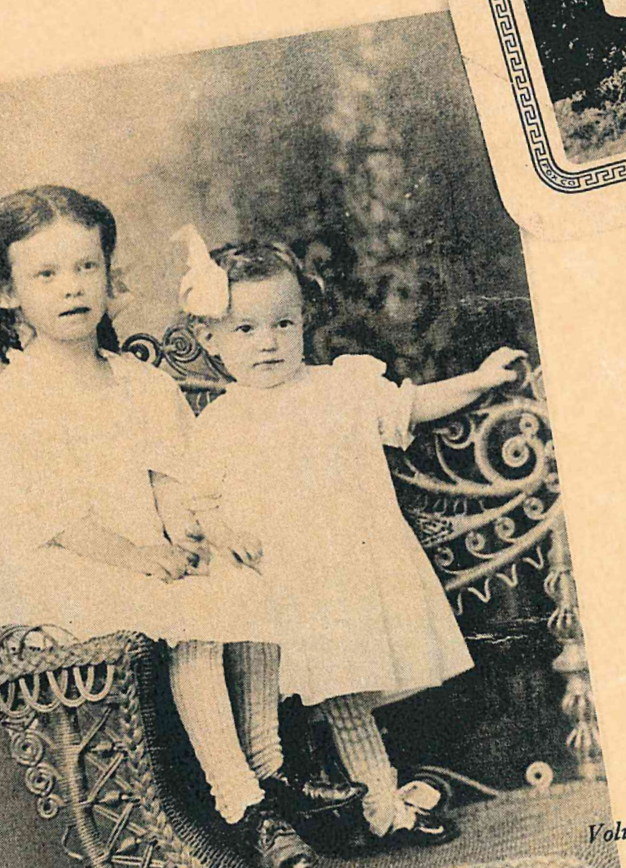
Excerpts from Our Pages Of Life



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Volume 26b–Thursday Morning Class/Fall 2000

There is in every human countenance either a history or a prophecy. I believe that if Samuel Taylor Coleridge would have been able to consider the impact of personal history on its writers and its audience of generations to come, he would have changed his observation to include *both a history and a prophecy.* For the past ten years, I have watched my students, writers of personal history, as they have read from their collections of life stories. Through their experiences, I have learned that in each of our lives we reflect both past and future. Stories become the thread that binds each generation to the next. I often ask my students to consider how their stories have affected those of whom they have written. Their responses convince me that we are writers, not only for ourselves, not even for an audience with only whom we are familiar. When our stories are told, we are also writing for generations yet to be. As I examine the work (and fun!) that continues in these unique classes, I am convinced more and more that I do what I do because of my love for people–and the generations that keep their histories and prophecies going. You'll fall in love with these life writers, too. You'll recognize stories of your past, and you'll probably see a faint reflection of a younger audience, one that anticipates its turn to turn prophecy into history. Enjoy these stories and keep creating your own.

Joan Stear
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Fall 2000

Thanks to the Horizons Department at Lafayette General Medical Center;
Life & Letters • an intergenerational company; and the English Department, the Ira Nelson Horticulture Center, and University College at University of Louisiana at Lafayette
for their continuous support of our efforts to write for the generations to come.
To my students–forever my teachers–thanks.
Acknowledgment also to my students for working so diligently as the editorial board for this publication.

FRONT COVER: (Clockwise, beginning at top right corner) Luella Brown holding Carita Brown, Melba Martin's mother and sister; Lucien Martin and his 125 pound fish, 1962; aunt and mother of Melba Martin; Jacob Sanders, Melba Martin's great-grandfather; (center) Melba Martin, age 12

This volume of life stories
is lovingly dedicated
to the memory of our friends,
Margaret DeVillier
and Jacob Valentine.

Marge and Jake,
we still tell stories about you (on you?!).
Thanks for enriching our lives
with the stories of yours.

LIFE WRITING CLASS
University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Fall 2000 • Thursday Morning Session

Seated, left to right: Mary Ann Early; Betty Speyrer; Joan Ireland; Kat Favrot
Standing, left to right: Tom Eby; Doris Bentley; Joan Stear, Instructor;
Francis Bourgeois; Jane Ellen Carstens;
Melba Martin; Lucien Martin
(*Missing from photo*: Lois Diehl; Mary Langford)

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GAMES WE PLAYED AT SCHOOL

by

Francis A. Bourgeois

When I look back on my youth, I recall how simple and innocent life seemed in those bygone days. Our everyday lives were uncluttered with afternoon television cartoons, little league games, parental pressure to be in numerous organizations, and we found enjoyment in simple toys and games. As boys we played for hours with an empty oatmeal box. We could roll it, hide it, use it to carry rocks or marbles, but mostly we threw it instead of a football. These thoughts remind me of the good clean fun we played at school.

In Grammar School we played mostly softball, football, and marbles. One game of "Red Hot" softball remains foremost in my mind. Red Hot rules stated that after each out the players rotated from the outfield to the infield. After being catcher you became one of the four or five batters (the number depended on how many kids were playing).

In this particular game, Adrian Pierre DuBarry, better known as Peter, was the first baseman and I was the pitcher. The batter hit a slow grounder to my left side. I scooped it up and threw the ball as hard as I could to Peter to put out the fast running batter. Peter reacted quickly, but the ball hit only his fingertips. The first knuckle part of his index finger on his left hand followed in the direction of the departing ball. The tip of his finger was pointing 180 degrees toward the backside of his hand.

None of us kids knew what to do for Peter. As we gathered around him we just gawked at the contorted finger while Peter held his finger and moaned in pain. Someone said, "Let's take him to the druggist." I don't recall any adult being around, nor did we ask any of the nuns for permission, we just took off. Peter, myself, and two other boys ran the four blocks to Jones' drugstore.

Peter showed his finger to the druggist who said he knew exactly what to do. He held Peter's left hand tightly with his own left hand and the tip of the bent finger with his right forefinger and thumb. "Now this won't hurt a bit," he said, and in a flash Peter stopped his hurtful cry. The pain was gone and Peter's left

hand had all the fingers going in the same direction. Peter was able to bend the forefinger and make a fist. When we were seniors in high school he would pay me back—twice over.

Another game the boys liked to play was tackle football. We mixed the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades to play so we'd have enough for a game. One boy in 8th grade was the biggest kid at school, and no one wanted to tackle "Huff" but me. Actually, I didn't tackle, I always did a body block and hit him below the knees. Maybe it was an illegal block or tackle, but he toppled heavily to the ground and never scored a touchdown. We had no fancy uniforms or protective padding. Our uniforms were scraped knees and elbows we proudly wore for most of the school year.

When I was in the 8th grade, the nuns started a "field day" where we would do track and field events. Mostly we ran foot races. Of the several pretty girls in our class, one of the prettiest was Patsy Ledet. She also turned out to be the fastest kid in the whole school. I mean she outran everyone–even the boys. The best any of us could do was to choke on her heel dust.

We boys also played marbles. We had a few varieties of the same game. Each game started out the same way. To decide who would be first, we stood behind the small ring and shot our marble toward the starting line which was about eight to ten feet away. Whoever shot his marble closest to the line was first, the next closest was second, and so on. This was called "lagging."

Another marbles game had a "ring" about two inches wide and nearly a foot long. Since it looked like a banana, we gave an original name to the game, "banana ring." Wherever you landed after your first shot from the lagging line determined your spot for your next shot. If you knocked a marble outside the banana ring you continued on until you missed. Then the next boy tried his luck.

A variation of this marbles game was to have a small round ring about a foot in diameter. The same rules applied except if you stayed inside the circle after your shot, you had to put the marble you knocked out back into the ring and your next shot was from the lagging line.

