Life and Letters

Volume XIVa
Fall 1995

One of my favorite passages in literature is a dialogue between a lion and a boy. Aslan, the lion who reigns as king over Narnia in C. S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia,* tells Shasta, the young protagonist in A Horse and His Boy: *I tell no-one any story but his own.* I grasped its meaning as a teenager during my rereading of the *Chronicles* (some of my favorite books), and through the years I have often embraced that quote, sometimes cloaking its deeper truth to defend its use as a bar to protect the privacy of my story.

I tell no-one any story but his own. That's true. But the power of paradox also teaches us of Everyman. His story, too, is our story. The bargains, the deceptions, the restorations. The fear, the forgiveness. Thank God for story. What would our lives be without it? Story shapes our days from the first communication of "Sleep well?" and "Good morning!" to the tabletalk questions of "What'd you do at school today?" and "How was work?" Each of us has a story to respond with. Some stories, as you'll see in this volume of **LIFE & LETTERS**, are told with a certain style--a punctuated force, a subtle, quiet offering, a humorous retelling. All of them are our stories, told to be received in the sign of love. We offer to you these stories of **LIFE & LETTERS**.

Joan Stear
USL, Lafayette, Louisiana
Fall 1995

Front Cover (clockwise from upper right hand corner): Margaretta Blanchard; Charlie Boy, Olympe Butcher's brother; Joan Stear (first grade); Jim Jennings; Wilma Bowles; Alicia Keaty; Fran Gross; Dale Delcambre (1940-41); (center) Ed Parker

This XIVth volume of **Life & Letters**

is lovingly dedicated to

David Spring Stear and Marjorie Belle Matherne Stear,

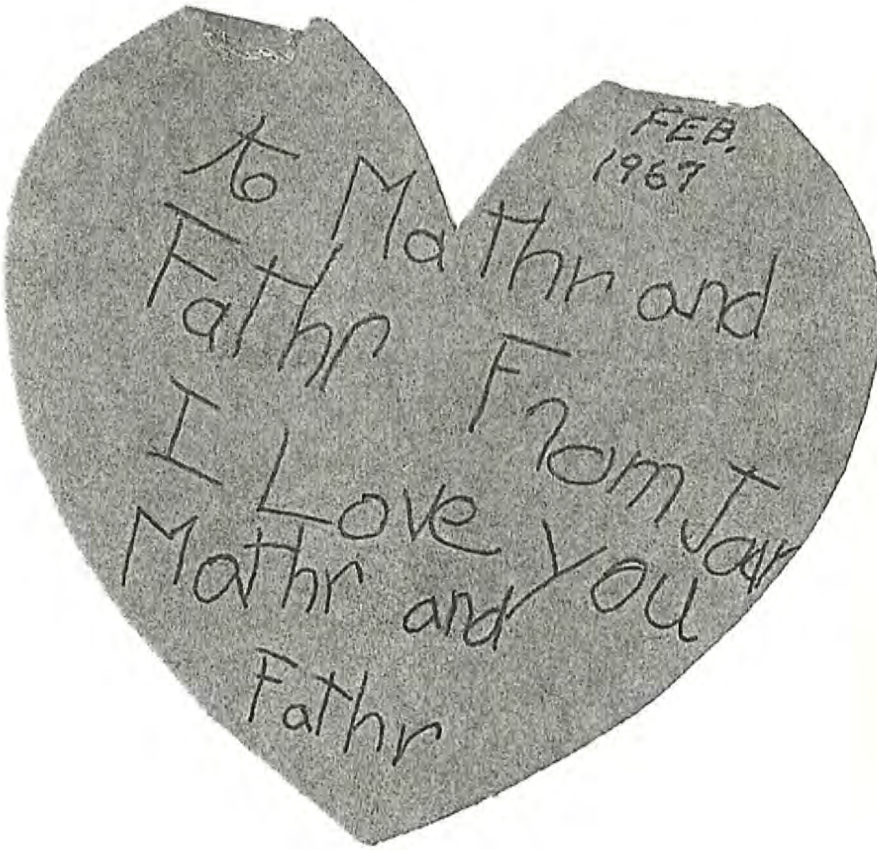
my dad and mom.

At six years old and into adulthood--my love for you is still the same.

➙ ➙ ➙

Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust,
no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything.
It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen.

1 Corinthians 13:7



Life & Letters
Fall 1995--Tuesday Class

Seated, l. to r.: Joyce Boutin; Olympe Arceneaux; Margaretta Blanchard; Anne Comeaux; Dale Delcambre; Joe Glorioso
Standing, l. to r.: Howard Manuel; Fran Gross; Joan Stear; Wilma Bowles; John Townsend; Jim Jennings; Ed Parker
Missing from photo are: Yvonne Foreman; Woodson Hopkins; Alicia Keaty

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LEVEE MEMORIES
by
Anne B. Comeaux

When Mama talked about *loutre bord* ("the other border"--the term she often used when she talked about Reserve, the town on the east bank of the Mississippi River where my older brothers, Richard and Paul, were already living and working), I pictured a row of houses on the other side of the River, facing our own dwelling. I thought everyone lived in a house that faced a big hill-like earthen structure that we called "the levee."

That levee which circumscribed not only my thinking, but also my very living, was not merely a bulwark sparing us from the devastating effects of floods. It was a place of fun and life. It was a delightful place to walk leisurely with siblings or friends. *Faire une promenade* or *se promener* (go for a walk) automatically meant "let's walk on the levee." Sometimes the walk was on the uppermost peak of the levee where frequent walkers had cut a pathway. At other times, the walk might proceed at a lower level, one-third or half-way up where paths had been worn. There were no sidewalks along the gravel road that ran alongside the levee. Certainly, it was much safer to use the levee. All these adult ramblings about safety and comfort never entered my mind as a child. A levee was just there for enjoyment.

Late evenings during the summer, sitting on the highest peak of the levee with friends or siblings was a nice "hang-out" for young people. The river at that time of day afforded some measure of air circulation or breeze, a welcome alleviation from the day's heat. I remember so well enjoying an evening with a young couple from the neighborhood, the Glaviana's. Emily and Texas (Lloyd Glaviana) had a young son at the time of which I speak. Because I was the "caboose" from a large family, I had not experienced the joy of having a toddler around. The conversation easily revolved around the cute things "Sonny" (Lloyd, Jr.) Did and said. One of them was when, in imitation of his grandmother, he spontaneously called me "Lilanne." How his mother laughed! Even much later, when Sonny had grown to manhood, a chance meeting brought memories and a smile to my face when Sonny asked, "Lilanne, are you still living in Lafayette?" I wonder if anyone ever told Sonny what my real name is?

Evening time in the country meant bringing cattle in from pasture. Our family kept only two or three cows, whatever number was needed to provide milk for our use. Our neighbors, the Granier's, ran a dairy, so they kept many. The cows were loosed to roam free during the day to pasture wherever the grass was greenest, on or beyond the levee system. Each evening we watched Luke Granier corral the animals of his herd. He used to ride, often bareback, if I recall correctly, to locate his cows. The cowboys of the west had nothing over on Luke. With his dog to help in assembling the herd, he was as good entertainment as a Saturday afternoon cowboy serial. We heard the yapping dog and listened for James' call to the cattle, as we watched him skillfully race his horse to head off any animal that veered in the wrong direction. Ultimately, the herd was directed to their

place to chew their cud and rest for the night. Without paying a dime for the show, the serial would be continued the next day for our enjoyment.

