

# Honey



*a memoir*  
*Jeanne Thompson Bryden*

## NOTE

This memoir was written by Jeanne Thompson Bryden over the course of a few years in the late 1990s, lovingly typed out with assistance from Anita Bryden Cady shortly thereafter, and finally laid out here by Jeanne Mansfield LeClair in 2017. Small punctuation and formatting edits have been made, but otherwise the writing is entirely Honey's original telling of her early life. She passed away before completing her full memoir, but this narrative illustrates vividly the events that would shape her identity and her view of the world throughout her amazing life.



## Early Beginnings

**I** was born the year women received the right to vote. For almost 50 years they had fought for equal rights with their male counterparts. They lived in a male-dominated society where nothing was expected of them beyond managing their homes and taking care of the numerous children born to them, whether they wanted them or not. Women were dependent upon men—be it a father, husband or brother. They were not allowed to earn or manage money. They were not permitted to express their opinions on politics, economics, or even to make decisions regarding their children’s welfare. They were not expected to be healthy, strong, intelligent, nor educated. The 19th Amendment acknowledged a woman’s right to find and express her own individuality. Things were to be different now.

But as a child, I was still taught to serve the best cut of meat to the men of the family, to hop up from the dining room table to get a glass of milk for my brother, that it was more important for a male to receive a college degree than for a female, that a girl never beat a boy at any game, even though she was perfectly capable of doing so. I was also taught that you never allowed a boy to take “liberties with your body”, as the phrase went. Nice girls didn’t kiss on their first date and never were involved sexually before marriage. If, by any chance, a girl did get pregnant, in my day she simply disappeared—no such thing as a choice of abortion or the possibility of raising a child as a single parent. When I was 20 and working in New York City, I was not allowed to spend the night in the city because “nice” girls remained under their parents’ roof until they were safely married—which, I guess, is why we married early. I am envious when I see young women today not only with their own apartments but traveling with male companions, completely free of parental restrictions. They live full and happy lives without the need for

a man, or marry because they want to spend their lives together and not because marriage gives them a freedom they couldn't find at home. My daughters saw more freedom, but it was as though they were sticking their toes in to test the water. They knew their role was changing but where were the boundaries? Women of my age were reared to be the silent partner behind the successful man; whereas, my granddaughters believe they can accomplish anything they desire—on their own. And what of their daughters? Will one of them be the first woman President of the United States?

My father, Robert William Gastmeyer, was born on December 12, 1889. As teenagers, his grandparents left Germany in 1848 during the Industrial Revolution and came to America to start a new life. They settled in Brooklyn, New York and Charles found a job building houses. Eventually he had his own construction company. They had 3 daughters and 2 sons. Charles, Jr. became an architect and went into business with his father, designing and building some of the finest homes still standing today along the Promenade in Brooklyn Heights. Robert received his degree in pharmacy and owned and operated his own drug store in the Evergreen section of Brooklyn. They were serious, industrious, intelligent, honest people.

In his early 20's, Robert married a girl of Scotch Irish background by the name of Catherine Jean Fischer. They lived in the loft above the store and spent long hours working together. There wasn't much time for anything else. They had a daughter, Ernestine, and two years later my dad was born. At the age of 18, Ernestine was killed by a runaway horse and buggy as she was crossing the street in front of her home. This devastated the family, but it was particularly traumatic for my father because he had fought with his sister that morning. As children growing up, Daddy always stopped us from arguing with one another by reminding us of Ernestine and of how badly he felt when he was unable to retract the things he said or to let her know he really loved her. Daddy was awarded a full scholarship to Cornell University that same year, at the age of 16. When he graduated in 1911 with a degree in Civil Engineering, he took a job in New Jersey, earning \$11.00 a week. He worked six days a week and had to take several modes of transportation. After expenses, he actually lost money. When he told

his boss this, the man said he should be grateful he had a job and be glad he was getting such good experience.

He met my mother, Rose Naomi Whitmore, in 1915 at a Fourth of July party in her home. The Whitmores were a gregarious group, yet a closely knit family of eight children. They played musical instruments, had good singing voices, were great storytellers, played practical jokes on each other, laughed easily, often, and heartily, and had lots of parties. Their house was a large white frame on Ocean Avenue in Flatbush. A trolley ran down the middle of the broad tree-lined road that ended at the ocean. The house sat on an acre of land with a barn in the rear for the horses and carriages. A man and his wife lived in the back of the house and helped with the animals and housework. A couple of times a year a seamstress came to stay with the family and made dresses for my grandmother and the four girls (there were no retail clothing stores).

Albert Whitmore, the father of this big brood, left home one day to do some grocery shopping for his mother and, instead, at the age of 19, signed up as a cabin boy on a ship bound for China. When they arrived in Shanghai six months later, he wrote his mother a letter apologizing for the worry he had caused her. When he arrived home a year later, he fell madly in love with Josephine Guilino, a petite, dark-haired beauty of Italian and French descent. Her father was a violinist with the New York Symphony and her mother, from a strict Huguenot family, left her home in Philadelphia to become a dancer in New York City. I don't know how thrilled Albert's family was over this marriage, but I imagine they already knew he wasn't going to fill their mold. The Whitmores were early settlers in the United States and fought in the American Revolution. One of them, a Bezaleel Howe, was an aide to George Washington and I can remember seeing a letter signed by General Washington, addressed to my ancestor, then in the possession of my mother's brother whose name was Bezaleel Howe Whitmore. The Whitmores lived on the Upper East Side in one of those brownstones you associate with the upper class, well-heeled New York families of the 1800's.

When Albert and Josephine were married on June 2, 1886, they headed west to Chicago where he sold real estate. My mother was

born in Chicago, the fourth of nine children. The oldest, a girl named Josie, died at the age of 9. When Albert's father died in 1898, the family returned to New York and bought the Flatbush house, which the children always called home. Albert was an entrepreneur and inventor. He was a charming, irresponsible man who loved his liquor and good times. He invented the first life-sized ragdoll—before Raggedy Ann. My mother had some of the canvases on which the body of the doll was stamped. You cut it out along the dotted lines, sewed the pieces together and stuffed the doll with cotton batting. The little Whitmore girls gladly traded their pretty porcelain dolls for this soft, cuddly doll that slipped into bed with them. Albert organized and was president of the Whitmore Company, a wholesale dry goods store. When he made money, he surprised Josephine with gifts delivered from Tiffany's. He took her with him on buying trips to Europe, leaving the children in the care of servants. They always returned with trunks filled with the newest French lingerie, handspun laces, beautiful material for the seamstress to work on, parasols, perfumes and pearls.

Rose was 21 when she met my father. After graduating from Packer Institute, a private high school in Brooklyn Heights, she took a job in the Fine China and Glass Department of Abraham & Strauss. On the day of the party, the house was decorated for the Fourth. An American flag hung from the porch eaves, Japanese lanterns were strung the length of the front porch, rugs were rolled back in what was usually a formal living room. The victrola in the corner was piled high with records for dancing. The dining room had two buffet tables set up with centerpieces of red, white and blue flowers. The two oldest boys, Bill and Bez, and the three girls, Rose, Dot and Iva, had invited all their friends and were eagerly looking forward to a great party.

Rose was a tall, slender girl, almost as tall as her brothers. She was not as pretty as Iva, nor as clever as Dot, who worked as a designer for Butterick Patterns in the City, but Rose had an openness about her that caught the attention of both men and women. Her dark brown hair was straight and thick, twisted into two large curls and held in place at the back of her neck with a bright-colored bow to match her dress. Her complexion had a healthy glow that magnified the lively brown eyes, and a generous mouth, the corners of which

turned slightly upward in what appeared to be a constant smile. She was everyone's friend from the doorman at Abraham & Strauss to the wealthy patrons she enjoyed waiting on. Most of the party guests Rose knew, but there was one tall, good-looking young man standing off by himself, watching the dancing and merriment with such a serious expression on his face that Rose walked over to tease him. He turned out to be a friend of a friend of her brother Bill, and had just started working for The Brewster Motor Company on Long Island (they were going to develop a car to rival the new Rolls Royce). His aloofness and formality were a challenge for the vivacious, outgoing Rose, and she took it upon herself to draw him into the fun. By the end of the evening, she knew all about his goals, his work ethics, his devotion to learning, and his lonely home life. Laughter was foreign to him. He had never experienced the sibling teasing and bantering. He could not understand the freedom of personal expression in place of the emotional restraint he had been brought up to believe was necessary. When it came time to say goodnight, Rose was thrilled when he asked if he could see her again. They had different approaches to life, but in the long run, they complemented each other. Where Mother brought spontaneity, light-heartedness and joy to the relationship, Daddy provided the necessary stability, intelligence, strength and protection. They were deeply in love—a love that endured throughout their 55 years of marriage.

They were married on May 29, 1917. World War I was in process and Dad took over a job designing airplanes for a French company operating out of Detroit, Michigan. Mother hated to leave her family but was thrilled to find her new apartment had a switch on the wall that when flipped on, the room filled with light. No more oil lamps. Telephones were hard to get but Daddy had one installed for her, even though it was so expensive she hardly ever used it. Just before I was born, they were able to return home—much to Mother's delight—and I put in an appearance on February 9, 1919—the first grandchild on either side of the family. In April, Albert had a stroke that left him completely incapacitated at the age of 53. As time went by, the horses and carriages were sold, the servants dismissed. Bill assumed the responsibility of head of the family, and the girls took over some



of the household duties. The year I turned two, the Flatbush home was sold, the family was living in East Orange, New Jersey, Albert died and I had a baby brother.

## Childhood

**M**y earliest memories are of Sunday afternoons at Cherie's house. Everyone called my grandmother Cherie, which means "dear" in French. From what I have been told about her, she was a tiny boned, elegant lady about five-foot-two with a dark complexion and dark brown eyes fringed with black lashes. Her thick black hair never turned gray—of course she was only 57 when she died. She wore a size 3 shoe, and even after nine children, maintained an hourglass figure. Her children, who admired her spiritual strength and optimistic outlook, which enabled her to maintain a happy and loving home despite the trials often confronting her, adored her. She taught her children the value of following her example and they passed it on to their children, who have passed it on to the next generation.

Cherie's house was an old rambling brown shingle set in a grove of oak trees. It was fairly large since most of the Whitmore siblings still lived at home. We lived in a duplex not too far from the rest of the family.

Sunday afternoons were a virtual Open House with various friends of my aunts and uncles stopping by for tea or to watch the hotly contested tennis matches on the clay court behind the house. Bob and I, being the only grandchildren, received lots of attention. My uncles vied with each other to be the first to introduce us to a new experience. I can remember Uncle Ed making a big issue out of giving us our first stick of chewing gum, and Uncle Sam took us to our first movie, a silent picture called *Romona*. We sat way down front in a darkened theater while Uncle Ed sat at a piano nearby, playing mood music while we watched the actors mouth the words which were printed on the bottom of the screen. Of course, we were too young to read, but were delighted with Uncle Ed softly playing sweet love songs or loudly banging out stirring marches when the Indians were about to attack.

There were always gifts, toys and candy waiting for us on those Sunday afternoons. Later, we listened to wonderful Whitmore stories and laughed at their contagious laughter. In the evening, we gathered around the piano to sing, or Bob and I would watch their noisy card game until finally we fell asleep wherever we happened to be, only to awake the next morning in our own beds wrapped in the warm feeling of belonging and being loved.

Cherie spent more and more time in her bedroom. When we arrived at the house, I always ran upstairs to find her sitting in her armchair placed by the window overlooking the gardens. She opened her arms wide to greet me and nuzzled her face in my neck. “You smell like fresh air and sunshine,” she would say and something in her voice made me think she couldn’t get enough of either one. She took a book from the pile on the mahogany table beside her, and stopping to explain the pictures, read to me. There were little various colored candies in a jar beside her, and we shared these as I told her what I was doing.

One morning my mother was crying as we drove to Cherie’s house. My aunts and uncles were all there, but no one paid any attention to me. They just silently hugged each other and walked out of the room. I sat on the bench in the hall by myself for a few minutes and then decided to go upstairs to see my grandmother. Aunt Alice stopped me and told me that my grandmother was dead. “She just went to bed last night and never woke up.” I was seven years old at the time, but this haunted me for years. Sometimes when I felt myself dropping off to sleep, I would panic and force myself back into consciousness. Thinking I was dying, I called my mother, and she came to my bedside to comfort me. It finally got to the point where my brother had to call our parents at a bridge party one evening to report “Jeanne is dying again, you’d better come home.” Daddy solved my problem that night. He sat down on my bed and gently explained that only old ladies died in their beds, and since I was just a little girl, I had nothing to fear.

When I was five, Mother enrolled me in kindergarten at the local school. It was built of fieldstone and its walls were covered with ivy. I remember being terrified when she left me in that great big room with a strange lady, who said she was my teacher, and a handful of other scared kids. But I learned to love my teacher, and most of those children

graduated from high school with me thirteen years later. The teacher played the piano for us while we sat quietly on our little chairs and listened. I found this pretty boring, so I started to count how many pages she turned for each song. One day we invited our mothers to come to school to see what we were learning. The teacher sat down at the piano and played one of the pieces. When she finished, she turned to the class and asked, “Does anyone know the name of that song?” I was the only one to raise my hand and Mother was mortified. She knew I didn’t know the first thing about music, but much to everyone’s surprise, I answered correctly “Melody in F.” Afterwards, Mother asked me how I came up with the correct answer, and I told her it was because the teacher turned over three pages and I knew three pages was “Melody in F.” And thus began my education.

When I was six, I was in a bookstore with Aunt Alice and asked her if she would buy me the book *Black Beauty* because it had such a beautiful picture of a black horse on the cover. She replied, “You can’t read.” When I told her I could, she said if I read the first page, she would buy it for me. I did, and became the proud owner of my first book. From then on, I always had a book in front of my face. I could even set the dining room table with my eyes on the open book in one hand and the napkins and silverware in the other.

In 1927, Mother was pregnant with Hope. Times were good. Dad had been working for some time in New York City for a company he always called PB&I (Pittsburgh Bridge and Iron). Sometimes at the dinner table, Bob and I would go into gales of laughter when Dad told Mother something involving PB&I and Bob would whisper to me “Doesn’t Dad ever do anything without PB?” or “That PB and Dad must be close buddies.” Then Bob and I were sent from the table until we stopped giggling—and that lasted only as far as the hall when we could no longer remember what was so funny.

Mother and Dad decided it was time to buy their first house. It was a newly built house on Maplewood Avenue in Maplewood, New Jersey. It cost \$18,000, and Dad sold it 20 years later in 1947, for the same \$18,000. During the depression its value had gone below \$3,000. The house had pale yellow siding with dark green shutters and window boxes. It sat on a sloping lot 50’ x 150’ deep. The front door opened to a closed hall, called

a vestibule, where we took off our outer clothing and boots, and then opened another door to the rest of the house.

