Life and Letters

Volume X

This tenth volume of **LIFE & LETTERS** marks a five year beginning for me. In the fall of 1990 I sat before a group of thirteen adults in a life history writing class. Their lives combined to form over eight hundred years of experience, and I sat before them one week from my thirtieth birthday. I began teaching that class with a goal wide in scope, but narrow in understanding. Today I recognize those initial anxieties and concerns about "teaching" people many years my senior as the incentive behind my continued involvement with **LIFE & LETTERS**. I've learned by listening to my students. I often wonder if they realize how much of what I teach them is simply a return of what they've taught me.

My original outline for the course of "stimulating the narrator in students and encouraging them to write their life experiences" has become a process layered with implications. These implications derive themselves from what one student describes as a "stimulating, humanizing experience." This collection of stories is hardly the sum of my students' lives. It is, however, a sampling of stories generated by the heart, stories dug up from the past to help us walk our present lives. As they've taught me, I hope these words and their writers teach you.

----Joan Stear
USL, Lafayette, Louisiana
Summer 1994

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Front Cover (clockwise from upper righthand corner): Lois Diehl; Melvin Daniel with mother-in-law; Audrey Tassin (youngest in front); Ruby Hamilton; Carol Tufts with daughter Ann; Audrey Daniel (on left); (center) Clarence and Mary Scheps

LIFE AND LETTERS
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Seated, l. to r.: Ruth Falk, Rena Turk, Audrey Daniel, Carol Tufts, Betty Gerard, Joe Glorioso

Standing, l. to r.: Charles Cain, Joan Stear, Iris Durel, Weellen Lemoine, Betty Shoemaker, Audrey Tassin, Ruby Hamilton, Lois Diehl, Mary Scheps (Missing from photo, Melvin Daniel)

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OUR DUAL LITTLE CITIZEN
by
Carol Tufts

We had lived in Guatemala four years before our longed-for baby arrived. She was not due until mid-October, and on September 11th I had my regular check for Rh-negative anti-bodies. On September 12th Dorothy, the surgical nurse who shared our apartment, and her fiance, John Fisher, invited me to Antigua to watch the volcano eruption. I opted for an early bedtime after a busy afternoon of errands.

At 10:00 p.m. I had to call a taxi to rush me to the small Maternity House, and the driver kindly came upstairs to carry my suitcase of autoclaved baby apparel. John and Dorothy came to see me at midnight. John sent a double-urgent telegram to Jack as soon as the Post Office opened and arranged for a chartered plane.

When Ann Helen Tufts arrived twenty hours later she weighed four and a half pounds. There were no incubators in the country. There was no chance of an identity problem--the other four babies had mops of dark hair and Ann was so blond she looked bald.

Jack visited me at all hours and was served lunch and dinner in my room. Dr. Ortiz, who owned the small hospital, was a genial host. When Jack took a taxi home one night, the same driver recognized our address and gave Jack a tongue-lashing for leaving me alone. Jack explained that the baby was premature and the driver calmed down.

Jack bought a used jeep so we would be sure of transportation when we went to live at the mine. Ann and I joined him soon after Dorothy and John were married in October. Our earlier wishes had all come true. We had a little girl, a passable road to Coban, and a house at the mine. Except for two flights to the City for Ann's check-ups, we lived there happily for two fleeting years.

Somehow Ann learned Spanish and English simultaneously and always seemed to know when to use each language. We often invited the bachelor status men to dinner one at a time and Ann had a group of adoring uncles. They built her a lovely high-chair and later converted it to a youth chair.

In September we three boarded a United Fruit ship sailing to New York. When Ann asked where the bananas were, Terry, the social director, confessed that they were all in the holds. She brought Ann a big juicy pear--a new experience for Ann. Guatemala pears and peaches were hard and had to be cooked.

We sailed into New York harbor the morning of Ann's birthday. On deck Ann was perched on Jack's shoulder, but the Statue of Liberty was obscured by fog. We waited and hoped. A sudden clearing revealed the Lady. Ann called down to me, "Look, Mommy, that lady's waving at me!"

It seemed an auspicious welcome to a small child who would someday call the United States her country.

BEST FRIENDS
by
Iris Durel

Barbara Munson was my best friend from the time I started Central School until she moved away at the end of sixth grade. Her family lived on St. Landry Street, about four blocks from our house. Her father had a candy factory in a huge room above their garage. Occasionally, Barbara and I were allowed up there. We got to eat the broken pieces of pralines that couldn't be packaged. The room held huge kettles bubbling with syrup and huge tables where the candy was dropped by small dipperfuls and allowed to cool. After the candies cooled, they were individually wrapped and then boxed. (I wish I could remember the name of Mr. Munson's company.)

Barbara seemed to have it all: a father (which I did not have), a maid (which I did not have), all the homemade candy she could eat, and a sixteen-inch two-wheeler. In fact, I learned to ride a two-wheeler on her bike. Barbara and I shared everything (though I must say, she had more to share than I did--but she loved to feed our chickens, so there!)

When we were eight years old, we made our Private Communion together. We were in the same class at school, we went to catechism together, were in the children's choir together, made our First Holy Communion together. Let's face it, we were inseparable. We were truly best friends!

The day Barbara and her family moved to Brusly, near Baton Rouge, was one of my saddest childhood days. I cried myself to sleep for many nights after. The candy factory did not prosper, so Mr. Henry Munson took a position as overseer of a big plantation in Brusly. Barbara and I corresponded regularly, and then came the good news that I could spend a couple of weeks with them. Joy of joys!

Jay took me to Brusly since he was now a salesman for Quaker Oats, Baton Rouge being part of his territory. Long before I-10, this trip took us by way of US190. When we got to Krotz Springs, we stopped to eat lunch at a restaurant he frequented. I felt so grown-up walking into a restaurant with my big brother. He explained the menu to me and helped me make a selection. I was very green and still wet behind the ears.

How glad Barbara and I were to see each other! The Munson's lived in a beautiful, big plantation home with a wide veranda across the front of the house. There were several card tables and chairs set up and a swing on the porch. A wide hallway went from the front to the back of the house. When you got to the back door there were about three steps down to a gallery, which went completely around the kitchen and dining room. Between these two rooms was a great big pantry. Much later, I learned the reason for a separate kitchen was the danger of fire. And, yes, Sophie was there: their maid from Lafayette had moved with them. Everyone loved Sophie!

Next to the gallery was a gigantic cistern. I was really impressed! On the gallery was an ice box with a motor on top that ran on gas, a Kelvinator, I think. That porch was wonderful. We could skate on it, or ride bikes on it, round and round the kitchen. If it rained we had so many places to play it didn't matter at all.

We never minded the rain; there was a drainage canal in the pasture in front of the house, and after a rain, Aunt Mabel (Mrs. Munson) would let us put on our bathing suits and play in the water while she and Barbara's older sisters played cards on the front porch.

