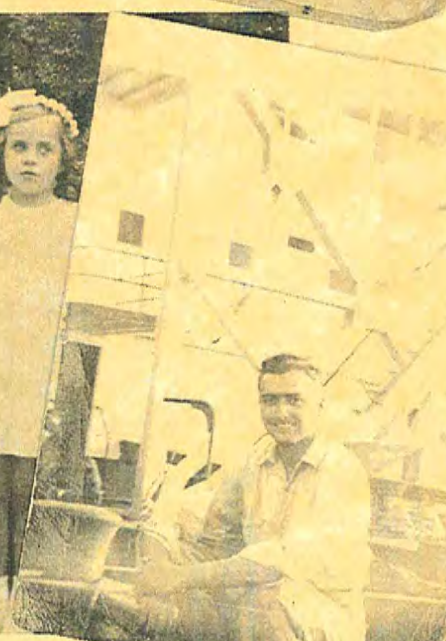
Life and Letters



Volume XIVb
Fall 1995

One of my favorite passages in literature is a dialogue between a lion and a boy. Aslan, the lion who reigns as king over Narnia in C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia,* tells Shasta, the young protagonist in A Horse and His Boy: *I tell no-one any story but his own.* I grasped its meaning as a teenager during my rereading of the *Chronicles* (some of my favorite books), and through the years I have often embraced that quote, sometimes cloaking its deeper truth to defend its use as a bar to protect the privacy of my story.

I tell no-one any story but his own. That's true. But the power of paradox also teaches us of Everyman. His story, too, is our story. The bargains, the deceptions, the restorations. The fear, the forgiveness. Thank God for story. What would our lives be without it? Story shapes our days from the first communication of "Sleep well?" and "Good morning!" to the tabletalk questions of "What'd you do at school today?" and "How was work?" Each of us has a story to respond with. Some stories, as you'll see in this volume of **LIFE & LETTERS**, are told with a certain style--a punctuated force, a subtle, quiet offering, a humorous retelling. All of them are our stories, told to be received in the sign of love. We offer to you these stories of **LIFE & LETTERS**.

Joan Stear
USL, Lafayette, Louisiana
Fall 1995

Front Cover (clockwise from upper right hand corner): Melba Martin with Aunt Ollie; Audrey Daniel; Melvin Daniel; Jean Smith (second from left); Pat Hough with grandfather; Rosa Bieber's mother; Mildred Joy; Lois Diehl; (center) Joan Stear, 1st grade

This XIVth volume of **Life & Letters**

is lovingly dedicated to

David Spring Stear and Marjorie Belle Matherne Stear,

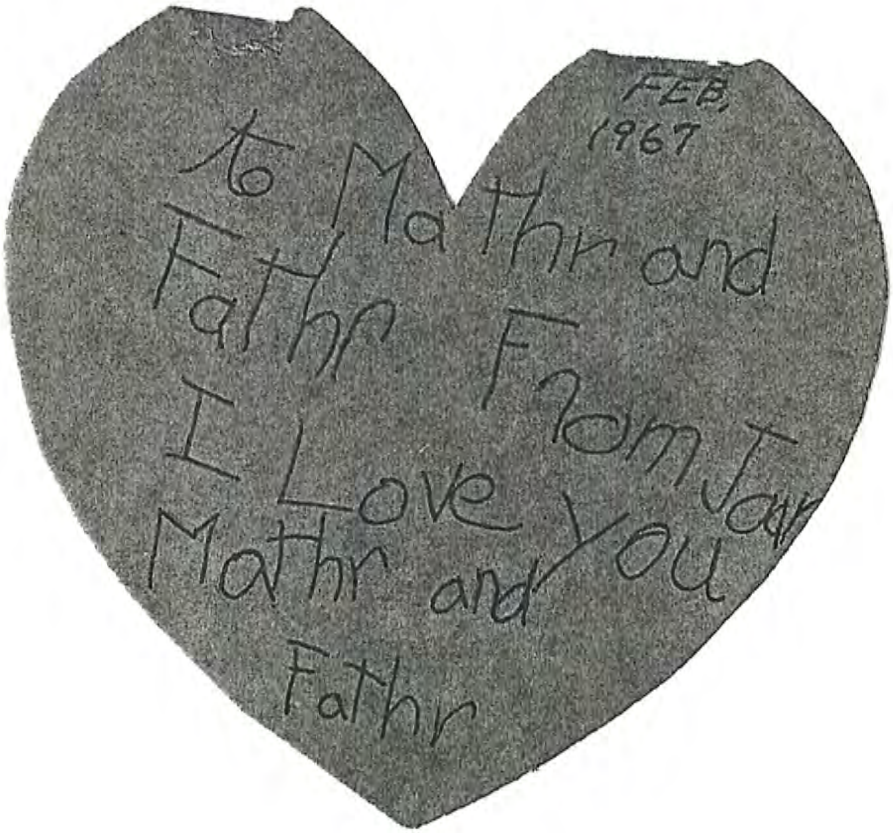
my dad and mom.

At six years old and into adulthood--my love for you is still the same.

➞ ➞ ➞

Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust,
no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything.
It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen.

1 Corinthians 13:7



Life & Letters
Fall 1995--Thursday Class

Seated, l. to r.: Joan Stear; Marge DeVillier; Evelyn Stafford;
Rosa Bieber; Jean Smith; Mildred Barry
Standing, l. to r.: Jake Valentine; Orpha Valentine; Joan Ireland; Woody Hebert;
Melvin Daniel; Ruth Maher; Melba Martin; Mildred Joy; Pat Hough; Audrey Daniel
Missing from photo are: Lois Diel; Ruth Oates; Betty Shoemaker

LIFE & LETTERS thanks the University of Southwestern Louisiana
and Lafayette General Medical Center for their continued support.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUNT OLLIE
by
Melba Martin

Just as I was turning my thoughts from my early years and preparing to move on, I realized there was a gap in my memoirs that should be filled with some of my recollections of Aunt Ollie.

Aunt Ollie was born Leona Olive Holland, the eldest child of Hampton Holland and Sadie Davis, my maternal grandparents. She graduated in 1923 with the first class to finish school at the Bell City High School. She attended SLI (now USL) for a short time and also worked at the Hayes Post Office before she married Howard Andrus.

Grandma sometimes referred to Aunt Ollie as the "tender-hearted one," for she cried easily and often. During what seemed like an ordinary conversation, Aunt Ollie would sometimes begin to cry for no apparent reason; that is, no reason that was apparent to me. Her strange behavior caused me to become very uneasy when she and I were in the same room. When I talked to Mamma about my uneasiness, she explained that when I was about a year old Aunt Ollie had lost her only baby, a little girl. During the months before, while she waited for her baby, she put together a beautiful layette, as most expectant mothers do. Each piece lay neatly tucked away in her cedar chest ready for the time when her baby would wear all the delicate garments. But when the baby was delivered, something went wrong and the little girl died the same day she was born.

Aunt Ollie kept her baby's clothes for many years. It was generally known in the family that from time to time she would open her cedar chest and sadly lift each piece, look at it with tear-filled eyes and then carefully put it back in its place. I never saw any of the little clothes, but I used to imagine what pieces there were and how they looked. Since Aunt Ollie was very good with a crochet hook, there would have been tiny bootees, a bonnet and perhaps a little sacque, all with the same theme carried out in the delicate stitches. Pink or blue ribbons, long enough to tie in bows, would have served as fasteners. There surely would have been several handmade batiste dresses with tiny tucks and white flowers stitched on the sheer white cloth with a single strand of thread from a skein of embroidery floss.

At some point in her life, Aunt Ollie must have found the strength to part with those bittersweet reminders of what would never be, for after she died they were not found among her belongings.

For many years Aunt Ollie and Uncle Howard lived in the Opelousas area. Once each year Mamma and I would spend a week with them in August for our combined vacation and school shopping trip. Mamma's shopping list for me almost never varied:

1 $2.00 dress and 2 $1.00 dresses
2 cotton slips, 50¢ and 3 pairs of panties, 25¢ per pair

1 pair of shoes, usually $1.00, and 3 pairs of socks, 15¢ per pair
1 writing tablet, 5¢; 3 pencils with erasers, 5¢; and 1 box of 16 Crayola crayons, 15¢

When our shopping was finished and Mamma was satisfied that I was "ready for school," she Aunt Ollie and I always went to a place near the clothing store for nickel ice cream cones.

One year our annual visit with Aunt Ollie and Uncle Howard included a very special trip for the four of us. We went to Baton Rouge to see the new capitol building. I don't remember being hot or crowded during this trip even though it was August and their 1934 or 1935 car had only one seat. What I do remember was the eager anticipation I felt as Uncle Howard drove toward our destination at about thirty miles per hour. I was completely awestruck when we reached what seemed to be the end of the road and Uncle Howard drove onto the huge ferry boat that would take us across the Mississippi River. There were cars ahead of us as well as behind us, and all were boarding the ferry. We soon found ourselves wedged in on all sides by other vehicles. As soon as the ferry began to move, we got out of the car. Waves pelting the sides of the ferry created a slight up-down motion causing my legs to feel a bit unsteady as I walked toward the side of the boat. As I held the railing firmly, I watched rainbows appear and disappear as the sun shone on the mist created by the waves. As we neared the other side of the river, the largest city I had ever seen seemed to get bigger and bigger and the capitol building taller and taller.

When the ferry docked, we quickly went to the car and waited our turn to drive off. Uncle Howard had no trouble finding the capitol building for it could be seen for miles around. He just kept driving in the general direction of it until we got there.

At last we were walking up the steps that led to the entrance. Aunt Ollie and I stopped at each step to read the deeply chiseled name and date of admission to the Union of each of the forty-eight states. I was deeply impressed with everything about the building. Some of my most vivid memories are of the many statues, the extensive use of marble and the bronze relief map of Louisiana with the names of the sixty-four parishes that encircle it. However, my biggest thrill of the day, which even surpassed the ferry ride, was looking down from the observation tower of the building. Everything--cars, sidewalks, trees, people--looked so small that it was hard to comprehend it all at once. We stayed on the tower a long time. No one was in a hurry to leave. We just walked around the deck over and over looking at everything that was visible from our unique vantage point.

As preoccupied as I was with all the new sights I was taking in, I couldn't help noticing Aunt Ollie's jovial mood. Until this day, I had never seen her laugh. When someone said something that pleased her or that was funny, she would just smile and sit very still. But on this day she seemed to be very happy. I don't remember what caused her to laugh., but only that she laughed.

The next day Daddy came to get Mamma and me. As we said our good-byes, there were tears in Aunt Ollie's eyes. I suppose Grandma was right. Aunt Ollie was the "tender-hearted one."

WHAT IS A GRANDMOTHER?

by

Pat Hough

There are many wonderful grandmothers in this world. They have managed to survive intact for ages! Each grandmother offers something different to her perfect grandchildren. Most grandmothers overcome the "generation gap." Each grandmother has her own abilities to amply supply the needs of her grandchild, that is, as a grandparent. The relationship of grandmother-grandchild is unique.

One grandmother might give money for piano or dancing lessons while another might bake brownies to serve when they go to "Nanny's house." I know my own Mother always had fried chicken for my children and their favorite vegetables. The yummy banana pudding topped off all their expectations.

You can ask any grandmother about her grandchildren. She will quickly whip out her billfold and tell you how lovely they are and share their age and activities. Her face becomes radiant and youthful as the Rembrandt photos are viewed.

I know all this because I am a grandmother. Yeah! I think of my grandchildren as a beautiful bouquet....There may be a few that resemble weeds, but they add to the bouquet! They are so different in looks and personality. Likes and dislikes are in all mankind, but especially in grandchildren. That's o.k., as each is unique, adding zest to my life.

They like different foodstuffs, T.V. programs, cereals and vegetables. Believe it or not, they all like macaroni and cheese! It must be the universal food for children!

My grandchildren are all talented. Perhaps they take after their grandmother Pat. My oldest granddaughter, Dana is an artist. She has always drawn well. She likes her work, which is hostessing for banquet dinners. Her brother Matthew, a senior in high school, ranks fourth place in debate in Louisiana! Brooke, their sister, a freshman in high school likes, English horseback riding. She has excelled in many competitions in her riding performances in Louisiana and Texas. In her bedroom, one of the walls is covered with awards! Rachel is in Grade 6 and is a wonderful swimmer and skater. She plays the piano and is also with a dancing troop. Dustin will be 12 years old soon and he follows close in the shadow of his daddy in the sport of golfing. This summer he excelled in a golf training program that he attended in Laredo, Texas. He was the best young golfer. Of course, as his grandmother I know. The video of his plays were proof enough for me! My youngest grandchild, Kenzie, is brilliant and beautiful--I call her my Barbie Doll.

What is a grandmother? These thoughts have entered my mind...What is in the heart of our grandchildren? Better still what's in their memory banks? Will we be able to love and nurture them as they grow and prepare for the future? "If there is anything better than to be loved, it is in being loving!"

WHAT IS A GRANDMOTHER? Will I be adored? Is there a generation gap? Am I loving, understanding and helpful? Let us look at some of the lighter side!

→A grandmother is someone who tells you what your mother did when she was a little girl.

→A grandmother can tell you memories of her childhood, but does not remember own age!

→A grandmother makes all kinds of food when she knows you are coming for a visit. She expects you to eat every morsel she prepared.

→A grandmother is an older woman, the mother of one of your parents, who insists on spoiling you. She is ready to save you from your parents!

→A grandmother cheers for you at baseball games, even when you aren't playing. She keeps watching for a "bat" and fears you might get rabies.

→A grandmother gives you a Great Dane Puppy when your parents have forbidden you to have any kind of dog.

→A grandmother cheers for you at your football games even though she is not aware of what's happening. She thinks the "Pigskin" is something eaten by Cajuns!

→A grandmother sends a birthday card to you with the wrong age on the front, but inside is a "bill of apology."

→A grandmother has fried chicken and banana pudding when you arrive to visit her.

With these thoughts, I'll leave you with some quotes:

It is not possible for civilization to flow backwards while there is Youth in the world. --Helen Keller

Older men declare war. But it is the youth that must fight and die.--Herbert Hoover

It is with regret that I was busy with my career in the early years of my grandchildren.

→→→→→→→

SOUNDS OF THE SUMMER WIND
by
Jean Smith

You could almost smell the storm a comin'! Rocking in the old porch glider, I swung back and forth--back and forth, real slow like--thinking about that very thing. The air was too hot--and deathly still. Then, squeeeak--BAM! Startled, I jumped as the screen door banged and Josey strode across the wooden planks. She walked quickly to the porch's edge, stood very still, and looked to the southwest for signs of trouble. After wiping away a sticky line of sweat trickling from her left temple, she rolled her sleeves up high, and raised her hand above her eyes shading them from the scorching sun. Slowly scanning the wide horizon, Grandma gazed out yonder--far and away--where Oklahoma's dusty land touches the summer sky. The metal glider squeaked and sang as I rocked, waiting for her to speak. Finally, she put both hands on her hips and breathed in--slow and deep. Then, she turned to me, "Storm's a comin', Jeanie--a Grandpappy storm!" Right away, even before you could see the purple-dark clouds begin to roll in, Josey knew. Josey always knew--with a sixth sense.