The least popular marble game was the one with a small circle inside a huge circle. You could shoot from anywhere on the big circle. Once you were between the two circles you were fair game for another player to hit your marble and knock it further away from the inside circle.

Sometimes we played for "keeps" but usually it was for "funsies." In "keeps" you kept all the marbles you won, and in "funsies" you returned the marbles to its rightful owner once the game was over. The verbal battles that ensued after a game of "funsies" were lengthy, funny, heated, ridiculous, and sometimes indecisive. Can you imagine several grade school boys trying to remember their dozen or so marbles when so many of them were the same color, size, and design?

One day after school, "Genie" Buras, Charles David, and I were playing marbles on a non-grassy area. We were going at it hot and heavy and I was shooting my marble in an experimental way that infuriated Charley. (By the way, we were born on the same day in 1933, January 11th.) To end his frustration Charley stomped my marble and smushed it into the ground. Innocently, I asked, "Why did you do that Charley?" He said, "Because I didn't want to step on your fingers!" His remarks and action ended our game of marbles for that day.

There was one "game" the nuns did not let us play and that was running through the basement on its cement floor. It was for everyone's safety, of course, but this didn't stop Charlie Doerre. He was a rambunctious child and had a mind of his own.

One day he began chasing some kid and I tried to stop him. (Of course, that meant I was running in the basement too.) The first boy reached the outside door and slammed it behind him. Charlie tried to stop, put out his right arm to catch the door, but his hand went through one of the small glass windows.

He pulled his arm back inside about the time I arrived, and I saw that a chunk of flesh, about the size of a grape, on the inside of his forearm was gouged out. The blood was spurting out in perfect harmony with his rapidly beating heart. Charlie had severed an artery! A nun applied pressure to stop the bleeding and escorted him across the street to Dr. Buquoi's office. That cured Charlie's running in the basement as far as I know.

In high school, "Hunt the Hay" became popular with us small town country boys. We would pile into Bill Smart's car and drive out a few miles to some woodlands, choose up sides and begin. One side took off, became the prey, and tried to evade the other side who became the hunters. The object of the game was to prevent the first group from returning undetected to the home base. When the hunters completed their mandatory count to two hundred, they yelled as loud as

they could, "Hunt the Hay." This signaled the beginning of the game that usually lasted for hours.

I was a senior when I played my last game of Hunt the Hay. One Saturday night before a Sunday football game in New Orleans I took off with several non-football students. Some of the guys were from our cross town rivals but we were all friends. By the time I got home it was two in the morning. Five hours later, when the school bus came to pick me up, my Mom didn't wake me. She went out to the bus and spoke with the coach explaining to him why I would not make the trip to New Orleans on Sunday.

Our football team ran a single wing formation, and I was the second string wingback. Usually, the first team played the entire game on offense and defense. Well, for this Sunday game the coach pulled the entire first string off the field and played only the second and third stringers. My big chance and I blew it! I was more than embarrassed the next day at practice. But, I learned a valuable lesson of life–you are responsible for your actions.

Remember, first baseman Peter with the finger that was out of its socket? Well, he weighed 165 pounds and I weighed 125 pounds as seniors on the football team. He was the first string guard and I was a scatback. I was skin and bones and he was all muscle! His two brothers taught him how to lift weights and it showed. He was solid as a brick wall. However, Peter was rather stiff in his motions and his classmates called him "Mechanical Man."

In football practice we had head-on tackle sessions. Peter carried the ball against me twice, and I had to tackle him as he ran full speed at me. I remember seeing his piston–like knees pumping away and I headed straight at them. Both times I was knocked out! When I woke up, I was flat on my back and someone was waving smelling salts under my nose.

Needless to say the coach never had me line up against Peter again. I'm sure my friend didn't knock me out on purpose, but I did get paid back for bending his finger with a softball.

Ah, those were the days of good clean fun!

FLUFFY ON PARADE

by

Lois Diehl

During summer vacations from school in the early fifties, our small town held an event that captured the hearts of all children who loved their pets. We had an opportunity to showcase our pet in a community sponsored Pet Parade. We planned for weeks in which category we would enter our pet. Then we spent hours putting together a costume, decorating a bicycle, wagon or float to display our pet.

I usually entered our small Manchester toy rat terrier, Maggie. One year she rode in my bicycle basket dressed in some of my finest doll clothes. Another year she rode perched in a doll carriage, again dressed in my doll finery. For one of the parades, I carried one of her tiny black and brown puppies, Mickey, dressed as a bird, in a small parakeet cage. As always I had my eye on the prize for the smallest costumed dog.

One spring my sister Jennie and I found a small white bunny in one of our Easter baskets. Because he was so soft and fuzzy, we named him Fluffy. When Fluffy was no longer a baby bunny, we moved him out of the house into a fenced area of the backyard. Fluffy hopped around the yard after us as we played in the back yard. Jennie decided to enter him in the annual Pet Parade. The parade route was too long for Fluffy on a leash to hop along after Jennie and she was too little to carry Fluffy the distance. Mom and Dad found a solution for Jennie. We would build him a small float to ride on–one that Jennie could push. Dad took the basket part off one of our old doll carriages and replaced it with a piece of plywood. Jennie and I covered the plywood with grass green crepe paper. Then we decorated Fluffy's ride with lots of purple, pink, yellow, and light blue crepe paper flowers and streamers. On the base near the push bar, we placed a big basket for Fluffy to sit in and added several paper mache bunnies. Fluffy with his long white ears held high rode regally on his float.

Shortly before parade time all pets and owners lined up at the school playground behind the Mt. Holly town band. The route was very short, circling one long block from the school. We followed the band up Front Street to the town

square, then turned the corner past the bank and firehouse, and turned again south on Chestnut Street back to the school. Back on the playground we anxiously waited for the judges' decision to see who won in each category. There was a prize for the largest pet, the smallest pet, the best costumed pet, the most unusual pet, the best decorated float, the most creative, and other categories I can't remember. For several years our big fluffy white rabbit with the red eyes won the prize for the best decorated float. Although the prize was only several dollars, to a child in the early fifties that was a lot of pocket money.

Fluffy spent many years hopping around our back yard and sometimes straying into Dad's vegetable garden. He was particularly fond of Dad's lettuce. He always followed us around as we played. He lived a long life for an Easter rabbit and died a natural death. We always had a lot of fun and a lot of happy memories preparing Fluffy's ride for the Pet Parade.

WHAT NOBODY ELSE KNOWS

by

Doris Broussard Bentley

I began taking piano lessons from Miss Marie Bourg in Loreauville when I was about five years old. I don't know why Mama thought I should take lessons so young. I must have indicated more than a passing interest, however, because I remember that one of the talking points to my staying at Vieux Mom's when Mama was sick with diphtheria was that I would not be missing my piano lessons.

When we moved to New Iberia after the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927, I took piano lessons from Miss Aimee Morrell. She lived way down Center Street past Dale Street and had to walk all the way from there to Duperier Avenue across the Bayou where we lived. That had to be a two mile walk for my music lesson. Fortunately, we moved to St. Peter Street that was about half the distance closer to her house, and her walk was only one mile–but a long one.

By the time I was about eleven years old, I fell in love with the composer Paderewski's piece, "The Minuet." Because I loved to play that piece so much, I aspired to be a concert pianist!!! I heard that Paderewski was going to be in New Orleans, and I wanted very much to hear him in concert, but I did not get to do so. Traveling to New Orleans in those days was not easy. It probably meant a two day trip; time and money prohibited by hearing Paderewski.

