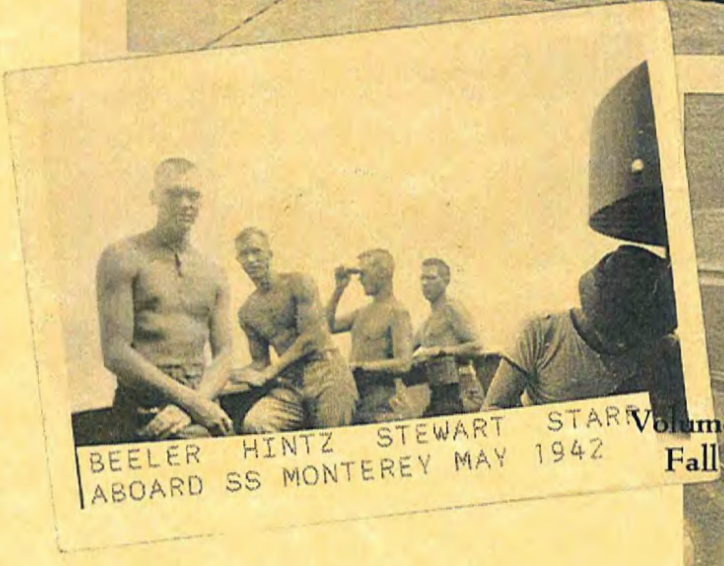
Life and Letters



Volume XVIIb
Fall 1996

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I've been stalling the writing of this page for this semester's volume of **Life & Letters**. Between the end-of-semester fallout of papers and the panic of "Will I ever finish?", I've been afraid of not finding words that do justice to my students' stories. But this afternoon I discovered the impetus and the connection I was looking for. I saw *101 Dalmatians* at the theater and was struck by the thoughts that crossed my mind in the darkness as I watched the movie, thoughts that became entangled (as many of them do these days) with what **Life & Letters** is all about.

The movie's plot has nothing to do with the tradition of our stories in this booklet, but the memories behind the movie have everything to do with the motivation of **Life & Letters**. As I watched the new version, I missed a few scenes that the original had included. I waited for Rolly's cry of "I'm hungry, Mother, really I am." I expected Nanny to run through the London streets crying, "Police!" I wanted to laugh again at the animals' dialogue. But this version was different. I whispered to my friend (too many times, perhaps) that this feature is truly a 1990's version. And it was wonderful.

So what is it about remakes and new versions? What keeps us listening to (again) and watching (again) the same stories? What is it that keeps those same stories going? The youthful eyes that watched the first dalmatian movie became the eyes that envisioned this new version to delight their own children's eyes. Therein lies the connection to these stories of **Life & Letters**. The story's told again, this time with the vantage point of years gone by and life experienced in between. Within this volume, as well, lie stories, different, maybe, in the telling, but so similar in tone, told again for the children. Join us on this trek into the lives of my students, transformed by time, retold with insight and a heart for their subjects and audience--you. Welcome, again, to **Life & Letters**.

❖ ❖ ❖ Joan Stear
USL, Lafayette, Louisiana
Fall 1996

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Front Cover, clockwise: (top right corner) Melba Martin;
(bottom right corner) Jean Smith, on right, and cousin George Eddie;
Beeler Badten, Jake Valentine's buddy; Ruth Maher, on far right; Pat DeLatte;
(center) Lois Diehl, sister Jennie in background, 1945

LIFE & LETTERS
Fall 1996

Seated, left to right: Jean Smith; Rosemary Aycock; Joan Stear; Chris Westell
Standing, left to right: Doris Bentley; Jake Valentine; Mildred Joy; Helen McConnell; Betty Gerard; Lois Diehl; Melba Martin; Jane Ellen Carstens; Ruth Maher; Pat DeLatte; Orpha Valentine
Class members not in photo: Marge DeVillier; Joan Ireland

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LIFE & LETTERS thanks, as always, the English Department
at the University of Southwestern Louisiana and
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A MAGIC DAY, A MAGIC DAD

by

Joan Ireland

Ready! Charge! Fire! Three rounds of hastily formed snowballs hurtled over the hedges at the target--one solitary, 6' 3" Dad on that wintery afternoon in late January of 1969. A winter afternoon in Connecticut, and a war was waging--my husband Ray against four-year-old Patti and my stepchildren Martha, eight, and Loren, ten years old.

Snow had fallen overnight, adding 10 inches of that soft stuff to the already two feet of snow on the ground--soft stuff perfect to make snowmen, snow balls, or a feast for the eyes of the beauty of a pure, white world. It was a cold, clear day, but with heavy wool stockings, boots, snow suits, hats and mittens, no one cared how cold it was.

Many times we would have newly fallen snow, but the weather would be so dark and cold, that the snow would be hard and dry or frozen over with a hard crust. Today, though, was perfect, a day not often seen, a magic day--a magic day that my kids remember as a bright spot in their childhood, one of the days they remember their Dad playing and having fun with them.

The day started as a snowball, small, unpretentious. Ray and the kids pushed these real snowballs around the lawn until they became huge. What to do with them? Make a snowman, of course!

Loren's snowball was very large! He rolled it to the center of the lawn. Then Martha, with the help of her dad, lifted her smaller ball on to the top of Loren's ball. Patti had her ball ready. It was smaller, as a four year old doesn't move as fast as big brother or sister, but it was just the right size for the snowman's head.

Patti and Martha rushed into the house calling, "Mommy, we need some eyes and a mouth for our snowman!" I had some small, red crab apples in the refrigerator and gave them to the girls along with a carrot for his nose.

"What about his mouth, Mommy?" asked Patti. I searched in the refrigerator and found some squash that I had planned to cook for supper. I cut a round, curving piece of the rind and cut tiny sections out for teeth. The snowman came alive.

Martha said, "Let's call him Mr. Snowapple." Ray pushed his old black hat down on Mr Snowapple's head. Before I could turn around, Martha had draped an old shirt of Loren's on the snowman. There he stood, a sentinel, or an arbitrator, in what was soon to become a war.

Ray, who at 6' 3" could look over the hedge which formed the line of battle and did not have an ounce of surplus fat on his body, could run, twisting and leaping, escaping all the snowballs thrown by the smaller arms of his children.

David, who was fourteen months old, and I watched them for a while from the safety zone of my living room window as Ray held the outer perimeter, the outside of the hedges. He was so tall he could look over the hedge and see the three kids with their hoard of snowballs, just waiting to wallop their Dad.

A glimpse of Dad and three snowballs flashed over the hedge, but no sooner had the snowballs left their hands, a large soft snowball would hit them in the face or on their backs as they hurriedly fell down in the snow. The kids were laughing, so happy and carefree. I didn't have three children out there in this "Snow Ball War." I had four, as Ray whizzed by the hedges and around the house in an elaborate hide and seek maneuver. Loren was after him in a flash, but he soon fell as a barrage of quickly thrown snowballs hit him in the chest.

Soon the major skirmish was over, and only a few balls were flying through the air. I got David all dressed up in his snow suit, woolen cap and mittens and Patti's last year's boots that were two sizes too big for him, and we went out to join the fray. Oh, yes, I got pelted a few times before the truce was declared.

Once the war was over, the children made angels in the snow. They ran to other parts of the lawn where the snow had not been trampled down and fell onto their backs in the snow. Then they spread their arms wide, moving them back and forth. When they got up there was a perfect angel, an indentation in the snow where their bodies had lain. Patti has told me many times that she misses the "angels" here in Louisiana.

Suddenly, I thought the war was resumed as I saw a flying object sail through the air, landing in a big soft snow drift. Then the ball moved, waving its arms and legs, and making a loud, laughing noise. Yes, it was David. With his too big boots and layered bundles of clothes, he could hardly maneuver, but a happy David. A magic moment with his Dad as he was picked up, hugged and tossed into another soft cloud of snow.

A magic Day, a magic Moment, a magic Dad, one that my children and I remember of the "Days of their childhood."

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HE WAS LIKE THAT
by
Marge DeVillier

Joe, my Marine Corps Master Sergeant husband, was funny, kind, considerate, loyal, thoughtful, compassionate and happy--always laughing.

Joe never sat when he could stand. He never walked when he could run. He was a human dynamo in perpetual motion. He never had a weight problem and was very athletic. A sensitive person, Joe was not afraid to show his emotions. He was like that.

One time, when we were driving back to Cherry Point, Joe ran over a cat. At first, he thought it was a wild animal, but it was a cat. Thinking it may have been some child's pet, he became so upset that he vomited. Joe loved animals. Joe was like that. (Before he joined the Marine Corps, he had been a student in animal husbandry at S.L.I.)

Joe was also loyal and a good friend to his friends. One of his Marine Corps buddies was put in the brig because the Marine Corps found out he was a homosexual; he was going to be dishonorably discharged. Joe said, "I'm going to see him." His other buddies begged him not to go because he might get into trouble himself; people might think he was a homosexual. Joe said, "He's my friend and I'm going. I don't know what people will say, but I'm going to visit my friend and tell him goodbye." He was like that.

He always saw the good in people. Whenever anyone criticized someone, he would bring up some good points about that person. He was like that.

Joe was romantic, too. I was working at a hospital in New Bern, North Carolina, when we were stationed at Cherry Point, twenty miles away from the base. On our first month's anniversary after we met, he left a red rosebud on the desk at the nurses' station for me. I thought that was so romantic. He was like that.

Even after our marriage, he would do romantic things for me. He would leave me little love notes in unexpected places. He was like that.

Joe was both considerate and generous. Before we got married, he had an allotment check sent to his father every month. After we married, he had money put in savings bonds for my sister's two children, my niece and nephew. He was like that.

Joe was like that! Fair, generous and thoughtful. He was always doing things for other people, too. He volunteered to help people do things like moving or in building something or working on a car. He always had a project going to help someone. He was like that.

Joe even volunteered my services at times. I didn't always like that because I was too selfish and self-centered. After I got involved in the project though, I was glad and enjoyed it. Joe helped me learn how enjoyable doing for others could be. He was like that.

