



Excerpts from
**Our Pages
Of Life**





We write lest we forget. That statement, written by one of my writing students, has become the motto of this wonderful group of people who draw from their lives to give—often unbeknownst to themselves!—to others. The members of their audience (you, me, the faces unseen, many not yet born) have been given a special gift.

What a treasure you will discover in this volume (XXII!!) of

Our Pages of Life!

In story we can pass along the legacies too easily lost amidst our hectic lifestyles. Through story we can tell the generations to come of generations past—so that we don't forget.

We write to remember—that there is a past, that that past is a part of us, and that the past can be turned into a stepping stone, forging a link to a future and a hope. I believe that it's for that future that these students write. They write lest they forget.

They also write so that we will remember.

Read, remember, and enjoy the treasures in these stories as you turn the pages of this collection of memoirs.

✦ Joan Stear, USL
Fall 1998

Thanks to the Horizons Department at Lafayette General Medical Center;
Life & Letters, an intergenerational company;
and University College and the English Department at the University of Southwestern Louisiana
for their continued support of our efforts to write for the generations to come.
Kudos, too, to each of my students for capitalizing Fun—what a wonderful life,
what a wonderful group of friends!

FRONT COVER: (*clockwise, beginning at top right corner*) Myrtle and Leo Schiller;
Beatrice Murphy (on left) and sister Vivian LeBlanc; Nell Clark;
Kitty Kelley, 1944; Johnnie Kocurek; Jim Jennings and his mother Grace, circa 1921;
Alfred Johnson, great uncle of Versie Foti; (*center*) Stanley F. Davis, circa 1902

This volume of stories is lovingly dedicated to

Stanley Fox Davis
Born on September 1, 1898

Belated birthday wishes for a wonderful centennial celebration



Stanley Fox Davis and Joan Stear
Stanley's 100th Birthday Celebration



USL LIFE WRITING CLASS
Fall 1998 • Tuesday Morning Session

***Seated, left to right: Johnnie Kocurek; Myrtle Schiller; Bea Murphy;
Stanley F. Davis; Kitty Kelley • Standing, left to right: Paul Miller;
Olympe A. Butcher; Fran Gross; Nell Clark; Joe Glorioso;
Woodson Hopkins; Jim Jennings, Jr.; John Townsend;
Betty Shoemaker; Joan Stear, Instructor; Versie Foti •
Missing from photo: Betty Tripp***



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DUST, DUST EVERYWHERE

by

John A. Townsend, Jr.

The time—late afternoon on a Sunday in June 1945.

The place—Camp Fannin, roughly 10 miles north of Tyler, Texas, on the Gladewater Highway.

It had been a rough week at the camp with our basic combat training getting into high gear. We had made a thirty-mile forced march, been on the rifle range on entire day, and then set out on an overnight 'jungle' enfilade to learn how to avoid and/or escape an ambush while in combat.

The only time we saw anything wet was while wading in the waters of the marsh or slough while we were doing the enfilade exercise. For the past two weeks there had been no rain. The temperature hovered near the 100 degree mark during the day and dropped only to the mid 80's at night. Some of the guys slept atop blankets outside the barracks but there was no 'cool' place. The grass which should have been green was turning brown and brittle, usually a prelude to autumn in late August or during the month of September.

Tony Martinez, a friend in our platoon, had received a letter from his family near Amarillo, Texas, that told of 120 degree temperatures, in increasing dry weather. Water and graze for their cattle was a big problem. In southern Kansas and northwest Oklahoma, sand storms were being seen.

In and around Tyler we had noted a yellowish pall in the late evening sky. But, none of the foreboding signs put a damper on our anticipation of pleasure for the approaching weekend.

On Friday evening some of us were boarding the bus to ride into Tyler. A few were gearing up to spend the weekend with some family who had volunteered to entertain them for the period.

This practice, weekend family, was an on going event in the area. My buddy, John Thompson, and I had the pleasure only a week or two earlier. Three or four other guys—the poker winners—were taking a bus into Dallas—lucky devils.

John Thompson, Harold Townsend—no relation—and I were headed for the bowling alley in Tyler where we'd meet our dates, then on to the movies, and a late supper. Midnight would see us back at camp.

Following breakfast the next morning, we returned to Tyler and the bowling alley. It was cheap entertainment. For the princely sum of \$1.50, I could bowl twelve lines. If I paid \$2.50 I could bowl all day. I was given a token that I only had to show the attendant. The chit allowed me and us to leave the premises to eat or whatever. If my memory serves me right—I believe there were six lanes in the bowling alley.

Sunday had arrived. Harold and I picked up our girls, Louise—his, and Marion—mine, and went with them to a Baptist Church. We ate lunch at the home of Louise's aunt whose name I don't recall. We then went to a movie—only open for a matinee on Sunday, "Bengal Lancer," I think, with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and Theda Bara—the latter, a guess.

Sometime during the movie the place became almost stifling. We learned, later, when we were leaving, that management had switched off the fans.

Emerging from the theater we saw a yellow pall over everything. To breathe was an effort. Dust lay upon the surface of every car in sight as well as the benches along the sidewalk, and the sills under the show windows of the nearby stores. The girls were ready to go home—quickly complaining that the dust or sand was getting into their clothing—causing their skin to itch.

Harold and I found ourselves making an early return to the camp. The closer we got to the gate, the thicker the dust pall. Our bus driver was worried that the dust or sand would clog the carburetor on the engine.

By the time Harold and I had walked to our barracks, our skin felt like one of our days in the field crawling in the dirt. We were looking forward to a bath. Once in the barracks, we could hardly believe our eyes. A half inch of dust or sand covered our blankets, foot lockers, the floor, and our hanging clothing. A few of the guys were in the barracks making an effort to clean up. John Thompson, who was from Utah, and Tony Martinez told them to quit wasting their time.

As evening approached, things began to settle down and the sunset became visible for the first time in a week. We learned later that all the dust had originated far to the north and west of our locale, upper level winds carrying it to us. In a letter from my mother, I learned that to a somewhat less degree the Shreveport area had felt the effects of those storms. Cleanup time lasted until midnight, but for days we could shake sand from blankets and clothing.

I can't even guess how it was in the area where all the dust and sand came from. It makes me itch to think about it.



THE IMPORTANT LESSON I LEARNED WHICH WASN'T TAUGHT IN SCHOOL

**by
James M. Jennings, Jr.**

I was a high school freshman in 1934 when my favorite uncle, Modoc Rykoski, invited me to accompany him on a mid-week fishing trip to Frank Ritter's fishing camp.

We reached the Ritter camp by driving to Yscloskey, south of New Orleans near Lake Borne. From that little village, the camp's boat took us far out in the marshes near Chandeleur Sound.

Although I learned much from Uncle Modoc and Mr. Ritter as we fished, one of the important lessons was taught by the camp's slot machines, illegal gambling devices according to Louisiana law. These were the old fashioned five-cent Jennings brand with the big red cherries on the dial and the long chrome-plated handle on the right side. I didn't discover how the mechanical innards of these machines were adjusted, but the odds were set to heavily favor the "house."

