

**Creative Writing/ Memoirs**

**AS I WATCHED**

**Barren County, Glasgow, Kentucky**

**Debby J. Hamilton**

## AS I WATCHED.....

Sitting in the kitchen I could see my grandparents farm and home. My grandmother was known to me as Mama Johnson. Watching I would see Mama Johnson heading to the garden in the coolness of the early morning. With a hoe or bucket in hand no doubt she had plans of planting, tending, or gathering that which would feed those who would enter her home. Her days outside started before the heat of the day then resting under the shade trees she busied herself working up her gathered produce. Her homemade duster was always covered with a paper or maybe a dish towel to catch hulls from shelled beans, husk of corn or peelings from vegetables or fruits. As the sun began to set another trip to the garden for yet another quick look as not to overlook any precious food that could be used for now or freezing, canning, or drying for the cold winter months. Always a homemaker her days were filled with seasonal activities to make ready food for all family activities and spur of the moment food preparation for visiting quest. Customers visited with hopes of purchasing their assigned dozens of fresh eggs from Mrs. Johnson hen house. If the chickens had not laid their weeks quota Mama Johnson always made sure they did not leave empty handed with the rest being promised when gathered. The orchard was always full of many varieties of fruits. Nothing ever went to ruin, they were made into jams, jellies and preserves or given away to neighbors, friends, and family. I saw through her actions she shared that which the Lord had richly blessed her with beyond her own needs. Wire racks could be seen holding sliced apples and peaches drying in the sun to make homemade fried pies or a favorite recipe. These dried fruits also made it to the homes of many others who knew of the availability of yet another one of this ladies talents. What enjoyment for those cold winter months. When cousins and myself visited the Johnson Farm games were played unlike games today. Learning while we played was a way my grandmother taught us. A game of blackberry picking with

small buckets in small hands headed to the blackberry patch with a challenge to see who could pick the most berries. We would return delighted of our accomplishment with no award to be given but always a praise of a job well done and perhaps a delicious fresh blackberry cobbler for lunch. We learned at a young age how to use a paring knife. The special thing about these experiences was they were never forced on us but Mama Johnson had that special unique teaching skill that made it fun and when we tired of a particular task we would move on to something else. Shelling butter beans till someone found a solid blue bean was a challenge we were up for waiting to see who would be the lucky one. The day came where the chickens she had raised for meat arrived. We understood as children the importance of this day. Mama Johnson demonstrated through her many years of experience of yet another means of food provision. The smell of fresh fried chicken for Sunday dinner was enjoyed by all and a lesson learned of a skill used to provide nourishment for the body. Seed and plant catalogs were a delight for Mama Johnson as she always enjoyed trying new things for the upcoming planting season. The smell of homemade bread and buns baking filled her kitchen for special occasions and family picnics. Store bought would never do! Plentiful foods could be found in the freezer and the basement pantry consisting of canned vegetables, soup stock, meats, and fruits canned for year round use. Her God given talents were many. Learning by doing was how she lived. She could take a little and make much. Her talents were numerous along with her encouragement and expectation for kindness, politeness and manners of dress and speech. Many years ago as a young girl she was eligible to take a test to become a teacher. Circumstances sometime prohibit dreams to develop but this did not hinder her ability to teach and structure young minds. I was exposed to all of what she enjoyed and her passion to pass those qualities to those she loved. Not enough lines are available to continue with all the memories I have of this wonderful person. Her life of 90 years was filled with many talents and her desire not to be idle and her example of that.

In conclusion: AS I WATCHED----- I LEARNED!

**Cultural Arts Barren Co. Mammoth Cave Area**

***Memoir***

***Things My Mother Told Me***

**Name: Sue Bishop**

## *The Things My Mother Told Me*

It's true. I'm the only person in the world who knows this story. It started before I was born.

It was 1940. My parents married young. Mamma was 17 and Daddy was 19. World War II was about to break out. It was now 1941. I was born on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup>.

The people in Macon County were very poor times were hard. Farming raising tobacco, and cutting timber or logging was all there was to do. People had no luxuries but were good people, as you will see in my story.

My mother 's cousin' Helen was her neighbor and also a good friend. She was beautiful. I remember and would see her as I grew up and time went by.

She worked many years in Louisville, KY.

We had family visits occasional. One day Helen asks if she could name me. Mother agreed. I'm named after a nurse.

My name is Rebecca Sue. I was born at my grandmother, house. The doctor made House calls. Someone went and got him or sent word to get Dr. Wilson. They Had no phone or car.

On a cold day with snow on the roads and everywhere, I arrived at 6 pounds and just about perfect. Mother said I looked around with my black eyes shining. As if to say where am I?

I had good and loving care. During that time frame Babies wore bellybands to cover the belly button and also to support the back. It was for cleanliness until the navel cord had come off.

We had a good neighbor who lived about 4 or 5 miles from our home on another farm. She walked over every day to see if I was all right and if the navel cord had gotten better. I think she just wanted to see a cute baby. I got to see her a lot of years while growing up in Tennessee. She lived a long life and remained a good friend and neighbor.

These are my good memories of having a young and wonderful mother. She told me a lots of good information to carrier and treasure forever.

## My Cousin Fay

Fay was my first cousin. Her mother, Corine, and my mother, Alice, were sisters. They were very close growing up and after adulthood. There were many visits between families. Fay and her family lived in the city and we were the country cousins. They owned a big white dog named Nosey. Fay loved dogs and all kinds of animals. I was scared of dogs and most other animals.

Fay visited us during the summer and we played a lot. My mom would take us fishing. Once my mom kept losing her bait to a turtle. She finally caught that turtle, after replacing her bait about eight times. She was so angry with that turtle, she hit it with a stick. Fay cried because she felt sorry for the turtle. She was a very tender -hearted person.

Fay drank a lot of milk, but didn't like the cow milk. We told her we had stopped the milk truck to get the milk and then she drank the milk. We were pleased that we had fooled her with the cow's milk.

When we visited the city, we would play on the sidewalks and back yard. Being an only child at the time, she had many toys. We always had fun. During that stay in the city we went to several movies downtown. We had to ride the city bus to get there. Fay and I always wanted to see musicals because the stars were all pretty, with beautiful clothes. My brother, Mike, always wanted to see cowboy movies with Gene Autry and Roy Rodgers. We would come home and play those movie stars, one day as western stars and another day as Hollywood stars.

I remember Fay had long dark hair that she wore in French braids. She always had matching ribbons at the ends. In her room was a dresser with one drawer for hair ribbons. Aunt Corine always washed and ironed those ribbons and laid them gently in the drawer. If I could find a ribbon to put in my hair, it didn't stay long. It soon slipped off and was lost. I wore my hair shorter than Fay did. She had long beautiful dark hair. She looked like the child star of that time, Margaret O'Bryan. She was very pretty.

Once at Easter, when I was about thirteen, I had my first grown up hat. It was pink with a little flower on the side and a veil across the front. It matched a pink blouse and grey pencil skirt I had. As I was trying it on in front of the mirror at her house, she asked if she could try it on. I let her have the hat and she put it on. Her hair was not plaited that day but hung over her shoulders. She said, "Don't you think it (the hat) looks better with long hair than short hair"? I grabbed that hat off her head and said, "No, I think it looks better on me, it's mine"! I guess I was a little jealous, she was pretty, but that was my first grown-up hat.

We visited back and forth over our adolescent years many times. We had our little differences but we were true cousins. We loved one another.

