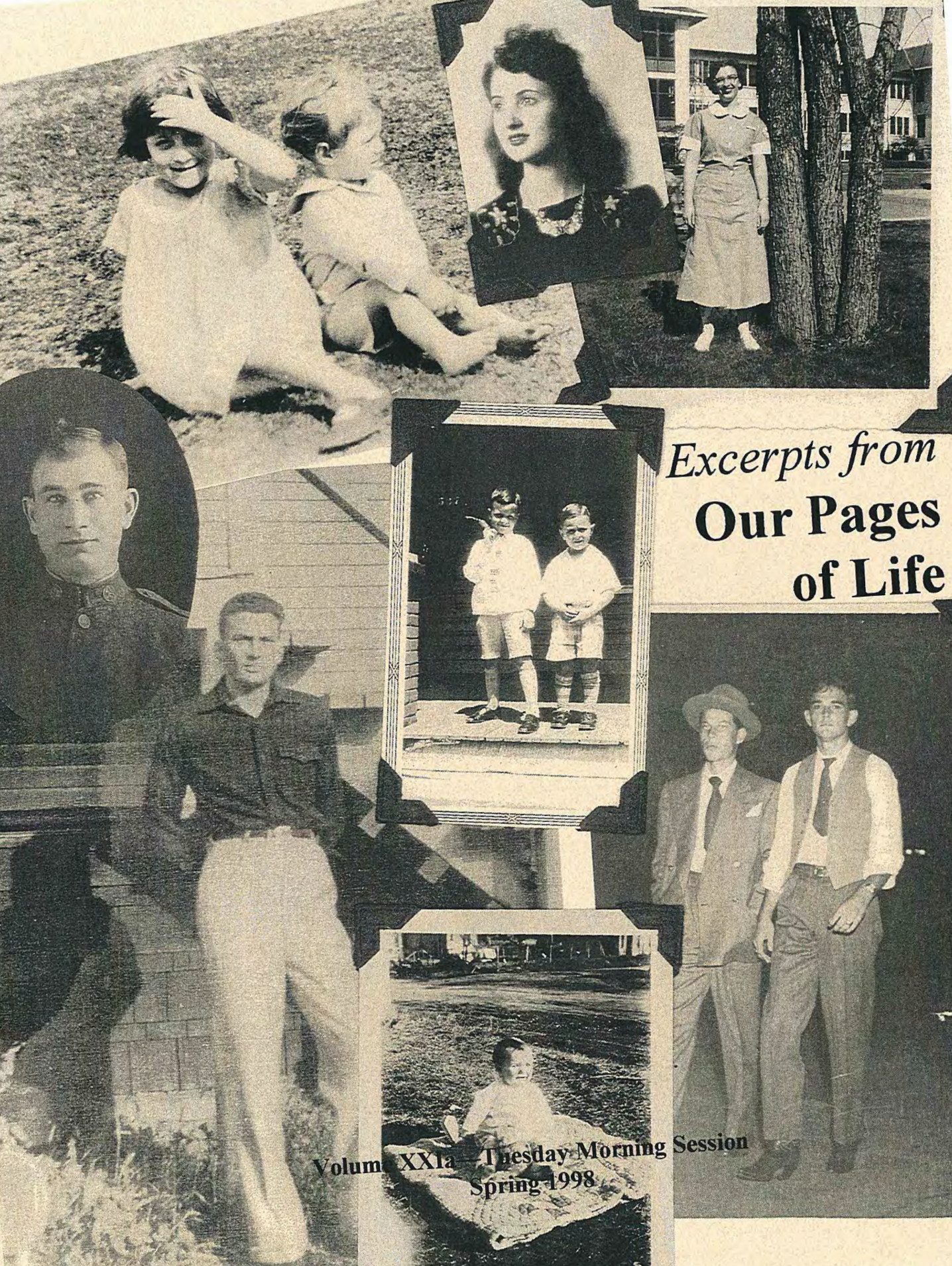

Excerpts from

Our Pages of Life

Volume XXIa—Tuesday Morning Session

Spring 1998

Behaviorists, educators, and scientists, even just plain people—mothers and fathers included (especially)—, generally agree upon the importance of repetition in the learning process. Twenty-one is often the number accepted as the magic number to establish habits. Doing something over and over again, twenty-one times, researchers say, makes a thing a habit. This volume of life stories marks the twenty-first time I have introduced such a varied collection. Has it become habit, then? I understand that a good introduction should simply *introduce,* say what's going to be said, invite the reader to listen, and then proceed with no hitches—but to do it automatically? As I sit transfixed, a bit anxious, in front of the computer screen, staring down all the possibilities of what I could say in retrospect of this semester and in praise of my students, I am left dumb. Where has the ability to "do without thinking" gone? Maybe—and this may be a good thing—these writings will never become habit for me, unless there is such a thing as a habit of the heart. I love these people, some who are family to you, others friends, some just brave writers. But I'm afraid I'll never do justice to their work. Not in two hundred words, not in two thousand. In my experience as their teacher (only in title, child in heart), I have seen and heard too much. The unwritten silence, the unseen tears, the between the lines mysteries, the unspoken secrets. My personal investment in the lives and stories of these students discounts me as an objective voice. I have respected their unspoken words, shared their tears, acknowledged life's mysteries, and protected their secrets—*and* I have suffered with them through the writing process! The work's been done, the furrows dug, the seeds planted. All we ask of you as readers, then, is that you reap the reward of these writers' words, habitually spoken (and written!) from their heart (and mine!).

—Joan Stear, USL
Spring 1998

Thanks to the Horizons Department at Lafayette General Medical Center and University College and the English Department at the University of Southwestern Louisiana for their continued support of our efforts. To everyone else, a capital THANKS! (Habit, maybe. Routine, never! Fun, always!)

Front Cover: (*clockwise, beginning at top right corner*) Betty Tripp; Jim Jennings, Jr., *left*, and brother E.J. Jennings; Woodson Hopkins, *left*, and Bobby Cooper; Johnnie Kocurek; Morris Laughlin (father of Versie Foti); Allen Fontenot; Olympe Butcher, left, and brother Charles André Arceneaux; (*center*) Bea Murphy

LIFE & LETTERS, an intergenerational company

USL LIFE WRITING CLASS
Spring 1998 • Tuesday Morning Session

Seated, left to right: **Joe Glorioso; Stanley Davis; Bea Murphy; Versie Foti; Olympe Butcher •• *Standing, left to right:* John Townsend; Allen Fontenot; Curney Dronet; Johnnie Kocurek; Jim Jennings; Woodson Hopkins; Joan Stear, *Instructor* •• *Missing from photo:* Betty Tripp**

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TRAIN RIDES TO LAFAYETTE

by

Beatrice Murphy

My son Larry took his first train ride when he was six months old. Together we boarded the Zephyr, a beautiful train, in Fort Worth in the afternoon and were to arrive in Houston at 10:30 p.m. The Zephyr had a lounge car with comfortable chairs. The glass windows all around gave passengers a superb view of the country. The dining car had tables with white cloths set very nicely with white china and silver flatware. The food, delicious, was served by efficient waiters dressed in crisp white uniforms.

Larry was a sensitive baby with allergies. When it was time for him to go to sleep, he wouldn't stop crying no matter how much I tried to quiet him. Finally, a woman on the train told me, "If I were you, I'd spank him." Of course, I wouldn't dream of spanking a baby, especially Larry, and I knew he only wanted the comfort and familiarity of his bed at home.

When we arrived in Houston, we had to change train stations, so I took a cab. With Larry in tow, we got on the Southern Pacific train to Lafayette. We arrived around 2 a.m., and Daddy was there to meet us! What an accomplishment—for all of us!

