



# Life and Letters

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I've been stalling the writing of this page for this semester's volume of **Life & Letters**. Between the end-of-semester fallout of papers and the panic of "Will I ever finish?", I've been afraid of not finding words that do justice to my students' stories. But this afternoon I discovered the impetus and the connection I was looking for. I saw *101 Dalmatians* at the theater and was struck by the thoughts that crossed my mind in the darkness as I watched the movie, thoughts that became entangled (as many of them do these days) with what **Life & Letters** is all about.

The movie's plot has nothing to do with the tradition of our stories in this booklet, but the memories behind the movie have everything to do with the motivation of **Life & Letters**. As I watched the new version, I missed a few scenes that the original had included. I waited for Rolly's cry of "I'm hungry, Mother, really I am." I expected Nanny to run through the London streets crying, "Police!" I wanted to laugh again at the animals' dialogue. But this version was different. I whispered to my friend (too many times, perhaps) that this feature is truly a 1990's version. And it was wonderful.

So what is it about remakes and new versions? What keeps us listening to (again) and watching (again) the same stories? What is it that keeps those same stories going? The youthful eyes that watched the first dalmatian movie became the eyes that envisioned this new version to delight their own children's eyes. Therein lies the connection to these stories of **Life & Letters**. The story's told again, this time with the vantage point of years gone by and life experienced in between. Within this volume, as well, lie stories, different, maybe, in the telling, but so similar in tone, told again for the children. Join us on this trek into the lives of my students, transformed by time, retold with insight and a heart for their subjects and audience--you. Welcome, again, to **Life & Letters**.

❖ ❖ ❖ Joan Stear  
USL, Lafayette, Louisiana  
Fall 1996



**Front Cover, clockwise:** (top right corner) Fran Gross; Yvonne Seneca; Jim Jennings, 1931;  
Ed and Esther Parker, 1944; Marion Embree (left), with cousin;  
Eugenia Stokes (circa 1891), Virginia Cook's mother-in-law; (upper right) Shirley Dugas  
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## THE ONE TIME I PLAYED HOOKEY

by

J.M. Jennings Jr.

I was one of the twenty four senior students in the Mechanical Engineering curriculum at Tulane University in the winter of 1942-43. Fifty of us had started as freshmen 3 ½ years earlier, but we were the only survivors. Our minds were toughened by exposure to differential and integral calculus, ravaged by the smells of general chemistry, and sent soaring by the problems we solved in advanced physics. We had conquered thermodynamics, strength of materials, refrigeration and advanced machine design in order to graduate. Now our final hurdle was learning heat power engineering and the design of ventilation, heating and air-conditioning systems.

Our instructor and mentor for the air-conditioning course of study was Professor Arthur M. Hill, Ph.D. Professor Hill was an innovative educator, and, during our Junior year, he had gotten us through the study of thermodynamics through his sheer will power. He had many years of experience on the "outside," and he was much in demand as a consultant by industries throughout the south. To show our respect for him, as much as the position of authority he occupied, we wore coats and ties in his classes during the cold weather season.

Having worked on the "outside," Prof. Hill drew on his experiences to illustrate his classroom lectures. Soon after we returned from Christmas vacation, Dr. Hill announced that our senior class was privileged to have received an invitation to attend the Eighth Annual Meeting of the Louisiana Engineering Society on Thursday, January 14th. I'm certain he had used his influence to gain invitations for us students to mingle with prominent Louisiana engineers.

If World War II had not been in progress, attending this meeting could have been an important opportunity for job interviews, but most, if not all, of my classmates had signed up with a favored branch of the service and knew they had to report for duty as soon as they graduated. Eleven of us were in the NROTC program and one, John Martinez, was anxious to leave for his Army Air Corp assignment.

We seniors were excited at the prospect of a day away from the classroom, a day free of the daily grind. Plus, we'd have the chance to see and be seen by "real" engineers. In the Engineering College in Stanley Thomas Hall, we attended class 8--5 each day and 8--12 on Saturday, so the symposium would be just like a day of vacation.

The L.E.S. meeting was held in the New Orleans' St. Charles Hotel Ball Room, a room large enough to seat several hundred people plus have enough space to permit equipment display tables at the rear. None of Prof. Hill's students had attended such a conference before, and the congenial attitude of the practicing engineers impressed us. "Why, these older guys aren't ogres. They treated us like we were part of the gang, one of 'em," I told my Daddy later.

The papers read at the morning session weren't nearly as stimulating as I had expected. One essay was titled "An Electro-Mechanical Method For Solving Algebraic Equations." Another was on the subject of "Viscosity, Its Importance and Measurement." One of my classmates and still a good friend, Johnny Martinez, spoke seriously on "The Fundamental Design of Airfoils." Perhaps it was his interest in airfoil research which led him to a commission in the Army Air Corp. (Some day I must ask him.)

