Excerpts from

Our Pages of Life

Volume XXIIIa—Tuesday Morning Session
Spring 1999

We live close together and we live far apart.
We all go through the same things—it's just a different kind of the same thing.
From "Trifles"— a short play by Susan Glaspell—these words
spoken by Mrs. Hale, the wife of the county sheriff
investigating the murder of neighbor Minnie Foster's husband,
express the "oh—I-don't-think-I-knew-that"of our lives.

The experiences that inspired the stories in this XXIII volume collection
of *Excerpts from* **Our Pages of Life** become *a different kind of the same thing.*
The writers themselves, a bit amazed when they say it, often comment
on the sameness of the lives and stories of their peers as compared to their own.
These friends who began as strangers are treated to the ordinary and extraordinary
events of each others' lives. With these narratives, they are also introduced
to one of the most important lessons for us to learn—
We all go through the same things—it's just a different kind of the same thing.

Read. Enjoy. And pass on.

❋ Joan Stear, USL
Lafayette, Louisiana
Spring 1999

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.
Thanks, too, to each of my students—my pages of life.

FRONT COVER: (*clockwise, beginning at top right corner*) Nell and husband J. O. "Bubba" Clark;
Billy and Emogene Laughlin and dog Buddy—Versie Foti's brother and sister—1936;
J.M. Jennings, Jr. USS King DD242, 1943; Johnnie Kocurek (*right*) and cousin Mary Jo, 1945;
(*center*) Nell Clark; Mim, Myrtle, Mom, Dad, Eleanor, Bootsie—Myrtle Schiller's family, 1942

USL LIFE WRITING CLASS
Spring 1999 • Tuesday Morning Session

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

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HISTORY IN THE MAKING: TURNING ON THE LIGHTS

by

Beatrice Murphy

I spent my childhood in the country and mostly without electricity. At Grandmere's house there was a generator and a ceiling chandelier. The table lamps had metal bases and long tall chimneys. Grandmere used carbide in the table lamps.

When I was seven, we moved to our little house just down the road from the big house. We studied by kerosene lamps. Our eyes must have been really good because reading books was our favorite form of entertainment.

We didn't have a radio but Uncle Ulysses who lived in the big house had a radio run by battery. On Saturday nights, Mom, Dad, Vivian, Jeanne, and I would go over to listen to the Grand Old Opera. We also would listen to Amos and Andy. The radio was not turned on often because of the battery.

Mama cooked on a wood stove. Our heaters were pot bellied stoves with vented pipes. Mama and Lil washed the clothes on scrub boards. They also used large black pots outdoors and used big wooden paddles to swish the clothes with.

1938-39 was a historic year for the Duhon family and neighbors on Duhon Road. Slemco set poles in and stretched electric lines all along the road. We had a row of trees along the front of our house. My cousin, Dudley Duhon, climbed a tree and touched the wire to see if we had electricity yet. Luckily it was two days later before it was connected.

Mr. Villian from Maurice and his helpers wired our house. One of his helpers, Fred Broussard, had a wonderful voice and sang the whole time. I do not remember the names of the songs.

Just recently I asked my sister Fay, "Did we have chandeliers?" She laughed and said, "It was a bulb with a chain." But I remember the first time we pulled the chain. It was like magic. Our family stood in awe of that little bright light.

We did get our own radio, and Mama got a washer with a ringer. I can't find anyone who remembers how much the bills were. They probably were around $5.

I live next door to where the old house was. I have an all electric home, three TV's, three radios, VCR and central air. My electric bills are quite a lot more than $5.00.

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WHAT NEXT?
by
John Townsend

Happenings take place in threes, or so I've been told. Over the past two weeks I've discovered that indeed it can happen.

The first event took place on Sunday, February 21, 1999. On the 22nd my brother, Pete, called to tell us that Caren, his daughter, our niece, had passed away the day before. The funeral arrangements were incomplete but the service planned for Thursday, February 25. Caren was 40 years of age.

Number two occurred the evening of February 22nd. Our dishwasher cratered. Actually the cooling fins on the electric motor came unglued, spun around making all kinds of racket before jamming the motor and burning it up. We delayed shopping for a new one until after our trip to Rockwall, Texas, for Caren's funeral.

It was a hectic few days. A planned trip to the Governor's Mansion and the Old State Capitol in Baton Rouge with a group from our church had to be canceled, as well as an excursion to Live Oak, now Rip Van Winkle, Gardens to see "Monkey Business II." The group that we were going with told us that the play was hilarious and that the food was fantastic, though a little pricey.

We learned that the Service for Caren would be a Memorial only and held at 7:00PM Thursday evening. As a consequence, Marilee and I drove up to Haynesville to spend Wednesday night with Scott and Cindy, breaking the length of the trip to Rockwall, which is just across Lake Hubbard from Dallas. Scott had to go to work so he would drive himself to Texas. We picked up Paul at Cotton Valley and drove to Sulphur Springs, Texas, where we picked up Allen and Mildred who rode with us to Rockwall.

All funerals are sad, some more than others, but in Caren's case the Memorial Service was a celebration of a life. She had been born with a congenital heart condition that required an operation at the early age of 18 months. A short time after the operation she was found to be deaf, as a result of 104 Degree fever suffered after the surgery. Caren had battled all sorts of physical problems in her 40 years of life but had

managed to bring up her sons Javier, 16, and Alejandro, 13. The hymns were about celebration and were 'signed' for all of her deaf friends who attended. It was an unusual and moving service.

Afterwards, because Scott and Paul had to get back to North Louisiana, and get up to go to work, we left the funeral home and went to eat. We found a place called Luigi's right at I-30. The food was delicious and reasonably priced.

Marilee and I spent the night with Allen and Mildred, then arose early Friday morning and returned home to Lafayette.

Saturday we went shopping for a dishwasher. At Sears Marilee chose a 'Black' Kenmore Ultra to be delivered on Monday. On Sunday Scott and Cindy arrived. Scott had been transferred by EOTT to the New Iberia area and would be staying with us until he and Cindy could find a house. When Marilee and Cindy began talking about the new dishwasher and the color, a change of mind occurred. Monday morning Marilee called Sears and asked that the black be replaced by almond. It would be delivered on Thursday, March 4.

I had stripped the old dishwasher of the parts that I thought might not come with the new machine, so when I picked up the new one I left the old one at the Sears warehouse for them to dispose of.

When I got the new dishwasher out of the box and was preparing to install it, I discovered that I'd left a couple of items I needed attached to the old machine.

Back to the warehouse I went. My luck was running good. I found the machine placed outside the fence near the warehouse. In five minutes I had the electric cord and ell connection for the water line and headed back to the house.

The installation under the cabinet was no problem for the drain line and the electric hookup, but the water line was a fishing expedition because it was short. I ended up tying a string to the end of the line and with the washer in place drawing the connector through a hole under the sink and making the hookup.

Now I was ready to bolt the machine to the cabinet top. Taking a nail I drove it in the underside of the counter top to start my screws. As I knelt to begin, I moved the machine and lost my mark. This 30 minute job had turned into two hours.

While holding a mirror I nudged the machine to realign the holes. In one hand I held the screw and nail. Suddenly the nail dropped from my hand. I heard it hit the open door of the machine. I spent the next thirty minutes looking for the nail, in the drain of the machine, and under it with a flashlight. Then, after I'd looked under the refrigerator and oven, Marilee swept the floor – 'no nail.'

I had planned to play golf after I had the machine installed. When we had no luck in finding the nail, Marilee suggested trying a magnet to see if we could move the nail if it was in the drain, but all we had was some of those button magnets that you attach notes onto the fridge with. I didn't think they were strong enough to do the job. Finally, I agreed that she could call Sears and find out if the nail would damage the unit if it were run. It was set that a technician would come in Friday morning. She went to her beauty shop appointment, and I went to the golf course. I won't comment on my golf game.

When I returned home about 5:00PM the first words I heard when I walked in were, "I've got a place to sleep tonight."

"What is that all about?" I asked Marilee.

"Well, after I came in from the beauty shop I thought about the magnet idea again. I got a chair and sat down so I could reach into the machine. I reached out with the magnet and 'zip' it was gone down the drain." Then, "When I couldn't get it out I called Lee Ann. After a quick 'hi,' I asked, 'Are the sheets clean on the bed in your guest room?' 'Well, no; what's happened?' was her reply."