The living room had a fireplace at one end, flanked with bookshelves on either side. At the other end was a sunroom with windows on all sides. There was a separate dining room, kitchen, breakfast room and a back hall with a lavatory (powder room). The icebox was located just inside the back door to make it easy for the iceman to carry in his big block of ice. A horse-drawn wagon delivered milk early every morning to the front door. Mail was delivered twice a day—morning and afternoon. Upstairs there were three bedrooms and one bath. Can you imagine a family of five living in a home with one bathroom? Dad was always the first to use it in the morning, but oh the agony of having to wait until I heard him turn off the shower before tapping on the door to request he vacate the room for just a minute. I guess that's why I always loved the story about the Sunday School teacher who asked her students if they knew where God was. One little girl raised her hand and said, "I know. He's in our bathroom." When the teacher asked why she thought that, the little girl said, "because every morning my Dad bangs on the bathroom door and yells 'Oh God, are you STILL in there?'"

We had a finished attic with two Spartan rooms, which became Bob's space after Hope was born. The cellar had a separate room with a window opening to the driveway. This was the coal bin. The coal truck delivered coal a couple of times during the winter. A chute from the truck was put into the window and coals poured down the chute, filling the whole room. Every morning and evening, Dad shoveled coal from the bin into the furnace to keep the house warm and cozy. Another part of the cellar contained the laundry which consisted of a wringer type washing machine, two stationary metal tubs and a mangle (large heated rollers for pressing sheets and pillowcases, as well as tablecloths and napkins) and, of course, the traditional standing ironing board. The wet laundry was hung out in the backyard, weather permitting. Clothes that dried with the sun and a light breeze smelt so good—I wish there were a way to bottle its aroma. When dry, laundry was dampened and rolled tightly for ironing the next day. Mother had a maid who came twice a week to help with the laundry and housework. Katherine made starch on the stove in the kitchen and carried the steaming pot downstairs to the cellar.

The vacuum had just been invented, and Mother purchased one from an Electrolux salesman who traveled from New York on the train and walked up Maplewood Avenue going from door to door. He brought the vacuum into our house and after pouring a bag of dirt all over the carpet, showed Mother how easy it was to clean it up. Mother bought it at once. It was wonderful not to have to drag the carpets out to the clothesline and beat the dirt out with a large flat paddle.

Maplewood Avenue was just two blocks from the Lackawanna Railroad, a line that carried almost every Maplewood father to work in New York City. Commuter trains with steam engines went by every 15 minutes each morning and evening. When they were electrified, Dad pointed out to us what a progressive step this was. He was always amazed at each forward step and made sure we were aware and appreciative. I can remember one morning in 1927 when he called us out to the back porch to see the first commercial airplane flying overhead.

Dad walked the half mile to the station each morning to catch the 7:15 train, and returned home at 7:15 in the evening. We waited dinner for him and all sat down together at the dining room table, covered with a white cloth, candles and centerpiece. Dinner consisted of a roast, potatoes, two vegetables, salad, bread and butter, and dessert. We could not have dessert if we didn't eat everything on our plate, so we had to know what the dessert was before we started the meal. Usually this was a pie or layer cake, or some kind of baked pudding. Everything was made from scratch—we'd never heard of boxed cakes, prepared piecrusts, or instant puddings.

The first few years in the new house, Dad spent most of his time working on the landscaping. He built a trellis along the back property line and planted pink climbing roses. In no time it was covered in sweet smelling blossoms. He planted a cutting garden, which provided fresh flowers for the house from May until frost. A fishpond was constructed in the middle of the yard and stocked with goldfish and water lilies. We caught the goldfish on bent pins tied to the end of a string. The pool became famous for the number of children who fell in each year.

Sometime in the middle 1920's, Uncle Sid built a radio for us. It was a small black box with earphones and when he let me put them on,

I couldn't believe I actually heard music. He explained it was coming from the airwaves. I still have trouble understanding that. A little later, Uncle Bill invented the dynamic loud speaker that enabled everyone in the room to hear the radio at the same time without headsets. RCA offered to buy the invention, but Uncle Bill and Uncle Bez wanted to manufacture it themselves. Within a year, RCA, with a few alterations to the patent, produced their own speakers and put my uncles out of business. We used two of the large boxes containing Uncle Bill's speakers as end tables for years!

One day in the spring of 1927, Mother and Dad took Bob and me to see the first talking movie picture called *The Lion and the Mouse*. There wasn't much talking, but I remember how loud the lion roared. On the way to the Mosque Theater in Newark, where the movie was to be shown, we saw boys on the street holding up newspapers with headlines so large you could easily read them from the car—"LINDY ARRIVES IN PARIS." Daddy stopped to buy a paper and told us this was the first man to fly an airplane across the ocean. He and Mother were so excited about it that it became one of those experiences in life that stands alone in memory.

We were probably one of the first families to have a car since Daddy worked for a car manufacturer early in their marriage. I have seen a picture of myself as a baby in a hammock stretched across the back of a car chassis. However, my first memory of a family car is a four-door Buick with a canvas top and Isinglass windows that snapped into place when it was cold or rainy. It was only used for special occasions such as Sunday afternoon after church and dinner, which was always served at 1 p.m. We piled into the car and drove to the mountains or visited nearby relatives. The car only traveled about 25 miles per hour—"a mile a minute" was a phrase used to mean the impossible. Our dog ran along beside us. Dad felt fortunate if he returned home without having to stop to fix a flat tire. Eventually they sold the Buick to the iceman for \$25 and bought a four-door black Pontiac. All cars were black in those days.

This car became a real family car in that it was used all the time. There were several trips that became a tradition and which I remember fondly. One was to Bear Mountain, which usually occurred on a snowy Sunday morning. We drove a couple of hours to the lodge at the base

of Bear Mountain and there we would have lunch in front of large glass windows so we could watch the ski jumping contests while we ate. Afterwards, Dad rented a toboggan and a couple of hours were spent racing down the mountain, twisting and turning. It was especially hair-raising when there was a sheet of ice with a light dusting of snow. Then with face and hands tingling with cold, we sat in front of a big fire in the lodge's living room and had our dessert—slices of moist chocolate cake and cups of hot cocoa—before the drive home in the descending twilight.

Another special trip was when the weather was warmer and we drove down to the Jersey Shore to go crabbing. Dad took us in a rowboat out into the bay and we threw old fish heads tied on a string overboard. When we felt a tug on the string, we slowly pulled it up and just before crab and fish head came to the surface, Daddy grabbed his net and scooped up the crab, depositing it in a big bucket at the back of the boat. After the bucket was filled and we were damp and cold, Dad rowed us all back to the dock's restaurant and we ate bowls of steaming hot clam chowder (Manhattan style). That night we kids watched in horror as Dad tossed each crab into a pot of boiling water. Sometimes a crab got loose and Dad scrambled around the kitchen floor trying to retrieve it. We squealed with delight as Dad and crab battled it out, but, of course, Daddy won. Later, we sat down at the kitchen table, covered with old newspapers, and learned how to eat fresh crabmeat.

An excursion that just Mother and I shared was a shopping trip to Bambergers—a department store in Newark, our nearest city. We drove the car from our house to the trolley line on South Orange Avenue and continued to drive towards Newark until we saw the trolley coming up behind us. Then Mother hastily parked the car on the side of the road a couple of blocks ahead of the oncoming trolley. We jumped out to flag down the trolley and rode the rest of the way to Bambergers. I accompanied Mom while she shopped. She either charged her purchases to her account at the department store (no credit cards in those days) or paid cash. The cash was given to the sales clerk who put it in a metal tumbler, similar to that used at the bank's drive-through window. This tumbler rode a wire at ceiling level to the business office upstairs. Any change was put in the tumbler and raced back to where we were waiting.



Bambergers had a circular gold staircase leading to a tearoom on the lower floor. To this day, I can see myself walking down that golden staircase to sit with my mother over a meringue glacé and a cup of hot tea. On the way home, we had to watch out the window of the trolley to spot where we had parked the car earlier that day. It was scary because Mother could never remember where she had parked it—and sometimes we rode right past it.

In sixth grade, we had a new boy in class. His name was Wakelee Thompson and he was from Louisville, Kentucky. Every girl in the room adored him. Besides the Southern accent, he was tall with dark wavy hair and terribly handsome. But best of all, he and his family moved to a house across the street from us. There were always girls wanting to come to my house after school. We played jacks on the front steps or jumped rope on the sidewalk where it was easy to spot us, and sometimes we were blessed with Wakelee and one of his friends stopping by to chat. By Christmas that year, Wakelee had become a familiar figure around our house. One cold day, he and I were down in the cellar looking for my ice skates when he put his arm around me. I froze. I was afraid if I moved even a tiny bit, he would take his arm away. Then, lo and behold, he kissed me and for a second I stopped breathing. My first kiss—never to be forgotten! By the time the ice was hard enough for skating, Wakelee had moved on to other girls, but we remained friends and walked together to and from the pond. (Note: when I was putting this section of my memoirs together, I came across a picture of Wakelee. Bonnie looked him up on the internet and found a Wakelee Thompson living in New Port Richey, Florida. She insisted I send him a card, enclosing a copy of the picture, and a note that said “Just shows a young girl never forgets her first kiss—even when she is an old lady.” I refused to put a return address on the envelope, so will never know if he received it or remembered me.)

As a child, the 4th of July was my favorite holiday of the year. The day started at 9:30 in the morning with an athletic meet in the park. Most of the children from the various schools in town participated. I was a runner but never won a race because I had the bad habit of turning around to see where everyone was just as I neared the finish line—and the girl right behind me won. I had plenty of red ribbons but

never a blue. At 2:00 pm, the town put on a three-ring circus to which all residents and their guests were invited. We sat in stadium seats and gasped at the high wire acrobats swinging through the air or wished we could be adorned with white feathers and ride on top of the elephants. There was something going on in one of the rings continuously until about five o'clock.

After the circus, Mother always prepared a barbecue supper in the backyard for extended family and friends. Every year the group grew larger and louder and more children fell in the fish pool. We were allowed to shoot off some small firecrackers in a designated spot in the yard, and every child had the opportunity to show off his stash of smoke bombs, rockets, creepy, smelly worms, tiny firecrackers and, of course, sparklers. It was on one of these occasions that Mother pulled her infamous firecracker joke. She planned to have a birthday cake to celebrate the birth of our Nation, using small firecrackers as candles on top. But instead of using a metal bowl, she iced an earthenware bowl and put a cherry bomb underneath it. When she brought the cake out to the yard, everyone “oohed” and “aahed” over the large chocolate frosted cake with six 1” firecrackers on top. Mother had us all stand around the cake in a circle to sing “Happy Birthday U.S.A.” and then Dad lit the tip of the fuse peeking out from the bottom of the cake. There was a thunderous explosion, followed by the sound of smashing glass as the bowl disappeared into a million pieces before our eyes. Fortunately no one was hurt, although we were all covered with chocolate icing and fragments of the earthenware. In horror, Dad turned to Mother and said “Rose, what have you done?” and Mother calmly replied, “Don’t worry, I have the real cake in the house.”

After supper, we took chairs and blankets back to the park where crowds gathered for a band concert and sing-along until it was dark enough for the fireworks—the likes of which I have never seen since those days. Bombs resounded throughout the town. The sky was ablaze with color and geometric designs. A waterfall display, built on the ground, spewed out streams of fiery sparks, lighting up the spellbound faces of children and adults alike. After an hour of chest-pounding noise and excitement, the grand finale filled the sky with thundering bombs and flashing lights—and then silence and night darkness. The band started

playing the “Star Spangled Banner” and everyone stood quietly with head bowed. Then the best day in the year was over, and it was time to pick up chairs and blankets and walk with the crowd, back to our homes, calling out “goodnight” to neighbors as they turned down their respective streets.

## Depression Years

One day, late in October 1929, the world turned upside down. Overnight, people went from a sense of wellbeing, confidence and financial security to being frightened, worried and destitute. I remember Mother sitting us down at the kitchen table and telling us that no money would be spent on anything but food and utilities. There was to be no more shopping trips to Bambergers until their bill was paid off. This didn't sound too grim since we pretty much had everything we needed. No one expected the situation to last more than a couple of months—a year at most. But it lasted ten years and was known as The Great Depression. We grew to adulthood under its shadow.

That first Christmas, we were told there would be just one present under the Christmas tree for each family member. Christmas morning when we came downstairs in our pajamas and bathrobes to open presents before breakfast, the tree did look pretty bare with the few wrapped gifts. I remember feeling sorry for Bob because he didn't have anything to unwrap. His present was an envelope with a note inside telling him he was receiving a subscription to *Popular Mechanics* magazine. The Saturday before Christmas, Bob and I went to the local movie theater for a special Christmas movie, where they were also having a drawing for a two-wheel bicycle. When it came time to select the lucky number, I was in shock to discover I was holding it. I sat there staring at it. Bob grabbed it from my hand and rushed to the stage to claim the prize. The two of us joyously took turns riding the bike home.

As always on Christmas Day, the Whitmore aunts, uncles and cousins came to our house for dinner, carrying pungent casseroles, bowls of fresh fruit, trays of homemade cakes, pies, and cookies. The house was filled with the aroma of roasting turkey and Mother's fresh baked yeast rolls. Not only was there no shortage of food, but an abundance of hugs and laughter, good stories and music. Uncle Bill and Uncle Sam—our two bachelor uncles—arrived arms filled with beautifully wrapped

inexpensive, amusing gifts for everyone. It was a wonderful, happy Christmas, and, as Mother pointed out to us at bedtime, nothing is more precious than the gift of family.

Sometime within the next year, Daddy came home from work with the news that good old PB&I was closing the New York office and Daddy no longer had a job. They gave him a check for two weeks salary and shut the door. That was it! With a mortgage to pay and five mouths to feed, it was a frightening proposition, especially since we had already witnessed neighbors and friends losing their homes and breaking up families. Daddy became ill. He couldn't keep anything down in his stomach, and didn't talk or eat. Mother had been introduced to Christian Science a couple of years before, through a healing of poor eyesight, and we children were enrolled in the Sunday School. Now Mother called the same practitioner to ask for prayerful help. This dear woman explained that although it appears one man is employed by another man, it is really God who does the employing. God employs man to express Him—to express Godlike qualities of intelligence, brotherly love, honesty, diligence, etc. She told Mother that Dad was employed right now and that he should shower, dress, and go into the City. Daddy failed to see the rationale of this, but within the next day or so, he did dress for work, walk to the station, catch the commuter train to New York City. He couldn't think of anything to do but walk down Fifth Avenue near his old office. As he did so, he met an old acquaintance, who greeted him with surprise and asked him what he was doing these days. Upon hearing that Dad was looking for work, this friend said his company was looking for someone with his exact qualifications. Dad followed up on it immediately, and came home that evening to tell Mother he had been hired by the H. H. Robertson Company—a company that he loyally and enthusiastically worked for until he retired 25 years later at the age of 65. All of this took place within the period of two weeks—just as the severance pay was used up.

