

FOREWORD by Frances Woods

My autobiography would have been written regardless of whether Gloria Swanson, Lauren Bacall or Shelly Winters and other celebrities had written theirs because Harry brought home a second hand typewriter. I had mentioned writing, now there was no excuse. I was a "hunt and peck" typist even though I had been an office manager and have a son who teaches typing. You can teach an old dog new tricks and eventually I learned the skill and fun of typing. Thank goodness for erasable bond! It will soon be obvious to the reader that I'm a novice writer. I read two books on "How to Write" and the bottom line simply was, start. So, I did.

I should like to express my gratitude to my grandfather, Harris Woods born September 17, 1824 who did what had to do in those times, regardless of danger or work involved. One example is his trip by oxen team across the Grand Saline into the Indian Territory where he traded loads of flour and meat for loads of salt which he hauled back to his home settlement in southwest Missouri. He married Arena Spillman February 7, 1850. They had sixteen children. Harris Woods enlisted in the army during the Civil War in 1862. Finally; he donated 1 1/2 acres of land for the Dry Valley Methodist Church and an acre for the Dry Valley School where I attended school. My father, Landen Price Woods was the superintendent of the Sunday school there all the years of my childhood.

Also thanks to my grandfather James "Papa" Shipman, born October 6, 1843 and grandmother Sarah (Smith) Shipman. He enlisted in Company "H", 4th Missouri Cavalry. He lied about his age to get in but was accepted as a "drummer boy". They lived on a farm in an adjoining county to the Woods family. Papa Shipman was called Judge Shipman by everyone except his grandchildren because he served as a Justice of Peace.

Without the four above, I wouldn't be able to relate these years of my own life.

[Frances Woods Dawson] The whole store is to be found....

YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY! By Frances

The decision to write the story of my life came about in my Presbyterian hospital room. My doctor suggested I write about my life for therapy (no research necessary). I thought what a great idea because you've come a long way baby! I certainly had plenty of time to reflect on the past: it also made me realize just how fleeting time is. I have lived through fourteen U.S. presidents. The first Teddy Roosevelt but for only four months before Howard Taft was inaugurated.

I was in the hospital the third time in the past two years with heart distress. I am very allergic to all available medication for my disability. My doctor and two cardio-vascular specialists had a conference, they firmly advised me that I must learn and practice Relaxation Response and Self-Hypnosis therapy. Dr. Goss told me that they had decided that my irregular heart beat was caused mainly by stress. (I had plenty of butterflies, anxieties and stress flooding my poor stomach at times, unexplainable by me). So, I began the tedious reading and eventually the practice first of Relaxation Response, then Self-Hypnosis. Much to my surprise, I found I could treat myself successfully with both methods. By concentration and deep breathing, I am able to relax like a wet, limp rag and with self-hypnosis which means that I have found the direct path to the subconscious or inner mind. Let me say here the

treatment is time consuming and requires considerable effort. In my self help program it is necessary to use age regression to get to the root of the fears, anxieties and stress. This part of the treatment caused me to recall events of many years ago. It brought many questions to mind; some serious and some funny.

Do we have a destiny at birth or could my life have taken a different route? Are the many mistakes I've made, etched some place else other than on my heart and soul? Are the accomplishments and the good influences I've exerted, recorded some place to be evaluated when the time comes?

Have I lived an average life with good times and bad times, love, marriage, childbirth, divorce, ecstatic care free years, years with the weight of responsibility almost too heavy to bear? Is it the norm to have lived through love, rejection, joy, disappointment, faith, fear, hope, despair and other deep emotions? On the lighter side, I've made over 35 houses and apartments into homes. Where are all the drapes I've hung? Are all the roses and shrubs I've planted still blooming? Is someone enjoying the asparagus, rhubarb, horse radish and raspberries I've planted? How many cars have I had? What did I do with all the money I've earned? As I look back it seems that I've gone the full gamut of my time.

I am the youngest of five children, the oldest a half sister married before I was born. The next oldest a brother, then two sisters and finally me. My first memory is of a farm my parents owned in southwest Missouri. My grandfather Woods fought for the South in the Civil War and my grandfather Shipman fought for the North. They actually had a confrontation at one time during the war. I heard the story many times as I grew up. I was born October 8, 1908 and my mother wrote this to me on my 29th birthday. "The day you were born, I made a strawberry cobbler for Mrs. Ford, Gracey Moore and for George Ford who was working for Papa while he taught school. Then when it was over, Mother Shipman came and stayed a few days. The Shafer girl was there doing the work and I could not eat her cooking. I was told that my father was disappointed with another daughter but said, "I guess we'll try to raise her anyway."

Mother loved her children unselfishly, completely and wholly. She hoped and prayed for us and I'm sure her prayers saved us at times, especially me. My father was a school teacher and farmer, a respected man who was president of every group that didn't pay its officers. So we had little money but our neighbors and relatives were in about the same boat. You see, then, no one came around and told us that we were poor, so we didn't know it.

It's amazing to think back to our way of life then and now the many conveniences we enjoy and take for granted in 1980. My brother had his own upstairs bedroom across the hall my two older sisters and I shared the same bedroom. Instead of springs on our beds, we had a straw tick with a goose feather mattress. After threshing wheat, we'd usually change and put fresh straw in the ticking. In the kitchen we had a big wood cook stove. I can still remember the wonderful smell of country cured ham frying and gingerbread baking mingled with the smell of wood burning. On cold winter mornings my father was up early and built a fire in the stove, and then we came down stairs and dressed by the stove. Every Saturday night we took a bath in a wash tub in front of the kitchen stove, all in the same water. We put on clean long underwear for the next week. The kitchen was a very busy place in those days. We each had our own chores to do every evening. My oldest sister and brother did the milking, and then it went to the cool milk house and was put through the crank type cream separator. The cream and milk was then poured into crocks and set in a trough of cold water. One of my chores was to churn the soured cream to make butter. Besides butter, this furnished us with buttermilk for drinking and baking. One of us had to gather the eggs every evening. Every Saturday night we cleaned the lamp chimneys that had blackened. We used discarded news papers and how they shined! We subscribed to the St. Louis Globe

and the Joplin Globe. I recall that my favorite funny was the Katzenjammer Kids. Dad insisted we always put the news paper back in order again after we had read our favorite section. My two sisters and I took turns washing the dishes. We had many a good battle over that chore. My brother did the chores around the barn, feeding and grooming the horses and caring for the stock. The female members of the family all pitched in to do the weekly washing and ironing. The washing was a full day's work consisting, of many steps.

1. Fill the boiler and heat the water.
2. Shave the soap in the water.
3. Two people to carry and dump in the tubs.
4. Scrub clothes on the board.
5. Boil the clothes, white only.
6. Rinse in bluing water and starch.
7. Hang on the line to dry.

Of course the irons were heated on the stove and white clothes were ironed to the nth degree. Mother spent days sewing for all of us on her Singer machine. We three girls had a new spring dress every Easter, to wear and much to our dismay on a cold, dreary, freezing day due to the usual Easter storm. We had a fireplace in our front room. After supper during school terms, we sat around the kitchen table and did our home work. Then we could pop corn or roast chestnuts in the fireplace.

