Life and Letters

Volume IXb

Life & Letters, a life history writing class, shares its stories once again. The story of each student bears the imprint of all our life stories, and each one is a story that deserves to be told, especially when told in love.

The excitement for me about this class with friends many years my senior is that they are not trying to recreate the past in order to live in it; instead these students recreate the past in order to live by it. Written past is history understood in the light (and sometimes darkness) of the present. That perspective changes things. The writers of these stories are children who, now as adults, understand their parents' struggles; sisters and brothers who can sympathize with their siblings' fears; friends who respect their confidantes' privacy; grandparents who give love before advice; husbands and wives, widows and widowers, who speak as a beloved not just caught up in yesterday's dream, but who live with no regrets. Every relationship, each life, counts, no matter how its story is told. And it's told here in these pages. We invite you to read about lives that matter.

----------Joan Stear
USL, Lafayette, Louisiana
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Front Cover (clockwise from upper righthand corner): Betty Gerard; Audrey Daniel; Stanley Davis (with Wilma Dartez and Livia Davis); Nelia Myrhaugen; Melvin Daniel (right); Margaret Bollich; Ruth Oates; (center) Lois Diehl

LIFE AND LETTERS
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Seated, l. to r.: Melvin Daniel, Audrey Daniel, Jean Brazda, Sari Stroud, Nelia Myrhaugen
Standing, l. to r.: Margaret Bollich, Wanda Rense, Lois Diehl, Betty Gerard, J.B. Landry, Betty Shoemaker, Stanley Davis, Minnie Latiolais, Gordon McGuire, Joan Stear
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MY FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL
by
J.B. Landry

In our home only French was spoken. Papa did not speak any English. Mama had been educated in a one room rural school in the northern part of Lafayette Parish. These one room schools did a pretty good job of educating children, because my mother, with seven years of school, could read and write English and French. When compared with today's average seventh grade education, the one room school rates far ahead of the modern well-financed schools.

I was seven years old when I started school. As I recall, my mother did not think I was ready at the age of six and she was probably right. I was a slow, clumsy child, often called slow-poke by the family and other children.

School was a new and strange experience for me. I did not understand a word of English. The first day of school was a foreign experience, you might say. The first day, only a half day, we were dismissed at noon. It was a noisy affair, what with children in a strange environment, with probably the majority not understanding English. I observed the goings on with keen interest. The teacher was at her wits end. She was trying to get some semblance of order. It was obvious to me that she was trying to quiet the room full of children. It was certainly noisy. I could not understand what she was saying. She was speaking English. I will always remember the freckle-faced boy who tried all morning to eat his lunch.

During the latter part of the morning the teacher picked up a book and opened the cover and pointed to a gold star and repeatedly promised that those who were quiet would be rewarded with a gold star tomorrow. I was too busy observing to join in the noise. But when would I get this gold star? The sign language did not tell me, but the word "tomorrow" was repeated several times after pointing to the gold star. I memorized the word.

At twelve o'clock we were dismissed. No doubt the freckle-faced boy ate his lunch. I hurried home with my older sister with the magic word <u>tomorrow.</u>

As soon as I arrived home I went to my mother and asked her what "tomorrow" meant. She told me "demain." Wow! What excitement! "Demain" I was going to get a gold star. I could hardly wait for the next day.

My sister insisted that I learn to write my name that afternoon, and she stood over me until I did.

The next day was a big disappointment. The teacher did not even mention gold stars.

Even though she did not keep her promise, she was an excellent teacher. By Christmas that year I was reading and understanding what I read.

MY BIG BLACK CAST IRON POT
by
Nelia Myrhaugen

The old black three-legged cast iron pot was in my family when I was born. It is two feet wide and one-and-one-half feet deep. I always desired to have the pot for my very own. My parents used the pot to boil crawfish, shrimp, and always for boiling water in the Fall when we had the yearly boucherie. Many of our friends and family members gathered at our house for an all day work party. The men built a fire under the old pot, which was filled with water. Wood was piled around the pot and a fire started to heat the water for scalding the hog to make it easy to skin the hog.

While the water was coming to a rolling boil the men caught the hog in its holding pen, where it had been kept to be fattened for the killing. The men held the hog down while one of them took a sharp knife and plunged it into the hog's heart. Someone held a large container to catch the blood as it gushed out. The blood was used to make red boudin.

After that task was completed the hog was plunged into the boiling water. Then it was put on a table prepared for this particular occasion. Everything was done outside, preferably on a very cold day. Hog butchering was hot work, so it was always done on a cold day if possible. The men worked rapidly using sharp knives to skin the hair off the hog. If the skin cooled too much, it was difficult to work with. The hog was then cut down the middle and all the entrails were removed. The intestines were gathered into a bowl and washed inside and out, then scraped to use as casings for the boudin and sausage. Nothing was wasted. The head was used to make hogs-head cheese. The feet were saved and pickled.

The fatter the hog, the better it was to make lard for cooking and cracklins to munch on. First, all the water was removed from the pot. The fat was cut into small pieces, then put in the hot pot. This process required constant stirring to keep the fat from scorching. The resulting lard was kept in large jars. The cracklins were crisp and tasty.

After I became a widow in 1962 I moved many times, trying (as some people would say) to find myself. Before my daddy died he promised to give me the pot if I ever quit moving around and settled in one place. He kept his promise. In 1968 he delivered the big pot to my little house in Abbeville, Louisiana, where I resided until 1972.

After graduating from USL in 1972, I married George Myrhaugen and we lived in Lafayette, Louisiana, on Antigua Drive until we built our house near Youngsville, Louisiana. I have already written about the house fire in 1984. The old pot is one thing that survived, but the extreme heat of the fire burned the finish off the pot. It can no longer be used for cooking. The bottom is pitted and rusty. I used black paint inside and out to make it look nice. Now it has a round, smooth piece of plywood cut to fit the top. It is used to display my Indian arrowheads, petrified wood, and other things. The cast iron pot is one of my most treasured possessions.