Marilee proceeded to tell Lee Ann what had happened, then she asked, "Does Mike have one of those magnet things to fish for dropped screws or whatever?"

Lee Ann told her, "He has one of those things that telescopes. It has a magnet on the tip."

"Can I borrow it?" asked Marilee.

When Marilee got back to the house it took but a minute with the wand to retrieve the button magnet from the drain, but further efforts to move the nail in the drain were fruitless.

After she told her story, I gave it a try. The wand should have moved the 'blanked de blank' nail if it was in the drain.

Finally as a last ditch effort I ran the tip of the wand beneath the new machine, the refrigerator, and along the cabinet to go under the stove. Suddenly, the nail appeared as if by magic, clinging to the wand. In all our efforts to find the thing it had remained nestled beside the leveler for the range where neither a yard stick or a broom had moved it.

Breathing a sigh of relief I used a drill this time, to make my holes for the screws. Marilee made another call to cancel the technician.

Did I say three events? I think I counted four!!

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TOP UP, TOP DOWN
by
Fran Gross

During the summer of 1956, the Captain of Art's ship, USS Radford sent Art to a three month Navy Engineering School in San Diego. We took over the apartment of another couple from the Radford, who had finished another school about the time Art got to San Diego. We also bought their car, a pale yellow 1946 Hudson Convertible.

When you live in San Diego and own a convertible, you should drive with the top down, right? That was Art's opinion. I on the other hand felt differently. The idea of a convertible is great, but with the top down my curled hair became tangled or straight, and the wind made my eyes smart. If the sun were shining, I would get hot, and if it were cloudy, I would get cold.

One Saturday we drove to the Salton Sea with the top down. As the bright sun beat down on us, I realized I had made the mistake of wearing black cotton pedal pushers. I knew the top of my thighs were hot, but it was not until we got home that I realized the sun's rays absorbed by the black material had blistered my legs.

When Art's school was finished near the end of September, he took thirty days leave so we could drive from San Diego to Jacksboro, Texas, to visit my aunts, and on to Lincoln, Nebraska, to visit Mother, Dearie, and Art's parents. Getting a late start, we drove to Winterhaven, California, and spent the night. Driving was slow then as most interstate highways were not yet built.

The next day we drove across Arizona with the convertible top down. As the sun climbed higher, and radiated more heat, I became more uncomfortable by the mile. Finally, about sixty miles north of Tucson I said, "We have to stop and put up the top, or when we get to Tucson I am getting out of the car and staying there. You can go on to Nebraska and explain why I am not with you."

Art said, "It will be too hot and stuffy with the top up."

I replied, "Let's try it. Leave the back window unzipped, and roll down the side windows. It cannot be as bad as it is now."

We put up the top, and low and behold, we learned it was quite comfortable with the dry air blowing through the windows.

Before we drove back to California, we made plans to leave the Hudson with friends near San Francisco, as Art expected to receive orders to leave Hawaii within the next few months. Since it was snowing on the more northern route, we cut down through Kansas and Oklahoma, and spent the night in Stratford, Texas, before joining Route 66 at Tecumcari, New Mexico.

The weather had turned cold, and the heater did not produce warm air. Art put duct tape around the fresh air vent in front of the windshield that let in air when opened. We had a quilt with us that I wrapped around myself. I was as miserable being cold as I had been being hot. It was not until we reached California that we learned in order for the heater to work properly, the vent had to be open.

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THE NEW GENERATION
by
Versie L. Foti

Morris Laughlin (no middle name) was the fifth son and seventh of eight children of James Allen and Dorothy Miller Laughlin. He was born on September 23, 1895 and was soon given the name "Son" by his parents and siblings—a name they continued to call him all of their lives.

Morris was a young man two months shy of his 23rd birthday when he was inducted into military service on July 16, 1918 at Crowley, Louisiana. He was given the serial number 2922833 and assigned to Company B—43rd Infantry. By late afternoon, he, among others from Acadia Parish, had been sworn into service and was on a train headed for Camp Travis, Texas for inoculations, indoctrination and basic training. Army records described him as a farmer by vocation, single, in good physical condition, with excellent character, blue eyes, medium light hair, medium fair complexion and five feet 8 inches in height.

Making the transition from a farm boy who had never been away from home farther than thirty or forty miles to a soldier in the Army of the United States was not easy. In a few days he began to miss the farm, his parents and sister with whom he lived and the other siblings and their families who lived and farmed nearby. He especially missed a neighbor girl he had left behind.

Life at Camp Travis became a blur of basic training designed to ready the recruits as soon as possible for the throes of war in Europe. Morris' days were spent in training and by evening he was so tired that he literally fell onto his cot to sleep until reveille.

The soldiers were free on weekends to rest and recuperate, do their laundry, write letters, read or find ways to entertain themselves. Entertainment and recreation were limited as transportation from the Army base to town was almost non-existent. Once a month an Army truck brought those who wanted to go into town for window shopping or wandering through the streets for a change of scenery. Other weekends were spent trying to find something to do to entertain themselves.

Most of the soldiers liked the game of baseball, so very soon teams were organized. Competition on weekends provided excitement for both players and spectators. Skills were developed among men who had never had the opportunity to play organized sports. Competition was fierce and soon it was evident who the best players were at each camp.

Morris loved to play baseball. He was athletic and very competitive. Luckily, he emerged as the leading contender for the position of "catcher" on the "All Star" team at Camp Travis. Traveling teams from other camps arrived at Camp Travis to play the "All Stars" who then traveled by train on other weekends to other camps in Texas to play their best teams. Baseball made life more interesting for Morris at Camp Travis.

Opportunities to travel and meet other people provided Morris only a few months of excitement. On November 11, 1918 at eleven o'clock in the morning, Armistice was signed and World War I was over.

The men who had seen active duty in Europe were brought home as soon as possible after the treaty was signed. Those who chose not to remain in service were processed out. In a few months, the service men in camps in the United States were released. On May 27, 1919, Morris was honorably discharged from military service at Camp Travis, and paid in full: $106.45.

Morris boarded a train with other ex-soldiers who were going home. He disembarked in Crowley from where he had left only ten months earlier.

Homecoming was a happy occasion for Morris and his family. He was the first one of his family to have served his country since the Civil War. Back to the farm he went. He was home in time to help with the crops that summer, though he was too late for rice planting.

Morris had left a neighbor girl friend, Dovie Johnson, at home when he was sent to Camp Travis. She was almost 21 when he returned. They soon began to make plans for a wedding, but each would need to help the parents with harvesting the crops so that they would have money for the wedding and to put in their own crop the next year.

Dovie began to use her spare time sewing a wedding outfit and her trousseau. Morris hired out whenever he could to make extra money.

On January 29, 1920, Morris and Dovie were married at 7 P.M. in the home of Dovie's parents, Marian and Nancy Emma Robinson Johnson. After a simple reception for family and neighbors, the bride and groom went by buggy about two miles away to the home of Morris' parents. They lived there until a three-room tenant house on the farm was repaired for them. In the spring, they moved into their house. They planted a garden, acquired a few chickens, ducks, pigs and a milk cow and planted their own rice crop as sharecroppers on Morris' parents' land.

Spring was a busy time. Soon vegetables needed to be canned, blackberries needed to be picked and preserved and potatoes needed to be dug. The fields were plowed and rice was planted. Added to the chores of planting, cultivating and preserving was the need for Dovie, her mother and her unmarried sister, Maggie, to begin sewing the tiny garments that would soon be needed by the baby that was expected to arrive in the fall.

On October 16, 1920, in the little three room house, with Morris' mother as midwife, a baby girl named Versie Orpah Laughlin was born to Mr. and Mrs. Morris Laughlin. That birth was followed by six others at two year intervals. And so a new generation followed World War I—the generation that was to fight World War II.

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HIGH SCHOOL POLITICS
by
James M. Jennings Jr.

During the spring of 1938, I threw my hat into the ring and entered the political arena hot-bed at New Orleans' Fortier High School where I was a senior and scheduled to graduate in a month's time.

