Life and Letters

Volume XIIb
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The students who participate in **Life & Letters** often describe their experiences in the life history writing class through metaphors. Although metaphor as a poetic technique sometimes loses its power through overuse, I recognize its enduring ability to express the inexpressible. In that sense, **Life & Letters** has become my metaphor for life. The power behind a well told story never loses its fervor or contact with life. The stories like the ones collected here and that I have listened to weekly for the past several years have become my teachers, helping me to give expression to this oftentimes tentatively received gift we call "life."

One student has described her stories as footprints; another, a patchwork quilt. They have become to some, an exercise in self-restraint, a treasure, a keepsake, and a journey, even a carrot on a stick. The class has become a fairy tale to others, and a catalyst. A slice of humanity. A step forward. It's even been called "fun." Recognizing the validity of the use of these comparisons and descriptions demands context. But the semester is gone. The stories have been told. The responses given. In their places, this collection becomes our way of passing on to you the richness of lives shared through **Life & Letters**. Read it as a story. And enjoy it as part of yours.

---------Joan Stear
USL, Lafayette, Louisiana

Spring 1995

Life & Letters thanks the University of Southwestern Louisiana
and Lafayette General Medical Center for their support.
Also, we extend especially big THANKS to Ruth B. Oates
for typing the stories included in this volume.

Front Cover (clockwise from upper right hand corner): Mary Simon; Adele Comeaux and brother, Octave Pavy; Mickey Stafford; Ruth Maher with brother; Mary Ann Sagrera; Mildred Joy; Marge DeVillier (on right); Yvonne Foreman; (center) Johanna Dupre

LIFE & LETTERS--Spring 1995

Thursday Class

Seated, l. to r.: Mary Simon; Marge DeVillier; Joan Stear; Melvin Daniel;
Yvonne Seneca; Adele Comeaux; standing, l. to r.: Jack McCabe; Lois Diehl;
Audrey Daniel; Mary Ann Sagrera; Wanda Rense; Mickey Stafford; Pat Hough;
(Missing from photo: Johanna Dupre; Betty Gerard; Mildred Joy; Ruth Maher; Betty Shoemaker)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

"SENSE"-ING FUN AT CHENIERE AU TIGRE

by

Mary Ann Sagrera

Many tales and legends have been recounted about Cheniere au Tigre. To me this mysterious place is no legend, it's very real. This was my father's birthplace. Cheniere au Tigre is located on the gulf shore in Vermilion Parish about 40 miles south of Abbeville. The island is only accessible by boat. Leaving from the boat landing in Intracoastal City, you will cross Vermilion Bay, travel via a series of canals which brings you through miles of marsh. Depending on your craft, you should reach the island in one to three hours.

In my early years Daddy's brother, Uncle Semmes Sagrera and his wife, Aunt Zoe, operated the Cheniere Au Tigre Summer Resort. The hotel was open to guests until the 1940 hurricane struck, ruining the beach and destroying many of the buildings on the island. The old hotel remained intact. In fact, much of it still stands today.

Even after the hurricane our family would spend our two week summer vacation there until it was closed after World War II. At that time my aunt and uncle moved to the mainland.

A favorite childhood memory goes back to those times. Some years we would take the mail boat to make our visit, arriving within an hour from Intercoastal City. Other times when the old Martha White schooner brought us to the island paradise, we had plenty of time to take in the scenery. I can still hear the sound of all kinds of birds, blue and gray terns, wild canaries, cardinals, hawks and many black crows. Occasionally we disturbed black moccasins gliding along near the boat and the alligators and muskrats that would slip noiselessly from the bank into the dark murky water.

When finally we arrived at Cheniere, our transportation was a wagon drawn by horses. Our luggage and other provisions were loaded up. My sisters and I always ran ahead down the sandy road. The terrain suddenly changed from a muddy, treeless marsh to a cool shady area with giant oaks, cactus and palmetto lining the path. It was about a mile and a half walk to the old hotel.

I remember waking up in the morning to the sound of "pow, pow, pow." Aunt Zoe had long ago been up feeding a hearty breakfast to visitors and the working crew. Now she was doing the laundry with a noisy, gasoline powered, wringer-type washing machine. There was no electricity, only a generator which was used to power the giant refrigerator. Imagine the piles of sheets and towels it took to run the old hotel.

The kids would get up and have breakfast in the kitchen at the long table with benches on each side. I don't remember what we ate for breakfast. It was probably scrambled eggs, homemade bread, fig preserves and sometimes sour milk. Next we went to find what exciting things were happening outside.

On a heavy table under giant oaks we might see Daddy, our older cousins, Tannie and Lloyd, and hired help, shucking oysters or cleaning fish, crabs or shrimp, depending on the morning's catch. My sisters and I would watch a while, hoping for a taste of the succulent, salty oysters.

Imagine having to catch the seafood, clean it and cook it for your guests all in the same morning. The men would get out early to seine for fish, crabs and shrimp in the Gulf, which was a short distance from the hotel. For dinner there would be different kinds of seafood, fried, baked or stewed. Uncle Semmes had the reputation for being the best cook around.

My first experience with frog legs came from Aunt Zoe's kitchen. We sat at a big table laden with huge platters of fried something that looked like chicken. Aunt Zoe told us it was fried chicken, knowing that if we knew it was frog legs, the finicky eaters wouldn't even taste them. I ate one, but I knew it couldn't be chicken because no chicken had that many legs!!

Vacations were twice the fun because, usually, some of the cousins our age were there at the same time as our family. Besides my sisters, Agnes and Helen Rose, there were Nelson, Shirley and Douglas and Buzz who came with us. One of our favorite pastimes was horseback riding. There were many horses to ride if we could get someone to saddle them for us. Old Dixie was a paint horse, retired from rounding up cattle. She was gentle enough for us. In fact, she would even let three of us ride at a time. Once, however, she got tired of her load and was ready to go home. So she made her way to a low hanging branch and down to the ground we went--Agnes, Nelson and me. Nothing broken, but we were pretty sore.

There was always time for a morning swim in the gulf. We dressed in our bathing suits and walked barefoot to the beach. Unfortunately, along the path we might run into cactus, mesquite trees, burrs and mosquitoes. In the water there could be sea nettles to sting us and sea weed, crabs and other sea creatures to bother us. These irritations were all part of this beautiful but sometimes hostile environment. I don't ever remember suffering from sunburn. At Cheniere we learned to swim, overcame our fear of the water and developed a love of the sea.

Another favorite memory is of great-uncle Ed White who lived next door to the hotel. He was a fascinating storyteller and would entertain us for hours with tales of the past. If we were good, he would allow us to help him pick his watermelons. He had a rule, if we dropped one, we would have to eat it. Needless to say, there were always a few dropped melons. Who can forget the taste of those warm, sweet melons we ate in the field pickaninny style without benefit of forks, knives or spoons? Besides the melons there was a large orchard of peaches, pears and figs planted many years ago by my grandfather, who had long since passed away.

I cannot end my memories of Cheniere au Tigre without thinking of Mama, who, besides helping with the cooking and cleaning, each year would can dozens of jars of fig preserves and peaches for our winter supply. I can still see her cooking them outside in one of those huge black iron pots over an open fire. Daddy helped by picking the produce and by peeling the fruit to can.

As I recall these bygone days, I realize that what was a fun-filled vacation for us was much hard work for my parents. We were fortunate to have such loving parents and relatives who enriched our young lives with so many wonderful and exciting memories.

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VIGNETTES ON THE SENSES
by
Anna Ruth Boudreau Ganucheau Maher

FRUIT PIES

Thursday was baking day in the neighborhood on Avenue D. Even though I was quite young, I remember well the aroma of baking on Thursday. A wonderful black woman named Emma baked for our neighborhood. We sometimes called her Em. Mama did not have Em bake every week but there were always two or three households each Thursday who did. As Em went by our house, we took note where she stopped, knowing well that would mean cookies for a treat that afternoon. (You see, this was a special neighborhood where we knew everyone or were related to almost everyone.)