In the Fall of 1993 I was invited to speak to a group of eight-year-old Brownie Girl Scouts. The wanted me to tell of my cajun culture and things I did as a little girl, such as the games we played and some of the other customs of my childhood. I shared the experiences of the old pot with the girls. I wore my yo-yo vest and demonstrated how to make yo-yos from scraps of fabric. They took turns trying to make them. We also strung popcorn to use on the Christmas tree and made chains from colored paper to decorate the tree in an old fashioned way.

The next week I received in a big envelope several handmade cards filled with thanks and loving words from the little girls. There is so much beauty and goodness in people. I feel indeed blessed to have had the opportunity to share a small part of my early life, especially stories of the old black iron pot, with such an appreciative audience of young girls.

MY HERO
by
Betty Shoemaker

School was finally out and the children were packing for our long awaited vacation. We were going to visit our good friend, Kay Dallar. Kay resided in Lawson, Arkansas, twelve miles north of El Dorado. Each summer one of the children was allowed to spend one month with Kay. Together they argued too much. This summer it was Chuck's turn.

Lawson is a very small community with one small grocery store housing the post office, and as in all small communities, everyone knows everyone.

After my week's vacation was up, we said our goodbyes and assured Chuck we would return for him at the end of the month.

On our return visit we were greeted heartily by Kay and Chuck. As we entered the house I felt a hushed quietness as if something was wrong. As we sat in the kitchen enjoying a fresh pot of coffee, Chuck went to the den to watch T.V. and Debbie left to ride Kay's horse. I finally confronted Kay. Had Chuck been disrespectful or done something wrong? I listened in awe as she related this story:

Several days ago Kay's brother Halley had stopped by for coffee. He told Kay he was going to bush hog the south pasture and would love Chuck's company. Kay filled a quart fruit jar with ice and a small amount of water and sent them on their way.

Chuck lounged under a large oak tree as Halley mowed around it. Suddenly the front of the tractor caught a large branch and as it mowed, the branch was released and swung backwards, striking Halley in the temple and knocking him to the ground. Chuck watched in horror as the tractor circled the tree and headed straight for Halley.

My son was a twelve year old city-bred boy who had no previous knowledge of farm equipment. Somehow he managed to climb on the back of the tractor between it and the bush hog. There was no time to climb into the seat to reach the brakes, so he leaned over the seat and turned off the ignition. The tractor stopped one foot from Halley's head.

Chuck immediately removed his white tee-shirt and soaked it with the ice water from their jar. He washed Halley's face, but to no avail. Halley was still unconscious. Chuck then ran down the road and flagged a man driving a pickup truck. Together they loaded Halley into the back of the truck and headed for the nearest hospital, twelve miles away.

En route Chuck and the driver stopped to pick up Halley's wife, Dorothy. Suddenly, Halley regained consciousness and was fine.

Although my son Chuck had saved our friend's life, he refused to discuss it and shrugged it off as nothing.

I could never be more proud of Chuck than I was that day. He was my son, my best friend, my confidante, and my hero.

BABIES JUST LIKE THE TWINS
by
Ruth Oates

I remember when Louise and Dorothy, our twins, were born. I was about five years old, and only bits of it are vivid, but I will reconstruct that time as best I can.

We lived, I think, in an old house of 20's vintage, 2-3 blocks down Frederick Street from the last house we occupied in Shreveport. The front porch went clear across the front of the house, which was built in a series of rooms opening into each other in a straight line, without a hall. (It was called a "shot gun house"--you could fire a shot gun clear through the doors from front to back without hitting a wall.) The pillars which supported the porch roof were heavy, square ones, two to each side of the three wide concrete steps. The yard was very shady, from a great oak which grew between the street and the sidewalk, and very small in front of the house, which was close against the side street and also close to the edge of the property on the other side. A wooden garage at the rear opened on the side street.

The twins were born on December 21, 1932, in the depths of the Great Depression. Daddy was hard pressed to keep a roof over our heads in those rough times. Jobs were very scarce. He would get an old car, fix it a little, and sell it when he could. We moved often, because when Daddy got together enough money to pay a month's rent, he paid it on a different house. We owed more than that where we were living. So we lived in the house I have described for only a short time.

When my brothers and sisters talk about these times--and only the older ones can, because they are the only ones who can remember them--they speak dispassionately, even sardonically. They are describing or naming what really happened, but something far removed from how we all live now, something we sometimes find hard to admit or even believe. The events seem almost grotesque, though our family lived them long ago. And then they speak only among ourselves, or among people who shared the rigors of life in a city during the Great Depression. In a certain age group there are a lot of Americans who understand how it was then.

Wages were minimal, to start with. There was no unemployment compensation, no Social Security system, no old age pensions, and no welfare payments or food stamps. No government commodities. School books were bought by each pupil's family. It is hard for anyone living in today's "welfare society" to imagine what it was like.

Daddy refused, Mother said, to return to the country and farm for a living, which he grew up doing and knew how to do. He refused because he was passionately certain that a good education was the road to success and the good life his children were going to have. Good schools were not found in the country, but in the city. So we got through the Depression by living from hand to mouth, but in the city of Shreveport, always near good schools.

For a while the only cash money that came into the family was from the boys' selling papers downtown. Leon, at 13, got a choice intersection allotted by the boss

because he could bring three other sets of hands to the job: Bryan, Lloyd, and John. Lloyd said he was eight when he started, and John was six. They worked under Leon's supervision and responsibility. Papers sold for five cents. They cost three cents, leaving a gross profit of two cents per sale. Any that did not sell came out of "profit," so the income was small, even from four boys. Nevertheless, Lloyd was assigned to buy milk for the babies with his money from the day as he rode his bicycle home. Bryan was expected to buy, with money earned that day, a loaf of bread on his way home.

Anyhow, Daddy was constantly having trouble paying the rent. Lloyd remembers that one of our landlords, and he thinks it was the one who owned the house I have just described, paid Daddy's moving expenses to get him to move! "He knew," said Lloyd with a rueful laugh, "there wasn't any hope of getting any rent out of us."

These are the circumstances of our family that winter of 1932-33. However, for the very first time, Mother went to the hospital to have her babies. As she put it in talking to me later, "I finally learned some sense!" The doctor kept her there for ten days to two weeks. When Daddy glumly brought home the news that Mother would not be home for Christmas, Margaret proposed that the family's Christmas celebration be postponed until Mother came home. To her amazement, Daddy readily agreed.

