

Full Life - Full House
The Way Things Usta Was
December 25, 1998
By: Ruthie Bright Wright

On January 4, 1931, I made my appearance at the Oglethorpe Sanitarium on Park Avenue, Savannah, Georgia, seven years after my brother, Jack, was born. My mother, Inez Helfrich Bright, and dad, Andrew Jackson Bright, Jr., took me home to 1409 East 50th Street. I remember the house as a two bedroom, gray shingle house with a free standing stove in the living room. My mother used to hang towels close to the stove and wrap me in a warm towel after a bath on a chilly night.

In the back yard was a goldfish pond and later a wonderful walk-in doll house that my dad had built in the Bright Brooks Lumber Company yard, where Dad worked for his father, who owned the business. Dad later became president after his father died. The business was located at 630 East Henry Street.

I was always interested in dolls and can remember loading my wagon with my favorite babies and walking, by myself, to a wonderful shady oak tree on the corner of Live Oak and Washington Avenue. I believe that Mary Frances and Carl Helfrich's house later was built on this lot. I would sit under the tree and eat butter and sugar bread and drink lemonade that I brought with me. Thank goodness I never needed playmates, as there were none around my house. Bertha, my black nurse maid, would walk me to Daffin Park in the afternoon, where she would sit on the benches with the other maids while the children played.

I was always on the look out for gypsies, as mother had said some Gypsies had camped not too far from our house on a hill overlooking the Casey Canal. She said, "Gypsies will steal little children and never bring them back home". This terrified me! I had a hard time going to sleep at night thinking that the gypsies would come through my bedroom window and steal me away from my family.

It seems that we spent most of our days at my Grandmother Edna Helfrich's house, which was not too far away across Victory Drive at 809 East 41st Street. Some of my brother's, friends lived two doors from my Grandmother's house, and I just enjoyed being at her house. There were always so many people living there. My Grandmother, Edna, was totally deaf but she could read your lips so well you almost forgot she couldn't hear. My Papa, John Helfrich, smoked a pipe that had the best smell, and he was always sitting at the card table playing solitaire.

Aunt Mayme, Grandmother's younger sister, was the most fun. She was still young enough to want to play games, and she could drive a car. Aunt Mayme was small, with

Memoirs

Page 2

beautiful brown eyes. She had been married but her husband was in a mental hospital after a train accident. To support herself, she worked at the Atlantic Coastline Railroad Business Office as a secretary. Papa had owned the Helfrich Candy Co, but even though he worked hard for years, he never made much money. With Aunt Mayme's added income, they managed to get by. At times, Aunt Florence, Grandmother's older sister, would come for a visit and stay at least six months at a time. She and Grandmother would sit at their sewing machines for hours and turn out the most beautiful dresses that they had copied from the store windows on Broughton Street. I never remember having a bought evening dress or graduation dress. They made all of my dresses for special occasions (evening dresses and graduation dresses), and they were more beautiful than any I could have bought in a store.

When I was about eight or nine, we moved two blocks down the street from my Grandmother's house in a two story gray shingle house (637 E. 41st St.). It was a wonderful house with four bedrooms. When I asked for a dollhouse, my Dad had one built by Bright Brooks Lumber that was nearly the same size as our house on 50th Street. My mother said she couldn't believe her eyes when saw a house being delivered by trailer and put in our back yard. I spent many fun filled hours in my doll house. I was the envy of the neighborhood children!

I changed school districts from Charles Ellis School and began going to 37th Street School, which was a big change in my life. I was suddenly popular with my classmates and made lots of friends who lived nearby. I was elected president of my 5th and 6th grade classes.

My father's parents, we called them Mombo & Pop, lived across the street from the school, but I never spent too much time at their house. I just remember going there for Sunday dinner. We always had fried chicken, rice and gravy, and butter beans. There was always a white tablecloth with white cloth napkins on the table. Pop didn't seem to care for children too much, so we never stayed too long after dinner. Mombo always looked the same. Her hair was always perfectly in place. I later found out that she had a steel plate in the top of her head due to brain tumor surgery. She went to the beauty parlor every day to have her hair combed.

Daddy bought a summer home on the Okatee River in South Carolina near Bluffton at Camp Saint Mary's. It was a shack when he first bought it, but we went to the cabin every weekend to work on it. When the work was done, it was beautiful! Daddy made a stone fireplace in the big room and enclosed the wrap around porch to make four bedrooms. Mama bought second hand furniture and each bedroom was painted a different color. There were iron beds, some painted pink, some blue, some yellow and some green. The bathroom was enclosed off the back porch, but for some reason was never completed. You had to be careful when friends were visiting that no one would climb to look over the top. There were some pretty hot days spent there in the summer and to stay cool we sat in the river in inner tubes under the dock in the mud. On the back of the lot, Daddy built a one room house for Blossom, the Negro girl who helped out with the cooking and the cleaning. But one day Blossom announced that she would have to quit because she had fallen off her bicycle and gotten pregnant.

Memoirs

Page 3

I remember listening to the radio on December, 1941 and hearing about Pearl Harbor, the beginning of World War II for America. We worried about Jack, who would soon be graduating from high school. He was eager to go into the service as his love was flying airplanes. He entered Clemson College after graduating from Savannah High, but didn't finish his freshman year as he was accepted in to the Naval Air Force. He was so proud, and we were proud of him!