In the summer of 1933 that we spent in New Orleans with the Brownsons, I took lessons from Miss Corinne Meyers. I didn't know it at the time, but Miss Meyers was considered a very good piano teacher. She took me back to the basics of Bach to improve my technique. For some reason I did not take any more piano lessons when we returned to New Iberia. Was it because Mama couldn't afford them? Or was it because Miss Meyers did not recommend more lessons for me? Was it because Bach made me lose interest? I never knew.

Even when I went to LSU after high school, I truly wanted to major in piano. However, I knew that Mama could not afford $100 a semester for piano lessons. So I decided to major in business and French in college instead of music.

(A stroke of luck for me, as I could never have earned enough money teaching piano to take care of the children.)

The piano I first used in the 1920's was Mama's Steinway. I still hear the tone of that piano. How I loved to play on it. After I married and lived in Chapel Hill, Mama decided to send the Steinway to me in Chapel Hill. She sent it to Gruenwald's in New Orleans to be refurbished. Before she could direct them to ship it to me, George was killed in an automobile accident and I returned to New Iberia to live with Mama and Daddy. The next two years were hectic ones–Daddy had the cancer operations, the pepper factory burned, and then Daddy died. When Mama finally got around to contacting Grunwald about her piano, they had sold it to a Methodist church in Mississippi. How disappointing!

Not to be daunted, we ordered another Steinway upright. But it never sounded quite like the old one. Unfortunately, I never did spend enough time at the piano to hope that I would ever be good enough to perform for anyone.

So my ambition to become a concert pianist is, until now, MY SECRET. Every now and then, I do sit at my Steinway and play "The Minuet." The performance I give is just for me! And that's all right.

WHAT NO ONE KNOWS

by

Tom Eby

Well, so, What is it you do?" comes your basic strangers-on-a-plane question. It is the question that comes up in polite conversation or serious interrogation. When you are meeting a stranger it may be hard to tell if he is being truthful or if he should be rigged with a difibulator for his mental condition.

The cowboy from out of town sat at the bar sipping his Coors Beer when an attractive blonde came in and perched on the only remaining stool which was next to him. She ordered a beer and eyed his cowboy hat and western outfit and asked, "Are you a real cowboy?"

"Yep, reckon I am. I work on a ranch and herd cattle for a living. How about you?"

"I'm a lesbian. I wake up in the morning thinking about women. I go to lunch and I think about women. The same thing in the evening and at night so I guess that makes me a lesbian." She finishes her beer and leaves.

Shortly afterward a man comes in and occupies the same stool. Not much time went by before he asks, "Are you a real cowboy?"

Looking a little perplexed, the cowboy says, "Well, I thought I was until a few minutes ago but I guess I'm a lesbian." By that definition I might have qualified as a lesbian, and I have a number of male friends that would also qualify.

I think I have encountered people on airplanes who have made up occupations and enjoy spinning tales. One time when "The Drowning Pool" was being filmed here in Lafayette, I boarded a plane headed for Dallas and sat next to a rather rotund bearded man whom I introduced myself to. In turn, he gave me a card that indicated that he was in the burlap and rag business. I was skeptical and in the course of conversation asked him what the price of rags was. When he quoted a figure, I immediately decided he was not in the rag business. At the time I served on the Advisory Board of the Salvation Army. They collect old clothes, sort them and place them in their Thrift Store. Those clothes, which are ripped or otherwise not useful, are baled as rags and sold. I knew we were getting around

eight cents a pound and this man's figure was not even close. I had fun trying to figure out why he had adopted a false occupation and decided the most logical reason was that he was in the film business and did not want to fool with everyone he met trying to get into Hollywood. Another time I met a man claiming to be a diver installing telephone connections on the floor of the Gulf to offshore platforms. I did not believe him because at the time most offshore platforms were using radio and microwave for communications.

One of the best opportunities for creative storytelling is offered when we are away from home and talking one on one to a stranger. Robert Fulgham, author of All I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten, likes to play pretend games on airplanes. He has introduced himself as a janitor. He told the woman next to him on a plane that he was a janitor, thinking he had truly spent half his life hauling out trash, cleaning and straightening around the house, only without pay. She wrote a housewives column in a small newspaper and spent the rest of the flight sharing tips for tidy housekeeping. He was later surprised to see her in the audience of the San Francisco church group where he was addressing a Sunday service. Other experiences of Fulgham included a plane ride where he claimed to be a neurosurgeon. The fellow next to him was so excited, and said, "So am I," and he really was. It took a while for him to wiggle out of that hole. Having learned his lesson, he sat next to someone who looked sympathetic; so he told these stories and then suggested that they play a game for the fun of it. Each made up an occupation and pretended for the rest of the trip. The seat mate said he would be a spy and Fulgham pretended to be a nun in a tweed suit. It was the middle-aged couple behind them that was blown away.

Marcel Duchamp was frustrated by the implications of the standard inquiry and would answer, "I am a respirateur (a breather)." He explained that he did more breathing than anything else and was very, very good at it too. Most people were afraid to ask more. We all are respirateurs, sleepeurs, and napeurs. Most of us are dreamers, singers, chefs, eaters, dishwashers, walkers, counselors, repairers, menders, and government workers as taxpayers and citizens. In this class, we are writers and authors.

"What no one knows" is how many times I have played this game and "What no one knows" is how much I enjoy meeting different people and hearing their stories, true or false.

THE GRAND THEATER

by

Melba Martin

When I was growing up in Hayes, movies, or "picture shows," as most people called them, were the best and usually the only entertainment that we had. The Grand Theater, owned and run by Mr. and Mrs. Felix Hebert, better known as Mr. Felix and Mrs. Felix, was a popular place. It was one of the largest buildings in Hayes, outsized by only the rice mill, the warehouse, and the school. Whether you entered the town from the north or south, its foot-high letters that spelled "GRAND" were easy to see.

Mr. and Mrs. Felix had begun showing movies during the silent film era. By the time I was old enough to go to the picture show, the movies had sound and were called "talkies." I don't remember when Mr. Felix began showing technicolor films, but when he did, they were few and far between for several years and were considered a novelty. When I left Hayes in 1946, many of the films being shown at that time were black and white.

The films arrived with the regular mail every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon for the Wednesday and Friday night picture shows. Sometimes I was in the post office when Mr. Felix came to get his films. They were always packaged in worn brown leather boxes secured with two leather straps that crossed and buckled. The Wednesday night picture show might be a mystery, a comedy, or a romance. It could be anything but a Western. Friday nights were always reserved for Westerns.

I was about ten years old when Mamma began letting me go to the picture show by myself. At that time, the price of admission was five cents for persons under twelve and fifteen cents for those twelve and over. By the time I was eleven I was so big that Mrs. Felix didn't believe that I was not yet twelve. One night when I put my nickel through the semicircular hole in her glass box, she told me that she would let me in that night, but the next time I came to the picture show, I would have to pay fifteen cents. Every week boys and girls tried to convince Mrs. Felix that they were still eleven. She turned many of them away only to have them

return a week or two later, hoping that she had forgotten their previous encounter and would let them in for a nickel.

But I really was eleven. The next week Mamma walked to the theater with me and very politely told Mrs. Felix my age. She went on to explain at some length–and to my embarrassment–that the reason I was so big was because I took after the Browns, my father's side of the family who were all tall and had big feet, too. She also told Mrs. Felix that I would be twelve the following October and would begin paying fifteen cents for my ticket at that time.

