

Low Country Children

By Ruth Saunders

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To Billy

INTRODUCTION

Low Country Born

Briars growing by the roadside
Hot sun, some burning sand
Thunderstorms on summer days
Sudden rain cooling thirsty land.

Warm and colorful autumn
Dark cool swamps, brilliant trees
A hint of approaching winter
Felt in a chilling breeze.

Southern winter, short and windswept
Subsides—the birds start to sing
Once again there is renewal of life
With the return of a Low Country Spring.

This is my beloved birthplace
Land of moods stormy and mild
A land generous, healing, forgiving
I'm glad I'm a Low Country Child!

Old Stick In The Mud

The Toogoodoo River is a beautiful little river in Charleston County. My Grandfather Prentiss lived by this river and I spent a great deal of my childhood there, visiting relatives.

Everybody enjoyed the river. Even my grandfather's livestock liked to stroll down to the edge of the river and have a look around. Since the water was salty they wouldn't drink it, so we just assumed that they like to see how things looked up and down the river, checking things out to see if anything new was going on.

My mother told us about a cow Grandpa had when she was a child. This absent minded cow wandered down to the edge of the river and went too far and got stuck in the mud. If this cow had been a boat, my uncles could have waited until high tide and floated her free. However, she was not a boat and all four legs were firmly stuck in the mud.

A hasty conference was called, everybody being mindful of the fact that time and tide wait for no man, and that cow didn't have too much time before the tide would begin to rise. All members of the family old enough to help were in listed in this rescue operation. This was a real emergency situation. The only thing they had going for them was the cow was even more anxious to get out of the mud then they were to get her out.

From the accounts, I have heard, it was a stupendous effort. Everybody, including the cow, gave the rescue effort their all, and just before high tide the cow was freed from the mud. As she reached the safety of dry land, she rewarded her rescuers by dying right on the spot.

There has been speculation over the years as to whether she died from the efforts of the rescuers, from fright, from a heart attack, or maybe even from joy because she was finally out of the mud. At any rate, it's a good thing they got her out of the mud before she died as you certainly could not leave a dead cow sticking up in the mud.

They thought about giving her a burial at sea, but the thought of a dead cow lounging around in the river at high tide didn't appeal to anybody, so she was given a burial right at the spot on which she so thoughtlessly died.

Briggsey

Briggsey was one of the mules my Grandpa Prentiss used for general farm work many, many years ago when my mother was a little girl. Unfortunately for Briggsey, this story starts when he suddenly died. Now a dead mule is a dead liability and also a pretty big object no matter which side you're looking from.

Apparently my grandfather delegated the responsibility of funeralizing Briggsey to his sons. It takes a lot of digging to give a mule a proper funeral. Not only that, it takes a lot of effort to get the mule in the properly dug grave. No question about it, funeral arrangements for a mule are very inconvenient and require thoughtful planning, considerable energy and many strong backs.

In view of the foregoing and since my grandfather lived near a tidal river and was not present when the final arrangements were made, it was decided to give Briggsey a burial at sea. At high tide he was pushed into the river. (He *had* been considerate enough to die reasonably close to the river's edge). When the tide started going out, Briggsey began a slow, dignified trip down the river, headed seaward. From all accounts, Briggsey's progress was watched by the small congregation delegated to funeralize him, and as he majestically sailed down the river, everybody was greatly relieved, lost interest in the whole thing, and turned their attention to other matters.

Tide went out, and tide came back in. On the horizon appeared an object. It was Briggsey, apparently reluctant to take to the open seas. He floated around leisurely until the tide changed. Again he sailed seaward, floating slowly out of sight around the bend in the river.

The story goes that for days Briggsey sailed up and down the river, homeward bound on each incoming tide. They appointed a watchman to check the river each time tide started coming in, and the call would go out, "Here comes Briggsey!" Finally, he left on an outgoing tide and did not return home.

Since his arrival and departure had become a part of each day's routine, everybody sort of missed him at first but after a day or two it was business as usual. Animals on the farm came and went but Briggsey's reluctance to leave home carved him a niche in family history. Everybody remembered Briggsey.

Siblings

Everybody ought to have brothers and sisters, or at least one of each, if for no other reason than to have somebody to blame things on. Cousins are acceptable substitutes if they live nearby. In most families at least one of the children will be thrifty, honest, truthful, etc. and parents will constantly nag one child by asking why he can't be more like his sister or brother who always does what he/she is told, and on and on.

The only good thing about living with a paragon of virtue who happens to be your brother or sister is that he/she might be a little compassionate and lend you money when you are broke, even if he does tell on you when you commit a crime of one sort or another. If you practiced thrift, truthfulness, honesty and all the good things your parents keep begging you to, you wouldn't need the thrifty, honest sibling.

Also, siblings are good to practice on so you can learn how to live in the real world where they don't have to put up with you simply because you happen to be a family member. As a result of having a brother or sister tell your parents about all your minor crimes, by the age of 10 you should have learned to withhold all information from anybody who might later use it for blackmail. In the course of growing up it is sometimes necessary to commit a small crime of one sort or another which one of your siblings knows about, or will find out about. Keeping this in mind, wisdom dictates that you arrange matters so that they will also be involved and, therefore, cannot turn you into higher authorities (mothers, fathers, teachers, aunts, uncles and so forth).

As you live in the same house with them they also provide convenient allies for any cause, rights or privileges you are working for.

This is because they will probably want the same rights, privileges etc., sooner or later themselves. For this reason, it is most convenient not to be the first born child in any family as they have to break parents in, so to speak, making things much easier for the children born afterwards. You don't have much choice in this matter so just be grateful when you find you are the second, third or fourth child, even if you have to listen to the stuff about how wonderful the oldest is.

A funny thing about brothers and sisters is when you no longer live in the same house with them, you find that you like them a whole lot more than you thought you did.

Privy

During the early 1930's, many people did not have running water in their homes. Water for cooking, cleaning and bathing was pumped out of a hand pump and transported to wherever it was needed. At my Grandpa Prentiss's house, for instance, there was a pitcher of water and a basin on a wash stand in each bedroom. You could wash your face and hands here. If you needed to do a little heavy duty washing, you could go out to the pump, prime it, and then get somebody to pump water so you could stick your arms and legs under the water and rinse off real good. After you finished the wash up job you had to remember to fill up a jar that stayed by the pump so the next person wanting to use the pump could prime it. If you needed a real bath you had to resort to the old galvanized tub, and the prevailing thought during my childhood was you didn't need anything as drastic as a tub bath more than once or twice a week.

Taking a bath in a galvanized tub was serious business. You had to pump the water, heat the water on the wood stove if it was winter time, go fetch the tub, reserve whatever space was handy for a little privacy and jump into the tub. One good thing about a galvanized tub was that it was portable. After going to all that trouble, there was no foolishness about getting fresh water for each bath. Several children could be run through the same water. I don't know who decided when a tub of water had outlived its usefulness as bathing material but I do recall dirty water was used to water shrubs, etc. Although we had not heard of recycling or conservation at that time, I am proud to say we were unknowingly making the best possible use of our natural resources. Today we just pull the plug and let perfectly good dirty bath water gurgle down a drain to go to Lord only knows where.

If you really had to GO TO THE BATHROOM there was a rickety outhouse a little ways from the house and that's where you went. Although many lucky people had a two seater, Grandpa's outhouse was a one seater and had a rakish tilt, as it had seen better days. Later on, the CCC came by and built a nice sturdy one that was really splendid compared to the old one.

If you had to GO TO THE BATHROOM at night, each bedroom was equipped with an article known as a slop jar. It wasn't indoor plumbing but it served the purpose. These days and times you might wander into a bathroom at night in a stupor, knocking things around, but in the days and times of the slop jar you paid a little more attention as you only had to kick one slop jar over to cure you of the habit for life!

After the Rural Electrification Cooperative ran electric lines down to Grandpa's house on the Toogoodoo River, people there enjoyed lights, running water and bathrooms too. Slowly but surely

almost everybody got bathrooms with the plumbing fixtures held firmly in place by pipes. You could wander into the bathroom at night and accidentally kick the commode and the worst thing that could happen was you might break your foot.

After electricity became a part of our daily lives, lighting up houses and pumping water, neatly encased in pipes, to kitchens and bathrooms the plain, utilitarian little privy that had served mankind so well for so many years was abandoned or torn down, the victim of progress and prosperity. No one mourned its passing or seemed to care that the privy rapidly was becoming extinct.

Many years passed and then I began to notice little buildings sprouting up here and there—usually at sporting events or where people congregated in great numbers for one reason or another. Not only that, the little buildings seemed to be mobile as they would be congregated at one site today and gone tomorrow. They turned up in groups at racing events, each with a queue of people winding toward its door. When I found out what these buildings were I was not surprised one bit. After losing ground for all those years, the old time privy had been dusted off, put on a truck and hauled to places where it was not only needed, but sought after. It even got dignified—or sometimes cute—names, like “Port-o-let” and the like, but an outhouse by any other name is still an outhouse,

For privacy and certainly modesty, this new breed of privy only comes in one seater models. This is only natural as the new breed is, for the most part, used by people who are perfect strangers to each other. In the old days a small child could be escorted to the family outbuilding down the well traveled path by a parent or older brother or sister to keep a spider or snake from pouncing on them. Small groups of children in those days, stopping by to answer nature’s call, made a social affair of the occasion as they stood in line to wait their turn. Although outbuildings of my childhood were not spacious enough to encourage large congregations, there were two seater models which could be occupied by two people at the same time. Not so with the newer models which encourage no loitering and promote an in-out-next attitude which is so prevalent in today’s lifestyle.

If my grandfather were still alive I am sure he would be pleased by the come back of the outhouse. I’m sure he would recognize a “Port-o-let” for what it is, too, although I don’t believe he would approve of them running around on trucks. He would not be surprised to learn that people have again come to regard the lowly privy with respect, even affection. I am certain he would be astounded to learn that people are making lots of money by transporting the sturdy little building to areas where they are lined up in neat little rows, or placed discreetly here and there, continuing to serve the needs of mankind.

Old Fashioned Heat & Air Conditioning

The beautiful days of fall find many people outside tidying up their yards, attending sports events, thinking about getting new stuff for winter wardrobes and anticipating the holidays which are just around the corner. Gone is the heat and humidity of the summer which trapped them in the air conditioned comfort of their homes. The approaching winter days, dreary and cold, do not concern these people, as they will go indoors, turn up the thermostat and enjoy homes as balmy as spring. Winter nights will be spent snug and cozy under electric blankets. It was not always so.

As I was born in 1926, I feel qualified to speak about some of the deprivations suffered by people born at that time. For one thing there was no air conditioning in our homes and as we grew up and went to work, there was no air conditioning in our offices or other places we might work. We had to leave the windows up and depend upon capricious breezes to cool us. This wasn't so bad as we expected it to be hot in the summer. As a matter of fact the intensity of the heat was one subject everybody could agree on. The only thing you could possibly argue about in regard to the heat was whether this summer was hotter than last, and whether, heaven forbid, next week would be even hotter than this week.

Having the windows up was nice, though. You could see and hear what was going on outside better with the windows open and even engage in pleasant conversation with someone passing outside on the street. Many times I got into some good arguments with a brother, sister or cousin through an open window.

Every now and then an occasion would arise that made it desirable to escape through a window. You simply unlatched the screen and jumped out. Of course, if you lived in a two story house you would have to keep your wits about you as it would have been impractical as well as uncomfortable to sail out of a second-story window and crash into the shrubbery or the neighbor's rock garden. My family didn't live in a two-story house so we didn't have to deal with the problem. Leaving our house through a window was not an uncommon occurrence and after we had been living in the neighborhood for several years, the neighbors got used to us exiting through windows. The young members of my family settled their differences with gusto and sometimes leaving by a window was a good way to end an argument without getting wounded in the process. These days our houses are made as energy efficient as possible and although this keeps us cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter, we are handicapped by having windows that nobody can get into and out of easily except burglars and other assorted criminals.

