



*Excerpts From*  
**Our Pages**  
**of Life**



Volume XVIIIa  
Spring 1997





These excerpts from *Our Pages of Life* are stories  
written by a group of adults in a life writing class.

As they share their lives, listen to yours, for  
the nature of story involves the tandem act of telling and hearing.  
What these students tell is yours to experience, yours to learn.  
Enjoy these glimpses into others' lives as you read on.

To my students, my friends for life--thanks!

❖ Joan Stear  
USL, Lafayette, Louisiana  
Spring 1997



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at the University of Southwestern Louisiana and  
the Horizons Program of Lafayette General Medical Center for their support  
Kudos, also, to Jim Jennings and Anne Comeaux  
for their offering of time and word processing skills.



*Front Cover: (top right corner) Ed Parker, in center; Toni Hagan, holding stuffed rabbit;  
Joan and Tommy Delcambre, children of Irene Delcambre,  
and their "most unusual Christmas tree";  
Faye Broussard; Jim Jennings, Jr.;  
Gilbert P. Cook, Sr., father-in-law of Virginia Cook;  
(top center) Fran Gross*

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**Life Writing Class  
Spring 1997--Tuesday Session**

Seated, l. to r.: Joan Stear; Virginia Cook; Anne Comeaux; Olympe Butcher;  
Margaretta Blanchard; Shirley Dugas  
Standing, l. to r.: Woodson Hopkins; Ed Parker; John Townsend; Fran Gross; Toni Hagan;  
Faye Broussard; Irene Delcambre; Dale Delcambre; Jim Jennings

## **BLESSING PRAYER**

By

**Anne B. Comeaux**

My prayer is prayed, my lines are few.  
I've counted blessings that fall like dew.  
I've thanked my God for all who share  
His blessings here in *Letters* rare.

For Fran who all the goodies sweet  
She joyed in baking for our treat.

And Ed with generous heart and hand  
Provided photos of our band.

For Toni's prose and poetic heart  
Revealed as well in cross-stitch art.

And Dugas, one we all call Shirley,  
Her ready laugh--who'd dare be surly?

Virginia's loss--how well we know.  
She's sown the seeds of peace below.

For stories wrought in style third person,  
The munchkin's naught but writer Woodson.

Irene, fair born a twin is she.  
She's shared her life with you and me.

And Jim who's lain on nautical bunk,  
Discovered a Mom with spark and spunk.

Margaretta, teacher because she cared,  
Sprinkled her love on hearing impaired.

For Olympe Butcher, our "genie" buff,  
Keep her in health, Lord--she's had enough.

In childhood, John in tasks took pride.  
Whence comes the gift--take life in stride.

His interest huge in dance and art,  
Still other gifts Dale takes to heart.

And for Joan Stear, still young in life,  
Please keep her, God, from serious strife.

And dear poor Faye, who still must work  
To find the gremlins where they lurk.

For Esther dear of hugging fame,  
We thank you for the times you came.

Most faithful friend and spouse, my Ray,  
God keep you close to Himself each day

And, I, oh Lord, forget me not,  
'Tho' I be only one small dot.

And now has come the time to close  
And rest our pens and pads once more.  
Please grant us all to hear the call  
To meet again this time next fall.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>MILK LUNCH by Fran Gross</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>THE BAKERY by Toni Hagan</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>LOST IN A CANE FIELD BY Anne B. Comeaux</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>THE MAILBOX by J. M. Jennings, Jr.</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>TRAVEL, TENTH CLASS by John Townsend</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>LIVING ON LOVE IN OMAHA by Virginia Cook</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>BORROWING by Olympe Butcher</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>A FIFTY DOLLAR BET by Dale "Ennis" Delcambre</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>FDR and ACORNS by Faye Broussard</b> .....	<b>17</b>
<b>THE HATLESS GENERATION by Woodson Hopkins</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>OVER THE FENCE ON THE DITCH BANK by Shirley Dugas</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>AN EMBARRASSING MOMENT by Ed Parker</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>THE UNUSUAL CHRISTMAS TREE by Irene Delcambre</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>MUSIC AND MERLE by Margaretta Blanchard</b> .....	<b>23</b>



## MILK LUNCH

by  
Fran Gross

When I look in a mirror I find it hard to realize I was once a skinny little kid. Yes, I was skinny. According to the elementary school nurses in Lincoln, NE, I was 20% underweight. Boy, did I go from one extreme to the other.

Hartley Elementary School in Lincoln, NE, had a milk lunch program for underweight children. At midmorning all children in this category were given milk and two graham crackers. The milk came in half pint glass bottles with a cardboard cover on the top. I do not remember if the crackers were in a sealed package, but I doubt it. They probably came right out of the box, because at that time we were not afraid someone would poison our food.

The exact number of bottles needed that day were set outside the classroom door at the proper time, by someone in the school office. It was an honor to be chosen to bring in the milk and put the bottles on the teacher's desk. The children who were to receive this snack would come to the desk for their crackers and milk, which we drank through a straw. I do not remember what the other children did at that time as I was always one of the snackers. Art says that they probably sat in their seats glaring at us.

I think milk lunches were a good idea. I had plenty of milk at home, so I was not deprived, but young thin children often need a snack to keep them going.

### *School Lunches*

When I was in the elementary grades, the schools I attended did not have kitchens to prepare hot lunches. We went home for lunch or the children who lived too far or had no one to prepare their lunch at home brought their lunches and ate at their desks. At Hartley Elementary, in Lincoln, NE, they ate in the multipurpose room used as an auditorium for meetings of all kinds, or for playing games in inclement weather. At election time the city used this room as a voting place.