When Em baked at our house, she usually baked fruit pies or a cake. Em would come early in the morning dressed in a bright print dress with a starched white apron and a bandanna on her head. My twin sisters, Rita and Rose, and I always looked forward to her visits. It was almost more than Mama could do to keep us out of Em's feet as she moved about the kitchen making dough and preparing fillings. With the scrap dough, Em would make little creatures. She would then sprinkle them with sugar and spices before putting them in the oven along with the pies. As the pies baked the aroma of cinnamon and nutmeg permeated the house. After Em completed her baking at our house, she moved on to the next and the next, baking for at least three families each Thursday. As she went from house to house, she would check to see who wanted her to bake the following Thursday.

Even though we had the little special cinnamon creations of dough for our snack, we could not wait for the evening meal to take place. When Daddy arrived from work, Mama had the meal ready to serve. There was a rule at the table that we had to eat a little of everything Mama or Daddy served us or we could not have dessert. You can bet your life that on Thursdays I ate everything on my plate. It was worth it. What the aroma and taste of those pies did to our senses was indescribable!

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MCFADDEN BEACH

Several times each summer, our family spent the day at the beach. Sometimes my grandmother, Mimi, and my two aunts , T'Sal and T'Laine, came with us. We would start early in the morning to help prepare for the day. Everyone scurried around gathering swim suits, towels, and old spoons to dig with, and even a beach ball.

When all was ready, we would pile into our 1929 Chevrolet and head for McFadden Beach. We were living in Beaumont, Texas, at this time and the beach was south of us on the Bolivar Peninsular bordering the Gulf of Mexico. Daddy knew the area well and would act as tour guide the entire trip. He knew who owned the land or the oil well being drilled. He described the changes in the soil and noted any wildlife he could spot. It was a pretty long drive for little kids. We would

anxiously wait to feel the change in the wind that signaled we were almost there. As we got nearer we could smell the salt of the Gulf and hear the break of its waves on the beach.

Daddy would put up a change room on the beach made of large bath towels and a couple of poles. He would then make a canopy for shade by tying a large blanket to the car, and using a center pole, he extended it out with rope and stakes in the sand.

We would play in the shallows looking for sea shells or on the beach building sand castles and burying each other in sand. I did not like the feeling of constriction when it was my turn to be buried. Daddy would wade with us in deeper water to ride the breakers. As I stood in the water it was scary to feel the sand washing away from beneath my feet. I always got water in my nose. When this happened, I was ready to go back to the beach to search for more treasures.

Mama would prepare a picnic lunch and a gallon thermos of lemonade. It was quite a challenge to eat without getting a taste of grit in your food or drink. After lunch, we took a rest for at least an hour before returning to the water.

I remember two particular experiences at the beach. One was frightening and the other was very funny:

Frightening Event at McFadden Beach

On one excursion to the beach, my two aunts, T'Sal and T'Laine, and our cousin Theresa, came with us. As we played near the water's edge, wading, digging our toes in the sand to lift small sea shells, my aunts and cousin waded into deeper water. Suddenly there was a cry for help from my cousin Theresa. Daddy quickly swam out to meet the girls and found a large jellyfish had attached itself to Theresa's knee. They brought her back to the beach and with much difficulty pried off the hairy tentacles of the jellyfish. After applying medication, her knee was packed in sand but nothing seemed to help the pain.

As there was no doctor nearby, our day was cut short so that Theresa could be brought to the doctor in Beaumont. It took a long, long time for the scars on her knee to go away.

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The Rented Swimsuit

Once during an excursion to the beach, Mama had to rent a swimsuit. Mama and Daddy waded out to meet the larger breakers as my sisters and I played with Mimi on the beach. Later, we noticed Daddy coming back to the beach without Mama, leaving her in deeper water. He went to the car and got a large beach towel and went back to meet Mama. Daddy wrapped the towel around Mama and they both returned to the beach. By the time they got to us Mama had little left of her rented suit. All but the arm, neck and leg bands of the suit had completely raveled away. We laughed all the way home. I don't think Mama thought it was so funny because she was so embarrassed.

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THE TOBACCO AUCTION
by
Marge DeVillier

One year my father finally agreed to take me to a tobacco auction with him, just me. After the tobacco was cut, tied onto tobacco sticks and put into the tobacco barn, cured and graded, the tobacco had to be brought to auction and sold. This was a busy, happy time of year with so many people around finishing up and getting ready for the auction.

My brothers, Array and Charley Jackson, had been many times while I secretly yearned to go. They talked about going to a big city and all the sights there. My father said he would buy me a nice present, something I really wanted. My list included a doll, a new "store bought dress" because all my clothes were made by one of my older sisters or were hand-me-downs from relatives who felt sorry for me "because I didn't have a mother." I seem to remember that phrase for some reason.

My list also included a guitar. I loved to listen to the Grand Ole Opry on Saturday nights and my first puppy love boyfriend, Jack Dunbar, sang and played the guitar. I admired anyone who could sing or play a musical instrument. On this list was a piano, which I had a huge craving for, but I don't know why except from hearing it played on the radio or from Church, maybe. I really wanted a piano although I couldn't play and there was little chance I would be able to take lessons. I think I thought if I just had the guitar or piano I would be able to play. I remember talking and talking and dreaming about that piano.

The day finally arrived to go the Auction. I think we had to stay overnight, but I can't remember if we stayed in a hotel or with someone we knew. I think the Auction was in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. To me it was a "long way off."

The morning of the Auction was cool as I remember it and we had to be at the Auction Barn very early. The Auction Barn was a large warehouse like building with only partial walls on some sides. It was the biggest place I had ever seen, with stacks and stacks of tobacco piled on racks of tobacco sleds. The tobacco dollies, as they were called, were crisscrossed on these sleds and there was row after row of these tobacco stacks.

I got my briefing on the way to the Auction that morning. My father said you mustn't scratch your head, pick your nose or pull on your ear. If you do the Auctioneer will think you are bidding on that stack of tobacco and you will have to pay for it.

I was terrified when I walked into that warehouse. The smell of recently cured tobacco was thick, strong and pungent even with all the fresh air. I loved the smell of cured tobacco. Maybe that's why I smoked three packs of cigarettes a day when I grew up, which is probably why I had a stroke.

Tobacco farmers were milling all about the barn, some walking up and down the rows checking tobacco of other farmers, picking it up, touching, smelling and pulling at the leaves and holding them up to the sun. They made their own inspection and assessments and commented to their friends on how much that stack would bring. There were all shades of yellow and brown leaves, come were golden yellow, some were almost brown.

The auctioneer had already started his spiel when we arrived, pausing occasionally to say, SOLD, AMERICAN, just like on the radio or SOLD, BROWN WILLIAMSON, or whatever tobacco company representative had made the highest bid.

Some farmers were standing by their own harvest. Some of the tobacco company representatives leaned or lounged against the stacks of tobacco while giving their signals to the auctioneer, sometimes with just a nod or tweak of the ear or a raised finger or hand but no one spoke loud enough to be heard except the auctioneer. He began a very fast auctioneer sing song with, "what am I bid, what am, whatamIbid, whatamIbid, like it was all one word; 45, 45, 45, 46, 46, 47, 48, 49. Do I hear 50, gimme a 55, 60, do I hear 60, do I hear 60, 60 going once, 60 going twice, 60 going three times, SOLD, AMERICAN for 60 cents a pound."