When he was younger, about 12, he had been diagnosed as having polio, which was raging at the time, and was required to wear a brace on his leg. All symptoms seemed to disappear though, and we thought it was a miracle that he had passed all his medical exams for flight school. He was sent to Pensacola for flight training.

Meanwhile, when I was 11, we bought a house on the Skidaway River at Isle of Hope, 19 Bluff Drive. WW II was in progress, the Japanese having bombed Pearl Harbor three years earlier. Grandmother was sad to see us leave 41st street but said, "I don't blame you, Isle of Hope is heaven". Jack would fly up from Pensacola in his Corsair and buzz the house. We would go running down on the dock and wave to him. Mother would yell, "Jack, go back!".

Those were the most fun filled days of my childhood. There were few people living on the island but the few people who were there had children my age. There were few houses on the island, mostly along the Bluff and Central Ave. which was the streetcar track.

The streetcar was the main transportation for carrying the children back and forth to the city for school. In the summer, the red, white, and blue open-air victory car was run. I was so worried, as the boys had been throwing matches off the back of the car and starting grass fires along the track between Isle of Hope and Savannah. At one point, they were forbidden to ride the streetcar.

The twins, Jean and Joan Cope, Betty Roberts, Allan and Guerard Bond, Betty Rollinson, Will Theus, and Kathryn Johnson all hung around with each other and when we became interested in boys, Noel Wright, George Van Giesen, Blair Minick, Jack Campbell and Kenneth Roberts were included in the Isle of Hope gang. We would have nothing to do with town people, except for my two cousins, Sonny Schirm and Elinor Hanson. Elinor was living with my Grandmother while her dad was fighting in Europe.

In the summer we lived in or on the river, swimming to the sandbar across from the MacIntosh's dock and floating back to our dock. Our parents were having their own fun, drinking and cooking together. They never had to worry about us, as we were always together. Slowly the girls started pairing off with boys, but we kept it within our own group. I decided Noel was the cutest, Betty Rollinson liked Jack Campbell, Betty Roberts and Noel's cousin, Edward Johnston, who came out to live with Noel quite a bit, were a twosome. Guerard and George weren't interested.

Memoirs

Page 4

In 1945 we moved from our first house and bought a very old, beautiful house at 7 Bluff Drive known as the Lawton House. It was about five doors east on our original Isle of Hope home. In 1946 after about two years, Daddy decided he was tired of repairing an old house and wanted to build on the corner of Bluff and LaRoche, part of the old Wylly Estate. It just happened to be located right next door to Noel.

Brady's Marina was the meeting place for boat lovers. Lukie Stein was the main mechanic and manager. Working for him were Mike Wright, Shorty Grant, and Willie Daise, who knew everything about pulling boats out of the water to have the hulls painted. As there was little dockage at the marina itself, and the boats were anchored out at night. It was Willie's job to row out every evening to the anchored boats and place a lighted oil lantern on each boat. In the early morning, the order would be reversed. Willie was a Gullah and was heard to describe one of the newer boats as having "a box what coolie heself" (electric ice box).

Willie and Shorty walked to work every day from their homes in Thunderbolt, miles away, and never missed a days work. Willie always carried a fried fish in his pocket to snack on during the day.

The excitement of the week was the barge traffic, which flowed down the Intercoastal Waterway during the war years. When you heard the revved up sounds of a tug engine, you knew a barge was not going to make it around the bend. At that time, tugs pulled their barges, rather than pushing them, and many a dock has been known to crumble under the force of the crash!

The first house that we bought on the island, 19 Bluff Drive, had been owned by John Rollinson, who sold because he was tired of sharing his wife with Judge Grayson, who lived down the road. At least once a year she changed husbands. She just couldn't make up her mind - it usually took a fur coat or diamond to woo her back and forth.

Farther down the bluff was Blair Minick, who couldn't leave the bottle alone. He loved to swim and drink, so to solve that problem, he tied a hot water bottle filled with his gin around his neck and floated with the tide. If the tide was going out, he would swim to the General Oglethorpe Hotel, and when the tide turned, he would float back home. He was seen numerous times clinging to a marker, resting and drinking from his hot water bottle.

Noel was not concentrating on schoolwork, and as a result his grades were not too good. In the fall of 1946 his parents decided to send him off to prep school, Saint Andrews School in Middletown, Delaware, an Episcopal school endowed by the DuPont Family. He was gone most of the year and was only home at Christmas and during the summer. But our group managed to stay together.

In the ninth grade when cousin Elinor came to live with us for a year, I was sent to a private school, Pape School (girls only), located on the corner of Drayton and Hall Streets. I felt uprooted, as all of my friends were going to Savannah High School. I was president

Memoirs

Page 5

of Quis Qui Sorority and graduated in 1948. Noel was off at school for my graduation, so Guerard took me to all of the festivities.