Fay grew up and was a good wife and mother. She could paint and sew. She also acted in a theater. She always loved animals and people. Fay died of cancer at the age of sixty-one. I still remember her as the little girl with the long dark French braids who loved animals, movies and life.

Ann Duncan, Meade County



### If You Can Read This...

My mother had a love for books, for the written word. She didn't own many books because on the farm there were too many other things needed, but there was plenty of reading material around in her house. In the afternoon (if she didn't drop off to sleep), she could be found book, magazine or newspaper in hand.

The newspaper always came to our mailbox when I was growing up because it was considered a necessity. I can still see my dad and mother sitting at the kitchen table thumbing through the newspaper. The Readers Digest was one magazine that came through the mail. Though the Digest was not a "scholarly publication" (as a teacher once told me), my mother read it from cover to cover and could discuss a lot of subjects because she had read something about it, if just a short article.

She loved to read about presidents and famous people and their families. She followed stories of the royalty - the queen and king of England and their children. She would cut out and save pictures of Queen Elizabeth and Princess Anne and all the "royal" family. On down through Princess Diana and sons, she would read every word.

I recall bringing a library book home when I was in sixth grade, "The Lees of Arlington" about Robert E. Lee. My mother read it over and over and decided she wanted a copy. The librarian at school helped her order the book - one of the few books purchased by my mother. She often borrowed books from her mother, my Grandma Brown, who had a full bookcase of books. Grandma had "Gone With the Wind" but wouldn't let us kids touch it! We had seen the movie, but obviously there were things in the book that kids didn't need to know. My mother did read it and loved the movie.

Mother would read every story she saw about a saint or religious figure. She also liked movie star magazines, but I am sure she never purchased one in her life. My Aunt Marian would buy them and had the latest ones (but never showed them to my uncle I'm sure). She would pass them on to my

mother who didn't care who saw them, and who probably read every article. (We children were grown and out of the house by this time.)

Somebody gave us an old set of encyclopedias when I was just a kid. There were four or five huge and heavy books, not the many-volume set like World Book which was later published and sold door-to-door. We treasured those books and my mother probably read them from cover to cover. Purchasing a set of World Book was not something ever considered because of the expense. I made sure I had a set of World Book on my shelves in my first home. My mother loved to sit and thumb through them and read the articles when she visited. I wished she had bought them for us and herself many years ago.

My mother's love of reading and school was apparent from an early age. She attended Bethlehem Academy and Vine Grove High School, where she was the valedictorian. I have a treasured copy of her speech at her graduation in 1926.

Following my mother's example, I loved to read. I always had books. After bedtime, my dad would yell at me if he saw the light from my upstairs window shining on the yard below. He'd yell "Turn off those lights." So I would make a tent of my blanket and put the lamp under the tent so that I could continue. Later my own daughter would do much the same, sneaking after bedtime to finish a book.

Today people have Kindles, ipads, computers, and the internet. Some fear books may become extinct. Already there is talk that "we don't need libraries" anymore. I like to think this is not true. You just can't cuddle up with a good Kindle or ipad.

As I write these memories of my mother, I think of the saying "if you can read this, thank a teacher." My mother, as with all mothers, was my first teacher. I can still see her as I think of her – sitting at the kitchen table or in the living room – book, magazine, or newspaper in hand. Maybe nodding off to sleep for a little nap.

# Lula's Porch

By: Kristi Harris, Crittenden County

I have so many fond memories of my grandmother and all the times we spent swinging on her porch swing. She was a tall, thin woman who had over time began to slump over from age and a hard life. She had raised nine children mostly on her own. She had a sister named Thula and her name was Lula so as a ten year old I thought this was quite comical. She had many grandchildren but I was lucky enough to live close and was able to visit often. She lived in a small river town on the east bank of the Cumberland River in rural Western Kentucky. The little town had two small country stores, two churches, a post office and a pool hall which I was never supposed to enter but I often did. Although you couldn't tell then, this small town was once a booming community with banks, hotels and restaurants. It had flourished as a trade town in the 1800's. It even had visits from the Knight Riders.

My grandmother lived in a three room house known as a shotgun house. It was narrow, long and had two doors on each end. In the summertime I would sit with her on the porch in a wooden swing and we would talk and laugh the day away. She loved flowers so she had them sitting all over her porch. She had them in every color you could think of and she would let me water them. An old wringer washer also sat outside on the porch, she would roll it in the kitchen when she needed to wash clothes. There was no bathroom in her house, she had an outhouse. Some people would have thought this as a great inconvenience but I didn't mind. It didn't matter if it was summer or winter, if I needed to go I just marched right out there and did it. Her house sat right in the middle of town and it was cater-cornered from Miss Gert's house. She was a widow. Unlike most of the women in town, Miss Gert had money, a nice house and fine clothes. She was quite the catch I guess you could say. So many afternoon's we could see when she had company and most importantly who the company was. We had a lot of conversations about who was at Miss Gert's house. Miss Robbie was a friend of my grandmother's and

she would often stop by and chat with us. She mostly talked about the weather, family and church. Once Miss Robbie came by for a chat and as she was leaving we noticed she had tucked her dress into her pantyhose. This of course exposed her panties on her backside and she didn't have a clue. We quickly informed her of her predicament. Although quite embarrassed, she was grateful we pointed this out to her. There is no telling how long she had been parading around town like this. For such a small town there was no shortage of interesting characters and somehow at one time or another they would end up on my grandmother's porch. Sometimes she would send me to the store which wasn't a stone's throw away to buy her cigarettes. This wouldn't go over well now a ten year old buying cigarettes but it was different times back then. She would usually give me extra money for a Nugrape which I would get out of the old drink machine. She would also tell me about the haunted house in town which I found fascinating. This house was right up the hill and you could see it from her porch. She told me a light would shine in the window late at night but the house had no occupants. I remember many nights when it began to get dark I would look up there to see if that light was shining in the window of that old house. I never saw a light in that window. But when dusk came, my attention always turned to the house on the hill.

Almost all of my memories of my grandmother involved sitting on that old porch. I just loved going there and staying with her as a kid. She didn't have the things that most people had but that sure didn't make me think any less of her. I never got bored at her house and I always enjoyed her company. I think times were much simpler then and in my opinion so much better. She passed away when I was thirteen. I still remember when my mother told me and how sad I felt. It was the first real great loss in my life. Much time has passed but I still remember all those great times. I miss her greatly. How I wish I could have one more conversation with her, tell her about how things have changed and what all has happened in my life. What I wouldn't give to sit with her on that porch one more time.

The End

## COUNTRY GIRL LEARNS GOOD WORK ETHICS

AS THE SUN PEAKED OVER THE HORIZON DISPERSING A VIRTUAL PALLETTE OF COLORS IN THE SPRING, I WAS EXPECTED TO HOIST MANY TREE BRANCHES ONTO A PLANT BED UNTIL IT REACH A STAGGERING HEIGHT OF 6 FEET TALL AND FIFTY FEET LONG BY 6 FEET WIDE. MY FATHER WOULD THEN SET FIRE TO IT. IT WOULD TAKE HOURS TO COMPLETELY BURN. THIS PROCESS STERILIZED THE SOIL SO TOBACCO SEED COULD BE SOWN. THEN A TOBACCO CLOTH WAS PUT OVER THE SEEDS EVENTUALLY GIVING THE NEWLY GERMINATED PLANTS SOME SHADE.