At every meal we all sat down at our place at the table, then bowed our heads as Dad said grace, "Dear Lord, make us thankful for this food. Bless it to the nourishment of our bodies. Feed our souls on the bread of life. Forgive our sins and in heaven save us Amen." We ate three squares a day. On the noon break my father and brother came from the fields for lunch. They would then take a rest on the cool floor, carpeted with rag carpeting mother had woven on a neighbors loom. My brother who was a terrific tease wouldn't go back to work until one of his sisters became mad and cried at his teasing.

Threshing the wheat and oats for the farmers was a big neighborhood affair. The whole neighborhood of men and women pitched in to work in the fields and help mother cook for all the men. I thought the threshing machine was as big and scary as the locomotive on a train. Our threshing was finished in one, long day and was one of the most trying times for my father. Actually we were all quite organized as there was lots of work to be done to maintain the farm.

Most of our social life centered around the country church and school. During the summer, the church had dinner on the ground once a month which was dinner on the rough tables under the black jack oak trees in the church yard. The ladies brought their specialties and could they cook and bake! My mother's specialty was salmon croquettes. We had a huge crock full of lemonade with a chunk of ice in it. Center creek meandered down through our Lawrence County and it was normally crystal clear with a sand and rock bottom. It originated from springs so it was a cold stream. In the summer the whole community gathered around Holly Hole every Saturday afternoon to swim and visit. My father and brother were both excellent swimmers and they encouraged us three girls to learn to swim at an early age. I could swim at 6 years of age; not very well, but I stayed on top and thought I was pretty good. Occasionally during the warm months the community would have a big fish fry. We all gathered on the bank of Center Creek where the men thought the fishing would be best. The men used a seine and seined the creek from bank to bank and usually came up with enough fish for all. There would be lots of crawdads or crawfish in the net. The tails were pulled off and immediately put into a big pot of boiling water. In a few minutes they turned a beautiful pink and were done. The children ate the

crawfish tails and what a treat for us. They taste something like lobster. Seining was later outlawed in Missouri.

Christmas was a great time for us. The highlight was the church tree. The tree always reached the ceiling and was decorated with strung cranberries and popcorn. We had candle holders with candles clipped on the limbs of the tree. They were all lighted and the smell was just thrilling. After a religious program, the children all received a bag of hard candy and oranges. At the country school, all grades were in one room. The teacher called each class grade to the front. We took our places on a long recitation bench and then sat in a row facing the teacher. A special event was the school pie supper. The girls decorated their pie boxes with colored crepe paper with bows and streamers. Some were very artistic and cleverly done. The owners of the boxes were supposed to be kept a secret and the boxes were auctioneered off to the highest bidder. A popular girl's box brought in top money. The fellow who bought the box then ate pie with the girl who had made it. Then we had a fiddling concert by neighborhood men. I loved the music and have loved music all my life.

This all sounds sweet, naive and innocent but it was not all without problems. Heartbreaking problems. One of our nice neighbors had a son who was sent to the penitentiary for stealing. The boys in the neighborhood got into mischief, turned over outside toilets at Halloween and at times caused much commotion at gatherings. Of course some drank "moonshine whisky" at the parties and affairs. Also there were some "shotgun weddings." This put stamina of shame on the people involved almost never to be forgotten in the ensuing years. The transportation was Model T's mostly, with a few people still driving a horse and buggy. I had many friends as everyone knew everybody else for miles around. My father was from a family of 16 children so I had cousins galore.

I graduated from the eight grade at the country school in April, 1922. So, that next fall, along with my sisters I was packed off to high school in the small town of Sarcoxie, Missouri. We had rooms with my mother's Aunt Liz Smith. The rooms were sparsely furnished with beds, a table, chairs and a kerosene stove. We'd go home on Friday after school and return on Sunday afternoon loaded with canned goods, home made bread and meat to last through the week. Our spending money was the money we had made the previous spring, from picking strawberries. My wardrobe consisted mostly of hand me downs that had been fixed over to fit me as well as possible. These clothes didn't bother me as almost every one clothed their families that way. We just accepted the fact that the oldest one got most of the new dresses. I enjoyed high school and participated in all the sports offered. I was five foot, two inches tall but made the high school basket ball team as guard. Girls basket ball was a different 'game in those days. We were the last generation to wear navy blue bloomers as our basket ball uniforms.

My parents sold our farm when I was a sophomore and we moved 50 miles to the town of Mt. Vernon, Mo. Mt. Vernon was the county seat of Lawrence County. The county courthouse sat firmly in the center of the square downtown with stores around the square and 60 years later is still there. I registered into my new high school there. I was very lonely in our new home for a few weeks, but gradually made new friends. As before, much of our social life centered around the Methodist church. We did become acquainted with many fine families who belonged to the church.

My father became the deputy sheriff and jailer and we occupied the apartment in front of the jail. During the four years we lived in the apartment there were two jail breaks. This was during prohibition so most of the prisoners were "moonshiners" (manufacture and sale of illegal alcoholic beverages) or forgers. A young man named Rogers from Pierce City, Mo. managed to get himself incarcerated sometime every year for forgery. We welcomed him when he'd return to jail as he kept order and kept the jail clean. He conducted a Kangaroo court among the inmates and tried anyone who violated one of

the rules that he'd set up to keep the place clean. He kept the inmates entertained with his guitar playing and card games. When held get paroled, my mother would lecture him to stay out of trouble which he'd do for a few weeks.

My high school years were filled with home work, classes, football games, chorus and plays. For recreation I skated and had sledding parties and an occasional dance during the winter months. In summer, I swam in the crystal clear Ozark streams and picnicked in the parks. I held two jobs. I kept books and collected bills for the local flour mill. I also visited all the business places once a week and collected social items for the town weekly paper. I made enough money to hang out in the drug store and join my school mates who gathered there to drink cokes and just be together.

By now my brother was married and he and Lillie had a baby son. My sister Vera was teaching in a country school nearby and sister Belva was in St. Louis taking nurses training. I graduated from high school in 1927. The big depression was on its way. There was no way for me to go on to college. Times were hard. I decided to go to Kansas City and see if I could get employment. My half sister and family lived there and she offered me room and board for \$3.00 a week if I wanted to come there. When I left home my parents gave me this advice. "You are an adult now and you are responsible for all your actions." I knew forever more, I was on my own.

The traffic was very frightening and confusing to a small town girl who had never been in a big city before. My sister gave me detailed instructions about the right street car to take, where to transfer, etc., to find my way to Montgomery Wards Catalogue personnel department. I arrived there my first Monday morning at 8 A.M. to apply for a job. I couldn't believe the hundreds of young people packed in the room and the halls for the same reason I was there. I'll never know how or why, but I managed to complete an application form and about 3 p.m. that afternoon out of the chaos, my name was called. I had an interview, a physical examination and a job. My starting salary was \$12.00 per week. My specific duties were filing and easy exchanges in the adjustment department. In this full floor of hundreds of desks, we did the paper work covering exchanges, refunds and damaged shipments. One thing happened to me while I worked at Wards that has proved to be a big plus for me the rest of my life. It was the trend at that time for businesses to hire an especially trained man as an efficiency expert. Our department manager had a meeting and told us that each unit (3 clerks) would, work with the expert for two weeks to learn to be better organized and to decrease wasted motions and time. I was young and impressionable and I got the idea fast. I became organized with each detail of my duties and did save much time. In the years to come, I was able to help people who worked under me to get thoroughly organized. Being orderly made my employees feel satisfied with the themselves and have a sense of accomplishment. I worked for Wards about 8 years and was making \$30.00 per week when I resigned.