When the Auction was over we walked around town and actually looked at a piano for awhile. I really thought I was going to get that piano but alas, when all was said and done it wouldn't be practical, or the tobacco didn't bring enough money, but I didn't get the piano or the guitar or a pony which I had on the list, too. I think I got the dress or the doll. I'm not sure, but I think it was the dress because after all that was more practical.

Years later I took guitar lessons, but it wasn't as easy as I thought it would be and the strings hurt my fingers. When I was about 34, I bought a piano and took lessons. The piano phase lasted a little longer than the guitar phase. Later I sold the piano and bought a beautiful ebony black Wurlitzer organ, then hard times hit and I sold the organ. I still have the desire to play the piano, so someone suggested a keyboard. A couple of years ago, for by birthday, Joan gave me a Yamaha keyboard. I still can't play that either, but one of these days -----I didn't give up yet! Even though I didn't get the piano or the other things it was a memorable experience. I felt special that day.

A DIP IN THE OCEAN
by
Jack McCabe

During World War II, I was stationed at Port Lyautey in French Morocco, North Africa. Ours was a B-24 squadron, each aircraft with a crew of seven--pilot, co-pilot, navigator, bombardier, radio operator, flight engineer and gunner.

Our mission was to destroy enemy submarines that might be lurking in the area, seeking to destroy incoming supply ships loaded with war material. These supplies were destined for the armies fighting in the area of the Libyan desert, where Field Marshall Rommel had earned his title of the "Desert Fox."

We had spent a couple of months in England in early 1943, learning from the British RAF their methods of patrolling and searching for enemy subs.

Now we had been flown down to Morocco, where we had set up operations near the Atlantic coast. We had a base in an area relatively safe from enemy attack. We were too far away from Germany for them to be interested in us. Germans had their hands full defending their homeland from the bomber attacks from England.

A vacant schoolhouse, converted to our barracks, was big enough to provide us with a mess hall, sleeping quarters, and room for administrative operation.

Our photo section worked mostly on the flight line, where we checked cameras, processed photo lab work, and trained the combat crews in the operation of aerial photography.

The bombers patrolled the ocean in a fan shaped pattern in search of submarines. When they located one, they dropped depth charges (explosives) in an effort to sink the U-Boat of the German Navy. In order to get credit for a successful attack, each combat crew needed to have photos of the "kill." A designated member of the crew was to operate the camera. We trained all the crew members, however, in the knowledge of the operation, so as to be sure photos were taken by somebody. Sometimes there were hostile aircraft in the area and there was always a chance that they would be attacked and the designated camera operator would be too busy with other duties to get the photography done.

We were able to find time for a little recreation and went either into Port Lyautey, or about fifteen miles to Rabat, the capital of Morocco. Also, Casablanca was not too far away and a number of smaller towns, as well, were interesting places to visit on our days off. In addition there was a delightful beach on the Atlantic that made swimming available as a sport.

On one occasion I was enjoying a dip in the ocean, when I discovered my ring was missing from my finger. It was my Sigma Chi fraternity ring, the one which I had gotten during my senior year in college at the University of Arkansas. I didn't spend too much time looking for it. If it was in the water, then the Atlantic Ocean is a pretty big expanse in which to search for anything as small as a ring.

One day, about ten years after the war ended, I received a letter from my fraternity headquarters here in the U. S., asking me if I had lost a ring with my initials on the inside, together with the year of graduation. It seems they had narrowed the owner down to three possibilities, of which I was one.

I wrote back that I had, in fact, lost a Sigma Chi ring in the Atlantic Ocean. I soon received in the mail my long lost ring and a letter from a gentleman of the State Archives in North Carolina. It seems that while he was on duty in one of our own submarines (naturally), their craft had stopped off the coast of Morocco for a swim and he had found this ring. One day about ten years later, he became curious as to who the owner might be, and wrote to the fraternity.

The sad ending to this story is that after I put it on and wore it for a short while, the set fell out and left only the frame on my finger. I never did find that set, and it seemed that I was not destined to wear that ring.

The miraculous part of this whole story is that not only would it seem impossible to find a ring in the Atlantic Ocean--so small an item in so vast an area--but also that he would be able to trace down the owner in all the people in the whole wide world.

It was tough to lose it the first time, but even tougher the last time. *C'est la guerre.*

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EARLIEST REMEMBERED EXPERIENCE
by
Adele Comeaux

Probably my earliest remembered experience was the birth of my youngest brother: the eighth son, the eighth living child, born on the eighth day of the seventh month, July 8, 1936. Coincidentally, he was named Octave, after our Uncle Octave, but not because Octave means "eight."

Octave was a big, beautiful, healthy baby. He had huge brown eyes, a smooth fair complexion and gorgeous brown curls. My Aunt Lil said that he was the best argument again birth control: the tenth child, born when our mother was forty-four years old.

Uncle Octave was the doctor who delivered my brother Octave at home. Uncle Octave loved to deliver babies, and he also loved to eat. Because of the latter (loving to eat). he had a tremendous stomach which protruded in front of him as he walked.

I had been sleeping in a baby or child's bed in the rear bedroom of our home. I remember seeing my uncle's stomach (with my uncle attached) coming through the door from the hall into the bedroom. He walked in and said, "You have a new baby brother!"

Some time after my first memory of Octave's birth, he won an Opelousas baby contest. I was very happy when his number, number ninety-four, was called as a winner!

As he grew, Octave became very attached to our nursemaid, Hattie, and would cry whenever she left. To avoid this, Mama would take Hattie home in our "Model T." Hattie would stand on the running board and Mama would slow down for Hattie to get off as the car was still running. In the meantime, Aunt Lil would distract Octave with a little gray rubber mouse as she repeatedly said, "Rat-ta-ta-tat come home." Otherwise, Octave would scream when he realized that Hattie was leaving.

I WOULD LIKE TO BE A KID AGAIN
by
Betty Shoemaker

All the farms and homes in Ida, a small town of about 350 people, were passed down from one generation to the next. With no rentals available, outsiders could not move in. Families relied on each other for help.

When my sister Gerry was born April 5, 1936, I was six years old. Mother was required to stay in bed for ten days, so I took over the house. I suppose it was like playing house, but it was the real thing. Dad worked out of town, so I was Big Mama. I had to do everything.

A year later, August l, 1937, my little brother Jimmie was born. I remember Mother became very ill that winter. We didn't have a doctor in town, so there was no one to tend her except me. The winters in North Louisiana were much colder then than now.

I remember doing the laundry in the back yard. We had a 2" X 8' board resting on two empty five gallon paint buckets. Three number three galvanized wash tubs rested on the board. One contained soapy water and two clear water for rinsing.

The temperature was below freezing and I would take a 2" X 4' board to break up the ice that formed on top of the water as I washed my little brother's diapers. Occasionally Mother would hand me a kettle of boiling water to add to my tubs. When my hands would become cherry red and I couldn't feel them anymore, I would go inside and warm them. The diapers would freeze solid as soon as I hung them. At nine years of age I quickly became my mother's right hand.

On January l, 1942, Donald Clyde Parker made his entrance into the world. He was a beautiful fair skinned baby, with rosy cheeks and red hair. When my mother went to see her younger sister and new nephew, she realized Aunt Louise had had a very difficult delivery, and being in bed for ten days would require some assistance. Mother said, "I'll bring Betty back to help you."

Before and after school I took on the role of little mother, cooking, cleaning, and doing laundry. At this time I was twelve years old and a little more experienced.

A short time later Aunt Lena Mae gave birth to Jeanette, a third little girl in the family. Uncle Kelly, my mother's brother, came and asked Mother if I could come and lend a hand.

I remember Aunt Lena Mae lying in bed in their little shot-gun house and telling me in the kitchen how to make biscuits, cornbread, and other foods. I cooked three full meals a day, and good ones. I also cared for the two little girls, Lonnie Gayl and Sissy. I was keeping house, caring for the small children, and preparing meals for five people.