THE LABORIOUS CROP WOULD EVENTUALLY REAP AN INCOME THAT WOULD SUPPORT MY PARENTS AND 8 CHILDREN. I WAS NOT COERCED INTO HELPING BUT FULL HEARTEDLY HELPED THE FAMILY GIVING ME A FEELING OF GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENT.

AFTER THE SEED GERMINATED, I HELPED HOIST BUCKETS OF WATER INTO BARRELS ON A WAGON AT THE CREEK. MY BROTHER DROVE THE WAGON BACK TO THE TOBACCO BED AND WE FOCUSED ON KEEPING THE SOIL MOIST SO THE YOUNG PLANTS COULD GROW TO A HEALTHY SIZE.

I WOULD SQUAT DOWN WITHOUT GRUMBLING AND KEEP THE TOBACCO BED FREE OF ANY WEEDS. BY THE TIME THE PLANTS WERE 8 INCHES TALL MY FATHER HAD AN ACRE OF GROUND TURNED FOR THE CROP TO BE PLANTED.

MY BROTHER CARRIED THE HAND SETTER WHICH CONSISTED OF TWO EMPTY CHAMBERS, ONE FOR WATER AND ONE FOR PLANTS. WITH MY ARM LOADED DOWN WITH TOBACCO PLANTS I WOULD DROP A PLANT INTO THE EMPTY CHAMBER.. AT THE SAME TIME, MY SISTER FILLED THE WATER CHAMBER. THE SETTER WAS SHOVED IN THE SOIL STARTING THE FIRST ROW. MY BROTHER WOULD PICK UP THE SETTER AND MOVE IT UP 12 INCHES AND SHOVE IT BACK INTO THE SOIL. HE WOULD RELEASE THE LEVER AND THE PLANT AND WATER WOULD GO INTO THE HOLE. MY SISTER FOLLOWED AND SHOVED SOIL AROUND THE PLANT. WITH MY ADRENALINE KICKING INTO OVERDRIVE, I KEPT PACE WITH MY BROTHER MOVING THE SETTER UNTIL THE ROW WAS FINISHED. THE DESIRE FOR A JOB WELL DONE BECKONED ME TO HELP PLANT THE ENTIRE ACRE. WE WERE AMAZED AT HOW STRAIGHT OUR ROWS WERE AT THE END OF THE DAY.

FOR THE NEXT FEW WEEKS MY JOB WAS TO HELP KEEP THE WEEDS FROM GROWING IN AND AROUND THE ROWS OF PLANTS. SQUINTING AGAINST THE HOT SUN I USED MY FAVORITE HOE TO REMOVE THE WEEDS.

BY LATE SUMMER WE WERE IMPRESSED BY THE TALL PLANTS WITH WIDE LEAVES, SUCKERS AND BEAUTIFUL BLOOMS. I WAS GIVEN A SHARP KNIFE ALONG WITH MY SIBLINGS AND WE SET TO THE TASK OF REMOVING THE SUCKERS, BLOOMS AND ANY HORNWORM WE ENCOUNTERED ON THE LEAVES.

WE THEN TURNED OUR ATTENTION TO GROWING VEGETABLES WHILE THE TOBACCO CURED IN THE FIELD TURNING FROM GREEN TO YELLOW.

WITH CONSISTENT EXUBERANCE, WE TURNED OUR ATTENTION BACK TO HARVESTING THE TOBACCO. WE LOADED THE WAGON WITH TOBACCO STICKS, METAL SPIKES, AND MACHETES. I HELPED SCATTER

THE STICKS DOWN THE TOBACCO ROWS. UNDER THE HOT GRUELLING SUN I FOCUSED ON USING THE MACHETE TO CUT THE STALK DOWN AND HAND IT TO THE PERSON SPIKING IT . AFTER I HAD CUT TEN STALKS THE STICK WAS FULL. WE HAD FIFTY STICKS SPIKED FULL OF STALKS BY THE TIME WE REACHED THE END OF THE ROW. WE KEPT UP THIS GRUELLING TASK TILL THE ACRE OF TOBACCO WAS CUT AND SPIKED.

WE TOOK A BREAK AND FOCUSED ON A JOB WELL DONE BUT KNEW THE TOCACCO THEN HAD TO BE TAKEN TO THE BARN AND HOISTED INTO THE RAFTER. SO WE SET ABOUT THE TASK OF LOADING THE TOBACCO ONTO THE WAGON AND MOVED IT TO THE BARN.

WE CLIMBED UP INTO THE RAFTERS AND HUNG ON WAITING FOR THE TOBACCO STALKS TO BE HOISTED UP TO US. IT REQUIRED GREAT STRENGTH TO HOLD ONTO THE RAFTER AND AT THE SAME TIME GRAB THE SPIKED TOBACCO. WE HUNG THEM 8 INCHES APART SO THE AIR COULD MOVE AROUND THE LEAVES STARTING THE SECOND CURING PROCESS THIS TIME TURNING THE LEAVES FROM YELLOW TO BROWN.

AGAIN. WE MOVED OUR ATTENTION TO HELP IN THE VEGETABLE GARDEN SO WE WOULD HAVE FOOD FOR THE WINTER. I HELP WEED. PICK AND CAN VEGETABLES.

ONCE THE TOBACCO WAS CURED, WE TURNED OUR ATTENTION TO TAKING THE TOBACCO DOWN FROM THE RAFTERS. THE INDIVIDUAL LEAVES MUST BE HAND STRIPPED FROM THE STALK AND DIVDED INTO FOUR GRADES: TIPS, RED LEAF, LUGS AND TRASH. I WOULD MOVE AROUND AND HELP STRIP ALL FOUR GRADES. WE WOULD TIE THE LEAVES INTO HANDS AND LAID THEM ASIDE. ONCE WE HAD THE ENTIRE CROP STRIPPED AND TIED INTO HANDS IT WAS READY FOR MARKET. WE LOADED IT ONTO A WAGON AND IT WAS TAKEN TO A TOBACCO WAREHOUSE IN TOWN. OUR TOBACCO CROP WAS GIVEN A NUMBER AND GRADED. THE HUGE TOBACCO COMPANIES SENT BUYERS AND THEY MOVED UP AND DOWN THE ROWS AND BID ON YOUR CROP. YOU WERE AT THEIR MERCY. A CHECK WAS ISSUED AND THE YEAR WAS DONE WAITING FOR NEXT SPRING AND THE PROCESS WOULD START OVER.

THUS GROWING UP ON A TOBACCO FARM TAUGHT ME GOOD WORK ETHICS SUCH AS NEVER QUIT TILL THE JOB IS DONE, HAVE A GOOD ATTITUDE, COOPERATION IS IMPORTANT AND HARD WORK NEVER HURT ANYONE..

By EDIE BELL, BARREN COUNTY

## *Memories of My Dad*

My Dad, James Hazel Padgett, was born on March 8, 1909, the first of eleven children. He grew up on a farm in Meade County, which is now part of the Fort Knox Reservation. There were five generations of Padgett's who had farmed this land.

Dad married my Mom in November, 1931, during the Great Depression. Together they raised eleven children. There were eight sons and three daughters. I was the youngest daughter, and the ninth child of the family. Times were very hard for everyone. Dad, along with his uncle, had the opportunity to work at Fort Knox during construction of the Gold Vault. Once it was built Dad was able to help unload the gold bars off the trains. The initial \$5 billion shipment took twenty-eight trains and nearly six months.

