

Chapter Four

When I was 14 years old, I had great pride in a two-acre field of peanuts, which I had prepared the soil and planted with a new variety of peanuts my Dad had gotten for me. I had faithfully tended to the healthy looking growing peanuts. One day after plowing about half the field to rid it of sprouting weeds, it began to look like it might rain or at least bad weather clouds were on the horizon. I decided to take Bess my mule, and put the plow onto the sled and go back to the barn. I would finish the other acre the next day. It rained for three days. Somehow the next day never came for me to finish the other half of the field. I lost interest as the weeds thrived and the peanut vines failed to materialize into maturity. I have decided to pick up pen and plow that other acre of this biography now before the weeds of time sap my recollections. I've had a good life with more to tell.

To begin a new career with family responsibilities at age thirty-nine was an almost overwhelming concept for me, except that I had a united family with me to face the uncertainties and challenges together. There was so much to do to prepare our home, enroll the children in school and me into the university, and secure work for Mary. Above all of these challenges was our unity as a family to support each other as each of the five of us had our individual concerns that required family support and encouragement.

One of the first families we met on our first visit to Auburn, before we bought our house, was the Webster family. We had been to Loachapoka to look for housing. There was an old, old vacant two-story store that had possibilities that we could renovate it into our home. We talked to the owner, Prince Webster and he quoted us a price we considered a gift if we could rehabilitate it into a livable house. He directed my attention to



some beams underneath that were severely damaged from termites. He also showed us a huge dugout earthen room under the store and told us this is where slaves were held by



their owners for a day or so as they passed through the area enroute to Atlanta or to Montgomery. He told us the cost estimate for repairs that he had already received. It was discouraging. Several years later the Webster family gave the old store to the newly formed Loachapoka Historical Society under the leadership of Dr. Nunn. He made it into a first class Southern Agricultural museum of note. On our way back to Auburn we saw two young girls selling apples from a beautiful apple orchard with many varieties, only a block or so from the old store. We stopped at their little roadside stand. They were very friendly and offered to let us sample the varieties before we bought any. We learned they were Margaret and Liz Webster, daughters of Prince and Peggy Webster. We bought several varieties that afternoon. They told us that it was their grandfather, Dr. Alexander Nunn's orchard. After we bought our house, we learned that the Webster girls were our across the pasture neighbors.

Their parents became our close friends in Auburn. Mary often said that she considered Peggy to be her sister as I felt a brotherhood about Prince. In fact, I am jumping ahead somewhat but Tom and Margaret bonded in friendship during their school days and were later married, bringing us two wonderful grandchildren.

One of our earliest considerations was to establish our family into a church life allied with spiritual nourishment and enrichment. We found these things in Covenant Presbyterian Church of Auburn. We all worked diligently to rehabilitate the house, making it livable and as a source of pride for our efforts. The boys had the two upstairs bedrooms and bath. They plastered it as was needed and painted their rooms to suit their individual desires. Each room had an attic storage area that the boys considered their personal and secret hide a room. Cammy had a front bedroom on the ground floor. She prepared and painted her room to her desires and even selected her curtains and a little girl light switch cover for the wall. She wanted a canopy bed, but we vetoed that.



Almost every day Prince would come by and we would chat about the progress the house was taking shape, to become livable. He was a true conservationist and loved his walks in the woods as he kept track of the deer and turkey populations for his own pleasure. I looked forward to his daily visits. Sometimes we would walk the fresh plowed fields after a light rain, looking for Indian artifacts. Prince knew of all the Indian village sites and I really enjoyed the fellowship and the finds. Prince had a priceless collection of museum quality artifacts. We would discuss every find we made. Both of our families went down to Panama City for a weekend of relaxation and fishing. Prince got too much sun and we cut the fishing trip so he could get back and agonize at home. Prince and Peggy Webster held considerable acreage of land of well-maintained pasture, orchards and timber. Prince had scooped out a rather large pool area over a year-round flowing spring in one of his pastures. This provided the children and adults a very refreshing swimming pool. On the hot July and August afternoons when it was too miserable to work on the house, the children would go to the Webster's pasture pool, taking snacks and drinks for a well-earned recreational afternoon of splashing. Everyone enjoyed their pasture pool.



All of us worked like Trojans as we repaired the house, built a kitchen and family room, built a huge carport and storage room, installed new plumbing, electricity and a central heating and air conditioning system. We worked hard all day long and took cold showers outside in a makeshift modesty structure, when it got dark. We would then go to the Bonanza Steak House in the Mid-Way Auburn-Opelika shopping center. The moment we came in, they would start cooking our favorite steaks. We ate there almost every night for the six weeks we worked before classes began for the children and me. They were very kind to us and even prepared vegetables for our evening meal, which was not a part of their menu. The manager, Roy, liked the children and did special favors of food for them,

like apple turnovers. The children liked him also. Roy was born with no hair follicles and did not even have eyebrows or eyelashes. He was relocated and we all missed him.

As school began, the children settled into their routines and developed their circle of friends. They were popular in school and did well in their grades. Eddy was called "Turk." Cammy had a friend named Diane who tried to isolate her from other friendships. One day she told Cammy, in a very cruel manner that she did not want to be her friend any longer. That was her first experience of such bluntness and it hurt her for a while. Mary began work in the cataloguing department of the University Library with a most pleasant lady, Miss Minnie Wall. Mrs. Barksdale, Rebecca Shivers, Dottie Marcinko, and Phyllis Connell were also her friends in that department. She really enjoyed her work there for nine years until we relocated to Thomasville, Georgia in 1977.

I was the old man in my classes. I enjoyed being a student again. For the first time in my life, 39 years old, I looked through a microscope. A whole new world of adventure was there before me. I learned photosynthesis and what made trees grow without eating up the soil. I learned that the characters of "The Canterbury Tales" were like some of the people I had known, just in a different setting. It was fun learning and it was all beginning to come together. I knew of the segments of the hydrological cycle but had never put it all together. To learn was exhilarating. I sometimes felt like a child discovering the ABCs in blocks. I was usually the first one in the classroom and the last to leave, especially in the lab classes. Every class was like an exciting learning adventure. I did not take copious notes in class. I listened and that night at home, I would put down the things I had learned in that class as I reread that chapter or segment. For the Botany lab class, we were paired to work on projects together. I only knew my partners last name, Quakenbush. Everyone called him Quaker. He told me that on weekends, he visited the cow pastures of the area and collected particular mushrooms from pasture patties. He boiled a gallon of these for several hours and would drink the tea. He claimed that he could then understand what the plants would say to him about pain and affection. He would listen to the pores of the underside of leaves and hear the leaf inhale and exhale and this is how they communicated with him. He made an "A" and I made a "B." Was it the mushrooms?

I was constantly pointed out as a military personality and was always on guard to try and adapt to the contrary and conflicting philosophies of several of the liberal professors of the social science department. It was very challenging at times to refrain from speaking privately to ribald and contemptible instructors and professors who shamelessly spewed anti-Americana in their classrooms. Most of the young instructors blatantly trampled the ethics and morals of their young students in classes such as sociology, psychology, histories and religion. I complained to the Dean of Education about one such instructor and he was dismissed. He was told why he was terminated, and he was proud of himself.

When we came back from Turkey, Mary and I promised the children that they could have any musical instrument they would like if they would learn to play it under the tutorship of an instructor, and have fun with it. Eddy chose a full drum ensemble. Those drums almost drove us to distraction as he enjoyed many hours, day and night, banging on those drums upstairs in his room. He was good at it eventually. Tom chose an antique fiddle, a

three quarters violin. It has a beautiful resonant sound. He took lessons for a while and tired of it, but he did a good job of teaching himself, until we made the mistake of urging him too strongly to take more lessons. Cammy was satisfied to claim the piano we had carried to Turkey and brought back, if we would tune it for her. She did very well with playing the piano, once she got past “The Volga Boatmen”, a practice piece of music.

The children wanted bicycles but we told them if they did a good job working together on fixing the house during those two summer months, they could select a motorbike of their choice. We all went to Columbus, Georgia and they each selected a motorbike of their choice, without any parental coaching. It was a great pleasure for us to see the children riding those motorbikes over our two-acre yard and our neighbors adjoining field with terraces. They made trails everywhere. We discourage them from going in the same path more than once, which was useless advice as they went everywhere, all over the yard. They wore safety helmets. Cammy’s long strawberry blonde hair would fly as she raced to keep up with the boys in their leaping the terraces in the field next door. I thought they would bankrupt us buying gasoline at twenty-eight cents a gallon for those three motorbikes. They thoroughly cleaned their bikes after each days ride.