I dated some young men but have an enthusiastic, good time when I went out with some of my many girl friends. I met John Guth who was a friend of my best girl friend, Opal in 1929. We dated steadily and was married June 24, 1930. The stock market crash had taken place in 1929, so we were deep in the big depression by now. There are many stories I recall of the necessary sacrifices we experienced during those hard times but this is the story of my life. The sacrifices did not hurt me in any way, I found out after it was all over. John had a flat bed truck which he used on an ice delivery route, servicing businesses and some homes. I had my job at Wards so we made out.

My father and mother were living in Kansas City at this time. Dad's bachelor, twin brother had left Colorado and was living with them. On July 14, 1936 my father suffered a heart attack and died unexpectedly right after dinner. This was on the eve of their 75th birthdays. Our chain was broken. It

was the first death in our family and it was hard to bear. We buried him in Union Cemetery near our old home in Southwest Missouri. His twin, Uncle Loren never got over Dad's death. He grieved seriously and became ill in September. He died October 7, 1936. He was buried beside my father.

About this time electric refrigerators were beginning to take the place of ice boxes. The ice industry fought electric refrigeration but as always, progress won. John lost customer after customer who bought the electric refrigerators. He began looking for a new job. His oldest brother was a foreman and traveled for Raymond Concrete Piling Co. He told John to join the union then he would hire him. I quit my job at Wards. My last pay check was dated 12/17/36.

We took off from Kansas City to travel with John working in a gang of construction workers. The piles form a strong base before the construction of heavy buildings and bridges. Our first home was Biloxi, Mississippi on the Mississippi sound. This wonderful semi-tropical climate was a complete change for me and a new thrill every day. The flowers were everywhere I was very excited about this chance to see, learn and live in the areas in our great country. Biloxi was still the Deep South, personified in 1937. I was delighted with seafood cooked in an open iron pot in the back yards. When I had an hour to spend, I'd walk out on the dock and fish. There were always people to visit with on the dock. My constant companion was my little fox terrier "Penny" and she had a great time teasing the croaker fish I'd catch. They were edible and when caught they croaked like a frog. My life as a gypsy had begun. We'd stay in an area an average of three and one half months. Our next home was Cleveland, Ohio. We made many friends in the construction business and neighborhoods we lived in. As I check back now in my Scrap Book that I kept of our travels, I can clearly see the pattern emerging toward World War Two. The great defense contracts that the government was awarding had broken the hold of the depression. Times were getting much better and most everyone was getting adequate wages.

In 1940 John went to Midway Island to drive piling on a Naval Air Base. We thought we could save a nest egg as the wages were very good. He worked there nine months. During that time I lived in Kansas City Kansas. I spent lots of time with my sister Vera and family who lived nearby. My mother lived with her. After John's return in September 1940 we started traveling again. We lived in many towns and had 24 different addresses during that time in our travels.

We were living in Alameda, California on December 7, 1941 and John was working at the naval base there. I turned on the radio that Sunday morning and heard about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. This was a terrible devastating event. Our President at that time was Franklin D. Roosevelt. He did everything he could to keep down the confusion and panic everyone felt. On the California coast, there was more fright as we knew we could be the next victims of an attack by the Japanese. We immediately went into a blackout. This curtailed all traffic at night except for law officers and military. We were sent to Saint Paul, Minnesota from Alameda and this proved to be the last trip I ever took with John as a pile driver.

In 1942, we bought a 25 acre farm near Kansas City Kansas and we paid cash for it. It appeared that John might be drafted. He and his father decided to get enough units on the farm to keep him out of the draft. Agriculture was important at this time so farmers were exempt from the draft if they owned a certain number of live stock, had enough crops in, etc. Without consulting me John and his father went to the auction and out of our savings bought \$800.00 worth of stock, horses and equipment to make the necessary of units to try and keep him out of the draft. I was absolutely shocked, amazed and angry. First, John had little experience doing farm work or managing a farm. Second, everyone I knew felt patriotic about our country and I also thoroughly disagreed with him in trying to avoid the draft. Third, I should have been consulted since I had been mainly responsible for our savings. Now, I must go back

to the second year of our marriage. There had been other dark clouds over our marriage, his infidelity during the second year of our married life. I was very hurt and felt that this was my very first set back in going forward in my life. John's best friend started telling me all the details of John's actions and then started romancing me pretty heavy. At first I was flattered then I felt repelled that he was not a good friend of John's and was trying to take advantage of a situation. That affair ended right there. At the insistence of John's brother Ed, I agreed to forgive and forget, but things are never quite the same again. Now these actions of John in trying to avoid the draft brought the storm clouds again. As it turned out, I felt I was really made the butt of all this maneuvering to save John.

We moved to the farm in the one room attached to the barn. It was crude. We cooked on a kerosene stove and had table, chairs and bed. We had an outside toilet. We put in a big crop consisting of tomatoes, green beans, sweet potatoes corn, cabbage and all that was required in what the government called a Liberty garden. Our crops were really garden truck, all to be sold at the Farmers Market. The government insisted on every one canning all they could to prevent a food shortage in these war times. We worked from daylight until dark, I was young and strong and I liked that part of it. The horses they bought in such a hurry had evidently been drugged and were quiet and tame when they bought them. However, in a day they were wild and very difficult to handle and almost impossible to catch. We finally got them to where we could control them. The rabbits ate our cabbages to the ground twice so we had to put up chicken wire to keep them out. John bought an old, flat bed truck with no doors on the cab. He and his fathers' efforts didn't pay off and before the crops were ready to go to market, he was drafted and had to go into the Sea Bees (a construction unit of the navy). He went to Norfolk, Virginia for his training. So, I was left alone on a lonely farm with animals and a crop to care for. John's brother Ed and his wife Ann were wonderful and they just pitched in and helped pick the bumper crops. We would arrange and polish up the produce and load the crates on the truck, always in the dark. Early in the morning, I would take the load to the Kansas City Kansas Farmers Market. I usually completely sold out within two hours. I wore a freshly ironed gingham dress, snow white shoes and a ribbon in my hair. It helped as some of the farmers in the booths looked pretty crummy. I even took fresh home made butter and baked goods when I had time to prepare them. We made good money. When fall came, I sold the horses and stock and moved into a little apartment in Kansas City, Kansas. I then applied for a job at the Army Medical depot there. I was hired immediately for the night shift. I still remember the agony to keep awake from 4 A.M. to 6 A.M. I received a fair salary but I sometimes felt it wasn't worth it as I never was able to sleep days while on that shift. I was lonely. John transferred to Gulfport, Mississippi and he wanted me to come down there. I resigned at the Army depot and took the train there as gas was rationed.

