Life and Letters

Volume XIb

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): Lois Diel; Joan Stear; Jean Norwood; Rita Wade; Patsy Hough; Margaret Bollich with grandmother; Audrey and Melvin Daniel; Barbara Trappey's family; Mildred Joy; center, Nelia Myrhaugen (in middle)

This volume of **Life and Letters**

is fondly dedicated to

Melvin A. Daniel

with a promise never to forget.

"Pooh, *promise* you won't forget about me, ever.
Not even when I'm a hundred."
Pooh thought for a little.
"How old shall *I* be then?"
"Ninety-nine."
Pooh nodded.
"I promise," he said.

LIFE AND LETTERS
Fall 1994

Seated, l. to r.: Nelia Myrhaugen, Rita Wade, Joan Stear, Jean Norwood, Audrey Daniel
Standing, l. to r.: Margaret Bollich, Wanda Rense, Patsy Hough, Betty Shoemaker, Melba Martin, Mildred Joy, Lois Diehl
(Missing from photo, Melvin Daniel, JoAnn Sartain, Barbara Trappey)

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A DAY AT THE OLD SUGAR REFINERY
by
Nelia Myrhaugen

The old sugar refinery on the Refinery Road across the railroad track was demolished many years ago; but I have many fond memories of going to and through the old building that stood about two miles out of the city limits of Abbeville, Louisiana.

Walking to the refinery was fun as I remember kicking the rocks as I walked along the gravel road with my two older brothers, Walter and Lester. During cane season in the Fall, I enjoyed seeing the change of colors of red, yellow and purple in the chicken trees and the wild sumac. We called them chicken trees because where we lived there were the same kind of trees where some of our hens roosted in the branches at night.

The process of making brown sugar from raw sugar cane after it arrived at the refinery began by unloading the cane, which had been piled high on huge trucks. The cane was tied with long ropes to hold the stalks securely on their trip from the field to the refinery. Huge, noisy machinery groaned noisily during the entire process; but first the cane was unloaded from the trucks by big tractors having a long crane attached to huge jaw-like grabbers that opened and shut when the operator pulled a lever on the tractor. The jaws would open and shut to grab a big bundle of cane and drop it on the conveyer belt making a very loud noise as the cane hit the conveyer belt.

After all the cane trucks were empty, the cane was then put through a crushing process to extract the juice. The best way to describe the sounds is to magnify by a thousand times the sounds that I made when I chewed cane.

I can remember the crunching sounds I made while I chewed pieces of sugar cane after the peeling was stripped off and the juicy white cane was cut into bite-size pieces. I chewed until all the sweet juice was extracted and swallowed; then I spit out the residue. The sugar cane at that time was called Blue-Ribbon cane. This particular variety of cane is no longer in production on a large scale. I believe the variety is now called P O J. The cane is not very sweet and not much fun to chew; but it makes good sugar and syrup.

We were each given a tin cup filled with freshlly extracted juice. We never thought that maybe the cane was not sterilized. We only knew the juice was sweet and delicious.

Daddy worked at the refinery every Fall during the sugar cane grinding. This season was always a happy time for my family because for at least three months there was a steady flow of income. Because of his handicap, Daddy could not hold down just any job. His duty at the refinery was to control the valves on the outside of the heavy metal boilers where the juice was heated to certain temperatures to kill any bacteria or other impurities before the juice was further processed. Daddy could handle this job very well in spite of having only one arm. He was very adept with his left arm.

Then the hot juice went through a filter press to remove any pieces of peel that might have remained. It took two strong men wearing heavy, work gloves to protect them from burns from the hot steam emitting from the hot juice. The sweaty men, perspiring from all the heat, stood on each side of the heavy metal sections of the filter press which made loud, clanging noises as the metal bars across each section banged together. The enormous, thick, mesh bags which contained the juice were attached to these metal rods.

Following that step, the juice was cooked until it turned to the most delicious, fresh brown sugar. We were allowed to see the hot sugar coming out of the chute as it fell onto the floor of the sugar room. The best part of the whole tour was to have a sample of the fresh, raw, natural brown sugar.

Daddy always brought some sugar home and Mama made peanut or sesame seed pralines with the raw, brown sugar. I can still remember the aroma of pralines cooking on Mama's wood-burning stove in the old-fashioned kitchen and how good the candy tasted.

LIFE IN THE COUNTRY
by
Rita Wade

Living in the country was never boring. With all the fun things to do, I think climbing trees was my favorite. Our yard was graced with four large pecan trees. The branches were thick and close together, and this fall the leaves were turning color. The cool air smelled of dry leaves, a great day for climbing trees.

My brother Howard was standing nearby. Approaching him, I asked if he was interested in making a deal. "What kind of deal?" he asked.

"If you let me borrow your gun until I kill a bird, I'll never pester you again," I said.

Howard quickly agreed.

I had driven large nails into the trunk of my favorite tree. With enthusiasm, I climbed up my makeshift ladder until I reached a comfortable place to sit. I watched the birds for a few minutes, then began shooting. I missed every shot. I felt like a failure when suddenly, a single bird perched on a limb near me. I shot once, and to my surprise, the bird fell to the ground. I scurried down, scratching my arms.

Howard picked up the bird, handing it to me with a proud smile. I held the tiny sparrow in my hand. I was speechless. It felt so soft and warm. My lips began quivering. I soon tasted salt from the tears that would not stop. Howard picked up his gun and walked away from me, mumbling "poor sport." I stood there, concerned only with finding a resting place for the little bird.