Joe helped me control my anger, too. One time I dropped the waffle iron after it had stuck. I couldn't get it open so I jiggled it so much it fell on the floor and I kicked it. He was shocked! When I started to clean all that stuck, burned batter off the waffle iron, he helped me. Then, together, we read the recipe for making waffles. I discovered I had left the shortening out.

The two of us got the waffle iron clean, but it never worked right after that. It was always a little off center, and the waffles came out in a strange looking pattern. Then we laughed. Joe always helped me face my shortcomings with humor. He had a terrific sense of humor. He was like that.

One time I bought a green naugahyde platform rocker for his birthday and had it delivered. I was so happy with my purchase, thinking he would be, too; but he chided me for spending the money on something we couldn't afford or didn't need. I was so disappointed because I had planned his reaction, too; but things didn't go according to my plans and he was upset because I hadn't asked his opinion.

We had agreed we wouldn't make any major decisions without talking it over together, but I justified my actions by saying, "Then it wouldn't have been a surprise." When I asked if he liked it, he answered and settled the rift with his usual humor, "All I see are green dollar bills when I look at that green chair." Joe settled most of our disagreements with humor. He was like that.

He could always get me out of a bad humor with his good humor He could dispel my fears and worries in the same way, too. He was like that.

Joe always saw the funny side of things. Marriage with him was so easy. He made the transition from single life to married life a joy. He was like that.

Joe was helpful, empathetic, compassionate, and humble, too. When he took a two week furlough after the baby was born to take care of us at home, he said, "I will never again say housewives have nothing to do." He did all the housework and cooking. He mopped and waxed floors, did the laundry and shopping. Every afternoon he was so tired he had to take a nap. The macho marine who could out-walk anyone, or out-run any runner on the track, couldn't get through the day without taking a nap.

I have never seen anyone so thrilled about going on maneuvers, but at the end of those two weeks at home, Joe was ready to return to work. His basic training in child-care and new-mother-care almost did him in. He wasn't afraid to admit this training was tougher than his Marine Corps basic training. He was humble, especially after such a humbling experience as that. Joe was willing to give credit where and when credit was due. He was like that.

Joe had had some domestic training at home with thirteen kids in the family. His mother had died when the youngest child was six months old, so he and his brothers and sisters had to help his dad with household duties and caring for the younger children.

Joe was an almost perfect carbon copy of his father. His father, Cleveland DeVillier, instilled priceless values into all his children. They all graduated from high school, and most of them went on to college.

Poppa could do anything around the house that involved house keeping and the rearing of children. Whenever someone had a baby or a medical crisis in the family, it was Poppa who went to take care of the kids and sick ones.

He dropped everything and went to California to take care of his daughter-in-law and her family when she got burned in a cook out fire. He stayed several years because her hands were burned badly and she couldn't stand warm or hot water on her hands and she had small children who required constant attention.

Poppa dropped everything and came to my rescue when I divorced my second husband and went back to work. I had a babysitter lined up and was scheduled to go to work in one week when the sitter called and canceled the agreement. I didn't know what to do, so I called Poppa.

Poppa was on the train to Louisville, Kentucky, the next day. I would have lost the job at the Veterans Hospital if he hadn't come. He did all the cooking and cleaning and laundry. He spoiled his grandson, too. I was in love with his family because they all helped each other like that, but Poppa and Joe were something else.

They were both like that.

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DENTS AND INCIDENTS, or HELL ON WHEELS
by
Jean Smith

Sooner or later, it seems everyone on my Life and Letters class writes an account of cars. To cite a few examples, Orpha Valentine has written "Cars I Have Hated," someone else (I forgot who) told of "Cars I Have Loved," Jim Jennings wrote "Cars I Would Have Loved Had Only I Been Able To Afford Them," and most recently, Joan Ireland penned the tale of her talking Toyota. However, the world's fascination with automobiles has always puzzled me. As far as I'm concerned, I'm deliriously happy if the vehicle has four wheels and gets me to my destination and back in a semi-reliable fashion because when a breakdown does occur, I panic and take flight, reverting to a female of the worst sort--a helpless, brainless, bubble-headed. Yes, dependability is all that counts with me, so maybe this story should have been entitled "Cars I Didn't Care About, One Way Or The Other."

The first such auto in my life was a second-hand Studebaker. When I was young and single, my father always said jokingly (I think), "Jean, when you decide to get married, I'll be more than happy to pay you if you'll just run off and do it!" Of course, when I did just that--which was, for me, a very uncharacteristic act, everyone was shocked and surprised. In fact, all were amazed, forgetting completely where the idea had come from in the first place. At any rate, when I did elope, and it came right down to the payoff, my father, the penny-pinching Dutchman, couldn't bring himself to fork up any cash, so he gave Jack and me his old black Studebaker, for which I may sound ungrateful but really wasn't. The present did delight us. In those struggling college days, we had no mode of transportation other than feet, so even a very old Studebaker was one step forward, you might say.

However, with our quick collegiate minds, Jack and I soon discovered that, in order to run, the old Studebaker required gasoline on a more or less regular basis. Now at the first of the month, after pay-day, buying gasoline was no problem. Not so three weeks later. Whenever the end of the month neared, and the car chugged on empty, we had no choice but to leave it parked by the side of the road until the first of the next month brought another influx of cash. Until then, we (ever the merry couple) made do by walking to and from classes, eating potato soup, and drinking home brew until our financial crisis was over once again. The funny part is that I, an A student who thought of herself as being totally reliable, saw nothing at all irresponsible about the situation. Neither about leaving the car abandoned on a strange street--nor about making moonshine in a dry state.

But even when we had money, the habit of trying to wean the Studebaker from guzzling gasoline had become a difficult mind-set for Jack to break. (And truthfully, trying to wean myself from the habit of guzzling home brew is another story altogether.) Anyway, Jack drove more miles to the fume than anyone else in God's creation, both in town and on the road. He ran out of gas so many times that finally, I, eight months pregnant and sitting on a tree stump by the side of a Texas highway in 100 degree heat, waiting for him to return with a can of gas, screamed--DIVOOORCE! So that ended that--running out of gas, that is--not the marriage. And we did have a full tank to get to the hospital when the following month, our first daughter, Mary Kathryn, was born. Come to think

of it, Kathy's arrival did come at the first of the month rather than at the last, thank God! Anyway, that's "The Story Of the Studebaker."

Pretty soon, very soon , we had four children instead of one, and our next car was, naturally, a Ford station wagon. Beige and cream. Color is the absolute only thing I can tell you about any car. And this one was beige and cream with, eventually, a rusted out hole in the bottom of the back floor through which you could smell gas fumes and view the pavement whizzing by. Once Jack tried making an exciting family outing with the kids by letting them watch the mileage roll over to a hundred-thousand miles. Big deal! He had really pumped up the kids, drummed up the anticipation for weeks, so they were anxious and ready. Their mouths fell open and their little blue eyes bugged out as, from the back seat, they looked over Jack's shoulder and saw the numbers roll over ever so slowly to reach the one and five zeros. And then, mission accomplished, we celebrated the event by going to Gables, a dairy north of town, for ice cream cones. But, as Libby absentmindedly licked her cone piled high with raspberry ripple and leaned over the fence to watch the cows who'd supplied the cream, her treat plopped to the ground. A greedy bovine gobbled it up, and Libby wailed--and--wailed--and wailed, so loud that the outing became a little less of a success than planned.

Less of a success, that is, until Jack recouped enthusiasm and saved the day by taking the kids on a hair-splitting sixty-mile an hour ride down Devil's Hills on Cook Road, the only street in Columbus, Ohio, that equaled San Francisco's steep hills and deep dips. Then, thanks to the old Ford's stellar performance on Devil's Hill, a thrill worthy to that of the wildest, most harrowing roller-coaster ride, the kids were terrorized and happy again. Anyway, that's "The Fable of the Ford."

Then, we moved on up to Oldsmobiles because Jack had become a plant manager, and he said all plant managers drove Olds. That was when he was going through the stage of the Smiths keeping up with the Jones and all that, I guess. The first Olds I accepted with fairly good grace, but when he traded it in on the second, and it was an emerald green convertible with a white top, and after six years, I still didn't have any living room furniture, I indulged in a surreptitious shopping spree at the nearest Ethan Allen's when Jack was out of town, thus ending my resentment of Oldsmobiles. But by then the kids were teenagers and Doug was pushed off the road onto the abutment of a bridge and totaled the green convertible. He wasn't hurt--thank God! End of Oldsmobiles. Or, I guess you might say (if you have the courage), that's "The Ode to the Olds."

Another memorable mode of transportation was Ringo, the second-hand Chevy, a car of the sixties, bought from a good-natured hippie for two-hundred dollars. Ringo was something to behold! Now this car had real character, and it was mine--all mine, including its bald tires and bad shocks, and its sides covered with pasted peace symbols and decals which my long-haired teens talked me out of removing. So Ringo was bodacious, but somewhat temperamental, always clunking and clanging, stopping at the most inopportune times--or not at all. Or not staying put in the garage...like when...

...One night late, after a rehearsal at Players' Club and a few beers, I drove Ringo home through a pouring down rain. We came to the bottom of the drive, and at the hilly incline you could almost hear Ringo puffing, "I think I can, I think I can." Then, 'the little clunker that could' chugged

on up the drive and safely into the garage on the back of our lot. Quickly, I shoved the gear into park and raced through the storm to the kitchen door and into the house and on into bed. Early the next morning, Jack went to the garage to get Ringo and drive to work, as his manager-type Olds was in the shop for repairs. One look and he raced back into the house, yelling, "Call the police! Quick, call the police! Somebody stole Ringo!" Now, really. you couldn't have given the old junker away. So, I went outside and looked around, and just as I feared, in my haste I had pushed the gear into reverse instead of all the way over to park. During the night, Ringo had crept backwards from the garage, gathered up steam as it rolled down the sloping drive, slammed across the street, jumped the curb and hit a maple tree directly in front of the neighbor's front bedroom's plate glass window, bouncing back into the middle of the street. And there Ringo sat with a bedraggled look, a very bent fender and a big crease up its rear end. Anyway, so much for in the middle of the street in the middle of the street "The Saga of the Chevy "!

