

L I F E A N D
L E T T E R S



The Fall 1992 classes of LIFE & LETTERS, a life history writing course, have continued the tradition begun in 1990 of senior adults gathering together to share their life experiences. This introduction marks on paper the struggle I encounter at the end of each semester. Two tasks lie before me: I must introduce the reader to or reacquaint him with our purpose and I must commend the students for a job well done. In other words, I must do with the English language what only the best writers prove over and over can be done: I must write life. I must write love. The reader may not experience the haunting that hounds these students as they write. He may not see the smile or the tears evoked by a simple flash of memory. She may not understand the depth of meaning between the lines and in unwritten words. How do I express the ideas our language seems so incapable of expressing? Either I've said it before or I don't know how to say it. Strange, isn't it? What takes a lifetime to live can never be relived by another. Or can it? These students overwhelmingly respond to the question "Why write at all?" with the phrase "for my children and grandchildren." What the generations present and future will never experience, the generation past can tell. And so, the following pages are pages of life and love retold. To my students, I say "Thank you." "Ditto" the words of years gone by and "amen" to the words of years to come. To the reader, both new and familiar, welcome to the pages of LIFE & LETTERS.

-- Joan Stear
Fall 1992

LIFE & LETTERS thanks the University of Southwestern Louisiana and Lafayette General Medical Center for their support.

Front Cover (clockwise from upper righthand corner): Barbara Hansen; Velma Boutotte--with husband Bill; Monte Gimbrede; Donna Kimpler; Ann LeJeune; Virginia Lambert; Dolores Perkins; Dean Edrington; Janet Thooft (top center); Ann Lee (bottom center)



FALL 1992 CLASS OF LIFE AND LETTERS (MINUS A FEW!)

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THINGS TO DO AND PLACES TO GO

by
Ann Lee

Who could ever forget the way we played when we were young? With the neighborhood kids we ran around whooping and hollerin' as we played cops and robbers and cowboys and Indians. Then there were also the quieter games-- like hopscotch. One day I yelled to the kids next door "Let's play hopscotch" as I was drawing off the squares with a piece of chalk on my cement front porch. Oops, there at the door was Mother with a frown on her face as she stretched out her hand for the chalk. Didn't I know to play hopscotch on the sidewalk? The cement walk in front of the house was also used for riding my bicycle, but I just couldn't ride it on those two cement runners of the driveway-- they were only a foot wide. Through the years my bicycle and I were always there for each other-- my most prized possession! Mother would say, "There she goes with her coat-tail just 'a-flappin'!" Such a carefree feeling with the wind blowing through my hair! But occasionally the bike did require attention so I'd have to stop by the bicycle shop for necessary repairs. As soon as it was fixed I'd take off for the "Hollow" where all the kids on our side of town played ball or any games which involved a lot of running-- sometimes to be caught was to be kissed! I was a fast runner! 'Twas a great place to meet after school-- a time we all looked forward to.

Another place to go was to spend the day at my friend Betty's house. Looked like I might be planning to stay a week with my big suitcase which was really chock-full of my collection of "samples." In order to get these samples it was very important to have friends in the drug store, grocery store, or any other stores who would save samples of perfume, soap, cosmetics, patent medicines, cough drops, notebooks-- anything that was small! These samples could also be ordered from magazine coupons. After Betty and I would have "show and tell" with each new sample we had gotten, it was time to get down to the business of trading. This required quite a **bit of** haggling as she often accused me of trying to trade my worst sample for one of her very best. And "Katy-bar-the-door" if by chance we got 'em mixed up at the end of the day when it came time to go home!

During the day if we got tired of our samples we might want to play movie stars. So tucked in my magazine I had brought were gorgeous pictures of the most popular actresses and actors which I had cut out. Trading had already

gotten into our blood, so many times the question came up-- would I trade one of my Clark Gables for one of hers, or could we switch a Clark for a Tyrone Power. This was simply mind-boggling! We could imitate them to a perfection-- even in our telephone conversations when Betty would try to disguise her voice: "This is Janet Gaynor, is Charles Farrell there?" We could talk for hours-- just pretending!

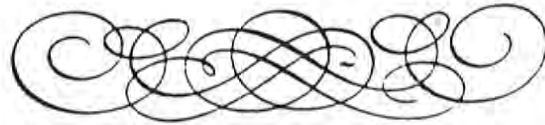
Since we were at the picture show at least three times a week, or every time the feature changed, it was such fun to relive the star's experiences on the screen. Truly the Ritz Theater, which was owned by our next door neighbors, was the greatest place to be on a hot summer afternoon since it was the only place in town with air conditioning. You could feel the rush of cool air right away when you went up to the window to buy your ticket. I always kept my money tied up in the corner of my handkerchief-- we never thought about purses for our young crowd. Inside was the plush carpeting in the back of the theater and down the aisles. A separate compartment-- the loge-- was on either side and in the middle with upholstered velvet seats. I never did figure out why they were there cause you didn't have to pay extra to sit there. The rest of the seats were hardwood that squeaked when folded up or down. In the upstairs, before entering the balcony, was the rest room where some 14 or 15 year old girls learned to smoke so they could be like the movie stars on the screen.

