Life and Letters

Volume XIa

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Each volume of **Life & Letters** becomes "that sort of book" Christopher Robin read to Winnie-the-Pooh when he got stuck in Rabbit's hole after eating too much honey. This collection of memoirs, like Pooh's request, becomes "a Sustaining Book, such as would help and comfort a Wedged Bear in Great Tightness."

The earlier generation become the ones in our history who welcome us into this "world of sorrows." Given to them also is the admonition of love, the added command to command the blessing, "May you find exceeding great joy in it." Joy and sorrow, tears and laughter are the juxtapositions of a world wrong side up.

However miniature in scale, the stories of **Life & Letters** reflect our attempt to turn life around, to sustain us in "Great Tightness." They become the tugs that remind us to keep talking. Like children clamoring for "just one more" turn, we, too, beg for more. More stories, please. They stave off the hunger pangs of "Wedged Bears." To my students, "Thanks"--though a "Bear of Very Little Brain," I'm learning about more than just People called Presidents and Relatives and Famous and something called Chemistry and places called Europe and the Homefront. I'm learning to answer "yes" to life instead of "never." To an audience, always friends, "Welcome" to **Life & Letters**.

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

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Front Cover (clockwise from upper righthand corner): Clarence Scheps (husband of Mary Scheps); Iris Durel; Anne Comeaux; Ed and Esther Parker; Myrtis King and family; Dorothy Stevens and friends; Marjorie and David Stear; Joe Turk (husband of Rena Turk)

LIFE AND LETTERS
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Seated, l. to r.: Charles Cain, Rena Turk, Anne Comeaux, Esther Parker, Myrtis King
Standing, l. to r.: Ed Parker, Woodson Hopkins, Mary Scheps, Joan Stear, Iris Durel, Dorothy Stevens, John Townsend, Joe Glorioso (Missing from photo, Ruth Falk)

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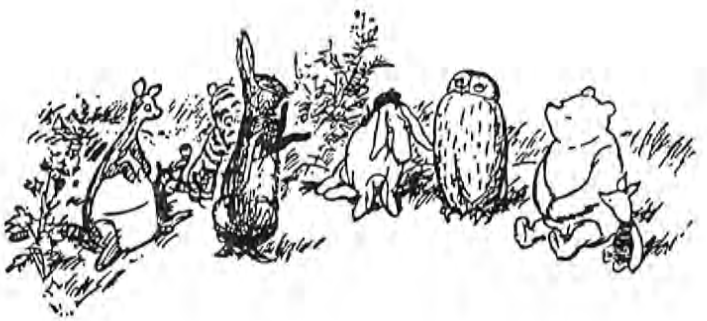


HIGH SCHOOL MEMORIES
by
Iris Durel

When Sadie, Margaret Jane and I got to Lafayette High, we met Jackie Michot who became "one of us." For the next four years we "four musketeers" (as our teachers called us) were inseparable. Margaret Jane died of TB at the young age of nineteen, a loss it took us a long time to get over. Everyone who knew her loved this beautiful, sweet, kind girl. Jackie has since moved away but we still keep in touch; and Sadie and I are good friends to this day. As young, high school girls we were together all the time; we even scheduled most of our classes together when we could.

My freshman year I took science with Mr. Pierre Hernandez. Because he was small in stature, everyone referred to him as "Tee-Hern"; he was shorter than many of his students. In truth, he was one of the "biggest men on campus," dearly loved by his students and by his colleagues. I joined the Science Club and was elected president. Miss Mouton was the librarian, and naturally, I joined the Library Club. Our meetings were usually held outdoors; sometimes Miss Mouton would walk us to the "Little Woods" at the end of Souvenir Gate, carrying several books, and she'd read aloud to us while we relaxed in the shade of trees. I can still "hear" the stillness of the woods! Do you know the "Little Woods" is where the Cajundome is now? (Later, I'll tell you of the many picnics Grandma used to take us on when we were kids--in the "Little Woods.") Teachers seemed to have so much more time for students then; not the hustle and bustle there is today. Most of them walked to school, and students would help carry their books home in the afternoons.

I was on the staff--the roving reporter--of our school paper The Parlez Vous, writing "advice to the lovelorn." One month I wrote a short story that was published in the Parlez Vous. Why didn't I keep a copy of that? Maybe I was afraid some day my children would read it and laugh?!

I tried taking French, offered after school without credit, but that didn't last long--couldn't roll my r's! Jackie's older sister, Beverly, was taking Spanish at SLI (USL) intending to become an interpreter, so why couldn't I take French and become an interpreter? If things had been different when I first started school perhaps many of us would have learned French in Grammar School. However, a student heard speaking French on the school grounds was reprimanded--we were there to learn the ABC's, to speak good English.

High school was just a few blocks from home; by taking a short-cut through the graveyard we could walk it in five minutes or less. That allowed me to participate in many extra-curricular activities, like chorus, basketball, volleyball, and baseball. On the basketball team I kept the bench warm! Once, the coach sent me in for the last quarter--to give me experience--and I am sure I lost the game. Practice was no better, but I really wanted to be on the team; I wanted to be a star! I tried baseball--don't think I ever hit a ball with a bat in my life. Why do they make bats so slim? And balls so small? My desire was to be good in sports but I was such a **klutz**! No one ever wanted me on their

team. You see, I still haven't changed; none of you ever want me on your team when we play volleyball at our "family get-togethers."

I remember all my teachers with fondness: Mrs. Edith Nugent (Math); Miss Roth (English); Lil Gauthier (English); Miss Mouton (Librarian); Mr. Mouton (Business); Mrs. Delaurel (English); Mr. Grunewald (English); Miss Poche (Civics, I think); Catherine Ducharme (Physical Ed); Mrs. Andrus (History, my worse subject); Mrs. Irene Whitfield Holmes (English, French); Mr. Chaplain, our principal; and his secretary, Mrs. Chaplain.

Let me tell you of an incident with Edith Nugent. When Daddy and I were first married we met Edith in the City Pharmacy, at the corner of Jefferson and Vermilion Streets. Very proud to introduce her to Daddy, I said, "Honey, I want you to meet my old school teacher, Mrs. Nugent." Indignantly she said, "Iris, one **never** says '**old.**' One says, '**former school teacher.**'" She taught me a valuable lesson I've never forgotten. I do hope all of you will have as many fond memories of your teachers and school days as I have.

Six months before my high school graduation was "A day that will live in infamy," December 7, 1941, the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. I remember it well. We were three couples (for the life of me I cannot remember who they were except for Bully King) that Sunday afternoon, out to have fun. We were on our way to Youngsville to find a sugarcane field, to chew sugarcane, of all things! We had the car radio on and had been singing along with the music blaring (some of the songs of our day were "Deep Purple," "Isle of Capri," "Three Little Fishes in a Itty Bitty Pool," "Beer Barrel Polka," "Red Sails in the Sunset") when a flash came on saying the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor! At first we thought it was a joke, and being young, kept on our way. We found a good cane field, chopped down a few stalks, stripped them, cut the stalks into chewable pieces, and chewed cane! We kept the car radio on and talked about what was coming over the airwaves. Our spirits were dampened when we realized it was no joke. We went back home to find Mother in tears; neighbors gathered on the sidewalk, all upset. It was truly a sad day for all.