Except--that I felt awfully bad about the incident and told my friend, Charles Ritter. Charlie laughed and consoled me, "That's okay! Don't feel bad, Jean," he said. "One morning I backed down my drive leaving for work. Carefully, I looked right and left. Confidently, I backed out and BOOM! hit my neighbor smack-dab in the middle of the street. Johnny had done exactly the same thing at the same time--neither of us looked directly behind." This story made me feel a whole lot less stupid, mostly because Charlie was a Ph.D., a professor of theater at Ohio State University--and I figured I had to be fairly smart to pull a dumb trick like him.. So much for was telling "The Chat with Charlie "!

And, so much for cars, too, I guess, except to mention again that really--Jack was hell on wheels! Less so, now that he's older, but that's mostly because he's less hell on anything now that he's older. No offense intended; he's very good natured about my heckling. Besides, we all slow down--and for Jack, that's a blessing. Jack used to be a tail-gaiter, par excellence! He just couldn't stand not being at the front of the crowd, including the crowded highways. But old age is a blessing, in a lot of ways--especially if you're lucky enough to make it to old age riding alongside a man with a race-car driver's instincts in traveling salesman's clothing--one who sees nothing wrong about steering the wheel with his knee while absorbed in map-reading. All I can say is, "It was awesome!" In spite of Jack's aggressive and inventive driving habits, he's had only one accident, and lying flat on his back in the hospital bed with a leg in traction for two months did stick in his mind and slow him a bit--but only a bit. Oh well, we muddle through.... And anyway, that's the end of my story of "Dents and Incidents "--and, also, the end of my cranky complaints about that damnable contraption called--THE CAR!

NEW ORLEANS, HERE WE COME!
by
Mildred Joy

The very first thing we had to do was obtain a 'Ryder Rental Truck' for a one way haul to the metropolis of New Orleans. Then came the packing and the loading up of all our wares. Of course, it was always my job to do the packing. Thank God for friends!

I had never lived in any other place other than Savannah, Georgia, and I just had no idea about how far we would be traveling, or what the people were going to be like. Cason had been in New Orleans for eight months and made very few friends. He had not called often nor written much. He was what you might call a loner. I guess it was all right for him, but not for me I just wanted my little family back together again. Whoever started the phrase, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder," should be hung up on a lamp post in the hot boiling sun. My New Orleans venture was next to the worst part of my married life. Working and dealing with people all day, then coming home to deal with children alone. Bah! Humbug! Sure I made this bed, but I did not want to lie in it by myself. On to New Orleans.

We spent the night in or near Milton, Florida, then got up and headed out as early as we could. Even in the '50's, Highway 90 was a busy thoroughfare. When we got to Mobile, Alabama, the traffic was so fast and furious, whizzing in and out. I became so frightened, my death grip on the steering wheel caused my knuckles to turn white. I drove as close to the U Haul as possible for fear of being left in this strange place. I knew I wouldn't have been able to find him or my way back to Savannah. Then up jumped the tunnel! I have claustrophobia, so I was very happy the tunnel was no longer than it actually was. When I could literally see the light at the end of the tunnel, I really took in a big breath. It was truly a new world to a Georgia gal trying her best to follow a great big huge truck directly in front of her. No one was going to get in between us. I certainly didn't want to be left in this crazy ruthless traffic. At that time of my life, I was frightened for myself moving toward an unknown destiny. The thought of these people whizzing by at high rates of speed really had me disturbed. Would they be in New Orleans, too? Oh, yes, they <u>would</u> be in New Orleans.

We still had to get on Highway 90. Back in 1957 only two lane traffic drove through the low lands and big coulees which in Georgia, we called ditches. All I could see in the dark through the beams of my headlights was that huge truck directly in front of me, two lane black top and ditches on both sides. Not enough road to pull off on should you have a flat tire. I thought, "Oh, God, what is he moving me into? I can't believe he has moved us from civilization to the swamp land. Oh, no, I'm not going to spend the rest of my life in a swamp." Judging, oh yes, but I was judging pretty good at this point. We finally arrived at Parkchester Apartments in New Orleans around 6:30 that night. I was certainly glad to get off the road and see some symbolism of humanity again and not swampland. "Thank you, Lord!"

The next day was very busy unloading and placing furniture. At that time Robbie was five, David was four, and Cathy, two. Our new home was a two story apartment which was pretty nice.

My 1952 Chevrolet stayed parked for three months. The children and I would walk to the store and get a little bit of groceries at a time. I was so frightened to drive in the traffic. Cason was out in the Gulf a good part of the time. When he did come in from offshore, he would drive me to the store for the main groceries and he would stay in the automobile with the children while I did the shopping.

The ladies in the complex would gather in the circle in front of our apartment building and we would have our coffee klatsch before heading back inside to prepare the evening meal. The children would be joyfully playing. They were so young and so innocent. The ladies had warned me to be sure and lock the doors front and back at all times because there had been several ladies' purses stolen from their apartments and one lady had been raped. Their warnings really made me very cautious, not for myself alone, but for my little ones as well. I oriented myself to the big city pretty good and finally even prodded myself into driving. I would put Cathy and David in the back seat and Robbie in the front seat with me holding the New Orleans map. I would drive several miles down the road, pull over, get the map and see if I was headed in the right direction. New city, new boundaries of which I had no idea which was north, south, east or west. A terrible feeling!

You see, Savannah was laid out in a very sound plan of north, east, south and west; and of course I had lived in that environment for twenty-three years. Now, here in New Orleans, a city that follows the curve of the Mississippi River, I was in for a new adventure. I was determined it was not going to beat me. Robbie would hold his finger on where we were and after driving for several miles, I would do my thing of checking to see if I was going the right way. We traveled this way to City Park, Pontchartrain Beach, and once I got really brave and went downtown. I was a nervous wreck when we got home but I got out among the natives of the city more and more everyday. Going downtown I didn't undertake again for quite sometime.

When living in the apartment, I learned what confinement is really all about. The rains just kept on coming; the three small children just kept on getting sick. First chicken pox, then measles, then both. One would get it and then the other . There was always one left to have his other turn. I do not remember who had it last, nor do I care. Those days have become one set of memories that really will wear a fellow out. I do remember, however, that my darling daughter, Cathy, had chicken pox and the measles at one time. She was a very sick little girl. I know you aren't going to believe this, but it rained for twenty-eight days solid. I was going stir crazy.

Another thing that happened while living in this apartment was that one of the children burned his foot terribly by walking on one of those spectacular floor furnaces. He cried and screamed and cried for an eternity. I put Foile on it, but he kept on screaming with pain. The neighbor came over from next door and brought some medicine her husband had gotten when he had been burned out on an oil rig in the Gulf. It did the job very nicely. He quieted down right away. The sound of silence was marvelous for a mother who was hurting so badly in her own heart for her youngster. We never had another house with a floor furnace. The next houses had the furnaces built into the wall. The children didn't get hurt on that type of heater. It's time to move on with life.

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MEMORIES WITH A NEIGHBOR--MY GOOD FRIEND, ANNA
by
Charlotte McConnell

My friend, Anna, only sixty-eight, had a massive stroke twelve weeks ago. We were neighbors for many years when Mac and I lived at 904 West Marshall Boulevard, at a later date, to be named Doctor McConnell Boulevard.

It is so difficult to make conversation with someone who cannot communicate. Anna would lay on her hospital bed, looking at me. I know she knows who I am. I took her left hand on my recent visit, and she held my hand with a good grip. Her right eye is open, and it seems, with much difficulty, she can barely open the other. I have decided to read to her about some of the memories we share.

"Hi, Anna, I have enrolled in a USL Class, 'LIFE AND LETTERS'. I have chosen to write about our friendship and some of the many things we shared as neighbors. Remember when Mac and I moved across the street from you? It was just two weeks before Christmas, 1951. You and M.D. had two children, pat and Dwight. Mac and I had Don and Mary Charlotte, who were older than your two little guys. We also had Mike, who was just a toddler, youngest of all.

"Moving was exciting; we loved the location. The day we had scheduled to move was fouled up by the mover we had hired. He had marked his calendar for the following week! Fortunately for us, our farmer friends came to our rescue. They sent their strong farmhands, as field hands were frequently referred to. They all came to our rescue and moved us in; all the furniture was placed in their proper areas. Mac was determined that every crate be emptied N-O-W, NOW! So we were settled in very quickly.

"And so it was, then Christmas arrived. Our tree was up, our new home was decorated, and we had made permanent friends and neighbors whom we would know and love for many years.

"There are so many events we shared and many incidents to remember. More children came along. You and M.D. had your only daughter, Kay Frances, and two more boys, Trent and Chuck.

"I remember so well when Trent was born and Kay was only one year old. Those were going to be busy days, so I suggested that you leave Trent in the nursery at the little McConnell Hospital where he was born. You did! M.D. would go in during the day to cuddle and rock his new son. A special bond was formed between those two. It didn't take you very long to get organized, and soon you were all at home together.

"How about the time one or our boys konked Chuck on his forehead? What a knot! Scary, too!

"And I know you remember your trip to Mexico with friends. There you and M.D. were, sitting on the balcony and enjoying all the beauty of the gardens and patios. You came back home, and in relating your wonderful trip to us, said you told M.D., 'If only our children were here, all would be perfect!" Quite a Mama. Most Mamas I knew would have looked on that trip as a great 'get away.'

"One night you brought one of your children to stay at my house while you both went out. You once set a record (quoting your oldest) of going out every night for 34 days! but the night at our house Chuck cried to go home. In and out of our house so many times, and he wanted 'to go home'! Your children always loved home. What a compliment to a loving mother.

"In those days before air conditioners and closed windows, we heard all our neighborhood children while they played outside. What fun! After a/c, we were all closed up for comfort, but we lost the sounds of the birds' songs, the locusts, the wind and the train. It took years for Mac to succumb to change and put an a/c in our home. A/c had its compensation of less dust floating into the house. Before, whenever it rained, we had to dash around the house or rush home to close windows. Times had changed...