UNCLE ALBERT AND AUNT ELSA
by
Barbara Trappey

Aunt Elsa and Uncle Albert, my grandaddy's brother, had a positive influence in my life. Grandaddy helped Uncle Albert get his education at L.S.U., and then to go on to West Point, a gesture Uncle Albert was always grateful for.

Uncle Albert moved up in the ranks in the army and lived all over the world. He didn't marry until he was probably forty-five years old when he met Aunt Elsa, an English newspaper reporter, during World War I in Berlin.

When Uncle Albert and his new bride came to Franklin by train to visit the family, their arrival was quite an occasion. Aunt Elsa brought several wardrobe trunks full of clothes, accessories, hats, scarves, capes, furs, shoes and jewelry. They would cause quite a lot of excitement. Her clothes were so different from anything we had ever seen. Her English accent just fascinated Ann and I. We would sit for hours listening to her stories about their travels.

After Grandaddy died Uncle Albert wrote to Mother asking if Ann and I could visit them for the summer. At that time they lived in officers housing at the Presidio in San Francisco. Uncle Albert would send Pullman train tickets for us, and we would travel there with our cousin, Roberta Loustalot. I was eight years old, Ann was ten, and Roberta was twelve. After much debate, Mother finally agreed that it would be a wonderful experience for us. (The train trip was quite an adventure, one I will write about another time.)

Uncle Albert and Aunt Elsa met us at the train. From the station we went straight to the Presidio. We met Minna, their German housekeeper who had been with them since they were married in Germany.

There was a large hill right in back of the house. I asked if I could go out to run up "the mountain." Uncle Albert, explaining that it was "a hill, not a mountain," said, "Yes, you may go run up it." He didn't say that it wasn't a good idea to run down. I ended up falling and rolling down the hill. Minna, with much fussing in German, cleaned and bandaged me up.

The beautiful view in front of the house looked out onto the San Francisco Bay. It was a beautiful view. We could see Alcatrez in the distance, a setting which we thought was very scary.

Our trip to San Francisco was to be our cultural experience. Every night Minna served dinner very formally in the dining room. We were taught to help her set the table properly. We were also taught to ask for what we wanted in German. I was, and must admit I still am, a picky eater. When I wouldn't eat, I would hear Minna mutter, "she must think she is a little princess." After dinner was over, she would take me into the kitchen and give me whatever I wanted to eat. As the youngest, I really did get a lot of attention, which really got Ann and Roberta angry.

Every Saturday morning Roberta, Ann, and I would go to the YMCA for a sing-a-long. We would sing Christian songs. I especially remember "Onward Christian Soldiers." I thought our Saturdays were a lot of fun.

across the Bay to Oakland to visit relatives. We went to the Pacific Ocean and waded in the water. We went to see the great Redwood Forests; I still remember their magnificence.

One Sunday we went to the St. Francis Hotel to have tea with an old friend of theirs. I just couldn't imagine that anyone could actually live in a hotel.

One night Uncle Albert and Aunt Elsa had to entertain at a formal dinner. There was lots of excitement in getting the house and us ready. Everything looked just lovely, including Uncle Albert and Aunt Elsa. He had on his full dress uniform, and she was dressed very elegantly. After dinner Minna brought us out to meet the guests. One of the ladies said, "How nice it must be to live so close to New Orleans!" Much to Uncle Albert's dismay I answered, "I've never been to New Orleans."

It wasn't long after we got back home that Uncle Albert arranged for Mother to take us to New Orleans on the train and for someone to take us around to see the sights in the city.

Even after Uncle Albert retired in New Orleans and Aunt Elsa died, he continued to play a large part in my life. I named one of my sons Albert after my Uncle Albert.

Decades after my San Francisco trip I returned to visit my daughter Claire and her husband David when they lived in California. I was able to visit many of the places I had seen and remembered the kindness of Uncle Albert and Aunt Elsa.

SAFE AT WARTIME
by
Patsy Hough

There has never been a good war or a bad peace. When war is declared, truth is the first casualty. Not all seek peace, but it is the climate of freedom! Violence is indeed terrible, yet our nation has an abiding faith in the cause of freedom.

Many have suffered in wars, seeking peace for our nation. Most of us know someone who has served in battle. The same faith that our nation has helps many casualties of war survive in peace. Others are still suffering.

As a twelve-year-old, I remember listening to the news over a battery operated radio. We did not have electricity, and the batteries were weak; but we still heard over the airwaves the news of Japan attacking Pearl Harbor. That event and the following months are vague in my mind now, but I do remember Grandma and Grandaddy Alcock being deeply concerned. My young mind did not grasp the awfulness of wartime.

The thing I remember about World War II was the rationing of sugar and gasoline. We were farmers, though, and were hardly effected. Grandaddy didn't have a "victory garden"; instead he continued to work his large peaceful farm. Instead of using sugar, we had honey from our bees to sweeten our food. Grandaddy used the A Model truck very little, so the gas ration did not affect us either. Plus, we had a good wagon and strong, stubborn mules.

I had two books of war stamps with a few ten cents stamps in each which I bought at school. Filling them up would mean having an eighteen dollar war bond worth twenty-five dollars. Somehow I associate wartime with what the government was giving us at school. We were given apples or raisins. We had to make our container for the raisins from our school supplies. (Crafts designed for 1941!) I also remember singing "God Bless America" and pledging allegiance to the flag.

As I look back, I realize the wisdom of my grandparents. They certainly did not instill fear in my mind about the horrors of wartime. Thank God, we did not have a television to see all the violence of wartime. We didn't listen to the radio hourly because the battery might get weak or go dead. I can remember listening to Joe Lewis boxing matches, but he joined the armed service to face a <u>real</u> fight.