On summer nights our family would sit on the front porch to get some relief from the heat. We watched the lightning blink in the sky and chatted with our neighbors, who were also sitting on their porches, and watched people go by. It was nice. Finally the mosquitoes would get so bad we would have to go back into the house to escape them. Usually a couple of the friendly mosquitoes would go inside with us and when we all settled down to sleep they would start singing and nipping one person and then another. Some of us were sound sleepers and apparently didn't taste good to mosquitoes so this didn't bother us one bit. The members of the family which tasted good to the little insects would eventually get up, scratch themselves and then do battle with them, swatting them with newspapers, fly swatters or whatever instruments were handy and could get the job done.

During the winter we expected to be cold. My family had a coal heater and it was my brother's job every morning to fire it up. The fire burning in the heater had a nice effect on your mind but rarely warmed your body too much. Our house and, for that matter, most houses I was acquainted with in my childhood had single floors in them. During the summer we used to find a good crack in the floor and peep through it and look at the ground under the house. We were always on the alert for snake traffic but we never saw a single snake while looking through the cracks in the floor. Regretfully, in the winter these cracks that provided peepholes to spy on snakes during the summer let in air so cold you could swear you were living in an igloo.

The worst part of a cold winter day was getting out of bed. After your feet hit the floor you either moved or froze. In the mornings it was just about as cold inside the house as it was outside so you had to generate your own heat by moving around at a brisk rate of speed. A cold winter morning was not time to linger over breakfast. To keep your blood from turning into sludge you hit the floor, grabbed your clothes, hugged the heater while you dressed, gulped down breakfast, then ran to school.

Going to bed in a cold bedroom was no picnic either. On extremely cold nights it was advisable to position your body comfortably since the weight of the numerous quilts and blankets we used to keep warm made it very difficult to change positions. We didn't know about electric blankets as they hadn't yet been invented. The day of the warm, lightweight blanket was still far away.

It's too bad we didn't know how much discomfort we were suffering. We could have whined and nagged if we had only known but that's how life is. You don't know you have a good thing going until it's too late. Most of us have had ample opportunity to let our younger friends and relatives, who have always relied on some power company to heat and cool them, know what a tough time we had and how much discomfort we suffered. They can't say we are wrong because they weren't there and, the truth of the matter is, we didn't know about it ourselves until many years later.

As self-appointed spokesmen for many who unknowingly suffered the daily hardships of too much heat/cold when we were children, we readily admit addiction to air conditioners, heat pumps, efficient furnaces and, yes, even the old wood heater which had been improved to the point it can really heat a house. We just love thermostats which, at the mere touch of a finger, spring into action to heat/cool house as the season dictates. To heck with the good ole days! Modern technology has made our homes too cool for bugs to get cozy with us in the summer, and warm enough in the winter for the family dog to try to sneak in to snooze on a carpet.

As for those nice chats with neighbors on summer nights, pick up your telephone and call them any time of the year. I know they will be glad to talk with you while they, too, are being warmed or cooled with energy furnished by some nice power company!

Supply and Demand

My mother kept chicken in our back yard when we were children. They supplied us with our eggs, and if there were any left over, my sister and I were allowed to sell them to the neighbors. We split the money from the egg sales. However, chickens are not all that reliable, as we found out when we had to depend on them for our financial security. We quickly found out that when the price of eggs was high, hens, for some reason or another, produced very few eggs. We also found out in short order that when our hens were out in the yard singing happily, clucking, eating and sitting on their nests and generally enjoying themselves, they produced many eggs. This increase in production did not improve our financial condition as the over abundance of eggs caused the prices of eggs to drop considerably. It didn't take us long to figure out that our chicken enterprise would never put us in a financially secure category. As we grew up, however, nobody had to spend hours getting us to understand the law of supply and demand. A few contrary chickens and either a shortage or surplus of eggs each week taught us the basic principles of trade in the marketplace at an early age. As chickens are also incredibly stupid, we found that we could not negotiate in anyway with them to increase their production of eggs at a time when high production would elevate our financial status considerably. Apparently our chickens had never heard of trade in the marketplace and they insisted on living their own lifestyle.

During the spring and summer months, our hens were seized with an uncomfortable yearning for motherhood and would hop up on a nest and settle down to hatch whatever eggs were available. This was not desirable. In the first place it stopped egg production. In the second place, if allowed, it would keep all the hens sitting around doing nothing for three or four weeks at a time. To prevent a complete shut down of business in the chicken yard, we would select a few hens to "set," put all the eggs under the chosen few, and lock up the others until they forgot about the urge to loaf around on a nest hatching chicks.

Every year our hens would hatch out several broods of chicks. Some of these would soon become the delicious fried chicken Momma fixed for us, and some of them would be kept to replace the old hens as egg producers. The older hens would eventually become the baked chicken we all loved so. Surplus roosters made tasty chicken salad. As a young child I was glad I wasn't a chicken because I could see there was absolutely no future in it.

Real Horses

During the 1930's, the Health Department didn't take too much interest in how we lived or what we kept in our yards, which was a good thing as most families had some sort of livestock or poultry living in their back yards. One of our neighbors kept horses in his back yard. We liked to go down and pet them and look at them, and every now and then he would let us take a little jog down the street on one of these magnificent animals.

Looking back I realize why these horses did not gallop up to the fence to greet us with as much enthusiasm as we would have liked. It never occurred to us that a horse would rather munch hay in a nice cool stable than fraternize with a bunch of noisy kids on a hot street.

Also, looking back, these horses were not particularly magnificent; they were just ordinary, run of the mill, rather overweight horses with an average I.Q. approaching the zero mark. However, we fancied them to be high-spirited, energetic and intelligent animals like the ones we saw at the movies every Saturday. The horses we saw at the movies could run like the wind, wore fancy saddles, never stopped to eat anything, although they would stop by a water hole every now and then for a little swig. Not only that, the movie horses could size up a desperate situation, get a rope or whatever was necessary and rescue a person from what appeared to be certain death.

Our neighbor's horses lacked these desirable characteristics entirely. If one of them stepped on your foot, you could scream and thrash around in the dirt like a wounded snake and the horse would not even bother to look at you, let alone get off your foot so you could go home for emergency medical attention. Emergency attention at my house started out with my mother saying, "I told you to stay away from that horse!" After these words there was a liberal application of iodine to the wounded parts, which was usually more painful than the horse stepping on you, then there were instructions to go back outside and stay out of trouble this time.

This treatment may seem a little primitive by today's standards, but it must have been pretty effective. I know numerous people who not only survived this type of medical treatment, but thrived on it, are hale and hearty almost fifty years later...and seem to be immune to just about everything.

Alas, these days towns have laws, ordinances and any number of other things which forbid horses from residing in back yards. I think this is rank discrimination as these same back yards are full of dogs and cats which can, and frequently do, howl, yowl, scream, screech and bark all night long. During my childhood, I never heard those horses down the street make so much as a whinny after dark.

They went into their stables and munched on hay or oats or whatever they ate and behaved themselves in a quiet and orderly manner.

The Bing

One spring a hen of ours hatched out a brood of chicks and, as usual, all the chicks did just fine, running around making their cute little peeping noises. As the chicks started to feather out, there was one little fellow in the bunch that didn't look exactly like the rest. Time went on and it became evident that he wasn't at all like the others. He never grew a feather on his body. I used to think how lucky it was for him he was hatched in the spring, because if he had been a winter chicken, he certainly would have needed a sweater.

Our mother told us she had seen these naked chickens in her childhood. She and her brothers and sisters even named this kind of chicken: they called them "bings." Family tradition was big in our family, so, of course, we named our nude chicken Bing. Sometimes we referred to him as The Bing.

As spring slowly turned into summer, The Bing got a nice even tan all over his scrawny little body. He was a sort of a free sprit and every now and then he would squeeze through a hole in our fence and walk through Dr. Carroll Brown's back yard until he got to the sidewalk in front of Dr. Brown's house. Then he would cut the block, walking home at a leisurely pace, picking at this or that interesting thing he happened to see, something nabbing a bug that wasn't expecting a chicken to stroll by.

We enjoyed The Bing all summer. He was the most outstanding and personable chicken we ever owned. When he was taking one of his occasional strolls around the block, we could positively identify him as our chicken because as far as I knew, we owned the only nude chicken in town.

As well as I can recall, as summer slowly turned into fall, whatever was causing The Bing's spectacular deficiency in the feather department began correcting itself, and this turned The Bing back into a regular chicken. What with going to school and football games and one thing and another, we lost track of him as he feathered out and looked like all the other chickens in the yard.

We were glad that he feathered out because he would have had a tough winter if he hadn't, but we really would like to have spared The Bing the fate we knew was in store for him, if could only have recognized him. I don't know whether he was converted into fried or baked chicken eventually. I never think of him like that. I like to think of that little chicken with the nice suntan taking a relaxing walk around the block. Even though many years have passed, I remember The Bing with fondness.

The Bat

When I was very young my family attended the Episcopalian church. I was about to catch on to all the standing, sitting and kneeling that was required of a good Episcopalian during a church service when we moved to the Town of Walterboro. After we moved to Walterboro, I became a Presbyterian. I was very pleased to become a Presbyterian for many reasons, one of them being that it did not require the vigor and vigilance that being an Episcopalian did. A person could sort of relax in a Presbyterian church as Presbyterians hardly ever stood up except to sing a hymn and almost never kneeled down. One of my uncles lived in front of the church and he attended with us each Sunday and kept an eye on us—saw to it that we behaved. Fortunately, as long as we (my brother, sister and cousins) were not openly rioting or putting a torch to the pew, he considered us to be behaving ourselves rather well.

In those days of the late 1930's, there was no air conditioning and during summer months a considerable variety of wasps, flies, bees and an occasional bird would fly into the church through the open windows, and after a while, find their way back outside. Every now and then one of them would linger with the congregation for the entire sermon. Some of them lingered too long and the next Sunday we would find a crisp, little dehydrated body on a window sill or the floor.

The most entertaining and spectacular visitor we ever had fly through the church windows came in during a night service. That we were there to witness it was sheer luck. Morning attendance at church was compulsory but we did not have to attend night services although we were encouraged to. On this one occasion providence rewarded us handsomely. We were sitting there, behaving ourselves, when a bat flew in. He swooped and darted, flew here and there, dipping toward members of the congregation in a breathtaking manner.

We were sitting in the back pew and had a perfect view of his dazzling aerial performance. The preacher took the whole thing rather well. He knew he was being upstaged by the bat but he ignored him and proceeded with his sermon. There was absolutely no reason to believe he could have ordered the bat to leave. The bat's antics were considerably more interesting than the sermon.

He—the bat—performed brilliantly for quite a while but, unfortunately, near the end of the sermon he made a lucky dart out of a window, thus terminating his church attendance. We didn't begrudge his freedom, though, as he had provided us with rare and unexpected entertainment for a while, and church was just about over anyhow.

Doc

When my mother, brother, sister and I moved to Walterboro in 1936, we lived on Warren Street. It was a nice neighborhood. Across the street from our house lived Dr. and Mrs. McKee. Doc, as my brother, sister and I called him, was a veterinarian and this really impressed us. He was a good-natured man and would talk to us like we were grown people, not just children, and we liked that. Doc was a big man, probably a three-hundred-pounder. He seems to us to be very rich as he had a new car, a record player and a nice collection of records.

Our neighborhood was very small so we knew when everybody came home from work. Late in the afternoon we would watch Doc drive up, get out of his car and disappear into his house. Later on he would emerge with a toothpick in his mouth, accompanied by the melody of his latest record floating across the street. He would gently lower his huge body into the swing on his front porch. His expression was one of peace, pure bliss, as he gently rocked back and forth in his swing. Unfortunately, after a few minutes the swing chains would begin squeaking. As time went by the squeaks turned into shrieks and to my brother, sister and me it sounded like the chains were screaming for help. After a while Doc, obviously annoyed, would stand up and briskly shake each chain. When he resumed swinging the result was the same—the chains would whimper a while and then begin screaming again.

Meantime, in our house, the three of us had started giggling because Doc was fighting with his swing and what had begun as a relaxing, serene swing on the front porch had escalated into a full-fledged war. By this time we were enjoying the episode so much we moved to the front door and the front windows of our house so we wouldn't miss a thing. This probably would have been all right but every time Doc stood up and shook a chain, we howled with laughter. Momma would finally make us go out on the back porch, hoping, I guess, that Doc wouldn't hear us. The problem was we could hear him doing battle with the unfortunate swing and at this point imagination was funnier than watching the real thing.