During early spring, when the clover was green and lush, an animal's owner had to decide whether to risk his animals eating too much clover or keep them penned during the day. Insufficient pasture on an owner's property might prompt him to loose the cattle. Whenever he did, the owner would drive the cattle back earlier than usual. Despite this watchful care, a cow did occasionally take in too much clover. The gas produced during the fermentation of the fresh clover sometimes proved to be too much for the animal's digestive system and severe bloating, often causing the death of the animal within a day's time. Most of the men knew the antidotes to administer to an ailing animal, but often the antidote was either insufficient or too late, and the cow died anyway. More serious cases might be treated by puncturing a certain area on the animal's side in an attempt to release the pressure sapping the animal's life. Losing an animal that was needed for its milk supply was a great loss. I remember one season when we lost two animals that way. Mama and Papa's distress over it was infectious. I was too young to fully understand the financial drain this loss was in an already depressed economy, but I was able to sense its seriousness.

Another incident that remains in my memory is that of a tractor on the levee. I believe the tractor must have been equipped with cutting blades to clear off high weeds from the levee. Almost directly across the road from our house was a steep embankment. How we thrilled scaling this "mountain peak" when we were children! That day was different. The operator of the tractor attempted too steep a climb for his vehicle. As we watched from the front porch of our house, attracted by the noise of the tractor and the precipitous ascent, the tractor suddenly turned over. We all gasped in horror! Teep quickly handed the book he was reading to anyone of us who would grab it as he said, "Hold this." He ran to the scene, as did a few other neighbors or passersby who saw what had happened. As we wondered and feared the worst, Teep ran back toward the family car and drove it to the road near the scene of the accident. There was no "9-1-1" to call. No emergency vehicles were available, so the men made the best decision they knew. They picked the driver up, placed him in the car, and Teep drove him to the doctor's office. We waited anxiously to discover the extent of the injury and whether it was fatal. Fortunately, the full weight of the tractor had not fallen directly on him, so the man's injuries were treatable. Mixed with my fear of what was happening was a deep sense of gratitude and pride--gratitude that a life was spared, and pride that Teep had been there to help.

One of the most beautiful scenes of the past which I miss today when I ride down the river road in St. James Parish is the sight of green growing rice. Many of the local farmers once grew rice in this parish where the Mississippi River was used as a source of water for watering the fields. Young rice plants must be flooded in water for quite some time before the crop reaches maturity. Farmers set up siphons from the river and over the levee to direct water onto the farmland. A simple pumping system permitted them to control the flow of water according to the needs of the rice crop. When water was no longer needed, the pump's valve was adjusted to cut off the water supply. Thus the crop was allowed to ripen and ready itself for harvest.

Today when I drive along the levee of childhood memories, the titillating smells of luscious green crops are absent. Replacing them are the acrid odors of ammonium compounds.

Where once the fast growing grain replenished the air with oxygen--today inanimate plants pollute the atmosphere with its puffs of dark clouds.

Where once small farmers lived who gambled with the elements for their livelihood--today executives and chemists control and produce the products for the big farmer's need.

Progress? Wisdom? Change? Each generation experiences these questions. Probably each entertains an assortment of feelings of regret, nostalgia, acceptance and hope for the future.

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The Silver Pitcher
by
J.M. Jennings, Jr.

I want to relate one of my earliest memories of a story told to me by my Daddy and his sister, my Aunt Mary (or Auntie). They often shared with me this account of one of the victories of my Mother that happened ten years before I was born. Mother died thirteen years later in 1924 when I was three years old.

Mother, Grace Dezell Shepard, was born in 1897, I believe in Jacksonville, Florida. I assume Jacksonville because there I photographed the head-stone of her father, Edward Felder Shepard, who died in 1905 and was buried in the Shepard family plot in the Evergreen Cemetery. Mother is buried in the adjacent grave plot.

My Mother had two sisters, Edith and Eunice, and three brothers, Herschal, Julian and Clinton. From the few photographs I have, they were an athletic, out-door loving family.

Today, we think that women are just now becoming liberated and permitted to take part in what were all-male activities, but my Mother was an accomplished motorcycle rider while in her early teens. I wonder how many other ladies, young or old, rode motorcycles in 1911?

My Daddy said that the Harley-Davidson was her preferred bike. Grace was a slender girl but powerful and strong enough to handle a Harley that must have weighed three times her weight. I think that her favorite colors would have been shiny black and chrome or fire-engine red with yellow trim.

Grace Shepard was active in motorcycle racing and received encouragement and assistance from her sisters and brothers. Her father had died when she was eight-years-old. She must have had help to maintain the mechanical perfection of her Harley required to be a serious competitor in those bike races.

I wonder who financed her sport? There are so many gaps in the few facts I know. My Mother's mother, my maternal grandmother, had been widowed since 1905 and was raising six children. Did the older siblings have jobs and contribute to the household expenses with something left over for extras? Like motorcycle riding? Did my mother, Grace, have a sponsor, perhaps a Harley-Davidson dealer who provided the bike, fuel and upkeep to advertise his business?

What kind of clothing did a girl motorcycle rider wear in 1911? A black leather jacket and leather boots? Maybe, but all the reproductions of early motorcycle advertisements I've seen portray a smiling young lady dressed in a fancy, ankle length gown and standing on the far side of the latest model cycle. The photograph emphasizes the machine, not the lady or her wardrobe. The 1911

Harley-Davidsons looked similar to today's men's bicycles with a strong horizontal bar from seat to handlebar. This would not be my idea of a proper seating arrangement for a lady in a long, expensive dress. I can imagine my Mother in culottes or even bloomers or horrors--pants. Heavy leather footwear would have been necessary as racing was done on dirt tracks. Many of the photos show the race driver taking a tight curve with one foot sliding along the ground as if to keep the cycle from falling over.

There is so much I don't know about my Mother. However, I have inherited a trophy awarded for one event that must have made her and her family proud. But another question: Did Grace's mother know just what her daughter was doing when she was fourteen years old?

My heirloom is a large, George III style, silver water pitcher engraved:

Moncrief Park
September 4th, 1911
Ladies Race
Won By
Miss Grace Shepard

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WRITER'S BLOCK
by
Joe Glorioso

In November of 1990 I found myself lying on an operating table under bright lights--dead to the workings of the world--my sternum being sawn open and my ribs cracked far apart so a surgeon could relocate my mammary artery to a heart artery to effect a by-pass around a ninety-five percent artery blockage. Ten days later, after those water-pipe size tubes had been removed, Dr. Ducote came into the hospital room to assess my progress. "Joe, you look great!"

"When in the hell do I get out of this hell-hole of a hospital?" I wasn't feeling chipper that morning. "I've got to get away from this horrible hospital food and this rock-hard mattress. Criminals in Angola are better off than I am by hundreds of miles if you ask me."

Dr. Ducote laughed. I scowled. "You'll go home tomorrow. First, let's talk about rehabilitation. I'm going to assign you to the Wellness Center at Lafayette General for physical rehab. Do you have a hobby? If you did, it would help you develop a better mental attitude."

"Doc, my career was my hobby."

"Get a new one. I know you are a perennial student. Enroll in a class at U.S.L. or find something else that you might be comfortable with. First, I'll send you to the sixth floor here in the hospital to monitor your physical condition. The physical program is easy and the nurses are nice. Is that okay with you?"

I met a fellow sufferer on the sixth floor of Lafayette General. Here my rehabilitation started. The "nice nurses" wired me to computers that would monitor my two hundred body parts. My suffering fellow confidant told me about a program called *Life and Letters*, staffed by a pretty, young teacher who helps her students write their memoirs. *Pretty and young*, I mused. That's just what I need as a hobby for my mental rehab.

The spring semester of 1991 rolled around, and I was discharged from the sixth floor of Lafayette General. A year and a half later, the fall of 1992, I enrolled in *Life and Letters*. I had not been deceived by my confidant. My instructor was, indeed, pretty and young. My fellow students were not young. But, what the hell, I couldn't have everything going my way.