"...When our children played outdoors, there were those delicious kitchen aromas. Johnny always managed an invitation to your house whenever he had a whiff of your meatball sauce simmering or your stove. Our Mike gravitated to our other neighbor, Miss Lou, for coush-coush. Our Mary Charlotte could always raid an angel food cake pan filled with pull apart rolls from her, too. So with a/c, we lost all those good aromas. However, all my children still love to cook the old fashioned way.

"Through the years, I have watched your family grow. With every family addition, M.D. would extend your home. There were additions of extra bedrooms, extra baths. M.D. even had a barbeque house built–with a fireplace! Whatever he did, he always wanted it finished the day before! Yesterday!

"We were good neighbors, weren't we, Anna? We knew each other's routines and worried about the other one when things were not just the same as usual. During these days and times, so many people don't even know their neighbor. However, just today, I was outside my apartment patio, watering my few plants, when a young man passing by introduced himself. He had just finished moving into his new apartment next door to me. His friendliness makes me believe he must have enjoyed a neighborhood like ours. I have four young career singles as my neighbors--with a sidewalk friendship of only two.

"I'll continue the memories. There are so many events we shared and many incidents to remember. More children came along. Until next time, Anna."

With love,
Charlotte

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AN ODYSSEY TO THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION

by

Lois Diehl

Before the summer of 1990, I doubt if many Americans knew where Iraq even was, other than that it was a country somewhere in the Middle East. Today Iraq is linked with the name Saddam Hussein--one of the most inhumane leaders of modern times. South of Baghdad--the capital city--the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers flow together--the ancient site, many believe, of the Biblical Garden of Eden. The area is also thought to be the site of "The Hanging Gardens of Babylon"--one of the ancient seven wonders of the world.

While we lived in Kuwait, Iraq was our northern neighbor separated from us by the Neutral Zone. Iraq was not one of the Middle Eastern countries that we visited on KOC sporting trips. I don't even remember commercial flights from Kuwait to Baghdad at that time. I do remember squabbles between the Iraqis and Kuwaitis as to ownership of some of the oil reserves near the northern Kuwait border. Other than that, very little notice was taken of our northern neighbor Iraq.

In the early spring of 1972, Kevin was a fifth grade student in the American International School in Salamiyah. His history teacher was Ed Jones, a young bachelor from the States. Ed was an enthusiastic teacher, who sometimes seemed as if he were one of his students. He had extensively researched the area and envisioned a class trip to southern Iraq. Ed and an Iraqi friend, with permission by the Iraqi government, had mapped out a four day road trip. The trip would take the students along the marshes east of Ahwaz and then over roads, some no more than trails of two tracks through the desert, to Baghdad, and then straight south back to Kuwait. The twenty or so students would travel by school bus and camp in tents at night. They would carry all the necessary food, water, and gasoline with them.

All the kids were excited to make this trip in March. All the parents, though, were nervous and concerned. Conrad and I were relieved because we did not have to make a difficult decision to allow Kevin to go. We had been told just after Christmas that we would leave Kuwait before February 15. No transfer goes as planned, so we were unable to depart until April 15.

Our good Iraqi friend, Zuhair, advised Conrad that the southern area was not safe. The Marsh Arabs were very primitive and wary of uninvited strangers. Also the KOC travel office advised not to take the trip. But each time our departure from Kuwait was delayed, Kevin begged to take this final trip with his friends. Conrad and I finally reluctantly agreed that Kevin could go to Iraq.

Bob Baldwin, the KOC Operations Manager, stopped by the house shortly before the trip. "Conrad, dammit, I told Miguel he couldn't go. But since you're allowing Kevin, I've had to back down and give Miguel permission to go."

"Well, if you had gotten us out of here by February 15 as promised, neither boy would be going," Conrad replied.

And so early one March morning Ed, the Arabic speaking guide, and the students boarded the school bus packed with food, water, gasoline, tents, sleeping bags, and lanterns. After the bus left, the realization that we parents would have no communication with our children until their return sunk in. Those four days crept by very slowly. When they had not returned by the fifth day we contemplated sending a search party. But who would we send and could we get permission for anyone to enter Iraq on such short notice? Finally on the afternoon of the sixth day, Ed got word to the school that they were in Ahwaz and would reach Ahmadi late that night.

We anxiously awaited the arrival of our exhausted and dusty kids. What a trip they had. Somewhere in the marshes on the second day, the heavily loaded bus got stuck in a very deep rut in the desert road. Ed and the students were unable to move it, so they all trekked about ten miles to a village for help.

Kevin had such a good time that he begged us to let him stay for the next class venture in May--a tame camp out on the Kuwait desert. Our memories from this venture are a few grainy photos taken by a ten year old, an Iraqi saber found in the Baghdad Bazaar, and a hand woven reddish woolen rug that looked as if it had been dyed in beetle juice.

All the travelers agreed that the area was very desolate. They found no remains of the Hanging Gardens or Eden--just sand and more sand. If I could turn back the hands of time, would I make the same decision to allow Kevin to go on this trip? You bet I would. And I would like to be right there beside him to stand in awe where civilization is believed to have begun.

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RITA'S & MY FIRST REAL TRAIN RIDE
by
Anna Ruth Boudreau (Ganucheau Maher)

Rita, my older sister, and I had taken several short train rides between Washington, Louisiana, and New Orleans for Mardi Gras, but never had we been on an extended ride such as the trip we now anticipated to Knoxville, Tennessee. The year was 1944. Our family had been living in New Orleans for two years and Rita and I were both working. Rita was a clerk in the Personnel Department of Delta Shipyard on the Industrial Canal, and I was working as a secretary-discount clerk for Howell Drug Company on Magazine Street.

Rita and I wanted to have an exciting vacation this year. We had never gone on a trip by ourselves so we did not know where or how to begin making plans. Dad told us he had recently visited with two cousins who lived in Knoxville, Tennessee, and they had invited our family to visit. He called Ivy to arrange the visit. Dad and his brothers and sisters often spoke of Ivy and Dorothy as they had grown up with them in Washington. We had never met them but knew their younger half-sister, Betty Ann, and their father, our great Uncle Tom Boudreau, who was then mayor of Washington.

We bought our tickets from Southern Railway, and Rita and I prepared our wardrobe for the visit. We would take the train to Tennessee. We were forewarned when making reservations, that the trains were crowded with servicemen, either on leave or moving from one assignment to another, and that we may not even find seats together. The warning did not dissuade us. We were ready for the adventure and the thought of meeting all these servicemen was exciting.

The morning to leave came. Mama and Dad drove Rita and me to the Southern Railway Station on Canal Street and saw us aboard. It was July and the ride was long and hot, in crowded conditions as we had been forewarned. We did get seats together, though. Because the windows were left open (no air conditioning), we were covered with soot by the time we reached Knoxville. My white crocheted accessories had turned grey. We met a lot of service men, Navy and Army, and joined them in song and had a great time in spite of the uncomfortable conditions.

Our cousin Ivy and her husband, Dr. Ralph Monger, and their two children, Mary Ruth and Ralph, Jr., and Betty Chastain, Mary Ruth's close friend, met us at the station. We all got into the car, and to our surprise, we left immediately for the Smokey Mountains. Mountains! Rita and I had never seen mountains before except in pictures Dad had taken on a fishing trip to Colorado when we were small children.

Our destination was a quaint little village, Gatlinburg, Tennessee. I'm sure that does not fit the description of Gatlinburg today. At that time it was quaint and unhurried.

We wound our way through the mountains to Gatlinburg nestled in the Great Smokey Mountains. Ralph had made reservations at a lovely old inn, one of only two inns in the village. Rita and I shared a room. At meal time, there was a special table reserved for us to have our meals. The food was different from the French cooking we knew. Ralph would always suggest a food, or a way of preparing the food, we had never tried before. He was a connoisseur of good food, and I appreciated and learned much from his suggestions.

The next day, Ivy and Ralph had arranged for our group to go horseback riding on a mountain trail. Rita and I knew how to ride but did not have the opportunity very often. The ride along the beautiful unspoiled trails was special. On our return to the stable, Mary Ruth's horse skidded on loose gravel and sat on its rear. The horse came up from the fall with Mary Ruth still in the saddle; she was not thrown or hurt, just shaken.

On Sunday we saw our first black bear rooting through a trash container near the road. We stopped to take pictures. We visited Clingman's Dome and climbed the observation tower. From there we viewed Chimney Tops, two peaks in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park, saw more bears, and visited the Laura Spellman Rockefeller Memorial in Newfound Gap. From this point we could see North Carolina. As the day drew to a close we headed back to Knoxville.

The following four days were filled with activities within the city. We met many of Mary Ruth's friends, as well as my cousin Ivy's friends at luncheons and swimming parties. In the evening we had dinner in wonderful restaurants, with Ralph as a guide to a new experience in food.

I was at a very impressionable age and was quite impressed with my cousin Ivy's husband, Ralph. The next morning at breakfast, Ralph noticed that I had a wart on my right wrist and offered to remove it for me. He promised it would be a painless procedure. Ivy took Rita and me to Ralph's office later that day and he applied a liquid on the spot. He told me that it would fall off in about a week. Just a few days after I returned to New Orleans, the wart did just that. It fell off and all that remained was a small white spot which is still on my wrist today.

While in Knoxville, Ivy took us to meet her sister, Dorothy Haddox, and her husband, Bill. They lived in an area of rolling hills on property that had been in the Haddox family for many generations. Dorothy brought us down to the smokehouse and took out a wonderful smoked ham for Ivy to prepare for us.

Rita and I have reminisced from time to time about our first real train ride to Knoxville, Tennessee. Remembering the hot, congested and sooty train with fond memories of wonderful cousins and the vacation they gave us in the Great Smokey Mountains.

MY BUDDY, " BEELER" BADTEN
by
Jacob M. Valentine, Jr.

