

Let's Live as Friends by Jerry Setterquist

There is racism in our communities and it is still very prevalent, but we should all work to adapt an attitude of friendliness. My earliest memories about my parents and my life taught me many things. As a young child in kindergarten, I remember a young Chinese boy who came into our class. He spoke no English and he was picked on by the class. My friend Marshall and I took him as our friend, we befriended him and we learned from him. He used to take pieces of paper and turn them into animals or birds. One day my friend's father came into the grocery store and dropped off some Chinese food. He told my dad, "Your boy is good to my boy. Here is supper." The best part is I had gone to bed before my father came home and I didn't get any of the food.

In 1939, Quaker Oats Company had an Aunt Jemima pancake lady and she came to Croquet to serve pancakes and sausage in the window of our store on a weekend. On Friday night she said, "Well I think I'll drive to Duluth to find a room." My dad told her, "No, go across the street and find a room." She replied, "They told me they're all full." My dad stormed out of the store and said to the owner of the hotel, "We need a room." He had said, "We can't do that you know." My dad reached across the counter, grabbed him by the shirt and tie, and said, "She's getting a room or you and I are going to have words." There was a supposed law on the books that no black person supposedly could stay in Croquet overnight until the 40's. She did get a room.

My mother was kind and friendly to everyone. One instance that I recall is when the Jehovah witnesses would do their missionary calls on Saturdays. My mother welcomed them into our house and served them juice and donated for their books. She was kind; even though they're books were very anti-Catholic at the time. When I grew up, I never knew about my Indian blood, even though we still visited family members on the reservation for Sunday picnics. As I think about my life, I never did experience discrimination but I saw it and heard it. I want us to be like my mother who loved everyone. To her there was nobody who was bad. Be like my father who helped all people. He believed in giving all a chance to succeed.