Our imaginations could really make the movies come alive as we screamed with laughter at the things that terrified us. We would sit on the edge of our seats when the weekly serial got started, but first the preview had to show how the serial ended the week before. And heaven forbid if the film were to break in the projection room as the exciting part was being shown! I liked the "Perils of Pauline" best when the bad men had tied her to the railroad track and about that time you could hear the train whistle blowing. I thought I had quit biting my nails after Mother had put "Bitter Apple" on 'em, but that suspense thriller got me started all over again.

When I was about 14, Mother and I didn't miss a single Tuesday night show 'cause every person there got a free dish. One week they'd give plates; the next, cups and saucers; the next, bowls; and finally, after a year, if you'd attended every time, you'd have a complete set of dishes. As I remember they were really pretty!

Not only did they give away dishes, but one time the furniture store had a drawing to give away a bedroom suite. I was chosen from the front row of kids to come up on stage to pick the winning name out of the box. Would you

believe that name was Mother's? All the people started yelling "Frameup, frameup!" But it was all on the "up and up" so the bedroom furniture was delivered to our house the next day. In later years when asked if I'd ever won anything, I liked to tell about my lucky ticket!



CHRISTMAS IN GUATEMALA

by
Barbara Hansen

The busy weeks in our new homes and at school are flying by. We travel twice to other sites to see how the Volunteers live and work. I am fortunate to live with a wonderful family. They work together cheerfully. Mama is a good cook. Little Dorita is feeling better. She walks more and even manages a smile.

On Thanksgiving Day we have our usual classes. However, we can sign up for dinner at the Ramada Inn in Antigua if we pay the eighteen Quetzales. We pack into two vans for a big night on the town. I am able to reach Beth on the phone at the hotel. We talk through our tears, and it is good to know that all are well, except granddaughter Amy, who could not eat due to her tonsillectomy. Beth will call the others and tell them I am fine and I had a turkey dinner, too.

Marge, Marion, and I begin to think about Christmas and how different it will be for us here. We learn about the Posada at the training center. For nine nights before Christmas, "Joseph" and "Mary" with their following, walk the streets, looking for a place to stay. After being turned down, they arrive at a home where they are welcome to stay. The hostess serves food and drink to all. Fortunately, this hospitality is prearranged. Buses are chartered, and we take a day trip to Chichicastenango to observe the Christmas festivities. The Indians dress in their traditional, colorful costumes, and dance in the square to the sound of the drums, pipes, marimbas, and horns. We walk through a large market where embroidery and carved wooden masks and jade

are featured. The Indians burn their incense and candles for ritual on the circular stairs of the ancient church, while the Spanish Ladinos attend Mass inside.

I tell Sergio about the costumes, dances, and music and he tell me there will be lots of dances and music in Santa Lucia too. I show him the photos I took of his family and just received in the mail from the film I sent to Beth. They are all so excited and I have to give them the pictures. Camera and film are too expensive for them. I decide I will take more pictures of them, have them developed in Antigua, and arrange them in an album for the family Christmas present.

We have party day at the center. Women come in with all the ingredients for tamals; corn dough, salsa, pieces of chicken with bone, capers, and olives. After washing hands, we take turns shaping them and rolling them in the canna lily leaves. While they are cooking we cut up fruit for the punche. It is started in a large kettle with Rose of Jamaica herbal tea. It includes all available fruit: apples, oranges, bananas, pineapple, coconut, papaya, melon, raisins, and cinnamon. It cooks over the wood fire too.

We decorate the walls of the center with pine boughs and pata gallo, the red bloom of an air plant which grows high in the trees. The name means "cock's feet," and that is what it looks like with the sharp points. We dance, Guatemalan style, to the music of a small combo, with our instructors and each other while the food is cooking. Our punche and tamals are the best. The busy day helps to dispel the lonesome feelings we have about not being home for Christmas.

When I return I see that our house is decorated too. The families are not allowed to cut trees, but they can cut branches. These are tied together to look like a tree and propped up in the corner of the room. The ornaments are hung and underneath is the nativity scene. Many little animals are placed on sawdust around Joseph, Mary, and the Baby Jesus in his manger. I tell them how beautiful it looks.

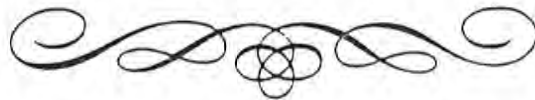
The town livens up with decorations, fireworks, and a hand-operated ferris wheel near the church. Grandpa's house has a new coat of paint and stalls for food are built. For many days before Christmas, there are dances in the street and people wear large costumes. Sergio danced in a costume one time. A band rolls in on a flatbed truck. People gather in the street with their children and buy drinks and food from the selections in the stalls. Cotton candy, fried banana chips, oranges with sprinkles of spice, flat tortillas with salsa or guacamole and shredded red cabbage, and green mangos are some choices.