I was drafted into the Army in April 1941 and along with about two hundred others from Wisconsin was sent down to Camp Livingston, Louisiana, to join the 32nd Division. We draftees, or selectees, as some preferred to be called, were taught the rudiments of being soldiers by a cadre of noncoms and officers from various field artillery batteries. After some weeks of training, we were assigned our duty stations. Along with friends Dennis Tatman, Ben Stewart, and Carl Ameian, I was put in the Headquarters Battery. It was there that I met Beeler and Johnny Hintz.

His given name was Robert H. Badten but somewhere along the line was given the nickname "Beeler." Beeler wa six feet five inches tall, weight about two hundred pounds; not too athletic but with his height probably played high school basketball.

Early in our friendship, he told this story of his days as a soda jerk in the local drugstore in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. A man sat down at the counter and asked for a malted milk. Beeler grabbed a mixing container on the counter and scooped ice cream into it. In went the milk, chocolate syrup, and then malted milk powder. He put the container in the mixer and after a few minutes poured the chocolate malted into a glass and set it in front of the customer. Beeler watched in amazement as the customer began spitting out ashes, matches and a cigarette butt. Beeler then noticed that the man was blind. Beeler had not looked into the mixing can that a former customer had used as an ash receptacle. Beeler almost cried as he told this story

Beeler joined Headquarters Battery, 120th Field Artillery, 32nd Division, a National Guard outfit, stationed in his home town, Stevens Point. When our entry into World War II seemed inevitable, the division was called into federal service in October 1940 and was sent to Camp Livingston near Alexandria, Louisiana.

In the communications section, Beeler and I often sat together on top of great rolls of telephone wire in the back of a weapons carrier. As the truck rode along, the wire payed out from one of the rolls onto the road. One of us stayed with the truck, while the other ran behind and threw the wire off to the side. When we got to a crossroad, one of us put on climbers spikes, climbed a tree, fastened the wire on one side, then went across the road and carried the wire up another tree and pulled the wire up and tied it so traffic could pass under.

Beeler, Johnny Hintz, and I tried out for the radio school. I soon flunked out because I couldn't read or send Morse Code fast or accurately enough, but John and Beeler became radio men and I became a telephone man. Beeler, John and I were friends all during the Louisiana and Carolina maneuvers 1941 in the communication section.

On 22 April 1942, the 32nd Division boarded the *SS Monterey*, a luxury liner converted into a troop ship. Early the next morning the ship went under the Golden Gate Bridge bound for Australia. The first day was bright an sunny but as we sailed away from shore, the sea got rough making nearly everyone sick. During the first breakfast, Beeler, Johnny and I went out on deck to get some fresh air. We stood at the ship's rail eating out of our mess kits watching the sea as the ship went up and down. By then Beeler wasn't feeling too good so when John and I finished our breakfasts we ate his, too. Thus began our custom of sharing. During our times together under different circumstances in Australia and New Guinea, Beeler, John Hintz, Ben Stewart and I shared home-sent cookies and candy.

On the *Monterey* after days of boredom, we settled into a routine, walking the decks, visiting the infantry, and going to mess. We were assigned as machine gun guards high up on the bow. I usually lay in a large coil of anchor hawser reading *War and Peace* or napping in the sun--who me, Alfred G. Neuman, worry?

The ship arrived safe and sound at Port Adelaide, South Australia, and after some weeks at Camp Woodside, we boarded a train with our trucks and howitzers loaded on flatcars headed for Camp Cable near Brisbane. Dennis Tatman and I sat on one side of the narrow passenger car and Beeler and Ben Stewart across the aisle. For childish amusement, I began extolling the scenery that we could see from our side of the car. Then Beeler and Ben would argue that their side was better. We'd then rush to their side and push and shove to look; then brag about the view from our window. Beeler began waving his long index finger in our faces making a point about something. Then we'd try to grab his finger. Finally we twisted his finger so much that we sprained it. From then on Beeler's finger had a large swollen knuckle.

Our division stayed at Camp Cable near Brisbane, Queensland, for many months in training. Beer was cheap and each battery could purchase beer from Australian Army canteens. The beer was sold in quart bottles packed in burlap bags, six to the bag. The boys from Stevens Point bragged about Point Beer. Although complaining about "Green Death," as the Pointers called the Aussie beer, everyone drank prodigious quantities. On winter party nights, we gathered around a great bonfire drinking beer. After considerable imbibing, Beeler would get up and give an interminable comic spiel. Beeler was the best natural stand-up comic I've ever known. Joe Kresh remembers Beeler "discoursing in his Russian dialect on a Black One who does not agree with Stalin's undeniable views." Getting hotter and hotter, more and more excited in his stories, per Monty Python's John Cleese, Beeler would stagger around the roaring fire until we feared for his life. Then Johnny Hintz would quietly guide Beeler to a seat.

In October 1943 my liaison crew consisting of Beeler, Johnny Hintz, and Charlie Solimeo, among others, went from Australia to a naval gunfire spotters school at Milne Bay, New Guinea. There we sailed along the coast of New Guinea in a destroyer firing at huts and bridges on shore. This exercise trained us to direct naval fire if needed in an invasion. We later rejoined our battery on Goodenough Island.

Beeler and I were together during the Siador and Aitape battles. Johnny Hintz died of bush typhus while we were at Saidor, which saddened both of us terribly. Beeler and I were usually on different assignments during the battles. While I was on the beach with the Headquarters Battery, Beeler was on the Drinimore River line when the Japanese broke through. I recently wrote Beeler, asking his to fill me in on the details.

He wrote: *A Captain Murphy was our liaison officer. He ended up digging my fox hole and I ended up giving the artillery commands over the radio back to Major Schultz. We had the shells landing in the middle of the Japs as they hit the Drinimore. Hundreds of Japs were killed.*

When the Japs came over the Drinimore River (full moon night), all hell broke out. We were only a few yards back from the river's edge. This is when Mitchell lost it. He took off like a guy in total fear. I am sure he was killed. I, along with others, were with the liaison right near the Drinimore. We went into the interior as far as possible. We didn't think the Japs wanted to go around us–or break through–they did both. We tried on various occasions to break through--each time we failed–just about out of food, when a scout from the infantry got us through with the Japs on our tail--with the help of A-20s strafing to protect us as we made it back to rest camp.

Several months after the Drinimore River battles, Beeler and I boarded a troop ship from Finschaffen bound for San Francisco. Beeler and I were among the first to go home on "points," mainly because we had arrived into a combat zone ahead of our battery by attending the naval spotter's school. Arriving at San Francisco Beeler went home to Stevens Point and I to Racine. A week later we got together at a Rest and Recreation hotel at Hot Springs, Arkansas. There was not much to do in Hot Springs. We took the hot baths and walked the streets. That was my last contact with Beeler until I wrote him several months ago to get him to recount his war stories.

In the fifty years that passed after I last saw Beeler we each went our own way--college, work and families. As a wildlife biologist and refuge manager, I worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in North Dakota, Virginia, Florida, and retired in Lafayette, Louisiana. Beeler worked in the insurance business in Minnesota, Iowa, and retired in Phoenix, Arizona. Now our friendship has been renewed via letters. We'll probably get together in person--Phoenix is not too far from Lafayette.

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CHILDHOOD EVENT: "SENSE-ING" FUN

by

Jane Ellen Carstens

Smell, sound, sight, touch and taste--some of these sense experiences are remembered individually, while others are remembered in connection with each other. As I reflected upon each of these truly wonderful gifts to humanity, I realized that life would be colorless and meaningless without them. Not only have I learned to appreciate each one, but I have also developed a greater empathy for those persons who may have had one or more of their senses impaired or lost them entirely.

A single delightful odor stands out in my memory. My Grandmother Blanchet had several magnolia bushes. I do not know the correct botanical name, but we called them banana magnolias. They looked like small white bananas on the bushes, and when one broke them off and put them in handkerchiefs or rolled them in one's hands, the resulting fragrance was wonderful. I have not seen any of these since childhood.

I remember more tastes from my childhood than anything else. I guess that says something about my enjoyment of food. Where shall I begin! Every weekend in the summer we had homemade ice cream - sometimes vanilla, sometimes chocolate, fresh peach or fresh fig. The cooked custard was made with pure cream and put into a three gallon aluminum container, immersed in a wooden freezer filled with ice and rock salt. Once the lid was on, and the crank installed, the process of churning began. All of us had a turn at doing this. We also took turns immersing our hands in the icy water to see who could keep them there the longest--a rather primitive means of stimulating the sense of touch. Additional ice cream cones were purchased once a week when the ice cream man came around in his truck. Sometimes, as we waited in the yard for him to arrive, I would lose my nickel and had to forego that treat.

My brother Charles earned money in the summer by selling snowballs. There was no crushed ice available then. He had to buy a large block of ice and scrape it with a scoop. He made delicious syrups to pour over the ice.

Very special desserts on weekends that I loved were blanc mange and floating island, both custard type desserts. I have not had these since I was a child. Ice cold watermelon was always considered a treat in summer, as were fresh blackberries, which we found growing in the ditches alongside the road (now Hacker street) that ran past our house.

A popular after-school snack was the nose of a loaf of French bread, with the center scooped out, and cane syrup poured inside. I can remember eating my treat as I skated on the sidewalk fronting Center Street. Speaking of cane syrup, there was no greater treat than that found during cane season. The cane trucks roared past our house and inevitably dropped stalks of cane on the street. We would retrieve them, and Charles or some other adult would cut and peel them so that we could

suck the fresh juice from the stalks. I guess I was convinced as a child that cane syrup was absolutely the best, and I still am! Another treat was finding couche-couche on our breakfast plates with good thick cane syrup to accompany it. Popcorn is a very common snack for people of all ages today. Popcorn balls were another item entirely! Think of a huge tray of popcorn balls, molded together with syrup, brought to the table covered with a huge napkin. When our cook Sophie pulled that napkin back we squealed with delight.