Prior to the war Lucky Strike cigarettes were packaged in green and red wrappers. When the government needed green dye for the war effort, the packaging became red and white. Grandma liked Lucky Strikes, but they were too expensive for her, so I helped her "roll her own" with a hand operated gadget!

Grandaddy's two farm hands, the Lear brothers were inducted into the armed services soon after the War began. So for the next couple of years, I helped Grandaddy on the farm, probably hindered him also! I hung onto the other end of a saw so we could cut the winter firewood. I also plowed a middle buster after Grandaddy used the turning plow. The turning plow left a middle furrow that the mule and I, with the help of a small plow, broke up. In the springtime, Grandaddy would make what is called a "new ground" where crops were to be planted I would go over the new ground and pick up roots, limbs, and clumps of bushes. There were also snakes and more hard work. The other

way I helped Grandaddy when the men were at war was placing the cane into the grist mill. Such fun! I saw the juice come out and later watched Grandaddy as he stirred the different channels of juice in a special made syrup cooker. When it reached the other end of the cooking pan, the syrup would be ready. Grandaddy knew how fast to push the juice in the pan to the final cooking. I can remember the flames from the blazing fire underneath the cooker. I helped with other farm chores, but I could never learn to milk the cows or pick cotton. As any twelve- year-old, I thought helping was sometimes hard work, but it was wonderful! I was needed and I was loved. The War seemed far away from my world. I was safe with Grandma and Grandaddy.

MY EARLIEST REMEMBERED EXPERIENCE
by
Jean C. Norwood

I remember posing on the stern of Papa's boat and pretending to steer it just as if it was yesterday. I remember how the blue and white wool knit cape with a drawstring neck and hood felt to my fingers. My cape had a hood which hung over my shoulder. I can also "feel" the ruffles on the bonnet. They were rather stiff and edged with lace. I had on a black and white checked romper under the cape and white cotton stockings with black, shiny lace-up shoes. I always played with the pom-poms at the ends of the drawstring around my neck. Mother had knitted the cape and crocheted the drawstring.

Mother sent the picture of me to her parents in Scott, Upstate New York (we lived on the South Shore of Long Island on the Great South Bay). As the clipping from the Syracuse Herald states, my proud grandparents put the photograph in the society section of the Sunday edition.

Grandmother called Mother and said all their friends were asking what Jean was doing in the picture. I told Grandma Peck, "I am wheeling Papa's boat!" My substituting "wheeling" for "steering" was quoted in the paper and laughed over for years. I always thought I was two years at the time of this memory, but the clipping says I was one! This early memory is a most happy memory, as were all those of my growing up years.

GROWING UP
by
Jo Ann Sartain

Though usually ready to talk about almost any topic, I have found it difficult to comment on growing up. Maybe the best way for me to comment on this process is to relate that growth that took place alongside Marge.

I didn't realize my sister's positive traits at the time. My first grade teacher prompted Mother not to expect the grades my valedictorian sister, Marge, had made. "Some have it and some don't--please don't cause Jo Ann to feel inferior," counseled Mrs. Buck. Mother waited 'til I was about thirty to tell me that story so I never got to feel inferior to Marge!

One day Marge and I were driving home from the post office. She had received a letter from her sweetheart, Joe McNeil, so she let me steer while she took care of the accelerator and brakes, giving most of her attention to the love letter. You know, it's a strange thing; when you are young it seems the roads rather meld into the path of the car. I saw the curve in the road, but it did not meld into the way the car was going!

When we called Daddy to come get us out of the ditch, Marge was the one to learn about not letting her baby sister navigate. To this day she insists on driving when we're together!

You might understand her frustration in that I enjoyed her boyfriends. I especially remember one who would play jacks with me, thereby missing her fashionably late entrance. Marge determined to get even by telling my jacks partner that the fried rabbit we were having for supper was my pet white rabbit. As a result of my horror, and to hers, I threw at Marge the stuffed head of lettuce Mother had artfully prepared for a "company" supper.

Well, Marge was properly reprimanded for that teasing and such terrible insensitivity. You know, my sister had a lot of lessons to learn while I was growing up!

REMEMBERING
by
Margaret Bollich

I'm remembering the year of 1936 in Eunice, Louisiana, the town where I was born. As I walked home from school, I was thinking of my Grandmother, Sidionie Prudhomme Miller. I thought Sidionie was a strange name for a lady. When I asked mother about the name, I was told Sidionie was named for her father, Sydney Prudhomme, who died three months before my grandmother was born. Her mother, my great-grandmother, lived to see the fifth generation of grandchildren, one of which is my own daughter, Catherine.

My mother's mother, Grandma, as she was known to the children, even those in the neighborhood who were not related, was the kindest, most genial person I have ever known. We spent many happy hours together. I often spent the night with her because she was alone after her youngest daughter, Stella, married. Grandma never complained about her illness even when my inexperienced hands gave her the insulin she needed for diabetes mellitus.

My grandmother loved food and always had hot bread with homemade canned figs or strawberry preserves for an afterschool snack. In those days, the aroma of fresh baked bread reached us even before we entered the front gate. I still think of long ago every time I bake bread or I'm near a bakery when fresh bread comes out of the oven.

One of our favorite places was the swing that hung on the long gallery that ran across the front of her home. Late in the evenings when homework was finished, we used to sit outside until it was time for bed. Grandma would tell me many stories about her life. My favorite stories were about when she and Grandad, Arthur Miller, were young: the trips they took to visit friends in their horse and buggy; stories of their four young children; and stories about when they were building the house that still exists today.