Three hours of discussion of these important subjects was fatiguing and mind numbing. I had gone expecting to learn of designing engines and turbines, not to hear a recital of the dull, boring, detailed labor essential before the glamorous design work could proceed. The morning assemblage finally broke up for the noon meal. Our student group walked across Gravier Street to the Holsum Cafeteria for a nourishing but much less expensive meal than the menu being served in the St. Charles Hotel restaurant. The professional engineers were holding a formal noon-time luncheon meeting there and were to be addressed by a guest speaker.

While eating in the cafeteria, we discussed our morning and what we had learned. Staying awake had been hard work, and we decided, "we need a break." Someone suggested attending a movie to refresh ourselves before returning to the afternoon sessions.

There was a motion picture movie house on the river side of St. Charles Avenue near Poydras Street, a short walk from the hotel. I wouldn't bet money on my memory being perfect, but I think the theater's name was the St. Charles. We had just enough time to walk down the street to catch the opening scenes of the new motion picture, "Stormy Weather." The film, a memorable couple of hours, starred Lena Horne, Cab Calloway and "Fats" Waller, with marvelous musical numbers. Lena Horne singing "Stormy Weather" is still unforgettable.

The absence of his students at the opening of the afternoon session did not go unnoticed by Prof. Hill, but he said nothing then. However, in our next written examination, many of the questions related to events occurring during the afternoon we missed. Test scores on this blue book exam were unimpressive. I don't recall what that exam was about, but I still remember the beautiful sound of Lena Horne's mournful crooning of the lyrics to "Stormy Weather"--

*I don't know why,  
There's no sun up in the sky, Stormy Weather.  
Me and my man can't get together,  
It keeps raining all the time.*

I gladly traded the poor marks I received on that test, whatever it was about, for my memory of "Stormy Weather" and the one time I played hookey.





## A LADY NAMED BETSY

by  
Anne B. Comeaux

*Hurricane Betsy*--she rode in one night  
Her fangs were bared, her "eye" was a sight.  
She whipped and she flailed and gave us a fright  
When morning arrived, we look out--what a sight!

Trees were uprooted, homes weren't spared  
Sugar cane toppled, the roof tops looked bare  
Glass littered the streets, debris filled the air  
This *Hurricane Betsy* she had quite a flair.

We knelt down to pray--thanked God we're alive.  
In the flooded areas we feared that none had survived.  
But its "business as usual" she's lost all her drive  
This untamed "lady" of nineteen sixty-five.\*

The poem above written by Irma Millet, my older sister, was her attempt to describe *Hurricane Betsy* as she experienced her in West St. James Parish.

Irma and her husband, Bea, along with their daughter Geralyn, joined scores of others sheltered in the gymnasium at St. James High School, a place designated as a refuge center for those who chose to abandon their homes for the passage of *Hurricane Betsy* the night of September 10, 1965. For a time the "togetherness" offered some comfort. Some prayed together. Others conversed. The gym seemed adequate for the number of refugees it accommodated. Each family made themselves as comfortable as the occasion allowed.

As Betsy moved in closer, the power of her winds and rain shattered panes of glass in the upper wall of the gym. Bursts of terrifying screams filled the gym. Momentary panic as people scrambled to escape flying glass. None were seriously hurt, but the "living space" of Betsy's refugees was greatly reduced in their effort to escape the danger of flying glass. Anxiety increased. The night was long.

Morning came. Refugees ventured out, returning toward their homes, fearful of what they might encounter. Irma, Bea and Geralyn did likewise.

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Prior to the arrival of Betsy, Bea had braced several mobile homes in the area, increasing their support systems. What disappointment he experienced when he saw his own mobile home toppled over as others he had supported, stood firmly in place.

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\* Poem composed by Irma Becnel Millet

Blessings are to be found whenever one looks for them, however. Almost immediately, Bea and Irma observed that although the home lay on its side, the entrance to the mobile home was up. Bea saw the possibility of entering the home by using a system of ladders.

Ladders or not--insurance adjusters had to evaluate. But seeing that it was necessary to minimize losses wherever possible, insurance companies quickly granted permission to safeguard whatever was salvageable. Using the plan Bea had conceived to enter the mobile home, clothing was retrieved. Relatives graciously laundered them. Because of this quick action, most of the clothing was saved. Shortly thereafter Bea directed the crew that helped him put the mobile home back in its upright position. Repairs needed were minimal.

Another scene affecting our family during Hurricane Betsy was on the east bank of the Mississippi River in St. John Parish. Here, three of my brothers, Richard, Paul, and Fernand, lived with their families. Paul and Emily had first considered going to a refuge center, but after further thought, Paul felt he had a better chance of protecting his property if they stayed home. It wasn't long before Paul's "hunch" proved itself. Suddenly, a huge blast of wind forced the door open and the gaping doorway admitted pelting rains. Immediately, Paul, with Emily's help, fought the door, braced it, and nailed it shut, thus preventing further damage. Other than yard debris, mud and water, their situation was good. They had weathered the storm well. and few repairs were needed.

