



*Excerpts from*  
**Our Pages  
Of Life**







Each semester's end I search my palette for words to say about my students and their stories, words that go deeper than Webster's definitions, words that fly off the page to land in the heart of our readers. I search for words that say more than "Thank you," more than "This is good stuff," more than "You've got to read this!" I fail every time. Maybe my failure to say what I want to say paves the way to say what I mean. And I guess what I mean to say this time around is simply: "Thank you!" "These stories are good stuff!" "You've got to read them!"

*Joan Stear*  
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and University College and the English Department at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette  
for their continued support of our efforts to write for the generations to come.  
To my students—really, my teachers—thanks.

FRONT COVER: (*clockwise, beginning at top right corner*) Clet Dugas, 1928, father of Christy Dugas Maraist;  
Madge Scott & Estelle Mouton (Ruth Maher's photo); Katherine Favrot; Lois Diehl;  
Mary Langford's children in British school uniform in Hong Kong; (*center*) Mary Langford and children;  
family of Doris Broussard Bentley; Estelle & Aimee Mouton (Ruth Maher's photo); Lois Diehl & mother



**LIFE WRITING CLASS**  
**University of Louisiana at Lafayette**  
**Spring 2000 • Thursday Morning Session**

***Seated, left to right: Katherine Favrot; Christy Maraist;  
Joan Ireland; Lois Diehl; Marge DeVillier***  
***Standing, left to right: Joan Stear, Instructor; Doris Bentley;  
Francis A. Bourgeois; Ruth Maher; Tom Eby; Mary Early; Mary Langford***

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## WEDDING PICTURE

by

Francis A. Bourgeois

A turning point in my life began while I was in basic training for the United States Army. The decision I made then was solidified while on active duty in Korea during 1952-53. I readily saw the difference in decorum, attitude, confidence, and demeanor between the men who had attended college and those who hadn't. Officers, non-coms, and fellow soldiers who had higher education seemed to me to be better equipped to handle future problems of everyday living.

When I was discharged in April 1954, I began processing my enrollment application for my first semester the following September at S.L.C. in Hammond, Louisiana. My experience in the Army had taught me the value of a good education.

Based upon some ill-advice I started with a pre-engineering curriculum. Having graduated from a prep high school in May 1950, I found it extremely difficult to achieve the high grades I knew were necessary to be successful in an engineering career. It was a combination of lack of proper study techniques and lack of comprehension of the mathematics involved.

I would celebrate my 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday the next January 11th. I was fairly certain I would someday marry and become a father, but time was marching on for me. How could I expect to get married when I no longer had a steady girlfriend? I prayed to God for guidance in both my personal and academic life. I left my problems on His doorstep with full confidence that He would provide the solutions.

My roommate, Bobbye Huval, and I attended a New Year's Eve party in Mandeville, Louisiana. We met two more fellow Covingtonians at the night club. Bennie Comenge was there with his date Jackie Cross. I knew Bennie from elementary school and had seen Jackie on campus in Hammond.

At midnight, while the band played “Auld Lang Syne,” Bobbye took it upon himself to kiss Bennie’s date. After his friendly peck I put my arms around Jackie and told my friend, “Bobbye, let me show you how to kiss a girl.” Little did I know that one day soon this sweet kiss would mean so much more!

During that next year Bennie was shipping out to Germany with Uncle Sam’s army. On his last campus visit to see Jackie he asked me to keep an eye on his girlfriend. Since I had gone overseas and lost mine, I agreed to assist my buddy.

The gorgeous redhead, with the piercing light sky-blue eyes that danced, intrigued me to no end. I found many opportunities to be in the same vicinity as Jackie. (After all, I told Bennie I’d keep an eye on her). I would see her in the library where I worked, the snack bar, classroom buildings, the lunchroom, walking to or from classes, crossing campus, the tennis courts, and at her dormitory. We talked and visited and became better friends.

Our happiest times were walking from the campus to the Beanery, a coffee shop, located in the train station. It was a favorite haunt of mine, and now I could share it with someone whose company I enjoyed.

Come rain, sunshine, or dark of night, Jackie and I would beat a path to the Beanery for a cup of java. Sometimes we held hands while we walked and other times we just walked and talked or acted silly, like the time we sang “Singing in the Rain” as we dodged raindrops. I felt completely at ease with this lovely lady.

Gradually I began to realize that God had picked up the request I had left on His doorstep and was answering my prayers. I wasn’t sure at first, but as our friendship grew it started to sink in that she might be the one. How lucky could I be if Jackie were the right one for me?

As I started to tumble head over heels in love with Jackie, I realized I should begin dating her. The heck with Bennie, he was far away, and besides, Jackie didn’t consider him as a beau, only a long time friend of her family. I had her permission, so what was I waiting for?



Once our relationship deepened I confided to Jackie of my difficulties as an engineering student. She was one of the part time secretaries for the SLC Social Services department. She was attractive and very intelligent. Jackie had access to my transcript and saw immediately my best grades were in Social Studies. Her plausible solution was to discuss my situation with the department head.

We scheduled an appointment with Dr. Sidney J. Romero, my soon-to-be new advisor. He agreed I should change my major study to Social Sciences. With this new graduation path I would have to make up some lost college credits by attending summer school and an additional full semester.

My grades began to rise, and I made the Dean's List the very next semester. Jackie had led me in the right direction, and I regarded her with the utmost respect. This same respect almost went too far because although we had been dating steadily for two months, slowpoke Francis had yet to kiss her as his girlfriend. This drought would soon end one Friday night while we walked in the City Park.