The class was great. That pretty, young thing was a skillful editor, too. I knew that if I stuck to writing I could even learn a few things about story writing. Looking back over about 500 pages I wrote since 1991 and the last five pages I wrote in 1995 with the first 1991 five pages I wrote and comparing them, man, what a difference in writing skills! Looks like I enjoyed everything about writing! Best of all, I was honing my writing skills.

Well, maybe I didn't enjoy everything. At the end of each semester, I was required by that young beauty to write a two page story for a publication, creatively called *Life and Letters*. Why two pages? Because I had only five minutes to read my story on our graduation day. If I read as fast as I could, it would take me two-and-one-half minutes per page.

And I needed, above all, to learn to read orally. Again, I didn't enjoy everything. Three weeks ago, I heard myself read a story I wrote on Acadiana Open Channel. I was a lousy reader. I read words as though they belonged to a long list of words: no emotion in my voice, no change of pitch, a monotonous volume, not a single inflection, only monotone diction.

Another "not everything": I've got to write another two page story for this fall semester's publication of *Life and Letters*. I don't want to, but I've got to if I want to keep in the good graces of that pretty queen.

For this part, it's Joe and his computer in Joe's makeshift office:

Joe pulls his office chair up to the IBM compatible computer and, finding a comfortable sitting position, he toggles the 'on' button.

Computer: Who's playing with the computer? Oh! It's you, Joe. Got work for me today, I hope!

(It was clever of Joe to install that little wake-up warning on the computer. When waiting too long, the computer immediately displays a dark blue sky with shooting stars replacing the monitor's white screen.)

Joe stares at the shooting stars. No Big Dipper. No North Star. Just shooting stars. He stares as the stars flew from the upper right corner to the lower left while hundreds of others randomly dance about the screen.

Computer: Don't sit like a bayou mud turtle on a log sunning itself. Do something! Punch a damn key. Any key. I want to help!

The computer's dancing stars grace the screen. Joe stirs to follow orders, gently tapping the space bar.

Computer: I'm awake. If you're going to write a story, put on your story cap and get going. Otherwise, I'm going back to sleep in thirty seconds. I don't have the time to mess around with you and your lousy habit of procrastination. If you're gonna wake me, get your behind in high gear and go to work.

The computer goes back to sleep. Joe pounces on the space bar, angry and unaccustomed to sassy outbursts from his lowly computer.

Computer: Look at you. I'm awake, but you ain't. Do something! Why don't you key in your file number and format your page? You can read, can't you? If you don't know how to create a file and put in a page format, get your manual out and start reading. I'm assuming you can understand what you read. Come on! You're a college graduate! That's what you claim.

Joe: Don't be so damn smart. I can read. I know how to file and format my story when I can finally think of a story. So get off my case. Only thing I see on my monitor is the blank page I dread so much. My mind is blocked. My creative juices are as dry as a water well in the Mojave Desert.

Joe punches in the directory file number and formats the page.

Computer: Well, well. I see you created a file and formatted your story. If you have writer's block, that's your problem. Don't bug me. I ain't going to write for you. Think. That's what you need to do. Think, man. I am assuming those sacks of cells in your skull were connected to create some kind of intelligence.

Joe is taken aback by the flow of sassiness and disrespect for his intelligence. He leaves his chair and goes to the fridge for a coke. He urgently needs the caffeine and time to think about rebuttal. He positions himself determinedly before the computer. The computer was in dreamland again. The shooting stars are his nemesis. He stares gloomily at the galaxy in obvious frustration. He forms a fist and punches the space bar.

Computer: I'm awake. Let me tell you about my dream. You and I were discussing our differences. You're a lousy writer, smitten by the bug I call writer's block. I'm a great computer, willing to help you out. While we have a thousand differences, we have one thing in common. We both love the opposite sex. You're stuck on your pretty editor and I have a yen for Miss Apple. Now, to me that's a good beginning. Why can't you tell the story about what you've learned in your class? Give honor to your pretty Miss. Surely, she taught you two pages worth of goodies. How about spelling? You were such a lousy speller. I can help you with my spell-checker. You'll look like a national champion. You wrote in the passive voice. Didn't your beauty teach you that the active voice is best for writing stories? You were a miserable failure in dialogue? Well, that's tough. You're probably still a neophyte. Buddy Boy, you're on your own here. Don't call on me.

Joe is uncomfortable when faced with the justified criticism. He fidgets, trying to compose himself. He admits to himself that the dream is not too far out-of-line.

Joe: You're right. But I wrote those stories in the past publications. I don't want to repeat them. I've already written 967 words. Maybe that's enough. I am allowed only two pages. I'm on my fourth page. I can stop now. Can't I?

Computer: But you haven't written a story. We've talked and talked and said nothing. Tell your class how much you like to write about your life. Jazz it up a bit. You certainly can do that if nothing else. You don't have to lie either. I know you had a good life. Let it shine through your writing.

Joe thinks about the story he wishes he could write. But he remembers the limits placed upon the publication's format and those five damn minutes. He decides not to fall prey to writer's block and let the hide go with the hair. The screen dances with stars. He punches the space bar to kick the computer awake.

Computer: Loosen up, Joe. You're no writing genius. Hell, from where I'm perched, you're not even mediocre. When I was safely stacked on a shelf in Midwest's mail order house, I imagined myself going to a writer who could turn out beautiful prose. Instead, I got you. Maybe, I should have waited until some long-haired, bearded computer hacker came along. That would have been more fun than what I have had to endure here. You're the pits, you and your writer's block.

Joe visibly cringes from the unwarranted criticism thrown his way by an insolent computer. Never has he been shown such disrespect. He moans aloud as the stars burst upon the scene.

Joe: Listen to me, you miserable excuse for a computer. With a flick of two keys, I can cut your sassy tongue out of existence for all time. I can cut you off as easily as I turn water off in my bath tub. I've got two other keys that I can peck that'll keep you wide awake for an eternity. If that's a threat, so be it. I'm sick and tired of all the disrespect you have shown me. You're the damn slave. Not me. Do you understand me?

Computer is silent to the threat, unable to respond.

Joe: Listen to me, you s.o.b. You're no Pentium 100 with 16 megabytes. You're nothing but a lousy souped-up 386. So get off your high horses with me. Only thing you've ever been to me is a stupid box that responds to the keys I punch. You're a cotton-picking slave. Nothing more. If I hadn't chosen you, you would be locked in a cardboard box gathering Ohio dirt and dust. Today, you're worth less than fifty bucks. So shut up your sassy mouth!

Computer: So sorry, Boss. My deepest apology. But our bantering back and forth has given you over seventeen hundred words. I only wanted to egg you on to write. I'm sorry as hell that I had to show you so much disrespect and given you so much lip. But look at the good side. You've got a fairly good story. Well, I think so. And my opinion really counts. There are hundreds of real life stories out there and maybe millions of imagined ones. Reach out! Go get them! Blink your cursor across the face of my monitor at your pleasure. There is never any need to worry about WRITER'S BLOCK.

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A SURPRISE FROM ABOVE
by
John A. Townsend

It was a warm, clear day in May 1944, just a week or two before my graduation from Sibley High School. We had a final test in Miss Frazier's "English Lit" class just after lunch. She allowed us to leave as soon as we had completed the exam. Shortly after two o'clock, I was on my bicycle, my fishing tackle strapped to the handle bars, and on my way to Dorcheat Bayou and Oscar Cudd's camp west of town. As usual the gravel on the road was deep and loose--hard to handle a bike in, so I found myself riding the dirt shoulder most of the way.

Upon arriving at the camp I found Bobby Carter at home, just returned from taking a physical to enter the Navy. He failed to pass that test because of an ear infection, but was told to return a week later. It was September before he made it.

Bobby always loved to go fishing with me, fascinated with the fly rod. For some reason, he could never get the rhythm and always ended up either hung in a tree or removing a hook from his shirt.