Our Jr. High School had a cafeteria, but I usually brought my sandwich, some fruit, and raw vegetables (carrots, celery, cucumber or a tomato, which usually squirted on my blouse or my friends' clothes). For dessert I would bring cookies or a piece of cake. I would buy milk and in winter, soup. My sandwiches were made of sliced roast beef, meat loaf, baloney, tuna fish, or egg. I seldom brought peanut butter sandwiches. Peanut butter was not yet homogenized, so when the jar was opened there was a layer of oil on top. I had to take a knife or spoon and stir the ingredients to make them a uniform consistency. The peanut butter had a good flavor, but often stuck to the roof of my mouth.

In High School I started buying my lunch. The only food I remember was one I called Red Macaroni. It was made of macaroni, hamburger, tomatoes, and onions mixed together and baked. Delicious! I persuaded Mother to make it at home, although we cooked it on top of the stove because baking took too long. Later I made Red Macaroni for my children.

I generally carried my lunch in a brown paper bag. When we lived in Ogalalla, NE, I used a flat metal lunch box with a small thermos bottle for my milk. I do not remember whether or not there was a picture on the box.

When we lived in Japan, Lorelei and Wayne came home for lunch since we lived a block from school. If I was not home, Kanasan, my maid, fixed the children's lunch, usually a sandwich or ramen (Oriental soup).

After we moved to Adelphi, MD, the children could not leave the school grounds during school hours unless a parent picked them up. Even then they had to have a good excuse. The children could buy lunches at school, but preferred to take their own. One year Wayne only wanted sandwiches made of two slices of bread spread with chocolate syrup and peanut butter. If I put any other sandwich in his lunch box, he would not eat it.

In Pampa, TX, only high school students could leave the school grounds at noon. Wayne was in the 10th grade when we moved to Pampa in 1976, so he usually went with his friends and bought his lunch at a fast food restaurant.

The year Clayton was to start 9th grade, Pampa Middle School was changed from 8th and 9th grades to 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, and 9th grade became part of Pampa High School. He either brought his lunch or ate in the school cafeteria that first year. After he got his driver's license, either he or a friend would drive to our house for lunch. I usually fixed hot dogs, hamburgers, or tacos for two or three boys. I wish I had a nickel for every taco I made during those years. If I was not home, Clayton fixed their lunch. At least I knew what he was eating, and what he was doing during his lunch hour.

Over the years, lunches served at school have changed dramatically. When I was in school, we bought each item separately in the cafeteria. Now the lunches are served in a tray already prepared. Some schools serve breakfast. All public schools have prorated prices for their meals depending upon the parents income. Instead of paying cash for each meal at the time it is eaten, the child buys a week's or month's worth of stamps. That way no one knows who is on welfare.

Each meal is supposed to be nutritionally balanced. That does not mean the children will eat everything on the tray. I hear that yogurt will soon be substituted for meat. I wonder how many children will eat it.





**THE BAKERY**  
by  
**Toni W. Hagan**

Supermarkets didn't come into being until after World War II, at least not in Brooklyn. Several stores supplied the things we needed: the grocery, the butcher shop, the green grocers, the drugstore, and the bakery. All were within walking distance of 370. Actually, there were two bakeries, one, a chain bakery was two blocks away down Clermont Avenue to DeKalb. The other was several blocks in the opposite direction, a small family-owned shop. I'm sure we went there year 'round, but my memories of it are winter memories. As I think of it these many years later, I become aware of its impact upon my small child's senses.

Crossing the black iron doorstep from the cold grey outside into the dingy white interior was to transit the worlds. Even before the oven heated air made contact with my chilled skin, enticing aromas drew me forward into the yeasty warmth of the bakery.

The once white tile floor was worn from the wear of unseen footsteps. The ceilings--more yellow than grey--were high and waffled as was the style in earlier times. From above, a light bulb dangled at the end of a black electric cord. Along one side was the glass counter atop which sat an ancient cash register; no electricity there. Nearby was a round, openwork iron container that held a ball of white string. The string fed upwards through a loop and, thence downward to be pulled out as needed to tie shut boxes of oven treasure.

Though I do not remember the name of that bakery nor what we purchased there, my senses know still that comforting warmth and fragrant welcome.



## LOST IN A CANE FIELD

by  
Anne B. Comeaux

It was during the late spring of 1996. Ray had left the house to go to the post office, an errand which normally takes a maximum of fifteen minutes. I busied myself with a few chores around the house. Glancing at the clock, I realized that an hour and a half has gone by. Ray still had not returned. Momentarily, anxiety prevailed.

"What if Ray had a seizure? An accident?"

I mentally chided myself for those doleful thoughts, whispered a brief prayer for his safety, and busied myself again. Ray has a propensity for engaging in conversation with people he knows, as well as with many he doesn't know but about whom he is curious. I also know that when Ray is chatting with someone, time stands still just for him. He becomes oblivious of hunger, so meal time is easily forgotten. With these realities before me, I dismiss my anxiety and decide to hold up our meal until I see him drive up.



Several hours later Ray pulls into the driveway. In the right seat I notice another passenger, a woman. Both get out of the car. The lady sees me and appears a little uncomfortable for a moment as she waits until Ray completes a brief car inspection before coming in. I wait at the door and Ray introduces the lady and me to each other.

"Anne, this is Sybille. Sybille, my wife, Anne."

Ray explains, "Sybille needs some help in finding her friend's house."

A few words of welcome, then Sybille says, "I am from Germany. I am visiting a friend whom I met in Seattle, Washington. She is at work right now, so I went for a walk. I was sure I could get back to the house with no trouble, but I couldn't find it."

"Do you know her address?" I ask.

"Do you know her address?" I ask.

"No, I don't remember that...but I do remember seeing plenty of sugar cane there."

"Sugar cane," I muse. "Sugar cane's easy to find in the Broussard-Youngsville areas. But select *a house* by that description? That's another story."

Ray and I take turns offering possibilities, making phone calls, asking questions. Sybille gives us the name of her friend. We make calls to any address whose name seems to fit the name Sybille

gives us. We try Broussard, Youngsville, Milton, Lafayette. No results. Either the person answering the call knows no one by that name, or we get a recorded message which indicates we have not reached the correct party.

Sybille offers some suggestions. "Maybe Broussard Road," she offers. "That sounds familiar."

We call city hall in Broussard, Milton, Youngsville and Lafayette to inquire if there is a 'Broussard Road', Street or Lane in their town. and if so where is it located? Still no results.

"There's a video store near by. If I could find that, I'd know how to get to my friend's house," Sybille offers.

"Ah, a clue! Video store! Ray, why don't you take Sybille to ride past the video stores in the area."

By this time, anything's worth a try. Ray knows the Broussard and Youngsville areas very well, so off he goes to take Sybille to some areas that might help her get her bearings. Throughout this time, Sybille has refused to accept anything we offered her to eat or drink, except water. No coffee, no cool drink, nothing to eat. I'm concerned because I know Ray will not eat anything unless our guest does, and Ray is diabetic. I know it's time for him to eat something. I worry that his blood sugar will drop dangerously low.

While they are out scouting for a 'memorable video store,' I give up the idea of preparing dinner and opt for a peanut butter sandwich. I am confident that Ray will return soon, but meanwhile, I know it's time for me to eat, also. It's way past our normal meal time, and I'm beginning to feel an attack of "the grouch" a symptom that Ray readily identifies as "time for Anne to eat."

An hour and a quarter passes by. Ray returns—with Sybille. The video stores Ray took her to rang no bells of familiarity. We're back at "square one." Sybille is apologetic, obviously embarrassed by the predicament she's in. A 'thirty-ish' looking woman, obviously much traveled, physically fit from the habit of long hikes in her own country—now lost somewhere in a cane field in Lafayette Parish. Compounding the problem is the fact that this "knowledgeable woman of the world" left her friend's house unlocked, and it's been hours since she left it. Sybille's friend gets off work at four; what will be her reaction when she gets home and discovers that Sybille is not home? This is getting serious.

A friend drives up. "Oh, here's Charles! He's a problem solver. Maybe he will think of another approach to resolve the situation." Meanwhile Sybille still refuses anything but water, but Ray realizes that he must eat something, so to my relief, he takes a quick snack, apologizing to Sybille that he has to eat because of his diabetes. After introducing Charles and Sybille to each other, we ask Charles if he has any suggestions. Charles thrills in challenges, so he jumps right into the "problem solving mode." Just as he is directing a phone call, Sybille suddenly remembers and presents

a different given name for her friend's husband. Up to this point she had given a name which was not listed in the phone book. Now that is a different story. Charles finds and dials the number, a Broussard number, and hands the phone to Sybille. Her face breaks into a big smile as she nods and says, "That's it, that's it!" She has recognized the voice of her friend on the answering machine. The rest was simple. A look at the address and a bit of explanation about the location, and Ray immediately nods, "Yes, I know where that is. I'll take her there."

Over three hours have passed since we first greeted Sybille and began making phone calls and searching for clues. At last Sybille was back at her friend's house. She would never again leave a house in a foreign country without an address and phone number in her pocket. Nor is it likely that she will ever forget her experience in Broussard, Louisiana.



When Ray returned home, he told me the rest of the story. After going to the post office, he had detoured a little to see what his sugar cane crop looked like. On Larriviere Road in Broussard, he noticed a woman flagging him down. He passed her up, thinking she was waving, then decided he should back track to determine if she needed help. She did—and therein lies the tale of a German lady, lost in a Louisiana cane field, who visited us in Broussard, Louisiana.

❖ Sybille had walked from the other side of Youngsville to Lafayette. When Ray stopped to help her, she was going back toward Youngsville. How many miles had she walked? Maybe as much as 8-10 miles.



**THE MAIL BOX**  
by  
**J.M. Jennings, Jr.**

We are all really children in our approach to life unless or until something happens and we begin to think "old." I still have occasional child-like impulses, and on Dec. 23, 1996, in desperation, I thought of an anniversary gift for my wife, Margaret, something she would enjoy. Presenting this gift should be fun!

First, I wrote her a short letter.

Dear Margaret,

I am writing this letter of explanation to you in lieu of an expensive, flowery store-bought card.

Today is our 54th wedding anniversary, and I realize since ancient times, it has been customary for a husband to give his wife some token to celebrate a milestone of this magnitude. Please take pity on me, for I have spent hours trying to think of a suitable memento for this occasion. You know how difficult a time I always have with a situation like this. Until a few minutes ago, I could only scratch my head in frustration. I could think of nothing. I had no idea how to solve this annual puzzle.

I have given up trying to select jewelry for you, for I can never seem to get the "right" stone, or the cut and style you prefer. Further, I am aware how difficult it would be for you to return a specially made-up ring or brooch that didn't please you. Jewelry had to be scratched off my list of possible remembrances.

Next, I considered clothing--a full length mink coat, perhaps. Of course, you would have to move to northern Colorado or Rapid City to get your full enjoyment from wearing it. How about a \$5000 designer evening gown? But, I am aware how notorious I have become in your eyes for my inability to select the perfect color or fabric to match a new pair of shoes, for instance the ones you are so proud of--the ones that don't hurt your feet.

I briefly considered visiting "Victoria's Secret" emporium in the Acadiana Mall to inspect the merchandise displayed or modeled there. I reconsidered, when I remembered your admonition to not even approach that particular establishment unless I was accompanied by you or one of our daughters.

Then yesterday, while I was sitting on the roof cleaning leaves out of our gutters, I thought of something about which you have been hinting for ages, something you truly lust for, something

to impress our neighbors. This is bound to make you proud. Take a moment to guess what is in this package before you rip the wrappings off!

This particular gift was available in several finishes including black, silver, white, or green. I chose black for you--the store clerk said the black was beautiful--but you can exchange it for another color, if you choose to do so. The receipts are in my wallet, just in case. I am confident what is in this package will remind you of this day at least six times a week, for several years.

Love,

With kindest personal regards, I remain yours very truly, etc.

The next day my daughter, Ann, and I got together to share more fun. We collaborated in designing visual instructions on how to install a mailbox. We did this on my computer in Lafayette, but Ann took a floppy copy to her Houston home and made prints on her Hewlett-Packard color printer.



## TRAVEL, TENTH CLASS

by

John Townsend

As my re-enlistment furlough drew to a close, I began to look forward to my trip to Europe. Early one February morning in 1946 found me stepping from a bus in downtown Greensboro, North Carolina, to join three or four other GIs in the coffee shop. An hour later a carry-all drove up outside and an Air Force corporal entered to ask about any passengers to the base. Besides the beauty of the town and an introduction to Smiley Burnett in town to publicize a Gene Autry movie, there were no outstanding memories.

From Greensboro I bussed up to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, where after the usual day of KP all transients faced, I had some booster shots for Cholera and typhoid. A group of us managed a weekend trip to New York City. The only guy I remember of the sextet was Gary Fontenot, another Louisianian from Zachary. He and I, along with two others decided to go into Harlem to hear some Jazz music. After some discussion I recalled that a man I had taken Infantry basic training with had told me that if I had the chance to make the tour to first go to a place called FAT ANDY'S and smooth the way. We splurged for a cab and the driver knew the place. It was a joint. The smoke could have been cut with a knife. Gary spoke only a few words to the man who greeted us at the door and was identified as a "cajun." We quickly learned that our host was from Franklin.

Andy was the largest black man I had ever seen, over six feet tall and wide as a door. When we told him what we wanted to do, he left us to make some phone calls. Upon returning he asked who our cab driver was. One of the guys remembered the name. Andy seemed to know him saying, "He knows where to go."

We had a ball, making about a half a dozen clubs, listening to the musicians jamming. In a couple of places we found a table reserved for us, and in all of them our first beer was on the house. At 6:00AM we climbed, tiredly, into a bus heading back to Camp Kilmer.

A couple of days later we sailed from New York harbor past the Statue of Liberty on an uneventful trip to Brest, France.

I don't know what we expected in the way of rail transportation, but what we found was a train of ten dilapidated box cars, quickly named "cattle cars." We were to ride for almost two full days in them. There were no sanitary facilities at all, which meant no privacy for any "personal" functions. One of two of the cars had a hole in the floor in a corner on one end of the car. We were not so fortunate. When diarrhea struck some of the men on our car, things got rather desperate. On more than one occasion I locked a hand with one afflicted while he bared all while hanging out the door. It is a wonder some one did not get killed. Our sleeping accommodations were no better, a pair of wool army blankets spread upon a splinter filled floor where the cold February air blew unrestricted through wide cracks.

Our meals were served from one car into our mess kits at a temporary stop. We ate the food on the run as the train started up again. A lack of a way to thoroughly clean our eating utensils is what I blame for the diarrhea attacks.

Looking back I realize that our discomfort was only a very small taste of what the Jews, Poles, Austrians, and Cheks suffered on their way to slave camps during the war years.

Shortly before noon following our second night of travel we arrived at our destination Furstenfeldbruck, Germany, where we were to be processed and scattered to the four winds. My first priority was a prolonged bath to wash away things that crawled.





## LIVING ON LOVE IN OMAHA

by  
Virginia Cook

You may have seen Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan in the movie "Sleepless in Seattle," a story about a young man's search for a mother for his young son after his wife has died. The little boy also conducts his own search for a new mother. After a lot of suspense, fate brings the father and the right woman together and their story ends happily.

This story reminded me of a time just before World War II ended when my husband, Gilbert Cook, returned home from the South Pacific and took me and our three-year old son, Lewis, back to Omaha where his old job at the Coca Cola plant waited for him. Unfortunately, his old salary awaited him, too.

I have read that a war helps the economy because so many more people find jobs in industries building fighting equipment. This fact did not hold true for Gilbert and me. He made \$125 a month, plus commission when he sold a Coca-Cola vending machine. He also acquired the wonderful title of "Route Manager."

We could not afford to spend more than \$50 on rent, so we looked at old run-down apartment buildings. They all had in common too little space, worn-out furniture and a bathroom that would stay damp from dripping faucets. Finally, we had to choose a place to stay other than the hotel we had checked into when we first arrived.

Our "new" home was a second floor apartment in the Culver Apartment building on Harney Street not far from downtown Omaha. I could walk to Woolworth's, which really was a dime store in those days. Sometimes I had a dime.

We had two small bedrooms, a tiny kitchen, a bath and one large room that was both dining room and living room. We had an old fashioned icebox where the iceman put a fifty-pound block of ice every other day.

We were living in something like what was then called an "efficiency" apartment. What I can remember most is that the beds were uncomfortable, and the only things "efficient" were the roaches who moved into our house every time a neighbor sprayed his apartment. They had laid out routes to get into my kitchen.

Oh, yes, we had entertainment built in. Below our bedroom was a bar. The juke box played "I'll Never Smile Again," the latest hit song, every few minutes it seemed. However, I still like that song.

The bar offered a really special treat at two or three o'clock in the morning. Couples who'd been in the bar too long came out and fought under our bedroom window. My mind jolted awake; I learned some words I'd never heard before.

We didn't have money for eating out or picture shows. We could picnic out in the country on fair weather weekends, or go across the Missouri River to the bluffs around Council Bluffs, Iowa. Gilbert would find a tree with a limb just high enough for him to show off to me how many times he could chin himself.

I couldn't buy clothes or toys I saw that I wanted for Lewis. When Gilbert had to tell me we didn't have money for those things, we sometimes had a little fight. But, as in Garth Brook's song "Two of a Kind Working on a Full House" we did what his lovers did. They "had a little fight just so they could make up."

Gilbert's absence of three years, nine months and twelve days in the South Pacific Theater had made us treasure our love. No hardship could separate us now. We had a little girl, Peggy, our second year in Omaha, and Gilbert thought I'd created a miracle. So we did get to work on that "full house."

Soon Gilbert thought he needed to find a better job. He wanted another little boy, and I told him only if I had a house and a washing machine of my own to put in it. So we packed up and took our love and our dreams to Jackson, Mississippi, in 1947. Roger was born in 1951, completing the full house.

I can look back now and laugh about some of the problems we survived, but I never had to face a lessening of our love. On our eighth anniversary, along with the dozen red roses, came this note on the florist's card. It was 1948. He wrote: "Is it possible to measure love? If it is, then it must be that I love you eight times as much as I did eight years ago."



**BORROWING**  
by  
**Olympe A. Butcher**

In my very young years, before Papa bought an automobile, borrowing was a necessity. We lived in the country, the real country, and there were not that many houses close together, so we had few neighbors to borrow from.

Papa's sisters, Nanaine, Bathilde Arceneaux and Maraine, Josette Arceneaux, still lived on the Arceneaux plantation in my Grandfather's (Louis Joseph Arceneaux) home. They were our closest neighbors. The Moutons lived across the road and, like the Martins, they were around the corner, too. So, when we needed to borrow, we visited Nanaine and Maraine who sometimes borrowed from us. We children must have been a distraction to our old Aunts, but I remember my delight upon visiting for I could always wait for a treat: homemade soup, bread and homemade butter, pralines, figs, sugar cookies.

Mama borrowed out of necessity. She might need a cup of sugar, some cinnamon or nutmeg, or a lemon to make us a lemon pie which she did so well! At the old place there were many citrus trees including oranges and lemons.

It was such a pleasure to be asked by my Mother to go over, across the pasture and past the well which served both homes, to borrow something. I remember dancing along the well-trod path, skipping a while or jumping rope to the tune of "Here I go a-borrowing."

Only twice as a child did I dislike having to do this business of "commicion" (of borrowing) for Mama.

One episode happened when, as Mama would say, it was a custom in our home, to include beets, freshly cooked, sliced beets in our meal. They were a must for Easter! This time Mama had no beets to serve, and since I wouldn't go alone, she and I borrowed from our neighbors a little further down. They were delighted with our visit and glad to share from their beautiful vegetable garden. Not only did Mama serve a beautiful dish of beets nestled in bright green leaf lettuce and decorated with sliced boiled eggs...that year she also let me dye some beautiful Easter Eggs with the beet juice.

The next time happened when Mama sent me to borrow mirlitons (vegetable pears) from Grace's Mother. Mrs. Martin knew that my Mother needed two for planting, and she graciously gave me two beautiful ones. Mama placed them in a box lined with cotton awaiting the right time to plant them. I'm sure that with Mama's green thumb they grew into a beautiful vine and produced many mirlitons. But--this to me was embarrassing because it was "borrow with no return."

I count my blessings everyday because we were a big family with so much even though we were not rich. There was so much love.

This last part of my story isn't much on borrowing because we needed nothing on that particular summer afternoon. The maypops and blackberries had been plentiful. We had had blackberry pie, preserves and more because we had picked many berries for Mama. They grew well on all the fences surrounding the farm. Mama and Papa were preparing to use Mama's blackberry wine recipe, which her grandfather, Papa Gentil, had brought from Blois to make wine from the extra berries.

Charlie Boy, who was about two and walking very well, got curious about that crock, and before we could stop him he ran, falling on the crock and cutting himself on the bridge of his nose.

Losing no time, we soon found ourselves in the buggy--Papa driving, Mama holding Charlie Boy--towel on nose to prevent bleeding--and I sitting in the middle of the floor of the buggy with extra towels in case Mama needed them.

I realize now why I was there, not to help out, but because they couldn't leave me alone on the farm.

Often, as I think about this accident, I could call it "borrowing time" because we needed to hurry to get Charlie Boy right away into the care of Dr. E.E. Guilbeau, Sr.

Dr. and Mrs. Guilbeau received us quickly and, with stitches in place, we soon returned Charlie Boy--bandages and all--home safely.

I don't remember if we made wine that day, but I do know that instead of borrowing from Nanaine and Maraine, I had a story to tell.



## **A FIFTY DOLLAR BET WON WITH A DEAD GAME FIGHTING ROOSTER**

by

**Dale "Ennis" Delcambre, known as "Boy Blue"**

I was born on Lee Station Road, on Bayou Petit Anse at the edge of a cypress swamp four and one half miles south-west of rural New Iberia. It is the summer of 1938, I am four years old at the time. My father, Dessard J. Delcambre, was a "bootlegger" in his younger days during prohibition, until January 1935. My father was probably a gambler before this time, as a person who outruns the law and makes illegal moonshine whiskey. My father had been going to rooster fights since he was a very young boy, just as I did.

My first fight was when I was about three and a half years old. My father would hold me in his arms, so that I could get a good view. The rest of the time I was on my own. Now, let's get on with the rest of the story. Because prohibition was now over, my Father had to find another occupation related to his former one. He decided he would go into a business related to his former business. He then went into the cock game rooster fighting business. First he built a small gym in the middle of our family's side yard. The property is too large to be a yard and too small to be a pasture. The gym Dad built was 40 feet wide by 60 feet long and was opened the last three feet below the roof. There were two rows of bleachers, one on each side with six rows on each side. The pit, about twenty feet in diameter and two and one half feet high, where the fights were held, was in the center of the building. In the left rear of the building was a fifteen foot wide room, that housed thirty roosters that were fighting that day. Fights were always held on Saturdays and Sundays. The right rear room had a counter on the front of it. This was the concession stand. My mother, Eunice B. Delcambre, made and sold delicious fresh banana and pineapple homemade cakes, pies, lemonade, rootbeer, oranges, apples, and bananas.

The middle room had a diving board three feet wide and four feet deep and three inches thick. This board had two springs so that it would bounce up and down in the front. Just before their fight, the owners would bring their fighting cocks to the middle room to get them ready for the big fight. They would hold their rooster on each side and make them run on the bouncing diving board. With heart pumping and the adrenalin flowing, the roosters were ready for the big fight. Each rooster was equipped with 3 ½ inch curved surgical steel gaffs to do a superb killing job. Put in the right place, it was instant death. In the wrong place, it was a slow and painful death.

A fight could be won in three different ways: Number one, a gaff right through the heart bringing instant death. Number two, a gaff in the chest area bringing slow eventual death. Number three, just as when a boxer turns coward and runs, he loses the fight. The rooster loses by running around the pit away from the winning rooster. The losing rooster can also lose by running away and jumping over the top of the pit. There was no limit as to the size of the bets placed on the roosters.

I now would like to tell you the story of "Pretty Boy," our pride and joy, our pet, our favorite and biggest money winner. He was fighting against his adversary, another well known rooster. My father had placed a big bet of \$50 on this fight. Remember the year was 1938, a lot of money, in those days. The "pit" (fight) started out well with both roosters giving a good fight. Half-way through the fight there was a turn of events, "Pretty Boy" was gaffed right through the heart. He was dying, jumping up and down as roosters do when they are dying. The other rooster was confused as he watched what was going on. Scared, he started to run around the ring. He was so scared that he jumped over the top of the pit and into the audience. The audience went wild. Money was won and lost on that particular fight. My father expected to lose with a dead rooster but with the turn of events he had won \$50. For many years on the bayou, the gamblers talked about the day they saw a dead "Pretty Boy" win a \$50 fight against a live game cock. (This concludes another event in the life of Dale "ENNIS" Delcambre known as "Boy Blue.")



**FDR**  
**by**  
**Faye Broussard**

On April 12, 1945 our school Drama Class was practicing for a play when one of the adults present announced that Franklin D. Roosevelt had just died.

I was 14 years of age at the time and was sad that a person had died but not very interested in current events. As I listened to the comments on how much FDR had contributed to our country and the world, I realized that I was missing out on history in the making. I began to ask questions on all current events and took an interest in local affairs.

Today I try and read two newspapers a day, listen to talk radio, watch newscast and information programs on TV. I now feel like I have my own thoughts and opinions on issues, events and am witnessing history in the making.



**ACORNS, OR RESPONSIBILITIES OF A BIG SISTER**  
**by**  
**Faye Broussard**

When I was about five years old our family moved to a larger house, which had a beautiful large oak tree in the yard. My baby sister was only weeks old so my mother had her in the middle of their bed. She was dressed very nicely and I remember how pretty the shawl she was lying on was beautiful. Our new neighbors came to help and admire the new baby, my brother and I were excited with all the activity. Our sister cried. It seemed constantly. We decided to retrieve some of the acorns under our new tree for the baby to suck on. When we stuffed her mouth full of acorns, she shut up immediately. I don't remember how my parents discovered us putting acorns in her mouth, but I do remember the lecture about the danger of anyone sucking on acorns, especially babies, and the responsibility of the older child to protect my brother and sister.



## THE HATLESS GENERATION

by

Woodson Hopkins

The old, battered hat rack had seen better days. From its location near the rear entrance to the flea market, it was but a step away from a date with the dumpster, victim to a generation of hatless young, interested in establishing their own traditions.

As a boy he could remember those square, sometimes oval boxes in Mother's closet, the hat rack by the front door, the wooden peg on the back porch where Dad's mud splattered work hat, stained by, who knows what elements, belched up from the bowels of the earth. Dad had a hat for all occasions and never left the house without one on his head. For him a hat was as much a part of the apparel he wore as was his shirt. It served him well to protect from the weather, mask his baldness, or serve as a container for drawing names and watering horses. Panama's, sailors, fedoras—all were there to serve a purpose.

It is doubtful that Dad ever considered his sons would turn from his ways to become a group once described by some old scribe as THE HATLESS GENERATION. Walking down Main Street, Dad would tip to ladies passing. If he stopped and a conversation ensued, his hat was removed. When entering elevators, it was an automatic gesture for him to take off his hat. The young learned the nuances of hat wearing intuitively and by observing. Sadly as the popularity of hats waned, so did a measure of etiquette, or so it seemed. Wearing hats in Father's day was not simply a fashion statement, it was a vehicle to carry on displays of courtesy and ruling social graces, most now lost in time.

Why the broad use of hats faded away and their popularity diminished cannot be easily determined by those interested enough to broach the question. Perhaps etiquette died a little with hats only to surface in different form elsewhere in society. Other theories advanced, say it came as an aftermath of war: climate control, hair styles, and even presidential elections. For sure veterans returning from the war were quick to rid themselves of all forms of GI headgear and rigid military life. Women's hats enjoyed a slight revival, but the trend never lasted as the nation settled into a more casual and informal mood. The post war boom put a lot of workers indoors and central heat and air conditioning, especially in automobiles, lessened the need for hats. Hard hats began to appear on the scene, but made no contribution to the fashion world or codes of gentlemanly behavior. Television may have been the biggest culprit of all when technology in the field allowed for the coverage of election campaigns, inaugurations and the like. When John F. Kennedy was elected, television gave the country a close up look at a true hatless leader, the first since wig wearing went out. JFK brought a youthful look to the presidency by showing a full head of hair. Truman, Eisenhower and Johnson were the last of the bona fide hat wearers in the White House. Being abandoned by the top may have been the last straw for hatters hoping for a comeback.

It cannot be said that there are no hat wearers left in America. There are many, but do they have that special "savoir faire"—that cast of old southern quality gentility? Do they practice etiquette



like their grandfathers? The commercial world has turned away from the hatted and has left them fending on their own. Auto makers may be the worst enemy of hat wearers, offering only pickup trucks as a ready solution to small cabin space. Sleek, low silhouette cars do not "cut it" for hat wearers. Those high backed, contoured safety seats, upon acceleration, will lift a Stetson "plum off" a cowboy's brow like the lid in a foot operated garbage can.

Restaurants, too, have ignored hat wearers' needs. Few now provide adequate accommodations for hats. The old hat check person is largely gone from the scene. Those with hats, in too many restaurants these days, are left with two options: breach etiquette and eat with hat on, or find an empty chair and risk the arrival of the fat lady who has become notorious for crushing hats in restaurants.

Who knows? Hats may make a comeback some day, but do not look for the likes of President Bill Clinton, Coach Jimmy Johnson, or Basketeer Denis Rodman to join the return. Undoubtedly, this trio would prefer their coffered heads remain exposed to the cameras, nor would the hair spray and hair dye people like such a revival.

The Texas Bull Riders Association is going ahead with plans for a special built crash helmet for entrants to wear in rodeo events. Perhaps this plan will spark Detroit to offer crash helmets, color coordinated, of course, on all its cars, and maybe, just maybe—hats will have their own place again.



## OVER THE FENCE ON THE DITCH BANK

by  
Shirley S. Dugas

With boisterous acclaim we measured, re-measured, then scored the stage plank with our knife to make sure that it was equally divided into three pieces. With curves on four sides it was impossible to measure our treat accurately with our 12 inch "coca-cola" ruler. George, Louis and I each knew that the mid-section was the largest of the three, so we drew straws for that section of the stage plank. Each Sunday afternoon my two older brothers and I each got a nickel. At Boudry Store on Vacherie Lane we purchased:

- 1 stage plank ( a flat ginger bread about 4" X 8")
- 1 bottle of icy cold pop rouge
- 5 cents worth of candy as long as it was divisible by three(usually Mary Jane's, silver bells or gum drops)We could buy more than a handful for a nickel.

George and Louis hoisted my small table with four chairs (one for a visiting doll) over the back fence onto the ditch bank under a large tree where we sat and divided our carefully purchased treats. We ate the stage plank, measured out equal amounts of the pop rouge, (oh, so nice and cool on a hot summer afternoon) and gobbled up all of the candy.

George and Louis would then escape into the tree house above the table. Without fail they promised to help get my belongings back to the other side of the fence. Without fail, each Sunday, they disappeared into the leaves above me. I was left crying –no way to get my table and chairs over the fence. I remember throwing my doll along with my small aluminum pitcher with three cups over to the other side after numerous tries.

Papa who was over six feet tall would come to my rescue and hoist me over the fence. George and Louis would come down from the tree at Papa's command. They would throw my table and chairs over the fence precipitating more tears.

I do not remember how I got to the other side of the fence on the ditch bank for our tea party or when I realized that George and Louis used my things for their pleasure and always left me in tears.



## AN EMBARRASSING MOMENT

by  
Ed Parker

In the 1940's a group of the younger men at the S R R L regularly played Jungle Ball during the lunch hour breaks. Jungle Ball is a New Orleans version of soft ball. It is played with a regular soft ball and small bats common to that game. The main difference from regular soft ball is that the pitcher doesn't pitch underhand. He throws with a side arm delivery much like a hard ball pitcher. We played on a diamond laid off on the lawn north of the building (the lake side, that is). Our regular umpire was one of the older men somewhat portly in stature. One day shortly after Esther and I became engaged, I went out at noon to play ball.

The first time at bat I got a hit. I ran to first, tagged the base and took two or three strides, but instead of circling to the right and returning to the base I just stood like a ninny. When the first baseman got the ball, he walked out (or trotted) and tagged me. The umpire raised a fat fist with the thumb up and shouted, "You're out!" Well, that was not the first time I did something absent-mindedly, nor the last, but the jokers who saw the event and those who heard about it assumed that my recent loss of status as a bachelor was directly responsible for my mental lapse, so for a while I had to put up with their slings and arrows. At least one of the group thought it necessary to report the event to Esther with his own brand of embellishment.



## THE UNUSUAL CHRISTMAS TREE

by

Irene Delcambre

I always had a special love for this particular picture. Oh, I like all the others--I'm the typical mother, always looking back with pride and joy, thinking, of course, how very cute my children were. But this picture always stirs up very special feelings inside of me.

It was Christmas of 1958--Joan, my oldest daughter, was barely 2 and Tommy, my oldest son, was a year old. My husband and I and our 2 children then, were living in New Iberia on Walton Street, directly across a cemetery. My husband, Leward, had been working for ENTEX for approximately 2 ½ years and, like other young married couples, we were struggling to make ends meet. We owned a 1955, red and white Chevrolet which we were still paying on and some new furniture, which left little for other much less desired extras. We learned the difference between need and want. We were content though--after all, we had each other and 2 lovely children.

My husband, Leward, who is deceased now, was an only child who liked to visit his parents regularly. He would often take Joan and Tommy with him when he visited his parents so that I could have some time for myself. Hannie, my mother-in-law, use to invite us over to her house for Sunday dinner regularly, so there was always that feeling of togetherness. These visits created an opportunity for a very strong bonding between the children and their grandparents which is still evident today.

That Christmas of 1958 was spent in a similar way as the one before. Again we faced the holidays on a limited budget, but that didn't dampen our spirits. We had wanted to put up a tree for the children, however, finances didn't allow it. My in-laws were not the type to spend their hard-earned money on such things, so we set out to make the most of what we had. We were determined to have some kind of tree for the children, so Leward and his father looked around and found this crooked, lop-sided branch and brought it in Leward's parents house. We wrapped cotton around it and decorated it with what trimmings we had. No matter how poorly the tree looked, the spirit of Christmas was there in all of us. That winter of 1958, we needed very little to make it a perfect Christmas.

Many Christmases have come and gone with different kinds of Christmas trees. For years we bought live Scotch pines at the Optimist Club Sale in New Iberia at the Park Shed. We even had a nice artificial one my mother-in-law gave us, but none of our trees were as memorable as this poor little lop-sided, crooked Christmas tree.



**MERLE AND MUSIC**  
by  
**Margaretta Blanchard**

Unless you have been introduced to my cousin Merle, you missed a part of life. She was born in Mamou, Louisiana. She sometimes seemed scatterbrained, but it only seemed that way. I think it was a method to get her way all the time.

She had one sibling whom she could wrap around her little finger. When she said, "Bubba," she could ask for the moon, and he would try to get it. Leslie, her brother, was about ten years older than Merle. Even at that young age she knew how to control her big brother.

My cousin Merle was about a year younger than I. One day she decided that she would not eat breakfast unless I ate with her. So her big brother would carry Merle and the two breakfasts to my home about five blocks away. Merle and I sat down and had a royal breakfast that morning. Then Leslie carried Merle back home.

Merle was not spoiled one bit. She was just the "Queen of Mamou." I loved her dearly. I still do.

But the years in between our growing up had many ups and downs.

My family moved from Mamou to the Bellvue farm, and I began enjoying the wide open spaces of the country. Merle would come for a week's visit every summer.

We had a neighbor whose son was born with a severe hearing loss. Merle discovered a method to converse with J.C. She declared she would marry him. But her family moved to Ruston in North Louisiana and to a different world. Merle could not buy an ice cream cone on Sunday. Nor could she buy anything else in Ruston on Sunday.

Merle discovered the piano. Sometimes I wonder if her neighbors had not been piano teachers, would Merle have studied music in school? She really became a fantastic piano player, but something disturbed her. How could she flirt with the boys if she had to practice piano playing everyday? But she found a way to do both. She is a great piano player.

One day when we were washing Merle's hair, the telephone rang. I answered the call. Someone wanted to speak to Merle. This person wanted to know if Merle could come to play the piano at "Tech," the college in Ruston, LA. The governor was a guest at the luncheon. Merle said, "O.K., but it will be a short while, however, before I can leave."

Merle told me, "While I take the curlers out of my hair, would you go get that white dress and my shoes in the closet? I will stick my head in the oven for a short while to dry my hair a bit." And she did!

Then she drove like a maniac to the university. I am glad I did not have to ride with her. She returned later with her hair pointing in every direction. She said the Governor was overjoyed to hear her play. She was really a good piano player.

Also, with the gift of “gab” my wonderful cousin has, Merle can win anybody over to her circle. Kookie hair and all!!