Many of the boys who graduated in January, 1942, left for the Services right after graduation. Some enlisted in the Navy, some in the Marines, and some in the Army. Some even quit school to join the services. With World War II declared, the rest of our school year was very solemn; a lot of the joy of our Senior Year was gone. One of our classmates, Malcolm Robichaux, was killed, I think, even before graduation.

Our graduation finally rolled around. As part of the program, Jackie, Sadie, and I sang "The Bells of Saint Mary's. Jackie was soprano, Sadie was second soprano, and I was alto (my part was very low). Jackie's brother, James, who was on leave from the Marines, was there with their parents and after congratulations were passed around, he wanted to know, "Who was that singing **bass**?" I wanted to die! I was wanting so much to impress him in that handsome Marine uniform, and there he was, making fun of me! Only a few months later, January, 1943, he was killed in action. What we all would have given to be made fun of by living heroes....

We were 145 graduates and even though I did not make valedictorian or salutatorian, I did make honor roll. Our class that year, 1942, was the first graduating class of Lafayette High School to wear caps and gowns. Walking up in my white cap and

gown to get my diploma from Mr. Chaplain was a proud moment indeed; the end of another phase of my life.

A LETTER HOME
by
Joe Glorioso

Reading and writing are inseparable and mutually strengthening intellectual skills. Your preference of reading materials (romance, western, mystery, religion, philosophy, or what have you) has no bearing on what you write, how you write or when you write. Remember: If you can read, you can write.

As a six-year-old, I started writing to my cousin, Josie, in Donaldsonville. Wasn't sophisticated, but it was writing. If you are as old as I am, you remember the penny postal card. The card and pencil were my media for writing to Josie. In block letters, my messages to my cousin invariably read: *How are you? I'm fine. Write me. Goodbye.* I signed off with *X X X X's* to show my love. The messages were signed, *Buster.*

Over the years, my writing improved. The sentence patterns of my messages went from simple to complex and ultimately to a combination that included compound sentences. Paragraphs emerged. My letters were funny, melancholy, serious, preachy, even borderline philosophical, but they recognizably said what I wanted to say.

Except for punctuation and grammar, my high school English classes were of little value in my theme and essay writing. My writings were always returned soaked to the hilt in red marks. My D's bordered on grade F and my F's barely missed D's. I remember my successful experiment in story writing. One descriptive story I wrote read something like this: *I saw a circus parade. It had marching bands. I watched the clowns. The elephants were large. Tigers were in cages.* So on and so forth. Miss Roberts did not scribble a single red mark on my story. I had the cherished grade A.

College English classes did not help my story writing. I had become immune to punctuation and grammar. To keep my limited skill in writing, I wrote many letters to my mother and boy and girl friends. University life was exciting and interesting. I'm sure my letters reflected that view. At least, BeBe, Susie and Dottie told me that they felt the excitement of college life as I described it in my letters.

When I was in Europe during World War II, I wrote to Carolyn often, giving her news we were allowed to write about. She saved all my letters in a locked box. I will randomly select and share one of my many letters. Keep in mind that we were limited in length of our letters and in their weight. Four pages on onion skins were our limit. (Life and Letters is generous. I get to write five pages, and a little cheating is tolerated.) The letter I'll share with you was written in Holland, dated December 11, 1944, five days before the Battle of the Bulge. I was staying in the attic of a Dutch woman's house. The letter follows:

Dear Carolyn,

We'll see how far I can get on this ink. I neglected to refill my pen this morning.

These Dutch women are the best housewives in the world, bar none. The lady here saw some of my dirty clothes hanging around, so she made me let her wash them. She even washed my field jacket.

Now she's in the kitchen sewing the frayed ends of the sleeves and darning up the little holes in it. You should see that jacket, the gold cloth bars even shiny.

My clothes were really dirty. I hadn't changed them for two weeks. I even sleep in my socks now. You're not here to keep my feet warm. I've gotta do something. I haven't bathed for two weeks either. Yesterday, I took a sponge bath which wasn't at all satisfactory. Better than nothing and was a wee bit refreshing.

We've been expecting a bombing raid here for the past 2 days. I have located the cellar in the house and at the first alarm I'm gonna be down in it. I sure don't wanta get knocked off in a bombing raid.

I forgot to tell you the other day, but it snowed here Saturday--great big snow flakes. The same size flakes as the day I graduated from OCS. What a day that was. It has been a long time, hasn't it? But we've both had a lot of fun since then. I know I have and it was good to be alive. Back in the states, the soldiers wish this war was over so they could go home. Over here we wish it was over so we could live. We'll all stay here two years as long as we know we'll be alive at the end of two years.

It's rugged over here and I'm not kidding. Oh, don't get me wrong--we're comfortable, lots to eat and a lot of laughs. Men here have a lot in common. It's just the apprehension. You just don't know what is gonna happen next and to whom it will happen.

We all hope for one thing--a nice neat wound and a trip to England. By the time we're cured, the war will be over. The lucky ones get wounded--the rest of us just stay and pray.

Someday all this will be over and everyone of us will be able to say: "Well, tonight I'll stay home." And I mean I'm gonna stay home plenty.

The news is scarce. It's getting colder now. I hope we have a white Xmas here this year. I also hope you, too, will have a white Xmas. It certainly would be fun. If you have any film, take a picture or two and send over here.

By the way, where is the small picture you were gonna have made and send to me? You probably have already done so. I've heard so seldom from you that I have lost track of you a little--only 2 letters in 6 weeks.

I guess you've received just about the same amount of mail from me tho. I have written every day.

I must close now, Carolyn. It is late. My hunch failed me tonight. I again waited till night to write, hoping I'd get a letter from you. Well, I was disappointed.

Tell your mother hello. Give my best wishes to all your sisters and all the brother-in-law.

Kiss Patsy and Janie.

Love,
Joe

Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year.

This paragraph is for Joan, my dedicated and consistent editor and a premier friend. There aren't many friendly editors around these days. Believe me! Carolyn's letter, Joan, is off limits to your never hesitant pencil marks. I wrote that letter at midnight, drugged by lack of sufficient sleep. So lay off the letter. One other thing, I am in competition with your damn pencil. In my five or six pages I write every week, that pencil, the infidel in my writing life, won't get an iota of a chance to be used. Not on my writing! Not quite perfect yet, but I'm working very hard at it. But I'd always be pleased to accept the pencil's kind remarks at the end of my writing, if that's okay.