Richard's story was a little different. Richard and Julie had a large family. Many of the children were still very young. Gayle, the youngest, was eleven years of age. So Richard and Julie decided to go to a shelter, the local high school. Richard would take Julie and the girls in his car. The boys would go in Robert's car. The entire family was reunited in the gym. The younger children slept while the parents kept vigil.

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The night 's horrendous scene was over. A new day arrived with day break. A man with a heavy accent arrived on the scene crying, Mr. Becnel! Mr. Becnel! Your roof is gone! It's all gone! The wind--she blew it away!" His voice crescendoed as he yelled his information.

Fearing the worst, Richard and the older boys made their way home. Indeed, it was a disturbing sight that faced them. The rear part of the house where the kitchen stood, had severe roof damage. But--the entire roof had not blown away. Within a few days with the insurance adjuster's approval, the older boys assisted more experienced men in repairing the roof over the kitchen.

Another problem surfaced. Robert's car was missing since the night of the hurricane. Robert needed his car. It was not the latest model, but it was his. He was heartbroken. Local police were informed of the loss. An initial search revealed nothing. Julie, Robert's mother, ever the spiritual fortress in their family, counseled them all to pray that the car be recovered. She assured Robert and the rest of the family that the car *could* be found, undamaged. Robert waited. A mother's faith is something to be reckoned with. Robert 's car was found, three months later, abandoned but essentially unharmed. The thief had abandoned it.

The dark hours of September 9th and 10th in 1965 held ominous mysteries for many. For none was it more devious than for Msgr. Eyraud, the pastor of St. Peter's Church in Reserve, Louisiana, a small community on the east bank of the Mississippi River. Like so many others in his parish, Msgr. Eyraud paced the floor in his home that night, depending on periodic lightening flashes to illuminate his surroundings. Each time a flash occurred, it illuminated the tall bell tower of his church assuring Msgr. that everything was all right. As the storm subsided, Msgr. decided to get a few winks before dawn.

September 11, 1965: Still weary from the night's vigil, Msgr. rose early and headed toward St. Peter's Church a few steps distant from his home. Lifting his gaze, an unbelievable sight met his eye. In the place where St. Peter's Church had stood, lay a huge pile of rubble. Only the church tower with its bells were still standing--a sentinel reminding Msgr. Eyraud of how close to destruction his own house stood.

It was a meek and grateful congregation that attended services in the school cafeteria that Sunday. The plea from the pulpit to aid in the cleanup of the church grounds was met with overwhelming generosity. Everyone had enough work to do cleaning and repairing their own personal properties, but the Hand of God that had protected them and kept families safe had to be blessed. An unspoken thank offering was the clean-up of the House of the Lord.

A new St. Peter's church now graces the site where the old land mark had stood. It lifts high a remnant of the old--the bell tower spared the night Hurricane Betsy ravaged the town of Reserve in St. John Parish on the east bank of the Mississippi River.



**SNAKES**  
by  
**Frances R. Gross**

Except for being teased by a neighbor boy with a dead snake, when Mother, Dad and I lived in Gothenburg, NE, in 1937, I had not had any experiences with snakes until I was ten years old. When visiting Aunt Effie and Uncle Lee on their ranch in Texas, I learned to watch where I walked, as their ranch had a lot of rattlesnakes, copperheads, and water moccasins. Fortunately, I did not run into any. There was also a nonpoisonous black snake called a black racer. One day as I was about to step off their front porch I looked down and quickly pulled my foot back. There slithering under the front porch was a black racer. These are friendly snakes that eat rodents, so we left them alone.

A few days later Uncle Lee and I walked out to the pasture to get Old Pete, his horse. I was carrying the bridle over my shoulder when I glanced back and caught a glimpse of a black wavy motion right behind me. I let out a yell and jumped into the air nearly scaring Uncle Lee half to death. When we realized it was only one of the reins that had fallen and was trailing me, we had a good laugh. My adrenaline was really pumping for quite awhile. Uncle Lee said that when I yelled, he fully expected to see me take off across the pasture. When I was seventeen, and again at the ranch, I liked to walk down the road, but always carried a pitchfork in case I needed it to kill a snake. I am not sure what I would have done had I run across a rattlesnake.

Every time I gathered the eggs in the chicken house, someone would warn me to look in the nest before reaching into it. That was good advice as one day there was a big bullsnake in the nest eating the eggs. I quietly walked back out of the chicken house. Aunt Effie, who was working outside, asked me if I had found "any" (meaning eggs). I said "Yes" (meaning a snake). They did not believe me, but Uncle Lee went into the hen house and was surprised to see the four foot snake coming down the leg of the nest stand. Uncle Lee got a spade and killed it even though he preferred not to. Though helpful snakes, once they start eating eggs, they will not stop.