Mamma usually gave me an extra nickel so that in addition to my picture show ticket I could get some ice cream at Annie Mae and Tee Claude Derouen's restaurant that was just across the road from the theater. Annie Mae and Tee Claude had a three-hole freezer that they kept stocked with four-ounce paper cups of Borden's and Watson's ice cream. They furnished a flat wooden spoon with each cup that they sold. The lid on the paper cup was a round piece of cardboard with a translucent piece of paper stuck to the inside of it. Pulling off the paper revealed a photograph of a famous movie star.

Mrs. Felix was a beautiful lady. She had dark hair that waved all the way to the back of her neck where she rolled it into a nub. Her makeup always looked as though she had just put it on. She usually wore floral print cotton dresses with rows of lace sewn vertically to the bodice. They looked as though they had just come off the ironing board. And there she sat in her glass cubicle looking as regal as a queen while she sold tickets, sometimes giving back a coin or two to those people who didn't have the exact change.

While Mrs. Felix sold tickets, Mr. Felix patrolled the theater to make sure all the young people who were not accompanied by adults sat in the first few rows of seats. Sometimes he had to discipline some of the boys who could be quite noisy during parts of the picture show that they didn't find particularly interesting.

A steep and narrow stairway led to the balcony where earlier Mr. Felix had threaded the projector with a reel of film and aimed it at the screen below. The last thing Mr. Felix did before turning on the projector was to admit the few black people who had waited until all the whites had bought their tickets before they approached the ticket box. He escorted them to a small section of the balcony that he reserved for them.

The young people always cheered when the picture show started. It began with a ten-minute newsreel that gave us moving picture accounts of events we could only try to imagine when we heard about them earlier on the radio.

The cartoon, or "comedy" as we called it, followed the newsreel and was met with more cheering from the young people. The cartoon characters that stand out in my mind from that era are Popeye, Olive Oyl, Wimpy, Sweet Pea, Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, and Donald Duck.

The "comedy" was followed by the serial which everybody called the "continued." Each episode ended with a cliffhanger to entice us to come back the following week to see the next installment.

The final and longest segment of the picture show was the main feature. Some of the popular stars of the time were Betty Grable, Alice Faye, Gene Tierney, Lucille Ball, Merle Oberon, Cary Grant, Tyrone Power, Robert Cummings, Gene Autrey, and Smiley Burnette.

When the picture show ended, I walked home alone in the dark. I cannot imagine letting a child walk one-fourth mile alone at night now, but this time was in a different era. Mamma encouraged me to use a flashlight, but I didn't like the bother of holding it all the way through the picture show. And besides, if I hurried there were usually enough cars with their headlights on traveling south after the picture show to light my way.

Now the Grand Theater is gone, and so are Mr. and Mrs. Felix, and probably most of the movie stars who gave us so much pleasure. But I will always remember the "picture shows" at the Grand Theater that I enjoyed so much back then.

THE BIG FISH

by

Lucien T. Martin

In 1962, I was working for Phillips Petroleum Company in the seismic department. My supervisor was Mr. John Standridge. The job was familiar to me, as I had previously worked with the Atlantic Refining Company as an observer and field supervisor, later as a seismologist in the Lafayette, Louisiana, office.

Phillips did plenty of blue line printing at the print shops in the Oil Center. A new shop, Flanagan's Reproduction, had opened at 1019 Auburn Avenue, and they were in competition with four other established print shops in Lafayette. To drum up business, Flanagan's scheduled a fishing trip in the Gulf of Mexico. Being an avid fisherman, I immediately signed up for the trip.

We drove from Lafayette to the boat landing after work on Friday, August 17, arriving about 10:00 PM that night, after stopping for a quick sandwich along the way. The yacht had arrived that afternoon, and was waiting for us at the dock in Venice, Louisiana.

On the trip to Venice along the River Road, we passed through an area of orange groves, mostly naval orange trees. These are more prominent near Buras. This area rarely gets cold enough to kill the orange trees and in the spring during blossom time, when I was there before, the fragrance of the blossoms filled my nostrils with a perfume that lingers in my mind, even years later. It was too dark to see the trees this night, but we saw them the next day on our return trip.

The boat was a fairly large yacht that belonged to the father of the owner of Flanagan's Reproductions, a doctor who lived in Gulfport, Mississippi. His yacht was a beautiful ship compared to the oil field crew boats I had been on before.

It was a clear and hot August night. Just a few days earlier, the temperature had reached the one hundred degree mark for four consecutive days–a record at that time. The captain had prepared some mosquito nets on the deck with blankets on the floor for us to sleep on. I had some 6-12 mosquito repellant, so I slept outside in the open.

The mosquitoes trapped under the nets had a feast that night. They had gorged themselves all night on the ones who had slept under the nets. The next morning their stomachs were filled with blood. Mashing them would leave quite a bit of blood on the men's arms. My stomach was ready for food, and I didn't have a single mosquito bite.

During the night the boat had moved down the Mississippi River, closer to the river delta where it anchored to be near to the fishing spot the next morning. I volunteered to make the coffee when everyone woke up, and three other passengers helped prepare bacon, eggs and toast.

After breakfast, each one of us prepared to fish for tarpon. There were not enough rods and reels to go around, so we took turns standing by the other fishermen as they trolled for fish.

Finally a strike, and all the idle poles were reeled in to give room to land the tarpon. It was a small one, and we released it back into the Gulf.

We were fishing in the Mississippi River delta where the fresh water meets the salt waters of the Gulf. Further south there is a sudden drop on the floor of the Gulf, where the water gets very deep, forming a deep crevasse or canyon wall.

The captain was sitting on a tall chair on the roof of the boat, and with a pair of binoculars, was able to spot a commercial boat that was fishing at a distance. He steered the yacht close to the other boat, and noticed them catching Warsaw groupers. They were fishing on a reef fifty to seventy five feet deep, and catching the fish on lines equipped with multiple hooks wrapped around large wheels that could be cranked with a handle on one side. More than one fish was reeled in with this set up.

Our captain idled the boat, and every one dropped their lines into the water. Calvin Savoie and I shared a rod and reel. I caught the first fish. It was a small one, about four pounds. Calvin also caught a small one.

We started to get good bites, but were unable to hook the fish. They would get the bait without being caught. When my turn came, I had figured that the fish needed to swallow the bait before setting the hook. I snapped a larger hook on the line and made fresh bait from the fish I caught before. I sliced the fish in half and put the half without bones on my hook. The bait was now too large for the small ones to swallow.

I let my bait down until it hit bottom. Almost immediately, a fish grabbed the bait and started swimming with it. Holding on to the rod with my left hand, I unreeled the line so there wouldn't be any resistance to the bait being swallowed by the fish.

Every one noticed that I had a bite. Someone shouted, "Lucien, set the hook! You'll miss the fish!" Another fisherman tried to grab my line to set the hook, but I held it away from him. Instead of setting the hook, I continued to unreel the line and talked to the fish saying, "Come on, Big Bertha, swallow the hook!"

I tightened the line and grabbed it with two rounds around my hand, but there was still too much slack. So I took the remaining slack hand over hand until it was tight, grabbed the line, and gave it a strong jerk, and set the hook. The fish let me know that it didn't like that at all. It took off and almost took the rod over the railing, but luckily I grabbed it and held on for dear life, the line singing as it went through the water.

"Tighten the clutch!" someone shouted. "The line will break when it reaches the end of the reel!" shouted another.

But the fish tired before the line reached its limit on the reel. I knew then that I had to reel in some line as fast as I could to prevent it from reaching the end. I raised the rod as high above my head as I could and reeled the line as fast as I could until the tip of the rod touched the surface of the water. I repeated the procedure–rod-up, reel-in, rod-up, reel-in, until the fish got its second wind and swish, zzzz zzzz zzzz zzzz came the sound of the line going through the water and the clicking of the clutch on the reel.