The next two years I spent at Armstrong Junior College located downtown at the north end of Forsyth Park. When I graduated and it was time to go the University of Georgia to complete my last two years, I really did not want to leave home, but the experiences in living and going to school in Athens really helped me grow up. I was on my own, away from my secure life of family and friends, and was forced to learn how to live on a budget and make new friends. I joined Kappa Delta Sorority and made wonderful relationships with my sorority sisters. Two of my roommates, Sarah Pratt and Peggy McBride were later in my wedding.

In my senior year, Noel transferred to UGA from Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia. Edward, Noel's cousin, transferred from the University of North Carolina, and Guerard Bond was already in Athens. They were all two years behind me. Guerard and Peggy became a twosome and I hoped they would later get married. Edward started going with Charlotte Bowman from Buford, Georgia.

After I graduated with a degree in Elementary Education in June 1954, I returned to Savannah and began a teaching career as a fourth grade teacher in Pulaski School. It was a brand new school and some of my sorority sisters came to Savannah to teach there with me. I was saving my money so Noel and I could be married the summer of 1954.

Noel was in the ROTC at UGA, and in the summer between his junior and senior year, he was required to attend army summer camp at Fort Benning near Columbus. Because of his ROTC activities, he would graduate as a Second Lieutenant in the Army and be required to serve two years in the active army.

When Noel returned to Savannah after summer camp, we were married in the living room of my home at 1 Bluff Drive on August 7, 1954. Attendants were Jack Bright, Edward Johnston, Guerard Bond, George Van Giesen, Elinor, Sarah Pratt, Peggy Newnan, and Noel's sister, Janet. The Best Man was Noel's father.

When school began again in the fall of 1954, we moved into a garage apartment (we called it a tree house) which was behind Dr. and Mrs. Wilson's home on Henderson Avenue in Athens. I had gotten a job teaching second grade at the Chase School in Athens. It was our idea that we would be able to support ourselves while Noel finished his senior year. We had a great time having our friends over and learning how to cook. We made soup once and had enough to last a month! The floors of our apartment were not level, and one time I made rolls. When I opened the oven door to take them out, they rolled out on to the floor by themselves!

We threw so much food in the garbage can that our landlord felt sorry for us and had us for a meal at least once a week. It was so good to eat a decent meal someone else cooked. But Noel did gain weight and eventually weighed 190 pounds, more than he had ever weighed in his life. We even had a pet squirrel that lived loose in the apartment with

Memoirs

Page 6

us, as well as a blue parakeet named "Blue Boy", who eventually flew the coop and escaped back to the wild where we had originally found him.

In November, I became very sick with the "flu". Nothing seemed to help, so I was sent home a week early for Thanksgiving holidays to Mama, in hopes that her cooking and care would cure me. But when the nausea continued, I went for tests and it was determined that I was pregnant (something everybody suspected except me.)

I continued to be sick and could no longer teach. Noel's Grandfather Johnston helped with the finances and kept Noel in school. I was in the hospital for a week in Athens with kidney infection but slowly after three months passed, my health began to improve and we began to make plans for the first baby. Noel said it was just like getting a new puppy. Noel graduated with honors in June 1955, and we moved back to Savannah to stay the summer. In October, Noel and I would leave for Fort Sill, the Army Field Artillery School in Lawton, Oklahoma for his first assignment in the army as a new Second Lieutenant. Luckily, Edward and Charlotte's orders were the same, so we would still have some family with us.

Noel worked the summer at Bright Brooks Lumber and we moved into the Chelsea apartments, completely furnished and decorated by Mama. Noel had hopes of returning to Bright Brooks after his 2 years with the army. My brother Jack, now out of the Marine Air Corp, married with three children, was working there.

When the time came for me to have the baby and I was two weeks late, Dr. Demmond, my obstetrician, gave me castor oil. We decided to spend that night with Noel's parents. Saturday night, August 6, I started having pains, probably from the castor oil, but we decided to go to Telfair Hospital just in case. Hours went by and Noel went home. Then finally the next day, Sunday, August 7th at 7 P.M. Elizabeth was born. Were we scared! Neither of us knew what to do with a baby. After a full week in the hospital with my feet not touching the ground, Mama, Daddy and baby left the Telfair Hospital for the ride home to the Chelsea Apartments. Several times the baby slipped down out of my arms into an uncomfortable position and Noel would have to stop the car to settle down the crying Mama and baby. No wonder Elizabeth suffered from colic. I turned everything over to Mama who took complete control during the day. I dreaded the night when I was in charge.

But nature has a way of taking over and by the time we drove out of Isle of Hope in our Ford in November headed for Lawton, we had parenting down to a fine art. We drove to Monroe, LA and then the next day reached Paris, TX where Noel got violently ill. He could not stand any light on in the motel room and could not hold any food down. I wondered what was going to happen to us in the God-forsaken foreign land so far from home. But in the morning light, he recovered and we were once again on our way to Lawton. We checked in at the Geronimo Motel because it had a kitchenette. We planned to stay there until Noel checked in at Fort Sill, and we could find out what housing was available for us. Noel stood in front of the mirror and practiced saying, "Lt. Wright, reporting for duty as ordered, Sir."

Memoirs

Page 7

After 3 days, we found that Charlotte and Edward had arrived in their new pink Oldsmobile, and it was decided that we would all rent duplexes off base on Williams Avenue. Ours was 2200 Williams Ave. and Ed's was three houses down from us. We had the side that was furnished with brown print on the sofa and chair. Edward and Charlotte had the green print fabric. (I liked theirs better.)