Dad bought his first farm in 1937. The farm consisted of bushes, briars, gullies and rocks. His Dad told him he would never be able to pay for it. He not only paid for it but kept adding a few acres at a time until he had acquired over four hundred fifty acres. Dad tended his own land as well as several acres he leased from nearby neighbors. Dad was a very successful farmer. He received the Master Conservationist award given by the Soil Conservation Service in 1971.

My Dad always regretted not being able to attend school regularly because his Dad needed him to work on the farm. He attended school sporadically until the fifth grade. He made a vow after he had children, they would all attend school. Dad and Mom's prayers were answered, because all their children were successful.

Little did I know, as I was growing up, that Dad did not know how to read nor write! I remember Mom reading newspaper and magazine articles to Dad. I never thought anything about it. He would bring farm bills and other things to the house for her to read and sign. Dad would sign with an X.

It wasn't too many years after I married that Mom and Dad moved off the farm and bought a house in Vine Grove. My youngest brother bought the farm from Dad. Dad always had a garden. He was so proud of his tomato's. He provided the neighbors with the fruits of his labor every summer.

Of course, I knew by then Dad could not read nor write. I offered to teach him, but at his age he did not want to learn. He told me he was so happy and proud we had all completed our education.

Mom passed away in October, 1993. My oldest sister did not live too far away from him so she would go over every week and help him with his mail and business affairs. I can't even begin to imagine how difficult it must have been for Dad, especially after losing Mom, to not be able to read. Going to the grocery, reading directions, reading street signs, etc., just a few of the many millions of things that we all take for granted.

My life was blessed by this remarkable and hard-working man, and I am extremely proud of him. His life was a life of honesty, integrity, and dedication to his wife, family and God.

Elizabeth Hawkins, Meade County



## **"Anything Yours Can Do, Mine Can Do Better"**

**As a mother, we all want the best for our children. We think they are the best thing since sliced bread! When I became a mother for the first time in 1992, I immediately fell into step with all the other moms. I'm not going to fib, I thought my son was the smartest, most handsome kid there was, hands down. I was, and still can be, very competitive when my children are involved, but at least I am discreet about it! Grannies and dads, not so much!**

**I will never forget one particular episode. Logan was three, and I was expecting his little sister in a few weeks. I had an appointment with my OB/GYN that day, and my mother went with me to help watch Logan. Fast forward to the waiting room! We're sitting there, and I hear, "Well, hello there!" I look up and see a couple from my hometown. The couple sat, and we chit-chatted for a bit. Their little girl, Anna, was with them. She was the same age as Logan. The kids started playing and were getting along famously!**

Then it begins...My mother said, "Logan, show them how you can say your ABC's." Anna's dad immediately said, "Well, Anna can say her ABC's and count to 20!" The cycle continued. My mother said, "Logan can count to 50. Show them, Logan!" The dad replied, "Anna can tie her shoes! On and on it went. Anna's mom and I were speechless. After all, why did we need to speak? We were being represented very well, it seemed. If that waiting room had had a bed in it, I would have crawled under it with my protruding, pregnant belly and hid. When my name was called to go back to see the doctor, I was ecstatic. I could not take any more of the child prodigy performances.

Logan is now twenty-six years old and married. Who knows, I may be a repeat of my mother if I am ever blessed with grandchildren. Looking back, I laugh when I think about that day. They were just a proud Granny and Dad, and they didn't care who knew it!

By Regena Lyons, Monroe County

## Snappin' Bean

Mom's in the kitchen and the day has begun. I woke to the smells of coffee and bacon. Wouldn't it be amazing if coffee tasted as good as it smells; say, like bacon!

Today will be a busy day. After breakfast we had a long day ahead.

It is bean snappin' day! One of my favorite and most endearing memories. Bean snappin' is as much a part of me as those wonderful morning smells.

Once breakfast is done and the kitchen readied, we would organize for the task at hand. The pressure cooker on the stove filled with fresh water. The clean jars and their lids on the counter. The cooling racks and toweling as well. Once the bushels of washed beans and bowls were in place; let the snappin' begin.

As we would string and snap the beans, we'd talk. Issues great and small, the events would be entertaining and the beans would make their own kind of music in accompaniment. We filled the hours with the silly and serious. Busily in the creation of wonderful things! Especially if you love green beans. A task of joy knowing at the end will be jars of good things lined up a cooling.

Mom's unspoken pledge to teach the use of resources to their best advantage. Now engrained in me, is my most valued trait. I love a bargain. I treasure handmades and family heirlooms, no matter the price; they were made with love. And every end of summer; looking forward to again exercising that talent for preserving the taste of summer for those long cool winter meals ahead. Assured of the loving hands that prepare them.

**By Julia DeVore, LaRue County**

## Oh How Time Changed

As a child, I can remember how beautiful my Mother was, whenever she dressed to go out. She wore a simple straight skirt either black or navy blue, and a white blouse with a matching button up sweater, high heels, stockings, make-up, and every hair gently in place. She always wore a pearl necklace with clip on earrings. We had very little, but after she dressed us in crisp ironed and sometimes homemade clothes, you would have thought we were royalty. She taught us to never make fun of anyone and that we were as good as everyone else. She was a stay at home mom. We would walk to the library, and she checked out books to read to us, as we sat at her feet. She also read the Bible, and would tell us stories of her childhood. Some were so funny and others were sad. During these story times I would realize she was even poorer as a child, growing up during the depression. But somehow she and her family managed to make happy and memorable memories during that unforgettable time in history. There was always three meals a day at the same time as we sat at the kitchen table together. Sometimes it may have only been Pope greens

that she found growing wild nearby, or cornmeal gravy, made with cornmeal, water, and grease. I hated greens as a child, but being very hungry and knowing it was the best she could do, I didn't dare complain or turn it away.

Our father was completely opposite of my mother. Whatever drew them together is beyond me. I am so thankful I chose my mother to be the example for my life. We were so close. And as an adult we were inseparable. When I learned to drive, we took my two sons and traveled to so many places and made so many good memories. And like for me, she became a very strong influence for my two sons.

Written by  
Judy F. Wood

**Barren County**

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## TRAIN TIME TRAVEL

The sulphur smell took me all the way back to my childhood. I was not a Babci then but I was with my Babci, my Polish grandmother, in her backyard. That's where it felt like the trainyard started and ended.

Here in Versailles Kentucky we were paying to ride a rail, a short way really. That smell had already made the trip worth the price of a ticket.

I see the trees out the passenger car window as they start to move. No wait, we passengers on the train are moving. The rumbles of the wheels vibrate the metal floor. The hard cracked leather seats bounce a bit as speed picks up. Conversation dwindles.

Farms go by quickly now. Those folks hung a sign with greetings on their back fence, like a wave of a hand or two. The speaker rattles the voice of the conductor taking time backward and the train on over toward high bridge.

We already knew this train would not cross the chasm. But what a surprise that the stop was smooth and long enough to disembark for a look down! The breeze lifted my hair with the shiver of my shoulders. Gladness was all around to not be crossing so high a bridge, so old. That realization eased the regret to ride the train as it retreated the precipice in reverse. Slowly, then with more energy we slid into the station elated and satisfied.

By Cynthia Dare, Henry County

## "Living Memories"

Nothing can prepare you for that moment in time when you lose your soul mate, your best friend, suddenly and tragically. On Sunday, August 27, 2000, that is exactly what happened to me. It was a typical Sunday with church, lunch, and then family time at home. Later in the day, Lee (my husband) went to play a couple of games of basketball with some friends, just to get some exercise. He came home laughing and talking about who was at the games and then left the room where I was rolling Natalie's hair on sponge curlers and getting her ready for bed. I went out into the family room and didn't see Lee so I called out his name. There was no answer. I opened the door to the patio enclosure and there he laid face down on the floor.