A "HARE-Y" EXPERIENCE
by
John Townsend

Dixie was the runt of the litter. The first few days following her birth her mother, Bess, a pointer bird dog, persistently pushed her from the doghouse, not allowing her to feed. My Mama and I took turns feeding the small female pup with a bottle filled with warm milk. After a few days we were able to return her to the doghouse where she was able to fend for herself.

Even before Dixie opened her eyes, we were able to notice that she was smart and resourceful. While the other six pups were battling for a particular teat to feed on, she would burrow beneath or climb atop the pile and find her own.

It was only with the help and persuasion of my mother that Daddy allowed me to keep Dixie. He made her my responsibility in seeing that she was fed, bathed, and later trained to hunt quail. Dixie was the classic Blue-tick pointer, her coat of off-white mottled by the spattering of small "blue," almost a purple-gray, dots. The tip of her left ear, the right front and left rear paw were marked with the same distinctive coloration. She remained the runt all of her life, but her puppies, as a rule, were oversized for Pointers and had odd combinations of colors.

Daddy and I took Dixie on her first hunt when she was just over six months old. When let out of the trailer we pulled behind the car, she did not stay with Bess, her mother, nor her older brother, Sport, and sister, Suzy. She immediately took off on her own. It became my job to keep up with her. At eight years old, I was a year away from carrying a shotgun, so I was unencumbered as I trailed, slightly behind, and below, Dixie, who was at the crest of a small rise in the field.

Bess, with Sport, and Suzy were moving in the slight valley below. Suddenly Dixie froze in place a few yards away. The angle she held her head had me look down toward my Daddy and the other dogs. Bess was at point. Behind her stood Sport and Suzy, still as statues. Daddy moved up beside Bess and kicked the birds up. Six or seven erupted from beneath Bess with an audible flutter. My Dad fired once, twice, and a third time, his Browning automatic spitting fire. I watched three quail flutter to the ground. The dogs moved quickly to retrieve the downed birds.

We moved on across the field. Abruptly Dixie froze. "She's found one," I told Daddy.

He laughed, "It's probably a field mouse or a rabbit--, but go ahead and see what you kick up"

I carefully moved up beside Dixie, who also moved a step or two further. Then I jumped about a foot as a single quail burst from beneath our feet. In all the years of hunting I never failed to get a start whenever I flushed the birds, but I found that it did not affect my reaction time when it came to shooting at the birds on the rise. Dixie came to be the best "singles" pointer we ever trained.

It was a month later. Dad, Uncle Red, and I were hunting along "rattlesnake" hill between two sloughs just off the Dayline Road approximately three quarters of a mile west of Sibley, where Granny and Grandaddy Allen lived. The sloughs were full. Dixie and I

were on the western edge of the "hill" near what is called "alligator slough" because its shape resembles the outline of one. Suddenly Dixie took off running as if shot out of a gun. Ahead of her was one of the largest "swamp" rabbits I have ever seen. It ran straight for the slough. Without a pause the rabbit sailed over a log at the water's edge and began to swim with Dixie in hot pursuit. The rabbit seemed at home in the water, quickly distancing Dixie who struggled along behind. At a matted hummock some 25 or 30 yards into the slough the rabbit climbed out.

Dixie reached the floating mass and tried to clamber up after the rabbit. Abruptly the animal sprang straight up, then landed both hind feet atop Dixie's head. "Kerplash!" Her head slid under the water.

I was yelling at Dixie to no avail as she determinedly tried again and again to seize the rabbit. Daddy and Uncle Red came to join me. Uncle Red spoke, "Shall I shoot the rabbit, John?"

Daddy replied, "No, I don't want to ruin the dog. Junior, get some chunks of wood."

I scrambled and found some big pieces of some tree limbs. Daddy took a couple of pieces, sailing one out at the pair while I called "Dixie!"

A lucky hit on the hummock just in front of the rabbit sent it leaping wildly away. The move ducked Dixie, and when she surfaced, there was no rabbit to be seen. Tongue lolling, she turned and swam back to me where I stood on the shore. There was no trouble with her running a rabbit thereafter. A lesson learned.

PIONEERS
by
Myrtis King

As I walked across the dry crunchy field, the sunshine was blinding. A typical day on the prairies of Central Texas, close to Brownwood. Plants, cotton, I think, were growing in the field, but to a pre-teen, this landscape meant little. I never wondered, either, how anything could survive in such hard ground where rain seldom fell. My grandmother, Katherine Champion, usually called Kate, lived in the neat gray house where she looked after her mother and my great grandmother, Virginia McLeod. One could see pretty far across these rolling prairies which are occasionally dotted with houses, mesquite trees, and scrub cedars. Thus Kate had been able to see when the rural postman left mail in her mailbox at the side of the road, three quarters of a mile away.

In the towns and cities, mail was delivered twice each day, but in the country only once. The driver kept to a close schedule so people knew just about the time to expect him each day and could watch for his arrival. When the mail arrived, my grandmother would don her bonnet and walk to the mail box. Today I had begged her to let me go and get the mail, and she had said "yes." Whether in rain or snow, hot sunshine or a cloudy day, the walk was made because this trip was also the way the newspaper was delivered, our only way to keep up with the news.

Even though Virginia had moved from Tennessee to Texas by wagon train when Kate was an infant and had five other children after that, she had always been frail. Now, 70-ish, and not too recently widowed, she needed help in cooking and housework. To Kate, widowed, with grown children, it was logical to rent her own farm and move in with her mother, whom she cared for until Virginia's death at 83 years.

My parents and I had come several hundred miles by automobile for a visit. I recall we drove around the countryside to visit other relatives, but to me, the best part was wandering among the mesquite trees, searching for juicy cactus berries, and looking for horned toads. The only chore I can remember was an infrequent trip to the tank to get a bucket of water.

It did not occur to me to wonder how my grandmother could cope. She had no car or other means of transportation; yet there was still the need for groceries. It was many years later before I wondered about that and several other things: why it was called a tank when it was only a very small lake with a man-made levee around it; why the drinking water came from a cistern which, like the tank, was dependent solely on the sparse rainfall to be filled; or how they existed with neither an indoor bathroom or an outdoor privy.

Only in later years and with more questions unanswered, did I realize how proud I should be of these pioneer women, my ancestors.

ANOTHER MEMORY
by
Esther Parker

I celebrated my fifth birthday in kindergarten class at John McDonough Memorial School (which I've already written about); but I was lucky to have another day with family members coming to visit. (I don't remember which was on the exact date, May 11.)

As I sat in a rocking chair on the gallery "reading," a delivery truck stopped in front of our house. I ran inside calling Mama, who told the man to "bring it in." It was in a great big box. I was so excited I couldn't stand still. It was a big standing Victrola with the dog on the inside cover and the "crank" on the side. The man demonstrated it with one of the records Mama had bought (78s, of course). Mama placed a chair beside the Victrola so I could turn the crank and watch the records play. Nina, Brother, and Helen had gone somewhere, and when they came home I immediately showed them my big birthday present and showed them how it worked. They all said it wasn't "mine," but I insisted it was. Mama had to settle me down and explain that it was a family gift. I finally understood, but secretly always thought of it as "mine."