Mr. Ritter, our host, would exchange a \$2.00 roll of nickels for a paper dollar, if the gambler would agree to play all forty of the five cent pieces through the slot machine one time.

Frank Ritter knew his games of chance and his slots. He never lost. As a high school freshman, I found out why slot machines are called "one-arm bandits." In addition, I mentally noted that illegal slots were quasi-legal if they were housed far from civilization.

A couple of years later, I had a job delivering parcels on a Simplex motor-bike in downtown New Orleans. Often I took a package down to the Canal Street ferry for delivery across the Mississippi River to a West Bank customer in Gretna or Algiers.

My instructions usually were to simply leave the carton with the auto-fare collector. The customer would pay a transportation fee when he received the merchandise on the Algiers side of the river.

During these deliveries, I often noticed the row of elevated boxes along the inner wall of the auto-deck. Whatever was in them was concealed by locked, black, steel covers, a mystery until one unforgettable day, I had to ride the ferry to the West Bank with my package, a C.O.D. delivery.

As soon as the ferry's mooring hawsers were cast off from the Canal Street loading ramp, a deck hand hurriedly walked up, unlocked, and dropped the steel covers from the row of boxes which were hiding slot machines. Mystery solved!

Men and women popped out of their cars to pull the handles during the ten minute river crossing. Then, when the ferry's whistle blew to signal the approach for the landing at the Algiers ramp, a deck hand rushed to conceal and lock up the machines again. I sensed it was O.K. to play the slot machines while the ferry steamed across the Mississippi. (Were we in international waters during the crossing?)

That summer, lunch was usually a crisp French bread sandwich eaten in a small restaurant near the corner of Carondelet St. and Julia St. There were two slots there, displayed openly, for the amusement of the diners. One day, the proprietor told us he watched during the week to see if either machine paid out a big jack-pot. If neither had, when he closed the sandwich shop after the Saturday lunch crowd left, he would begin playing.

Starting out with fifty, two dollar rolls of nickels, he would continue pulling the handle until he hit a jack-pot. He bragged to my Daddy that he earned enough money, working the slots those Saturday afternoons, to pay the monthly rent on his restaurant. That man knew his slot machines.

Since these youthful lessons concerning this type of gambling, I have observed slots being played in Las Vegas and Winnemucca, Nevada, on Caribbean cruise ships, and in tropical island casinos.

What I observed reinforced the not-in-school lessons I learned as a high schooler: when you put your money in the slot and pull the handle, your cash is gone forever.



THE INFLUENCE OF HORSES

by

Versie L. Foti

Horses have been an important part of my life beginning in early childhood and lasting through 1994 when circumstances brought that influence to a halt. My earliest recollection of transportation, other than walking, was by horse-drawn buggy or wagon. Mama and Daddy did not own a car or truck until 1926. When we attended church and visited Grandpa and Grandma on Sundays we traveled by buggy. A neighbor who taught school picked me up to ride with her in a buggy to school and back. Trips made to the woods to get firewood, pick blackberries, and cut down Christmas trees were made by wagon pulled by mules.

As I grew older, probably by 7 or 8 years of age, I learned to ride horse back. It became my job after school to carry water jugs and coffee to the men in the field, riding Sally, the mare, bare-back. Soon I became experienced at riding horses and expanded my trips from the field to the store a mile away on a gravel road and to visit friends and relatives in the community. My brother, Vira, and my sister, Sue, who were both younger than I, also learned to early to ride horses. We often spent weekends riding with friends and cousins in the community.

Some of the riders and horses were better than others. We sometimes held races to determine the best horse and rider. As we grew more and more daring, we jumped ditches, canals, and cattle guards. Most of these events were held out of sight of adults who we thought would tattle to our parents and get us in trouble. Fortunately, other than a sprained ankle or arm from falling off a horse or being thrown off, I don't remember any serious injuries to either horses or riders.

The proficiency I developed from riding horses on the farm served me well when I went to L.S.U.--Louisiana State University, Agricultural and Mechanical College. I lived in Evangeline Dormitory which was located a short distance from the coliseum where livestock shows and rodeos were held and

where students in the College of Agriculture met for some classes. The coliseum became a familiar place for girls from Evangeline dorm to see the animals and socialize with the guys who were there.

Every spring, the College of Agriculture held a livestock show and rodeo which lasted a week. Several girls and I who came from farm backgrounds obtained jobs working during that week. We took turns working at the concession stands, keeping records, and doing odd jobs to make extra spending money. We were allowed free entry to the events. We saw all the show animals and met many interesting people including the rodeo performers. The whole week was an exciting time for us.

The show horses and the parade horses needed to be exercised every day. Some of us girls who could ride horses were hired by the owners to warm up the horses before the performances. We slowly gravitated toward our favorite horses and soon set up barrels and began barrel racing.

Barrel racing was one of the competitive events at the rodeos but the riders were all male. After a few days of practice, we girls persuaded the owners of the horses and the rodeo officials to allow us to compete in an all-girl-barrel race on the last night of the rodeo. What a thrill! In March 1941, the first ever all-girl-barrel race was held at the L.S.U. College of Agriculture rodeo. I won the race! I still have the glass water pitcher and two of the six glasses that were awarded as the prize 57 years ago!

The women's barrel-race was an event on the last night of the rodeo again in 1942. I won the race and this time the prize was \$20.00. Women's barrel racing then became a regular event at the rodeo.

As my five children grew up, we had saddle horses for them to ride. The first horse was a gelding named Raindrop because he was born during a rainstorm. Through the years, others that followed included Otis, Sally, Suzy, and Belle. The children spent most weekends and summers riding on the country roads and through the cane fields. Many children in Maringouin had horses, and there was great similarity between the escapades of my generation and my children's generation.

The two best riders among my children were Linda and Jerome. Both of them loved horses and became excellent riders. The other three children, Terry, Kenneth and Lamar rode sporadically.

In the fall of 1962, my husband, John, was invited to go with some horsemen to Keeneland, Kentucky where they hoped to buy some thoroughbred yearlings at auction. John knew absolutely nothing about thoroughbreds except how to read a racing form.

A brown filly caught his eye and he found himself bidding on her and buying her for \$2,300.00. I could not believe John had bought this thoroughbred! What would he do with her in Maringouin? He had no pasture, no barn, no stall, no tack and he hadn't the faintest notion about how to care for a horse. He had never even ridden a horse! No one in Maringouin knew anything about thoroughbreds--cutting horses and regular saddle horses, yes--but certainly not thoroughbreds!

"Oh, well," I thought, "he will soon tire of the horse and that'll be over!" How wrong I was! The bug lasted almost thirty years.

Well, here we were with an unbroken, untrained, Kentucky-bred racehorse in Maringouin. What would be an appropriate name for her? Between John and the children, the name that surfaced was Jovial Molar. John rented a pasture and barn about a mile out of town. Every afternoon, he loaded the children into the Ford station wagon and they headed out to the barn to feed, water, and walk Jovial Molar. Very soon Jovial Molar was tame enough that she came to the gate when she saw the station wagon drive up. She became a pet. The children loved caring for her. By Christmas, Linda and Jerome were riding her. They began an exercise program with Jovial Molar by riding her around the pasture counter-clockwise, gradually increasing the speed. The horse seemed to enjoy the work-outs and would go to the stall to be saddled as soon as the station wagon turned off the road onto the lane leading to the barn.