Art's first Navy ship after he finished Electronics School at Treasure Island, CA was stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Art and I moved to Hawaii in 1954. Hawaii has no snakes. If there were snakes, the island has mongooses that would kill them. While living in Hawaii, whenever I saw a mongoose run across the road, I would be reminded of Rudyard Kipling's story, Rikki Tikki Tavi. One day I heard on the radio that a dead snake had been found behind a small shopping area in the town of Waipahu on Oahu. This news really caused quite a stir. How did it get there? What kind of snake was it? There was much speculation for a while, but finally the truth came out in the paper. Apparently, the snake was dead when it was brought to Hawaii. It was in a bottle of formaldehyde in the back of a drug store. Somehow the bottle was knocked off the shelf and broken. Without thinking about the consequences the store owner threw the snake out the back door. There was a lot of inquiry and discussion over his action by the local authorities. I believe the store owner was fined, and told not to bring any more snakes to the island.

When Art, the children and I lived in Japan in 1967, we found a small snake on our front step. We thought that it might be the very poisonous snake called a Mamushi, as it had a triangular head. We killed it anyway and fortunately never saw another one.

As a person who never liked snakes, I am not sure why I let my boys talk me into getting two snakes when we lived in Adelphi, MD, a suburb of Washington, DC. We went to the pet store, and bought two gardner, not garter, snakes, which we put in a large unused fish tank. They were about 18 inches long and about the thickness of a man's thumb. The boys fed them mealworms and whatever bugs they could find. I was not happy when the boys found a bullsnake in the woods, brought it home, and put it in another unused fish tank. This snake was larger around and about 2 feet long.

We had to keep a book or something heavy on top of the lid of the gardner snakes' tank. One morning, after we had the gardner snakes a few weeks, I started down the basement stairs and was surprised to see one of the gardner snakes on the second step from the bottom. When it saw me, it went back down the stairs and hid behind the open basement door. I had the snake cornered, and it was as afraid of me as I was of it. I knew how to pick up a snake, but I did not grab quite high enough behind its head. It was able to swing around and bite me in the skin between my right thumb and forefinger. Although the venom of these snakes is not poisonous enough to harm a human, this bite did cause me discomfort for about three days. My right arm was sore all the way to my neck, and I had a headache, and a slight fever. I talked to the doctor, but there was nothing to be done. I had had a tetanus shot, so I just took aspirin for the pain.

I warned the boys that if the snakes got out again, I would not try to pick them up, and I would kill them if given the opportunity (the snake, not the boys). About two weeks later, one of the snakes was missing again. When the boys got home from school, I made them take the other gardner snake and the bullsnake out to the woods near us and turn them loose. Since we had four cats, my neighbors expected one of the cats to kill the runaway.

Time passed, and I almost forgot it until about six months later, I went into Art's workshop in the basement and there on a shelf at eye level was the missing reptile. Of course neither boy was home, so I started calling Wayne's friends. I found one at home and explained what I wanted done. David came over wearing a pair of thick leather gloves. He caught the snake and carried it to the woods, thus ridding the basement of the last reptile. David had a snake get loose in their house about the same time, and they never did find it.

While we lived in Maryland I was a Girl Scout leader and took the girls camping. We were warned that we needed to be careful of the bullsnakes as someone had discovered that they were mating with rattlesnakes and becoming poisonous also. I am not sure if this was true, but we acted as if it were.

Living in the panhandle of Texas we do have rattlesnakes, but we do not seem to have copperheads nor water moccasins. We do not have much water either. Aunt Iva had told me that

there were no copperheads north of the Red River. I guess she was right, and I am just as glad. After my son-in-law, Mike, killed several rattlesnakes at our place near Amarillo, TX, Lorelei got some cats to live in the barn. As the cats proliferated, we did not see any more rattlesnakes. But in the fall of 1995, the coyotes killed the last of our eighteen outside cats. Since we have not yet replaced these cats, we may be inundated with rattlesnakes. Not a pleasant thought.



**AN ODD PET**  
**by**  
**Wilma R. Bowles**

As a child I had dogs and cats as pets. Jackie, my dog, was a good pet. He followed me to school on many occasions. I would chase him home, but he still followed my classmates and me to school. There were times when he was at the door of the classroom waiting for me. I also had several cats during my childhood; however, one of my cats scratched me in the chest. This incident eliminated my desire to have any cat as a pet.

Along with flowers and a few vegetables that she grew, Mama also raised chickens. She ordered these baby chicks from Muller Broussard Feed Store. My chore was to keep food and water in the chicken feeder. These little chicks were kept in a coop until grown enough to roam the enclosed backyard and be placed in a shed especially constructed for them. One batch contained a special white chick that became my pet.