At first, I thought he had just passed out, but upon looking closer, I could tell it was far more serious than that. He had a cut on his forehead where he had fallen and hit the corner of the table, and it appeared he was not breathing. I immediately called 911, and then I called my neighbor and friend, who is a RN. Moments seemed like hours until someone came to help me. The kids were scared to death and didn't really know what to do. As my parents and neighbors started to arrive, I became even more fearful that Lee had died, when Julie administered CPR with no response.

The ambulance finally arrived, loaded him up, and headed towards St. Luke Hospital in Ft. Thomas. My neighbors took Natalie and Jenna with them, and I rode with Mom and Dad. Along the AA Highway, the ambulance pulled off so we did also. I didn't know it at the time, but they were trying additional efforts to revive him. The ride to the hospital seemed endless, and as we waited in the emergency room with family, neighbors, and friends we joined hands and prayed. God surely wouldn't let Lee die, would He? Lee was needed by his family and friends, and he was a father, and he was needed to run his small supermarket, and the list went on and on. What we didn't realize at the time was that God needed him more!

Finally, the doctor came to us and said, "I am so sorry, but your husband has died. We did everything we could."

How could this be? He was just laughing and talking to us a few hours ago. He is only 41. That is way too young to die. He hardly ever even had a cold....a man of perfect health. What could have taken his life?

The doctor said we could go back and see him. One by one, we went back to see Lee with tears rolling down our faces and wondering what on earth are we going to do without our Lee.

I wrapped my arms around Jenna and Natalie and headed to the car for the long ride home with my parents. As the next few days unfolded, there was so much to do----funeral arrangements to make, contacting friends and family to let them know, greeting those who came to pay their respects, and praying for God to some way somehow get us through all this.

I wish you could have met Lee. He was such a religious man who always put God first; then his family came next. He was so giving and loving, and his smile would light up any room. His visitation at the

funeral home was truly a testimony of his life and his love for mankind. The doors opened at three in the afternoon, and the last person went through the line at 12:30 a.m. The little town of Augusta was lined three city blocks with people waiting to pay their respects. I heard story after story of how Lee had given money out of his own pocket for someone to buy food at the store and of him performing countless unselfish deeds to help someone less fortunate. One lady said to me, "Phyllis, you were so lucky. Some people search their whole lifetime for the love that you and Lee shared." How true that statement was.

The cycle of grief is so true, and I went through every stage it seemed some of them more than once. I did not have the time to just fold up and hide. With four children to raise, a small supermarket to run, and my career as an assistant principal, I certainly had my hands full. God definitely became my refuge and strength as I faced each new day. I was comforted by God's Word as I read passages that helped me to process my own personal grief and to support my children in their grieving process. A dear friend also gave me the book entitled, "When Someone You Love Suddenly Dies". I have shared this book with others over the years, when they lost a loved one suddenly.

An autopsy was performed with the conclusion drawn that Lee had arteriosclerotic heart disease (blockages) and myocardial hypertrophy (enlarged heart). There were absolutely no signs that he had anything physically wrong with him. I questioned myself over and over if there were signs that I should have recognized to have forewarned me of this condition, but I could come up with nothing.

It has now been almost 19 years since Lee died, and in many ways, it seems like just yesterday. Each of the children dealt with their grief differently but with me by their side. Never did we lose faith or blame God for our loss, and we came to realize why God chose Lee to have by His side. The support of our family and friends was amazing and will never be forgotten. Their loss of Lee also was traumatic for them.

Raising four children by oneself is not easy, but I am happy to report that all four are married and are successful in their careers. Our nine grandchildren are such beautiful blessings also. I am comforted each day knowing that Lee is watching over all of us, and I look forward to seeing his beautiful smile again someday in paradise.

My next valley occurred in January 2003 when I was diagnosed with breast cancer, but that is another story.....

Phyllis Kelsch

February 18, 2019

Mt. Auburn Homemakers  
Pendleton County



The following is a memory from my memoir printed in my book "HOLLYHOCKS AND MUD PIES" published in 2017. This was an inspirational message that I gave to my church circle in 1967 in Ft. Thomas Kentucky.

I wish you a Merry Christmas. Such simple words, and for each person who says them there is probably a different meaning -- according to the kind of growing up they had, the pattern of his present life and the facets of his personality. If we moderns approached Christmas more reflectively, took more time for soul searching, I would like to stop those who greet me with a "Merry Christmas, take them by the arm, look into their eyes and say, "what do you mean by that"? and if someone would ask me the same question, I would be partially ready with my answer.

I wish you good health and peace of mind. May you look upon life with optimism and good cheer, even in a world that insists on violence, hatred and war. May you have an indestructible faith to survive today's griefs and confusions and a questioning mind, what is my stake in Peace on Earth? What is my part in helping to fulfill the Promise?

I would want you to have the fragrances of cedar and oranges, nutmeg, cinnamon, and bayberry candles. I would want you to have lights of some kind in your house, the twinkling lights of your Christmas tree or a candle in the window so that others can see that you are there and all is well with you. May you have some family around you and especially children with sparkles in their eyes as you tell them the story of Bethlehem's

manger. I wish for you to have some gifts to give and the joy in giving. May you stand in starlight silence and hear the angles sing. I hope you'll hear bells, church bells chiming and street corner bells asking you to share with the least of these, sleigh bells, and door bells. You must hear carols, old and new and join in the singing. May you have a turkey and all the other goodies and memories of Christmas past. And would you mind just a little snow falling at twilight time? But most of all I wish you some peace where you can let your mind drift back over the centuries to that night when God became man and lived among us for a while. May you go with the shepherds and Wisemen to the little Judean town and in your heart be near to the one who was to say "My peace I give unto you....I will not leave you comfortless, be of good cheer and I do wish you a very Merry Christmas.

**By Juanita Mitchell, Campbell County**

## The Little Black Calf and Days Gone By

(A true story)

I was sitting outside early one morning drinking my coffee and watching the cows graze on the hillside. We have several beautiful red cows in the pasture. I noticed that one cow was standing by herself and what looked like a pile of dirt beside her, all of the sudden it moved. A new born black calf was trying to stand. After trying several times the calf finally made it to his feet. He went straight for his mama's nipple to get the first taste of her life saving milk.

The little calf was getting stronger and was starting to jump around and play. When his mama moved away the little calf laid down for a while, after a little nap the calf would get up and look for his mom. One day while he was sleeping on the pond bank the baby's mom wondered to the pasture and left the baby all alone inside of the fence. He did this several times, even bawling for mom. This time I noticed she was watching him, he must have seen her also because he laid back down. As the days went by he played with the other red calves in the field. As days weeks and months have passed the once little black calf and the red calves have gotten bigger. His mama still watches out for her baby. I'm still setting outside drinking my coffee watching the calves and the birds, but the calves will be sold the birds will fly south, the cold weather will be here, and I will be drinking my coffee indoors.

Pat Ditto

Meade County

# GOOD OLD DAYS? BAH HUMBUG!!

BY

Helen E. Adkins

Greenup County Member at Large

Northeast Area

## THE GOOD OLD DAYS? BAH HUMBUG!!

When I was born my family lived in a small community that was a former mining camp, it was called Fernwood outside of Steubenville Ohio.