I welcomed him and his boat. Bobby was a friend of mine, and his willingness to share his boat saved me 25¢ to rent one at the camp. Besides that, he did most of the paddling.

We left camp moving north, along the west bank of the bayou. His mom, Dot, who operated the camp, reminded him to be back at the house by five that afternoon. As a consequence, we rowed only a mile or two above the camp before reversing our direction, returning along the east bank.

About half-way back we reached the location where Uncle Tom Jones' camp had been. The clearing at the water's edge was now a bank of willow trees, the tops leaning out over the water. Our route carried us under the limbs. Bobby was trolling with a cane pole and line to which was attached a tandem spinner. He hung a fish that swam under a branch just beneath the water. When he jerked at the line, the hook suddenly came free and the bait shot above his head, becoming entangled in the branches overhead. Bobby whipped his line free. Suddenly, a writhing form came falling--"kerplunk!"--onto the bottom of the boat. With a yell, Bobby bailed off his end of the boat into the water with a splash.

The water moccasin, about two feet long, was in a frenzy--writhing from one end of the boat to the other. I spread my feet atop the wall on either side as I reached for a boat paddle. Bobby, holding onto the nose of the boat, yelled, "Hey! Don't put that thing in the water with me!"

I don't recall my answer as I made my first attempt to toss the snake overboard. It failed. The second attempt I flipped the reptile onto the center seat from which it immediately returned onto the floor of the boat.

Finally with another toss and fling of the paddle, I had the snake flying over the side. The nose of the boat dipped water as Bobby, in one move, came flying up and over onto the seat. I grasped the sides of the boat to stop from being thrown overboard. The fishing was over. When we reached the camp I had to tell Dot why Bobby was so wet. The story had us both laughing until the tears flowed.

Bobby tried to duplicate the feat for his mom, but met with no success. She laughed, "Bobby, fear gave you wings that you don't now have." I had to agree with her.

So ended another adventure on the bayou. By the way--yes--we did catch fish, two nice stringers. The fish were small, but Bobby had the snake growing a foot whenever he told the story.

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PFEFFERNÜSSE
by
Fran Gross

When Dearie, Grandmother Rogers, was living in Beatrice, Nebraska, her house was large enough for her to rent at least one room. One boarder, a young German immigrant named Carl Kornmesser, lived with Dearie and her sons, Paul and Charles, until Carl married and moved to Omaha, Nebraska. One year Carl wrote to relatives in Germany requesting the recipe for a cookie called pfeffernüsse. He asked Dearie if she would be willing to make a batch, which she did, and that was the beginning of a yearly Christmas tradition lasting until Dearie was in her eighties.

After the dough was mixed, Dearie would scoop it out and form it into several rolls about the thickness of her thumb. These rolls were then cut into pieces roughly 1 ½ inches long. This process took all day, as she made hundreds of cookies. There would be pfeffernüsse, both baked and unbaked, all over the large dining room and kitchen tables, plus on any other available space. After they were baked and cooled, the real challenge arose, at which time I was often called upon to assist.

Dearie felt she had to share her efforts with almost everyone she knew. I don't know where she got all the small flat boxes year after year. Maybe they were returned to her. But what we had to do was fit the nuggets into the boxes so they were level and tight. I think each box was filled with a special person in mind. Sometimes for the specially favored, we used a larger box and made a second layer separated from the first by waxed paper. The boxes would then be wrapped, and some were mailed off, while others were delivered to whomever was unlucky enough to receive them. I say "unlucky" because a little pfeffernüse went a long way.

The pfeffernüse I've seen and bought in a bakery are nothing like the ones Dearie made. The Kornmesser recipe made a hard, tooth breaking variety, not a soft chewy one. One might imagine that these were invented by the Prussian military to harden their troops to the rigors of battlefield rations. You had to soak them in coffee, or other liquid, or suck on them like hard candy. Actually, I liked them. I do know that most people didn't, but were too polite to tell Dearie.

Mother made them a few times after Dearie quit, and I made one or two batches after I was married, but gave up as it was too much work to have no one appreciate them. I'd rather bake something people will look forward to eating.

Carl Kornmesser's Recipe for Pfeffernüsse

Boil up together:
2 quarts corn syrup
1 quart sugar

When cool, add:
½ quart milk
2 cups lard
3 heaping teaspoons baking powder
2 teaspoons cardamon seed
1 large teaspoon cinnamon
2 small teaspoons nutmeg
1 small teaspoon cloves
1 small teaspoon finely ground pepper
enough flour to make a very stiff dough

It greatly improves the flavor to add 1 cup finely cut coconut, also ½ cup citron and candied orange peel or grated fresh orange peel.

Make long rolls of dough the thickness of your thumb. Lay 3 or 4 alongside each other and cut across with a sharp knife. Sprinkle with flour. Lay on a buttered tin.

Bake in a rather hot oven. Give them a good top heat.

Half of the recipe makes a large quantity.

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HISTORY IN THE MAKING (1941-1945)
by
Wilma R. Bowles

December is a month to look forward to Christmas and presents. It was always an exciting time for me because we celebrated three birthdays during this festive time. Dad's birthday was December 20th, and Momma and I shared the same birthday, January 4th.

December 7, 1941, began as usual. Daily, I walked with Grandma Alice to Mass, except on rainy or cold mornings.

This particular Sunday was a shock to us as well as all Americans. Grandma Alice, who was blind, was a constant radio listener. I can recall her sitting for hours listening to soap operas, music and the news. I was on the swing playing with other children when suddenly the familiar sound of the round house whistle blared loudly with an eerie sound. This whistle blew daily to remind citizens that it was 6 a.m., 12 noon, or 5 p.m. This Sunday it blew as though someone was in distress. Grandma Alice interrupted our playing and told us that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Our biggest concern as children was, "Can the Japanese bomb Lafayette?"

The next day we sat and listened to the radio as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt announced that America was declaring war on Japan and Germany.

Another concern of mine was, "Is my Daddy old enough to leave us and go off to war?" Daddy celebrated his forty-first birthday and was declared later to be 4-F. However, Aunt Yolande's only son was drafted and served in Germany. A very dear friend of the family, Louis Joseph, an orderly at Lafayette Sanitarium also went off to war. His job was left vacant because it was not easy to find a replacement. His job was filled by women for the duration of the war.

Geography classes in sixth grade for the remainder of the school year became interesting. Not only did we study about Japan and Germany, we also became familiar with other places in the United States. We were encouraged to purchase saving stamps and when the book was filled, to exchange it for a savings bond. I saved four of these war bonds and eventually cashed them to apply towards tuition my sophomore year in college.

Paul Breaux High School served as a place to register for ration coupon booklets, which contained stamps for the purchase of shoes, sugar, and gasoline. All of these items were rationed because of short supply. I found several of these saving stamps when going through belongings of Momma.

It was patriotic to have a victory garden, and members of my extended family did have gardens. The produce from the gardens was shared by the families. Chickens, pigs and cows were also raised. When the pigs and cows were slaughtered, each family received a share of the meat.

Stockings, or hose, for women were almost non-existent for silk was in short supply. Elastic was also short in supply and items requiring elastic were replaced with buttons.

The extended family became closer because various members of the family went off to war. Prayers were said for the safe return of our neighbors and loved ones.

One experience I had was learning to drink strong black Creole Belle and Standard coffee with honey or syrup. Occasionally sugar was available. There never seemed to be enough sugar for baking sweets and drinking coffee.

Another remembrance was the black out drills. All windows were darkened by either covering or turning off electric lights or blowing out kerosene lamps. No lighting was to be visible from the outside. Wardens, persons who were assigned the task, walked the neighborhood to make certain that households adhered to the rule. Again the round house whistle was a sign for the beginning and end of the black out drill. These drills were held as preparation for bombing raids if the area was under attack by enemy airplanes.