Shortly after this all happened, Mother moved the piano down to the cellar, added a rug, some easy chairs, and a couple of old lamps. When the first man knocked on our front door, asking for money, Mother explained that we didn't have any money but if he wanted to share our dinner, he was welcome. From then on, there was never a night when we didn't have a couple of “out-of-luck” men, as they were called, eating

supper and spending the night in our basement. Bob and I took food down on trays and sat and listened to their experiences on the road. Sometimes, they sang around the piano or played cards. We learned that these men traveled in boxcars on the railroad, and that someone had put a mark on the rails indicating they would be welcome at our house. One of these men really got to my mother's heart with his story about having a job interview and not being able to go because he had only the torn and dirty clothes he was wearing. Mother gave him an old suit of Dad's, which she mended and pressed for him, added one of Dad's white shirts and a necktie. He thanked her profusely and left with my Dad shaking his head in disbelief. Years later, we ran across this man in the Christian Science Church in Southold. He recognized Mother, and came over to tell her how much her spiritual talk and physical assistance had meant to him. He was given the job, was able to reunite with his family, and became a Christian Scientist.

Things didn't get any better for the world that next Christmas nor for many years to come. We all learned to get along without the things we used to think we needed. Mother made dresses for us girls, and mended socks. We were expected to make one pair of shoes last the entire school year. Dad kept repairing the old car, and grew vegetables in the backyard. We played games around the dining room table at night for entertainment. We worked on jigsaw puzzles and listened to Amos and Andy on the radio, instead of going to the movies. And we were never, ever allowed to waste anything. Lights were turned off when you left the room. Slivers of soap bars were recycled into liquid soap. Phone calls were limited to three minutes by an egg timer sitting next to the phone. A penny found on the sidewalk was picked up. And it was a moral sin to put more on your dinner plate than you could eat. Mother would remind us of all the children who were going to bed hungry while we scraped the food from our plates into the garbage.

Uncle Bill took Bob and me to Chicago with him the summer of 1933. We drove from New Jersey on a five-day trip with Uncle Bill and his girlfriend, Kay Herndon (of the furniture family). I guess Bob and I were the chaperones, but it also gave Mother and Daddy a little relief. We didn't have highways and turnpikes in those days, but drove down the main street of every little town along the route. We stayed in

hotels (no motels then). Kay and I were in one room and Bob and Uncle Bill in another. It was my first time spending the night in a hotel. I was thrilled at the idea of a bellboy carrying our bags to the room; delighted at having a private bathroom; overwhelmed eating dinner in a formal dining room and Uncle Bill saying we could order anything we wished. When eating with the family, we had to consider the price. The hotels cost \$5.00 a night—gas was 10 cents a gallon, and dinner maybe a dollar. Of course, the car kept breaking down and Uncle Bill thought it was a good day if he only had to stop to fix a flat tire. It took a long time to reach Chicago, but we saw a lot of the country on the way. We learned to get around Chicago, which I didn't think was as grand as New York, but learned you didn't say that when someone from Chicago asked how you liked their city.

Happy was born the summer of 1934. That year, Daddy had some work to do in Maryland, so we all left the end of May and rented a house on the Severin River, outside of Annapolis. It was a great change for the family. Like the trip to Chicago the year before, it was the only form of a vacation we had in those depression years. We returned home just weeks before Hap's birth. Mother was having her at home with a Christian Science nurse in attendance and a doctor she engaged at the last minute in order to be in compliance with the law. Edith, the maid she hired to help with the household duties, fell down the attic stairs, drunk, in her haste to answer Mother's call that the time had come. The doctor was late in arriving, so the nurse delivered the baby. Mother was up and around almost immediately, and I, as a 15-year old, was her assistant. I was thrilled at the prospect of a baby sister, and took over a lot of the mothering until people began to wonder if this was my baby. Since we had been gone the last three months before Happy's birth, and Mother had tried to keep her pregnancy a private matter, I guess my devotion to the new baby could raise suspicion.

The following summer, we rented a cottage down at the end of Long Island for a two-week vacation. When a young man came over to where I was playing with Happy on the beach and asked if my husband was around, I was horrified and stopped baby-sitting. We loved our vacation at Orient, where we learned to play tennis, sail and

swim, and met lots of boys and girls our own ages. So we returned for a couple of weeks every year, until Mother and Dad bought the Southold house in 1946.

Meanwhile, Grandma Gastmeyer, at the age of 75, eloped with an old friend who worked as a butcher for a meat packing plant in Newark. As a result of this connection, in the middle of the depression, we were dining on steaks and roast beef, furnished at the benevolence of our new grandfather, Ernest Grifhorn. It became so monotonous, that Mother started trading T-bones for chicken, and rib roasts for hamburger, with our less fortunate neighbors. However, we were grateful that we could eat so well in the worst of times. When I was sixteen, Grandma fell and broke her hip while we were vacationing at Orient. And when she passed away a couple of days later, at the age of 78, I was left to take care of the family while Mom and Dad went back to New Jersey for the funeral. Both my grandfathers died when I was two, and Mother's mother when I was seven, so Grandma Gastmeyer was the only grandparent I really knew, and I didn't see much of her.

I graduated from high school in 1937. The depression was still with us, and there was no money for college. I desperately wanted to go, but my parents held out little hope. Since I was a fairly good student, I went ahead on my own and applied for a scholarship. I was elated when I received an \$800 scholarship to Skidmore, and Dad gave me my first bit of praise. He said, "I am very proud of you, dear." He agreed to finance the balance of the costs on the promise I would take some business courses—typing and shorthand. He felt it was important for me to have the skills to support myself—which in my case, turned out to be a wise decision. Uncle Bill sent me \$18 a month for living expenses, and off I went to Skidmore the fall of 1937. I loved college, dorm life, my studies, professors and extra curricular activities. But at the end of my second year, it was Bob's turn to go, and money was still very tight. Dad insisted it was far more important for Bob to have a college degree than I, so now I had to put my business training into practice in the real world. I was feeling very sorry for myself, but after I had been working about nine months, I went back to Skidmore to visit old friends. I must confess I felt more sophisticated in my business clothes, wiser when it came to knowing the ways of the world, and wealthier with my own money to



spend the way I wished, than any of my girl friends still in school. By the end of the weekend, I was very happy to return to my new role as a career woman.

## Mymee's Diary 1940

**January 1** | This morning at 8 AM while I was fixing breakfast, I heard a knock on the cellar door, and there was Bobby, bare from the waist up, his evening pants on, and groggy-eyed. He had been out calling, dancing and dining all night—went to 6 o'clock mass at Catholic Church with a crowd, where he proceeded to fall asleep. He would peek out of slits to see the congregation kneeling, fell asleep on his knees only to find next time he became conscious they were all seated. He came home at 7—had no key—so made a bed on the cellar floor, after taking off his good clothes and slept there. What a life. Can't see how they like sleeping on a beautiful sunny day and being out all night.

Am glad the holiday season is over—he went back to Lehigh today to regular living.

Jeanne too has been keeping terrible hours—home one night at 4 AM and up at 7 for work. She seems to be quite fond of this Lew Thompson right now—but how long it will last, well! She certainly is having an interesting time of it. Loves her job, spends her money wisely, has nice clothes, met a lot of new people, and in short finds life in the business world lots more exciting than college. She hears from Dick Smith in California very often, and from Carl Muthe in Chicago more often than she desires—eats lunch with Lew or Bill Lauder or Edson Outwin every day.

Then there's Hope—quiet, unassuming Hope—very popular with the boys, tho totally unconscious of the fact. We bought her a lovely white bunny evening jacket—she goes to one dance a month—loves dancing, ice skating and desserts (especially fudge sundaes), likes being in the orchestra and camera club and hates making the beds or setting the table. Cooking and sewing are all right—she can make delicious cake—could ever since she was 10 years old. At 13 she has just changed her hair-do to a more sophisticated model.

And little JoAnn (mostly known as Happy), independent, assertive, progressive and alert. Just got single runner ice skates at the age of 5—goes every afternoon to the skating park alone and doesn't return until 5:30—when it is quite dark—she can be heard whistling all the way from the corner. I remarked about her coat and seat being soaking wet—“Well, you'd be wet too if you fell down as much as I do. I can make fancy turns and skate backward.”

Her piano playing is remarkable for her age—at the Xmas play in school she played Silent Night, and a little girl sang it. The kindergarten teacher has had her play before quite a few audiences and seems quite proud of her. Eating little and sleeping little, she has loads of energy and is always ready for anything or anybody.

We will see how they all progress this coming year, each one so different from the other—different interests, ideas and ambitions. Jeanne and Bob share the same amusements and ideas more than the others. They like the same people, do the same things together such as skating, dancing, movies, etc.

I hope this year will find Bob in the work he likes and established in a paying job which he may keep in the fall or return to College. At present he isn't quite sure what he wants to be, but I know the right place will open up for him since he realizes too that every idea is in its right place.

**January 9** | Iva, Bez, Sam and I went through some of Bill's things last Saturday—seems perfectly terrible to be poking among his private belongings that way. As time goes on, I seem to miss him more—hard to believe it. I try to realize that all of Bill that ever was still is—the real, true qualities (love, consideration, intelligence) are spiritual qualities that never can be destroyed or burned up.

Sam is executor of the estate and has quite a job on his hands—much money is owed Bill, and in turn, he owes much. Fred Marchev and Carl Muthe have been wonderful helps—they will try to collect debts in Chicago. The job seems to be good for Sam, it has made it necessary for him to forget himself and this great sorrow, and apply himself to a real task. He is so very good to everybody—always trying to make somebody happy, helping out financially where needed. I never have known anyone

who had such wonderful brothers as I—and hardly a day goes by that I do not stop and give thanks.

All the brothers and sisters met today to dispose of Bill's personal belongings. I thought it would be a simple task, simply seeing that everyone had a remembrance—but it was not so. The material values were reckoned on too much and there was dissension over who made out the best.

I am very happy that Ed got the diamond stickpin & the silverware, since to him things had a sentimental value. To my way of thinking, the most valuable things were the least valuable according to the world's estimate of values, and my most cherished possessions are Bill's baby curls and family pictures.

No one seemed to have a happy feeling that everything was just as Bill would have had it. All the blankets, trunks and silver in the world aren't worth losing a friend for.

**January 16** | Played polka [poker] at Ed's last night with Alice & Alan, Ed & Ginny, and Bob. Won \$2.35. Had lots of fun—ought to do it more often.

Neddie was sick—the Dr. had just come and given him some medicine to break his fever.

**January 18** | Happy had three little friends in for a tea party. Peggy Smith, Sissie Deutz, and "Cookie". For about 15 minutes they're alright, but after that—boy—how they can argue and fight. Someone always goes home crying.

If Hap doesn't stop fixing her hair like a boy—pulling her braid ends over her eyes and putting on a cowboy hat to hold it in place. She begs me to cut her hair off like a boy, but I know she really wouldn't like it.

**January 19** | That's a nice job Jeanne has—but tonight she never got home until a quarter of nine for supper. Something came up after 5 o'clock which had to be typed immediately, so she and Mr. Gesner stayed. They are perfectly grand to her though—gave her a \$10/month raise starting Jan. 1—even though she has only been there three months. So she really can't complain.

**January 20** | Our new piano came today—changed in the old one, and for \$60 addition we have a good piano. They allowed me all I paid on the other one a year ago last Nov., so that wasn't a bad deal. I told Hap the piano is hers since Jeanne gets the dining room set and Hope the bedroom set. So she went down the cellar and said, "Daddy, come see the piano—it's mine when we break up."

**January 21** | Was tired out today, staying awake so late Friday and Saturday nights waiting for Jeanne and Hope to come home. Friday night Jeanne stayed in NY for dinner and a show—arrived home 1:15 AM. Hope got in at 11:15 from an ice skating and supper party, and Dad from the Cornell Club at 11:45. He joined the club Friday night.

Then Saturday, Hope went to another skating party which lasted until 12:15—a terribly late hour for a 13-year-old.

So I sneaked out an hour's nap this afternoon. It is my turn to get tea. Hope and Hap have been skating all afternoon – temperature about 20 degrees. They came in cold and tired, made a log fire and curled up on a blanket in front of the hearth. Jeanne is reading a book on the couch. I brought in supper—they were my guests tonight— next Sunday Jeanne is hostess, then Hope has her turn.

**January 24** | Bobby finished exams and is home until Tuesday. Jeanne had such a busy day—Miss Ellis & Mr. Gesner were both sick and Jeanne was alone in the office until Mr. Robinson unexpectedly arrived. She had to rush to the bank with \$193,000—ran 4 blocks in 5 min.

Ginny, Ed, Jeanne, Bob, Dad and I bowled—Gin and I weren't so bad for the first time. Had lots of fun—Bobby was very good—180—by far the highest.

**January 25** | Dad stayed in NY for dinner. Bobby and Bill Eisner have gone calling, Jeanne is consoling Eleanor—seems like they are having trouble with their dates, getting them to date. Eleanor paid \$5.00 for a dance ticket and her man is a little obscure.

Hope and two boys are doing their homework, studying for exams tomorrow. They could study just as well at their own homes, I suppose—one has quite a walk home.

**January 29** | Had a feeling today I would like to move out on a farm where life is less complicated—seems like all we make goes right into a meager living, with nothing set aside for the future. Wouldn't be a bad idea to form a farm corporation for all the brothers and sisters to retire on.

**January 31** | Bobby's report card just came—he just about manages to get through every time. Seems too bad he doesn't like to study more than he does.

**February 1** | Parents' night at Jr. High—mothers and fathers visited in their childrens' rooms. In the math class the teacher, Mr. M said, "The children have shown marked improvement in their work, especially Hope Gastmeyer. I don't know whether or not her parents are here, but Hope has learned, and learned well how to think on her feet in front of the class, and can follow through a problem to a perfect conclusion. In the Science class the instructor also singled out Hope and said, "I should like to call attention to the project made by Miss Gastmeyer, showing a real interest and ability."

After the class was over, Mrs. Malone said, "My stars! If the next teacher praises Hope and no one else, I'll think she is in line for a PhD." Mrs. Cruze, Jack's mother, said, "Hope isn't only popular with the boys—she also is a good student."

**February 9** | Joy, Hope and I drove into NY, met Bob, Ed, Jeanne, and Lew Thompson at the Cornell Club for the birthday dinner. The birthday cake had "Joy" and "Jeanne" on it. Jeanne and Lew went out to see "Life with Father" while the rest of us saw "Swiss Family Robinson" at the Music Hall. Neither Ginny nor I felt very well—it was the beginning of a long siege for me, if I but knew.