We were probably the first family to move into the Willow Creek Farms subdivision, which was about 2 miles west of Auburn on the Loachapoka highway, State 14. Our yard was very, very rough with ruts and potholes. We had neglected the yard, concentrating mostly on fixing the house. One night Jane Brewer the wife of Dr. Bob Brewer, came to our house to use the telephone, as they had not yet had a telephone installed in their new house. She stepped into a pothole and broke both of her legs. I heard a moan in the yard and turned on the light in the front yard. Jane was lying on the ground in severe pain. All of us rushed to her side. Cammy and Tom brought out pillows and a blanket, I called for an ambulance and Eddy stood at the driveway to flag the ambulance, Mary stayed at her side, holding her hand and comforting her. The ambulance response was swift. She had a difficult time with both legs broken. We immediately had topsoil hauled in to fill the potholes and level the yards. The Brewers were wonderful neighbors for us during our time in Auburn. Their son Robert and Tom became the best of friends. Jane later worked for The Alabama Poultry and Egg Assn. as a noted TV personality demonstrating the myriad ways to serve poultry and eggs. She was very popular throughout Alabama.

Jane was a fifth grade teacher in the Loachapoka Elementary school. When it was time for me to do student teaching for a semester, Jane agreed for me to be her assistant in practice teaching for a semester. The children had practically no playground equipment so I bought them a spool of plow line rope, which they cut into lengths to make jump ropes. They even made double jump ropes. Those little children were really good and got better. They loved “Hot Peas.” The sexes did not mix on the playground. I think this was of their choosing. Jane taught me more about the application of teaching techniques in the elementary classroom than I could have ever learned in the University classrooms.

The Brewers had been missing their 80-pound boxer dog for more than a day. Everyone in the neighborhood began a search throughout the wooded areas and along the highway, searching everywhere. Someone walked past the well, which was a four-foot bored well,

about 43 feet deep. They heard a splash, splash from the well. Bob got a flashlight and looked down into the well. There he was, in slow motion, splashing his paws to keep afloat. I went over to the Webster home to ask Prince Webster for advice. He got a long coil of rope, put it in his maroon Ford Bronco and went to the Brewer home. We all discourage him from going down in that well, but to no avail. He insisted that it was the right thing to do to save that dog. He tied one end of the rope around himself and was slowly lowered down into the well with a flashlight in his mouth. He took the rope that was around him and tied it to the dog and yelled to pull him up. We did. I felt horror of the thought, if the dog wiggled free of that rope tied around him, it would mean eighty pounds of Boxer dog would freefall forty feet down on Prince. The dog was almost gone but he survived for many years afterward. The rope was lowered back down into the well. Prince tied the rope around himself again and was brought safely back to the surface. I have always remembered this was a true act of heroism on the part of Prince Webster.

We poured a huge concrete slab, 60' X 20' parking area leading into the carport. The concrete finishers made the concrete very smooth so we could use the surface for painting a shuffleboard, hopscotch, and other games. We all enjoyed many hours of shuffleboard, badminton and other games on that slab. We bought a lot of square tube steel to make a pump house. The more we thought of the dimensions, the bigger it got. Eventually it was decided on a size. Eddy and Tom welded the steel frame together and installed opaque fiberglass sides with a green fiberglass roof. It looked good and served as a pump house, greenhouse and eventually as a honey processing house.

Tomatoes grow wild along the banks of the Euphrates River. They have a very firm texture and are slightly tart. We especially enjoyed those Euphrates tomatoes. I took several of the tomatoes and let them mature to the point of being almost too ripe and then I took the seeds and dried them to bring back to America for planting. I learned of Dr. Greenleaf, the Auburn University Experimental Station Director who had developed the Tabasco pepper for commercial use and the "Big Boy" and the "Better Boy" tomato varieties. He called himself a plant breeder. He was very pleased when I brought the seeds to him and told of their history. He planted the seeds in his greenhouse and nurtured them along. He liked the plant because it was nematode resistant and produced beautiful fruit. He developed the tomato to produce the fruit all at the same time. It had high commercial potential because he could develop it to be machine harvested, he said. I was pleased when he called me to come and get a basket of the tomatoes. They had that same delicious taste. He said that the University policy was to grow the tomato for five years before releasing it, meaning Auburn would sell the patented plant.

A few months after we moved to Auburn a neighbor started building his house on the lot adjacent to ours. The builder had a scrap pile of plywood from the roofing. Tom and his friend Bill Webster thought this scrap plywood would make an excellent tree house. They carted several pieces of this plywood into the woods and began making their tree house. They were so proud of their construction project; they invited us down to see their achievement. The flooring looked good and sturdy. When the neighbor learned about the tree house, he called the police. They came out and Tom quickly admitted that he was the one who had taken the scrap plywood. The policemen looked at the tree house, had a

good laugh, talked to our neighbor aside from us and left. We never heard anymore about Tom's brush with the law. That couple was never neighborly, even after we made several attempts to be friends. He once complained to me that the color of our house was bringing the value of his property down. The family had a conference as to what color to paint the fading gray cedar shakes on the siding. After much discussion with color swatches, the vote was taken and the color yellow with white trim and brown shutters was the preference. Our Yellow House became a landmark for directions to turn into Willow Creek Farms. About three years later, a vote of pale blue pastel won out over white. Thank goodness it was a pale 'Baby Blue' pastel they chose, and it was pretty.



Our house was built in the mid-1920s and we soon realized the beautiful oak flooring was always cold because we did not have any insulation throughout the house. It was built in the days before installation was in use. I told my Aunt Wessie about the floors one day when she came over for a visit. She immediately said let's set up an appointment. She was in the carpet business in La Grange, Georgia. She brought over a crew in a truckload of carpet, which she had selected. I asked how I could help them and was told to take the family and go for a five-hour ride. In less than a day, she and that efficient crew had carpeted the entire house ground floor. She refused to accept money. About a year later, I took the Comanche 250 airplane and flew her with the flying aunts to the Bahamas for a four-day paid vacation as our gift to her. The carpeting made a tremendous difference in warming the house.



There was a nice fireplace and ornate mantle in the living room. Our first chilly night, we decided to build a fire and bask in the nice warm heat from the fireplace. We were roasting marshmallows and making Graham Cracker sandwiches with them, when suddenly we heard a roaring sound all over the house. Perhaps we had built the fire a little too much, as the roar was getting louder and louder. I rushed upstairs and it was really roaring. My thoughts were that the chimney had broken during the moving of the house and fire was outside the chimney. I was terrified as I felt the upstairs hot wall

I called the Auburn Fire Department and they refused to come out, saying that we were just outside the city limits and they were prohibited from responding. I called the Notasulga Volunteer Fire Department and they said they were on their way. We went outside in the yard and saw tremendous fireballs coming from the chimney. Sparks were flying everywhere. I could just see our home going up in a ball of fire. Mary got the garden hose, Eddy got the ladder, Tom turned on the water and I climbed up to the

chimney amid the eruption of sparks and fireballs and put the hose into the chimney. The only thing this did was to flood the living room with dirty sooty water and ashes.

The fire continued to roar for several minutes, which seemed like an eternity to me. When the Notasulga Fire Department arrived, the fire had gone out. They had a tremendous laugh. The Chief said the fire was a chimney fire because the fireplace had not been activated in such a long time and the chimney had resins and pitch that easily ignited and created the fire. Even though I was humiliated at their laughter and jokes about the fire and me, I gave them a check for \$100 and thanked them for coming out, adding that I hoped I would never see them again. They thanked me for the check and drove away in their two fire trucks, laughing all the way back to Notasulga. I thought it was strange that the city police responded to see Tom's tree house but the fire department could not respond to a house fire on property that abutted the city limits.