We rented a room from a lady who said that her husband was in the insane asylum. She was a dyed in the wool southern lady with a soft, lovely drawl. Two other military couples rented bedrooms there. Later her neighbors told us that her husband had abandoned her and run off with a younger woman, so from that time on she always told everyone he was in the insane asylum. I applied for a job at Kessler Air Force Base there and they offered me the job as chauffer to a Colonel. Since I hadn't been driving much, I turned down the job. One day while shopping at the Piggly Wiggly grocery store in Gulfport, the lady cashier had just walked out on them and they had a line of customers. I had previously visited with the head cashier, so she asked me if I would go to work right there and then. I agreed and so I had a job. It was hard work but I enjoyed being with people and it filled my days. I was offered a transfer to New Orleans but decided it was best to stay where I was. I enjoyed the climate again and the nice, young military couples we associated with. They were all in the Sea Bees.

John next was transferred to Port Hueneme, California, a Sea Bee Base on the Pacific side. From this base the Sea Bee Battalions were usually sent to the Pacific to do necessary construction. pontoons

were used to make bridges, docks, etc; to help the troops that were in combat. I left Gulfport and went to Kansas City and picked up our 1940 Plymouth Coupe.

With a young girl, also named Frances from West Virginia we headed for Ventura, California. Her husband was with John in the Sea Bees. She didn't drive but could guide a car and I was inexperienced in highway driving. Away we went with enough gas ration stamps to get us to California. I was picked up by the highway police near Williams Arizona for speeding and fined \$10.00. We hit snow and slick roads and I stepped on the brake to avoid hitting a stalled Greyhound bus. We turned over in a big snow bank. Other than being frightened, neither of us was hurt. The car came out without a scratch. The state police turned the car upright and we proceeded on our way. I was so tired after we crossed the mountains near Needles, California that I let my companion drive. Because of gas rationing there was little traffic alone this desert road. I showed her how to stop if she needed to, so I relaxed some and rested my eyes. We arrived in Ventura, California and started looking for a place to stay. There were none. The U.S.O. sent us to the only place they had vacant down below Oxnard. In my whole life, this was the worst situation I'd ever been in. They put us in a shed with straw filled mattresses and it was filthy. It was weird to say the least. It was dark by now and we didn't know our way around so we spent the one night there. The next day, I found a nice bedroom and bath in Ventura from some people named Chambers. Mrs. Chambers proved to be a lovely lady. She was so clean it hurt. Her husband sold tools used in the oil fields and he was mannerly and nice but I soon found out that he was an alcoholic. Then she had a young daughter who had suffered a nervous breakdown and was in a hospital. Mrs. Chambers was sad much of the time.

I contacted John at the Sea Bee base and that wasn't easy. He'd get a week end off occasionally and I could visit him at the visitors' quarters and evening or two a week.

I checked into possible employment and applied for a job at PNAB Contractors at Port Hueneme. I was hired and placed in the Central Receiving department. This work had previously been done by men but by now it was necessary to start hiring women for lots of jobs. We were required to wear slacks. This was the beginning of women wearing slacks as a regular part of their wardrobe.

I worked in a team of about 20 women who were responsible for the inventory and placement of supplies to go overseas to the Sea Bee units. For instance, when a truck of gasoline came in, we climbed on top of the tank and checked to see if the driver had the number of gallons of gas that they were billed for. Then we escorted the driver to the underground area where he was to unload and again to check to see if it was all delivered. We'd then sign his billing and he could leave. Many trucks were loaded with food and beer and sometimes cash money to pay the men overseas. The pontoon trucks brought pontoons every day from Los Angeles where they were manufactured. We all thought our boss Mr. Soper (a Hawaiian) was quite easy. After I'd been there about three months, I went in one morning and found he had fired two of the four supervisors. He called Genelle and I in and told us we were the two new supervisors. We were floored as we thought perhaps he was going to get after us about something. That promotion raised my salary and it was quite good.

John went overseas and that left me footloose and fancy free. The climate all around us was romance, dancing, partying and romance. There were oodles of young, lonely men and women thrown together at Port Hueneme. All of the twenty women who worked as receivers in my department were alone. They all had husbands in the service but overseas in the Pacific war zone. The military men we met absolutely everywhere were awaiting the word that they were to go into the war zone. To put it simply, they may never come home again and caution was thrown to the winds. They were eager for companionship and were lonely away from their families. So, I took care of my job and loved it but

also loved the attention I could get any night I decided I'd like to dance and socialize. We had one big advantage in our office as we had a big book available that had family information on every Sea Bee at our base. The men we met always told us he was single, so we'd look his record up the next day to find out how many kids he had back home. Most of the Sea Bees were in their thirties so not too many were single men. Usually, they were courteous and glad to have companionship and were lots of fun. Many times they would show up at our office with all kinds of rationed things they could get and we couldn't. Laundry soap was a real prize. They would also bring us Hershey bars and jello; the jello I would send to my sister Vera for her family of young boys.

We were always full of fear for our men in combat finally the U.S. seemed to be getting on top of the situation. Devastating events were everywhere to make us aware of the horrible war and its toll on all our lives. One of the worst situations was our men who were taken as prisoners of war. We all hated that and we heard terrible stories of how badly they were treated by our enemies. We could go high on the mountain east of Ventura and see a big group of ships congregating out in the Pacific to go to the war zone. They kept absolutely blacked out at night. All this was very hush-hush. One noon I was the only one in our office when a truck load of life boats came in. They were late and were supposed to go on a big ship that was to join the convoy. This was away over my jurisdiction but they asked me to please guide them to the proper dock since they were so late. There was a naval officer with the shipment. I guided them to the dock where the ship was supposed to be waiting. It had just pulled out but we could see it. Through signals, the ships attention was caught and they returned to the dock and got their life boats. Every day we had events of this kind at Fort Hueneme. We felt we were helping a little in the war effort.

The years passed, 1945 was here. More historical events happened in this year than in any other in my life time. On April 12, 1945 our president, Franklin D. Roosevelt died suddenly. It was a great shock to a country in war and we felt a terrible loss for a trusted leader. His vice president, Harry S. Truman took the reins of the government and proved to do a brave and courageous job.

Germany was experiencing tremendous losses and so many of their young men were dead. On April 30, Adolph Hitler committed suicide. Germany's formal surrender was May 8, 1945. Our military forces were returning home from the European zone.

I was still working at Port Hueneme. We'd seen many men come and go through our area and we'd seen supplies, so many supplies go overseas. All of us who worked at Ware house # 1 Central Receiving had become very close. We had formed many tight friendships as we were more or less alone and had homes back in the mid-west or in the east. My friend Mable who I shared an apartment with and I had decided that we would both get divorces. We thought best not to write "Dear John" letters (as they were called) to John and Bill while they were overseas but would tell them when they returned to the U.S. For myself, I had fallen in love with Ventura and thought I'd never leave that area. The climate was just wonderful and to me everything was exciting and lively. Of course long, forced separations caused couples to feel almost like strangers with each other.