I have listened to my peers read their stories of their early childhood and all the fun they had. I suddenly realized I was robbed of my childhood because I was always on loan to anyone who needed help. One seldom knows one's destination with one's first step down the pathway of life. I did. Fifty-nine years later I am still doing what I do best, cooking and caring for the sick.

I would like to be a kid again, for just a little while.

SCHOOL DAYS
by
Mary Simon

My elementary and high school years at St. Francis in Iota were spent in one building, with the exception of the library, which was in the nuns' house adjoining the school. Each room, which held two grades, opened into another. I can still remember the smell of wax on the wood floors. On the walls, painted light green, hung lots of blackboards. Ink well with rubber stoppers sat in holes in the desks. We supplied our own blotters, ink, pens, pencils, and paper.

A black iron stove stood in the center of each room. I don't remember there being any janitors, or how the wood was brought it. Once on a cold day I brought roasted peanuts to school. During recess, the class ate them and we put the shells in the stove. We were having fun when the nun in charge came in, angry. Without asking, she knew who was responsible. My face was beet red. I felt all my classmates looking at me. I never again brought peanuts to school.

We carried our lunches from home, since we did not have a cafeteria. Usually Mama packed brown bags with Vienna sausage sandwiches, a thermos of milk and an apple. Across the street from school there was a small grocery store, Stelly's. Occasionally Mama gave my older sister, Lorrain, money for hamburgers and pop. Before crossing the street again for school, we divided a dime's worth of candy.

We played hopscotch or shot basketballs during our noon recess. Large oak trees held swings. Some had benches built around them. There were no cement sidewalks, only wood plank walks around the school.

I liked my first grade teacher, Sister Edwina. However, I did not like my sixth grade teacher. She had us go to the board, one at a time, to work long division problems. I was shy and often did not remember my multiplication tables. I suffered through the remaining years worrying over those tables. Not until I graduated did I realize I did know them.

The bus we took to school had canvas sides that were rolled up in good weather. I don't know why we didn't freeze on cold days. Many a time Daddy transported us by car.

Once I came down with pink eyes at school. All the other children pushed to the front of the bus, and I sat alone on the last seat. I told them that I caught it from them, but that didn't help me feel any better.

Our senior picnic was at a mineral spring just west of Iota we called "The Springs." In the late eighteen hundreds it had erupted and had become known for its curative powers. The remains of a hotel built there around that time were still there in 1944. Although the springs had long dried up, it was still a very pretty place.

For my graduation Mama made me a white eyelet dress, and I had a graduation ring with a pearl inset. Our graduation ceremony was held in the adjoining church, St. Joseph, in May, 1944.

My education continued at a business school, Spencer's, in Lafayette, Louisiana, where I stayed during the week at a boarding house on Lee Street

HISTORY IN THE MAKING: A TIME TO REMEMBER

by

Johanna Dupre

On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait. Little did we know how this could affect our family. On August 7 the United States began to deploy military personnel to Saudi Arabia. A line had been drawn, and 430,000 troops would be sent to Saudi by the end of January, 1991. Saddam vowed that if Iraq were attacked, it would be "the Mother of all Battles."

We had two sons in the military. Eddie, our oldest son, was serving in the U. S. Army. He was stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas. Eddie was a mechanic with the "Big Red Tank" division. Our youngest son, Matthew, was a Marine reservist. He was called up to active duty on November 28, 1990. Matthew is a tow missal gunner.

The reserve unit left Lafayette and traveled to New Orleans, where they boarded a plane to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. There they received extensive training. On January 2, 1991, three days before his twenty-first birthday, Matt arrived in Saudi Arabia. Eddie shipped out from Fort Riley on January 6, 1991. Both were in the same country, but hundreds of miles apart. When the war started, the unit from Fort Riley was ordered to enter Iraq on the west side to cut off the "Royal Guard."

Time went by. The desert was their home. Camouflage tarps or tents were stretched out between the vehicles. They ate MRE's three times and day, and water was scarce. An occasional bucket bath was always welcome. Waiting was the hardest part of the duty.

The air war started. Tension grew. A member of the U.S. military was killed.

About 2 AM on January 31, the telephone rang. We woke up in a scare, knowing the time of night.

"Hello."

"Hello, Mom. This is Eddie." My heart began to beat fast. "Have you heard from Matt?"

"No, Son."

"Well, I heard that some marines with the First Marine Division were killed this morning."

"Eddie, Matt is in the Second Marine Division. Where are you calling from, Son?"

"Mom, I caught a ride on the back of a supply truck, rode four hours to a phone. I had to call, I was so worried about Matt."

"Don't worry, Son. I'm sure he is okay."

"Thanks, Mom. I had better try and get back to my unit."

This division was later lost for a couple of days in the desert. They had to travel at night without lights or radios for communication.

Matt's unit, the Second Marine Division, was in the North-East area of Saudi, just south of Kuwait. They were one of the first units to enter Kuwait City. They were fired upon but no one was injured, and hundreds of Iraqis were captured. They secured the airfield in Kuwait City and continued north.

Eddie's unit continued south, and at one time the two young men were only ten minutes apart but didn't know it.

Two weeks after the war ended, we got a phone call from Matt. Matt's dad, phone in pocket, was up on a ladder painting when the phone rang.

"Hello."

A voice from miles and miles away said, "What's up, Dad?" Dad almost fell off the ladder. Matt had reached an area where phones had been installed, and he was able to call home.

Two weeks later we heard from Eddie.

Both boys saw action, and within four days 70,000 Iraqis were captured and the Royal Guard was broken.

Matt arrived home on April 25 and Eddie on May 16. We celebrated with the boys and family and friends, thanking God for their safe return.

It is a time we will always remember.

GROWING UP--THE TEEN YEARS
by
Yvonne Seneca

It seems everything was happening during my teen years. First, I made the decision not to return to parochial school when I was ready to start high school. I had heard about all the wonderful things the students were doing in public school, such as singing in a Glee Club, learning Modern Dance in girls' P. E. class, and doing experiments in Science class. Mom was not in favor of my leaving St. Michael's School. It was a tradition. My older sister, Genevieve, had graduated from St. Michael's, and my younger brother, Alfred, and sister, Jeanne, were in that school. I talked with Mom about what I had heard. Finally, Mom consented with the threat that if I did not do well in the new school, I would have to return to St. Michael's. At times Mom could be understanding, but she was always firm. Mom could see I was not happy at St. Michael's, so one morning she told me I would be going to public school. She brought me to Crowley High School to be registered. I can remember feeling so excited. I was looking forward to the challenge.

A few months after being in high school, Mom bought a bicycle for me to ride to school. I was able to return home for lunch if I didn't brown bag lunch. A real treat was when I had money to buy a hamburger from the stand across the street from school. One day when I was riding home on my bicycle, some boys drove up alongside of me and spoke to me. I told them, "Leave me alone. I am too young to flirt." The family has teased me about that incident even after I became an adult.

Boy-girl friendships developed with activities done in groups. Our community did not have such places as skating rinks or a bowling alley. On week-ends about six to eight boys and girls would gather in my front yard to socialize--to play games or talk. Very often on Saturday night we would gather at my friend's, Teddy Lou's, home across the street.

December 7, 1941, was during my Junior year of high school. Teddy Lou and I had gone to the show (movies) as usual that afternoon. When I returned home, my mom was upset. With tears in her eyes, she said, "We are at war." Her words were very confusing to me. I went to the front yard and leaned on the hedge that surrounded the yard. As I watched the cars pass by, I wondered if the people knew about the news and what it meant.

The next day our principal, Mr. Lucas, had all classes assemble. The Junior Class met in the library. Mr. Lucas turned the radio on through all the PA systems so that we could listen to President Roosevelt speak. Everyone was so quiet.