I spent many happy times with Mama listening to "My Wild Irish Rose" and "Sweet Mystery of Life," which Mama said Poppa used to sing. I also remember "My Old Kentucky Home" and "Old Black Joe."

I recall when we first moved to Corpus Christi in 1952, my first move away from home, as I listened to the radio, "Old Black Joe" played. I got so homesick I cried.

A BASEBALL STORY
by
Rena F. Turk

Joseph (Joe) was born to Slovenia Yugoslavian immigrants, John Turk and Celia Atelsek, who had settled in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Sheboygan is a city along Lake Michigan about fifty miles north of Milwaukee. John and Celia had six children, John, Jr.; Anthony; Joseph; Frank; Virginia; and Lucille. Frank died when he was only twelve years old. At the time of his death he was a bat boy for the Sheboygan Industrial Baseball League.

Joe attended elementary school at Sts. Cyril and Methodius Catholic School. As a young child, he preferred sports instead of school work, a preoccupation which sometimes got him in trouble. A very special nun, Sister Serphine, took special interest in Joe. Joe said, "Sister Serphine worked with me and helped me realize the necessity of an education."

When Joe and his brothers were old enough to have summer jobs, they picked beans at a farm. The beans were sold to the Canning factory in Sheboygan.

The neighborhood boys enjoyed fishing at the pier. During the winter months Joe and his friends enjoyed ice fishing and ice skating. When Joe was older and was able to have a gun, he went rabbit hunting. Later, when he was a more experienced hunter, he would hunt pheasant and deer. He also was a member of a bowling team. Indoor or outdoor sports, Joe enjoyed them all.

While attending school at Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Joe decided to join the church choir. One day on his way to choir practice, one of Joe's friends said, "Joe, I bet I can put you to sleep." Joe just laughed, "No, you can't." His friend told Joe to hold his breath as he wrapped his arms around Joe's chest. Well, when his friend let him go, Joe fell in the concrete alley and broke his nose. Joe knew he was in trouble, but went to practice with his bloody nose. He said by the time he got home his face was all swollen.

During high school Joe attended Sheboygan Central High. He became active in a variety of sports. He was captain of the basketball team. Joe was also on the school's golf, track, and baseball teams. On weekends he was a caddie at Riverdale Country Club. While in the ninth grade he was awarded the "best all around sports medal," an award generally given to a junior or senior student.

When Joe completed high school he went to work at the Young Shoe Factory, but soon changed his plans. During World War II, Joe decided to enlist in the United States Navy instead of waiting to be drafted.

After the War, Joe returned to Sheboygan, and spent most of his time playing golf. One of the owners of Riverdale Country Club wanted to sponsor him to play the golf circuit in the surrounding states. Another friend, Victor Males, offered for Joe to go to a baseball spring training camp at Darlington, South Carolina, an affiliate of the Philadelphia Athletics. At this time in baseball history there were the Philadelphia Athletics and the Philadelphia Phillies. Although the decision was hard to make, Joe decided to try out for baseball. After spring training Joe was offered a contract for the 1948 baseball season.

Joe soon became a very popular player. He played first baseman, and later centerfielder. He was "rookie of the year" with a batting average of 307. Later minor league president George Troutman of the Atlanta Crackers, a division of the then Milwaukee Braves, notified Kingston manager J. Norman McCaskill by telegram that Joe Turk had been drafted into the Class B Southeastern League. The draft price into that class ball was $1000. Turk went on to play for the Pensacola Fliers.

Lafayette Brahma Bull manager, Harry Strohn of the Evangeline "C" League went to Pensacola hoping to have a few players farmed out to the Bulls. Turk was one of the players selected. At the end of another successful year, he had become a very popular centerfielder, not only with the Bull fans, but the whole Evangeline League.

The following year Turk returned to Pensacola for spring training, hoping to be sent to a major league. Turk lost out to Jim Reviere, who went on to play for the Chicago white socks.

Harry Strohn went back to Pensacola hoping to get Turk and a first baseman. He returned with Turk and Billy Barrett. At the end of that season, Turk was chosen outstanding player with the most runs and also collected the most hits, second place was Barrett. Turk was presented a diamond ring; Barrett, a watch.

In September of 1951, Turk bought a service station at the then very popular Four Corners area of Lafayette. Turk married Rena Falcon on October 21, 1951.

In the spring of 1952, the Abbeville Athletics bought Turk's contract. During this season a baseball scout came to Abbeville and wanted to buy Turk's contract for a AAA Club in Oklahoma, a division of the Cleveland Indians. It was very tempting, but Turk had just invested his saving in a business and refused the offer. At the end of the baseball season the Abbeville Athletics folded up and again Turk was offered a contract in an East Texas League, plus a job for the winter months. Again Turk turned down the offer.

The Lafayette Brahma Bulls bought Turk's contract. After another very successful season with the Bulls, Turk had an accident while sliding in to third base at a Crowley ballgame. He dislocated his ankle and broke his leg. Local newspapers ran the headlines: "Bulls lose Joe Turk for season." "Turk is one of the top defensive outfielders in the Vangy and was recently named to the West All-Star Team." At a ballgame later as Turk hobbled by on crutches, Billy Adams, manager of the Thibodeaux Giants, said to Bulls manager Earl Caldwell, "There's your pennant. When you lost him, you lost one of the Evangeline League's greatest ball players."

Joe still keeps up with baseball as he still subscribes to the "Sporting News" and is a very faithful Braves fan. As a faithful baseball fan, and as his wife, I still think of Joe as a great baseball hero. Joe Turk played in the postwar years only, the second segment, of the Evangeline, Vangy, Tabasco League.

THE FRUIT OF THE WOMB, A REWARD: PART II
(PSALM 127:3b)
by
Anne Comeaux

In the first part of "The Fruit of the Womb, A Reward," I left you on a joyful note with Paul, the sixth born of Leocadie and Walter Alphonse, my parents, still gardening and bringing joy to his wife and family in his advanced years.

On October 9, 1915, when Paul was 16 months and 10 days, Gertrude was born. Richard, the eldest survivor, was 3 years and 6 months. Both Richard and Paul were too young to remember Gertrude. In telling her story, I have had to rely on information passed down by Mama to us, her children. Mama's eyes would tear up as she told us that the family was in the midst of a big boucherie when Gertrude became gravely ill. Within a few hours, she quickly sank into a coma and died shortly after its onset. It was January 8, 1918. Gertrude was only 2 years and 3 months.

When Gertrude died, Irma Lucy was 11 months old. She had been born February 7, 1917. Irma grew to adulthood, married Etienne Joseph Millet, and became the mother of Geralyn Mary (now Geralyn Hurst). After a battle lasting 8 months after diagnosis, Irma died March 1, 1991, of carcinoma of the gall bladder, a form of cancer which the medical community told us is very rare. Irma was 74 years old.