**February 22** | Celebrated Washington's birthday with a cake and ice cream. Neddie and JoAnn [Hap] couldn't understand why we sing "Happy Birthday" when he is dead!

**February 24** | Bobby came home from College unexpectedly and brought a friend to stay for the weekend—Pete Smith. Had to change the

dinner menu from salmon to steak and make up two more beds. Jeanne stayed in NY with Lew and just got in a few minutes before her evening date arrived—Edwin Outwin.

Bob, Pete, Ken, Red, and Danny were trying to decide where to take their dates for 50 cents instead of \$2.00.

**February 25** | Today Bob, JoAnn [Hap] and I went to Alice's for dinner. Hope and Jeanne cooked a turkey dinner here for Bobby and Pete. The boys left about 2:30 for school.

**March 4** | Bobby's birthday—we sent him cards, but I wasn't able to get out to buy him anything—19 today!

I was very happy to be able to work today—did a lot of cooking. When we woke up this morning we were surprised to see that an ice and wind storm held sway all night. A huge piece of tree broke off and fell across our telephone wire—so we're without phone service, but I learned later that many are without electricity or heat. All the trees are covered with ice, and it is so cold it probably will remain all day.

**March 9** | Bob and I went to Sallie Johnson's formal dinner. Dad hasn't had his tux on for years and was he in agony. His stiff shirt pushed up when he sat and made his collar catch his Adam's apple—the pants were so tight he could hardly bend—and all-in-all, he should have “stood in bed.”

Jeanne had Lew Thompson here for the week-end. They got supper and stayed with Hap.

**March 10** | Hap came running in from school—“Hey Mom, I just found out something—Felix Mendelssohn is dead—my teacher told me.” She had been practicing his music and loved his “On Wings of Song” and had evidently thought him alive—she was on the verge of tears when telling me.

**March 11** | We are having such a time keeping Hope where she belongs. I don't know how these youngsters get to be such high steppers. When Jeanne was her age, she wasn't allowed to stay out until 11 PM, but

it seems to be the thing now. I suppose at that rate they will stay out all night when they are 20.

**March 22** | Hope, Dad and I saw “Gone With the Wind”—\$3.30 for the move [for 3 people!]. It was very good, though, and gives you plenty food for thought.

Easter comes very early this year—this Sunday, and the weather is so cold, snowy and blowy.

**March 23** | Bobby arrived home for 10 days vacation. Jeanne had Lew for the week-end—we all colored and dressed eggs. The Jizzies dropped in, and my what a commotion. Everybody talks at once. After fixing baskets and hiding eggs and chickens for Hap, underwear and stockings for J and H, and \$1.00 for Bob, I went to bed.

**March 24** | A cold, damp Easter. Ten of us for supper—Charlie, Eleanor and little El, Lew and us. We played polka [poker] dice. Clinton won the \$1.00, and was he tickled! It was a close game between Clint and Hope.

**March 25** | Bob is working on his “flivver,” putting it in order so as to pass inspection. He thinks he will drive it back to Lehigh and sell it. That was his intention, but after he had it running again he said, “Boy—when I think of all the good times I had in this thing, I hate to part with it. I’ve worked on it, taken it all apart and put it together, bought new parts—it’s just like my baby, and I hate to part with it. The fellow will give me \$25.00 for it. What do you think?” “Well,” says I, “if it’s only \$25 you’ll get—it cost you \$20 and you put \$30 more in parts and pieces—you might better keep it and leave it in the driveway until you are working and can pay insurance on it.” He seemed relieved and happy.

Had lunch with Max [Maxine Marks] today.

**March 30** | There was an Easter Egg hunt for children in our park today, and I believe there were 999,000 children there. They broke thru the ropes and it certainly looked like a stampede. Even the cops had



no control. Happy got 2 eggs and a lucky number for which she drew a prize.

**March 31** | Hope, JoAnn [Hap], Dad and I drove Bob and Bill Eisner back to school. It started out a beautiful day—very springy—but before we hit the Pennsylvania line it was pouring, and by the time we were in Easton the sun was shining again. We stopped for supper on the way back. Jeanne had Jinny Outwin, Lew and Bob here for tea.

**April 1** | Today being April Fool's day, JoAnn (who changes her dress for boys' clothes as soon as school is over) thought she would love to fool Miss Meyer and go to school as a boy. So she donned those awful pants, flannel shirt, Bobby's red skating cap with earmuffs, and her braids tucked under with a bang in front, and presented herself at Kindergarten. "Good morning Miss Meyer, JoAnn couldn't come today so I'm taking her place—I'm her brother Bob." Her teacher phoned me that night and said that the farce was carried on all day—she tried to get "Bob" to take off his cap, "as all boys do"—but "he" insisted he had to keep it on. Happy still thinks Miss Meyer is completely unaware of her identity.

**April 5/6** | Tomorrow Jeanne is going to spend the week-end with Lew's folks and is she all agog! "Suppose they don't like me—maybe my face will break out or my hair will look awful—and I do so want to look nice for Lew's sake." It is a new experience for her. She feels she's going to get a grand looking over, and it scares her a bit. I keep trying to impress on her that her special charm is her ability to be natural under all and any conditions, and that they can't help but like her. Well, we'll see.

**April 7/8** | Yesterday, Lew's mother being sick, Jeanne brought him here for the week-end! Ed, Ginny, Joy, Ned, Hope, Hap, Jeanne, Lew, Dad and I went to the "Brook" for dinner. We were so long finding a place to eat that we arrived at the Women's Club about 5 minutes before Hap was to play. They roughed her up in a hurry and pushed her out on the stage, a very calm and very poised young lady. She

announced she would play “a piece written by Mozart when he was 5 years old—same age as I am.” She did awfully well and received much applause, she being 5 years younger than any of the others—most of whom were between 15 and 20. Needless to say, Mama and Papa were very proud. Each music teacher was allowed to put on one pupil, and Mrs. Mills chose JoAnn.

**April 9/10** | Mr. Alley, the dog warden, brought Barry back today. He was called out at 1 AM to pick him up, along with 3 other dogs. Ours he took home with him because he likes children and can't bear to see them cry for their dog. Whenever Barry is gone we send Hap to the warden's house, and she is so afraid that if we have to pay the \$50 fine we can't eat for a whole month, that by the time she gets to his house she is all worked up thinking about it and as soon as he opens the door and asks what she wants the poor thing bursts into tears—and he, thinking she loves her dog so much, hands him over. He told me today that's why he brings Barry back—because he loves kids and dogs.

**April 11** | Last Saturday night after Hope's dance at the Women's Club she brought some friends home to make merry. The dance is from 7:30 to 9:30, and they are all dressed up and hate to go home to bed—so they continue the evening at someone's house. David Brown gave some imitations of a Jewish Rabbi and the teachers at school. I laughed until I hurt—he is very clever and will no doubt someday be a good actor.

## 1941

**June 7** | I learned today from Joe Williams' mother that her Joe and my JoAnn are planning to marry and go west on a ranch—when I questioned her about it she said, “Oh Mother! That's a long while from now. I have to go through college, high school and glamour school.” (Grammar school)

**June 24** | Hope's Johnny is moving to Washington, and I am glad. She is too grown up for her age since going with him—practically keeping steady company.

**June 25** | Today JoAnn gets promoted to 2nd Grade and Hope graduates from Jr. High. If I hear Hap whistling from the corner, I am to know she has her card saying, “Promoted.” Her father says, “We have never had anyone left back yet—you had better not start it.”

**August 25-27** | Hap celebrated her birthday by having 8 little girls for supper and games. We played games in the yard and kept scores on the blackboard—potato race, dart throwing, etc. Sam dropped in—Jeanne and Eleanor kept score. Then each pair of girls were given a jig-saw puzzle on the living room floor, and while they were occupied and quiet, we fixed supper—after which we sang at the piano—more games—dressed Barry up in clothes and took him walking, and dismissed the party at 7:30 when parents began calling for them.

For her birthday, Happy was allowed to do as she pleased all day—eat or not, as she saw fit, dress to please herself, stay up as long as she liked—which would probably have run into the wee hours of the morning had it not been the rest of the family were very tired. By nine o’clock, Bobby headed upstairs to read awhile, Jeanne took Eleanor home, and I put out some lights and went upstairs. And since Dad was in the cellar printing pictures and Hope was at Sea Girt, little JoAnn gathered up her teddys and took herself to bed.

**September 13** | Well—Bob’s on his way to Africa. The Pan American Airways signed him up as an employee. Now he has to be x-rayed and inoculated, get his passport, and be ready to sail a week from tomorrow.

I’m having all the Jizzies who are still round for dinner tomorrow night, and the family Sunday—4 Coles, 4 E.K. Whitmores, Sam, 5 Jensens, 4 Hopkinses, 4 B. Whitmores, 4 Packards and us (6)—33 in all, for a farewell supper.

This is going to be a big thing in Bob’s life, and I know that all things work together for good to them who love God—and that this adventure is a real beginning for him.

**September 15** | All the family came for supper tonight. We took a lot of pictures. Cinna Mae and Naomi Hauerbach played their accordions for us—then we had supper, played the piano and sang.

Bob will be around for another couple of weeks. Every time I think of his going, I have a sinking feeling. I just have to keep remembering there is only one presence, one power, and one intelligence to guide him—no matter where he might be.



## War Years

**L**abor Day 1939 Germany invaded Poland. The family was once again renting a house in Orient and that morning a group of us were sitting on the porch, enjoying our Danish and coffee, when we heard Winston Churchill's voice on the radio, announcing that a state of war existed between England and Germany, I guess we all more-or-less expected it. There had been troubling news from that part of the world for some time. Then in another way it was exciting. We had all grown up with the stories of heroism and patriotism connected with World War I. We had all been taught to love our country and to be willing to defend it, if necessary.

I had just finished my two years at Skidmore in June and was taking the summer off before looking for a job. I thought I was in love with Dick Smith, whom I had been dating throughout my high school years. He and his family moved to San Francisco shortly after I graduated and we had been carrying on a long distance relationship during the time I was at college. In June he made the trip by bus from San Francisco to Maplewood and we had a wonderful three weeks together. The New York's World Fair was being held in Flushing Meadow just outside the City. We spent a lot of time at the Fair admiring all the new inventions they promised we would have in the near future. A car with sleek, low lines. A kitchen without electric wires running along floors and ceilings. Something they called a family room, which would be the center of the family's activities and included an accessory called a television. It was a small screen that enabled you to see pictures such as the newsreels in the theater as well as movies, right in your home.

Dick wanted us to plan a wedding in the near future. The threat of war in Europe was causing people to move ahead with their long-range plans, but I had so much I wanted to do and see before settling down. He finally left with my promise to visit California in six months' time to see if I liked it. California in those days was almost as inaccessible

to me as it must have been to those traveling in their covered wagons back in the 1800's. Flying wasn't even considered a possibility and the train trip was long, tedious and very costly. I could not envision living so far away from the family. Now on Labor Day 1939 at Orient, the war in Europe and the necessity of finding work, temporarily set aside thoughts of marriage and Dick Smith.

We closed the house the next day and went back to New Jersey. By the end of the following week I had a secretarial position in the RCA building in Rockefeller Plaza. It was, without a doubt, the nicest spot in the whole city to work, as it was surrounded with elegant shops, fascinating restaurants, beautiful Rockefeller Plaza and the world famous Music Hall. I became a businesswoman, dressed in a suit, hose, heels, and always a hat and gloves. I walked to the train station each morning with my dad to catch the 7:15 train into the City. A couple of girl friends who had gone to business school after high school, were working in New York and riding the same train. I was happy to find that a number of boys who were two years ahead of me in high school, now as college graduates, were also starting work in New York. We developed a close little clique, saving seats for each other, making dates for the weekend, etc. As soon as we boarded the train, we played bridge for the 30-minute ride to Hoboken. Then we caught the ferry across the Hudson River to lower Manhattan. Those of us going uptown walked a couple of blocks to the IRT subway station and rode another 15 minutes. I was one of the last to get off—at 50th Street. I walked another four blocks to Radio City—the heart of New York's activities.

Every morning at the downtown subway station, I saw this beautiful Greek Adonis. He was a tall, handsome blonde in a dark overcoat, fedora hat, and a pipe. He also got off at the 50th Street exit; walked the same four blocks to Radio City; went into the same office building; rode the same elevator. I got off at the 42nd floor and he remained on the elevator. After this had been going on every day for a couple of weeks, one evening I was late leaving the office and had to run to catch a later subway in the hopes I could still catch my ferry in order to catch the 6:45 train from Hoboken. Otherwise, I missed my friends, as well as dinner, because the next train to Maplewood didn't leave until 7:15.

As I raced down the subway steps, I saw my mystery man waiting for the subway. I had never seen him on my trip home before and the surprise brought a smile to my face as our eyes met. I took my seat and he walked over and sat down beside me. We started talking and I learned his name was Lewis Thompson; his father graduated from Cornell two years before my dad and was an All American football star; he lived in Ridgewood, New Jersey and knew friends of mine at Skidmore; and he worked for the American Cyanamid Company on the 57th floor of the RCA building.

The next morning he called me at the office and asked me to lunch. He took me to one of the restaurants in the Plaza where they had real tablecloths and napkins and a waiter in a black tuxedo. We had a delicious meal with dessert that cost him 50 cents apiece. I usually ate lunch alone at Chockful of Nuts and had a cream cheese sandwich on raisin bread and a cup of coffee for 15 cents—which was all I could afford on my \$75 a month salary.

After that very special lunch, Lew joined me at the Chockful of Nuts or similar eating spots as often as we could work it out. He began meeting me at the station in Hoboken and we took the ferry together. On Saturdays we met after the close of business—in those days everyone worked until noon on Saturday. We spent the afternoon and evening going to museums, Central Park, the zoo, and shows at Radio City where his brother worked and could get us in free. We hunted out cute little, ethnic restaurants and rode the Staten Island ferry back and forth in the moonlight—anything that let us be together and not cost too much. I tingled all over when he took my hand and cried if something came up that kept me from being with him. I had never known such emotional highs and lows. I looked at everything through eyes of love and saw only loveliness around me. For the first time I knew what love was all about. I lived to love and loved to live.

Mother and Dad celebrated my 21st birthday by taking Lew and me to the Cornell Club for dinner and to a Broadway play afterwards called “Life With Father.” *I was never happier.*

Lew’s father died when he was nine. He had an older sister and a younger brother. They lived in a bungalow with their mother, who was an artist. Apparently there wasn’t much money and the children were



expected to pitch in their salaries to cover the cost of running the house. Then their mother gave them back an allowance to cover their expenses from payday to payday. Although we both wanted to get married, there didn't seem to be any possibility of it for some time to come.