Shortly after the first of the year, one of John's friends, Norman LeBlanc, who trained and raced thoroughbreds, was visiting. He went with John to the pasture to see the filly and watch Linda exercise her. Norman was so impressed

with Jovial Molar's raw speed that he persuaded John to let him take the horse to Jefferson Downs to work her with some other horses.

On March 21, 1963, Norman entered Jovial Molar in a race for two year old fillies at Jefferson Downs. She won the 3 ½ furlong race in 43 seconds! Several times during the next two months, the filly ran again and won each time going away. John was so excited about the speed of this horse!

In June 1963, several horsemen were taking their stables of thoroughbreds to Louisville, Kentucky to run at Miles Park which opened after Churchill Downs closed culminating with the running of the Kentucky Derby. There were not enough stalls at Miles Park for the competing horses, so some horsemen rented stalls and exercised their horses at Churchill Downs. John decided to go to Louisville with Jovial Molar and he rented a stall at Churchill Downs.

John rented an apartment at Arlington Village in Shively, a suburb of Louisville. The day after school closed in May, the children and I drove to Louisville to vacation there while John raced his horse. The apartment was large and comfortable. The complex had two swimming pools and it was within walking distance of a mall. About a mile away was a beautiful mountain-top park where we often cooked out in the late afternoons. We had a box at the race track and children were allowed to accompany their parents there. We all loved spending the summer in Louisville because there was so much to do for entertainment and the weather was delightfully cool compared to the hot humid weather in Louisiana.

The first big race was on July 2, Jovial Molar, carrying No. 7, won and the picture at the finish line showed no other horse. The second place winner was too far behind to be in the picture. Even I began to get excited about Jovial Molar!

The next big race was run on July 13. Excitement ran high because it was the Dale Robertson Handicap, a feature race, widely advertised and paying a big purse. Competition was intense. The best of the two year olds were entered. The jockey, Larry Freeman, wearing our colors, a red satin shirt with a large white molar applied on the back, rode Jovial Molar, again carrying No. 7, and

won the race! In addition to the purse, Dale Robertson presented a beautiful red and white wool horse blanket to John. The biggest thrill for the children was getting to meet Dale Robertson--a real live T.V. cowboy actor!

The summer of 1964 was spent in Louisville again with Jovial Molar. We had such a wonderful time the previous summer and the weather was so cool and delightful that we encouraged many of our relatives and friends to plan their vacations around a trip to Louisville. We rented another apartment, in addition to our own, to accommodate our guests. For two months it was occupied constantly.

Jovial Molar continued to perform well at Miles Park. She ended the meet with two wins, one second, one third and one fourth. We didn't take home much money, but she paid for our fabulous extended vacations for the entire family. Her career did not end at Miles Park. John brought her back to Louisiana where she had several more successful meets at Jefferson Downs and the Fair Grounds.

Jovial Molar's successful career and a gambler's beginning luck hooked John on thoroughbreds. He was an annual participant in the Fall Yearling Sales in Keeneland for some twenty years until he began breeding his own. Through the years, such candidates as Sandy Cuspid, Latigo Incisor, Cavitron, Restless Pain and others filled the stable. Some were winners, some were losers, but I can't deny the impact horses have had on my life.

We began to liquidate the thoroughbred stock in 1987 when John had his first bout with cancer. We no longer bred the mares. We sold the two studs and gradually sold some of the racing stock and the yearlings. Two years after John's death in 1993, the children and I decided to liquidate everything--the farm, the barn, all the equipment, the trucks, and even the house which ended an important phase of my life--and my association with horses.



PICKING COTTON

by
Bea Murphy

I can still see and smell those cotton fields, row after row of white cotton waiting to be picked. For three summers, Mama, Vivian, and I picked cotton on my Grandmother's farm, two weeks every year. We picked cotton at a penny a pound to pay for our school supplies. Even though the fields were right in back, Mama joined us because she didn't want us in the fields by ourselves.

I was thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen years old those summers. We wore long sleeved dresses and big straw hats. We would add fresh leaves in our hats to give us more shade. By the end of day the leaves would be dry. We would have large sacks that dragged on the ground. We'd sling the attached strip of cloth across our shoulder to carry the sack. My cousins Tom, Alta, Dan, Agnes, and also the Stutes' cousin, Wombell, were all pickers.

I'm surprised that I do not remember the heat. I was a small teenager and rather frail, but I was up to two weeks of cotton picking. Because my mother was older and had so many responsibilities, I know the heat was hard on her. We'd go out real early, at the first light of day. We would stop around 1:00 A.M. for lunch and rest. Then we would resume at 2:00 P.M. until dusk. Aunt Alice would have a good dinner for us.

We were serious about picking cotton, but we also had fun in mind. We'd sneak over to the nearby melon field to eat the ripe melons. Tom would take his cotton sack, pound it into the ground and cry out, "There's oil down there!" (His prediction came true. Two oil wells have been producing on the property since the early 1980's. At one time they were paying \$2,400.00 an acre in royalties monthly.) As children, we had all been to Uncle Homer's funeral and heard Aunt Marie scream "Poor Pop!" through the whole funeral home. Wombell would scream "Poor Pop!" while picking cotton. Of course, as kids, we would laugh at his incantation. We would also sing French songs like "Jolie Blonde" and "Madame Sostene." The two weeks would come to an end, and we had enough money for our school supplies. When I was fifteen I was a

senior and bought my high school ring with MY cotton picking money. I think the ring cost eight dollars. That means I picked eight hundred pounds.



ADVANCES IN MEDICINE

As they have related to me

by

Betty Tripp

In 1911 the Lafayette Sanitarium was opened for treating patients in Lafayette and the surrounding area. The Sanitarium was located on St. John Street near the Cathedral Carmel School. My first contact with the Sanitarium was in January 1956. In December 1955 I had visited my family who lived Lafayette. Warren was on the *USS John Hood* and was on a cruise in the Mediterranean Ocean. I was staying with Mom and Dad waiting for him to return to Norfolk and then I would go and live in Norfolk, Virginia, while he was stationed there.

Since Warren was not sure when the ship would return, I decided to go to work at the Sanitarium. The Lafayette Sanitarium was a small hospital with approximately 85 beds. There was an emergency room (called the back porch), the general floor for medical and surgical patients, a couple of operating rooms, and the obstetrical wing where the nursery and the delivery room were located. When I started in January 1956, Margaret Taylor was Head Nurse of the general side. She was from Wales and had a strong Welch accent. She was a very kind lady and every one was fond of her. Director of Nursing was Jewel Meek. I was employed to work on the general side.