By now my adrenalin was in high gear, and I was able to keep up the pace of reeling in just a bit more line than the fish could pull out. We kept at it for a long time. I never did find out how much time elapsed before I landed the fish. I'm sure it was close to an hour, the fish getting a bit weaker after each episode. When the fish surfaced on top of the water, it looked to be as large as a hippopotamus. It was a large Warsaw grouper. The captain put the yacht in reverse as I reeled in the slack line. The fish was a big one. Its air sac had expanded when it reached atmospheric pressure at the surface, so it just floated on top of the water, unable to swim anymore.

Two men grabbed gaffs as the grouper came along side, and hauled it in the yacht. The fish opened its mouth, and I could see the hook deep in its throat. Its mouth was so big, it reminded me of Jonah and the whale. I lifted the fish's gill flap, thinking I could retrieve the hook through the gills. When I stuck my hand inside, the fish clasped my hand with its gill, and I couldn't pull my hand out. I grabbed the gill flap with my other hand, and pulled hard to get it opened to release my hand. Alas! I was too weak to hold it open. Landing the fish had taken all my strength–I was exhausted.

That reminded me of the time during WWII when I was at a British air base. A fighter pilot came in to land with holes in the wings and fuselage of his fighter plane. With great effort he managed to fly the plane with its engine smoking and the landing gear stuck. He made a belly landing and the pilot immediately jumped out of the cockpit, ran about forty feet from the burning wreckage and collapsed. He had finally run out of adrenalin. The stress had taken its toll.

Well, I wasn't exactly in the same dilemma as him, but there is some similarity. The stress of landing the fish had taken its toll. I couldn't get enough strength to release my hand from the gill of a fish.

That left me very embarrassed. I felt a bit foolish and in order not to attract too much attention, I whispered to J. F. McMinn standing nearby, "Mac! Hey, Mac! Help!"

But McMinn didn't hear me, and this time the fish flipped its tail and tightened up its gills. Finally I shouted, "Mac, help!"

This time he heard me and came to my rescue. After removing my arm from the fish's gill, I took out my pocketknife and cut the fishing line, leaving the hook in the fish's throat.

There was a scale on board, but the roof of the tarpaulin was too low to get the Warsaw grouper off the floor to weigh it. We moved the fish to an open area of the boat. Two men stood on boxes and held a pole with the scale in the center. The fish was then hooked to the scale. The weight of the fish was 125 pounds. That was the largest fish ever caught on the yacht.

After all the pictures were taken, I decided to clean the fish to take it home. I opened my tackle box and took out my hunting knife, which was sharpened to

a razor's edge. Someone saw me cutting the fish to skin it and said, "Lucien, this kind of fish is not good to eat. You're wasting your time cleaning it."

"Have you ever tasted one?" I asked.

"No, but I heard that it's not good to eat," he replied.

Another person near me said, "You'll take all the room in the icebox with that no good fish. Throw it back in the Gulf. There won't be any room in the icebox for the good fish we'll catch later on."

"I'll make room for the good fish when the time comes. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," I replied.

I think it was in Norway where I heard the saying, "Don't count your bear skin before you kill the bear."

As we were moving to another location to fish, we encountered a stingray. It had a flipper span almost as long as a Greyhound Bus. The tips of its flippers stirred up the water, making whirlpools or swirls as it swam next to the boat. The water was so calm that we could see the fish very clearly. The reflection of the clouds on the surface of the water was like a giant canvas where the fish left swirls on it for a long way out.

"I would like to harpoon the stingray," I told the captain.

"Not on this yacht," the captain replied. "A stingray of this size is powerful enough to easily pull the yacht under."

We stayed alongside the ray and watched its graceful movements as it swam near the surface, not paying any attention to our being there.

We moved to other spots to fish for red snapper and other fishes, but we were not too successful. We fished until noontime. By then the captain called it a day and we headed back to the boat landing. My Warsaw grouper stayed in the icebox. We all pitched in to clean the boat on our way in. There was still the large ham in the kitchen, and the captain called us in to eat it.

We reached the boat landing early and the captain was anxious to return to Mississippi that afternoon, so we left the yacht as soon as we docked and thanked the captain for a wonderful day.

The day after the fishing trip, I decided to cook some of the Warsaw grouper. I first tried frying a few pieces. Then the next day I made a court bouillon. Both dishes were edible, but not delicious.

The third day there was plenty of leftover marinated fish. I lit a good fire in the barbecue pit and when the coals were ready, I barbecued the Warsaw grouper in steaks about one inch thick. My mother and other members of the family came for the occasion. The comment of my mother tells it all. "Lucien, that's the best fish I have ever eaten," she said.

LAFAYETTE LAGNIAPPE

by

Mary Langford

In the spring of 1961 we learned that Don and two other residents would be sent to Lafayette, Louisiana, for their last year of training. Virtually all of the men entering their final period of surgery training requested this special posting because they knew it would involve so much valuable experience. The Charity Hospital in Lafayette was one of the busiest in the state, and only three residents would be handling all of the surgical cases. There was further cause for rejoicing when we found that this assignment included a salary for Don that for the first time would be adequate for our little family's needs. We turned our faces and the black Volkswagen toward Lafayette with great anticipation.

Our excitement grew as we realized that we could afford to rent our first house. We found the perfect one on St. Francis Street, not too far from the hospital. Our new home was white frame, with three bedrooms, one bath, a living room with a picture window, a kitchen/dining room combination, and an enclosed breezeway connecting to the garage. The off white walls were freshly painted, and the hardwood floors had been polished to a fine sheen. In the grassy, fenced back yard oak trees furnished shade that called for the sand box we soon placed there for John and his new friends. The picture was completed by two large camellia bushes which stood on either side of the front door, like gracious matrons welcoming visitors to chez Langford.

Into the living room at 524 St. Francis we moved the sofas, L-shaped coffee table, and hi-fi cabinet that Don had made in New Orleans. My African violets on the glass shelves from our first apartment gloried in the sunlight that streamed in through the picture window.

One bedroom became a study, with homemade bookcases and the old dresser which served as a desk. The middle room was John's, furnished with his crib, the big cedar chest, shelves of toys and books, and a rocking chair that had belonged to my mother. Our bedroom contained the maple bedroom set that had already traveled with Don's parents from their house in North Louisiana back to

their original home in Tennessee, and then to our first and second apartments in New Orleans. It seemed as glad as we were to be in the St. Francis Street house. In the dining area of the kitchen we placed the narrow mahogany table with its six homemade chairs. Although we had been using our furniture for a few years by this time, all the wood was as yet unfinished, and we had grown accustomed to the look. I enjoyed so much the time I spent in that kitchen preparing meals which were usually eaten by Don after a late arrival home. Our older friends, J.L. and Sue Wise, came from New Orleans to visit us, and she taught me to cook red beans and rice. I still have her recipe the way she gave it to me then. My neighbor across the street was Janice Pratt who was native to the area. She taught me to make gumbo. Her recipe card begins with a vital phrase that would become very familiar: "First, you make a roux."

The breezeway off the kitchen became a sort of make-shift TV room for us. John and I sat there until late at night reading and watching old movies while waiting for Don to come home. Soon after our arrival in Lafayette, the other two surgeons-in-training
were called into active duty from the Army Reserves due to the Cuban Missile Crisis. Thus Don became the clinical director, chief of surgery, and the only one on call for all trauma care and elective surgery . Soon after that, the director of the T .B. hospital (now Tyler Memorial Mental Health Clinic) resigned and his duties were assigned to Don. Finally, the administrator of Charity had a heart attack, and my husband became acting administrator of the weathered old hospital on West St. Mary Street (now a vacant lot). So my first year of freedom was for Don a year of indentured service. He had wanted experience, and he got far more than he had bargained for. In the light of all that, it is rather amazing that we learned in the fall that there would be an addition to our family in the late spring.