"Afore too long," she predicted, "there'll be a torrent of rain a whippin' over the prairie--whippin' and ridin' fast on the back of a howlin' summer wind." She paused. "A hot angry wind," she added, "one a cryin' with long, sad howls--like coyotes at dusk."

Wide-eyed and eager, I asked, "How soon, Grandma?" She smiled at me, "Oh, Jeanie, it'll be awhile yet." Josey walked back to the door, turned, and beckoned me to follow, "Come on. Let's us go wash up the dinner dishes afore the old storm comes a roarin' in."

Following Grandma back to her kitchen, carefully we circled around my cousins--Retha, Carol and George Eddie--sitting on the linoleum floor, intently involved in a serious game of jacks. Going past the players, I grabbed a flour sack dishtowel off the hook, gave a light playful pop towards Carol, but missed. Then, while Josey washed dishes in her big chipped-enamel pan, I dried and put away, until, sure enough, pretty soon the storm's first sigh floated in, lightly fluttering the curtains at the open window. Feeling the hot, dry, little breeze barely kiss my face, I sucked in a breath, quick and short, and stood very still...waiting. My ears perked up. Catching the sound of that first, low, steady rumbling--deep and distant--I looked up at Josey and grinned broadly. Hallelujah! We both knew...it was coming! "'Tater wagons, Grandma!"

"'Tater wagons!" Josey laughed. Quickly, we took hands and hurried through the kitchen door, tripping over the jacks and around the busy players. Disinterested and disgruntled, Georgie glanced up, Retha shrugged slightly, and Carol stuck out her tongue as we darted on by.

"Let's don't miss this one, Jeanie," Grandma whispered. "It's gonna be a dandy!"

Clasping hands, Josey and I ran across the front room and quickly out, onto the porch and to the glider--and happily, side by side, we plunked down. For storm watching, the view from Grandma's old metal glider was the best in all Creek County. Always, the rusty springs squeaked and groaned, complaining loudly as we rocked back and forth, watching each and every storm. Josey and I--we loved them all!

Loved them all--from the spring showers skipping gently toward us, across the distant blackjack leaves--those shy little rains with tiny droplets that sprinkle down, smelling like clean bed sheets hung to dry on the backyard clothesline--to the long slow soakers baptizing Ed's emerging cotton stalks into life. We loved them all--from winter's snow swirls dancing across the land in small cold puffs, stinging red faces and leaving the oak's brown branches hanging heavy with icy-white and silver stalactites--to the angry blue-northers that come in sudden surprise, swooping fast and beating hard at Josey's back door.

Each storm was better than the last! And we loved them all--from fall's giant sheet-lightning, flashing like enormous neon signs in the night sky--to the little dust-devils kicking up dry black land after it's bare of crops, those feisty trumpeting whirlwinds, heralding the first heavy, dime-sized, splattering drops of cool autumn rain--to the dark Halloween clouds sailing ominously across an orange harvest moon.

We loved them all, Josey and I! But if we had a favorite, it might have been summer's majestic storms with their anvil-topped clouds, high and white--those giant, grumpy, cumulus thunderheads, grouching and complaining, before dropping their sudden beating-hard downpours. But, the most spectacular show of Oklahoma's black skies--breathtaking beyond comparison--was the dark hot night's blue-bright electrical storms, with the raging and yowling of fierce lion-winds, thunderbolts crashing hysterically in wild abandon, and the black heavens crowned with sky-splitting streaks of golden fireworks!

Oh, yes, Josey and I loved them all--I guess, even to the black tornados wheeling in the elements like a giant snake--though I'd never seen one! Josey had, though! She said Grandpa Ed's farm was right in the path--that wide sweep of country from Nebraska's southern plains, through Iowa, Kansas and Oklahoma, and finally over the Red River Valley and on into the north edge of Texas--that path they call "Tornado Alley." Josey said the tornados were savage, though. You don't really mess much with tornados, she said. But still, Josey and I, we couldn't help it, we adored the excitement, the violence.....and the power! We were emotional twins, Josey and I. Two of a kind.

Snuggling close as the 'tater wagons rumbled louder, we began our "rain watching" ritual. It had started way back the first time Josey told me about the olden days, when potato wagons, loaded full and fresh from the fields, used to roll right by Ed's farm. With wheels bouncing and bumping along from rut to rut, they rolled down the dirt road and over the wooden bridge, past the Four Mile Corner, and on to Bristow...and to market. You could always hear the wagons rumbling slowly by, she said--just a grumbling along in that deep, heavy, drum-rolling voice--sounding like some far-off grumpy god of thunder.

"Tell me the stories, Grandma," I had begged. And Josey would begin. One time, a story about this, another about that, but all stories that I will tell you in due time--one by one. Family truths and family myths--and none of us really know which is which. This time Grandma had just started telling me about----

This time Grandma had just started telling me about--well, right off we get interrupted by Uncle Clayton, who drives up in his old green pickup turning in over the cattle guard, through the grove of trees where the red bird sings, and right on up to the front gate.

"Hi, Momma...and Jeanie!" waved Clayton as he got down from the truck.

"Whatcha doin' here, son?"

"Just passin' by from doin' some work over at David Bath's place. Got a couple a ripe melons he says to give ya," Clayton said. "They thumped out real good!" He heaved the big stripped melons from the back of the pick-up and walked towards the porch. "How's my son doin'?" Clayton asked, "Is he treatin' his cousins right?"

"Clayton Wyatt, George Eddie is always behaving hisself! Don't you go a picking on my favorite grandson!"

Clay laughed and then looked a might more serious as he said, "They say the weather's done turned nasty down the road a piece--over near Stroud, they say." He looked the sky over. "Seems like twister weather to me," he said. "Hot as hell and still as death. You an' Jeanie gonna git yourselves inside like you got a lick a sense?"

"Heck, no!" Josey said.

"Heck, no!" said I.

"We don't see no mother cloud yet, Clayton Wyatt! Git!" Josey didn't much take to being bossed around by her own kid.

Well, Uncle Clayton just shakes his head and says he's going inside and get himself a frosty glass of sweet tea--and set a spell with Ed. Uncle Clayton was real nice. Sure didn't have much luck with wives, though. Josey started telling me in our little "porch talk" that day, that Uncle Clayton's first wife, Imogene, had died of a ruptured appendix, and then, George Eddie's momma, Jewel, had died in childbirth--and that was why Josey was raising him. She said Jewel left this world about three weeks after Georgie's birth and that when she did--Grandpa Ed was in the field working, and a turtle dove came and sat on his old straw hat--perched right on its brim and wouldn't get off--so it was right then Grandpa knew that Jewel had died. Sadly, Ed walked back home. Josey came out on this very porch and started in telling him--but looking down at the ground, Ed just shook his head. "No, I already know," he said, and he went inside so Grandma couldn't see his tears. "That turtle dove done

told him," Josey said, "The sweet cooing bird is always a sign of mourning," she said, "Sure as one comes close like that, it means the little bird is a telling you of someone's passing." Then, she said, when Ed went in the house, the thunder and lightening started in, and there comes a downpour that didn't let up for a solid week--a good hard rain--one that rests the weary body and washes the soul, pure and clean.

With Josey hugging me, sitting for a spell and resting her eyes, I was thinking about George Eddie with no momma and all. Comfortable and secure in each other's arms, we drifted off into a light little cat-nap, dozing and dreaming of happy times. It was then, in deathly stillness, the black mother cloud crept close. Peacefully, we slept. Quietly and stealthily, the first little trail hung low, slipping down from above...unnoticed.

And then, suddenly...the thunder! It crashed and the lightning cracked and sizzled down out of the boiling sky, striking the lone cedar in the prairie just beyond Josey's gate. The giant tree split before our eyes--split with a ringing hollow crack--clean and loud--so that it fell blazing on the ground like God's own fiery furnace.

Then the howling started, the strong sad wind yelling with long coyote cries. The sky growled--churned and heaved and roared. We heard now, the sound of the Devil's angry freight train barreling our way. The blackest cloud spun and gathered strength, twisted and skipped madly toward us-- touching the ground and rising again and down again heading for Josey's house with breakneck speed. "Twister!! Oh, my God...Twister!!"

Screaming, Josey and I ran into the house. Quickly, Uncle Clayton and Grandpa jumped up, swooped us four kids into their arms, two and two, and carried us through the kitchen and out the back. Josey followed last. Running against the hard wind, fast as their legs would carry them, they dashed across the back yard and to the storm cellar. Putting Georgie and Retha down next to Josey, Uncle Clayton bent over and heaved open the wooden door--and down the steps into the mouth of the damp dark hole we went!

"You kids, set in the corner! Git on!" Josey yelled. Then, she spoke softer, trying to stop our shaking, "It's okay, younguns. Everything's gonna be okay." Uncle Clayton slammed the door shut, and he, Ed, and Josey, all three, held on tightly to the door's long rope, pulling down with all their might. Over our own terrified cries, I heard above our heads--the tornado's scream of death.

Then, at last....all was quiet again. "Thank goodness! Yeah! Yeah and hurrah!" Jumping up and down, we kids clapped and cheered and ran for the cellar door.

"No!" Josey hollered, pushing us back in the corner. "You younguns stay put! This one's an old snake eyes--two in a row." Ed peeked through a little crack between the door's planks and saw a second streak of whirling wind dipping along behind--ready to strike. My cousins and I hunkered together in a little heap as the last funnel snaked down, striking with a fury that, in comparison, made the first swirling air look like a child's tiny top! The giant twister dipped and surged with a wicked

force--way too strong for the adults to keep the cellar door closed. "Stay back in the corner!" ordered Uncle Clayton, "Don't none a you kids dare move a muscle!" The killer wind raged...and the cellar door opened wide. Still holding onto the rope, Clayton, Ed, and Josey were lifted off the ground and high into air. Hovering on the damp floor, we kids could see past them, too, as they were hanging from the rope--holding on for dear life! Less than a mile away, the long surging finger dipped again from the mother cloud, one last time--and in slow motion, or so it seemed, David Bath's house rose, twisting and turning high into the black sky of Oklahoma, and exploded into a thousand tiny splinters! For an instant, the world stood still...and then....Josey's cellar door slammed safely shut once more.

→ → →

P.S. The Baths, too, were in their storm cellar and were unharmed--though watermelons were flung for miles around and live chickens were stripped of their feathers, or so the story goes. Anyhow, true to the pioneer spirit, Josey, Ed, Clayton, and all the neighbors for miles around got together the following week, gave a house raising party, and donated from their own homes, clothing and blankets and dishes-- everything needed. David and Catherine Bath and their six children came out not only unscathed, but better off. The tough settlers of Oklahoma "belonged to the land," as our state song says, "And the land they belonged to was grand!" They knew it--they loved it--and they kept it grand by caring for one another--and showing it!

→→→→→→→→

THE BOYS FROM BENEDICTINE MILITARY SCHOOL

by

Mildred L. Joy

As I turned from being the tomboy, I realized that there was a big difference in guys and gals. The young guys who lived across the street from me were gorgeous. Although there was a six foot wall that kept us separated, they had to walk to school every morning and back home down the same streets that I walked. That's when Tina and I would try our best to flirt with them and get them into a conversation. Naturally, the flag went up for me because they were Catholic and I was Baptist. Perhaps that is why I was so interested. At that time, in my household, boys were off limits, and Catholic boys were another no-no. If my Mama had found out that we were flirting, Tina and I both would have been in hot water, probably locked in our rooms for life.

My bedroom window overlooked the huge garden of the home for the boys boarding school. I really enjoyed their garden. In the mornings and evenings they would walk up and down the paths in the garden chanting their prayers. I thought then and still think it is a wonderful way to carry your every thought to the Lord. I know, however, that they must have had a ritual chant that they had learned. Still, their praying was truly a pleasant sound floating through my bedroom window.

Tina, who lived downstairs, and I finally worked up enough courage to start a conversation with several of the boys. I fell head over heels with one of the Cadets! Oh, he was handsome, especially in his blue grey uniform. His blue eyes literally said more than his mouth did. His wavy brown hair,...and oh, so tall.... Oh, my, was he a handsome specimen! We went to several of my afternoon tea dances at school. I was so proud and happy to have him attend with little ole me. We would have to meet at the school, though, because at age fifteen Mama still wouldn't let me date.

There is absolutely nothing like that first love, even if it was stolen hours. Maybe, just maybe, that's what made it so enjoyable. It was forbidden. We would meet at the corner confectionery store and have a coke or we would meet at the ice cream parlor further down the street for a soda on a Sunday. It was a wonderful year, and I hated to see it end, but he graduated, went off to college and met and married a girl in Savannah.

At age sixty-nine he is no longer the gorgeous blue-eyed young man that I loved so deeply but he has put on weight, as I have, and that wavy brown hair has now thinned. He is still married to the same sweet little lady he met and married during his college years. How do I know this--my girlfriend Tina, who is now Catholic, keeps me informed as to the happenings since her children went to school with his children. That was a happy time in all of our lives.

The next year when I turned sixteen, I had a real crush on another one of the Benedictine Cadets. He was not as tall, not as handsome, nor did he have blue eyes. I did get courage enough to bring him home to meet Mama and Daddy, but they didn't care for him because he was Catholic. Still, that only made me more interested. Were they prejudiced, oh, yes! He would come to the house and we would play cards. He gave me my first piece of jewelry from a boy. Sterling silver,

too! I kept it until my first granddaughter became a teenager, and who knows where it is now. I have never seen another bracelet like it in all these years. Our young romance ended when I moved out to the country. What a shame!

What really makes me angry is the fact that I had to ask the boy next door, Frank Moye, a trombone player, to go to the graduation banquet with me. He was from our rival school, Savannah High School. I asked and he accepted. Harold was from a rival school, too, but that was different. Harold was the one that I personally would have picked and wanted to go with, but Mama said, "No! If you go to the banquet, Frank will take you or you won't go!" In raising my children, I tried very hard not to pick the boys for my girls or show partiality so as to put them directly in each other's arms.

The young man I did choose to marry was a strong, silent type. Even back then I did all the talking. We were complete opposites. He was a grand provider for the children and myself. He still is a good provider for the children who wish it. He always said he was six feet tall--not so--he is a little taller than myself. The most he could have been was five feet ten inches tall. We were married twenty-four and a half years and had two boys and three girls.

We had a few ups and downs as most married folks do, but that's what makes the world go around. It also makes a person appreciate the mountain tops. You just have to remember, the valleys have to be traveled before reaching the utmost mountain top. Just remember that life and love are always there to give and to receive no matter the color of the eyes, hair or the height.

Honey Bee, Honey Bee
by
Joan Ireland

A honey bee landed on my daughter's rose bush this morning in search of nectar. It didn't stay long, though. The lone blossom on the rose bush looked faded and showed signs of aging. No fragrance, no nectar, nothing there to keep two wings flapping in the breeze. Poor Honey Bee--neglected, hungry, always searching for something to fill that big hole in the tummy.

Honey Bee! Honey Bee! Let me tell you of an epicurean feast you can get in Aroostook County in the northern most part of Maine, that state that hugs the Canadian border.

Lush fields teeming with clover, red clover, some so dark they are almost like garnets sparkling in the fields with just a hint of dew that fell during the night. Blossoms larger than a robin's egg nodding their heads as though overcome with the nectar they hold within their depth.