There were only a few RN's employed at that time. One was a very outspoken nurse named Angelina Glaudi. She had graduated from New Orleans Charity Hospital in 1923. She was the Sanitarium's first graduate nurse and was a head nurse, anesthetist, and purchasing agent. The other nurses were practical nurses who had been trained on the job by the Director, doctors, and Miss Glaudi. I did not enjoy my job at all. The majority of the nurses and the patients spoke French, and I spoke no French. It would drive me crazy to open drawers and closets and have roaches running around. I was also in the first stage of my first pregnancy, and morning sickness was terrible. Mom thought I would feel better if I worked 3-11, so I started the 3-11 shift and continued it through the rest of my working years. In March, Warren called me and said the ship was in

Newport News, Virginia, for a couple months and then would go to Norfolk. Within a few days I was on a plane out of Lafayette!

My next contact with Lafayette Sanitarium was in October 1959 after Warren and I and two children had moved here to Lafayette in September. Conditions had greatly improved over those three years! In October 1958 it had become known as Lafayette Memorial Sanitarium, Inc. A new wing had been added, Clark Hall (named after Dr. Clark who died in 1958). There were more nurses who had graduated from USL and other hospitals in the state and around the country. There were several trade schools beginning to graduate LPN's also.

I started working part time, and my salary was \$10.00 per day. I was hired to work in the nursery for the 3-11 shift. I was happy with the position and with the girls who worked in the nursery. Earline Landry was Head Nurse, Jewel Meek, Director of Nurses, and James Gardiner, Administrator.

Most of the deliveries were done by general practitioners. There were a few OB doctors--Drs. Morgan, Daly, Chaisson, Hewitt. By now, pediatricians were coming to Lafayette to start their practice.

When a sick baby or a "preemie" baby was born, they were placed in an isolette. Oxygen was turned on and we watched to see if their color improved. When it did, we started to bottle feed them and wean them from the oxygen. In 1963 plans began to be made to build a new hospital in the Oil Center on land donated by Maurice Heymann. This hospital would become known as Lafayette General Medical Center.

When construction started on the new hospital, Mary Perrodin was the head nurse in the nursery. She would go and visit the hospital as construction progressed and would tell us about the "wonderful and new equipment" we would have. The nursery would be located on the second floor along with the Labor and Delivery rooms and the rooms for the post partum patients and the gynecological patients. Lafayette General's grand opening was on April 4, 1965. At this time, the director of nurses was Rowena Harrell, and the administrator was William Carroll. We opened the nursery with one new baby but increased our census very quickly. The nursery was divided into three rooms. One room

was for admitting the baby and then after several hours they went to one of the other rooms. The nursery personnel increased too. Eventually we started doing intensive care for the babies, a real challenge. The nurses learned to start IV's, give medicine we had never heard of, and the respiratory department became active in the nursery when the prematures were put on respirators and had to be monitored constantly. I was never really comfortable working in the Intensive Care Unit. I was more confident around healthy babies. In 1980 construction was started on the 10-story west wing. When this wing was finished, the nursery was moved over there, and Pediatrics was moved to the area where OB and GYN had been. More floors were completed on the main part of the hospital, and a parking tower was constructed.

During this year of 1998, construction has been under way that has involved the entire second floor. Our department is now known as Women's Services. It involves Pediatrics, a Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, the Neonatal Intensive Care, Labor and Delivery, and the OB-Gyn Department. We now have more Labor, Delivery, and Recovery rooms, and the nursery is back where it started in the same area with NICU. On the west wing is the Pediatric Department and the post partum and GYN patients. The Pediatric Intensive Care Unit, the only unit of its kind in the city, was just completed.

The hospital is now in the process of teaching all employees how to use the new computer system that is being installed. The nurses will do their charting on it, and supplies will be obtained on it, with every department involved. I will not see all these new procedures implemented as I have decided to retire at the end of this year. After 39 years, I think that I have been a part of all that I care to keep up with. I did not go to nursing school to be a computer expert, so it is time for me to say "good bye" and "good luck" to those who will be going into the next century and witnessing all the advances that will come about.



SELF CONFIDENCE #34162

**by
Johnnie Kocurek**

Strolling down Chaparral Street in Corpus Christi, Texas, with chin held high, arms swinging and walking in two foot strides, I beamed with self confidence. The warm sunshine and September breezes made the day perfect. World War II had ended a month ago and all seemed well with the world. Our soldiers, sailors, and marines were arriving home daily. Automobiles sported new tires and every department store in Corpus was restocking. Rationing was over and grocery shelves proudly displayed sugar and beef, adorned with signs boldly printed "NO LIMITS." Leather shoes were no longer rationed nor in short supply, and my heart raced as I headed toward Saad's Shoe Store. "Real leather shoes," I thought as I let the idea comfortably settle in my brain. "No ration stamps needed, just my feet and a few dollars."

Neither of the two requirements for new leather shoes were a problem to me. A crocheted purse hung from a long strap over my left shoulder. The contents of the purse, known to me only, weighed little, but contributed heavily to my self-confidence. The crocheted purse contained an accomplishment on my part. Saving money was never one of my strong points, and my total savings had always been contained in a small toy bank or a cigar box filled with pennies and nickels. Due to my poor record of saving, I had only heard of splurging, never having the opportunity to do so, that is...until NOW!

My good fortune of this day could be contributed to the generosity of two of my Aunts on my father's side, an Aunt on my mother's side and two close neighbors of my youth whom I had called Aunt. I had graduated from high school three months before at the tender age of sixteen. I had saved every dollar these generous relatives had sent me in graduation cards and tucked the green bills between the pages of my Bible somewhere in Timothy.

I was seventeen the June following graduation and mingled the money I received for my birthday with my graduation savings. That was quite a

birthday...seventeen and already rich. I closed my Bible and did not look at the money again until September 12th, my mother's birthday.

Purchasing a birthday gift for Mother would not be difficult. Evening in Paris Perfume was always appropriate. I removed five dollars from the back of bills and closed the Bible. I noticed a slip of green showing from the pages of the Good Book. I opened it once more and was surprised as I counted my money, thirty eight dollars still resting in 1st Timothy.

I call it coincidence, for as I moved the bills to the side of the Bible pages, there in the book of Timothy, words jumped at me: "Money-- root of all evil." My little inner voice jumped in right behind Timothy. *Get rid of it, get rid of it! Evil, Evil!* Hence my stroll down Chaparral Street became a mission of repentance.

A list of items I intended to buy was wrapped around the money secured with a rubber band and tucked into the crocheted purse. The first item was a pair of shoes. If anyone had the brown leather loafers I wanted, it would be Saad's Shoe Store, reputed to be the best shoe store in Corpus Christi. Higher priced shoes and the wonderful X-Ray machine at the back of their store had a lot to do with the store's favorable reputation.

Several groups of newly arrived, post war leather shoes, perched on free standing wooden display boxes, greeted me as entered the store. My fingertips lightly touched a few pairs as I walked between the displays, feeling and smelling the rich pleasant aroma of leather. I took a seat in one of Saad's plush chairs, looking around at the displays until my eyes rested on a pair of brown leather loafers.

A dapper salesman in a three piece suit, white shirt and tie approached. "May help you?" he asked, showing some white teeth to fake a smile.