Grandma's flowers and trees are another fond memory. The magnolias and night jasmine, as well as the four o'clocks and plum trees, are gone now but the memories linger on. Four o'clocks and night jasmine are grown in my own backyard as a reminder of Grandma's house.

Though her world was limited, Grandma was a happy person. I strive to be like the grandmother I remember for my own grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

MARDI GRAS MANIA
by
Audrey K. Daniel

The beat of the drums, the roar of the crowd, and the cries of "Throw me something, mister!" were the sounds instilled in every true New Orleanian. Our family was no exception.

Mother loved the parades, and consequently, so did I. We never missed any of them, even if we had to walk downtown to the parade route, hoping that the mule drawn floats would be late so we wouldn't miss anything.

Mother was a skilled seamstress and always saw that Elaine and I had a costume to wear to the pre-Lenten celebration. One year, our fantasy was to mask as pirates. The costumes were made up of short black pants, purple boleros, red sashes around our waists, white shirts, black oil cloth leggings and jaunty black oil cloth hats. We thought we looked great. During the Great Depression, clothing--especially something as unnecessary as a costume--was never discarded. When my pirate suit was outgrown, Elaine's identical costume was handed down to me until it, too, no longer fit.

One year my cousin Jean came in from Pontchatoula to share in the revelry. With Mother's help, Jean and Elaine masked as gypsies, and, once again, I was a pirate.

On another of Jean's Mardi Gras visits, she and Elaine masked as sailors, while--for the last time--I was a pirate. That was my final year of fitting into that infamous hand-me-down costume. We walked downtown to see the Rex Parade. On the way home, we stopped at a reviewing stand on Jefferson Davis Parkway and Banks Street. This stand was not for judging best costumes; the winners were mainly judged by their talent. Jean and Elaine were very confident and decided we should sing "Popeye, the Sailor Man." Being very timid, with no vocal talent, I would not be persuaded by Jean's suggestion.

Daddy always had to work on Mardi Gras, but Mother seemed to solve the problem of transportation. Many times we rode with Aunt Gussie and Uncle Willie, usually viewing the parades at St. Charles Avenue and Poydras Street, never seeing a parade only once. Uncle Willie patiently drove all over the city, weaving through traffic jams with his big black Dodge to see the parade at two or three locations along the long parade route.

The baubles thrown by the masked men on the floats were strings of flimsy glass beads made in Japan. These necklaces were regarded as treasures by anyone lucky enough to catch one.

Mother established her own Mardi Gras tradition. After the parade, the family gathered at her house for a lunch of baked ham, potato salad, and hot dogs. With full stomachs and a little rest, everyone was ready to return downtown for the night time flambeaux lit Comus Parade.

In 1950, the year after we were married, Yvonne suggested that Melvin and I, along with her and Bos and Mother, should dress as clowns and go downtown together. The sewing machines immediately went into action. Red chintz and white tulle were everywhere. Five red clown costumes, complete with tall stiff red hats adorned with white pom poms, were ready in time for the big celebration. We were quite an impressive

group strutting around St. Charles Avenue and Poydras Street.

The clown costumes were stored away with no thought of ever wearing them again. In 1953, Mother, Melvin, and I were going to the Rex Parade with Elaine and her family. Seeing five-year-old Cheryl dressed as a little clown, Melvin and I decided to wear our clown suits once again. After three years of being stored in a cedar chest, the two red suits with their fluffy white tulle collars, now wilted and reeking of moth balls, were quickly donned for the last time. Mother was not receptive to the idea of masking again. She was almost sixty years old, and clowning around once was enough for her.

Melvin and I never masked again. The years that followed were filled with sewing costumes for Kenny, Doreen, and Julie instead. With Mother's help, I made mice, Indians, and Chinese costumes.

Our move to Lafayette ended our love for Mardi Gras. I continued Mother's ham, potato salad, and hot dog tradition for a few years, but Mardi Gras Mania is now a thing of the past.

A PROUD FATHER
by
Melvin A. Daniel

Having never known my father, I was delighted when I had children of my own. I couldn't wait for them to be old enough to share in family activities.

Kenneth was the first born and, before Doreen was born two years later, was the most spoiled. He was the "King of the Household."

When Kenny was a toddler, we were living on Bernadotte Street, across the street from the house on Banks and Bernadotte where Audrey was born. It was almost a nightly ritual for my father-in-law Fritz and me to take Kenny "frogging" by the railroad tracks where Banks Street dead ended. Kenny would search for the small frogs and place them in a bucket to be released by the house to eat insects. A freight train would pass around eight in the evening, and Mr. Carpenter, who rode the caboose, would occasionally toss flares to us for lighting later on. What a pleasure it was to see Kenny's excitement when he caught a flare!

When Kenny was four years old, he developed a love for the brightly colored Tonka toys. He loved the bulldozer, but his favorite was a crane he referred to as the "Big Digger."

Most Sunday afternoons were spent on the levee of the Mississippi River. Kenny spotted the new Mississippi River Bridge under construction, and watching its progress turned into our main Sunday attraction. His love for bridges was the first indication that he would possibly be an engineer when he grew up.

We moved to our newly purchased home in Gentilly Woods when Kenny was four years old. He became involved in scouting activities just as soon as his age permitted. On many occasions, I accompanied him on campouts. Although I, too, had been a scout, I could never get used to sleeping in a small pup tent. In spite of the cramped sleeping quarters, I enjoyed being with my son.