It is spring. The ice and snow has relinquished its grip on the land, and the fields yield a fragrance so sweet even a human can detect. The land once again belongs to the bees and the butterflies.

BUZZ, BUZZ, Buzz, buzzzzz. Quiet solitude in these fields of clover. Honey Bee, you can buzz and taste the nectar in every red blossom. Just a moment! Stop the flight! See over there by the fence that the humans put up. Something white! I'll fly over and check it out.

White clover, pure white clover! Did you ever see the like? Yum. Yum. So sweet, so luscious, so fragrant. I must stay here a while.

Later Honey Bee flew back home, home to the hive where the Queen Bee lived and stored the nectar she had collected in the honey combs. Honey Bee was saturated, happy and content with her searching for the day, elated with the bounty received from the luxurious red and white clovers of Aroostook County.

Honey Bee took one last look at the clover field before he slept for the night. Wait a moment! What is this noise? Laughter! Singing! Joyous music as two little girls ran into the fields of clover. No, not too little, but they are running and skipping about, happy, free, and searching for clover. Can they be Honey Bee Humans?

They are gathering clover, big fat blossoms and placing them in their baskets. What a queer way to collect nectar!

What are you doing?" buzzed Honey Bee.

Kerry said, "I'm picking red clover blossoms so my Aunt Jo and Mom can make honey. I need to get forty blossoms of this beautiful, red clover."

Her cousin, Patti, chimed in, "Yes, I'm getting clover blossoms too, but all I have to get are twenty white blossoms. We'll leave plenty for you, little Honey Bee." Then Patti and Kerry skipped away gathering their clover blossoms. Honey Bee started to fly back to her hive, but she just had to see what those two human girls were doing with that clover.

Two little girls returned to their hive, one large cottage nestled in by huge trees along a rippling brook, built by their Dads, and Grampy Pierce. Honey Bee hovered near the window and saw Kerry's Mom counting red clover blossoms--one, two, three, four, oh, this makes me so sleepy, It's worse than counting sheep, five, BUZzzzzzz, thirty-eight, thirty-nine, forty. "That's enough!" shouted Kerry. "The recipe only calls for forty red blossoms."

Then Honey Bee saw Patti's Mom counting white blossoms, one, two, three. Oh dear me! Time for a nap. Buzzzz, still counting, nineteen, twenty. "Stop" yelled Patti. "We only need twenty white blossoms." Honey Bee almost lost her perch on the window sill.

"Don't forget the roses!" cried David as he was scanning the ancient recipe.

Honey Bee saw a white rose sitting on the window sill in a glass of water. The fragrance from the rose even overpowered the scent of the clover blossoms. Honey Bee sure wanted to taste the nectar of this rose but what are they doing? That strange Human Boy is tearing off the petals and counting, "One, two, three, four, five, six petals." Then he drops them in with the clover blossoms.

Just a minute! Is there a Queen Human Bee living in this hive? Yes! I see the Queen Human putting a lot of some white stuff in a pan with some water. Now she put a fire under the pan. "How queer these humans are," thought Honey Bee as she buzzed around the screened window.

Honey Bee then saw Patti's Mom dump the clover and rose blossoms in the pan on the stove along with a small spoonful of something from a small jar. Can they really be making honey? What a strange way to make honey if that is what they are really doing!

Honey Bee saw Kerry's Mom get a large clear bowl from under the cupboard and place it on the table. Then she put a pan that had thousands of little holes in it on top of this pan. The Queen Human brought that pan of water with the blossoms and poured it in the pan that had thousands of holes and a miracle happened.

Clear, golden, fragrant honey came seeping down through those holes into the large white bowl. Honey that smelled so good, Honey Bee tried to get through the screen window to get a taste but she was too big and the screen holes were too small. Honey Bee saw Patti, and her cousin Kerry, as well as a bunch of human boys, with spoons in their hands, just waiting for the first taste of that delicious honey.

"Oh well," buzzed Honey Bee, "Time to fly away home. Got to get an early start tomorrow. I think my way of making honey is best." And she flew away into the darkening night, eager to get to sleep and rest for tomorrow was going to be a busy day.

But, she vowed to herself, as she flew back to the hive, "I'm going to get a copy of that recipe."

CLOVER HONEY

40 LARGE RED CLOVER BLOSSOMS
20 MEDIUM WHITE CLOVER BLOSSOMS
6 WHITE ROSE PETALS
1 TEASPOON ALUM
6 CUPS WATER
6 CUPS SUGAR

DIRECTIONS: *GATHER FRESH CLOVER BLOSSOMS AND ROSE PETALS*
MIX TOGETHER SUGAR AND WATER
BOIL 6 MINUTES
ADD CLOVER AND ROSE PETALS
LET SET 15 MINUTES
ADD 1 TEASPOON ALUM
PLACE COLANDER OVER CLEAR BOWL
POUR MIXTURE IN COLANDER
LET DRAIN

REMEMBER WHEN?
by
Marge DeVillier

August 5, 1995

To: My son, Joe DeVillier
From: Mom

Do you remember when on April 5, 1951, at 4:00 PM at Kaefer Memorial Hospital in New Bern, North Carolina, you were born after 36 hours of excruciating labor? You were more trouble for me before you were born than afterwards.

Remember when you were little, two or three years old, you thought I couldn't see you when you rolled your eyes up in your head? When I would say something like, "Joe, did you do that?" you would roll your eyes up in your head, you thought you were hiding and I couldn't see you.

Remember when you were staying over at Grandma Armour's house and you wanted chocolate milk? After you drank glassful you asked for some orange juice? She said, "Joe, do you think you should put that on top of chocolate milk?" and you said, exasperated, "Grandmother, I want that in another glass!"

Remember when I found all the toothbrushes crammed through the overflow hole in the bathroom sink? I couldn't figure out what was happening to all those tooth brushes I was always buying. I never found any in the waste baskets. Finally the mystery of the missing tooth brushes was solved when the sink wouldn't drain properly.

I looked in that overflow hole and saw something. I got a coat hangar, pushed it into the hole and it caught onto something. I kept poking with the coat hanger and pulled a toothbrush up to the hole. I had trouble getting them out because they would hang perpendicular to the hole and I had to get other instruments to break them and to pull them out of there. I had screw drivers, pliers, knives, and I don't know what all, pulling those things out. There were about 25 toothbrushes in that hole. I know it took a long time to get them all out.

Remember when you and Janet fixed the slats unevenly on your cousin Roger's bed and nearly killed yourselves laughing when he laid down to go to bed and the box spring, mattress, slats, and everything else, including Roger, all crashed to the floor?

Remember when you and your cousins, Dennis and Roger, almost blew up Aunt Rita's garage with Roger's chemistry set? You were always wanting to go visit Aunt Rita, but I dreaded every minute we were there because I knew you and Roger were going to think up some mischievous thing

to do. I just couldn't understand how you could be so good at home and turn into such a monster when you got around Roger.

Do you remember one night while at their house you asked if you could sleep with me and I said, "Why do you want to sleep with me?" You said, "Because I want to watch "The Wolf Man," and I know I'll get scared and have a bad dream."

Do you remember one Christmas when we lived with Tommie and Al and we had four kids in diapers under the age of four? We took you kids out of the play pen and put the Christmas tree in. This ingenious idea saved our sanity.

Do you remember when we lived in St Matthews in Louisville, Kentucky with Tommy and Al and you would take all your clothes off while playing in the back yard?

Remember when you pulled the wagon over the fence and crawled over and got out in the street and went to a neighbors house? I was frantic looking for you. Finally, I found you in the neighbors kitchen eating ice cream. How you loved ice cream!

Do you remember when? I know you don't remember, but when you were only five months old, I had to tell you your father, who was in the Marine Corp, serving in Korea, was missing in action. I had to try real hard to keep myself from crying around you because then you would get upset and cry, too.

When you were sick, I would let you play with your father's military medals and tell you stories about him and each medal. It was hard to keep his memory alive for you because you were so young. It was hard to decide what to tell you because I wanted you to know him if he came back. I didn't want to talk about him too much to depress you and have his memory marred for you.

All you ever knew about your father was what I told you and from his pictures. Yet you seemed to know someone was missing in your life. You had little contact with men except for the husbands of my Marine Corps friends. You knew mostly women living with me and your Aunt Beryl still you would walk up to men even in the street and put your arms out to be taken. Later when we moved in with Tommie and Al, you automatically started calling him Daddy.

Finally, I had these pictures mounted in a frame and gave them to you when you were older. I know you still have them today. I'm glad you had them when Hurricane Andrew came for I know they would have been lost. Thank God, you didn't lose them in Hugo when that hurricane hit Charleston.

There's another memory I want you to know about which I don't think I have told you yet. This one's about you and your father the day we brought you home from the hospital when you were about five days old. Your Dad said, "I have always liked kids, but I never thought I would have

feelings like this when I had my own." He was very proud of you and turned into the typical new father bragging about you and showing pictures to anyone who would listen.

Before he was reported missing in action, I sent him a lot of pictures of you which came back in his personal effects after he was reported missing in action. He had made comments on them, like the one where you were hanging onto a wooden coat hangar. One of his comments was, "Hang in there, little man." Then he had some of your pictures painted on silk in Japan when he went on R & R, but those came out looking a little too oriental.

When we first came home from the hospital with you, we didn't have anyone to come in and help us. Your Dad had to do all the work, the grocery shopping, the washing, and cleaning, plus numerous trips to the PX and the commissary because of his absent mindedness in forgetting what he went for.

I had to have a lot of help after you were born because you were born by Caesarean Section and I couldn't do any lifting or driving. Your Dad needed a nap every afternoon and finally asked, "How do you do it all?" He vowed, "I will never again say women have nothing to do but watch T.V." He did quite well for, after all, he had had some domestic training as he was born into a family of thirteen children. However, he never had the sole care of a baby.

One day your Dad was doing the washing. He had he put too much soap in the machine and there were soap suds all over the floor. We lived in military housing on the Marine base at Cherry Point, North Carolina, so he called the maintenance department. He sounded so "panicky" the lady asked, "Do you have a new baby at your house?" to which he replied gruffly, "How did you know that?"

Joe had to go out on maneuvers a lot, and he never went without a lot of complaining and griping but I have never seen anyone who was so happy to go on maneuvers which were in the boon docks, as he was after two weeks of taking care of us and the house. By this time, I was able to take over, and his whole demeanor and attitude changed back to his happy, cheerful, personality. The crisis was over and he heaved a huge sigh of relief.

Shortly after that, in July, he received his orders to go to El Toro Marine Air Base in California to pick up his orders to go to Korea. We decided to drive there so we could take more personal items which I didn't trust to the movers.

Your Dad built a long narrow box and painted it blue and put it on a luggage rack on top of the car to carry these personal and household items. He then made a bench in the back that filled the space between the back seat and the back of the front seat. That is how you and I rode to California in July of 1951 from Port Barre, Louisiana, after stopping to visit your father's family and to pick up one of his sisters, Beryl, to go with us and to live with us while he was in Korea. She took care of you so that I could work at a hospital when we got there.

The back seat with that bench made it like a large bed so you and I had plenty of room to sleep and play. Beryl rode in the front with your dad. We took the southern route so it was very hot. We drove mostly at night and stayed in air cooled motels in the daytime. There weren't many air conditioned places at that time, and of course, none in the car, but it wasn't to bad for you and me at night in the back seat.

But that desert sure was hot in the day time. At one of the state borders, Arizona or New Mexico, your Dad had to take that box down from the top of the car and we had to take everything out so the inspectors could be sure we weren't smuggling in any fruits or vegetables. They were very strict about that to prevent insects and bugs from coming into their state. Your Dad put the box back on top of the car and we were on our way again.

That wooden box traveled well on top of the car. I was able to put things in there that I knew we would need right away when we got to California. I kept the box for a long time on the porch in California for storage. The bench in back came in handy when I left California to drive back East alone with you when you were only twenty two months old.

You were a very good traveler, Joe. You slept a lot, and you were very good at playing by yourself. I could hold the thermos bottle between my knees, pour you a cup of milk and hand it to you in the back seat. We didn't have car seats back then so I had all the handles on the doors in the back removed.

The only mishap on that trip was when I was going through Cumberland Gap in Tennessee on the way to North Carolina and the curves were so sharp. You fell and hit your head on the metal strip across the bottom of the back door window. I heard your head crack, and you burst out screaming, but there was no place on the narrow road to pull over and stop. I had to drive a ways until I came to a restaurant and had room to pull into a parking lot.

You seemed to be all right after that until we stopped at Cherry Point in North Carolina to visit old Marine Corps friends. Then you fell down a short set of stairs and passed out. We rushed you to the Marine base hospital. They X-Rayed your head and examined you, and you seemed to be O K. I often wondered if the fall had something to do with the blow to your head in the car in the mountains, but at the time, the doctor didn't think it was related.

Remember when we lived on Weyer Court in Louisville, Kentucky, when Skippy, your white German Shepherd dog would get between you and me when I was trying to spank you and I couldn't get good leverage to give you a good whack?

Remember when Skippy saved your life by walking up and down in front of the steps to an open basement on a house being built and how we later wrapped up her Christmas present of baloney in Christmas paper and tied it with a bow and how she wolfed it down so quickly.

Remember when you had trouble learning how to put your jacket on. You laid it down on the floor then you laid down on the jacket and stuck your arms into the sleeves. It worked. I have that problem today since my stroke but if I laid down on the floor, I wouldn't be able to get up.

Remember when you wanted to go to bed with all your clothes on and I said, "No! You have to put on your pajamas," and you said, "It's just a waste of time. If I keep these clothes on, I won't have to change again in the morning. I can get up and go right outside and play."?

Remember when you visited Aunt Sis in Louisiana when we lived in Kentucky? She said you looked just as dirty after you supposedly took a bath. She looked through the keyhole and saw you running the bath but you didn't get in the tub.

Do you remember when you were about five years old and we flew from Louisville, Kentucky to Castro Valley, California, where Poppa, your Grandfather Cleveland DeVillier lived with his son and family for the presentation of medals from the Marine Corps? On the plane you saw a man in a Navy uniform and raised your arms for him to take you and you said, "Daddy." The sailor was so embarrassed, and I was too, a little.

We had the presentation at your grandfather's son's house near where Poppa lived because his son didn't think Poppa could take a big parade and formal presentation. Poppa had not accepted the idea that your father had been killed in action. He felt his son was a prisoner somewhere and would come back.

Do you remember when you were in the second grade at St. Stephens school in Louisville, Kentucky, and you didn't come home with the lady who drove that day in our car pool? It was raining and she said you weren't with the other kids in front of the church like you were supposed to be. She sent one of the kids into the church but he couldn't find you.

I went back to the school and to the nuns house, but no one had seen you. I drove very slowly all the way home to see if you had decided to walk. I checked with the bus drivers in case you had mistakenly got on a bus. Finally, I called your stepfather who was a Louisville policeman. He came home and we started looking again. We called all the neighbors and anyone we could think of. Then I said, "Lets go back to the church." I said this in desperation feeling you couldn't be there. I went up to the loft and found you curled up on the floor by a radiator asleep. I was both angry and relieved at the same time.

You could go to sleep anywhere. I never had any trouble getting you to go to bed at night. One time you even went to sleep with your head in your food in the high chair. We could visit anyone at night and I would have no problem getting you to sleep on their sofa or in an unfamiliar bed.