Fernwood consisted of the company's Superintendent's two story home. This house had 2 large bedrooms upstairs and one very small room for a nursery or sewing room. The stairs came down into the middle of the first floor.

On the first floor one room was a large sitting room with a fire place that had been closed and a stove was put there.

The other room was a very large kitchen with a wood/coal burning cook stove. That stove had a reservoir for heating water. Over the hot plate caps was a warming oven with a shelf on top. These were great for keeping food warm and heating dinner plates.

In the center of the kitchen was a large table that could seat eight people. On the ends were chairs for Mom and Dad, the sides had long benches. It also had an ice box and sink.

This room also served as a meeting room for church services and any business meetings for the company. The superintendent home had a spring house, none of other homes were that fortunate.

There was a small building across the dirt lane from the superintendent that served as a post office and train station for the Pennsylvania Railroad. The 2 back rooms were used as home for postmaster who also served as train ticket office/manager.

All the rest of the approximately 10 houses in the camp were two rooms down and two rooms up. All of these homes had several children and/or grandparents.

My families rented home was across the double track railroad from the superintendent home.

It is hard to believe one summer two men came and ask Dad if they could rent from us while they took up the railroad tracks going into the mine that led to the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Mr. Joe Weehouse, the white man, said they could not find a place to stay in Steubenville because the other man was colored. He said he heard Dad was a good man and may let them stay with us. Dad said they could stay but they had to look after themselves. Mom cooked for all of us and we all ate together. The rent money helped us a lot.

Mr. Weehouse was glad we were a big family because he missed his children.

Weehouse was not Joe's name but we could not pronounce his real name, he was Polish.

When the outhouses were built the whole camp used the two joined double outhouses. Each side was a two seater one side for ladies and one side for men. Each family was required to furnish their own paper so you brought some with you when you went there, catalogs, newspapers and magazines. Each home had a slop jar to use at night then dumped in the toilets in the morning.

Later when the companies' houses were sold to families each family built their own out house on their lot. When necessary the family dug a hole on their property to move the outhouse to the new pit.

When the mine closed my Dad and Mom bought one of these houses across the railroad.

Dad, Mom and their 6 kids lived in four rooms, upstairs the boys shared a room and the girls shared the other room. Down stairs Mom and Dad shared a room and the other room was used for the kitchen and dining room. Most of these rooms were only nine feet by twelve feet.

After WWII the boys helped Dad build two more rooms on the side of the two bottom rooms. After the WWII the boys married and they brought their wives and babies to live with us while they looked for a home of their own.

When Dad had bought the house he also bought the lot beside our house so we had a small garden and

a couple of fruit trees. Very poor soil.

Dad and the boys built an outhouse for our family.

We still did not have water on our property. Water was a very big problem.

The Penn. Railroad had a spring house where water came out of a pipe in the wall. That pipe was mainly made of lead that was before people knew how dangerous lead is. Underneath the pipe was a concrete catch basin approximately 3 feet wide 6 feet long and 2 ½ feet deep. The trains would stop there and put water in their engines.

The closes house from the spring house was about 200 feet. Our house was about 375 feet from the spring house. That was one hard job carrying water that far. The Penn Railroad Company permitted the families to get drinking water there, the water was carried in buckets to our house for drinking two buckets a trip.

Vandals tore out the pipe several times so the railroad company abanded it. The families took care of the spring house. The families decided it was too much of a problem to continue to care for it. The families decided to drill a well near the crossing and in the middle of the houses. They shared the expense of drilling the well and any repairs.

This was used for several years until people decided to drill their own well. Some of those wells had good water. Until the well was drilled the family would not know if the water was good or Sulphur. Our family's water was Sulphur water. It smelled like rotten eggs and tasted bad. We had no choice but to use it until the Harris family drilled a well. About 300 feet from our house the Cleo Harris's family had good water and they permitted us to get drinking and cooking water from their well for about 20 years.

We had a small creek behind our house and Dad damned that small creek and we used that water for other uses such as bathing and laundry. It was good each family had many members with all the carrying of water.

The other families hauled water from the bigger Cross Creek which was close by. We were the only family who used water from Dad's dam.

As the families bought the houses the families drilled a well and installed a hand pump because at that time Fernwood did not have electric. It was not fun pumping all that water. I was about 11 years old before we had electric, approximately 1945.

I was lucky I was too small to carry water.

My parents did not get an electric pump until about 1956 several years after Martin and I married. They never had a water heater. All water was heated on the cook stove or living room pot belly stove.

Years later there was a hand held invention called a water heater. We put it into a tub of water and plugged it into an electric outlet. You never put your hand in the water or touch the container for fear of being shocked or electrocuted. I cut the cord off of Mom's, the heater and it now hangs on the wall in my laundry room.

Mom spent two days a week washing on the wash board, Tuesday and Wednesday. This included clothes, towels and bedding. This was for a family of eight. Mom said, "We may be poor but we will not be dirty". The family carried water and kept the water hot on the stove. We girls when we were home, hung the clothes outside to dry or Mom did it all. In the winter the clothes would freeze dried outside then hung in the house to finish drying. Mom's hand were always sore during that time.

Mom did not have a clothes dryer until a few years before she and Dad came to spend the last few years of their lives living with me and my family in Kentucky.

We ironed on Thursday using sad irons heated on the stove until we were able to have electric. [A sad iron is made out of metal and put on a hot stove to heat.] The wood burner had to burn winter and summer. Mom had three irons, one to iron with while the other two were getting hot. We checked for temperature by running the hot iron on a rag,

Monday and Thursday Mom made her great homemade bread. Usually 8 loaves at a time. Friday was house cleaning and baking for the weekend. Saturday morning we mopped the whole house then we baked a big cake or two pies. Sunday was a big meal cooked in case someone came and we rested that day.

The good old days? BAH!!!!!!!

We did enjoy Saturday if we went to town.

Saturday was shopping if we could get one of the family to take us and we had gas stamps to purchase gas for the driver's car.

When possible Mom would drop Deloris and me at the movie, after the movies if we had the fifty cents we went to a movie \$.10 then to "Paramount Lunch" for a \$.10 hotdog, \$.05 potato chips and \$.05 pop. Then we would go to another movie \$.10 and bought \$.05 popcorn or penny candy. At that time everything cost five or ten cents, even the movies. Most days the theater was full of kids and very few adults.

At the movie we saw a double feature of all kinds, a serial that continued each week as a draw, cartoon, coming attractions short, newsreels and ads. During that time movies started being in color. Wow some invention.

We were blessed in many ways. We had healthy family members who loved each other, a house to live in, food, water and all of my 4 brothers came home safe from WWII, armed service members who kept our country safe from foreign invasion. Most of our clothes came from Salvation Army, we all got new underwear and socks. Mom lived to be 81 years old and Dad 86 years old also I still have a 93 year old sister who is in good health. I am 85 years old. We were and are blessed.

## ADOLPH'S FIVE AND DIME

Everytime that I hear those four words I laugh till tears run down my cheeks. My deceased sister, Judy, if I said them to her, would say , "Oh, my Good Lord!" ...and we would dissolve with peels of laughter.

Adolph's Five and Dime was a store at the corner of our block where we grew up. It was a very nice neighborhood. Adolph was a lovely Jewish man who owned the store... and quite a store it was, as it had everything in it, and I do mean EVERYTHING!

Growing up, my sister and I, and the other children of the neighborhood, spent hours in there looking...and looking...and looking at "STUFF". We didn't even know what half of the "stuff" was. We were afraid to ask Mr. Adolph about them, so we just gawked in silence. We never had any money to buy anything, and ADOLPH KNEW IT!