We enjoyed countless battles between Doc and the swing. We watched him oil the chain, change it, soap it, rattle it, swing gently, swing with a little more vim, all with the same result. The only time a truce was declared was during the winter months when Doc would go indoors to his easy chair, then we had to look elsewhere for our late afternoon entertainment.

The best episode with the swing happened one afternoon when we had the incredible luck to be standing on our front porch. Oh, the joy of the whole thing! We heard the chair snap; we saw the one-

sided crash as the swing and Doc hit the porch; we saw the look of surprise, shock and then outrage on his face. There was no need for us to pretend this was a run-of-the-mill incident—it was the funniest thing we ever saw! After a while Momma got embarrassed and made us go into the house and stay there because we were laughing and carrying on and making so much noise. I know she thought it was funny too, but she was grown up and had to pretend it was just a little incident and no big deal.

Doc's Cats

About the time I became the owner of Sugar, my adorable cocker spaniel, my veterinarian neighbor, Dr. McKee, became the owner of several cats. His was a gradual type ownership, because he did not go out and buy these cats; he did not even ask anybody to give him a cat. He did not receive these cats as gifts from well meaning souls who were owners of so many felines they felt a need to inflict ownership upon friends and acquaintances. They just hung around and one day he fed them and they adopted him. They knew a good thing when they saw it. He became very fond of these cats and the numerous kittens they produced.

His wife, however, did not share his fondness for his “kitty babes” and was constantly swatting them off the front porch with her broom. This did not discourage the cats; they forgave her. It did serve to make them very alert when they saw someone approaching with a broom, garden rake or instrument of that type. They were a hardy bunch, were unbelievably fertile and very frugal with the nine lives allotted each of them.

One night, after we had gone to bed, a bunch of Doc's cats congregated under our house. This friendly, sociable meeting deteriorated after a while and the meeting turned into a full scaled brawl. One of them must have been very eager to disengage himself from the battle as he ran the entire length of our house screaming and battering his head on every sill under there. Needless to say, this woke us up, and always being easy to entertain, we laughed and made comments about the speed of the cat trying to escape. We could judge his speed by the rate his head was hitting the sills. Shortly after his speedy escape the cats disbursed themselves to other interesting areas in the neighborhood and we went back to sleep.

The next morning we casually looked the crop of cats over but didn't see one in the bunch with a banged up head. We didn't find a dead or unconscious cat in the yard either, so we assumed that the worst that came of the sill-bumping incident was probably a severe headache for some unfortunate feline.

Doc's cats could be described as inscrutable, stoic and fatalistic. They took head bumps, broom swats and occasional brawls with other cats in their stride. They endured what had to be endured and then went and took another nap. They did have limits beyond which they would not be pushed, however, and my spaniel was the one who made this unfortunate discovery. He was out in the yard one afternoon when he saw two or three of Doc's cats having a meeting on the sidewalk across the street. His canine instincts apparently told him he had to go rip up those cats. He ran toward them at top

speed, barking and carrying on like a fool which, as it turned out, was exactly what he was. Those cats, warned by all of the noise my dog was making, sized up the situation and immediately withdrew into the dense shrubbery in their yard. My dog, flattered and encouraged by their flight, ran into the shrubbery after them.

I couldn't see what happened, although the whole thing happened right there in the bushes not ten feet from where I was standing. There was a lot of thrashing around and screaming and noise in the shrubbery, most of the screaming being done by my dog, if my ears were operating correctly. By the time the unfortunate pooch discovered what a terrible mistake he had made it was too late to retreat. When he finally escaped, the cats had ripped his ears, bloodied his nose and effectively wilted his spirit.

The episode ended his cat-chasing career. He had his pride but he wasn't proud enough to test those cats again. After that episode he ignored cats and the cats ignored him. Those cats treated all dogs with contempt and my dog, for one, was happy with looks of contempt after the thrashing they gave him.

The Studebaker Incident

When my brother, sister and I were very young, our parents were divorced. This disturbed our lives a little but before long we settled down and things went along as usual. Several years after the divorce Daddy remarried and he wanted us to spend a week or two with him during the summer. This was an unexpected turn of events—we had not anticipated this. There was always something going on in our mother's large and close-knit family, and if we left town for two weeks we might miss out on some real good stuff. We enjoyed Daddy's visits to us; we enjoyed going with him to visit his parents. We even visited his parents during the summer occasionally, but he lived more than 100 miles from our home. This was an enormous distance and we were concerned about what would happen to our dog, ducks and chickens while we were away.

Every summer we went and every summer we cried because we did not want to leave home. After a few minutes of crying my brother and I would get tired of the whole thing and stop. Our younger sister though, was serious about her crying and when my brother and I would stop bawling, she would pick up the chorus and start everything over again. I rather suspect all this got on my father's nerves a little.

We kept this up until Daddy would tell us that the long bridge at Santee was only a few miles down the road. We didn't get to see many long bridges so when Daddy notified us that we were approaching the bridge, we would quit crying and try to get the best place by the window for a good view of the bridge. From that point on we enjoyed the trip and the visit with Daddy.

On one of these summer visits my brother requested permission to use Daddy's Studebaker automobile to drive around one Sunday afternoon. He had just recently gotten his driver's license and he felt very grown up. After laying down the law with a list of do's and don'ts and entirely against his better judgment, Daddy let him have the car for an hour or so.

After a couple of hours had passed and no teenaged son or car had returned, Daddy was noticeably nervous. Finally my brother came home pale and scared. He told Daddy that the car had shut off and wouldn't start—he didn't know what was wrong with it.

My father, grandfather and I went with my brother to look at Daddy's car. I wouldn't have missed this for the world! When we got to the place where the stubborn car had given up the ghost, there was evidence of much sliding and skidding around in the dirt road. Not done by him, my brother said—certainly not: he had obeyed every law laid down by Daddy. My father gave him a dirty look and raised the hood of the car to look at its innards.

After a while I got tired of standing around so I opened the front door and slid in under the steering wheel. Daddy had his head under the hood checking wires and all that stuff when, as I told him later, I decided to see if the horn still worked. I gave it a couple of toots and Daddy's head shot straight up from the engine and crashed into the hood of that sturdy Studebaker. When I heard the crash I realized instantly I had lost my spectator status. My brother had wounded the car, but what was that compared to the possible fracture of my father's skull!

Daddy didn't carry on too badly—just said a few choice words and held his head for a while. We all learned a lot that afternoon, though. My brother learned to erase possible incriminating evidence from the scene of an alleged crime. I learned not to blow car horns when a parent's head was under the hood, and my father learned to check the premises and see if it was clear of offspring before attempting repairs of any kind in a close space.

Skin Conditions

During my childhood my sister, brother and one of my cousins used to visit a friend who did not have any children of her own. This fact did not interest us one way or the other except we noticed her house stayed cleaner than the average and she was a little less tolerant of grubby hands and grimy faces than most adults in our family. She must have enjoyed our company, though, because as soon as school was out for the summer she came and got us and we would stay with her for several weeks.

One summer my sister Anne, and my cousin Betty Ann and I were victims of the itch. Nowadays they call it by several other fancy names but in those days they called it just what it was—the itch. We really didn't give it too much thought as most of our schoolmates had the affliction to one degree or another and not one of us was going to let it interfere with a perfectly good summer. We had a remedy we used to treat our ailment and although it left a lot to be desired, it was the best we had.

Most likely if Isla had had children of her own she would have noticed right off that we were busy almost all of the time scratching this place or that, but her childless background had made her blind to that sort of thing. We had been at her house for two or three days before she noticed the activity and condition of some parts of our anatomy. She inquired what the problem was and we, in all innocence, told her.

At first she refused to believe us. She considered itch and head lice to be afflictions of poverty stricken, lowlife, dirty people. It is true that we were only a cut above poverty-stricken but we were certainly not low lifes and we had the cleanest itch in the entire community. We knew it would not help our case to point out that we did not have head lice. We felt fortunate in that regard as they were making the rounds in school at the time summer vacation recued us from the possibility of acquiring that affliction also.

She immediately took us to her family physician, a kindly man named Dr. Rogers, hoping for a more refined or acceptable diagnosis. She was appalled when he cheerfully told her what we knew all along—we had the itch. He gave us a greasy, pink salve to rub on our afflicted parts and we went back to her house and greased up.

Before we got the medicine on the only way you could tell we had any kind of ailment was by noticing that we were unusually occupied at times with scratching. After we applied Dr. Roger's itch eradicator, everyone could tell. The medicine was not only pink; it was greasy, and if you happened to be walking in the sun it would glisten in a most eye catching manner. It also had a distinctive odor.

People realized right away that there was something strange about the way we looked and smelled. Isla went out of her way to tell her friends that we had a skin irritation which Dr. Rogers was treating, and her friends said that was too bad. Most of her friends had children and undoubtedly knew just exactly what kind of skin irritation we had.

Although Dr. Rogers' medicine was a bit gaudy, it must have been good stuff as our skin irritation finally disappeared and we all enjoyed the rest of the summer in an itch-free and more socially acceptable condition.

Button

During the summer months, my brother, sister, a cousin and I visited a family friend who lived in the Indiantown Community of Williamsburg County. Our friend, Isla, had a tobacco farm and also owned and ran a little store. We enjoyed our visits to her home. She let us get stuff out of the store and we used to ride around with her and look at the crops. Isla's lifestyle was a little different from ours, and during these visits to her house, we were introduced to our first taste of gracious living. For one thing, all the meals at Isla's house were prepared and served by a cook named Button.

At our house we didn't have a cook. Our mother fixed out meals. We did not assemble in the dining room for meals. We ate in the kitchen, and our mother had to run us out of the kitchen at least a half dozen times before she finished cooking any meal. She knew there would be a moderately noisy stampede to the table when she announced the meal was ready. If any of our friends or relatives were around at meal time they were welcome to eat with us, and regular visitors quickly learned that it paid to be at the head of the stampede: usually the first in line got the best shot at the good stuff being served. Sometimes we would be well into the meal when somebody would remember we hadn't said the blessing. On these occasions my brother said a blessing which was retroactive, thus including the unblessed but already-eaten portion of the meal as well as the portion we hadn't devoured.

A congenial atmosphere usually prevailed and meal time was an enjoyable, if somewhat noisy, experience. Occasionally a squabble broke out, sometimes escalating into a really good fight. This was frowned upon by mother and usually meant banishment to the back porch until the meal was over. She was working on our manners but usually had to stick to basics such as: no animated conversation with food in your mouth; no hands in other people's plates; and no sweeping gestures low enough to knock the glasses on the floor.

The sort of thing was unheard of at Isla's. We assembled in the dining room for meals. Isla check out the table and when she pronounced everything all right, Button was dismissed and we sat down and proceeded to eat.

After her dismissal, Button was supposed to return to the kitchen and hand around there during the meal so she could be summoned to the dining room if her services were needed. Usually, however, she would go outside and sit in the doorway of her house and smoke her pipe. In the dining room everything would be just fine until somebody needed one thing or another that wasn't on the table. One of us would jump up and head toward the kitchen to fetch what we needed, and just before he

made it to the kitchen door, Isla would direct him back to his chair and pick up a little bell she kept by her plate and ring it. This supposedly was a summons for Button to return to the dining room and see what the problem was and remedy it. Sometimes Button would show up, and sometimes she wouldn't. If she had been detained by something in the kitchen she would hear the bell and eventually come back into the dining room, muttering under her breath. If she was already outside smoking her pipe, she never hear the bell and never showed up.

Isla tried numerous ways to impress upon Button the desirable characteristics a servant should possess, among these, of course, the immediate answering of the bell. Button, who never considered herself a servant, dealt with these instructions in a direct and efficient way. She ignored them.

As we grew older and could not visit Isla as often, we missed Button and kept in touch with her through Isla. Finally, after many years at Isla's she moved to another community. Soon thereafter she died.

I don't know how heaven looks, but I am sure a little, black lady named Button is there, sitting in the doorway of a little house on a golden street, smoking her pipe.

Frankie

I lived with my father during the year 1944 while I attended secretarial school. My grandfather and grandmother lived with him also, and my grandfather was the owner of a dingy, gray-colored bulldog name Frankie. Frankie had nothing but contempt for the entire family group, but since he was my grandfather's pride and joy, we all leaned to tolerate his presence.