Do you remember how much you liked playing with toy soldiers when you were small? You never had enough soldiers. You always wanted more, and they were all over the place. You played

by yourself for hours, playing all parts, including the sounds effects of a battle. You even played war with a deck of cards. Maybe this wasn't a healthy thing for a little boy, but I think it was the beginning of your interest and love of history.

Do you remember when you were a teenager, you told someone you just finished reading War and Peace? and they said, "Isn't that kind of hard to read?" You said, "I only read the War and skipped the Peace." Today I am so proud that you went back to college and got a degree in history this year.

→→→→→→→

PROUD OWNERSHIP
by
Melvin A. Daniel

I was fifteen years old when I had my first encounter with learning to drive. My brother, Edward was my patient instructor. I had a very difficult time mastering the art of driving and jumped many a curbing. Edward kept very calm trying to keep the car on the road. He deserved all of the credit for helping me get my driver's license. I did not own a car but at least I had my license.

After a second tour of overseas duty, I came home on leave. During the latter part of 1945, I met Audrey, my wife to be. Transportation on our dates was by the West End Streetcar until I got enough nerve to request use of the family car. George Eitmann, my Aunt Myrtle's husband, owned a black Packard and was not too receptive when I requested permission to use the car for something as frivolous as dating. With Aunt Myrtle's permission, I used the car before George came home from work, and, for a while, Audrey's dates with me began in the afternoon.

Uncle George's Packard was a fairly nice vehicle in its day. The only thing I can remember was my difficulty in shifting gears trying to correlate the stick shift with the clutch. However, this car played a very important part of my courtship with Audrey.

Ownership of my first car is a story in itself. Lucien Ashhen, my marine engineer co-worker friend, advised me that his mother had just the car for me. She was unable to drive and wanted to sell her 1936 Nash four door sedan. Would you believe that the price was an affordable $350.00? According to Lucien, the car had very low mileage and very seldom left the garage. What a dream car! My savings were meager but I managed to pay cash for my "very first car." Can you imagine how wonderful I felt every time I drove my very own car?

For about a month or so the little Nash performed well. I even rented a spray gun and painted the car a South Central Bell green. Audrey and her mother re-upholstered the seats by using my mother-in-law's soft discarded underwear as padding for the seats.

Now my little car began to fall apart. First, the battery and generator gave out, minor problems I figured because most cars suffered similar situations. Next, the entire brake system failed. Then, due to excessive oil consumption, I had to have the engine overhauled. After I recored the radiator, there wasn't much left to do.

When Audrey and I married in 1949, we borrowed her father's 1948 Plymouth for our honeymoon. He used the Nash while we had the Plymouth. Our relic could not be trusted to make the trip.

Audrey and I knew that we needed a reliable car and had saved enough for that purpose. We bought a 1951 four-door Plymouth for $2400.00. This second car proved to be a good car.

Although rather underpowered for mountainous driving, it took us on trips to Mexico, California, New York, and Florida, serving as our family transportation for twelve years.

The Plymouth received excellent care. Having no garage, I rented a neighbor's garage to keep the car out of the elements. I joined a new company and was assigned a company car with the stipulation that it be garaged. I rented another neighbor's garage for this purpose, also.

Later, we purchased a Pontiac in the middle sixties and a Chrysler after moving to Lafayette. I was fortunate enough to be assigned company cars while serving thirty-six years with Commercial Union.

When I left Commercial Union in October 1992, my retirement gift to myself was a new Cadillac. What a contrast to that little green 1936 Nash that had been our first family car!

OUR FRONT PORCH
by
Audrey K. Daniel

The post war trend toward subdivisions of ranch style homes with backyard patios brought a change in my life. In 1958 we moved from our shotgun-style house in the Mid-City area of New Orleans into one of these porchless structures in Gentilly Woods.

Family life in our little four room house on Banks and Bernadotte had centered around the front porch. In my childhood years, we were never allowed to bring our friends into the house. Mother would always say, "Play on the gallery. It's cooler outside." Having no air conditioning or television to lure us into the house, we obediently turned the porch into our fantasy land.

Our porch, or gallery, as Mother called it, graced the front of our corner house. It was made of 1" x 4" flat boards, painted gray. The ceiling above it was made of tongue and groove boards and, like all New Orleans houses, was painted sky blue. Our house was a two family house, sharing a common porch partitioned off by more tongue and groove boards. Two red brick pillars supported both ends of the over-hang.

Mother was an avid gardener. A large Formosa azalea filled the corner garden and a beautiful, sweet-scented white clematis alive with honey bees clung to a trellis along the side of the brick pillar.

This Banks Street house was our home when I was born in 1927. From the time I was a toddler, this porch was my play spot, although not always the safest place. I can still hear Mother scolding, "Don't eat the dirt," as my little hands dug deeper into the long concrete flower pot on the edge of the porch. More harm was caused by my fall off the side of the porch into the azalea bush than I ever suffered from playing in the dirt.

Our front porch was the favorite playspot for all the children in the neighborhood. We danced across these wooden boards as we fantasized ourselves as the Ziegfield Follies, we used it as a house when we played "Ladies," and it was the perfect arena for playing paper dolls, jacks, and fiddle sticks. Our front porch was always the base for playing fate, kick the can, and hide and seek.

We were sitting on the porch in 1936 when the newsboy rushed down the street shouting the headlines that Edward VIII, King of Great Britain, had abdicated the throne to marry an American divorcee, Mrs. Wallis Simpson. It was from this porch once again in 1937 that we heard the newsboy excitedly shout the news of the disappearance of Amelia Earhart in the South Pacific on her attempted flight around the world.

I remember sitting on the porch watching the WPA workers as they planted a scrawny oak tree in front of the house. It was frightening to hear them discuss the inevitable war with Germany

after Hitler's take-over of Czechoslovakia in 1939. The skinny oak twig is now a huge, stately tree, and the predicted war has been over for fifty years.

It was on this porch where I experienced my first kiss from a boy and, years later, my first kiss from Melvin, my husband-to-be.

How exciting it was on November 12, 1949, when Daddy and I hurried across the porch, holding up the train of my long white bridal gown, as the chauffeur held the limousine door open for our ride to St. Anthony's Church.

I sadly recall the months in 1950. Elaine and I sat on this same porch and crocheted little garments for our soon to be born babies, mine never to be worn by my darling little girl.

In late 1950, all things changed, but everything stayed the same. We moved across the street to our house on Bernadotte Street; Elaine and her family moved into our little house on Banks Street. Once again we sat on the same little porch, anticipating the birth of Elaine's daughter Laurie, and our son, Kenny, in 1954. Four years later we moved into our porchless house in Gentilly Woods.

The years between 1927 and 1958 created memories of events from our front porch, memories that could never have been created on a back yard patio.

→→→→→→→

PRIMARY SCHOOL DAYS
by
Woody Hebert

My first school day must have been uneventful because I cannot seem to remember anything that happened on that day. Or maybe it was fearful for me, so fearful that I cannot remember it. It is not so much the introduction to school but my school days' experiences that come to light.

I remember the bus rides because they were anything but typical measured by today's standards. The weather conditions had a decided impact on the mode of transportation of the day. Those were the days of the dirt roads, either dusty or rutty. On clear days Mr. Herpin, the bus driver, drove his newly acquired gasoline operated yellow school bus, leaving a cloud of dust trailing behind him. I never could understand why there was always a trail wind blowing, causing the dust to beat me to the entrance of the bus when he stopped to pick me up. Pig Pen in the Charlie Brown comics takes me back to those memorable rides.

On rainy days it was a different matter. Mr. Herpin would hitch his two mules to the old hack and delicately maneuver the deeply cut ruts on the road struggling not to get bogged down in the mud. I cannot remember if we had to leave earlier in order to get to school on time; but I do remember holding on tightly as the hack bounced from rut to rut, convulsing, trying to throw us out through the canvas roll down sides into the mud puddles on the road.

Those were also the days of the brown bag lunches; no such thing as school lunches. One of my favorite sandwiches was chocolate spread on homemade bread. My mother would cook Hershey chocolate with milk, and possibly other ingredients, into a thick spread and generously pile it between two slices of homemade bread. When I bit into the sandwich at lunch time, the spread would ooze from the sides where I would hurriedly lick the drippings before it broke loose form the piece of bread. Vending machines were yet to be discovered. The only way to wash down such a delicious meal was at the hand pump in the middle of the school grounds.

The school building was a wooden building containing three school rooms, two downstairs and one upstairs. Only the first three grades were taught there. The age of most students was in the six to nine year range, although some were as old as eleven or twelve. Some of the students fell too far behind in school work to be promoted to the next grade. To survive, families often kept children out of school to help in the field during hoeing or harvesting time. I spent my first four years of school in that old wooden building because I couldn't get through the first grade the first time around, and it wasn't because I was hoeing or harvesting.

My brother and I were born to parents whose language was exclusively French for many generations back. My mother had never attended school and my father dropped out in the third grade. Neither had learned the English language, therefore, their children had never been taught English. What really set me back that first year in school was the total lack of understanding of what the English speaking teacher was communicating. She literally spoke a different language, a foreign

language, although she was capable of speaking French if she chose to do so. The teachers were instructed to refrain from speaking my language and insisted that I speak their language. We were actually prohibited from speaking French on the school grounds under penalty of some form of punishment. I was so fluent in the French language that it was not until I enlisted in the Navy after high school graduation that I was able to make the transition and become fluent in the English language as well.

I often reflect on the giant strides that one is capable of making when motivated by a desire to succeed. A college education wasn't even considered as a possibility during those formative years. Little did my parents envision when I had to repeat the first grade in that little old wooden schoolhouse that their son would some day not only graduate from college but graduate with honors. It has taught me to be more tolerant with my own children when they are struggling with their school work.

→→→→→→→

A CERTAIN KIND OF CLASS
by
Mildred C. Barry

What a big day for me! I had dreamed about it for a long time. I wondered with mingled excitement and concern what my first college art course would be like this afternoon. Really, only an hour or so from now. Not that I hadn't had art lessons before. But this time was different. I had told Fan, "I know I can sketch and paint, but there are always new ways of doing things. And, you know, like I say, at our age--well, it just makes good sense to keep on going. Like the fellow said, 'Move it, brother, move it.'"

Fan looked at me funny when I said that. A defensive look. Well, let him look at me funny. Sometimes I didn't understand my husband. Letting himself go like he did. His belly was as paunchy and soft as the little dough boy on the T.V. commercial. He kept saying how lucky he was to have big strapping grandsons to help him in the yard. It certainly wasn't helping his waistline.

Poor Fan. A lot of gray was creeping into his sandy hair. And so many tiny wrinkles fanned out from his eyes. True, they were laugh lines, but I wished my husband wasn't so relaxed about it all. Well, I certainly wasn't ready for the rocking chair. But, Fan did put in a full day at the office.

Just yesterday Fan had asked, "Why the college? Why don't you just keep on with your regular Wednesday art class with the girls?"

I had to tell him I didn't want to be just another housewife dabbling in paints. Credibility was what I was after. A college course wouldn't hurt, and besides, it would give my endeavors a--well--a certain kind of class.

I felt like I was on the brink of discovery. The art supplies I had rushed around collecting were snug inside of a big cardboard carrying case. I wondered if the case was sturdy enough to withstand the rainy weather and was deciding it would just have to do, when I noticed that a slow steady rain was in progress. Keeping an eye on the fickle weather, I gathered up my belongings, loaded the car and was soon on my way. The thrill of anticipation made me feel giddy. It was barely sprinkling now, and by the time I reached the parking lot, the sun was making rainbows in all the puddles.

The college kids were tumbling out their cars, heading for the shuttle bus stop. "Hi, there," I called out to the beauties languishing against the wooden shelter. "Am I at the right place?" "Yes, Ma'am," answered one lovely, "if you're going to the college."

Squeezing my bulky station wagon into an economy car parking space, I marveled at the youthful skin and lustrous hair of my scholastic counterparts. I wondered wistfully if I had ever been that young.

"Here comes a bus now, Ma'am!"

Quickly, I dragged the bulky satchel from the car, skimming it across a puddle. It flopped against my leg, spraying a muddy shower on my hose and shoes. No matter. I flung my purse over my shoulder, settled my books on my hip, and walked as fast as I could to the bus.

There, a challenge awaited me. The steps, so steep! But there was no time to waste on arthritic knees and hips, so I pulled up on the railing and forged ahead. I was caught by the alert young driver who pushed me down gently in the front seat. A little flushed, I looked around. No one was laughing. Odd. I couldn't help thinking how in my younger days I surely would have cracked up if a kooky lady had practically gone into a seizure getting on a bus. Come to think of it, there was little expression at all on the faces of the young people. Their eyes never wavered from some spot in the distance and most of them strummed on their books while their hands moved rhythmically backwards and forwards.

The music! The ear-splitting, pulsating, three word melody had them all mesmerized. As the bus loped along, my head began to throb, and my eyes teared up. I was sure my hearing was lost forever. Oh, but what blessed relief when I, too, stared straight ahead, drummed out the beat of the song on my books and jerked my head fore and aft.

The wheels of the bus searched and found every inch of pavement in need of repair. After an especially rough jolt bounced me off the seat, I decided to wear my back brace the next day. I landed unladylike, sprawled across the aisle.

I let the stampeding kids get off first when the bus reached the campus. The art building was not hard to find, and with some effort, I lugged my paraphernalia onto the elevator. The fourth floor was deserted. *Well*, I thought, *maybe I'm still a bit early*.

In a few minutes a young boy stepped out the elevator. I rushed toward him. "Are you in Mr. Meir's art class?" I asked. "No, ma'am. I'm in sculpture on the second floor." He seemed in a hurry. "Could you tell me what classroom is Mr. Meir's? There's no one around." He replied, "No, ma'am, I'm sorry. I don't know." And he was gone.

I walked around pulling on doors. Every one was locked. I began having doubts. *Maybe I'm on the wrong floor. Suppose class has already started. Should I check around?* It was dumb to have left my class schedule at home. Well, I'd have to wait and see what would happen.

I leaned against the wall, suddenly very tired. My hands were numb, and when I loosened my grip everything slid to the floor. I blinked back tears. I felt so lonely. *What in the world am I doing here anyway? Fan was right. I should have been satisfied with my little art group. They were meeting at Alice's today, or was it Mona's?* I had convinced myself long ago that their gossip was therapeutic. It wasn't gossip, really. It was more like settling personal affairs without that particular

person present. *Oh, and right now, what I would give for a cup of coffee!* The groan of the elevator broke into my misery.

Chattering students, equipped with books and art supplies, rushed past me. I scooped up my things and followed them, praying I was with the right group. I was right there when one guy I thought was a student, unlocked a door down the hall. The room was furnished with benches that formed a semi-circle around a low platform. No easels in sight. Uneasy, I sat on the edge of one of the benches.

I heard my name called out by the young man with the key. My relieved "Here!" rang out much louder than I intended, but I was so happy to get settled at last. The young man, as I had begun to suspect, turned out to be Professor Meir.

I was now in my element. With much delight I taped paper to my clipboard, got out my brushes and paints and waited for further instructions.

"Don't we have easels?" I asked the young lady sitting next to me. "This is your easel," she answered, patting the upright plank at the end of my bench. For a second there, I thought I detected a patronizing air.