One evening, a man dances out with a wooden rack over his head. It is wired with firecrackers and when lit, they shoot everywhere. What a sight! Parents grab their children and run back to avoid a burn.

I know my family is Catholic, but they do not go to church. One evening, Delmi says to me, "Come," and we all go to Grandma's house across the street. I see an altar in a large room. A picture of Christ has many flowers and candles around it. The men stay in another room while the women and children celebrate Mass. Delmi leads the service, reading from a book, while the others follow, reading from their books. Grandma and I sit on chairs-- the others kneel on the concrete floor. They sing and the little children run around the burning pan of incense in the floor.

The eve of Christmas arrives. Many friends, neighbors, and relatives come by. There are so many hugs and handshakes while we wish each other "Feliz Navidad." When the fireworks start at midnight, it was time for punche and tamals. This seems like a good time to give my gifts. Socks for Papa, a scarf for Mama, a doll for Dorita, a box of marzipan candy, and the photo album for all. They take turns looking at the pictures, many of them for the first time. There are no other presents.

It is quite a bit after my bedtime, and I am ready to turn in. I have many thought in my mind and wonder if Santa has finished his deliveries in Louisiana yet. My grandchildren will open so many packages in the morning. I hope they appreciate them.



MY GRANDMOTHER'S HOUSE

by

Geraldine J. Edrington

My favorite place in the whole world is my grandmother's house near Washington, Louisiana. I always get a good feeling inside when we're on our way to Grandma's, especially on our Sunday visits. I love the gravel road that looks like a green tunnel in spots because the trees on each side meet over our

heads. Sometimes we stop at the little unpainted store on the side of the road to pick up bread or a pie for dinner. One time Daddy got us each a delicious pink coconut ball.

A few miles down the gravel road we turn down this little lane. I can just barely see the house at the end. My little brother and I are both sitting up on the edge of our seats to see if we can see anyone coming down the lane or playing in the yard. There's usually someone around; but even if there isn't, as soon as we turn off the motor someone spots us and runs out to meet us.

I love that big old unpainted cypress house with its rust colored tin roof sitting up on a hill. The house has five fireplaces in it, but only one or two are used in winter. My favorite spot is the long front porch with the swing that makes that lazy scrunching noise and the three wide steps that we sit on when the porch is full of grown-ups.

I have three aunts who are almost my age; Anna Lee and Ena are a little older than me, and Rose Mary is nine months younger. My brother has an uncle who is just about his age. Cousins who live right across the field from Grandma's come over to play, so we all have a great time.

There's so much to do at Grandma's. In the summer there's sugar cane to chew, watermelons to eat, muscadines to look for out in the wooded area, and crawfish to catch. In the fall the pecan trees around the house provide us with hours of fun. We look for pecans, pick them and then sit down under the tree, crack them on the brick walk with another brick, peel them, and then eat them. Then we go out looking for wild persimmons.

I remember one day, Grandma packed us a lunch and we went across the big pasture, past the fishing pond into the woods near Bayou Courtableau for a picnic. We didn't dare go into the little log cabin that Lionel, my older uncle, had built because he would have skinned us alive. We had an old blanket to set our lunches on while we swung across the gully on muscadine vines until we got hungry. Then we ate our sandwiches made with homemade bread and peanut butter and cane syrup filling and drank our milk from little pint jars. After our lunch, we scouted around looking for acorns, persimmons, arrow heads or whatever we could find. We swung on the vines again, and then we were ready to go home.

I'm glad we go to Grandma's house early, right after church, and we come home late when it's almost dark so we can have a long day to play and laugh and have fun. I feel good and drowsy on the way home, and I usually fall asleep. My little brother does, too.



MY LIFE DURING WORLD WAR II

by
Velma Boutotte

My adult life actually started after graduating from Alto High School in May 1940 with business school in Lufkin, Texas, immediately following. I finished the secretary-accounting course with good grades. The last part of the course included office training at night classes. I worked for Davis-Horne Accounting Co. during the day. I was making a good salary at that time but not as much as my cousin and friend were making at the Defense Plant in Texarkana, Texas, where they had gone after business school. As I continued public stenography at the school office, Mr. Al Moore, who worked for Lufkin Times, offered me a secretary-accounting job in Texarkana where he was taking a manager job of an Office Equipment and Supplies store that had expanded during the boom time. I was their baby sitter on weekends already. I asked for a bit more salary than was offered; and with Mrs. Moores' urging, I got the job, traveling to my new job with Mr. and Mrs. Moore and the two children in May 1942. The children were delighted, and so was I. We had fun sight-seeing together in and around Texarkana.

A friend from business school and I found a room together one block from my office in a beautiful old house. My shorthand teacher in business school and her roommate also lived there and shared the same bathroom. We ate our night meal at a boarding house down the street. Because of national rationing of meat, sugar, gasoline, shoes, and tires, to mention a few, we had to give the boarding house our sugar stamps and meat stamps occasionally.