This little chick followed me around, and I took time to isolate this chick from the others. At night, instead of sleeping in the hen house, this chick slept on the back porch and in cold weather slept in the house in a cardboard box. I named the chick "Little Bit." She grew to be a plump white hen. The other chickens over a period of time became baked, fried, stewed, gumbo, and chicken with dumplings, but not Little Bit. I did not want Mama to kill her. To turn Little bit into food for the table, Mama sent me to visit Uncle Issac and his family in Port Arthur, Texas. While I was away, Mama killed and cooked Little Bit. Upon my return home, she informed me that the hen was extremely fat and was tough as nails to cook. My stepfather, Walter, said that a rusty nail should have been used to get the hen tender.

I would not have eaten any dish, tender or tough, that was prepared with meat of Little Bit for she was my odd pet.



## **ROMPING ON THE LEVEE**

**by  
Shirley S. Dugas**

"Whoosh!" Down the levee I slid atop a large flattened cardboard box over the wet clover.

When Baudry General Store got a shipment in a large cardboard box it was reason to celebrate. Cousin Merrill, owner and manager of the store, gave us the cardboard box or boxes. George and John, two of my older brothers, would cut them open and flatten them out for us.

John, Marie, George, Lewis and I would then laboriously carry the prepared boxes the half mile from our home in Vacherie to the levee at the River--the Mississippi. We went at dusk when the clover would be damp with dew and took turns sliding down the levee atop our cardboard boxes.

When we tired of our rides we chewed clover flowers and stems. I discovered why bees visit sweet clover flowers.

The lightening bugs were our only source of light unless the moon was out. On moonless nights we saw countless shooting stars, too.

We listened to the wail of freight trains, the fog horns of the boats plying the river and the croaks of the frogs down near the river, until we finally heard papa calling to us telling us: "It's time to come home!"

The sounds and sights I remember during those twilight hours are still vivid. The smell and taste and feel of crushed clover are not foreign to me. No roller coaster ride has ever felt as exhilarating as sliding down the levee on my cardboard carpet.





**TELL ME A STORY**  
by  
**John A. Townsend, Jr.**

How many times have we, as parents or aunts and uncles heard, "Tell me a story--Mommy, Daddy, Aunt K or Uncle B," asked by a child? Oh! And let's not forget Grandparents. Whenever I hear these words, memories of my childhood and the years we lived at 1755 Buckner St. in Shreveport come back.

We moved into the house the first part of 1934 and remained there until the summer of 1940. The Depression was at its worst. Most of us had few chances for "paid" entertainment so we learned to create our own form of fun and games.

The "Buckner Street Bunch" was what the neighbors called us. The group consisted of Charles and Thomas Wright, Fred (Mac) Huble, Bob Schilling, Claudia Melton, Bobbie Sanders, Liz Walker, DeFrance Brest, my brothers Robert (Bubba), Dick and me with occasional visits from Lawrence Fox, when his Mama let him out of the house, and Billy Flowers. We found a lot of competition between and among ourselves depending on whether the game was one on one, or team efforts.

We had roller skate races, individual and relays, as well as tin can, "street," hockey both on and off skates. The girls were no slouches when it came to the relay races or when "fancy" skating was called for. Sometimes we played croquet or badminton with the girls. Other times we might have marble games, mock battles with toy soldiers, or a Yo-Yo competition. Of course there was always "Cowboys and Indians," Gangsters and G-Men, or Tarzan of the Apes for us boys to enjoy.

My favorite game took place on warm summer evenings when all of us were winding down following a full day of fun and games, and our evening meals. The gang would congregate on the front steps of the house, ours usually, and begin telling stories. They could be about anything at all, trips to see the animals in a zoo, fair or carnival, grandparents, or other things. I had the most fun in what we called, "Serial Story."

One of us would start out telling the tale, naming the characters, giving the plot, and building the suspense. It might be a mystery, scary, or funny, serious or fanciful or maybe something from Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon, or Jack Armstrong the All-American Boy. The person who began the story continued to innovate to the point of suspense, "How do we get the hero out of this pickle?", then another of our group would pick up the tale, carrying it to another point of calamity. Some nights we might have three or four installments but it all depended on how late we began the games for most of us were required to be in bed by 10:00 PM. There was a lot of fun and laughter, but a learning experience also because in some instances a lot of imagination was required to extricate the hero from dire peril.

When we took turns telling a single story, I had a single theme about an eleven or twelve year old boy and girl who were always finding one scrape and another to get involved in. I made a habit of writing their adventures in a pencil notebook beginning when I was 10 years of age and must have filled twenty or more by the time I was 13 or 14. My stories were all destroyed when the rats or mice got into the box stored in a shed at my grandparents' house in Sibley.

"Tell me a story--about when you were a little "boy, girl, Daddy, Mommy." Treasure them--write it down or record it.