On the adjoining side of our duplex were a Sergeant and his German wife. They had five girls in a two bedroom duplex. The mother could not speak any English, and I swore she was always talking about us. In the duplex next door were two Lieutenants, the Roterts and the DeLisis, who each had a little girl Elizabeth's age. We had good time together, cooking out in the back yard.

Noel was often gone overnight on guard duty or field exercises at the post, and I remember one night I was in the back yard next door with neighbors, when we saw a shadowy figure creep up to my kitchen window. All the guys started chasing the peeping tom but never caught him. I was terrified as Noel was gone from home quite a bit. He was given weekend duty and was away over night on field exercises. His major was red-haired heavy- set man who disliked Noel because Noel was a reserve officer and not regular army. Edward seemed to be having a wonderful time. I was grateful to my neighbors, as Noel was working all the time.

It was no wonder that Noel came down with a high fever. I drove him to Fort Sill and left him there to see the doctor. The doctor determined that he had a contagious disease and would have to be sent to the contagious hospital out in the boondocks. He was put in the back of an open truck. With him was a 10 gallon glass jug filled with water which started rolling around, and when the truck stopped suddenly, the glass broke and cut Noel on the heel. When the driver heard the jug break, he stopped and saw Noel bleeding. He turned the truck around and headed back to the main hospital where the cut was stitched without anesthetic. Then Noel was again loaded into the back of the truck and taken to the contagious hospital. After five days of asking someone to check his ankle, and being told that they didn't treat cuts at that hospital, someone finally took off the bandage and inspected the wound. Luckily, there was no infection!

But Noel's fever never went away, and his diagnosis changed from day to day ranging from Spinal Meningitis, to Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever to Q Fever to Polio. After a month of being in the bed, Noel was released, his diagnosis was a fever of undetermined origin.

Mama had flown out to be with me for a week, keeping Elizabeth while I visited with Noel through a window at the hospital. Noel came home on Elizabeth's first birthday. He had lost 20 pounds and was so weak that he could hardly stand up, but was required to report to duty the next day.

It was no wonder that when our two years were over in November 1957, we were glad to leave this lonely place of dust storms, tarantulas and tornadoes. Edward had

Memoirs

Page 8

decided to make the army his career and had gotten into flight school. He, Charlotte, and baby Nina were being sent to France.

We would return to Savannah with a new addition, an English Bulldog named Taddy Boy and expecting our second baby.

The one thing that I thought would never change in my life had happened! Daddy had decided to sell Bright Brooks Lumber Company. This meant Noel would have to find another job. Jack, my brother, had been diagnosed as having Multiple Sclerosis and would not be able to work. He was also having trouble with his marriage.

Daddy's brother, Orrie, had founded First Federal Savings and Loan Association in 1934, and was Chairman of the Board. He offered Noel a job as a teller, which we were grateful for, and Noel began his career in the main office at 30 East Bryan Street as a teller trainee.

We moved into a two bedroom rental house on East 66th Street, just west of Paulson. Our new dog, Tad the English Bulldog, was now grown and was strong and sturdy, as well as people loving, but he had a drooly mouth. But more importantly, he hated other dogs. He had almost been killed by two large dogs when he was a puppy in Lawton, and now he was out for revenge against any dog he could find. Anytime he could escape from the fenced yard, we would find a trail of blood and injured dogs. We were forced to give Taddy Boy away. It was the first time in my life that I did not regret losing a dog.

Our baby boy, Noel III, was born February 6, 1958. I had awakened during the night in labor, and we bundled up Elizabeth and drove in our trusty Ford to the Telfair Hospital at about midnight. Because Noel could not leave the sleeping Elizabeth in the car alone, he drove close to the front door of the hospital, let me out of the car, and drove off! It was not until the next afternoon that our Bubba arrived. He was a big baby, eight pounds, and a ravenous eater. It took two bottles of milk to satisfy him. His Grandfather Noel called him "drooly Uly" after the bald head Ule Brenner. Late he was called WPR Monroe, the house wrecker when he tried to saw down the bed. Monroe was a local man who advertised on TV as a house demolisher.

We bought our first house in 1958 at 25 Colonel Estill Drive in Wymberly at Isle of Hope. We were so proud!

It was just a year and a half later that our baby, Kathryn, was born on July 7, 1959. She was a dainty little baby weighing not quite 7 pounds. By now we were old hats at raising children, and Kathy became a good sleeper and an easy baby.

We were fortunate that we had wonderful friends (and we have remained friends for all of these years). The couple living next door to us on Colonel Estill Drive was Ralph and Myrtle Vick and their two children, Cindy and Little Ralph. Cindy was old enough to baby sit, and Little Ralph and Bubba were the same age. Cindy would take care of Kathy. She called Bubba, "Bubba Louie", and she called Kathy, "Kaky Doodle".