"I want that shoe," I said showing a few of my white teeth as I pointed to the brown leather loafer on display.

"And your size?" he inquired.

"I'm not sure, but I think a six and one half," and I hurriedly added, "We'll have to use the X-Ray."

Mr. Dapper left me and returned shortly with a shoe box. I quickly reached down and removed my huaraches that I had purchased in Mexico. Real leather--and they still smelled a distinct untanned Mexico leather odor. Dapper looked at the huaraches in disgust, sat down on a small stool in front of me and slipped a six and one half sized loafer on my foot. "How does that feel?" he asked.

"I can't really tell," I answered as I left the chair and moved slowly toward the X-Ray machine. Dapper rose from the stool and reluctantly followed me. I stepped onto the machine and stood still for just a moment. I thought of my Mother instantly, knowing she would have a hissy fit if she knew I was going to use this dangerous machine, the same hissy fit she had when I got too near the water at the beach or took an elevator all the way to the top floor of a building. But nothing could stop me, not even Mother's silent disapproval, and I slipped my leather clad feet into the openings at the bottom of the machine. Dapper flipped a switch, and the machine purred as he and I took turns resting our eyes on the two eye cups on top of the X-Ray. I saw a pile of bones resembling a foot. Dapper saw a six and one half loafer sale.

"Perfect fit," he told me, now showing teeth in a genuine smile. "We just got these in. Grooviest style for the fall," adding a bit of temptation. "They are only \$8.95," he concluded, cinching the sale.

"I'll wear them!" I declared and handed him my aromatic huaraches. He took the Mexican shoes between his index finger and his thumb, lifted his nose a little in the air, and quickly dropped them in the empty shoe box.

I removed my roll from my crocheted purse, handed Dapper a \$10 bill, borrowed his pencil, and scratched "shoes" from my list. I put my change in my purse and left Saad's. Even new loafers irritating my bare heels did not dampen my self confidence.

The next stop on my list was Best Dress Shoppe. It took little time to select two Sloppy Joe sweaters, one red and one gold, together with a detachable white collar to wear with either of them. I paid for them and felt quite pleased with myself. I was learning how to splurge. I had \$18.00 left. The third and final item on the list was a dress. K. Woolens was my last stop. I went in wanting a Gibson Girl look and I came out with a Gibson Girl dress.

My self confidence was still running high. There I stood on Chaparral Street, a shoe box in one hand, a dress box in the other, and a crocheted purse containing \$3.05 hanging on my shoulder. The root of all evil was almost spent.

A stop at the Beverly Shop for a pin to wear on my Gibson Girl blouse convinced me that I had beaten the devil. Inside Beverly's I selected a pin, paid the clerk, and counted my money. \$2.05. I turned from the counter and there, leaping at me like the devil himself was the sign of signs. "FUR COATS--½ PRICE...LAY AWAY AVAILABLE."

I walked to the rack of coats, selected a full length squirrel fur coat and put it on. A three way mirror reflected back to me the most beautiful coat in the world. I hugged myself as I looked into the mirror. "The loafers must go," I murmured under my breath as I glanced below the coat to my feet. I smoothed the fur, ignored the loafers, flipped my hair a bit, turned around a few time and breathlessly asked, "How much?"

An older lady in a black dress heard me and looking at the tag attached to the sleeve of the coat, smiled and answered. "It was \$78.50. It is now \$49.00 plus 20% federal tax. Total price is \$58.80." She was about to dismiss me when I blurted out, "I'll take it!" I didn't recognize the hoarse, crackling voice, yet I knew it came from me. Then I heard myself asking, "What is your lay away plan?"

"\$1.00 down and \$1.00 a week," the pretty lady mumbled, still in disbelief. She lifted the fur coat off my shoulders. "Come to the counter," she instructed, the coat over her arm. She wrote out the sales slip and pushed it toward me. "\$58.80 less \$1.00 deposit, leaves a balance of \$57.80. You'll pay

a dollar a week until paid in full.” It sounded more like a question than a statement.

She snipped the price tag off the coat and stapled it to a layaway tag and informed me. “You are layaway #34162.” I could almost feel my little crochet purse tremble as I removed a dollar bill.

I stood there. I could not believe I was buying a fur coat. The Timothy verse exploded, and I added to the Epistle’s words, “Don’t spend money that you do not have.”

I paid for that coat, one dollar every week for fifty one weeks, the balance on the 52nd week. Over the year I learned the pretty lady’s name was Lucille, and she cheered me on each week as the balance on the coat got lower and lower. Lucille even allowed me to visit my coat occasionally, taking me to the back of the store and looking through garments until we found #34162. I stroked it and talked to it as it hung there waiting to go home with me.

Lucille wasn’t working when the day came for me to take the coat home. A strange lady went to the back of the store and returned with my beautiful coat. “Layaway #34162,” she read from a ticket. She took my coat from its hanger and reached for a large box from behind the counter.

“I’ll wear it!” I said. The clerk looked at me strangely. I smiled back at her and thought, *Lucille would have understood.*

With the coat over my shoulders, I left the store. The warm sunshine with September breezes made the day perfect. Strolling down Chaparral Street in Corpus Christi, with chin held high, arms swinging, walking in two foot strides, a bit warm, I beamed with self confidence.

I’ve had more fur coats since then, but I have never had more self confidence than when I went strolling on Chaparral Street in September 1946, wearing Layaway #34162.



A MEMORABLE OUTING

by

Stanley F. Davis

March 10, 1998

Some years ago Livia, my wife, and I were visiting her relatives in Medellin, Colombia. Her favorite cousin, Tulio 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, Tulio asked 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 what kind of an outing he planned.

Early the next morning, March 11, 1973 (exactly 25 years ago tomorrow), I met Tulio and his two friends, Emilio Garcia and Roberto Valencia, both elderly retired men. Neither Tulio 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 Conquistadors. The spot where they were digging had been chosen because of certain omens, legendary tales, and frequently reported supernatural sightings.

It was obvious that Tulio'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 Tulio 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 that 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 mountains 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 tenderfoot and almost exhausted, Tulio 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 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 Robert immediately jumped into the pit and began digging it deeper. Tulio 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 conquistadors 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 bocadillas, a typical Colombian sweet treat. Of course, they had also brought a jug of water.

I lay 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 asked, "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 recovering 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 than the climb. The taxi was waiting, and soon we were back in the hotel at the bar enjoying the cold beer I dreamed 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 fall day on a mountain top in Colombia searching for gold believed hidden by Spanish conquistadors.



OUR HONEYMOON DISASTER—NO ROOM IN THE INN

by

Myrtle Thibodeaux Schiller

Should have been an omen--the wedding rehearsal was held without my husband to be. Leo was stationed at the naval air base in Coronado, California, and had to come by car to Los Angeles where we were to be married. The smog along the coast was so heavy that Leo, who was his best man, Clifford Bossert, and other friends had to walk almost all the way ahead of the car to help the driver steer through the thick fog. The rehearsal was held with my Uncle E.J. acting as his proxy. Finally, Leo and Clifford arrived, bedraggled and tired at 4 a.m. the morning of our wedding, New Year's Eve 1942

Our nuptials were spoken at 8 a.m. in Our Lady of Loretta Church with a reception held at Uncle E.J.'s house. The wedding party stayed with us all day and on through the New Year's Eve party, held at a favorite place called Mom and Pop's, where everyone there, it seemed, bought drinks for us. After midnight everyone in the wedding party came up to our hotel room and stayed till about 4 o'clock in the morning.