May 1945 ended World War II with Germany. I learned about the war's end upon returning home from school one afternoon. I was relieved for it meant my cousin John Martin, Jr., and Roland, Walter and Earl Dixon, along with other young men in the neighborhood would be returning home.

August 6th and 9th of 1945, America used the atomic bomb on Japan, and a few days later the Japanese surrendered.

I became aware through my studies during those war years that Japan and Germany were a great distance from me. My concern about Lafayette being bombed lessened. Today with modern transportation, arriving in these countries is a matter of less than twenty-four hours by airplane and a week by ship.

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SCOUTS AND STEW
by
Woodson Hopkins

Nothing was going right for him or his buddy, Jimmy, or the nation. Since the attack at Pearl Harbor, the war had been a series of setbacks. The ensuing months immediately following the first aggression brought only bad news to the home front. The Phillippines had fallen, leaving the door open for Japanese hordes to sweep toward Australia. Uncertainty permeated the land. Enlistees and draftees filled recruitment centers in every state. For two under aged boys, it was pure torture to watch others go off to war, leaving behind women and children. The only group interested in them was the Boy Scouts of America, who launched paper, tinfoil, and tin can drives. Victory gardens were on the horizon, and the two did their part despite a common preference for meat and potatoes exclusively. Neither were exactly tuned into sacrificing, but war had a way of edifying them sooner or later. His family was soon hit with the news of a transfer to a location near the Texas-Mexican border in LaSalle County. Here they would explore for new oil, as if old oil had no worth of its own. "No new development, no pipe," the government decreed.

The business district of Cotulla, Texas, was three blocks long and contained one of everything--one bank, one grocery, one drugstore, and one movie house. Hitching posts had since given way to iron rings sunk into concrete curbing, two meters high. Not much had changed in the little town in years until the war came along and whisked away all eligible males. It was a town without men, just a few old timers left out because of age and health, and the womenfolk. It was the women, more accurately defined as girls, that drew their eyes, with some mysterious attraction they had yet to fathom. As the war heated up, so did their instincts. By some measure of fortune, they were able to make contact with the one person who could "open doors" in their quest for building social status among the bevy of unattached young ladies. The war had changed their direction from faithful boy scouts intent on helping the war effort to being ahead of their time in the nuances of courtship. The key ingredient in their plan was gasoline, and it was rationed. They had discovered early on that most of their prospects lived miles from town on ranches. They could hardly ask permission to court a man's daughter on one hand and beg the loan of ten gallons of gas at the same time. "Go see Krebs," Benny, the wisest of all classmates, advised, "but don't tell him I sent you."

At first appearance, Herman Krebs had all the bearing of someone's patron, a lord of the manor. On another day, a devoted public servant bent on doing his duty for the county he served. The regular County Agent had volunteered for the Marines, and Krebs was pressed into service. But more importantly to them, the old man was a key figure on the rationing board. Alas! A plan was in the making. "Let's tell him we need gas for an outboard motor and lots of it because we want to return to our true home on the coast where we plan to fish for several days. Running the bays for trout and reds will take mucho fuel. Tell him that, Jimmy, tell him that since his town has no scout troop, we have nothing to do and are apt to get in trouble. No, on second thought, forget the trouble part. We might get blamed for everything that happens around here."

They caught up with Krebs one morning before school at the Green Lantern Cafe having a plate of huevos ranchos which he chased down with steaming hot coffee without so much as a flinch. He viewed the young boys with squinting eyes from beneath a broad brimmed sombrero which he customarily neglected to remove upon entering the eatery. His baggy britches legs were stuffed inside a pair of well worn Mexican boots that came to just below his knees. It was typical garb for a typical cowtown, but the character that wore them was anything but typical.

"Are you Mr. Krebs?" Jimmy inquired, knowing full well whom he was addressing.

"Yes, yes," Krebs replies curtly, sensing he was about to be enticed into doing something he was not readily in favor of doing.

"Well, sir, Mr. Krebs, you see, it's like this: We need gas for an outboard motor to go back home and fish. You see, sir, we are, or we were, boy scouts, but since Cotulla, and don't think we don't like it here, Mr. Krebs, but since Cotulla has no scout troop, well, we, we have no life here, no life whatsoever, Mr. Krebs."

He was on the verge of giving Jimmy an "A" for his performance when he--with a toss of his head--blurted out, "Please, sir, give us some stamps or draft us!"

Krebs offered a counter proposal, one for which they were unprepared. They were caught off guard when he suggested they forget the gas, take their gear and go out to his place on the river and camp and fish like real scouts. Heckfire, he thought to himself, doesn't he know we aren't interested in camping out on his scrubby brush, snake infested rancho? Jimmy shrugged and accepted. "What else could I do?" he wailed.

The next weekend rolled around, and using the directions Krebs had provided, they reluctantly made their way south toward that great body of water, the Nueces River. They anticipated the Nueces to be like the Rio Grande, sometimes wet, sometimes dry. They entered the old man's property through a fence gap and headed down a narrow sendero toward the river. The site was nothing like what had been envisioned. Two tremendous oaks stood tall on the river bank. A lush green stand of grass ringed them. A gleaming white sand bar rose partly from the river's bed, lapped by flowing green water. It was nothing short of an oasis, a rose among the thorns. They had waded through cactus, mesquite and black brush only to be pleasantly surprised by their surroundings. Both were beginning to see Krebs in a new light, as friend and potential confidant.

Krebs arrived before sunset. "Just came to check on you boys. I suppose you have no makings for a meal?" the old man questioned. He then launched into a mild tirade about Boy Scouts and always being prepared. They looked at each other, puzzled, wondering how their host knew the scout's credo. For two who were not in the habit of missing meals, they would have never come to this place without bringing along something to eat. But what served as food for them did not likewise interest Krebs. He ordered them to build a substantial fire and left in his old truck down the sendero toward the highway. When he was out of earshot, Jimmy hollered as he threw a can of pork'n'beans

over his shoulder. I bet he's going after big, thick steaks," Jimmy laughed as he danced around the fire.

It seemed forever before Krebs returned. As directed, the boys had built the fire from mesquite wood they had collected. It had begun to settle into a mass of fine coals just right for grilling a big cut of beef. Krebs came out of the truck bearing a large pot, but no steak. He poured some water into the container and quickly cut up a good sized onion, a large potato, and threw in jalapeno peppers. The hungry pair's spirits took an immediate dive as they observed Krebs at work. Another pot was brought from the truck, a smaller, more ominous, looking crock, and its contents were poured into the larger pot now stewing over the fire. As the old man lowered the receptacle, what looked to be two large earth worms clung to its side.

Jimmy's face turned beet red and appeared to be in a state of disbelief. Krebs removed a large cooking spoon from a hip pocket and skillfully guided the entrails into the brewing concoction. Before long Krebs announced that they were ready to eat. Reluctantly they accepted each a portion and sat down across from Krebs, keeping pot and fire between them and the old man. The fire cast dim shadows into the night that now surrounded them. When Krebs wasn't looking, they would toss some of their meal into the dark.

"Sure was good, " Jimmy complimented their cook.

"Well, I just wanted you boys to have a proper meal out here at my place. I'm kinda sorry we don't have a boy scout troop for you. Maybe after the war we'll start one."

As he departed, Krebs handed Jimmy an envelope and disappeared into the night, satisfied he had properly displayed his civic pride and demonstrated to two displaced scouts how wonderful life could be amid war and isolation. When the boys examined the contents of the envelope, they found a generous supply of gas stamps. "MEXICO, HERE WE COME!" Jimmy cried.

