

Kentland Blue

By Marie O'Donnell

Uncle Otis had a lot of influence on me because he spoiled me shamefully. I think, at that time, I was the granddaughter he never had. If I wanted something, I got it...period. My grandmother once said in front of him that I thought I should have anything I wanted. He looked at her and said, very matter-of-factly, "She should, and I'll make sure she gets it." He was going to give me piano lessons so I could play the pianos in the music room. I was going to make my "debut" at the mansion (that sounds so odd these days), and, as I have written, he was going to have my wedding there when I got married and I would walk down the main staircase in my gown...which I'm sure he would have paid for. Ah, dreams. The problem with them is that you have to wake up.



Uncle Otis' favorite color was blue, he called the shade "Kentland Blue," and it was his mother's favorite color. That's the color all of the shutters and trim on the farm buildings were originally painted. The color was dark blue, but not quite Navy blue. It was a very rich "blue" blue, if that makes sense.

Unfortunately, there was little maintenance, so the color faded to more of a washed-denim color. At the time we moved there, my favorite color was green—as told in the ring story. I had a Kelly Green snowsuit with the leopard fur trim. Later, however, that changed and blue has been my favorite color most of my life. Maybe it's the color of "security," because the years we lived there were so carefree.

When Uncle Otis was growing up his mother was his world. I don't ever remember hearing him mention his father. He talked about how much his mother sacrificed for him to be able to go to law school, and he told me about how he made his first million dollars. When he was a young attorney, he was assigned a case that was very difficult. He worked on it for months, never quite being able to find the legal precedent that he needed. One evening, totally exhausted, he fell asleep over the law book he was researching. When he woke up the book was on his lap and opened. As he scanned the pages he saw the case information that he had been looking for. They went to court and won, and his payment for the case was a million dollars. That was the money he used to purchase Kentland Farms. I don't remember if his mother lived there or passed away before he moved to the farm. I think he did a lot of renovation before he moved in, and she may have passed away while that was being done, but I'm not sure. He did a lot of plastering, painting, refinishing floors, lighting, and so forth. He was still doing them when we moved there. The library was finished during that time. I remember he was so proud of it. It was my favorite room. It had that soft lighting and such



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a comfortable feeling. I've loved libraries and books ever since I first set foot in that room.

When I was a senior in high school we had to write about a time we remembered that brought back emotional feelings. I wrote about sitting on Uncle Otis' lap as a small child while he played the piano; watching his fingers caress the piano keys while the strains of "Beautiful Dreamer" filled the room. I felt safe, and loved, and totally happy. I can still see the old sweater he wore, with holes in it and worn spots on the elbows. He always wore leather bedroom slippers, and, I'm not sure he ever bought a new pair all of the time I knew him. He wasn't much for clothes. Ruby, who was his secretary when we first moved there, was always on to him about his appearance. She picked out his dress clothes, and, he always looked elegant when he was dressed up. But, around the house, you wouldn't have known he had a penny. There was no pretense about him.