When Larry was about nine months old, he and I took another trip to Lafayette. When we took the 10:30 p.m. Southern pacific train in Houston, I noticed four soldiers playing cards. Larry and I shared a berth, and during the night I woke up. One of the soldiers had unbuttoned my berth, flashed a light into our compartment, and was looking at me. I asked loudly, "What do you want?" He quickly left. I turned on my light and rang for the porter, but he didn't come. The commotion didn't wake Larry.

I couldn't go back to sleep that night. I kept thinking about the stories I had read where women were murdered in berths on trains. About thirty minutes later, I saw a big hand unbuttoning my berth. I let out a scream that resounded throughout the train. It woke Larry up, and he started crying. It also brought the porter, pronto. This time my would-be assassin was an old man who mistook my berth for his; he had become confused in the darkness.

I told the porter, "That's the second man in thirty minutes!!" He assigned someone to keep an eye on my berth and instructed him, "If anyone bothers that woman again, throw him off the train!"

I continued to travel by train, in spite of the night visitors. When Larry was about two, the busy stage, he and I were on the Zephyr, again, headed for Houston. Relaxed in our seats, I caught a glance of him and saw foam coming out of his mouth. The people around me looked pretty amazed. He had gotten into my small cosmetic bag and had eaten an alka-seltzer.

Another time when we were changing trains in Houston, I dropped my cosmetic kit, and everything flew all over the street. The cab driver helped me pick up lipstick, combs, face creams, and aspirin.

Besides the mishaps, we also met very many interesting characters. The men would first make friends with Larry and then strike up conversations with me.

The Zephyr was my Orient Express. I'll never forget her beauty.

Later on, we would take a train in Fort Worth and arrive in Bunkie in the afternoon where Daddy would be waiting to drive us into Lafayette.

Larry had two favorite playmates in Louisiana. My baby sister Jewell was just three years older than Larry, and my nephew, Richard, was two years older. At that time Mama and Daddy's house was still in the country, so Larry experienced country life. Jewell took Larry into the hen house where he saw one of Mama's hens lay an egg. He quit eating eggs for a long time.

One time Richard came over to visit, and Jim took Richard and Larry to Paul Alleman's country store. They bought out the firecrackers there, and I just knew they would blow themselves up.

Our train trips are happy remembrances of adventures and being with my mama and daddy and the rest of our family.

THE TRUNK IN THE ATTIC
by
John A. Townsend, Jr.

I awoke, unusually alert, on that bright summer morning. Why? At the time I had no idea save that I had a day off from my soda jerk job at the M & D Drugstore on the corner of Fairfield Avenue and Margaret Place in Shreveport. Following a quick breakfast, I rolled my bike off the front porch of the house on Buckner Street. The sun was bright, the sky crystal clear. A cool breeze blew from the northwest, heralding the coming of one of those rare "cool" days we sometimes got during the months of July and August in North Louisiana. Noticing the paper, the Shreveport Times, lying at the edge of the house, I picked it up and carried it inside. "Daddy must have missed seeing the paper," I said as I read the headlines.

The Nazis were still agitating the peace in Europe, and Russia was at war with Finland. Snow had fallen in Chicago on the Fourth of July. 1939 was becoming an unforgettable year.

While eating another biscuit with butter and syrup, I read the funnies--*Buck Rogers, Flash Gordon, Lil' Abner, Jungle jim, the Phantom, and Lil' Orphan Annie*. I never missed *Ripley's Believe It Or Not*, either. (I'm still fascinated by the strange and unusual things that take place around the world.)

Mama spoke, "Are you going to collect the money on the paper route with Jack (Carter)?"

"Not 'with', for," I replied. "He's sick with his breathing problem again." (We didn't call asthma by its medical name in those days.) "Since I have thrown papers for him at least a dozen times, I think I know all of his customers."

Okay. Be careful along Fairfield and Southern Avenue while you are on that bike," she ended.

The brisk morning air gave me a desire to "fly" on my bicycle, and I did just that for the block and a half to my first stop. I was lucky. Just about everyone was at home. Most were outside, enjoying the cool spell, so the collecting was going quickly.

The last house was directly across from Mrs. Charles Campbell's home. Mrs. Campbell was one of my favorite people. She had been one of my best magazine customers and one of the many who "spoiled" me with hot chocolate or milk and cookies. It was at her house that I met her granddaughter, Barbara Fairchild. The two of us quickly became friends.

On impulse, I decided to ride across to visit with Mrs. Campbell whom I could see cutting the flowers that grew on her front lawn. As I approached the house, I blew the horn on my bike. I could see the smile on her face as she turned towards me. "Hello, John," she said. "It's been a long time since you were here." Then, "I guess you heard that Barbara was visiting?"

I felt myself blush. "I didn't know it, but I'm glad to hear it," I smiled. Then another voice called, "Hi, Gran! Who are you talking to?"

"Hello, Barb," I said.

"John-ny! Where have you been hiding?" she spoke as she came to grasp my hands. I was surprised at the change in her. Now at eleven plus years, nine months younger than me, she was slightly taller than I, almost the height of Mrs. Campbell who was a petite five feet, two inches shorter than Mama.

We helped Mrs. Campbell gather up her flowers and followed her into the house. In the kitchen, Barb and I had some milk and cookies while Mrs. Campbell arranged the flowers in the various vases that she would place about the house.

Sometime later, Barbara and I left her to climb up to the second floor where I pulled down the ladder that led up into the attic. "I promised Mama that I would find her college annual and the photos from earlier. Gran said that they were in a big black trunk," she spoke.

We found three trunks in the dimly lighted attic, one a sailor's trunk about 18" x 18" x 30", another 24" x 24" x 42", and the last, a monstrous steamer trunk, a black one, sporting a broken hasp. "That must be the one," I said, pointing.

Dust flew as Barb opened the lid. "Ooh, look!" she exclaimed as she reached to bring forth a feather boa and draped it about her neck.

I joined in and found a flat crowned straw hat called a boater that I placed upon my head. She giggled and began to delve deeper. Her enthusiasm was contagious. "I can't believe all this stuff!" She laughed as she held up a velveteen vest, a black and white striped coat and ivory pants.

I uncovered a polka dot black on yellow silky dress. Barbara squealed when I handed it to her. "Let's put these on and go show Gran," she grinned, face flushed. Before I could speak, she unselfconsciously peeled off her dress.

At twelve years, four months, I was still somewhat shy. Hastily I turned my back, face ablaze, and more calmly removed my trousers. In a matter of minutes we were dressed, a la flapper days. Barb's outfit was snug, the hem above her knees. To my surprise, I found the coat I wore was only a little large. I had to cuff up the trousers a couple of inches and use a tie to nip in the waist. Further digging turned up the black bow tie.

On the way down the ladder, I made sure that Barb went first, but even then it was quite a show as the skirt rode up her legs. Mrs. Campbell was ecstatic when she saw us. She ran from the room to return with a box camera to take a picture.

I can still see Barb, hand on hip, lips puckered, her curly honey blond hair draped about the smoke gray boa.

Regretfully, I never thought to ask for a copy of the picture, but then and now, black and white is no substitute for a color photo.

Eventually we returned to the attic and found the annual and the photos Barb's mother wanted. When I later told Mama about the incident, she smiled, "It was like stepping back in time, wasn't it?"

A $25 LOAF OF FRENCH BREAD OR I REVEAL MY CRIMINAL PAST

by

J.M. Jennings, Jr.

May 4th, 1952, dawned as a beautiful day over the island of Oahu, Territory of Hawaii: sunny, shirt sleeve weather with a soft breeze blowing down from the northeast over the Koolau mountain range. A great day to be alive, I thought, especially if it is your 31st birthday and your wife and children are there to enjoy it with you.

Our Navy had recalled me to active duty at the start of the Korean War, or Police Action, and flown me out to my assignment at the Fleet Weather Central, Pearl Harbor, T.H. Margaret and our three children joined me shortly before Christmas 1950. After several months living in a rental unit in Waikiki, we had been assigned quarters in Naval Housing Area #1. Our address was 104 Main Street, just across the ten foot high chain link and barbed wire security fence surrounding the oil tank farm of the Pacific Submarine Fleet.