Jackie was born in my hometown of Covington but she had grown up in Fruitland Park of Forrest County, Mississippi. The eight house hamlet boasted of having the smallest Post Office in the United States. It was located in Mrs. Hesse's small grocery store across the street from the railroad tracks. The small community was located among hundreds of acres of pecan orchards and rolling hills, quiet rural setting where a person could relax and enjoy the beauty of God's creation.

Jackie invited me to visit her during the semester break. Her parents were very friendly and cordial. Her mother was Irish and her father was English—what a combination!

Our love grew, and once it bloomed, we became engaged. One hot summer evening, in her mother's kitchen, on bended knee, I asked Jackie to marry me. She accepted my proposal, and our wedding was the first ever to be held in St. Francis Xavier's in Wiggins, only four miles south of her residence.

The picture you see is Jackie and me on our wedding day. Before this happy occasion I thanked God for sending me such a lovely and beautiful wife to become my life mate. I certainly believe in the power of prayer because He answered mine. Jackie has become more beautiful as the years have gone by. We will celebrate our 42<sup>nd</sup> anniversary on this December twenty-third.

If the Korean “Police Action” had not happened I most certainly would not have joined the Army. I may have gone to college eventually but the war sped up this chapter in my life and enabled me to meet Jackie at the right time in our lives.

Having matured as a teenager into a young adult, I was ready to successfully meet another of life’s many turning points.



**MY NEW HAIRDO**  
by  
**Doris Broussard Bentley**  
*March 16, 2000*

When I was a baby I had no hair until I was about a year old. When it got long enough, Mama curled it with strips of old socks. Each night she would roll my hair around the strips of cloth and then tie the strips into a knot. We called the knots "papiottes." In the mornings I would have curly hair. I suppose she stopped putting my hair in "popiottes" when I started school.

During my early school years I wore my naturally straight hair parted on the side with "bangs." I always wished I had curly hair, but curly hair was not for me. I remember when bobby pins came into vogue. I learned to roll my hair around my finger and clip it with a bobby pin, and it would curl, sort of.

Sometime in my early teens, I suppose, Mama let me have a "permanent." Happy day. Strange that I don't remember my first permanent. But I do remember going to a beauty parlor where the operator would twist pieces of my hair around some metal things, insert each "thing" into an electric apparatus, and low and behold, I had curly hair. The curl lasted about six months until the hair got long enough to cut the old curl off and get a new "perm."

Later, the process was done with chemicals. The operator would roll pieces of hair on a plastic rod. Then she would moisten the hair with a chemical that would cause the hair to curl. After a few minutes, she would moisten it with another chemical which would "set" the curl. Even though I had a permanent, I still had to "set" my hair each time I washed it. I usually rolled it up with bobby pins. Sometime in the fifties or sixties, somebody invented "rollers"—a version of the "papiottes" of my childhood. There were two kinds of rollers. One was a brush inserted in a tube made of twisted wire covered with netting. I would roll pieces of my hair around the roller and hold it in place with a plastic fastener that looked like a toothpick or a nail. The other rollers were made of tubes of foam rubber around a piece of plastic. I would roll my hair around the foam rubber tube then hold the hair in place with a plastic clasp attached to the shank in the foam rubber tube. If I went to the beauty parlor, I would sit for

twenty minutes under a dryer until the hair dried. The dryer was a hood with an electric heater in it and a fan that blew the hot air over my hair until it dried. I did not frequent the beauty parlor except when I needed a permanent. At home I had a dryer which had a cap to put over my head and a hand-held drier that enabled me to blow hot air into the cap until the hair was dry.

I usually just let my hair air dry, which took a long time—an hour or more, depending on how long my hair was. If I had recently had a hair cut and a perm, my hair was short and it dried rather quickly. But if my hair had grown and it was close to the time when I needed a new perm, then my hair took a long time to dry.

In the sixties it became the style to wear a "beehive" hairdo. The operator would "tease" the hair by taking pieces of hair and combing it backwards toward the scalp, then she would gently comb it and style it so that it would "poof." The trouble with that styling was that we could not comb our hair until the next time we went to the beauty parlor. We learned to sleep with a pillow around the neck so that we would not flatten our hairdo.

Over the years, since I was about 13, I got a new permanent every five or six months. But I had curly hair!!!

Three or four years ago, I was not pleased with the way my operator had cut my hair; I was having a hard time with the styling. At the same time, she had given me a new permanent and mentioned that she was using a new product. The new product was too strong and burned the ends of my hair. When I needed a haircut I wanted to go to another operator, but I wasn't sure to whom to go.

I remembered someone whom I had counseled several months previously in SCORE. She was starting a beauty parlor business. SCORE is an organization made up of people who counsel persons who want to start their own business. I decided to seek out Linda, who happened to have opened her shop on Lafayette Street a few blocks from my home and in the neighborhood of the Lafayette Museum. I told Linda my dilemma. I didn't like the hair cut and the ends of my hair were singed. Linda agreed that we could not put a new perm in my hair at that time, but she would cut it.

"You have good hair," Linda said. "It has a lot of body and it is nice and thick. You don't need a permanent."

"Now, Linda," I said. "I've had a permanent since I was thirteen years old. Don't tell me I don't need a permanent!"

There was enough curl left after the first haircut that I walked out feeling that I had not lost all of my curl, and I was pleased with the way Linda had cut my hair. I thought to myself as I left her shop, "There's no way I am going to have straight hair again."