Kenny attended St. Gabriel School and through the years became active in sports, particularly basketball, football, and track. I travelled frequently on business trips, but attended as many activities as possible.

In 1970, I was transferred to Lafayette. Kenny had good grades and a good sports record and was eagerly accepted to Cathedral High School through the recommendation of my agent, S. P. Landry, and his son Sidney. We were grateful because the school was full at the time.

Kenny immediately participated in all of Cathedral's sporting activities. Audrey, Doreen, Julie, and I enjoyed attending the football games in Lafayette and surrounding towns. I was a proud father at a banquet at the school when Kenny was awarded the Burton Richard All Sports Trophy for excelling in football, basketball, and track.

Once again we watched with pride as our son signed a football scholarship to attend Tulane University in New Orleans. Kenny earned his Civil Engineering Degree, and later on, his Master's. Yes, I am proud of my son and glad I was able to share in his scholastic and sporting activities.

He and his wife, Vicki, must be as proud of their only son, thirteen-year-old Paul,

as I was of my only son. Of course, my two lovely daughters are another story, and Kenny and Vicki must be as equally proud of their own two lovely daughters, Noemi, 16, and Lauren, 10, as Audrey and I are of Doreen and Julie.

JANKARA MARKET
by
Lois Diehl

Shopping in Lagos was an all day adventure. Surprisingly there was a wide variety of goods and food that began appearing shortly after the end of the Nigerian Civil War. The drawback was that not all items were available at one particular time in one particular outlet so shopping around was necessary. In an overpopulated city with streets congested with people, bicycles, and automobiles mobility was not easy.

Jankara was the local native market where the art of bartering was the norm. Its entrance stretched over many blocks on a street branching off the main street--Yakubu Gowon--lined with established stores with set prices. On our way to Jankara Bashiru, my driver, would drive slowly weaving his way through narrow streets overflowing with Nigerian vendors and customers all talking at once. New buildings rose above roofs that resembled a patchwork quilt designed from rusting corrugated iron and thatched raffia mats covering an endless maze of mud-walled houses. Nearer to Jankara the streets became narrower and more congested. Wares from small lock-up shops and stalls spilled across the sidewalks where customers and shopkeepers haggled endlessly over prices. Street vendors, their goods perched precariously on their heads or in cardboard boxes tied to the back of their bicycles, would weave in and out of these teeming and noisy crowds.

At the edge of the market was stall after stall of toys, grocery store shelf goods from all over the world, tin cooking utensils, ready made clothing, small tools, small auto parts, small home appliances--just about anything one could imagine. As we ventured further into the maze, market women dressed in brightly colored caftans or wrap around skirts with matching headpieces called out to us or approached us to look at their wares. "Madam, Madam, come see!" We passed stalls exploding with purple, blue, and green plastic goods such as buckets, basins, and carry alls. After the enamelware--trays, bowls of all sizes, and chop dishes--were the cloth vendors. Length after length of the green, yellow, red, and blue java prints from Malaysia hung folded over rods in the stalls. These brightly patterned cotton prints were the most prevalent material used by the Nigerian women.

Deeper in the market, where the thatched covering over the stalls began to block out the sun, were the vendors most popular with the expatriate women--the bead women. These women guarded their raffia strung Venetian trade beads as if they were made of gold. They brought them out sparingly and only after much coaxing. I soon learned the secret to gaining their trust and willingness to bring the beads from their hiding place was to bring trinkets, small candies and gum to their many children playing nearby. It could take an entire morning of laughing and cajoling to get the women finally to show the oldest and rarest of the beads. Patience was sometimes rewarded when a wad of soiled cloth was unwrapped revealing the most sought after and hardest to find treasure in beads--the Chevron bead. The Chevron bead was blue and white striped with a star-like design on each end. The larger ones were the most desirable. Many of the beads,

prevalent in West Africa during the slave trade days, had been buried in the ground or hidden in caves. Caches are still being uncovered today.

One day while I was looking at several open lengths of native tie dye cottons held up by two of the women so I could see the entire designs, I was abruptly pushed to the ground from behind. One of the women I frequently traded with had attacked me, or so I thought. Then I heard some loud angry voices speaking in tribal languages. Behind me two market vendors were rolling around in the dirt with their arms locked around each other. Before I managed to get back on my feet, I realized that I was not attacked, but only pushed out of harm's way as I was in the direct path of these women. Needless to say I was shaken and wary for quite a while after.

Only once did I venture into the center of the market accompanied by several friends and a driver. At the center was the food market for the Nigerians. There were baskets and wooden tables full of fruits such as plantains, pineapples, papayas, coconuts and oranges. Yams, cassavas and dried hot peppers were everywhere. We passed covered baskets that seemed to be moving. We soon discovered these baskets contained large land snails. These glossy black creatures had shells that were about six inches long. Later I had my first encounter with this delicacy at a Nigerian dinner party in the form of snail stew served over rice. When I was told what the dish was, all I could envision were those vibrating baskets in Jankara.

The smell deep in the market was overpowering. Nigeria had many rivers and lakes and the fish from them turned up in the market either dried until they were black or smoked. Either way they looked and smelled uninviting. A small truck that resembled a World War I ambulance made its way into the market center. Its back doors opened spilling out carcasses of bloody animals that were hacked up and hung in the stalls. Flies swarmed everywhere attracted by the raw uncovered meats. In some of the open areas pots of rice and soup containing meats and chicken with lots of herbs and spices gave off an aroma that was a mixture of the wood fire and the food being cooked.