Three blocks down Main Street was the Pearl Harbor Elementary School where daughters Ann and Elizabeth were enrolled. Five year old Jimmy was a reluctant student at the nursery school on the nearby Hickham Air Force Base.

On this fine Sunday morning, all five of us, dressed in our best go-to-meeting clothes, attended eleven o'clock services at the Pearl Harbor Community Church located adjacent to the PH Elementary School. No doubt due to the power of the confluence of many heavenly bodies on the preparation of watch assignments for the month of May, I did not have the duty that Sunday. Margaret, the children, and I had this entire day to enjoy together.

After church, a unanimous vote called for us to drive over to Pearl City and get a hot loaf of French bread from Tanaka's Bakery. This Japanese bakery was held in the highest regard for baking the finest French bread on the island.

I drove north on Kamahamaha Highway past Makalapa Crater and the huge, white concrete headquarters of the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Ocean Area and the Pacific Fleet. Kamahamaha was a blacktop, four lane road divided down the center

by a narrow neutral ground. There was hardly any highway traffic and we laughed and talked, had a good time—quality time—together.

We bought our fragrant loaf and drove westward down the highway toward Waipahu, inspecting the ships in the Middle Loch arm of the harbor before I made a U-turn at the intersection with a dirt road leading into a sugar cane field. With that maneuver, I had become guilty of committing a criminal act. Our Chevrolet hadn't gone far before I was pulled over to the side of the road by a police car topped by flashing lights and a shrieking siren—the whole bit.

"Daddy, what's happening? Why are we stopping?" "Is that policeman going to arrest us?" "He can't do this to us! We were going slow. We weren't speeding." On and on, the children cried out in protest. They had never heard of a U-turn and watched in surprise, a bit in awe, too, as the officer wrote me up for an illegal U-turn. The ticket required that I report within three days to the Pearl City police substation, at which time I was required to put up a $25 cash bond to guarantee that I would not skip the Territory but that I would show up in court for my trial the following week.

I discussed this heinous act that I had innocently committed with Bill Paulin, the Executive Officer of the Weather Central. I asked for his insight and advice. "Jim, this is how I look at this thing. You never saw me drive a car, did you?"

"No, your wife always does the driving in your family."

"The reason I never drive is that I've gotten two tickets thus far in this tour (of duty). If I get one more citation, my driver's license gets taken away, and I'm in danger of a huge fine with some jail time as a possibility. I tell you, the judges don't fool around here."

"If I were in your shoes, I'd go to court, plead guilty, and hope the fine is small. This is your first time, so the judge may not hit you too hard."

"What day and time do you have to be in court? I'll have to adjust your watch schedule."

I went to court and, when my case came up, the judge asked did I plead guilty or not guilty.

"Guilty, your Honor."

"Do you know what you did wrong?"

"I was ticketed for an illegal U-turn."

"Answer my question!"

"I made an improper U-turn." Under my breath I added, "But I'm not sure there was any sign posted about that."

"Then you plead guilty?"

"Yes, your Honor."

"Then, I fine you $25 and put you on probation for six months. I won't be this easy on you if you show up in front of me again."

"Thank you, your Honor."

"Bailiff, handle the paper work to transfer Lt. Jennings' bond money to satisfy his fine."

I felt relieved to have my trial behind me. Three months later, the Navy released me from my two years of active duty, and we moved back to New Orleans, away from the jurisdiction of the County of Honolulu.

My unserved three months of probation must have been forgotten or forgiven. On two subsequent visits to the 50th State, my photo did not appear on Hawaii's Most Wanted List of criminals posted at the Honolulu International Airport, and I drove our rented car back over Kamahamaha Highway for a visit to Pearl Harbor, the Fleet Weather Central, and our former home on Main Street with no fear that I would be rearrested and put back on probation.

UNSOLVED MYSTERY
by
Versie L. Foti

Dark heavy clouds hung low, threatening rain, as I drove across the bridge over Bayou Teche and turned left on Main Street one block from my office in downtown St. Martinville. There wasn't a ray of sunshine. The temperature outside hovered around 40 degrees causing a bone chilling dampness in the air that reminded me that winter was setting in.

My office was located on the second floor of what is known as La Maison Duchamp, an antebellum mansion across the boulevard from St. Martin De Tours Catholic Church. Maison Duchamp was owned by the Federal Government. The first floor housed the United States Post Office and Farm Security Administration occupied the second floor. I was St. Martin Parish Supervisor of F.S.A. and the office facing Main Street was mine. My secretary, Marion Fournet Thibodeaux, occupied the small office next to mine. The clerk, Rita Duchamp, worked in the office across the wide central hall.

That morning, I parked my car near the rear entrance and ran up the steps that led to the hallway. I was thinking how glad I was that today was Friday. Usually, on Friday, I remained in the office to work with the staff instead of going to various farms on supervisory business. On office day, I turned in reports to be typed, completed my travel voucher for the week, signed documents, recorded mortgages at the courthouse and made my itinerary for the following week. Marion, Rita, and I would then review clients' cases and bring their folders up to date. We also made a list of pressing cases, the ones that needed immediate attention on Saturday morning. Yes, we worked on Saturday mornings from 8 A.M. to 12 noon.

As we reviewed cases, we found one client, Henry Etienne, who had a mortgage payment due. If the payment was not received that day, it would be delinquent and a penalty would be charged. Notices were always sent 30 days before the payments were due and second notices were sent 15 days before the due date.

Henry was a cane farmer, a sharecropper, and harvest was in progress. As the farmers who had borrowed money from F.S.A. sold their harvested cane to the sugar

refinery, their checks were sent to our office for mortgage payments. However, we could not deposit the checks in the bank and credit their account until they signed the checks. Henry had not yet come into the office to sign his checks.

I knew that cane-harvest time is a very busy season. Farmers were desperately trying to get their crops in before the cold rainy weather arrived in late November and the refineries closed before Christmas. Our office closed at 5 P.M. The farmers worked in the fields until dusk, so it was difficult to get to the office to sign the checks.

By the next day, Saturday, Henry's account would be delinquent. I knew he could ill afford a penalty. I also knew that he would be in his cane field at least until darkness fell. I decided to leave the office after we closed at 5 P.M. and take the checks to Henry to sign when he came out of the field. I would give him a receipt for payment, bring the checks back to the office, stamp the date on them, enter payment on his account and make the bank deposit on Monday. The bank was not open on Saturday.

In spite of the gloomy and threatening weather, it still had not rained. When I got to the field, the half-mile long road between the thick rows of sugar cane was dry, so I drove about half way down the road where the men were cutting cane and waited in the car. Soon dusk began to fall. The men began to come out of the field to the road in wagons pulled by mules. They headed in the opposite direction from which I had come.

Henry's wagon was the last one to come to the road. Three or four men rode with him in the wagon. I called to Henry. He recognized me, stopped the wagon, climbed out and walked over to the car. When I told him why I was there, he explained that they were working long hours, and he had to be there with the crew. He just had not been able to get to the office when it was open. He signed the checks, I gave him a receipt and he thanked me for taking the trouble to come out to the field. He offered to wait while I turned the car around and headed toward the main road. I assured him that I would be all right, that he should go on in as it was now almost dark and beginning to rain, first a light misting, then a slow steady drizzle.

Henry climbed onto the wagon and headed out. I started the motor in the car, turned on the lights and windshield wipers, and shifted the gears into reverse. I wanted to turn the car around and get out of the field before the rain soaked the road.

The wagons and trucks carrying cane from the field to the refinery had carved deep ruts in the road. As I turned the car around on the road, I was aware of bumping sounds as the wheels rolled across the ruts. When I had the car straight on the road and slowly headed toward the main road, I realized that a tire must be flat.

I stopped the car, found my flashlight, and got out of the car to check the tires. Sure enough, the rear tire on the driver's side was flat! Well, I had changed a tire before on my '39 Ford, so I would just get busy and do it again.

