Our Stories, Our Lives

LIFE & LETTERS

Spring 1998

At the heart of Life & Letters—as concept, as company, as a writing class—is story. At the heart of story, people. The writers represented in this collection of reminiscence tell their stories with heart. I count it a privilege—always—to be one of the first sets of ears to listen and learn from the paths these people have taken in life. The titles offered here are as varied as the people who wrote them. Somewhere in the variety, I think you'll find yourself or someone you know. Read on and enjoy these tales. They tell the story of our own lives and are dedicated to you—with heart.

Joan Stear
LIFE & LETTERS
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A very grateful acknowledgment to all the people
who had a part to play in this session's writing group—you're the heart of Life & Letters.
THANKS.

Front Cover: (*clockwise, beginning at top right corner*) L. Butcher (father of Tom Butcher); Pat Straley; Ruth Edith Smith; *left to right*, Warner, Tillman, and David Jenkins (brothers of Peggy Bihm); (*center*) Pat O'Brien, *far left*

LIFE & LETTERS WRITING CLASS
Spring 1998 • Thursday Afternoon Session

Seated, left to right: **Ruth Edith Smith; Peggy Bihm; Pat O'Brien ••**
Standing, left to right: **Tom Butcher; Pat Straley; Gertrude Henke; Joan Stear, *Instructor* •• *Missing from photo:* Nada Breaux**

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TOOT! TOOT! CLANG! CLANG! CLANG!
by
Ruth Edith Smith

My eyes are closed. Completely relaxed, I'm ready to travel,...in time, that is! Gliding over days lived, places remembered, I land in the village of El Camino Real, on a beautiful tropical island. The year is 1933. Semi-darkness envelops the village. The day is about to break. Some stars are still burning, the moon is fading out and dew floats on the green foliage of trees and plants. The air is light and cool at this early hour. Except for the roosters' crowing and the birds' singing, no one is stirring yet. I am glad! I'll spend the whole day in El Camino Real!

As if simultaneously turned on by a master switch, weak gas lights begin to appear inside the small wooden abodes. The villagers are up. A new day begins! While the men clean up in a pan of water outside the house, their wives get the fire started on the wood burning clay stoves, inside a lean-to kitchen. A strong cup of black coffee and a good piece of bread send these hard workers to the sugar cane fields. Work begins at 7:00 A.M.

La zafra, or harvest time, is here. The long *invernazo,* dead season, is finally over. With plenty of work available now, there will be food at the table of these needy families. Business flourishes at my father's, don Remigio's, general store.

Sylvia, Tony, Fernanda, and her brother Julio are happily strolling down the tree lined road to our one-room school a mile away. I hurry to catch up with them and join in the joyful walk, but once we arrive at school, I ask Mrs. Cartagena, the teacher, to excuse me from class, for I don't feel quite myself today. Back at home, lying on a hammock in our porch, I will observe the village activities of the day.

The women busily carry on their daily routine of laundering, cleaning and looking after their younger children. "Nine o'clock!," echoes dona Angela as she hears the distant sound of the train whistle. A clock is a rare commodity in the homes of these poor folks, so the village wives count on the "toot, toot" of the train that passes beyond the sugar cane plantations and another village called Potala, blowing its whistle every morning at 9:00 A.M.

The sound of this whistle sets the women in a frantic motion. They drop everything they are doing and start preparing the meal they are to deliver at exactly 11:30 at their husbands' work site. "I have to hurry, Cheo is working in Serrano today," says dona Angela to dona Fela, her neighbor.

As the women take off in different directions carrying their husbands' lunches, I am amused by the appearance of the ever present, picturesque, family-less village characters. Dona Maria *la ciega,* a half blind widow, her graying hair combed tight back in a bun, who lives in a one room rental, walks over to dona Monse's (my mother) to eat and do the dishes for the family after every meal. Acasito, an old gray bearded man, lives in a small room in back of my family's home. He cleans our yard for room and board. I have never seen him without his worn *gaban,* or jacket, his stained tie, high boots, and straw hat. For pocket money he goes out to the countryside and cuts fire wood to sell. I recognize his stooped figure slowly shuffling down the road with a bundle of wood on his shoulders, followed by his faithful female dog, Coja, lame in Spanish. Perhaps Acasito will start a charcoal pit and stay up all night watching it, as he usually does.