After this experience I decided that I would stick to buying my meat from the stores on Yakubu Gowon Street, my shrimp and fish from Apapa wharf, and my vegetables and fruit from either the man who came to the house on his bicycle or the small vendors scattered throughout the residential areas.

MY SECOND HERO
by
Betty Shoemaker

My daughter Debbie, then seventeen, was and is an excellent horsewoman and trainer. She could get the horses to do everything but talk.

Faye Case, one of my best friends in New Iberia, resided at 710 Victory Drive. She and I serviced our automobiles at the same Texaco station on Parkview. The station was on the opposite side of the street from a pasture I leased from the B. F. Trappey canning company.

She said one day as she was servicing her vehicle the station owner told her this story.

Several days ago Debbie and a friend had ridden out of the pasture. Debbie was riding "Lady," a beautiful strawberry Roane mare. Her friend was riding Poncho, my black gelding. Poncho was a mixture of Morgan and Tennessee Walker. Both horses were very frisky.

Debbie realized right away that her friend had lost control of Poncho. He was headed east on Parkview where there was a signal light at the Lewis Street intersection, but poor Poncho didn't know the difference between red and green. Debbie knew that if Poncho reached the bridge he would slip down on the metal flooring.

The station owner was amazed at Debbie's expertise as she was weaving in and around and in front of the cars as if they were filming a movie that had been rehearsed many times.

Debbie was finally able to overtake Poncho and force him from the street down a slight embankment that stopped at the water's edge of Bayou Teche.

I cringed at the thought of Poncho slipping and falling in front or between cars injuring himself and his rider, or worse.

Debbie had prevented a serious accident or possible tragedy. When I questioned her, she merely shrugged her shoulders and said, "We just lost Chuck, and I didn't want you to worry about me."

I gratefully accepted the realization that I was the proud mother of two heros instead of one.

GROWING UP WAS NOT EASY!
by
Mildred Joy

Now don't get me wrong--childhood was the easy part. When I was twelve years old, I was doing the grocery shopping, cleaning house and preparing supper. I would love to see the twelve-year-old that does that in this day and age. I feel that I have been grown all my life, and I am here to tell you that I am enjoying my retirement beyond anyone's wildest imagination. This is because of my hard work and, as my shorthand teacher used to say, "STICK-TO-ITIVENESS!"

Saturday was my day to really clean house since I was off from school that day. If you will remember, we used the old Red Cedar Oil on the wood areas. I guess I was lucky that I did not know what floor wax was, or I would have had to wax the floors, too! Remember, I also had those twenty steps to do. Tina, my very precious girl friend who lived upstairs, would do the porch and front steps one week, and I would do them the next.

Dad would give me his pay check endorsed, and I would take my little pull cart and walk about two miles to the store. Out of his pay check I could have one nickel candy bar. Sometimes I would look for a candy bar that was a two for a nickel. That way I would have one for during the week. I would have to settle up with Dad when he got home. I would return with my receipts and his change, minus the nickel for my candy bar. I thought I was some smart doing this.

Now, Mom was a different story--I had better have that house sparkling clean and supper ready for the table. I know I learned a lot because of her demands, but I feel that I missed a lot of my childhood. Who knows, maybe I did have enough childhood for me. I would be punished if the house was not in order, so believe you me, I kept it as clean as possible. When I first had this chore, we had an old woodstove that had to be polished and rubbed down. Well, I had done that to the best of my ability and then had to start preparing supper. I put the newspaper, kindling and some coke coal in and lit it. The fire was not hot enough to begin cooking, so I poured some kerosene and...boom! I had all the soot from the inside of the stove on the outside of the stove, floor and the entire kitchen. Scared the daylights out of me, but I had the fire going again for supper. Then came the chore of cleaning up once again. Thank the Lord, Dad came in and helped me clean before Mom got home. You can bet I didn't do that again, EVER!

Daddy only had one good white long sleeve shirt, and this particular wash day I was trying to hurry and get through so that I could go outside and play. I had a red shirt and threw it in with all the whites in that hot water. Everything in that washing machine turned PINK. That was before the style of pink shirts. Daddy had the prettiest pink shorts, undershirts and one lovely pink shirt. Mama had pink undies and bras--ME TOO! I called Mama right away crying and told her what I had done. She said, "Don't cry, just remove the red shirt out of the wash and leave all the white clothes in and put some Clorox in. That will remove a lot of the pink." It really did surprise me by removing almost completely the pink. I was never so glad to see a white shirt in my entire life. We laughed about that for a long time, but I never did tell Mama that I was in a hurry to go

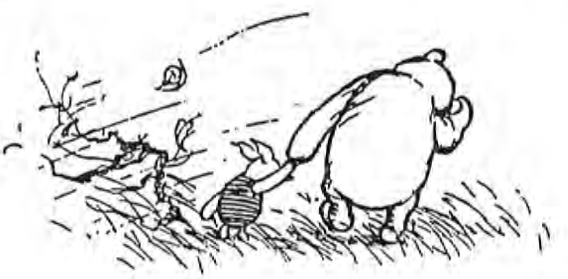
outside to play. I know that she must have known exactly what happened even though I would like to think that I got by with some little something while growing up.

We had an old colored mammy, Leila, who came and went in our lives. She would work a month or maybe two and then take off to who knows where. Then she would call Mama and Daddy to help her get out of a tight, and they would. She called me Bill. Til this day I do not know why that was my name to her.