Principal John R Conniff had gained the approval of School Superintendent Nicholas Bauer and the New Orleans School Board to inaugurate an experimental program in student government at our high school.

Student politics with elections and political campaigns was a new, novel approach to supplement our "civics" classroom education. With great excitement and publicity "the Sovereign State of Fortier" was born or came into being on my 17th birthday—May 4th, 1938. On that day 30 bewildered young men were elected—a governor and a lieutenant governor plus 28 other students representing 14 classroom districts. That May, our student body numbered about 1500 souls. 266 were graduating seniors. Of the 28 district representatives, 4 boys, of whom I was one, would graduate in a month's time, and the other 24 hoped they would in the future.

A newspaper article on May 4th stated that we had been elected as "members of a model unicameral 'general assembly' that administers (the) student government of Alcee Fortier High School in much the same manner that a real state is run." This byline turned out to be an unfortunate choice of words considering that the person who gave the Commencement Address the night I graduated was Dr. James Monroe Smith, President of Louisiana State University. Soon afterwards, Dr. Smith suffered the indignity and shame of being convicted of a felony and having to serve his sentence in a federal penitentiary together with Louisiana Governor Richard Leche and others.

We student politicians had only a short school week to politic, shake hands, and attempt to make our names known to the electorate. Our efforts would be thought dull by today's standards, but consider that we had no computer generated banners or posters, no electronic loud speakers to shout messages across the school yard at lunch time or any gaily decorated convertibles filled with pretty co-eds to circle the school grounds. Each candidate was equal from the standpoint of finances for each of us ran

a low budget campaign—crayon decorated signs and posters plus a few friends actively circulating our names among the other students, asking for their votes. I paraded with a little sign around the schoolyard during our lunch period to show off and get recognized.

I cannot remember a single candidate who ran on the promise to do anything or give anybody anything. Who among us had any inkling of what a unicameral legislature did? What problems could students correct? Our faculty included first class leaders, teachers, and disciplinarians. In former memoir writings I extolled the virtues of two teachers that I admire greatly. What we lacked were professional agitators to give us slogans and generate some imagined problems for the student unicameral legislature to solve.

If we representatives met in solemn session, I did not receive a copy of the minutes listing our deliberations. There simply was not enough time between election day and graduation for serious political discussions and decisions. We had final exams to prepare for.

I failed to learn how to be an effective politician during that one short month, but I believe I managed to hide this fault from my other 265 classmates who graduated with me on June 8th at "eight of the clock."

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"PÂPA," "PÂPA"—FATHER AND DADDY
by
Nell Clark

I have written about my Mother and the influence she had in my life. Even though I have written very little about my Father, he too played a very important part in my experiences. The reason for that was that my Mother was always with us, no matter where we lived.

I remember my Father first as an engineer for the I.N.G.N. Railroad. He was gone a lot, but when he decided to change his profession and went to work for the Standard Oil Company in Mexico as a superintendent for the company, we saw even less of him. My Father wanted us to live in the States, so we maintained dual residence.

As a small child, I remember my Father as very affectionate with us children. We would take turns sitting on his lap.

When he had been away a long time, and we went to Mexico for the summer, we took turns sleeping with Mother and Father. The nighttime closeness was a very special time for us, but I don't know how special it was for them as we crammed three people into a double bed.

My Father made it a point for us to speak English most of the time. All of the maids, cooks and handymen spoke only Spanish. He was very strict, especially with the boys, Walter, Bill, Ellis and Alfred. He wouldn't put up with any of us telling fibs. One time in Mexico, my Father gave my brother, Walter, a very important letter to mail. We went to Church, then had lunch, saw a movie and had snow cones, never thinking about the letter. When we returned home, my Father asked Walter if he had mailed the letter. We looked at each other dumbfounded. Walter said, "Yes, sir." My Father reached on the desk and showed him the letter. As the ringleader, Walter got a good whipping and the rest of us got punished for agreeing that the letter was mailed.

The weeks and months we lived in the States, my Father wrote each of us letters, often sending us five-peso gold pieces. My sister, Grace, and I would trade them in at the bank for dollars. The exchange rate at that time was two pesos for one dollar. We would get $2.50 each and spend our money on movies and candy.

When we lived in Vera Cruz, Mexico, Dad would take us to see the ships in port. Dad was doing work for President Wilson at that time. I must have been four or five years old, but I have strong memories of the town and its history.

Vera Cruz had the first "fort" that was built in North America, San Juan de Alnor, later to serve as a prison. It still stands as a tourist attraction where visitors can see where prisoners were kept and tortured. The shackles remain on the walls. I haven't been back in the last ten years.

My Father never lost his English accent although he left England as a small boy.

I called my daughter, Karen, in Houston, Texas, and asked her what she remembered about her Grandfather. Karen said she remembered going to San Antonio, Texas, as a little girl. Grandpa would watch TV, and if there was wrestling on, we all had to watch it with him. When that was over, we watched the 10 P.M. news together. After that, we all went to the dinette and kitchen and had a snack. By that time it was almost 11 P.M., so we bathed and went to bed. No TV after Grandpa turned it off. No one turned it back on.

Karen also remembered her Grandfather teaching her to skate. Karen was seven years old and we lived at 144 Memory Lane in Lafayette. He would get on one side and her Grandmother on the other side. Up and down the driveway they walked and skated.

Between her father, Bub, Grandfather and myself, we also taught her to ride her bicycle. That was an experience, I don't know how many times we heard, "Now don't let go until I tell you." Then she was off and wanting to go visit her friend, Lanier Gerac, about seven blocks away. What memories! Another thing Karen remembered: my Father was always putting food on Mother's plate. She had lost her eyesight 15 years before she went to be with our Lord. Every one of us would get angry with him for doing it. We didn't make a big to do about it since we didn't want Mother to know it. Anyway, my Father would not have listened to us.

My Father and Mother loved to travel. Bub, Karen and I always took a vacation and would invite them. They went with us many times. Since they were both good travelers, we visited my brothers in California every other year: San Jose, Long Beach, San Francisco and a sister, Bertha, and her family, husband, John, daughter, Gail, and

son Larry Jefferies. We especially loved Mexico. Bub and I also traveled with our good friends, the Todds (mostly to out of the way places in Mexico.)

My Father had a very interesting life from going on his own as a young boy, working for the railroad, working in Mexico, as Superintendent of Standard Oil Co., and being robbed several times while there. The robbers took furniture, curtains, or anything they could move. We saw him tied to a tree being held for ransom. He was released as soon as Chaparo, one of the servants, returned with the money. That happened on Sunday as we were ready to go church. The general store in town would let you have money when you gave them the note with said amount. Dad had written it so it was no problem.

We all say that we should have recorded his experiences. He also had a lot of heartaches but never complained even though during the last years of his life he suffered with rheumatism. We never knew how painful it was until now, since we all have I touch of it. Now, it's called arthritis.

My Father was a great provider, very thoughtful with his family, a strict disciplinarian. He loved to have his picture taken and sometimes clowned with it. I look back now, and the years seem so short that we spent together. Pâpa, Pâpa, Father and Dad left us with so many gifts: to be honest, not to cheat, to be kind, and to respect others, above all not to lie.

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ONE LONG RING
by
Johnnie Kocurek

When I was seven years old and the night was extra dark, Gaw sat rocking and knitting in the living room.

"Tell the story about the man you shot!" I begged. "I want to hear the one long ring story."

Gaw's three grandchildren, Mary Jo, Bob and I, wrapped in our favorite handmade quilts, sat on the floor in front of her and listened as she began.

"I was alone in Dark Corner that dreadful night except for your mothers, ages four and six, who were tucked safely in their beds. Your grandfather had taken a day's trip into Hot Springs to attend to some business and would not return until the next evening. I had stayed alone on many such occasions and was not afraid, but on this particular night strange noises in the barn made me fidgety and anxious. Several trips outside earlier in the evening, braving a cold wind and an early sunset, I found nothing to cause my anxiety. I cooked dinner, put the girls to bed and sat in complete silence rocking and listening. Nell whinnied once and then again. Safely stalled in the barn, she would whinny only if something was not as it should be. Quickly blowing out the kerosene lamp, I walked softly to a window.