The first fall we were in Auburn, the pecan trees had a bumper crop. The children each selected their three personal pecan trees. These were their own trees to collect or gather the pecans and sell them as they wished. Cammy's trees were on our property but partly hung over the white board fence into the State 14 road right-of-way. Cammy would be furious that people would stop and collect the pecans that had fallen into the shallow ditch under her trees. She would go out every morning and collect those pecans before school, and the first thing after school. I think she delighted when people stopped and found no pecans in that ditch. They would gather the pecans, clean them, grade them and put them in five-pound bags. They had a pecan sale stand at the driveway, selling them for fifty cents per pound. They made quite a few dollars selling pecans. Eddy contracted with Cammy that she could collect under his trees, sell the pecans and give him half the money. She caught on to this and renegotiated for a more favorable deal. She and Tom made some kind of arrangement and she ended up with a monopoly on the pecans, selling them at seventy-five cents a pound on football game days. When they wanted money, they came to her for a loan. They began to call her "Money Bags" which infuriated her. No money for the name callers dried that up quickly. They had their spats but always seemed to work those things out. A hurricane came all the way up to Auburn wreaking havoc in its path. Mary was alone at home at the height of its afternoon destruction. From one of the upstairs dormer windows she saw one of the best pecan trees slowly begin to lean toward her window. It gently brushed the roof as it was uprooted. It was one of Tom's trees. She went to another window and saw Tom's car being slowly blown sideways towards a retainer wall I had built. The carport post held it from going over.

The most traumatic event that ever occurred in our family happened on the first day of January 1969. Eddy had a houseguest for about a week after the Christmas holidays. He was a friend from the days of Shalimar, who came to visit him from Atlanta. They wanted to go squirrel hunting. I let Eddy use a 22 rifle for their hunting but I refused to lend any gun to his friend David. They went about 2 miles into a heavily forested area hunting squirrels. Eddy crossed a stream on a log, but David was yelling that he was falling. For balance, Eddy quickly handed him the stock end of the 22 cal rifle, holding onto the barrel. He leaned over at some distance to reach David who grasped the stock, put his finger into the trigger guard disengaging the safety, and pulling the trigger.

David panicked and started to run away. Eddy told him to halt or he would shoot him. The threat brought David back to reality as he came back. I am sure this threat saved Eddy's life as it had a sobering effect on David to listen to Eddy's instructions as to how to get out of that heavily grown up and wooded area about two miles from our home, and how to come back for him. Eddy kept the gun. I think David ran in circles part of the way, stopping about a half mile from our house to tell a neighbor Thad Webster, that Eddy had been shot. The news quickly spread. Surely the Lord was directing this tragedy.

David was almost incoherent when he got to us. We understood enough from him for all of us to pile into the Jeep and go after Eddy. David was not a lot of help, but he did remember some of the trails. Eddy was a good woodsman and scout and would occasionally break and bend a plant pointing in the direction he was traveling. I saw



several of these signs along the way as we made new road paths with the Jeep in four-wheel drive. We found him, almost unconscious, pale and bloated from loss of blood. It was a real effort for him to speak. He asked his mother if he was going to die, and mercifully passed out. He was in great pain now as the wound had been inflicted more than two hours previously. Tom and I carefully put Eddy in the back of the Jeep with Mary and Cammy comforting him. I took the shortest and fastest path to the highway and on to the hospital at Opelika. I was driving carefully even at maximum speed for the Jeep. No one was looking at the speedometer. I had the accelerator pedal full to the floor. When we arrived Dr. Webb had the operating room prepared and his team was ready. Eddy was taken directly to surgery. I believe it was God's providential care that in his meanderings to get to our house, David had stopped and told Thad Webster about Eddy. Thad immediately called Dr. William Webb at home and told him of Eddy. Dr. Webb was our neighbor and friend and had just returned about six weeks earlier from Vietnam, where he worked at a forward hospital, like the TV series MASH, working with the gunshot wounds of our brave heroes of that war.

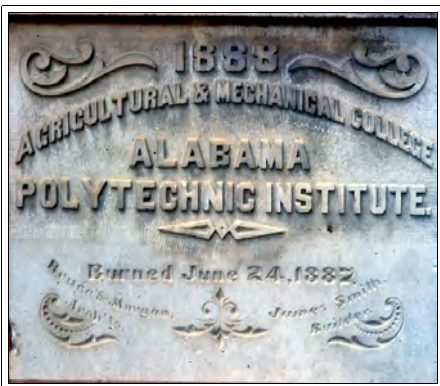
After about four hours into surgery he came out to see us in a very bloody gown. He told us that he had perhaps a fifty-fifty chance now. He told us that he had lost him twice on the surgical table but that Eddy was strong and was in there fighting for his life. We all prayed, I mean really prayed, until my body was limp. He stayed on the surgical table for twelve hours. Dr. Webb removed a fourth of his stomach, two feet of small intestines, a lobe of liver and all of his spleen. I am convinced that it was a miracle that he survived.

He found the bullet just under his skin near the backbone. His abdomen cavity was thoroughly contaminated with the contents of the stomach and intestines. This required many rinses to cleanse his insides. He had to wear a colostomy for several weeks. We did not insist he go to school in that condition because the thing gurgled when he had the slightest gas and it was embarrassing for him to have anyone near him, even family members. He had another surgery and was eventually released. We never got a bill from Dr. Webb and he would not let me take him on a deep sea fishing trip, saying maybe someday. I know a shining star is waiting for him for his skills and talents he so aptly plied that tragic afternoon on Eddy. God Bless You, Dr. Willie Webb, wherever you are.

Mary had a cousin Ernest Richardson who owned and operated a rather large dairy of 160 Holstein milk cows, in Montgomery. He gave each of the children a three-day-old male calf. We built a pen for each of them in the back yard. They bottle-fed those wobbly-legged little things for about three months. I don't know how many gallons of milk and dry feed they consumed, but when the children tired of them, we all took them to the Montgomery Cattle Auction House in the back of the Jeep Wagoneer. They sold to the high bidder for \$50.00 each. We all had a good laugh over that enterprising venture.

I decided to try feeding-out a few more mature calves over the spring and summer months. Prince Webster went with me to the Montgomery Cattle Auction and I bought five very lively calves, which appeared to have been pastured together. Mr. Webb of Loachapoka brought them to Auburn for us. We put them in the forty-acre pasture Prince and I had mended fences, plowed, and planted peas for them. They were the most "skittish" calves that Prince had ever seen. They were so nervous they tried to run from their own shadow. Everything frightened them. They were afraid to come up for feed or even to eat feed we put in the pasture. After about three months of this situation, we took them back to Montgomery and lost more than four hundred dollars on those calves. I had bought two loads of fertilizer and eight bushels of grain seed to be spread on the pasture. Prince was able to get his combine cranked and operating to harvest and sell the grain. He had not cranked it in years. He had made lots of money when he first bought that combine in 1946, harvesting clover and grain throughout mid-Alabama. So much for my cattle ranching aspirations. The children had another laugh over our cattle ranching.

Dr. Alexander T. Nunn of Loachapoka and my father were classmates in Auburn back in 1924. Dr. Nunn had a wonderfully successful career as executive editor and publisher of the Progressive Farmer for 48 years. When the magazine directors decided to advertise tobacco and liquor, Dr. Nunn resigned and began his own magazine called Southern Living. He directed his magazine to be a very popular magazine nationwide. He retired to return to his beloved home and family in Loachapoka and sold SL to Time Warner.



I respected this man with great admiration. I enjoyed many hours in his home and visiting him in his orchard and vineyard filled with cuttings and planting from all over the world. He embodied those tenants of a Progressive Farmer that my father cherished so dearly during his career of teaching. My father and Dr. Nunn were good friends during their API college days. He traveled to my fathers' house reporting on huge timbers growing there. Dr. Nunn wanted to begin an organization for rural farmers of the area. The organization was called Ruritan, which was an

organization similar to Civitan, Rotary, Lions and other organizations for urban citizens. He wanted me to be the charter president and organize the club. Dr. Nunn was not a

friend that accepted no to one of his requests. He agreed to be at my side, as I did not know all of those men of Loachapoka and the surrounding area. At our first meeting I was elected president and told to select the other officers. With the help of Dr. Nunn, we did it in an acceptable manner to all of the club membership. Dr. Nunn was a very practical man. He intimately knew the nature of all of his neighbors in Loachapoka, Ala.