This particular episode happened while Joyce, a girl friend, and myself were going to wash our old Franklin automobile. It was a four door with front and back seats. Just in back of the front seat were jump seats that would fold out. The car had been parked in front of the house and the spigot was on the side, so we pushed and pushed until we got the car where we wanted it to be washed. We did a great job in cleaning the car, but then we had to put it back around the corner in front of the house. Only one small problem stood in our way. The street was a slight incline which we had to push the car back up and around the corner. I proceeded to go upstairs and get the extra key to the car. Since I knew how to drive, I was simply going to put it in reverse and go around the corner backwards. I did very well starting, but then my mind, even as a child, could not remember which gear was reverse on the old stick shift. Joyce was scared to death and kept telling me, "Boy, Mildred you are going to be in trouble!" I put the shift in reverse all right, but the clutch I let out fast and stepped on the gas too fast. By gollies, did I go around that corner! I am here to tell you it did not take as long going up the hill as it did to come down the hill. I missed hitting a sweet gum tree by a hair. I stalled the car out in the middle of the street and the street car track by slamming on the brakes. By this time I was so addled I didn't know which way was up.

Who do you think was looking out the upstairs window at the scene? Nobody but Leila. When I got out of the car shaking, what did I hear but Leila yelling at me, "You, Bill! You better put that car right back where you got it from and leave it alone. I'm gonna tell Mr. Knights on you!" I got back in the car and, believe you me, I had everything down pat with her watching me every minute. Did a good job putting it back where I had moved it from,too! Leila told Daddy, but he just laughed. I didn't think it was a bit funny.

Whoever thinks that we don't have a guardian angel is mistaken because I had one that day for sure. There could have been someone crossing the street at that particular time. There could have been a streetcar loaded with people or even another car. Oh, yes, there are guardian angels. This was another one of those episodes that I suppose Daddy did not tell Mama.



WHAT'S IN A NAME?
by
Wanda Rense

What's in a name?
That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet....

Shakespeare penned those lines some four centuries ago. I therefore find it logical to assume that Man has pondered the meaning, the importance, and the impact of a "name" for a long, long time. Even as a child I was aware of "names." I liked certain names. I disliked certain names. I remember thinking that some names "fit" an individual, whereas other names didn't seem to match well with the owner.

The past twenty or thirty years seem to have seen an upswing in the viewing of names, as well as the ascribing of importance thereto. More recently we read of the results of studies that purport to show that names are more important in life than previously perceived. Studies appear to show that employers, teachers, and the public at large, in general, perhaps subconsciously, "prejudge" persons by the names that they bear. In politics, it is now believed that certain given names inspire confidence, or trust, or some other plus reactions, whereas other names engender the opposite reaction.

Genealogists and historians know that in various cultures the giving of names is frequently rigidly prescribed by custom. Even within a broad-based culture, there will be sub-cultures, differing somewhat toward this topic, but nonetheless with patterns firmly delineated. Historians and genealogists have long learned to expect the repetition of given names in a particular family.

I have always known that the names that I bear are the result of the attitudes of my parents toward given names. Both of my parents' families had their own repeated familial names. I was the first child of parents who had strong ideas about given names. It was probably because both parents had their own repeated familial names that nurtured the genesis of the naming of me. My mother wanted to name me Mary, a name that she loved, and a family name for her. My father recoiled in horror. His attitude toward the name "Mary" was firm, strong, unequivocal. He would have none of it. However, he countered with his own suggestion: Elizabeth. Elizabeth was a name threading through seven or eight generations of CHILDS family. That was his choice for the name for the new baby. Mamma would have non of that. The name Elizabeth might be borne, but then, no one would call the child "Elizabeth." They would call the poor creature "Lizzie." That clearly would be a Fate Worse Than Death! No! No! Elizabeth was definitely out.

The matter was eventually solved, avoiding an impasse that would result in a nameless infant. Each parent picked out a non-family name. They put four names together, and then chose two! I finally was named!

My father had a beautiful given name--Alexander Berry. This given name had been in his family for some six generations. It was the entire name of the father of a long-departed female ancestor. I wonder how long before that the name of Alexander Berry is traceable?

My mother's family also had their family names. Her father, named the simple and beautiful name of John, carried a name regularly used and traceable back, to an ancestor who served with distinction in the American Revolution. So, when I came to anticipating the birth of my first child, I began to consider this serious matter of name-giving.

Unlike this day of sonargrams and other projections of sex knowledgeability as to the coming baby, in the time when my babies were being born we had relatively little to go on as to predictions of the sex of the expected child. The physical evidence that did exist was based on factors that gave predictions with little more than a 50% degree of exactness. For some individuals this projection served well, as it did with me, but in others it seemed to be almost entirely in error.

It turned out that most of my planning involved male names. Even though that narrowed the field, there were still a lot of names to sift through.

Should I use the venerable family name of James? I shuddered at the thought. Here enters the problem of what I might call "environmental damage." All through elementary school years I had the misfortune of being in a class with a James. Now, James probably had a problem of physical nature--I do not know--but his nose ran, perpetually. Summer, winter, spring, fall, James' nose ran. Had he made some effort to mitigate the problem, the situation would be improved. However, he seemed totally unaware of his condition. Onlookers, however, were painfully aware of it.

Perhaps I should use the old family name of Henry? I shuddered at the thought. The problem of "environmental damage" continued. All through elementary school years I knew, and remember yet, a boy named Henry. I do not know his I.Q. level, but it was surely abysmally low. And, in the manner of the chronically stupid, he talked non-stop. If Henry had a goal in life, it had to be that of driving everyone around him crazy!