In the months that followed, every so often we would be told of a schoolmate that had gone to war. The first I remember was in chemistry class when the teacher, Mr. Lucas, told us that "Parker" (I can't remember his first name) was now in service. Parker was older than most of us, but he was also one of our football stars.

The four years of high school P.E. were in a Modern Dance class. I really liked the class, even though the teacher, Mrs. Applegate, pushed us very hard to learn. We had recitals, and the teacher even made a movie film of us.

The big turning point in my teen years was when I entered Nursing School in New Orleans. At the time the Daughters of Charity were in charge of the hospital and nursing school. I had less

freedom as a student, which was an adjustment. Withing six months my class was given hospital assignments. Those days were when I really grew up.

Such wonderful years, the teen years. I have so many memories that I need to write the stories.

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PLUMBING I HAVE KNOWN
by
Wanda C. Rense

Change! What thoughts that word evokes! What an interesting word and comment! A friend of mine, who was born and raised in another culture, and who speaks several languages, tells me that the same aphorisms that exist in the English language exist in other languages in more or less the same form. We have in our language many aphorisms about "change," and I assume that they likewise exist around the world.

One of my favorite sayings concerning change is "Nothing lasts forever." Another favorite is the well-known French saying, "Plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose."

These two maxims might seem like opposite thoughts are being expressed. I do not think so. The French saying, in my view, relates to the philosophical whereas the other one refers to the "trappings" of change. It is the "trappings" of change that I consider today.

When reviewing the many physical changes that have ensued during my lifetime, I think none are more strongly drawn than the changes that I have observed in plumbing. Let's examine this statement.

I go back in memory to my earliest childhood, in Eunice, where I was born. Eunice is never going to set any records for being avant garde, or in the vanguard for style-setting. But perhaps it is neither that much behind some semblance of "norm" for other small towns of the area. Let us assume for this discussion that it was "average" for the time.

I would guess from my earliest recollections that probably no more than 5% of residences in Eunice had what we might call "indoor plumbing." I refer to a plumbed bathroom that was built as a part of the residence. Most houses and buildings had that outdoor structure that I shall hereafter refer to as an "outhouse."

The outhouse was generally erected behind the residence. Many people seemed to have made an attempt to build where it was least conspicuous, although some seemed to have build for personal convenience, and to heck with appearances. There was a decided similarity in construction. All were rather tall structures with a roof that was highest in front, above the door, sloping to the rear. Inside, the buildings were almost invariably similar. Across the rear half of the building was built a sort of raised counter, like a broad shelf, closed in to the floor. In the flat surface of that "shelf" holes of a size corresponding roughly to human physiognomy were cut: round holes, or preferably, slightly oval holes.

The size of the outhouse was a distinguishing feature. Most outhouses were what might best be described as being "two-holers." However, there were always a few one-holers, as there were also three-holers.

In addition, there were roughly three classes of outhouses. These three classes might be designated economy, standard and deluxe. In the economy model, little effort or expense had been made in the manner of construction. The outside planks that made up the structure were simply nailed on vertically, with cracks between the boards. On this economy model, the roof was invariably of a piece of tin roofing, the cheapest thing around in the 1920's. The interior of the economy model was similarly meager.

The deluxe model was well built. This model would be constructed on weather-boarding. The roof might be of cedar shingles. It would be at least partly sealed. The door would be well-made, and would have quality fittings. The standard model would be somewhere in between the cheaply done economy model and the well-made deluxe model.

The fanciest outhouse that I ever saw was the one built in the garden of my grandfather's house in the country. This was a beautifully crafted three-holer. The outer building was of all-cypress weather-boarding, matching the residence, and it was always kept well painted. The roof was of cedar shingles. The door, well fitted, with quality hardware, had a charming half-moon, at artistic angle, cut into the door. I do not know if this aperture was intended to let light into the structure, or to provide a means of ascertaining who might be inside. This outhouse was entirely sealed, just as a quality residence would be. Also, the interior had been wall-papered. Both of the side interior walls had built-in brackets to hold paper. In addition, the shelf with openings was built to varying heights. The lowest opening was for the use of small children. The one of middle height was for middle-sized persons, and the highest opening was for the tall. That, for the time, was sheer creature-comfort!

Outhouses were subject to insects. They had a way of harboring spiders that often crawled around on the underside of the "shelf." Seldom-used outhouses generally became festooned with cobwebs, and said cobwebs were apt to be occupied by a resident spider. And all outhouses collected mosquitoes in swarms. Bare skin provided a perfect smorgasbord to these rapacious insects, avid for blood! Outhouses were subject to cold. Think of rainy Louisiana and a long trip though the rain on a raw and cold day. Outhouses were generally confined to day use--night use involved something else, of which we will speak later.

Outhouses in town were frequently built behind the residence, in the area that held the animals. In the 1920's almost everyone had a cow and a flock of fowl. Chickens were usual, but ducks, geese, and guinea fowl were also common. Pigs were not uncommon. The area was generally surrounded by a fence to keep animals confined. I well remember a small girl of my acquaintance, younger than I, about three years of age. The outhouse for her family was located in the chicken yard. One had to pass through a gate to traverse the breadth of the yard to get to the outhouse. In the yard were a few geese, and the geese had the poor girl's number! Whenever she tried to walk through, the geese charged, beaks outstretched, and nipped her. I have seen her standing at the gate, crying bitterly. Why her family didn't take pity on this situation I do not know, but they seemed not to take notice of it.

Paper on rolls, as we know it, was available then. However, in the view of many people, it was an over-expensive luxury. The ubiquitous paper, used in every outhouse, was newspaper, any and all magazines, journals, and catalogues. In fact, jokes about the use of catalogues were standard along the vaudeville circuits. I guess those old jokes about catalogues would not be understood by many people anymore, except for oldsters who remember both the custom and the vaudeville circuits.

For nighttime use, there were vessels which were bedroom equipment, generally called chamber pots. The French was "pot de chambre." A few of these were very attractive, china, or ceramic, with flowers, butterflies or birds painted on them. Generally, though, they were metal, and plain, either white or beige enamelware. All were fitted with a lid.

I shall never forget an amusing incident recounted to me. This happened at Allenspark, in the early 1960's. A couple had recently purchased on of the older cabins in the area, along with the contents. The first summer they threw a large picnic party and invited friends and neighbors. In the

center of the spread table, the place of honor, was a beautifully made vessel, with lovely painted violets, the purple and green colors still vibrant against the white china. The guests were full of admiration for this charming antique dish, which held the potato salad. Everyone was admiring it and asking the hostess about it. She proudly explained that she had found it in the cabin, among other odds and ends left behind by the original owners. My friend, probably the oldest person there, viewed the scene with absolute horror. She well knew what the beautiful vessel was. To her credit, she said nothing, but neither was she in the mood for potato salad that day!

It is fairly safe to state that every household had some kind of chamber pot, and many had several. Where are they today? Surely the refulgent hobby of antiquing should dredge up lots of them, but I never see one now.

Such bathrooms as were in the 5% of houses in Eunice in my early childhood had a certain monotony of construction. They were invariably square and rather bare. No one had as yet thought of cabinets and built-ins; those would come later. These rooms contained three pieces only. The bathtubs were porcelain, with a kind of rough outer finish. The top edge of the tub curved around and down. The tub sat on short curved legs. Faucets were out-of-the-wall or up-from-the-floor and were much like garden faucets today. Hot water tanks were just beginning to come in. Many bathrooms had only cold running water. Hot water was heated in the kitchen and carried to the tub or basin.

The basin was likewise small and frugal. Those faucets (some basins had only one) were built in, but were plain and simple. Very early-day toilets had the tank mounted high on the wall overhead, with a chain to pull to flush by gravity flow. Newer toilets were more of a piece, as they are today.