Bernard Benjamin first saw the light of day May 20, 1918, when Irma was one year and 3 1/2 months. (Notice from the dates given that Mama was about 5 months pregnant for Teep when Gertrude died.) Bernard is the one who is often called "Teep" in these stories because it is the only name I ever used for him. I am also the only family member who called him Teep. Perhaps a word is now in order regarding my calling Bernard "Teep.

> The story was told to me that when I was very little and learning to speak French, I prefixed every name with "tee," my childish way of rendering "petit." Bernard was my godfather, or "parrain," so he was "petit parrain." Again, the childish rendition of "parrain" became "pie-yan." Bernard's complete name became "Tee Pie-yan." As I gradually caught on that everyone was not "petit," I dropped the "tee" from all other names except "Tee-Pie-yan." This was the name I used for him until I was about eight or nine years old.
>
> One day Teep and I were teasing each other, alternately calling each other Tee-pie-yan and Teetanne, just having a fun time. Now the story becomes more complex by a comic radio show of the time, two characters named Smokey Joe and Teetanne. I said I would call my parrain "Teep" for short. Decision made, I never veered from that decision. Teep, in turn, said he would call me "Smokey Joe." He called me that until I entered the convent, then I noticed he dropped it. I believe he decided it didn't sound very dignified. I persisted with Teep, and even today, when I must use "Bernard," it sounds stilted, as if I speak of a stranger. But "Teep" conjures up all kinds of wonderful, happy memories.

Enough for the digression. Teep became an automobile mechanic. He worked at Thibaux's Garage in Donaldsonville and made his home there. Later he accepted a job as a mechanic at Pope's in Plaquemine. There he worked until his untimely death of pneumonia December 30, 1971. Teep was only 53 years old. He left a large family, many of whom were still dependents. His wife, Aline, and two sons, Lynn and Russell, still live in Donaldsonville.

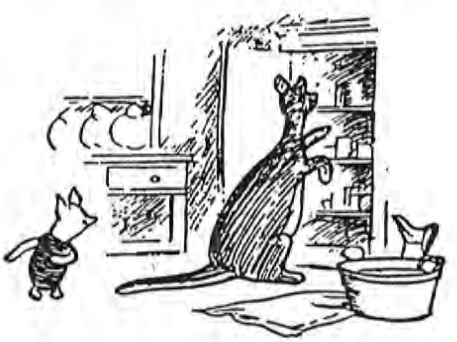
April 7, 1920, when Teep was a year and 10 1/2 months, Noemie Therese was born. She was the 10th child born of our parents, Leocadie and Walter Alphonse. However, the only living members were Richard, Paul, Irma, and Teep. It is very difficult, even with all the data in front of me as I type, to visualize the changes taking place in Mama and Papa's household, so when I repeat information given before, it is for emphasis, and to make it easier to follow the story.

Noemie felt called to religious life, so she consulted with her pastor, Father Louis Marrioneaux. This priest had become acquainted with the Sisters of the Most Holy Sacrament while ministering in a parish where these sisters taught in Gretna, Louisiana. He introduced her to the life and work of these nuns. Noemie entered the Congregation of the Sisters of the Most Holy Sacrament in January 1941. There at the Motherhouse located at 409 West St. Mary's Boulevard, she received her early religious formation. After an initial period of formation, Noemie received the habit (garb) of the congregation and took the name Sister Mary Magdalen.

Noemie has lived and worked in Lafayette all her adult life. For many years she served as a community seamstress. In this capacity, one of her main duties was making the habits for those women entering the community. Now in semi-retirement, Sr. Mary Magdalen visits Bethany Health Care Center daily, keeping in touch with the needs of retired sisters at Bethany. She continues her active ministry as a Eucharistic minister in St. Edmund Parish.

On June 10, 1921, when Noemie was 14 months old, Robert Augustine was born. I never knew Robert, because I was only a year and 7 1/2 months when he died, but some of the older members of the family do remember him. Robert died of typhoid fever and pneumonia complications August 30, 1930. He was only nine years old.

The story of my family baffles me. I find it difficult to comprehend the difficulties my parents had to endure. More forcefully, it illustrates vividly how strong two people, a man and a woman, dedicated to their God and to each other, can be. It gives a wealth of meaning to the words, "For love is as strong as death." Song of Songs 8:6



CHANGES IN A SMALL TOWN
by
Dorothy Stevens

"Oil!" The driller's shout echoed above the noises of the wildcat well on the outskirts of Talco late in the evening of February 7, 1936. The word spread like wildfire, and by daybreak, the last big oil boom of the Southwest was in progress.

Talco, Texas? They had to search their maps to find it. But the lease-hounds, the con men, and the fellows just down on their luck hurried to Talco to get a piece of the action. There was no place for them to sleep, no place for them to eat, but they stili came to Talco.

To grasp what happened in Talco that Friday evening, you have to understand how it was before the Carr No. 1 struck oil.

Talco was a sleepy, impoverished little farming town of less than 500 people. The Depression had just run its course. Times were very tight. There was no water system, no gas, and not much hope for any. The only convenience was electricity, which had come in 1928.

For six years before this date, I had walked through town each day to school. As I walked up the hill to town I passed two cotton gins. On the right side of the street I passed the Post Office, Mr. Harper's grocery store and Mr. Sike's barber shop. In the next block I passed a small restaurant, Mr. Hopwood's drug store, the ice house, and a small rooming house. Here I turned right and made my way past houses and through vacant lots to school.

Coming home in the afternoon I made my way up the other side of the street, passing the Depot and a service station. In the next block I passed the bank, Mr. Jones' merchandise store, and Mr. Uncell's undertaking establishment. This last store was always a challenge. I always hoped the door would be closed, but on hot days the two wide doors stood open and inside I could see the coffins.

Talco had three churches and a cemetery. The families were very close and always there when you needed a helping hand. Now this old-fashioned town was coming to an end.

Wildcatters had drilled three or four dry holes around Talco. The townspeople laughed when R. L. Peveto, John B. Stephens, and Housh-Thompson moved a rig in on the C. M. Carr place to try one more time. This was to be a little bit better wildcat than the others. The first ones quit at the Woodbine sand, 3,300 feet. These people planned to go to the Paluxy sand, at 4,200 feet.

When the driller looked at the core test on the evening of February 7, 1936, he knew Talco was never going to be the same. The drillstem was at 4,208, and there was a good show of oil.

By morning the lease-hounds were knocking on doors and paying $150 to $300 an acre, depending on how close your land was to the well. By Sunday it was higher. A half-million dollars changed hands in Talco that Sunday, and if the town's three churches held services that day, it was probably to consider an offer to drill a well in the parking lot. One man who held out finally sold the lease on his single lot, 150 feet

square, for $10,000. They came to Talco that weekend, and in the days that followed. On Sunday alone, 6000 to 7000 cars drove into the little community.