I do not remember much of that celebration. From what others have said, I know that Christmas dinner came in a "Christmas basket" of groceries brought to us by someone's kindness in a bushel basket on Christmas Eve. A bare minimum of toys were included in the gift of the basket. Our young wage-earners had carefully hoarded nickels and dimes which they spent for small gifts of clothing, such as a handkerchief for Daddy. There was one rattle for the babies--in those days no one knew ahead of time that there would be twins.

I do not remember Mother coming home again. I do remember a little later, with the babies bigger, that a cord was tied from the head to the foot of their bed, and the twins' rattle was tied to it. Because of the advantage to the baby of getting her mother's milk, Mother nursed the twins alternately. By turns each got a bottle. I remember Louise with the bottle rolling off the bed and crawling under it to go to sleep. When I discovered her, only Louise's little feet could be seen beside the bed on the floor. I was intrigued. I got down on my hands and knees to see for myself the contented baby, her bottle still clasped in one arm, fast asleep beneath the bed. "Let her sleep," someone said. So I did.

One thing about that Christmas I remember quite vividly. That was the year Helen and I got the baby dolls dressed by our grown cousin, Louise Denham.

The dolls must have been about ten or twelve inches long. They were new and shiny, with bright eyes and rosy cheeks. Their arms and legs could be moved, and their clothes were **wonderful**! Each had a tiny undershirt, just like our baby sisters. The shirt tied under each arm, so it was double across the chest. Below this each tiny play baby wore a cloth diaper pinned with one large pin in front, the current style of diaper. On the legs each wore long stockings pulled high and pinned with a minute gold pin to a tab on the lower edge of the undershirt, one under each arm. *Just like*

the twins! Layered over the underthings, each doll wore a pretty petticoat, a nicely trimmed dress, and a warm, fleecy coat with a matching bonnet. On her feet were knit booties. Our twins did not usually wear a pretty petticoat, dress, coat, and bonnet, nor the booties. But neither did any other of our dolls wear underthings like the babies did. I was enchanted.

Helen and I spent many hours dressing and undressing our "babies." I am sure I copied the way Mother and Margaret handled the twins, getting by acute observation the mothering skills I would later practice on other dolls and, when I was old enough, on my little brother David, before I had need of them with my own children.

LOOKING BACK
by
Betty Gerard

When my parents, William R. Johnson and Ida Eckerman, were married, August 4, 1915, Larry McGuinn was their best man. Larry and my Dad worked together at the bottling plant. The bottling plant was different then from the automatic plants of today. The bottles were placed on a circular machine. Each bottle was filled and capped when the operator used his foot pedal. Also, all of their sodas were made from formulas that were for their company only. When my Dad left the company he took his formula for the strawberry and creme soda. If Mom didn't discard them, those formulas are still in my attic. When I was 8 or 10 years old it was a thrill to go to the shop and watch this operation, then take one of those newly bottled bottles of soda and enjoy!

Larry and Dad worked together for many years. Larry and his wife Virginia were close friends of my folks. They had a daughter, Betty. When I was born, I was named Betty Virginia for Larry's wife Virginia and her daughter Betty.

Eventually the McGuinns moved from Peoria, and we heard from them occasionally.

In 1934 or thereabouts the McGuinns moved back to Peoria. They lived not far from our house. Betty was a year older than me, but we had a lot in common. When Larry opened his shooting range the two Bettys were there on weekends. When no one was using the range we would get to shoot the pistols. Virginia was an excellent shot and a good teacher. We were never marksmen, but we had fun.

Soon school was out and summer plans were being made. I had spent six weeks with my aunt in Chicago in 1933 and I was invited again in 1934. Betty McGuinn also had an aunt in Chicago and was spending the summer with her. Both aunts lived on the South Side of Chicago, so we were able to keep in touch. We talked to each other from time to time and got together to see some things in the area.

My aunt lived at 57th and Marilyn, one block from Cottage Grove. Betty's aunt lived at 69th and closer to Lake Michigan. We made plans to go to the World's Fair that was in Chicago in 1934.

I was to go to the "EL" (elevated train) station nearest my aunt's and Betty would get on the "EL" near her aunts. Connections were perfect and we were off to see the Fair.

We toured the exhibits and finally came to the section where the rides were. By this time it was getting close to dinner time. The two of us decided we's take a ride on the Ferris Wheel, then catch the "EL" and go home.

We are enjoying the ride and it seems like we are getting an extra long ride. Maybe we had smiled nicely at the fellow when he fastened us in the chair. No, wait, we are on the top of the Ferris Wheel and it isn't moving. We can see no one around. There we sit for thirty minutes! Finally, the ride starts again.

When we stopped at the bottom, the attendant was surprised to see us. He told us that they thought everyone was off the ride and they had gone to supper.

You better believe the two Bettys, fifteen and sixteen years old, dashed to the nearest exit and caught the "El" for home.

A TRAVEL EVENT
by
Stanley F. Davis

In 1927 I was a very young man enroute to a remote oilwell drilling site in the jungles of Colombia, South America.

Arriving at Panama I was informed that it would be four or five days before I could get a boat to Cartagena, Colombia.

I registered at the hotel Astor, across the street from the railroad station in Colon. I chose this hotel rather than the United States Government hotel Washington because I thought the downtown environment would be more interesting than the Canal Zone.

I soon discovered that the only way to avoid being pestered by East Indian merchants trying to sell jade, carved ivory, and other junk was to dress like a Canal Zone employee: khaki pants, blue shirt open at the collar, sandals and a well worn straw hat. After I adopted this mode of dress I could roam the streets and bars without interference, watching the tourists being fleeced but always leaving the shop certain that they had outfoxed the vendor.

Most every night I went to a picture show to kill time. One night the feature was a Rin-Tin-Tin episode, probably the greatest dog celebrity that ever acted on the movie screen. Just before the picture started a young Panamanian matron sat down in the seat next to mine. When the picture became exciting she became excited, too, and from time to time she grabbed my arm or leg. Naturally, we started a conversation.