Our bathroom in Eunice, which I believe to have been typical of its time, had a linoleum floor, predecessor of the vinyl flooring that we have today. My cousins in New Orleans, who lived in a very elegant house, had two bathrooms, one on each floor. These had tiled floors, in a black and white design. I have seen that type of tiling in other houses of the time. But these big-city bathrooms also shared the usual design--large, square, with the three primary appliances and nothing else.

Our bathroom in Eunice had one light only, an electric bulb at the end of a long cord, hanging from dead center of the room. That, too, I believe to be fairly a norm at the time.

But things changed rapidly. People began to build in bathrooms, and the rooms began to take on upgraded fixtures. Built-ins crept in, as did cabinets. Lighting began to change. Within a relatively few years, relics from the past were almost gone.

Recently I visited a positively huge bathroom, actually not one room, but a series of compartments making up what is probably called a bathroom. Each compartment held one, or more, of the same fixture. The old three fixtures have given way to additional ones. Bathtubs have evolved into Olympic sized whatevers. What one does in these huge affairs is, for me, a matter of conjecture. This elegant room that I visited was blindingly lit, with glass crawling up to the roofline. Orchids in hanging pots swung up and down everywhere.

I stood for a moment in the midst of all this grandeur. My mind went back all those decades and stopped fleetingly at these recollections from the past. I thought of change and the differences these years have seen. I guess both of my favorite sayings about change have their own degree of validity. Nothing remains exactly the same, yet the result only serves the same human needs.

ALGEBRA--BAW! HUMBUG!
by
Mildred Joy

While going through Richard Arnold Junior High School in Savannah, Georgia, I had every intention of making the Honor Roll each and every six weeks. Those intentions lasted for only the first six weeks! I had a young Algebra teacher fresh out of college. I have forgotten her name and her looks simply because I have really tried to block that part of my thirteen year old life out. You know as well as I, sometimes these bad experiences come back to haunt us. My other grades were exemplary, but that blasted Algebra was unattainable for me.

My Dad, who had only a second grade education, could work out my problems and come up with the answer, but he couldn't tell me the X Y Z's of Algebra. He tried to explain how he had gone about getting his answer, but I could not for the life of me figure out which number the X was to be, or the Y or the Z. The second six weeks I failed Algebra with a "U" for "unsatisfactory." The third six weeks I did it one more time. Mama took time off from her work to talk to the teacher but got absolutely nowhere as to solving my learning disability with this XYZ subject. As I look back, I realize it could have been my stubbornness that had already formed a mental block against learning Algebra. I am certainly like that to this day about law and lawyers, too! My dad never did give up trying to help me over this terrible ordeal.

Dad must have made some headway in getting Algebra through my thick head, because I did pass the next three six weeks periods. Just barely, I might add. I was so happy to know that I would not have to take another semester of Algebra in order to graduate from high school. For certain I did miss the basics of Algebra, but I haven't ever needed it in my career of secretary, bookkeeper, and office manager.

Business Arithmetic was another story, and bookkeeping was my love. Anything to do with numbers really did intrigue me and hold my attention. It does to this day.

The high school I attended was for the business profession only. Commercial High School prepared you to go right out into the business world, and most of us had positions waiting on us when we graduated. When I remember going to apply for the position of secretary to the manager of Haverty Furniture Company, I wonder how in the world I ever became a secretary. I had thinner but longer hair then. I wore a plain white cotton shirt with a plaid skirt, bobby socks and saddle oxfords. I weighed about 150 pounds.

My boss, George M. Sanders, was the head potentate of Alee Shrine Temple in Savannah. He smoked a great big ole cigar, which I hated to smell, and when he dictated to me he would chew on that huge cigar, mumbling his words so badly that I could not always get his dictation. Between Mr. Sanders and myself we had a little game. Who would give up first? "Read that back to me, will you?" he would ask.

I would answer by reading as much as I had written down on my steno pad and then I would mumble and make weird noises. He would look at me, smile, and say, "Oh, I'm at it again, huh?" I would say, "Yes, sir." And we would start once again. Mr. Sanders was certainly one of the nicest bosses I ever had. He died with cancer while I was still employed at Haverty's.

I remember one special occasion that Mr. Sanders told me I had painted my lips too full. I tried my best to convince him that my lips were just naturally big. He said, "No, they aren't. Wipe off your lipstick and I will show you what you are doing wrong." He was so surprised to find that my lips were big like I said. If a boss did that now, it would be called harassment. I called it--not knowing what was underneath my lipstick.

I worked six years for Haverty's. After reaching top pay there with no advancement in sight, I bettered my position in life by going to work in the Personnel Office of Savannah Machine & Foundry.

I kept in touch with Mrs. Sanders until 1990. She had moved to South Carolina, and she must have been at least ninety-five when she passed away. Her last Christmas card, in 1989, showed that she still had all her faculties, as she addressed it and wrote the note herself. Isn't that wonderful to know that we still have a lifetime in front of us, too?!

TAKING A BITE OUT OF THE BIG APPLE
by
Mickey Stafford

I arrived in New York City in the spring of 1954, the beginning of a new life for me. Recently widowed, I made no secret of that fact, but I was unprepared to make a great impression on the "Big Apple." My skills up to this time had been marriage and mothering three children. My gravitation toward finding employment left much to be desired. No college degree completed, no B.A. or any other A's or B's, just 2 ½ years in New Paltz Normal.

I decided on this day to take my Rollie camera in hand to see if I could take some snaps of various Bay Ladies. I thought if I got one or two good shots, maybe I could sell them to Pergano's, a photo outlet for free-lance photographers as well as a major studio for models.

I walked up Seventh Avenue to the Hudson River, back up to Fifth Avenue, then went to Fourth and started downtown. Finally I decided to keep walking all the way to Fourteenth Street. I knew that Falines basement was on the corner, and I could shop, if lucky even find a good suit for the following Monday, when I would hit the want ads again. The sun was shining on the left side of Fourth Avenue, also known as Park Avenue South.

I really was enjoying my independence. It had been many years since I had been in Manhattan by myself. Spring was in the air. People were walking in their shirts, heavy overcoats long cast off for this lovely day, the sun shining between the buildings. I looked to my left and saw a bank on the corner of Park Avenue South and Twenty-second Street. It looked like a good shot. I focused my Rollie carefully to get the exact composition I was looking for and snapped the shutter.

I gave up the idea of going shopping for a suit and instead headed for Pergano's, where my brother Tommy worked as a darkroom technician. I left my roll of film with him and asked him to develop it.

Sunday came and with it brother Tommy with my photos. He had enlarged the one of the bank to 8"X 10", as he thought it was an excellent shot. I did, too. I decided to send it to the bank in case they cared to use it for advertisement. On the back I wrote "Mickey Coddington" and my telephone number, in case they wanted the negative.

Three days passed, and I forgot about my picture--still no job, but I was hunting as hard as I could. I was either under or over qualified. Besides, with no work experience, I had no references.

It rained on Thursday and I decided to stay home and rethink a new strategy of what to apply for the following week. The telephone rang. I answered with only, "Hello," thinking it was either my sister or my brother, not knowing anyone else in the city. "Hello, is this the telephone for Mickey Coddington?" "Yes." "Well, may I speak to him, please? This is Mr. Mills, the president of the New York Bank for Savings." "I'm he," I stuttered. "I'm a she." "Well, that's all right. I'm calling you about the 8X10 photo you took of the bank. I would like to have you come down here. I'd like to talk to you in person." I somehow stammered out, "Yes," and made arrangements to be there Monday at ten.