"Peering out, I saw a figure running from the direction of the barn, slowly dragging a large sack toward the fence. Moving to the front door, I reached up with one hand and brought a shot gun to my side. The figure reached the fence and struggled as he tried to climb over, tugging the large white sack behind him.

"I pulled the hammer back on the loaded shotgun, lifted the butt to my shoulder, aimed toward the intruder's backside and fired. The figure bellowed a loud groan, fell from the fence, and then disappeared into the darkness.

"I did not dare go out of the house in search of a body. Suddenly I wasn't the brave frontier woman I had thought I was. I sat down in my rocking chair and rocked and knitted, prepared to sit there until daylight. Both the girls came into the front room

and sleepily asked what had happened. I told them I thought I had killed a man but that they should go back to bed and stay there. It was less than thirty minutes later as I sat patiently waiting, one long ring from the wooden phone hanging on the wall broke the silence. Everyone in the community knew the one long ring meant a call for Doc Rogers. I picked up the phone receiver and put it to my ear.

"'Doc Rogers, this is Cul Wilson. Someone just shot Albert.'

"'How bad is he hurt, Cul?' Doc Rogers asked.

"'He was out hunting. Someone shot him in the leg and he's bleeding a lot.' Cul replied.

"'I'll be right there," Doc Rogers promised.

"The next morning I found a half emptied sack of corn and scattered ears by the fence. I also saw Albert Wilson's blood on the ground. The Wilson family lived about a mile from me, and I knew them well. Thank God I had not killed their son, Albert. But still, Albert lived and limped the rest of his life."

Gaw's story ended with an offer of hot chocolate. I had always been in awe of my grandmother and now again I was fascinated by the wooden phone on the wall and one long ring. I would visit my kin in the country and be allowed to stand on a box so I could answer the oak phone when it rang one, two or three, short or long rings. Soon, progress was taking away the old wooden phones in Dark Corner. The city phones had already graduated to little black telephones with the ear piece hanging by a cord and soon the same came to Dark Corner.

We didn't have a black phone in our house in town in the thirties, but my Uncle John, who lived next door, did. His phone number was 515 and he shared his phone with all his neighbors. Emergencies only, of course.

My interest in telephones was enhanced because my Aunt Dee Dell was the second operator hired in Hot Springs. Her job was to plug into a switchboard, ask "Number, Please?" listen for a number, plug into another jack, and connect the two parties. She knew everyone's number, and sometime was given only a name. Dee Dell retired after fifty years with the telephone company at which time she was honored at

a reception at the exclusive Arlington Hotel. She had prepared and memorized an appreciation speech and knew every word she was to say. We had gone to the hotel several times to practice walking down the staircase. I listened for weeks as she recited her speech over and over .

The night of the big affair, Aunt Dee Dell, for the first time in her life, wore a formal gown and a beauty shop hairdo. She was very nervous as she made her grand walk down a spiral staircase.

In the crowded room at the bottom of the stairs I watched my aunt, dressed in her beautiful evening gown. Although she descended gracefully to greet her audience, I sensed her insecurity.

Over a loud speaker a deep voice introduced her. "Miss Nell Haynes."

She reached the bottom of the stairway, and stood regally, listened as the emcee reviewed her career, accepted the retirement gift he offered, and took a deep breath. She approached the microphone.

She faltered. Not a word came from her mouth. My mind was urging her on. *Say, "Thank you friends and fellow workers." Say anything, Dee Dell.*

She cleared her throat, leaned toward the microphone, smiled sweetly and asked, "Number, please?" The crowd cheered, she cried.

Soon after Dee Dell's retirement Mother and I got our first phone. Our phone number was 3252W, the W identifying our phone line as a party line. We used the phone only when absolutely necessary. Our party line's ring was two rings. Ours was one. I must admit I listened in on the party line once in a while. We waited two years for a private line, then dropped the W. I missed ole two rings and the tidbits I heard while holding my hand over the receiver.

In the mid-forties, our phone number was changed to National 32768, and our telephone operator asking, "Number, please?" was gone forever. A little dial took her place. She came on the line once in a while to say "information" or "long distance." The prefix "National" was taken away and our number became 663-2768. Soon technology replaced the dial with punch buttons. The phones themselves came in all

shapes, colors and forms. They could be operated inside the house, outside the house, and along the highways. Then they appeared in cars, and young mothers in Suburbans drove around town, one hand on the wheel, the other holding a phone. No phone was ever as fascinating to me as the wooden one on the wall.

If Gaw shot a man tonight, she would punch 911 wherever she was, then sit and wait a few minutes for help to come.

One long ring for Doc Rogers, with everyone in the country listening in, is just another of the simple ways of life that is gone forever.

Gaw never reported Albert Wilson stealing her corn, and Albert Wilson never reported Gaw's attempted murder act against him. Their experience with each other on that dark and windy night, ended with one long ring.

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FUN ON THE FARM
by
Kitty Kelley

Grandpa quickly caught a chicken, and with the flick of the wrist, broke its neck and flung it over his shoulder. He caught another and flip, over his shoulder it went. Donald was a quiet child so Grandpa kept up a running chatter of this and that, with little response from Donald. After a while Grandpa realized it seemed like he was killing a lot of chickens for just one meal. Chickens with broken necks were dancing and dying around the yard. I wished I had film in my camera. "Hey, Donald, is the pail full yet?" Grandpa asked.

"Nope...," Donald said. "None of the chickens landed in the pail."

Every summer, activities on the farm kept us all busy. Often there were guests for the afternoon and supper. The kids were happy with the horses and the pony. One day, the twelve-year-olds, Joanne and Sheilah, decided it was time for their cousin, Mike, to learn to ride a horse. Mike was two years older than the girls and a lot bigger, but they were determined, so Mike got his first and last lesson in horseback riding. "Come on Mike, put your foot in the stirrup and swing your rump over," Joanne said. "I can't," Mike said. "Yes you can! Now come on and try," Joanne said again.

"Mike, you're gonna ride this horse or else," Sheilah threatened. "Joanne, we can push him up if he will just get that foot in the stirrup. O.k., Mike, once more."

I watched them struggle and wondered if Mike knew he was outnumbered and outwitted. Sheilah picked up his foot and put it in the stirrup. When they told Mike to give himself a little jump, he made a weak effort to get that rump up. He wasn't getting very far up, so both girls put their hands on his fat rear and together gave a healthy push. Mike went up all right, up and over. He landed on the other side of the horse. Such a howling you wouldn't believe! I did empathize because they were in a hay field which had just been cut. The stubble was sharp and scratchy.

The girls told Mike he was going to ride even if they had to tie him on that horse. After a few more tries they did get him on and were calmly leading the horse as Mike hung on for dear life. That is when Uncle Doc showed up and gave the horse a swat

on its rear and off Mike went. Uncle Doc was a local baseball hero whom the kids all loved. Doc loved to tease the kids and took special pleasure in stirring up things for the older children. When Mike finally managed to get the horse down to a slow walk, the girls ran up and caught the reins and helped Mike down. That was the last time Mike ever rode a horse.

No story of the farm would be complete without a story of the club which met in the abandoned chicken coop. Seven-year-old Margaret came in crying one day because she couldn't bring herself to torture a butterfly. As recreation chairman, it was my duty to find out why that was necessary. "They won't let me be in the club unless I do," Margaret said. Well, in the way of adults dealing with kids, I changed the rule, so Margaret did get in. I turned to go back in the house and looked back one more time. There was Leo stuck in the doorway of the coop. He was too big to get in, so he got stuck. I decided if the group couldn't push him out, I'd send Grandpa. There are more club stories to be told.

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NOSTALGIA: *JUST THINKING*
by
Myrtle Thibodeaux Schiller

Many things come to mind about growing up with Mom and Dad and my three sisters, Nettie, Eleanor, and Mim. Mom and Dad were such great examples of what I think about when I think of married bliss. I can't remember ever having heard them having an argument. They had a closeness that I wanted--and had-- during my married life. When Dad would come home from work, his first words were "Mama, I'm home." If he got no answer, he would head for the kitchen, check the pots and pans on the stove, lift the lids, smell the cooking, then out the back door he'd go, looking till he found Mom, who was usually in the garden or just out in the back yard. Dad just wouldn't stay in the house alone.