Have you ever rolled a cigarette? The Munsons had a little machine, a flat metal box with a hump in the middle that had a lever on it. You could put a stack of cigarette papers on one side of the metal box, roll the lever over part-ways, add a little tobacco, continue pushing the lever and out would come a real honest-to-goodness cigarette! If I remember correctly, you then had to pick up the cigarette and wet the glued end. I wish I could remember exactly how that was done, but I do know Barbara and I would roll cigar boxes full for the Munson's, as they all smoked, all except us children, that is!

In the wide hallway was a stairway that went to a large room that contained day beds and a couple of tables and chairs. There were many books. That visit was my first introduction to Shakespeare. Barbara and I spent many hours in that attic room reading.

My summer trips to Brusly continued for several years. Then, I suppose, we two best friends started to grow apart. Why do we have to grow up?

A VISIT TO UNCLE JOHNNY'S HOUSE
by
Ruby Hamilton

Growing up on a small farm in the 30's was not always easy or fun; however, when my parents said we were going to Uncle Johnny's house, I knew that would be fun! These visits were always on Sunday, as that was the only day the men did not work. Women did not get the day off; they worked seven days a week.

Uncle Johnny lived about five miles from us on his farm in Central Louisiana. There were ten children in their family, all such fun to play with. Their house was a typical double-pin built from native pine in the 1920's. A porch stretched across the front of the house and an open galley extended to the back with rooms on either side.

The kitchen was at the end of the galley, away from the other rooms. In the kitchen, a big black wood burning stove was seldom cold. Aunt Viney and her oldest girls prepared the best food in the world. They made huge pans of cornbread from corn they grew on the farm and ground into meal by my father's grist mill. From the same oven came baked sweet potatoes with their skins bursting with sweet syrup oozing out. There were different kinds of vegetables grown in their garden, including big red tomatoes picked that very morning. The meat was either a fat hen, prepared with dumplings, floating in the rich broth; or smoked ham or sausage from the smokehouse. For dessert there was fresh peach cobbler which smelled mouth watering as it came out of the oven.

Uncle Johnny enjoyed his day off sitting on the front porch in his large cowhide bottom rocking chair with his feet propped on the banister which extended around the porch. From this vantage point he could survey his farm and keep his eye on his growing boys.

Small children knew how to get out of sight of their parents of else they would be given jobs. So off we would go to the orange orchard where we ate fruit off the trees until our stomachs would not hold anymore. Sometimes when the sugar cane was ready and before syrup was made from the sweet juice, we would peel and chew cane. Then we would go to the big shed where the cotton was stored waiting to be hauled to the cotton gin. We loved to roll in the soft white cotton, even though it stuck to our skin and made us sneeze. Our favorite game, though, was "playing church." One of the cousins would do the preaching while others of us made up the choir and congregation, singing "Shall We Gather at the River," "Amazing Grace," or anything we could remember. What fun we had making fun of the "hell and brimstone" preachers who filled the pulpit in the nearby Baptist Church, which we all attended faithfully.

One Sunday while we were visiting, the big boys were amusing themselves riding horses up and down the lane in front of the house. Bunk and Preacher (Uncle Johnny gave all his children nicknames) were racing each other on their favorite horse toward the house where their father was sitting. They must have forgotten the picket fence around the yard because Bunk's horse planted his feet suddenly and threw Bunk over his head. Bunk landed of top of the picket fence. He was cut and bleeding badly from a long gash on his head! My uncle, very much in control, turned to the mother of this boy and said,

"Viney, bring me a needle and thread." He sat Bunk between his legs, clamped his knees on Bunk's head, and sewed the cut neatly, despite Bunk's howls of pain.

There was a doctor available, about six miles away, but Uncle Johnny was very angry at him because of this story:

> About six months before, Uncle Johnny and my father, Lester, took their boys fishing on Six Mile Creek. Bunk broke his arm trying to crank the Model-T truck. Sometimes the crank would "kick," and if you did not move quickly, it could break your arm. Since they were way back in the swamp, Uncle Johnny decided he needed to try to set Bunk's arm and relieve some of the boy's pain. He found an old orange crate which he broke up and used for a splint. Then he cut Bunk's pants legs and tore them into strips. With my dad holding Bunk's shoulder, Uncle Johnny pulled and pulled until he felt the bone in line. Next he placed it on the small board and wrapped it with the dirty pants strips. Between the two men they got the truck started and Uncle Johnny told his brother, Lester, "Maybe we should take the boy to Doctor Officer and let him check my work." When they arrived at the doctor's office they waited for his verdict. The doctor unwrapped the pants strips, felt up and down Bunk's broken arm, replaced everything as he had found it and said to Uncle Johnny, "John, I could not have done a better job. That will be three dollars."

Bunk's latest accident would be one time the good doctor would not get his money; he would do the job himself and without an inspection! Uncle Johnny was still angry about his three dollars.

Allie, my mama, and Aunt Viney were sitting on the other end of the long porch, shelling peas for dinner. "Viney," my mother asked, "Do you think you'll ever raise these wild boys?" With a straight face Aunt Viney answered, "Wal, ya don't raise many, but them you do raise is gooduns!"

Late in the afternoon, two ice cream freezers were brought out to the porch filled with mixture prepared mostly from milk and eggs produced on the farm. The big boys, tired of horse racing, were called in to turn the crank on the freezers. The smaller girls were "allowed" to sit on the top of the freezer to hold it down. When the mixture became so firm the handles would not turn anymore, the bucket was drained of salt water and the ladle was pulled. If you were lucky, you could get a taste of the treat that would be served after supper. Supper often consisted of Aunt Viney's delicious biscuits that we used to "sop" the homemade syrup and butter made by Aunt Viney. There was plenty of bacon, sausage, or ham from the smokehouse.

It was usually dark before we assembled on the back porch with a bowl and spoon in hand, waiting our turn at the freezer for the grand ice cream. We ate so much of the cold, sweet, creamy dessert we would start shaking. Sixty years later, I can still remember the wonderful feeling of being with my family and cousins, everyone laughing and relating stories of the day and stuffing ourselves with ice cream.

The good times over this day, we piled, tired and sleepy, into my father's Model-T touring car and started down the dirt road toward home. Uncle Johnny, Aunt Viney, and all the cousins would wave good-bye to us, amid shouts of "You all come back soon!"

FOUCHER STREET
by
Audrey Z. Tassin

During late summer of 1937 when I was six years old, our family moved away from the location where our grocery store and home were in uptown New Orleans. It was not a happy move for any of us, but it was necessary. Many of the store customers were unable to pay for their goods and their charge tabs became extremely high. The family business of seventeen years, unfortunately, was forced into bankruptcy.

It was devastating for Mama and Daddy to see customers, who were also their friends, out of work and unable to pay their honest debts. When I was older, I realized my parents' compassion for their neighbors meant five long struggling years ahead for them. With God's help, they managed those bitter Depression years together.

My first recollection of the dwelling on Foucher Street that was to house the ten of us--Mama, Daddy, my six siblings and Josie--was dismal and depressing. Josie, our nanny for the past six years had become so attached to us that she felt we were her family. She agreed to move with us even though Daddy was unable to pay her a stipend. She consequently, helped me to cope with the new surroundings.