The days on St. Francis Street were golden ones for John and me. We slept late, ate when we got hungry , visited with the neighbors, and invited their children over to play. Don had the car, so John and I walked almost everywhere we went. We had picnics in a nearby park and lay on a quilt to read. We took shopping trips to Sears, then located in the building that now houses the City Hall. We walked to Ronnie and Dorman's Beauty School (still on Johnston Street) where I had my hair done. While John napped in the afternoons, I read and wrote poetry and drank coffee and felt very content.

Christmas approached, and we made another version of our homemade Christmas cards, with a picture of the three of us holding hands in prayer at the homemade dining table. We had an Open House, inviting neighbors, friends we'd made at church and co-workers from the hospital. Two elderly sisters from Carencro arrived early, bringing trays of gorgeous big camellias from their yard–so many that I could have bowls of them in every room and still give one to each lady who attended the soire–a gracious touch made possible by the generosity of the Miller sisters.

There were some less than gracious days that winter. The weather turned unusually cold, water pipes froze and burst, the camellia bushes shivered. Unused to heating by floor furnaces, John stepped on the vent and stood paralyzed in pain while stripes were burned onto his bare feet. But those wounds healed, pipes were repaired, and spring came.

Our baby was due the second week of May, 1962. My mother came down from Shreveport to help, and Don designated a weekend when the birth must take place, because that was when he was off duty. Mother, John and I walked for miles in the Saint Streets, trying to induce labor. On Saturday night, May 12, Mother fixed a tasty supper, with strawberry shortcake for dessert. I wasn't allowed to have any of it, because I would surely be headed for the hospital before the night ended. And indeed I was. After a short but very intense labor, our second son was born on May 13, Mother's Day, at Lafayette Sanitarium–forerunner of Lafayette General Hospital. We named him James for James L. Wise who had been like a second father to both Don and me. His second name was Davis, for two other friends–Stan Davis and Milton Davis May, both of whom had been in our wedding. Mother brought me a huge strawberry shortcake to celebrate the birth of a second healthy baby. Then we brought him home to join his three-year-old brother John in the middle bedroom of the simple, cozy house on St. Francis Street.

COLUMBIA SCHOOL

by

Betty Speyrer

While in my home town of Ottumwa, Iowa, this past summer, I visited the Wapello County Museum. The museum is housed in an unused section of the old railroad depot. I was delighted with all the exhibits as they brought back happy memories of my childhood and teen years.

One of the exhibits was a large room which was outfitted as a replica of a one room country school. I attended just such a school at age five beginning with the Primer until graduation from the eighth grade. It was called Columbia School. The only thing missing from the school room in the museum was the large iron pot bellied stove that sat in a corner of Columbia School. The stove was the only heat in the large school room. It was the teacher's job, among other things, to keep the fire in the stove burning. There was always a pile of wood and a bucket of coal available. Sometimes, one of the older boys took care of this task, but most often, it was the teacher's job. Many times, on very cold days, a nearby farmer would enter the building and have a fire going in the stove before the teacher arrived. My sister, Marjorie, was the teacher for a time. Sometimes, she made soup at our home where she lived. Dad took it to school for her in a large pot, and it was kept warm on the stove for our noon meal.

The school was well lit with many windows on each side. In front of the room was a large blackboard. In the back of the room, there was a door leading to a cloak room with shelves for our lunch boxes and pegs on which to hang our coats in the winter. There were also cabinets where the teacher kept supplies–paper, ink, pens, paste, etc. I mention ink because on every desk there was an ink well where we dipped our straight pens in penmanship class. Across the top of the blackboard in the museum were green sheets of cardboard with all the letters of the alphabet written in the Palmer Method which was the method of penmanship we used and

practiced. Similar green sheets were in the front of our classroom at Columbia School and we practiced our ovals and push and pulls until our penmanship was perfected.

There were desks to fit all sizes: small desks for the primer and first grade students, and larger desks for the upper grades. For the eighth graders, there were double desks, that is, two students could sit at one desk if the need arose. At Columbia School, there were never enough students for double occupancy of the desks. There had to be at least five children to keep the school open, and many years there were just five or six.

The teacher rang a hand bell to signal that the day was ready to begin. The bell also called us to order after the morning recess and after the noon hour. Our school day opened with the raising of the flag on the pole in front of the building, weather permitting, and the Pledge of Allegiance.

We then had the audacity to offer a brief prayer for a successful school day, sometimes led by the teacher, sometimes by a student.

There was an old fashioned victrola in the front of the room. On entering the classroom, the teacher put on a record which played rather rollicking music, and we did our exercises. I suppose this activity was meant to make us alert so we would not go to sleep in class. Most of us had walked at least a mile to school, and some had gotten up very early to help with the morning chores at home before coming to school. Fortunately, Dad spared us this task.

Strict discipline was maintained in those days. We had to raise our hand for permission to speak , one finger to get a drink of water and two fingers to take a trip to the toilet which was outside and at the back of the playground–one for the girls and one for the boys. I do not know what would've happened if one of the eighth grade boys had decided to misbehave as some of them were bigger and taller than the teacher. One boy, Donald Camper, was sixteen years old, having been kept out of school to help his Dad with the farm work. Somehow, the teacher always maintained order. The dunce stool beside the teacher's desk was seldom used. Hardly any of us dared to misbehave.

To recite our lessons, we were called to the front of the room where we sat on a large bench called the recitation bench. There the teacher questioned us on our studies to see if we were learning. While one class was reciting, the other students were supposed to be studying. The teacher kept her eyes on everybody to be sure they were busy.

School was not all work and no play. I remember the "pie suppers" that were held in the Fall. A night in October was designated for this event. As there was no electricity, the men hung lanterns around the walls of the school room so it was well lit. Someone brought a guitar and another a fiddle for entertainment. Each woman in the neighborhood brought a homemade pie, and the pies were put on display on a large table in the front of the room. The men watched to see who brought which pie. They then bought a pie, and it was the custom for the woman who made the pie to eat with the man who bought hers. Dad always bought Mother's pie first as he didn't want any of his fellow farmers to eat with her. In those days, teachers were not allowed to marry, but my sister, Marjorie, who was our teacher for several years, had a boyfriend. His name was Ellsworth, but we called him Bud. Bud drove the twelve miles from Ottumwa to come to the pie supper so he could buy Marjorie's pie and eat with her. Years later, the ban on married teachers was lifted. By that time, Marjorie had taken a teaching position in Ottumwa and Bud and she were married.

The years I spent at Columbia School were good years. We were taught not only the three R's, but the basic principles of good behavior and morality. In other words, we were taught to use plain old common sense. Too bad that some of our elected officials do not adhere to that philosophy!

MY BROTHER CHARLES

by

Jane Ellen Carstens

My brother Charles, the only boy in our family, was second to oldest and nine years older than I. Named for Papa, he was Charles John Carstens, Jr. Our family called him Charles, but some of our relatives called him Charlesee.

In the early years of our childhood, the five youngest of us children slept on the sleeping porch. At some point, I suppose it was decided that Charles should not share a bedroom with his sisters because a portion of the porch was converted into a bedroom for him. All of our beds, including his, were iron. One evening there was a terrible thunderstorm, accompanied by lightning, and the latter struck Charles's bed, throwing him on the floor. Fortunately, he was not hurt, but we loved to say that because he had been struck by lightning he did odd things from time to time.