The second week I was at work, one of the salesmen at Firmin-Greer Co. brought a handsome young man over to my office to meet me. He asked me to have a sandwich with him after work and to walk me home. I declined, but after checking up on him the next day, I did go across the street to Simmons Drug store for a sandwich with him after work that day. He walked me home and we sat in the swing on the front porch and talked. Bill Boutotte and I became good friends and later sweethearts.

The town of Texarkana was divided in the middle by State-Line street. Texas lay on one side of the street and Arkansas on the other side with the post office right in the middle. Bill and his older brother, Jack, lived on the Arkansas side with their guardians, Aunt Mary and Uncle Gene Huggins. I lived and worked on the Texas side. Jack and Bill's mother, Velma Elizabeth Boutotte, had died in surgery when Bill was 13 years old, and their father, William Arthur Boutotte, died when Bill was 16 years old. Bill later told me his first attraction to me was my name, the same as his mother's. My first attraction to him was that he knew nothing about farming, but still liked the outdoors. He was also handsome and very intelligent.

Jack Boutotte was drafted by the army right after I met him, ending up as a tank driver in the European war theater. [A coincidence happened in Italy where Eugene Barron and Jack Boutotte met the first time. The Signal Corps my brother was in and the tank corps ended up in the same place. Bill and I had just married, so both brothers had heard a lot about us. Bill's uncle Gene Huggins had also been drafted and was made a part of a construction battalion that built the bridges and other things for the U.S. Forces. He was part of the crew that built the base for the famous U.S. flag on Iwo Jima.]

Bill worked on the construction of the Lone Star Defense Plant where I later went to work. He worked in the payroll section that was still around while the Red River Ordinance Depot next door was being built. It was for storing or shipping of the bombs or other ammunition that had been loaded with explosives where I worked as secretary for the manager of the blueprint department.

Bill joined the U.S. Army Airforce when the plants were finished and his name got nearer the top of draftees. He wanted to be a pilot. He entered cadet training at San Antonio, Texas, progressing through pilot training. When he graduated, his Aunt Lorena and I went to Ellington Field in Houston so I could pin his wings on him. She was always ready to go with me any time the occasion came up to visit him at different fields. She taught high school at Big Springs, Texas, for many years. We liked each other very much and both liked to go places together. Each time Bill and I were together, it became harder and harder to say goodbye.

My plans to become a career woman became less important as our love grew for each other. So Velma Elizabeth Barron and Billie Ray Boutotte were married December 2, 1943, at the Post Chapel of Laredo Army Airforce Base. We spent our honeymoon a half day at a time as he flew B-24's for gunnery practice the other half of the day. We lived in the master bedroom of a

retired American Consul's home, and another pilot and his bride lived in the guest room. Mr. Wormuth was still in California but Mrs. Wormuth had come back to open up her home again. She was a lovely person and had lived all over the world before he retired. She drove us on many sightseeing outings across the Mexican border and around Laredo. Kathy and John Blaylok were from Chicago, so it was quite a treat for all of us. The priest from the Catholic church liked to play cards in our spacious room with a Duncan Phyfe drop leaf table separating sitting area from the bedroom area. A large many mirrored liquor bar sat against the side wall. Between the five of us it was well stocked. There were stories of the north, south, west, and from around the world that made many wonderful evenings.

Bill and I were very happy, and everything was just perfect. We bought our first automobile, adding a new dimension to our social life. Now we went to the Saturday night dinner dances at the officers club every week. Twice a month there was a band, and dress was formal. Few manufacturers were allowed to make fancy clothing during the war as everything went for the war effort. Mrs. Wormuth let Kathy and I use her sewing machine and went shopping with us. Her influence at the stores got bolts of nice material pulled from under the counters that were not shown to the average customer. She helped us make two gowns each that we wore with pride.

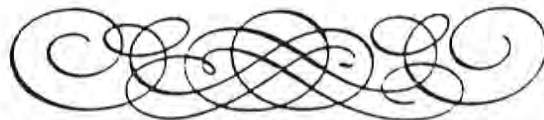
The good friends and good times were very hard to say goodbye to in March 1944 when Bill was transferred to Buckingham Air Force Base in Ft. Myers, Florida. We got a delay in route that gave us time to visit with his folks in Honey Grove, Texas, and my folks in Alto, Texas. In Ft. Myers, we lived in a bedroom with kitchen privileges with Mrs. Hough, a senior citizen, a sweet lady to us. The first avocado tree I ever saw was in her back yard. It was huge, and bushels of ripe fruit fell each day. I picked them up for her and put them in a big box at the front curb for anyone that wanted them. I didn't like them until much later. We discovered Ft. Myers Beach the first weekend and the good fishing docks on the back bay area, so we looked for and found a house facing the beach to rent. We enjoyed living there and explored the area thoroughly. By September the worse hurricane in fifty years came and destroyed it all. The owners of the house made their guest house in town available to us.

