



*With
Love
Sis.*



Excerpts from
**Our Pages
Of Life**



My First Communion Pic





Each semester's end I search my palette for words to say about my students and their stories, words that go deeper than Webster's definitions, words that fly off the page to land in the heart of our readers. I search for words that say more than "Thank you," more than "This is good stuff," more than "You've got to read this!" I fail every time. Maybe my failure to say what I want to say paves the way to say what I mean. And I guess what I mean to say this time around is simply: "Thank you!" "These stories are good stuff!" "You've got to read them!"

Joan Stear
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Spring 2000



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 Louisiana at Lafayette
for their continued support of our efforts to write for the generations to come.
To my students—really, my teachers—thanks.

FRONT COVER: (*clockwise, beginning at top right corner*) Rita Wellborn; Rita Wellborn (on far right);
Mary Pratt, Viola Aberly's aunt; Clinton Aberly and daughter Claire, family of Viola Aberly;
Viola Aberly, shortly after World War II



LIFE WRITING CLASS
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Spring 2000 • Tuesday Afternoon Session

Seated, left to right: Viola Aberly; Mimi Fisher; Rita Wellborn
Standing, left to right: Joan Stear, Instructor; William Scott;
R.C. Sealy; Lois Hollier

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>Rita Wellborn</i> • ASCENSION CATHOLIC CHURCH FAIR	1
<i>R.C. Sealy</i> • JAMBOREE !!!!!	3
<i>Lois Hollier</i> • CHERRY PICKING TIME IN MICHIGAN	6
<i>Mimi Fisher</i> • DON'T FORGET TO LAUGH	8
<i>Viola Aberly</i> • EARLY SCHOOL DAYS	11
<i>William Scott</i> • A CHARMED LIFE	13

ASCENSION CATHOLIC CHURCH FAIR

by
Rita Wellborn

In my early years our whole life revolved around family and church. Most of it was pretty ordinary—dinner guests were always family, aunts and uncles from down the bayou, Mass on Sunday morning, benediction on Sunday afternoon—but once a year there was a fair on the church grounds that was a delight to adults and children alike.

My most vivid memory of this fair is one of unaccustomed freedom. My parents kept pretty close watch on me and my sisters. I was the oldest of three. Seventeen months older than my sister Mathilde (we called her Mattie) and five years older than Eulah Mae, the baby. We seldom left the yard. Mama and Daddy were both from the country and were not too trusting of "town people" so they were extremely protective of us. But the church fair was a different situation. I suppose because it was "church" we were allowed to run around pretty much on our own for several hours. Of course we would check in every now and then with Mama, who was playing Bingo, I guess to make sure that she was still there, holding Eulah Mae, the baby.

My next strongest memory is of the sounds—the most important being the sound of joy on this small fair ground. The loud voice of the caller at the Bingo game, the laughter and teasing of the winners! There was also a high table where men were playing "high ball." They stood around the table laughing and shouting as they made their bets and goaded each other to bet more "to benefit the church." And, of course, the small children, Mattie and I included, ran around like wild Indians with squeals of laughter. It was really a magical time.

In one corner of the church yard small tables had been set up for a mini restaurant. From this area came the wonderful smells of gumbo, fried chicken, and homemade bread. The high school girls from the convent were waitresses

at the church fair. My sister, Mattie, and I couldn't wait to be old enough to be waitresses at the fair.

Of course, we couldn't afford to eat at this wonderful restaurant, but Mama did manage to play Bingo, and Daddy worked at the Bingo tables. These were long tables made of boards set up on carpenter horses. They were set up in a large rectangle, and the workers, the callers, collectors of money and checkers of winners stood or sat in the middle of the rectangle.

The biggest treat for Mattie and me was the ice cream. We never had ice cream at home. Perhaps once a year during the summer we would go to Parrain's house (Parrain was my uncle who was also my godfather, hence the "Parrain," and they would make ice cream in a hand-cranked freezer. That ice cream was good, but the ice cream at the church fair tasted much better. I suppose all the other things we were enjoying at the fair combined to give this ice cream a very special taste. I had never tasted strawberries and I suppose I thought this wonderful taste was exclusive to church fairs.