For the first official meeting of the Loachapoka Ruritan Club, I suggested to Dr. Nunn that we have a fish fry, hushpuppy and Cole slaw dinner for the entire community and I would pay for the fish. He thought that would be a good idea but did not want me to pay for it. I insisted and suggested that I order 100 pounds of small one half pound flounder from my friend John Ray Nelson in Bon Secour. I would go down there and get the fish. I should have listened to Dr. Nunn when he said that these folks didn't know anything about flounder and it might be better to get bream or sunfish, bones and all. I didn't listen very close because I went down and got the flounder. Mr. A.B. Williams had a six-gallon cast iron wash pot, which was just right for me cooking the fish in corn oil. Howell Rowell made the slaw, Johnny Adams made the hushpuppies and everything looked like it was going to be a great success. People came by to look at that funny fish that was flat and had two eyes on one side. Some laughed, some just turned away in silence. Peggy Webster was the one who actually cooked the fish. She breaded them and cooked them to a golden brown. She cooked them in about twenty pound batches and put them on the draining screens ready for serving. After a welcome by Dr. Nunn and grace said by the Brother Pastor of the Methodist Church, the folks formed a line for a plate and food. Some folks passed on the fish while others took one and dumped it into the garbage later. Some of the brave souls enjoyed the flounder and actually took heaping plates home with them, as there was certainly a lot of fish left over. I was mortified. I should have listened to Dr. Nunn. We had some good laughs about that Flounder fish fry flop over the years.

I enjoyed my tenure for three years as president of the Loachapoka Ruritan. Dr. Nunn had it arranged that I was to be the Alabama, Georgia, and Florida Southern District Governor. That meant that I was responsible to travel, at my expense, to communities organizing Ruritan clubs in these states. I did organize twenty-seven new clubs, which was a record for Ruritan governors. The Waverly Ruritan Club was the first I organized. The Ruritan headquarters was in Virginia. They hosted a convention for the three states in Pensacola. It was mostly a big banquet with a pep talk from the National Director. Five of us went down there. Johnny Adams was the senior member, chairman, of the Lee County Commissioners. He had never seen the Gulf of Mexico and wanted to put his feet into the gulf and beach sand before he died. He sat up front with me and that was what he wanted to talk about on the way down. At the banquet they served wine. More than a year earlier, I had casually told Johnny that while I was in Paris for three months, I felt like I could become addicted to their hot steamed wines that warmed me from the inside, on those chilly humid mornings. Oh, My, he snatched that glass of wine from my setting and told the waiter to bring me water. I asked him about it later that night, as we roomed together in the famed Palafox Hotel where the convention was held. He said he thought I was a recovered alcoholic and he did not want me to have any alcohol whatsoever. I thanked him for his concerns and assured him that I had never had a compelling taste for any alcoholic beverage. We laughed about that several times. He was like my big brother.

The next morning we checked out and decided that we must go to see the Gulf of Mexico. There is a very long bridge, considered more than three miles long that connects Pensacola to Gulf Breeze on the way to the Gulf Shores. Johnny got real quiet and was all agog at the water and the bridge as we



were almost half the way across. Finally he turned to those in the rear seat and spoke up saying, “Goll-ley bum boys, Ain’t we glad we don’t have something like to pay for in Lee County.” That broke all of us up for the rest of the return trip, pointing to things along the way that we did not have to pay for in Lee County. Everybody got their feet wet. Johnny fell down and got soaking wet. He then gave me his wallet and pen and went all the way swimming in the Gulf. He laughed so hard he almost choked. We had a great time all the way home, after Johnny changed clothes. He laughingly brought a garbage bag of sand home with him. That was indeed an outstanding group of country gentlemen.

I had a strong feeling that Ruritan organizations such as ours should have some form of a farm implement display or something that would depict the rural character of the community creating community pride. I discussed this with Dr. Nunn, Howell Rowell, A.B. Williams, Johnny Adams and some other men, suggesting that we have a cane mill and syrup-cooking event that would publicize our community. They thought for some length of time and some men began to offer negative responses. We don’t have a cane mill. We don’t have a syrup cooking pan. Nobody grows sorghum or sugar cane anymore. Nobody knows how to cook syrup. It would be a futile effort to generate interest in such an antiquated event. Nobody would come to something like that.

I respectfully disagreed with these wise and gentlemen who knew their community far better than I ever could. I encouraged them to think positively as to how we could do this, not why we can’t do this thing. They took me seriously, and I was grateful. People began to scout the area for the items that we needed; a copper syrup pan that could possibly be repaired and used, a cane mill press, a mule to turn the mill, someone to grow about an acre of Sorghum Cane and someone to help me haul stones up to the roadside park where we would build a furnace for the cooking. I told them I knew how to make syrup and had done so in my early years. I told them that I would be responsible for the syrup operations with the help of the club members and the ladies of the community could make biscuits and sausage and sell these items for community projects. I had a year earlier, cedar shingled the well house in the wayside park in Loachapoka, which some had said that it couldn’t be done. I think this convinced some of the men that I could actually make syrup too. I knew I could, because I had done so as I had said. We came up with a list of individuals to accomplish different things such as searches, publicity, work details and encouragers. I felt that we were well on our way to having something good for our community. I felt very positive. We had a year to work before we were to make syrup.

The men of Loachapoka really got excited about the project and started working diligently in a very positive manner to make the syrup making a great success for the community. A cane press mill was found and work began immediately to get into

working condition. A copper pan was found and a tinsmith in Opelika straightened it to be completely serviceable. A black man agreed to let us use his mule for the day. Howell Rowell planted the acre of sorghum cane. The ladies eagerly organized and planned their biscuit and sausage making and sales. Mr. Peddy helped in bringing stones to the site to make the furnace to fit the pan. He helped me make the furnace of red clay, slack lime and stone and we lined it with firebrick. A.B. Williams was not sure we could cook the juice into syrup so he bought a fifty-five gallon drum of sorghum syrup and hid it in the Methodist Fellowship Hall. I started at daylight making the syrup but couldn't make it as fast as the demand dictated more syrup. A.B. told me of his hidden cache and I told him to please go and fill some five gallon buckets and bring it on down. We used all of his syrup and I finally had to stop about ten that night from utter exhaustion. Everyone else was in the same shape. For the next five years that I was in Auburn, I cooked syrup, teaching others to do it as my replacement. My last year with them, we sold more than three hundred gallons of syrup, mostly rebottled from commercial drums of syrup. I encouraged other clubs to have a gristmill on operational display, selling their meal and grits during an annual community wide event or fair. Some clubs did that successfully.



MAKING SYRUP — Charlie Bryant (left) watches the bubbling syrup at Loachapoka's syrup sopping. Supervising are Clarence Bullard and Mayor Howell Rowell. Although the rain kept some away, an estimated 1,000 came to watch an old-fashioned

syrup-making, to skim a while, and to eat sausage and biscuits. The remainder of the sorghum juice is being cooked in the town park today.—Photo by Judith Nunn.

1,000 Attend Syrup Sopping

By JUDITH NUNN

The day itself turned out to be sopping for Loachapoka's first Syrup Sopping.

It was a day not fit for men nor beasts, but only the beasts stayed home. An estimated 1,000 people turned out to stand in the rain eating warm biscuits and sausage and freshly made syrup.

Pompey Lee Dowdell didn't want his mule out in weather like that, though. So while he waited for the rain to clear, a tractor was hitched to the juice extractor, and it began to furrow a mud hole knee deep.

Some of the women in the Loachapoka Improvement Club might be raising a little Cain themselves today over the soupy track left by the tractor.

BY THE TIME the mules arrived, the mud hole was too slippery and deep for the mules to work in, so they stood on the sidelines to watch.

But though getting the syrup cooking was a bit slow in the steady rain, the day was termed an unqualified success by the town council, which is convinced now it will be an annual affair.

A couple from South Carolina stopped on their way through town to skim the bubbling syrup for a while. Tears welled in the eyes of one woman who said making syrup reminded her of her grandfather. And children came to watch a process they had not seen before.

And if the weather didn't dampen spirits, it probably did hold down the crowd. "If it hadn't rained, we couldn't have handled it," said one worker.



A PARK GETS A MUD HOLE — The rainy weather was too nasty for Pompey Lee Dowdell to let his mules out the Saturday Loachapoka had its first syrup sopping, so a tractor was hitched to pull the juice

extractor. By the time the mules arrived, the machine had furrowed a mud hole knee deep, too deep for the mules which spent the rest of the day on the sidelines.—Photo by Judith Nunn.

My father
that every
should
working



believed
child
have a

knowledge of the sources of vegetables, fruits and other foods from the bounty of the land. Perhaps this is why he insisted that we do certain farm chores at York Mountain as we were growing up. He once told me that he wanted us to know what it was that we did not want to do for a livelihood. I could certainly agree that I did not want to follow a mule or horse for the rest of my life to make a living. I took great care to explain to the children that it would be so much fun and profitably rewarding also, to grow a vegetable garden. They were eager to do this. Eddy chose to grow tomatoes. He was going to plant 100 tomato plants, harvest the fruit and sell it to the local grocery stores. It was a good plan and he was enthusiastic. I was very encouraged by this early enthusiasm on an aggressive project.