The interview was with Personnel first, then I was sent to Mr. Mills. Once inside his office, my stomach did some flip-flops when he told me what a good photographer I was, then asked would I be interested in taking the position as their staff photographer, which would consist of taking photos

of all their mortgage properties and social events at the bank. I pretended to be calm and said I would consider it. Mr. Mills asked me how many years experience I had and why I had picked out that bank. I lied, saying I had been free lancing for several years in Memphis and recently moved to New York. As the reason for the photo of the bank, I said I thought it was a beautiful entrance, especially the huge flower pots with little evergreen trees on each side of the building.

I took the job. I worked at the New York Bank for Savings for seventeen years, working my way up to Executive Assistant before I left to remarry and come to Louisiana to raise horses.

THE TURBULENT MISSISSIPPI
by
Melvin A. Daniel

After I was discharged from the U.S. Navy in 1946, I completed my High School education before deciding exactly what career I would pursue . Times were tough. So was finding a job. I had considered Delgado Trade School to continue in my Navy work in the field of aviation mechanics. I thought perhaps I could secure employment with an airline at the Moisant Airport, now the New Orleans International Airport. After some discussion with Veterans career counselors, I gave up the idea because of an overcrowded field and airlines were switching from propeller driven planes to jet powered aircraft.

A phone call from an older friend, Lucien Asyshen, a chief engineer for T. Smith & Son Towing And Salvage, changed my future plans for awhile. Lucien offered me a position as Marine Engineer trainee. Having no other prospects of employment, I accepted the position. The hours were long, eighty hours a week, but the salary of $189.00 per month was agreeable. My duties aboard the steam tug HUMRICK consisted of machinery maintenance and firing of the tug's two boilers.

In my younger years, I was not aware of the beauty or danger of the mighty Mississippi River. I was only familiar with the calm slow moving waters of the New Basin Canal. I never dreamed that sometime in the future I would spend a part of my life riding down this river from New Orleans to Pilottown.

The tug HUMRICK had several duties. It towed barges and cranes to the docked ships for unloading cargo. Another function was to pull ships away from the wharf and escort them out to the shipping lane for the journey to the Gulf Of Mexico. In June, when the Mississippi was at its highest, the treacherous river waters caused whirlpools, or eddies, making navigation extremely difficult.

Often, ships would run aground in the mud and sludge on the bottom of the river. Ships running aground at the mouth of the river presented the greatest problem. Sometimes it would take days to free the ships from the suction of the ooze and mud.

My first journey down the Mississippi River was fascinating. I had never been on such swift, muddy waters before. The river had a beauty all its own. I learned, too, about her dangers. During a hurricane in 1948 I was certain that I would be a victim of the mighty Mississippi. After I arrived aboard the HUMRICK in the early morning hours, the wind velocity picked up to hurricane force. We were berthed at the Louisa Street Wharf next to an unloaded ship. Suddenly, five inch hawsers snapped like kite strings and the ship began to drift away from the wharf. The HUMRICK was ordered to come to the rescue. The crew attached lines to the port side of the ship. Being void of cargo, it rode high in the water. Everything went wrong. The high winds pushed the ship against the HUMRICK in the direction of the Algiers Ferry Landing, threatening to capsize the tug. Steam was escaping from the HUMRICK'S boilers. Fearing an explosion, the tug's captain ordered everyone to abandon ship. Someone lowered a rope ladder and then we climbed onto the ship's deck to safety. Fortunately, no one was injured.

Both the HUMRICK and I survived this ordeal. The little steam driven tug continued chugging through the muddy waters of the Mississippi, but I soon decided that Marine Engineer would not be my chosen profession.

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WHAT'S BEHIND THE ARMOIRE DOOR?

by

Audrey K. Daniel

There was nothing special about our double shotgun, two bedroom, one bath house on Banks Street, but in the back bedroom was the most interesting piece of furniture, a large oak armoire. The large oak armoire was part of Mother's and Daddy's first bedroom set, a set made up of a brown metal bed, two oak cane seat chairs, a dresser, and the armoire. Mother always said the armoire wasn't a good piece of furniture, just "early marriage." Elaine and I thought of the armoire as a treasure chest. The armoire had two large drawers on the bottom and double doors with beveled mirrors above. I remember lots of belts hanging inside one of the doors. It must have contained clothing, too, as our house only had two small closets, one in the hall, one in the front bedroom, but none in that back bedroom.

The most treasured things in that side of the armoire were a large doll, a brown fox scarf, and a walking stick. The doll, the size of a toddler, was Yvonne's, although not her favorite. What she had really wanted was a small baby doll, not that big lifesize, dark haired ugly doll. Dolls were my first love, but this big doll must have inspired a love-hate relationship. Elaine and I stripped her stuffed cloth body of clothing and rendered her baldheaded with the constant brushing and combing of her dark, matted hair. She had a hole in her face, perhaps eaten by insects, but more likely from the constant washing given her hard, non-washable composition face by four caring, sometimes meddlesome, hands. The poor doll really was ugly after Elaine and I outgrew our fascination for her.

The fox scarf, a definite flapper charm, was proudly worn by Mother when she and Daddy were first married in 1914. The mouth snapped open and shut and clipped onto the tail or somewhere between. It was now a motley piece of faded brown fur with four little legs and stiff toe-nailed feet hanging from the flattened fur body. I felt elegant playing "ladies" with Mother's outdated, worn our fox fur piece encircling my shoulders.

The biggest treasure behind that armoire door was the walking stick. It was crafted from a young pine sapling during the time of reforestation of Bogalusa. Daddy had worked at the paper mill sometime in the early '20's, and he brought Mother this stick as a souvenir. "Bogalusa Reforestation" was burned into the thin stick; unfortunately, it was not dated.

This stick was something dreams were made of. It fulfilled my fantasy of being a baton twirling drum majorette. Elaine and I also fantasized our roles as Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers doing their top hat and walking stick routine. On one of our dancing days, we threw the stick into the air, pretending we were Fred Astaire, and CRASH!, down came one of the lights from the chandelier. Mother immediately found a new use for our treasured stick. One swat, and the stick, once a dreamstick, was now our nightmare.

One day Mother decided the armoire had to go. Daddy was constantly nailing or gluing part of it back together. It was showing signs of stress from our constant climbing up on it, taking inventory of its contents. The old armoire met its final resting place as firewood in the old black iron stove in the kitchen. What a terrible ending for something I would treasure today! I still have one of the beveled mirrors from an armoire door and the cane seat oak chair of the bedroom set.

The doll ended up in a buffet drawer, only to end up in a trash can when the buffet was sold. The fox scarf met the same fate when Mother moved to Helena Street.

But the walking stick survived Mother's purge of everything outdated and no longer useful. The stick's only purpose now is to proudly rest in the corner of my fireplace hearth and bring back fond memories of the days of wondering "What's behind the armoire door?"

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TOO DRUNK, TOO YOUNG
by
Pat Hough

Christmas was the time of year for holiday food and good times for the young and old in our family. Daddy enjoyed buying fireworks for the children. The young children had sparklers and roman candles and the older ones were allowed to pop and light sky rockets. Daddy supervised the fireworks and taught us to be safe. It was a tradition for him to bring them to the home of the family gathering each Christmas.

Daddy had five sisters and two brothers. Uncle Alton Parker was deceased, but his children joined us for some of the Holidays. I loved my cousins and being with them was exciting. We had lots of family love and fun when we were together. This particular year, around 1935, we were at Aunt Modena Railey's home in Waskom, Texas. I can still visualize my aunts preparing a feast for our gathering that year. There were pumpkin, pecan, coconut, chocolate, and lemon pies, not to mention cakes of all flavors. There was always chicken and dressing, chicken and dumplings and various kinds of salads and vegetables. We never went to town to buy a turkey. Although there was a turkey on our farm, he was mean and I could never understand why we never roasted him!