The fair was always held in early summer when it was deliciously warm. Mama was always overly cautious with us. We couldn't go barefoot until May no matter how warm April was. We couldn't ever sit on the ground because we'd get red bugs. At home, she enforced many other rules which seemed senseless to us. But at the fair, with Mama playing Bingo, we roamed to our heart's content. All the really young children ran and chased each other, playing tag, falling often on the ground. We rolled around on the grass which felt cool and soft to the touch in the warm May weather. Our sense of freedom was even greater because we knew that tomorrow we would be back with the rules.

As we left the fair for the walk home, I couldn't help but look back at the grounds where I had had such a wonderful time. It seemed sad, with its overturned chairs, littered grass and empty Bingo tables. But even as I looked at this deserted area, I was already looking forward to next year's church fair.



JAMBOREE !!!!!

**by
R.C. Sealy**

In 1937, the National office of the Boy Scouts of America announced that a National Jamboree was to be held in Washington, D.C., in June. This was the first national event ever held, and scouts from every state in the U.S. plus scouts from every leading nation in the world would attend. The Evangeline Area Council, which encompasses roughly all of Acadiana, began organizing a troop of scouts to attend, and I was lucky enough to be selected as a member. Our scoutmaster was Mr. R.E. Brumby of Franklin, and he was assisted by six leaders. Thirty seven scouts were to make the trip and were from all troops in the Evangeline Area Council. Since we were required to have complete uniforms, and since my parents couldn't afford the cost, our troop held fund raisers to offset the expense. We were scheduled to be gone three weeks, traveling in our own private railroad car.

After a couple of practice campouts, our departure day, Saturday June 26th, arrived, and we assembled in Lafayette at Council headquarters to pack our equipment aboard our railroad car. We then gathered in the District Court room for a special program conducted by Judge Dalferes, plus talks by our scoutmaster and Mayor Maxime Roy. We then marched to the railroad station in a parade accompanied by the Lafayette High School Band. The crowd that gathered to see us off numbered several hundred as we boarded the Sunset Limited and got underway.

Our car was a chair car, and the seatbacks folded flat which made a sleeping platform. The aisle was cluttered with long bamboo poles, which we carried to erect flagpoles, plus all our camping gear. The tents were two-man pup tents, and we were all assigned a tent-mate. Mine was Robert Adams of Lafayette.

Our first stop was a tour of Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, and we then traveled on to Cincinnati where we spent a day sightseeing. The following day we arrived in Washington and set up our camp in the spot assigned, located on a section of land along the bank of the Potomac River called Haines Point. The next day was the official opening day, and we took our place among twenty-five thousand fellow scouts for the first ever National Jamboree. During the twelve days spent there we took in all the sights Washington had to offer. We climbed the Washington Monument and we got to see President Roosevelt as he paraded before us on Constitution Avenue. Trading souvenirs with other troops was a big pastime as we visited other troops from around the country and from across the sea. Our local congressmen were in attendance, namely F. Edward Hebert and Bob Mouton, and we were guests of Mr. Mouton at his Chesapeake Bay camp after the Jamboree ended.

We boarded the train after twelve days in Washington and, after a stopover for sightseeing in Philadelphia, arrived in New York City for a two day stay. Our hotel overlooked Times Square and we made the most of our time, including a visit to that marvel, the "Automat." We rode the subway, walked up the Empire State building, and saw the sights in the big city. We departed New York by river steamer up the Hudson river to Albany, then back on the train to Niagara Falls. The next day saw us headed home, with a stopover in Cincinnati, then on to Marietta, Georgia, where we camped out on the local golf course and feasted on watermelon and peaches. After a couple of days there we made our way back to Lafayette, arriving on July 17th, and were greeted by a large crowd of friends and relatives. An article in the Daily Advertiser stated that "Over a thousand citizens of South Louisiana cheered to the accompaniment of locomotive whistles, fire engine sirens and a band as the Jamboree Scout Troop alighted from their special car on the Sunset Limited at the S.P. Railway Station at 4:45 PM yesterday afternoon."