As the weeks went by and Linda cut my hair again, a strange thing happened. When I washed my hair it felt nice and soft. Previously, when I washed my hair it felt coarse and matted. Now it felt soft and silky. *What to do?*

"Well, I'll get that permanent next time I need a haircut," I thought.

Another strange thing happened. My friends complimented me on my new hairdo. They liked it! My children, on the other hand, did not care for my new look. What a revolting development!

Time has passed. I still get compliments from my friends. And my children no longer make ugly remarks about my new hairdo. So I think I'll wait a while before I ask Linda to give me a new permanent.



## CARNEGIE'S SKIBO CASTLE

by

**Katherine Favrot**

Mary Beth, my travel agent daughter from Dallas, and two friends, Janet and Stassy, went to Skibo free because her name got drawn out of a hat, first in Dallas and then in Chicago. They were greeted at the castle with glasses of Scotch. Luckily they stayed in the castle that first night. The next day a man rented the whole castle for his 50th birthday. The girls went to a three bedroom lodge close by. They got putting lessons at the golf pro shop by the man who taught Tiger Woods. It was snowing when there were two fires and Mary Beth held someone's baby under her fur coat, so the parents are already her travel clients. So is Lynda Carter, who chatted in the snow with them.

Mr. Carnegie's philanthropic adventures are still present and doing wonders in this world. His presence is still felt at Skibo, his paradise on earth. "Heaven on earth" is how Andrew Carnegie described Skibo, his glorious castle home. It was 1898 when Mr. Carnegie acquired the property and castle. It had to be redone since it had fallen in need of major repair and new furnishings. He could have everything tailor made to his five feet height and his devoted wife's five feet seven inches. It was created in good taste, Victorian, not plush, just very serviceable. Carnegie used Skibo as a base for his very active social life and philanthropic endeavors. The guest book reads like Who's Who. He entertained King Edward VII, the Rockefellers, Helen Keller, Rudyard Kipling, Lloyd George, Henry Ford, Theodore Roosevelt, and all the wealthy barons of that age. All the guests could enjoy hunting, fishing, riding, golf, croquet, skeet shooting, tennis, swimming, bagpipe playing, and even organists playing before dinner.

No details escaped the Carnegies. His friend Thomas Edison invented electricity that lighted the whole castle and up to date plumbing was used. Skibo also boasts a seventeen car garage.

The climate for Skibo is ideal. It affords the remarkable micro-amount of sunshine hours using the Gulf Streams but smallest amount of rainfall. This allows the exquisite gardens to grow and the green houses to go unheated. The

golf courses stay playable and beautiful. There are 20,000 acres of land in the estate that cost \$85,000 and \$2 million with improvements. Carnegie's three requirements when he bought it were: it would have a trout stream, a view of the sea, and a waterfall. The stones for the castle had been quarried right near the Donnish Firth. There are over 200 rooms and 400 windows. The library has seven thousand leather and gold bound volumes. Carnegie had used the library to get much of his own early education so he has given 3000 libraries worldwide, even one in Jennings, LA for \$10,000, and countless trusts for theaters, parklands, music halls, schools, and 8,000 organs. He longed for peace in this world, so he donated \$1 million to construct the Peace Palace in The Hague.

All of this has been possible by having been born in 1835 to parents who borrowed money to come to the United States thirteen years later. He first worked as a bobbin boy in a cotton factory. Then he was excited when he became a messenger for the telegraph office where he became a good friend with all the prominent men of Pittsburgh. It was here that he caught the eye of Thomas A. Scott, superintendent of Pennsylvania Railroad, and was offered a job. It was Theodore Woodruff who allowed Carnegie to manufacture sleeping cars for the railroads when he made his first fortune before steel, by having oil wells, steamers on the Great Lakes, iron works, and railroads.

Did you know Mr. Carnegie kept the United States Government from going broke twice? He kept his money in the banks.

He considered his greatest luxury having two walkers who walk the estate grounds to keep them smooth. Skibo is Heaven on Earth.



## IF THE SHOE FITS

by

Christy Maraist

*(as told to me by my father Clet Dugas, born in 1910)*

Mr. Sidney Dugas, who lived across the T-Bayou in Coteau Holmes, came over one morning to talk to Pop. He had sold fire wood to the prison in St. Martinville, but he didn't have mules or a wagon to haul the wood. He asked Pop to help him. He was going to pay three dollars for loading and unloading the wood and the use of Pop's wagon and mules, but Pop was not inclined to doing extra work, even though we really needed the money.

I could take the job. I knew how to hitch the mules. Pop never said "no." His attitude seemed to be one of: *if you think you can do it, then go ahead*. Just as I figured, he agreed.

I was ten years old in 1920. I had never owned a pair of shoes. I would have my first job and now I could pay for shoes. Ten years old and my first paying job. I would have done it for much less, just to have the opportunity to go to town. I had been to Loreauville before, but this was going to be my first trip to St. Martinville, which was a much bigger town. I had never felt happier. I was going to earn three whole dollars. I knew that men's "brogans" (work shoes), cost about seventy-five cents. Mom had negotiated a deal with me before I went to bed that night. I could buy shoes, and I would give her the balance of the cash.

The next morning, I got up early, hitched the mules, Della and Carrie, and headed down the road to help Mr. Dugas load the wood. I was daydreaming all the way, imagining myself in my new shoes, not having to put up with the kids taunting me about being barefooted. Mom had told me not to mind them. She said the only reason some could afford shoes was that their father sold moonshine, and their shoes were bought with illegal monies. She always added that the Good God preferred that we were honest and barefooted, rather than have nice shoes and a guilty conscience. That never made me feel any better, not that I wanted Pop to do anything illegal. Besides, they never appeared guilty to me, just superior and hateful.