Christmas Eve night the women were visiting and cooking in the kitchen. Aunt Ellie was making fresh fruit salad at the kitchen table. There was a bright, shiny new oil cloth on the table which was laden with many foodstuffs. How tempting to my childlike appetite! I sat down on the end of a rough unfinished wooden bench we used instead of chairs. As I sat on the bench at the back side of the table, I felt something against my foot. I looked under the bench and found a fruit jar with some kind of juice in it. I slipped down under the table and opened the jar. It had a pungent odor. I turned the jar up to my lips and tasted the contents. I wanted to spit it out, but didn't! I decided to tease Aunt Ellie. I knew I wasn't supposed to even see it and surely should not taste it! I walked over to Aunt Ellie and let her smell my breath. She thought I had just touched my tongue to the moonshine whiskey to tease her. She was an easy going person and handled every situation calmly. (Incidently, I can't remember anyone drinking that Christmas, but me.) It was probably Uncle Jack Railey's hidden jar.

I continued to open the jar of moonshine several times, and take a sip. I would go back to Aunt Ellie and blow my breath in her face. She had no idea of the serious condition of her playful niece! She would have stopped me had she known what I was up to.

Later I went to another room where my cousins were playing games. Grace and Jewel were having fun cutting out paper dolls. I flopped to the floor and joined them, only to find the scissors I was using cut off the heads of the paper dolls. I could not get their clothes to fit their cut up bodies. One of the adults realized I was drunk. My Grandmother started crying and said, "That chock liquer could kill her!" They induced vomiting and put me to bed.

The next morning I felt terrible! I missed Daddy's yearly display of fireworks. Today, in our home there are no drinks on this special day. We always have a "Happy Birthday Jesus" cake on top of our table. Nothing is hidden under a chair or bench filled with evil spirits! At the age of seven years, this incident of being drunk, too young helped me become a tee totaler!

THE FARM
by
Lois Diehl

My very first home for about a year after my birth was Grandma and Grandpa Baker's 144 acre farm located approximately 3 miles outside Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania near the Yellow Breeches Creek. The white frame house with dark green shutters, shaded in the front by two large maple trees, had been their home since 1926.

Branches of a huge weeping willow tree nearly covered the entire backyard while shading the kitchen. Memories from that kitchen drift slowly back. I remember trying to turn the long wooden handle of the butter churn with my little girl hands. I can see the wood from the wood shed behind the outkitchen crackling and flaming when placed in the wood stove. Many wonderful aromas wafted from the stove as meals were cooked and pies baked in its oven. The best and most exciting time came before the leaves turned--thrashing time. At the end of the day all those that helped crowded noisily around the long harvest table in the dining room to enjoy the food cooked all that day by the women.

I remember many gables, a steep many-angled roof, a long front porch, a large cement area between the kitchen door and the outkitchen, and a steep downward sloping yard behind the house ending at the fence bordering a small orchard. My earliest playmates were my two cousins, Bill and Judy. I was the oldest, born in June, and Judy was the youngest, born the following January. The orchard was off limits to us, but we were fascinated by the honking geese that roamed the orchard and poked their heads through the wire fence. It was great fun for the three of us to run to the gate, call the geese and dart out of the way of those long swaying necks and snapping beaks. The fun ended the day I was not quite quick enough to escape the hissing beak as it grabbed me by the seat of my sunsuit. From that day on I stayed out of the beak's reach. Later when we were a little older, we ventured into the orchard to climb and play in Grandpa's apple and white cherry trees. We three spent a lot of time in our early years riding our tricycles and sliding in cardboard box lids down the sloping yard behind the kitchen. We had many fun filled days playing in Grandmas's yard, bounded by the black wrought iron fence along the front and two sides and by the orchard in the back.

A two lane black top road separated the house from the dairy barn, pig pen, wagon shed, granary with a tall silo and barn that housed horses, sheep and dairy cows. Across the road from the house was the water well and a small vegetable garden with grape vines at one end. I remember following Grandpa when he went to the dairy barn to milk the cows. I watched as he milked each one by hand--the milk squirting and splashing into the bucket. Fresh milk in the barn was always a treat. The milk in 20 gallon shiny cans was taken daily to the Hemling Milk Company three miles away to be processed and loaded in tank trucks. Sometimes Grandpa would let me ride on the back of one of the cows when they were being put out in the back pasture behind the orchard.

The fields surrounding the barn and other buildings were planted with corn, wheat, barley, oats and alfalfa all the way to the foot of the South Mountain. The mountain rose up from the edge of the corn fields. Grandpa plowed these fields with a horse until he acquired his first tractor in 1938. I liked to sit behind the wheel of the tractor and pretend I was driving it. Behind the barn Frank Wilson, Grandpa's friend, kept a small airplane in a tin hanger.

In March 1947 when I was 8 years old Grandpa and Grandma sold the farm and moved several miles away into a two story red brick home. Later my parents refurbished this home and moved into it in 1988. The Appalachian Trail follows along what used to be the edge of Grandpa's fields as it leads out of the South Mountain. Sometimes trail hikers can be seen from the kitchen of my parents' present home. Most of the original farm buildings were destroyed by fire years ago. Today only the pig pen and a much changed house remain. Sometimes, particularly at dusk, when I look towards the Appalachian Trail I can see in the distance the farm as I remember it.

THE COLOR PURPLE
by
Betty Gerard

There it goes again! I know you have all seen it as often as I have. "What is it?" you ask. The commercial shown over and over again showing the man using the product "For Men Only" to get rid of his gray hair. The ad says a man can use a little or a lot to get rid of his gray hair and bring his hair back to its natural color. Every time I see and hear this commercial I have to snicker and recall a time in my young life.

It was the Depression Era. Jobs were scarce. Even if a man had a job, there was no guarantee the amount of hours he would work. Also, the hourly wage was very low, with a salary often as low as $15.00 a week. With this salary Dad was expected to supply the needs for our family of four--Dad, Mom, Bill, and me.

We lived in Peoria, Illinois. The winters were cold in Peoria, so we needed coal for the furnace to keep us warm. Dad also had to pay for our housing, utilities, food, and clothing. No wonder Dad was worried. We were not alone, though. Times were bad for everyone.

Dad was in his forties, and if employers were hiring, those in Dad's age group were not usually considered. Talk about discrimination! Every time Dad would hear that some company was hiring, he would go early to apply, just in case he might be one of the lucky ones. With every rejection and turn down, he became more depressed.

Dad's Aunt Maggie and her husband, Uncle Charlie, came to visit us from Lincoln, Illinois. During this visit the topic of conversation was always how bad the job situation was and how the Depression had effected people. Dad spoke up. "It's not only that I'm in my forties, but they take one look at me and my head of grey hair, and that's it." (As a side comment, I'd like to say that I don't even remember my Dad with dark hair as his earlier photos showed.)

Aunt Maggie suggested, "Why don't you color your hair?" After much discussion of how difficult it was to do, Dad decided he'd give it a try. He bought a bottle of "Color Back" and followed the directions on the bottle.

What a disaster! Dad's hair turned purple--but that's not all! Dad's nightly routine was always the same--after supper he would go to the living room, sit in the big overstuffed chair, read his nightly paper, smoke his pipe, and listen to his favorite radio program. Dad also had a habit of striking a match, lighting his pipe, shaking out the match fire, and then scratching the top of his head with the match stick.

One night Mom and I were in the kitchen. Do you remember the celluloid kewpie dolls? Ever smelled celluloid burning? Mom was trying to locate that same smell when she walked into the living room. "Oh, no!" she cried. You guessed it--Dad's hair was on fire!

Until the day Dad died in 1952, we teased him about his purple hair, especially whenever he lit his pipe and scratched his head with the match stick. Now you know why the "For Men Only" commercial makes me snicker and remember.