From the next village of Galicia the small, dark silhouette of dona Margarita, with her long cotton dress and her head and half her face covered with a piece of cloth, appears at the bend of the road. No one knows the reason why she doesn't have a nose. There is only a big hole where her nose should have been. Living alone and very poor, she makes a daily trip to our village to pick up food that my mother will save for her, and which she will take back to eat in the privacy of her tiny home. I wonder where dona Maria, Acasito, and dona Margarita ever came from!

It is 4:15. The village children are returning from school. They set their books down and begin the chores they perform at home everyday. I visit with Sylvia while she takes down the laundry her foster mother, dona Victoria, hung up during the day. The delicious smell of dona Victoria's *arroz junto (*rice mixed with red beans,) which I love, permeates their yard. If my mother hadn't forbidden it, I would accept dona Victoria's invitation to stay for dinner. Carlitos sharpens his father's spare *machete,* which he will need the next day to cut sugar cane at the field. Pepe takes the family's goat to pasture. After a long, back breaking day at the fields, the village husbands are now coming home. A hearty meal of rice, stewed pinto beans, with a piece of roasted *bacalao,* (dried, salted codfish) awaits them. Now cleaned up, with a full stomach, don Cheo, don Rafael , don Paco, and don Campos sit on the ledge of the brick canal across

the street to enjoy the rest of the daylight together, smoking a cigar or chewing tobacco. What fun to join the children as they play baseball, hide and seek, marbles, jacks, jumping rope, and *dona Ana no esta aqui,* a circle rhyme game, until the sun goes to bed and the moon and the stars cover the sky!

Dusk is upon us. Bonfires begin lighting up on the hills and mountains in the distance. Everyone turns his attention to these fires. The children count them as they appear. Today is February 2nd., *Dia de la Candelaria*, bonfire lighting day, an old tradition in this island. Tonight children may stay up a while later watching the fires as they burn out.

"Clang, clang, clang!" The harmonious sound is carried by the soft evening breeze into Camino Real, Galicia, and Serrano. The night sentry in Potala is in charge of striking the big bell, one strike for every hour, each hour on the hour all through the night. The villagers in Potala and neighboring communities go to bed and rise by the clear and dependable "clang" of that bell. All except Acasito, that is, who springs up earlier than anyone, goes down the road mumbling to himself, making sure everyone is up, and gets a cup of coffee wherever he can.

I hear eight strokes. Everyone is inside their homes, reaching out to shut their doors for the night and lay themselves to rest. I say "Buenas noches" to my old friends, close my eyes and wake up in 1998!

THE WEDDING
by
Nada Breaux

It was December 20, 1947, and I had just been warmly welcomed into my future husband's family. I never dreamed that I would be so blessed with such a lovely extended family. Maman, Roy's mother, made me feel instantly at home. I knew his sister, Iris, as she had driven down with us from Virginia. Wilbert, Roy's brother, was there with his wife, Marguerite, and their three year old son, Kenny. Roy's sister, Grace, lived across the street with her husband, Hiram. Roy's father , known as R.J. was a dear kind man. He had suffered a stroke and was partially disabled; but he, too, was very friendly.

We planned to marry on Christmas Day so for the next few days there was a lot to do. Roy had various formalities to attend to, one of which was to buy a wedding ring. We went into a little jewelry shop in Crowley owned by Albert Karre and picked out a little gold ring with diamond chips for me. I still wear it proudly today. Then we wanted to buy something for Maman so Mr. Karre asked us if we would like a "bould vase." I could not imagine what he meant until Roy explained he meant a bud vase. I had a lot of trouble in those days with my pronunciation, especially with names.

Roy's friends wanted to give me a shower but he said "no" emphatically. I had no idea what a shower meant. They asked me what my patterns were. I did not know what they meant. I had a lot of fun meeting people. They were so different from the English. I spent a lot of time talking to Iris. I had no sister and I knew nothing about married life except that my parents were very happy together.

We were married on Christmas Day in the priest's house at 11 o'clock. We could not be married in the church as I was not a Roman Catholic and I had to promise that our children would be brought up in the Catholic religion.

On Christmas Eve we all went to Midnight Mass. Roy was to sing in the choir loft with Goldie Boudreaux, who had a beautiful voice. It had been a long time since he had sung in St. Michael's. I will never forget his voice that night resounding through the church accompanied by Goldie's beautiful soprano. It is the closest I have ever

been to hearing angel voices. Now I like to think that he is in heaven singing his heart out in thankfulness to the Lord.