At the base, we were aware of a secret operation with some sealed boxes going through our port. They were accompanied by some men who were from Los Alamos, New Mexico. However, we had had other shipments that we were seriously cautioned not to discuss so we were not impressed one way or the other. As it turned out, a very small part of this operation came through our base. We were still fighting fiercely with Japan. We heard lots about their pilots committing "kamikaze". They would sacrifice their life to dive into and destroy a target with no chance to get away. On August 6, 1945 the U.S. dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. On August 9th we dropped a bomb on Nagasaki.

The Japanese signed a formal surrender on August 14, 1945. World War II was over! It was a big relief, but for those of us in war jobs asked, what now?

The base had much unfinished business, so I did not have an immediate worry about losing my job. Over crowded ships immediately started landing at Port Hueneme with returning Sea Bees. So many we knew quite well, hurried through, anxious to get back to their homes. John returned and we discussed our future. I held out for a divorce as I felt it was best and at the moment, he was so anxious to see his family, he agreed. It was not an easy time emotionally. So, soon Mable and I contacted a lawyer. We both were frightened the day we appeared before the judge but it was over in a few minutes. We felt pretty miserable for awhile. That feeling wore off and we turned to making new lives for ourselves.

The base converted from the PNAB Contractors to a Federal base and we were given civil service ratings. My rating was lousy but I was given the opportunity to submit a job write up. I spent lots of time on the long, detailed write up and I was given two jumps in my rating.

The position was quite different now; mostly office work and I had job security. Most of the women I worked with during the war had gone home and things settled down after having had so many military people added to the normal population.

Harry Dawson started working in the office next to mine at the base. He was originally from northern Minnesota but had been in the Navy for four years. He had signed up the very day Pearl Harbor was attacked(unreadable).....office. I was dating a friend of his occasionally One Sunday Ray invited Harry to go along with us on a ride up the coast to Santa Barbara. It ended up with us taking Ray home first, and then Harry and I stopped to have a drink before going home.

That evening started our friendship. We went out dancing and partying several evenings a week. It was really not a terribly serious relationship but we always seemed to have fun. Mable married in early 1946, so I had to find another place to live. I had a small savings and Harry did also so we decided to buy two small adjoining houses in Casitas Springs. Casitas Springs is a very small village inland thirteen miles from Ventura. I moved into my little house and managed to scrape together enough furniture to get by. Harry's house soon became vacant. We spent much time together and so the romance developed. We got married November 7, 1946. Harry had been discharged from the navy exactly a year ago. Our age difference was irrelevant to us, but some harped on it for years to come. It took some strength on my part as I knew if we had serious trouble, where my narrow minded judges would be quick to place the whole blame. I've reflected that it furnished some people with a long needle but they probably would have found another reason to get their kicks.

We lived in my house while we were remodeling Harry's house. One day we returned from work and found a swarm of bees on the outside of the house. Much to our dismay, we found the bees had also invaded the inside. We sat in the car quite awhile trying to decide how to handle this. After some time, I decided to go in and fight the battle. They were not feisty so I soon had it all under control by opening the doors and using the fly swatter. The outside swarm was just above our toilet (inside). Through a small crack on the outside they entered and settled between the outside and inside wall. Soon Harry cut a square out of the inside wall and we got some fine honey. We then smoked them out. We sold my house and moved into the small house next door. We invited guests for Thanksgiving and Harry bought a 32 pound turkey. I had never baked a turkey, let alone such a monster. I got up at 4 a.m. and put him in and it turned out just great but our little house smelled like turkey for days. About Christmas, I found out I was pregnant. We sold this house also and rented a nice, little house from a man I worked with.

This place had blackberries boysenberries, apricots and a large garden spot. A small creek ran across the back. That spring we put in a big garden and one dozen sweet potato plants. We couldn't find a single sweet potato but when Harry dug below the hard pan, we found the biggest sweet potatoes, I've ever seen. The creek ran into the Pacific Ocean. Steel head salmon came up in the creek to spawn from the ocean. It was illegal to catch them but we discovered that our law abiding neighbors were enjoying frequent messes of fish. I looked out of our kitchen window and here came Harry with his pitch fork and a big steel head.

The pregnancy progressed and I was consulting a Dr. Welborn. He kept warning me that I might never carry this child and he advised me to keep my job. I worked until the 6th month and then took a leave of absence. Our baby was due about August 15th. On July 15th we were invited to Chris and John Mays home in Ojai for fried rabbit, biscuits and gravy. I had no appetite that evening. On the way home, I had a hard pain but didn't mention it. As I opened the gate at home for Harry to drive in, I had another pain. Harry contacted my doctor and we found he was on vacation. We were referred to a Dr. Shore. I went into the hospital the next day and finally on July, 17th they decided to perform a Caesarian section. It was a harrowing forty eight hours. James Price came into the world at 11:01 July 17, 1947. I did well after the surgery but since Jim was premature we stayed in the hospital two weeks. My sister Belva volunteered to come out from Columbia, Missouri and take care of us. She stayed with us a month so we had the best of care and a distinct advantage in setting Jim off to a good start. Before we took Belva to the train depot in Los Angeles, we dropped down to Mexico. We all enjoyed the sights, sounds but believe me, not the smells. A new baby changes the habits of a couple but he thrived and grew. I resigned officially at Port Hueneme on August 9th.

Harry saw a notice for a civil service examination for federal guards at the Alcatraz federal penitentiary. He took the test and passed satisfactorily. He was notified to come to Alcatraz for an interview, which he did. He was hired and reported for his new job April 1, 1948. There was no housing available at Alcatraz at the time so we rented an apartment in Richmond, Calif. in a housing project. It was quite a distasteful arrangement but we made out. However, we did have a nice apartment on the island soon. Living on Alcatraz was a unique experience never to be forgotten. It was a healthy, cool place but with many inconveniences we had a small store and a post office there. The children had to go to San Francisco to school via the boats. One devout Catholic lady took the 5:45 a.m. boat every single morning to Mass. Harry was a guard at first but when a vacancy occurred among the boat operators, he applied and was made an operator. (Two boats went back and forth to San Francisco on a daily schedule.) We found all the sixty families living there to be nice people. Warden Johnson soon retired and our new top man was Warden Swope. He and Mrs. Swope lived in a 22 room house high up near the prison. We were down the cliff but far above the bay. San Francisco was a formal town then, so when I went shopping I wore hat, gloves and always a coat for the cool climate. I'd return to the dock with packages and Jim in tow. When we'd board the rocking boat at the windy slip, I'd try to hold my packages, keep on my hat and hang on to Jim. That could give one nightmares because with one false step, we could land in the bay. The islanders were one big family and we helped each other. We had one scary riot while we lived there. It lasted two days, with no fatalities but some damage to the prisoners dining hall. My friend Ursula had a baby daughter and I had Jim. We applied for a saleslady job at I. Magnums store in San Francisco. They agreed so; I'd take Jim up to her apartment then board the early boat and be on the job at 9 a.m. Then she would bring baby Karen and Jim over on the boat at noon. I'd meet them and take the kids home with me and she'd go on to work for the after noon. We filled one job slot and made a little money for ourselves. Now we belong to the Alcatraz Alumni Association made up of former residents who lived and worked on the island.

This poem written by Esther Faulk, a former resident. It says it all for us who lived there.