Most of the children in Faubourg walked to school barefooted. When it was cold, my toes left their imprint in the frost on the railroad track; sometimes I also left my skin. My brothers and I would skip so our feet didn't have to touch the cross ties as often, nor stay in contact too long.

Mr. Dugas and I loaded two cords of wood in the wagon and began our slow journey to St. Martinville. It seemed like we would never get there. The mules could not go very fast because of the heavy load, so I just let them go at their own pace. It was important not to strain the mules too much because they were our most valuable possessions, aside from the land.

Finally, we reached St. Martinville. Mr. Dugas, pointed out the major sights after we crossed the bridge over the Bayou Teche. We passed by the church on the left side of Main Street. Next to the church was the presbytere where the priest lived. I took it all in, but I was anxious to spot the store where I would buy my shoes. At last, there it was across from the church. All kinds of marvelous things displayed in the window. I could hardly wait. It wouldn't seem very grown up to show how excited I was. So I just made small talk with Mr. Dugas who said we were almost at the jail. He said that after we unloaded the wood at the prison, he would bring me to a store to buy myself a pair of shoes. I was hoping we could get the shoes first.

Finally, we had finished stacking all the wood neatly behind the jail. I worked as fast as I could, and Mr. Dugas complimented me for my hard work. We got back into the wagon, and I headed back the way we came. When we got to the front of the church, Mr. Dugas said to stop. We went into Schwartz' Department Store on Main Street.

As we walked into the store, the clerk was speaking in English to a customer who was walking out of the store. As soon as Mr. Dugas and I approached him, he asked in a very stiff, awkward sounding French, "What can I do for you today?" It was obvious that before we even opened our mouths, he knew we spoke French.

"The boy needs shoes," Mr. Dugas indicated as they both observed my dirty feet.

The clerk turned and started walking to the back of the store, looking over his shoulder saying, "Follow me." Reaching the area where the shoe boxes were stacked on shelves against the wall, he asked, "What's your shoe size?"

Of course I didn't know. Never having owned a pair of shoes before, how would I know? By now my excitement was beginning to be dampened by my humiliation and I answered, "I don't know."

He observed my feet, I guess to estimate what size shoe to get. He told me to sit in a rocker and he headed to the boxes on the shelves. I walked to the rocker and sat. I must have missed the rocker, because I landed on the floor. I thought perhaps Mr. Dugas had pulled the rocker out from under me, and I couldn't believe that he would do something like that, he was such a nice man. *How could he embarrass me like this?* The clerk appeared with the shoe box just as I was getting up from the floor, and he and Mr. Dugas could not help but burst out laughing.

What I hadn't realized was that there was a big mirror on the wall. When I went to the rocker, I bumped into the mirror; what I was trying to sit in was a reflection of a rocker. I had never seen a mirror that large before. Pop had a broken, triangular-shaped piece of mirror to use for shaving. It was on the wall above a wash basin, and I wasn't tall enough to see myself in it. Now and then he'd take it down and let me look at myself.

The clerk took me by the arm and brought me to the rocker. By now I was beginning to wonder if this was not all a big mistake. To go from such a feeling of happiness, to feeling like I didn't belong there. At that point I did not need shoes, all I needed was to get back home to Mom and Pop, to my brothers and sisters, where we were all alike, where we weren't ashamed of who we were.

The clerk opened the box and put the shoes on my feet. He buttoned up the shoes and asked how they fit. I thought they were fine. There's no way I would have taken those shoes off at that moment. Suddenly I felt that I belonged in St. Martinville, just as much as the clerk or anyone else in town. I left with them on; I couldn't wait to get home to show my family.

On the way out of town, it was about one o'clock, Mr. Dugas said he was hungry. He told me to stop at a grocery store on the outskirts of town, and he went in. I was sitting on the plank across the front of the wagon, my feet on the floor. When Mr. Dugas got out, I propped my feet up on the front of the wagon so I could study my new shoes, that I was actually wearing, at last. They were a soft brown leather, and came up to my ankles. There was a row of five buttons, on the outward side of each shoe. I couldn't remember how the clerk had fastened them, and I was intently studying the buttons when Mr. Dugas returned. Just as I was about to attempt unfastening one, his appearance stopped me.

He began to empty the content of the bag he carried out of the store: two cans of sardines and a box of crackers. That was the first time I had seen those flat cans with the roll up top—all those little silver fish, bones and all. It was the first time I had eaten a store-bought meal. It was the first time I had worn a pair of shoes. I was feeling real good about myself. A trip to town, a job, shoes I had paid for with my own money, and now, above and beyond all that, sardines in a can. We ate in the wagon on our way out of town.

The mules were tired, so the trip home was also slow. I wasn't in such a hurry anymore. I was just enjoying each moment. As the trip went on, the mid-day sun was getting hotter, the sardines and crackers were salty, and my feet were now sweating and swelling.

The shoes started feeling a little uncomfortable. My feet were just going to have to get used to being in shoes, that's all. But, another mile down the road, and the pain got worse. Maybe it was just the way shoes felt on everyone, and if everybody who wore shoes could take it, so could I. I finished my sardines and saved the empty can for Pop. I knew he could figure out some use for it. I'm sure I was just imagining this, but I could feel my heart beating in my feet! Every second, it felt like the shoes were tighter and tighter. Now, aside from the squeezing, the numbness, the throbbing, the soles of my feet were burning as if they were on fire.