I will not list them all, but a few names of the scouts on this trip you may recognize: Msgr. A.O. Sigur; Bryant Felhman and Donnaud Williams of Crowley; Kaliste and Richard Saloom, Mike and Antoine Boustany, Robert Adams, Clifton Todd of Lafayette; Stanley Moore and C.L. Deere of New

Iberia; Lester Boutte of Abbeville; Eddie Miller of Lafayette; Tyler Lamson of Opelousas; and many others from Patterson, Franklin, Jeanerette, Ville Platte, and St. Martinville. Every one of the scouts and their leaders went on to a distinguished career in their chosen field, influenced in no small part by lessons learned in Scouting. The group includes clergy, doctors, lawyers, judges, engineers, business executives and owners, public servants, state senators, and military commanders. Our ranks are fewer now, but those of us who are left cherish these memories of our scouting days..



CHERRY PICKING TIME IN MICHIGAN

by
Lois Hollier

The little farming community of Ruskin, Florida, where I grew up had no other industry. As it supported only one gas station and one hardware, feed, dry goods, and grocery store combined, there were very few jobs. Although the climate supported the growth of two crops a year, there was just nothing to do in the hot summers.

Many families in Ruskin would board up their homes and travel to Michigan to work the harvest of strawberries and cherries. I remember the first summer we made the trip. My Dad, Grover Stroud, came home after a visit with our neighbor and broke the news, "Mr. Christopher has agreed to take us to Michigan to pick cherries." He had a two ton truck with a box-like room built on the back. The room had no seating, table or bed. Our family of five and the Christopher's four sons all rode seated on the floor with our backs to the walls. There were only two small windows, one on either side and much too high for us to see out. I remember the stops along the highway at rest areas. It was wonderful to stand and walk about. There was always something new and different to explore. We cooked our meals on a Coleman camp stove. We'd get a pan of water and take as much of a bath as we could. The trip took several days with four adults taking turns driving through the nights.

As we traveled northward each state had a different fragrance and feel to the air. We were leaving the high humidity of the Gulf coast behind. The air was lighter and felt so good on the skin. Even now 50 years later I can close my eyes and remember the smell of fresh cut clover or the scent of peaches or apples growing on a summer day and the pungent odor of Spruce. Once we stopped to drink water where it cascaded down the mountain and over a rocky ledge at the roadside. It was so cold my teeth hurt, but tasted so sweet. What a difference after the sulphur water we had at home. It was a real treat.

The owner of the cherry orchard furnished his workers a place to live during harvest time. There were a few cabins, a large tent, and a basement apartment. All were very simply furnished and had mattresses made of hay. It took some getting used to, sleeping with the musty odor and sticking of the hay.

Each morning we were up before day break and in the orchard starting to pick at first light. The dew on the trees, icy cold, would trickle down our collars as we climbed the ladders and picked the fruit, causing the tree limbs to shake. We worked long hours through the week, but Sunday was a day to explore the area. There was a beach along the shore of Lake Michigan where we would go to swim. I call it a beach but there was no sand, only rocks worn smooth by the water. One Sunday we hiked over a nearby hill and through some woods. It was there I heard a scream that struck fear in my heart. Someone in the group identified the sound as the cry of a panther.

Another day we found one lone cherry tree of a different variety. The fruit was small and dark purple. The flavor was strong and very sweet. We ate our fill and then some. When we returned to camp, we asked about that tree and were told, "That is the tree the owner has for making his wine." It was a bit like having eaten the forbidden fruit and it seemed sweeter in our memory.



DON'T FORGET TO LAUGH

by
Mimi Fisher

Lesson One

My father was an export lumberman. He shipped timber from the U. S.—predominately Southern pine—to all parts of the world. Back then seedlings were planted as soon as a strand of trees was cut. Recently, driving across the Lake (Lake Pontchartrain from New Orleans into those crowded communities which used to be piney woods), I realized that wonderful, pungent scent I remembered was not nearly as strong, and it was actually almost gone.

It always seemed strange that products of Louisiana and surrounding sawmills were in such demand, not only in Europe but in South Africa as well. Trees for Africa?! My father's partner, Mr. Hillcoat, an Englishman, spent most of his time in the office in Johannesburg, and that end of the business was a mystery to me. My parents encouraged an inquiring mind in their only offspring, but as time goes on, I find I didn't inquire enough about a lot of things.