Talco's two cafes had lines reaching to the street around the clock. There were no hotels. Private rooms were worth almost as much as oil royalties.

The boomers slept on porches, in barns, in tents, in autos, and under the stars. The natives of Talco didn't sleep much; nor were they thinking about another poor cotton crop next summer.

The most critical commodity was drinking water. Talco only had individual cisterns, and not many. A drink of water was harder to find than a drink of beer. The newcomers whooped it up drinking beer. there was a lot of celebrating, a good many fights, even a few killings. But there was also a lot of work to do, building an oil field.

Daddy, with the help of Grandaddy Pittman, who was a very good carpenter, was building us a home when oil was discovered. They finished our home and built a duplex apartment and tow rent houses near our house. Rent houses went up quickly al over town.

The city limits were extended and many new businesses moved into town. There were two refineries, many major oil companies, supply houses, pipeline companies and other firms whose business related to the oil industry. At the peak of the oil boom some 3500 to 4000 people lived there.

In January of 1936 there were perhaps 125 school children. By the fall of 1936 there e were 385 children enrolled in school. When school closed in the spring of 1937 there were 625 and by fall 1937 there were 716 enrolled. Temporary buildings were placed near the school to accommodate the new students.

The oil field followed the fault line some 25 miles east and west. The width was less than one mile wide. In January 1937 there were some 15 wells in the small city limits, but the east and west fields observed spacing. At one time the number of wells reached 683.

Almost immediately, there was a $200,000 water and sewerage system put in use. A $25,000 City Hall was built and many blocks of dirt streets were paved. Within two years there was a new school plant costing $185,000. These were extravagant costs after the Depression and before World War II.

The estimated life of the field in 1937 was 20 years. That was 58 years ago. The town has now changed back to a small East Texas town, but as we drive through, many old wells are still producing and new wells are being drilled.

WALKING ON WATER
by
Charles Cain

Dr. James Foret and I formed a partnership to do consulting work in the field of agriculture in the mid-fifties. Both Jim and I had been called in by local attorneys on more than one occasion to testify on agricultural damages resulting from oil spills, herbicide usage, salt water spills, and crop losses caused by soil disturbances by pipe line construction or highway construction. We felt pretty confident that we could cover claims in agriculture because of Jim's knowledge in horticulture and pesticides and my knowledge in field crops and soils.

We had a call from the owners of the Florence Club in Vermilion Parish to discuss peat deposits. We agreed to meet with them at their club late on a Friday afternoon so that they could show us around the place.

We were not sure what we were getting into, so we each put a change of khakis in a paper bag and set out late Friday afternoon. We arrived o time in our khakis, and two of the men met us out in the yard. The caretaker was told to take our "bags" to bedroom number 4. We felt a little uncomfortable when we went in a room the men had their wives there. Someone asked what our drink preference would be. I piped up, "What have you got?" The reply was, "You name it and we might have it." Both Jim and I had bourbon and water, but learned later that they did have almost anything one would want in the liquor cabinet.

The Florence Club is a hunting club south of Gueydan near the Intracoastal Waterway. Canals across the property are interconnected in such a way that there is easy access to all areas by boat. We were taken out by boat on Saturday morning to see the various areas of peat. It was estimated that these areas covered about 500 acres and had a maximum thickness of approximately sixteen feet.

Jim and I agreed to return in August and map out the peat areas, showing the thickness and quality of the peat deposits. We designed a sampler to be constructed from one-inch conduit. The sampler would work on the same order as a grain sampler, giving us a continuous sample through the peat that we could examine through the side openings. It worked pretty well.

We each worked a week on the survey in August with two high school boys who grew up in the area. One of the helpers drove the boat, leaving us off at one canal and picking us up at the next canal. The other helper would accompany me, carrying the equipment while I made notes. We saw an alligator occasionally in the canal, so we were conscious of their danger. One afternoon I was making notes and not noticing were I was putting my feet when I stepped into a waterhole. My feet were already wet because it was boggy underfoot. I new I had stepped into an alligator hold, and I came out pretty fast. If my tennis shoes had not been wet before I stepped in the hole, I don't believe they would have gotten wet from the water in the hole.

On my last day in the field I asked my helper if he knew how much the two gas wells on the property were worth. He thought they were worth a lot but had no idea how much. I knew he thought what we were doing was not worth much so I took him through

some simple mathematics. He knew the peat deposits were 16 to 18 feet thick and ranged down to zero as we moved to the edge, so we agreed on an average of 8 feet in thickness. We also agreed on about 500 acres, which would give us about 4000 acre-feet. I explained that an acre-foot of mineral soil would weigh about 2,000 tons and the peat would weigh about 500 tons per acre-foot which would give about 2,000,000 tons of peat on 500 acres to a depth of 8 feet. Good quality peat was wholesaling for about $60/ton. About 40% of the deposit could be classified as good, but the rest could be marketed at a reduced price. We finally reached a value of about $75,000,000 without figuring in the cost of harvesting and marketing. When we stopped for lunch my helper wanted me to repeat my story.

A few years later an outfit out of Dallas called Jim and me in to go over the report. I think they had made arrangements with the owners of the Florence Club to produce and market the peat. The Dallas people organized the "Green Belt Peat C." and issued a few shares each to Jim and me. We were supposed to be their advisers, but our advice went unheeded. We were flown to Dallas for a shareholders meeting and found ourselves in the middle of a fight for control of the company. Each of the two sides took us into a private meeting to explain why the other side should not have control. When it got down to the open meeting Jim and I each abstained from voting. We never knew how the problem was solved, but someone produced peat on a small scale and then abandoned the project.

THE BUBBY CAFFERY STORY
by
Mary Scheps

Every spring the sweet perfume of the magnolia blossoms takes me back in memory to Natchitoches and my grammar school boyfriend. Of course, it was only puppy love. What else could it have been since we were only in the second grade when we first became pals? But it was wonderful spending all my grammar school years with Bubby.

We both lived on the beautiful tree-shaded campus of the "Normal," now called Northwest University--he in a large, white, wooden house surrounded by wide verandas and I in my family's modest bungalow across from the park. His grandfather was the president of the college; Bubby and his mother and sister had come to live with him after the death of Bubby's father. To be fatherless was a great distinction in those days--even a cause of envy to some, for this meant freedom from paternal restrictions in a time when a parent's word was law.

Bubby's father had not died a natural death. He had been killed in an airplane accident in World War I--an authentic hero. Furthermore, Bubby had an uncle who was making a name for himself in the diplomatic corps and represented the United States in exotic countries all over the world.

When encouraged, Bubby would recite the complete title of his important uncle. I only remember the words, "plenipotentiary extraordinary."