The instructor rushed around setting up a scene on the platform using drapery, a ladder, large sheets of crushed paper and a chair. He aimed a spotlight towards the center and turned off the overhead light.

"For thirty minutes sketch whatever you see from where you're sitting," he told us. "Looks like we're getting off to a good start this semester. Our model showed up today. Now, you have thirty minutes to sketch, then begin painting."

I looked down at my palette. I could hardly wait to dip my brush into the assorted blocks of paint. Yellows, reds and orange were my favorites. Such gay vibrant colors! I would have to go along with whatever the model was wearing, though, and of course, I had to sketch first. I rooted around in my bag until I found my sketch pencil and eraser. What fun this was going to be! I looked up, ready to begin. Then I froze.

From out of the shadows a lithe young boy, completely nude except for sunglasses, stepped up on the platform. I adjusted my glasses. Moving toward the center, the model made sure he was under the spotlight, then with one hand resting on the back of the chair, he stood there for all the world and me to see.

Oh, my God!" I gasped. The young girl next to me was a great comfort. "You'll get used to it," she said. "He's putting himself through school. Just a job."

The shock was devastating to me. I had thought I was a free-spirited artist. I took deep breaths, trying to get my bearings. I couldn't bring myself to raise my eyes, so I sketched the model's feet and the lower part of the platform over and over. However, I was forced to make a quick sketch of him when I heard the professor moving around the room.

My thoughts were in a jumble. I stole a look at my young neighbor. Surely she was kidding about getting used to such flagrant exposure. She wasn't. An eraser was clamped between her teeth and her pencil was flying across the page. Braver now, I glanced at the other students. They were completely absorbed in their work! The model himself seemed--what did the kids say?--out of it. I began to relax.

My sketch now started to take shape. With bold strokes I worked in the background, each step edging a little closer to the subject I wanted to avoid. I dismissed the thought of putting clothes on him. When the allotted time for sketching was up, I had features and muscles in all the right places and was ready to delve into the world of color.

The model became secondary as I splashed my reds and yellows all around him. He paled in contrast to the brilliant colors. Tentatively I proceeded to give life to the stripped statue. When I had put on the final touches, it was with much satisfaction and not a little awe that I stood back to admire my creation. Then, of all things, I felt myself blushing.

At the end of the period the paintings were exhibited along a wall. I thought mine looked a little cold, even inhibited, when compared with the others. But God knows, I sure did try! That exhibition was really of little concern. Now I was wondering how I could get rid of the thing. No sense in calling attention to myself by tearing it up. Well, I'd just have to bring it home. Thank goodness I could hide it in the carrying case.

Trudging back to the bus stop, I was dragging ass, another all encompassing expression from the young. I got on the bus feeling bruised and tormented, exhausted and aching. Rolling with the pitch of the bus, still in the clutches of self-pity, I suddenly thought of Fan. Old-fashioned Fan. What was I going to tell Fan? I was going to have to think of something.

I felt a little wobbly but managed to get from the bus to my car. Driving into my neighborhood I waved to my neighbors taking their evening stroll. What would they think if they knew what I had hidden in my car? I put my hand over my mouth to stifle a sudden rush of hysterical laughter.

And wouldn't you know, my grandchildren and their mother were there to greet me when I arrived home!

"Hi, Mom, how was school?" asked my daughter Kim. "Let me see what you did today. Have fun? Is your painting in here?" She opened the car trunk. Kim was an aspiring artist herself.

I had earlier in the day perhaps I should warn her about what was in store for her at the college, but now it looked like she'd be finding out for herself.

"Hey, Granny, let me park the old wagon for you." This offer came from Peter. Dear Peter, so much like Fan, considerate and protective. Helpless women were their forte.

Steven, the blond charmer, escorted me into the house with Kim lugging the satchel close at their heels. "Granny, I looked for you on campus today. What time is your class?" Steven asked. I replied, "One to three. Did you see the hail today, Steven? I almost missed my very first class."

Kim had put the soggy bag on the kitchen table and was busy getting it open. I wondered about my chances of getting the bag into my studio without them getting suspicious.

"Kim," I asked, "how about making a fresh pot of coffee?"

"Sure thing. You sure look tired, Mom."

"I am tired. I think I'll get into something more comfortable. Be back in a minute." I reached for the satchel but both Kim and Steven yelled, "Hey, Granny, we want to see your painting!"

I was too tired to argue and I thought it best anyhow not to make an issue.

Kim took out the painting and propped it up on the cabinet. Her hand went up to her mouth, then she backed away, still looking at it. I waited.

"Mom, I can't believe this! Did you do this?" She started laughing. Steven was now standing next to Kim, "Hey, Granny! All right!"

Peter ran in. I wished I could have saved this grandson from embarrassment. But he looked at the painting and yelled, "Way to go, Granny! You gonna show it to Grandpa?"

Just then the phone rang, and I, grateful for the interruption, hurried to answer it. Kim's husband wanted his family to come home, so I shooed them out and collapsed on the living room sofa.

I must have dozed off. A key was turning in the lock. Fan! And the painting was still in the kitchen! My whipped and bruised body didn't quite make it, and Fan and I met right in front of the coffee pot which was right next to my Adonis.

Fan backed off. I thought he looked amused. He leaned against the opposite wall and stared at the painting. He was not amused. He tugged at his bottom lip a while, then cleared his throat. I held my breath waiting for the explosion that would surely follow. Nothing happened. Oh, why doesn't he say something! Anything! I couldn't stand it.

"Well?"

Fan slowly plugged in the coffee pot. "Well," he said, "if you took the trouble to put glasses on the boy, I don't suppose the class was drawing from an anatomy lesson," he said finally. "Was that fellow just standing there, naked like that? He gets paid?"

I nodded. I knew he had more to say.

"Seems like there'd be a more decent way to earn money. I guess he is pretty proud of his build, though." He put his arm around me.

"Hey, you look bushed. I bet you're glad that class is over with. You know, I believe there's enough daylight left to get a start in the yard. Might make a garden this year. It should be good for this, see?" He pinched the overhang around his middle.

I wanted to say to Fan that he didn't have to work and exercise just to please me. I wanted to tell him I liked his cushiony body, that he was soft and warm and so comfortably slow. I wouldn't have minded if Fan wanted me to stop going to class. In fact, I almost volunteered to quit. But I didn't say any of these things to Fan. I prided myself on not being a quitter, for one thing, and neither Fan nor I had much use for quitters.

Fan pulled my head against his shoulder. "I'm proud of you, you know?" he whispered into my hair. I blinked back tears for the second time that day.

Fan left the kitchen but suddenly turned back. He pulled a dishtowel from out of the drawer and carefully draped it over the painting. At my raised eyebrows he said, "In case the kids come over."

Then I knew there was something else I couldn't say to Fan. Just how in the world could I tell him the shameless model was scheduled for a repeat performance when my art class met Friday. This time we'd grapple with his backside, if you will.

→→→→→→→

CARS I HAVE HATED
by
Orpha Valentine

I was four years old when I learned to dislike the first automobile in my life--a chauffeur-driven limousine. Once seated in the car, usually in the company of my mother, I sank into the limousine's deep, dark cave. My feet did not reach the edge of the seat. The upholstery was picky on my bare legs, and I could not see out any of the windows. I did like the fresh flowers in little vases at both passenger windows.

By the time I was in seventh grade, I had learned to hate that limousine. Years later, my family was still driving it, but without a chauffeur. Mother, Dad and I had moved to the dairy farm by then. With no school buses (no school lunches then either), children walked to school. A child certainly would not have been driven to or from school. Except me!

Mother usually drove me to school in the morning, but Jim, the hired hand, often picked me up after school. Because I was the only one who came to school in a car, a car too big and humiliatingly out of date, I insisted I be dropped off and picked up several blocks from school so none of my friends would see me.

On that awful day of days, Jim was waiting for me at the usual corner. I still did not like sitting on the big upholstered seat, so I sat just behind Jim--on the jump seat, a folding seat that folded up against the back of the front seats. I was just about to slide the glass partition open so I could talk to Jim when we hit the car ahead of us. I fell through the glass pane onto the front seat. Blood was everywhere, on my face, my clothes, the car. Jim rushed me to the hospital, a motorcycle policeman leading the way. Two of my teeth were on my tongue, which I had bitten nearly in two. When I saw two more teeth on the floor of the car, I had the presence of mind to pick them up. The four teeth were put back into their sockets, and my tongue was stitched back together, as well as my head. I was kept on a liquid diet for weeks. Dad sold that beast soon after for about $50.00.

The next vehicle I learned to hate was an old delivery truck. Jake and I had not been married long. We needed a vehicle to get to North Dakota from Wisconsin for Jake's job as refuge manager of Slade National Wildfire Refuge.

Jake bought a dark blue panel truck for $75.00 from his good friend, Carl Ameian. They had been in the army together, and Jake often worked for Carl in Carl's Oriental rug business. We loaded all our possessions in and on the truck, the panels on both sides still declaring, in yellow letters, THE ALA RUG CO. Off we went looking like Okies from the dustbowl of the thirties.

Once there, Jake had a government truck to use in his work. And I,...I had THE ALA RUG CO. To take me forth and back ten miles north of the refuge to the one room school, built in 1897, where I taught all eight grades to fourteen students.

In the land of blizzards, it is understood that all families pick up their children at school before a predicted storm. It is also understood that the teacher does not leave until all pupils are on their way home. By the time ALA and I left the school yard during one blizzard in 1951, the wind driven snow was swirling around and around, filling dips in the road with snow, trying its heavy best to hide the road from me. When I got to the refuge entrance, I breathed a "thank you." At the same moment a wheel rolled past the right side of ALA. I could not imagine where it came from until the three wheeled ALA hit the ground. We hit hard.

Dressed in my best wool coat, wearing galoshes over my dress shoes, I leaned against the wind, and for three miles I plunged through the blinding, freezing blizzard, following the only thing I could see--the telephone poles leading to our house. Where was Jake? In Minneapolis attending a conference at the regional office. Husbands are never around when you need them!

Three days later the storm was over. Another unwritten rule in the land of blizzards: after the main roads are plowed open, the teacher is first to get plowed out. State regulations decreed that if the teacher is in the school, it counts as a school day even if no students come to school.

The Kidder County plow man, Richard Schauer, came onto the refuge road, plowed around ALA and on up to the refuge house. When he learned what had happened, he said he would send his two teenage boys to put things to rights. The next morning, under a brilliant blue-white sky, blinding sunlight sparkling against the snow covered earth, I was on my way to school again. Yes, I was the only one in school that day.

For five years ALA and I had one battle after another. We were transferred from Slade National Wildlife Refuge to the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge in Virginia. Before the move we buried THE ALA RUG CO. on the refuge in the deep grass and new snow of the shelter belt's rows of closely planted trees.

Years later we purchased a Volkswagen Rabbit, a red Rabbit. Rabbit, shabbit! The biggest lemon ever created!! I still have the repair records showing that we paid for that thing three times.

The straw that broke this camel's back was when the Rabbit stopped dead AGAIN, this time on Johnston Street at 4:30 in the afternoon. I pushed it by myself out of the heavy, rushing traffic onto the shoulder of the road. Not one car stopped to help. I had the red rabbit brought to the house after the tow truck driver asked, "Where do you want it taken this time, Mrs. Valentine?"

I pronounced to Jake that I would not pay another penny to fix that dumb Rabbit, and in capital letters, I WOULD NEVER DRIVE THAT CAR AGAIN. And I didn't.

After my declaration, Jake decided he would drive the wretched car to work. He did. For one week. That red rabbit remained parked by our house for at least six years. Not until I arranged to sell it for junk did Jake trade it for a paint job for our house.

So you see, some cars have earned my hatred. Their front grills and headlights always look like Lewis Carroll's Cheshire cat. Each car shows its teeth in its grinning grill, just biding its time until, with the wink of its headlight eye, it will get me. And, sooner or later, it does.

→→→→→→→→

COUSINS, COUSINS, BY THE DOZEN
by
Anna Ruth Boudreau (Ganacheau Maher)

Friday afternoon was a favorite time of the week for me in the earlier grade school years because it meant going to the farm to play with our Fournet cousins. Our family had always lived in town, so a visit to our cousins' farm presented country adventures. The wide open spaces of the countryside offered different scenery, cattle, horses and other farm animals.

By 1929 our family had moved back to Lafayette, Louisiana, from Texas. We were now close to Mama's family ties. Mama and her sister, Aunt Aurore, were very close to each other. For me, it was a wonderful experience to have so many first cousins to play with all in one family. Aunt Aurore and Uncle Jack Fournet had ten children, three girls and seven boys. Jeanne was the eldest, the same age as my twin sisters, Rita and Rose. Next came a string of six boys, Paul, Jim, Howard, Bob, Tom and Fred, then Louise, Dan, and Nellie. When you put our seven and their ten together, we were quite a gang, certainly enough children to play many games.

Often on Friday afternoon, Mama picked us up from Mount Carmel Convent in our Chevrolet sedan and we headed down what was then College Avenue to the Abbeville Highway, a gravel road going south from Lafayette. Lafayette ended just as you crossed the Coulee where Lewis Street is located today. From that point you drove through farmland, an occasional house on either side of the road and barbed wire fences covered with honeysuckle and wild roses. When we reached the second Coulee, the Derouselle house was just beyond. Shortly after there was another house, then the Fournet property. All in all, it was less than a mile from the outskirts of town to the farm. As the white picket fence came into view we knew we had arrived. We crossed a cattle guard as we turned onto the property.

Aunt Aurore and Uncle Jack's house had a real charm. A climbing red rose, called "Seven Sisters" covered one end of the porch and on the other end hung a wonderful swing, shaded by a kudzu vine. My cousin Jeanne, my sisters Rita and Rose, and I often wiled away the afternoon, making plans, reminiscing or singing on this wonderful swing. We could see any activity, which was infrequent, on the highway from the swing. I remember an old professor from SLI, wearing long socks and knickers and a soft hat, who lived beyond the Fournets. We saw him each time we visited as he walked back and forth to the college with his beautiful white long haired dog, carrying a walking cane in his hand.

The front door of the house opened into a living room with a fireplace, followed by a dining room, then the kitchen. There were two bedrooms on the left, one with a fireplace, a sewing room with windows on three sides to the right of the dining room, and porches on either side of the kitchen. The sewing room soon became the girls' room as the family began to grow.

A well stood in the rear of the house with a tower into which the water was pumped. The pump house was covered with Rose of Montana vine and four o'clock plants. We spent many

afternoons stringing the four o'clock plants. We spent many afternoons stringing the four o'clock blossoms onto long grass stems, making necklaces and crowns. An orris plant, a member of the iris family whose roots were fragrant, grew near the pump house. Aunt Aurore harvested the roots, washing them clean. After drying, the long slender tan roots were wrapped in tissue paper and placed in the linen and clothing drawers to give the fabrics a sweet fragrance.

The left rear of the house was shaded by sycamore trees and grape vines. I don't think I ever saw the grapes ripen. I have no doubt they disappeared as quickly as they did.

I can still see Uncle Jack and Aunt Aurore and our cousins coming out to meet our car when they heard the "ooga-ooga" of the horn as we turned into the yard. Amid many hugs and kisses, Uncle Jack would give us turns throwing each of us in the air or turning us over in flips. His hellos were so much fun.