My father had a marvelous sense of humor, a very dry wit, and a ready Santa Claus twinkle in his eyes for the world in general. He would laugh prodigiously *with* one and all, but never *at* anyone. He was an oddity for his time and place, completely without prejudice and very much against intolerance and bigotry. Even those traits in others were met with humor rather than flat indignation.

His persona gathered a phenomenal number of friends. Their diversity was astounding—all types from all backgrounds, races, creeds, and colors, molded by a wealth of different experiences. As a take off from Will Rogers who "never met a man a man he didn't like," I never met a man, woman, or child who didn't like my father, from the very old to all children. Learning to laugh from him has helped me over many a bump. My most hazardous and painful

times have been when I temporarily forgot to laugh at me! Daddy's wry humor is an important point in this remembrance.

My father often visited freighters when they docked in New Orleans to load consignments of his timber before heading down to the mouth of the Mississippi and on over the ocean. Occasionally my mother and I were invited to accompany him. (I've always been fascinated with ships. It could be hereditary. My maternal grandfather was a Swedish sea captain. That, however, is another story). On this occasion, after our shipboard visit, we were laden down with souvenirs, goodies and various shaped bottles of different alcoholic spirits, as we carefully descended the long, sloping, gently bouncing gangplank. There was always a watchman at the bottom, and policemen patrolled the wharf areas but they only smiled or saluted while ignoring our loot.

Many times on the way home from an outing, I distinctly and with some belated guilt, remember pretending to be asleep on the backseat of the car so that my father would have to carry me in to bed. This time, as we drove up St. Charles Avenue, I was wide awake, hanging over the front seat chattering excitedly. Surprisingly, my parents didn't tell me to sit back. More surprises were in store. (This was before the legal requirements for seat belts would set in motion the automatic routine of back seat safety checks that include door locks. Obviously, this time my parents hadn't displayed their usual meticulous attention to my welfare.) As we slowed to turn in to Marengo Street, the door on that side swung wide and the world shifted into slow motion. One of the bottles that had been placed on the floor of the back seat slid across to and out the open door, landed and rolled slowly in one smooth, fluid—but fortunately not liquid—motion, and kept rolling.

I've always thought it was Scotch since that was all my father drank, but it might have been something else since it had a raffia sleeve or cover as many wines do. Just now, however, I think I remember an odd brand of Scotch that came so embellished. Whatever! Suddenly life shifted to fast forward. I called out excitedly and turned to watch the wayward bottle through the rear window.

My father stopped quickly but not as quickly as the car following us. It barely hesitated. An arm shot out to scoop up our bottle as the car swept around us and zoomed away.

"Follow him, Daddy! Get his license, Mother! Call the police!"

Daddy and Mother looked at each other, smiled broadly at each other, and Daddy laughed. Laughed! He was still chuckling long after he'd given up trying to verbally pacify my irate indignation. It took a long time to understand his appreciation of the nerve, quick reaction, and agility of that opportunist, and to realize that laughter was the best, possibly the only, viable solution. After all, I didn't, at that time, understand the 18th Amendment—Prohibition.



EARLY SCHOOL DAYS

by
Viola Aberly

I started school in the first grade. There wasn't a kindergarten. I had to walk two miles to Carmel public school which had only two rooms. I walked to school with my teacher, Miss Margaret Digeytaire, who boarded with us. She walked so fast on her short legs that I couldn't keep up. She never looked back even when I lagged behind, so I walked as fast as my skinny legs would carry me then I would have to run to catch up.

The School Board paid Mr. Woods to drive his covered wagon for children who lived beyond two miles. On cold mornings some of the bigger girls would motion to me to come close to the wagon. Then they would lift me up into the wagon. Once settled, I would look out and wave goodbye to Miss Digeytaire. I wasn't supposed to ride to school in the wagon. The driver was Cousin Johnny Wood's grandpa. I think he pretended that he didn't know I was in the wagon.

In winters somebody would start a wood fire in the pot-bellied cast iron stove. We would huddle around the stove trying to get warm. When the bell would ring we would all go outside into the cold to line up and return through double doors and the cloakroom. We would remove our coats and hang them on the double hooks made for a coat and hat. Finally we would go to our desks. I think we only had one row of desks for each grade. The teacher would hear our lessons and assign more work to do while she moved to the next row.