Tom chose to plant string beans and would work three rows in the garden. He would set posts, string heavy cords and strings for the vines to climb upon and nurture the plants into producing a good crop to sell to the local food stores. Cammy elected to grow twenty-five hills of squash and sell these to the local grocery store or maybe set up a vegetable market at the driveway beside the roadway and also sell the boys vegetables for a commission. She was never greedy but she had a good perception for business.

All three of the children prepared the soil and planted their vegetables with great patience and enthusiasm. During the growing season, Eddy became disinterested in his slow growing tomatoes and he now had an automobile, had driven it out to California with two friends and was beginning to feel the stirrings of being in love. His 100 tomato plants thrived and turned into beautiful ripe fruit that rotted on the vine. He never harvested any of his tomatoes. That clearly wasn't his interest at all. We ate many of his tomatoes for our sandwiches and salads and shared them with the Webster family, with his approval.

Tom did a good job of stringing his strings into a lattice for the bean runners. He even trained the string beans runners onto the trellis of strings. He lost interest when he spotted the plums that were growing from a plum tree that we had planted. I had grossly over fertilized it, but the plum tree had survived and was now producing so much fruit that it was breaking the limbs. I have never seen so many plums on one tree. These were huge sweet purple plums with a clear beautiful purple skin. Tom asked for that tree and we agreed, if he would let the others eat what they wanted from the tree. Tom and Margaret picked the plums every morning before they became overripe, never letting one to ripen and fall to the ground. They took them to the Auburn A & P grocery. They got premium money for their plums. This was their first joint business venture and they enjoyed their profits. Tom forgot about his string beans. We harvested some for our family meals and thoroughly enjoyed his beans even after they dried on the vine and were shelled.

Now the outcome for Cammy was a different story of her 25 squash plants. She began to harvest every morning shortly after daylight, cutting the squash as the A&P produce grocery man had told her to do. She washed each squash, rubbed away any little burrs and carefully placed each one into market baskets lined with paper towels. She would get me up to take her and squash to the market. She sold all of the squash her plants could produce. She made more than \$300 on those 25 squash plants. We accused her of buying

her wedding dress with that money. Cammy is still a great gardener and loves working in the fresh earth, and is still as frugal and generous as she was in her youth.

I had always wanted a hive of honeybees. I was fascinated with what little knowledge I had of the life of the honeybee. I knew that it was only the female bee that did all of the work in the hive. The big bumble bee looking drones were just that, drones. All they did was to care for and breed the queen, once in her lifetime. They ate a lot of honey. I was never able to have bees because of military assignments, but now I wanted a hive of bees in the back yard to pollinate the apple trees I had planted. I contacted Mr. Berry in Montgomery and he invited me to come over to discuss honeybees. He told me that I needed to have at least two hives to fully appreciate and observe the life of the Honeybee. He sold me two hives and I placed them in the back yard. The word was soon about the neighborhood that Charlie Bryant had dreadful honeybees in his yard among the children.

Grandma Webster had ten hives in her yard. Prince was very concerned that his aging mother might receive multiple stings if the bees became contrary. He gave me all off his mother's beehives. Soon other people began to give me their bees under similar circumstances. I began to buy hives and placed them about the community and onto likely spots throughout the county where the bees would most likely thrive in harvesting nectar and converting it to honey. The more I observed the bees the more interested I became in their instincts and abilities to produce honey. I read all of the literature I could find. Before I realized what I was doing, I found myself with more than 500 hives of bees scattered throughout Lee County and into adjacent Macon and Chambers County.

I went to South Baldwin County and brought back a huge trailer load of more than 200 producing hives of honeybees. The owner declared that he never wanted to see another honeybee and almost gave them to me, to haul them away. He gave me equipment that he could not sell and I appreciated that too. I was not aware that I was in the commercial honey business until I was already there. One night Mary decided to go with me to place some bees in an apple orchard for pollination up in Chambers County. I got five dollars a week for each hive of bees in an apple orchard. I always moved bees at night because all of the bees belonging to a hive were inside. I then placed a screen wire strip to prevent them from coming out. To move a hive of bees in the daytime meant that perhaps half of the worker bees would be out foraging for nectar and to move that hive would mean a loss of the worker field bees that were out gathering nectar. I had 20 hives of bees on the truck and was well under way to Chambers County, when Mary suddenly became quiet. She asked what would happen if we had an accident with all of those bees back there. I laughed and told her to run like crazy because nobody would stop and help. She looked at me and asked if I would let her out and pick her up on the way back home.

Mr. Berry always remained my mentor and friend in the honey business. My last harvest of honey was more than forty thousand pounds of honey. I stored and sold honey in five-gallon pails, weighing sixty pounds each, for easy handling. Honeybees do not like loud noises or vibration near their hive. One day Cammy was mowing the lawn in front of the 20 hives of bees that were kept at the back perimeter of our back yard. The bees became upset and swarmed out chasing her. She abandoned the tractor and ran for the pool and

jumped in to avoid the bees. I discouraged her from ever mowing near the bees again. She quickly agreed. Forrest Tidwell worked at the service station that I had bought. He detested working with the bees. I did not realize this. At times I really needed help in lifting heavy supers of honey to take back for extraction. Sometimes these would weigh 100 pounds or more. I would often ask Forrest to help me, as he never complained about helping me. I learned later that he almost quit at the station if he had to continue working with those bees. No amount of protective clothes and equipment allayed his fear of bees.

Only one time did I experience a problem in working with the bees. I was always careful as I kept bees in very remote and isolated places where an incapacitating accident could have serious consequences. I always left a message as to where I would be working and my expected time of return. It was a hot afternoon, cloudy with high humidity and was about to rain. These are not favorable conditions to work with bees. I was hurrying to finish working the 20 hives of bees down on an abandoned road leading to a fallen in bridge that once crossed the Saugahatchee Creek. I got careless and in a hurry.

I was wearing white bee coveralls that had slits in the sides for accessing the pockets of pants under the coveralls. I had no pants under the coveralls. The bees found those slits and began to sting me in the lower abdomen. Each sting emits a pheromone that other bees can track to the source. The irate bees really tracked the pheromones that afternoon. Pheromones can be used similar to an SOS to bees, indicating that there is trouble and all bees should rush to the rescue. I began to feel some of the stings and would rub the area with my forearm. Each rub crushed the bees and increased the pheromone signal to the bees in distress. I kept on working as fast as I could. I soon began to feel shaky and couldn't work the hive tool with a good grip. I closed all of the hives that I was working.

I got into the truck and went as carefully, but as fast as I could to a Mom and Pop country grocery that was owned and operated by Shirley Hall. Shirley had worked for me as head of the lunchroom when I was at Union Academy. I was beginning to lose it as I wobbled into Shirley's grocery and told her I didn't feel good. She had a cot in the back of her store and helped me to it. When I told her about the bees, she began stripping off my coveralls and carefully pulling the throbbing or pulsating stingers from around my waist.

Each stinger has a sac of pure protein, venom, which detaches from the bee and stays with the stinger, continuing to pump the venom into the victim. The bee dies without a stinger. To press this sac is to inject the contents into the victim. The stinger is barbed and difficult to totally remove. She stopped counting at 100. She kept giving me coffee and coke and slapping my face to keep me awake. I lay there nude under a sheet half asleep for about two hours, recovered, and put on my clothes. Shirley helped me to the truck and drove me home, after she closed her store. She told me to come and get the truck when I felt better. My dosage of the bee venom or pure protein would have been tripled or quadrupled had she not pulled out those pulsating or throbbing stingers. I always called her my Saving Angel for she may have saved my life. I have always been grateful to Shirley for what she did for me that painful afternoon. Somehow the gossips heard that I spent the afternoon in the back room on Shirley's cot nude and my truck was at her place

for three days. The tongues wagged. I heard later that Shirley had an answer for them, “What I do, I don’t tell. If you don’t like it, you can go to H___.”

