

## 14. **Telling Tales**

I hit a personal low when I was only about six years old. We had a family reunion at my grandparents' farm. As the oldest grandchild, I felt too grown-up to play with the "kids," and the adults thought I was far too young to join them. My aunts, uncles, grandparents, and parents would either pinch my cheek, chuck my chin, or tell me to run along.

After a while, I noticed that even the younger grandchildren left me out. I really couldn't play with two- and three- year-olds. They didn't tell me to run along, but I felt left out anyway.

It seemed almost as if I didn't belong to this family. I was just an observer, watching from the sidelines.

Finally, I went outside, sat on the windmill pump, and called Skipper, an ugly farm mutt. That silly stupid dog paid more attention to me than anyone had all day. I remember petting him, saying over and over, "Nobody loves me." He looked up at me with liquid canine eyes, licked my hand, and listened as I cried.

*Of course, when my family came outside and found me crying and talking to a dog I didn't even like, they all laughed and called me, "Silly." But I wasn't silly; I was sad.*