After the show I asked her if she would have a drink with me. She readily agreed but said, "Only one, and I don't drink anything but beer." After two pints of beer she told me that she was married to an American sergeant, and they lived on an army post in the Canal Zone. After two more pints of beer she told me that she and her husband had an argument that afternoon and she had left in a tiff. I surely hoped that her husband would not show up looking for her.

After two more pints of beer (six in all) she was so drunk she did not know where she was, how she got there, or how to get home. I could not leave her in that beer joint. I certainly did not want to take her to my hotel room to sleep it off. I just did not know what to do with her, and she was too drunk to help me. Finally, I decided the best thing to do was to send her home. I called a taxi, gave the driver fifteen bucks, poured her into the taxi, and told the driver to take her where she had told me she lived. But, if she did not want to go home, to take her wherever she said she wanted to go.

So much for ships that pass in the night.

THANKS & GIVING
by
Minnie Latiolais

During World War II, the government rationed gasoline, sugar, and meat. That didn't impact our household to any degree. My sister Dolores and I lived in New Orleans. We had no car, used very little sugar, and ate our noon meals out.

In the fall of 1945 our parents stayed with us while Dad was under the care of a doctor at Ochsner Clinic. He had developed osteomyelitis (bone infection) following the amputation of his left leg in 1942.

Dad was a person who never met a stranger. He spent much of his time sitting on the front porch, greeting all who passed by. He soon knew everyone in the neighborhood. He even did the grocery shopping for us at Rouly's Market.

Mr. Rouly owned and operated the market and the tavern in the adjoining building. The tavern was the gathering place for the neighborhood. These buildings were about one and a half blocks from our house, an easy distance for Dad to make on crutches.

Mom and Dad were going to be with us for Thanksgiving. Because of rationing, we started planning for our feast early. Sugar would be needed for the pumpkin pie. We were hoping for a turkey, but would take any meat we could get. Mr. Rouly would not take orders for meat more than a week in advance. We were concerned because the requests for meat would be high and there was a possibility there wouldn't be enough.

At Dolores' office her employer was raffling off a turkey among the employees. We did not think we would be lucky enough to get that turkey. Lo and behold! Dolores did win the turkey! It weighed fifteen pounds, too big to fit into our ice box. Dolores prevailed upon Mr. Rouly to keep the turkey in his meat case until the Wednesday before Thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving week arrived. We were elated to have everything we needed for the feast. Dolores and I had to work until noon on Wednesday, so Dad assigned himself the job of getting the turkey from Rouly's Market Wednesday morning. We made Mom and Dad promise they would wait until we got home before starting the preliminary preparations. Much had to be done on Wednesday since we planned on eating about noon Thursday.

On Wednesday, by chance, Dolores and I were on the same street car going home from work. When we arrived home, Mom was sitting on the front porch--a rarity. Dolores and I exchanged quizzical glances as we bounded up the steps. We greeted Mom and persuaded her to go with us to the kitchen.

Dad was busy gathering the utensils needed for preparing the food, but no food was in sight. He kept up a lively banter about everything but food. Dolores and I began bringing out the vegetables to be cleaned, chopped, sliced, and diced. When Dolores asked about the turkey, Dad answered, "It's been taken care of," then quickly changed the subject.

Finally Dolores put her hands on her hips and squared off with Dad. She demanded to know where the turkey was! I saw Mom slip out of the kitchen and head for the front. I then knew trouble was at hand. Dad hemmed and hawed, but Dolores was not going to be put off. She decided to go to Rouly's herself to get the turkey. Dad stopped her by stating the turkey was not at Rouly's. Well, if there was no turkey here and there was no turkey at Rouly's, where was it?

The hour of reckoning had arrived! Dad told us he had gone to Rouly's about 11:00 a.m. to get the turkey. Mr. Rouly had put it into a bag that Dad could carry with his crutches. He had placed it on top of the meat case. He and Dad were talking when a woman rushed in and started pleading for some meat, any meat, for her Thanksgiving dinner. She was not from the neighborhood. Mr. Rouly kindly tried to explain he didn't have a scrap of meat of any kind left. With tears streaming down her face she told them her son had come home on leave, as a surprise, for Thanksgiving. She was totally unprepared for a dinner. She had tried every market in the uptown area and none had any meat. Dad gave her our turkey for her dinner, refusing any payment for it.

He quickly let us know the spirit of charity would prevail--like it or not--and it finally did. Thanksgiving dinner had everything, except turkey. We gave thanks that we had given another family a great Thanksgiving!!

HAIRDOS AND DON'TS
by
Audrey Daniel

Last week I was introduced to a handsome young professional man with the most bizarre hairstyle imaginable. He sported a glorified Mohican, spiked in a four-inch length down the center of his semi-shaved scalp. Looking more like member of a rock group than a member of the medical profession, it was unbelievable that this hairstyle was the norm. That doctor's hair, or lack of it, brought back memories of the hairstyles that have come and gone through the years.

The first hair cut on my thick, straight blonde hair was called a "Buster Brown." It was short and square cut with bangs. I remember the day Mother sent my sister Elaine and me to the neighborhood barber shop. Mother told us to ask the barber for a "windblown" cut, a softer version of the Buster Brown. We returned home in tears; Mother immediately joined in our misery. The barber could not have done a better job had he put a soup bowl on our heads and cut around the bowl. Thank goodness hair grows!

When Shirley Temple became a star with her little golden curly locks, Mother thought I should have curls, too. We went to the beauty shop, where my straight blonde tresses were rolled on metal rods and hooked onto long electric wires dangling from a monstrous machine. I can still smell the odor of singed hair. I was too timid to tell the beauty operator that my skin was also burning; by the time she disconnected the wire and removed the rod, a huge blister had formed on my tender scalp. I still bear the mark of my first experience of trying to look beautiful. During the same year as the perm disaster, Mother was doing her usual Sunday night ritual, a visit to my sister Yvonne's house to have her hair set, a commitment that lasted a lifetime. Yvonne had studied to be a beautician, but only exercised her talents on family members, close friends, or anyone who could take advantage of her. I looked in admiration as Yvonne made deep finger waves in Mother's short, thin dark hair. The waves were held in place by thick, sticky green Nestle's wave set, a forerunner of today's styling gel. Finger waves eventually were replaced by the twenty-five cents Toni home perm.