At 11 o'clock we were at the priest's house--Roy and I, Maman, Wilbert, Iris and Grace. It was 80 degrees and I was wearing an English tweed suit. Fortunately Marguerite had been able to lend me a cotton blouse and I was too happy to worry about the temperature. The service was performed by Father Mollo who had baptised Roy and later baptised our first child, Susannah. There was apparently someone else at our wedding from whom I heard many years later. Judge Edmund Reggie told me that he was a barefoot boy in the priest's garden the day we were married.

After the brief ceremony we went back to the house for Christmas dinner. The whole family was there. We had turkey and all sorts of new foods and vegetables, some of which I had never seen. Cornbread, squash, eggplant, sweet potatoes and pecans were all new to me.

After lunch we set out for a honeymoon in New Orleans. We stayed at the Monteleon Hotel for three nights. Roy loved showing me the sights, the cemetery, the Cabildo, St Charles Avenue and Royal Street where he bought me a pair of cameo earrings in an antique shop to match the antique cameo Mummy gave me when I left England. I was introduced to raw oysters at an oyster bar and beignets at the French Market and to dinner at Arnaud's. We had very little money to spend; but who needs money when you are in love?

When we returned to Crowley, Maman and Iris left by train for Virginia where Iris had a miscarriage. We stayed with R. J. and took care of him. I did my best to cook in my new country. Roy had given me "The Joy of Cooking and Iris gave us a pressure cooker. R. J. obtained some ducks for me which I cooked and we enjoyed. After English rationing I could not bear to waste anything so one day I bought a cabbage and cut it in half. The first day we had boiled cabbage, the second day we had cole slaw. I hated to waste the leftovers so I put them in the dog's bowl. "Rex will never eat that," Roy said and he was right. After three weeks Maman returned and we helped her to get help for R.J. before we left for New York, as Mr. and Mrs. Roy Charles Breaux.

FIRST STEP INTO ADULTHOOD
by
Peggy Bihm

I think my first step into adulthood and maturity started on a Sunday in early September 1949. On that day my sister Kathryn age 16 and I, almost 15, left for boarding school at the Academy of the Sacred Heart in Grand Coteau. Our trunks were packed and ready to go. For weeks we had been sewing name tags on all of our clothes and linens.

That morning all of the family went to early Mass. Mama had prepared a special dinner of favorite foods, fried chicken, rice and gravy, smothered green beans, and apple pie. After eating, we loaded the car and drove away in a small caravan of the other five or six girls from Eunice who would also be starting school. Over the next three years, we would take this trip every Sunday during the school year.

As we neared the school, my heart felt like it was in my throat, and I had to keep swallowing so I would not cry. First, we saw the long alley of oaks, then the school looming in the background.

Kathryn and I were assigned separate rooms on the third floor. As we started up the stairs, young girls were swarming all over. I soon started to loose some of my apprehension, and I kept telling myself everything was going to be okay.

Our days at Grand Coteau were long and full from early morning on. The wake up bell rang at 6:30, Mass was held at 7:00, breakfast was served at 7:30, and classes started at 8:45. We had a 30 minute study hall prior to class. We were in class all day with a short recess in the morning and one following lunch. At the end of the academic day, we had "Goutea," a snack, sometimes cookies and milk or my favorite pickles and crackers.

After snack, we had P.E. Every day we had a study hall of at least 30 minutes for every subject we took. Tutoring was provided also. We had about an hour of free time before lights out at 9:30 PM. Of course, there was NO TV.

We spent our short leisure time talking, reading, playing games and walking around the grounds. We were not allowed to wear makeup, and, of course, no males were present. Occasionally we would see some of the young men studying to be Jesuit priests at St. Charles College. As all young girls, we would speculate why these good looking young men would want to be priests.

Our meals were served family style, 6-8 girls of varying grade levels at each table. One of the nuns supervised each meal, patrolling up and down, correcting bad manners, loud voices, and inappropriate conversation. A senior usually sat at the head of the table and was responsible to see that each girl was served and ate her food.

During the school year we had several at-school holidays called a Conge. On these special days, we had no classes. Instead, we played team games of soccer and basketball, and sometimes we had scavenger hunts, lunch was a picnic on the grounds. Dinner was a formal affair with everyone dressed in fancy clothes, with candlelight and a special meal.