Frankie was a mean and contrary creature. My grandfather had a blind spot when it came to viewing Frankie's shortcomings but did consent to build him a nice doghouse and chain him to it after he had demonstrated his intention to sack and pillage the neighborhood. Being tethered to his house by a heavy chain didn't improve Frankie's disposition but he finally resigned himself to the fact that he could not chase cats, fight with dogs and lunch on neighbors.

After Frankie's activities were so abruptly curtailed, he entertained himself by digging a moat around his house. By the time he lost interest in his excavation job, he had a moat one and a half to two feet deep completely surrounding his house which was perched on high ground in the middle. When it rained the moat would fill up with water and Frankie would retreat into his house where it was nice and dry. During an extended rainy period he discovered he could keep an eye on things a whole lot easier if he jumped on top of his house. The move from ground floor to rooftop residence apparently suited him fine because he spent most of his time thereafter lounging around on the roof and glaring at the neighborhood.

Grandpa fed Frankie because nobody else would, except Grandma, and she wasn't too keen about it. He started out feeding him in a regular dog pan, but Frankie would eat his food and then eat the pan, too. This problem was solved, to a small degree, when Grandpa started feeding him in a good, stout garbage can lid. Frankie could gnaw on the lid for several weeks before he finally did it in, and by that time Grandpa had hunted up another lid for him to start mauling. It helped a little to keep Frankie busy doing something and the garbage can lid worked about as well as anything.

Ah, Frankie was some dog! (My grandfather's opinion.) Never have I seen a dog look more regal, more majestic, sitting on top of his doghouse, surrounded by his moat (in which he could take a dust bath or a water bath, depending upon the weather) with two or three bent-up garbage can lids decorating his small but utilitarian landscape. He was not beautiful; he was sloppy; his disposition left everything to be desired, but, by gosh, he was top dog in his mall kingdom!

The Race

During World War II, almost all young ministers were serving in the armed forces as chaplains. As a result of this, many elderly clergymen came out of retirement to serve their churches for the duration of the war. My father's minister was one of these. He was a frail, gentle old man. He was a good minister and believed in visiting the members of his congregation.

I was in the back yard one early summer afternoon in 1944, when I saw the minister drive up. My grandfather's bulldog, Frankie, was exhibiting intense interest because he was barking non-stop and lunging forward as far as his chain would allow. The minister paid no attention to the noise Frankie was making, and this revealed a great deal about this kindly man's attitude toward all of God's creatures. He was a peaceful, serene man and he regarded the enraged Frankie as little more than a naughty dog who was, perhaps, overreacting in defense of his home territory.

He was out of his car and halfway to the front door when Frankie, on a lucky lunge, broke his chain. When Grandma, who was waiting at the front door to welcome the preacher became aware of the fact that Frankie was free and also intent upon welcoming the preacher in his own fashion, she almost went into a swoon. We had an interesting and noisy situation shaping up. Frankie, barking at the top of his lungs, was in hot pursuit of the preacher. I, yelling at the top of my lungs, was in hot pursuit of Frankie. Grandma, standing in the doorway, was making moaning sounds.

Overjoyed by this unexpected opportunity, Frankie seems to be well on the way to ripping off the preacher's pants. The old gentleman, realizing that the dog meant business, evaluated his position and decided to take his chances on getting back to his car. For thirty seconds he was as agile and fleet of foot as any Olympic contender hoped to be.

If I had been betting on the outcome of the race I would have put my money on Frankie. However, the preacher had more at stake, and desperation gave him the edge he needed to win. He beat Frankie by a nose.

When we got Frankie chained up and the minister seated in the living room for his visit, I excused myself and went to the back yard to see how Frankie was taking the curtailment of what he had obviously regarded as a wonderful recreational opportunity. He sulked a little while, jumped on top of his house, took a nap and forgot about the whole thing.

I feel a little guilty because I enjoyed the whole episode so much. I even felt a little mellow toward Frankie for a while for providing such exciting, enjoyable and unexpected entertainment, even though it was of short duration.

The Winery

My Grandpa Jaillette and I found a very nice plum thicket one spring. After discussing the pros and cons of the sudden ownership of such a rich and productive plum patch, we decided we should make a little wine as it would be a shame to let all those beautiful plums go to waste. I have often wondered in the years since that spring why we didn't decide to make jam or jelly, but we cast our lot with the wine.

We collected all the ingredients and utensils we would need for our wine operation. Grandpa supplied the expertise and I did the legwork. After a short while, all we needed was a place to put our treasures so the fermentation process could proceed and produce what would undoubtedly be fantastic wine. Since the dining room was used only every now and then, I obtained permission to use that room for the operation.

Every day we checked on the wine operation. After a while we noticed a little activity and change in the plum juice and I was fascinated. To the best of my recollection, the containers soon began to resemble little cauldrons as the liquid in them began bubbling and boiling a little bit. I was fairly ignorant of the fermentation process but everything seemed to be going along nicely.

I got home early one afternoon and immediately went in to check on the wine operation. I found, to my horror, that the fermentation process was indeed getting along nicely and at this point had redecorated one entire dining room wall, as well as a portion of the carpet.

Grandpa and I never found out whether we would have had an outstanding wine. As soon as Grandma and my stepmother surveyed the damage they gave us the old heave-ho. Out went all our work and lost were all the valuable and interesting hours invested in the production of what would probably have been the best wine every produced in a dining room.

It was an interesting and educational experience though. I learned a lot from it. After I got a home of my own, I knew enough to discourage any in-house winemaking. I knew firsthand about the unreliable behavior of fermenting juices and to avoid it at all costs. After I grew up if I found any beautiful fruit of any kind, I made jam or jelly out of it.

Moony Mules and Lemons

My paternal grandfather was an agreeable man to my way of thinking. From the time I was a very small child he called me Ted, and I sort of enjoyed this distinction until I found out he called me by this name because I reminded him of Teddy Roosevelt when I walked. I know that many people think highly of Teddy Roosevelt and believe him to have been a great president of the United States. However he was a short, stocky person with a moustache and I didn't enjoy my name so much after I saw a picture of him. But that's another story.

Grandpa was a mule trader. It was in his blood, so to speak. Unfortunately, even skilled mule traders get old and he and Grandma moved into my father's home in the early 1940s, as they were both getting on up in years. Grandpa immediately found an old barn and stable two or three miles from Daddy's house and started doing a little horse and mule trading. This suited everybody just fine as it kept Grandpa busy and also out of the house.

It was from hanging around the stable in the afternoon and watching Grandpa ply his trade that I learned what an unreliable lot mules and horses are. From him I also learned what a moony mule is. A moony mule will behave with reasonable decorum until the moon gets full, at which time it will then turn into a sort of horsey werewolf. Plainly stated, during the full moon, moony mules go a crazy as loons, or at least that's what Grandpa told me and I have never had any reason to doubt him.

Whenever a mule trader found himself the owner of an animal that was overly sensitive to the luna cycles, he launched an instant campaign to unload the animal as soon as possible, preferably during a new moon cycle. In those days it proved your skill as a mule trader if you could move undesirable types out quickly and keep their numbers down to a minimum. It was the only way to survive in the mule-and-horse-trading business.

It was kind of sad when the stables closed, one by one, and all the horse and mule traders went out of business. It was the end of an era. Cars, trucks and tractors moved into the transportation and farming business. They were not only more efficient, but when you parked a car or truck or tractor after working all day it was likely to be right there when you returned in the morning, which is more than you could say for most mules.

Times change, but people don't. The direct descendants of mule traders are disbursed over all fifty states of the Union. You can find them in used car lots selling eager, tire-kicking people all sorts of cars. Some of the cars are the equivalent of the moony mules, only now we call them lemons.

Wedding

The stores in Walterboro used to close on Thursday afternoon. In fact, my husband and I got married on a Thursday afternoon so all our friends and relatives could come to our wedding. We didn't send invitations to the wedding. We had announcements printed to send to the friends and relatives who lived out of town, and invited everyone else to attend when we saw them on the street, at work or wherever. We asked them to the reception too. The wedding was held in Bethel Presbyterian Church and the reception was held across the street in the home of my Aunt Tots and Uncle Jack Moore.

And so on July 21, 1949, Billy Saunders and I were married in an un-airconditioned church, packed with friends and relatives. I wore to my wedding a smashing white suit I purchased from Novit's Dress Shoppe. I made a special trip to Charleston to purchase a pair of navy blue shoes and as a result of that trip was married in the ugliest navy blue shoes every manufactured. I wore a wide brimmed navy blue hat which I had hoped would cover up my hair. It didn't! I had given myself a home permanent several weeks before the wedding and it left me looking like I had stuck my finger in a light socket. I still have the pair of navy blue gloves which finished up my wedding outfit.

I guess I looked OK but I'll never know because my mother and my sister, Anne, who was my only attendant, wouldn't let me look in the only full length mirror we had in the house. They kept pushing me out of the way and arranging their hair, hats, clothes, etc., so I finally gave up and went to the church like I was. To this very day I have no way of knowing if my stocking seams were straight, or whether my slip was showing.

I found out after the wedding that my husband-to-be was having his own problems as his best man, Tom Warren, noticed that the coat to his suit wasn't styled quite like the one he was wearing, and so twenty minutes before the wedding he wanted to run downtown and buy another suit, but somebody talked him out of it.

After the wedding everybody went across the street to the reception for cake and punch. There were two punch bowls, one which we dubbed the "Baptist Bowl"—it was straight punch, and one which we for several obvious reasons called the "Presbyterian Bowl." Two of the reasons were that my future brother-in-law, Archie Barker, and my Uncle Jack had liberally laced the Presbyterian Bowl with generous amount of intoxicating spirits. Needless to say, there was much laughter and revelry among the guests congregating around the Presbyterian Bowl and it did a brisk business. As a matter of fact, my husband's grandfather (a teetotaler) was making his way back to the Presbyterian bowl when

my new mother-in-law (also a teetotaler) asked him where he was going. He gestured toward the liquored-up punch bowl and said, "To get some ore punch; that stuff is good!" She steered him toward the other bowl. I never did find out if he was disappointed with his second cup of punch.

Nobody could ever accuse me or my husband of marrying each other for money. After we were married we took stock of the worldly possessions we had endowed each other with and found that, with the exception of wedding presents, we didn't have any. He had a note at the bank and a second hand Ford in which Commercial Credit Corporation had a majority interest. I also had a note at the bank and a black cocker spaniel. When the notes came due we combined them. We sent the cocker spaniel out to live with his parents at Stokes, and a year or so after we married I wrecked the Ford.

Things turned out all right, though. We accumulated a few things, had three children and, although my beloved cocker spaniel didn't last but eight years after our marriage, we had lots of replacements over the years. It was an interesting and pretty wedding, and since almost thirty-seven years have passed, I guess it would be reasonably safe to say the marriage was successful.

Home Sweet Home

Shortly after we were married, Billy and I moved into a small apartment. It smelled a little musty but I was very enthusiastic about our new home as it was adequately furnished and the rent was reasonable. Unfortunately, we only lived there a week after we were married because we discovered big rats were sharing the apartment with us. Every night after we cut the lights off they came out and divided our groceries among themselves.

We quickly found a cozy, three room apartment with Miss Mattie Herndon on the Bells Highway. She had a few ground rules for tenants, the basics being “no drunks, no pets, no children.” We had only been married a week so fortunately we had no children, and my black cocker spaniel had been shipped to Stokes, a rural community near Walterboro where my husband was born and reared, to live with my new in-laws. That took care of those categories. We weren’t worried about the no drunks category as we certainly didn’t fit into that slot either. However, after a conversation with Miss Mattie, we found out her interpretation of “no drunks” included not only us, her tenants, but also any friends who might visit us in our new home. Billy and I defined “drunks” to mean persons who were so saturated with alcohol that they were in love with the whole world and everybody in it and stated this fact to everybody in the immediate vicinity by loud and congenial conversation or by, on occasion, bursting spontaneously into song; or persons who had turned “mean” as a result of having a nip or two too many and as a result wanted to destroy furniture, pick fistfights and whack friends over the head with chair legs; and, finally, those dear souls who had rendered themselves unconscious by over-indulgence and were quietly sleeping it off. Unfortunately, Miss Mattie’s interpretation of “drunk” meant anybody who had one drink of anything stronger than water, lemonade or Coke.