Home perms soon became the "in" thing. I applied more than my fair share of them. I was well-accomplished at setting pin curls and rollers, as I had been styling my hair since childhood. Mother had no talent with either a comb or brush, so doing my own hair before my teen years was not unusual.

During World War II, hairstyles became longer, and pompadours were back. I remember rolling my hair over a rat, a pad over which hair was arranged to add fullness to the pompadour. Occasionally, a long rat, looking like a length of sausage, was used to roll my hair into a short, off the neck hair style. This style was a great hairdo for nighttime engagements, a wonderful way to conceal my drooping long locks devastated by the hot, humid New Orleans days.

Eventually our hairdos were covered by Jacqueline Kennedy hats, and hats

were eventually discarded for the full, teased and heavily sprayed bubble hair style. After torturing our hair like this, it's no wonder wigs became popular.

While I was still teasing and spraying, the younger generation was trying to look like Sonny and Cher. The long hair styles of the rebellious Vietnam years are now history.

Thank heavens, hair has taken a more sensible look. Fashion is not so rigid that we are all condemned to a single hair style. Coiffures are no longer wrapped around rats or sprayed into stiff mounds of unbendable hair.

My dear young doctor, I owe you an apology. You are probably an image of the New Age generation.

BOMBS AWAY
by
Melvin Daniel

After returning to San Francisco from my first tour of active duty in the South Pacific, the entire crew of the U.S.S. Saratoga was granted a thirty day leave. I had an enjoyable month back in New Orleans. I especially remember it because I first met Audrey after an introduction from Yvonne, her sister and my next door neighbor. I did not know, at that time, that Audrey would be my future wife.

My orders instructed me to return to the Naval Air Training Station in San Diego. I then was assigned to the Naval Air Station on San Clemente Island located about thirty miles northwest of San Diego. This island was quite isolated and we were granted liberty every other week traveling via a World War I four stacker to San Diego. Most of the sailors, including myself, hitchhiked a ride to Los Angeles, approximately one hundred twenty miles north, for rest and recreation. While in Los Angeles we visited the Hollywood Canteen and also did some sightseeing in this colorful city. We bunked in the YMCA and headed back three days later when our funds were depleted.

Four months later, we were rotated back to the Air Station in San Diego, closer to civilization. The duty there was more to my liking as I performed my assigned task as an aircraft mechanic.

San Diego, though a picturesque city, did not offer much for a sailor with liberty time. The zoo had a favorable reputation as one of the best in the country, so I did some sight seeing here. However I spent most liberty time in Los Angeles.

The Naval Air Station offered some recreational activities such as movies, bowling and other sporting activities. Sometimes life became boring, but we still kept busy.

I managed to have one beautiful weekend off without any watch to stand or aircraft to repair. While visiting with some of my friends in one of the hangers, I noticed a group of pilots preparing for some air activity. My interest intensified when they advised of a mock practice bombing run just off the coast of Mexico. One of the pilots invited me to fly with him since his crewman was absent. Although apprehensive, I donned a parachute and strapped into the aircraft.

The Squadron involved fifteen SB2C Douglas dive bombers, which were the latest in the Navy's arsenal. This "practice dive" was to be a "first" for me since I had never flown in an SB2C.

It was a clear day with hardly a cloud in the sky as the planes soared from the long runway. We formed a tight formation at an altitude of twelve thousand five hundred feet heading for the bombing range some one hundred miles south.

My heart was about to pound out of my body, and I kept asking myself, "What on earth am I doing up here? Suppose we can't pull out of the dive." As I looked down all I could see was huge rocks spiraling along the coastline. These rocks were to be the targets for the smoke bombs.

All of a sudden, the pilot's voice came over the microphone: "Daniel, we are about to make our first dive bombing run. Hold the mike and read to me the descending altitude in thousands of feet. We are now at twelve thousand five hundred feet."

I braced myself for the dive and looked over my shoulder to watch the Squadron peeling off. The time finally came. I read the altimeter as instructed when the plane descended at a ninety degree angle or "straight down." Finally, at two thousand five hundred feet, I shouted "mark," dropped the mike and held on for dear life. I blacked out for several seconds as the blood drained from my head producing an immediate severe headache. Then we climbed back to the diving altitude for a good fast-paced repeat performance. After two more dives, the pilot advised that we had to leave the squadron and return to San Diego because the aircraft was developing oil pressure problems. I checked my gauge and noticed that the pressure had dropped to a dangerous eighty pounds. I answered the pilot in the affirmative, my head now pounding like a drum.

We landed safely in San Diego and I thanked the pilot for the invitation to fly with him. Believe me, that was my first and last ride in a Navy dive bomber. It was a memorable experience I will never forget!

EARLIEST MEMORY
by
Jean Brazda

"Why does Grammia hate Smudge?" In response to this query about my aversion to my granddaughter Cara's cat, I found myself relating this long-buried story as it emerged from my memory.

A toddler is seated on the dining room floor. A cat, screeching and hissing, dashes into the room. People are screaming and running after it. Brandishing brooms, they try to direct the cat's erratic course. The cat leaps on the youngster and locks its claws into her shoulders. Then it is on her head, entangling her hair in its claws. The cat, now more frenzied, races across the room, jumps on the desk, and knocks the phone over. The child can see only the receiver of the phone dangling from its long cord. From the desk, the cat frantically tries to climb the drapery on the high dining room windows. From there, it tries to scale the wall. After scratching futilely, the cat thuds to the floor. Someone scoops the child from the floor and carries her from the melee.

I had finally unlocked the mystery of my repugnance to--no, my phobia about--cats. I have never felt the urge to cuddle a kitty. I have never gushed over a litter of newborn kittens. I have never even said, "Aren't kittens cute!"

This attitude does not mean that I am an animal hater. On the contrary, dogs--not just a dog--can attest to my admiration and tender care. I also love horses. But cats--NO! When a cat purrs, it's just revving up its motor to attack me. When a cat arches its back and rubs against my leg, it's just taking measure of my animosity. I can actually feel my "flesh crawling." To aggravate this whole unpleasant cat situation, I have developed a terrific allergic reaction to cat dander, to cat hair, to cat presence.