One day I came upon an excited crowd of kids on t he school playground. Bubby and another boy were having a fistfight. Someone said to me, "Don't you know what is going on? They are fighting over you." I left quickly, and we never mentioned the fight; but I suppose bubby won it since we were undisturbed companions from then on. We climbed magnolia trees, played kick-the-can and red-light, and drank lots of milkshakes which my mother made from fresh milk, sugar, vanilla, and crushed ice.

Throughout grammar school we never expressed any words of admiration for each other, not even, "Me Bubby, you Mary Esther."

Eventually Bubby's grandfather retired from the presidency, and the moved to another house longer than walking distance. I remember the only time I went there. It was a rainy day, and I was wearing a coat with a fur collar, a hand-me-down from an aunt. We were all jammed into the small car driven by Bubby's mother, and his sister remarked, "Your collar sure smells terrible." To me, a sensitive pre-teenager, the remark did too.

By now we had graduated from grammar school and were freshmen in the large high school. Bubby and I passed each other in the halls as though we were strangers.

Forty years later, when it occurred to me to inquire about him, I learned that he had gone abroad during World War II as a freelance war correspondent and died in Spain.

The French have a verb which means both hope and expect--*esperer*, so they cannot express one without the other. This seems to me a very optimistic point of view; to hope for something is to expect it to happen. So, Bubby, my sweet companion,

j'espere that you are in a wonderful place with your heroic father and your illustrious uncle, Ambassador Caffery, Plenipotentiary Extraordinary.

Afterward: I mailed this story to a lady in Natchitoches who had been in grammar school with me, and she sent back the following note, "You got just one thing wrong--Bubby was my boyfriend, not yours."

MY HOME AWAY FROM HOME IN NEW ORLEANS
by
E. D. Parker

My first day at the Southern Regional Research Laboratory (May 1, 1942) I met a lot of people, including all of the Oil, Fat, and Protein Division personnel--all of those, that is \, who had checked in. The full complement of personnel was not yet aboard. Sam Voorhies, a former pharmacist from Nashville, Tennessee, now a chemist in one of the oil sections was to be, for me, a fortunate acquaintance. Sam was of medium height, fair complexioned, somewhat thin, and had a pleasant voice--probably in the baritone range. In talking to him I found that he lived around the corner from me at 132 South Solomon. Solomon is parallel to and one block on the lakeside of Carrollton. Sam's landlady, Mrs. Devron, a widow, furnished not only a room, but also meals. He offered to ask her if she would take me on as a boarder. He did ask her, and she agreed to the arrangement. So, instead of eating at neighborhood restaurants and hamburger joints, I began eating homecooked meals--meals cooked in the Creole tradition.

After eating at the Devron house for a couple of weeks, an extra room became available, and Mrs. D. asked me if I would like to move in. It sounded highly desirable, so I did. Mrs. Devron's family at that time consisted of her mother, Mrs. Dickmann, who had recently celebrated her 100th birthday; Marko, a brother, who was about 75 years old; Sophie, a sister, who, I think, was the youngest sibling; oh, yes, and Me Too, a male Spitz dog, age unknown.

The Devron house was a long, narrow, two story structure. The bottom floor was at ground level, and they referred to it as "the basement." Unlike the Forrest house, the basement had been completely finished and was part of the living quarters. It was on a narrow lot (as were most houses in New Orleans at that time) and was on the river side of Solomon. The entry was from a small porch on the front and opened into a short hall along the right side of the house. On the left of the hall was a bedroom which was occupied by Mrs. Dickmann and Sophie, whose main duty was looking after her mother. The hall entered a small living room. Behind the living room was the dining room with the kitchen on the right. At the back right hand corner, behind the kitchen, was Marco's room. Upstairs were four bedrooms and a bath. Mrs. Devron occupied one of the bedrooms and the other three ere available for boarders. At the back of the house was a small yard surrounded by a high board fence. To the right of the yard was a one car garage that housed Mrs. Devron's shiny black Hudson which saw the light of day only twice a week at most--once on Saturday to go to the grocery store and once on Sunday to go to church. There was a narrow driveway on the right of the house, but the left side was so close to the neighbor's house that one could have leaned out the window and shaken hands with the neighbor if he leaned out his window.

Mrs. Dickmann came to New Orleans from Germany with he parents and younger siblings when she was a young girl. Both her parents died in the yellow fever epidemic, and she, being the oldest child, inherited the chore of raising her large family of younger siblings. After she married, Mrs. Dickmann had a large family of her own and had outlived all of her children except Mrs. D., Marko, and Sophie.

Mrs. Devron had also known tragedy. Her husband and two sons, her only children, were physicians, and all three had died within an eighteen month period. I never knew the specific causes of their deaths, but Mrs. Devron, in reminiscing about them on one occasion, mentioned that they all had high blood pressure--so presumably this was a contributing cause of their demise.

The Devron household accepted me with open arms as they had previously accepted Sam. They really treated us like members of the family--you might say like the proverbial prodigal son.

When I first moved into the household, Mrs. Dickmann was somewhat ambulatory, with the assistance of Sophie and a walking cane, and came to the table for meals. After a while she became more bedridden and confined to her room. Almost everyday when Sam and I came home from work, we stopped in her room for a short visit. When we missed a day, she always noticed and asked Sophie why we hadn't come in. She was remarkably alert and pleasant for a lady of her age. When asked how it felt to be her age, she replied that if you feel well you feel young. I asked Boss, Mrs. Devron, that is, (before I appeared on the scene Sam had given Mrs. D. the nickname, Boss, and we always called her that) what would be a fitting present for her mother. She had suggested that I give her a bottle of Kummel, a German liqueur that Mrs. Dickmann was especially fond of. So I gave her a bottle for Christmas, and she was as delighted as a little girl with a new doll.

Mrs. Dickmann lived until shortly before her 102nd birthday when she quietly passed away. Sam and I served as pallbearers.

One day as Marko and I sat on a small bench on the front porch I asked him how old he was. He straightened up and, with pride, asserted in a strong voice: "I am seventy-five years old." It happened to be his birthday, so Sam and I debated what to get him for a present. He chewed tobacco, and we had given him tobacco on occasion; but a man can shew just so much tobacco. We decided to give him some cash and let him choose his own present, so that's what we did. A day or so later there were repercussions, however. Boss asked us not to give Marko any more money. When he had folding money in his pocket, he made a beeline to the nearest bar where he imbibed John Barleycorn until the money was gone and then came staggering home. So, we never again gave Marko money in lieu of a gift.

I lived in the Devron household, my home away from home, until May 31, 1944, when Esther May and I were married in the little church around the corner--literally speaking. We were married in a small Methodist Church on Canal Street between Carrollton and Solomon. We kept in touch with the Devron household, visiting there occasionally. Marko, and then Sophie, passed away before we left New Orleans in 1952. Boss had moved Uptown to a Catholic Home for Senior Citizens, and that's where we saw her for the last time.