The house structure was a common style in New Orleans. It was a two-story double, shot-gun house, (so named because a bullet fired from the front door could pass straight through all the downstairs rooms into the backyard).

The house was eerie to me. A big neglected water oak tree stood too close to our front porch, casting a scary shadow on it. An eight foot cedar fence brought darkness in the long narrow alley and was also the culprit for too little day light inside the downstairs of our house. My uncanny feelings seemed justified.

Summer vacation in this house was dull and friendless. I don't remember happy times at night on Foucher Street like I had with my siblings over the grocery store. Most of the time Mama didn't feel well and was in her bedroom. Daddy worked long hours six days a week, so we saw little of him. Later I learned he had a job for an independent grocer earning a pittance.

Hooray! Summer was over and I was certainly ready for school. The previous year I had completed first grade at Mater Dolorosa on Carrollton Avenue. I would have preferred being home with Mama and Josie that first year of school; however, I was excited about leaving them and that gloomy house during the day to enter the second grade at St. Henry's School. The school had no mortgage, and we were allowed to attend tuition free. St. Henry's was located one block from Napoleon Avenue and only half a block from Magazine Street. Street cars ran every three minutes on Magazine Street from Canal to the Audubon Park and they made loud clanging noises that I loved. My sister and brother, Rosie and Emile J., walked me to school everyday. I used to wave to the street car conductors and was so delighted when they responded. (I could go on about "Street Car Nostalgia," but that is another story.)

Making new friends at St. Henry's seemed easy, and I loved the sisters teaching there. One afternoon in Sister's class,someone knocked on the door. Was I ever surprised to see my Daddy there with Rosie and Emile J.! Daddy checked us out of

school and took us home. My three older sisters, Yvonne, Lorraine, and Muriel, were already at the house with my two-year-old brother Paul. Reverend Father Paul Gaudin was also there. Father was thirty years old then and was assistant pastor for Mater Dolorosa Church. Our family became his lifelong friends.

At first, seeing all of them together startled me, but in an instant I relaxed. I was staring at something beautiful. It appeared to be a tiny satin lined baby basket, sitting on Mama's piano stool. From a distance it looked like an adorable baby doll inside the shiny satin basket. Instead, it was a beautiful real baby with thick black hair dressed in a long white christening dress trimmed with rows of dainty lace. Daddy said, "This is your sister, Jane." He continued, ""She was born here, at home this morning. Jane lived for only a few minutes, but Mama was able to baptize her." At that time, we all knew there was another angel in our family. Baby Flora, our first angel, died in 1932 after ten days of life.

Father started the traditional burial prayers while all of us knelt around the coffin. Mama was resting in her bed during the prayer service, and when it ended, we all kissed the baby. Daddy and Father Gaudin then took our baby Jane away. This beautiful baby brought sadness into our home, yet she also built our family bond with her memory.

It's odd that most of the children were not aware that Mama was expecting a baby. She was always a big woman, however, I think we should have realized her condition. Fifty-seven years ago I guess it was a lot easier than it is today to allow your children to be ignorant.

A few months later, Mama seemed normal again. I was preparing for my first confession and Holy Communion Day. I could hardly wait. It was a beautiful sunny day, and my family went to see me. I was wearing a pretty white dress and veil with white stockings and shoes. After mass, Mama and I took the streetcar to visit my grandmother and my aunts, who gave me money gifts. Mama said I was like an angel that day; I was so happy.

It was getting close to Christmas of 1937, and I was sitting at the dining room table doing my homework. There was a table cloth on the table and a pretty china lamp in the center with the electrical cord pulled straight up to the outlet hanging from above. I was in a comfortable position leaning on the back two legs of a dining room chair. It was fun rocking back and forth, keeping the two front legs off the floor. Mama saw me and said, "Audrey Mae, stop! You know you are not supposed to do that." Just as she finished the command, I fell backwards to the floor bringing the tablecloth and lamp with me. China pieces were everywhere. I knew I was in trouble. Almost immediately after Mama saw that I was okay, she took me by the hand and put me over her knee. That was my first and only over the knee spanking, but I'll never forget it. Now I had to wait till Daddy came home from work to tell <u>him</u> what happened. I was scared.

It's a good thing it was Saturday morning when this disaster occurred. I was sure I had committed a terrible sin by breaking Mama's good lamp. Josie was going to confession at three o'clock, so I went with her. I almost cried when I told the priest about the lamp. To my surprise, he smiled when he explained that breaking the lamp was not a sin but God wants us to obey our parents. After saying my contrition, I felt happy again, like an angel. I wasn't even scared when I told Daddy. He must have been tired; he just pat me on the head and kissed me goodnight.

Not long after this incident, we moved to a bright and sunny house once again. The address was appropriate, 914 Pleasant Street.

Even though I remember little happiness on Foucher Street, I realize now that baby Jane, my first communion, and the broken lamp are among my fondest memories. In simplicity they have taught me to appreciate my faith in God and the love of our family.

AN UNKNOWN QUEEN
by
Ruth Falk

Approximately sixty years ago I heard a lecture which has left a lasting impression on me. Frank Laubach's philosophy was "Each one--teach one," and we'd do away with illiteracy.

About twenty years later, here in Lafayette at our church, I heard about VITA, Volunteer Instructors Teaching Adults. I remembered Frank Laubach and joined VITA.

My student was a young black woman, about fifty years of age. She had never had a day of schooling. It was a learning experience for me, too. We found about twenty words which she had never heard. I've forgotten most of them, but still remember dawn and twig. But what happened one day I'll never forget. I taught her to write her name. She took a deep breath, sat back in her chair, and said, "I've just written my own name. I feel like a princess." Then she took a very deep breath, stood, and in a voice full of conviction, said, "No, I feel like a queen. I can write my own name."

I'll never forget that moment nor the emotions I felt at that time. When we were asked last week to write about some experience with any of our senses, I thought of the experience with my student. Could it be that there are senses other than those we know about, or could it be that the use of some sense could reach the saturation point and thus become something greater? I can't find an answer, so let's just call it " deeper magic."

BEACH PEOPLE
by
Audrey K. Daniel

Sitting here on the balcony watching the beautiful white crested emerald surf beating against the glistening white sands on the beach in Destin, Florida, one thought came to mind. I have always been a beach person. Melvin and I together were beach people. Our children were beach people. And now, decades later, their children are beach people.

My love for the beach began at Lake Pontchatrain. Many afternoons of my childhood years were spent swimming in the lake. On our summer vacation visits to my Aunt Nene's farm in Pontchatoula, picnicking on the beach of the swift water of the Tangipahoa River was a special treat. When we were in Pontchatoula, we sought out every speck of white sand in the surrounding area, the beaches of the Tickfaw, Tchefuncte, and the beautiful spring fed waters of Red Bluff.