Memoirs

Page 9

There were many children in the neighborhood, and we all became good friends, which has lasted throughout the years. The friends were the Carters, Shirley and Eddie with their children, Jenny, Bubba and Jeff; the Warrens, Dave and Helen with their children, Brent, Charles, Gary, Ann and Joe; as well as the Herndons, Dick and Nelle (both dead now) and their children, Bob, Tom, Ricky and Janet; Oscar & Betty Crosby and their children Marshall, Craig, Keith and Sally.

Kathy had a friend named Tammy, who would ask Kathy to come to her house to play. But once there, she would not let Kathy come home. Her mother would call me and beg for her to stay. Kathy finally would not go to her house.

Elizabeth's friend was Valerie Dixon. Elizabeth called her "Ballerie", and Valerie called Elizabeth, "Lizard".

In the spring of 1960, Mama and Daddy sold their house at 1 Bluff Drive at Isle of Hope and moved to Florida. They settled in Sarasota. I missed them so much and could hardly believe that they could have left their home here in Savannah. But Daddy was going through a depression period because of the selling his business, and the fact that Jack's illness was steadily worsening. Jack was also going through a difficult divorce, and his wife, Pat, was causing a terrible "stink" about not having enough money to raise her children.

Our children were attending Isle of Hope Elementary School, and when Kathy entered the first grade, I went back to teach fourth grade at the children's school. When integration of the schools was ordered in 1970, the children and I transferred to Savannah Christian School, where all tuition would be free if I worked there too, which I did until all the children were out of school.

Noel had learned to fly while we were in Oklahoma and this had begun to be his first hobby (of which there were many). I would never fly with him, but he flew every weekend and took trips with friends to the Bahamas. The children were not allowed to fly with him.

One Sunday afternoon Elizabeth begged me to let her fly with her Daddy, and I reluctantly let her go. I remember we had just bought her a new pair of red shoes the day before, and she had these on as she walked out of the house around 3 o'clock. I tried to keep busy that day, trying not to think about my child. But as darkness approached and I had heard nothing from my fliers, I began to be apprehensive. My deepest fears were coming true. Darkness fell and I knew the plane had no lights. I called the airfield, but they had closed. In those days, no flight plans had to be filed. There was nothing I could do! Who should I call? My poor friends tried to console me, but I knew in my heart something had gone wrong.

Then about 9:00 PM the unbelievable call came from Noel. He and Elizabeth were safe! The plane had caught on fire in the cockpit when they were over Wassaw beach, and Noel had landed the plane in the surf just outside the breakers on Wassaw Island. They had

Memoirs

Page 10

waded ashore and walked two miles across the island to find someone at the black community to help them.

The black island caretaker, Paul, loaned them a small bateaux to travel from the island to the nearest mainland on the south end of Wilmington Island. When they were about a mile from Wassaw, the small engine broke down and Noel had to row back to the island. Fortunately, old Captain Boyd was on the island for the weekend, and he offered to take them across to the mainland in his bateaux.

At 10:30 PM, my little girl with one new red shoe lost and a tired husband were a welcome sight for my red swollen eyes. And no more airplane, thank goodness!

Noel went from flying to playing tennis. He came in second in the City of Savannah championships one year. He was a very serious tennis player until he developed a bad case of tennis elbow, and had to give up the sport after a number of years.

His next hobby was bicycle racing. Naturally he was going for the prize of racing. This meant shaving his legs, wearing skimpy tight black pants, and a fancy racing bike built in Belgium. This was not a macho man that turned women on! But this was the new hobby and he trained like an Olympic rider would to compete in the local (Georgia) races. He would ride at least 20 miles every day, and some times as many as 120 miles. He rode from Savannah to Hilton Head, Savannah to Beaufort, Savannah to Statesboro, and many times to Tybee. In his first race at Tybee, he placed 5th out of about 30 riders. He also raced in Augusta.

But he would need a new hobby as he was smashed by a car early one morning when returning from his usual training ride to the Skidaway Institute. The bike was ruined, but he received only a badly bruised shoulder.

The hobbies began to become safer after the scuba craze. He took up nature photography, and as usual, perfection was the norm. Noel won many blue ribbons in the Sierra Club nature photo contests. He has thousands of excellent slides of the Georgia barrier islands.

As age has progressed, his hobbies have slowed, and now at age 66 it is only woodturning, camellia growing and jogging three miles every day.

Noel and Ralph Vick became inseparable hunting and fishing pals beginning in 1958. They were gone every weekend. Thank goodness for Myrtle. Noel and Ralph bought hound dogs and kept them in the back yard. At one time, we had nearly 20 howling dogs in the pen. I must say we made lots of enemies that year. The dogs would begin howling early in the morning when they wanted to get out of the dog pen and go hunting deer in Wormsloe across the street from our houses. Usually we would get hang up telephone calls. Noel rigged up a sprinkler system in the dog yard so that when the howling would begin, Noel would turn on the water and this would quiet down the dogs. We raised lots of hunting dogs: Nell, One Eyed Joe, Billy, Sam, Singer, Belle, Blackboy, Red, Bullet, etc.

I had a feeling that Noel was saving money somewhere for another dog, and I was tired of having to scrounge around looking under sofa pillows to find even a dime when we heard the ice cream man coming.