We were busy getting to know Bill's plane crew. We went sightseeing and picnicking together each weekend. This was the crew that would remain with him for the duration of the war. For 25 years later, we were still in touch with so many of them. When the B-29's were ready for combat, the crew went to

Birmingham,Alabama, for six weeks to learn all about flying them. They were larger than the B-24's and B-17's that had been the largest planes made. I went back to Honey Grove to visit his folks and to Alto to visit mine. His next airbase was McDill Field out of Tampa, Florida. We lived in an apartment hotel, The San Souci, in St. Petersburg, Florida, until they were shipped out to Guam and Tinian in the South Pacific to fight the Japanese. Bill was now 1st. Lt. Billie R. Boutotte. Saying goodbye this time was the hardest thing I had encountered thus far. Both of us were very patriotic, which sustained us.

Martha Smith, a pilot's wife across the hall from us at San Souci was expecting a baby, and we flew back to Ft. Worth, Texas, her home. Bill's Aunt Mary, who was back in Honey Grove, met me at Aunt Pearl and Uncle Waldo's house in Ft. Worth. We found a room together and started looking for jobs. I was lucky the first day to find a billing job in the accounting department of Sinclair Refining Co. The next day or so Aunt Mary went to work in the credit department of the Fair Department Store in the same building I worked in. She had a car so that helped a lot. Uncle Gene Huggins came home from the war sooner than Bill, so the two of them went back to Honey Grove. The very next week Lessie Moore who had worked with me at Lone Star Defense Plant in Texarkana, came to share a little cottage with me. She had not married at that time. She worked for the 7th Air Command and was transferred to Shreveport, Louisiana, just as I got the news that Bill was leaving his overseas post to come home.

The World War II years, 1941 through 1945, were a big part of my life, the beginning of 31 wonderful years with my Bill Boutotte.



FRIENDSHIP
by
Donna Kinmpler

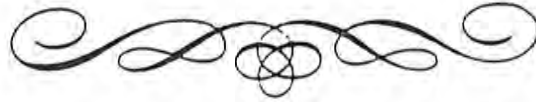
I was seven years old when my mother and father divorced. Johanna Beuttel, my mother, moved herself and children to St. John, Kansas. My mother went to work at the courthouse and we children went to school where we tried to make new friends.

There was a girl in the third grade class that I liked. She had blonde hair and pretty brown eyes and her name was Lou Ann Allen. She was bigger than I and had a sister named Colleen. We had smiled across the room at each other so I felt she liked me, too. One day I brought some candy to school to share with her and that was the beginning of our friendship. From that time on we did everything together and were known as the "Gold Dust Twins," I guess because we both had blonde hair. We played together, worked, laughed and cried together. We rode bicycles together, tandem bikes, and even ran away from home together on bicycles only to be caught and returned back to town. We worked together in the Theater. Lou Ann sold popcorn and I ushered.

One time in school, she was swinging me by pulling my feet to make me go faster and higher. She pulled me out of the swing on my knees, cutting my knees so badly that I had to go to the doctor. I could not walk for a couple of days, and she felt so bad and cried because she hurt me. Another time we went to the roller skating rink which I liked and she didn't. Skating to the music and playing the game of "Crack the Whip," Lou Ann fell and seriously injured her kneecap. I cried because she would not have been there if it hadn't been for me.

We marched in the band together, she playing the clarinet and I the trombone. She was good on her clarinet; I was not good on the trombone. My mother remarried when I was a freshman in high school, and we moved to St. Bend, Kansas. I did not see as much of Lou Ann then, but we remained good friends.

She married, I married. Each of us has a family, and each lost our husband in death about three years ago. We are still good friends and I have a letter on my desk from her that is waiting for an answer. I just wish she lived here in Lafayette or at least closer that Escandido, California.



MY SPECIAL FRIENDS
by
Virginia Lambert

The frequent moving we did during my youth was not conducive to developing intimate friendships with other people my age. I did make friends wherever I went; but these friendships never had time to develop into a "best friend" relationship before we moved on to some other place. It was especially difficult to find friends if we happened to move into a new town during the summer months when school was not in session. Without a central gathering place for people my age, finding friends was difficult to do.

But in the summer of 1932 in Caldwell, Kansas, I discovered friends that could be my friends and go with me wherever I lived.

Whenever we moved to a new town my mother did two things for her girls. She enrolled us in a Methodist School Class. And, if the town had a library, she took us to get a library card. She encouraged Marion, Maxine, and me to discover the pleasure of reading. And, I must say she succeeded.

At the Methodist Church I did meet some girls my age, but their homes were too far away from ours, so I only saw them on Sunday.

When my mother took us to Caldwell's library, I made an exciting discovery. There, on the shelf were copies of books I had borrowed from the library in Enid. There was Little Women and Jo's Boys by Louisa May Alcott and Tom Sawyer by Mark Twain. I felt like I had just met up with an old friend. One by one I read again these books. That summer I began to consider books my special friends.