We would return home after we knew that we had worn out our welcome with Adolph... mainly because he would tell us to either buy something OR GET OUT! I never could figure out why he was not happy to have our company, as noone else was ever in there to buy anything. I always wondered if he just had the store to have fun for himself, and I bet it would have been a thrill to take a peek at his profit and loss sheet.

ADOLPH was bald!! I suspect now, that I know about Alopecia, that he had a very strong case of it. He wore a wig. I think that he only wore the wig as someone told him to do that , his wife? The reason that I guessed that was because he just threw it on any-ole-way in the a.m. and most of t he times it was sideways or backways on his head. I always wanted to have a conversation about that with him but was too afraid of him to start the conversation.

Our Mother sent us to Adolph's store at least twice a day to purchase something. But our Mother never liked what we purchased so she just made my sister turn around and go back to the store and get our money back from Adolph. Adolph would just scream at us, but we stood our ground until the cash register was slammed shut and he gave us our money back. This day in time a proprietor would tell the children that they could never come back to his store again. But in the days gone-bye people were too polite to do such a thing to children and I think truly that Adolph enjoyed having someone come into his store so he could hear the little ding-aling bell on the top of the door that rang when someone came in. It kind of kept him company.

But I will tell you a secret...I don't think that Adolph had any children. The reason that I think that is because he knew then, and I know now, that my Mother was so smart that she could keep us running back and forth all day... a sort of baby- sitter program. And I think he really let us pester him in the hopes that someday our Mother would come into his store and he could see what she really was like... OUR MOTHER WAS SO SMART...WISH I HAD THOUGHT OF THAT! GOD OLE' DAYS WERE SO FUN !!

**By Mary Ann Mitchell-Carrico, Campbell County**



## Lost and Found memories

Have you ever gone looking for something that's missing and end up finding lost memories?

Well, last night while hunting something missing, I emptied some old trunks and chests and got lost in old memories.

As piece by piece was pulled out and looked at, I wondered why they were all saved.

There was old clothing from my husband's army days, so small I wondered how he had ever worn them. The medals and emblems long forgot except the scars from battle he yet wears to prove there really was a Korean war. All the anxious moments while there, from his loved ones back home and his never-failing faith in God that brought him through.

There were our wedding clothes, looking so limp, tired and worn, that once were so crisp and new. A reminder of younger days and seeming so long ago.

There were feather pillows, old handmade blankets, well worn and put aside never to be used again. The many hours that were spent plucking chickens and fowl to save the feathers, and so many stitches and love in each blanket to be laid aside and never used again. Now everyone wants a piece of this past. I don't know if it's a reminder of things that were or just the beauty of looking at what was.

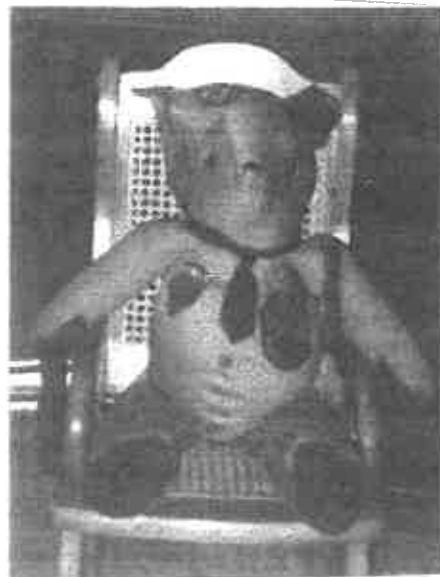
There among the treasured things, I lifted out and returned, to the chests, were things our children made or gave us through the years. Each remembered joy of the sparkle in their little faces when they made and presented them to us, I treasure. It was the joy of accomplishment to make things and give them in love.

Anyone can or could buy things, but the love that is put into small gifts outweighs any expensive gifts I could ever have gotten.

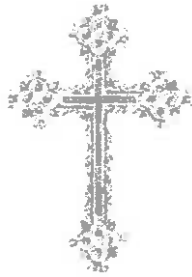
Today we attended the funeral of a dear friend of ours, and as I look back on these things, we cannot go backward. We have our memories to take out and put back, when we need them, to carry us over a rough road. But, if we don't take the time to make these memories, along the way, there is not much joy in living.

Only God knows how many more times I'll take these memories from these chests and reflect on them. When the time comes, someone else will go through them and discard them, not knowing as I have, what they mean.

As I close the lids and walk away, I know I can go back anytime and find old memories that have been lost.



By Dorothea Schlappi, Lincoln County



## TRIBUTE TO A LIVING MAN FOR ALL SEASONS

Guess who? Do you know a living man for all Seasons? If not, then follow him when he is around. Shake his hands, give him a pat but not too hard for he might fall upside down.

People love to talk to him

Sometimes a mile long without a break.

His gracious smile and hidden wisdom  
Stir up the conversation long...long...long

Small school kids shared their love  
To a humble man with a big heart.  
One by one they give him a loving hug  
With joyful smile, he makes them laugh.

He likes to run but not for fun  
For duties abound to be served on time.  
Visiting the sick, the shut-ins and the homebound.  
Rain, shine or snow he goes giving them the needed  
Holy Host.

Scripture studies and Sunday writings  
Show that he knows the Bible so well.  
Ask him anything on Scripture course  
gladly he explains it with all his heart!

From a distance he gets a gloomy call  
Someone he knew by grace went home.  
For spiritual consolation to mourning souls  
He goes no matter what conditions prevail.

We hear that he a has a little dog  
Who followed him all year around  
to share the love for his master's need,  
That is love and hug after a hard days work.

Happy are his parents with his endeavor  
For his spiritual guidance for everyone  
Truly it's a blessing for us all  
With him around it's a joy to behold.

Varoom-Vroom-VRoom-that's the sound of a motorcycle  
With his slim body structure  
He might be blown by a whirling breeze as he rides.

Happy are we that have a truly gifted living man for all  
seasons and that is Father Brian Johnson!  
Happy birthday from all of us and God bless you always!

By Mila Whitler, Breckinridge County

## One in Ten Thousand

Three years of dating on the college campus. Bill and I had become best friends, become engaged, and now we were working on wedding plans. It seemed right to us, but for such a huge, permanent life decision, I ABSOLUTELY wanted God's approval! Who knows???? Out of ten thousand men I could meet in this lifetime, perhaps there was someone else out there who would put my life on a different trajectory God had planned.

So, I began to pray earnestly during that spring of 1977 that God would confirm to me that out of 10,000 men I could meet in this lifetime, Bill Russ was indeed the one God wanted me to marry.

The weeks passed and one Friday afternoon, I had a major test. Bill and I planned to drive 90 minutes to the North Carolina mountains the next day. I needed some money for tomorrow's day trip, so handing Bill my ATM card, I asked him to please withdraw some cash for me from the campus bank.

"What's your ATM access code?" he asked.

"1 7 4 5," I replied. (not actual code)

"No, that's MY number. What's YOURS?"

"1 7 4 5 IS my code number," I repeated.

We stood there looking at each other for a moment as we slowly realized we had the SAME code number. Quite unsettled, Bill promised to call Wachovia Bank on Monday morning.

"The bank officer couldn't believe it either!" Bill announced the following week. "For a four digit code number, the bank officer said that there is a less than one in 10,000 chance that two customers would have the same access code. And ... even if two bank customers DID happen to have the same access code number, what is the likelihood that they would ever find out about one another? We have been dating for three years, seeing one another almost daily, and never knew this before!"