I tried to ignore the pain, but by the time we were about three miles out of town, the pain became unbearable. Even worse than when there was frost on the railroad track and the skin under my feet would stick to the metal rail.

The shoes had to come off. I didn't care anymore about being embarrassed in front of Mr. Dugas. I started struggling frantically with the buttons, not knowing how to unfasten them. Mr. Dugas offered to help, but I could tell by the way he was fumbling that he wasn't going to succeed. By then, my feet were hurting so bad, that I did the only thing I could do. I took out my pocket knife and cut the buttons off. The shoes were ruined.

When we got back home, Mr. Dugas gave Mom the balance of the money. Everybody laughed when I told them about the mirror and how I bumped into it. They teased me a few days about my new shoes. Pop said what I needed was "brogans" like his and not those button-up citified shoes.

I would just have to wait for another opportunity to earn money, go to town and buy another pair of shoes. I was used to going barefooted and I was used to waiting for what I wanted. I guess what I really needed was a good cry. Mom always said we should save our tears for things that really mattered. Anyway, our lives were filled with so many things to cry about, we just laughed instead. That was much easier.

Pop made a little toy wagon from the sardine can that I brought home. He used four round pieces he cut from a branch to make the wheels, which he attached to each side of an axle fashioned from a twig. He attached this to the bottom of the tin, by using thin strips of metal that he had cut from the rolled up cover. The turn-key used to open the can, he made into a handle for the wagon. Who else but Pop could think of something so unusual and fun from an empty sardine can? I knew he would.

Pop was good at doing things like that. Somehow he could turn the worst situations into something enjoyable. No matter what life offered him, he seemed to be very happy with us and with himself.



## WHAT A SURPRISE!

by

**Anna Ruth Boudreau Ganucheau Maher**

Early in the month of June, 1999, my oldest daughter, Ruth Anne, called me and asked if I would have lunch with her on June 19. She said, "Mom, I would like to take you to lunch to celebrate your birthday." I accepted her invitation and she said, "Mom be sure to get your hair done and wear something pretty. I am going to take you somewhere special." Curious, I started envisioning where she was going to take me for my birthday lunch.

About a week before the date, Ruth Anne called to remind me not to forget that I was having lunch with her next Saturday. My reply was, "Ruth Anne, we'll have to make it another day because I have an important meeting to attend for the Boudreau Family Association." She was speechless for a few seconds. Then she responded, "Well, I will call and see if I can change the date."

A few hours later, she called me again and said, "Mom, we can't change the reservation. We have to go that day and that time. You will just have to miss the meeting and come with me." She sounded a little upset and so I said, "O.k. I will go with you on the 19th as you suggested originally." Again she said, "Don't forget to get you hair done and wear something pretty. I'll pick you up about 10 a.m. that morning." Now I was really curious.

Ruth Anne arrived at our townhouse exactly at 10:00 a.m. the morning of the 19th. I had complied with her request and had my hair washed and set the day before and wore a bright silk print dress. I was thinking we must be going to a nice restaurant out of town to be leaving this early. She still had not told me where we were going. When I asked, she replied, "It's a surprise!"

Suddenly she turned into Bendel Gardens and I said, "What are we going in here for?" She responded, "Bill and Louise are going to join us, and I offered to pick them up."

As we arrived at their home, we drove into the driveway and my son, Bill, came out of the front entrance. (They invariably use the carport entrance...not the front door.) He stated, "We aren't quite ready, but y'all come on in for a few minutes," leading us to the front entrance.

As we walked in, he led us into the dining area. With that came shouts of "Surprise! Surprise! Happy 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday!" I was dumbfounded! I had never had a surprise party given for me before! All of my children, their spouses, and my grandchildren and Tom, my husband were there to greet me, even my youngest, Rosemarie with her husband and two daughters who had driven in from Wilmington, N. C. I just could not believe what was happening.

After I had greeted everyone personally, Bill invited me to take a seat as he was going to present a video of photos of me over the last 75 years. Bill was the creator and producer and his son, William, 3 ½ yrs., was the co-producer. There were pictures on the video covering almost a hundred years taken from a large number of albums, slides and scrapbooks, from my Mother and myself. Some I had not seen in ages! My first thought was, "How did he get copies of all those old pictures?" I found out afterwards that Bill had been coming to my home and taking an album at the time, plus many old loose pictures and copying them for the video. I knew he had copied several pictures for me over the year and had given me a disc with the pictures of me that I wanted for my memory stories. I was flabbergasted! At the end of the video my son asked William if he had anything to tell his Granny? He replied, "I wuv you Granny, you're my hero!"

Everyone then went to the garden for family group pictures. After the sitting we were all invited to lunch. A marvelous luncheon had been prepared and two tables had been set to serve the twenty of us. After lunch, my husband, Tom, and I were invited to take a rest before the next phase of the party was to take place. I know by that time, I was ready for a rest. I don't think I ever closed my eyes but I did rest. My mind was still going fifty-miles an hour.

After our rest we were then invited to greet about eighty longtime friends from Lafayette, New Orleans, and Covington, and other family members who had been invited to visit any time between 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. I just couldn't believe all the people who came. It was a joyous occasion as I greeted

each person reminiscing of where and when we first met, and the wonderful times we have shared together. During this period of time, the video ran continuously so that guests could see some of the pictures on the video.

My son, Bill, presented me with a copy of the video and a disc with all the pictures he had copied to make the video. What a memorable day! A day I'll never forget!