One rare use of that wonderful cane syrup was the night of the first snowfall that I witnessed in New Iberia. Everyone in our house, adults and children alike, hurried out of the house, clad in night clothes, to see nature's wonder. I don't know whose idea it was, but someone got the syrup pitcher and poured syrup on a little pile of snow for us to savor.

Of course, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches were always favorites; wieners (we called them wienies) were special treats; and on occasion we were delighted to see on our plates the wonderful hot tamales that someone in the neighborhood made.

Although the sight of many of the goodies described above was equally as pleasant as the taste, there are a few special things that I recall seeing. There were always beautiful flowers in our front yard, lining the sidewalk in beds, surrounding the house and along the side hedges. Mixed in with these were plants, called elephant ears, that waved in the summer breezes. In addition to these sights provided by nature, perhaps my favorite "visual" pastime in the summer was to climb up into the top of a large oak tree in the back vegetable garden and watch the Evangeline League baseball games across the street in the field back of New Iberia High School. Somewhat later in my childhood, when Papa found out that I was such a fan, he gave me a season ticket to the games for my birthday.

Although air conditioning is something that I accept rather reluctantly now as a necessity in the summer, it does not stimulate my sense of feeling as did the cool breezes that used to blow across our beds at night as we slept on the sleeping porch. And actually swimming in a regular pool was preceded much earlier by pretending to swim in the water that flooded our front yard when heavy rains fell. The entire front part of the yard sloped down about two feet towards the center, creating a perfect spot for water, and providing us with the opportunity to don bathing suits and swish around in the slowly rushing water, another delightfully cool sensation in the summer.

Perhaps some of the best sense experiences were those of sound. We lived one block from the Southern Pacific train tracks and two blocks from another. There was something very comforting in the sound of the trains going by at night, with their rolling wheels and whistles muted somewhat by the distance.

Music and song provided some of the most memorable sounds throughout childhood. Someone was always playing the upright piano in the living room. During evenings and weekends we could count on Papa to play a myriad of tunes on his harmonica, interspersed with the more powerful melodies that came from his cornet. Whenever I have marched in procession or watched

others do so at Graduation to the sound of "Pomp and Circumstance", I have thought of Papa's rendition of it on his cornet.

The musical instrument that brought all of us the greatest joy was the Victrola, a wooden cabinet with legs housing a record player--a revolving disc table that played the old Edison records (78 rpm and later, 33 1/3 rpm) with the help of a needle. We had the first Victrola in our neighborhood, and all of our friends, children and adults alike, would gather at our house from time to time to listen, dance, and/or sing in accompaniment to the tunes on the dozens of records in our collection. I knew every single one of those songs, and on rare occasions through the years, have heard one sung or played, bringing back wonderful memories of the happy sounds of childhood!

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CAMELOT
by
Rosemary Aycock

Survivors often feel that having endured and conquered they are invincible and life's quality can only go up. I had no such expectation after my first year of teaching, a marathon of misery at St. Mary's. I could only anticipate the future with dread and wonder. Could I stand another nine months of teaching? I expected a repeat of the first year's trauma in the same socioeconomic setting.

But unexpected deliverance did come when I received a mid-August assignment to teach fifth grade at St. Pita's in the uptown, Garden District of New Orleans. The relief went to my head and heart with the effect of a bottle of vintage champagne--I was literally drunk with relief!

St. Rita's was located not far off Carrollton Avenue and in the vicinity of Tulane Stadium. I recall that during the fall our property boundaries were lined with the cars of the hundreds of fans crowding the stadium for the Saints games. Their festive spirit echoed as, carrying their ice coolers, ticket holders loudly voiced their anticipation of Archie's prowess and their expectations of victory. Only Archie seldom came through--it was hard for a quarter-back to win without a team!

The school was built of wood, with large classrooms fashioned to accommodate many students. The building stood on a medium size corner lot bordered with a hurricane fence and an occasional large oak tree. Recess was always crowded activity time with each class playing in its designated area--surplus space was scarce!

The fact that my fifth grade class consisted of sixty-six youngsters, thirty girls and thirty-three boys, was not, as I remember, overwhelming, even before I had the pleasure of their company. The most difficult problem with that number of students was trying to clear the classroom in the three minutes allowed during fire drills. We always seemed to be still exiting when the signal came to return, no matter how we tried to hurry!

These students were members of upper and middle income families--most with professional parents. Maintaining order was a non-task since, basically, the class was a self-disciplined one. The thirty girls were seated in three rows of ten desks to my left as I faced them; the thirty-three boys occupied the three rows of eleven desks each to my right.

There was little sameness as I viewed their alert, fun-filled, anticipating faces, for most of them changed desk seating frequently. Highly motivated to achieve, they responded positively to Friday's weekly tests and Monday's seat changes on the basis of those tests results. Packing their books expectantly, they took seating from front to back as averages dictated. How diligently they worked to move up those rows. Never considering possible trauma to pupil's self esteem, I continued this system throughout the year. There were thirty-two A averages and no failures in any subject in

the class. In addition, there were no parent complaints of psychological abuse or discrimination! The 50's were a different day, a different age!

Far from being mere "bookworms," these students played hard at sports and had a variety of interests which they delighted to share. One such was Andy S. who took untold pleasure in recounting the details of life in his fish tank; his guppies and other tropical fish provided hours of enjoyment and learning for him. I didn't realize that his seeming inattentiveness at times in class was probably due to what we would diagnose today as ADD, Attention Deficit Disorder. But he did achieve, even at the back of the class--and he was my friend. I wonder now if he, and others like him, unable to learn easily, were enabled to achieve to a higher level by the spirit of motivation that captured this class--I wonder and wish I had the answer! Of this I am certain, I was very fortunate to know every one of these youngsters, and I realize how challenged I was in working with them!

October was Mission Month when classes throughout the school vied for the honor of raising the most money, through personal sacrifice, for the foreign missions. It was a friendly competition, but a fierce one! Many a student's lunch consisted of a peanut butter and jelly or luncheon meat sandwich eaten dry, without the usual purchased Coke or carton of milk to add to its enjoyment. Recess candy and cookies were forfeited as contributions to feed pagan babies grew!. During that October those fifth graders donated ninety-eight dollars, a sizeable sum in the fifties, to the Foreign Missions Fund! Of course, they won the competition. As one precociously wise ten year old, Kathleen B., answered when one of her peers raised the question, "What's our prize for winning?" "Our prize is knowing that we did our best and we are the best!" Everyone seemed satisfied. There was no half-day holiday, no homework reprieve, no omitted weekly tests; it was enough for them to know they had earned the distinction of being "the best!"

It was a fantasy world for any teacher, this memorable experience of fifth graders' love of learning, friendly competition, enthusiasm, pride in achievement, teamwork and acceptance! As the teacher of this class, I remember it as "Camelot"!

THE GREAT MISSISSIPPI RIVER FLOOD OF 1927
by
Doris Bentley

Although "high water" occurred every spring and flooded the back woods where Numa Julian lived in Loreauville, never had the water risen so much and flooded such a vast area as it did in the Spring of 1927. When the snow melted in the north, the water swelled the Ohio River, which flows into the Mississippi River, which was also full of water.

At the same time, 12-14 inches of rain fell and raised the Mississippi River to its highest level from Cairo, Illinois, on down. The levees were lower than they are now; so by the time all that water got to Louisiana, the river overflowed its levee and the water backed up into the Atchafalaya Swamp. The unseasonably rainy weather locally added to the problem. The water overflowed into Lake Dauterive and into the flood plain.

Over three hundred people died and 637,000 people were evacuated. About 18 million acres of land were under water. The Red Cross provided much of the relief. Railroads, highways and bridges were useless for many weeks. The government passed the Flood Control Act of 1928 which gave the Corps of Engineers authority to do flood control.

As a result of this flood, the levees were built on both sides of the Atchafalaya Swamp so that flood waters could be diverted through the Atchafalaya Swamp to Morgan City and into the Gulf of Mexico. But that occurred AFTER the disaster.

Everybody was evacuated from Loreauville. Mama, Daddy, and I went just west of Lafayette to Scott, which was high ground. At the crossroads in the center of town, a store proclaimed in large painted letters: SCOTT--HERE THE WEST BEGINS.

I always thought that was pretty funny. However, years later, when I did research for my dissertation, I found that it is true. West of Scott are seven huge prairies where the Louisiana cattle industry flourished in the early 1800's. The area was called the "meadow-land of America" by an early geographer.

My grandmother (Vieux Mom) had a brother, Luke LeBlanc, who lived in Scott, and all the Broussard family from Loreauville gathered there seeking refuge from the Flood. The people of Scott found places for us to stay. We were housed, along with the Berard Family, at the elementary school. Daddy went back home to see about the farm animals, the house, and its furnishing. Many people lost animals, but I don't remember that we did.

Daddy set the piano on a table, thinking the water might come into Mamite's house. Actually, the water came up to the floor of the house, but it didn't rise any further. Of course, all of the crops were ruined.

When the water receded sufficiently, we went back home to Loreauville. The devastation must have been horrible.

Mama and Daddy were full of despair. My brother, J.E., they had recently lost to diphtheria; they had lost the house in Loreauville; now they lost Mamite's farm. The decision was made to move to New Iberia. Daddy was forty-two years old, and Mama was thirty-six.

Thank goodness Mama had her job as principal of the elementary school.

As I write this segment, I am again conscious of the courage they had.

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THE FARM: IN THE BEGINNING
by
Chris Westell

At age five, I was expected to start kindergarten. So I presented myself to the school. After several weeks, I appeared at home, blanket in hand. "Mama," I announced. "I don't like kindergarten. I have more fun at the farm." The following weekend, Dad carted me, bag and baggage--a kindergarten dropout--up to the farm to be with Busia and Dzia dzia (*Grandma* and *Grandpa* in Polish).

The farm is about 80 acres along Lake Michigan, seven miles south of Manitowoc, Wisconsin. It stood in the small village of Northeim, Timothy in days of old. But let's start at the beginning.

Down at the lake there are remnants of an old long pier that stretched out over the water. We children swam among these old posts--that unknown to us were deep connections to our past.