A CHANGE OF CHARACTER
by
Woodson Hopkins

He was but a snip of a boy in the summer of 1936. School was in recess, leaving nothing to occupy the hours. Bonds of idleness gripped him and held him in a lethargic fog from which he endeavored to escape. Passing the long hours, isolated from much of the world, he began an endless search for adventure. He never considered himself a prankster like Huck Finn Except for that one hot, lazy afternoon in July, he could have gone through life carrying the "good little boy" reputation his mother insisted fit him well. "Spankings? No, he never gets spanked," she would tell her friends with an air of pride. The idea that he had broad latitude with his mother would be put to test before sunset.

The day started like all others in the South Texas oil camp they called home: Breakfast with Father after an early morning tour of drilling sites; a romp with Pal, the cocker spaniel, and preparations for his usual afternoon swim. His growing appetite for hamburgers and root beer at Granny's was satisfied in the early evening. Swimming and eating are great, but where's the adventure in life, he questioned? Hunting in July was unsportsmanlike and hot. About all left to him was a crack at those pesky mullet in the pond down the road.

When word came to him the pool was to be closed for cleaning, he thought about the mullet. At the pool he spent most of his hours perfecting his back stroke and diving. He had learned to swim after only one lesson. Virgil Rymal heaved him into the deep water and commanded him: swim or drown! Brother Billy tied his ankles to insure he keep his feet together one day while diving from the board. They were, he told himself, reincarnates of Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn. But he knew that they knew if anything bad happened to her little boy, his mother would do harm to their persons. Armed with this awareness, one day he feigned drowning. With ankles tied, he sank to the bottom, reposing there until his agitators became worried enough to come to his rescue.

He always went the direct route to the pond, avoiding the gravel road and its many twists and turns. His path took him through the makeshift softball diamond, past the swimming pool, power plant, and on to the pond. "Those mullet won't bite a hook!" his father shouted as he left the house. But he could only think of the tantalizing sorties the mullet made around his cork without once stopping to bite.

Against his father's advice, he arrived at the pond packing rod, reel, bait, and a baseball bat someone had left at the diamond. The bait was his own concoction. Usual bait had been summarily rejected by the mullet. He decided that those fish wanted human food. He just knew that hamburger meat, peanut butter, and corn meal from Granny's kitchen would do the trick. He would go home with the most elusive game prizes on the ranch. His mind conjured up a call from the famous Buckhorn Saloon wanting to hang them on their wall. His hook no sooner hit the water than the mullet--flashing their shiny backs in the sun--swam full speed past the cork. With each teasing turn made by the pair, the adventure in his day dimmed.

He stood shaking the stiffness from cramped legs and noticed growing activity at the softball diamond. The sight of female intruders from Refugio and Cuero sent an

audible grown from him. They would surely block his intended travel home. He had rarely seen his grandmother, against whom he matched all women, out of her kitchen, garden, or chicken lot. Women playing softball gave him a strange feeling. In years to come he would see women pulling pipe slips around drill strings and standing atop cement trucks; sights he knew would stun his father, to say nothing of Granny. It was a changing world. It remained to be seen if he would change with it.

He felt a slight bump to his line as he reeled in the unmolested bait. Suddenly a serpent head appeared, followed by the writhing, recoiling body of a large moccasin. The hook, intended for the mullet, had instead lodged in the side of the passing snake. Mysterious instincts came to play in him as he fought against the resisting reptile.

Questions arose in his mind. Did he really want this thing on his line; did he want it on the bank slithering after him? Before he knew it, he was engaged in a game of "hot potato" with the snake. When the menacing creature made its unwelcomed landfall, he was convinced he was in a kill or be killed situation. Acting swiftly, he grabbed the nearby bat and smashed all the life from the wriggling form before him. He felt slight elation as he made plans to take his trophy home to show his father that he had not been shut out. His kill, hopefully, would prompt his father to get him a shotgun. He felt some amount of vanity regarding his abilities as a big time hunter. He had taken to the prairie life reluctantly at first, but warmed to his new world as nature gave forth all types of creatures with which he would learn to deal. Perhaps, without any degree of awareness, a bit of Tom and Huck was creeping into his ego.

Activity at the softball diamond drew his attention and his curiosity surfaced once more. Women, not girls, were playing softball. What next, he thought? See for yourself, a far off voice with a river dialect spoke. Getting his booty home through the enemy lines taxed his ingenuity. He was not so advanced in the business of handling dead snakes that he could bring himself to touch one. Another being--a holy being--must have taken control of his actions. He jerked the hook from the snake's side and inserted it into the lower jaw, barb up. *UPON THY BELLY SHALT THOU GO, AND DUST SHALT THY EAT ALL THE DAYS OF THY LIFE....* He tucked the rod, tip down, under his arm and started a slow walk toward the game. The snake, cursed by God, followed in the prairie dust.

He approached the field from the rightfield corner and moved to a position behind first base. The snake rested in the grass down the right field line. The game was intense and none of the sparse crowd in the single stand behind home plate paid him any attention. He was quick to notice the female mannerisms of the players and snickered under his breath when they flexed knees on grounders and issued only polite encouragement from the bench. He wondered if Granny would approve. Her idea of recreation was whipping up a full course meal for hungry men. Seeing women in brightly colored baseball uniforms sporting around might be too much for her Victorian upbringing.

The game wore on with the home team down 1-0 in a closely fought pitcher's battle. He made an untimely decision to watch the final inning from the opposite side of the field in order to make a quick exit after the fray. As the teams exchanged the field, he bolted, only to feel the weight of the snake's corpse on a now taunt line. Quickly he

removed his thumb from the reel's spool, allowing the line to "free wheel" while he sought safe haven on the other side.

The snake moved to a position undetected behind first base. He had pulled it off, but his timing was off, too. He had run between catcher lady and the third base lady on a warm up throw and drew wrathful comments from the third base lady. "Hey, kid, get off the field!" she screamed. "Yes, ma'am," he replied weakly.

A whispering voice entered the dialogue. "She doesn't like kids. See what she thinks about snakes!!!" With that, he slowly turned the crank of his reel and moved the moccasin to the lip of the infield. The lead off batter lifted a high fly to left. With all eyes toward the sky, he cranked the snake to the grass between first base and pitcher's mound. The home team was two outs away from losing when the second batter, attempting a bunt, popped the ball spinning toward the ugly form on the ground. The pitcher, second and first base ladies all broke to the ball, converging simultaneously on the graphic scene at their feet.

"Snake! Snake!" The first base lady screamed uncontrollably, launching a ripple of panic throughout the crowd. He was likewise dealing with panic of his own. Fearing involvement, he immediately cut the line with his pocket knife and sprinted home. Behind his the sounds of pandemonium rose like thunder and he ran faster and faster.

Peering around the corner of the garage he saw cars hastily departing the diamond, leaving a cloud of dust in their wake. He slumped down, resting his back against the garage and began to ponder his fate. He could not tell his mother the devil was responsible nor could he mention Eve in the garden. The only one left was Huck!