Why? Why me? I'm a relatively nice person. But last summer, after sixty-five years of wondering, I finally found the answer to Cara's question. And the episode wasn't a dream, for my brother Pat verified the story. What a relief! I don't hate Smudge; I am traumatized by cats.

IN SHA'ALLAH
by
Lois Diehl

It was spring of 1970. I was expecting our third child in early September and Conrad was supervising the construction of the gathering centers in North Kuwait. Greg, now one year old, had been our trial run for a birth at Southwell Hospital. Now that we knew not to expect Dr. Arafat's presence for the birth and were at ease with the competency of the midwife delivery, we decided this baby would also be born in Kuwait. Our plans were to take our two months vacation in early summer when Conrad's project was completed and return to Kuwait in plenty of time for the September birth.

Little did we know that we were about to become very familiar with the Arabic phrase "in sha-Allah," translated very loosely as "if Allah wills." First of all, Allah did not will that Conrad's project be finished anywhere close to the anticipated time. He was finally assured we could leave no later than the first week of August. Plans had to be revised. I could travel through mid-June without a doctor's permission, but then needed a letter from the doctor to travel through early August. After that time I was grounded until the baby's birth. Allah willed instead that this child was to be born in the States.

Kevin was excited because this change in plans afforded him the opportunity to return to Switzerland for six weeks of camp, escaping the 100+ degree temperatures of the Kuwaiti summers. This summer he would go outside Geneva along the lake instead of near Davos in the southeastern area. We would fly to Switzerland, to meet him and then travel on to the States.

After more delays, Conrad's project was now to be completed in September; but he was assured he could still accompany his family in August. We notified the camp to transport Kevin to the Geneva Airport where we would meet him. Eight hours before we were to leave, Allah intervened again. Conrad was informed that he was indispensable to the project and therefore had to stay in Kuwait. There was no time to change plans again. Someone had to meet Kevin and in less than a week I could no longer travel by air, with or without doctor's permission. Very reluctantly and close to tears, I boarded the 2 AM plane with a squirming fifteen month old and a letter from Dr. Arafat.

We were to change to an Air Italia plane in Rome. I remember struggling through the airport with my heavy carryon bag and Greg in tow. It was a long hot walk over the tarmac to the plane that was to take us to Geneva. By the time we reached the foot of the stairs that disappeared into the tail of the plane, I could go no farther. When the stewardess at the top of the stairs motioned for me to hurry and get on board. The tears I had in Kuwait were replaced with anger as I told her, " If you want us on board so this plane can take off, someone could give me a hand."

We were finally settled in our seats. There was a lot of whispering between the stewardesses in the rear of the plane and then one went to the cockpit to get the

Captain. I didn't understand Italian, so I did not realize I was the topic of the conversation. The Captain approached me and asked if I was awaiting a child. I thought he said 'meeting' and immediately replied, "Yes, my son in Geneva." He became very flustered and said I would have to return to the terminal to have a doctor examine me before I could continue. "There is no way I will get off this plane after the trouble I had getting here," I replied. " And besides, I am to meet my son in Geneva in two hours." The Captain was speaking mostly in Italian with just a little English. When I realized he was about to have me removed from the plane, I retrieved Dr. Arafat's letter from my purse and coyly asked him, "Is this what I need to stay on the plane?" After he read the letter, he turned and said to the crew, "Now we go."

At last we arrived at the Geneva airport. But where was Kevin? I had the camp representative paged, but got no response. I then checked with Swissair, and was told the representative had been there to put some campers on a flight to London. Next, I called the camp just as the driver returned from the airport. I was informed that there had been a big mixup and Kevin had been put on the Swissair flight to London with the other campers just as I was landing. How did this happen? He did not have a ticket to London for today. His ticket was written for three days from now. Swissair was very cooperative and asked me to sit down while they tried to locate Kevin. Shortly, the rep approached me all smiles as she said, "Everything is fine. The plane has landed in London and Kevin is with his parents." I will never forget the look on her face as she turned and went running back down the corridor when I said, "Well, I left his father in the Arabian Gulf about twelve hours ago and I am his mother." Allah's will was becoming frustrating by the moment.

After what seemed like hours the Swissair rep returned to inform me that Kevin was indeed in London and was in the company of Swissair personnel. He would be returned to Geneva on a flight arriving at 10 PM, so I was to go on to our hotel and he would be delivered to me there. Next came the question, "How would you like to pay for his return ticket?" I informed Swissair that he did not have a ticket to go to London in the first place, and I was not paying for someone else's error in giving him a boarding pass and putting him on the plane. After much discussion, it was decided that Swissair would take care of it.

I decided to meet Kevin's flight. Allah intervened again. His flight landed early and I missed him again. When I returned to the hotel, the doorman informed me that a small boy with no luggage got out of a taxi and was directed to the check-in desk. The Concierge insisted on accompanying me on the elevator to return to my room. Over my objections we got off on a floor, two floors below my room, and knocked on one of the room doors. Much to my surprise I heard Kevin's voice coming from within the room. The first thing he said to me was, "Hi, Mom! The plane ride was free, but the taxi ride cost me 10 Francs." Swissair had simply put him in a taxi and sent it to the hotel. Kevin had checked himself into a room, not realizing I was there. I told the Concierge that Kevin did not need a room to himself and finally took him to my room. When his luggage arrived the next day, the stench of a boy's six weeks of unlaundered camp clothing was overpowering. Needless to say, most were discarded right there.

After several days of recouping in Geneva we flew on to London to transfer to our PanAm flight. It was our first trip across the Atlantic on the new 747 jumbo jet. This leg of the trip was relatively uneventful except when I discovered at check-in that I had left my bag containing all my money, our passports, and our tickets on the front seat of the Heathrow transfer bus. Fortunately, I had remembered the bus number and its routing. After a few phone calls and anxious moments my bag was once again in my possession.