I got my raincoat and hat out of the car and put them on. By now it was dark as pitch and the rain was falling gently. Not a light anywhere in sight! I was at least a quarter mile from the main road. I left the car lights on and opened the trunk. I removed the spare tire, the tire tools, and the car jack. I tried to place the jack on level ground but the ruts prevented the jack from resting solidly on the ground. I tried to beat the ruts down, but the jack was not stable. Desperately, I searched the trunk hoping to find a board to use to set the jack on. None!

"Well," I thought, "maybe I can find one around here."

With the flashlight, I searched frantically up and down the road a short distance for anything I could use to set the jack on. Nothing! My heart was pounding!

I collected my thoughts, trying to decide what I should do. Either I could walk out to the main road and try to get help at the nearest house or I could drive out on the flat tire.

As I stood near the car with my back toward the rows of cane mulling over my options, I became aware of someone standing behind me. I turned, startled to see an average size man, perhaps five feet, eight to ten inches tall wearing a black slicker with a hood and black rubber boots. The slicker was wet and shiny from the falling rain. I turned the flashlight toward him and noticed that he was black, so I assumed that he was one of the field hands. But, of all things he had a small board in his hand, probably about two feet long and about four inches wide as though he had it with him just for me.

"Hi," I said, "I have a flat tire, but I can't find a board to put the jack on. I'm so glad you came along. Can I use your board?"

The man never said a word; he simply took a few steps to the flat tire. I noticed that he walked with a severe limp. As he knelt to position the board, I picked up the jack and handed it to him. He reached for the flashlight in my hand and I gave it to him. Then he made a waving motion with the flashlight which indicated that he wanted me to get into the car, I assumed because of the rain. I obeyed his silent command.

I felt the jack raising the car with short jerky motions. In a few moments, I heard the hub cap pop off. I sat there in the car giving thanks to God for sending help at such a crucial time. A short time later, I felt the car being lowered and heard the jack, tire tools, and the flat tire being put into the trunk. Then the lid was slammed down.

I got out of the car and went to the rear where the man was. "I thank you so much for changing the tire. I don't know what I would done if you hadn't come along. Here, I want to pay you for helping me out." I held out my hand with a five dollar bill in it. He shook his head and handed me the flashlight.

"Well, then, get in the car and let me take you home," I said. Again he shook his head. He never said a word.

I thanked him again, walked to the door, opened it and got in the car. As I started the motor and put the car in gear, I looked in the rear view mirror to see which way he was walking, but he was no where in sight.

I drove back to my office, stamped the checks with the date, credited Henry's account and went home.

On Monday I was on the road to check on other farmers. Around noon, I was passing Henry's field and recognized Henry in his wagon near the road. On the spur of the moment, I stopped to tell Henry that I had completed the transaction on Friday night and his account was now current. During the conversation, I told him about the flat tire and about the man who changed it. I described the man to Henry, what he was wearing, and about him being crippled. I mentioned that perhaps he was mute because he never spoke a word.

"What's his name?" I asked, thinking I would bring him some small gift in appreciation for his help.

"I don't know, Miss. No one crippled works for me. I don't know who that could be," replied Henry.

I was puzzled. Out of curiosity, I drove down the cane field road to the place where I had turned around, I looked around for the board but it wasn't there.

Who was this man? Where did he come from? Where was he going? I suppose I'll never know, but I shall always carry this story with me in the belief that God's love is everywhere and forever.

ME AND MY LITTLE BROTHER
by
Olympe Arceneaux Butcher

In a picture I treasure, I am about five or four years old, and Charlie Boy is two years younger. We are at our home on Louis Arceneaux Road--barefoot and carefree in the big, big pasture--just sitting there! Someone captured us in this photo. Probably my sister Lou or Vange.

I just wonder. What would we have been thinking about---just us two?

We were too small to go crawfishing in the big nearby pond. Mama would not have given us her permission to go there alone anyway. We couldn't go to the grist mill without Papa. And that *big engine* which ground corn into cornmeal for us and all the neighbors was a dangerous machine. To Papa it was his toy---to start up whenever he had corn to grind. Mama's cornbread was always so delicious made with fresh corn meal.

In the middle of the big pasture there was no danger--unless the cows or horses came by to munch on the grass. Or Mama's big geese might come over wondering what we were doing-just sitting there. Later my friend Grace wouldn't come play because she was afraid of the geese. They might bite and chase her!

But to Charlie Boy and me, the geese and all the animals of the pasture were our friends, our pets. Because of the bright sunshine and the clothes we are wearing in the picture, I can tell it was taken during the summer. And we were not looking for persimmons under the big fruit tree near the barn, nor pears from the huge pear tree back of the barn (pears more delicious than Bartletts). I wish I could remember the name of that kind of eating pears.

It must be we were posing for someone in the bright sunshine. In all probability the clothes I was wearing were handed down to me from my sister Rose. To me it's still exciting to wear hand-me-overs. This resulted from the pleasure of belonging to a great big loving family--and stretching the income. But why worry about the dollars the bales of cotton or other crops would bring? Surely at five, I had *no* worries.

Charlie Boy and I had two homes. We visited often at Grandpa Louis Joseph Arceneaux's home across the pasture where Papa's sisters Nainaine and Maraine lived in the 200 year old house. We especially liked to gather those huge acorns from the basket oak tree found in the front of the old place. The acorn cups were large enough to serve as teacups (without a handle) when we played under the quilt that Mama was quilting as she made those especially small stitches! Lots of quilts were needed for the many beds in the large bedrooms to keep us warm in winter.

Soon I would start school and Charlie Boy would not be too far behind. We attended St. Ann Convent in Carencro. Sister Genevieve, one of our teachers, was so special! She even came out at recess to play ball with us.

My thoughts were far from ever losing Charlie Boy, but after a pulled, abscessed tooth and a few months of his not feeling well, I could tell my parents were worried, very worried.

Charlie Boy would leave me in the spring of the year to meet the Angels Above. It was a hard task for me (my Mother asked me to) to return his books to his first grade teacher at St. Ann's. Did I see a bouquet of flowers on his desk?

I remember St. Ann's well. I was a fourth grader--he was in first. And that's the year that our playing together days ended.

I still treasure those days of carefree playing together. Because of his strong hands (he boxed with me sometimes), Mama thought he would be a boxer. After he died, however, my thoughts were that possibly that ugly world war would have gotten him as all his friends enlisted.

I still remember Mama's soft voice after Charlie Boy's death at age seven of septicemia---"If only penicillin had come in a year earlier!"

I still pray for my little brother, Charles Andre Arceneaux, with the feeling that he is much safer with the Angels in Heaven!

A SURPRISE FOR A SAILOR--
AN ADVENTURE FOR ME
by
Betty Tripp

In December 1954, I left Tewksbury Hospital--thankfully--to return to Pondville Hospital to finish my nursing training. I would have about ten days vacation before classes started after Christmas holidays.

Warren was now stationed in Norfolk, Virginia, aboard the destroyer The USS John Hood. I had not seen him for about two months, and he wasn't going to come home for Christmas, so I decided it would be fun to surprise him. I would go to Norfolk myself. Of course, I couldn't drive that far alone. My girl friend, Marsha Foster, who was a nursing student at Massachusetts General Hospital, also had some time off. When I asked her if she would like to go with me, she said, "Sounds like fun, when do we leave?" Then, Evelyn, one of the girls in my class at Pondville Hospital heard I was going, and asked if she could go along, too. Marsha said it was fine with her, and I thought it would be good to have another person to share expenses and the driving. So Marsha, Evelyn, and I became, "The Three Musketeers on an Adventure."

My parents were living in Lafayette at the time, so I didn't tell them I was going--didn't want them to worry--but I did tell Viola and Lester Tripp, Warren's parents, and my cousin Paul Beaucaire who had bought my parents home when they moved to Lafayette.