We were both so tired, Leo after having walked almost all the way from Coronado and me not having slept from worrying about him, that we went to sleep in each other's arms almost immediately! So much for our wedding night....

We had to return to the base in Coronado for Leo to go to work early Monday morning. After leaving L.A. at about 8 p.m. for Coronado where my uncle had paid for a night at the del Coronado Hotel as a wedding gift to us, we encountered the same smog. It was New Year's night, and traffic was horrendous. So it was well after midnight when we arrived at the hotel, and guess what? The hotel had canceled our reservation. Nothing was available!

Our dilemma! What to do! Luckily, I had the address of friends, Jim and Margurite Williams who were stationed there. We looked them up. As luck would have it, they had a one bedroom apartment and only a sofa in the living

room. Sooo...I spent my second night alone. Leo had to go back to the base because by that time it was morning and he had to report for duty.

Whew--can you beat that for disasters?!!

But you know what? On our 50th anniversary, our six children gave us a three day "second honeymoon" at the del Coronado Hotel in Coronado, California. Our son, Craig, wrote the Hotel and told them the story of our experience. They gave us a wonderful reception, beautiful red roses, lower rates on a VIP suite, and even featured us on A.B.C. News on New Year's Day. That was fifty years after our "honeymoon." A pretty good twist to a near disaster, don't you think?



HOMECOMING

by

Joe Glorioso

As usual, this is a multi-part story written partially to comply with the five-page rule. The first part is about the 1935 New Iberia High School Homecoming. I'm not sure about the date of the homecoming. If it occurred before October 3rd, I was eighteen. If it occurred after that date, I was nineteen. The dates, however, have minimal overall significance in the sequence of stories.

To hitchhike to New Iberia on game day Friday, I needed to leave Baton Rouge early on Thursday afternoon. To do that, I had to make arrangements with Dr. Davis to take an important history test at noon on Thursday. On Wednesday after history class, I met Dr. Davis in his office to get his permission to take the test early on the next day. As I studied in his office while waiting for him, he walked through the open door with a bright smile, greeted me and asked, "Hi, Joe. Didn't I see you in my nine o'clock class?" I returned his smile and nodded. Arranging his history notes in a desk drawer, he asked, "What can I do for you today?" His tone sounded a bit sarcastic as though I constantly asked favors of him. I was a bit uneasy, but I pressed on. I told him about the homecoming in New Iberia on the coming Friday, fibbing a little about the class party that was planned with some of my classmates and a few of our favorite teachers. Dr. Davis mellowed as he listened to my story, delivered as humbly as I knew how. He answered, "I have a luncheon meeting with three faculty members on Thursday noon. If we persuade Gee Mitchell to be here at noon, can you take the test in my office then?"

At that moment Gee, Dr. Davis' graduate assistant, walked into the office, "Hello, Doctor." Then facing me he asked, "Joe, why are you hustling the good Doctor?" I thought: *Why does Gee think I'm a hustler? I might fib a little now and then, but I have never hustled anyone.* I told the homecoming story to Gee and posed the question as politely as I knew how, "I need you to supervise me when I take Dr. Davis' history test at noon on Thursday, so I can hitchhike to New Iberia on Thursday afternoon? Will you please do that for me?" He looked at me quizzically, studied the floor as though it had the answer, and, finally,

glancing at Dr. Davis, who nodded a wee bit, ventured a question, "What's in it for me?" I smiled and jovially said, "Look who's hustling." Dr. Davis laughed. Gee solemnly ordered, "I'll be in this office exactly at noon! If you're one second late, you'll be out of luck." His voice calmed a little as he added, "Now, get the hell out of here!" I left pronto, winning the day.

Shortly after taking my history test, I walked to the Campanile and caught the bus for downtown Baton Rouge, taking the first seat next to the door for a hasty disembarking. Stepping from the city bus, I strode into Strobe's Drug Store to buy a bar of Baby Ruth to munch on my way to the Mississippi ferry boat, elated about the results of my history test and feeling good about my chances of hitching a ride New Iberia. Walking rapidly downhill to the ferry landing, two women riding in a blue Ford eased up besides me. The woman in the passenger seat called out to me, "Where're you going?" I had never had anyone offer me a ride without my asking. I responded, "New Iberia!" She offered, "Is Lafayette close enough?" I looked at her, astonished at my luck. She waved to me as the Ford came to a halt. "Jump in!" she commanded. On the way to Lafayette the two ladies kept a steady stream of conversation going between them. Occasionally they turned me to ask a question. To answer one question, I told them about my graduation class and the homecoming.

In my graduation class, there were eight boys. Five of us went on to university or college: Marlin (SLI), Lloyd (SLI), Michael (LSU), Edwin (Tulane), and myself (LSU). Three went immediately to work as paid apprentices in different fields and were employed or went into business for themselves: Royal (police), Carol (dry cleaning business), and Fred (vending machines business). When we were home on holidays and vacation, I palled around with my university or college friends. Carol and Fred were my buddy-buddies. On special occasions, the eight of us chummed up to party.

The New Iberia High School Homecoming happened to be one of those special holidays. The chums planned to sit together in the wooden stands to watch the underdog Yellow Jackets sting the-hell-out-of the Lafayette High School Lions. They also remembered that old stadium for a convenient place to romance our girls during the school day, for jawing in useless chatter with each

other, for enhancing the rumor of the day, and for cramming to beat a demanding test in math or science. (Strangely, we cared less about our English grades.)

Friday dawned with a weak sun barely peeping through an overcast sky. Only four of the friendly eight met for breakfast at the Frederick Hotel, hoping that a clear night would hover over the stadium for the ball game. After breakfast, with jollity and high spirits, we told of our high school episodes, and of those that crushed our egos. Would the girls who graduated with our class be at the homecoming? The conversation shifted to the good teachers and the not-so-good teachers. Recalling the 1933 year football team, we laughed at our ineptness in the nine games we played, failing to yield a single NIHS touchdown during the entire season. The past did not concern us. Only the future did.

Together the four of us left the hotel and headed to our alma mater. We bounced up the front steps of the high school, each soon to be on his own. Two at a time, I raced up the down stairs, aiming for Miss Melancon's classroom, my beloved French teacher. Everyone in the school called her *Tante*, "aunt" in French. She was an experienced teacher of French. Every student of hers who entered the State Literary Rally at L.S.U. won the gold medal.

Attracted by the insistent knocking on her door, she look up, dismayed by the intrusion on her French lesson. Then, recognition registered in her smile, Tante twisted in her chair, gained her feet, and walked to the door. As she swung it open, she clasped my arm and said loudly, "Entre! Entre! monsieur." She literally yanked me into the classroom and announced boldly, "This is Joseph Glorioso, the best student I've ever had. He could conjugate every French word in all its tenses, translate every French statement, and put English sentences into French without error. I have always been proud of him!" Speechless with embarrassment, I blushed profusely.