My cousin Jeanne, my sisters and I and several of the older boys would head for the orchard to play. Depending on the season of the year we would pick figs, satsumas, pecans, or pears. The pecan orchard can still be seen today just to the right of Albertsons on the corner of Johnston and Bertrand.

Aunt Aurore had a large chicken yard with white Leghorn laying hens. Rita, Rose and I loved to help Jeanne gather the eggs in the afternoon. There was also a herd of dairy cattle in the pasture. As the boys got older they would bring us to the dairy to watch them milk in the afternoon. Milking a cow did not look like a task I would like to have to tackle. The probability of being kicked by a cow seemed quite possible because of the position in which one had to sit while milking.

The Bertrand, Landry and Derousselle families lived nearby. There were children in each of these families in our age group so sometimes the numbers of children who would gather swelled to a couple of dozens.

The Fournet boys were great teases. They loved to get us girls in a situation that was scary to us but really not dangerous. At times we would go beyond the orchard and into the pasture; our cousins would see the bulls coming and run for the barbed wire fence. My sisters and I, not realizing what was happening at first, really had to make a bee-line fro the fence to keep from being chased or butted. We often got either our clothes or skin caught on the barbed wire and so were scolded for tearing our clothes and doctored with stinging iodine for the cuts by the barbs on the wire. One of the boys favorite teases was to bring us into the sweet potato house and then call the hogs to feed them. Without notice, the boys would jump out of the house and leave us city girls stranded with the vicious-looking pigs as they made all those awful noises. We were so afraid they would bite us, we would not leave until Uncle Jack came to our rescue.

During the afternoon Aunt Aurore would call the whole gang to the porch and serve us lemonade and cookies. After refreshments we would play yard games such as Rover, Rover, Kick

the Can, Chase, Dodge Ball, and Pop the Whip. We hated to see five o'clock come because it meant leaving all of these playmates and fun to head back to the "big city."

As we grew older, we cousins developed great relationships with each other and continued to visit each other for days at a time. By this time, the Dorans and the Meaux families had moved nearby, and more playmates were added to the contingent. Whenever my sister and I visited, the number at the table swelled to fourteen or fifteen. Can you envision the amount of food Aunt Aurore had to prepare? After saying grace before the meal, Uncle Jack would pass all of the serving dishes to Rita and me, telling us if we didn't serve ourselves first, we would probably not get anything to eat. Believe me, the food really disappeared. Seldom was anything left for seconds.

Anytime we came back to the house in the evening after going out with a group of young people, on the kitchen table there were always several loaves of French bread, homemade butter, jars of fig preserves, and gallons of milk awaiting our arrival. With this gang of growing young people, the food disappeared in short order.

Some twenty-odd years ago, this memorable old pale green house was moved out to what my Fournet cousins called "the farm," a piece of property they owned on the Vermilion river off the Breaux Bridge Highway near Lake Martin. On of the sons, Jim, lives in the old home. The house rests today in an idyllic spot underneath a number of ancient oak trees on rolling terrain. One would never guess that it has not been there always.

THE FOURNETS--My Country Cousins
Back row, l. to r.: Bob, Howard, Jeanne, Jim, Tom, Paul
Second row: Fred, Nellie, Aunt Aurore, Louise; in front, Dan

BEHIND THE DOOR IN THE KITCHEN:
A PLACE MEMORY
by
Lois Diel

In a corner of our kitchen at 19 Chestnut Street next to Mother's sewing machine was a door that opened into a place that holds an assortment of memories. The door was underneath the stairs to our second floor bedrooms. It opened onto open-backed wooden stairs that I cautiously descended while holding onto the large rough stones that were a side wall of our cellar. Our dogs refused to go up or down these stairs because they were open. They used to stand on the top step and bark until someone carried them down.

Mother's old wringer washer was tucked underneath these stairs. On wash days it was pulled out near the drain in the center of the cement floor that replaced the original packed dirt floor. On rainy days or extremely cold wash days I played beneath a canopy of clothes hung up by wooden pins on rows and rows of thick cotton lines. They dried by the heat from the big old furnace.

Along the side of the cellar beneath the front porch were two large wood-sided rooms. One room was used to store the coal after it clattered noisily down the coal chute in a swirling cloud of black dust. Next to this storage room was the furnace that frequently needed coal shoveled into its front door. Stoking the smoldering glowing coal passed heat through the coiled radiators in each room keeping the house warm in cold weather. By the furnace was a favorite place to warm up after the chill of ice skating or sledding during the winter months.

The other half was a room lined with shelves, our fruit cellar. The shelves were full of Mason jars filled by Mother with green and yellow beans, tomatoes for sauces and soup, and other vegetables from our garden for use when no longer in season. From our fruit trees jars were filled with pears, apricots, and pickled pears, but many of the jars were full of the yellow peaches that came from Peter's orchards in the fall. One section contained an odd assortment of jars sealed with wax covering the jewel colored jellies and jams made from our red strawberries, purple grapes, and yellow peaches. On the floor were bushel baskets full of red and yellow delicious apples, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and walnuts from our backyard trees--English and black. Cracking those black walnuts with a hammer and then picking out the meat was a long, tedious and time-consuming job that turned one's hands sooty black. During the fall next to these shelves was usually a five to ten gallon crock covered with cabbage leaves held in place by a round flat rock. The crock contained alternating layers of fermenting slaw-cut cabbage and salt. A large wooden stomper was used to press down the cabbage and start the juices. Fermentation or curing took about four to six weeks. The sauerkraut was then put into Mason jars and placed on the shelves. Stomping sauerkraut was a family tradition passed down by both of my grandmothers.

On the wall between these two rooms hung a big blackboard. I spent a lot of time doing my math homework on the board or creating artwork with the colored chalk. Some of my homework

was done while seated at the old wooden and iron schoolroom desks in front of the blackboard. My friends and I would play school here in the cellar before we discovered school was not all fun.

The cellar was also a great place to decorate and create a spooky Halloween atmosphere. While I was in grade school Mom and Dad invited my friends to come costumed for a surprise Halloween party in our cellar. These spooks and goblins descended the shadowy stairs to frolic in a room full of corn stalks, scare-crows, ghosts, and witches seen only by the flickering light of candles in carved pumpkins. Red apples floated in the water that filled the big galvanized wash tub. Sometimes it took more than one try to grab an elusive apple in our teeth, and most of us had wet faces in the attempt. During the reading of a scary story in eerie darkness, we passed around such things as cold spaghetti and pig liver amid shrieks and squeals as our imaginations perceived them as parts of a dead body. We munched on home baked gingerbread and sugar cookies washed down with fresh apple cider.

Some of my happiest times were spent with the tin treasure chest Mother would bring out for me. This old gray beat-up chest was about eighteen inches long, ten inches wide, and ten inches high with handles on each end and on the lid. Sometimes I had to tug and tug to get the tight fitting lid off to reveal the treasure. The chest was full of buttons of every color, size, shape, and composition imaginable. They were like a treasure chest of jewels for me. I could spend hours digging through them finding each time some I had never seen before.

Over the years there were changes in the cellar. The coal furnace was replaced by a more efficient one that used fuel oil. Freezing vegetables and fruits replaced canning. A deep freezer was added near the fruit cellar. The Mason jars are now sought after by antique collectors. The wringer washer was replaced by an automatic washing machine with various timed cycles and an electric dryer replaced the clothes lines. Although time and progress can replace many things, they cannot replace my special memories of the cellar when I was a child.

→→→→→→→

AUNT SUSAN
by
Betty Shoemaker

In April of this year, I traveled to Shreveport, Louisiana, to spend several days with my Aunt Cecile Oakes, whom I call CeCe. CeCe is ninety years old and has a fantastic memory. During the visit, she told me this story:

My great-grandparents, William Richard Wynn (born February 28, 1831 in Columbia, South Carolina) and Almedia S. McJunken (born July 15, 1842 in Franklin County, Georgia), were married on July 15, 1864. Great Grandpa had two children, Josephine and William Richard Wynn by a previous marriage. The newlyweds first born was my grandpa, James Mina Wynn, born in 1866.

The Civil War had ended, and President Lincoln had freed the slaves. Many of the slaves left their former homes with only the clothes on their backs.

My great grandparents, with their three children, left Georgia in 1871 to settle in Caddo Parish, Louisiana. On their was to Louisiana by covered wagon, they stopped on a dusty trail. There stood a very frightened and pitiful little teenager, a young black girl, clutching a little baby to her breast. "We have no place to go and nothing to eat," she said.

Great Grandpa told her, "We are on our way to Louisiana. Come along if you want to. You are welcome." Aunt Susan climbed in the back of the wagon and immediately became a permanent member of the family.

My grandpa and grandma married April 30, 1886 in Ida, Louisiana, where the family had settled. When they started their family, Aunt Susan went to live with them. She was a real asset to the family and a joy to have. Her little girl had died, and she loved and cared for Grandpa's and Grandma's children as if they were her own.

Grandpa and Grandma had two sons and five daughters. CeCe said when the five girls got new dresses, Aunt Susan got one, too. Sleeping space was scarce in a house with ten people. CeCe has fond memories of snuggling up to Aunt Susan in her warm flannel night gown on cold winter nights. When the girls misplaced something, they would go to Aunt Susan and she would say, "You can't find it 'cause you looking where 'tain't 'stead of where 'tis," and she would always find the missing articles.

Aunt Susan was the only black person ever to live in or around Ida, so she never had the opportunity to marry. She lavished all of her love and affection on the only family she had ever known. She was not a servant in Grandpa and Grandma's home. She was a trusted, loved, and respected member of the family.

CeCe said that when Aunt Susan got old, she continued trying to take most of the work load off Grandma. When Grandma would ask her why, Aunt Susan would say, "I must earn my keep." Grandma would tell her, "Aunt Susan, you don't have to earn anything. This is your home."

When Aunt Susan died, the family was devastated. They prepared her for burial and took her body to the Line Creek Cemetery. A group of men met them at the entrance and said, "You ain't burying her in our all white cemetery."

Grandpa stood up to them and said, "Aunt Susan was a member of our family. I donated the land for this cemetery. If we can't bury Aunt Susan here, I'll see that no one else is buried here." The crowd disbursed, and Aunt Susan was laid to rest in one corner of the cemetery. She had a little wooden cross etched with her name, Aunt Susan, and her date of death. She never knew her birthdate, and she had no last name.

Grandma was old and desperately in need of help to run their large home. As fast as Grandpa would bring in help in the front door, Grandma would wend them out the back door. No one could ever fill the void left by Aunt Susan's death.

ON BEING A MISSIONARY
by
Rosa B. Bieber

Our family had been brought up in church. Every Sunday we attended the Baptist Church in Oak Ridge, and most Wednesday nights, we were there in prayer meeting. Those prayer meetings weren't especially interesting for us kids, but we must have absorbed a lot of spirituality just by osmosis. Our elders would pray for the church, for the sinners, and for missionaries.

We three, Roy, Ruth and I, had heard those prayers so much that we thought we had better give God a hand and answer those prayers for missionaries ourselves. We were about nine, eleven, and thirteen years old at the time, and we just knew that God was speaking to us, that those prayers were meant just for us. Why God had picked us out to be missionaries, we did not know. We were the same kids who had a reputation for getting into trouble, but now we really did want to better ourselves and be obedient to the Lord.

When we told Mama that God wanted us to be missionaries, she could not believe it--three of the most conniving, most mischievous children she had. She said we had better pray about it. We did, she did, and the whole church did. The church said they were standing behind us and were praying that God would show us how to be missionaries. We were indeed glad somebody was going to show us how because we surely didn't have any idea kids our age could be missionaries--or to whom! But God answered those prayers!

He did show us how! He spoke to our hearts, and suddenly we knew how! There were twenty-six black families living on the farm. In these families there were at least thirty-five or forty kids from age four to twelve or thirteen. We would teach them about Jesus and be their friends.

On Monday as the men came to the mule lot to go to work, Roy, who was eleven, met them and told them our plan. Roy was the one chosen to tell them because we girls were not allowed to go too close to the mules as they were being harnessed for work. But Ruth and I weren't too far away; we stayed in the house yard near the fence and eagerly watched. You should have seen their faces when Roy told them what we wanted to do for their children. They grinned from one ear to the other! One man who was near enough so we could hear him said, "Sho' nuff, Mr. Roy. Dey's gonna be so glad!" And indeed that proved to be true.

We had decided we would meet in their church which was about a mile down the river from our house. Dad had built the families a church which had a belfry with a bell. The church was unpainted and made of cypress. At this particular time, they only had one service a week on Sunday--all day. There was no service or anything especially for the children.

Roy, Ruth and I, under God's direction, were now going to remedy that situation. We were now missionaries and were excited about what God was going to do through us. But we had many

decisions to make: Who would do most of the teaching, telling the children about Jesus? Who would teach them the songs? Who would lead the games? And what about books and pictures? The church that prayed for us was now as good as their word. They gave us leaflets with Scriptures and Bible stories.

It was going to be fun. Dad had said we could use the slide to ride on to the church because it was too far to walk in the hot sun. He and Roy hitched up a mule to the slide used to take implements to the field. Oh! We felt big! We were real missionaries! The slide was about five by six feet long and built on runners.

On the first Saturday afternoon after school WA out, we set out for the church. The sun was so hot. We didn't realize how hot it was at two o'clock on a summer day. We started our little trip singing choruses, really rehearsing them. Then Ruth said, "I wish we had a top on this thing to keep the sun off my head." Roy immediately changed the chorus he was singing to "Oh, donkey, keep your tail up, keep your tail up, keep your tail up! Oh! Donkey, keep your tail up, keep the sun out of our eyes." We laughed and giggled so much we were at the church before we knew it.

We were surprised! There were plenty of kids at the church waiting for us. We knew their fathers well, but we were not acquainted with the children. We went to different schools and different churches. So first of all, we got acquainted by learning names and finding out who belonged to which father.

When introductions were finished, one boy asked, "Ain't you gonna ring the bell? The parson always rings it before he starts preaching." Roy told him, "Well, if we can't start before the bell rings, you go and ring it.

An he did! It ding-donged about three minutes; it seemed like ten. The church is located on Lake La Fourche where the lake makes a bend and goes into Beouf River. When that bell tolled, people from far and wide knew something was going on at the church. Sound carries far over water--so they knew--and they came. Big and little people came.

And they all stayed. We taught them all to sing choruses, taught them about Jesus and how He came to save them from the penalty of sin. Ruth led the children in playing. That Saturday afternoon was a good experience for us. We met with them people for two summers and made friends with them--the families of the share croppers and tenants--and learned to love them. We learned they were people just like us with the same needs and goals for living.

Being a missionary those two summers was a turning point in my life. I learned that when we do what the Lord wants us to do, it is never hard, but pleasant. This experience also deepened my commitment to share the Good News of Jesus, my Lord.