OUR ISLAND

There's an Island out in a beautiful bay
That used to house men who had gone astray.
Outside and below that prison wall
Stood houses which formed a village small
Where employees on the island were at ease
Living with their wives and families.
The homes in the village were neat and clean,
Welcome mats at each doorstep could be seen
On every inch of ground bright flowers grew.
There was a beautiful garden and a hot house too
Planted by a man who loved flowers very much,
They seemed to thrive by his tender touch.

The Social Hall was a delightful place,
The memories of events there nothing can erase
The dinners, parties, the games and the plays
We shall always remember those wonderful days
When life on the island out in the bay
With good friends and neighbors was good and gay.

The island appears to be a ghost town today
The prison abandoned, the families moved away
The laughter of children no longer fills the air
The village and flowers no longer are there;
O'er the island, each day, hundreds of strangers now roam
Curisoty seekers have taken over our beautiful home!

Harry received a letter from Los Alamos, New Mexico inviting him to take the civil service examination for a Security job at the Atomic City of Los Alamos. He passed and his notice told him to report at Los Alamos January 2, 1951. Los Alamos is built on mesas in the Jemez Mountains with deep gorges between the mesas. What a contrast to our previous home on the Pacific Ocean! It was a closed city so we felt the children were safe to move around freely. We rented a Denver steel house with two bedrooms. I joined the Security wives bowling team and enjoyed the activities among the Security group. We joined the Methodist Church as a charter member and were quite active in church affairs. I noticed there was not a Prudential Insurance agent to pay our premiums to, so I contacted the Albuquerque office and inquired about being their representative there. They came to interview me and gave me their tests. I qualified, so I became the Prudential Representative in Los Alamos. I sold quite a few nice policies. It enabled us to buy furniture and also help pay for vacations. Los Alamos enjoys a nice climate, snow in winter for winter sports and cool summers. It was then a town of 13,000 souls. The average age was 35 years. There were more PhD's per thousand than any other place in the world. These scientists were doing some pretty heavy experiments in the big laboratories there. The testing grounds for nuclear weapons were Bikini Atoll in the Pacific. Then as the weapons became smaller, they were tested at the Proving Grounds about 60 miles from Las Vegas, Nevada. Now in 1980, we hear about the military men that were there at the blasts, being contaminated and suffering from radiation. The amount of radiation we were subjected to at Los Alamos probably was more than that received by the people at Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania, recently. I found the confined living

eventually very boring so I was ready in 1955 when Harry transferred to Sandia Base in Albuquerque. He was a courier for the Atomic Energy Commission.

We bought a small adobe house in Albuquerque. I loved this city from the very first day we moved there and now still feel the same way. It is really home to me. We joined the Coronado Club at Sandia base so that first summer, Jim and I practically lived there at the pool. At 11 P.M. on the night of September 29th, I received a call from Belva that Mother had suffered a hard stroke there at her home. She died early on September 30th. I got plane tickets for Jim and I and we flew to Kansas City. Vera picked us up and we drove on south to Sarcoxie, MO. She was buried beside my father in Union Cemetery. She was 86 years of age and alert up to the time of the stroke. Thus, I lost the love and the very best friend I would ever have in my whole life. I was given a Memo book that she had kept and was surprised to find how much she liked poetry and that she had a collection of her favorites in this book.

In February 1957, I was contacted by Prudential and they asked me to come to work in the new Ordinary office they were just opening up. I started immediately as the new business clerk. On October 1st, the manager promoted me to assistant Office Supervisor. My knowledge of insurance I had gained in Los Alamos had paid off. As Assistant, I had to learn every aspect of the different processes. We relied completely on brain power as computers were unheard of then. The biggest challenge for me was the book-keeping, which involved crediting premiums, figuring and paying commissions and reporting every item to our home office. We had conflicts in the high administration personnel and changes were taking place. That fall, the office supervisor resigned and I was given her position. I had seven girls under my supervision. I loved the work but it was a demanding job and sometimes I felt it was necessary for me to neglect my duties toward my family. Once or twice a year, I had to fly to the home office in Los Angeles and attend a training session for a week with all 40 supervisors in attendance. Office methods and new policies were changing so rapidly, it was difficult to keep up with it all.

March 3, 1958, we moved into our new home we had had built. It was in the boon docks but within a year we were well in town as Albuquerque was then growing fast. That Christmas, Santa brought me a new electric organ. Needless to say everything else was neglected for the next few days. I took the 6 free lessons and I practiced faithfully. How I loved it we made up an organ club of couriers and wives who had organs. I learned to play for my own amusement and enjoy every bit of it. I worked and worked while Harry traveled and Jim graduated from Sandia and went to Eastern University Portales, New Mexico. In 1961, we bought a cabin on Deer Lake in Northern Minnesota. It was beautiful there. I will always remember the breath-taking view of the moon over the lake just looming through our windows. We could only spend two or three weeks a year there but it was worth the long trip to be able to relax so completely. We can tell some great yarns about our big fish we caught and have the pictures to back it up.

Of course, there were some dark days during this time but as time passes, these unpleasant things fade away and the nice things are remembered. One of the nicest things in my life was my two daily companions, the Pekinese brothers, Kim and Lem. We got them when they were tiny pieces of dog fuzz. They became important members of our family. If there was a crack within a mile, Kim got his foot caught in it. He was always in a jam. He was the spunky one but he died with a spinal ailment when he was four years old. Lem, the dainty, blond gentleman was with us until he was twelve. He tried so hard to show me how he just adored me. I've been truly loved!

At noon on November 22, 1963, I was concentrating on some detail in the office when news came in that our 46 year old president, Jack Kennedy had been shot as he rode in a motorcade in Dallas, Texas.

We soon heard that he was dead. Vice president, Lyndon Johnson was quickly sworn as the 36th president of the United States. At the time, it was not known whether this was a plot by some foreign government and perhaps President Johnson's life was in danger also. Soon, Lee Oswald was arrested and charged with the murder. I saw Oswald on television, murdered by a shot from Jack Ruby. For years, investigations have been conducted but they've never, revealed a real connection between Jack Ruby and Lee Oswald. Prudential gave us the day off, the day of president's Kennedy's funeral. We were all glued to our television sets, as our hearts ached about this terrible tragedy.

Harry retired from the government on April 10th, 1964. We went to Minnesota that summer and converted our lake cabin into a nice cottage. I loved the time we spent there, swimming, boating, and just relaxing. We entertained lots of relatives who enjoyed the beautiful lake, the big pine trees and the many birds. Northern Minnesota is one of the last unspoiled areas in the United States, in my opinion.

The years were piling up and it showed in my mirror. Fortunately, I had good health. I passed day after day in my office, always looking forward to vacations. I was president of the Women's Life Insurance Association one year and that required much of my time. We had our cottage in Minnesota and a nice run about boat. It was pleasant to let my thoughts fly up to beautiful Deer Lake and our lonely cottage just waiting for us, because the silence turned to the good sounds when we arrived, like laughter, motors singing and fish flopping.