When we left for boarding school little did I realize that I would never live at home again except for weekends, holidays and summer vacations.

These three years at Grand Coteau passed quickly, but the memories remain, and the wonderful education I received has served me well over the years as I entered adulthood.

LITTLE GIRL LOST
by
Patricia O'Brien

When I was a very young child, maybe two or three years old, my mother bathed me in the old dish water pan. There wasn't much water in it, but I could get clean, and still splash a bit. Momma's time was so precious--never enough hours in the day for a farmer's wife.

One day Momma left me for a few minutes to play in the tub while she ran to do one of her numerous chores--maybe to bring in the eggs, chop some kindling for the fire stove, or run to the well to draw up a fresh bucket of drinking water. Anyway, you get the idea...Momma knew she'd return in a few minutes, so she figured I'd be O.K. alone in the tub for a short while. When my Momma did return, I was gone. She ran through the house. She looked in the smoke house and the barn. Momma told me this story often while I was still a child. Momma said She was petrified. Her imagination created all sorts of scary scenarios. I could have fallen in the creek near the house and drowned. Or I might have climbed into one of the three tanks on our farm. Momma told me this story often while I was still a child.

Finally, Momma ran up the hill to Dad's family, but Grandmother and Granddad Crocker said I wasn't there. My Uncle Arl and Aunt Minnie started looking for me. Their concern was the tanks, and they considered ways to check them. We did not have big seines as the tank water was mostly for the cattle to have water when we had dry spells.

All of them searched for me for several hours to no avail. Who would have thought that a child that small would be on her way to visit her Daddy who worked as an accountant at the cotton gin? It was a good two miles, as the crow flies, to the cotton gin.

I had walked about one mile when a neighbor, Ned Truelove, found me. Ned was walking from Blooming Grove and he picked me up and carried me home to everyone who was searching for me. They welcomed me with open arms in my birthday suit. After that dusty trip, I needed to have another sponge off.

THE BIG BIRTHDAY PARTY
by
Pat Straley

Mom was in a flurry, getting my brother Jerry and myself bathed and dressed, and fixing some fancy food to take to a party. "It's a birthday party," she told us, "at Grammy and Grandad's house." We were so anxious to go we didn't even ask whose birthday it was. Then Dad came home from work, ate his supper and changed clothes. The four of us walked the two blocks down the street to Grammy and Grandad's house, a short walk in the small town of Belmore.

All the aunts, uncles, and cousins were there. A few of the women were helping Grammy in the kitchen, where she welcomed us. "Most everybody's here," Grammy said, "out in the back yard." We hurried out back. I remember feeling shy at the sight of so many people, shy enough to stay close to Mom. Everybody was talking and laughing. It was getting darker all the time as evening turned into night. One of the big boys hollered, "When do we start? Let's go!"

I grabbed Mom's hand. Grandad was farther out in the yard taking things out of a box. "What's Grandad doing?" I asked. Mom replied, "just watch and you'll see. Stay by me."

All of a sudden I heard *pippity pop, pippity pop*. Mom picked me up and stood so I could see flashes of light dancing on the ground in front of Grandad. "It's all right, those are firecrackers," she explained. Grandad was calling the big kids and getting them to stand far apart from each other, handing out what looked like sticks and putting a flaming match to the end of each stick. Now there were sizzling sounds and many, many sparkling patterns in the air. Everybody was shouting and laughing as the uncles tried to keep the kids with sparklers from running around.

Then Grandad walked further back in the yard, asking all but the uncles to sit down closer to the house and watch the sky.

Suddenly--WHIZZ BANG! WHIZZ BANG! there were explosions in the sky, showers of colored lights way up there: green and red, blue and yellow showers coming down toward us. I was excited and afraid at the same time. Mom hugged me. "Now watch this one," she said as she held me higher. All the uncles were walking with

Grandad to the very back end of the yard where they fastened something big on the gate post. The uncles briggled with lighted matches and Grandad turned around with arms up and shouted: "Now EVERYBODY, sing HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO AMERICA!" I saw stars and stripes take shape, sizzling and sparkling right there in the back yard while we all sang "Happy Birthday, America..." as loudly as we could.