MORE WAR STORIES

by

Ruth Burns Oates

based on conversations with my brother, Lloyd D. Burns

One day when Lloyd and I were talking in his office, we began referring to a number of our family's war stories. He told me about the mission when he was shot down, during the Battle of the Bulge, December 23, 1944. He also mentioned the washout rate for flight school. About forty percent washed out in ground school, then more as training progressed. Also, many of the young pilots in training crashed. The training units flying B-26's when he was learning lost more men proportionately than those flying in combat. Lloyd said, "Our brother Bryan told me about Navy pilots training in Pensacola, and he quoted a saying: *One a day in Tampa Bay.*

"One squadron of B-26's I knew of," Lloyd continued, "lost fifteen of eighteen pilots in one month's flight training. Crashes were common. Since we flew so low and fast, the crashes were almost always fatal. The first survivor of a B-26 crash was in the hospital at Barksdale Field when I was in for my appendectomy.

"Part of the problem," Lloyd added, "was due to the unfinished design of the plane. They were built and shipped, and students were flying them without a test-pilot check-out. People were still learning how the plane would behave. No one really knew what the ship would or would not do."

Lloyd was involved in a near-crash in the sky when he was returning to base from a mission overseas. The mission had aborted, so each plane still carried 2,000 pounds of bombs. The formation was six planes, three above and slightly ahead, and three below and slightly behind, each three in a row side by side. As they approached the base, the center plane of the upper three was supposed to waggle his tail as the signal for the lower three to shift to the left and the upper three to peel off and slip down beside them, getting ready to land by turns. His ship was the one on the right in the lower set.

The leader's tail had not yet wagged, but Lloyd saw the plane above and a little ahead of him shift slightly, and he realized the ship was about to slip down, preparing to land, so Lloyd instantly slipped off to the right. The upper plane did move down, and its wing missed the nose of the lower center plane by a foot or less--Lloyd had seen it. The pilot of the lower plane saw it, too, of course. Five of the formation went ahead and landed, all assuming that Lloyd and his ship had crashed because they were so low when the move began. He, however, had done the maneuver instinctively, without too much concern, as he had trained when B-26's were first designed specifically to "hedge-hop."

In hedge-hopping, the pilot took the ship almost to ground level across a field, rising to clear the trees at the fence, dropping again to near ground level as he cleared them, so that he appeared to "hop" the trees and hedges that bordered the fields and roads. The enemy's radar could not find

planes flying so fast (350 mph) so near the ground, so a formation could sweep past the enemy guns before the enemy knew they were there. As enemy radar improved, specifically to counteract such tactics, engineers added six feet to the wingspan of the B-26, modified existing planes, and Air Force authorities forbade hedge-hopping. The pilots were hard to break from practicing it.

"I thought nothing of peeling off like that," Lloyd told me. "I had done it so often. I used to fly down, just for fun, to between 500 and 1000 feet, pick a house on the ground below, roll the ship over on its back--you weren't supposed to put it on its back--come down on that house, roll the plane back over and pull out."

Incidentally, the man who descended before a signal was given had flown fifty-five of the sixty missions required to go home to the States. "Pilots approaching that sixty mission limit tended to become aware of their chances," Lloyd told me. "The chances were fifty/fifty for completing sixty missions, so they began to be nervous, and this man was no exception. As he returned from each mission, he took to sitting alone on his bunk with a bottle of gin, which he hated, steadily drinking until he was roaring drunk. Definitely a bundle of nerves. This WA one reason I was watching him so carefully." However, Lloyd has remarked often that staying alive while flying required eternal vigilance, being aware at every second what was going on around you and never losing respect for your plane. "After his near collision in the air," Lloyd continued, "that pilot never flew again. He had lost his nerve. They shipped him out to the States, so he made it home after all.

"As for me--," Lloyd added thoughtfully, "I was remembering that 2000 pound bomb load I had. Even without bombs, though, if you had a collision in the air, you'd go down for sure. The bombs would have just added to the fireworks."

Lloyd was on his ninth mission when his ship was shot down. He was flying as one of three planes which flew in tight S's ahead and below the main formation. They dropped long ribbons of foil to fool the enemy radar so that the flak would burst a safe distance below the bomber.

After one of Lloyd's two engines was knocked out by groundfire, five enemy fighters jumped his crippled aircraft. Three would make a run, peel away below, and then the other two would come at them. Lloyd was flying evasive action, but he could see the lines of tracers coming and hear them like large hail on the top of the plane. "Load our guns!" Lloyd ordered his co-pilot. "Prepare to fire!"

Lloyd paused in his story and looked at me. "We had some guns we could control," he explained. "I wanted us ready in case some fighter made a slight miscalculation and got into range." Then Lloyd returned to his story by adding, "But after loading the guns, the man had nothing to do but sweat. Sweat stood out on his face in marble-sized beads. It didn't run off....

"As soon as the five fighters peeled off to wheel for another run, I'd move the ship to the side. A second later a line of 20 MM shells from the ground guns would burst where the plane had been, and I'd shift again, with another line of shells exploding alongside our ship, where we had just been.

The fighters would come, then I'd dodge the ground fire." Lloyd thought the fight must have lasted for fifteen minutes before he lost altitude because of the crippled engine, and his men began bailing out. They all told him later that they had reported as they went, but he did not hear them, so the intercom was not working. (The first night Lloyd was home after the war, he talked about this experience, and that time he said, "There wasn't anything working in that airplane but me, and I was working mighty hard!") The tail-gunner's chute did not open, whether from enemy fire or being beat up by the violent motions of the plane, Lloyd did not know. Anyhow, the rest of the crew saw him go into the trees with his chute trailing. Lloyd, as captain, had to make sure every man still alive had bailed out. He stayed so long after they all went that they figured he had gone down with the plane. He landed very far away from the rest.

Lloyd's chute opened and he was turned around, so that as he went into the trees his heels hit the ground first, then he sat down heard and lay full length from the drag of the chute. "I looked up into a ring of German soldiers with guns pointed at me!" he said ruefully. "So I was captured immediately.

Lloyd ran into his crew in Le Havre on the way home after his liberation. From them he learned that the tail-gunner's chute failed to open. He wrote to the family of the tail gunner, as it was his duty to do.

Lloyd and I sat in thoughtful silence for a few minutes after he told me about writing the family. Then he added, "The hardest part of the whole experience was what happened as I was marching in a column of prisoners near the lines. The column was bombed and strafed by "friendly" aircraft. One bomb in the string wiped out the highest ranking American officers at the front of the column. Another took out most of the German guards who were at the rear. I was near the rear. I had hit the ground with the rest, and when it was over there was a bomb crater about eight to twelve feet away. An American bomb crater."

You should hear Lloyd tell these stories. He supplies detail with his hands as he tells them.

→→→→→→→

GOING TO VOTE WITH MY DADDY
by
Evelyn L. Stafford

I scarcely remember going to the voting poll with Daddy because I was very young. I do recall that my sister, Elsie, could not go with us. She had homework and needed to go to bed early. Since I wasn't old enough to attend school and could sleep late the next morning, I was privileged to accompany my father.

I never knew exactly where we went for Dad to cast his vote except that the polling booth was "down the road a piece." However, I vividly remember the terrible dirt roads--so rough and bumpy, and plenty of dust if it had not rained. When it rained, the "highway" was very muddy and slippery, making any kind of travel almost impossible. As a matter of fact, many folks chose to stay at home when it rained. A common expression was "I'll see tomorrow or whenever if it doesn't rain.

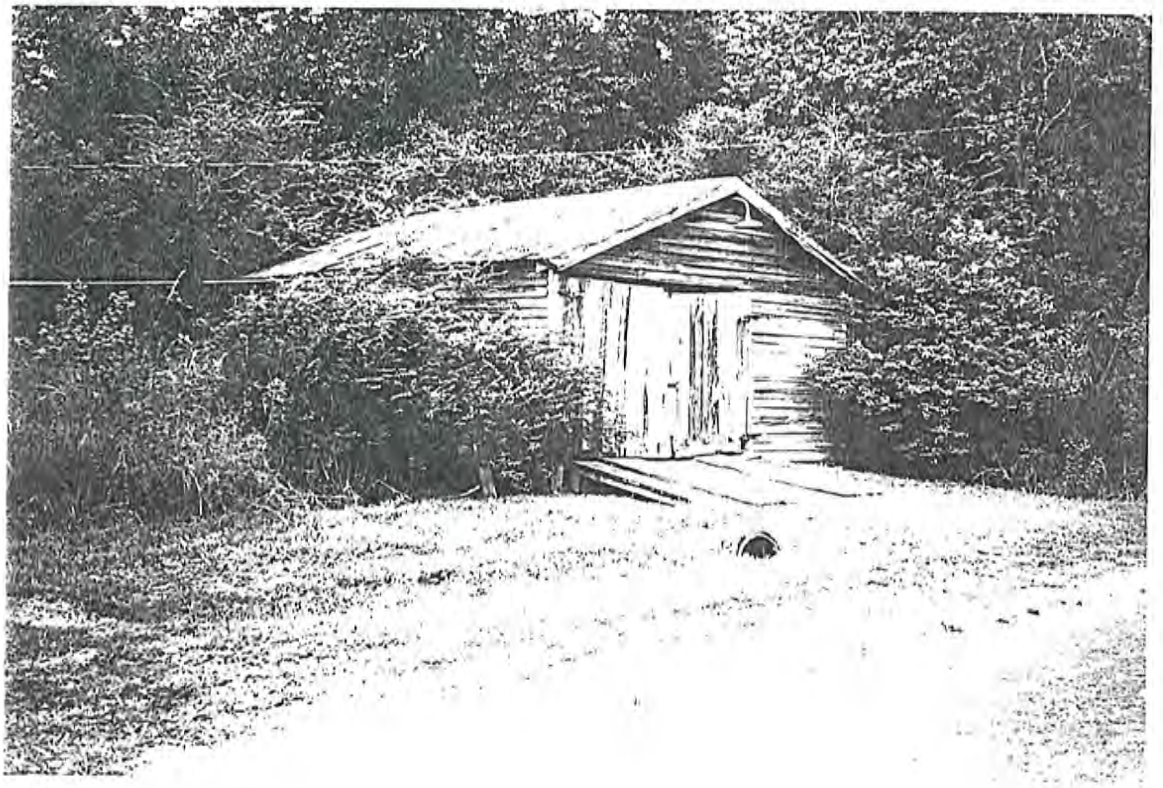
The folks who lived close to the poll walked to vote. They never thought about walking for exercise. But those living too far to walk, road in buggies or wagons. A few families had cars. We were among the blessed. Because cars were used for church and special occasions, it seems like everyone dressed up in their best when they rode in a car.

When we arrived at the place to vote, there were a lot of farmers standing outside discussing the events of the year and bragging about their crops. I suppose the small unpainted building was too small for anything other than voting. It stood near an old unpainted home that had a building or two, a cistern for water and an outdoor privy. If anyone wanted water to drink, there was a long-handled dipper or a cup for use to satisfy their thirst. The custom was for everyone to share the same dipper. I never wanted to drink from any dipper because most of the men had long-handled moustaches and smoked or chewed tobacco. Mama said she believed some of those old men also rinsed their beards or moustaches as they drank.

Through the years, I often thought about that little unpainted voting "building" where its location. For some reason, I never asked Daddy. Most of the folks I knew who voted at that poll were deceased. I more or less dismissed the subject until several months ago. My friend, Brenda, had come for a brief visit. She is in her early thirties and from the little community of Frey next to Mowata. She soon left saying that she wanted to check on an elderly lady in her neighborhood. She mentioned Nan's old unpainted home and how "run down" it was. On another visit, she had spoken of Nan and the interesting stories she told about the past. My curiosity got the best of me, and I said, "Let's go visit her."

As we rounded the curve and turned into the narrow road approaching her house, the first thing I spotted was a little unpainted building next to Nan's house. I told Brenda, "Boy, does that place look familiar." However, I could not remember traveling that road. Once more, I forgot about the old unpainted place.

Several weeks later, Brenda called and said, "Come drink coffee with me." When I left her house, I decided to go the long way back home and passed by Nan's house. Finally, it dawned on me. *This might be the place where the Mowata and Frey menfolks came to vote when I was a child.* By this time I had to settle my inquisitive mind. I paid Nan a visit and asked her if people ever came to her place to vote. Her face lit up and she replied, "Why, of course, right in that garage over there."



Voting garage for Frey and Mowata communities in the early 1900's
(Picture taken in September of 1995)

ON THE DRINIMORE RIVER
by
Jacob M. Valentine, Jr.

A day after the patrol abandoned the Mot River crossing, recounted in an earlier chapter, the Japanese attacked the beachhead established on an island in the Mot River. My diary reads: *Down on the island. 20 Feb. 1944. The infantry has only a small beach-head...machine gunning like mad. ...men shot on both sides of the river...laid more wire to the island...leapt in foxhole with Joe D. and Paul P.*

The next day, more exchange of fire. A mortar round landed twelve feet away from DePaoli and Coti. On the 23 February 1944, my crew and I crossed the Mot River on a stretcher hung on rollers on a cable strung across the river. As I looked at the contraption that was pulled back and forth, an infantryman said, "That thing saved the day." I guess he meant that the portable stretcher allowed the infantry to get troops across fast, without having to wade the deep stream.

I walked around the battlefield and later wrote: *Saw dead Japs..Jap dugout...men looking for teeth, dug up graves to get them...slept in hammock near old Jap position. Next day, not much doing...laid wire...slept in same place.*

On 26 February we moved a few miles to Yamai Village. When the allied infantry passed Cape Iris with patrols beyond Singor, the artillery could rest. It was back to peacetime activities. Goofing off, washing clothes, and making ourselves as comfortable as possible. Then more training and repair and replacement of equipment. I would send my radio crew to work with the radio guys and my wire crew with the wire guys, then I'd sneak off to the beach where I'd meet Carl Ameian from the antitank attachment, to swim or lie in the sun with a book.

My diary reads:

> *Near Yamai. 29 February. Went out with Duda, Len Krasavage, Art Smith, and Russel in peep. Found Japanese equipment, cartridges, mines, grenades, gas masks, haversacks, a bugle and other things...native garden with watermelons...native huts with lots of spears, bows and arrows, and other things.*
>
> *Near Yamai. 1 March. Don Fraser and I went out shooting in the aft... hot a couple of goon birds..shot a lot of ammo, about 150 rds. 5 March. Woke up to the tune of aerial bombing this morning... art of the 126 Inf. is making a landing some miles north of Isis..went up to the Yori...saw native with elephantitas of the testicles...the 'Chief' went out to 'piss' (fish) shooting with bow and arrows.*

"Singapore ear" sent me to a field hospital for several weeks. Without antibiotics the cure took forever. The infection went back to 1941 in Louisiana where "Hammering Hank" Duda broke

my ear drum boxing. A dive into a bayou gave me the first infection and a long stay in the hospital where the treatment was alcohol.

We had lots of time for housekeeping duties. On occasions, we had dock detail where we unloaded bombs and ammunition (that's when we were able to steal hundreds of rounds of .30 caliber ammo, for fun shooting). Between 14 March and 25 May I read fourteen books. We attended a fire direction school where we called directions to targets, raised or lowered elevations, windage, left or right, with smoke and live ammo. The observation post was so close to the targets that it was dangerous to be there--short rounds are scary.

On occasion, the Japanese would send over a small plane to drop a few bombs to harass us but their attacks were ineffective. We used to sit on the top of a hill making sophomoric remarks and watching our antiaircraft send up equally ineffective shells.