Noticing a trim petite girl at the blackboard who had been struggling over an English sentence, but was now coyly smiling at my red face, I heard Tante, in her own subtle way, command me, "Joseph, help Juanita with that simple sentence!" I hated to embarrass the pretty girl, but no one ever slighted one of Tante's commands.

I walked to the blackboard to rewrite the English sentence into French, one that I remembered from my own days in the same class. The girl, clad in a blue dress that emphasized a full-bodied torso, handed me the chalk and eraser. Tante beamed to the class, the girl smiled at me, and my knees weakened. After I translated the sentence, Tante dismissed the girl, and my teacher and I chatted until the bell rang for the next class hour. Juanita lingered behind the class and flirtatiously whispered near my ear and out of Tante's hearing, "I'll see you around."

Following the students down the wide hall to Miss Mestayer's science class, I ducked in for a brief chat with the teacher who inspired me to pursue the field of science. Miss Mestayer held a well-organized science class. Everything went by the numbers. When called upon, we promptly rose from our seats to answer her questions, which invariably led to another and another question until she was satisfied that our knowledge was complete. Miss Mestayer was quiet, reserved, and business-like in dealing with her students. I always thought that her dresses came out of the 1890's Sears Roebuck catalog, but I never told that to anyone.

I stepped into Miss Riggs' biology classroom on my round to see my favorite teachers. She had an overstuffed body and a red head that matched her temperament. Without let up and for one solid hour, Miss Riggs pushed her biology students to reach the upper limits in biology from a homemade syllabus. Henry Holt's biology text cast a dark shadow as an unnecessary evil. It was issued to us and immediately tossed into the darkness with other evil omens. Miss Riggs dictated the syllabus for the upcoming grading period on the first day of each four-week period. Everyone dreaded that chore for it cramped our fingers to dullness. From then on, lectures and copious note taking ruled on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Questions and in-depth answers ruled Tuesdays and Thursdays. She did not tolerate one-word answers. Complete sentences were the order of those days. Being so well versed in biology, I should have been exempted from freshman zoology at LSU. In botany I correctly identified a leaf from a pecan tree and in rigorous Riggs dictum pointed out the leaflets that comprised the leaf. As a result, Professor Ford appointed me as his unpaid assistant for the semester.

Trying to find young Miss Mohart, my high school geometry teacher, I learned that she married at the close of the 1933 semester and left the teaching profession. Miss LeBlanc, my social studies teacher, had enough of the teaching profession and went on to better things.

[I have written my five allotted pages and have come to the conclusion that this is a reasonable break-off point for this part of a continuing story. Next Tuesday I'll continue with the football game and its aftermath.]



MY MOTHER, BEATRICE REAL PARKINS

by
Nell Clark

All mothers are special. Mine is extra special to me and to all our family for the many lessons, impressions, and memories she left us with. My mother was an only child. Her father was a professor of reed instruments; her mother was very good at delegating work for the servants to do. My grandmother was also very religious.

My mother lived in Mexico and spoke both Spanish and English. She was taught to do fancy needlework taught to play the mandolin. She had a very nice voice, and studied astronomy at the University of Zacatecas.

My mother had twelve children, two who died as infants. She raised ten, five boys and five girls. My oldest sister, Mabel, was my father's favorite. She was blonde, with blue eyes, and a wonderful personality. We didn't mind her being a favorite as she was so special to us two. Mother never showed partiality. My oldest brother, Walter, was between three of us girls. My father didn't want him to be a sissy, so my sister Grace and I played all the sports-- baseball, football, volleyball, and andy over. [If you have never played that children's game, it's quite fun. Players choose sides. One half go on one side of a building. Someone throws the ball over the building, and your opponent catches the ball, comes around your side, and throws the ball at anyone of his opponents. Then the person hit goes over to the other side.] I don't think Mother knew how hard the boys hit the girls. We must have liked it as we never stopped playing. My youngest brother, Alfred Shelton, was also blue eyed and blond. He was my father's pride and joy, so we called him "little Jesus."

My dad was working outside the United States, so my mother raised us. We said our prayers every night and ate our meals as a family. Each of us had our special place at the table.

Before going to sleep we would say, "Your hand (your blessings), Mother." She would answer, "God bless you." We never went to bed with out

asking for her blessings. Even as teenagers we continued the ritual. On Sundays, Mother took us to the Catholic Church. After lunch she took us to a movie at the Majestic Theatre or to Breckenridge Park to the Japanese sunken gardens. My sister Grace and I had a lot of Protestant girlfriends. We liked to go to the Baptist Church's B.Y.P.U. (Baptist Young Peoples Union). Even though she was a devout Catholic, Mother would let us go. We would also be invited to go on their hayrides, which I enjoyed.

One of the many things my mother taught us was to be courteous. If someone was rude or ugly to us, we should keep our mouths closed. That way we would never regret saying something we couldn't take back. My mother had beautiful manners.

Mother was great on quotes. When we girls went out, she'd say, "Have a good time. Just remember, the girl sets the pace." And to my brothers, "Treat a girl as you want your sisters to be treated."

Some other favorite quotes are: "Fast pay makes fast friends." "Tell me who you go with, and I'll tell you who are." "Still water runs deep."

Some of you knew my mother She lost her eyesight about fifteen years before she left us--all through a doctor's negligence. Some said, "Sue." But Mother would say, "It won't bring my eyesight back." She crocheted by learning to feel and counting stitches. She made the granny squares. I just put them together, over seventy-five, to make a full bed size coverlet. If someone would tell Mother, "Mrs. Parkins, that is so nice, she right away would say, "I'll make you one," and she did. Mother never complained about anything, not food, weather, or health.

I have to tell you this special part. She never kissed my father until she married. When we asked her how she knew he liked her, she smiled sweetly and simply said, "By the way he squeezed my hand." My mother was very special.



WHEN WAR COMES HOME

by

Woodson Hopkins

Nothing in those days struck fear into the hearts of those of us on the Home Front more than the Western Union messenger ringing our door bell or the ominous call from the War Department. Terrible thoughts ran through my mind as I bounded down three flights of stairs in the old dormitory where I lived along with three hundred other smooth faced cadets to answer what I was told by the duty officer to be a call from home. Looking nervously at my watch, I noted that it was less than an hour before taps, quite late for Mother to be calling just to chat. *It must be an emergency*, I thought to myself as I lessened my pace, trying desperately to shy away from what I thought to be the “bad news.” Before entering the Commandant’s Office, I paused, took a deep breath, and reached for the doorknob. My fears ran first along blood lines to Billy, my one and only big brother who was somewhere in France. Frank, the most distant of in-laws, was flying in the Pacific Theater. Then there was Ivan, friend Loman’s brother, fighting with the 82nd Airborne. It might be anyone of them. War was becoming more real with each step toward the telephone. Much to my surprise, Mother’s voice seemed somewhat cheery, bright and contrived to tactfully deliver the news all in one breath.