I became interested in wine making when I saw so many wild plums rotting along the roadsides, and felt that it would be interesting to make wine, jelly or jam from these plums. I went to the library and checked out winemaking books and talked to a few people who had made wine. I bought a five-gallon glass jug called a demijohn. A friend of mine in the glass blowing shop at the physics department, made the glass tubing, stoppers, and a water trap that is needed to make wine. Now, all I needed was the fresh fruit to squeeze the juice and make wine. I went to the A and P grocery and the produce manager gave me two bushels of overripe strawberries. That made the best wine I have ever made. I took him a bottle of it. I tried so many things and each time it all turned into good wine which I was supplying the whole neighborhood with wine. There's an exception to what I just said about all wine turning into good wine. I had bought a stalk of ripe bananas, peeled and mashed them, making a mess feeding the pulp into the demijohn. I proceeded to make wine of those bananas. It smelled good like bananas should, but somewhere in the fermenting process, or formula, something went wrong. I went to check on the process the next day and smelled bananas well before I reached the storage room where I made wine. The stopper had blown off the demijohn and there was banana pulp all over the ceiling, walls and floor in the little room where I liked to make wine. It was a mess. I thoroughly hosed the area and cleaned for about four hours. The odor lingered for two years. Not to be outdone, I started over and made a very nice clear banana wine. I don’t know what happened to that first batch. Cammy helped me one time as we picked about two bushels of Dr. Nunn’s scuppernongs, peeled and seeded them leaving only the pulp to make a very delicious scuppernong juice rather than proceeding to the full wine stage. It was delicious. This was from a recipe provided by Dr. Nunn, who never used any form of alcohol. I gave him a flask of this juice and he heartily approved. There was a popular song of the time about “Old Dogs and Watermelon Wine”. I tried diligently to make watermelon wine but could never duplicate the delicious taste of a slice of cool watermelon. Watermelon flavor is God’s little secret recipe.

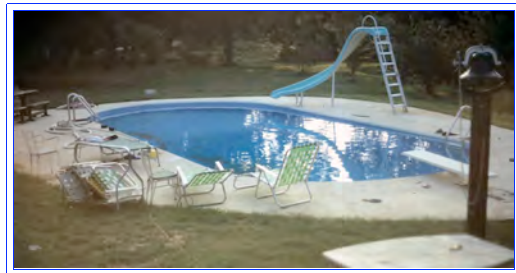
In 1970, I finished my undergraduate academic work in the area of Social Science Education. I felt that it was an achievement that I had well earned. I accepted the diploma of Baccalaureate of Science in Social Science Education on behalf of my family for supporting and encouraging me in academics as well as the many community services in which I was engaged. The registrar was the one to announce the names as we approached the stage to receive the degree from the President, Dr. Philpott. The registrar and I had been friends for a long time. When he called my name he announced, “Charles E. Bryant, 1947 until 1970”. The auditorium roared in laughter. Dr. Philpott handed me the diploma and said in a whisper, “congratulations old man, come by and see me sometime”.

Friends were encouraging me to continue in the academic program to earn the master's degree. Their rationale was that the baccalaureate degree was a minimum entry for teaching and would not provide income sufficient to provide for the family. Their encouragement was that I should continue into the master's program and employment would be greatly enhanced. The family discussed these things and we voted. The family

logic was that we were in place and happy with things and that I should continue to be a student working for the Master of Science in Education. The family vote was a mandate.

For several months, I had been dropping hints that the family could really have fun traveling and camping if we had a motor home. I realized I was not hinting to a receptive group so I changed my tactic to placing travel magazines about the house, talking of beautiful scenery out west, and even the notion of visiting Bangor, Maine, Waco, Texas and Roswell, New Mexico to visit each of their birthplaces. We had a family meeting and called for a vote on buying a motor home. Mary stayed out of it, which may have been a signal to the children Their logic was that they couldn't drive the thing, they were happy in Auburn among friends, and they simply did not want a motor home, but....they offered the notion that if we had a swimming pool, all could enjoy it and as parents, we would know where they were and who their friends were. They wanted an immediate vote.

The next week, I contracted with a pool company in Pensacola to come up and install an inground swimming pool, with wide concrete aprons, steps, a slide, a diving board, an electric heater and an underwater light. They completed the project in about a week. The children were right in all of their arguments for the pool. It was an enormous source of pleasure for all our friends and our family and guests. The whole community enjoyed that pool.



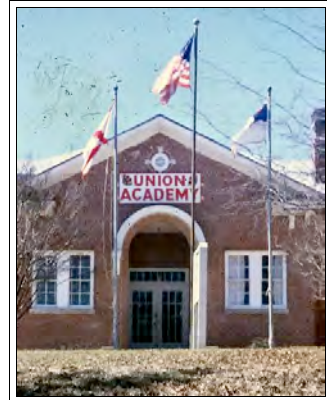
The second summer we were at Auburn, Tom wanted to work for some business. He liked Mr. Sam Wellborn, his middle school principal and the friendship was reciprocal. I went to him and tried to get Tom a summer job but he had no funds to give him a job. I made an arrangement for Tom to work three hours a day for four days a week and we would give Mr. Wellborn twelve dollars a week to give to Tom, if he would not disclose the arrangement to him. Both of them enjoyed the work program he had assigned Tom. Dr. Wayne Teague, the City School Superintendent was one of my professors who taught Politics in Higher Education, learned of Tom's diligent and productive work. He told Mr. Wellborn not to take any more money from me and to double Tom's wages and use him six hours every day for four days a week. I was very proud of Tom's work and he was too, as he really liked his work. The next summer he got his own job, working for Mr. Lumkin in his front-end alignment shop for a good salary, which he used very frugally. He learned to do the caster and camber and alignment of a vehicle. It was hard work

Tom experienced his first encounter with racial violence when he was about thirteen. He had a black friend that enjoyed riding behind him as they scootered about Auburn, just friendsriding and having fun. They were returning near his friends home when two larger black boys on a motorbike rode up beside them and with some racial slurs to both Tom and his friend, they kicked Tom's motorbike into the ditch with Tom and his friend flying through the air. They pushed the bike to his friend's home where the father and others straightened his motorbike while the mother cleaned up their wounds and abrasions. Tom was told later that the father and some other men took care of those two mischief-makers.

That act made a deep and lasting negative impression on Tom, concerning racial violence, but he never lost his friendship with his friend, throughout their school days.

In 1970 I was asked to come to the community of Union in Tallapoosa County to build a private school from the long abandoned classrooms of a school that had been built in 1932 for the children of the workers who built Martin Dam, which formed Lake Martin. The enforcement of the law requiring compulsory education of all children under the age of sixteen became a burden for the families of this area. They would not send their children to any school with integrated classrooms. They wanted to send their children to a private school but had no concept as to the mechanics of organizing and staffing a school. I met with a group representing the parents of the area and agreed to join with them to get them started in the direction to comply with state standards as an educational facility. They then wanted me to take over the school and operated it as the “Headmaster” as they called me. I received enormous pleasure in working with these people who so desperately wanted to maintain their children in a segregated culture. I was not a segregationist then or now, but their work ethic and enthusiasm was exhilarating and contagious. We had just two months before school was to begin, to ready the facility and staff a faculty

We made new chalkboards from panels of masonite, which we spray painted chalkboard green, installed infra-red heaters as there were only old wood burning heaters in the classrooms, swept out cobwebs, painted classrooms and halls, replaced broken windows, repaired rotting wood in floors, refinished the gym floor, painted the building and even built a cafeteria lunchroom. The men, with help from the county road equipment, made a football field, and it was a good one. The county motor grader operator would leave his equipment at the Academy in the early afternoon and one of the fathers would climb aboard and scrape away at the football field. It took about a month to finish the field, fertilize and seed it and water it every day. It was beautiful for that first game. Mothers cleared the old teachers home and made it into a delightful kindergarten for children from infancy to five years old. Cribs and playpens were donated. The Union community had earned the right to be proud of their efforts in civic pride and achievement. I was able to secure teachers from Auburn who were enrolled in the night classes of the graduate programs and needed daytime supplemental income. I enrolled the Union Academy into the Christian Schools of America Inc. organization in Grand Rapids, Michigan. We got our textbooks from them at a very generous discount. We were given a flag that had flown over the capitol in Washington, DC. Two parents erected flagpoles to fly the flags, as we did it with pride. These were good citizens with a feeling about race.



Some of the parents with trucks went with me to Montgomery to the State Dept. of Education surplus and storage warehouse, armed with a letter personally signed by Gov. George Wallace that we could have any surplus equipment we desired, for one dollar a load. We loaded up five trucks and a semi trailer with chairs, desks, overhead projectors, movie projectors, slide projectors, screens and about anything we thought the academy

could use. We even got a little two-seater pedal boat for the large catfish pond in front of the Academy that provided us with two fish fries before it was seined out by someone.