At last we arrived in Baltimore. We patiently awaited our turn in the customs line and watched the agents diligently search through some sleeping bags inch by inch. We watched as they took sausage links from one of the passengers and pistachio nuts from another. Soon it was our turn. We had nothing to declare and were waved on. Just before we reached the exit, Allah returned. "What is that sticking out of the boy's PanAm bag?" one of the agents asked. "It is a camp souvenir--a Y-shaped piece of tree branch that grew around a rock," I replied. "You cannot bring it into the States," he said. Kevin loudly protested and we were asked to step aside. We were still there after the last passenger had cleared customs. Kevin was not going to leave his camp memento. Soon we were joined by several more agents and an agronomist with a microscope and other equipment. After a thorough inspection and a lot of discussion, Kevin got to keep his camp memento.

Now came the task of finding a doctor to deliver the baby. My cousin, Dr. George Baker whom I called Bill, had just begun his practice near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, a town about thirty miles from my parents' home. Bill's practice was in the growing stages and I persuaded him to deliver my baby. September came, the due date was long past and Conrad was still in Kuwait. Before he could leave, there was another Arab-Israeli conflict and Allah willed that Kuwait close its borders for approximately a month.

Bill and I agreed that labor should be induced if the baby was not born by Saturday, October 3. This decision was made because of my distance from the hospital and Greg's relatively speedy entrance. On that day at noon I entered Chambersburg Hospital and Bill started the procedure. He left me at 3 PM for lunch and assured me we had a while before delivery time. Imagine his surprise and mine when he had to abruptly leave lunch and race to the delivery room barely in time to get his gloves on for my daughter's birth at 3:30 PM. For years Conrad always remembered her birthday as October 4 because when I called him at 5 PM it was already after midnight and another day in Kuwait. At last Allah willed that the Kuwaiti borders open and that Conrad could leave. We were united as a family again and Conrad finally got to hold his daughter, Lauren Elizabeth, for the first time when she was two weeks old.

BEGINNING A NEW LIFE
by
Margaret Bollich

I have spoken about my Father and hope that I have expressed the love and admiration I had for him. Why tell all of this? My whole life is tied up, not in the past, but in the love I have for my Father. Even though he was dead he continued to influence many of the decisions that I made throughout my life.

"What about your Mother?" you ask. I remember her as a kind, loving, devoted wife and mother, not only to her own three children, but to the three step-sons as well. Mother was always so busy that my recollection of her, in the days before Dad died, is the good meals she prepared, the clean clothes she provided, the neat clean house she kept and the way she waited for Dad to come home in the evenings.

After my dad died, I didn't care if I lived or not. I only wanted to be with him. This seems strange to me now, sixty-two years later. I didn't try in school, didn't go half the time and often went home with a headache in the middle of the day. My principal, Charles Randle, KNEW, he understood that time would heal the wound.

I need to regress a little, for I left my Father on the train. Four days after he died we arrived in Eunice to find that his whole family had driven from West Texas for his funeral. Two of his brothers, the Methodist ministers Emmit and Travis Mays, were with us. They had come to Fort Wayne, at Mother's request, when Dad became ill. In addition to the Mays brothers, there were the mother and father, Alice and Dallas Mays, and three sisters, Ora, Mary Lee and Vista. There were also four brothers, Herbert and Herman, who were twins, and Clarence and Gus Mays. I don't recall where all of these people stayed, but at that time there was only one hotel in Eunice. I will never understand why some of those boys didn't go to Northeast Texas to get Alvin and bring him to his Father's funeral.

We arrived in Eunice on a cold dreary January Tuesday. Because Dad wasn't buried until Thursday, the body lay in my grandparents' parlor. Hundreds of people came to pay their respects. Even the colored people who had worked for him at the lumber yard before he left Eunice asked if they could come. I especially remember the Sunday school class that I belonged to before we went to Indiana. They came as a group, making me feel better to know that they still remembered me. As a matter of fact, one of them sits next to me in this class and there are three others in the vicinity who are still my good friends.

Before the Mays family left for their respective homes they gathered on my grandparents' front steps to take a family picture. Great Uncle Emmit Mays stood in for Dad and later his picture was replaced by my father's to make a complete family portrait. That picture is part of my treasured collection.

It was time now to get on with our lives. The first thing Mother did was to enroll us in school. Kenneth was in first grade. Mildred, who did not start to school when she was six because of illness, was in second grade. I was ten, in fourth grade. The principal questioned my ability to read, so he called in a fourth grade teacher, Ivy Mae

Smith, and asked me to read to her. I must have been concerned, for the memory of that experience has remained with me all these years. Miss Smith took me into a room with shelves of books. It wasn't a library but storage for different levels of books. This I learned many years later was called "Trying a book on for size." When we went back to the principal's office, Miss Smith said, "I can teach her to read," and she did. Before we leave this wonderful teacher I must tell you she taught me not only in fourth grade but again in seventh grade. To say she was a good teacher is not enough. Her seventh grade class in 1934 was the only class in the St. Landry public school system that scored 100% on the state spelling test. She knew how to make a student want to learn.

Many years later at a State Reading Conference I was able to recognize her publicly for what she had contributed to my education.

A LOVE AFFAIR WITH SHERLOCK HOLMES
by
Wanda C. Rense

Sherlock Holmes has always loomed large in my life. My father was a committed "aficionado." The library in our home had three volumes of detective stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. By the time I was ten or eleven years old I had read them all.

My father also had a love for the developing medium of radio. We had, early-on, state-of-the-art radio sets. Those sets were remarkable devices, able to pick up broadcasting stations at fantastic distances. One winter, one of the USA stations, I have forgotten which station, ran a weekly hour-long series of Sherlock Holmes stories. Oh, glory! glory! In our home all systems stopped to await the event. I think that the night might have been Wednesday, but I cannot now be certain. However, no medical crisis dared occur. No baby could be born. **Nothing** could happen during the *Sherlock Holmes Hour*. I remember that the sponsor was a company called *G. Washington Coffee*. Judging by the content of the ads, I believe that this product might have been an early go at instant coffee. I suppose some research would provide an answer (remind me to do this some day). The Holmes stories were done in the one hour slot, except for the longer stories which, I believe, were done in a "to be continued" style over two weeks. I do wonder, what happened to *G. Washington Coffee*?