On the approach to the Philippines, General Douglas MacArthur commanded nearly 750,000 allied troops. Within the South Pacific Area there were 350,000 Japanese, with 50,000 isolated from the main forces. Plans for May 1944 included landings at Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea, as a site for a major airport and supply base, and a smaller one at Aitape, 130 miles southeast in Papua. The Hollandia operation began on 22 May 1944. Despite logistic and movement problems caused by jungle and terrain, airfields at Hollandia, Tanahnmerah Bay, and Tami were cleared of Japanese by 6 June.

The 32nd Division was slated to land at Aitape on 22 May. During April training was winding down to morning sessions. In the afternoons we washed clothes, sunbathed to avoid skin diseases, and rested.

> *Gabumi. 29 April. Hiked up to Gabumi thru Malanghai, Yori, Wiwai. Went with Ritz, Shanks, and Duda. Slept overnite. One native came over and made our fire and stayed till we left. On the Yauri. 30 April. Went hunting with 'Condita' for 'baloose' (birds). Saidor. 12 May. Moved to Saidor this morning...left the best camp we've ever had.*

D-Day for Aitape was also on 22 May. With little resistance, our assault troops captured the airfields. My outfit left Saidor on Mary Walker, Liberty-ship type (AKA) on 25 May. When we boarded the ship, we were each given a four by four by eight foot sheet of plywood which we carried down into the hold and put on the deck. We put our gear on it and slept on it, our lebensraum for the three-day trip--an idea that minimized arguments.

Disembarking at Aitape on 27 May, we drove to Anamo in a "duck" (a wheeled amphibious vehicle) and set up camp, where we did little except to get comfortable. We slept in hammocks suspended in fox holes and did fun things (swimming, blasting for fish, reading, exploring the area in a peep).

6 June. Big News, landing in Europe. Ammo detail. Aitape. 8 June: Moving up... saw large native canoes, with platforms and outriggers, holes chopped in them by Yanks. In the Field, along the Drinimore River, where the artillery is registering targets. Saw: 39s bombing and strafing...Jap prisoner brought in...very thin and small...he walked barefoot and in raincoat all the way back.

Our outer defense line, the Drinimore River, originated in the Torricelli Mountains, then flowed north through deep gorges and over waterfalls to Afua (six miles from the coast), where it meandered through the narrow coastal plain and emptied into the ocean. Except during floods, the water course was only a few hundred yards wide and hardly knee deep. Dense forest extended to the edge of the river and the view was obstructed by river bars covered with tall reeds, which made it hard for both sides to see what the other was doing. By the end of the Drinimore battles, the 32nd Division, 43rd Dvision, 112 Cav RCT, and smaller units were deployed along the river from the sea to Afua.

Our artillery battalion was located with the howitzers at Anamo/Anapopi about a mile west where Drinimore River emptied into the ocean. A passable road ran through coconut plantations where six by six trucks could pull the howitzers. Our headquarters and guns, situated on the natural levee at the edge of the beach, seemed a long ways from the fighting. Everyone dug deep fox holes, hanging their jungle hammocks below ground. Hank Duda's was elaborate, with room for his hammock, an underground seat, and a table fashioned in the damp sand.

Tadji airport was improved after the landing and became a base for bombing Rabaul and installations farther west. Large groups of enemy troops seen by aerial observers indicated that Japanese 18th Army between Saidor and Aitape was moving west. As our patrols probed east and set up defensive positions, the enemy became more aggressive. Outlying defenses were difficult to supply so our troops were withdrawn to protect the airports at Aitape.

The 129 Artillery Battalion supported the 126 Infantry Regiment and the 128. We in the liaison section set up our message center (radio, portable switchboard, telephone) at their headquarters. Our mission was to keep the artillery informed as to how the infantry was doing; provide howitzer fire when requested; and provide forward observers to direct fire. The liaison followed the infantry all along the river, from its mouth to the dropping grounds near Afua.

No one knew where the enemy was or how many there were. One day, two patrols met in the jungle and began shooting at each other. Each patrol backed off, deserting their Chippewa Indian scouts from Wisconsin who had been mistaken for Japanese. Although they were from different companies, the Indians recognized each other and walked in together. When they reported what happened, the platoon leaders were court martialled and broken in rank--maybe sent to the stockade.

Aitape. 13 June: Lot of bombing of Japs....could see 39s dive. 14 June: A-20s cleared their guns in our area...hit the flat toute de suite...frigate shelled Japs east of Yakamal with 3" and 40 mm. 15 June: Another POW, pretty weak, brought in on a

stretcher. 28 June: They brought in a pack full of stuff...the Jap they killed was carrying a 75 mm. mountain gun shell.

With eight native bearers carrying radios and bulky equipment on 27 June, my crew and I hiked the trail from Anamo to Afua. Looking up, I saw a low flying B-25 and a string of bombs floating down toward us. We took a dive into the dirt under a cliff before the bombs hit a few hundred feet away. The bearers dropped their loads and ran into the bush--six of the eight came back.

I had fun with the natives, called Fuzzie-wuzzies by the Aussies, talking pidgin English. One young man told me about "making poison" (witchcraft). An enemy could cause your death by cooking up a potion, which did not have to be drunk. German missionaries before World War I had converted the natives to Catholicism. They shouted Grus Gott (God Bless) when we met them. They were intelligent and some could read and write German. Once on a mountain trail, hiking with friends and a group of aborigines, we got to a trail where the natives would leave us, the headman asked each of us, "You Catoleek?" I said, "No" and walked on. Those that said, "Yes," got a handshake, and "Grus Gott."

My crew and I were attached to the 126 Infantry Regiment on the Drinimore River, but we had no idea where we were. My diary has few entries, except to mention that I went up in a liaison plane to relay radio messages from patrols to regimental command posts. The pilot was Warrent Officer David Booth, brother of Clare Booth Luce, playwright, and wife of Henry Luce, owner of Time.

The Japanese that had made their way to our line were being shelled from the sea, from the air, and by the artillery howitzers.

27 June: Out in the bush with Lt. Herb Jackson...John Hintz, Coty, Skik, and Dittman are out here. 1 July: 5 Japs tried to get into B Btry's area this morning...they were carrying demolition kits 1 KIA 2 more later found wearing American sweaters and leggings.

The Japanese probably came in from the sea; the only damage they caused was a blown up truck seat.

In the field. 2 July. Don and Phil Fraser came up to relieve John and Coty...we're eating C rations mostly, with a little fresh bread. 3 July: Moved again closer to the coast...6 natives for the equipment...Max Scheft and I laid the wire...had commu with the plane to contact patrol. 5 July: Back from the field--Jackson, Dittman, and I came in...natives sing Christmas carols in German. Aitape. 6 July. With Dan Fink went to the Tadji airport trying to get a ride on the Beauforts--no luck.

During most of July I went back and forth from the front to artillery headquarters. At headquarters, for a time I was in charge of a detail to "fix up the camp." On 11 July, the enemy

broke through the Drinimore River lines forcing the middle of the line to retreat. I was on the beach at the time, but some of my men were with the infantry. I wrote in my diary that "*the infantry suffered reverses last night; some of the arty boys in on the retreat. Mitchell missing.*"

The attack by the Japanese began near the center of the line at Company G, 128 Infantry. The company had recently been reinforced and a string of low barbed wire had been strung. The enemy attacked in several screaming waves that were mowed down by infantry machine guns and mortar fire. As soon as the attack was begun, the 120 and 129 began firing previously registered concentrations along the bed of the river and on the east side. From later reports, the Japanese battalion was reduced from 400 to 30, principally the result of artillery fire. General Adachi had planned to attack with three regiments abreast, but only smaller elements sent in waves along the line. Despite set-backs, the Japanese opened a large gap in the American lines and troops began moving west away from the river. Others were isolated in pockets without being able to join troops that were being assembled for a counter attack.

After reinforcement by new and additional units, troops were on the Drinimore by 13 July but Troop C, 112 Cavalry was isolated at Afua.

> *On the Drinimore. 15 July. Back to the first bn...with Fraser, Ritz, and Jackson...nothing much doing...our bn. on the counter attack probably knocked out 2 enemy mountain 75s. 16 July. Just living...making things livable, cooking, etc. 17 July. Dead Japs on the beach...washed down by the rain from the Drinimore.*
>
> *On the Drinimore. 19 July. An attack coming up according to G-2...building our radio pit deeper and sand-bagging. 20 July. Saw a bunch of K-9s this morning...they were by short rounds. 21 July. Bad luck again...another inf boy hurt...another short.*
>
> *Back with the battery. 22 July...it feels pretty good to be back with the old bunch. 23 July. Anapopi. Swim in the ocean...laid wire to A Co.,...inf. found a Jap range finder, mines, explosives.*

Photo maps identified trails and rivers along the coast but the jungle was seen only as tree blobs with few distinguishing features. To locate positions away from the river, two methods were used. An artillery liaison plane would fly over the unknown position where a liaison officer on the ground would notify the pilot when he was directly over him. The pilot would turn around, fly straight to the Drinimore, return and circle over the liaison officer, and tell him by radio how far he was from the river. Then the pilot would fly directly east to the sea and return over the position in question. The position would be at the intersection of the lines.

The whole area had been registered, plotted, and numbered on artillery charts. To check accuracy of the intersection method, the pilot circled the unknown position and gave the liaison officer the distance he was away from Concentration Number so and so. When fire was requested,

the infantry would fire a few rounds of smoke mortars at the spot, and with aerial and ground observers directing, gun fire was quite accurate.

In big battles, it can be dangerous to be hundreds of miles from a battle front, but here in the jungles of New Guinea, a world of difference existed between life on the Drinimore River and that only a few miles away in Aitape. At the base, movies were shown, GIs put on shows, you could read a book, take a swim in the ocean, and eat hot food. Out on the river, where the Japanese might be anywhere, and attacks were imminent. When the telephone wire was broken we sloshed through the mud, first to find the break, then splice it. It was often easier to lay new wire.

Some of the city boys thought they should get a medal just for going to the front. As someone who had been a hunter and a woods wanderer in Wisconsin, I hated to go out with New Yorkers and other big city boys who were careless about keeping quiet. The fellows from northern Wisconsin or westerners who grew up hunting were the best people to have in the jungle.

On his way to inspect the infantry on the Drinimore, Colonel MacNab ran up the coast in a barge, passing the river, landing a mile farther east deep among the enemy. When he realized his error, his barge was stuck in the sand where he couldn't back out, so another barge was sent to rescue him. Colonels are supposed to know where their front lines are and not make costly mistakes, so MacNab was sent back to the States.

Herb Jackson and I tried to destroy the barge with artillery fire--lots of close misses, but no cigar, so the barge lay there. We had a few short rounds that hit some our infantry--it happens more than the brass will admit. The Papuans have a word for this silence, mokita. It means, "Truth that we all know but agree not to talk about."

Diary: *July 25, Out in the field again. Hiked along the D. with John...dead Japs on the trail...Skik, Shemanski, Weaver, Duda, Capt. Carmichael, et al....fixed up a hut for sleeping. July 26 "Woke up to the sound of rain...six Nip .75 mm. shells landed in the CP area injuring four...stayed in the hut, more afraid of rain than the shells...others went into the rain filled slit trenches...I wasn't too brave, however...moved later in aft.*

I lay on my pad in the tent with Johnny Hintz, a devout Catholic, who lay there praying. Earlier in the war, I read a Readers Digest article entitled "There are no atheists in foxholes" that told of soldiers and airmen who had found religion when under the stress of combat. I had been an atheist so long, that the thought of praying never came to mind. I could as much pray to a primitive idol, as to Jesus or the Christian God. Poor Johnny, one of my best friends, died of typhus on 24 August. I had been to see him at the hospital on the 23rd.

July 27: Laid a bit of wire...C47s came over this morning and dropped rations and ammo...drops have killed several men, including a native, who tried to catch a box...wooden crosses from a broken bundle twisted and fluttered to the ground...the plantation is now an Army cemetery...as we were laying wire through the dropping grounds, a Japanese mortar

dropped close enough to scare us...Denis Tatman, Kurt Hofmeister, Leary, and Tony C. there, Ritchey and survey gang up.

Baldy (112 Cavalry). 1 August: Japs attack...arty thrown in...8 sabers walk by...direct hit by our arty on enemy CP...Nip colonel killed... prisoners taken. 2 August, 1944. Plenty rations...stayed up all night standing by...attack on right flank repulsed. 3 August. Attack at night...enemy 75's supposedly firing point blank but overshot harmlessly in the bush...our arty did good work.

Baldy. 4 August. Attack this morning...repulsed...terrific arty...11 prisoners, incl. 1 officer, 1 sgt. major...most in pretty good shape. 5 August. rain...prisoners.

After the battle I walked around the area where the 112 Cavalry RTC (Baldy) had endured some of the most intense fighting. Scores of dead Japanese, beginning to stink, lay scattered about. Dead GIs were lined up in separate rows awaiting Graves Registration people to get their data. Looking at the infantry dead didn't bother me--I never knew them. Their muddy boots and laced up leggings, hit me with pathos--these guys were alive last night. They had put on their boots and meticulously laced up their leggings with no idea that this was their last day. Real sadness would come when their parents, wives, or sweethearts got the news from the War Department.

Baldy. 7 August. Five Chinese coolies brought in, all smiles, bowing. 8 August. more Japs...good rations...Moss and Mike work on them--playing possum.

Mike and Moss were Japanese-American interrogators trying to get information from the prisoners by being friendly and devious.

During the Battle of the Drinimore, thousands of Japanese gathered along the river, made banzai charges time after time. During lulls in action and anticipating battles our artillery had fired targets along the river. When the enemy was about to charge, they betrayed their intentions by making so much noise the infantry would call for fire. Those that escaped the artillery would be mowed down while trying to cross the river.

When most were dead or wounded the battle was over. After the war, the Japanese estimated that their 18th Army lost 9,000 men just for the period 1 June through 5 August. The Allied forces lost 450 men killed, 2,550 wounded and 10 missing.

Despite the large numbers of soldiers killed on both sides, the Drinimore fighting was essentially "defensive." The mission was not considered complete until a counteroffensive could be made against the Japanese 18th Army. The 124th Infantry Regiment, reinforced by a battalion of the 169 Infantry Regiment, crossed the Drinimore late August and fought the Japanese east to Niumen Creek and circled around to Afua by 10 August.

I was not involved in this maneuver but I remember the intense aerial, naval bombardment, and cannon fire during the attacks, thinking *I hope they know where they're shooting*. Lt. General Hatazo, commander, withdrew the remnants of his 18th Army and eventually circled around the American forces and made his way west.

> *9 August. Baldy. All quiet on this front...3 more prisoners...scattered remnants of the enemy still running about being shot by Yanks...mountain guns found. 10 August. Nothing doing now but eating and sleeping...our arty group was photographed by Signal Corps. 11 August. Back from the field in a Cat right down the Drinimore River...sure is funny how this folded up...back to base in afternoon...went to the show with Ben.*

After a few days of rest and a lot swimming, my diary said: *Aitape. 17 August. Went out on the destroyer Stevenson...had good breakfast...fired 3 problems at barges, a hut, and a wrecked plane...went as far as Dagua airdrome, passed But airdrome...good chow...had ice cream after supper.*

On 25 August 1944, General Krueger, over-all commander, convinced that the Japanese 18th Army was no longer a threat, declared the Aitape operation over.

→→→→→→→