So one day, I decided to hunt around in the attic. I had already looked everywhere in the house - under the bed, in the closet, in pockets of old jackets. But, there in the attic, in an old boot, I hit the pot of gold. I poured out the change in the middle of the floor and it amounted to about \$50.00. You would have thought it was a million. The kids and I celebrated by going to the hamburger drive in - had money for a movie - gas in the car and even enough for the ice cream man. All Noel could say was, "I was saving that for a special hound puppy".

But we had always had a house dog, and when we had to give away Taddy Boy, I brought Mr. Chipps, a medium sized red mixed breed with long red hair and a proud fluffy tail, home from Dr. Mood's Vet Office, where he had been left by his former owner. Chippy loved the family, especially the children, and went everywhere with us. He was sitting outside Newton's Grocery Store at Sandfly waiting for us to complete our shopping when a car plowed through the store glass window. I knew Chippy had been sitting in that spot, but he had miraculously had escaped without injury. He had been so frightened that he ran into the woods behind the store, and was not found by Noel until three days later.

I believe our favorite dogs had to be Flash, a beagle, who would sing (howl) when you raised your arms like a music conductor, and Beau, a beautiful springer spaniel, who loved to go with us on the boat to Wassaw and Ossabaw Islands. I will never forget when he went upstairs in our house on Hopecrest Avenue and jumped out of the open second story window, landed on all fours and walked away, surprised I am sure.

The following is a story Kathy wrote about Beau:

HOW TO WASH A DOG NAMED BEAU.

By Kathy Wright

If you have a dog like Beau, who seems to be more human than dog, then you are bound to have trouble at bath time. No matter how many times he hears the water going in the bathtub, he seems always to know when it's being prepared for him. Even saying his name in a casual conversation while the water is running will send him to his hiding place under the bed.

So there are certain procedures that must be followed when Beau needs a bath.

Casually pretend it's just another day. Don't look his way, speak his name, or acknowledge his presence. When the water is ready, pretend it is for your own use. You might try fixing a ham sandwich and giving him a taste every other step until you have the bathroom door securely locked behind you.

Memoirs

Page 12

There, trapped in the room with this fifty pound oversized Brittany Spaniel, you begin prying his two front legs over the side of the tub and then pushing with all your strength the rest of him, until you and he are completely drenched.

Once in the water, Beau is a gentleman, but never leave him unattended even to turn around for a towel or the soap. If the phone rings, and you tell him to "stay", don't expect him to be there when you return.

Getting him out of the tub is even a worse ordeal, as he is too big to be carried. You just say the magic word, "go", and he is out of the tub in one leap, shaking water in all direction, and heading for the front door.

Maybe next time I'll take him to the Poodle Parlor.

And I will never forget our beloved Sparky. The following is a poem I composed and some facts about Sparky:

Sparky Got His Man

By: Ruthie B. Wright

April 18, 1992

Sparky is known by many names,
But answers to none.
He thinks its all fun and games
To turn around and run.

But Friday night he earned his pay,
When he alerted us at night.
He barked and barked as if to say,
"This time I'm doing right."

"There's someone lurking in the yard,
I'm telling you it's so.
Come outside and be on guard,
For he's hiding here, I know."

The call went out to 911,
And help was on the way.
Now that Sparky's work was done,
We knew we'd be OK.

Facts About Sparky

1. Known as Benji
2. Father of Dr. Brawner's puppies

Memoirs

Page 13

3. Great deer hunter with his friend Judy
4. Lives with three cats and loves them
5. Thinks he is a cat. He prefers cat food and sits on table tops
6. Hates to take a bath
7. Likes to live outside
8. Does not like strangers
9. Neighbors say, "when Sparky speaks, we listen."
10. Before he has a bath, he smells like he is dead

Meanwhile, we had built and moved into 153 Hopecrest Avenue in the spring of 1969. Jack, my brother, died in 1970, and Noel's dad also died the same year. Daddy died two years later (1972) from heart failure. Mama moved back to Savannah to live with her sister, Ruth, at 809 East 41st Street. Later she moved into her own apartment.

Early one morning, Noel started out with his hunting friends by boat to hunt for deer on Skidaway Island. All of the men brought their lunches, usually a can of sardines and Beenie Weenies. The night before the big hunt, I had fixed Noel a real good lunch of fried chicken and such, and put it in the refrigerator. That morning, he grabbed his brown paper sack of lunch and proudly boasted to his buddies, "I've got fried chicken - no Beenie Weenies for me today".

At lunch time, all of the hungry hunters gathered around a large oak tree and brought out their lunch sacks, eyeing Noel enviously for his fried chicken. Noel opened his bag and, to his embarrassment, learned that he had picked up the wrong paper bag. He had unsnapped, uncooked green beans! He had to beg for lunch from the other hunters.

On the same order, Noel left early one cold morning in his bateau with a small five horse power motor to go to the best fishing drop around the corner at the Modena docks. It took him about an hour to reach the spot, where he found old Haywood already there. Haywood, an old black man, was a professional trout fisherman. His wife owned a small grocery store, and Haywood provided all the fresh fish for her to sell. He was one of the best fisherman around. Noel anchored his boat in a good spot and reached in his bucket for the frozen shrimp he had gotten out of the freezer. Much to his dismay, he realized that he had picked up a pack of frozen butter beans instead of shrimp. Knowing that fish did not bite well on butter beans, he pulled up anchor and motored back home, exchanged the butter beans for the bait in the freezer and returned to the fishing drop.