Nettie, Eleanor, Mim and I were close in age--and close in friendship. We got along pretty well, and sort of moved in the same circles. Our house was always filled with our friends. Mom was "Nan" to practically everyone. "Nan" opened our house for parties on New Year's Eve, Mardi Gras, Easter, and any of the other holidays On New Year's Eve and the Fourth of July, everyone brought out Mom's pots and pans, and spoons to beat them as noisemakers. Many years later some of the kids who participated would come to see Mom and tell her how much they appreciated and remembered her hospitality. They remembered how much fun they had at our house all those special holidays. For all those years of us girls growing up, Mom's idea was that she would rather have us at home instead of off somewhere else.

Besides our memorable holidays, I also enjoy thinking about the big mulberry tree in one corner of our yard. Boy! What a mess that was in the summertime when the birds ate the mulberries. We finally dug up the tree, smoothed out the ground, filled in the hole, and made a tennis court in the spot. We got much more use out of that part of the yard. It was more fun playing tennis than cleaning up the mulberry mess.

Remembering about the mulberry tree has made me think about another tree, (this one in Grandma Faulk's back yard which was next door to ours), a huge fig tree. Once, a cousin of ours, Shirley Hebert, Eleanor, and I were picking figs. I was climbing ahead of everybody, almost reaching the topmost branches when chaos struck! Shirley was just below me and Eleanor had not yet started up the tree. She was picking

figs on the lower branches, so she was spared the ordeal Shirley and I endured. I was trying to get a footing when all of a sudden I felt these awful wasp stings all over my foot. I had put my foot in a wasp nest. How I screamed! I gave my foot a kick, and Shirley, who was just below me, let out a howl and grabbed his head. The wasp nest contents left my foot and covered his head. We came scrambling down out of that tree, figs flying, as fast as we could. My foot was full of stings and already swollen twice its size. Poor Shirley's eyes were swollen almost shut and his head was huge, with lumps all over. He was in terrible pain. Thank God, the wasps had spent their fury and left. We had to go to the doctor's office to get shots in case we were allergic to the stings. Needless to say, that was our last attempt at picking figs, that year anyway.

I've noticed that when I start thinking about one thing in the past, something else always comes to mind. I could go on and on, but I'll save it for the next time.

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A TRIP TO PENNSYLVANIA
by
Betty Tripp

Aunt Emily and Uncle Ray always spent the month of July in Scarbrough, Maine, at a cottage called Mac's Rest. The summer of 1947, I turned 12 years old, and Aunt Emily invited me to go to Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, with them the first week of August when they went back home from their vacation. Mom, Dad, Roberta, and Don would pick me up the second week of August. I was very excited about this trip as I had never been further west than Connecticut or New York, and we would also be staying in a motel one night on the way. I kept bugging Mom and Dad with questions about the motel. "What will we sleep on?" "Do they have bathrooms?"

The day arrived when Aunt Emily, Uncle Ray, Judy, and Rodney came to pick me up. Judy was a year younger than I and we got along well, even though she was taller than I. Rodney was always teasing us and telling stories about Judy. I believe Uncle Ray had a new Chrysler Sedan car so I knew we would have a good trip.

Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, is a suburb of Harrisburg, which is the capitol of Pennsylvania, and is located in the southeastern part of the state. We stopped several times during the day for food, gas, and bathroom breaks. That evening we arrived at the motel. I am not sure what city it was in, but may have been in Maryland. When I saw those little cabins I could not imagine five of us staying in one of them. The motel rooms looked like little doll houses. After Uncle Ray registered us at the office, we went into the one assigned to us. There was a double bed for the adults and cots were set up for Judy, Rodney, and I. There was a bathroom with just the basic necessities.

The next morning we continued our trip to Camp Hill. Judy and Rodney were anxious to get back home as they had been gone for a month and a neighbor had been taking care of their dog. Uncle Ray was employed by the American Rose Society, located in Harrisburg. At the time I went there, I believe he was the Secretary of the Rose Society. Later, he became the President and also served as President of the World Federation of Rose Growers.

While I was visiting in Camp Hill, Aunt Emily took me several times into Harrisburg to do sightseeing. I also learned a lot about the growing and cultivating of roses. At his home, Uncle Ray maintained a two acre rose garden in his back yard, experimenting with cross breeding with the flowers. Some were very beautiful. I remember all the shades of pink, red, yellow, and combinations of all colors.

Mom, Dad, Roberta, and Don arrived on the Sunday after I got to Camp Hill. It was very hot in Pennsylvania during the month of August and there was no air conditioning, but Uncle Ray had several fans around the house. Mostly the children stayed outside and played in the shade under the trees in the yard.

About the middle of the week, Dad was working in Uncle Ray's garden doing some weeding. Since he was very hot and sweating, he had tied a white handkerchief around his forehead to keep the sweat off his glasses. After an hour or so, he looked up and saw a line of law enforcement officers coming towards him with their guns drawn! He just stood there and waited for them to approach him. One of the officers spoke to him when they were closer--"What is your name?" and "What are you doing here!" Dad told him his name and that he was visiting his brother-in-law. Then he offered to show him his driver's license. The officer decided he was harmless but told Dad that a young man had escaped from a state prison a few miles away. The officer told Dad he better stay close to the house and to notify the police if he saw anyone that looked suspicious.

When Dad came to the house and told the rest of us about the escaped convict, we were all a little nervous. That night we hoped the convict was long gone from the area. It was still hot, so the windows upstairs in the bedrooms were all left open. About four in the morning we were all awakened by the sound of a gun shot and a woman screaming! Then Judy started screaming, "Buddy's been shot, Buddy's been shot!" My sister, brother, Rodney, Judy and I began crying while the adults tried to calm us down and find out what had really happened. There were several police cars in front of the house, so Dad and Uncle went out to see what was going on. I think they were able to get more information from the lady next door than they did from the police.

This was the series of events. Buddy (the man next door) went to work very early in the morning. He was sitting on the wall in front of the house waiting for his ride. A police car patrolling the road saw him and thought he was the convict. The

policeman jumped from his car and grabbed Buddy. When he did, Buddy started running. The cop pulled out his gun and shot at him. Luckily, he missed! The wife had been watching from the front window, and she started screaming. Judy was sleeping downstairs on the side of the house near the action, so that was why she was screaming that Buddy had been shot. Everybody finally settled down. The police decided they had the wrong person, Buddy returned to his house, and we all tried to go back to sleep. But I don't think any one was successful in getting any more rest. The remainder of our stay in Camp Hill was uneventful. I don't know if the convict was ever captured or not.

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BONNIE'S GRANDPA
by
Olympe Butcher

The scene was Westside Elementary in Scott. My purpose there was to teach French to Fourth Graders since their French teacher was out having eye surgery. My friend, Principal Mary Nell Domingue, was always glad to see me come in at 10:30 each morning after I had finished teaching French classes to Eighth Graders at Scott Middle.

The children at Westside were delightful, anxious to learn:

New French words,
Make French sentences,
Read some French, and
Carry on French conversations.

But most of all in each lesson, they were anxious to sing French songs.

One half hour of French was never enough for these "anxious to learn a new language" kids. One class in particular was never willing to leave. So each day in order to get them to go back to their teacher, if I started singing: *Au revoir, au revoir!/ C'est le temps de s'en aller/Demain encore si vous voulez/Revenez vous amuser*, they knew that French was *finis* for the day and they could sing their way back to their homeroom since they knew the song well.

For these children, French was not only enjoyable, it was a delightful moment away from their classes. I had never taught at Westside, but I found in every class, there were children who were special. Bonnie was one of those Fourth graders. As she left on Monday, she promised me that her Grandpa would love to come play his accordion for us. My response to her was, "Bonnie let's invite him. I'll write an invitation and make a date sometimes soon." Knowing school's rules for visitors, I had planned to talk to the principal about permission for allowing us to invite Bonnie's grandpa, but upon arrival at school on Tuesday (the next day), I realized that Grandpa and the accordion were already there...Mr. Aldus Roger himself! Mrs. Roger had come, too, to help entertain Bonnie's class.

All classes in our wing of the school had an extra hour of French music on that morning. All ears were tuned to Mr. Aldus Roger's accordion. And Bonnie was the center of attraction for having invited her Grandpa.