Since we wanted the apartment very much we assured Miss Mattie we met her requirements. We lived there almost a year before we moved to a larger place. Due to the fact that we and our friends were very discreet and also had an outside stairway to our apartment, we got along fine with her, and I know she was not aware of the fact we bent her rules a little as she never threw us out.

We moved from her apartment to a small house, which we lived in one month before I found an adorable house for sale, which we bought. As luck would have it, shortly after we bought the adorable house, a nice house located in Stokes became available. Since Billy was starting to feel like a nomad, I made some semi-secret negotiations with the aid of my father-in-law, and in February of 1951, we moved to Stokes and have been there ever since.

Our first move to the apartment we shared with the hungry rats was accomplished by throwing our possessions in a car. By the time we moved to Stokes, we needed a truck and had developed a little expertise and nonchalance about moving. While I certainly would not recommend moving as a form of recreation or as a basis for developing togetherness in marriage, I will go so far as to say if two people can weather the rigors of five moves in a little more than a year of marriage, they will probably live together the rest of their lives. The prospect of dividing up property and moving yet again should make them realize things could be much worse.

Driver's License

When it occurred to me that I had become eligible to be licensed to drive a car World War II was in progress and gasoline and tires were rationed and we didn't have a car anyway, so it seemed unnecessary to get a license. Time went by and the war ended and we still didn't have a car so I didn't bother to go to all that trouble. My Uncle Jack Moore let me drive his car and my lack of a driver's license didn't bother him any more than it did me.

When I got married my newly acquired husband did not take the nonchalant attitude toward being an unlicensed driver that my Uncle Jack and I did so, approximately a month after my wedding, on a morning when I had a few minutes to spare, I went to the Colleton County Court House in my husband's automobile to get my license.

The highway patrolman who tested hopeful applicants for a driver's license was named Mr. Pruitt. Almost everybody who knew him said he was a nice man but I thought he looked like a glum, dejected person. I passed his office in the Court House many times and I never saw him with a smile on his face. Years later when my children were learning to drive I came to understand why he looked so glum and dejected.

Mr. Pruitt gave me a sour look when I walked in his office and asked what I wanted. I told him I wanted a driver's license. He asked where my car was and I told him outside, parked right there by the Court House. He then asked me who had driven me, an unlicensed and therefore illegal driver, to the place where the car was parked outside. I was not prepared for him to be so picky about how I got to the Court House as I did not realize the State took driving so seriously. I also suspected that Mr. Pruitt may have watched me drive up and park my car, although I did not know this to be a fact. After a split second of sheer panic, I did the only reasonable thing I would think of to do—I lied. I told him my mother drove me there. He gave me a dirty look, more or less confirming my suspicion that he had seen me drive up alone, and demanded that I produce my mother. Fortunately my mother worked for the Clerk of Court upstairs so I ran upstairs, told her my predicament, pleaded with her to lie for me (which she did) and I brought her and her driver's license for Mr. Pruitt to inspect. Mr. Pruitt then proceeded to give me the written part of my driving test.

I thought it ironic that in all my years as an unlicensed driver I had never bothered the State of South Carolina and it had never bothered me. Now, as I was trying to comply with the law, if looked as if I might get arrested or get a ticket before I even got my driver's license. I did not think it prudent to point this out to Dr. Pruitt, however. By this time my confidence had dwindled and my brain was

addled. I watched him go over my written test and finally he announced that I had passed. As we left his office to go to my car for the driving part of the test I could tell this was not going to be a pleasant drive around town. He had the expression of a man condemned to be shot at dawn and I had begun to sweat—it was August—and my cute blue cotton dress was soaked with perspiration.

These days (1986) when you hang an arm out of your car window it means you are holding your steering wheel with one hand, or have the air conditioning turned off, or you want to act nonchalant or maybe you are even waving to a friend. When I took my test cars were not equipped with turn signals or air conditioning and when you stuck your arm out the window it was supposed to indicate to others sharing the highways with you what your intentions were in regard to stopping or making a right or left hand turn. Keeping this firmly in mind, when Mr. Pruitt told me to turn right at an intersection, I gave a smart right hand signal and pulled into the left lane and turned left. That was really the worst mistake I made.

When we got back to the Court House Mr. Pruitt, with great reluctance it seemed to me, gave me that marvelous little piece of paper which declared I was licensed by the State of South Carolina to drive a vehicle upon its roads. I could not tell whether the tortured look on his face was the result of his drive with me, or whether it was the result of having to decide whether to license me and expose unsuspecting citizens of the State to a driver who did not know her left from her right.

Collectibles

About a year after my husband and I were married we moved to the community of Stokes, where he was born and raised. In 1952, our oldest child, a daughter we named Ruthie, was born. As soon as she could crawl she investigated everything. She like dirt, dust, one-week-old crumbs that were hiding on the floor, unidentifiable objects and cats and dogs.

In 1954, our second child , a daughter we named Russell, was born. She was afraid of everything that moved. Bugs, dust, dogs, cats and one week old crumbs were all enemies. When our son, Billy, was born in 1957, he was so fond of bugs, dogs, cats, etc., that he wanted to move them all into the house. Braced up by her brother and sister, Russell learned to tolerate dogs and cats and an occasional tadpole or very small fish.

All three children liked to play in a ditch by our house. It has lots of good stuff in it and every now and then they would bring a pan of tadpoles in the live with the family. Nothing smells like a pan of week old tadpoles, but I overcame this smelly obstacle by telling the children that the tadpoles' mother was swimming around looking for her babies. This worked like a charm and they dutifully returned the tadpoles every afternoon to mommy in the ditch.

The children collected dogs, cats, fish and birds. I had no objection to small creatures that could be returned to mommy at dark (tadpoles) but unfortunately dogs, cats, fish and birds usually hung around for meal times and became bona fide member of the family by virtue of adoption. The truth of the matter is I bought the birds. Every now and then somebody would leave a door open and we would lose a six or eight dollar bird as it darted out to see how the rest of the world was doing. Guppies could be contained in a small tank where they could do what they did best—reproduce.

As the children grew up, I guess people started noticing that we had lots of animals. Obviously some of these people thought we needed more as many times generous, big-hearted citizens would leave us gifts of one, sometimes even two puppies in the front yard. It is true that I never saw them put these dogs out in our yard and they certainly never did knock on the door and inform us they were leaving us cute puppies, but I don't think it was an accident that so many dogs ended up in our yard.

We live on a well-traveled-farm-to-market road, and a person didn't have to be very observant to notice that if you bought a dog, paid good money for it, that this dog would wait until a loaded log truck was approaching at a high rate of speed to decide to stroll across the road. After a few of these tragedies I decided to cast my lot with the stray dogs of the world as they were not only abundant, cheap and almost indestructible, but also delivered directly into your yard under cover of darkness.

Why, as I sit here writing this I have two fine, amiable dogs of unknown origin and questionable ancestry snoring out in my carport. Just like all of the rest of the livestock around here, they are not the least bit disturbed about their lack of fine blood lines. They only ask that they be fed at regular intervals, with perhaps a nice little snack between meals on occasion, and that they be allowed to come and go as they please. If it gets very cold outside, these dogs station themselves near the back steps so they can stampede into the house when somebody opens the door. They like to snooze on warm carpets in the winter.

In the summertime these same dogs like to relax in the comfort of air conditioned rooms. Never mind that they are sporting a complete assortment of fleas, ticks and heaven-only-knows what other kinds of canine livestock on their bodies. That doesn't bother them one bit. They just bring their little guests into the house too, and invariably leave some of them around to build up business for the pest control people. The exterminator ought to send my dogs Christmas cards as they personally provide at least one half of our need for his services.

In years gone by I could and did blame the children for the collection of creatures milling around and about the house. The children are grown and gone now, so I guess I'll have to put at least some of the blame where it belongs. ON ME. Sometimes I even miss those tadpoles.

Cats and Kittens

When my children were small they asked me if they could have a cat. I thought it over and said O.K. I had never had a cat for a pet when I was growing up. My mother didn't particularly like them and besides our neighbor across the street had lots of cats. There was certainly no deficiency in the cat department on our street.

I don't remember where the cat came from. It occurs to me at this late date that they probably had a cat stashed under a bush in the yard when they asked permission to have a live-in cat. I had forgotten, fool that I was, how rapidly cats reproduce and as time went by I notice a sharp increase in the cat population when I went out to feed them. My children were very pleased with the increase—they gave each new cat or kitten a name which, of course, gave the animal family rights and privileges. If memory serves me correctly we had from 15 to 25 cats at any given time for many years.

Some of our cats were a little accident prone, especially those that liked to hang around the highway, but mostly they just hung around the back yard, the barn and the pump house, killing time until I fed them. You would think that a cat would be inclined to rustle up a rat every now and then for a little between meal snack, but I don't think it ever occurred to our cats to do this. They were used to eating on the pump house and they like their food served from a pot. They were fond of climbing up a big bush by the kitchen window to get on to the roof so they could lounge around in the warm sun. I got used to the rather heavy cat traffic as they climbed up and down the bush when the notion would strike them.

I was standing by the kitchen window one afternoon and was greatly surprised when a cat sailed by the window. He wasn't flapping his feet or anything like that, he just glided by. I thought this was most interesting as our cats could entertain themselves handsomely by just eating and sleeping and I thought if they were going to start pursuing a more vigorous lifestyle I ought to check it out. I went outside to see if there were any more cats up there waiting to glide off, and I solved the mystery right away. I saw a bunch of wasps buzzing around a nest which the unfortunate cat had apparently run into, or decided to investigate. I don't know how many wasps stung him, but that cat's flight was swift, graceful and probably would have set a record for cat sailing off a roof if I had just had the presence of mind to measure it, which, of course, I didn't. It was years before I realized I probably had a Guinness Book of World Records cat flight on my hands, but by then it was too late to document the spectacular flight.

I wouldn't recommend keeping a dozen or more cats around your ordinary, average household, but we lived on a farm and I finally got used to them. We had some funny things happen. These incidents amused us but I doubt if our cats were amused, especially the time a little visitor at our house took a kitten and threw it into a five-gallon can full of burnt oil. I fished the little creature out of the oil. It had been totally submerged and I felt sure it would die. However, you can never depend on a cat as that little fellow turned out to be one of the handsomest cats we had after he wore off his personal oil slick. We also had a kitten that climbed up on to the tractor to investigate something or the other and somebody cranked the tractor up and the fan blade rotated him around for a right good little while before we discovered where all the howling was coming from. The only thing that got hurt was his feelings. We never had to worry about him hanging around tractors any more, either.

For a dozen or more years, numerous cats lived around the house before they contracted some sort of flu that is deadly to cats and that disease wiped the whole bunch out, lock, stock and barrel, in just one winter.

I missed them for a while, just the same way you miss a headache when you realize it's gone. We never built up another sizeable cat herd as the children were going off to school and involved in other things and couldn't give the cats the attention they needed to build up a truly magnificent bunch like we had before the flu wiped them out.

Rattlesnake!

One summer afternoon my husband and I went to a neighbor's house for a few minutes. When we got back our oldest daughter met us on the porch and told us there was a rattlesnake under the house. My husband got all upset and asked her how she knew there was a rattlesnake under the house. She told him she just knew there was one under there because she heard it. He asked her if she was sure it wasn't the hot water heater. She said it wasn't the hot water heater; it was a snake. We had a gas hot water heater at that time and every time the gas came on to heat the water it made grumbling noises, sometimes escalating into a roar and then climaxing with a volcanic-like explosion. Needless to say, all unexplained noises were blamed on the hot water heater.

He got the flashlight, and accompanied by the whole family, went to the opening under the house. He poked around with a long stick and looked around as best he could with the weak beam of the flashlight, and finally a snake stuck its head up. It was a rattlesnake and it was coiled up in a little depression near the edge of the house.