## A VISIT FROM THE MAYOR

by  
E. D. Parker

On Saturday, May 11, 1996 Larry Trenary, the current mayor of Fort Walton Beach, Florida, and his wife, Mary, who were en route to Lubbock, Texas for a reunion at Texas Tech, stopped in Lafayette for a short visit with Esther and me. Now why would such an important man and his charming wife interrupt a thousand mile voyage from the Panhandle of Florida to the Llana Estacado of Texas for a short visit in Lafayette? Well, now I have known His Honor for about sixty-five years, although I hadn't seen him for about fifty-nine years.

Larry and I both attended Texas Tech in the 1930's. The first time I remember seeing him was on the football field in the Tech stadium. He was a member of the freshman football team and was dressed in the appropriate uniform for the occasion. Larry was a star running back on the freshman squad that year. In those days it was common for some colleges to have two football squads, a freshman team for new recruits from the high schools, and a varsity team for those who passed Muster in their freshman year and a few transfers from other colleges. Although Larry was a star during his freshman year he did not appear on the varsity team the following year. I asked him one time why he didn't play varsity? His answer was two short words, "bad knees." Apparently his knees had taken such a beating during his freshman year and probably during high school at Pampa, Texas, that he was unable or unwilling to play on the varsity team.

Larry and I both majored in Chemistry, and during the late thirties, we were fraternity brothers, or club brothers as we were referred to in those days. The Board of Regents outlawed Greek letter fraternities and sororities in the early twenties. Because college students have always been independent and resourceful, those at Tech soon began to organize social clubs, each of which was named in some language other than Greek, some in English, others in Spanish, and at least one in French. Our club was named *Kemas*, which is an Indian word for friends.

When I pledged the *Kemas* in 1934, we didn't have a club house, but during my senior year, in '36-'37, we had rented a large house only a block or two from the campus. We had four bedrooms upstairs where eight members roomed, and there was a large living-dining room down stairs where we could have parlor dates. That area became a little crowded at times since the non resident brothers were also welcome to use the dating privileges. The landlady and her family had living quarters down stairs near the kitchen. Those of us who lived in the club house took our meals at a girls' boarding house a few blocks away. Larry and I were among the eight living in the house.

The last time I saw Larry was in the spring semester of 1937. One Saturday near the end of the semester, he and I decided to play golf with a set of clubs that he had borrowed. Lubbock had two public golf courses at the time. One of them had conventional greens covered with grass, but the other one had greens covered with a layer of coarse sand. A wooden rake was available at each

green to smooth footprints and ball tracks in preparation for putting. We selected the latter course for our game.

After playing the 18 holes, we decided to start over, and finished the first 9 on the second try. We were so favorably impressed with the game that we decided to play again the following Saturday, and we did play again repeating the same 27 holes. As well impressed as I was with the game, I have not played golf since, except for a few rounds of miniature golf that became popular in the 1940's. Larry told me that he still plays the game. My brother, John, who is 2 ½ years my senior, is a devoted golfer and still plays twice a week. My only connection to the game now is to watch the tournaments on TV.

Although Larry and I were both chemistry majors, the only course we took together was physical chemistry, the most mathematical and probably the most difficult course normally required of chemistry majors. Since our rooms were in close proximity, (Charles Heard and I had the north bed room and Larry and his roommate had the south one), we found ample opportunity to study physical chemistry together. Our sessions often included other students of the course.

Now just how does one locate an old college buddy after so many years? It turned out to be simple in this case. *The Texas Tech Ex-Student Association* now publishes a bimonthly magazine called *The Texas Techsan* which prints news articles about the university and news about individual ex-students. In one issue I saw an article about one Larry Trenary who graduated in 1939. The article included the information that Larry was the current mayor of Fort Walton Beach, Florida. I wrote a letter to Larry at the mayor's office, and received a reply shortly after I wrote.



## COINCIDENCE: FIRST COMMUNION PICTURE

by  
Olympe A. Butcher

My father, Emile Galbert Arceneaux, Sr. (1876-1965), was the son of Louis Joseph Arceneaux, and direct descendant of Longfellow's Gabriel in his poem *Evangeline*. Papa, as we called him, was a planter and politician: Justice of the Peace for Lafayette Parish (1899-1908), [date error, maybe?] Member of the Lafayette Parish School Board (1907-1940), Member of the Lafayette Parish Police Jury (1940-1955).

In 1902 Papa married Rose Celestine Mouton, the first granddaughter of Jean Sylvain Gentil, Jefferson College Professor of Languages and editor of *Le Louisianais*, Louisiana's finest French newspaper (1865-1891). Rose, my mother, was a direct descendant of the founders of Lafayette, Jean Mouton and his wife, Marie Marthe Bordat.

Papa was doing exceedingly well according to his *Monthly Bulletin at* St. Isadore's College in New Orleans on the corner of Reynes and Dauphine Streets in 1894. Board and tuition was \$18.00 per month.

Knowing my father, he must have been very disappointed at having to come home to manage the plantation. But this he did.

Papa's growing family made him desire a good education for his own children. All his children became educators.