When school was out we would walk home. I couldn't wait for the weather to warm up so I could walk bare foot. Mom would make me wear shoes to school, but if it warmed up I'd take them off to walk home. Sometimes I would lose a stocking. Oh, how I hated those old stockings! They were long thick shapeless things held up with garters. Little girls couldn't wear jeans or pants in that part of the country.

When we got home from school Miss Digeytaire would use our red checkered oilcloth-covered table to correct her papers. When she was finished she would help Mom by setting the table for supper. After supper she would clear the table while Mom washed the dishes. She washed them in very hot soapy water and then she would rinse them in boiling water. Dad would go to the barn to do chores. When Miss Digeytaire finished clearing everything else, she would pause for a few seconds looking at me as I sat there fiddling with my food, and without a word, she would pick up my plate and dump the remains in the pig bucket.

She treated my schoolwork the same way I guess. I don't remember her scolding me for not doing schoolwork. She passed me, but my parents realized I didn't know enough and asked the next year's teacher to start me over.

Nowadays my grandchildren are driven to school. There is central heat and air and a room full of students all in the same grade. They have classes in computer where you can learn just about anything you want to know (and some things you don't) right at your fingertips. They also have lunchrooms, gyms, and things I probably didn't know about as a young student growing up in the 1920's.



A CHARMED LIFE

by

William P. Scott

As I reflect on my seventy-seven years on the earth I am convinced that I have led a charmed life. I do not believe in predestination but there have been many events in my past that cause me to have serious thoughts about what might have been. This report will enumerate several of these happenings.

When I was ten years old I fell twenty feet straight down from a bag swing suffering a severe skull fracture. It took over an hour to get me to the nearest hospital where doctors removed bone splinters from my brain. It was a miracle that I survived that accident with no permanent damage. I was living a charmed life.

Several years later I had to take over my brother Bert's paper route when he became sick. It was a hot July day when I made my final delivery, and I was heading home on my bicycle on State Highway 24, a gravel road. Suddenly a car horn sounded and I veered sharply to the right to move out of the car's path. But the driver was passing me on the right side of the highway and a collision occurred. I was knocked off my bicycle and fell directly under the car. 1935 model cars were built much higher off the ground than are today's models, and instead of being crushed by the undercarriage I was dragged almost 100 yards before the driver could stop. Again it was a minor miracle that I suffered no serious injury. I was living a charmed life.

In the spring of 1944, I was a Private serving with the 84th Infantry Division on maneuvers in central Louisiana. I was assigned to the Cannon Company, a highly mobile unit of eight 105 millimeter artillery pieces. A short time before the Division was ordered into battle I was transferred to the 784th Ordnance Light Maintenance Company, still a part of the 84th but a much safer place to be in the thick of battle. After one month of action on the Holland-German border, two thirds of the cannon company personnel were either killed

or wounded. During the remaining months before Germany surrendered I survived several bombing raids without any injury whatsoever. I was living a charmed life.

I was discharged from the army on February 26, 1946 and began working in the oil field shortly thereafter, first for Core Lab, then Hycalog, a service company based in Shreveport, Louisiana. I worked in Oklahoma, Texas, Mexico, and Louisiana. Hycalog opened a new district in west Texas in late 1949 and Randy Brown was appointed District Manager. I know that he received that promotion because of his seniority with the company. Then in February, 1950 I was appointed Manager of the South Louisiana District and I was given the option of relocating to New Orleans or Lafayette. Choosing Lafayette enabled me to meet and marry a lovely LSU graduate from Opelousas. And the drilling activity in west Texas diminished, but south Louisiana is still going strong due to offshore discoveries. I was living a charmed life.

In 1964 I was given the opportunity to become associated with Petro-Log, Inc. as a full partner. I acquired 50% of the stock, the other 50% was owned by Holmes Ware. We had a buy-sell agreement funded by insurance in case of the death of either partner. Mr. Ware died an accidental death in 1979 and I now owned 100% of the company. The oil field was booming for the next few years and my company grew and prospered. I was still living a charmed life.

Two years ago I retired and turned the business over to my son. Now I travel some, play golf and bridge, and enjoy my children and grandchildren. I'm still leading a charmed life.