Between us we saved enough money to buy an old Volkswagon bug so Lew could drive from Ridgewood to Maplewood on weekends and we didn't have to spend so much time and money in the City. On Sunday, December 7th, 1941, we were parked in our little car on a mountain top in the South Orange Reservation, enjoying our chocolate malts when we heard the announcement over the radio that Japan had bombed Pearl Harbor. Monday morning when I came into the office everyone gathered in the lobby to listen to President Roosevelt's declaration of war on Japan and Germany. When the program ended with the playing of the National Anthem, there were tears in everyone's eyes. Things began to change once again.

After two years at Leigh University, Bob took a leave of absence to accept a job with Pan American Airlines to build air bases in Africa. The day he was to sail, I had just started a new job with Previews. John Tysen, my boss, was away that day so I decided to take my lunch hour and go down to the harbor to see Bob off. Mom and Dad were there also and we all boarded the ship to visit with Bob and his buddies. When they were ready to sail, I looked at my watch and saw it was already 4:30. I couldn't believe what had happened to the time but I knew there was no point in going back to work. I thought for sure I would be fired but when I sheepishly put in an appearance the next morning, my boss asked where I had been and when I told him, he just nodded and said he hoped all would be well with my brother. When war broke out, Bob was made an officer in the Army Air Corps and stayed in that part of the world for the duration.

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### **My Boss, John Tysen**

My first job in the RCA building was with an oil company out of Pennsylvania. They had a new man in charge at the office, and he was

assisted by an older single woman, who obviously knew more about the business than he did. I was to be a Girl Friday—answering the telephone, acting as a receptionist, taking dictation and doing the typing, filing and any other menial tasks that arose. Mr. Gesner was seldom in the office, but Miss Ellis was very nice to me and helped me learn office routine and business etiquette. After about six months, Mr. Gesner was fired and Miss Ellis suggested I find another job.

When I applied for the advertised job at Previews, I was pleasantly surprised to see so many young, attractive secretaries working there. There was a large central room, surrounded with small offices—each containing an area manager and his secretary. After I was interviewed, and my secretarial skills were tested, I was asked whether I wanted to work for the Manager of the New Jersey department or the Vice President of the company. The interviewer explained that the Vice President was a 29-year old eccentric bachelor who dictated very fast in an English accent and couldn't keep a secretary longer than two weeks. He had a terrible temper and each girl left in tears. They were willing to pay a bonus to any girl who could stick it out. I chose the vice president—sight unseen, and never regretted my decision.

My first encounter with him was the Monday morning I started work. He rushed into the office—a tall gaunt youngish man, immaculately dressed, wearing a gray overcoat, black bowler on his head and an umbrella over his arm—though it was a sunny day. He called the umbrella a “bumbleshoot,” and that and the flower in his buttonhole, were his trademarks. He gave me a hardy handshake, and started asking about my life. I found myself talking about Lew and my not being able to finish college. He asked my religion, and when I replied Christian Science, he asked what that meant. I said it meant I used prayer to keep me happy and healthy. He said, “You mean you aren't going to take a couple of days off every month?” I laughed and assured him I was not. I never missed a day of work the whole time I was with him. After I left Previews, I heard he tried to get another Christian Science secretary.

Since I sat in the same office with him, I heard all his sales pitches and often wanted to applaud. He was so good. As the saying goes, he could sell a refrigerator to an Eskimo. He had such a dry wit that I would leave the office in the evening with a smile on my face, just remembering

some funny incident that occurred during the day. He did dictate at a rapid rate, and sometimes I had to have a break to stretch my arm and wiggle my fingers. Late one afternoon, he was dictating a lengthy letter, and I had almost filled up my dictation notebook when he called it quits. He said I could type the letter the next day, since it was already five o'clock, and he knew I had to catch a commuter train. I decided to go over my notes on the train ride home, while they were still fresh in my mind. The next morning, I sat down at my typewriter and—I had left the notebook at home! There was no way to retrieve it. I was sick. I knew this was a very important letter, and that it had to go out that very morning. When he and the bowler hat and bumbleshoot burst into the office an hour later, and asked for the letter, I dreaded telling him what I had done. I thought for sure that this was my time to leave in tears. But he never said a word, except to tell me to get a new notepad, and then proceeded to dictate the letter all over again.

We had the best of relationships. I was his “office wife.” I knew all his personal business; shared his disappointments; paid his bills; bought gifts and flowers for his girlfriends; and celebrated his triumphs over drinks at the Biltmore. So, it was natural to write and congratulate him when I later saw the article announcing that he had been made the President of Previews, Inc.

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We had a 5”x 8” flag with a blue star on it, hanging in our front window. It told everybody that a member of the family was serving in the Armed Forces. Flags were in almost everyone’s window and sometimes there was more than one star. When a blue star was replaced with a gold star, neighbors knew someone had lost a loved one. Times were solemn. When we stood to pledge allegiance to the flag, it was hard to hold back the tears. Dad gave blood every week at the American Red Cross and never missed the nightly news on the radio telling us where battles were being fought. Before the start of a movie at the local theater, there was about 10 minutes of film footage from the war zone. This was our only visual source of what was going on. No TV to watch with a blow-by-blow description of a war in Iraq! We all had brothers, cousins and

boyfriends eagerly enlisting. My cousin Billy Hopkins, at the age of 19, was killed in France fighting the invading Germans. Lew was classified 4F (not fit for service) because of a double hernia they discovered when he went to sign up. His brother Bill went into the Navy. Ration books were issued to families for things like gasoline, sugar, meat, coffee, eggs and butter. Long lines formed to purchase silk stockings and cigarettes. Silk stockings were so scarce that we used to stain our legs a suntan color and draw a seam up the back with an eyebrow pencil. Silk stockings always had a seam. Seamless nylons came along much later.

Now when we took the ferry across the Hudson River to New York, we saw troop ships loaded with young men, high school and college buddies, on their way to England. All the boats in the harbor blew their whistles, including our ferry, as the boys leaned over the ship's railing and waved their goodbyes. Again tears fell as you couldn't help but wonder when—and if—those boys would come back home.

With the increasing demand for goods because of the war, business started improving and money was easier to earn. Daddy received his first bonus check from H.H. Robertson Christmas 1943. He gave Mother and me a check with the request that we now return to Bambergers and each buy a fur coat. Mine was a gorgeous black Persian lamb in a princess cut. I don't remember what Mother bought—nor what eventually happened to mine. I think I gave it away when I moved to Florida. But I will never forget his generosity nor his expression of appreciation for the years we stinted and saved, never losing our joy, nor our expectation of good. Today people say “I love you” so often and so routinely, but I wonder sometimes if actions don't speak louder and ring truer. My father was not a demonstrative person but he showed how much he loved us and took care of our needs in so many different ways over his lifetime.

Late Saturday afternoon, October 24, 1942, Lew and I were married. I was pleased to see how many people came to the church. With the scarcity of gasoline, no one drove very far, and of course, many relatives and close friends were overseas. The reception was at home at twilight. Mother had the rooms filled with flowers and candlelight and caterers passed out a light supper. It was a beautiful party and we hated to leave but finally it was getting late. Our Best Man, Wes Dorsheimer, home from the Navy on a short furlough, drove us into the Waldorf

Astoria where we spent the night. The next morning we took a train to Skytop Lodge in the Poconos and had a glorious week getting used to being Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Renton Thompson.

Lew had been transferred to the American Cyanamid plant in Bound Brook, New Jersey earlier that year. We rented a charming garden apartment in nearby Westfield. There was a bedroom and bath, living room with dining alcove and a kitchen. I had had minimum experience in the kitchen and now found myself with a cookbook constantly propped up on the counter, trying to put a meal together. Even when I roasted my first turkey with the gizzards, neck and liver still wrapped in a paper bag inside the turkey, Lew raved about how delicious it was. This kind of praise kept me trying again and again to be a good cook.

The complex contained a swimming pool and tennis courts—and if I climbed out the rear window of the living room I was on a green lawn bounded by a brook. The rent was astronomical but we both agreed to do without other luxuries in order to pay the \$45.00 due each month. They were all young people, like ourselves, living there and we had an instant social life. I soon quit my job in the City and took a very unglamorous job as secretary to the Manager of a large defense factory nearby. He didn't want to hire me because he said he couldn't afford to train me and then find I was pregnant. I assured him we didn't want any children until after the war so he agreed to give me the position. A year and a half later, with the war still going strong, I had to quit to take care of our little boy. His daddy was insane when he found out it was a boy—handed out cigars to everyone even the man who came to pick up the trash. We named him Lewis Renton Thompson, Jr. and called him Tommy.

When I married Lew, I stopped going to Church. The first time Lew took me home to meet his family, he mentioned that I was a Christian Scientist and his mother looked horrified. She explained they had an aunt who was a Christian Scientist and died of appendicitis because she refused to go to a doctor. It was obvious the Thompsons had no use for Christian Science, nor its followers. Well, it didn't seem that important to me. I never spent much time being sick. I was drinking and smoking socially since starting work in New York and enjoyed my cocktails before dinner—often stopping for a drink at the Biltmore cocktail lounge with friends before heading home at night. In addition, it was nice to spend

Sunday morning reading the newspaper over a late breakfast instead of the early rising and dressing for Church previously required. Married life was wonderful. I was free of all the restrictions I had known under my parents' roof and now lived by the rules and standards Lew and I worked out for ourselves.

With a baby to care for, I spent a lot of time with the other mothers in the complex. We would sit out by the pool and compare notes on toilet training, etc. John Tysen gave me a Bedlington terrier puppy when I left New York so I wouldn't be lonesome for Previews. Her name was Heidi because she looked like a little lamb out of the Swiss Alps. She was a welcome addition to our little family. I would put Tommy in the carriage and with Heidi by my side, walk to the grocery store with my ration books and buy whatever I could find.

Both money and supplies were hard to come by but I learned to make a good meatloaf, macaroni and cheese, baby peas, tossed salad, apple pie a la mode and coffee. This was my standard guest menu. When served with my wedding china and crystal on a linen cloth with candles and flowers, it became a festive occasion. One day I was so involved with the menu that I came out of the grocery store, arms filled with bundles, and walked on home. As I was putting the groceries away, I remembered I had left the baby carriage parked in front of the store. I pulled on my coat and raced back to the store to find Tommy still asleep in the carriage, covered with a light dusting of fresh snow and Heidi sitting patiently beside him—although I must admit she looked extremely glad to see me.

In August 1945 we dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Japan surrendered. Germany had done so several months earlier. The war was over! Whistles blew, fire sirens went off, radios blared out the good news and everyone poured out of their apartments, cheering and hugging each other. Some friends drove by and shouted they were on their way to the City to get into the excitement and asked if we wanted to go. Lew said he would stay with the baby so I jumped in and went to New York. It was a madhouse. People in the street were rocking the cars as they tried to drive down Broadway to Times Square. When we attempted to get out of the car, we were crushed in the crowd. I didn't realize at the time that I was pregnant with Hope, and became physically ill with the noise

and jostling crowds. We decided we'd had enough and drove back to Meadowbrook Village where everything was now quiet and peaceful.

My brother came home—as well as dear friends who had been gone for a year or more. Times were good and people were prosperous. We all needed houses, appliances, cars, everything that had been on hold for four years. The urge was to buy. We felt we deserved it—but there was always the fear a depression could happen again. Basically we paid cash for the things we bought but there was a growing tendency to buy what we needed now and worry about how to pay for it later. Credit cards did not come into existence until the early 50's. Business was booming. Jobs were plentiful. Hope was born in April 1946. The next month Mom and Dad sold some Robertson stock, which was priced higher than anyone ever dreamt was possible, and paid cash for the house in Southold. The entire family spent the summer of 1946 together at Southold—happy, healthy, well off and so very grateful. In the fall of '46 Bob returned to Leigh and received his Engineering degree in June 1949—ten years after he first started college.

From the time I first met Lew, he had one goal in mind—to be earning \$10,000 a year before he was thirty (probably equivalent to \$100,000 in today's money). So when in the fall of 1947 he received a very good offer from the Chemical Division of Bordens in the new field of plastics, we moved to Long Island, bought a little house in Syosset for \$10,000 with a big mortgage and a 4-door Studebaker sedan, on the installment plan, and with our two children in tow, eagerly began the next phase of our lives.

## Mother and Son

**T**his was probably the lengthiest and most difficult demonstration ever required of me. Looking back now, I can see it wasn't a disease that needed to be healed, or the fear that had wrapped me so tightly in its grasp. No, in the final analysis, it was the very special relationship existing between a mother and her son that needed to be spiritualized. Ever since the Virgin Mary looked upon her newborn and saw the Christchild, every mother holding her son for the first time is overwhelmed at this miracle she has created.

I can remember the joy and excitement I felt when I first looked at my baby boy. His face shone with an inner light and the few strands of blonde hair framed a halo around his head. The dark blue eyes looked directly into mine, acknowledging the bond between us. Never have I felt so strongly the presence of the Christ.

He was an exceptional child. At two, he was so handsome people stopped me on the street to admire him. At three, he was robust, active, good-natured and an avid learner. He adored his father whose mannerisms he aped perfectly. And he was very affectionate toward me. Often he would run over and give me a hug and ask if I was okay. One incident stands out in memory. We were waiting in a crowded restaurant waiting to be seated when my four-year-old son dragged a chair across the floor and said, "Here, Honey, you sit down." The others in the room looked at us in amazement and several remarked how very unusual it was for such a young child to be so caring for his mother. It was also the first time I remembered his calling me "Honey" but Honey became my name from then on.

He had just started kindergarten the year his father became ill. That Christmas it was necessary to uproot the three children (Hope was three and Anita just a couple of months old) and leave familiar surroundings to stay with my family in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania, until their dad was well enough for us to go home. This was hard enough for the children,



but the following Christmas their dad died, and we never did return to our own home. Instead, we were absorbed into the routine of my family's household, which was big and comfortable.

One day, I found Lew under a card table, which was covered with a blanket to the floor. When I stooped down to ask what he was doing under there, he replied he was pretending he was in a little house like our old one. About this time, he developed a hollow, dry cough and had difficulty breathing. At first, I didn't take it too seriously but as time went on, he became lethargic, thin and emaciated. The glow in his face was gone, and he spent most of the time by himself in his room. I knew he missed his father, and the practitioner whom I asked to help us told me to affirm that God was his father and those fatherly qualities could not be lost to him. We worked to know there was no "beckoning," a term used for so-called communication with the dead, because I also knew his dad would be missing him.

