

# His Daughter Remembers

## Gail Gardner

By Cynthia Gardner

Gail and Delia Gardner were hospitable people and the best of all possible parents. Fortunately for me, their teenage daughter, they genuinely liked kids and were willing to let us push back the furniture, roll up the rugs, and dance on the hardwood floors in the living room. The rules for parties were simple:

- 1.) Clean up the kitchen.
- 2.) Roll the rugs back down.
- 3.) Lock the front door.
- 4.) Turn out all the lights.

Usually, the boys would all troop upstairs to talk hunting and fishing with my father or to seek advice from my sympathetic mother. Not until just before time to go home would the dancing begin.

One particular night I remember vividly. I was dancing in the dark front hall with the boy I liked best at the time, on the verge of a kiss, when suddenly the light went on. There was my father, at the foot of the stairs, in his bathrobe, his voice booming: "What's going on down here?"

Before I could die on the spot or gather my wits, my father had herded us all into the kitchen. "It's not just the noise", he said, as he opened the cupboard door. "It's the

vibrations." The bottle he took out of the cupboard was empty. Why he looked in the flour bin, I will never know, but he did, and sure enough, there was another empty bottle, which he held up for our inspection.

I had never seen my father in a bathrobe before and I never saw him in a bathrobe again, but there was no doubt that he meant business. What he said to his teenage audience was short and stern:

"You have not only abused my hospitality, you have also made me liable for contributing to the delinquency of minors. I could go to jail for this. Now go home. This party is over." And so it was. Without further ado, my father went back upstairs, leaving his

teenage guests with the shaming truth of his words.

Fortunately, none of the kids had a driver's license and no one was hurt, but the damage was done. To make matters worse, the next day my father discovered that two more bottles were missing from the case of imported sherry he kept with his fishing gear just inside the basement door.



Four generations of Gardners and Steigers have lived in this Prescott home.

The best of all possible parents believed me when told that I honestly didn't know about the drinking in the kitchen, and I wasn't scolded for 'dancing in the dark,' (which was my first thought when I saw my father at the foot of the stairs). My mother and father didn't rub things in with long lectures and my

friends were still my friends, but I seriously doubted if I would ever be allowed to have another party.

A few weeks later, when I asked I was truly surprised to hear: “Yes, just remember the rules. Clean up the kitchen. Roll the rugs back down. Lock the front door. Turn out all the lights.”

I could hardly believe my good fortune and neither could my friends, so we were on our best behavior, but during the course of the evening, one of the boys opened the cupboard door in the kitchen.

Inside, where the sherry used to be kept, there was a sign. Written on a piece of cardboard were the following words:

“IF YOU LITTLE BASTARDS  
THINK THERE’S ANY MORE,  
THERE AIN’T ANY.  
FROM NOW ON.”

And there wasn’t. There were lots more parties and as far as I know, no more teenage abuses of the Gardner hospitality. In the years that followed, many of those boys, who were now men, would come to visit my father. While the talk was mostly about hunting and fishing, there was always a chuckle when someone reminded my father of that sign in his kitchen cupboard.



## WILD CATTLE

(Continued from page 21)

One thing we should mention about working cattle, and very important it is, that is the earmarks. A brand on a cow determines the ownership. If my brand is on that cow, why it’s my cow. But there’s [also] an earmark.

There are various kinds of earmarks. We’ll mention just a few: there’s a split, a crop and split, underbit, overbit, crop, swallow-fork; all these various earmarks. And there’s dozens—hundreds of combinations: one in the right ear, one in the left ear. Well the purpose of the earmark is this: When you’re riding on the range and you see a bunch of cattle far away, you can put your glass on ‘em and whistle and they’ll put their ears up. You can’t see at a glance what the brand on those cattle is but you can see the earmarks right away. And working cattle in a herd, why you can’t turn every cow around to see what iron is on the hip or the ribs, but you can always see the earmarks. So working on cattle, cutting them out, separating them, you go by the earmarks entirely.



### *A Very Personal Earmark*

*Speaking of earmarks, a local surgeon tells a story about removing some skin cancers from Gail’s face and noticing that an old injury had left a prominent split on one ear. Since Gail was still sedated the doctor went ahead and repaired the ear. He was not prepared for the result when Gail awoke.*

*When he visited the recovering Gardner, the young doctor found Gail in a real state of anger with some unkind words aimed at him. Gail was shouting, “Some son-of-a-bitch ruined my swallerfork.” Grandson Gail Steiger remembers that, “When we went to the VA days later to bring Papa home he was still mad about losing his swallow-fork.”*