In our early years of marriage, Melvin and I would pack a picnic basket, meet with our good friends, Maerene and Rene', and drive to one of the State Parks in the Covington area to swim in the cool waters and bask on the warm sand. These trips became a Fourth of July ritual.

I remember our first trip to Florida. Melvin and I had driven as far as Panama City on our honeymoon in November of 1949, but were anxious to return in warmer weather. And that we did the following summer. Mother, Daddy, Melvin, and I drove over to St. Augustine in Daddy's 1948 Plymouth and rode down the East Coast to Miami. The rough waters of the Atlantic Ocean were not like the calm waters of Louisiana. After a brief stay in Miami, we drove across to St. Petersburg, where we spent several wonderful days. While swimming in the waters of the Gulf, we were frightened by what we thought was a shark. How embarrassing to find out it was just a playful porpoise.

On our drive back from St. Petersburg to New Orleans, we drove along the most beautiful, almost uninhabited strip of beach we had ever seen. Sand dunes and sea oats dominated the landscape. We checked into a small cabin on the beach and hurried to get into this beautiful emerald green surf. Little did we realize that this beautiful, isolated beach with the emerald surf was Destin, Florida, an area now covered with condominiums, restaurants, and amusement parks.

Beaches continued to be part of our lives. We spent many Sundays on the sands of Biloxi. Our friends, the Scotts, and their two children, loved the beach as much as Melvin and I and our three children.

Then came the Florida attraction again. One year we journeyed with the Scotts down the West coast of the Florida Peninsula to Sanibel Island. After a few days, we all had the "Sanibel Stoop" from combing the beach for exotic shells. We and the Scotts also took several trips to Pensacola Beach.

Several summers we pulled our pop-up camper to the Holiday Park Campground in Destin, setting up housekeeping at the surf's edge. The beautiful white sands were now on our floors, our rugs, and worst of all, our beds. But we were still having fun. One year we even pulled the camper up to Cape Cod.

After Ben and Doreen were married, Ben's parents were generous enough to let them use their luxurious motor home. They invited Melvin and me to accompany them to Destin. Once again we set up housekeeping directly on the surf's edge, but with the luxury of our own bathroom, shower, and best of all, a built in vacuum cleaner. This time the white sand was not a problem. The only problem came when we tried to stand Ben and Doreen's one-year-old son, Jonathan, on the beach. He cried at the feel of the warm grains of sand beneath his small, tender feet. How could a member of our family not like the beach?

For several years we returned to Pensacola to vacation on the bay at the Naval Air Station where we were always anxious to catch a glimpse of the Blue Angels in flight.

In the past few years, I have spent many vacations visiting beaches of tropical islands, including a New Year's picnic on a sandy beach on the Amazon River in Brazil. Melvin and I have even had the luxury of staying on Waikiki Beach in Hawaii, the beautiful beaches of the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico, and the impressive beaches on the coast of Spain.

For the past four years, we have vacationed in Destin with Julie, Freddie, and their two sons, Christopher and Austin. Three-year-old Austin, like Jonathan, does not like the beach either. Betrayed again by another grandson! This year, 1994, is our fourth year of returning to the Holiday Surf and Racquet Club, same place, same view, same emerald green surf. But this year is different.

All three of our children and their spouses and children are here, Kenny, Vicki, Noemi, Paul, and Lauren; Julie, Freddie, Christopher, and Austin drove over from Houston; and Doreen, Ben, Jonathan, Adam, and Jennifer from Lafayette. Everyone is staying in different condos, but all are generously sharing their time with us.

In all the years of beach trips, we never dreamed we would have a family reunion on the white sands of Destin. Although sizes, shapes, and physical conditions have changed through the years, we all still have the same love for the roar of the surf, the feel of the cool winds blowing across our faces, and the taste of salt on our lips. We are still beach people.

MY MOTHER-IN-LAW, A TRIBUTE
by
Melvin A. Daniel

Mothers-in-law (an awkward word, but standard usage) are the subject of many jokes, songs, and, as family members, are at the bottom of the list and the least understood. Perhaps these stereotypes are due to an protectiveness of their sons and daughters.

I would like to take exception concerning my mother-in-law, Lillian Kirschenheuter, "Lil." When Audrey and I married in 1949, the economy was bad and salaries were low. Although their house was small, Lil offered to let us live with her and Fritz, Audrey's father, until we could build up our resources. The arrangement was compatible, and we remained for seven years trying to save as much money as possible to purchase a home of our own.

Lil was unique in many ways. I believe that her first love was the street car that operated on Canal Street in New Orleans. The walk from her home on Bernadotte Street was three blocks to Canal Street, and the fare was seven cents. Lil's main enjoyment was boarding the streetcar for bargains, usually at Krauss Co., Maison Blanche, or wherever she could come out best.

Lil was an extremely sweet person who disliked getting involved in an argument, even with Fritz, her husband. Audrey and I, like all married couples, had our disputes; but Lil would walk away. I can't remember any instance when she and I were involved in an argument where the result was nothing more than a laugh.

A memorable experience travelling with Lil occurred in Acapulco when she, Fritz, Audrey, and I were in Mexico in 1951. After visiting Mexico City, we decided to go through Tasco and Cuernavaca, our final destination, Acapulco. Two unfortunate things happened. First, we probably picked up some water in the gas when I tanked up in Tasco, and as luck would have it, the car stopped on the beach in Acapulco just when Lil developed severe stomach problems known as "Montezuma's Revenge." Lil, always the trooper, held up well while a self-proclaimed Mexican mechanic corrected our problem.

Lil had a reputation of "having four wheels on her feet" because she was ready to go anywhere, anytime. Just rattle the keys and Lil would be first in the car. She also took vacations by Greyhound bus in the U.S. When she was in her late sixties, Lil toured England, France and Italy with her sister, Mildred.

Growing flowers was a priority with Lil, and she always maintained a beautiful garden filled with snapdragons, petunias, and sweet peas. She was an amazing woman who bent over from the waist to plant her garden. I have never seen her kneel to plant and I always wondered how she managed to perform this task.

At ninety Lil still lived alone on Helena Street in New Orleans, and maintaining the small house was becoming a chore. Since our children were grown and married, Audrey and I invited Lil to live with us in Lafayette. We disposed of her furniture, with the exception of an heirloom dresser, and moved her in with us. We had a large yard which she enjoyed.

Lil died of heart failure five years ago at the age of ninety-four. She lived a long full life and enjoyed every minute of it. When it came to mothers-in-law, she was tops. My mother died when I was five years old, so when Lil left, I felt that I had lost a dear friend. I was fortunate that Lil gave me a wonderful daughter to love and marry. Others may ridicule and make fun of their mother-in-law, but my hat goes off to mine.

A PLEASANT MEMORY
by
Rena F. Turk

During my early childhood our families would spend a lot of time working and helping each other with farm chores. Both of my grandparents owned a few acres of woodland near Rayne. In the fall the men would hitch the mules to their wagons and go to the woods to cut trees. Then they would load the logs in the wagons and head for home. Most of the time it was dark before they returned. The wagons would sometimes get bogged in the mud. The next day they would get together and cut the wood for heating, cook stoves, boucheries, and for the syrup mill. If we had a bad winter, a second trip had to be made to the woodland to gather a few more logs.