About the same time the snake stuck its head up, I thought about my dog, Samantha, and I almost burst into tears as I realized the dog was not with the family, peering under the house in her usually social manner. I realized that the snake had probably bitten my dog as she walked from under the house—that most likely the reason the children heard the snake was because the dog had walked by the serpent and riled it up. I started carrying on about my dog when my husband told me to shut up about that dog until he got that snake killed. He was sticking his head under the house looking for the snake, which had disappeared, and I started sort of screaming because I thought he was going under the house to look for the snake. My screams set off a chain reaction and the children joined me. This irritated my husband greatly as he was finding it difficult to deal with a rattlesnake and the noisy chorus behind him at the same time.

I guess what with all the noise going on out there curiosity got the best of the snake and he crawled to another spot nearer my husband. Now, my husband decided, he could get a good shot at the snake. All he had to do was decide whether to use a shotgun or a 22 rifle. He was in favor of using the 22 for a clean kill. I was in favor of blasting away with a shotgun for any kind of hit. I didn't have much confidence in a clean kill as it was pretty dark under the house, a snake is a reasonably lean creature, and the flashlight batteries were getting weaker all the time.

We abandoned the snake hunt temporarily while we had a heated debate on which gun to use. If that snake had had a lick of sense he would have headed out the other side of the house and hot-footed

it to the woods while we were settling the question of which weapon to use to exterminate him. Unfortunately for him, he waited patiently until we decided to try our luck with the shotgun.

My husband got him on the first shot. The noise from the gun blast blew my cowardly dog, Samantha, from under the other side of the house, screaming at the top of her lungs. The snake didn't bite her as I thought, but the encounter with the snake apparently addled her poor brain and she was hiding under the house somewhere, apparently hoping for a rescue. The gun blast was more than she bargained for, however, and she was a nervous wreck for several days.

The whole episode was exciting, nerve-wracking, exhausting, a little out of the ordinary and had a happy ending, except for the snake, of course.

Stripe

A spidery, skinny little dog came by some time in 1975 or 1976, and unbeknown to me, took up residence in the barn. It is true that at that particular time a rhino could have taken up residence in the barn and would have blended right in with all the other stuff in there, and unless it let out a good snort, nobody would have been any wiser. Nevertheless, my son found this little dog hiding between some boards and, of course, we fed her and you know the rest.

After she fattened up, she looked pretty good. She had a sweet disposition, looked vaguely like a small collie and I named her Stripe. My husband, who had very little patience with me running a soup kitchen for stray dogs, just tolerated her and that was all. This sweet little dog was good company all day, quiet as a mouse, barked when strangers came in the yard and did not dig up in the shrubbery. Unfortunately, she was a night person and when it got dark, for several hours before settling down and going to sleep (or whatever it was she did during the night), she would bark, and bark, and bark.

Every night my husband swore he was going to kill her, or take her off in the morning, or tie a rock around her neck and sink her in the nearest river. Every night he went to sleep vowing to remove her from the premises first thing in the morning. Life was, he said, too short to put up with such an aggravating, noisy mongrel. Since she was my dog, he always woke me up to go outside and try to get her to shut up. I did my best but before I could even get back in bed she was at it again, barking at the moon, the wind, the neighbor's dog, anything that moved. She never kept me awake. I slept like a log, never hearing a thing until I was waked up to listen to her.

One night, after several hours of barking, my furious husband decided to take things into his own hands. He said since I was so wishy-washy with dog discipline, he would go outside and settle the matter. He got out of bed, went to the front porch, and demanded that she be quiet. The dog was delighted. She was used to me yelling at her at night, but she had never had the pleasure of a midnight conversation with him. She ran up to him and he tried to hit or kick her, and she darted off. He tried to catch her and she played tag with him. Finally it dawned upon him that this dog thought he had come out for a little midnight romp! By this time I was wide awake. All that thumping and thrashing around outside was enough to wake the dead. He tried to catch her, and I could hear him promising her that he would kill her with his bare hands, if he could just catch her. She darted here, ran there—she was having a great time. Since he could not catch her he decided to throw something at her. In the yard there was a small piece of garden hose which he picked up and renewed the battle. The thrashing and flailing had increased to the point where I found it impossible to stay in bed. I went to the window to

try to see what was going on but it was too dark. I did hear a shrill “yip!” and knew that finally he had gotten lucky and scored a hit. Apparently she decided to forgive him for this, as she was operating under the erroneous belief that the whole episode was just good, clean fun and considered this mishap to her person to be a purely accidental result of the little frolic they were having. And the battle continued.

Finally, he came into the house and went back to bed. He was exhausted, rigid with rage. He had been bested by a thirty-pound dog who refused to take him seriously. When we went to sleep, she was still barking.

Uncle John

My mother's oldest brother, Uncle John Prentiss, died in 1976, after a long illness. He as a good, hardworking man and I will always remember him with fondness, After his death his body was taken to Fred Parker's Funeral Home and all relatives and friends were notified so we could gather and pay our last respects. There were two other funerals being handled simultaneously at Parker's, so there was a tremendous crowd there the night we gathered to mourn Uncle John.

My family is a big family. It is a sad commentary on my nature but I was looking forward to seeing various relatives at the funeral parlor. We hardly ever got together except for funerals, weddings and an occasional family reunion. It was certainly no fault of mine that Uncle John had paid a dear price for what was doing to be a rich, social experience for me. At any rate, I felt he would understand and not begrudge me any pleasure I might have as a result of this family gathering.

The first mistake I made that night was when I sat down by his brother, Uncle Bill Prentiss. Uncle Bill and I lived in the same town but we rarely got an opportunity to visit. We started our conversation with the usual polite, family-type remarks. These led to observations about various things and from there we went on to discussions of family happenings of years gone by—some of them pretty funny—to us, anyhow.

For all practical purposes we forgot that we were in a funeral parlor to mourn, comfort and console. We had gotten into family history and we were really enjoying it. I realized that our enjoyment had passed the bounds of decorum and good taste when I saw the strange looks we were getting from the friends and relatives of the other two people who had the bad luck to be the guests of honor, along with Uncle John, at the funeral parlor.

There we were—Uncle Bill and me—an island unto ourselves, a little raucous knot of noise, having a great time! Our relatives, having known us for a good many years could overlook us—probably didn't expect anything better, but the other people down there that night obviously expected a little more from us. To make matters even worse, Uncle Bill and I were having such a good time that we could not muster up enough strength of character to pull ourselves together and behave with a little dignity.

Looking back on that night, I feel kind of good about that farewell to Uncle John. I hope when I die that my friends and relatives will gather and mourn a little bit, and then go on to remember the many good, funny and special things that we shared and enjoyed.

Jennifer's Birth

My husband and I have three children. Their births occurred with few problems. However, there was one person who was very involved on all three occasions. She had glazed eyes—her world narrowed down to a hospital room—she was suffering agony and anguish. She paced the hospital halls and made unreasonable demands on the doctors and nurses. Fortunately doctors and nurses, especially those who work on the maternity hall, are very kind and understanding and do everything they can to comfort and relieve the suffering of these poor souls. They certainly were nice to my mother. They helped her through the trauma of the birth of my children with great skill and sympathy while attending to my needs at the same time.

Yes, it was my mother who suffered greatly when my children were born, and over the years I have giggled, snickered and poked fun at her because of the way she acted. I should have known better as I had already learned that life has a way of getting even, even if it takes many, many years.

I got my comeuppance when my granddaughter, Jennifer was born. In all fairness to myself, I was caught off guard and was not properly prepared for her birth. My daughter went to see her doctor one day and that very day he assured her it would be several weeks before her baby would arrive. I took this to be the gospel truth and settled down to wait a while longer. Unfortunately, things didn't work out like that. That very night Jennifer (then unknown to me) indicated that she was making different plans. After several calls to the doctor in charge of the whole business, my daughter, son-in-law and I departed the next morning for Charleston where my daughter was to be hospitalized.

I remember having the presence of mind to know I might need a few things so I thoughtfully threw a wool cap in the car. I recall clearly thinking I might need that cap, but I can't clearly or even dimly remember what I thought I might need it for. When my daughter saw me sitting in the back seat with my purse and my wool hat for company she snickered at me. I had other things on my mind so I let that go.

After arriving at the hospital and being admitted, my daughter was put in a small room and her husband and I were allowed to stay in there with her. It wasn't until we were crunched up in this little room that I suddenly realized where we were and why we were there. In spite of my daughter's normal nine-month pregnancy, I found I was not quite ready for the ordeal of birth. I felt dizzy and faint and I thought I might have to have medical attention myself. To make matters worse, the doctor came in and said it looked like the birth would be by Caesarean section. When I absorbed this information, I announced I wanted to see a priest. My daughter told me I was scaring her to death, and why did I

want to see a priest as I was Baptist. (We were in a Catholic hospital and I figured a priest was around somewhere—I was in no mood to quibble about denominations).

Now I was the one with glazed eyes, suffering agony, anguish and intolerable pain. I could not make demands on doctors and nurses as the medical profession had wised up over the years and now stashed soon-to-be fathers and grandparents in a waiting room with instructions to wait right there and somebody would come tell them as soon as something happened.

After a little while my granddaughter was brought upstairs by her pediatrician, Dr. Hill. She wasn't even ten minutes old and already she had her own doctor! Dr. Hill stopped long enough to let my son-in-law meet and admire his daughter before he took her and put her in the nursery. I will never forget the look on my son-in-law's face when he saw his daughter. It was one of life's privileged moments.

Shortly after that my daughter was brought upstairs and put in her room. After everybody was present and accounted for and getting along just fine, I was amazed to discover that my physical condition had improved also. You would think after all these years my daughter would quit snickering and laughing and asking me what I was planning to do with that wool hat. I know it's too much to ask that she remember the real anguish I was enduring. Why should she—I'm still snickering about the way my mother carried on!

First Homecoming

Dear Jennifer:

I'm sitting in your kitchen waiting for you to come home. It's February 9th, a full ten days before we even expected you to be born. I have been doing little things while I wait and when I started sweeping the back porch I realized I was doing the same things for your mother that my mother did for me when I brought my first baby home. I hope I live to see your mother help you bring your baby home some day.

Your parents are bringing you to the home in which your mother grew up. I have walked around the dining room table this morning and felt the corners that your mother bumped her head on so many times. Doubtless you will bump yours the same way and just as many times. When your mother had her first birthday party she walked around and around that table trying to see her birthday cake. I can hardly wait to share these things with you, Jennifer, child of my child.

Your parents have taken this house in which your mother grew up and remodeled it. It is theirs and yours now. They have made it uniquely theirs by the many changes they designed. I am glad you will grow up here, listening to the redbirds and blue jays that must be descendants of the birds your mother grew up with, listened to, left and then came back to. You even have a dog, Jennifer. Old P.B. is lying out there in the yard in the sunshine, blissfully unaware that in the future he will enjoy less attention than he has become accustomed to.

You are a lucky little girl! You have two sets of grandparents, three aunts and an uncle who love you. Some of them haven't even seen you yet and you are already important to them.

One of the most constant prayers of my life is that the good Lord in all ways possible will take care of all little children who are afraid or hungry or unloved, in danger, in pain or unwanted. Your birth had made me feel this even more deeply and I pray you will never suffer deprivation of any kind. Your birth has renewed my desire to reach out to others in love, compassion, tolerance and good humor.

Leon just drove into the yard to get some gas. He works with your daddy and granddaddy. You will like him. There are so many people here you're going to like!

So, welcome home, Jennifer! May your life be filled with love and happiness in years to come. Love grows and multiplies endlessly. Your birth has increased my love and happiness and renewed my life in a way I never dreamed possible.

I am looking forward to the joy of seeing the world through the eyes of a little girl again.

I love you,

Grandmother

Beauty—Only Skin Deep Anyhow

I glanced at myself in a mirror as I was leaving home to go shopping one summer afternoon. I thought I looked a little faded, but then, considering normal wear and tear combined with my age, I could look worse. While I was driving to town the memory of the reflection in the mirror kept going through my mind. I was approaching a small shopping center and knew there was a nice cosmetic shop there so I decided to stop by and see if I could get something to spruce myself up a bit. Maybe there would be something there that could repair, or at least camouflage, the ravages of time. Perhaps, I thought, modern science and cosmetics sold in this shop would perform a miracle, but being a reasonable person, I was willing to accept considerably less.

I entered the shop and was met by a very pleasant person. I explained to her what I wanted. She gave me a long, evaluating look, which did nothing to restore my confidence, and began showing me little swatches of color, holding them next to my skin so I could see them. She asked me, in a discreet way, if I would like for her to demonstrate how I should use make up. I was very enthusiastic—I thought maybe I had discovered my miracle.