During my brother's high school years and summers away from college, he could frequently be found in the kitchen experimenting with the concoction of syrups made from fruit juices. He also made some very tasty liqueurs. I remember his scouring Jefferson Island for maypops and making syrups from them. In the summer he would buy huge blocks of ice, shave them, and make snowballs with the various syrups, hawking the treats in the neighborhood. I don't know why, but I was his chief taster of the concoctions, every one of them delicious as I remember.

Charles went to St. Peter's College, the Catholic school for boys on Main Street in New Iberia, where the City Hall and Library now stand. At graduation time he invited his class over for dinner (there were less than a dozen in the class), and I remember hearing them chatter away. At one point, one of the Ackal boys said, "While y'all were talking, I was putting it (the food) away!" Charles won a four-year scholarship to Loyola University in New Orleans, where he majored in

chemistry. At graduation time, Papa and the rest of the children drove down to New Orleans for the ceremony. We enjoyed having poor boys for supper prior to the program, the first for many of us, for they could only be found in New Orleans at that time.

While Charles was at Loyola we met Walter Sagrera from Abbeville (now a retired dentist there.) They became good friends, and Charles frequently went with Walter to Chenier au Tigre, an island in the Vermilion Bay, where the Sagreras had a camp. One summer he brought back delicious fresh peaches from the island. We did not know that he had also brought back an unwanted visitor, which I discovered in my bed, fortunately before turning out the light–a huge tarantula!!

Following graduation, Charles taught chemistry at Church Point High School. Agnes Givens from Lafayette was also teaching there, and they dated for a while. Another girl/friend whom he dated during that time just happens to be in this class. Now Doris Bentley, she was Doris Broussard then, from New Iberia.

The summer before I started college, Charles took over the confectionery part of the drugstore across the street from our house. Mr. Alonzo Walters also hired me to work there. I had fun serving my friends and delivering ice cream sodas and sundaes in the neighborhood. I tasted every kind of ice cream, sundae, and soda, but I denied Charles's accusation that I ate all of his profits!

When World War II broke out, Charles joined the Navy. On one ship, which had a Chinese chef, he learned how to prepare the delicious Chinese dinners that one enjoyed in his home in later years. Following a tour of duty, he was stationed in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Charles frequently wrote home about evenings at the USO and about a hospitable volunteer, Mrs. Phoebe Paff, who entertained some of the sailors in her home in Brooklyn Heights. Never once did he mention that she had a daughter named Betty. It was not until we received a letter announcing their engagement that we learned about her. They were married in 1945, and we met Betty a year later when they came to New Iberia for a visit.

After Charles was discharged from the Navy they moved to Texas, where he worked for Chemstrand Corporation. From there they went on to Alabama,

and finally ended up in the Research Triangle (Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill) where Charles was a research chemist for Dupont.

Like my father, although on the surface Charles appeared to be a quiet, low-key type person, he did a few unusual things. I doubt that Betty suspected this when she married him, but to her credit, she put up with them.

Number 1: Charles brought crayfish from Louisiana to Spruce Pine, North Carolina, where they had a summer home in the mountains, and before long the crayfish were roaming the mountainside! One year he brought one of the crayfish down to the Breaux Bridge Crayfish Festival and entered it in the crayfish race. It won! He returned to Raleigh with a plaque and was interviewed by the television station there.

Number 2: Charles became a Republican, and, believe it or not, decided one year to run for President!! He campaigned mostly in North Carolina, but came down to Louisiana and campaigned in the Acadiana area as well. He did not win, of course, but he did get some votes, mostly in North Carolina.

Number 3: Charles and his family had a dog that was much beloved by all of them. When he died, they buried him in the mountainside, next to their home in Spruce Pine. At some point, Charles told Betty that he wanted to be cremated and to be buried next to the dog. To her credit, she carried out his wishes. The day after the Memorial Mass in Spruce Pine, Betty, their two daughters, my sister Noelie and her husband, and I stood with the priest as he officiated at the burial. A fence with flowers growing alongside it surrounds the small mountainside cemetery. The two tombstones are identical, one for the dog, and one for Charles.

Charles was indeed a unique individual! I still miss my brother.

THE BIRTH OF FOUR BABY GIRLS

by

Joan Ireland

It was quiet at a little house deep in the Maine countryside early one morning on the 30th of May. Many years later, May 30 would be designated a national holiday with the whole country honoring their veterans who proudly defended their country, but, on this day, in 1913, a little girl was born, my mother–Gertrude Alice Brown. When I was a child, I really thought Memorial Day Parades were in celebration of my mother's birthday. Later on, when our government decreed that Memorial Day as well as many other national holidays would be celebrated on the Monday following the actual holiday, I felt cheated–the country no longer celebrated my mother's birthday.

Mom didn't make her appearance on an obstetrical ward of a large hospital. There were no hospitals serving the small town of Howland, Maine, in 1913. Little Grammie's confinement was at home and a midwife brought her baby into the world. Little Grammie's mother and a kind neighbor, who lived a couple of miles away, were also there as the midwife delivered my mother, Gertrude Alice, the midwife, wiped her eyes, lightly spanked her bare bottom until she cried, and then gave her to her new grandmother to wrap and dress in homemade flannel clothes.

Little Grammie had to stay in bed for 10 days after my Mom was born, only allowed to dangle (sit on the side of the bed dangling her feet on the floor) on the third day. No bottles had to be washed and sterilized and filled with a formula as Little Grammie nursed her precious new born.

Eighteen years later, on November 27, 1931, my mother was ready to give birth to her baby girl, Joan Estelle Pierce. Just 13 months earlier, her firstborn son, Weston, was born, a baby weighing over nine pounds. Weston was not fat, but had a large framed body and quickly grew out of the shirts and nightgowns Little Grammie and Mom had handsewn for him by the flickering light of a

kerosene lamp. Later, in preparation for my birth, Little Grammie and Mom, knowing that Mom's first born had grown out of all his clothes within a few weeks, sewed much larger nightgowns for me.

I, too, was born at home–in a tiny tenement home in Milo, Maine. Earlier in the morning, Dad had walked to the doctor's office and told him that his wife was in labor. Because it was the day following Thanksgiving, the doctor told Dad not to worry as his wife probably had indigestion. Even though he felt it was an unnecessary trip, the doctor hitched his horse to his buggy and came to the house and was surprised to find Mom was just about to give birth. Without even stopping for a cup of coffee, he brought me into the world, a tiny baby weighing not much over three pounds.

Little Grammie dressed me in the baby shirt and a nightgown that she and Mom had sewn for me, but they were much too large. However, they doubled the nightgown under my body and then wrapped me in a blanket followed by a heavier blanket. My first cradle was a shoebox that had held my Dad's heavy work boots. After placing me in the box she weighed me and found that the box, my clothes and the blanket plus me still weighed under four pounds. No formulas had to be prepared as my mother nursed me just as her mother had spent so many hours nursing and rocking her. There was no newborn, high risk maternity ward waiting for me in Milo, Maine, just a lot of love and care from Mom and Little Grammie.

Mom, too, had to stay in bed for ten days after my birth, again, only allowed to dangle after the third day. When I think of the time our mothers and grandmothers had to stay in bed after giving birth, I wonder–could this have been an added blessing? What a chance of bonding with the newborn baby! Others would be doing the endless housekeeping chores plus the care of older siblings while the mother would lie in bed, occasionally nursing her newborn infant, even letting the doting grandmother or friendly neighbors change the baby's diapers and all the special care required of a newborn.