While taking care of my father in his last illness in 1965, I noticed on his dresser something which he treasured very much—a picture of Mama in her First Communion outfit. And as I quietly watched him sleep, I wished for a picture like this. I wouldn't ask, surely, because I knew how much he cherished that picture, always in that special place, so he could see it. Since Mama had died in 1941, he had really missed her and that picture was a reminder of how beautiful she was.

The same day, upon my return home to Myrtle Place, I opened the day's mail. An envelope addressed to me contained the identical picture I had that wished for—sent anonymously. A note read:

*a surprise--Your Mother's picture in*

*First Communion Attire.*

*She was a "Sweet Rose."*

All this person asked for was my prayers and signed it, "One who admires you and loves you dearly."

Yet another coincidence in our family.

I have prayed much for the sender of Mama's picture. I wish I could have thanked her in person. Now I have two pictures!



## LOST AND FOUND

by  
Yvonne Seneca

As a rule, when one thinks of "lost and found," what comes to mind are items, maybe an umbrella or a glove. This story is of a lost and found experience I had many years ago.

Recently I visited Macy's Department Store in New Orleans. As I wandered through this very large, beautiful store, I began to recall an incident which took place when my daughter, Marlene, was a toddler.

We were living in the New York City area, and it was Christmas time. I had decided to take Marlene to the city to visit Santa Claus and to see the Christmas decorations at Macy's in New York. Marlene's father, Harry, had cautioned me to "be careful with the child," because he always had a fear that she would be kidnaped in the city.

Early one morning, Marlene and I took off for Macy's. After we visited Santa, I decided to do some Christmas shopping for a shaving brush for Marlene's father. The men's notions were at a counter on Macy's first floor. At the time, stores had display counters with one to two clerks behind each counter to wait on the customers, like the cosmetic counters in our present day department stores. Around the side of the counters were window displays of the merchandise sold at this particular counter.

While I held little Marlene's hand, I looked over two or three brushes. In order to feel the softness of the brush, I let go of her hand, and when I looked down for Marlene, she was not by my side. I walked around the counter thinking she was looking in the display windows. No Marlene. She had disappeared in a split second. The counter was near three elevators where a crowd was standing and waiting. I thought perhaps she had been accidentally pushed into an elevator. I panicked. I blurted out to the clerk, "I've lost my baby!" After giving a description of Marlene, the clerk telephoned security. I began to walk through the counters calling Marlene's name, when another clerk told me she had been picked up by security and taken to Lost and Found. I quickly made my way to the back of the store. Toward the right hand corner was the Lost and Found Department. There was a counter around two sides of the area. On the far end of the enclosed area sat my little girl on a high stool with a sucker in her mouth. Marlene was not upset and had a look as if to say, "I knew you would come for me."



## OUR FIRST AUTOMOBILE

by  
Esther Parker

A lady friend of Mama's, Ollie Parker, insisted that we use her first name, no "Aunt" or "Miss." Ollie encouraged Mama to learn to drive. Mama resisted for a while but finally decided to try. Ollie used her vehicle, ignoring Mama's worry that she might "break something." Mama was not mechanically inclined and had to concentrate hard on what she was doing; she often had trouble not looking down at her feet to be sure she was on the correct pedal. She also did not like taking her hands off the steering wheel to shift or signal. Looking in the rear-view mirror or side mirror intimidated her because she was supposed to keep her eyes on the road ahead. I sat unafraid in Ollie's back seat—I just didn't look where we were going.

Finally when Ollie thought Mama was ready, Mama bought a blue Willys Knight sedan. No license or insurance was required at that time so things were simple. Mama didn't drive for a while without Ollie or someone else with her. One day she ventured downtown on paved busy streets. Ollie sat on the passenger side. I was in the back seat enjoying a box of animal crackers. Suddenly—POW! I fell on the floor; the seat fell on top of me and the animal crackers fell all over. Another automobile had "gotten" in her way. No one was hurt, just Ma's pride. She just got confused and hit the gas pedal instead of the brake, I guess.

The Willys was replaced after several months when Mama was ready to try again. Our second car was a Whippet, blue also. Thereafter, Mama's driving went well with no mishaps.





## MY ROLE IN OUR FAMILY

by  
Marion Embree

Because I was reared in two places with two families, it will be difficult to figure out “my place.” I was an only child until I was nearly ten years old when my brother Ted was born. Sidney was born three years later. The first ten years I got plenty of attention from parents and grandparents, but I must have been ready to have those brothers. I loved them immediately.

My grandparents Van Os, Rosa and Joseph, lived in Norfolk, Virginia. When Grandma Rosa became dangerously ill from her chronic Brights’ Disease, Mother’s brothers, Irvin and Henry, would call. Mother and I would get on the train and stay there until she was able to take care of herself.

Sometimes we would go up twice a year. When I reached school age, Grandpa and Grandma Dreyfus suggested that I needed to be in one school per year, and Livonia was it.