Had I been a young inexperienced teacher or in a different situation, I may well have worried. I could have been reprimanded by the principal (or by other teachers) for inviting a visitor without first notifying the office, but instead Mary Nell and I have had many a little chat and laugh about Bonnie's invitation to Grandpa and the extra added attraction of Cajun music.

As I look back on this visit of Mr. Roger to his granddaughter's class, I realize it was something very special indeed!

This past week, he was buried at the age of 83, having died on Easter Sunday.

Mr. Walter Pierce of the *Daily Advertiser* stated in his *Accent Wednesday* story, "Requiem for a Pioneer," "You simply can't overstate Aldus Roger's contribution to Cajun Music." This person, who was inducted into the Louisiana Hall of fame and the Cajun French Music Hall of Fame, gives some indication of his importance to his style of Cajun Music.

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A TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE
by
John Q. Lee

What a beautiful morning to be traveling the shaded road, as it wound along Mill Lake. I saw rabbits and the fuzzy fox squirrels run across from all directions right in front of us. Dad and I broke out of the forest into the little county village of Bickley, Georgia, about mid-morning—our one and only stop on the way to see Grandpa. The little town sat right at the foot of Mill Lake Dam, a picturesque scene. Most fascinating to me was the water wheel for power to operate the grist mill where everyone came from the surrounding country to have corn ground into meal and grits. It was here that Dad stopped to rest and water the horse. A country general merchandise store of long standing was located right at the crossroad up from the mill house. While Dad was taking care of the horse, I scooted up the high steps into the store.

After a short greeting with Mr. Scriven Westberry, the owner, I began checking out the candies and cookies. In that semi-darkened, overstocked place I'll never forget that smell of hay, mixed with leather, but oh, the candies, nuts, and cookies really made my mouth water! Dad was always more interested in farm equipment and fertilizers, and on every trip we always got some materials from the dry goods department to take to Mother. We looked at the meats, but never did buy any 'cause we cured our own good ol' Georgia hams.

It was time to get serious about the candies right in front of that big cash register. Special glass containers with covers kept them just so fresh for little hands to slip into. "You're Jim Lee's boy, aren't you?" he asked. "Yes, Sir," I answered. "He's outside watering the horse." "What's your name, Son?" "Quincy Lee," I proudly replied. "How old are you?" "I'm four and I'll be going to school next year when my brother Josh starts. Mother and Dad wouldn't let him go until I got old enough." "You all headed for your Grandpa's?" "Yes, Sir. He's been sick."

"Howdy, Jim."Mr. Westberry called out as Dad walked in. "Scriven, is this boy bothering you?" "Not at all—we were just getting acquainted," he said as he ran his hand under the counter and pulled out a red striped stick of peppermint candy. "Here ya go, boy—something to nibble along the way." I thanked him and Dad said I could get some other candies for me to take home for Josh. Scriven handed me a brown

paper bag, and I began to give serious thought as my hand rumbled around in that glass jar.

They talked too long 'cause I was ready to be on my way....*but wait, what was Mr. Westberry saying?* "Oh, by the way, I bet you all haven't heard what happened at the Rowel Farm last night. They say two boys broke into the house while Mr. Rowel was away and raped his sixteen-year-old daughter, Maurine, battered his wife real bad, and stole some money. A Sheriff s posse has been out all night searching for them. You all be on the lookout." "My goodness, that's just terrible. You never know what's going to happen these days," Dad said as he paid for the candy.

I was scared as Dad and I continued along our way, sailing at a pretty good clip on those much improved roads. Both sides were shaded by oak trees as we went downhill heading toward the covered bridge over Big Hurricane Creek. Just as we were approaching the bridge, ol' Trix shied, almost throwing the buggy off the road into the creek. I was trying to hold on, while Dad jumped from the buggy and stood at ol' Trix's head with a tight rein. I heard him scream, "Oh, my God!" When I looked up toward the end of the bridge, I saw the limp bodies of two black men with ropes dangling loosely by their sides. They were hanging from the lower limb of a large oak tree. I only looked once, then covered my head with the lap robe that had been keeping us warm. "Let's go, Daddy, let's go!" Dad was holding the horses bridle with both hands to keep her from bolting. She was very nervous, but Dad managed to hold on and led Trixie quickly onto the covered bridge, out of sight of the oak tree. Then he hurriedly climbed back in the buggy, and we took off as fast as we could.

I had calmed down only a little before we got to Grandpa's. I could hardly wait to tell him what I had seen. There he was sitting in a rocker on the front porch waiting for us. "Grandpa! Grandpa! guess what we saw on that tree at the covered bridge?!" I yelled. "We saw two men hanging by their necks on ropes!" His face turned white as a sheet, as he said, "Oh, my goodness! I wish you hadn't seen that. We knew that a posse was out looking for 'em, and I suspected the worst could happen." Still upset, I then told him about ol' Trix almost turning the buggy over.

We began to settle down after Grandmother came out to get us to come in for dinner. We had baked ham, sweet potatoes, turnip greens, and chocolate layer cake for dessert. Yum, yum, all the good ol' Georgia dishes. That night I sat on Grandpa's lap and counted to a hundred. We had such a good visit. Dad's youngest brother,

Uncle Prince, had trapped a covey of quail the day before and insisted that Grandmother fix them for breakfast. I really enjoyed that breakfast.

We were soon on our way back home, with lots to think about along the way. Would you believe Josh was at the gate waiting for us? I could hardly wait to tell about the excitement on our trip to Grandpa's, but Josh was more interested in his share of the candy.

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THE KNIFE WENT PLUNK!
by
Woodson Hopkins

Before I was old enough to join the Boy Scouts, and through some method still unknown to me, I started receiving monthly copies of *Boy's Life* magazine. The issues arrived at the post office where I eagerly worked the combination lock on Box 236 while standing on tip toes to retrieve what I considered to be my personal mail. I was more than captivated by the Scout merchandise pictured for sale particularly the Scout pocket knife with multiple blades. I wanted one of those knives more than anything. It was not long before I began a campaign strategy to get one. I showed the magazine first to Uncle Mike (I believed he was my best prospect). Perhaps my confidence in him came from his frequent gestures of surprising me with coins fetched from his vest pocket each time we met I knew Granny would be a hard sell, so I bypassed her, going next to Dad, then mother. My approach was coy and subtle, but not overly so. I would carry a copy of the magazine around for all to see. I even showed up at the dinner table with a copy tucked under arm.

Hardly a week passed before things started happening. Dad pulled into our driveway early one afternoon and asked if I wanted to go to the bay fishing. Before I could answer *yes*, I was told we were leaving early the next morning. Uncle Mike was going with us. Without wasting time I began to prepare for what I sensed was to be a real excursion. It was rare indeed for the two of them to have time off simultaneous,(the oil field being what it was in those days). They had been so busy, what with four rigs running, no time was left to fish. Dad directed me to take to the bed early that night because an early departure was planned. I was so excited I could hardly sleep. I looked forward to my first go at salt water fishing.

When I felt Dad's hand on my shoulder whispering for me to wake up, I sprang from my bed and jumped into my clothes in one bound. We had loaded Dad's coupe the night before with his stainless steel ice chest, a gift from a grateful vendor. Boat and tackle would have to be rented since there had been no time to acquire any. A short distance down the road Uncle Mike waited for us with a sack full of fried egg sandwiches and a thermos of coffee. I slid to the middle as Mike, Dad's father-in-law and my maternal grandfather, piled in beside me. Dad turned the Ford around and we were off across the B lease to the county road. There we turned South toward the old

"Hug the Coast" highway. We arrived at Mills Wharf on the North side of Copano Bay at first light. Despite my excitement I had slept most of the way cradled against Uncle Mike's side.

The two of them made arrangements for a boat and tackle while I opened the trunk lid and helped the dock boy load ice into the chest we had brought. "Gonna need this for our catch," I confided. The boy, probably in his mid-teens, displayed his doubt about a catch by grunting loudly. I grabbed the sandwiches and thermos and headed for the wharf, which looked to me like a Texas dance hall on stilts. The piers that held the weathered structure had long since lost their coats of creosote and were encrusted with barnacles. The whole thing leaned precariously. Inside the hall a long bar took up one side. Behind the bar was a tiny kitchen with two gas hot plates. Around the room a series of wooden booths lined each wall. In one comer a nickelodeon rested silently after a hard night's work. Above it swung a rusting beer sign.