I decided to retire after my 10 years were vested with Prudential. So on June 2, 1967, I retired from my job with many mixed emotions. I'd made many friends within Prudential and also in the business community in Albuquerque. Yet, I was anxious to try so many things that I hadn't had time for before. I received many cards from the Prudential group who wished me well. My own office had a party with cake and all and presented me with two engraved, Nambe' pieces. We left shortly for Mt. Vernon, Missouri to my 1927 graduating class 40 year reunion. It was nice to see all my class mates after so many years. But like so many reunions, after the first half hour of visiting, we had little in common and nothing more to visit about. We went from Mt. Vernon to our cottage and spent the summer. The next year, we did the same winter in Albuquerque, summer in Minnesota.

The unpopular Viet Nam war was taking our young men. What a sad time for parents when young sons are taken. Our case was no exception and Jim went into the army January 27th, 1969. He was in college and bang! He was drafted. We took him to the airport to go to Fort Ord, California for basic training. The harassment was already in evidence by the way they were shoved into the plane at the last minute. My heart was broken but he was tough enough to live through it all. I didn't want to stay in Albuquerque. Harry got on the phone and talked to Mrs. Pasek in Minnesota about buying her 55 acre tree farm and farm house just above our cottage. An agreement was made, so we put our Albuquerque home up for sale and it was sold on February 12th, 1969. Since it was in the dead of winter in northern Minnesota, we decided to spend some time in Corpus Christi, Texas on the Gulf, in our small trailer. We saw lots of country in the rain as it rained, rained and flooded. The fish were few and far between and the trailer got pretty small. We headed north and moved into the farm house on March 1st, 1969. The snow was still foots deep but it soon was none and our first spring just exploded as it does there on our farm. We spent money and time remodeling the house and added a family room. We finished the attic and we had a nice bedroom there with a fabulous view. Jim called and told us he was setting married on his furlough to his Albuquerque sweetheart. We drove to the wedding and were enroute somewhere in Nebraska on July 20th, 1969 in a motel. We stopped in time to see Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin step on the moon. I wished my father could know about this "one giant leap for mankind." We flew back to Minnesota and Jim and bride drove our car back and spent their honeymoon in our cottage on the lake. He then left for service in Germany. We had a fine garden that

year while I was re learning how to garden and how to can. The winter passed but I was very lonesome that Christmas for Albuquerque friends. The snow really does get up to the windows and sometimes higher. We carried dirt out of the house instead of in. Finally, the weather broke so we could move about some. I had wanted to see a winter up north but decided one was enough for me. There was a period when all animals are hibernating, only a few birds are in sight. We had seen deer tracks right up to our bedroom windows. We had a cub bear on the farm and called the Wild Life to get him as he seemed to be alone. We plugged the maple trees and boiled down the juice to make pure maple syrup. We put legal nets in the lake and caught white fish and smoked them. I picked wild cranberries in the bogs and made delicious cranberry sauce. I picked big, wild strawberries and blue berries. I put in a big garden this year, and had a good crop. Part of the garden was virgin soil, never cultivated before. We enjoyed all the activity on the farm. Our evergreens were growing up and we sold a few of them. Sister Belva and Joe spent a month in a rented trailer near the house. We had lots of fun fishing and playing cards. Then, brother Harry and Lillie and their son Harold and Betty spent a few days with us all and we had a glorious time. That was the time of the great croquet tournament!

The 1970 fall came and it was simply gorgeous, if only I could have painted the beauty of white birch mingled in with all that color. We begin to feel the(unreadable)... getting back into the dry sunshine weather. One Sunday afternoon in November, I was making my own personal Christmas tags. Some one knocked on the door and it was a Mrs. Beers who was looking for some property to buy. There was an hour or two of looking into all the nooks and crannies. She said she might return. We decided we would sell if we made a deal with her. The next day, she was back bright and early and we made the deal. We again packed our belongings and headed for New Mexico. We arrived in Albuquerque on December 18th, 1970. We bought a new house at 12204 Apache, NE and moved in December 30, 1970. We had severed any land connections in Minnesota as we had sold our cottage on the lake in June, 1970.

Our son came back from Germany in late January, 1971. He and his wife moved to Portales, N.M. so she could finish college at Eastern University. Harry and I took up golf and that was the name of the game for many a month. I've always liked competitive sports and so I loved the game of golf. We did get back to Minnesota that year as my mother-in-law passed away on December 22nd, 1971. We buried her in a blinding snow storm but that had been her life in her beloved Minnesota. I now had time to try some of the crafts, I was interested in. So, I found I could win a few and lose a few in the world of arts and crafts. In September, 197?, we drove to Sarcoxie to visit Harry, Lillie and Bertha. While there, they told us about a rice house for sale, nearby. We saw, we liked, we bought. We returned to Albuquerque and sold our house and here we were packing again. We moved into our Sarcoxie house on October 10th, 1972. Wow! Did the climate show off for us that fall and winter. It rained constantly, but it didn't rain out Harry and Lillie's fiftieth wedding anniversary celebration on November, 26th. What an accomplishment and it was a bang up affair! I saw lots of people I had known as I was growing up. December was no different and then the rain froze on the trees and wires and the results were no electricity. I was afraid to get outside as it was slick. We slid out of southwest Missouri after Christmas and drove to Bonita Beach, Florida, our second home. It was lovely and warm and good fishing. Belva and Joe were spending the winter nearby.

Back in Sarcoxie, we played many pitch games with Harry and Lillie and their card club members. It was nice to get re acquainted with my own family. That year, I spent months listening closely to the Senate Watergate committee investigating the Watergate break in and cover up by President Nixon and some of his cabinet members. I made my own decision about the possible outcome. After a hot, humid summer, I yearned for Albuquerque again, never more to roam. We advertised and held an "Open House" one Sunday and we had only a few lookers. On Monday, a couple came and looked and

decided to buy the house. It was exciting to get results so soon. So, we rented a U-Haul and had much help in getting our furniture loaded once again.

I followed Harry to Albuquerque and we arrived back here on October 23rd, 1973. It felt like home. We bought our present home and moved in November 15th, 1973. We were in the boon docks again. No police protection, no telephone, and no mail delivery. We had a visit from a flock of crows early every morning. We had much to do to a bare house and sandy yard to get everything in a livable condition. We didn't take our usual Florida trip so we could get back to normal again. So, soon 1974 appeared on the horizon. I painted 50 quilt blocks with each states bird and flower. The quilt was finally together after six months of work. I am still proud of the finished product. We put in evergreens and roses and some southwest landscaping. We have been quite satisfied with the results and enjoy a private, cozy back yard. The Watergate thing still raged. Vice President Spiro Agnew had resigned for tax evasion October 10th, 1973. Our new Vice President was Gerald Ford sworn in December 6th, 1973. Then on August 9th, 1974 President Nixon resigned and Gerald Ford was sworn in as our 38th president. Nelson Rockefeller was the new vice president.

Our son and wife divorced and he came to Albuquerque to live. This was one of life's painful circumstances. I turned to God and faith again and was helped cross this emotional valley in my life. Jim started teaching at Technical Vocational Institute January 2nd, 1975.

We took our vacation again at Bonita Beach, Florida. We always had nice visits with Belva and Joe on these trips. We spent most of our time fishing in Florida, as New Mexico offers only trout fishing and we are not adept at that kind of fishing.