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SOME SCARS I HAVE COLLECTED IN THE LAST SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS

by

E. D. Parker

About 1918 or 1919 I received the first of a long list of injuries to my left hand. These injuries show that compared to my unscarred right hand, the left one certainly seems to be accident prone. At this time we were living in the old Bob Ellison ranch house located on the Wellington-Memphis road about thirteen miles from each town. The house had a red picket fence around it, and the old bunkhouse still stood in the southwest corner of the fenced yard. Someone had parked an old hayrake across the fence from the bunkhouse. My brother, John H., who was two and a half years older than I (in fact he is still two and a half years older) was playing with the old rake.

Using the lever designed for that purpose he would raise the raking tines off the ground and then lower them back. When he tired of this game, I decided to try it myself. Being smaller, I didn't have enough muscle to pull the lever all the way back and lock it in place, but I tried it anyway. Bracing my left hand on the iron work at the base of the lever, I tried to raise the rake by pulling the lever with my right hand. I couldn't get the rake all the way up. My right hand slipped off the handle, and the rake fell back to the ground forcing the lever back to square one. While sliding back, the lever sheared off the end of my little finger at the base of the nail.

Amidst the excitement, Mom or Dad called Dr. E W. Jones, our family doctor, in Wellington, and he drove out, a thirteen mile house call, to clip the short piece of skin still attached to the finger tip and bandage the stump. Ultimately the nail grew back, but it doesn't resemble the other one. It grew down in a compound curve over the end of the finger.

The next insult to my left hand occurred after we had moved into the new house on our farm about half a mile west of the ranch house. It happened soon after hog killing time, and I was probably seven or eight years old. Mama was preserving pork sausage. She fried the sausage patties, packed them in half gallon jars, filled the empty space with hot lard, and capped the jars. I decided to help her, so I got our small iron skillet and began frying patties in small batches. The ground pork contained a considerable amount of fat and the skillet soon filled with hot grease. When I attempted to pour off the hot lard, I took the skillet by the handle in my right hand and, in moving it to a jar, I accidentally tilted the skillet and poured the hot grease on my left wrist. It ran completely around in a strip three or four inches long. My first reflex action was to put my arm, between my legs and pull it out, wiping the hot grease on the inside of the legs of my denim overalls. A little skin wiped off on my denims also. The scar from this burn was large but somewhat superficial, and has grown less visible over the years.

On one Sunday the Noel Cudd family, who lived one and a half to two miles north of us near Buck Creek, had come over for dinner and a visit. Our house didn't have a regular fence around it, and the mules had become a nuisance, especially when clothes were on the lines. To keep the mules away from the house, Dad had built a makeshift fence consisting of a single strand of barbed wire,

supported on cedar posts. He had provided access to the windmill and barns. On this day, we kids, Cudds and Parkers, were playing around the barn area, and I went to the house for something, probably my straw hat. The gate was open when I went in, but Dad and Mr. Cudd had gone through the gate while I was in the house and closed the single strand gate. When I started back to the barn, I ran through the gate at top speed expecting it to be open. The barbed wire caught me under the chin, and I gained another scar, this time on the right side of my neck.

During my two years of teaching at the Swearingen School (1934 and 1935) I went out on double dates frequently with Raymond Jarrell, the younger brother of Almeda, my first sweetheart and former classmate. We lived across the road from the schoolhouse and the Jarrells lived two miles south. Raymond and I dated mostly two comely blondes who lived in Wellington. Raymond's girl was Dayle Gulley, the youngest sister of Cicero Gulley, my barber. My girl was Edith Monroe, who, as far as I know was unrelated to Marilyn, but I thought she was equally attractive.

One night we took the girls to a dance in Memphis. We had to drive thirteen miles to Wellington, then twenty-six miles to Memphis, and after the dance, reversal of this mileage to get back home. Raymond drove that night. Dayle was in the front passenger seat on the way home. Edith and I were in the back, she on the right and I on the left. About a half or two miles out of town, Raymond leaned over to kiss his girl and lost control of the car. It veered to the left and finally ran into a deep ditch on the north side of the road. The car fell against a high bank on the left side of the ditch. We in the back were thrown to the left. I raised my left arm to brace myself on the car body above the back window, but my calculations were off a bit and my hand went through the window after it had been broken in the collision with the bank. My arm was cut up a bit by the broken glass, but the damage was confined to the inside of my left wrist.

Several other Wellington couples were at the dance, and two or three of their cars stopped to help. One driver offered to take the girls back to Wellington, and another offered to take me back to Memphis to obtain medical assistance. We gratefully accepted both offers. We had no trouble finding a doctor to repair the damage. I don't remember his name, but I do remember that he was known locally as a character. He inspected the wounds, cleaned most of the broken glass from the cuts and sewed them up. From this episode I have a four inch Y-shaped scar on the right inside of my wrist with the open end of the Y starting below the heel of my hand. There are two one inch scars usually covered by my watch band, one of which was surgically produced about twenty years after the accident. While I was talking to the doctor, Raymond got the car towed out of the ditch and drove us home.

In the 1950's when we lived in Corpus Christi, Texas, a small lump appeared on the inside of my wrist. From the feel of it and its location I felt sure it was a wandering piece of glass of 1930's vintage. I went to a doctor to have it removed, and when I told him what I thought it was and how long it had been there, he just laughed. When he removed it, it turned out to be a piece of glass with sharp edges.

The last insult to my accident prone left hand occurred in Lafayette. One day in 1969 I was sawing a piece of plywood on our patio that was under construction at that time. Esther was at work in an allergist's office on Johnston and Bob was at home. I had wired the safety guard back on the electric hand saw I was using which as I learned the hard way should never be done. I was holding the small piece of plywood in place with my left hand and was intending to saw across it (the plywood, that is). The saw jumped out of the groove, and when the rapidly rotating blade hit the top of the plywood it caused the saw to reverse direction and come back at me at high speed. My left hand was in position to catch the moving blade in my palm between the thumb and index finger.

I began to bleed profusely, but it was a simple matter to stop the flow by closing my hand to make a fist, a fist that I maintained until the doctor pulled my fingers apart in his office. Bob was only fifteen at the time and didn't yet have a drivers license so he called Esther at work, and she came home to haul her stupid husband to the doctor's office for another sewing job. The resulting scar is about one and a half inches long and has a slightly bluish color, probably from the plywood glue.

Last but not least, there are two abdominal scars from surgical procedures. The smaller one, about three inches long on the right side, was contributed by Dr. E. W. Jones in Wellington about 1940, about twenty years after he bandaged my little finger. The last time I saw Dr. E. W. was in New Orleans in the late forties. He and his wife and Carter Holcomb, one of his protegees, visited us at our house on Chapelle Street in Lakeview. Carter obtained an M. D. At Tulane and returned to Wellington to practice medicine.

The larger abdominal scar, about six inches long and more centrally located was the result of a cutting and sewing job by Dr. Ed Breaux in Lafayette in January 1995. At seventy-plus years old, I'm still in one piece.

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MEMOIRS
by
Alicia Keaty

Because my dear ones insist I write my memoirs, I am taking this opportunity to relate a bit about the most outstanding happenings in my life as I recall them.

May 31, 1912, was the day I entered this world. My parents, now deceased, were James (Jim) William Armshaw and Ann Burke Armshaw. I already had a sister seventeen months older than I. Her name was Ellen Ruth Armshaw (now deceased).

My father, a shoe broker, worked in New Orleans for Tubman Shoe Company out of New York, which necessitated his traveling to New York as much as twice a month by train. Airplanes were not yet popular for traveling of any kind.

Back in the early 1900's, fewer family members sought complete independence from their roots as soon as they were married. My mother's mother, Grandmother Burke, who had a heart of gold, resided in a beautiful home on Valence Street in New Orleans. She enjoyed having her married children in her home until they would be settled, especially those in their childbearing years. How comforting it must have been for Mother and her little ones to feel safe and well taken care of, especially when Dad was traveling. In the early days of their marriage, they did not have time to look for or invest in their future home.