Dad motioned for me to bring the bag of sandwiches and the thermos to him. The look on his face told me that he was not especially proud of the leaky row boat he and Uncle Mike had selected. At the moment of our departure, Uncle Mike fished around in his coat pocket and, pulling out a small box, handed it to me smiling broadly. I opened the box and saw the shiny bright knife I had so coveted. I admired the gift carefully for a moment and then placed it in the pocket of my shirt. Then, like a bunch of Kansas tourists, we were towed out to the nearest reef to fish. In the bottom of the boat we found two tin cans suitable for bailing, compliments of The Wharf.

We fished hard for an hour without catching any specks or reds, boating only a few hard heads for our efforts. Uncle Mike blamed our luck on the soggy bait supplied by The Wharf. Dad was thinking that salt water fishing was not worth the effort. I was detached from the moment daydreaming over the new knife in my pocket. I watched my wind blown cork drift toward the skiff. When it came within my reach I leaned over the side and my new knife slipped noiselessly into the depths. I was too stunned to move. I sat frozen, knowing my loss had gone undetected by Dad and Uncle Mike.

Suddenly Uncle Mike let out a whoop. Something was on his line and tugging like the devil. When the monster surfaced, Mike shouted, "Stingaree.!" Dad grabbed the line in one hand and draped Mike's catch over side of the boat; then laid an oar against the monster's tail. When he called for my knife I froze, not knowing how to tell them that I had lost it over the side.

Reading the anxiety on Dad's face, I let out a painful cry of confession that I had lost my brand new knife in the water, and that I was mighty sorry for my negligence. Lowering my eyes to avoid their stares, I saw Dad pull the stingaree into the boat and cover it with a rag brought along especially to quell flopping hard heads. Then he took the oar and moved the boat forward to a point where I had been when the knife went over the side. He gazed hard into the water. My grief suddenly turned to joy when Dad reached into the water and found my knife.

What I had not noticed was that we had anchored directly over the reef in half a foot of water, casting our lines into the deeper water ringing the reef. At that moment, with kid-like instincts; I felt my silver haired Daddy could do just about anything from wrestling a menacing stingaree the size of a number three wash tub to retrieving a prize possession for a little boy. It was the final time the three of us went fishing together. Uncle Mike died at DeTar Hospital in Victoria less than a year later.

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WEATHERING CHANGE

March 23, 1999

by

Stanley F. Davis

In 1944, I resigned from the Purchasing, Material and Customs Department of Creole Petroleum Company. For the last fifteen years, I had been an actual but not continuous head of that department. My reason for leaving was that if my two daughters, fourteen and three years of age, were to spar on equal footing with other American girls, they should have an American education and grow up in the American environment.

The night before we left for the States, my wife and I were given a farewell dinner, attended by almost every employee of the Material, Accounting, and Public Relations Departments of the Company. I was presented with a hand-embossed, genuine leather brief case, which I still have. I told them that I had enjoyed working with them and that I would miss them, but if I ever returned to Venezuela it would be as a visitor or tourist. I was then informed that the odds were four to one in a wagering pool set up among the employees, that I would be back in Venezuela within ninety days.

After visiting Livia's father, mother, and a sister in Panama, we arrived at Texarkana, Arkansas, where my parents lived. My mother was terminally ill with cancer. She was being cared for in the daytime by my father and an old colored woman. At night, my father and my sister, Lucile, who worked seven days a week at the munitions factory, took care of her. My older brother, Karl, who lived across the street was secretary and treasurer at Buhrman-Pharr Wholesale Hardware Company. My youngest brother, Kenneth, who also lived across the street, was principal of the Texarkana, Arkansas High School. One brother, Henry, and one sister, Pauline, lived out of state.

After thirty days of vacation with a very ill mother, a father busy all day taking care of my mother, two brothers, and a sister working all day and too tired to visit at night, with no job in sight, I became discouraged and unhappy. Like a fish out of water, I nearly drove my family crazy.

I was so discouraged that I was on the verge of calling the personnel department of Creole Petroleum Company to see if they could find a job for me back in Venezuela. Then I decided to look for a job in Shreveport, Louisiana, which was then a thriving oil city, much as Lafayette was in the late sixties and seventies. Henry Linam, who had risen from rough-neck to general manager of Creole Petroleum Company, lived in Shreveport. Mr. Linam was very popular with the Venezuelan government officials and had been very influential in obtaining regulations favorable to the foreign oil company. However, two years previously, he had resigned when, in his opinion, the New York office decided they knew more about running a Venezuelan oil field operation than he did. Also, the New York office had overruled his judgment on how to prevent, or at least delay, confiscation of a U.S. foreign oil field operations in Venezuela.

When I called Mr. Linam, he invited me to his home. After two beers and some discussion of why he resigned from Creole, I told him I had also left the company and was looking for a job in the States. He said, "I know where you can get a job that will be perfect for you. My friend, Bill Somner, owner of The W.L. Somner Company, Buda Engine and Gaso Pump Sales and Service, is looking for an office manager, bookkeeper, and inside salesman. The man who previously had the job is now in the penitentiary for forgery and stealing from the company. See Bill tomorrow morning. Tell him I sent you and that I know you can handle the job. I am sure the job will be yours."

The next morning I went to see Mr. Somner, and as Mr. Linam had predicted, I was offered and accepted the job at a fair salary, but not nearly as much as I had been earning in Venezuela. My staff consisted of two girls and a mechanic. One of the girls, a niece of Mr. Linam, did the billing. The other girl kept a card record of the stock and did typing and filing. The mechanic serviced and delivered equipment sold. Mr. Somner was seldom in the store. He was the type of salesman who believed in visiting his customers and potential customers in their offices and on their jobs, personally selling his equipment and services.

I had solved my need for employment, but finding a place to live in Shreveport proved extremely difficult. It seemed that every rental type house and apartment was occupied by the families of enlisted men and low-ranking officers stationed at Barksdale Air Force Base. I finally settled for a cabin in the Alamo Plaza Tourist Court, on the north side, near the Fairgrounds. My oldest daughter Wilma, who had

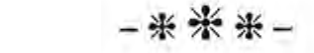
never attended an English speaking school before moving to the States, had been receiving tutoring from my brother, Kenneth, to determine where she would fit into the American School system. Therefore, she remained in Texarkana, living with my brother Karl and his wife and attending her first year of high school.

Six months later, by sheer chance, I was lucky enough to rent a small house, also on the north side of town. This permitted us to bring Wilma to Shreveport, and during the second semester of that year, she attended North Park High School. When the owner of our rent house returned, we were again desperate for a place to live.

The only place we were able to rent was a prestigious home on the west side near Centenary College. The rent, although regulated under rent control, was more than I could afford to pay. However, an apartment over the garage was included, which I rented out for half of what I was paying for the house, and this arrangement helped me financially.

Living in the center of Shreveport, Wilma then attended the first semester of her second year in high school at Byrd High. When the owner of the house returned to Shreveport, we had to move again. This time we were luckier than before. We rented a neat small house in Bossier City—a reasonable rental with no time limit specified or anticipated. The house was located two or three blocks west of Highway 71, about halfway between the Red River Bridge and Barksdale AFB. Now living in Bossier Parish, Wilma attended the next two semesters of high school at Bossier High.

Tiring of working for someone else, I quit my job in Shreveport and moved to Abbeville. I opened N.A.P.A. Automotive Parts Stores in Abbeville and Crowley, which I operated for the next ten years. Wilma graduated from Abbeville High School and, in due time, from S.L.I. (now U.S.L.) with honors. Weathering changes, to me and my family, was never a problem—only a challenge.