My parent agreed this arrangement would be best. When Grandma Rosa passed away, it was agreed that I would continue attending school in Livonia and ride the Greyhound Bus to Melville each Friday. My dirty clothes and I rode the bus home. On Sunday afternoon my clean clothes and I rode back to Livonia with Mother, Daddy and my brothers. After supper my folks drove back to Melville in time to catch the last ferry on the Atchafalaya River.

In May of 1930 my Livonia grandparents made room in their house for their older daughter, Rosina, her husband, Alphonse Weil, and their two children, Flora and Simon.

The cousins were a few years older than I, and we got along very well. They had come to live with us because Grandpa felt he was “getting on in years” and Uncle Alphonse could help him run the store and pharmacy. Aunt Rosina was a great help in the kitchen. Grandma loved having her.

After my brother Ted was born in Melville, I looked forward to going home to play with our new baby. By the time Sidney was born, we had moved to Krotz Springs. I was old enough to be a sort of weekend nanny and thoroughly enjoyed taking care of them.

My place in the family? I knew I was loved. About five years ago, my New Orleans cousins told me they called me “the Princess” among themselves! I find that funny. I thought they were so lucky to live in New Orleans.



## WHERE WAS I WHEN WORLD WAR II ENDED?

by

Margaretta Blanchard

I vividly remember V.J. Day! I was working for the Navy at #1 Canal Street in New Orleans. Three of my teacher friends, Veda, Elaine, and Thelma, and I had decided to work in the war effort for our country during our summer time off from school. The naval officers in white uniforms did not discourage us civilians in any way.

So we applied and were given jobs in the receiving area of one department. Every item coming onto the Unit had to be tagged, recorded and sent to the correct station.

The Naval Station Building stood at the very end of Canal Street near the Mississippi River. We could see the *President* river boat harbored at the end of Canal Street. Many times we went dancing with the "Navy Boys" just to keep their spirits up and our time filled.

There were no eating places in that area near our work. But there were fresh fruit stands all around us. So we ate enough fresh fruit to last a lifetime. The fruit gave us enough energy for the rest of the day.

Late one afternoon, after we had finished our work, the four of us walked down the block and decided to go into the movie house. We were not there very long when the paper boy ran into the theater with his newspaper held high above his head. The big black letters pierced the semi-dark room. The front page of the *Times-Picayune* read: THE WAR IS OVER--JAPAN CONCEDES--or something like that. (I still get goose bumps remembering that scene.)

The audience rose from their seats simultaneously and in the next moment, it seemed, were out on Canal Street. People stood from curb to curb, laughing and crying and kissing each other. The people-laden street had no place for cars or trollies or buses. All vehicles disappeared as though they had been absorbed by the earth. Every square inch was covered by a human foot.

After hours of rejoicing, people started praying and many people looked for a nearby church to go to and give thanks to God. Veda, Elaine, Thelma, and I found a small Catholic church on a side street near Canal. We and hundreds more prayed aloud and silently within the walls of the church. God must have been well pleased with His children. Happiness was flying through the air, like a dove.

Returning many times to New Orleans, I have never been able to find that church. But I will never forget that afternoon "fifty years ago."



## FIRST CONTACT

by  
Virginia Cook

A photograph I treasure is dated January 1945. It shows a first sergeant in the Fifth Air Force of World War II and a little boy two and one half years old squatting together by the wall of a building. The sergeant is my husband, Gilbert Cook, Jr., and the little boy is our son, Gilbert Lewis. Father and son had met for the first time about five minutes before I took the picture.

Gilbert had volunteered for the Army the day after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, taken me home from Omaha, Nebraska, and on his birthday, January 24th, had returned to Omaha. He was sent to Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland for basic training. Several months later I discovered I was expecting our first child. We were sorry Gilbert had been so hasty in becoming a soldier.

Gilbert was sent with the 892nd Chemical Company and a bomber squadron attached to the Air Force to the South Pacific. He was stationed in Australia when Lewis was born September 14th, 1942. I sent pictures frequently, but they were a poor substitute for really seeing that son.

Finally, the greatest news came. Gilbert could leave New Guinea for a month's furlough in January, two and a half long years later, twice as long as we'd been married when he left me.



Gilbert was flown in to an army camp at Hattiesburg, Mississippi, and I took Lewis on a Greyhound bus. We planned to meet at the Post Office in downtown Hattiesburg. And so the great moment came when Gilbert Pierce met Gilbert Lewis. Thank goodness Lewis was happy to be friends with anyone. He ran straight to his Daddy's arms. Then I had them pose by the wall to the Post Office. I snapped the first picture of many I'd take before Gilbert had to go back overseas for six months in the Philippines just after MacArthur returned there.

This photograph was taken at just the right moment. Shortly afterwards, Lewis's gums began hurting where he was cutting teeth. You may guess what he did. He bit his father on the leg--a moment preserved only in our memories.