We would be traveling in my 1940 Buick Coupe that sometimes gave me a problem. It would stall when stopped at a light or stop sign, and only started after being pushed. Still we had faith the car would make it to Virginia and back. Two days before we were to leave, the door handle on the driver's side broke. I fixed it by tying a rope around the seats and then to the handle of the window. (Yankee ingenuity!)

We left Foxboro on a Saturday morning and headed south, probably on Route 1. Then we took the New Jersey Turnpike and later whatever highway went to Virginia. When we stopped for gas and food on the New Jersey Turnpike, I noticed the license plate was missing. It looked like it had broken off. Well, we laughed about it, and Yankee ingenuity took over again. We simply made one of cardboard and stuck

it in the back window. I had my registration and insurance in the car, so I wasn't worried! We stayed at a motel somewhere in Pennsylvania that Saturday night.

We were on the road bright and early Sunday morning. Nothing else fell off the car and it didn't have to be pushed. We arrived in Norfolk that Sunday afternoon.

Following the signs that directed us to the Norfolk Naval Base, we arrived at the gate and asked the Officer On Duty how to get to the USS John Hood-DD655. He told us what pier to go to and that the "Hood" was the third ship over, which meant we were going to have to cross two other ships to get there. So here we were, three young ladies on a Sunday afternoon with several hundred sailors watching, whistling and hollering as we crossed these ships to get to the USS John Hood.

Arriving on the deck of the "Hood", I told the Officer on duty that we would like to see Warren Tripp. It had occurred to me that Warren might be off duty and had gone somewhere, but my luck held out and the Officer said, "He is on duty down in the engine room but I will send for him." So a message saying, "Three young ladies want to see you," was sent to Warren in the engine room. Pretty soon heads began to pop up through the hatch and then disappear. Down in the engine room, Warren did not believe the message. He was fairly new on the ship and thought the men were playing a joke on him. Marsha, Evelyn and I were getting very impatient standing there, so finally the officer sent another message (probably using stronger language). Warren finally arrived on the deck. He was very surprised to see me. He was able to get some one to take over his duty and went off the ship with us.

We drove around Norfolk for awhile and found a place for Marsha, Evelyn and I to stay. Warren showed us some of the sights of Norfolk, including the "Red Light" district, and we had some thing to eat together. Later that night we took Warren back to the ship. We made plans that he would get two other guys and we would meet them the next afternoon and go out together.

Monday morning the three of us went shopping, had our lunch, and then went back to the Naval Station. The two sailors Warren brought with him were Ike and JL and seemed to be very nice. After introductions were made, we all piled into the Buick. We drove around while the guys decided where would be the best place to go. They finally decided on an area where several things were going on (movies, clubs, restaurants) and we found a parking place. Warren and I decided top go to a movie--

have no idea what it was--and would meet the others later at one of the clubs. When we arrived at the club later everyone was dancing and having a good time. Evelyn, Ike, Warren and I had our picture taken together but I do not remember why Marsha and JL were not in it. Maybe they were dancing. We had a very good time and brought our sailors back to the base late that night. I was very sad leaving Warren as I didn't know when we would see each other again.

Tuesday morning, the Three Musketeers left Norfolk behind and headed north. We had decided to go to Washington, D.C. to take in a few attractions. We visited Mount Vernon, George Washington's home, first and then drove into the city and went to the Washington Monument and the Capitol. We were very impressed seeing all the places we had read about in school. That night we stayed at a motel in Falls Church, Virginia, a suburb of Washington.

Wednesday we started out on the last lap of our trip to get home. Of course, we had another adventure. This one in Connecticut when a State Trooper came up behind me with lights flashing. I pulled over and he came up to the car, wanted to see my license and wanted to know where the license plate was. I explained to him about the plate, showed him my license and registration papers, but he still had to check things out on his radio. He probably thought we were runaways with a stolen car. He finally came back to the car and said, "Every thing checks out o.k., but get this thing fixed up when you get back to Massachusetts." And the three of said, "YES, SIR!"

When we arrived in Rhode Island, it was snowing so we were very glad to finally arrive in Foxboro, Massachusetts, and be home safe and sound. That December trip was an adventure I have always remembered and look back on with fond memories.

A MEMORABLE OUTING
by
Stanley F. Davis

Some years ago Livia, my wife, and I were visiting her relatives in Medellin, Colombia.

Her favorite cousin, Julio Vasquez, was a retired locksmith who boasted that without a key he could open any lock that was ever made. His hobby was searching for discarded artifacts and gold that had been hidden in the mountains of Colombia.

One Friday afternoon, Julio asked me if I would like to go with him and two of his friends on an outing to the country the next day. I readily accepted the invitation, even though I had no idea of what kind of an outing he planned.

Early the next morning, March 11, 1973 (exactly twenty five years ago tomorrow) I met Julio and his two friends, Emilio Garcia and Roberto Valencia, both elderly retired men. Neither Julio nor his cronies spoke English but that presented no problem because I was fairly fluent in Spanish.

They hired a taxi and we departed on our jaunt. I soon learned that we were on our way to a remote spot in the mountains, about fifty miles from Medellin, where they had been digging in the hope of recovering gold which they believed had been buried by the Spanish conquistadores.

The spot where they were digging had been chosen because of certain omens, legendary tales, and frequently reported super natural sightings.

It was obvious that Julio's cronies were somewhat disturbed because he had not told them that he had invited a "gringo" to go along on the expedition. Their fear was that I might talk and the location of their dig might be discovered and made public. After Julio explained that my wife was his cousin and that we would be leaving Medellin in a few days, the two seemed somewhat mollified and became friendlier.

About fifty miles out of Medellin, at the foot of a high mountain they instructed the taxi driver that we had reached our destination and he was to return to pick us up at five o'clock that afternoon.

After the taxi left, we crawled through a barbed wire fence and started up the mountain, a one-half mile steep climb to our destination.

When I looked at the mountain and the climb ahead, I realized that I should have stayed back at the hotel drinking a cold beer instead of being on this outing. However, the choice had been made and I staggered along behind my friends who seemed tireless. About halfway up, realizing that I was a tender-foot and almost exhausted, Julio called for a rest stop. During the rest stop Emilio Garcia cut a small sturdy sapling, stripped the bark and made me a walking stick, which I badly needed. From there on the climb was a little easier.

When we reached our destination at the top of the mountain, the three men removed the tree branches which hid a pit about six feet square which they had dug on previous trips. Emilio and Roberto immediately jumped into the pit and began digging it deeper. Julio remained at the edge of the pit scraping away the dirt that the diggers threw out. Frequently all three would stop and examine a handful of dirt to determine whether it had been dug up and replaced years ago or if it was as solid as when God had made it. They also carefully examined the dirt for bone fragments or residue. It was their theory that the 'conquistadores' would have killed and buried the slaves who had transported the gold to the site where it was buried; thus precluding the possibility of the slaves revealing the hiding place of the gold.

At noon they stopped long enough to eat a lunch which they had brought. It consisted of canned fish similar to sardines, only larger, hard bread and cocadillas, a typical Colombian sweet treat. Of course, they had also brought a jug of water.

I laid in the shade and watched them work all day. When I suggested that they should bring a gang of peons (laborers) to get the digging done more quickly -- they threw up their hands in horror. Stunned by my suggestion they said, "Don't you realize if we brought in peons everyone would know where we are looking for hidden gold." I felt duly chastised.

After lunch the three men continued digging deeper until they could no longer throw the dirt out of the pit with their shovels. However, they planned to return the next week when they would be better equipped to dig deeper.

After carefully re-covering the pit to prevent hunters or cowboys in the area from readily discovering the pit, we headed down the mountain.

The descent was much easier then the climb. The taxi was waiting and soon we were back in the hotel at the bar enjoying the cold beer I thought I was missing.