In retrospect, I can visualize Ruth Anne, the day I told her we would have to change the date. First she was speechless for a few seconds before she said she would have to check to see if the reservation could be changed. I can also see BellSouth and e-mail flying in fast fury between my four children trying to help Ruth Anne to handle this matter and what she must tell me when she called me back. All the plans had been made, the invitations had been sent out, the photographer had been hired, the food had been catered, etc. All I knew was that 1999 was the year of the Congres Mondial Acadian-Louisiane 1999, and I had worked all year on the Boudreau Family Reunion. It was priority.

Secondly, I marveled that the cars of the family members had been parked elsewhere to appear like it was a regular Saturday in the Ganucheau household.

Later, my son shared with me that planning with his three siblings for this party was the starter which ignited e-mail between all four of them regularly....And to boot! they include me on their e-mail list. I share one of Bill's web sites, and during the six months of planning, they were constantly worried that I might open up his mail accidentally and find out their plans. I never did until June 19, 1999, a special surprise!



## MY BEST AND WORST TEACHERS

by  
Tom Eby

“If you don’t remember anything else from this course, I want you to remember what is written on this blackboard. It will show up on some of your tests.” That’s what my General Psychology professor said the first day of classes. I have forgotten most of what I learned in college and most of what I learned from that course, even that teacher’s name, but I still remember the words on that blackboard. They were, “Anything is possible in this the most possible of all possible worlds.”

At the time, I thought it was hogwash and dribble. Now that I have witnessed the development of space travel, a man on the moon, satellites, supersonic flight, computer speeds, the internet, cellular phones, telescopes which can show us stars and other worlds five billion light years away, and so many other changes that have occurred since that day in 1947, the professor’s statement makes more sense to me. I would revise it to read “Most anything man finds credible is possible.”

Although the psychology professor made that indelible impression on me he was neither my best nor my worst teacher. The worst teacher I ever had was my instructor for freshman physics in college. He had just migrated to the U.S. from France, and added to his thick French accent, he spoke in a monotone. As he paced back and forth across the front of the classroom, the taps on his shoes resounded. The one single tone of his voice and the tap-tap-tap-tap of his shoes were like a metronome, which put me to sleep.

In high school I had made A’s and B’s in all my physics and other science classes; however I ended this physics class with a D. I attribute that poor showing to a very dull teacher. At the same time across the campus I made an A in Chemistry. The difference was in the professors.

The first day of Comparative Morphology the class met in an auditorium. Dr. Causey addressed the three hundred students seated before him: “This class is too big. I intend to thin your ranks to less than fifty of you. So his technique



was to give a test right then. He said, "This test will be weighted as one third of your semester grade." It was a simple test. Name all the subdivisions of life forms down to species. Half the people in the room got up and walked out. They were the smart ones. Even though I filled out a couple pages I did not do well in the course. About the only thing I remember from that course is "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny," which means individual development duplicates evolutionary development and is demonstrated in human fetal development or other life forms.

My favorite teachers liked to demonstrate with examples and analogies. My General Geology professor, Dr. Giles, was the head of the Geology Department. He walked into our 8 AM class, looked around at the students and said, "Gentlemen never rise before nine." On one occasion he wrote on the blackboard 268,000. Then below that he wrote 93,000,000, and below that he wrote 265,000,000,000. Turning to the class, he said, "This first figure 268,000, that is the number of miles to the moon." He might have said that distance would be similar to driving the distance to Baton Rouge and back every weekday for 10 years. He did say, "This number and measurement, 268,000 miles, is so large that it is hard to comprehend that distance. The second figure, 93,000,000 is the number of miles to the sun. Light travels at the rate of 186,000 miles a second. It takes light over eight minutes to travel from the sun to the earth. To get an idea of the size and distances involved, imagine a ball six feet in diameter sitting 40 feet outside that window. That is the sun. Now on the opposite side of the room, out in the hall, imagine a pea is the earth. This gives you a little idea about how big the sun is compared to the earth and how far apart they are. This third figure of 265 billion completely dwarfs the first two figures, but that is not miles that is dollars. That is the national debt. If the first figure is beyond comprehension, then nothing I can say will convey a realization of the magnitude of this figure. I could put this in terms of how many cases of beer this would buy, and some of you would have a new appreciation of this figure. At \$6 per case you could buy 44,167,000,000 cases of beer. But in terms of the number of houses you could buy, at \$30,000 per house, you could buy 88,333,000 houses. In terms of how much each citizen owes, your part of this debt is \$2,650 plus the interest accumulating."

Today, with our government's \$5.7 trillion debt each citizen owes \$20,803. Dr. Giles would be appalled. He warned us, "You are going to pay

for this, and your children are going to pay for this, and your children's children are going to pay for this." Dr. Giles made Geology not just the study of the earth and all around it, but also the study of the politics and philosophies of the people on it. He was a very interesting, informative and humorous teacher. He was the best.



## **CHICKEN SOUP**

by

**Marge DeVillier**

This story is being written for our new classmates, Christie and Shirley, to introduce them to my weird sense of humor. The other classmates have already been exposed. (I hope they don't sue me for trauma caused by said exposure.) This story also includes some violence, so listen with discretion.

If you've got the flu or a cold, make chicken soup, and here's how: Assemble the following ingredients and equipment. Include in your collection of implements a bucket, a hatchet or axe, and a large kettle of boiling water. Include also 1 large boiling pot to make the soup. Ingredients include celery, onions, noodles, salt and pepper, celery salt and parsley flakes, plus 2 or 3 boiled eggs, chicken stock or bouillon, and finally, the chicken.