It is perhaps not surprising that, when I married, I chose a man who was likewise a Holmes devote'. I think that this must have been coincidental; I cannot remember that it was a pre-requisite. As a result, the home that we established always emphasized these stories. Our family has worn out several sets of The Complete Stories of Sherlock Holmes. Our sons Will, John, and Charles are all fans of the great detective. In fact, Will has done considerable research into this subject and possibly could be considered a resource person on the topic.

The summer of 1964 was a great one for me. I had several months of exciting plans. The schedule started off with a visit to my in-laws, Rudy and Betty, in England. Rudy was both national and international Supervisor of Production of the Lubrizol Corporation. During this time, Lubrizol was in the midst of building several international plants. The first to be done was the plant in England, located south of Liverpool. Rudy was overseeing the technical portion of the plant. Later they would be in France and Japan. Lubrizol built a fourth plant, concurrent with these, in Iran; but Rudy elected to send one of his assistants, and he and Betty did not live there.

In England, Rudy and Betty lived in the small village of Ledsham in Cheshire, in an area called Bomborough. They stayed at a beautiful facility called Ledsham Country Club, which was in reality a very upscale English Inn. Ledsham was a wonderful place to stay for a visit, truly English countryside. It was surrounded by other small villages, all of ancient lineage. All these small villages averaged a mile or so apart, separated by fields, and they were connected by footpaths. The footpaths

were incised deeply into the earth, well below the hedgerows, attesting to the countless feet, over many centuries of time, that had passed their way. Since I have always been a joyful walker, I can't imagine greater pleasure than to hike from village to village, enjoying the fields and the wildflowers in between, and the interest of village life, as well.

Most of the villages had their own church. Ledsham didn't have one, so we attended the church in Burton, St. Nicholas, a relatively "new" church dating to the 14th century. The church in nearby Smithwick was almost 200 years older. Once in a while someone would be in one of the old graveyards making a tracing of one of the old stones, apparently a popular activity. I will always remember St Nicholas Church especially. I got to know the bell-ringers. There were four of them, one to each of four bells. They allowed me to climb with them to the loft, which was up a very steep and narrow, tightly curved stone stair. In the surprisingly light and sunny loft, I would try to follow the difficult music while they "rang." What made the music difficult was the manner of writing--not across, as we are accustomed to, but up-and-down in vertical lines. Bell-ringing is a musical form in itself.

Ledsham was located just five minutes from the north Wales border and perhaps eight miles from the wonderful city of Chester. Wales is simply beautiful, and I treasure the memories of my trips there. I also got to know Chester, at least somewhat. Chester has its original Roman wall, in good condition and still in use. Shops are nestled against it, and the wall, with the stairs to it, is in general use for shortcutting. Chester also has a very interesting old cathedral, part of which dates to the 9th century. I think Americans tend to forget how old European cultures can be.

During this time Betty and I made plans to go to London. We planned to make a stopover at Stratford, then go on to London, where we built in enough days to fulfill our long lists of "wannados." Betty had consulted some of her English friends and made reservations for us at a recommended hotel. It turned out to be a great choice. It was a beautiful, modern facility, in the heart of the city. Once we supplied ourselves with maps and learned to negotiate the transportation system, we were ready to go!

Our separate lists of "wannados" duplicated nicely. We both wanted to do some theater, and that fit in nicely for evenings. We each had only one item on our personal list that the other did not share. Betty was collecting "horsebrass" and wanted to go to some London antique shops. I had never even heard of "horsebrass." A piece of horsebrass is an item, sometimes fancy, made of brass, attached to the bridle, that the horse wore on his, I suppose, forehead. What either the horse or the collector would want with horsebrass I emphatically do not know. But I acquiesced with grace, and we spent quite a few hours sifting through antique shops. We also did the usual tourist attractions, of course. On my list there was only one additional item. I wanted to visit #221 Baker Street.

"But," Betty protested, "that address is purely fictional." "Not exactly," I replied. "It is fictional that Sherlock Holmes lived there, but the address does exist. And I want to see it."

So we took off early one afternoon. We found Baker Street on the map, took a bus, got off on Baker, and searched until we came to 221.

I gazed with pure joy. Baker Street is a sort of "average" London street, and 221 is just a building, much like its neighbors roundabout. If anyone is now watching the "Mystery" series on PBS (the current Sherlock Holmes stories, starring Jeremy Brett as Holmes and Edward Hardwicke as Dr. Watson), you can see duplicated both the street and the outside of the building.

Naturally, as I gazed, I became greedy to see more. "Let's go inside," I said to Betty, "and see what the interior looks like." She became cautious. "We shouldn't. It's a private building."

"Nonsense," and I dashed inside. I was in a building which was narrow, widthwise, longer from street-side to back. We stood in a foyer, a hallway to the right, with a couple of doors, closed, leading off. A stairway went up on the left, with a turn toward the top.

Sherlock Holmes had lived upstairs. "Let's go up and see what it's like upstairs," I said. Betty looked more and more reluctant. But I didn't give her a chance to voice her reservations. I loped up the stairs. Betty followed, a bit more slowly.

At the top of the stairs I found myself in a squarish hall, almost a duplicate of the layout downstairs. There was a narrow hall leading back, as it did downstairs. There was a door immediately to the right. The door was a bit larger than I would have expected from the rest of the architecture. I couldn't resist. I grabbed the door and pulled it open.

The door was heavy and when I threw it open, it banged loudly. I stood in the center of the doorframe, looking into the area beyond. No fireplace and mantle. None of the Victorian clutter that made up his suite of rooms. Indeed, there was no suite of rooms at all. There was just one very large room, rimmed round with files and shelves, containing perhaps 8-10 desks scattered throughout. At every desk sat an occupant--and every occupant was staring fixedly at me. Clearly, whatever the business pursued in this office, it emphatically did not involve drop-ins.

I had the grace to be embarrassed. I think I muttered something, perhaps "Excuse me," or "Pardon me," as I slowly backed out. Unfortunately, again I slammed the heavy door loudly behind me. I dropped precipitously down the stairs, joining Betty at the bottom.

To her credit, Betty did not have a single word of reproach. I am glad. Despite our reception, I was in a euphoric state. I had seen the place where Sherlock Holmes lived!