My friends never did find any hidden gold at that location or elsewhere, but for me, a gringo, it was a most memorable outing--spending a full day on a mountain top in Colombia searching for gold believed hidden by Spanish conquistadores.

THE KISS THAT WASN'T TO BE
by
Johnnie Kocurek

My best friend of fifty-eight years answered her telephone in Corpus Christi, Texas, with her usual "Hello." "Hi!" I said and was immediately interrupted.

"Johnnie, I was just thinking of you! What's going on?" Little Opal asked.

"Believe it or not, I'm trying to write a story about one of your escapades when we were young," I explained, "and I decided to call you. I want to make sure I have all my facts straight."

"Well, I know the exact story you're writing about," she said accusing me with every word.

"Bet you don't. I'm going to read it aloud to a class of my peers in a writing class. Still think you know what I'm writing about?" I teased.

"NO! Of course not. Not if you are reading it out loud." And Little Opal laughed her laugh that took me back to the time in our lives when everything was both serious and funny at the same time.

I had reminisced an hour before I called her and thought of the joys we had shared over our lifetime.

I met Little Opal in 1940 when my mother and I moved into a house next door to her in Corpus Christi, Texas. She, like me, was an only child, living in a one-parent home with a working mother. The two of us had much in common. We were the same age, a little bit of "look-a-likes," and both of us were in need of a good friend.

We soon spent all of our waking hours together. I can't remember ever having an argument with Little Opal nor can I remember ever discussing "what can we do now?" We were always busy, sometime just talking and sharing our dreams and plans for the future, and sometime teaching all the things one of us knew to the other.

Little Opal did not get her name from her size except when she was compared with her mother. Her mother did not get her name "Big Opal" from her size either, but only because she was bigger than Little Opal. Big Opal owned a restaurant where I was fed every afternoon after school as if I was her second child. Either Big Opal or my mother could be reached at any time and we four had an understanding that whichever mother we reached could give permission, guidance or advice that applied to the both of us. Little Opal and I, at the wise age of twelve, knew which Mother to call as each had their own weakness in specific matters. Sometimes we used that knowledge to our advantage.

Little Opal and I got a $2.00 a week allowance each Sunday morning. With both our mothers working, most domestic jobs around the house became our responsibilities. House cleaning became a game to us and we took on both houses as a "working pair." We saw to it that beds were made, dishes were done, school clothes were pressed and bathrooms shined in my house and then we repeated the same chores in Little Opal's house. We sang, laughed, and cleaned our way through an hour every afternoon after school. We had no chores on weekends except bed making and usually that involved only one bed as we spent the night together at one house or the other almost every Saturday night.

We budgeted our $2.00 allowance, always saving ten cents for the next Saturday at the Amusa Theater. The Amusa was only a twenty minute walk from our houses and was the best possible way we knew to spend ten cents. For a mere dime we could purchase three and one-half hours of entertainment which consisted of two full length Westerns, starring Charles Sterrett, Lash LaRue or Johnny Mac Brown. The heros wearing white hats were pitted against the rustlers and gun fighters. After the full length features came the serial, which consisted of ten to twenty episodes with one being shown each week. The serial always ended with a cliff hanger assuring that the same audience would return the next Saturday. A comedy was then well received by a theater full of yelling patrons. Some lucky Saturdays, two comedies were shown!

Almost as much fun as the comedies was when the film projector, located at the highest point in the rear of the theater, malfunctioned and the film flipped off the reel. The projector's bright light flickered on and off, turning the theater into a cavern of screaming youngsters. What fun it was to stomp our feet and scream demands to the blank screen in front of us. The film was always quickly replaced on the reel, sometimes backing up a frame or two, sometimes skipping forward a frame or two. We

would settle down in our seats and quietly watch the rest of the movie while eating popcorn.

For Little Opal and me, the Amusa, popcorn, cherry cokes, records players, sloppy Joe sweaters, huaraches, and walking on the bay front, were the most important things in our life. That is until one day in the first part of the summer of 1942.

Little Opal and I were at the very same time swallowed up in a whole new experience. In one quick moment, without any warning whatsoever, we became "boy crazy!" Until that quick moment, boys had been merely disgusting creatures to be tolerated and ignored if possible. Overnight, all boys became cute and each time Little Opal and I encountered one, he was immediately noted and rated by the two of us. It was during the early stages of "boy obsession" that we learned that Cleve Combs' father owned the Amusa Theater. Cleve was a classmate of ours but even though he had not been noted or rated, the discovery of his father's position gave Cleve a top rating and we concentrated all our efforts on capturing his attention.

In less than a week, I received an invitation to meet him at 11AM in front of the Amusa the following Saturday. He explained that I would not have to buy a ticket but just walk in with him,. Money flashed in my mind...ten cents saved....popcorn money.

Before I answered him, I explained to him that Little Opal and I always had plans together on Saturdays and that she would be with me at the Amusa. I was prepared for his disappointment when he heard he would not be spending time alone with me, but this did not present a problem for the son of the owner of the Amusa, for he immediately answered, "That's o. k. Truman will be with me. We always go to the show together on Saturday."

Well, let me tell you, it was no easy task convincing Little Opal that she was going to the Amusa Saturday and sit by Truman, who had not been noted or rated. "Truman is cute," I told her. "And we can save a dime."

"I don't know him and I don't want a date with him," she argued.

"I don't think this would be called a date." I said as strongly as I could.

"Well, it sure sounds like a date to me." she responded.

We dropped the debate, as neither of us had ever had a date so neither of us were sure if we were having one or not.

Saturday morning arrived and little was said between us as we walked to the theater. Cleve and Truman were standing in front of the picture show and obviously ignored our arrival.

"I'm glad they aren't looking at us!" Little Opal said. "Let's get our own tickets and go in."

As we started toward the ticket window, Cleve spoke directing his voice our way. "Come on in this door with us." With that statement, he and Truman walked through the front entrance, past the ticket taker and into the theater with Little Opal and me in close pursuit.

The four of us sat in the back row. Previews of coming attractions were pictured on the screen and we settled in our seats. About thirty minutes into the first Western, Little Opal bounded from her seat and excused her way to the center aisle.

"Where are you going?" I questioned.

"I'm going to spend my dime," she answered without looking at me. I sat for a minute or two and decided to go and look for her. She was standing at the candy counter, stuffing caramel bits into her mouth. Soon she couldn't get another candy in her mouth, she couldn't chew, and she couldn't speak.

We returned to our seats and each time I glanced at Little Opal, she was working her jaws from side to side. Little dribbles of caramel ran from the side of her lips down her chin. She tried to retrieve the escaping liquid candy and made noisy slurping sounds, swallowing with some effort.

After the cartoon and serial episode, followed by the second feature, we four left the movie, Little Opal still slurping the remains of semi- melted caramel. The boys offered a swift goodbye and I thanked Cleve for the free admission.

Little Opal and I were halfway home when I finally had enough of the slurping and swallowing.

"Spit that out!" I demanded. "What in the world is going on with the candy?"

At this point in my reminiscing, I had decided to call her and get details that I may have forgotten about that Saturday morning. Her laugh was still traveling the phone line from Corpus Christi to Lafayette.

Oh, yes. I know what you are writing about. The caramel candy, right?" and Little Opal laughed again. She continued, "Remember, we had just sat down in our seats and the next thing I knew, his arm was on the back of my seat. Then his hand was on my shoulder. I jerked my head toward him in protest and there, one inch from my mouth coming toward me were his two puckered lips. That's when I went to the lobby. I hope that little pip-squeak thought twice before he ever tried to steal another kiss."

"Opal, I'll never forget how eight ounces of caramel, half chewed, half melted, looked in your mouth. I highly recommend using your method to all the girls in my family, especially when they are young, boy crazy and not quite ready to handle the acceptance of a 'first kiss.'"

"Yeah," Little Opal said, still laughing, "and I've told all the boys in my family about the caramel and recommended that when they are young, girl crazy and want to steal a kiss, to make sure they date only girls with braces."