I was reluctant to reveal that I looked upon books as friends. Then at sometime, somewhere in my reading I came across a quotation that made me realize that I was not alone in considering my books my friends. Oliver Goldsmith wrote in 1762 the following: "The first time I read an excellent book, it is to me as if I had just gained a new friend. When I read over a book I have perused before, it resembles the meeting of an old one."

Through the years the books I have read have changed in subject matter. In my teen years I "devoured" the romance novels. Later, when I was married and felt "trapped" in a marriage that was not made in heaven, my self-esteem sunk to zero. It was then I discovered the "positive thinking" books written by Norman Vincent Peale, Charles Allen, Claude M. Bristol, and others. When I was in a mood for a laugh, I read humorous novels such as Auntie Mame or Tea House of the August Moon. Even today, as then, I enjoy the humor published in Reader's Digest.

I am also a "push-over" for how-to-books. Whenever I have a problem, I generally find a book that offers a solution. The book that has been the most special book of my life, though, is my Holy Bible. It has seen me through good times and bad. It is my "survival kit" that helps me cope with the world.

The dictionary definition of the word "friend" is "a person whom one knows well and is fond of; and intimate association." Now I do have friends who are "people" friends that fit the dictionary definition. And I cherish them; but when they are not available, I always have my books. I feel as John Adams must have felt when he wrote in a letter to his mother dated March 17, 1817, "My books are my friends that never fail me."



ANTICIPATION

by

Ann LeJeune

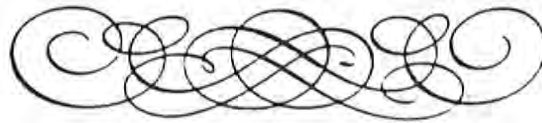
If I were to begin a list of anticipatory fun-times, I would be hard pressed to choose the ones I liked best. A rush of high voltage phrases, charged with the happiest memories immediately flood my mind; phrases like "chocolate ice cream sundaes," "picture shows on a Friday night," and "late evening car rides coming home from the movies when my sister Jane and I would fall asleep on the back seat of the car." Knowing full well that Daddy would have us home within ten minutes from drug store to home, we both settled into the sweetest ten minute nap ever anticipated. And the memory was always the same. Let me tell you about it.

Daddy, a hard working, dedicated workaholic, owned an Insurance Agency which bore his name. Later he became the president of a bank. Each morning he left for work at 6:30 a.m., seldom arriving home before 7:00 p.m. This routine was part of owning his own business and dividing time between two very responsible positions. Whatever his explanation, the phone rang constantly when he did arrive home. One of his favorite pastimes was to pick up Mother, Jane, and me and whisk us off to the local movie house "before the phone started ringing." We were served a quick supper on "movie nights," rushed through the necessary homework and were ready for the show in a matter of sixty minutes. It didn't really matter what was playing at the movies (although Daddy's favorites were "cowboy shoot'em ups"); he took us to the picture show just to get away from his constant phone calls. That plan worked quite well, too, for all of us.

Then the real fun began. And it was always the same. After the movies, Daddy took us around the corner to the drug store for ice cream. My favorite was called the "chocolate special," three scoops of vanilla with more than enough chocolate syrup brimming all around and running down the sides into a coke glass. Second favorite was a "cherry nectar," sheer, rainbow-pink ice cream with a frothy topping of carbonated fizz. Both were the pot of gold at

the end of the rainbow. Daddy introduced me to the cherry nectar taste, but our all time favorite was the "chocolate special" with three scoops of vanilla!

After the ice cream, it was time for the sweet ride home, and, it was always the same. Jane and I would each take a corner of the backseat and snuggle down into the soft upholstery cover to make a kind of pillow. I closed my eyes quick as a flash so not to miss one minute of the stolen sleep that was mine to have for the soon-to-be-over ten minute ride home. Jane seldom closed her eyes but "slept sitting up" because she was five years older than I was. The car windows were open, and the soft motion of the car lulled me to sleep. Only the crunch of wheels in the driveway gave signal that the ride was over, and if I lay very still in the back of the car Daddy would carry me inside to my room. Heaven could be no better! And-- it was always the same.



HISTORY IN THE MAKING

by

Monte Gimbrede

It started in Austria when a certain fellow was shot. Why this should have set off World War I is a question seldom answered. This occurred in 1914 and the war ended in 1918; four years of the worst slaughter and destruction the world had ever seen. The Kaiser, Wilhelm, of Germany tried to take all of Europe under his control. Easy countries like Belgium and Holland were first to fall. then the advancement tried to conquer France and all adjacent territory.

All the countries of Europe became involved; some directly and some only in their relationship to the others. This situation brought German armies to Denmark and England to a small extent and to Northern Italy, Austria, and adjacent areas of Southeastern Europe. Eventually the U.S. became involved to aid friendly nations and send a huge army to France, airplane forces to Great Britain and a Navy to control the ocean and coastal areas.