In 1964, on June third, another baby was about to be born–my baby–a little girl Ray and I would call Patricia Dawn Ireland. Approximately seven months

before, my pregnancy had been confirmed by my obstetrician, Doctor Frank. Thereafter, each month I went back to him as he who kept track of my blood pressure and general health plus the growth of the baby in the womb. Prenatal care was not a priority in 1913 and 1931.

When Patti let me know she was about to put in her appearance, I called Doctor Frank, who notified the Bristol Hospital that I would be coming in to give birth. A nurse from the delivery room met Ray and me as we entered the hospital and brought me to the maternity ward in a wheelchair where I was assigned a bed in the labor room. As my water had broken earlier at home, I just knew that I would soon be holding my newborn baby in my arms. Doctor Brown gave me a shot to speed up delivery and I was left with only a nurse coming into my room periodically to check up on me.

As my labor pains became more severe, I thought of Mom and Little Grammie who had their babies at home and envied them as it seemed I was all alone in a cold strange room, just me and my big belly, which seemed to be pulling my body apart. Sometime, during the night, I was given a shot that put me to sleep even though it slowed labor.

Dawn was just peeking through the heavy curtains of the labor room when I awoke and realized the labor pains I had experienced during the night were like a pin prick. I was sure glad when Doctor Brown appeared with an anesthetist who gave me a spinal. Like a miracle, all pain ceased. I was then wheeled into the delivery room and it seemed only minutes later that I heard Doctor Brown say, "You have a beautiful baby girl."

I was assigned a room in the maternity ward and my baby was taken to the hospital nursery. Ray and my family could only see Patricia two times a day through the thick glass fronting the babies' nursery, at 4:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. I stayed in the hospital for three days with the nurse bringing Patricia to me every four hours before they whisked her back to the babies' nursery. At that time it was the hospital's policy to keep all newborns in the hospital for at least three days–a long 72 hours for a Mom and Dad who wanted to embrace their precious little girl.

In the spring of 1994 another baby was about to be born–Katelyn Rose Arnold. Eleven months before, on March 30, Katelyn's big brother, Tony, was born by Caesarian section. Patti, too, had been under an obstetrician's care during her pregnancy. Even though her first child was delivered by a Caesarian section, Patti had hoped that she would be able to have a natural delivery for her second child. However, three months before her due date Patti had fallen and injured her back and her doctor decided to deliver her baby by Caesarean section. Patti's due date was early in May, however, the doctor made an appointment at Lane Memorial for her to have the baby on April 26, 1994.

I was with Patti and Tony and little Tony when we made that momentous trip to the hospital. Patti felt fine, no labor pains at all, as she carried her own suitcase into the hospital. After checking her into the hospital, the nurse led Patti to the operating room with Tony following with the camcorder. In the visitors room, the new baby's soon-to-be Uncle David, her Nana, eleven-month-old brother, Tony, as well as her Aunt Rhonda, and Tony's mother were anxiously waiting for her to make her appearance.

It seemed only a few minutes had elapsed when Tony returned into the waiting room carrying little Katelyn in his arms to show her off to her waiting fan club. The nurse was right behind him and quickly took Katelyn to the babies' nursery while preparations were being made to move Patti into her room in the maternity ward. Soon after Patti arrived and was made comfortable, the nurse wheeled Katelyn's bassinet into the room with the baby dressed in her newborn paper clothing wrapped snugly in a little pink blanket. Little Katelyn was allowed to stay in her mother's hospital room, only returning to the nursery to be checked by the doctor and nurses before returning to stay with her mother.

Soon after eight o'clock, Tony left the hospital with little Tony leaving, Patti and me to spend the night at the hospital. How happy we were to find that it was the hospital policy to keep newborns with their mothers. Patti hardly left Katelyn out of her sight that night–Patti even cuddled the baby next to her as she went to sleep. I had to wait until I could see Patti was snoring (lightly) before I could

retrieve my granddaughter, giving her all the TLC I had been hoarding up for months before placing her in her tiny bassinet for a few hours sleep.

Patti entered the hospital around 7:00 AM, delivered the baby before noon, stayed one night in the hospital, and was discharged the following day with her precious baby. What a change from her birth in 1964 when she (and I) had to stay in the hospital for 72 hours after she was born. What a change also was the birth of her mother's mother and grandmother who were born at home with a doctor or midwife in attendance for the actual birth.

What changes will be in force when little Katelyn is ready to give birth. Will she suffer through labor pains? How about medication for pain? Will she go full circle and have a home delivery? Who knows?

LEARNING TO DRIVE–THEN AND N OW

by

Mary Anne Early

Learning to drive has taken many forms over the past hundred years, from trial and error to a required course.

My Dad told the story of Grandfather Burn's driving experience with his first Model T Ford in the early 1900s. Grandfather was driving my Grandmother, her sister, and husband on a country road. They were speeding along at 5-10 miles per hour and came to a curve in the road. Instead of turning the wheel to negotiate the curve, Grandfather pulled back on the steering wheel and yelled, "Whoa! !" The car went into the ditch and Grandmother and her sister were thrown out of the touring car. Grandfather, in telling the story said, "John, the old ladies didn't even lose their hats." Obviously Grandfather had not made the transition from the house-drawn vehicle, and no citation for inattentive driving was given.

Dad never discussed how he learned to drive. I only remember him being a very good driver in mud, snow, and ice. I do remember two incredible testing his driving ability. On occasion he drove us in and out of a steep ditch to avoid a head-on collusion without turning over. The other incident he was alone negotiating an icy curve, skidded, and turned over in a ditch. He told about landing upside down with battery fluid starting to drip as he exited. Again, no citation, or points against his license.

For me, age 14 years, my Dad was my driving instructor and was very patient. My challenge was to effectively release the clutch as I shifted into the various gears while depressing the gas pedal. I could have used our mentally-limited neighbor's sign and the desk board, "Down to me, over to the other fellow, and back to me." I remember, in diagonally parking, I failed to depress the brake quickly enough, and we hit the curb with a jolt. Dad's only

comment was, "You need to watch that, Dear ." I got my license at fourteen years old–no test of demonstration of skill.

A number of decades later our son, Jim, learned to drive. It might have been with the two old cars that he bought, unknown to us. One car never ran, but he and his friends pushed it around from place to place. The other car ran one afternoon and became know to us because the neighbors who sold Jim the car got parking tickets. Jim had to take an objective test and demonstrate his driving skills. He became a very good driver. Mary, our sixteen-year- old daughter, enrolled in a summer driving course offered in a nearby town, Northeast, Maryland. The course included classroom instruction and supervised driving experience. The instruction included road signs, traffic lights, and laws and viewing a film involving the results of serious traffic accidents-also experience in changing tires. Mary passed the course, received her license and soon after, we took a college expiratory days to South Bend, Indiana. I wasn't as patient as my Dad, as Mary drove the Interstate highways of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. I remember she said, "Mom, just relax and get some sleep–sleep! ! !" Not me! Mary turned out to be a very good driver, too!

The second generation, Jim's sons, Tim and Greg, had a similar course as Mary. My vigilance was even more intense. Tim remembers going through a red light and I authoritatively said, "You went through a red light." It's a wonder the two boys weren't nervous wrecks but turned out to be very good drivers.

Now I'm a passenger with Mary's children, John, Jeff, and, recently, Kim. Wisely, Danny their Dad, provided supervised driving experiences prior to their course, receiving their learners permit and later obtaining their full license. The three do very well and are very law abiding. I have only Ann and Katie to become licensed in the next few years. I find I'm not as overpowering in supervising their driving. Maybe it results from the experiences with the older ones performance or I'm given up my previous tactics and say "what the heck," and take my chances.