In trying to think back as far as I can remember, I believe my first memory was a happening to me when I must have been two years of age or close to two. I was seated in my high chair in Grandmother Burke's home. My sister, Ruth, (then about four years of age) who was beautiful, spoiled and envious of having to share her prominence with me, came up to show me a button she had found. The button had a pin on the back. As Ruth placed the button on the tray of my high chair, I reached for it. When Ruth tried to get the button from me, I shoved the button in my mouth. Ruth began shaking me but before my Mother could reach me, I swallowed the button.

I vaguely remembered being held upside down and patted on the back, but no button came up. I was then rushed to the hospital (this I do not remember) but when I was much older, I learned it took two days in the hospital before the doctors retrieved the button, and I was safe home again.

The next big impression in my life was sad and tragic, when all our dreams and hopes were shattered. It was in the year 1918 during World War I. My sister Ruth was eight; I was six; Billy, our only brother, was four; and Naomi, my baby sister, was two. Dad was twenty-nine years of age, a very handsome man. He was 6' 4" with curly hair and blue eyes. Dad, an entrepreneur, started his own shoe business. He had in his store one pair of every shoe size for men and women, from infants to adults. All who needed shoes or operated shoe stores could come to his shop and order shoes from his samples. His shop was on the corner of Chartres and Canal streets in New Orleans. He had

already bought a Peerless Touring Car and a two-seated Ford for his work. Mother, also 29, spoke often about how Dad had already put down a deposit on our first home-to-be in Audubon Park on a street facing the park. We were to move into our new home sometime after the new year.

It was December 1918. Dad belonged to many associations, but Mother said the association he liked belonging to most was the Knights of Columbus. On or about December 20, Dad, a Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus member, brought Mother and all four of us children, Ruth, Bill, Naomi, and me, to the Knights of Columbus Hall to observe their party for the poor and orphaned children. Because of World War I, together with the predominance of the cursed flu that took away many people, there were many orphans and poor people, right there in New Orleans, and I am certain all over. The Knights of Columbus, as well as many others in the City, went all out to make certain that many of the orphaned and poor children would have the Christmas the hoped for. A beautiful Christmas tree towered above the balcony where Mother and we four little ones sat with other relatives and friends of the Knights of Columbus. I can remember watching Dad and the other members giving bicycles of all sizes, baby carriages, dolls, baseballs, bats, footballs and toys galore to these children. Of course, the parents also received large baskets of food and sweets to share.

When we arrived home Dad complained of feeling very poorly and took to bed. Dr. Claire, our family doctor, was called. In those days, doctors came to the homes of the sick. We soon learned the bad news. Dad was afflicted with the deadly flu, pneumonia. On Christmas Day, Dad was held up to the window of his upstairs bedroom by the doctor and nurse so he could see Ruth and me riding our Christmas bikes. Two days later, Dad died.

Dad's body was taken away by an undertaker to be prepared for burial and soon brought back to the house in a casket. The coffin in which Dad's body was lain was placed against the wall in the front parlor. The piano was removed. Our two sofas, lamps, and the music stand remained in the room. A chrome decorated gas heater in the hearth heated the room. How well I remember the funeral, mainly because the hears and carriages to accommodate the family members were all drawn by horses. The streets leading us through our neighborhood were all graveled with small bridges spanning the ditches.

Mother, Grandmother, and my aunts wore black dresses and black hats with black veils. Ruth, my girl cousins, and I wore white dresses under our winter coats. In keeping with the formal tradition of those days, the funeral procession went first to Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church on Napoleon Avenue in New Orleans. After the funeral Mass and the blessing of the body, the procession proceeded to the Metairie Cemetery where Dad's body was interred in the "Burke Families" plot. In this plot are family members buried as far back as the 1700's.

The suddenness of Dad's death was difficult for us all, especially Mother. For me, I was deeply touched. Daddy and I went through a ritual each morning before he left for his office. I felt his kissing me goodbye each morning was not a real kiss unless he kissed me on the lips. Dad would tease me saying, "The reason I can't kiss you on the lips is because your nose is in the way." However I persisted until he rightly kissed me on the lips before leaving for work. You can imagine

how much it hurt every morning after Dad's death not having him with us so he could kiss me properly on the lips. It was hard for me at six years old to understand and accept Dad not being there to say goodbye every morning from then on.

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL PERSON
by
Margaretta Carson Blanchard

You might call me the "Yo-yo" baby. Then again, maybe you should not. "Yo-yo" implies instability, but we were never unstable. The needs of extended families caused my family to move from the nest of my father's people to the nest of my mother's people. So we moved back and forth, living near my father's Protestant family some of the time and near my mother's Catholic family sometimes.

But we never moved out of the circle of family love. We were so fortunate to have lived in an era of much love and respect for all members of the family. My Bellevue, Louisiana family lived in a Protestant circle and my Mamou family lived in a Catholic community. We received the love from all of them. I was christened and started church attendance at the Catholic church in Mamou.

When we moved again, near our Protestant family members, I was five years old. Instead of catechism, I attended Sunday school in the little red church on the hill in Bellevue. The church is still there. Every year we have a family reunion on the grounds of "The Little Red Church on the Hill." It is a warm sweet gathering. We chat and catch up with the family happenings of the year.

However many of our dear ones are no longer with us. But we have time for prayer and remembering the warmth of love of those gone by days.

One of the heavenly angels was Katie Boutte, my Sunday school teacher. She taught me about the love of Jesus so well that it is a special part of my life today. She had a talent of telling stories so vividly that I could feel the presence of the people in the stories.

"Jesus is my friend. My teacher told me so!"

Those were such warm wonderful days!

When I reached the age of ten, my mother's friend took me to catechism in the Catholic church in Grand Coteau every Saturday morning. Of course, I already knew all about Jesus and His love. All I had to learn about was the presence and love of the Blessed Mother, Mary. By the time the year of study was over, I knew all about Mary and Joseph and Jesus and God. I won the prize at the end of the year for knowing my religion lesson best.

Almost all of the credit can be given to my cousin Katie Boutte. Also, she was a school teacher. I was one of her students in first grade. She could make knowledge dance around the classroom. You could never forget it. Katie and I remained close all of our years.

At the end of Katie's life, she had Alzheimer's disease. It progressed very slowly. It was so sad to witness her mind deteriorate. She became silent and immobile. I visited her throughout her illness.

We were called one day and told that her family thought that there was not much time left for her. My cousin and I drove to the nursing home. Katie lay immobile and silent with her eyes closed. Her family said she had been in that condition for several days.

I wanted to talk to her about Jesus, just as she had done for me, so many years ago. I made several attempts, but my voice would break. So I decided to sing the message to her instead. I stood behind her as she lay on the bed with eyes closed. She had not opened her eyes in weeks.

I started singing. My voice would break, but I would start again. I sang the hymn entitled "The Old Rugged Cross." She had taught that hymn to me many years ago. Her hands began to move. She turned her head to face me. She opened her eyes which looked like small cups filled with tears. Her eyes smiled at me, her tears ran down her face. Katie breathed deeply, closed her eyes and died. A tiny smile remained on her face. Katie was at peace.

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MON PETIT FRÈRE
by
Olympe Arceneaux Butcher

I learned about death at an early age. My little brother, Charles André Arceneaux and I had been great playmates. He loved to wrestle and throw me down, much to Mamma's worry because she thought he might hurt me. Papa said he would be a boxer.

Charlie Boy was the last of our large family of four boys: Joseph, a twin who died shortly after birth; Benjamin Louis; and Emile Galbert. The six girls included Louise Josephine; Blanche Alice; Evangeline Stella; Mary, the other twin who also died prematurely; Rose Lima; and myself.