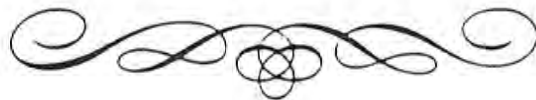
After a total of four years destruction the Germans were finished and an Armistice was starting to develop. All peopled in the U.S. were hoping and praying that it be soon so the world could go on with its business.

My family was living in Mount Vernon, New York, just north of New York City, and we had not had much fun for some time so we decided to go to the city for a day in early November. I can't remember the date. We decided to go by automobile and were in the Borough of the Bronx driving south at about noon or a little earlier when traffic became overcrowded and progress was at a standstill. Newspaper sellers became numerous and Dad bought a paper and the headline said an armistice had been signed and the war was over in early November 1918. We decided to return home and avoid the huge traffic tie-up in Manhattan.

A few days later, November 11, 1918, we went to celebrate my parent's wedding anniversary-- ten years of marriage. We drove to New York City and reached 5th Avenue and 59th Street. There we found the traffic very heavy on 5th Avenue; so Dad pulled into the entrance of the Plaza Hotel. There was no sign of the traffic decreasing, and it looked as though we could not drive further. Since it was midday, we left the auto and walked a few blocks to a French restaurant we knew for lunch. After lunch the restaurant became very crowded and the proprietress would let no one out because of the danger on the streets. I don't know the time of arrival of the news that an Armistice had been signed at 11 a.m. and the war was over. Yes, it was the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of the eighteenth year! The owner, a French lady, came to each table and told us we would not be allowed to leave until it was safe and all food and drinks were on her.

When we did leave in early evening it was still light. The streets were full of noisy people and Wall Street ticker tape. Even champagne was being poured out of a window near us when we got to our automobile.

In a fairly short time the noise, crowd, and airborne items were decreasing enough for us to turn the car out of the driveway and go north on 5th Avenue and on through Manhattan and the Bronx to Mount Vernon and home. It had been very exciting, but we learned later it was not as exciting as the First Armistice Day!!



THE NEW HOUSE

by
Janet Thooft

All the leaves are off the trees, but the weather is still nice. I am in the third grade now, almost nine years old. I'm still pretty excited because today is the big day. You see, Dad, the big boys (Carl, Steven, Kenny), and Uncle Bill (Grandpa's brother) have been building the new house for months now. I know because I asked.

"Mom, how many years have Dad and the big boys been working on the new house?"

Mom smiled and said, "Janet, they only started this spring."

"But how many years is that?" I persisted.

"It's been about six months, which is only half a year. You should have learned that in school though, right?" Mom probed.

"Oh, yeah, sure, well a year just seems like a really long time, that's all." I quickly ended the embarrassing episode and hurried off to find one of the other kids.

We were all really excited about getting a whole new house to live in; but before Dad could start work on the house, he had to first move the sweet smelling, purple lilac bush and the propane tank that we always got in trouble for playing on. Since there are a lot of hard rocks right under the ground, Dad had to use dynamite to blast out the basement. During the dynamiting, me, Raymond, Paul, Becky, Mom, and sometimes Tim went to the cave. The big boys, Dad, and sometimes Tim would go to the shop. The basement is about fifteen feet away from our old house. Dad, or those other men, would start the fuse, and then run to the shop. And after the thundering noise stopped, we could come out of the cave. Sometimes after an explosion, the air was smokey and smelled funny, like burning matches and dust. Our ears still ringing, Tim would say, "Dad woke up the entire county that time."

"Yep," I added, "I bet even the birds' ears hurt."

"Unuh, birds don't have ears, dummy," Tim said.

"They do, too! Otherwise how could they hear what they're singing? And besides, why do chickens have holes on the sides of their heads then?" I quipped.

"Look, whales have a hole in their head too, right? Well, it isn't an ear, it's to help them breathe, and that's the same for birds. They don't need ears," Tim replied smugly, "because they can tell what they're singing by the vibrations in their throat."

"Oh," was all I could come up with. After all, he's a year and two weeks older than me.

Another time during the dynamiting, Mom and I stayed in the house. The windows and dishes kept shaking. I bet earthquakes feel just like that. The dynamite broke the rock apart, and then Dad hauled the big pieces over the bank. (They make great mountains, too.) Dad put one rock next to the chicken house to sit on. It's full of fossils and little squiggles. It can hold about ten people all at once.

After the basement was all ready, this big cement truck came. It sounded like a hungry animal grinding up bones in its belly. After the gray soup was poured out, Uncle Bill, once a stone mason, leveled what was to be the basement floor, driveway, and garage. Uncle Bill also used some kind of grinder to smooth out parts of the basement after the cement was dry. He had to wear a white mask. I sneaked down the new stairs Dad finished to watch, but it was too dark and dusty. I went back up the steps and looked at what would be a floor. All that could be seen of the upstairs was the dark yellow plywood floor, like a huge dancing platform in the middle of the yard, except for the stair hole. It started sprinkling, and I decided to spin in circles on my new dance floor. The sun was still shining. I stopped spinning and looked up to see a pale, shimmering rainbow stretching over the barn lot below the house.