Papa's father, Pepere Andre, had a syrup mill, a sucrerie. the sugar cane farmers in the area would bring their canes to the mill to have syrup made. The fare generally was half share of the syrup. During the busy milling season we would spend the nights at Pepere Andre's house. The mill was in operation all day and until late at night. The juice from the sugar cane was extracted by a roller press. The press for crushing the canes and extracting the juice was turned by horses. The canes had to be continually put in the press manually. Mama spent many nights working the press. The juice was piped to a vat in the mill. There was a hand pump attached to the vat. My sisters and I would go in the mill with our cups for a taste of this very refreshing juice. Inside the mill were two larger vats to cook the cane juice into a thick syrup. The syrup was cooked by Pepere Andre, Papa and his brothers. The bagasse, peeling and a fiber residue of the cane, was piled in hill shapes in a pasture near the mill.

Later, several times a week, the bagasse was burned. On chilly nights, the children of the workers would sit on top of one of the hills and tell stories as they watched the next hill of bagasse would burn. These were fun times for us. Mere Andre was a very good cook and she always had something special for the children. Pepere Andre loved to tell stories and sometimes he would try to teach us Spanish.

The syrup milling season was hard work, but it was also a happy time, visiting with family, friends and farmers in the area. When winter came, we had our year's supply of syrup.

Papa always planted peanuts, popcorn, and sesame, which we called bene, all the fixings for pralines. Mama also managed to buy a few fresh cocoa nuts, and our grandmothers gave us pecans. The fun part of using cane syrup, besides pralines and syrup cakes, was the pulling candy, taffy. The more you pulled the taffy, the lighter and better it was. The syrup was not only used for cakes and candies, but also used with our meals at breakfast and supper.

A RAW COLLEGE FRESHMAN
by
Charles Cain

Since my roots were in Louisiana, it seemed natural that I would go to L.S.U. We never talked much about what I would major in, but I think Mama wanted me to be an ag teacher and return to Merryville. I thought I wanted to be a forest ranger, and I knew that I would be in agriculture.

It is doubtful that there were new students entering L.S.U. in September 1933 who knew as little about what to expect as I did.

I had never been on the campus nor even to Baton Rouge before. I got off the bus and asked someone how to get to L.S.U. I lugged my suitcase over to the bus stop and took the L.S.U. bus to the campus. Another fellow sat beside me and told me that we would get off at Chimes Street. He pulled the cord just before we got to the campus and said, "Here's where we get off."

My reply was, "I'm going on the campus." He sat back down and then left the bus at the same place on campus where I got off. He motioned to a couple of fellows who were trimming the hedges nearby. They had paper doll scissors and proceeded to give me a "free" haircut. I had just paid thirty-five cents for a barbershop haircut the week before, and then I had to pay again for a barber to go over my head with clippers. (I used to have more hair than I have now.)

I registered and was assigned to East Stadium Dormitory and to Company "L" in ROTC. The dormitory rent was $6.00 per month, and O.K. Allen Dining Hall meals were $15.00 per month, served boarding house style. I had registered in agriculture and did not have to declare a major.

My freshman roommates and I went to town a few days later to go to a movie at the Paramount Theater. Some upperclassmen caught a group of us freshmen and decided to have us do a sock race around the block. We had to take off our shoes in front of the Piccadilly Cafeteria, race around the block and come back to our shoes. I suppose the upperclassmen worked fast because our shoes were in a pile with unmatching shoes tied together by the shoe laces. It was a mess.

Somehow I happened to get hemmed in by several upperclassmen that same night. I was getting thumped on the head and had to scratch their palms by moving my head back and forth. I was getting pretty fed up and decided to hit one of them on the chin and run. I had picked out the fellow who was about my size, and he must have recognized what I had in mind. He took me out of the group and walked me down to his car. We had a long talk, and I learned about being a freshman. "Your turn will come next year."

I suppose my competitiveness, or combativeness, began to show as I went out for intramural boxing later in the semester. Our ROTC "top kick" for Company L had encouraged us to participate. While working out in the Gym-Armory, I ran across my upperclassman friend. "What company are you boxing for?" was my question.

"I'm on the varsity boxing squad," was all he said to me. I'm sure he saved me from getting a good licking when we first met downtown on Third Street.

I had figured to fight in the 145 pound class since I weighed in at 143 pounds when I started working out. My first bout came up in about two months, and I had not reweighed until the week before the bout. I weighed in at 149 and knew I did not want to move up to the 155 pound class. I weighed in the day before our bout at 143 pounds. I "retired" from boxing after that first bout even though I did not get knocked out.

A few weeks later the intramural cross-country race came up. I figured I was still in pretty good shape so I went to the track several days before the race and made six laps. My leg muscles tightened up on me, and I was some sore the next day. I was pretty far back when some of us walked onto the track for the finish. There were two fellows ahead of me on the "stretch." I got by them and came in 98th.

I played third base in the spring on our company softball team, but we didn't win that either.

I was able to keep up with my classwork although I made a "C" in chemistry. I eventually decided to major in agronomy even though chemistry was very important in that curriculum.

I AM A WRITER
by
Joe Glorioso

I have a splendid job, weekends and half-day on Tuesdays. It doesn't pay me anything; I mean money. But it has its compensations. The job is good, pleasant, easy and productive. I write for **LIFE AND LETTERS**. I have a reliable agent, an editor extraordinaire and a friendly friend. Her name is Joan, something or other.

I go to work on Saturday, sharply at ten in the morning, work until noon, take a thirty minute dinner break and a one hour rest and recuperation siesta. I go back to my computer and peck away on its keyboard until five thirty in the afternoon. That's not a burdensome day, even for a writer. Sunday, following the exact Saturday schedule, I bang away at my computer's keyboard until the story is finished, casually edited and printed. Monday is my day of rest from my strenuous weekend of skilled writing.

Tuesday, I read my story to my, more or less, appreciative audience of fourteen who are obligated to listen to earn three credit hours in USL's 370. When I finish reading my weekend story, I hand it to my agent, who gives it to my editor, who writes me encouraging notes, and my friend returns it on the following Tuesday. All I can say is that's a hell-of-a-way to make a living. But, what the hell, beats ditch digging or manure shovelling.

I was asked, "How do you decide what to write? Do you make your writing plan, like during the week?" If I had to decide and plan ahead, hell, I'd quit my job. Doing that is above and beyond the cause of writing. I've lived seventy-seven years of pleasant experiences and could fill volumes without deciding and planning. Even as I write this story, I could write a story about writing this story. This story is an experience in my life.

Let me clue you in on a story I wrote titled "Never A Mickey." It could have been outlined: (a) California, (b) Mickey, (c) Family, (d) Palladium, (e) Good time and (f) Good-night kiss. That's not much of a story, that's barely telling you of a wonderful experience.