In 1852, this pier was a very busy point of commerce. Settlers landed here, and logging was the chief export. Land had to be cleared for farming, which the settlers intended to do.

A young girl, age 10, born in Piaseczno, Poland, landed with her Aunt and uncle Sworkowski. The girl's name was Anna. Her mother had died at her birth, and her father wa a casualty in the Prussian Army. The aunt and uncle had three children and took Anna in to help care for their little children. All three children died on the boat trip to America, and as a result, the aunt and uncle were resentful and very mean to Anna.

When they landed, the family claimed land along the lake shore and began to clear it for farming. The first months were spent in a lean-to until trees could be felled and a cabin could be built. Indians from the tribe of Menomenee were their neighbors. The Indians would come and watch these new white people. They exchanged farming methods and in hard times would exchange food. One time an old Indian came with a small boy and a large hand woven basket full of berries. He needed other food, so Anna gave him potatoes, rutabagas and yams. He did not know what rutabagas and yams were, so Anna had to cut some of the vegetables off and eat them to show him that they were edible.

Anna, my great-grandmother, is known in our family as "little Grandma," as she was a slightly built woman. Anna did not know what religion she was supposed to be, so one day she walked about ten miles to St. Nazien, Wisconsin, and took instructions in the Catholic faith from the missionaries there. She made her first communion and was confirmed at the St. Nazien mission. It is said that an old Indian walked back and forth with her from Timothy to St. Nazien for those trips.

When Anna grew up, she married Maxmillian Leschke (little Grandpa), born in Jastszambiec, Poland, and they occupied the land claimed by her aunt and uncle in 1852. We do not know when they were married, but it must have been around 1859. Perhaps some research in the Manitowoc

courthouse will reveal this and other interesting facts. They had four surviving children--Andrew, Susan, Monica and Vanda. Monica married Joseph Pekarski. they were my Busia and Dzia dzia. They also had four children--Ella, John, Maxmillian, and Harriet Anna. Harriet was my mother.

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GENE AUTRY'S PIANO
by
Orpha Valentine

In the 1950's Lake Isobel was part of Slade National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota. A large lake, it served as an important part of public relations for the refuge. The public used Lake Isobel as a boating playground,--not fishing, not swimming--but tearing-around-in-noisy motor boats. Back then, out on the prairie where the wind blows forever, there was not one single sailboat!

Also on the lake was Camp Grassick, a well-built camp for crippled children, built and supported by Gene Autry, the very famous cowboy-movie star and guitar playing singer of western songs. Gene Autry came every summer to entertain the crippled children. The camp and campgrounds were also used in the summer by 4-H Clubs from all over the state and beyond.

Occasionally Jake was asked to lecture on wildlife and ecology to the campers. The first time I accompanied Jake I saw the sturdy, upright piano, also donated, according to a small brass plate, by Gene Autry. I went several times to the empty lodge to play the piano.

In our third September, already too cold, I asked Jake if I might "borrow" the piano for the winter months. All those freezing winters were hard on the piano; it would be much better to use it and keep it warm through the winter. We could easily return it before Camp Grassick opened for the summer.

In late September, on a cold, windy Saturday, Jake and a friend of his, Roger Just, drove Roger's pickup truck to the lodge and manhandled the monstrous piano onto the truck, shoving it against the cab of the truck. No tie downs.

The treeless terrain of North Dakota may look flat but it is hills and swales, down right lumpy, good horse-break-a-leg ground. Jake and Roger were not yet in sight of our house when the piano bounced out of the truck bed, cartwheeling into countless chunks and pieces. The harp of the piano hit the prairie earth with a resounding "lost chord" which I heard back at the house.

It was a very long time before Jake, Roger and the truck appeared on the horizon. As they drove up to the house there was no piano to be seen. Jake didn't say anything as he handed me two bouquets of eighty-eight piano keys, ivory and ebony flowers on their long stems of felt hammers. I didn't say anything and Roger didn't say anything. Roger busied himself bringing in the lumber that once housed the piano. It took great strength for Jake and Roger to carry the harp into the house. The harp was the only thing still intact, not a string was broken. They carried all the pieces, big and little, heavy and light, cracked and broken, into the house, piling it willy-nilly in the front hall.

Piece by piece, like a giant jigsaw puzzle, I put that piano back together. With hammer and glue, screw driver and more glue, tiny screws, big screws, "quick" fifty mile trips to Bismarck

hardware stores as well as the fabric store for several weights of felt, I finally got all eighty-eight keys, hammers and felts in place. Then, I began rebuilding the furniture it was housed in. I even got the sustaining pedal connected properly. It had not worked back at Camp Grassick.

I completed the piano the last week in October, five weeks after it had crashed to earth. It was the second week in November before the piano tuner could come all the way from Bismarck. I was so afraid that bad weather would prevent the piano tuner from coming. My work would be for naught. There is no pleasure in playing a badly out of tune piano. Even saloon, honky-tonk pianos are in tune.

The piano tuner, Fred Gunsch, was blind. His wife chauffeured him to his work. I had just served coffee to her when he asked in a startled voice, "What happened to this piano?" I almost dropped my coffee cup. I thought, "Good heavens! Even a blind man can tell I put that piano back together badly." I asked, "Is the piano that bad?" He answered, "It is the very first time I have ever put my hands inside a piano and there is no dust at all, no dust balls, no mouse droppings, no grass nests, no seeds, nothing at all inside the piano."

After I regaled them both with the story of rebuilding Gene Autry's piano, Fred Gunsch tuned the piano well, complimenting me on my work. He even left a paper bag of ivory key covers to replace the long missing covers of many keys on that wonderful old piano.

Playing that piano often saved my sanity that long cold winter. At our Christmas party everyone joined in singing Christmas carols at the piano. the following June we returned the piano, this time strapped down, with two men standing with the piano in the back of the pick up.

I looked forward to telling Gene Autry the adventure taken by his piano, but for the first time ever Gene Autry did not come to Camp Grassick because he, himself, was ill.

I sometimes wonder whatever happened to that piano. I wonder, too, if Gene Autry ever heard, by word of mouth, this story about his piano. Of one thing I am certain. The field mice were happy to have their mouse hotel back at the lodge in the cold winter and spring days of North Dakota.

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CHARRED CHICKEN
by
Melba Martin

Lucien Martin, my husband of forty-three years, and I met and began dating in the spring of 1953. After several Saturday night dinner-movie dates, we planned an all-day outing to Holly Beach. Lucien said he would arrive at my apartment in Lake Charles early the following Saturday morning with his bathing suit, ice and cold drinks. When I said I would pack a picnic lunch, Lucien replied, "Fried chicken would be nice." I smiled and said, "Fine," trying to control my panic. I had known Lucien was a meat eater since the day we met; however, I ate very little meat and had never touched a piece of raw beef, pork or chicken. Now I had a week either to conquer my aversion to raw flesh or figure out a way to prepare chicken for frying without touching it.

First I needed a recipe. The following Monday during the noon recess at Iowa High School, where I taught music, I entered the teachers' lounge with pencil and paper. The Home Ec teacher and several others with many years cooking experience were relaxing before the afternoon classes began. As soon as there was a lull in the three or four conversations that were going on simultaneously, I quickly said I needed to learn how to fry chicken by Saturday and asked if they could give me a few tips. Their first reaction was amusement at my culinary naivete. Then followed a barrage of directions as they all began talking at once. By the time the bell rang I had heard enough about how to fry chicken that I felt reasonably confident. I also learned that frozen chicken parts packaged neatly in little boxes were readily available. Knowing it was not necessary to start with a whole bird and go through the gruesome chore of dissecting it, as I had seen Mamma and Grandma do many times, brought a terrific sense of relief. I was beginning to see my way through this thing.

On Friday after school I bought everything necessary for preparing the picnic lunch including a package of six frozen thighs, a pair of rubber gloves and some tongs. Heeding the teachers' warnings to defrost the chicken before frying, I put the thighs into the refrigerator to thaw overnight.

The next morning the chicken was ready to fry. Using my new rubber gloves and tongs, I carefully transferred each piece from the package to a paper bag containing a mixture of flour, salt and pepper. After shaking the bag vigorously, I put the thighs into a skillet of hot oil.

About twenty minutes later, my confidence soaring, I began removing the rich golden brown thighs from the frying pan. With three pieces left to go, there was a knock at the door. Thinking Lucien had arrived, I left the kitchen to open the door.

Instead of Lucien, a delivery man from the dry cleaners was standing in the doorway waiting to exchange my clean clothes for money. I quickly laid my oily tongs and rubber gloves on a magazine and opened my purse. All I had was a twenty-dollar bill and a few nickels. I gave the delivery man the twenty, but he couldn't change it. What could I do? I knew my checking account balance was dangerously low, so I didn't dare write a check. I went to the bedroom and roused my

sleeping roommate. While I was explaining my predicament, she opened one eye, pointed to her purse and turned over and went back to sleep. A hasty rummage through her purse showed only that she was much worse off financially than I. Then I remembered the newlyweds across the hall. Dare I knock on their door? I decided to go for it. The response was a gruffy "What?" As I was explaining my situation the door opened slightly, and an ashtray filled with change appeared at the end of a hairy arm. I thanked the male member of the newlywed duo for the loan and paid the now impatient delivery man.

I returned to the kitchen. The chicken had burned. Thighs four, five and six were no longer a rich golden brown, but a crisp flaky black. I considered putting them into the garbage can, but decided against it. Maybe they weren't burned all the way through; and maybe the smell would go away if I put them in front of the fan for a few minutes before I wrapped them.

Most of the odor of burned food was gone by the time Lucien arrived. We drove to Holly Beach where we spent a wonderful day. We could smell the salt-scented air as a cool south breeze blew over the water. Sometimes sea gulls flew overhead, and a ship moved slowly across the horizon until it disappeared from our view. The waves were just high enough to be a bit of a challenge.

After a couple of hours in the water, we had both worked up hearty appetites. Lunch was the three perfectly browned thighs for Lucien and sandwiches, fruit, and cookies for both of us. After lunch we went for a long drive on the beach, sometimes stopping to take pictures or look for shells and driftwood.