Parents opened their wallets to buy athletic equipment and all sorts of classroom teaching aids that we couldn't find in the warehouse. We made a haul that day. It was amazing to learn of the things the people did to build "their" school. Gov. George Wallace sent a check for \$1,000 and that really fired up the parents to furnish the school with basic teaching aids. Eddy and Cammy came with me to the Academy, because they wanted to, despite my encouragement that they stay in the Auburn School system. They were well received by their peers. Eddy was an eleventh grader and was made the quarterback of the football team. This was only eighteen months after his near fatal gunshot wound. Family and friends were concerned for his welfare. They had a good season that year.

I was not able to furnish a chemistry lab with the essentials. I was unable to find a teacher that would come up there to teach chemistry without a chemistry lab or chemicals for demonstrations. Chemistry was a required course for seniors, so I was forced to teach that class myself, using only the textbook. Poor seniors. I would read two chapters ahead and ask Mary, who was a chemistry major in college and by profession with Southern Research Institute in Birmingham before we married, what the textbook was telling the reader. We struggled through it for a semester. I told the students the situation to begin with and assured them that we could all learn despite my ignorance and ineptness at teaching chemistry. Everyone in the class made a "B." More than 1,200 students were enrolled that first year. I had an arrangement with the Auburn University library to check out 16 mm movies from the audio-visual department for teachers who requested certain movies for their classes. The English teacher was a big user of this arrangement. She ordered for her senior Literature class a film of the Greek Classical period with some nude statues depicted. Oh, My, My, did that ever stir a hornet's nest among some parents.

I bought a school bus to carry children and teachers from Auburn. I had discussed the school bus purchase with my dear friend Earl Smith several times and had asked him to locate one for us. I was standing in the processional line forming up in the parking lot of the coliseum to receive the Master of Science degree in Education, when Earl came running up to me, explaining that he needed three thousand dollars right now to fly him and Eddy to New York to buy a bargain school bus and they would drive it back. I tried to delay the conversation by telling him to wait until after the ceremonies and I could help him then. He was adamant to get permission to proceed and I could repay him with extra expenses when he returned. I agreed, giving him a check for three thousand dollars and ran up to where the Masters Degrees students had been forming, but they had already been marched into the auditorium. I pulled off my cap and gown and went home. So much for that little ceremony. The University mailed the degree. I didn't miss anything.

It was about Thanksgiving of the second year and the Academy was going very well in all aspects. A group of the community leaders came to my office and I knew they had a problem. They went straight to their mission, which was to tell me that they could now run the Academy and I was no longer needed. I don't remember saying a word except that I wanted them to call Eddy and Cammy from their classes, to gather their belongings

and we went home. The Auburn teachers walked out and by New Years, almost all of the students had transferred to Tuskegee Academy. Union Academy closed that spring semester. During the Christmas Season, that same group came to our home and pleaded with me to come back to them. I was not unkind to them, but I was adamant to tell them that I had been humiliated by them and wanted no more. They humbly apologized but the irrevocable damage had been done and the Academy was doomed for certain failure.

The building became a sewing factory for garment workers and was eventually closed and destroyed. The only evidence that the site was once an object of community united pride and achievement, is the granite monument I had placed there reading “Union Academy 1970”. That had been my first experience in Educational Administration.

Mrs. Gibson was a dear friend who had many interests in civic and business affairs. When she heard of my termination with Union Academy, she called for me to meet with her. She was Director of the Board of Trustees at Lee Academy, an Auburn Private Academy. She asked me to be the boy’s basketball coach. Now she was a lady that none could refuse to comply with her requests. I agreed to be the coach after school hours. When I went out there I found they did not have an indoor Gym. Their practice was done



on the asphalt parking lot. They would ask that the area be cleared for their 3:00 o’clock practice. They had never had a basketball team. They learned teamwork very quickly and I constantly encouraged the little team to “just-out-quick-em.” And that is what they did, as they had an eleven to two winning season. I was proud of that team of boys much shorter than their competitors. Their rally was ”out-quick-em.”

When I made application to the Dean of the School of Education for admittance to the doctoral program in Educational Administration, he thoroughly chastised me for having participated in the organization of a private school. When he had told me earlier that in order to be considered as a doctoral candidate, receiving the highest degree in education, I must have a moderate exposure in some form to an educational system. He told me he had no idea that I was going to fly off the beam and go out and start a private school. He said that Auburn University was a public funded institution, not intended for the purpose of producing private school administrators. I did not argue with him, but I did express my opinion that I had received a far greater education in my experience with that Private Academy than I would have ever gained in a public school environment during such a short tenure. We laughed about that as he came from behind his desk and sat near me, explaining that he wished sometimes he had the courage to do exactly what I had done. He asked that I complete the application forms, which would be a simple routine and that he would personally approve and sponsor me as chairman of my committee. I thanked him and left. I later had friendly lunches with him several times at the Student Union.

Not having the responsibilities of the operations of Union Academy any longer I felt at odds for something to do besides academic studies. I had noticed that the Union Seventy Six service station in downtown Auburn had been vacant and not operational for more

than a year. I had always been curious about a service station operation and located the owner, Mr. Buck Hughley, who was the distributor of the Union 76 products for the several counties area. I told him of myself and that I would like to manage that station for him. He asked me a few questions about drinking, womanizing and honesty. He told me that he would charge me a penny a gallon for the rent and that there was about a thousand gallons of gasoline in the ground that I could have to get started and all the stock of whatever was there, was mine. He handed me the keys, shook hands and wished me well. No contract and no signature of any document. I couldn't believe it. I obtained all of the licenses; gas pumps, oil retail, tires retail, soft drinks sale, and a litany of things I never realized that required a license to sell. I got the electricity and telephone turned on.

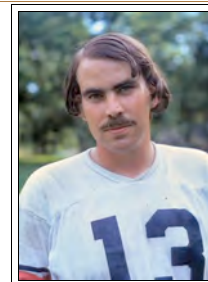
We were ready for business the next day. When I told the family that night of what I had done, Mary was depressed, the children were miffed that they had not had an opportunity to discuss and vote on it and I was still in shock that it had all happened in less than an hour and I was now a merchant in Auburn as well as a Doctoral Candidate in the University. The next day I put \$100 in bills and change in the cash register and opened the doors for business. I was doing it all alone until that afternoon when the boys got out of school and came to help. We had a lot of fun that first day. The next morning a young man walked up to me and said he was looking for a job as a mechanic. He was reluctant to discuss any of his previous employments or experiences. He said his name was Bill Trouble spelled Trebel. I asked him what kind of trouble was he looking for. He told me he did not look for trouble but he handled it when it came to him. I asked him when would he be ready to go to work. He said that he was ready right now. I motioned that there was a car at the fuel pumps. He grabbed a rag, went out and waited on the vehicle; pumping the fuel, cleaned the windshield, wiped the headlights, checked under the hood and pointed out to the customer that he was two quarts low on very dirty oil and it would save him money if he changed the oil and filter. He drove the car to the oil change lift for the first use of the service bays. That was Bill's contract. Later that day he asked me how much did I pay. I told him "not very much and not very often." He grinned and kept at it. He stayed with me for four years until I sold the business when I left for Thomasville.

That afternoon Tom brought his friend Forrest Tidwell and he was considered hired. About a week later, another friend of Tom and Forrest, Geoff Burkart came and was considered hired. I was impressed at the number of university students that came by seeking a job. We had a good supply of tires on the tire racks. We began to order additional tires, oil and other supplies. I called the Sun Engine Analyzer Co. in Columbus, Georgia and asked them to come to the station for a discussion of purchasing an engine analyzer. They responded within two hours. The boys and I thought over the various machines that were available and decided on a very large machine with wheels that could be rolled out onto the service apron under the canopy or back into the garage area. We paid cash for the machine. He call their warehouse in Columbus and had one shipped out to us that afternoon. He stayed well into the night teaching us, particularly Eddy who laid claim to this machine, explaining the operations, the functions, and the principles of the machine to us. Eddy in turn, taught us how to use it. That machine became the principal moneymaker for the station. Eddy would roll that thing out under the large overhead canopy and the students would line up their cars to have their engines

analyzed for two dollars. As fast as Eddy could analyze and diagnose an engine problem, Tom, Forrest, Geoff and Bill Trouble would work on the engines, correcting their problems. Little Henry from Cleveland, Ohio visited his mother and wanted to work about six months of the year as a body and fender repair and auto painter. We gave him a bay and that was his body works area. He was very good except when he wanted to paint a car fender with over-spray paint and fumes everywhere. We sealed his bay off and corrected that problem. Our next major purchase was a big yellow, boom wrecker from Sonny Baker. That thing was a real workhorse. The local police and the state police used us to tow their vehicles. For a considerable time, we had the only wrecker service in Auburn. It was a very profitable arrangement to have the wrecker. Tom laid claims to the wrecker. He and Margaret once took the wrecker to Panama City and towed a car back to Auburn. They had put layers of carpet down on the floor, which was almost rusted out but they still almost froze with the wind coming through the flooring. I told them to keep every penny of the charge. They earned it, driving all night in that rough riding wrecker.