We would have some relief, but the fear never left me. I was so afraid of losing him and felt so incapable of meeting his needs. Time didn't work any miracles. He seemed to get frailer and more withdrawn. I decided to take Class Instruction in order to get a better understanding of how to heal in Christian Science. Mother, who had been waiting a year to go, was accepted at the same time. I made arrangements for the girls locally and planned to drop Lew off at the Thompsons' home in New Jersey on our way to New York City where class was being held.

The day we were to leave, Lew said he didn't feel well. I called the practitioner and her reply was "This is just mortal mind trying to keep you from this very important step. Go." So we made a bed for Lew in the back of the car and started the drive to New York. By lunch, he was feverish and we stopped to report to the practitioner. Again, her reply was "Don't let anything keep you from this mission. Keep going."

We did, but by the time we arrived in New Jersey, I knew I couldn't just drop this sick child at the Thompsons, who had children of their own. So Mother made arrangements with Aunt Iva, who also lived in New Jersey to put us up for the night. I spent most of the time in prayer at Lew's bedside—and in the morning, instead of the expected healing; we had a bad case of chickenpox. The practitioner reiterated that I must take advantage of this opportunity—class instruction is held only once

a year. Aunt Iva very generously said she would take care of Lew for the ten days we would be gone.

I explained to this poor, little sick child how important it was for me to go, and that it meant leaving him in the care of someone he barely knew, and I asked if this was okay. Stalwartly, he agreed (I wouldn't have gone otherwise) and said he would not be any trouble to Aunt Iva. Afterwards, I learned that when she asked him how he was, he replied "Nice and hot, thank you" or "Nice and cold, thank you" depending upon his temperature—but never a whine nor word of complaint! That's the kind of kid he was. I loved him so much; just the thought of him made me ache.

I don't mean to imply that I loved Lew more than the girls, but the relationship between us was entirely different. I understood the girls. They were, after all, an extension of myself. I knew how they thought and what they felt. I could experience their pain and rejoice in their triumphs. I lived again through them. We were friends and would be so forever. But my son was hurting, and I didn't know how to help. He was vulnerable, and I didn't know how to give him strength. I was obsessed with the fear that I couldn't meet his needs. We loved each other dearly, but because I couldn't put myself in his shoes, I didn't know how a man would handle any situation. And, of course, always a mother is faced with the knowledge that some day another woman will take her place.

Even after class instruction, from which I emerged a stronger and more learned Christian Scientist, I still could not let go of the burden of responsibility, which, as a single parent, weighed me down. And constantly I fought the fear of my own inadequacy. The picture would improve but then I found myself fearfully listening in the silence for a cough. And when the "thing I most fear has come upon me" (*Book of Job*), I would lie with my head buried in a pillow to shut out the sounds of the debilitating cough, while affirming that he was the son of the living Father, created, supported and protected by Him. I yearned to take him in my arms, but had been told that my love was "smothering" him and that I had to learn to let go.

I was advised to study Genesis, Chapter 22, where Abraham heard God tell him to put his beloved son Isaac on the altar as a burnt sacrifice to God. Abraham obeyed, knowing that God would never require him

to forfeit his dearest possession. So Abraham set about building the altar and laid wood on it. Then he bound Isaac in order to place him on the fire, even at this point still trusting God to save them both. At the very last moment, he heard God say, "Lay not a hand upon the lad for now I know that you would not withhold your only son from me." And when Abraham looked up, he saw a ram caught in the bushes behind them and used it as the burnt offering. This was to be my lesson, and I read and studied its message over and over again. But I didn't want to relinquish my personal sense of motherhood. I couldn't put my burden of responsibility on the altar. I was afraid to trust Science to provide the solution. I could not feel sure of God's loving care nor acknowledge a "deathless life." And so the coughing and the difficult breathing and the fear and thoughts of death prevailed.

Until one day, Lew's breathing became so impaired that it might even have stopped. He was lying on the bed in my room, and I grabbed him in my arms and shook him vigorously, thinking all the time of Abraham's willingness to give Isaac to God and mentally I let go. "Okay, Father," I thought, "I can do no more. He is all yours." Immediately his breathing became normal and he lay back on the bed at peace. And I, too, was free. The heavy burden was gone, and I knew with absolute certainty that I could trust God with my most cherished possessions, my three babies. I turned them over to their true parent who would always be there to guide and guard them.

What a wonderful lesson to learn so early in my parenting, because in all the years that followed, I never feared for their safety nor worried about their decisions and temptations. No matter where they were or what they were doing, I knew they dwelt in the "place of the most high where no evil could befall them."

The coughing and difficulty in breathing continued off and on for a number of years, but Lew began to gain weight, his physical appearance was much improved, his thirst for knowledge was insatiable, and he became interested in athletics. Once the fear was gone, the cause of the problem was negated and gradually the effects, too, vanished.

The lesson? It is important to understand that God is the only creator and that He is both Father and Mother. He supplies His children with the desire to do and be good, the wisdom to know the way and the

strength to get back on course when need be. As human parents, we are temporary caretakers of our children. In the long run, the responsibility for them rests solely with God. *Amen!*



## Returning to the Work Force

At 31 years of age, I found myself a widow with three children under the age of six to raise, no home, no money and no job. Fortunately, my dad had a theory that every woman should have some experience in the business world before she was married. So at his insistence, I had included typing and shorthand courses in my two years at a liberal arts college. When I was unable to return for my junior year (because of no funds), I found a job as executive secretary to the vice president of Previews, Inc., a promotional real estate firm in New York City. When I was married two years later, I left the job with regret on both sides.

One day in Spring of 1953, shortly after my husband had passed away, I saw my former boss's picture on the cover of *Time* magazine, with an article about his promotion as president of this very up-and-coming real estate firm. I dropped him a note to congratulate him and mentioned a little about what had been happening to me in those intervening ten years. I was so pleased to receive his reply telling me how sorry he was to hear of my loss and saying if I ever wanted a job, there would always be one for me at Previews.

In striving to know what plans God had for me, I had been working with the verse from Isaiah 54:2, "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes." I had looked up the various words in this statement in both the dictionary and the concordances. I can't remember now exactly what insight I received but basically it was to enlarge my concept of where and how I lived; to let them—Life, Truth and Love—stretch away the curtains of doubt or confusion; to not limit myself in any way and to prepare to add some strength to my daily demonstrations of the presence of God, good.

So I felt this invitation from my former boss was the first step. When my parents took their annual trek from Pittsburgh to Long Island, my mother said she would take the children to Southold and I

dropped off in the City. I had a lovely visit and was offered a job—not an executive secretary but in their stenographic pool. I was to start that Monday.

Still working with the Bible verse, I found an apartment on Park Avenue for the summer months at a very low rental, and after a year of taking care of a sick husband, as well as a new baby and two other little ones, I thought I was in heaven walking down Park Avenue in a new business suit to my own job! But my delight was short lived. My typing was awful—it had been too long! I found I'd forgotten most of my shorthand and the stenographic pool was filled with cute, young girls fresh out of school who looked at me like I was their mother. When I went to lunch that first day, I wanted to just keep on walking right down to Southold and my kids. But again, I knew I had to trust and keep working at finding my answer. So that night, I wrote down a list of assets I knew I could contribute to the job, such as being on time, not taking days off, loyal to the company, willingness to learn, not taking part in office politics, etc. And for the next two weeks, I kept that list always in front of me. Every once in a while, I would check it out and make sure I was expressing those qualities—and sometimes I would add a new one.

When I had been at work a little less than a month, I was called into the president's office and asked if I would like to take over the management of their Palm Beach, Florida office. They said I would be paid enough to set up a home for my children and could hire a friend to go down with me, if I wished. When I gasped and asked "Why me?" my boss laughed and said, "Well not because you're such a good typist, but we need someone down there who knows and loves the company, someone we can trust and who will work hard, someone who won't get involved in office politics or idle gossip"—almost word for word from my list of assets.

I was awed by God's plan for me, but I was hesitant. Surely this was what the Bible verse had meant about expanding my dwelling place and strengthening my stakes, but I had never been to Florida, let alone Palm Beach, and it meant leaving the security of my parents and their help with the children, traveling 1,500 miles away from everything I knew, and all my friends. It meant finding a home and someone to take care of the children while I was at work. Then I remembered that when

the Bible gives us a command, there is always a blessing to follow, and I wondered what the promise was for me if I obeyed that particular Bible verse. So, I went back to Isaiah Chapter 54, and read further and this is what I found in verses 4 and 5. “Thou shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. For thy Maker is thine husband.” That was my answer and the move became a demonstration of its own.

The lesson here? Sometimes it takes lots of study and daily application—persistence and dedication—to bring about a solution!





## Move to Palm Beach

**T**he interesting thing about the move to Palm Beach is that my parents thought it was a great idea. Up until this time, there had been many discussions about what was going to happen when Dad retired in a couple of years. He explained to me that no one would want to marry a widow with three kids and no money, so he was prepared to provide for me and the children as long as it was necessary. However, he was adamant that we would have to leave Pittsburgh as he felt it would be more than he could handle financially on a retired income. Instead, he planned on moving to Long Island where real estate would be cheaper and yet still be near the City where I could find work. I guess he looked at a map one day and picked out a town named Amityville, which seemed to fill these requirements. None of us had ever been to Amityville, but it became the symbol for the drab and mediocre life I was destined to live. Many the night I left the dining room table in tears because I didn't want to leave the many friends I had made in Pittsburgh. I never had a Christian Science friend before, and now found myself surrounded with so many good friends—all with young families like my own. We shared child care responsibilities, helped each other with personal problems, supported each other metaphysically and although I was the only one in the group without a husband, I was included in the bridge parties, covered dish picnics, square dancing, etc. Sometimes I had a date and other times I did not, but I was always made to feel welcome.

So when I went down to Southold that weekend with the news that I had been offered a job in Palm Beach, Florida, I was astonished at the reaction. Daddy's comment was "This is a miracle. Palm Beach isn't just anyplace. It is paradise. When I retire, Mother and I will join you there." Amityville was never mentioned again.

Praising God for turning my life around and trusting the Bible verse that my widowhood would be a reproach unto me no longer, I eagerly waited to see how it would all unfold. I awoke each morning with

such a sense of anticipation that I couldn't wait to start my day. This was the end of July, and I was scheduled to take over the Palm Beach office of Previews the day after Labor Day. First, I contacted Ann Patterson, a young, single girl whose company I had often enjoyed. She worked as a secretary in Pittsburgh and lived with an elderly aunt. She seemed a likely candidate to share this experience with me—and to her credit, she was enough of a free spirit to hire on as my assistant.

I will never forget the day the two of us packed a few personal belongings in the back of the 1950 Chevy convertible that my brother Bob helped me buy. We said goodbye to all those good Pittsburgh friends, hugged and kissed my three children, who were staying with Mom and Dad until we were settled, and drove away from the “comfort zone” I had so carefully established for myself. Neither of us had ever been to Florida, so after we crossed the Mason Dixon line, we were in foreign territory. When we entered Florida a couple of days later, we immediately stopped at the Welcome Center to see our first palm tree and to drink glasses and glasses of fresh squeezed orange juice, supplied by the Tourist Board.

The weather was getting warmer and warmer as we traveled south, and at this point we had the top down on the car and were enjoying the sun on our faces and the wind in our hair. There was no I-95 in those days. We traveled through little towns and miles and miles along undeveloped shorefront. We even took a few minutes to drive the car on the beach at Daytona, racing the waves, laughing and singing. After a year of taking care of a sick husband and three small children, and the many months of worrying how we were going to get on with our lives, I felt as though someone had opened a cage and set me free.

About 6 p.m. that evening, we entered Palm Beach County and checked into a funny little group of cabins along Highway 1 in Riviera Beach (these cabins have just recently been turned into a historical preservation area, and are being restored to their original condition). The next morning, we finished the ride to West Palm Beach and crossed the bridge into Palm Beach. Driving down Royal Palm Way, its large center island lined with Royal Palms and beds of colorful flowers everywhere, I thought I had never seen anything more beautiful. On a big white house, set back from the road, we saw a sign advertising an apartment

for rent. We pulled into the drive, and went looking for someone to talk to. We eventually were down a one-bedroom, kitchen, living room and a balcony overlooking more gardens, and decided to take it for a month. Right around the corner was the Previews office, and at the end of the street was the ocean. As we took time to admire the expanse of white sand and tireless waves rolling back and forth, I turned to Ann and said, “Can you believe we live here?”

We stopped to see the Previews office. Unlocking the door, we found a large reception room facing the street and two smaller offices behind it. Desk drawers had been left open, their contents spilling out; files emptied on the floor at random. The scene was overwhelming, and suddenly I realized, that when John Tyson told me back in New York City that the former employees had left in a fit of anger, he meant it. But even this condition could not shatter our enthusiasm. We simply locked up and walked down South County Road, looking in shop windows, offices, banks and art galleries. These were all one or two story stucco buildings, painted either white with dark wood trim, or a bright yellow. The downtown appeared to be very small. We stopped at Benny’s, a delicatessen on the corner of Royal Palm and South County. I had a 10¢ cup of delicious coffee and my first bagel with cream cheese and lox—just the first of many “firsts” I experienced in Palm Beach. Everything about Palm Beach was different from anything I had known previously. There was so much beauty—contrived and planted, but beauty nonetheless. There was so much wealth evident in the cars parked along the road, in the clothes and jewelry worn by the people we passed on the street; the yachts tied up at the Palm Beach docks; the size of the homes along A1A. Even the merchandise in the store windows screamed money!

It was Wednesday, so we decided to search out the Christian Science Church and go to the testimonial meeting. We crossed the bridge again to West Palm Beach, and found the largest Christian Science Church I’d ever seen. It sat in the middle of a huge lawn across the street from the Intercoastal. The subtle outside lighting magnified the beauty of the architecture, which resembled a Greek temple. We joined the many men and women walking up the wide front steps. As we sang the familiar hymns, and listened to the familiar readings, I thought how universal Christian Science was. We didn’t know any of these people, yet their

facial expressions were familiar. We knew who they were, and what they stood for, and I felt very much at home. I gave a testimony to that effect, and after the service, many came over to welcome us. In the next few weeks, we learned that the Christian Science Church was the place to be. Many prominent Palm Beachers belonged, as well as people about our age and financial bracket.

When it got close to New Year's Eve that first year, we asked what arrangements the Scientists had to celebrate, as we always did in Pittsburgh. When they said they didn't do anything, Ann and I moved the furniture out of the living room, rented a juke box, and set up a buffet table in the dining room. We let it be known that everyone was welcome—the only stipulation being no drinking or smoking. Bob and Ken thought it was the most ridiculous thing they had ever heard—a New Year's party without liquor and where no one knew anyone else! But it was a grand success. So many came that we had to have nametags to show who they all were. Everyone had a wonderful time, and it was the beginning of a group of close friends that has existed for almost fifty years.