After a reasonable period of time, she finished what I had come to think of as a construction job on my face. She handed me a mirror and asked how I liked it. Unfortunately, the mirror magnified my face greatly, and I was reminded of a forlorn little caterpillar I had seen one time crawling through some cold ashes. His trip through the ashes added considerable bulk to his usually neat little frame and he was dusted down to the eyes. Every hair on his body was covered with ashes and he was having a hard time crawling along because the ashes interfered with the proper operation of his numerous feet. My cosmetic experience had done the same thing for me that the ashes had done for the usually tidy little worm. It accentuated every little blemish and downy facial hair that I had never noticed before stood out like small, white poles all over the landscape of my face. I felt a belated burst of compassion for the little worm. I should have gently dusted him off and set him on firmer ground.

I made a small purchase and hastily left the shop before I met someone I knew. I got into my car and drove one block before I started to perspire. The transition from air conditioned shop to hot car was the beginning of the end for my new face. My trip through the world of instant beauty hadn't lasted much longer than the aforementioned worm's trip through the ashes. It also cured me of the yen for a refurbished face. Now, when I glance in a mirror and think I'm looking a little drab, I know that there are things that are much worse.

Jen

Who are you, little girl
With hair of gold and eyes of blue?
Why does my heart swell with love
Everytime I think of you?

What binds my heart to you—
Little person, full of pride?
What makes the world a nicer place
When you are by my side?

Winsome moppet, smiling child
As busy as can be;
I'm grateful that the plans you make
So often include me.

I see the world through different eyes
When you invite me in to play
My heart remembers the bitter sweet joy
Of years that have slipped away.

Beautiful daughter of my child,
I know these days will not last;
Your world will soon outdistance mine
And leave me in the past.

My life has spanned so many years,
My heart has found its home.
But your life is just beginning
And you must go on alone.

Beautiful grandchild, my perfect love,
You belong to tomorrow.
May your journey there be filled with love
Touched only lightly by sorrow.

You won't even know when the voyage starts
The leaving will take quite a while;
Slowly the old will mix with the new
As you travel through life mile by mile.

I can't go with you, my golden child;
I will watch as you walk away;
Glory in your victories, shed tears for your pain.
You must go on, and here I must stay.

Always remember, child of my child,
This love and the life that we share.
And when your heart wants to come home for a while
I'll be waiting, oh, yes, I'll be there!

Farm Friends

Let's all take a walk down memory lane—
More years than some can recall;
Let's talk about some of the gold ole times,
Remember a few things dear to us all.

Take for instance the farm family
Who lived in days long ago;
They grubbed out a living as best they could,
Their work exhausting, tedious and slow.

The old-fashioned farmer got up real early,
Got out of bed while it was still dark,
Ate a big breakfast prepared by his wife,
Went to work happy (well almost) – as happy as a lark.

He stepped out of his door and looked at his farm;
There were endless chores to be done;
Every day he would start at the beginning
And work until setting of sun.

When breakfast was over the farmer's wife
Would start her day clearing the table.
She worked just as hard as her husband
And she helped him when she was able.

She washed dishes and clothes, she swept and scrubbed;
She cooked, she canned and she sewed;
Dried, preserved and conserved food for the winter
She swept yards, aired mattresses and hoed.

They were people who lived close to their Maker,
Lived through time both bad and good.
They were people of the earth, knew life, death and birth,
Accepted their lot in life, they knew where they stood.

He plowed up his land with the help of a horse—
Or more often the help of a mule,
This was the original horsepower
(In case you've forgotten the horse power rule.)

Each year they would start out even
The farmer, the crop and the weeds
They would race each other all summer
Each trying to fulfill their own needs.

There were lots of frolic-filled hours
Spent chasing escaped livestock;
Hunting nests hidden by chickens;
And working the garden till dark.

There was wood to chop for the wood stove;
People worked hard just to make ends meet.
Each task that was done required hard work.
Still, life was rewarding and sweet.

The along came the big war,
The one we call World War II
Most farmers were exempt, but lots of them went
To serve their country till this war was through.

When they all returned to their homes
Things had changed, they weren't the same.
People started putting their lives back together
But it would never be the same again.

Science moved in to help the poor farmer
Improve production and update his gear.
He rotated his crops, he diversified:
Oh, yes! Better times were near.

Soon every farm had a tractor;
Horses and mules were gradually put aside.
It was nice 'cause a tractor stayed where you parked it,
Whereas horses and mules liked to stray far and wide.

Electricity pumped all the water
For the goats, the chickens and cows,
Single stands of electric wire
Fenced in the shoats, the piglets and sows.

Technology developed lots of good stuff
For farmers to use on the farm:
Good seeds, good fertilizer to enrich the soil
And chemicals that worked like a charm.

Time passed, the tractors got bigger
There were combines and balers and rakes
Production increased and to support his machines
It took all a farmer could make.

Then finally it took the whole family
Rising at dawn and working till dark
To support the family farmstead,
But gone was the song of the lark!

Now there are futures and contracts and bankers,
Hedging and markets to be heeded;
Chemical and machinery and past due notes
Another mortgage for the things that are needed.

The cows are mooing in the feed lot,
They're waiting for their store bought food.
The pigs are banging their feeders.
Heck, farmers deserve an occasional bad mood!

A horse on a farm doesn't work now;
People keep them for fun, and yet
They eat more expensive food than the family;
They make beautiful, big hungry pets.

There is liming and fertilizing and soil-testing
Discing and land to sub-soil;
Government forms to be filled out;
Oh, Lord! There's no end to the toil!

Yes, this is what it has come to:
The American farmer, that hard-working man
Who likes what he does and still hangs in there
Because he's in love with the land.

Well, that's about all there is to say
I've covered a good many things;
Hitting the high sport of farming,
Pointing out hazards it occasionally brings.

And now here's the really big questions
Every year the one people ask:
Will this over-worked, under-financed poor devil
Continue at his thankless task?

Will our hero go out of business?
Will he ignore the new brand of seed?
Turn his back on fertilizer and chemicals
The new combine he really does need?

Nope. He really can't do it.
It's an addiction of the very worst kind.
He can't get a cure, so let's give him a toast:
Here's to the farmer, the best man you'll find!

Norma Lee Quinlan Von Lehe

Dear friend of mine, you have passed into the valley of the shadow of death. There is no way of knowing how long you will linger there before death claims you but it is certain that it will not be long. I have known for several days that you will leave. I have felt grief and sorrow for myself because I will not share your company on this earth again. Never again will I sit in your house and share a cup of coffee with you while we look at the squirrels in your yard and talk about what makes our feet hurt. The joy of being grandmothers will never be discussed and we will not swap books and talk about taking another course at the university just because it would be fun.

For the rest of my life on special holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving, you will be a guest in my heart for you will always be with me and my heart will ache because I miss you so. I will wonder what special, delightful gift you would have given me, and I will always wish I could give you just one more small gift that I knew you would like. Something special for someone special.

I do not think you ever knew how special you were to so many people. You had many sorrows but you also had many joys. And you were a joy to have as a friend. I love you because you are not lukewarm about anything. You are a sister of my heart. Your interests are so varied and your intellect is marvelous. In this life we have so few friends we can truly trust, and you are one of mine. I feel like my heart will break because our earthly bonds are being severed. I can take consolation in the knowledge that my last words to you were, "I love you," and your last words to me were, "and I love you too."

As long as I live a part of you will live in my heart and I am richer for the rest of my life because I shared it with you.

Sport

Our family once included a bird dog named Sport. We got him from a man who told us he hated to give away such a fine good-blooded dog but, he said, “I been sick and ain’t able to take up time with him. You say your son likes to bird hunt? This dog will make him a fine quail dog!”

We all looked at Sport. He was a big, liver and white pointer with a knobby head, a knotty tail and oversized feet. We said we better think about it a little bit and besides, we didn’t have the room to put Sport in the car with the whole family right then. He said, “I know right where you live. I’ll bring him there late this afternoon.” So, that’s how we got Sport.

He was taxied into our lives by his soon to be former owner who assured us that Sport was a great dog, an aristocrat of the canine world and finest bird dog in six counties. We all thought it was such a pity that Sport’s owner was obliged to give him to total strangers because of his health. We were touched that he was so shaken by their imminent separation that he hastily gave us custody of the dog and left with great speed so we could not see how emotionally upset he was.

Sport, on the other hand, took the whole thing very well. He surveyed his new kingdom, found the water pot, took a sip, investigated the food we had provided for him to make him feel welcome, and then took a short nap to lessen the trauma of his transition from city dog to country dog.

When quail season opened, Son and Sport went hunting. In no time at all Son found out Sport loved to hunt quail but had his own rules. Sport covered the fields and pine woods like a vacuum cleaner but it would have taken an Olympic sprinter to keep up with him. He got so exasperated with his hunting partner (who could not keep up with him) that when he found a covey he nabbed his own quail before it could get off the ground and ate it right on the spot. His Master, trailing far behind him, and had already decided that he probably was not going to get to shoot any birds on this hunt with Sport and was seriously entertaining thoughts of taking a shot at Sport. Fortunately for the fleet-of-foot Sport, by the time his hunting companion caught up with him he had cooled off a bit and decided to give him another chance.

On the second hunt Sport did a little better. He located a covey of quail and when the birds rose, Son got a shot off and a quail went down. He sent Sport to retrieve the bird. After some time had passed he finally went off to locate Sport and his bird. He found the dog with quail feathers dangling from his muzzle, looking just a bit sheepish. Unfortunately, it seemed that Sport found fresh quail irresistible.

Sport was relieved of serious hunting duties after that. He was demoted to yard dog, which suited him just fine. He would ramble around in the morning, covering the fields and edge of the woods, hunting for anything that was available. Sport was easy to please and he had some fine hunts by himself. After exhausting himself pursuing game, he would come back home, stop by the water bucket and drink a quart or so, then find a nice spot to nap. As soon as he was sufficiently rested, he would get up and check his food pan to see if any unexpected goodies had been put there in his absence.

Sport would probably have spent the rest of his life in this comfortable routine if we hadn't decided to buy some cows and put them in the field in front of our house. He was off on one of his hunting jaunts when the cows arrived, so he was not aware of their presence. When we went to check on the cows later that afternoon Sport, always a sociable fellow, strolled over to the field with us. He spied the cows right away and went into the field to investigate things a little more thoroughly and spooked some of the cows, which spooked the rest of the cows, which started a stampede, which he promptly joined. Now Sport was not the best bird dog in the world, but he was perfect for chasing cows. He had speed, grit, determination, finely tuned muscles and lots of spare time. One little stampede and he was hooked. He chased the cows up and down the field as we yelled, "Stop, Sport!" We progressed to "Dammit, Sport! I said stop!" We said other things but Sport ignored them too. We finally gave up and just left and amazingly he stopped and came with us, taking care to stay out of everybody's reach.

Everytime we walked over to see the cows, if Sport was in the yard, he went too. Everytime he went he chased the cows. He never chased them unless we were there to watch and yell. We tried to sneak away from him but his ears, which were too deaf to hear commands, demands, threats, or pleas, could hear the slightest footsteps in the direction of the cows. We finally decided that Sport thought of the cows as a big covey or funny-looking birds that we had put on the premises for his pleasure. It was the chase that Sport loved. He was prudent enough not to catch the fleeing cows. He loved the thunder of hoofs and the exhortations of his family as we watched the canine-bovine derby from the fence.

As time passed on, so did Sport. He had a cavalier attitude toward life. He was worthless as a hunting dog and his industrious pursuit of his various hobbies occasionally resulted in gross neglect of his yard dog duties. Also, he probably had the hardest head of any dog that ever occupied space on earth. But life with Sport was interesting. He had style. I know if there is a dog heaven, Sport is there, taking time off every now and then to chase his own celestial covey of cows.

Southern Snakes

Most people are afraid of snakes—any kind of snake. I do know a few people who pay little or no attention to them so long as they stay out in the woods or in the barn or out of sight. There are vast areas of wooded lands and swamps in which snakes may lounge and slither, not to mention numerous caverns, rocks, stumps and holes under and in which they can skulk and lurk without being seen by some human who will jump at the chance to pound them flat with a big stick, yet they are drawn by an irresistible force to the areas inhabited by men.

