children in New York City about good books and writing.

Then World War Two started. Aunt Jean's son Bob was killed in the war. With her husband Clary Snow and little girl Judy, Jean moved to a farm in Williamsburg, Massachusetts, and had two more children, Betsy and Stephen. She became a remedial reading teacher.

1951 - Back: Clary and Judy; Front: Betsy, Stephen, Jean

Jean died of cancer in 1965. Eight months later, Judy's fourth child was born and named Jean. She has green eyes and thick blonde hair. This Jean is now a first-grade teacher in Parker, Colorado, and two of her daughters are elementary teachers. Stephen also had a daughter whom he named Jean. Judy wrote this book in 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic.