Excerpts From

Our Pages ...of Life

Volume XXa--Tuesday Morning Session
Fall 1997

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ONCE UPON A TIME. Four of my favorite words. They speak of story, its mesmerizing quality and its place in history. American author Willa Cather has noted that, "There are only two or three human stories, and they go on repeating themselves as fiercely as if they never happened." My favorite storybook phrase invites us to examine life one story at a time, to enjoy life as it is repeated in each of our lives--as though it were happening for the first time, a *once upon a time* experience.

This collection marks the twentieth volume of life stories written, fashioned, and lived by my life writing students. Though a fraction of the two thousand plus stories I have heard these and other writers share, the stories in this edition echo the literary motif of *once upon a time.* Those words beckon us to open the eyes of our mind and to listen with our heart.

We are often stifled in our attempts to understand others, to show compassion, and to express sympathy, to see life through someone else's eyes. But we never will walk in another's shoes. It is story that allows that discrepancy--to want to understand and yet to be incapable of fully experiencing another's life. It is story that allows us to transcend the reality of living a life alone by sharing life together. I will never walk in your shoes, no matter how hard I try. But story says, "It's o.k. Just listen as I tell a tale of *once upon a time.*"

I invite you to listen with me. Become *all ears* as we learn from the lives of these students. You've heard their stories before, haven't you? They've been yours from the start.

❖ Joan Stear, USL
Fall 1997

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Twenty volumes, seven and a half years of thanks! To all of you who make this job so much fun--THANK YOU! Lafayette General Medical Center and the English Department and University College at Southwestern Louisiana continue to support our efforts--to them we offer our appreciation as well.

Front Cover: *(clockwise, beginning at top right corner) Johnnie Kocurek; Morris Laughlin, Jr., Versie Foti's brother; Wilma Bowles; Philcien Doucet Judice, great-grandmother of Bea Murphy; Jim Jennings (on right) and brother Eddie, circa 1933; Tom and Dave Parker, sons of Ed and Esther Parker; (center) Bea Murphy*

USL LIFE WRITING CLASS
Fall 1997--Tuesday Session

***Seated, left to right*: Johnnie Kocurek; Joan Stear; Olympe Butcher; Bea Murphy; Versie Foti**
***Standing, left to right:* Woodson Hopkins; Jim Jennings; Stanley Davis; John Townsend; Virginia Cook; Wilma Bowles; Ed Parker**
***Class member not in photo:* Betty Tripp**

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A MEMORY BROUGHT BACK

by

Stanley F. Davis

A few days ago while thumbing through my picture album, I found a picture of myself sitting on a park bench with a girl's wide-brimmed floppy straw hat on my head. Standing nearby were the two girls who had put the hat on my head, my two cousins, Phyllis, the girlfriend of my buddy Tom, and Katherine, my favorite cousin.

The picture has no real connection with the story I am about to relate except to remind me of the fun-filled week we spent together when I had the use of a brand new automobile.

When I arrived in West Texas looking for a job, my Uncle Charlie, a tool-pusher for Gulf Oil Company, helped me get a job in the material department of that company. My first job was as a helper on a horse drawn wagon hauling express and local freight from the railroad depot to the warehouse. During the first year I had finagled myself from laborer to an office job as timekeeper and payroll clerk.

At that time the field operations of the Gulf Oil Company was largely directed and closely monitored by the Houston office. H.A. Melat was in charge of drilling and production, and Oscar Busby was in charge of material and supplies. Early in December Joe Bailey came from Houston to Eastland to take an inventory of the warehouse stock. Everyone knew that Joe Bailey was the fair-haired buddy of Oscar Busby, so no one was surprised when he arrived in a brand new company automobile--a brand new 1919 Model "T" Ford Roadster with a bright orange disc, GOC 23, painted on the door, and on the other side of the car where another door should have been.

Joe Bailey, like everyone else out ot the Houston office, was interested in only one thing. That was to complete his field assignment so he could get back to Houston to drink, dine, and dance at the newly opened Rice Hotel. He believed, and he would tell anyone who would listen, that it was the grandest hotel in the U.S.A.

Knowing that it would be good to have a friend and ally in the Houston office, I spent all my free time during the day and half the night helping Joe Bailey count stock and write-up the inventory. ("Brown-nosing," yes, but it paid off in a big way, sooner than I had expected.)

A few days before Christmas, Joe Bailey told me that Mr. Busby had given him Christmas week off and that while he was in Houston he was leaving his company car in my care.

Later that day one of the men I worked with told Joe Bailey that I had no experience driving a car. He added that he was a fool to leave his car with me.

When Joe Bailey asked me about my driving experience, I told him, "If I could not drive I would not have told you." Actually, my driving experience was extremely limited.

It was raining the night it was time for Joe Bailey to go to the railroad station to take a train for Houston. Hoping he would find someone else to drive him to the station, I hid out, but he found me playing a poker game in one of the back rooms of the rooming house.

He drove to the station, bought his ticket, and checked his bag. Then he said, "I want to get a haircut. Let's go to the barber shop. You drive."

I had no trouble backing out of the place where the car was parked and made it to the barber shop. At the barber shop I had to park head-in to the sidewalk. I couldn't find neutral with the shift pedal, and my right foot, wet from the rain, slipped off the brake pedal. The car hit the curb with a bang. Joe Bailey said, "That is one way to park a car."

After he got his haircut, he drove back to the station. He got out and said, "It is all yours now. Have a good Christmas and meet me at the station when I get back."

I had no trouble getting back to the boarding house. I just got into the deep muddy ruts on the right side of the road and stayed there until I reached the graveled driveway into the warehouse yard.

The next morning, a bright sunny day, I rose up early and spent an hour practicing my driving: Starting in low gear, shifting to high gear, locating neutral, backing up and stopping by pulling the gear shift in neutral and applying the brakes slowly. I also practiced adjusting the spark or timing to the speed of the engine. The

spark control was a small lever on the left side of the steering post under the steering wheel. The gasoline control was a similar lever on the right side of the steering post.

My buddy, Tom, and my two cousins had a wonderful time joy-riding all over town and into the countryside. Then, on Sunday, we decided to go to Cisco, fifty or sixty miles from Eastland, a two hour plus drive because automobiles at that time did not travel more than twenty-five to forty miles per hour over dirt roads.

That morning, after disconnecting the speedometer, all five of us stacked in the one and only seat of that little car and left merrily for Cisco.

Halfway to our destination, due to carelessness, lack of driving experience or overcrowdedness, I lost control of the car, and I ran off the road down a steep bank, ending up with the car on its side in a shallow patch filled with water.

After we unscrambled ourselves from the tangled mess of arms and legs and got out of the car, we found that no one had been hurt, not even a scratch.

About that time a truck loaded with pipeline workers on their way to work stopped to see if anyone had been hurt and to offer their assistance. Seeing that the car had suffered little, if any, damage, they turned it back upon its four wheels and pushed it up the bank onto the road.

Just before the crew left, the foreman asked, "What are you kids doing with a Gulf Oil Company car this far out of Eastland? Did you steal it?" We all replied, almost in unison, "No, we didn't steal it. It was loaned to us." He shrugged his shoulders and drove off.

After the pipeline crew left, we checked the car over carefully, happy to find that not one fender was bent. Neither was there a dent or scratch anywhere on the car.

We decided to go on to Cisco and piled back into the car, a far more somber group than had left Eastland a few hours earlier.

In Cisco we had dinner at the home of the girls' Uncle Frank, their father's brother. After resting an hour or so, we headed back to Eastland, arriving there without further mishap.

The next morning I washed and polished the car until it shone like it had just come off the salesroom floor. I also reconnected the speedometer.

That night when I met Joe Bailey at the railroad station he inspected the car carefully then got into the driver's seat and headed home. Soon after leaving the station he said, "While I was gone I worried about having left the car in your care. I was afraid I might come back and find it wrecked. Did you take any long trips out of town?"

I said, "You can see by the speedometer that I didn't drive it much, but we sure had fun joy-riding around 'town.'"

Quickly changing the subject (so as to speak no longer with a forked tongue), I said, "Joe Bailey, let's get busy and finish that inventory this week so you can get back to Houston and spend New Year's evening with your girlfriend dining and dancing in the Rice Hotel. Just as we arrived at our boarding house, the Gulf Oil Company Hotel, he said, "It can be done and that will be fun."

CORNBREAD ROYALTY
by
Johnnie Kocurek

Martha Matilda Clemons Heath, my spry and wise great grandmother, was seventy-seven years old in 1936, and I was eight years old. She told me many stories that year about her childhood. These were tales of quality, and they never lacked in quantity. Grandma Heath was quite the talker. She passed her talent of telling stories down through five more generations. That talent is now resting with my twelve-year-old granddaughter, Marilee, and I hope that she will, someday, pass it on.

I remember sitting on the front porch with Grandma Heath, both of us rocking in rhythm in high back wooden chairs. This particular evening comes to mind when she was reminiscing about the terrible weapons that she saw as a twelve-year-old.

"The long single-load shot gun was thought to surely bring civilization to an end," she recalled. "I, and all the children near my age, imagined the world coming to an end. We grew up much too soon worrying about our unsure future that lay ahead of us." She kept rocking as she finished her thoughts aloud. "All the women in our family were 'worriers' but we always looked for solutions. If we were not well equipped to handle a problem, we improvised. After worrying about the gun problem for awhile and realizing we could not solve the problem, we decided to enjoy life and to be happy with the time we had."

My grandmother Gaw was sitting next to me on the porch that evening listening to her mother tell about the terrible guns. Gaw let Grandma Heath finish and then looked at her.

"Mama," Gaw said, "I remember when I was about eight and Uncle Newt brought an automatic rifle over to our house. We children were warned of its danger and told there was no defense against it. We believed everyone in the world would be killed by those fast firing rifles. We were told to make the best of our time while we were able."

I thought of Gaw, Grandma Heath, and their world destroying weapons nine years later when my mother and I heard of the atomic bomb that wreaked such havoc on Japan.

In a way that reminded me of Grandma Heath and Gaw predicting the end of the human race all over again, Mother had told me about the A-Bomb. "This could bring an end to the world as we know it," and then to no one in particular she asked, "How can anyone defend themselves against it?" I helped her worry.

Twenty-four years later, Kathy, my daughter and friends her age, observed that the earth was overpopulated. "Overpopulation and starvation will surely destroy the entire world," she told me. She worried.

Last year my twelve-year-old granddaughter wrote several letters to environmental departments suggesting that something be done to preserve the rain forests. She discussed pollution with me. "If something isn't done, Gamma, life on earth could be threatened." During the summer she wrote the following poem:

I am the earth
Don't hurt me
I am a firefly
Don't conceal me in a jar.
I am a fern
Don't crush me
I am a bonsai
Don't let me die of starvation.
I am many things
All of which need care.
If you would pay more attention
You would know
That I can't
Survive all alone
Pay more attention
Before I'm gone....

Six generations of women in my family have been "worriers." Yet each of us has always displayed optimism, driven by "hand me down" genes and cultural legacies of survival and resiliency.

Judging from all the stories passed down, there was never a doubt that, starting with Grandma Heath or maybe before her, we six generations of women have always

been proud to be of the female gender. My mother instilled in me, when I was very young, a healthy and positive attitude toward a girl's transition into womanhood. Her mother had given this special lesson to her, she to me, and I passed this attitude on to my daughter, Kathy. My granddaughter, Marilee, has been privileged to acquire this same attitude from Kathy. Growing up happy-and-female is a valuable "hand-me-down."

Grandma Heath also gave us a list of what she called 'morals': *Love God. Love your family and always be loyal to them. Love your friends and stay near them in their darkest hours. Speak the truth or speak nothing. Help those who can't help themselves. Stay clear of debt. Make but few promises and then fulfill them. Be kind to animals.*

The women in our family have tried to live by these 'morals,' and whether from nature or from nurture, one of our strong points is to express love to anyone or anything that touches our lives.

Besides people, animals have always been special to us, and we have shown them respect, even in their death. We have left many backyard pet cemeteries as we moved to new homes, and consequently, to new yards over the years. We have lovingly buried birds, goldfish, dogs, cats, hamsters, squirrels, opossum, turtles, coons, chickens, ducks, pigs, and many other pets. Handmade containers constructed from everything from shoe boxes to match boxes, and even some jewelry boxes, have been made to accommodate the deceased. Sermons have been carefully prepared and our special family prayer has been said time and time again. I don't know which of my ancestors wrote this prayer or how many have said it over some pet's grave. I do know it was originated before my grandmother was born and repeated often to me by my Aunt Hester. It has been a part of almost every family pet funeral.

Pity all things that have to die
Even to cows, hogs and dogs
And every other little critter,
I pray that all that has to die
Reach their Heavenly Home. Amen.

Like the prayer with a dateless beginning, some of our family traditions go back to unknown origins. Before my great grandmother was born, someone in the family

living in the Old Marble Community in Arkansas stood in a pasture, across a creek, down in a hollow, or on top of a mountain and whistled a three syllable signal that rang out in the glens and dales. The whistle called someone home or announced someone's arrival. Today you may hear our "family whistle" in Maison Blanche in Lafayette, in the Galleria in Houston, on the beach in Perdido Key, Florida, or anywhere else our family members roam. If you listen you will hear someone whistling back from another direction. Look around and you'll see two people locate each other. Our family has owned that whistle sound for over 145 years.

120 years ago, Great Grandma Heath designed beautiful quilts and tatted lace. Thirty years later, Gaw designed quilts, crocheted scarfs, bedspreads, and ladies collars. But the talent didn't stop there. My mother designed, like her ancestors before her, quilts, lace and needle point pieces. I create culinary designs and love to entertain. My daughter, Kathy is an Interior Designer with expertise designing quilts, rooms, furniture, and culinary delights. Marilee, twelve years old, designs valentines, greeting cards, cookie faces, and room arrangements.

Food has always been important to my family. We have proven that a good meal can solve problems, settle disagreements, win over an enemy, heal the infirmed, force a confession, induce a proposal, and patch up a troubled marriage. Many of our recipes have been passed on to us from generations before us. We love to feed people and we love to eat. Luckily, thin genes run in our family, too.

Part of our culture, due to different necessities in each generation, is a sheer determination to make things work by improvising. Another part, and perhaps the most important, is practicing family loyalty.

Grandma Heath told me during one of our talks, "If you master these two things, you will never be a failure." And so down the family ladder went the lesson on improvising and loyalty. It's now resting with Marilee, waiting to be passed on.

I have to admit, some genetic traits passed to each generation from Grandma Heath to Marilee, need a little fine tuning. We have a history of being independent to a fault. We have a tendency to exaggerate, possibly because we talk too much in order to stay in control. We are stubborn and exhibit a determination to take care of everything..

Thus far, I have written about the women in my family, not intending to ignore the wonderful culture passed on to us from our male heritage.

It just happens that the women in my family were talked about more than the men. The women seemed to be the ones doing the daring, unheard of things.

Grandma Heath, for instance, shocked all of the country folk when she wore an outlandish red skirt, disgraceful because of its color, straddled a horse, and rode over the countryside day and night, serving as a mid-wife in the late 1800's. A red skirt made brush-riding safer, but a red skirt on a "nice" lady was unheard of.

In the year 1914, Gaw was the first woman in Hot Springs to drive an automobile without a man in attendance--unheard of.

My mother, Ethel, and her sister, Hester, were published in the Hot Springs newspaper in 1916. They had gone to a public swimming pool in bathing suits with no bloomers, thus exposing their legs--unheard of.

In 1978, I located an adoptee's birth mother and helped obtain needed medical information from her--unheard of.

In 1969, Kathy was the first to wear a formal made with long full pants instead of a skirt to a prom in Lafayette--unheard of.

Marilee shaved her legs without permission when she was only nine years old, creating a rash of outcries from mothers of fourth grade little girls yelling, "Not fair!"

I remind Kathy and Marilee often that our culture came from the Arkansas hills, generations ago. We come from strong willed, pioneer spirited, proud women who have thrived on common sense and resiliency. I remind them, too, that we, like our ancestors before us, are Cornbread Royalty, reigning like Queens because of our cultural values while maintaining a common connection to the rest of the world.

Hopefully, the next generation of our family will accept our hand-me-downs and enjoy life as we have, worrying and changing for the better, the things that we can change, but always staying in control.

My wish is that some day Marilee acts or reacts to a situation and someone says to her, "You are just like your Gamma."

I have no doubt that Marilee will continue handing down the legacy she has to generations which will come after her, holding her head high and reigning as a 'queen', like those of us before her in Cornbread Royalty ancestral history.

THE OLD SWIMMING HOLE

by

Versie L. Foti

The rural community where I was born and lived until I was almost twenty years of age is located in the northern area of Acadia Parish on the southern fringe of the Opelousas prairie. Prior to the turn of the twentieth century, it was known as "Light and Tie." The prairie was covered with an abundance of tall prairie grass, but there were few trees to tie up horses. As riders on horse-back or in buggies or on wagons road up to the houses or stores, they were greeted with "Light and Tie." The riders were expected to dismount and hobble their horse by tying the bridle around the horse's front leg so that the animal could not wander away.

The post office in the community was named Coe, after a family by the name on whose property the post office was located. Gradually, as more residences were built by farmers migrating to that area, "Light and Tie" gave way to Coe, which became the name of the community. When the post office was closed, the name of the community then became Thrailkill after another family who farmed in the area.

In the early 1900's, a farmer with extensive land holdings, Theogene Richard, donated several arpents of land at a crossroad to build the first public elementary school to be named Richard School. Finally, the community became Richard, as it is known today.

My grandfather, Allen Laughlin, moved to this area about 1900 from the Long Point settlement about six miles north of Crowley on Long Point Gulley to farm rice. All of his seven children, four boys and three girls, married into families already living in that community and they, too, farmed rice.

Growing rice requires a constant source of water. To supply the water, Grandpa had a deep well installed to pump a stream through canals to the rice fields farmed by him and his children. The pump was located across the narrow dirt road from the house in which my family lived.

The ice-cold water was pumped out of the ground through a 12-inch pipe which emptied into a pit about 20 feet wide and 40 feet long. Two canals, one on the west side of the pit and one on the south end, allowed the water to flow to the various

rice fields. The flow of the water could be controlled by opening or closing the flood gates installed where the canals flowed from the pit. By closing both gates, the pit could be filled with water and, Voila!, we had a perfect swimming hole!

To make it even better, Daddy and his three brothers, Uncle Bud, Uncle Vinnie and Uncle Sullivan, hauled white sand by truck from Whiskey Chitto River near Elton to cover the sticky, muddy bottom of the swimming hole. The sand felt much better on the bottom of our feet than the gooey mud.

As warm weather arrived and the rice crops began to grow, thoughts of starting the water pump began to fill our heads. My brothers, Vira and Bill, my sisters, Permelia, Martha and Jean and I led the onslaught because Daddy was the one who determined when the pump would be started. We were soon joined by some ten to fifteen cousins and several friends who looked forward to a summer of afternoon swimming. Everyday we pestered our parents to allow us to go into the water. We just couldn't wait for the day we could jump in!

We could usually persuade Mama and Daddy that the weather was warm enough about the time school ended at the end of May. Every afternoon about three or four o'clock, the fun began! Kids would arrive on foot, on horse-back, and a few would ride bicycles down a dusty road from all directions to join us at the swimming hole. What a way to spend a hot afternoon!

In those days, swim suits were a luxury which most of us did not enjoy. Just try to imagine the variety of costumes worn by the swimmers! Most of us wore our oldest, most faded clothes. Dresses were certainly not appropriate for swimming, and we didn't wear shorts in those days. So what did we wear? The memories make me laugh even today! What a sight we must have been!

Some of us who played basketball wore our basketball suits which consisted of matching shirt and bloomers in school colors. Boys wore cut-off overalls or old dress pants with no shirt. Some of the girls wore their own or their brothers' cut-off overalls and an old faded shirt. Other girls were ingenious enough to construct for themselves a type of bathing suit (but not too revealing) from feed sack prints. Underclothes must be worn with each outfit. What a style show that was!

Oh, the fun we had in that swimming hole! The deep well water that came out of the chute was ice cold! Jumping into the water always took my breath away. It was almost impossible to wade into it because every step deeper into the water sent needles into our skin because it was agonizingly cold. We would chicken out and run back to the bank.

The trick was to run from the road to the bank, quickly jump as far as we could into the water, then throw water on those who were not yet wet. Shrill screaming and screeching could be heard half a mile away but there were no houses closer except for our house across the road. Of course, all of us kids were at the swimming hole as was Mama and sometimes Daddy.

We played all kinds of games in and out of the water. We used inflated inner tubes to float, and threw empty barrels in at the chute and tried to ride them the length of the pool. It was almost like riding a bucking horse. We had swimming and diving contests and played "Follow the Leader," "Tag" and "Leap Frog" in the water.

When our teeth were chattering, our limbs were shaking, and we were blue-cold, we would make our way to a pipe which carried hot water into the pool. This water was heated by circulating cold water through the pump engine to cool it. There was often quite a hassle at the hot water pipe where we gathered to try to get warm, pushing, pulling, squeezing in and trying to hang on.

Inside the pump shed was an exhaust pipe which carried hot air from the engine to the outside. We would get as close to it as we could to get warm. Surprisingly, I do not remember anyone getting burned.

Another fun thing we did was to put watermelons, which our families grew, into the cold water to chill them As we swam and played, our hunger intensified until we couldn't wait any longer. We got out of the pool, broke the melons and ate all we could. Then we had fights with the rinds. The next spring, watermelon plants sprouted all around the swimming hole and pump shed. Even on the banks of the canals, watermelon vines grew where the seeds had floated in the water until they were deposited.

Usually, we swam and played until we were called in for supper. The cousins and neighbors left for their respective homes. After drying off, dressing, and eating supper, it wasn't long before we were ready for bed. The two to three hours of swimming and playing was all the exercise we needed. We were dead tired! And we only had to wash our feet, face and hands before jumping into bed.

I never remember not knowing how to swim or dive, nor do I remember being afraid of water. Some areas of the swimming hole were deep enough that water was over our heads.

The little kids came with their older siblings. There was no formal swimming lessons, so I guess we learned to swim and dive by necessity and peer pressure. There was never a drowning nor do I remember a serious accident. I'm sure there were bumps and scrapes, perhaps a minor burn or two from the hot water pipe, or a bruise from a watermelon rind.

What will always be in my memory, though, and what is often rehashed when I see cousins and friends who share these memories with me and my siblings are the care-free, happy, exciting times we spent in the old swimming hole from three or four o'clock until seven o'clock every afternoon throughout the summer, except Sundays. No, the pump did not run on Sundays, so there was no swimming.

A VISIT FROM THE BARROW BROTHERS AND FRIEND BONNIE

by

E.D. Parker

One day in November of 96 I was listening to a broadcast from Opelousas during which a visit of Bonnie and Clyde to that town was described. While they were there Clyde got a shave from a local barbershop. The announcer suggested that was probably the last shave Clyde got before the two were killed soon after that in Arcadia, LA. That broadcast suggested the subject for this paper.

Highway 83 crosses the U.S. from North to South. The south end is at Brownsville near the mouth of the Rio Grande. It eventually goes through Childress at the southeast corner of the Texas Panhandle. From there it continues northward striking Wellington a glancing blow, forming the eastern boundary of the town section. Seven miles north of Wellington it crosses the Salt Fork of Red River. The river at that point is about a quarter of a mile wide. In the dry season the river bed is covered by a thick layer of white sand. During the dry season the sand is quite dry, but there is usually a small shallow stream of water flowing near the south bank. If and when it rains, the stream widens as necessary to accommodate the run off water. After crossing the river Highway 83 continues to Shamrock where it intersects the legendary East-West Highway 66. Highway 83 continues Northward and eventually crosses the Canadian border at Westhope, North Dakota. It continues for some distance in Manitoba under the same designation of Highway 83.

In the early thirties the Texas Highway Department did considerable work on the section of 83 near Wellington. I think they were mainly interested in straightening some of the kinks in preparation for paving. The new roadway approached the river somewhat downstream from the existing bridge. It had been prepared up to the river bank, and a new bridge was planned for that location although it had not yet been built. Northbound traffic was directed by a sign to a detour about 300 yards south of the river which led to the old bridge.

Sam Pritchard operated a farm on the east side of Highway 83 near the river. His home was about 200 yards from the river.

One evening in 1933 Sam, his wife, his daughter Gladys, and son-in-law Alonzo Cartwright, his son Jack, and daughter-in-law Irene were sitting on the porch when they heard a car traveling at high speed come over the hill near their house. The car missed the detour and continued at top speed toward disaster. In a short time the car plunged off the fifteen foot cliff into the river. The Pritchard family went to the river immediately to render assistance to the occupants of the car. The car had caught fire when it landed. There were two men and a woman in the car. The Pritchards assisted the occupants, two men and a woman in getting out of the car and putting the flames out with water from the river. They would not learn the identity of the occupants until much later. The three were the infamous Barrow Brothers, Buck and Clyde, and the equally infamous Bonnie Parker (no relation). Bonnie was injured in the fall and also received some burns in the aftermath. The rescuers took the trio to their house and put Bonnie to bed to ease her suffering. Alonzo offered to drive to Wellington to report the accident. When he told Bonnie she needed to see a doctor, she asked him not to send an ambulance. Alonzo left his car in the yard and drove Sam's car to town. In town he reported the wreck to Sheriff George Coprley and City Marshall Paul Hardy. The two officers drove to the Pritchard farm expecting to see some drunks who had been on a party. They had no clue who they were to encounter. Alonzo had car trouble and didn't return to the farm until the culprits were gone.

George and Paul drove up to the Pritchard yard and parked. Buck and Clyde were patrolling the premises and immediately got the drop on the officers. Bonnie, who was thought to be asleep or unconscious, jumped out of bed, when she heard the commotion outside and ran outside to relieve the officers of their guns. The Barrows then cuffed the officers with their own hand cuffs. They loaded the officers and themselves into the sheriffs car. Paul and Bonnie got in the back. Paul sat at the end of the seat and Bonnie lay down with her head in Paul's lap. George and the Barrows rode in the front. After shooting the tires on Alonzo's car they took off north on 83. When they reached 66 they turned east and crossed the 100th meridian near Erick into Oklahoma. Between Erick and Sayer they met another car driven by Raymond Hamilton, a confederate of the Barrows from the Dallas area. They had obviously arranged this rendezvous before the accident. The outlaws tied George and Paul to a cottonwood tree with barbed wire cut from a fence. They then departed with Hamilton in his car leaving the sheriffs car stuck in a sandbar. One of the officers managed to slip loose from his bonds and freed the other one. George and Paul made their way into Sayer, the next town to the east and reported to the police. They formed a search party but the trail was cold and they didn't catch the outlaws.

We were living on the farm at Swearingen when this event occurred. I was attending Texas Tech, but was home on summer vacation. After I graduated from high school, Mom and Dad moved back to the farm to help weather the great depression.

As soon as we heard of this event we made a special trip to town to visit the Hardy's and get a first hand account from Paul. We were long time friends of the Hardy's, having lived next door to them on East Ave. in Wellington around 1915.

As dangerous and bloodthirsty as those two were, the only person injured in this episode was Gladys Cartwright. Before the officers arrived, Gladys was inside the house when she noticed the back door wasn't latched. She reached up to latch the door. Buck Barrow was patrolling the grounds with a sawed off shotgun. He saw Gladys through an open window when she reached up. Perhaps thinking she was reaching for a gun he shot at her hand, and twelve of the pellets struck her hand.

In listening to the Barrows during their fifty mile trip to Oklahoma, Paul Hardy had formed some definite opinions about the character of the two men. He thought Buck was more belligerent and antagonistic than Clyde.

In view of Paul's assessment of the differences between the two brothers, I think it must have been Clyde's idea to tie the two officers to a tree. Bucks solution may have been a more permanent one.

Gladys Cartwright wrote an account of this episode for the Collingsworth County History. Included with her account is a reprint of an article from a 1934 edition of the Galveston Tribune which tells of the end of these outlaws. Bonnie and Clyde were killed in a police ambush in 1934 near Arcadia, LA. Their bodies were riddled with submachine gun fire.

Ivy Buck Barrow was shot several months earlier by police in Joplin, Missouri, and died of his wounds later in Dexter, Iowa. Raymond Hamilton was executed in the Texas Penitentiary in 1934.

ON PAYING TO BE MADE SICK
by
Virginia Cook

In early spring of 1989, Martha Ogden, a long time friend of mine, called to tell me about an American Express vacation special that she and her sister, Willanna James, were taking. Airplane fare would be inexpensive and there would be many choices of excursions. Before we finished talking, her excitement made me just as excited. I knew I could go.

There was only one problem to overcome. I had to find a roommate, and it seemed no one in Lafayette had any desire to see Hawaii, at least no one I could find. I had traveled with my brother, Joe Wilson, and his wife, Helen, several times, so I called her, expecting her to refuse. To my delight, Helen offered no argument at all, and when it was time to catch the plane, she came down a day early. Gilbert saw us off at Lafayette Airport.

Upon arriving at the Honolulu Airport, we were met by American Express guides, had leis hung around our necks, and listened to a welcome speech. We were then taken to our hotels at Waikiki.

The next morning we met at a central location where all bus tours began. From there we were driven to the Hawaiian Hilton where we ate a deluxe breakfast--lots of pineapple juice, pineapple chunks, sweet rolls, and coffee. The guides handed out brochures on all the places we could go and how much each trip would cost. Helen and I pondered over all the choices, trying to fit in what each of us especially wanted to see. I agreed to accompany her to a place I didn't want to see, Pearl Harbor and the sunken memorial ship that sank with all the men aboard the Arizona. Some trips were very expensive, one being $300 to fly over Kilawua volcano to see lava flowing from the crater.

Helen and I chose well, we thought--some of the less expensive trips and two rather expensive ones. For Mother's Day, we opted to cruise from below Waikiki to Diamond Head and back and enjoy a steak dinner on board. After the cruise, we would go to a nightclub and see Don Ho perform. I thought the day would really be special since we weren't home to receive gifts from our children and husbands.

Helen had never been on a ship, so she looked forward to the cruise, too. I thought we would love it. However,--and that's a big however--she had bought herself a disastrous outing. Mine was ruined, too. The ship rocked gently from side to side as the breakers came in, and five minutes after the ship started off, Helen became violently seasick. She sat on the top deck with her face to the wind the whole trip, and I imagine that she was praying not to have to hang over the rail. Seeing her like that, I felt so sorry for her that I became a little sick myself. Neither of us ate the steak dinner, nor did we go to see Don Ho. All we wanted to do was go to bed.

The other expensive choice we made was flying to Maui to see the extinct volcano, Haleakala, and tour the island to see the gorgeous flowers. We had a little time to shop for souvenirs, also.

Flying on a very small plane was new to both of us, but we enjoyed the flight. A bus that held ten or twelve people met us, and we were driven to the volcano first, one and a half hours away. A narrow little road went up the mountain, and the lady driver was trying to break a speed record. I was all right, in spite of the bouncing of that bus; but the farther up we went, the less I could breathe. I was beginning to think I'd have to ask to get out on the roadbank and be picked up on the way down. I managed to practice all sorts of breathing patterns--I have bronchitis and some asthma often--but I still managed not to embarrass myself. At last we arrived at a parking lot. There were about twenty-five concrete steps up to the rim of the volcano. Helen went on up and looked in, but all I could do was sit on the curb and breathe. I was so disappointed!

But that wasn't the worst of it. The bus went even faster down the mountain, and I was as motion sick as Helen had been on the ship. I overcame it when we stopped in a little town and walked around to see jewelry made there.

The results of this trip are that Helen will never get on a ship again and I will never take a little bus up a high mountain!

FERRY RIDE ACROSS LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN

by

J.M. Jennings Jr.

About 1931 or 1932, Uncle Modoc decided that he needed to visit the factory headquarters of the Bonney Forge and Tool Company in Allentown, PA. This company manufactured a popular line of mechanics hand tools bought by the customers of our New Orleans auto parts store. Getting to Allentown in our automobile was an adventure.

In the early 1930's, New Orleans was almost an island bounded on the south by the Mississippi River, on the north by Lake Pontchartrain, and by the Rigolets and Chef Menteur Pass to the east. There were no bridges for autos or trucks headed north, east or south out of New Orleans. Because the city was practically surrounded by water, a traveler had to ride a ferry if he wanted to drive his auto to a place like Pennsylvania.

Uncle wanted his wife, Auntie, and my younger brother, Eddie, and me to ride with him for both a vacation and the educational benefits of travel.

Uncle's automobile was a black Packard touring car powered by an inline eight cylinder engine and carrying two spare tires, one on either side of the auto in wells sunk into the front fenders. (Were all cars painted black in the early 1930's?) I remember the hood ornament was a graceful, chrome-plated swan.

This trip promised to be the most exciting event of my ten- or eleven-year-old life.

Auntie and Uncle were concerned with the cleanliness of the food in the small town restaurants we would encounter, so they made what they considered prudent preparations. We carried a large, woven willow lunch basket in the back seat. When we started the trip, the basket was loaded with sandwiches, fruit and jars of water all resting on a block of ice. The basket sat on a stack of discarded Times-Picayune newspapers in a tin tray. The newspapers absorbed the water from the melting ice. (Remember, salmonella and E-Coli caused distress and a belly ache then as they do now.)

On the morning of our departure, Uncle drove our Packard to "West End" on the shore of Lake Pontchartrain to board the ferry which took us north across the 26 mile wide lake to a landing near the town of Mandeville. From there, good graveled roads led us to Pennsylvania. Two steam-powered ferries, the Susquehanna and the Madisonville, carried passengers and automobiles across the lake. We probably embarked in the Susquehanna for the two hour voyage as she was based on the New Orleans side of the lake. Posted fares were $2.00 for car and operator, plus 25 cents each for extra passengers.

The ferry ride was fun. All of us got out of the Packard, climbed the stairs, and rode in the comfort of the passenger salon. Eddie and I prowled around the upper deck obeying the warnings not to climb the railings or fall overboard. From our high-up look out post, he and I watched a procession of luggers laden with watermelon, lumber, or firewood headed toward the docks on the New Basin Canal. Frequently the Susquehanna's whistle sounded to warn and remind the careless helmsmen of approaching luggers which vessel had the right of way. The rules-of-the-road then were the same as they are now: little boats keep out of the way of the big ones!

At the Mandeville landing, we drove from the ferry onto a small, floating wooden barge then over a graveled path to the highway. A customer of Uncle's store operated a gas station near the landing, so we stopped and visited with him, filled the Packard's fuel tank from the hand cranked gasoline pump, and we were on our way to Pennsylvania.

THE WELL
by
John A. Townsend, Jr.

It was the summer of 1937, and once more, we boys--Bubba, Dick, and I--looked forward to the trip to Granny and Granddaddy Allen's in Sibley, Louisiana. We were to spend two weeks with them, then leave with Mama and Daddy to go to Sumrall, Mississippi, to visit Little Granny and Granddaddy Townsend.

As we drove into the driveway at Sibley, we saw Granny carrying a bucket of water from the faucet in Aunt Liza Culverhouse's yard next door.

I heard Mama say, "Oh no! That darn well has sanded up again."

Daddy spoke, "If Red's here maybe we can clean it out."

"Mama will appreciate that," replied Mama.

As we boys scrambled from the car, Granny disappeared up the steps onto the back porch. We waved at Granddaddy who sat upon the front porch as we ran to the back of the house. Mama carried Pete, who was only just beginning to walk, while Daddy carted suitcases toward the front door. I heard Uncle Red greet them, then Daddy, "There are a couple of bags in the boot (trunk)."

After getting our hugs from Granny, we boys followed her into the kitchen, making a bee line to the crockery cookie jar.

"Hold on there," spoke Granny. "Only one apiece. We'll have dinner in thirty minutes," then, "Hi Selma, John. Come to Granny, Pete."

Each of us holding a cookie, we ran out onto the front porch to speak to Granddaddy and Uncle Red. A short time later, Daddy came out onto the porch carrying a cup of coffee. He and Uncle Red moved down the porch and began talking about the well.

"We need a new rope before we try to go down into the well," said Uncle Red.

"Okay," replied Daddy, "after we've eaten we'll go to the hardware store."

Later as the two men started to leave, we three older boys asked to go with them.

"We're only going to Boyett's," said Daddy.

I piped up, "That's good. We can get some candy at Mr. Werner's store."

Granny spoke, "I've some fresh eggs to trade for some sugar. The boys can do that."

While the men purchased the well rope, we boys carried the eggs next door to Mr. Werner's store where we traded them for two small bags of sugar and a free stick of peppermint for each of us.

When Daddy and Uncle Red emerged from Boyett's store, I saw that they had a new bucket as well as some rope.

Back at the house, the two men quickly pulled the outside boards from above the well. Uncle Red tied a piece of rope around his waist, then Daddy helped him move down into the well, about fifteen feet. It was a slow process. Daddy would lower the well bucket down to Uncle Red who would fill it full of the wet sand, then Daddy would haul it up to dump into an old wooden wheelbarrow. Granddaddy would slowly move it over to the driveway and dump the sand.

I watched for a while and at Granny's beckoning I took a bucket over to the faucet at Aunt Liza's. There I filled the bucket and carried it back to the porch so the workers could have some cool water.

It was getting late in the day. I had just started from the chicken yard where I'd gathered eggs when I heard Mama yell, "Ervin!"

Then Daddy pulled furiously on the safety rope. He let out with a curse, then, "Red's taken the rope off his waist."

An instant later we three older boys were hanging onto the rope which was tied to Granddaddy. He, in turn, held the wrapped rope as Daddy scrambled down inside

the well which was now about twenty feet in depth. Faintly, a minute or two later, we heard Daddy say, "Pull!"

We tugged, Mama joining us, and soon Uncle Red was dragged out of the well. He was covered with a coating of wet sand from head to foot. Daddy climbed out of the well a moment later coated with sand from the waist down.

I heard them talking about a "sand pipe," or water channel, about three feet above the twenty foot level.

"We'll have to put a caisson into the well," said Daddy. "I'll get up early and go see Kelly at his mill."

The next morning the men roughly hammered together the square caisson , about 4'x4'x6', using 2"x6" rough oak lumber. They then braced the support for the well rope before carefully lowering the caisson into the well.

Then Uncle Red went back down into the well, and soon the sand was moving again. The caisson gradually settled to the bottom of the well as the sand was removed from inside it. An oak stake driven into the side of the well at the caisson's top edge anchored it. It was after the noon meal before the men had finished replacing the boards around the well. The next morning there was about three feet of fresh, clear, cool water. It was delicious.

A PEEK AT EARLY CHILDHOOD

by

Wilma R. Bowles

I was one of the youngest of several children in the neighborhood who played together often. Being an only child, I was always looking for someone to play with. My playmates were Eula Mae, Hilda, and Mayola Comeaux; Bertha and Althea Mae Isadore; Calvin Celestine; Henry Davis; John Lebean; and Wilson and Bay. John and Calvin and some of the others were amateur construction engineers. We gathered materials for making homemade scooters with wheels from old broken skates. We gathered boards, sawed them, and used broken skates for the wheels. Uncle Joe supervised. We each had a turn hitting a nail or two. Sometimes even a finger received the bang of the hammer. We painted the "L"-shaped scooter with whatever color of leftover paint we found. Depending on the number of pairs of broken skates on hand, at least two scooters were kept within the neighborhood. The sidewalk in front of the house on Walnut Street was our road for our homemade scooters.

We played games of Hide-and-Seek, Red Rover, Pop the Whip, Ring-Around-The-Rosy, Blind-Man's Bluff, Little Sally Walker, jump rope, and stick ball. Cigar boxes and Clabber Girl baking powder cans appeared in our marble games.

As the youngest of four first cousins, including Marjorie, John, and Alice Martin, I was usually in the middle of activities. Aunt Yolande's house was often the scene for family gatherings. I shared many Sunday and holiday meals in her large dining room that seated most of us. Those family members who did not share a seat at the table sat in the kitchen at a table in view of the rest of the family.

During the warm summer months, it was not unusual for us to make a churn of homemade vanilla ice cream. My cousins and I were allowed to turn the crank on the wooden ice cream churn, but John--whom we called Bud--would tell me as the ice cream thickened, that I was too young to turn the crank. When the cream was firm and hard, the battle for the dasher began. I was allowed to eat the ice cream from the blades with the rest of my cousins.

Spending the night at Aunt Yolande's house was a treat for me. I was allowed to sleep in Bud's room several times while he was away in the Army. One winter night, Aunt Yolande placed two large heavy quilts on the bed. I could not turn

comfortably, but I remember sleeping as snug as a bug in a rug. Sometimes I slept in a room which I called the "Statue Room." It was here that Aunt Yolande had a statue of the Blessed Mother, a kneeler, a rocking chair, a roll away bed, and many house plants. The room had several windows and an outside door. Aunt Yolande retreated to the Statue Room to recite her rosary or to sit and meditate.

The aroma of freshly baked bread in the neighborhood was one that got Cousin Alice's and my attention many days. We walked to Keller's Bakery on the corner of Lamar and Stewart Streets. Upon returning home, we cut off both ends of the loaf and filled the heels with thick cane syrup, butter, and a piece of yellow cheese. We enjoyed our treat with a cold glass of milk.

There were enough children in the three hundred block of Stewart Street and nearby, so I did not have to leave our neighborhood to find a playmate. We played with our dolls, jumped rope, played Old Maid and paper dolls, had tea parties, rode bicycles, played hopscotch, and played baseball with the boys. Occasionally, on Sunday afternoon we were allowed to go as a group to the Jefferson or Lincoln Theater. An older child, Roy Breaux, was given the responsibility of seeing that we behaved and returned to and from the theater safely.

A chore that I despised as a child was carrying in the bucket of coal during the winter months for the coal heater. I had no siblings to share chores. I did whatever had to be done without complaints, but I did try to avoid some work. Mama often fussed whenever she could not find the rice pot. She became aware of places where I hid the pot, under the back porch step and under the water bucket table.

As I look back, growing up with other children and extended family members around me molded my character for fair play, love, and respect for others.

A PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY: VIVIAN, JEANNE, AND I

by

Bea Murphy

Vivian, Jeanne, and I were born at Grandmére's house on Duhon Road in Lafayette, Louisiana. We lived upstairs, but at birthing time, the back bedroom across from the kitchen became Mama's hospital room and became our first bedroom. Uncle Octave was a physician, so he attended all our births.

We three were closely knit as sisters, but we were very different. Vivian was blonde-haired, blue-eyed, the serious big sister who tried to see that I behaved. Jeanne had black hair and dark eyes. Uncle Octave would call her his little Chinese girl. Jeanne was shy and timid, very attached to Mama. We called her Mama's pet. Jeanne never brought home less than an "A" on her report cards. She was very intelligent. I was the brown-haired, green-eyed sister, and the lively one.

Grandma grew big old-fashioned rose bushes all along the fence in the front yard. We all loved those roses. They were captured on film as the background for a special picture of Jeanne, Vivian, and me.

After we moved to our little house, Vivian, Jeanne, Fay, and I slept in one bedroom with double beds. Vivian and Fay slept together. I never remember one time that Jeanne and I didn't get along as sleeping partners. We never fought over blankets or anything. We shared one closet, and we each had our own clothes and never used each other's belongings. When Vivian outgrew her dresses, they were passed on to me.

At night we would do our homework on the big round oak table in the kitchen dining room with kerosene lamps as lights. Daddy would read, and Mama would sew or cord wool as we studied.

I must have been born with a guilty look on my face because I was blamed for a lot of things I didn't do at home and at school. One day Vivian couldn't find one of her books, so Mama decided I had taken it. She urged me to give that book back. When I denied taking it, she decided to punish me until I gave it back. She made kneel in a corner and "stay there" until I confessed. She even threatened to spank me. Seems like I stayed in that corner for an eternity. Eventually, Jeanne got the book out

from under her bed covers and threw it at Vivian. I have a hard time talking about this injustice even today.

When Jeanne started school, she didn't want to leave Mama, so Mama put me in charge of her. She would cry and I would put her in her class line and make sure that she was all right. One day on the school grounds, I saw several girls standing in a circle. I realized that one of the girls was angry and fussing at Jeanne. It didn't take long for me to break up that fight. I would have done anything for my sister.

One year Jeanne was to sing "On the Good Ship Lollypop" in a program at school. Mama had bought her some new white shoes. When Jeanne put them on, Mama discovered that the clerk had given her one shoe longer that the other. Because Mama didn't have time to return to the store, we told Jeanne to stand up with one leg slightly back. That way no one would notice. Jeanne sang very well, and no one noticed her shoes.

Another memory I have of Jeanne is of her lost pet chicken. Mama raised chickens, but this one was special to Jeanne. She looked all over for it. Not until years later did we learn that Mama had turned Jeanne's chicken into a meal.

At home we were not allowed to step out of our yard. One day a fire started in the high weeds in the pasture near our yard. The fire was put out right away, but we couldn't find Vivian. Finally she was discovered in weeds farther away and admitted that she had started the fire. That escapade wasn't like serious-minded Vivian at all.

Mama would have us rest at noon in the summer. We would lie down on the floor with our pillows. Vivian and I would often tease Jeanne. All we'd have to say was "Eh! Eh! Eh!" Jeanne would cry to Mama, *"Les fants fonts mes taquines"* (The children are teasing me). She couldn't say *"enfants,"* so she'd say *"fant, fant."*

Daddy owned a cow that was expecting a calf one spring. Well, I decided that I wanted it to be a white calf. The new calf was born red, so I took whitewash and painted the wobbly-legged calf white. My Daddy washed the poor calf before it lost too much of its fur.

Another mischievous episode happened when Mama went to visit her neighbor. Before she left, she told sixteen-year-old Vivian to give Jeanne a haircut. I had curly

hair, and Mama wouldn't let me cut it even though I loved short hair. I decided that I would supervise Jeanne's haircut. The chair was in the middle of the room. I would walk around and inspect the haircut. I kept telling Vivian, "Shorter, shorter." Then I would go around and inspect again. "Shorter," I'd say. By the time Vivian finished, Jeanne's bones were showing on the back of her head. Mama was really upset with us, and Jeanne didn't want anyone to see her new haircut. She wouldn't go out of the house for about a week.

When Vivian was eighteen and I was seventeen, Mama let us start dating boys our age, but we always had to double date. We'd usually go dancing. Once we dated two boys who were friends. We had lots of fun together. Another time Vivian saw my favorite boyfriend kiss me. She told me, "If you let him kiss you again, I'll tell Mama." So there was no more kissing in front of Vivian.

Even though I lived in Texas thirty-five years, I remained close to my sisters. I would come down every Christmas and we'd gather at Mama and Daddy's. Mama always cooked a big old fashioned dinner of roast, rice dressing with lobster in it, candied yams, pralines, and coconut cake.

I had always thought that my sisters and I would grow old together, but it was not to be. Vivian and Jeanne both died of breast cancer eleven days apart in August 1990. I keep them in my heart, but I miss them still.

GUTEN MORGEN
by
Olympe Butcher

As a young child, I knew that I was meant to be a teacher. Those before me had chosen this path for me. My mother, Rose was most encouraging. When I was hungry, she taught me how to combine ingredients for a delicious afternoon snack. My oldest sister Lou taught me phonics, how to spell, how to write down a list of groceries to buy, and she also taught me good health habits. My sister Vange taught me that singing makes work lighter. As she dusted the house and prepared the lamps each morning, she would warble choruses still familiar to me. The clean clear light of the lamps would help us enjoy our night meal and light our way through our homework hours around the big round oak table in the dining room. My sister Blanche also taught me. She moved to Avoyelles Parish after teaching for many years to become the parish's Home Demonstration Agent. She returned occasionally to teach us the values of home demonstration work--especially to become Garden Club members who could grow many types of beautiful flowers in our garden.

These experiences during my younger years carried over into my teaching career--and, too, admiration of the many teachers who taught me and who helped motivate me into going into teaching as a profession.

Today the colleges of education graduate smaller classes than just ten years ago. When I was ready to teach, it didn't matter that there was an overflow of teachers. Teaching was a prestigious profession to choose. And it mattered not that during my Practice Teaching, my class of students numbered forty-eight. I remember Tommy, whose name I often wrote on the blackboard for talking excessively and who later became president of a local television station. I also remember the young boy from Tommy's class who was killed in action during World War II and didn't come home.

As I acquired a new group of students each year, I realized that it was much easier to handle twenty-five students, giving me more time to plan extras for the class--like teaching them to build window boxes in which to plant cuttings (which they had learned to do).

I remember entering my first classroom at Myrtle Place School when we did not have enough desks for the forty-two students. Apple crates made very handy desks--

especially for the girls, who decorated them with frilly skirts, their creativity encouraged by their parents. In today's classroom with teaching as an occupation filled with difficulties and lacking monetary rewards, I don't think apple-crate desks would do without noise from the community. But we survived. In each step of my career, all of these experiences, together with my understanding of sixth graders, made me happy in my work each day.

Special projects like these made my days and the children's days enjoyable and educational:

> One class knit an afghan to send to our boys stationed in the war. The *click, click* of knitting needles could be heard for ten or fifteen minutes to end each day. Every child, boys as well as girls, knit one four-inch square until finally Louise Larriviere Cordell's mother, knitted them together.... And later we received a thank-you note from a German soldier who was so pleased to be kept warm by the colorful afghan.
>
> Any girl in my classes who wanted to learn to crochet could do so at recess or after school while we waited for their bus. I taught them to appreciate arts and crafts, even lapidary--how beautiful the rocks were when polished. My classes also went on many planned field trips.
>
> Our French classes were just twenty minutes long and consisted of "just words" as I read to the children from books bought from my French and English teacher, Miss Dupre, at her San Souci Book Shop (twenty-five cents for Little Golden Books--Minow le Petit Chaton, Notre Ami Chien, Pere Noe et sa Famille et Poup-Patapouf l'elephant). With these words, we had spelling, reading, writing, music, and art. I wish I had kept the adorable booklets the children made. In Physical Education, my students even enjoyed French folk dances.

After I taught at Myrtle Place from 1940 to 1961 at Myrtle Place, all sixth grade classes were moved to Lafayette Elementary. On one quiet mid-October morning, the school counselor appeared at my door. Mrs. D'Ella David beckoned me to the door. I would have a new student! But D'Ella needed to talk to me first.. "There is a problem," she said. "This student can speak no English, and if anyone can help her, you can."

"Guten Morgen," the little girl said as she entered my classroom.

Cory Prins was assigned by me to a student who had demonstrated to me that she could help. The counselor had explained to me that Cory had been enrolled at another school since September, but that the teachers there couldn't help her. This challenge, with student Leona Berthelot's promise to help, brought us many delightful moments that school year.

With that challenge came many special moments: Once Cory used certain French words, unacceptable to us on the playground...I also remember when we were prepared to have P.E. in the gym by special permission of Coach Louie Campbell and Cory burst into tears. After whispering in my ear that she would not dance with boys, I assigned her to a girls' group. She danced--and enjoyed it!--especially the Dutch Couple Dance, a Danish dance called "Little Man in a Fix," Land of Cotton ("Dixie"), and "Pop Goes the Weasel."

When Christmas came, Cory taught us how beautiful our Christmas program could be when the Christmas carols were sung in three languages--English, French, and German. I'm reminded every Christmas of "Stille Nacht," when we sing "Silent Night."

Cory had no difficulty in learning. But I'm still wondering why she never quite got the social studies lessons that I taught since I was teaching "Old World Lands"--her Belgium, her Germany, her France. Maybe she had a dislike for history and geography.

Near the end of April, 4-H Achievement Day was scheduled. As 4-H leader, I wondered how Cory and Leona would fare in their demonstration. They placed first with their chosen recipe, "Fig Pin Wheels with Pecans"--another first for Lafayette Middle.

At the end of the year, after testing Cory, Mrs. David was pleased to tell me that Cory had accomplished five and a half years in our sixth grade class. What a pleasure to hear!

In a chat this week with Leona, who lives in Carencro, she told me that Cory Prins is living in California. Leona and I plan to meet soon to say *Guten Morgen* and reminisce.

P.S. As soon as we can, Leona and I plan to call Cory, who now lives in California, to invite her for a visit to our homes in Lafayette so that we can talk--now after forty years or so--to really get Cory's impression of her short year at Lafayette Elementary. It should be a great reunion!

Auf Wiedersehen!

THE HELL OF IT
by
Woodson Hopkins

Newt and Huey were two boys straining to break the bonds of adolescence. Each Sunday they sat on the front row of the little church, fidgeting under the stern stare of Reverend Thomas Pratt, Newt's strong-willed father. Huey construed the preacher's words that day to mean they were all bound for hell, and he didn't want to ponder the prospects of that happening. Newt had heard it all before and seemed embarrassed when Huey cast a frightful glance his way.

Huey's idea of hell was missing supper or the Saturday matinee at the Bijou. Newt thought of hell as the manner in which his father dished out punishment on him and the others. He frequently felt the urge to rebel against his father, but he always backed down to fiery reactions.

Reverend Tom was the only one of the unholy trio that knew a real hell. He had been there before several times, only to fight his way back by sheer determination and an unshakeable faith in God. He had shrugged off jeers of school mates half his age to learn to read and write when he was twenty-one years old. He escaped from the hell of poverty and self-ignorance in rural Mississippi only to find it again among the dead and dying on the sloping hills of the Argonne while carrying out the duties of an Army chaplain. Then came his beloved wife Emma's death from diphtheria. The task of raising six children alone--the youngest of which was eight months old--loomed before him. But with each catastrophe that came along, Tom seemed to grow more determined to take his message to as many as he could.

Wherever he went, church rolls swelled. Men of all persuasions flocked around him. He had been a hunter all his life and shared many days in the wild with them. He was also fond of horses and did most of his hunting riding one. He numbered among his closest friends merchants, bankers, and politicians. One of the town's prominent citizens gave him a horse and saddle and arranged for a pen in which to keep the animal.

Huey found out that Reverend Tom had a horse, so he arranged with his mother to take him over to see Newt, not mentioning the gift to her. "You will miss the matinee, and you know how you hate to miss that," she confided. He hesitated briefly

before telling her a lie that he had already seen the picture and had nothing to gain by going again. He wanted so badly to see that horse that he was glad to forgo his weekly entertainment to do so.

Saturday rolled around ever so slowly, and on his and Newt's walk to the place where the horse was kept, Huey blurted forth a question he had been wanting to ask for some time: "Why does your father cry when he preaches?" As soon as his words cleared his crooked teeth, he knew from Newt's expression that he had asked the wrong thing. "He's not crying, dummy. He's weeping."

"But, why?" Huey asked.

"He's weeping for your soul. And don't ask me why again."

Huey set his deep thoughts aside as they approached the small pen on the edge of town. Newt, sensing he had cut his friend short, began to talk about King, the Palomino. Seems as if King had been found by Mr. Bartlett, a merchant and one of Reverend Pratt's hunting partners, at Fat Jones' stable in Hollywood, California, and bought at a considerable price. Bartlett intended to ride him in the annual County Fair parade, the town's only community event, but he had to give up the idea on orders from his doctor. He gave King to the preacher he had come to respect, even though he regularly attended the big church over on the main highway, the one with the stained glass windows and statues all around. The scholarly Newt called the gift a display of "ecumenical coexistence," and King was renamed Solomon by his father.

Huey listened intently to Newt's story about King, now Solomon, and came up with the idea that they saddle the big stallion and ride out to the stock tank on the Hensley place and go skinny dipping. Newt drew back and looked at his friend with a devilish grin. "Let's go!"

In no time they were saddling King Solomon, as Huey was now prone to call him, but ran into trouble with the massive weight of its Mexican design. The oversized horn and hooded stirrups were more than the two could lift over their youthful heads. Huey had an idea that they could use the lariat to pull the saddle up toward the stable's rafter, position King underneath, and then lower it down on his back. It worked, and together they tightened the cinches and rode off like big time cowboys. He was convinced that the ride was better than the shoot 'em up he was missing.

When they arrived at the pond, Newt maneuvered King under a large cottonwood tree and proceeded to loosen the cinches so he would be more comfortable while they took a dip. After about an hour, Newt shaded his eyes against the afternoon sun and announced that they had better be heading back. He sure wanted to be home before The Reverend got back from that funeral in Laredo.

Huey and Newt did not notice, but King had done what horses sometimes do. He swelled his stomach like a party balloon. The cinches were tight, or so the boys--soon to be men--thought. Halfway back to the pen, Huey wanted Newt to increase the gait slightly to smooth the ride. Newt obliged by slapping the lariat across King's flanks. The horse took off as though he was pulling one of the movie stunts for which he had been trained. Slowly the big saddle started sliding off, sending the riders headlong into the hard, sun baked ground below. Huey, who was behind Newt felt the sharp sting of the tin concho ripping into his thigh. Both landed head first into a stand of black brush. Fortunately the saddle sailed clear of King's legs, but there was no way to get it back on. Huey and Newt would have to carry the heavy saddle back home. The trek back to the pen was laborious and hot.

The next morning Huey and his mother arrived at church early and noticed an old flat bed truck belonging to Celso Gonzales, Mr. Bartlett's foreman, parked in front of the parsonage. Huey left his mother and circled around to the back door where Newt sat looking dazed. "What's the matter? Why is Gonzales here?"

"King is dead. Gonzales found him this morning in his stall."

"Newt?"

"What?"

"You know that hell your daddy has been preaching about?"

"Yeah?"

"I think we are going to get some more of it today."

MEMORIES OF WORLD WAR II
by
Betty Tripp

I don't remember the actual day that war was declared, but the effects of World War II have had an everlasting impression on me. As children, we tend to exaggerate, sometimes trying to "scare the day lights" out of other children. I believed several of the things that were told to me, especially the story that the Japanese could hide in trees and make themselves green. I would run in fear as fast as I could when I went to a friend's house that had trees along the driveway.

The draft was one of the first things that affected me, as so many of the young men from my neighborhood were suddenly gone int the Navy, Army, and Marines. Their absence put a damper on our local ice hockey games, and it didn't seem like anything was fun anymore. Three of these young men were killed in action. Two of them had lived next door to each other. Rationing and the shortage of supplies were difficult to contend with. To buy gas, sugar, meat, tires, and even stockings for women, a person or families needed stamps. Everyone was issued a certain number of books of stamps--not for mailing letters.

Dad was one of the air raid wardens in our community, and his job was to patrol the neighborhood to be sure all the homes had their windows covered with a special black shade that kept out all the light. He also made sure everyone stayed in the house until the "all clear" alarm was blown. Mom, a nurse, was working in the local hospital, but she went to work in an ammunition factory that was two to three miles from our home. She had a position in the first aid station there, hating the work because it was very dangerous for the men and women who worked there. One evening there was a big explosion at the factory which shook all the houses in the area. Luckily, Mom was home at the time. I believe the factory was closed after that, mainly because no one wanted it there in the first place.

My most frightening experience happened one day when I was out playing in the yard. I heard a noise that at first I thought was a plane, but when I looked up, it was a dirigible that was flying so low I could see men in it. I just knew they were the enemy coming to land in my yard. I began screaming and threw myself on the ground.

I couldn't move until Mom came out and assured me that the men were Americans and were flying to a hangar near Boston. Those men probably laughed all the way home.

My Aunt Hazel Fleming had an unusual job--she was a plane spotter. Several times a week she went to a small house on a hill in Barre, Massachusetts. On the walls were maps and charts with all the different types of planes. Every time a plane flew over, she grabbed the binoculars, observed the plane, and in a log book, wrote down the type of plane it was and the direction it was flying. Some of these planes were commercial airlines flying out of or into Boston. Some were the smaller planes they were using to train the air men that were at Fort Devens or Otis Air Base in Massachusetts. I felt very important when I could go with Aunt Hazel and help her identify the planes.

In February 1944, my brother, Don, was born. Mom had had Roberta and me at Massachusetts General Hospital, so even though there was a war and gas was hard to get, she still wanted to have this baby there, too. A week before she was due, she had our favorite baby sitter, Grandma Hill, come to stay with Roberta and me. Mom went to stay with Uncle Fred and Aunt Laura in South Boston until she had the baby. Fred and Laura had seven children, and one more (or more!) was always welcome. One night, the fourth, Fred called and exclaimed, "It's a boy!" We were very excited, but had to wait a week before they came home.

The next excitement was when the war ended on all fronts, and our friends and family were all together again. There were big parades and other celebrations held throughout the country. I remember the band concert that was held in Barre, Massachusetts, where Aunt Hazel lived. I always thought that once there was no war to write about, the newspapers would go out of business, but, of course, that did not happen.

OVER MY HUMP
by
Joe Glorioso

The hardest task I face in story writing is forcing myself to give up two or three hours to spend at a computer touching words to paper that my head dreamed up. Even more repelling to me is correcting the typos, agreements between subjects and verbs, and other junky stuff grammarians conjure up in academe to make writing an unnecessary chore.

Today, as I approached my Gateway 2000, I thought Id muster up a fictional story involving the seduction of a married man by a twenty-year-old woman that ended in a one-night escapade of lust and love, leaving the man in deep conflict between desire and soulful regret. I gave up that story for two reasons. First, I didn't believe our valued teacher/editor would appreciate my story of wanton seduction if I deviated from the spirit of Life and Letters to spin a yarn of predictable rank and file romantic fiction. And second, I'm not one who is inclined to gain greater infamy status as number one on the hit parade that is currently tabulated. Not that I give a hoot one way or other, but I do want to be accepted by my classmates.

Little else was left open to me except to go back to Greece and write another Greek story. I found that it is extremely dull to write about weathered statues without heads or broken-off arms scattered on a well-trampled earth or missing torsos mounted at grotesque angles on stone mounts. I hardly could spark interest if I spent valuable time pounding a computer to interest even the hit-man with a story about people-houses and out-houses, ancient ruins smelling of wind driven dust and gaily painted vases that only a kindergartner would be proud to present at show and tell. My level of interest in writing those kinds of Greek stories would be insignificantly higher than your interest in listening to them. I am confident you would not me to read more loudly, thereby disturbing your little catnaps.

The next story that came to mind was the swimming pool at the Capsis Hotel. That was one swanky hotel. No Days Inn. I felt out-of-place among the many ornate columns in the lobby and the marble floor inlaid with a mosaic of Greek mythological figures. Outside in a cloudless sky, drenched by an August sun, pretty young women decorated the pools, making them the most intriguing part of the entire establishment.

Seems the hotel garnered these shapely forms as the *piece de resistance*. Happily, or with some trepidation, depending upon one's point of view, I watched and glanced at those pretty young women who seemed to have lost their bras or forgotten where they had left them and for all practical purposes have lost or misplaced most of their bottoms. They could have maliciously and purposely set out to embarrass me. They were topless. And what bottoms they wore were hopelessly inadequate. To put it another way, the bottoms were a micron away from being successful in its cover-up mission.

After circling the pool, I surreptitiously eyed and studied the beauty surrounding me. Over time, and as though I had been vaccinated, I soon became immune to the endemic disease of toplessness. I no longer confined my eyes and my thoughts to this brand new world I had discovered.

I shall not dare even to think about tapping my computer keys to write a story about naked children, mothers, fathers, even grandmothers and grandfathers, who paddled around in the waves pounding the beaches of the Aegean sea or who sprawled out on the beach under a blistering sun *sans* garments of any kind, except straw hats that shaded their heads and eyes from the blistering sun and the glare reflecting off the sandy beaches. Certainly, the discarded stories in the above paragraphs would not survive the hit list. Not unless the tabulator had given up on me as an unrepentant creature who writes dirty stories.

I think I have a story that will make me immune to that terrible, relentless pencil wielded by another unrelenting tabulator. A travel story might suffice, yet I confess it will not elicit Ohs and Ahs from the faithful.

In early February, mild fits of depression had me on a slippery slide down into the misery of something worse. By the end of the month, I began to sleep later and later, trying to avoid whatever the day held out for me. My afternoon naps began to extend into late evening. I avoided meeting my friends because I couldn't enjoy their conversations. I lost interest in eating. Couch potato became my chief characteristic. I had a difficult time following the simplest of all TV programs, the cartoon channels. Sissy, my daughter, noticed my inability to pay attention to my surroundings. "Dad, are you okay?"

"Sure. Why did you ask?"

"You invited me to dinner. Almost angrily, I left work because you invited me to dinner. What do I find? You sitting around like a hundred-year-old grandpa watching a cartoon on TV, the sounds blasting my ears out. Get out of that chair, take a bathe, shave, and get dressed. That's an order."

She didn't have to order me. I could recognize an order when Sissy gave one. When I made myself ready, she ushered me out to her car and hustled me to the Piccadilly for lunch.

She reported the incident to her sister, Terry. That night my daughters visited me in my home to discuss my condition. They chewed me out generally for not facing reality and proceeded to give me unwanted advice. They cajoled, threatened and told me they cared. They advised me to see a psychiatrist. I protested forcefully. I could not begin to think that denial had penetrated my body and soul. After an hour or so I finally agreed to have a priest come over to talk to me. I agreed because how else could I have gotten them out of my house without hurting their feelings and well intentioned efforts to help me?

The next day a priest from Fatima came by to visit me. We talked about fifteen minutes. He soon recognized that he had not gotten any closer to solving my problem than my daughters had. He finally asked, "Will you pray the Rosary with me?"

"One decade is all I have time for." Lying to a priest was unthinkable for me at any time. I knew then that something had decidedly gone awry in my state of mind. He led me through the Rosary slowly, not stopping at ten as I had requested. I didn't mind.

When we finished, he said, "God bless you, my son." Looking me over solemnly, he asked, "Is there anything you want me to tell Terry and Sissy?" That question bothered me a second or two.

"I want to travel alone. I want to be away, far away, for a while. You can tell them that." Sissy called Chippy on the phone and explained to him my apparent condition and about my request. He told both of them that he would phone me and invite me to stay with him and his family as long as I wanted. That same night Chippy called and invited me to come to Pittsburgh and stay as long as I wished. He said, "I'll

send you an airplane ticket." I told him that I didn't want an airplane ticket, that I would catch the Amtrack in Lafayette.

Going back in time to my early youth, I remembered the fun I had when my mother, Rocky, my little brother, and I watched the Sunset Limited out of Houston chug into the New Iberia train station on its way to New Orleans and east. Rocky and I scrambled aboard the train and grabbed a seat facing the engine. Mame followed and tried to calm our excitement. We got off the train at Shriever, where my uncle Colly met us in Model-T Ford for our trip to Donaldsonville.

During my years stationed at Fort Knox, Carolyn and I traveled many times from Louisville to New Orleans on the Humming Bird and then the Sunset Limited to New Iberia. Trains were my connection to the past. Forever, I wanted to feel that connection in my bones. I wanted so much to relive that connection. That's why I wanted to ride the train. Airplanes didn't connect me to anything.

On Monday of the next week, I pried my butt out of my Lazy Boy and walked to the Asi-Elite travel agency to make inquiries about Amtrack. Not quite sure of how I'd behave, I approached the front door hesitantly. I anticipated opening the door with a definite show of confidence, with more energy and determination than I had exhibited over the past month. Without hesitation, I confronted the receptionist almost too enthusiastically, speaking loudly, I want to take a train out of Lafayette. She seemed disturbed by my loud voice and misunderstood my enthusiasm as a belligerent attitude. She looked at me startled. I'm sure I sounded a bit rude and demanding. She couldn't know that I planned to take one hell of a big step. My behavior and tone of voice revealed, at least to me, my anxiety. I was on the verge of losing my composure and blowing my chance of making it.

Despite my seemingly belligerence and rudeness, she maintained her composure. Pointing to an adjacent office, she said politely, "You should talk to John. He's our train expert." I could feel her staring at my back as I walked into John's office. I tried to calm down as John offered me a chair. He had the manner of an ex-school teacher: suspenders, disheveled hair and to correct nearsightedness, thick lensed eye-glasses like the bottom of a coke bottle.

Trying my best to control my voice and clasping one hand into the other until my knuckles were white, I inquired, "The receptionist said you were the train expert.

Right?" He nodded, leaned forward on his desk and beamed a broad smile in my direction. He almost convinced me that some where he had taught school, one I certainly attended as one of his students. Schools, principals, teachers and students made up a pleasurable environment, giving me many enjoyable, familiar memories. The whiteness disappeared from my knuckles. I felt the tension in my shoulders ease. For the first time in weeks I felt completely relaxed with a stranger. No psychiatrist, not even a priest and prayers, made me feel as sure of myself as that little man, past his own mid-life crisis.

"I want to take a train to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Trains do go there from Lafayette?" I tentatively spoke up. As his answer, he began to dig around in a cardboard box while he explained to me that very few people ask to go anywhere by train. I began to wonder about his expertness in train travel. He retrieved a three page folder and handed it to me. I read only the captions under the pictures printed on the folder. "I see that Amtrack has a program that allows travel around the perimeter of the U. S., allowing three stops along the way." He held out his hand for the folder, which I turned over to him.

"You're right," he said matter-of-factly. It seemed odd to me that I had to explain to an acknowledged expert the ins and outs of Amtrack. I asked him if he could punch the computer and get some kind of a cost for me. He looked at me quizzically. "I believe I can," he responded. After several tries, he got into the Amtrack computer. "Two hundred seventy dollars, less ten percent if you're a senior citizen. $243.00 plus taxes."

It was decision time for me. *Could I do it? Am I ready? What would my daughters say?* I steeled myself. Reaching into my back pocket, I pulled out my wallet, slipped out my Visa card and laid it on the desk. I had made a decision all on my own for the first time in a long time. "Take my Visa card. Write my Visa number and expiration date on a page of paper. Make a file folder. File away in your desk for future use. You're gonna need it," I ordered. Speaking with newly found authority and beaming with dawning self-confidence, like a butterfly unfolding its wings from its confining cocoon, I flew out and over my hump.