I want to make a movie using just words on paper. I want you to feel vicariously my personal experience. I want you to know Mickey, the joy in her life, a little of her character and something of her family. I want you to enjoy my experience and feel my story as though it happened to you.

When I sit at my keyboard at ten o'clock on Saturday, I type in the new file number that looks like 'H071994.hor.' That number sequences my stories. Then I type in the following notes, subject to deletion and omissions, when and if they become part of my story:

1. Mrs. DeArmand sends me to the green grocery with a list and asks me to stop at Francis McGertie's house for her green grocery list.

2. I meet Mickey, who goes with me to the green grocery.

3. I can't guess her age (child-woman, woman-child).

4. We don't buy from Japanese, they poison food.

5. Mother Italian from New York, Father is Irish.

6. Mickey brings up subject of dance at Palladium, Battle of Bands.

7. I note age difference. Mickey excited about dance.

8. Mickey invites me to dinner. I hesitate.

9. I meet parents.

10. At dinner, Francis and I exchange stories about our parents.

11. I've got my five pages, end of story.

The notes take about fifteen minutes of my time. From the notes, I write my story, deleting each note from my computer as I progress through my story, which is pushed and dragged along by narrative, description and dialogue. My story should be a neat show, maybe, to some, entertaining.

My skillful and dependable editor will find every typographical error in my story. I don't know how she does it. I couldn't when I tried. She'll add little notes: transition would be helpful, appeared unfriendly and you write as though friendly, use relative pronoun instead of new sentence, insightful instructive notes and pencilled advice in the margins and so forth, ad infinitum. When I sit at my computer to write my next story, I seriously consider each and every bit of instruction and advice she gives me. If I don't, I'll never improve my writing.

Joan is really a professional editor and, without a doubt, a good friend. I have borderline reservations about her persistence as my agent. You see, I haven't had publishers knocking down my door to publish my stories, not for bucks anyway. Published or unpublished, my agent sets me aglow when she makes me internally feel, as she often does--bless her heart, that I'm a writer.

IN PRAISE OF A GREAT MAN
by
Mary Scheps

I was married for fifty-two years to a great man. I speak seriously and unabashedly. He was a bona fide genius who made straight A's at Rice, L.S.U., and Columbia Universities; he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Beta Gamma Sigma, ODK, and other honorary fraternities. But that's not why he was a great man.

His field of expertise was College and University Accounting. He was listed in Who's Who of America for as far back as I can remember, was the founder of the National Association of College and University Business Officers (and later its president), and wrote the only book in his field, which is on the shelf of every university business office in the country. He was selected the most outstanding college business officer in the United States. The Encyclopedia of College Accounting is dedicated to him, characterizing him as the "father of fund accounting." But that's not what made him a great man.

He was elected to the Orleans Parish School Board when membership was unpaid but hotly contested because of the financial gains to be reaped by those who decided where new schools would be built or who took advantage of other "perks." During his six-year term, he brought the schools up from "pot-belly stoves and horsemeat weanies" to a beautiful, modern system with co-education, up-to-date buildings, the new 6-3-3 grade divisions, integrated teachers' meetings, the best school superintendent in the country, and no political patronage. For six years he gave it his all, and then he quit, so he never had to make a decision "in order to get reelected." But these feats still do not prove that he was a great man.

With so much to brag about, I never heard him brag, and later, with so much to complain about, I never heard him complain. A man of few words, he never interrupted anyone or dominated any conversation.

In fact, he was interesting for the things he never did. He never smoked the first cigarette, even to see what it was like, never wore a watch (but was never late), and never wore a piece of jewelry of any kind. He never wanted a luxury of any kind. When the shocked insurance agent made a list of our belongings, my husband laughed and said, "We travel light."

Although he never told the first joke, he had a keen wit and a great sense of humor. He never spoke ill of anyone on earth, always giving them the benefit of the doubt, and this inherent kindness radiated to everyone around him.

He was a magnet, it seemed, for awards, certificates of appreciation, invitations to speak, and testimonial dinners in his honor. Gradually and gracefully he shifted from "young Turk" to "elder statesman," always willing to give newcomers a chance to try their spurs. After he retired, he was immediately rehired in a lesser capacity and went right on working for Tulane University as Secretary of the Board for almost the rest of his life. His portrait now hangs in the President's office.

But I still haven't told you why he was great. Like Abou Ben Adam, he loved his fellow man and showed it every day of his life. This love was far more important than any of his achievements. And that's why Clarence Scheps was a great man.

MIXED-UP COOK
by
Betty Gerard

My birthplace is Peoria, Illinois, a midwestern city with a mixture of several cultures. My ancestors were of German and Pennsylvania Dutch extraction. I learned to cook the German style. Maybe I should say "typical midwestern cooking"--bland, but good!

Don and I were married in 1943. Don, a midwesterner like myself, was used to the same type of food. My cooking passed his taste tests.

In March 1947, Don, Donna and I made a big move: from Peoria to New Orleans, Louisiana. My folks had been living in New Orleans a little over a year by that time. Imagine the shock of the different foods served there. First, seafood! In Illinois at that time, seafood was hard to get and a little expensive. Also not many knew how to cook seafood. When we, as Catholics, were supposed to eat no meat on Fridays our food was not like New Orleans. Our meals consisted of macaroni and cheese, tuna casserole, salmon loaf or salmon patties and occasionally fried catfish. With the help of my Aunt Amelia who lived in New orleans, I began to try and cook some of the dishes of the area. It was trial and error some of the time.

Our biggest error was the time that Don had gone crabbing with the neighbor. He came home all excited and proceeded to cook the crabs as the neighbor had instructed him. Our mouths are watering. We can't wait to eat the crabs. Don told my mother that he would show her how to eat the crabs. all went well, the crabs were broken open. Instead of Don scrapping the poisonous "Dead Man" out and throwing it away, he tried to feed the "Dead Man" to my mother. No one would eat the crabs because Mom said that they didn't taste good. When Don was taking the crabs to the garbage can, our neighbor, Nita, asked, "Why are you throwing those crabs away?" Don explained to her what part of the crab he was trying to feed Mom. Nita laughed, explaining to Don that the "Dead Man" is thrown away, not eaten. She then came over and showed us how to clean a crab to eat.

I did learn how to make tomato gravy and rice. Rice to us was never served as a vegetable, only as a dessert. We ate rice pudding or cold rice served with sugar, cinnamon and milk. I have a friend who grew up eating this cold rice dish as a cereal in the morning.

We really enjoyed the food in New Orleans. After living there for ten years, my Creole cooking would get by, along with my midwestern cooking.

In 1957, we moved to Lafayette where we were introduced to Cajun food...Mmmm, good! I did not have anyone to show me how to cook Cajun, so I tried to do it on my own. Not too good!