After giving this matter much serious thought, I have decided that it is the highways they like. Once they find a highway, they attempt to cross it and are immediately run over by a speeding car, pickup and/or loaded log truck. In fact, many people consider it their civic duty to run over snakes crossing roads. If they miss them the first time, they will stop their vehicles and either back up or turn around and make another determined effort to run the poor reptiles down. The above statements can be verified by driving down any road on a nice, warm day and making a flattened snake count. The result is mind-boggling.

The number of innocent snakes attempting to cross a highway and meeting an untimely death is exceeded only by the number of opossums which are run over in like manner. It is my belief, however, that unlike snakes, opossums hang around the edge of the highway and fling themselves in front of approaching vehicles.

I am acquainted with people who refuse to walk down a dirt road in the summer because they are sure they will step on a snake, or that a snake will dash out of the bushes and bite them. It is useless to try to convince these people that snakes have better things to do with their time than lurk around the edge of a road hoping a human will walk by so they can run out and nip them. I have only known two or three people who have been snake bit and they have assured me that the snakes that bit them were very grumpy and certainly were not seeking a friendly encounter with a human. I know people who work in the woods cutting logs and pulpwood and who, after an unexpected meeting with a big, cranky rattle snake have knocked off work for a day or two. These unplanned vacations were necessary in order to get their hearts, lungs and various other internal organs functioning in a normal matter again and the flow of adrenalin slowed down. Unexpected encounters with grouchy, big rattlesnakes tend to addle a person mentally and physically.

When I was a child we believed that if a rattlesnake was around you could smell the odor of watermelon and we relied on this fool-proof method to keep safely out of reach of rattlesnakes rambling in the same area we were occupying. I found out in later year that this was not true but it was the only system we had for protection and it worked pretty well for us, as we never got snake bit.

Walterboro High School Class of 1945

Hi, there! Class of '45
It's great to see you all;
It's been forty years since last we met
So tonight let's have a ball!

We scattered, went our different ways
Without a backward glance
To make our mark upon the world,
Each eager for his chance.

Some went far away from here;
Some returned, no more to roam;
And some never left at all,
Content to stay at home.

The busy years went flying by
And, then, before we know
Our children were grown, jobs most done:
Retirement almost in view.

As time passed by our hearts looked back
To the times of yesterday.
We yearned for the dear old schoolday friends,
Now so far away.

Then some old friends got together
And made plans to meet again,
Asked the '45 class of Wildcats
A reunion to attend.

They discovered the misty bonds of love
Have lasted all the years
And bring us back together tonight
To reminisce with laughter and tears.

That's why we gather here tonight,
The old familiar faces,
To celebrate time long past
In the old familiar places.

We remember classmates who have crossed
The bridge from life to death.
We will remember dear old friends
As long as we draw breath.

They all live on within our hearts.
Yes, they are still alive:
In our hearts we're always together—
The Class of '45.

Middle Aged Jogging

At a more than middle age of life
Pushed by a yearning to be fit,
I decided to take up jogging;
I practiced bit by bit

At first I'd run a yard or two,
Then I would walk a spell.
Then I'd start to run again
And once or twice I fell.

It was very hard work for me
To jog on down the road.
My feet were sore and aching
As they carried all that load.

As time slowly passed on by—
Oh, maybe a year or two—
I realized with gratitude
There were aches, but just a few.

I liked to think as I jogged along
Of days long since gone by,
Of the energy and strength of youth
When my feet could simply fly.

I felt gratitude for times long gone
When I could run and run and run
With youthful grace and vitality
Simply because it was fun.

I liked to think about
That young girl of long ago,
The one who could always run so fast
But she is here no more.

For she is me and I am she—
The slim girl now grown plump;
The years have taken speed and grace
But still down the road we clump.

I know why the young girl ran;
It was fun to fly along
With speed, grace and agility,
To which that time of life belong.

But why does the older woman jog—
So diligently pursue it?
I know why and I'll tell you now:
Its's great to be able to do it!

Plane Trip

I am sitting in one of Piedmont's planes waiting for take off. I am at the Charlotte, N.C., airport hoping to fly to Boston on a dull, quiet, uneventful flight. I try to act nonchalant. The pilot announces we are ready for take off and I notice everybody reacts differently to this announcement. Some people seem more alert; some put their heads further down into magazines and books like they are trying to hide. A nice looking stewardess comes by and stands near my seat. I see another stewardess in the front of the plane. The one in the front tells us to keep our seat belts hooked. She tells us where we can get oxygen and the stewardess near me shows where the oxygen is stashed in the event we should need it. She moved her hands in keeping with the instructions we hear coming from the person in the front of the plane. They show us where the exits are. They tell us our seat cushions double as flotation devised in the unlikely event we should need a flotation device. The final little newsy piece of information we get is that there is a little brochure placed in front of each of us and that we should read it as it give us instructions about how to deal with about how to deal with emergencies and all kinds of stuff I would rather not deal with on land, let alone up in the air.

The pilot announces that we are now number one for take off. Although I was a little nervous before, I am now sweating and have crumbled into a complete nervous wreck. I look over at my husband, my faithful companion, and I wonder what we are doing in this airplane which might have the emergencies the stewardess just told us about. I think about the insurance policies we just bought back at the airport. I feel no consolation at all that should any or all of the things the stewardess mentioned actually happened, our children would be considerably wealthier than they were when we left home. The plane's engines are roaring and the plane has started moving forward. My stomach feels like it is behind me as the plane lifts up off the ground and is airborne. I bring myself to look out of the window finally. It is very beautiful down there. The ocean is visible and there is a big, winding river which the pilot has not identified. We are on top of the clouds and it seems strange to be looking at clouds from this direction. I start thinking about the marvel of a machine that can fly miles above the earth with such great ease and speed. Then I start thinking that if the good Lord had meant for man to fly he probably would have put wings on his back. I terminate this chain of thought immediately as it occurs to me that I do not want to propel myself with my own wings—not at this stage of the game anyway.

We are passing over a tremendous city—probably New York since we can see skyscrapers below. Still now word from the pilot. I hope he knows where he is. I feel the plane dropping down a

little bit. My instincts tell me to go knock on the pilot's door and ask if everything is all right but my common sense tells me I had better not. I look out of the window again and note that a flap or something on the wing is wiggling, and observation of this flimsy looking contraption does not cheer me up. I talk with my husband. I talk with the young woman sitting by me. She loves everything about the flight. A wiggling wing means nothing to her. She is very young. The pilot is turning the plane to the right. Still no word from him. No pleasant chit chat to reassure passengers that all is well and we needn't worry about a thing.

The plane is coming down. I can feel it. Maybe I should run up there and knock on the cabin door and casually inquire if this is what we should be doing. My husband would probably stop me so I decide against this. We should be in Boston in about fifteen minutes. It is hard to believe we left North Carolina only an hour and a half ago. The plane is bumping a little bit. Everything is beautiful and clear outside. Good Lord! He is turning way to the right. I am not surprised that so many people are reading: what can you do on a plane but read and talk to the person next to you? It is considered poor taste to moan in terror while riding in an airplane occupied by others. We are getting closer to the ground. I haven't heard anything from the pilot yet but the flight attendant has just told us to fasten our seat belts. I hope this means our landing is imminent.

Finally we get a word from our pilot. He says we are over Rhode Island and will be in Boston in about 15 minutes. I am glad to know that he is hale and hearty up there in his little closed-off cubicle. He is definitely going down now. My ears and stomach feel funny. Maybe I shouldn't have eaten that nice complimentary breakfast the pretty stewardess gave me.

The flight attendants have all congregated in the front of the plane and seem to be having a good time. This cheers me up. But, they are not worried, why should I be? Oh Lord! We are turning hard to the right and the engines are making a funny noise. I feel a little bump and just like that, we are back in touch with good ole Mother Earth. The plane finally stops.

As we leave the plane the pilots and flight attendants line up and smile at us and thank us for flying their airline. Being back on the ground I find I am much braver about flying and act like I had a great time up there in the air with them. I smile back at them. By now I don't really regret eating that nice breakfast up there seven miles above the eastern seaboard. I decide, however, that the nicest part of flying is getting off the plant at your destination.

Homecoming

For many years I have belonged to Doctors Creek Baptist Church. One of the annual events held at our church is “homecoming” which occurs in October. All members of the church invite old members, former ministers of the church, old friends, new friends and relatives, to attend. In passing I might mention that homecoming is also fund-raising day and to raise funds you have to have crowd of people, preferably generous people.

On Homecoming Sunday, after the preaching, there is a mind boggling layout of food as everybody tries to outdo everybody else by bring lots of delicious food. Special recipes are trotted out and kitchens are steamed up for several days as veteran cooks outdo themselves in the culinary department.

After church old friends are reunited, family members gather and everybody has a great time and eats entirely too much. For the past fifteen years our homecoming dinner has been served in the nice new air conditioned building behind the church. A long line of tables is set up for everybody to put their food on and other tables are set up for people to sit at. People sit all over the place—the meal is informal. Some younger people go outside to eat their meals but almost everybody else elects to remain inside and eat in air conditioned comfort. It was not always so.

Prior to the construction of this nice building adjoining the church, the homecoming food was laid out on a table under a shed on the church grounds. Ladies of the church worked all morning to get the food arranged and set on the tables just right. Food was assembled in categories. All meat was in one area, all vegetables in another, all rice dishes together, all salads congregated in one spot and, of course, all desserts and drinks at the end. All this activity attracted more than hungry people. Long before church was over and people turned out to feast on the goodies, the marvelous aroma of the food attracted insects from far and near. Flies turned out in their Sunday bibs and tuckers to sample the good stuff lined up on the table. Yellow jackets, those feisty, bad tempered insects who could put the fear of God into men much quicker than any preacher, roamed the tables to have a bit of this and a bit of that. Wasps, undisturbed since homecoming the year before, joined the crowd to see what was going on. Ants attacked from the bottom and gnats, those durable, numerous and social members of the insect group mingled freely among the food and the crowds. The gnats didn’t appear to eat—they simply wanted to reach out and touch. An occasional mosquito flying by, not at all interested in the food on the table, stopped to lunch on the people eating the food.

As this uninvited bunch joined the crowd for dinner, several ladies would improvise fans to chase them away. The cool breeze stirred up by the fans seemed to be most appreciated by the insects. Every now and then a clumsy fly or witless gnat would drown in a glass of tea or get bogged down in a bowl of potato salad as a blast of air hit. That was the fly's tough luck, and nobody felt sorry for a little insect that had to be fished out of a pitcher or bowl.

After a few hours everybody would pack up the food and leave the insect population sifting through the crumbs left on the ground.

After the new building was constructed and the homecoming feast was served there I did not hear one person express sadness or disappointment because they did not have jolly little insects to share their food and drink with them. Of course, some of the younger members of the church fix plates and take them outside to eat. This attracts some quick thinking insects but before they get a chance to dig in, the young people have eaten everything and gone on to other things.

It's kind of nice to remember the old homecoming dinners, complete with assorted bugs. It is sad to think that generations of people in the future will eat their fabulous dinner inside an air conditioned building, excluding countless little insects who would like to munch on fried chicken with them.

About the Author...

Ruth [J.] Saunders (1923-2013) was a lifelong resident of South Carolina's Low Country.

She enjoyed writing all her life and began saving and collecting her work several years before self-publishing her first book, *Low Country Children*, in 1986.

From her birthplace of Yonge's Island in Charleston County to her lifelong home in the Stokes community near Walterboro, Ruth recounted real life experiences from an era which will never be repeated. Her stories tell of a family and community-oriented lifestyle which reflects not only the South Carolina Low Country, but much of the American South.

Ruth was married to William H. Saunders (1928-2018). They had three children—Ruthie (Ruth P.), Russell Anne, and Billy; five granddaughters—Jennifer, Katie, Rebecca, Miranda, and Crystal; and three great grandsons—Luke, Blake, and Mason.

Ruth worked as a legal secretary and court recorder in Walterboro for many years before she and her husband operated their farm and farm supply business. She was elected to the Colleton County School Board as its first female member and served for 20 years, including eight years as Chair.