My 93 year old father-in-law went to rest June 6th, 1976 and was buried beside his beloved Emma under a big blue spruce tree in Pine Ridge cemetery near Deer River, Minnesota. We have to water lawns and shrubs all summer here so we were tied to our place as usual this year except for the Florida trip. We were beginning to realize what a nice neighborhood we were in and our close neighbors were all friendly and fun. We lost a few to transfers but the new ones who took their place were just as nice. Then the New Year of 1977 was born. We were in Florida on February 11 and Eleanor called early that morning to tell us that Amelia (Harry's youngest sister) had suffered a bursted blood vessel over her left eye and was unconscious. We immediately packed up and were on our way home by noon. We slept only two nights and drove on to Albuquerque from Shreveport, La. Amelia died on February 14th, 1977. We started right out again for Pismo Beach, California and her funeral February 17th. Her sudden unexpected death caused a lingering ache in my heart. She and I had always been able to confide in each other and I felt a great void in my life. After the funeral, we went to Port Hueneme to look over our old stomping grounds and our once little home. We could recognize only a few things because everything had changed and freeways seem to criss cross every where. We visited Harry's brother George's grave in Santa Paula, California. He passed away as a young man at the age of 42 with cancer in February, 1957. George was a veteran of the U.S. Navy Sea Bees and when the war was over, he went to work for the Ventura County Fire Department as a mechanic. Melvin and Eleanor came by here on their way home from Amelia's funeral. We took them to old Mexico. We ate there and I got a serious food poisoning and that seemed to be the start of health problems for me.

On July 20th, Vera's son Norman called and told me that Vera had fallen down her basement steps and was in a critical condition. She had been found by Rosalie, her daughter in law, unconscious. She was in the hospital and there was little hope and so the angels came for her at 5 p.m. that same day. Would it never end with all our loved ones leaving us? We drove to Sarcoxie and picked up Harry, Lillie and Marjorie and went right to Harold's place in Kansas City. Her funeral was July 23rd and she was

buried on a beautiful knoll in Memorial Park cemetery in Kansas City. I had a terrible time accepting this death.

When I returned home, I had a nice letter from Vera that she had written the day before her accident. She had sent me a piece of music some time before and said, " I wish you would learn to play this song. It is so pretty." The music title is " His Name Is Wonderful." I couldn't play this music for two years after Vera' s death and it still makes me sad.

About this time Women' s Lib became a new controversial subject. As I listened to the advocates of women' s lib, I always thought back to my father' s youngest sister, Aunt Rosa. I helped them during strawberry season when I was in high school. She treated me like an adult and even asked my advice sometimes, so I had a special feeling for her. They had, transient strawberry pickers living in tents on their farm this year. One evening she and I were cleaning up the supper dishes when the door burst open and this man bolted through the room. Right on his heels was his infuriated wife, wielding a big butcher knife. I panicked and was shaking like a leaf as they rushed through the house. My religious and straight laced Aunt Rosa went on with her work calm as could be and said, " Good, I kinda hope she gets him." I thought I understood what she was trying to tell me. For myself, I have an opinion about women' s lib but I'd rather not document it. The term "male chauvinist pig" sprouted from the women' s lib movement.- For some reason, I just love to twist that phrase around "my tongue.

Speaking of pigs, since retirement I had steadily gained some weight every year. I had considered shooting the scales as the needle went around farther and farther. I loved to cook, my lasagna would just melt in your mouth but calories galore. So, I paid for all this extra pounds on my five foot, two frame. The year of 1978, we took our trip to Florida and one of the highlights was a visit with my cousin Harold Hall and his wife Kate. I hadn't seen Harold since I was nine years old. Our mothers were sisters. Katie died two months later. In late February, 1978, I had a terrible, weird spell with heart distress and ended up in Presbyterian hospital. My heart doctor pulled no punches about my weight and told me I must lose 50 pounds and soon I was released from the hospital, put on a strict diet and ordered to walk two miles every day. My life style changed. That heart spell had made a believer out of me. When I started the walking program, I hated it as I was sore and swollen every place and had blisters all over my feet but I walked. I was finally convinced to get proper walking shoes. The blisters and swelling left me. The end results were a 50 pound weight loss and an intense love for the walking. It was so nice to get the blood circulating and get out under the blue sky every morning. I quit cooking. I just boiled, broiled and baked. I still had the irregular heart beat at times-- it was a very uncomfortable and alarming sensation for me. It caused me to have headaches and feel dizzy at times. I was in the hospital again in September but I managed to go on to Florida. Our regular housing arrangement there was Hargraves Resort on the bay and a block from the beautiful Gulf beach. Our location is perfect for our time there, basking in the sun and fishing. Our son usually spends his Christmas vacation there too.

1979 rolled around. Believe it or not we had lived in one place 6 years now. I had some bad times with nerves and the heart trouble but got through all of this year pretty well. We did all right with retirement. I always have been one to keep busy one way or another. I have been engrossed with shell projects, or some kind of crafts. But when the wall gets full with all this artistic stuff, it is time to call a halt. Harry had invested with some antiques and so we sold them and I took an interest with old dolls for

awhile and read up on that hobby. We visited with neighbors and friends and stayed around Albuquerque this whole year. We left for Florida a little early this December and went by Sarcoxie to visit with brother Harry and Lillie and Marjorie. While there, I asked about sister Bertha's death on November 20th, 1979. She had been in failing health for two years, but she made it through her 89th birthday and her two sons who had pre-deceased her, Marjorie, her daughter survives. We stayed with Harry and Lillie three days and caught up on all the news of families and friends. That partly broke up the long, long trip to Bonita Beach.

Now we are into January 1st, 1980 and our return to Albuquerque Presbyterian Hospital where I started my Story. I must mention the giant progress my beloved mile high city of Albuquerque has undergone. We were alone when we first moved in to this house in November 1973. Now, there are houses all around us for miles. The early morning flock of crows abandoned us years ago. Now, we have trees, lots of birds and I've even coaxed a few humming birds to sip at my feeders. People are moving in here from both the east coast and the west coast and there's a good reason for it. We are shielded from the mid-west heat and humidity by the imposing 10,000 feet Sandia mountain range to our east. (I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. Psalms 121-1st verse.) We have skiing right at our fingertips up in the Sandias while the city enjoys a moderate winter climate and cool summer nights. We have the best of three cultures in residence here, Anglo, Spanish and Indian. Those cultures offer us unusual art, the old and the new.

In these seven decades of my lifetime, I've been privileged to see the machine age come and go and see us enter the electronic age. I've seen social reform progress so that blacks have gained equal civil rights. Now, I see the elderly population getting some consideration as the average age gets higher.

This story just relates a few highlights of my life as the years fled by. There are so many other events, I could write pages and pages about. There have been emotional mountains and emotional valleys but I have weathered them out. There have been financial crises but I've weathered them out. I've learned to thank my God every morning for the great gift of life. Yes, yes you've come a long way, baby! However when my stint on earth is finished, I'd like to be remembered like this (author unknown):

Do not stand at my grave and weep.
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow;
I am the diamond glint on snow,
I am the sunlight on ripened grain;
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you waken in the morning hush;
I am the swift uplifting rush
of quiet birds in circling flight,
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I did not die.

My thanks to Belva for the help and data she furnished me.
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