Touché, my best friend, I knew you were never a feminist.

DRAMA AT THE BALL PARK
by
Woodson Hopkins

A fledgling columnist, searching for fresh material on which to launch his newly acquired literary career, showed up at the ball park on a warm Texas evening in search of the human drama, believing the ancient axiom that good stories must inevitable embrace conflict. Now that he had been awarded space for a daily spiel on the sports page of the local newspaper, it was only prudent for him to form opinions and put those opinions in print, an exercise he had so far neglected. What better place for experiencing a slice of americana, or delving into life's nitty gritty, than the old ball park?

He began to draw ideas into his mind even as he departed from the noise of the teletype machines spitting out stories of war around the 38th Parallel. *Ironic*, he thought. *How the tentacles of war gripped baseball once again.*

"*When America Goes to War So Goes Baseball!*" He liked that, pausing to scribble the words on a folded piece of paper stuffed instinctively into a pocket, then grudgingly considered their originality. Original or not, they were true and could bear repeating. Ted Williams had been recalled to service by the Marines; the "Say Hey Kid," Willie Mays, was drafted in May. The Sporting News reported that the Yankees had young pitching phenom, Whitey Ford, stashed away at Fort Monmouth, close enough for their pitching staff to observe his progress while he fulfilled certain obligations to his country. *Perhaps*, he mused, *it would be more appropriate to say 'When Baseball Goes to War So Does America.'* He retrieved the piece of paper from his pocket and wrote the revision.

By definition it was called semi-pro; by description, home-style baseball. The grocery boy might play shortstop; a collegian from a nearby school, centerfield, and--more often than not--an ageless ex-big leaguer pitching (and during the week sellling beer by the truckload). No one owned the team. It had a sponsor. The fans at times acted as though they had proprietary interest but shied from any form of liability. On inaugural night, no home plate ceremony was planned for the new sponsor so the new czar engineered a grand entrance. Smiling, waving at the sea of unfamiliar faces, he greeted the crowd, acting as though he was acquainted with each one of them.

Probability was that he had never been in a ball park or seen a game in his entire life, and he sure did not hobnob with the fans.

Life Magazine had printed a multi-page spread about the town, saying that it possessed more millionaires per capita than any other town in America. The new sponsor set about to demonstrate--in disgusting fashion--that he was indeed on the list by sticking fifty dollar bills into empty cigar cannisters and throwing them to players who drove in runs. The scribe sensed a budding philanthropist at hand, not simply a hard, cold business type. The young reporter was likewise struck with the notion that there was more to the game than hits, runs, and errors. For one serving of the human drama put 'em in a pot--players, management, fans, and press--and stir slowly. Let sit for a lifetime. Then savor before a warm fire on any cold winter's night.

GIRLS
by
Joe Glorioso

Mame baked a chocolate cake covered with a white sugar coating for my sixth birthday. Written across the top in chocolate block letters: *Happy Birthday*. Charles, our delivery boy, (there is a good story about Charles waiting in the wings) brought the cake to the first grade classroom at the New Iberia Grammar School. Seems to me that Miss Eves, my first grade teacher, expected the cake. When Miss Eves served the cake, I found myself sitting shoulder-to-shoulder with Winnie. As we ate the dry cake, water became a priority. We walked to the water fountain to wash down the chocolate cake. A new friendship was born.

Winnie was a pretty petite blonde, her head crowned by wavy, neatly trimmed and perfectly combed hair, blue eyes, and an angelic face that attracted me and captured my complete attention for an eternity. After school, we usually met at Briganti's candy store to walk three blocks to the end of Dr. Shaw's block on St. Peter Street. We always stopped at the St. Peter's Catholic Church and talked about any and all things that only little people talked about. One question especially haunted me, but I was afraid to ask, "Why couldn't I meet her parents?" It was a long time before Winnie confessed that she was Jewish. She told me in confidence, "I'm Jewish. My parents only let me be friends with boys and girls who are Jewish. Not Catholic. My parents hate New Iberia because it is full of Catholics. My Dad is a tailor and he stays here only because he makes money."

Here I am, a little innocent first-grade Catholic boy sitting next to an equally innocent little Jewish girl on the steps of a big Catholic church, and I'm being told that Winnie's parents think we are different. I asked, "Do you think, we're so different that we can't sit her and talk to each other?" Her blue eyes searched my face, looking for a reasonable answer, "No, I don't see any difference. We're friends and will always be. I am Jewish, my father and mother are Jewish. I must obey them." I stood up and reached for her hand, grabbed it, and pulled her off the steps. I said cautiously, "Let's walk. I understand, but I don't. I love my Mom and Dad. I respect and obey them. They don't see any difference between Catholics and Jews. We're Italians. Some people don't like us, but we like them. I want to be your friend forever." She squeezed my hand. I had forgotten we were still holding hands.

Winnie and I met at Briganti's corner, leaving school for the last time as first graders. Next September Winnie and I would be second graders meeting as always at Briganti's. We walked to our favorite step on the church that I attended every Sunday. We laughed with delight on the church's steps in praise of our passage onto the second grade, and we became doubly joyous over the news that our parents would be happy to hear about our promotion. We laughed and talked about the first grade. Then out of the blue Winnie said, "I have to tell you something. I don't feel like telling you, but I must." I could tell that she was serious. I wanted to hear what she had in mind, yet I didn't want to know. I hesitated, not knowing what to say. She paused a long time before continuing, "My Mom and Dad have been packing for several weeks. They've finished their packing. Tomorrow we leave for New York." I accepted the revelation with ease, "Vacation?" "No," she said in an unmistakably emotional voice, "we're moving to New York. Dad is opening a new business with my uncle in New York. He has to go. My uncle has more work than he can handle. We should say goodbye here in front of this church. I'll never forget you, Joe. Honest." I stood before her and put my hands on her shoulders, hugged her, and said, "No, we won't say goodbye here. I am going to walk with you to your front gate and say goodbye to you in front of your Mom and Dad. Then, I am gonna be at the railroad station to wave goodbye again. You can't stop me, can you?" She took my hand, and I did just that.

I missed Winnie a whole lot. Still, I had a summer to hone my swimming skills. Mame had given me permission to swim with the older boys at the bridge. Sadie, the bridge tender's granddaughter, occasionally watched the swimmers from the bridge's walkway. Soon, she became a daily watcher. One day, I mustered up enough courage to talk to her. I bragged to her, "You want to see me dive off the bridge?" I could jump off the bridge and land in the Teche feet first, but never had I ever dived head first off the bridge. Sadie looked startled that I had spoken to her. "I double dare you!" I looked down at the water. It seemed a million miles away. I swallowed hard, leaned forward, felt my body losing its balance, forcing me to plunge headlong into the waters of Bayou Teche. When I came up and turned to see Sadie standing at the rail, I blithely waved to her. Sadie replaced Winnie that day.

When school opened in September, there was Anita. Every Friday during the second grade, I'd sit with Anita watching a silent western movie at the Elks Theater. When Tom Mix or William S. Hart got mixed up in a gun battle with the bad guys, she would thrill me by tightly gripping my arm or lacing her fingers through mine. With the battle over, our hands remained interlocked.

There was also Elaine and her brothers, Slavin and Gordon. They spent each Saturday with their grandmother, our next door neighbor. Slavin spent his time in the third grade at St. Peter's College, spending most of his Saturdays playing his favorite game, cowboys. It fell my lot to play the good guy and wrestle with the bad guy to win the girl, fair Elaine. Often Slavin and I enjoyed wrestling up and down the grassy incline to the railroad tracks at the edge of the Bayou.