Well, back to Previews. Previews is a kind of public relations agent for owners of large estates throughout the world—the kind that sell for millions of dollars. We were responsible for preparing copy and photographs and the printing of an elaborate colored brochure on each property. We decided where and when to place ads. We also had to keep in close touch with our owners, providing progress reports periodically. We worked through real estate brokers, who actually sold the property. Our job was to stay in close touch with broker and client, doing everything possible to bring about a successful sale.

Starting from scratch was difficult because we didn't know the local brokers; had never met the owners; and didn't even know the locations. As the Music Man sang, we “didn't know the territory.” The day after Labor Day, Ann and I opened the doors to the Palm Beach office of Previews, Inc. Fortunately, we had no customers. We spent days cleaning up files, reading each one to acquaint ourselves with them, and then re-filing. We pored over local maps to learn where the properties were located, and when at all possible, we wandered through prestigious homes to familiarize ourselves with the inventory. We spent lots of time

introducing ourselves to the local bankers, who, for the most part, were very gentle with us. It turned out that one of the well-known architects was a Church member, and we ran across several other Scientists who were very helpful. We all worked on South County Road within blocks of each other, which created a happy and exciting work atmosphere.

The month of September 1953, as all Palm Beachers explained to us, was a very exceptional one in that it rained all day every day for 30 days. Every day for 30 days, we awoke to the sound of rain on palm fronds. We put on damp clothes because the humidity was so bad, nothing ever dried out. We never had breakfast on our balcony overlooking the flower gardens. We slopped through the warm rain in and out of the car, office and apartment, but Ann and I never stopped being thrilled with our lives. Then it was October, and we had to find a more permanent place to live. Finally, the sun came out, and I located a 3-bedroom Spanish style house in West Palm Beach that was available, fully furnished, for the winter season. We moved over to 340 Granada Street. It had a guest cottage in the rear, so when Bob called to say he thought he would drive down to see how we were doing, and bring Lew with him, we were ready. Mom and Dad were bringing the two little girls the next week. Bob never went back to Pittsburgh. He bought an old apartment house in West Palm Beach, and moved into the ground floor unit. He re-did the others for rental income.

When Mom and Dad and the two girls arrived, Mom offered to stay for a couple of weeks to get Lew and Hope enrolled in grammar school and find a nursery school for Nita. We also had to find a maid to take care of the house and meals while Ann and I were at work. About a week after Mom arrived, someone knocked on our front door. I opened it to find a young, attractive black girl who said she was looking for work. She was a single mom, living with her mom and small son. She was exactly what we were looking for. Mother stayed around another couple of weeks to show Billie Ruth how we needed things done. We registered Nita in a nursery school down the street, and every noon Billie Ruth rode a bike to school, picked up Nita, brought her home for lunch and a nap. Then she prepared dinner before she left for the day. In the morning, she fixed breakfast for us, did the dinner dishes from the night before, cleaned the house, washed and ironed our clothes and made everything

welcoming and attractive for our return home from the office. All I had to do was put the dinner on the table. Billie Ruth stayed with us until Ken and I were married, and she was truly a gift from God.

In November, Bob informed us he had invited an old buddy to join him in a business venture. He bought a formica fabricating company and was going to work with home builders. In those days, there was no real business in Palm Beach other than doctors, lawyers, bankers and real estate brokers. Since Bob had decided to stay in Palm Beach (he claimed it was to keep an eye on me), he needed some additional income. Bob met Ken Bryden when they were both working in construction in upstate New York. Ken had recently lost his wife and was having a hard time, so he eagerly accepted Bob's offer. A lot of people were looking for a new start in life. Only a very few of Florida's residents were natives. Most of us were transients from the North and thought of ourselves as pioneers in one of the country's last frontiers. In the summer, the place was deserted. The wealthy owners of Palm Beach estates left right after Easter and didn't return until Christmas. Hotels, restaurants and stores were closed. The streets were empty—the docks deserted. There was no air conditioning except in a few restaurants and movie theater in West Palm Beach.

It was a great time for those of us who lived here all year. Life took on a slow pace. We swam after work when the sand cooled off enough to walk on without burning the soles of our feet. We cooked supper over an open fire on the beach, and took moonlight dips before going to bed. We sat around bonfires with good friends and watched a full moon rise out of the ocean. Sometimes, one of our friends would be house-sitting an elegant estate and there would be pool parties in the lush surroundings. Another summer benefit was that you never had to wait in line for dinner or a movie, or drive in traffic.

Ken arrived on one of those balmy moonlight nights, just before Thanksgiving. There were seven of us around the dinner table that first holiday away from home—Bob, Ken, Ann, the three children and me. Each of us was so very grateful for the way things were working out in our individual lives. Bob and Ken were over at our house so often that the bridge table became a permanent fixture in the living room, where we often built a fire in the fireplace that winter to keep ourselves warm in the big, drafty house with no furnace. I finally made an arrangement with Bob

and Ken whereby they ate dinner with us every night and paid me a small weekly fee. We sat around the table, drinking coffee and talking politics, religion, current events, etc. for hours—the children often joining in.

Shortly after the first of the year, Ann and I were invited to the gala opening of La Coquille, a hotel-apartment complex on the ocean in Manalapan (the site where the Ritz Carlton now stands). Our friend from Church was the architect and one of our broker friends was a part owner. The afternoon of the day of the party, Bob Bissett, the broker, asked me if I wanted to drive down to see the site. I couldn't believe there was to be a party there in a few hours. There was no landscaping, leftover building materials were stacked everywhere; the swimming pool was empty. After work, Bob, Ken, Ann and I put on our good clothes and arrived at 8 p.m. to a virtual fairyland. Another first for me to discover what miracles could be performed in a Palm Beach atmosphere. We walked along a graveled drive, lined with Royal Palms and expanses of green lawns. There was a balmy ocean breeze and a full moon cast its light on a beautiful swimming pool, complete with water and fountains. Chaises were set out on the patio, where a long buffet table was set with gorgeous ice carvings and platters of exotic food. An open bar was serving alcoholic beverages and fancy non-alcoholic beverages adorned with flowers. At the other end of the patio, an orchestra was filling the air with foot-tapping music near a newly constructed dance floor. The place was filled with beautifully dressed and jeweled people—some famous enough for us to recognize, and others whom we knew casually from business and church connections.

It was one of the most enchanting and memorable evenings of my life. We were included in many lovely events over the years, as we became more and more a part of the Palm Beach scene. There were dinners at the Bath and Tennis Club, Tombola luncheons at The Everglades, evenings at the Royal Palm Theater, operas and symphonies at the “Leaky Teepee,” dinner parties at private Palm Beach homes and Principia Sings at Mrs. Merriweather Post's estate. But none of them impressed me more than this first one at La Coquille.

One of the connections we made was the Principia Mothers Club, which held a luncheon meeting once a month at the home of a member. I didn't know much about Prin at that point, and went mainly to meet other Christian Scientists. I learned, however, to have great admiration



for what Prin represented and wished that someday I could give that experience to my children (never thought of grandchildren back then). It was at one of these meetings that I met Nell Baer, a real estate agent, who told me about a little house she had for sale in Palm Beach, right down the block from the public school. This sounded like heaven to me because the children would be able to walk to school, as well as to the Previews office if they needed something. Also, the school provided after-school care. The Four Arts Library and Art Museum were across the street and would also be available to them. Nell made arrangements for me to see the house, and I fell in love with it at once. It had a nice big living room with a fireplace, a full size dining room, kitchen and laundry room. There were three bedrooms, two baths and family room. A little guest house was in the rear with a bedroom, kitchen and bath. The owners were in the process of a divorce and agreed to let me have it for \$24,000, partially furnished, and I was able to take over their mortgage.

When I called Dad to tell him the news, once again he thought I was crazy. He asked me about the construction, the foundation, and the roof and I couldn't tell him anything. I only knew I had found my home and was sure my "husband" had led me to a perfect one (and it proved to be so). We closed on it the end of March, and moved in April 1, 1954. Bob and Ken helped us get settled, and built a large formica table and matching buffet for the dining room. Our backyard was a good-sized patio, all in brick. A fruit-bearing orange tree was next to the house and shrubs, including sweet-smelling jasmine, grew profusely along the other three sides. A high concrete wall at the back of the property separated us from the Horace Dodge estate. We used to sit on the top of the wall to peek at their fancy garden parties, to which many famous movie stars were invited.

Our next-door neighbor was Miss Fortune, an elderly heiress to the Marshall Field fortune. She always seemed to know what was going on at our house, and took vicarious pleasure in the coming and going of our guests. Also, because our dining room was so close to her sitting porch, I'm sure she heard a lot of conversations. She was a very sweet lady. The second week we were living in the house, she came to call, wearing a hat and white gloves—pretty intimidating! She invited

the girls and me to tea, and later shared her large colored TV with all of us—the first one any of us had seen.

On the other side were Dr. and Mrs. Lindsey. He was the pastor of the Poinciana Chapel, a couple of blocks away, and catty-corner lived good friends from Church, Barbara and Don Fox and their two small sons. They, too, were northern transplants. He was the manager of Saks Fifth Avenue on Worth Avenue. We all became very good friends.

Our house was just one house in from Lake Trail, a five-mile walking and bike path that ran along the Intercoastal Waterway and ended at the Palm Beach Inlet. Many a night we walked the trail in the dark and quiet of Palm Beach and looked across the Intercoastal to the lights and bustle of West Palm. On our side, we heard only the bells on the bridge, as it opened and closed for passing yachts, and the lapping of their wake against the seawall. It was a great place for thinking and intimate conversations. During the day, we biked, skated or walked the Trail past lovely estates and private docks. We used to pass the “Honey Fitz” tied up at the Kennedy dock, and sometimes caught glimpses of the family.

Ann and I often ate breakfast on the patio before walking to the office. One morning, we had our picture taken next to the orange tree, loaded with fruit, and sent it to my cousin Stuart, who was in a hospital in Syracuse, recovering from an accident in the snow. It wasn't long before he showed up for a visit, and like the rest of us, fell in love with the place and never went back home. He sent for his belongings, found a job at the local bank and moved into our guest house.

This was long before “communes” were known or popular, but I think we were running one. We now had the three guys, Ann, three kids and me for dinner every night, and began attracting other singles who would drop by looking for a bridge game, a meal, or just some company. The house was a beehive of activity all the time. Even the Palm Beach policemen—young, single guys from up north—stopped in to check on us as they patrolled our block.

Aunt Iva and Uncle Sid retired to Florida that summer. They bought a house in Lake Worth, and Stuart moved in with them. By the end of summer, Happy came to live with us. She and Jim were engaged, but could not marry until he finished college in another two years. Happy

found a job as a secretarial assistant to a filmmaker, who was shooting a movie in Palm Beach. When it finally opened at our theater, he furnished all of us passes for the Opening Night gala.

By Labor Day 1954, there were twelve members of the family happily living in the Palm Beach area. We had more church friends than I ever dreamt possible. I owned my own home and loved my work. Mom and Dad were coming down for Christmas, not only to celebrate the holidays with us, but also to look for a home for themselves as Daddy was retiring in Spring, 1955.

I have not included the daily metaphysics behind this tremendous demonstration, which affected the lives of so many different individuals, but the awareness of the presence of God and His direction was always with me. My gratitude and awe for the “husbanding” I was witnessing grew each day as the unfoldment took place. In a little less than a year, I had gone from the Amityville type of experience to the abundant life promised me in the Bible.

## Ken

**I**n a way my Dad was wrong when he predicted no one would want to marry a widow with three children and no money. I actually had four opportunities for marriage, but it wasn't the lack of money that kept me single. It was my concern about how marriage would affect the lives of my children.

I met Jock MacFarland through a practitioner in Pittsburgh. He was a charming, personable man, several years older than I, but lacking maturity and responsibility. He was a sometime actor, and I don't think he ever knew what role he was playing. Sometimes he was happy, affectionate and amusing. He enjoyed playing with the kids, taught them to fly kites, bought ice cream cones to eat under the shade of the big elm in the park, or arrived with little toys disguised in elaborate wrappings. Then, at other times, he forgot to show up at all, leaving disappointed kids all dressed up with no place to go. I never believed what he promised, nor took him seriously, when he spoke of marriage.

Then there was Bob McGeary. I met him through a church friend at one of the square dances. He was a learned, successful engineer at Westinghouse, a bachelor about my age. He was all wrapped up in his work, a serious thinker who seldom appeared to be having fun. He moved slowly and meticulously, and thought every step through carefully. Although he would have been a good provider and someone I could rely on, he was annoyed at the children's demand for my attention and had no tolerance for their occasional misbehavior. We dated, usually without children, and by the time he spoke to me about making this a permanent arrangement, I had decided this was not what the children and I needed.

I met Fenton Larimer when I took class instruction in Christian Science. He was from Portland, Oregon, and a fairly new student of Science. He was enthusiastic and contributed a great deal to our

discussions in class. We became close friends in those two weeks of spiritual progress. At the end of class, he decided to stay in New York—due partly to the relationship developing between us. He came down to Southold weekends that summer, and flew to Pittsburgh a couple of times the following winter. In between, we carried on lengthy telephone conversations and a busy correspondence. He was spending lots of time studying and practicing Christian Science, and it was comforting to me to have someone in whom I could confide my fears, doubts and frustrations. When, in the summer of 1953, I moved to New York to work for Previews, we started seeing each other daily. It was then he began to chide me for the way I was applying my understanding of Science. His thinking was so pure and in the realm of the absolute, while I, as a single, working mother, was forever having to deal with human problems and their resolutions. He was deeply involved in his search for spirituality while in my spare time, I craved lighthearted diversion. When I told him of the proposed move to Florida, he negated the idea of its being part of God's plan for me, and felt I was being self-willed. So when I made the decision to go, he said he would come to see us, but I knew he wouldn't—and he didn't. Shortly afterwards, he became a practitioner and from time to time, I would hear of the amazing and exceptional healing work he was doing. I saw him every year when I returned to New York for Association, and we always made time for a visit.

By the time Ken came into our lives, I had my own home, my own income, my own children, and all the companionship I could wish for. I had no desire for a husband. Ken and I became good friends. He was always there when I needed a man. He repaired things around the house—took care of my car. If I had a date, he volunteered to give the children their supper. He loved reading and visiting with them. He heard their prayers and tucked them into bed. He knew nothing of Christian Science, and informed me at an early date that he had no intention of becoming one—and I had no interest in converting him. However, as he watched Christian Science being lived and demonstrated in our home, he finally picked up a copy of Science and Health and invariably became interested, which resulted in his joining the Church.