When Dad finally started the walls of the main floor, we had a party, like a barn-raising, I guess. It was a breezy, cloudless summer day (that's my favorite kind). Lots of friends and relatives came to help Dad. We had a picnic right on the rock Dad put by the chicken house.

Finally, after the outside was completed, but still not the inside; me, Raymond, Paul, and Tim decided to sleep in the new house. Tim and them guys kept trying to scare each other with funny noises. It's a fun place to play hide-and-go-seek. The upstairs, which is the main floor, has the utility room, little bathroom, hallway, kitchen, dining room, living room, hallway, big bathroom on the end, then me and Becky's room, Raymond and Paul's room,

and then Mom and Dad's bedroom. The big boys get to sleep downstairs, but that means they have to come upstairs to use the bathroom. The basement has the family room, hallway, Kenny and Tim's room, Carl and Steven's room, the mud room, and the furnace room.

I thought the floor man would never come, but he eventually came and put linoleum and carpet on all the upstairs floors, but not the basement. I rolled back and forth for a long time on the floor of the newly carpeted bedroom that me and Becky would share. A room of our very own! (We had slept in the hallway in the old house.) Mom even let me pick out the color of the walls, light blue. The smell of fresh paint, glue, and pine filled the room. A large glass circular light shade with four bright burning bulbs lit the room. Dad still needs to hang the doors on the closet, so I could see the five little shelves on the left side of the closet that he made and the tall hanger rack for me and the shorter one for Becky. There are two big, deep shelves above the hanging part for storage (and Becky's stuffed animals, no doubt). Paul and Raymond, my younger brothers, will sleep next door to us. They wanted a green room, and since their closet was smaller than ours, they didn't get the small side shelves. And wow, a bathroom right next to us! A bathtub, two sinks, a shower, and best of all, a toilet, and all you have to do is push the lever!

Finally, like a dream come true, the day to move in arrives. Not everything is completed, but Dad said he can do the rest during the winter and over the next couple of years. It feels like I walked more miles today between the old house and new house than I have walked my entire life!

I guess I can really be annoying without trying sometimes. "Mom, can I take my dolly with me? The one I gave a haircut to?"

"That's fine," she answered.

"What about my summer clothes?"

"Well," Mom debated, "leave them here until we get all of your winter clothes hung up."

"Mom, can I take the three pig story?"

"Yes, Janet," Mom said tiredly. "You can always come back and get something if you forget to bring it over, o.k.?"

"Mom, should Becky bring Frumpy? He's dirty and she's got a ton of other toys." My little sister, Becky, is only three. She's the youngest of us all.

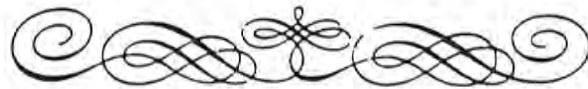
"Mom!" Becky cried, "Frumpy's my favorite animal!"

"Girls! That's enough. Becky, you can bring Frumpy, but you'll probably have to leave some of your other toys over here for now until we see how much room we have." And so it went.

And now, I can't seem to go to sleep. Becky and I are sharing the double bed with Carl's white metal headboard. It looks nice in our new bedroom. Carl, Steve, Mom, and Dad are trying to move the stove into the new house using the little yellow Minneapolis tractor and the big crate-like contraption box that Dad made that hooks to the back of the tractor. It's getting dark fast, and I can hear them on the other side of the open bedroom window. A cool breeze is coming in, and now the crickets and night birds are coming out. I put the sheet and comforter snugly over my shoulders and the air smells... so sweet... and... won... der....

I blink my eyes. The early morning sun rays are peeking over the hill and dancing across the farm. Wow, it's morning already! It feels like I just went to sleep. I didn't dream or anything! The room smells so fresh and clean. The rooster is crowing as I quickly jump out of bed; Becky is still sleeping. The smell of frying bacon and toast makes my stomach growl. I guess the stove has been moved.

It's a wonderful, cloudless, brisk morning (my favorite kind) and a perfect day for show-and-tell about our new house!



GROWING
by
Dolores Perkins

The ambition of my life has not been of worldly things. I never had desires to climb mountains, invent things, become a leader of some movement, become an expert in some profession, or become a doctor, lawyer, or nurse. The direction of my life and my prayer has been to be a good wife and mother. It is not easy and has been a struggle for me. I suppose I, as most people, strive to be perfect. This desire to be perfect has made my failures unacceptable to me, and so the road has been hard.

To be a good wife and mother requires me to be working constantly with myself. I realize this more now than I did when I was young. It is sometimes difficult not to try to mold others into what I think they should be. This battle is itself a lesson to be learned and regretfully wasn't realized until later years.

The strength and help that I need to change, I find in the Bible. Learning how to live, in all phases of my life, not only with my husband and children, has been a slow process, and I believe there is more to be learned than one can achieve in a lifetime. But I struggle for growth-- trying to live in love and peace and not hurting anyone-- I fail so many times, but I don't give up, for I am still growing.