So much commotion going on afterward, but what I remember best are the explosions of multi-colored light showers, lots of bangs and pops, and all of it bright and beautiful! Best of all, it was the first of many Fourth of July celebrations for me.

GRAMPY AND HIS BUDDIES
by
Tom Butcher

Grampy, as our father, Lawrence Butcher, was known by all in the family, was a successful business man, a terrific salesman, and a very gregarious individual. He loved people and they loved him in return. A contagious sense of humor resulted in many friends, especially around the City Barber Shop, which he frequented daily, not only for a shave, but also to get the latest news and gossip along Jefferson Street, the main thoroughfare.

His buddies, the barbers and businessmen, were not timid either and they enjoyed each other's company, always trying to upstage one another by playing practical jokes.

Many of the merchants who owned stores on Jefferson St. were cigar smokers rather than cigarette users, and they usually carried them in their shirt pockets. When they greeted each other in the morning, a slap on the breast pocket would crush the cigars making them unusable, and result in a good laugh at the expense of the victim. Grampy found a solution, which baffled his friends, until Mother gave away his secret.....she told them to check his socks. He was keeping the cigars safe and out of view by inserting them under the elastic ribbing, an arrangement rendered useless because of Mother's tip.

We lived beyond Girard Park during the 1930's, and my father raised chickens for our use, (we were six children), which helped with the food bill. After some time, he became disenchanted with the situation and decided to slaughter them, bringing them to the Shamrock ice cream store on West Vermilion Street for freezing and storage.

Some weeks later, two of the barbers, LoLo Broussard and Roy Babineaux, invited a large group of friends, including Grampy, to a barbeque on the weekend at Babineaux's house. Everyone had a great time, and thanked the two barbers for their genial hospitality, at which time Babineaux replied, "Don't thank us, thank Butcher. He furnished the chickens!" Grampy was a good sport, gracious, and got a good laugh out of the prank.

A year passed, and LoLo happened to have a crate of frozen crabs in cold storage, at Shamrock's, for a supper he was giving later in the year. Grampy found out about it and persuaded Mr. Smith, the owner, to let him have them because Smith had been in on the joke they had pulled earlier. Our family ate the crabs, put all the empty shells back in the crate, and re-froze them.

Sometimes later, LoLo scheduled his crab dinner with his friends from the barber shop and all looked with anticipation to a wonderful dinner. He found, to his dismay, that he had been fooled, when the crate was defrosted and only the shells remained. Don's Seafood was the beneficiary of some unexpected business that evening!

Babineaux was still to be repaid for his part in the chicken prank, and Grampy was not about to let him off the hook. Several months later, an offer of some rose bushes was made to Babineaux . Dad told him that he had ordered too many from the nursery and that if Roy wanted them, he would even send his yardman to plant them, assuring that the job would be done correctly.

In reality, the rose bushes offered were Indian roses, a type of rosebush which grows in the wild, multiplies voraciously, is practically indestructible, seldom blooms, and is very difficult to eradicate, once established. After a few months, Babineaux saw Dad at the barber shop and informed him that the two dozen bushes had yet to bloom, and were not very pretty around his house. At this point, Dad offered to send our yardman over again to fertilize them, which was promptly done. The bushes grew and grew, but no roses bloomed, just thorns and ugly stems. Finally, Babineaux had a nurseryman check them to find out how he could get them to bloom. That is when Roy found out that he had been duped and repaid for his previous "fowl deed."

These men were close friends and did many good deeds for others. For instance, Dad was very instrumental in getting Professor Howard Voorhies, the best man at his wedding, to move to Lafayette for the purpose of starting a band program at Cathedral High School in 1935. Eventually Prof established twelve bands in area high schools, and is considered the father of band music in South Louisiana.

Times were tough immediately before World War II, money for the program was difficult to raise, and the band was in trouble. The Christian Brothers, owners of the

school, surely could not afford to support the program either, as they were barely making ends meet themselves.

Dad knew of the problem because he was president of the band booster club, and approached his friends at his favorite hang-out, the City Barber Shop, for their ideas. Finally, a brilliant thought came forth from the group....why not buy a couple of used slot-machines, to raise money, which they did. With no one's knowledge as to their ownership, these slots were installed at the City Barber and the Vermilion Barber Shop, the only barber shops downtown, and before long, the money started to roll in. It soon became apparent to the group that these machines were a good idea, as the instruments, uniforms, and music facilities were paid for in short time, and there was a surplus in the band fund. This bothered the Brothers, because, one, they had no control of it, and, two, they could not find out what was generating the cash.