Gradually, we were looked upon as a couple, since we had the same friends, came and left the same parties together. Every Friday evening was “spree” night when Ken and I took the three children to their choice of restaurant and then to a movie, game of miniature golf, or a challenge at the bowling lanes, or anything else they desired to do. It was recognized as kids’ night out, but all five of us enjoyed the time together. Sunday after church, we also set aside for the kids, Ken and me. We went to the beach or museums or checked out some tourist attraction nearby. All of this seemed very normal to me, and I was grateful for the sense of family it created for the children. Every once in a while, the five of us would discuss getting married. But when a vote was taken, it always ended up 4:1—mine being the nay vote.

Then Bob became involved with an attractive divorcee from Hobe Sound, and was spending less and less time at the house. Ann and Stuart were married in October 1955 and Hap and Jim were married on March 31, 1956. Now that the children and I had the house to ourselves, I leaned on Ken more and more. One day, my friend, Barbara, called to invite Ken and me to a dinner and bridge party on Sunday. And I, without hesitation, accepted for the two of us. When I informed Ken of our date, I was shocked to hear, “I’m sorry, but I already have a date for that evening.” I couldn’t believe my ears. He went on to explain that he had met someone to whom he was attracted, and made an arrangement to pick her up Sunday after church. I had to phone Barbara and tell her Ken couldn’t come, and since it was a bridge game and I was now an “extra”, I couldn’t be there either. I fussed and fumed all day Sunday. The children and I had lunch by ourselves, and spent a quiet, lonely, depressing day at home. At first, I was terribly angry at Ken, but as the day wore on, I began to see that he wanted and deserved more from this relationship than just being my lackey. I realized how important his presence was in our lives, and how, in reality, he already had become part of the family.

The first thing Monday morning, I called to ask how his date was, and when he replied he had enjoyed himself tremendously, I told him I had something important to discuss with him at his earliest convenience. We were married two months later. He never ceased teasing me, how after three years of courting with no results, it took only one date with

another woman to bring me to my knees. And so, on May 30, 1957, my demonstration of God's husbanding was complete.

The day of our wedding, a florist delivered a dozen long-stemmed roses addressed to me with a card from Miss Fortune saying, "I wish you great happiness on your marriage to a man whom I know loves you and your children so very much."

## Learning to Be Still

*Published in the Christian Science Sentinel, 1954*

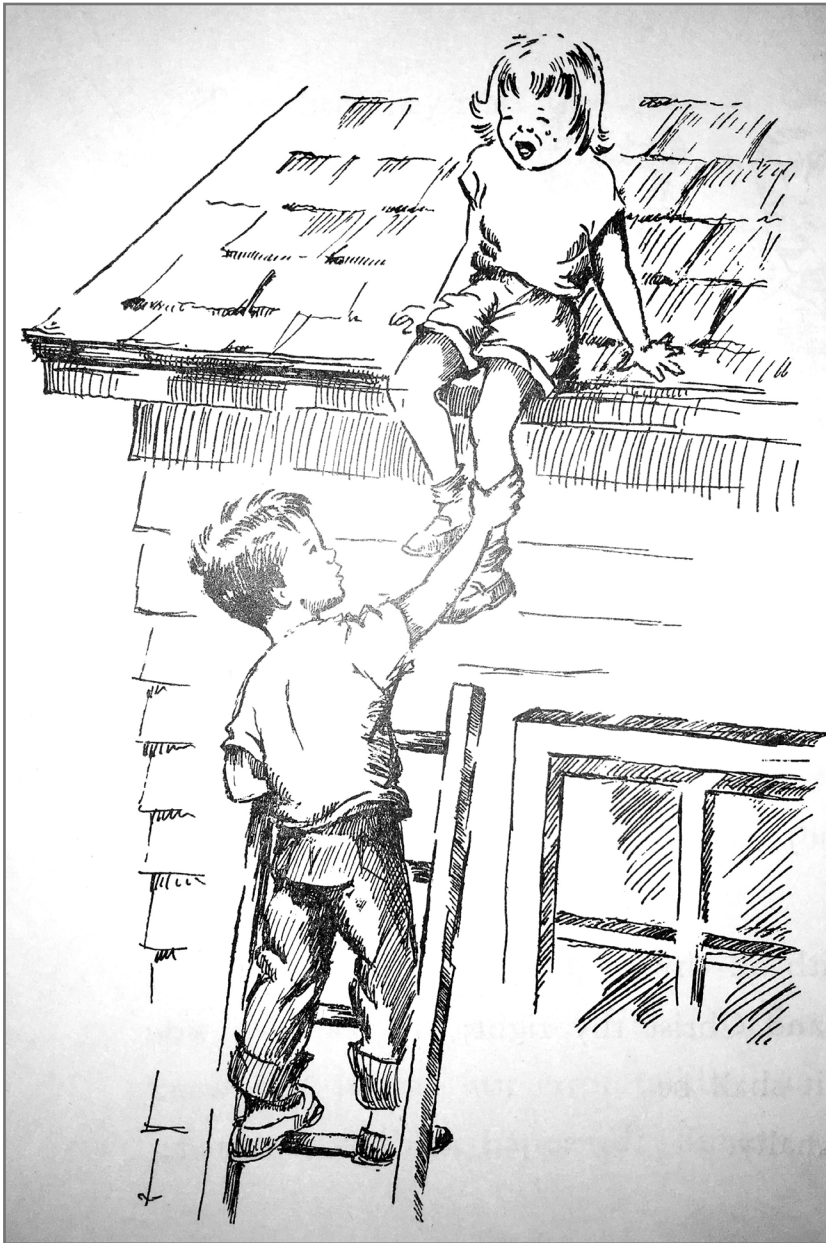
**H**ope was screaming loudly: "I can't get down. I can't. I can't." When Mother went to see what all the noise was about, she saw little Hope sitting on the garage roof, her hands gripping the sides tightly, her feet swinging in mid-air. She was crying so loudly that she could not hear her brother, who was standing below, trying to tell her how to get down.

Mother went over to the children and looking up to where Hope was sitting said: "Hope, listen. You will never be able to hear how to get down until you stop crying." Hope knew this to be true, so she stopped crying. As soon as she was quiet, her brother was able to show her the ledge on which to put her foot, and immediately she was down on the ground with her mother and brother.

"Now," Mother said, sitting down under the trees and taking the little girl in her lap, "There is a lesson to be learned from this experience." And she reminded them of the little bird that had been caught on their screened porch a couple of weeks before and of how he had kept flying against the screens instead of finding the door they had opened for him. Because he thought he was trapped on the porch he was filled with fear and kept flying blindly against the screens, peeping loudly.

Hope and her brother and her mother were all Christian Scientists; so it seemed quite natural to them for Mother to tell them of a verse in the Bible which says (Ps. 46:10), "Be still, and know that I am God." And then she told them of the something that Mary Baker Eddy says in one of her books (*The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, pp. 149, 150): "Remember, thou canst be brought into no condition, be it ever so severe, where Love has not been before thee and where its tender lesson is not awaiting thee." It was in this way that the children understood that opening the door for the bird was an expression of love, so Love must have been present with them.





Illustrations by Jeanne C. Manget, published alongside "Learning to Be Still" in *Happy Playmates*, 1954.

Then Mother pointed out that Love is always present and always provides a way out. She explained that no matter where we are or what seems to be the trouble, we must always remember that God, Love, has been there before us and is leading us on if we will be quiet and listen for God's thoughts, or angels. They remembered that when the little bird sat on the railing for a moment he noticed the open door. Then he quickly flew forth to join the other birds. When we silence fear, stop crying, and remind ourselves that God is ever present and all powerful, then we see the way out just as the little bird saw the open door.

"I'll remember not to be afraid any more and to be quiet so that I can hear God's thoughts," Hope said as she ran off to play.

One night several weeks later, when she was being tucked into bed by her mother, Hope said, "I used that truth about being still and listening to God today."

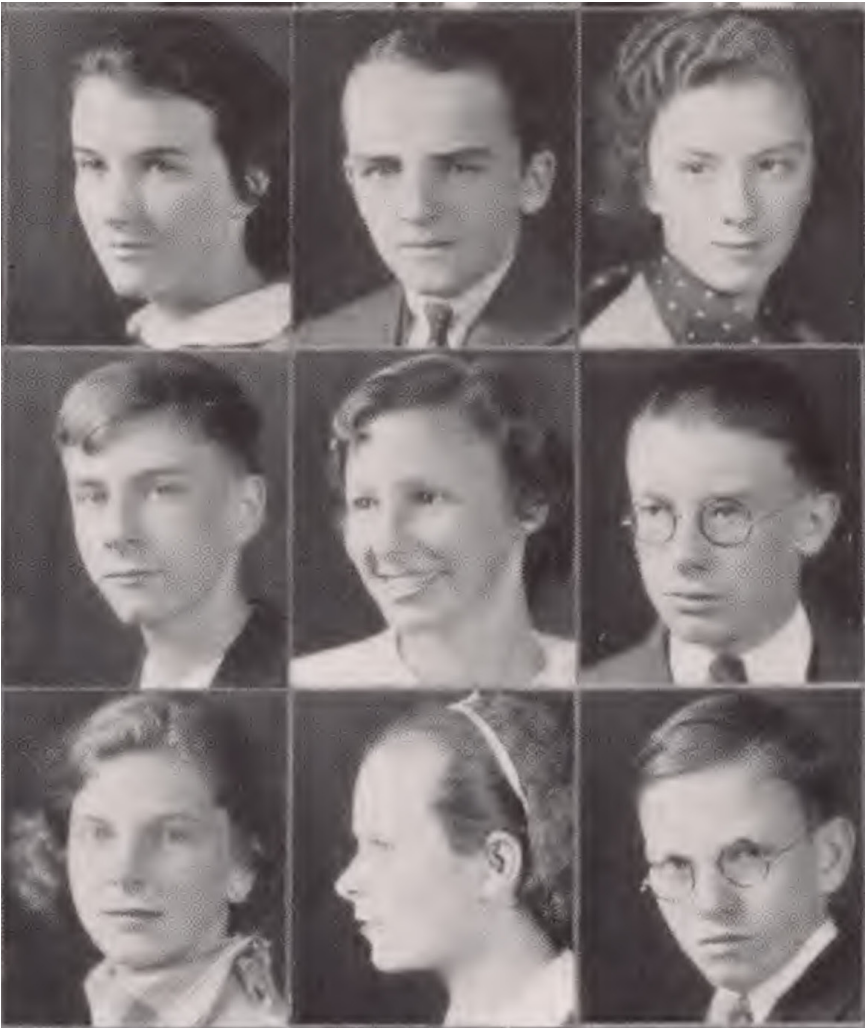
"You did?" Mother asked. "Tell me about it."

Hope then told that while she and her friends were swimming they all tried to climb up on a big rock in the water and they kept slipping off. Once she fell and went into deep water, and instead of opening her mouth to scream she thought of being still and knowing that divine Love was taking care of her. So she said to herself, "Please, God, show me the way." When she came to the surface she was able to climb up on the rock as easily as could be.

"That's fine," Mother said. "I am glad to see that you are learning how to use this wonderful truth."

"Yes," replied Hope, "I was happy, too, and so I said, 'Thank you, God.'"





Naomi Jeanne Gastmeyer, as a sophomore in high school, alongside her classmates in 1935 at Columbia High School in Maplewood, New Jersey. *The Mirrow Yearbook*, 1935.



**N. JEANNE GASTMEYER**

Parnassian Society (3, 4); G. A. A. (3, 4); Social Committee (3); Home Room Vice-Chairman (3); Senior Play Advertising Committee (4).

N. Jeanne Gastmeyer, as a senior in high school at Columbia High School in Maplewood, New Jersey. *The Mirror Yearbook*, 1937.

Dad (on top of Chrysler Bldg)



Robert William Gastmeyer, "Poppy"



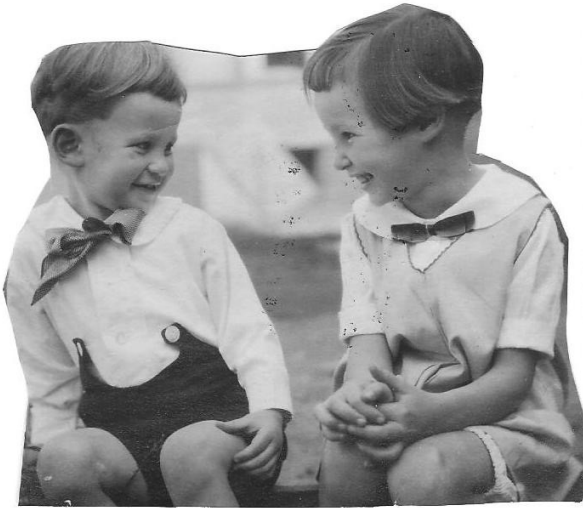
OAK BLUFFS, MARTHA'S Vineyard  
mother & me - 6 months old

mother + me





Bob + me







Dad & I





Uncle Bill  
Mom +  
me





Skidmore friends, 1938



Jeanne Gastmeyer & Best Man Wes Dorsheimer, home from the Navy on a short furlough for the wedding

	East Orange.	College.
ool an en- n of ress Miss the maid ress of man ver hn le-	<h2 style="margin: 0;"><i>Jeanne Gastmeyer Bride</i></h2> <h2 style="margin: 0;"><i>At Ceremony in Newark</i></h2> <hr style="width: 20%; margin: 5px auto;"/> <h3 style="margin: 0;"><i>Cousin Is Only Attendant at Maplewood Girl's Marriage to Lewis Renton Thompson</i></h3>	
oe ar e of je -a l. & rt n.	Miss Naomi Jeanne Gastmeyer, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Gastmeyer of 56 Maplewood avenue, Maplewood, became the bride yesterday of Lewis Renton Thompson of Westfield, son of Mrs. Elmer Ives Thompson of Glen Rock and the late Mr. Thompson, in the South Park Presbyterian Church, Newark. The pastor, Rev. C. Ransom Comfort, performed the ceremony and a reception followed in the Gastmeyer home.	Tennant of Orange and Robert Berg of Westfield. The bride wore an all-over white lace gown and a tulle veil draped from a coronet of roses and valley lilies. Her attendant was in aqua silk with a headdress of tulle and talisman roses. She carried the same flowers. After a short trip the couple will reside at Meadowbrook Village, Plainfield.
i	The bride had as her only attendant her cousin, Miss Eleanor Packard of Maplewood. The best man was Wesley Dorsheimer of East Orange, ushers being Fred	The bride attended Skidmore College and Mr. Thompson Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. He is with the American Cnanimid Company, Bound Brook.
74	Margaret Weber	



Lewis Renton Thompson



Lew Thompson with  
Bedlington terrier, Heidi  
(left). Lew Thompson  
with Lew Thompson, Jr.  
("Tommy"), 1945 (below).





Jeanne Thompson, with Lew Jr (“Tommy”), Hope, and Anita.  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1953.



Kenneth Bryden and Jeanne Thompson Bryden, Palm Beach, Florida, 1957.