Both of our daughters, Donna Jo and Carol Sue were dating boys from this area, so they asked if they could have their friends over for Sunday dinner. I fixed roast, browned noodles, peas, salad and a dessert the first time the boys came. After several Sundays of my cooking, the girls came to me and asked, "Mom, would you mind if the next time the boys come to dinner that we cook it?" The next Sunday our guests, "the boys," were served the meat, but with rice and gravy and other dishes they liked.

I then realized that I had better learn to cook Cajun. With the help of the girls who had learned from their future mothers-in-law, some friends and the Junior League cookbook, Talk About Good, I experimented. Soon my dishes looked Cajun and tasted Cajun. They pass the Cajun test most of the time. I even learned that a little Tony's makes a great dish.

MY EARLY YEARS
by
Weellen Lemoine

"Life and Letters" has prompted me into doing something I have always wanted to do for my children and grandchildren, to tell them about my early childhood.

My family consisted of Mom and Pop, my brother, Huey, who was eight years older, and my sister, Laura Mae, who was six and a half years older. We were farmers and lived in a rural area just southwest of Ville Platte. I was born on October 7, 1932. Where did the name "Weellen" come from? Mom always told me that the name came from the Times-Picayune newspaper on the day that I was born.

Our home was located at the end of a 1/2 mile dirt lane, which was off of another slightly graveled road, which lead to other farms. This road was only a half a mile from the heavily graveled main road. In other words, our private lane was parallel to the main road with a field in between. The private lane turned into a small pasture area which had a circular driveway. Mom loved flower gardening, so we always had seasonal flowers and ornamental trees and shrubs blooming in the fenced yard in front of the house. The home was surrounded by a backyard, chicken coop and yard, a smokehouse, fruit orchard, vegetable garden, a barnyard with two barns, and a potato storage shed. Trees in the yards and pasture were oaks, pecans, cottonwoods and chinaballs. On the right of the private lane was a pond which provided many hours of fun. It was a home for crawfish, frogs, turtles and snakes. Showers always prompted the frogs to serenade us with their "wa-wa-rons."

Looking back on my childhood years, I realize that our neighbors were either relatives or lifelong friends, or both. Everybody knew everybody. There were no strangers among us. Neighbors helping neighbors was a way of life. Some of the family names were Guillory, Fontenot, Vidrine, Thompson, Duos, Landreneau, and Ardoin. Good old Evangeline Parish names!

Our closest neighbors were the Lirettes, the only black tenant family in the neighborhood that I can remember. Their home was located in the middle of the field in front of our house half way up the turnrow to the bus stop. They had twelve children. The father and mother were called Laurent and Florence, and the children who were my age, the oldest of the family, were Sister, Delta, Vinell, and Alberta. I can't remember any other names. In the summer I would play with the kids in their yard, but I would not go in the house, and if a sudden shower came, I would run home. I can't remember them playing at my house much. One of their children had a waterhead and his body was severely deformed, and he would lie on the quilt on the floor during the day. Chickens and piglets ran around in the house because they had no screens on the windows or doors to keep them out. The house was pretty much of a shack. The Lirettes were always there when we needed them, good neighbors.

During school time, Huey, Laura Mae, and I had to walk down that turnrow through the field to get to the bus stop which was on the main road. Rainy days were no exception. Pop had built steps up one side and down the other of the fence so that we would not have to unlatch a gate, and maybe forget to relatch it. Remember, we were

trespassing. Also, it was much quicker to cross the fence by stepping over it, especially when the bus was waiting on us. These steps were built over the fence in front of our house and at the bus stop.

Pop cultivated cotton for income and corn, sweet potatoes, and sugar cane for our own use. Corn was used for feeding the animals, sweet potatoes were stored in the potato shed for winter meals, and sugar cane was hauled to my grandfather's syrup mill to make our syrup for the year. We even grew broomstraw which we brought to the local broom factory to have our brooms made for our personal use. We also had our own corn ground for cornmeal. Of course, we had a watermelon patch, cucumbers and cantaloupes in the summer, and a year round vegetable garden. We raised our own chickens for meat and eggs, ducks, guineas, cows for milk and meat, and pigs for our meat supply. Occasionally, Pop would well a few cattle, or pigs at the local sale barn for extra income. We planted about six to eight acres of cotton averaging one bale per acre. An average bale weighed 500 pounds. Cotton sold for about eighteen cents per pound in 1938. The ginning fee was paid with cottonseed from the cotton after it was ginned. This income was what we had to live on for the entire year, including money for supplies needed for planting next year's crop. Pop would work at the cotton gin during ginning season for extra income, but that meant hiring at home help harvest the crop. We exchanged surplus eggs at the grocery store for items we could not produce ourselves. Preserving fruits and canning meats and vegetables were another way of being self-sufficient.

On the first really cold spell of the winter season my family would butcher a big pig, which had been fattened in a pen. We would have a "boucherie." We would fry the grillades (pork steaks) and store them covered with lard in a large crock. Another crock stored "ti sale" submerged in a liquid with preservatives for later use. Homemade sausage and taso were cured in our own smokehouse. We would make boudin for immediate consumption. Of course, my favorite was the cracklins, which were fried in a large black iron pot over an open fire in the barnyard. The lard produced from frying the cracklins was used to cover the grillades in the crock and also for cooking. We would store the cracklins in large glass jars. We always stuffed the hog pouch and smoked it along with the sausage and tasso. That was a real treat.

During the summer season, we practiced another tradition. Several neighbors would commit to slaughtering a young cow (about 200 lbs.) on an appointed Saturday morning. The neighbors would help the host family divide equal cuts, averaging 10-12 lbs. per family, for their week's meat needs. After the distribution process, the variety meats were cooked in stock in a black iron pot over an open fire. After going home and storing their fresh meat, they would return to the host house and enjoy the "boulli" for lunch. Refrigeration was non-existent then, but we owned a wooden ice box. On Saturdays we would buy a block of ice to keep our meat chilled. But that ice lasted only 24 hours. One block of ice was all we ever bought per week. I don't know how we treated the unused meat after the weekend.

We collected rain water from the roof through gutters into an underground cistern for doing the laundry because rain water was soft. We also had a shallow well for drinking water and watering the animals. We kept bottled fresh mild submerged in the

cistern to keep it cool. I remember dunking watermelons, too. We also kept them under the bed in the bedroom to keep them cool.

Memories of our home in my very early years are sketchy. Pictures show that when I was about nine or ten the outside had unpainted wood lap siding. About that time the original front porch was closed in to make two bedrooms and an indoor bathroom. A new front porch was built on another side of the house. I can remember the kitchen with the woodburning stove and the dining table on the opposite end of the kitchen. Beyond was an enclosed stairwell to the attic with a pantry built underneath. One door led to the bedroom where Mom and Pop slept and the other was on the outside wall. One the same side of the house was Huey's bedroom but it had no door directly to the kitchen because of the stairwell and pantry. His room had an outside door also, and the other door lead to an adjoining bedroom until the porch was closed in. Then it became the parlor. We had a double fireplace in the center of the house. Mostly we used the side that was in Mom and Pop's bedroom, which was also used as the parlor. The kitchen had beaded ceiling and walls, but the bedroom walls were made of bousilage and white washed. I can't remember not having screens, but I do remember mosquito nets over the beds.