On one occasion, Elaine goaded me into a "do or die" wrestling match. I resisted the taunts and bullying until she called me a "yellow belly." I felt a tinge of humiliation taking over my good sense of reason. I pounced on her unmercifully, straddling her supine body, and pinning her arms above her head on the grassy incline. I jutted my face next to her's, contorting my face into a mock sneer, "Say 'uncle.'" Elaine twisted and squirmed. I applied pressure and repeated, "Say 'uncle'!" She cried, "You're not fair! You're not fair!" I recalled an old line that adults often spoke, "All's fair in love and war." Finally, in exasperation, she said, "Uncle! Let me up!" I released her and moved to let her up. In the blink of a lazy eye, she toppled me off her body. I looked up into her eyes. I lay flat on my back in the grass. Elaine was bestride me in another blink, my arms pinned to the grass. "Say 'uncle'!" she scornfully yelled. The table had turned. We laughed. Elaine's face touched mine, cheek to cheek. She whispered, "All's fair in love and war." I scanned the innermost corners of my brain for a comeback. Still laughing, I joked, "And never, ever, trust a woman."

Elaine and I spent many Saturdays together through our years in New Iberia Grammar School. In the sixth grade she enrolled in Mount Carmel Convent. As we got older we would walk and talk along the railroad tracks and oftentimes sit on the front steps of her grandmother's house. On one occasion, her grandmother surprised us when she asked, "What do you children find to talk so much about?" Elaine and I looked at each other and giggled. Elaine said, "Mostly about school and the old maid school teachers and the mean old nuns." She was truthful as far as she trusted herself to go. She didn't reveal that we talked most often about our future, next year, three years from now, ten years. We wondered what the future held for us.

As I looked back over those years, one fact stood out among every other fact. The girls I chose to be with the most resembled each other in many aspects: the same big eyes set apart by small chiseled noses, ears closely packed against shapely skull, pouting lips that always seemed on the edge of a cheerful smile, and cupid-like facial

features on a petite body. Uncannily, they all fell into a pattern that fit all the attributes of my Winnie. Winnie's face cast a weird spell over me that endured to the time of my betrothal to Carolyn in September of 1943.

After Winnie and Sadie and Elaine and other friends,--but before Carolyn--, almost overnight, at least it seemed to me, my voice became husky, sometimes creaking and cracking, at other times, croaking, loud and blustery. *Will it always be this way?* I worried. Strands of dark stringy hair appeared on my chest. Then they began invading my chin. My sense of balance went awry. *What is happening to me?* The girls I knew seemed to become rounder and rounder. Their crisp blouses jutted further and further out. They changed from bony girls to plump ones, becoming ever more plump. The skinny, bony girls I had danced with last year now felt soft. Their skin took on a glow for which I could not account. They danced closer, hypnotizing me. Their smiles took on new vexing meanings. The perfumes they wore tantalized me. In only a few short months, I entered a new world, an exotic world of love and desire. No more cowboys, no more double dares. I hoped I would never have to give this world up.

FROM YOUNG ADULT TO ADULT
by
Allen Fontenot

When I left you last week, I had just been for a swim in the Pacific Ocean, but it was not by choice. The indoor swimming pool on the base had a diving board that was about 25 feet above the water, but standing on the edge of the board, it looked to me like 75 feet.

Each recruit was issued a kapok life jacket, which was quite cumbersome. After we had donned the jacket, we had to climb the ladder to the diving board. We were commanded to walk to the end of the diving board, take our left hand and clutch the jacket collar as tightly as we could and jump in the water below. The reason for holding so tightly to the front collar of the kapok jacket was to keep it from hitting us under the chin and knocking us out. When we would jump from the ship, if we would ever have to, it would be much higher than the diving board, forcing the jacket up with even more force.

One young man from Tennessee was scared of heights and didn't want to jump. Two swimming instructors were told to climb the diving tower and force him off the tower into the pool. He was a big boy, and he got the best of the two instructors. They ended up in the pool but "Tennessee" stayed on the platform.

Another maneuver to help us stay afloat in the water in case we did not have a life jacket was to take off our pants, tie knots at the end of each leg, and hold the pants by the waist and jam them into the water. This would force air into the legs of the pants forming a floating device. Now this maneuver doesn't sound too hard to do, but if you are in deep water and not too good a swimmer you would likely swallow some salt water. I promise you, I was no Johnny Weismuller (Tarzan), and I swallowed my share of the Pacific.

I survived Boot Camp and passed all the tests required, not with flying colors, but I passed. Next, the Navy needed coxswains to be in charge of amphibious landing crafts. Those were the boats that would take the Marines to shore when making landings during invasions. The Navy sent me to Amphibious Landing School on Coronado Island, California, which was just a short ferry ride from San Diego. Before we could graduate, we had to go on night maneuvers. A young Ensign, the most junior

naval commissioned officer in the Navy, but above a Chief Warrant Officer, was in charge of our little flotilla of boats. He was young and had no more sea experience than we had. Once we got lost and wound up below Tijuana, Mexico. He had to radio the base for help.

The next step in training was to put us on board a ship. They found a converted Liberty ship named the U.S.S. MIFFLIN. It had been converted into a troop transport, APA 207. Each landing craft that was on board had a crew of four men, the coxswain, a signalman, a mechanic, and a deck hand. I had a very distinct Cajun accent, as you can imagine. The officers in charge of assigning the crews to the landing craft figured I was of Spanish descent, so they assigned me three Mexicans. My comrades couldn't understand my English, and I couldn't understand theirs. So I named my landing craft the "SNAFU." That means, "situation normal, all fouled up."

On December 29th, we embarked 1,183 enlisted men and 66 officers of the Fourth Marine Division at Maui, T.H. Hawaii was not a state yet, so it was Territory of Hawaii. We went on maneuvers again, this time with Marines and all of their equipment and arms and ammo. On December 25th of 1945, we were anchored at Pearl Harbor. December 31st we crossed the International Date Line. But I don't remember if we gained a day or lost one.

February 19th, 1945, was "D" Day of the invasion of Iwo Jima. When we were briefed about the island, we were told that the air strip would be taken and secured within four hours and that there were just about two thousand Japanese on the small Island. They thought that the whole island would be secured in four days. Instead, the battle took thirty five days with a loss of 5,821 Marines killed, 633 from ships and Navy air units, 195 medical corpsmen, 51 Seabees, 2 doctors and 9 Army personnel, for a total of 6,821 American boys dead. The Japanese casualties on Iwo Jima (estimated), 20,000 killed and 1,083 prisoners taken: Marines, 216 and Army, 867.

I don't think the government told us the truth about Iwo Jima because if they didn't think there were that many Japanese on the little island, why would they have had three Marine Divisions there, the 3rd, the 4th, and the 5th Marines? They had ships with fire power more than you can imagine. The number of rounds of ammunition fired on Iwo Jima by Navy guns included 16 inch 1,950, 14 inch 1,500, 12 inch 400, 8 inch 1,700, 6 inch 2,000 and 5 inch 31,000. Naval air planes bombed the island whenever the ships quit shelling.

Iwo Jima in Japanese means SULPHUR ISLAND. For me, too, it was a stinker.

There were 80 Medals of Honor won by Marines during WWII, 22 of which were won at Iwo Jima. Five Navy men also won this medal. Thirteen of the medals were awarded posthumously. One of the saddest things I've seen was my first burial at sea.

One of my first cousins, who was just two months older than me, was killed on Iwo. We had grown up together and were very close.

The Chaplain on one of the transports had some cards printed and distributed to each Marine on board his ship. He included the words of Sir Jacob Astley's famous prayer before the battle of Edgehill in 1642:

O Lord! Thou knowest how busy I must be today:
If I forget Thee, do not Thou forget me.

I feel sure this prayer well fitted the mood of the U.S. Marines three centuries later.

Like I said, it took 35 bloody days before the SULPHUR ISLAND was secured. This experience was a hell of a way to go from young adult to adult and, may I add, I do not recommend this type of transition. So many of our young adults never made it to adulthood. From the desert of Africa to the frozen Islands Of Alaska, they saw their last light of day on the battlefield.

From Iwo Jima we went to Okinawa on April 1, 1945. No April Fool's Day, it was "D" Day.