FREETOWN
by
Joe Glorioso

By edict [Editor's note: *Ahem!*], stories are limited to five pages or seven minutes of oral reading, barely enough time to focus my surgically implanted plastic lenses that are my eyes. My story about Freetowners must necessarily be continued from one episode to the next to complete a satisfying whole. I write this story as an eighty-two-year-old man with a cluttered mind, seeing life overflowing with insecurity, immorality, infidelity, and injustices, and devoid of romance, joy, and happiness. But I must write my experiences as a ten-year-old youngster with an uncluttered mind who observed an idyllic world overflowing with security, morality, fidelity, and justice, and bursting with romance, joy and happiness—for that was Freetowners yesteryear's beautiful world.

As I write the episodes that make up this story, the reader may get an impression that my youthful experiences occurred in one short summer. What actually happened to me took place over three summers, from age seven to ten. My writing balled several smaller, but similar episodes and observations into a larger one and wrote the observation, especially the episodes, as though they occurred as one.

Freetown was a close knit community of about two hundred souls in fifty shotgun houses. The houses rested on foot-high brick pillars in an area bounded by Hortense and Rozier streets, Bayou Teche, and New Iberia's golf course. My stories focus upon the generous, law-abiding citizens of Freetown. They called themselves Freetowners, and with pride they referred to themselves as Colored Folks. (I purposefully capitalized the two words in honor of the proud people who lived in Freetown.) Yes, they were black, and they lived in the fully segregated town of 1926 New Iberia, but, in good conscience, they considered themselves free and equal. Their skin tones ranged widely from the color of one tablespoon of milk mixed into a cup of black coffee to several tablespoons, from shoe polish black, to shoe polish brown, and to shoe polish tan.

Nicknames were given to nearly every Freetowner, based primarily upon a prominent physical characteristic. A set of fraternal twins was called Sha and Shoo. Usually, we referred to them as Sha-Shoo. My favorite person was Aunt T who told

me wonderful, true stories about her mother, a former slave. Tite-Eyes was called that because he squinted through narrow slits between drooping eyelids. Snaggle's two permanent front teeth had been knocked out by a boy swinging a baseball bat. LuLu, T-May, Chanunce, Uncle Tat, Paw and B-Boy were names that have lingered in my memory. I was T-Joe, my father was Poppa Joe, and my mother was Ma'am Joe to those Freetowners who knew my family.

Nearly all of the older men and women in Freetown were first generation freemen and freewomen living in a less-than-free segregated South. As free people, they believed in the work ethics of a free America. They worked in banks, New Iberia's ice house, the power plant, machine shops, and in the homes of local families. Some of the men worked on farms in Morbihan Plantation and, to them, faraway Loreauville. Sometimes their wives and older sons shared in their working day. Others worked in their homes taking in family laundry, starching and ironing clothes, patching, mending clothing, and making new school dresses and boys' shirts. One Freetowner did exquisite needlework on silk and linen and was much in demand among the affluent. The Freetowners eyed with displeasure, even disgust, the men and women of the Coteau area, referring to them as "them lazy niggers."

The small community of shotgun houses peopled by industrious human beings had been built on large lots astride a two-way dirt road that was puddled by the advent of South Louisiana's persistent, winter rains. During the dry summer months, horses and wagons plied deeply into the road's powdered dust susceptible to swirling dust devils. Narrow ditches, collecting wastewater from soapy dishpans and wash bowls, bordered each side of the road. Many residents gathered water hyacinth from Bayou Teche and planted them in the ditches in front of their houses to bloom in the spring and summer as attractive blue, white and yellow flowers. Next to and parallel with the ditches, the residents had built wooden banquettes of varying widths alongside the ditches for pedestrian traffic.

Most of the shotgun houses on the street sported picket fences. In the spring, the whitewashed fences were adorned with pale blue morning glories. A few shotgun houses had a front porch that stretched across the front of the house under an extension of a corrugated metal roof. Other houses had smaller front porches with sloped metal roofs attached to the houses' front walls and supported in front by two four-by-fours.

Two steps were attached to the front porches. In the evenings, the residents sat on the floor of the porches with their feet on the top step to watch their neighbors walk along the banquette, stopping briefly to wave, occasionally to pass the time of day or to visit and exchange views on the happenings of the day. The youngsters sat on the front edge of the porch, dangling their feet above the tops of yellow and red nasturtiums.

Only important visitors entered the parlor through the front screen door and wooden door. The parlor was considered a special room, usually heavy, red or blue drapes hid the windows. A sofa, and one or two stuffed chairs, and a rocking chair were strategically placed to face a small, grated fireplace ornamenting the back wall of the parlor. Family pictures sat on the mantle proudly exhibiting past lives of the residents, young and old. A door on the right side of the wall, always kept closed, led into the master bedroom with its armoire, dresser, washstand, and four-posted bed covered with a colorful, homemade quilt. On the left side of the master bedroom's wall, a door led into the children's bedroom, sparsely furnished with narrow bunk beds, small trunk-like storage boxes for clothes and things, and small benches.

In the wall's center of the children's bedroom, a door led into the kitchen, the largest room in the house. A wood burning stove stood near the corner on the kitchen's back wall. Its black stovepipe poked its way upward to within a foot of the ceiling and abruptly turned at right angles thrusting through the back wall on its way outside to turn upward beyond the roof, capped to keep the rain from dripping downward and snuffing out the fire.

Out into the yard through the stout wooden, back door, the screen door and down the two steps, and immediately behind the house stood the whitewashed water cistern, mounted on an elevated foundation. Some cisterns came with open tops, but most were covered with planks and screened to eliminate mosquito larvae wiggling in the rain water. For cisterns without planked screen tops, the residents tied cheesecloth around the cistern's faucet to sift out the wigglers.

Gutters ran from the house's roof to collect the year's rainwater and the inevitable street dust that accumulated over the year on the roof of the house. The dust filtered through the water to stretch a thin layer of mud over the cistern's bottom. During the rainy season in April, Freetowners emptied their cisterns of water, bucket by bucket, and toted them into the ditches. In most cases the cistern cleaners were

helped by neighbors, who loaned tubs and other containers to save water to tide the cleaners over until the next rain and provide water for the last stage of cistern cleaning.

The men and young boys assigned the task as cleaners climbed a ladder to the top of the cistern to remove the cover and lowered their bare feet into two inches of mud on the cistern's bottom. Usually the women of the house perched at the top of the ladder, lowered shovels, water buckets, brooms, and a length of rope to the cleaners. They shoveled and scooped mud into buckets. The woman at the ladder's top roped pulled the filled mud buckets up and handed them to the boys and girls waiting at the bottom of the ladder. They toted the buckets and splashed mud onto the street. In time, all bottom mud was bucketed out and the spare rinse water poured, swished around, broomed, and drained through an opening in the cistern's bottom. A plug was stomped into the drain. The boys were hoisted up to the cistern's rim and down the ladder. The head-of-the-house clambered up the rope, replaced the cistern's cover, and scooted down the ladder.

The cistern cleaning job was finished until next year. The prayer for April showers now began.

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THE LONGEST RIDE
by
Betty Shoemaker

I desperately worked with Chuck while Debbie ran home to call the ambulance. David's Ambulance arrived immediately, followed by a State Police officer. People were gathering around us. As we prepared to transfer Chuck to the stretcher, I supported his head and neck with my left hand and his upper lumbar spine with my right. I was in a state of shock, but more so as I caught a glimpse of the officer placing one hand underneath my son and another under his knees. Aware of the badly dislocated left knee and compound fractures of the tibia and fibula, I yelled at the officer to put Chuck down. With a startled look on his face, the officer placed my son back on the ground. I yelled at the officer, "If you puncture the artery in Chuck's leg with one of the jagged exposed bones, he will bleed to death before we can get his to a hospital."

I was very upset at the office. When I glanced at the Red Cross on his shirt sleeve indicating he had passed Red Cross training, I looked at him and asked angrily, "Didn't you learn anything in the training course? You never attempt to move an injured person until you have assessed his injuries! It appears I have already forgotten more about first aid than you will ever know!"

The ambulance driver and I placed Chuck on the stretcher and into the ambulance, then Debbie and I climbed in the back with Chuck. Time was of the essence. My son was dying. I knew by experience that Chuck had three to three and a half hours of his short life left.

Chuck was still unconscious, unable to respond to painful stimuli. His only response was when I talked to him in a very low voice and assured him that we loved him and would stay with him. As the sirens blared and the ambulance raced to Dauterive's Hospital, I wondered what the next hours would hold.

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