“Yes ...” I said quietly as I meditated on this amazing fact. “And what’s the likelihood that those two people with the same code would be ENGAGED and planning to get MARRIED?”

We stared at each other, still stunned. I had my one in ten thousand answer!

**By Carol Russ, Oldham County**

## To Blessed to be Stressed

I recently found a plaque with the slogan "To Blessed to be Stressed" on it and I had to buy it because it applied to my life "to the tee." In the last 3 1/2 years I lost my husband and nearly lost all my children.

Go back to September 2014, my daughter called saying, "Mom get yours and Dads medicine together and be out here to my house by one o'clock. We have to be in Dayton by a certain time to catch a plane for Florida. I said "why? She said our son had an accident and they didn't know if he would live or not. He was driving and going 60 mph and his heart stopped. He hit an oak tree. The car behind him saw it and called 911. They had to cut him out of the vehicle. It crushed his hip, nearly cut off his foot, punctured his lung, and crushed the bones in his face. For weeks we didn't know if he would live or die. With excellent doctors and a lot of prayers he began to improve. He was in a rehab hospital for 3 more weeks and in house therapy for weeks after that.

After my husband and I were there taking care of our son after he had come home from the hospital, my husband got sick and I called 911 for him. They took him to the hospital for a week. He came back to our son's with therapy, that seem to not help. We came home in April and he started failing fast. He got to where he could not swallow. So on Labor Day I took him to the ER, and he was admitted. On Wednesday they took him to a room where they were going to change his blood, hoping this would help. While they were doing this he had a heart attack. He was taken to ICU, and lived until our son got

**in from Florida on Friday night. He told me he saw angels coming for him. Then, he was gone on September 11, 2015.**

**In December after that our youngest daughter was out to eat with her husband and couple when she suddenly went into cardiac arrest, after complaining don't you think it is hot in here she stated to her husband and fell over to the floor. Thank the Lord her friend was a nurse and did CPR until the squad came. She was rushed to the hospital where they put in a pace maker.**

**In 2018 our middle child was in the hospital and they were doing a procedure on her when her heart stooped. She said when she came to they were saying stay with us , stay with us. They finally determined thru genetic testing that what my children have is inherited probably from my mother, who died at 41 yrs. old. I was only nine when she passed away.**

**My middle child took a picture of me with all three of my children and said, "Guess who did not have a pacemaker". Me of course. It seemed to have skipped my sister and me.**

**So you can see why I am totally blessed even though I don't have my husband now. I could have lost my whole family, but God saw fit to let me keep my children. I'm just "Too Blessed to be Stressed."**

**Janet VanBibber  
Greenup County  
2019**

## Strangers love, or how I learned to love being the mom

My youngest son squeals with surprise as the lady behind the Kroger florist's counter accidentally deflates a balloon. It makes a raspberry noise, which my delighted toddler imitates and then cackles. His laughter is bright and pure. People in the produce section nearby can hear it, and I see some of them smile and laugh along. The lady behind the florist's counter also laughs. She keeps trying to get my toddler's attention by slowly inflating and deflating the same balloon. When we walk past on the way to the checkout, the clerk starts talking.

"Your laughter just made my night," she says, bending down to toddler level. "It was the best sound in the world! Would you like a balloon?"

"Yes please," says the two-year-old. People comment on how polite my kids are. Truthfully it's because "please" is the third word I teach them. I say teach, but it's more like enforce.

"Uh, yes please," says the ten-year-old. I am always bracing for the day he will be "too old" for things. Apparently balloons are still good.

One blue and one orange balloon later, the clerk is showing my toddler a picture of a bulldog on her phone because he has a bulldog on his shirt. "Those are my favorite type of dogs," I sheepishly offer. I'm always unsure of saying anything to people when they have started the conversation talking to my kids. I'm always afraid people will try to include unsolicited advice or judgment for me. I have learned that when you enter into these situations, the best way to handle them is to just open your heart and let people love your kids.

The hardest lesson I have had to learn as a mother is that other people are indeed capable of loving my kids just for the sake of them being kids. My kids can be so annoying! There are times that I need to step aside and forget my name is, "mommy, mommy, mommy, MOMMY!" I love them both, annoyances and all. I do not fool myself to think that these strangers think my kids are somehow perfect. Most of them are also parents, or grandparents. They know what children are capable of. Yet for the briefest of moments, they have decided to show my sons unconditional love through kind words, caring actions, and warm gestures.

I always thank them. My boys thank them, too. The toddler sometimes adds, "I love you, bye!" I hope they realize they are teaching my boys that manners and kindness win the day. I hope they feel loved in return. I hope they do this for other people, and other people do it for other people. I hope they can see their act of love floating above their heads like a brightly colored balloon tethered to their small wrists.

**By Ella Hudson, Clark County**



## Quilting Memories

As I sat with a quilt square in my lap, my thoughts went back to 12 years earlier (2006) when I decided to retire from teaching. One of my goals was to join a quilting guild and learn how to make quilts. My mother also wanted to learn how to quilt so we both joined Lincoln Homemakers and the quilt guild called "The Sassy Stitchers".

"The Sassy Stitchers" was made up of about 20 women, most that were like me and my mother, beginners. I don't remember who chose our first project but it was the "Giant Dahiiia". It was a beautiful quilt. Our instructor, Rita Stewart, suggested we chose an easier project but since we didn't know any different, we said, no, we will do this one. We all worked hard and completed our project. Being beginners, we just didn't know any better. Our next several projects were also considered difficult but we just kept on. We bonded, being beginners, and worked well together. My mother kept up with the rest of us and enjoyed the fellowship with the other quilters. She carefully chose her fabrics and cut with precision.

As the years rolled on, I noticed that my mother seemed to enjoy the camaraderie with the other women more than working on the current project. I liked watching her since I knew she didn't get to interact with other women other than her church group on Sundays. The other women also enjoyed talking with her. It didn't matter as much if she didn't finish a project. During this time, she started working on her own projects at home. She found patterns in magazines and began making full sized quilts for members of the family. She took care with her cutting and piecing and you could see her pride when she finished.

Mom chose patterns that were small and intricate. I began to notice that she had problems with cutting. I was afraid she would cut her fingers so I volunteered to cut her patterns

for her. One project she decided to do was circles on squares. She was going to make this for her youngest great grandson.

It was during this time that she was diagnosed with dementia. She began to forget little things and her short term memory was getting worse. She began to lose interest in her projects and didn't have as much interest in going to quilting classes. I would urge her to go with me and at least visit with the other ladies. She didn't want to socialize as much anymore. Her health began to suffer as well. She would complain of not feeling good and not wanting to get out and about.

Not long after this, my mother passed away. I took her material and unfinished projects and put them in a room. I wasn't ready just yet to go through all of it. About a year later, my youngest daughter asked me if I would finish her son's quilt that my mom had started on. I found the squares and began to lay them out. This is when I discovered that her squares were not square. She had sewn circles on the center of the squares and some of them were centered and some not. I tried to straighten out the squares that I could and picked out the best ones. As I did this, my memories came flooding back to 12 years before and how precise she was then. I now thought of my own life and how I too would probably not take the time to make things right as I tried to now. I will look at my mothers earlier projects now and treasure them even more. I am glad to have the memories that I have and hope that my quilts bring fond memories to my children and others.

**By Esther Bailey, Lincoln County**