When he arrived, Haywood was pulling up his anchor, preparing to leave. "Did you catch anything?", Noel asked. Haywood held up his sting of 20 large trout to show Noel. "They was biting real good, but they just quit", Haywood replied as he cranked up his outboard and left.

Noel threw out his line and waited about an hour without the first bite, before he too returned home.

The old salt of the island, Harry Hucks, became like one of our family. Harry had been born in 1910 and grew up at Isle of Hope. He attended the old Isle of Hope school until the fourth grade, when he quit to help his father work. In his young days he was a professional hunter, trapper and fisherman (both fin fish and shrimp). He also used to gather turtle eggs in season to sell to the fish markets downtown. He was famous around the island for telling many interesting stories of his life. He always joined us for Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners, as his children were Jehovahs' Witnesses and didn't celebrate those events.

Harry and his wife, Stella, lived on Henderson Avenue with their seven children. We didn't become close to Harry until Stella died. At that time Harry began spending most of his time fishing and shrimping from his bateau that he kept at our dock. He would sit and rock on the dock for most of each day. He would look out over the river and marshes and tell us that the green marsh grass was his lawn, and tell us stories of the way things "usta was".

He had retired earlier from the Corps of Engineers, where he worked as a lever man on the large dredge Henry Bacon. During World War II, he went with the dredge to New Foundland and to the Pacific Islands to help in the war effort.

He did not attend church, but he worshipped nature and acknowledged that nature came from God's hand. Stella had persuaded him to go to church, which he did a few times, but a bad experience made him change his mind. Stella was hospitalized at St. Joseph's Hospital, and Harry went to the preacher to ask him to pray for her. The preacher informed him that since he was not a member of the church, he could not honor the request. I'm sure Harry gave him a blessing out with no words found in the Bible.

Harry told many Gullah stories, as he had worked with many Gullahs during his fishing and hunting careers. At the old City Market downtown, he met an old Daufuskie Island native, who came to town on Friday and Saturday in his sailing bateau, bringing chickens, vegetables, ducks, etc., to sell. He had never attended school, but told Harry that he could read and count. Harry did not believe him, so he asked, "how many chickens you got?". The old man looked at his live chickens and started counting, "Dere's two, dere's turty, dere's two pa nap anutty, and dere's two wid he legs tied together".

Mostly blacks worked at a sawmill near Thunderbolt. When the sawmill steam whistle blew early each morning, everyone who worked there knew it was time to get up and go to work.

One night, old Joe got drunk, and when the whistle blew the next morning, he didn't move from his bed. Later, his wife woke up and realized Joe was late for work, so she shook him awake. He said, "what time it is?". The wife answered, "Doofie done blow de horn and de day done break clean".

There was a gullah striker on a shrimp boat who couldn't speak English. The white captain was hard of hearing. Late one evening when it was time to anchor for the night after a long day of dragging for shrimp, the captain told the Gullah, "Go up on the bow, and when I tell you to put the anchor overboard, you do it". The old Gullah went to the bow and the captain shouted, "Throw him over". The Gullah looked at the anchor and noticed that the anchor rope was not attached to the anchor. He shouted back to the captain, "He aint got no tring on him". "What did you say", answered the captain. The Gullah repeated, "He aint got no tring on him". The captain still did not understand and lost his patience. He shouted, "trow him over, tring or no tring". The anchor went over the side and was lost.

Our three children grew up so fast and seemed to go through the usual troubles of teenagers. Bubba constantly teased the girls, and we would get notes from Kathy telling us of his activities while we were out.

Kathy saved up her baby sitting money and bought a motor bike. She Would race round and round our back yard in delight. But she always wanted a horse and begged and begged for one. I regret that we never did manage to get her one because we had no place to keep a horse. She did take a few riding lessons from a neighbor who had a horse named Bullet.

Bubba drove around in our "hippy" Volkswagon bus. He came home one day and said that he had turned it over on its side on the dirt road not far from our home on Hopecrest Avenue. Noel went with him to help, and they turned it upright, with little or no harm to either Bubba or the bus.

All of our children turned out to be wonderful adults, and we are proud of all of them.

We also have three grand children who are our great loves. Chris, our first grandson; Andrew, named after my dad; and our only little girl, Cindy Noel.

When Noel's mother died in 1984, we remodeled the family home on the bluff and moved in June 1985.

On a warm Sunday afternoon in November 1988, Noel was working in the engine room of our 30' boat, Patience. He was in an awkward position (on his head looking down) replacing some engine cooling water hoses, and had been at it for several hours, while I was up at the house keeping our six months old grandson, Andrew, while his mom and dad were off in their boat fishing. I had just walked out on the front porch to rock Andrew in the warm sunshine when I saw Noel approaching the house. His face was drawn, sweat beading in his forehead and his walk unstable. "I think I'm having a heart attack", he murmured. "You couldn't be, you're just tired", I consoled him. "Go

lie down and I'll put a cold cloth on your head" - that was my cure for anything that ailed you.