Rose and I were the girls closest in age, so we had the upstairs bedroom. There were two large windows to the East, and two bay windows on either side. It was always nice and cool, and we could hear and feel the breezes of the night coming from the trees and see the moon shining into our bedroom. We could easily walk out onto the roof and pick a pear from the pear tree. The green pears didn't appeal to me, but Rose was daring.

On Easter Eve as we went to sleep, I remember worrying about those breezes blowing away our grass nests on the front porch--only to find them filled with colorful eggs on Easter morning.

After Easter, in April of 1930, we were a sad family. Our family dentist, Dr. Paul Salles, had pulled Charlie's abscessed tooth. Only seven years old then, he was gradually weakening due to septicemia (blood poisoning). My parents and our family doctor, Dr. E. E. Guilbeau did not see him improving. Penicillin had not yet arrived in Lafayette, nor was it yet widely used by doctors.

And so, during the night of May 21, 1930, Mamma called us all together. She called Rose and me from upstairs to be at Charlie's bedside because, as Mamma said to me, "Charlie Boy is going to Heaven." While Mamma held his hand, Charlie just sighed a last breath and died ever so quietly. His death made me the "baby" again.

The next week my Mother asked me to please return Charlie Boy's books to Sister at St. Anne's Convent. This was a hard task for me. When I entered his classroom, Sister was waiting for me with a big hug. I knew all of his classmates since they were only three years younger than I.

Later, I heard my Mother say, "If only penicillin had come in sooner." (Sir Alexander Fleming of Scotland accidentally discovered penicillin in 1929.)

Recently, I spoke to Dr. Romagosa and related Charlie Boy's story to him. He told me, "Yes, I ordered the first dose of penicillin from New York in late 1930 to administer to a young boy here in Lafayette who had septicemia. I was frightened at the thought of this first injection. Would it be O.K.? I saved his life, and I see him often. He never forgets to say 'Thank you!'"

Later during World War II, the thoughts of our family were "The Dear Lord must have had a reason to call our little boy away at so young of age. But, maybe if he had lived longer he may have perished in this war."

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LITTLE RED WAGON
by
Joyce Mae Guidry Boutin

The experience I remember most as a child was about a little red wagon, snow and ice. I was about four years old, and Dad, Mathias Guidry, wanted to take a picture of me on the wagon he had built for me. It was a replica of the wagons used on Grandpére Ozaire Guidry's and Grandmére Emily Marie Bergeron Guidry's farm in Anse La Butte, a small community between Lafayette and Breaux Bridge.

I stood on the little red wagon for the picture session. As I recall, I wanted a snowball, so I bent down and fell head first into the snow, crying. Without a snowball I got back on the wagon. The picture Dad snapped tells the story of my broken spirit that winter day.

Dad wanted to make amends, so he took me to Romero's Grocery and Shoe Shop for candy. To add insult to injury though, as I stepped out of the store, I fell on the ice-covered sidewalk, skinned my bare legs, and hurt my pride again.

Thanks, Dad, for my first Winter Olympics, 1934. I love you, Dad. All that misery paid off. I was forty-two when I went ice skating in Houston and snow-skiing in Taos, New Mexico, for twelve years. Thanks again, Dad.

A CHILDHOOD SCHOOL EVENT:
TAKING RESPONSIBILITY
by
Howard Manuel

When the school year of 1936 started, I was six years old and living with Papére Aldues and Mamére Liza in Ville Platte, or rather three miles south of Ville Platte on a Louisiana rice farm. I had come to live with them to start school because my father, Delta "Googen," and my mother, Blanche, were still harvesting their rice crop on Bayou Rouge.

When the first day of school came, I bravely got on the bus. A neighbor's older boy was to look after me. I'll never forget Gussie. He showed me my bus, No. 6.

The second day I decided that I did not want to go to school, but I was told that I had to go, so I got on the bus crying. The crying did not last long because the bus driver, Mr. Kive, told me he would throw me in the bayou when we passed over it if I did not stop crying. The tears stopped.

The weeks started to pass and I started to learn. I remember the reading book Bob and Nancy Can Ride and started learning my numbers. I also learned that when I needed the bathroom I had to raise my hand and ask if I could "be excused." I didn't know what "be excused" meant, but I knew I could go to the bathroom if I said those words.

My Papére Aldues could barely sign his name. He had only gone to the third grade, but he helped me read the Bob and Nancy reader anyway, and at the end of the first six weeks, I got a report card. Guess what?! I made the Honor Roll. That was the only time I made the Honor Roll in my life. I strongly suspect it was because of the help I received from Papére Aldues and the fact that I was one of the very few who could speak English.

Of course, we were told not to speak in French or we would be punished, and we were after a few weeks. But it's amazing how fast the other kids started learning English. One of the first phrases they learned was "B-squzed."

The weeks turned into months, and then my parents moved back. I was happy to see my brother and sisters. A few weeks later my dog Spot came back, and then it was Christmas. The year passed by pretty fast. Life was putting responsibility on me at an early age, even though I didn't know it then.

The next year, my second grade year, my little brother Johnny was starting school. I had to find my new classroom and his. Then I brought the lunch, so we had to set a place where we could meet to eat because I had the lunch box with the sandwiches and the bottle of coffee milk and sweet potatoes.

The third year was even harder because I still took care of Johnny by finding his new room and I had to help my little sister Jeanette find her room. Plus, I had to learn where my new classroom would be. We still had to meet for lunch because I carried the lunch bucket.

I don't know why I still felt that it was my responsibility to continue to find Johnny's class and Jeanette's, but I did. Plus, I had another little sister, Abeline, starting school that following year. I had plenty of responsibility at an early age.

That is why I continued to take all the responsibilities all of my life. My attitude was "don't worry about the mule, just load the wagon."

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THE BULLY
by
Dale Ennis Delcambre

What is a bully? A bully is anyone bigger or older than you. School had just started for me, Boy Blue--my nickname on the bayou. I was six years old in the fall of 1940. Pooh Pout, my cousin Bradley LeBlanc, the bully, was nine or ten. Since he was bigger and older than me, I had to tease him or get even with him from a distance. Pooh Pout was worse than bad. He was terrible.

Everyday after school he would get off our school bus about a hundred yards before my stop and would pick up rocks. He'd run behind the bus to wait for me. I was a sitting duck for him. I would make a bee line, running the thirty yards from the door of the bus to the security of the front door of our house. Pooh Pout would always manage to hit me, and I would enter the front door crying. The Bully had struck again.

One day when Dad would come home from work with the United Gas Pipeline Company, Mama told him I had come back home <u>again</u> from school crying because I refused to defend myself. With only the words "Come here" spoken, Dad took off his big black belt and gave me the worst beating of my life. Showing me his belt, he said that if he ever heard that someone hit me and I didn't hit him right back, that I would get double the beating.

I was still afraid of Pooh Pout, but I was much more afraid of my father and his big black belt. I knew I had to do something about the big bully.

The next day started out like all the rest. Pooh Pout got off the bus and picked up the rocks. Today, though, something was very different. Boy Blue didn't run for the safety of the front door of his house. He stood right where he got off from the bus. Boy Blue called out, "Pooh Pout, come here!" Pooh Pout was very surprised and walked over to Boy Blue.

Big Bully Pooh Pout stopped right in front of Little Boy Blue and asked, "What do you want, Ennis?" Before the bully knew what had happened, Boy Blue hit Pooh Pout, "Bang!" with a hard left hook that swung his head around. Pooh Pout was so surprised, he started crying like a big baby, running home to his father saying, "Boy Blue hit me and made me cry." That afternoon was the last time Pooh Pout ever tried to make Boy Blue cry again. Boy Blue learned two very valuable lessons: The bigger they are, the harder they cry, and they are not as tough as they think they are.

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