Nearing my seventeenth birthday, commander of a company of just as young cadets, full of romantic notions about war given me by a patriotic Hollywood, I felt trained to do my duty, whatever it might be. In three years at the Academy, I had undergone a watered down version of basic training offered by the Army. The ultimate match up in my mind was the ROTC against Hitler’s Youth Corps. Of course, dying and killing were not part of the training.

I listened as Mother spoke, “He’s fine. He’s going to be all right. The doctor says Daddy is going to recover in no time. There’s no reason for you to worry.” In a few short words she had set my mind at ease. No long story with a hard hitting punch line. *What a Mom!* I thought.

Only after some prompting, during which she questioned me about coming home, did she tell me what had happened to Dad. Her voice grew serious as she related that Hop had suffered an accidental gun shot wound, but the .22 cal slug had entered just under his rib cage on the right side and exited his upper back without striking any vital parts.

It was the lesser of all the likely events I had contemplated while descending the stairs of Talbot Hall. Mother went on with her chronicle of events surrounding Dad's wound: "Dad was on the Washburn Ranch location. He went to his car to listen to the six o'clock news. He had passed the previous two hours driving up and down the road leading to the well, hunting for blue quail. He had placed Billy's .22 on the car seat next to him with the butt down, barrel up. When he got back in the car and sat down, the rifle barrel slid under his right arm pit. When he attempted to move the gun away from him, it discharged. Thank God, Bob Lemley was there with his fast LaSalle. The crew loaded him into Bob's car, and they took him to San Antonio in record time."

At that point Mom's words were drowned out of mind by my thoughts. I knew that rifle well. I also knew why it had accidentally discharged. The firing mechanism was prone to. It would fire at the slightest of jars because Billy used to throw it at jack rabbits he missed when he was hunting. Dad had never been much of a hunter. He preferred fishing over hunting any time, but our move away from the coast had put a crimp in Dad's fishing. In the brush country there was nothing but hunting to pass the long hours monitoring company drilling activities.

I returned to my room, upset because I had not warned Dad about Billy's .22. I was reminded that my reputation as a tattler had long ago passed. I refrained from telling Mom about Billy's activities when I sensed that she herself thought it inappropriate. I was learning something about responsibility--the hard way!

Switching on the short wave next to my bunk, I crawled into bed, putting on earphones to listen to the BBC reports on the war. Keeping up with the fighting via the radio lent youthful excitement to an otherwise boring routine of study, study, study. Things in Europe were escalating to the advantage of the

Allied Forces. But in the Pacific a *Divine Wind* was blowing. The *komikaze*, wreaking havoc to our fleet, were altering the time table for the invasion of Japan. If we had to fight those little nips in the caves and crannies of their homeland, as the brass worried we would, it was going to be an even longer, bloodier war.

In late May I arrived home to find Dad fully recovered from his wound and to find a letter from Billy saying he might be shipped to the Pacific since the surrender in Europe was final. It was not a good time for me to approach my family about enlisting. So I took off for town, hoping to renew old acquaintances. Eagerly, I did just that. Andy had been an outgoing sort of fellow before the war--lively, friendly, full of fun to those who hung out together at the picture show operated by his family. Andy worked every job at the theater. He was projectionist, ticket taker, popcorn attendant, an all around live wire who kept his friends in stitches.

I wasn't at all certain that it was Andy approaching me on Main Street. A noticeable limp had replaced what was once a fluid stride. The beaming face was marked now by a hollow stare. It had been three years since I last saw that eagerness go off to war. Two months had passed since he was blown off the deck of the aircraft carrier *USS Franklin* by two bombs from a lone Japanese dive bomber. "Big Ben's" dead numbered 724.

A brutal portrait of war was etched on Andy's face. I saw it clearly. What rosy, juvenile concepts of war I carried around suddenly faded when war came home with Andy.



ONLY A TEACHER

by

Olympe A. Butcher

I remember Miss Marie Himel. She was a friend of my two sisters, Louise A. Pellerin and Evangeline A. Simon. Lou and Miss Himel taught at Central Grammar School, and Vange worked as the one secretary to the Lafayette Parish School Board. Mr. J.W. Faulk served as Superintendent of Schools.

I remember Miss Himel as being a sweet, gentle, soft spoken person. She was everybody's friend--especially the little children she taught. My sisters loved her, too, and I'm sure that my father, E.G. Arceneaux, Sr., who was a member of the School Board from 1908 to 1940 must have held Miss Himel in highest esteem. He admired her for her work as a teacher and also as a person who saw the need and found a way to begin the "Soup Kitchen" for the little children in the schools.

According to a dear friend of mine, Patricia Faulk Billingsley, Miss Himel was her godmother by special request. When Pat's mother did her student teaching at SLI, Miss Himel was her supervisor. Pat's father, Mr. J.W. Faulk, was Superintendent when Miss Himel taught at Central Grammar School, located where the Lafayette Public Library now stands.

Miss Himel was more than a teacher. She was also a friend and a nurturer for the little children. She knew what would be good for them--a good hot bowl of vegetable soup at noon.

Next to Central School was a small building which soon became Miss Himel's kitchen. With permission of the School Board, she set the wheels to work to open the first soup kitchen in Lafayette Parish. Patricia was invited every Saturday to help cut the vegetables for the next week's soup. She said the crackers Miss Himel also served were delicious, just as the soup was.

Here is a copy of the report given by Miss Himel to the Lafayette Parish School Board as soup kitchen manager for 1929. These minutes were printed in the Daily Advertiser.

January 3, 1930:

Work of the school Soup Kitchen here during the past year is outlined in a report prepared by the manager, Miss Marie Himel.

The report, for the period from January, 1929, to January, 1930, as announced by Miss Himel today, follows:

*Free bowls served 11,913
Paid bowls 387 at 5 cents per bowl
Total, 12,8000 bowls*

*Average number of bowls served per day 67.5
Cost per bowl 3 and 9 10 cent (3 9/10 cents)
Collections (drive) \$600.00
Total collected \$644.35
Expenses--8 months \$498.80
Balance on hand \$145.55*

A good nourishing soup is expensive. Three dollars per day seems exorbitant, yet when we consider the quantity, the cost of ingredients, the trend of thought is changed.

Here is an approximately itemized daily expense: meat \$.60, crackers \$1.00, vegetables \$.85, servant hire \$.70, Total \$3.15.

At least 1 ½ bunches of carrots, turnips are required, besides cabbage, potatoes, celery, tomatoes, rice, parsley, one onion to each pot and onion tops. Small amounts of salt, soap cleaner powder, wear and tear on stove, dishes, also help to increase the monthly expense.

The Standard Oil Company has furnished the oil for 18 years, free of charge.

Marie Himel, Manager

In talking to Patricia, I asked her how long had Miss Himel been the sole manager for the soup kitchen. How long? Eighteen years? Pat didn't know.

And no school is named for her!

We need to remember. And I do remember this sweet, gentle lady, Miss Marie Himel, who was "only a teacher"!