I remember sitting on Pop's lap in the morning during the winter, waiting for the room to warm up after lighting the fire in the fireplace. Our shins would get red from the heat but our backs were still chilled. Mom would make coffee and cook cornbread by the fireplace in the footed black iron pot rather than start up the woodburning stove in the cold kitchen. I would still sit on Pop's lap when I was big enough for my feet to touch the floor. I remember being teased about that.

When I was about five years old, I came down with diphtheria. My condition was life threatening, and I was quarantined at home. Friends who came to see me had to visit at the barn. The doctor emphasized the importance of keeping me in a consistently warm environment as it was during the winter. By the time I had recovered, our butane bill had run up to $65.00. It almost broke us.

SANDY
by
Betty Shoemaker

One summer evening, Chuck was mowing the grass as I prepared our dinner. Suddenly Chuck raced into the kitchen. Hugging me, he sobbed, "My dog! My dog!" I immediately pushed him away to see if he was bleeding or injured, then I ran our the front door and spotted Sandy, Chuck's German shepherd, lying on the pavement in front of our house.

Several cars passed before I could reach Sandy. She lay motionless, whimpering, and obviously in a lot of pain. Still crying, Chuck watched as I knelt to examine Sandy. I could feel a fractured right hip. She was bleeding from her nose and mouth, indicative of a fractured rib or ribs and possible punctured lung.

I improvised a makeshift stretcher from a discarded hundred pound feed sack. Chuck and I very carefully lifted Sandy onto the stretcher and into the back of our station wagon. Fortunately, Dr. Harold Reaux, our vet, was in his office when we arrived. He quickly confirmed my hasty diagnosis and administered injections of tetanus toxoid and antibiotics. He then placed her in a holding cage and said, "If she survives the night, she will probably be o.k."

I lost my cool by then and yelled at Dr. Reaux to take Sandy our of the cage. Poor guy, the vet looked like I had slapped him. I told him that Sandy was in a lot of pain and needed medication to make her more comfortable. I asked him to administer some pain medication and repeat it before closing the office for the night.

That night I gently held Chuck in my arms while he sobbed for fear of losing Sandy. I told him that God had his hand on her and she would be fine. The next morning I called Dr. Reaux to check on Sandy. She was up on her feet and walking around. We were able to pick her up that afternoon.

Sandy had difficulty hobbling around on a hip to foot length brace, but she had survived, even learning to stay clear of the highway.

Later my ex-husband, Charles, accused me of making a sissy of our son. He said he had taken Chuck hunting and he wouldn't kill anything. "True," I said, "Chuck and I hunt only to enjoy the birds and the animals, not kill them." I taught my son that all of God's creatures are beautiful. There is a reason for each and every animal to be on this earth. We must love and respect them. Yes, Chuck may have been a dreamer, and I take full responsibility for that. But he was certainly no sissy.

THE HOLLY GANG
by
Lois Diehl

I grew up in one of the many small communities that dotted the south central Pennsylvania countryside, attending school in the two story red brick schoolhouse covered with ivy vines. On top was the white cupola which housed the big bronze school bell that rang every morning during the school year. In front, a double sidewalk divided a large green lawn in half and ended at the steps to the oversized heavy wooden front doors. A dirt playground with swings and seesaws surrounded it on the remaining three sides. Most of the small towns like mine provided education for their children through the ninth grade. The last three years of schooling were completed at the Senior High School in Carlisle about 6 miles away. Those of us who lived in Mt. Holly Springs and its surrounds were known as the Holly Kids or Hollyites.

Each class averaged twenty students, so we were all like one big family. But there was a core of us who were special friends. In the vernacular of my children, we "hung out" together. We were known as the Holly Gang--Teddi, Wendy, Arlene and I. Sometime, I think when we were in the sixth grade or so, we started a girl's club--the Minne-ha-ha Club. I can't remember the origin of the club name, except we wanted an Indian name and all the original memebers were girls. Our meetings were held in Teddi's basement. With feathers in our hair we performed our Indian rituals and danced around her big old furnace. Sometimes we moved our gatherings up to the Goosery, a small first floor room adjacent to her father's office. To this day I can't recall just why we named that room--the Goosery. The "gang" usually got together at Teddi's because the location and environment always lent itself to our imagination and creativity.

The Tichy home was at the edge of town on a hill next to the mountain. The stone house with its wide front porch blended into the trees and bushes around it. It was hidden from sight until the curve in the upward sloping driveway was reached. It had a wonderful large yard with many footpaths leading into the woods, several gazebos, and a small swimming pool with stone sides. Teddi's home was a place to be in tune with nature, to dream and to plan.

That house saw many club meetings and many slumber parties. We were all in chorus in high school and involved in other musical activities. Often we would practice at Teddi's. It was there in her living room we all learned to dance. This was before line dancing and we needed partners to practice. We expanded our gang to include some boys--Joe, Alex, and Bobby. One weekend someone brought a newly released recording of 'Heartbreak Hotel' sung by some unknown with a strange name. I remember how addictive it was as we played it over and over. In high school we met Marilyn, our witty flaming redheaded friend, who became part of the Holly Gang although she lived in Carlisle.

When we became old enough to get our drivers' licenses, we spent many weekends driving around in 'Miss Gertrude'--Teddi's old black Chevrolet of late thirties vintage. That car was so much a part of the family that it was not sold when it could no longer be driven. Instead it was buried in the hill in front of the house to the left of the

driveway. In the summertime we temporarily replaced 'Miss Gertrude' with a bright yellow open top jeep. We covered many country roads and would drive to Laurel Lake or Pine Grove Furnace to swim almost every sunny day. Sometimes Teddi's older sister Jenny Lee and her boyfriend Pete would take us to Pine Grove.

Our days were carefree days. Had we known what life had in store for some of us, we may have elected to stay frozen in time. I've lost track of Arlene. Wendy lost her first husband to cancer two months before the birth of her second child. She remarried and is living near Harrisburg. Marilyn married an older man who had been one of her high school teachers. When she became very ill about ten years ago, her husband shot her and three of their four adopted children. Jenny Lee and Pete were happily married with four children and a grandchild. Just two months after my husband died in a heliocopter accident they met tragedy. One Saturday night a son-in-law tried to kill their daughter, Nina, with a shotgun. She fled on foot to her parents' home. He followed her to their home and killed Pete. Later he was killed by the police after terrorizing Jenny Lee, Nina and the baby. Teddi is divorced from her college sweetheart and lives near Philadelphia with one of her daughters. The school has been converted into a home for three large fire trucks and two ambulances and a bingo hall. My father bought the schoolhouse bell at auction many years ago. Today the fire sirens replace the ringing of the school bell.

In my mind's eye I can see us still dressed in our new Easter outfits and hats looking toward a camera. The woods of Teddi's yard are behind us. We're all smiling, ready to meet the world. The Holly Gang is together, intact forever.