Back at our picnic site we went for another swim. Now the water was cooler and the waves smaller. It was almost dark when we came out, and as before, our appetites were raging. Lucien looked in the picnic basket hoping to find some tasty morsel to tide him over until we could get to a drive-in restaurant. Instead, he found the three charred thighs. With a very sober expression on his face, he carefully examined each piece in the remaining daylight. Faced with the option of enduring his hunger pangs for perhaps another hour, or tolerating the taste of burned food to relieve them, he chose the latter and gobbled up those thighs with gusto!

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HERO FOR A DAY
by
Betty Shoemaker

I am sure most of you have read short stories in the Reader's Digest about people who performed a heroic deed and were considered hero for a day. One day in the summer of 1946, when I was a junior at Centerville High School in Centerville, Louisiana, I became hero for an afternoon.

My brother, sister and I rode a school bus for twenty miles to and from home. On our way home one afternoon, the three of us spotted our car at the Marine's home. When the Marine children got off the bus, my younger sister Gerry and younger brother Jimmy and I followed them. We wanted to visit and return home with Mother.

As we walked toward the front gate, Mrs. Marine came out onto the front porch and told us to come to the back door. "There is a large blue runner snake in the front yard," she called out. A large porch extended the full length of the front of the house. A five foot fence extended from each side of the house and about twenty feet across the front of the house. On the left side of the porch inside the fence was a large oak tree. In front of the tree at just above ground level was a large rotted out hole.

When we entered through the back door, Mrs. Marine lead me to the front porch. As we reached the edge of the porch, the snake poked its head out of the hole. There was a large root about eight inches in diameter lying on top of the ground and extending out about five or six feet running parallel to the fence.

"I will get rid of the snake," I told Mrs. Marine. "Do you have a gun?" She went into the house, returning with a four ten shotgun and one shell. "Is one shell all you have?" I asked. She sighed, nodding her head. "Yes."

I loaded the shotgun and started down the steps. No one was making a sound. I had only one chance. By then the snake was approaching the large root resting on the ground. I must not let the snake clear the root because it could surely pick up speed. When I reached the middle of the yard, I started backing up slowly. The snake came out of the hole in the tree and was slithering toward the tree root. I gazed in awe at the beauty of the slick dark blue skin of the snake. The snake was moving from side to side in slow motion with such grace and rhythm. The snake and I were now in eye contact with one another.

The fence was at my back. There was no place to go now. Perspiration was running down my face, the salt water burning my eyes. There was no time to dry my face. I could not take my eyes off the snake nor relax my grip on the shotgun. Sunbeams danced on the leaves and disappeared through the leaves into the shadows beneath the branches of the oak tree.

I had spent a lot of time in the woods hunting and was considered a very good shot. I owned a .22 caliber rifle that was always at my side. I called it my "snake gun." I usually killed at least one snake a day in our yard.

I watched the snake as I calculated my time. When the snake was about half way over the root, I inhaled. I exhaled and took another deep breath. This time I held it. I took a close aim and fired. This shot must be perfect. To my amazement one half of the snake flew up in the air to the right. The other half flew to the left. I had blown the snake in two, right in its middle.

Laughter and cheering rang out from the front porch. Mother, Mrs. Marine and the four children thought I was a real live hero. I didn't think it was a big deal. I was only doing what I have always done, protected the people I love.

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GRANDPA BASCLE'S FARM
by
Pat DeLatte

I had no idea that summer in 1939 that I, along with my brother Ennie, and my sister Joan, would spend the next three months in the country at Grandpa Bascle's farm. All I can remember is that we were going on a great adventure, different from anything we had ever done before. Mom explained that because we had just moved back to Louisiana from Texas there had not been time to rent a house in New Orleans, our new location. We would stay in Bourg with her parents, Tilden and Josephine, until a suitable homestead could be found.

The countryside with all the farmhouses and fields was something that a young city girl like me had not seen before. I thought it strange that the road from Houma to Bourg was not paved but was covered with gravel that was dusty and rough. Our car bumped along the narrow two lane road until finally there it was, Grandpa Bascle's farm! When Daddy's car stopped in front of the big fence surrounding the front of the property, I noticed the wooden plank lying across the ditch. I remember that plank as a source of daredevil behavior for me. I wanted to follow and do all the adventurous things Joan and Ennie did. Many times, trying to keep up with them, I ended up in that ditch!

Sitting way back from the road was the house. I later came to know its style as Acadian, a typical farmhouse in Terrebonne Parish. There was no paint on the outside, just weathered clapboard, and the roof was of galvanized tin that sang its own soft song during the slightest rain, becoming a crescendo of sound when the thunderstorms broke loose. Across the entire front of the house was the "gallery," better known to me as a porch. It was about three feet off the ground, and the cool damp earth underneath became a favorite play area for me during that hot summer. The steps up to the gallery were worn with the passage of time and the many footsteps of all the children who had lived and played there. Shuttered windows let in the sunlight during the day and the loose screens did little to keep the lively mosquitoes out during the night!

A huge round structure stood next to the rear of the house, and I wondered what it was. There was a pipe running from it to what I learned to be the kitchen. The citified ways of plumbing had not arrived at this "Cajun Cottage," and the backyard cistern was used as a source of stored water for cooking and drinking. The kitchen was warm and friendly and the smell of baking bread promised wonderful mornings of coffee milk and hot bread with freshly churned butter. Grandma's fig preserves, covered with thick cream skimmed from the top of boiled milk, were always an added treat.

To my dismay, the plumbing facility known as the bathroom had not arrived in the country either, and I learned that the little house behind the big house was where certain bodily functions were taken care of. Grandma and Grandpa's outhouse was a two seater, but for the likes of me I couldn't understand why. We went only one at a time. I also learned that bathing was to be done not in a tub like I had always known, but in the Number 10 washtub that hung on its nail out on the side porch.

On those occasions, we followed one after the other, youngest first. This arrangement was o.k. by me since I was the youngest and the water wa the freshest! The water we used for bathing was collected in a rain barrel that stood next to the porch, so as to save the precious drinking water in the cistern.

The bedroom where Joan and I were to sleep contained an old antique four poster bed whose posts had been sawed off. I suppose this was to make the room seem larger or to make the bed more modern in appearance. I never asked why. The mattress on the bad had the musty smell of moss and the sheets were of unbleached muslin. the tall dresser, actually called a "high boy," had a small mirror that tilted up and down. It didn't matter to me because it was too high u for me to see in anyway.

On the wall of this devout Catholic home hung a crucifix with a dried palm frond behind it. Sharing the same wall was a picture of Huey P. Long, the Governor of Louisiana who was a hero to every small farmer in the state. Grandma Bascle's sewing machine was also in this room. It was a proud singer machine with foot pedal power. Colorful feed sacks were piled up next to it waiting to be turned into whatever garments were needed at the time. I imagined Mom as a young girl, sitting at that machine and learning to sew. She still made all my clothes, but on a new power driven model.

A strange looking chair stood next to the bed. It had a large hole cut in the seat. Not very useful I thought. Little did I know how useful it would be once the chamber pot was put into place. I saved many a scary walk into the night to that little house in the backyard. There was electricity in the house, evidenced by the dim light reflecting from the single light bulbs hanging from the ceiling in each room. at night, however, the kerosene lamp would be put on the closest table and its soft glow would help us find our way around the dark rooms.

Other buildings on the farm were inspected one by one as Grandpa Bascle gave us his official tour and explained the purpose of each. The first small building he showed us was the chicken coop. I had never seen where chickens slept or the nests on which they laid their eggs. Inside the coop there were horizontal boards stacked one about the other. On these perched the chickens every night until the rooster crowed at dawn summoning all the brood hens to do their duty and provide the daily egg supply. I really didn't care to stay in there too long. It didn't smell as good as Grandma Bascle's kitchen. Besides, the chickens were beginning to complain about the intrusion, and their clucking became more noisy and disapproving.

The corn crib was the next building to discover. This is where the corn was stored and eventually ground to feed the chickens and livestock. It was a fun place to play, too, when rainy days would not allow us outside. I especially avoided the pen where Grandpa kept the two huge pigs. Not only was the area real muddy, but the pigs were not very playful. they just lay around all day waiting to be fed. I didn't want to get to know them too well because they were destined for the dinner table come fall when the butchering would take place. Over near the vegetable garden stood the two mules waiting to be harnessed to the wagon Grandpa used in the sugar cane fields. The fields were a short ride from the house, but I could see the tops of the stalks and wondered what it would be like to get

lost between the rows. I decided then and there never to climb that particular fence in search of adventure. Not even the sweetness of the sugarcane would make me change my mind.

When Grandpa and I were returning to the house, we was the cows slowly making their way to the shed where every morning and evening they were positioned for milking. There were only two of them, but having never been close to four legged animals with horns, I was afraid. Grandma chuckled as she let me know that there was nothing to worry about. she gave me a handful of grass to feed one of the cows. Gingerly I stretched out my hand, and the cow wrapped her long rough tongue around the offering, gently withdrawing it from my hand. I overcame my fear, but continued to keep a safe distance behind the fence. Milking the cows was Grandma's chore. She would sit on a little three legged stool and place the bucket under the cow. Her head bent and pressed against the side of the cow, she would begin the process. She explained that leaning into the animal simulated the calf nursing and reassured the cow. With great precision, the streams of warm milk hit the bucket, and soon there was a bucket full of swirling, frothing milk.

By the time Mom and Dad left to go back to New Orleans, I had seen most of the farm, but still had a lot to discover. I learned to make coffee in Grandma's small granite pot, dripping one tablespoon of water at a time. I watched in wonder as cream turned to bright yellow butter, then was stored in the coolness of the earthenware crock. I helped shell dry beans while sitting on those gallery steps. I collected fresh eggs from that chicken coop. I brought in wood for the wood burning stove. But most of all I had a summer filled with the fun of seeing and doing things that this city girl had never experienced, things that could only have been done at Grandpa Bascle's farm.

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