How about my very favorite CHILDS name? This was, and is, the name of Nathan. Nathan has been in every generation of CHILDS family since the middle 1700's. I loved the name of Nathan. At this point, it was Bill who recoiled in horror. He knew a Nathan in his boyhood. This Nathan was a shifty fellow, a sleazy type who was a chronic thief among other unpleasant qualities. Bill would rather be dead than to foist off a name like Nathan on an innocent, unsuspecting child.

I began now to view, with altered outlook, my earlier amusement at my parents, who could not agree on a name for me. Who was it who said something like, "When I was very young I thought my parents to be very simple-minded. But as I grow older, they get continually smarter"?!

We did manage to get the children named, and all have family names. Number one became William Childs Rense. John is John Alexander Luther Rense. He is the only child with a given name from Bill's family. Bill's mother's maiden name was Rosa Luther. Legend has it that she is a lineal descendent of the religious reformer of the sixteenth century, Martin Luther. I was very fond of my mother-in-law, and I thought it fitting that she be honored with a namesake, too.

Charles is Charles Edward Caston Rense. The child who visited us so briefly was given my personal choice of prettiest names--Elizabeth Anne. I shall always be happy and grateful, that my daughter-in-law, John's wife, Lucile, named her firstborn Elizabeth

Rebecca. Somehow, our vibrant granddaughter, Elizabeth, stands a living monument to the earlier Elizabeth who was destined to be no more than a memory and a statistic.

But then, we all become a statistic in a relatively short time. Our names become perhaps the most tangible marker of our brief tenure on earth. So, maybe it is entirely fitting to bemuse, "What's in a name?"

PLEASE DON'T PASS THE ROAST
by
Melba Martin

I choose not to eat the flesh of mammals, reptiles or birds. This decision was motivated neither by politics nor by religious persuasion. Simply stated, it is part of who I have become and the way I choose to live.

It always seemed to me that I operated better when the balance scale of my diet was tipped in favor of carbohydrates rather than protein. Even though my body insinuated this to me time and time again, the concept was contrary to all the material on nutrition that I read; that is, until we became cholesterol and fat conscious. Then the pendulum began to swing the other way. Perhaps my body had been telling me the truth all along.

It has been said countless times that there is a reason for everything. I won't deny that I have had experiences which could have influenced my food preferences. Perhaps a psychiatrist could help me sort it all out; but unless I lose a few more marbles than I have so far, I don't intend to spend the time or money to pursue the matter.

As I ponder my aversion to eating flesh, while realizing that most people can happily devour bloody ribeyes and T-bones, there is an incident in my distant past that always surfaces. When I was two or three years old, I observed what I still consider to be the most hideous and disgusting activity I have ever witnessed. It happened early one cool morning. It was butchering day at Grandma and Grandpa's house. Two or three men were in the barnyard ready to help Grandpa. They made a tripod from three two-by-fours which they fastened together at the top with a chain. A large hook was on one end of the chain which hung down about a foot or two from the top of the tripod.

As Grandpa opened the barn door, a black calf calmly walked out. One of the men stood waiting with his rifle cocked. He aimed at the calf's head and shot it right between the eyes. I could hear the most awful sounds of roaring and bellowing which continued for what seemed like an eternity until it diminished and finally stopped.

Grandpa and his helpers dragged the carcass of the calf to the tripod, and with great difficulty, hung it from the hook. They removed the skin by slitting it the full length of the body and by cutting around the four legs. The smell that began to permeate the air was so foul that I will not attempt to describe it.

After a few moments, the weight of the carcass became too heavy for the area around the hook to support it. As it began to tear, Grandpa apparently sensed an impending disaster. To prevent the whole thing from falling to the ground, he put his arms around the calf and held on tightly while his helpers put the hook through another place in the tissue. I watched in disgust as the week-long whiskers on the side of Grandpa's face dug into raw flesh. At about this time Mamma called me, and I gladly went into the house.

Later in the morning, Grandpa and his helpers hauled large hunks of the calf to the dining table. Grandma and someone else cut these large portions into smaller pieces. There was blood, tallow and bits of bone everywhere.

Soon the awful smell of flesh cooking on the old wood stove in the kitchen spread through the entire house. I remember watching the grown-ups serve their plates from the pots on the stove. It was then that I realized that the calf was something to eat. I don't remember what I ate, but I doubt it was part of the calf.

Through my childhood and adolescence, I alternated between eating very little meat and eating no meat at all. Mamma continually warned me that I would "grow up to be a weakling" or worse, "not grow up at all." Oddly, these admonitions seemed to alternate with comments about how fast I was growing and how big I was getting. Well, I did grow up and I became neither a weakling nor a giant.

As an adult, I made an effort for many years to overcome my distaste for meat. Having chosen a meat-lover for my life partner, most of the meals I cooked for our family were meat-centered and complemented by vegetables and rice or potatoes. However , when serving myself, more often than not, I passed up the meat.

Having an issue made of my eccentricity has caused me a lot of uneasiness and embarrassment. When dining out or in other people's homes, I have been asked such questions as "Why didn't you take any meat?" or "What's wrong with the meat?"

Did the day of butchering, so long ago, trigger a lifelong aversion to animal flesh? Or did some long-latent genetic strain from herbivorous ancestors survive aeons to finally blossom in me? I don't know. I only know that I have at last come to terms with my gastronomical quirk, and having done so, I am at peace with the matter. About five years ago I stopped making an effort to eat meat. I am too old to do anything that makes life less enjoyable. When people comment on the contents of my plate, I just look them straight in the eye and say, "I am a vegetarian. I don't eat meat."