After catching the chicken, place a block of wood with a niche cut out on a tree stump or some solid surface. Then hypnotize the chicken by drawing a circle over and over on the ground under the chicken's eyes. This will relax the chicken so you can place its neck on the niche of the chopping block and you will be able to make a clean chop on the neck. Otherwise, the chicken would probably do what happened once before when I tried to do this. Every time I lifted the axe to chop off its head the chicken would move and I ended up with a gory result. Also, never throw the chicken on the ground after chopping off the head, or you will have a dirty, gory result. That's why you need a bucket.

Place the chicken in the bucket. This will confine the chicken to a smaller space and the chicken will have a neater, more peaceful demise. After that, pour some of the hot boiling water onto the chicken in the bucket. Let it cool a little then proceed with the plucking procedure. A clothespin on your nose may be helpful at this time. After plucking all the feathers from the bird you can spread them out to dry. These can later be made into feather pillows.

When the bird is plucked clean, remove the pin feathers, then hold the chicken over an open flame turning the chicken until the entire surface has been singed. The next step is to make an incision from the neck to the

whatchamacallit and gut the chicken by pulling all its innards out. Now is the time to cut off its legs and wings, or is this done after the gutting? I'm not sure?

After washing all the parts, place the chicken in a pot of boiling stock and add ingredients and seasonings. Cook until meat is tender and liquid is satisfying to your taste. Skim off the fat. Then serve.

Note: If you prefer you may remove the skin before boiling, or if this seems too big a deal, just open a can of Campbell's Chicken Noodle Soup, heat and serve.

Don't forget to check the inside of the lid on the can. You may have won \$100.00.



## A CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCK

by  
Joan Ireland

My grandson, Tony, is a chip off the old block—his daddy is also named Tony and was the giver of some traits that we often find infuriating in little Tony. Tony is a unique individual, a boy that you can't put into a mold and say, "This is Tony Randall Arnold."

Last Halloween, I was visiting Patti and her family in Texas City when I heard an eerie scream coming from the darkened kitchen. Patti and I raced to the kitchen and found little Tony had shut someone in the refrigerator. All we could see was a hand sticking out from the refrigerator. Patti yelled, "Open that door, Tony! Who do you have in there?"

Tony didn't answer but continued holding the door tight with a look of horror on his face. Daddy Tony cleared up the mystery as he appeared laughing hilariously from the corner and commanded his son to open the door. As Tony slowly opened the door, a plastic arm fell with a soft thud to the floor.

Tony also likes to argue even though he does it with a twinkle in his eyes. One day a couple of years ago, I was in Texas City and was watching "Toy Story" with Tony and Katelyn. At one point in the story, the main character spells his name, "Toy. T-O-Y," as he repeated each letter out loud.

Tony, with a devious gleam in his eyes, said, "He said his name is Tony, T-O-N-Y." At the time Tony was only four years old and hadn't started school, but he knew all his letters and their sounds. Tony had learned the alphabet from an alphabet chart that he had received when he was two years old. Tony also learned the sounds of the letters as he followed along and read each word in the books that his father and mother read to him and Katelyn every night.

Patti rewound the "Toy Story" video and said to her son, "See, Tony, he said Toy, T-O-Y"; however Tony insisted the star of the show was Tony, "T-O-N-Y." Patti rewound the tape again and replayed the tape introducing Toy

where he spelled each letter, T-O-Y, but Tony still insisted the man said "Tony, T-O-N-Y."

Many times, Tony will argue with his sister (or his mother or his father or even his Nana) even though he knows he is wrong. No one should question this trait as his father invariably takes the opposite view of any argument and will swear he is right until his fellow opponent (usually his wife, Patti) gives up in despair. Tony always has to be right, and even when he's not, he won't back down, but will argue to the death.

While attending Zachary High School, my son Tony belonged to the Zachary Debating Team. As President of the debating team, Tony's side always won as Tony convinced everyone with his oratory and logical arguments that his side was right. By the time the debate was over, no one was sure what the original argument or discussion was about.

Even now, I am not sure who was the main character in Toy Story.

"Was it Tony, T-O-N-Y?" or was it "Toy, T-O-Y?"



## A LEGACY OF LANGUAGE

by

Mary Langford

Of all the intangible gifts my father gave to me, one which is continual pleasure to me is the love of words. Since childhood I have been intrigued with language—words and phrases and their infinite combinations. An only child until I was nine, I welcomed books as my ready companions and teachers. English was my favorite class in school, and to this day I enjoy adding words to my vocabulary. I revel in the richness of expression which is possible in English, and yet, I wish I knew more languages.

In high school Mademoiselle Marie Therese LeBlanc guided me through two years of French. Years later M'amselle LeBlanc's tutelage helped to lead me again through the streets, subways, and sights of Paris. I have often thought of her as well at times when I have caught familiar sounds, phrases, and signs during four sojourns among the Cajuns of south Louisiana. Now a permanent resident, I delight in the idioms and expressions which are woven so naturally into the unique fabric of life in Acadiana.

Before settling among the Cajuns, however, I had a long and fascinating stay among two widely divergent people groups who lived together in remarkable synergy in the colony of Hong Kong—the British and the Chinese. Upon my arrival I entered a course of language study which would last more than twenty-five years and which would provide delight, frustration, heightened understanding, and incredible mis-communication. First there was the Cantonese dialect of Chinese, a language thousands of years old, with no alphabet, seven tones, unusual syntax, and sounds no Westerner was ever meant to make.