Noel went in the bedroom and lay on the bed with the cold wet cloth draped over his eyes, but in a matter of minutes, he jumped up and said, "I'm going to the hospital but first I've got to take a shower." While he was in the shower, I called friends to see if I could leave Andrew, but wouldn't you know, no one was at home.

Noel dressed quickly and the three of us left for the hospital. I left a note saying we were at Memorial Hospital. I drove, and Noel held Andrew, who was screaming at the top of his lungs because I hit his head on the car door when handing him to Noel in the car.

The words "heart attack" sent the hospital staff into immediate action. There is no fooling around! Nurses appeared from everywhere and luckily some were familiar faces to me. One took Andrew so that I was able to be with Noel.

We requested Dr. Miller, who arrived in a very short time. After examining Noel, he said that he was having a heart attack, and we had to decide between angioplasty or taking a clot busting drug. Dr. Miller explained the dangers of angioplasty, but he was confident that the procedure would open up the blocked heart artery quickly and recommended that procedure at once.

Connie and Noel III had arrived home, read the note, rushed to the hospital fearful that something had happened to their baby, as I had forgotten to say in the note why we had gone to the hospital.

For some reason I was not worried about the heart procedure. Noel has always been the strong one of the marriage - never sick, always knowing the right thing to do and say, and always being right. There was never any doubt in my mind that he would be all right. Angioplasty was performed and was successful in opening the blocked artery.

Noel was placed in CCU for the night. Doom and gloom was present in Noel's voice as he instructed me on what I was to do in case he "didn't make it". "You will have to sell the house, my will is in our safety deposit box, move into a condo, sell the boat." I left that night with assurances from the nurses that he should be fine. I felt that as long as I remained with him, he could not rest.

The next morning I arrived at CCU just as Noel returned from his second angiogram. He had begun to have pains again and been rushed to the operating room for a second look. All arteries appeared to be open and a second angioplasty was not needed.

While we were talking about the second attack, Noel had a coughing spasm and the femur artery in his groin which had been used to insert the catheter unto his heart had reopened at the point of the incision. Blood from the artery was gushing all over the bed.

I yelled out for the nurse and she rushed in and stopped the bleeding by applying pressure. All this was happening to a person who 24 hours earlier had seemed to be the picture of health!

Noel has always been athletic and an outdoorsman. When he was a student at St. Andrews and Washington & Lee, he was an outstanding wrestler. He was always interested in the outdoors, hunting and fishing every weekend. He went from one hobby to another which seemed to occupy every hour that he did not spend at the bank, where he became Executive Vice President and, as he did with his work, everything had to be done with perfection.

In 1991, three years after the heart attack and angioplasty, Noel was jogging his usual daily three miles and felt a sharp pain in his chest. Sure enough, tests showed that the same artery that became blocked in 1988 was nearly blocked again. Dr. Miller did another angioplasty and wanted Noel to consult with Dr. Yeh, a cardiovascular surgeon. It was decided that bypass surgery was needed.

Noel came through the operation but several days after the procedure, he developed a fever. Instead of staying in the hospital for five days, he remained for 10 days. But Noel has more will power than anyone I know. He has a healthy life style, being a vegetarian and walking two and one half miles every day, rain or shine.

We have had special laughs, which help keep a marriage happy. I have always liked the quotation, "Laugh and the world laughs with you. Cry and you cry alone". Of course we did not always laugh, and we have had the usual ups and downs in every marriage. More ups than downs. Its much more fun to have a good laugh.

Special Laughs

1. Like the first time we got our garbage "bucket" after years of illegal dumping at the Baptist and Methodist Church's dumpsters.
2. Like taking the trash to the dumpster at the marina, and Noel making me get out of the car barefooted while he stayed in the car to listen to the Braves on the radio. I stepped on a nail, which was connected to a board. I almost fainted while beating on the side of the car for help. Noel had difficulty pulling the two by four from the bottom of my foot.
3. Like Noel looking in a dumpster and finding a large quantity of new shoes. We fished them out and thought we had hit the jack pot. We lined them up on the hood of the car to match them up and discovered that they were all left feet. A salesman must have unloaded his stock!
4. Driving around slowly after dark to look into people's houses.
5. Counting ducks in the back yard every morning to see if we had nine. Some mornings after we heard loud quacking, and, after counting, discovered that several had "flown the coop". They would always return by night fall after a nice trip around the river. We started with Donald and Daisy, and then

hatched more out in an incubator. We had Handsome, Heckle and Jeckle, Jasmine, Phil, Lil, Crip, Little Ann, Big Ann, among others.

6. Like an embarrassing moment when Kathy invited her boy friend's parents for supper and forgot to tell us what she had done. We ended up making a salad and ordering pizza.

We have had a full house and a full life. Our house had been so full at one time that we considered putting out a "no vacancy" sign. Chris has grown up with us, as he and his mom, Elizabeth, have lived with us since Chris was a small boy. My mother, Inez, a young 98, has her own living area behind the house. Kathy, at one time, stayed with us for six months while saving her money to buy her cute yellow house an Richmond Drive. Bubba, Connie, Andrew, and Cindy are right around the corner , living on Romney Place, but our door and dining table are always open.