The long and short of it was that the Brothers bothered their benefactors to such an extent, that the Barbershop gang became angry, the machines were taken out of the locations, and were sold. That brought to an abrupt end, possibly, the most successful and innovative fund raising scheme in the annals of band financing in South Louisiana.

Mais, c'est la vie!

MEMORIES OF NAN
by
Gertrude Henke

I'm sure every family has a Nan—a nice, well-meaning female relative who insists upon interfering with everyone's life!

Whenever there was a thunderstorm, no matter how mild, the whole family, including aunts and cousins, would congregate at our house, the largest on the hill—at Nan's behest. It's a wonder we are not all deathly afraid of even a slight drizzle. Nan would have everyone remove hair pins, anything that was metal. She'd also make us sit on the floor, but that was only when she did not have us sit on the bed so that "if we must go, let's all go together." We were not even allowed to play cards to pass the time. I suppose card games were sinful to her, even Battle. People still remind me of when they happened to be visiting at those times and had to follow Nan's rules along with us. Even Daddy would come home from the office to appease Nan. He delighted in making the ladies nervous and would stand on the front porch counting aloud after each lightning flash—*1, 1000, 2, 1000, 3, 1000*—to await the clap of thunder and determine how far away the lightning had struck. He was definitely an outdoorsman!

Enough about thunderstorms.... Nan's idiosyncracies grew with her, and I remember times in my adult years when Nan was "just Nan." She would hire a new maid and try to train her to keep her hand over her mouth whenever she opened the refrigerator door. Of course, the maids never stayed for long—except "Da," the one who, every morning, religiously polished and dusted Nan's Trans Am (the car she purchased when she needed an oil change for her previous one).

Nan had Nol—her devoted husband, good old Nol—at her beck and call. And "cher" Nol had better walk the straight and narrow (which he would have done anyway). If Nol bought Nan a gift that Nan felt was too expensive, she stopped speaking to him for days at a time or she would return the gift, except, of course, the diamond ring that I inherited.

Each Sunday Nan and Nol would dine at either the Piccadilly or the Kettle, but not without Nan's set of utensils. If she had somehow left them behind, she would carefully wipe the restaurant's set before using them. After Nol died in 1960, Nan kept her Sunday tradition, but she hated to admit old age and refused to use a cane even

though she could barely walk. She actually went to the Piccadilly for her favorite Millionaire Pie. Instead of a cane, she used her broom!

Besides her eccentricities, Nan had her good points. She would shower us with gifts—but never failed to remind us of the price. We accepted her and her faults because, after all, she was "old."

In her lifetime, Nan was never without her *café au lait*—but mind you, she never took even one aspirin. We would put up with her "treat" for our little ones—a little taste of coke in their milk—even though it would ruin their appetites.

Nan and Nol would often visit us on Sundays about supper time. One hot afternoon Werner and I had been occupied trying to get Susan's temperature below 105°F, packing ice around her, trying just about everything.... Nan walked into the house with Nol, took one look around and said, "Chére, these drapes are old!" (As if I didn't know it after so many years of looking at them myself.) I felt like throwing up. Instead I started to cry. I was so exhausted and on edge between Susan's fever, the hot afternoon, and being pregnant. Werner didn't have my excuse, though, only that of a German temperament. He exploded, and Nol began shaking. I gave him a tablespoon of whiskey with a little sweetened water—Nan's request—my mother always gave me a dose for menstrual cramps, but never to ward off a heart attack. After a few more shaking moments, Nan and Nol walked out of our house. The next day some fortunate person was able to purchase their Packard at a *very* cheap price (you see, Werner was selling Packards at the time) and Nan didn't want anything to do with us after that.

Nan had an attorney who visited with her every Monday morning to write and rearrange her will. We all figured that his eraser must have been worn because Nan changed her mind so often. It all depended on who had upset her most recently. Of course, I missed out in at least one instance. Nan had willed all of her silver to me and then changed her mind and gave it to another relative. When all was said and done, though, Nan's fickle, but charitable, heart gave me other gifts. I certainly was not excluded from her will after she died at the ripe old age of 94. Good and bad, constant and fickle, concerned and nosey—Nan was all of these. And we can never forget her.