Then there was the British version of English, disconcerting at every turn, with its different spelling, pronunciation and definition of what had been familiar. So we set to and learned to say "lift" for elevator and "boot" for the car's trunk. We spelled honor and color with a "u" before the "r" and added an "l" to jewelry. We ordered "chips" when we wanted french fries, spoke of "roundabouts" and "fly-overs" rather than traffic circles and overpasses.

Remembering all this, I have realized that I know yet another language—one made up of childhood memories and of the terms, jargon, idioms, expressions, adages, translations and transliterations of the people I have encountered in the places where I have been. It is the special language of our family—words, phrases, and codes which only communicate to those of us who know the context and/or etymology.

Here's what I mean: When we travel, we don't stop for a snack but for a "tidbit," because my husband's father started every trip after he closed his drugstore at 10:00 p.m. and wanted to stop every hour or so for what he called a "tidbit" to keep himself awake as he drove through the night.

Having spent years with the Chinese, our family says "lop-sop" for garbage, "mafahn" for trouble, and "lop-loon" for confusion because those borrowed words even seem to sound like the ideas they convey.

Our children's experience in the British schools added several terms to the Langford lexicon. We brag on each other by saying, "You get a tick and a star!" because the English elementary teachers put a check (a tick) and a star on the best test papers. Another addition was made by the science teacher who gave instructions for making lab reports more appealing—"Colours, if poss"—a phrase we've adopted for a way to suggest making something nicer.

When the children were young, they were all on my passport because they were not going to travel alone. After one very long day spent making pictures, traveling by ferry, waiting in line and filling out forms to get a new passport, one of our little ones asked wearily, "If something happens to Mother, can we just cross her off the passport?" Being "crossed off the passport" has become our family's way of playfully threatening to do away with someone.

Our Chinese household helper and friend Ah Say made many contributions to our family language bank. One good example is "Don't talk, body!" which we say, as she did, when we want everyone to be quiet. If we are reassuring each other that we won't give up, we say we're "going to keep delivering eggs." The background involves a dear Chinese lady who rode into town from the country twice a week on her bicycle with flats of eggs piled high on the back to deliver them to her customers, most of whom were missionaries.



One evening in a prayer meeting concern was expressed for the egg lady because she had no children and her husband had decided to take a concubine. The sad story having been told and prayer requested for the situation, a voice from the back of the room inquired, "She's not going to stop delivering eggs, is she?"

I'm guessing that every family has its own private lingo which becomes part of the heritage handed down to each generation. These expressions are used or originated whenever the family gathers. They are whispered and spoken when everyone assembles for the group picture, which is one of the ways those smiles are produced. And by the way, when our medically influenced family poses for the photographer, we don't say "cheese," we say "colostomy." Don't ask.



## SKATING ON WINTER ICE

by  
Lois Diehl

When the temperatures dropped, the thin patches of ice formed on the street and sidewalks invited me to slide across them without falling down. My first attempts were to push myself across a patch of ice on my sled to see how far I could slide. Later I would try standing upright as my boots glided across the ice and my arms waved by my sides for balance. I envied the older kids whenever I saw them with skates dangled over their shoulders on their way to a bigger patch of ice, usually one of the many frozen ponds in the area.

Sometime during the winter I was eight years old, I strapped my very first pair of skates over my boots. The skates were not fancy, just two sets of double metal blades with a pair of mesh straps to hold them tight. The many layers of sweaters, jacket, and leggings I wore cushioned all the tumbles I took as I learned to maneuver on the slippery ice. I wanted to skate like Sonja Henie, the three time gold medal Olympic champion who was now performing in exhibition ice revues and in movies. But most of all, I wanted a pair of white shoe skates like the ones she originated in her costume of the short skating skirt and the white shoe skates. However, my first shoe skates were black, hand-me-downs that had belonged to my mother. To make them fit, I wore several pairs of the thickest wool socks I could find and stuffed the toes of the skates with newspaper. Oh, how I wished for a pair of white girl skates that fit just me!

There was no public indoor ice rink in central Pennsylvania at that time. The Hershey Bears played ice hockey in the only enclosed ice arena nearby. The Ice Capades also performed there several days each winter. All my skating was on nearby private small ponds covered by a layer of ice when the temperatures dipped low enough to freeze the top water. We would make the rounds of Otto's Pond, Laurel Lake, Keller's Pond, Fuherer's Pond and the upper Holly Ore Hole looking for ice that was safe to skate on. Sometimes the water froze in ripples because the wind was blowing as the temperatures dropped, but we always looked for fairly smooth ice. A bonfire about ten feet back from the edge of the ice was always a necessity. The enjoyment of ice skating was always tempered with a 'chill to the bone' feeling ever present. The

cold from the ice permeated even the thick layers of clothing and wool socks we wore.

The best times skating that I remember were on moonlit nights. The only other light we had was from flashlights that lit our way across the snow covered fields to the ice-covered pond and the bonfire we started once there. Intermittent with the sounds of our voices were the crackling of the fire, the creaking of the ice, and the faint scraping of the skates gliding over the ice. Surrounded by the beauty of the snow glistening and the ice shining in the moonlight and firelight, we forgot all about how cold we felt.

Keller's Pond where we skated is now the site of the PPG plant. The owners of the other two ponds do not want skaters on their property. I feel fortunate to have grown up at a time when there was the freedom to enjoy winter's beauty. And, yes, finally the Christmas that I was ten or eleven years old, I received my first pair of white shoe skates. Although I never skated like Sonja Henie, I enjoyed skating on the winter ice of Pennsylvania throughout my school years.