One day a big, young man riding on a BMW motorcycle slowly cruised up to one of the open bays of the station. He kicked his kickstand, rolled off his motorcycle and lay on the concrete. He was almost incoherent in explaining that somebody in a truck had passed him head on and threw a can of beer, which hit him in the chest. We finally got his leathers off and opened enough to see that his chest was very bruised. Tom took him to the University Dispensary. His name



was David Smith, a former student at Auburn but was now out of work and had no place to sleep. Tom invited him to stay in his room, sleeping on a cot. Tom hired him to work at the station getting pay only for what he did. He moved in. Cammy told Smitty, as we called him, that he needed to take baths as he was smelling-up our house. It worked.

Eddy was very good on the engine analyzer and in diagnosing engine problems. He wanted to go to Atlanta for a two weeks course in carburetors by GM. We agreed and he learned a lot and had a good time in the process. Cammy would come to the station every afternoon to do her homework until Mary got off work at the library and could come by to get her. We had an open cash register policy. If someone needed money, get it out of the cash register. One day Tom came to the station with a shirt that had the bottom cut off and was printed, "I soloed today". I did not know he was taking flying lessons. Miss Posey, our station bookkeeper asked me one time how we could possibly stay in business because there just was not enough profit showing to support all of those people working.

Sears learned of Eddy's skills in diagnostic services and offered him a high paying job to come work with them. He did, and enjoyed his work and the good pay. In early 1972 Eddy came to me telling me that he wanted to marry Freda Cox. She had been his classmate, a charming, very attractive and extremely talented young lady. We liked her very much and were pleased with their friendship but feared they were too young to seriously



consider marriage. I learned of a Presbyterian sponsored orphanage in Nairobi, Kenya. After an exchange of communications, I learned they would welcome Eddy to be with them. Perhaps a year of duty there would be good Eddy. I agreed to pay all of his expenses and pay \$200 each month for his room and board as he worked at the orphanage. His passport was brought up to date and all arrangements were made, except it was a requirement that he should be interviewed and approved by the authority of the World Missions located at Covenant College in Chattanooga Tenn. He drove up for the interview. The director took one look at his long hair, bound in a ponytail, with a leather thong and told him to go back home and cut his hair. I was incensed and I let it be known very strong to Dr. Raburn, President of Covenant College and Seminary. I learned a year later this director was sporting a full facial beard and had long hair. I also learned that parents should never meddle or tamper with plans made by young lovers. Freda planned a beautiful church wedding at the Presbyterian Church. Rev. Robert H. Cox officiated at the ceremony. His wife Margaret planned the reception and luncheon. I was honored to be his best man. This was the first and the last wedding in that church building.

The church burned a few months later. The cause was never determined. The congregation knew that I had built the Westminster Presbyterian church in Ft. Walton and asked that I be a one-man building committee to build a new church building. I contacted a professional church builder in North Alabama, Mr. Jim Hawkins. He came down to Auburn and for two days we discussed plans, specifications and financing. We agreed on a Sanctuary Building shaped like an "A" frame building with a two story educational unit attached in the rear. He was also a good artist and gave me a drawing of the proposed



building. The project involved five thousand square feet heated and cooled at a cost of \$82,400. The congregation heartily approved. I signed a contract and construction was begun immediately. He brought down a mobile home and lived on the premises with his two assistants. The first task was to remove the burned debris and the unusable concrete slab. He brought two cases of dynamite to

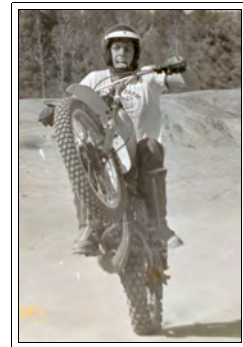
remove the slab. I was afraid of the dynamite but he handled it like it was just a big firecracker. He sometimes bundled several sticks, buried them under the slab and blasted away. He used all of the two cases except for one stick. He lit the fuse to that stick and held it forever so long. I was very concerned for him. He threw it high into the air at the last moment. WOW What a bang it made. He and his helpers roared with laughter. He had been a coal miner and was severely physically impeded due to a ceiling rock that fell on him. He had been the only survivor, promising the Lord that he would dedicate the rest of his life to building church buildings as economically as he could do so. It was indeed a pleasure to work with him and occasionally invite the three of them to an evening meal. They laughed a lot and worked long hard hours every day except Sunday. The building was completed and dedicated in about four months. Jim and his crew were a part of the ceremony of dedication. Although I was on the site every day, I never made suggestions unless Jim asked me for advice. We had a contract and they stuck with it.

The boys all liked motorbikes. Tom had a Bultaco dirt bike and Forrest had an Ossa dirt bike. They loved to race and were very competitive. They won many trophies at dirt bike competitions. Forrest was often working on his bike with a hammer. We began to call all shop hammers as Ossa tools. The boys often bought and sold cars at the station. They earned good money doing this trading and it was good experience. We were careful to avoid



Tom on Bultaco

being called a used car dealership.



Forrest on Ossa

When Tom was about 14 years old he found a 1969 Corvette that had crashed with a big blue tick hound dog. The front was really smashed. The owner practically gave the vehicle to Tom for some work he had done on another vehicle for him. Tom ordered new parts and began to rebuild the Corvette. It was a convertible. When he completed the project it was a nice looking vehicle. Little Henry painted it white for him. Now Tom had a very expensive automobile and was not old enough to get a license to drive it yet. He let me take that thing to Nashville for a conference. I was never so glad to end a trip because it was lying down driving, feeling every bump in the highway. When he got his license to drive, he really enjoyed his Corvette. He eventually sold it. Tom became known as a mechanic specializing with the MGB automobiles. For her sixteenth birthday, Cammy was given a Plymouth Barracuda, which she called her “Bacca-ru-dah.”



The boys took the wrecker to Saugahatchee Creek and pulled a massive stone grist wheel from the creek. They took it to our side yard. We voted, and gave the wheel to Dr. Nunn to put in his Loachapoka Museum. It probably weighed more than a ton.



My only encounter in the political arena came in 1974 when my professor of political science Dr. Don Hayhurst asked me to be his campaign manager for the office of mayor of the city of Auburn. I thought it would be fun so I agreed to do so. We ran his campaign from the service station. He ran on the promise that he would accept no salary and that he would break up the “good ole boy syndrome” that prevailed in Auburn politics. He campaigned to involve Auburn University talents in the operation of the city government. We won by a record landslide. Getting people to register and to the polls is how we won. The only favor I ever asked of him was that he direct the city planning and development board to look into the feasibility of purchasing some property from Prince and Peggy Webster for an industrial park. He did. The city bought considerable property from them.

Cammy was invited by one of her friends to go with their family on a weeklong church camp in Tennessee. They had a wreck on the way up and the camp was not what she expected. She was miserable without any contact from home. I felt so sorry for her as she was so homesick when she got home; all she could do was cry in joy to be back home. This was her first time to away from home and family. She was one homesick little girl. We were glad to see her back and safe.



My BS degree in Education was in the broad field of teaching Social sciences which involved at least seven major subjects of study. The MS degree was in the in-depth study of curriculum, how to develop and implement a curriculum of study. I felt that the field of developing facilities to conform to the curriculum would be a very worthwhile vita in the current trend of constructing new educational facilities. Oh My. What bad advice I got from my major professor. Ten years earlier this was a “Hot Field” but just as suddenly, all positions in the field of Educational Facilities Planning were slammed shut. Realizing I was on a dead end track, I switched to Educational and Public Administration with no problems, except that I had more courses in Public Administration to take. I was told that the difference in PhD and EdD was simply knowing a foreign language. I could have passed on exam in Turkish but no one knew it, so I accepted the EdD or DEd rather than learn Spanish or French. Public Administration was too politically sensitive to consider this as a career but I took the courses leading to that degree anyway.

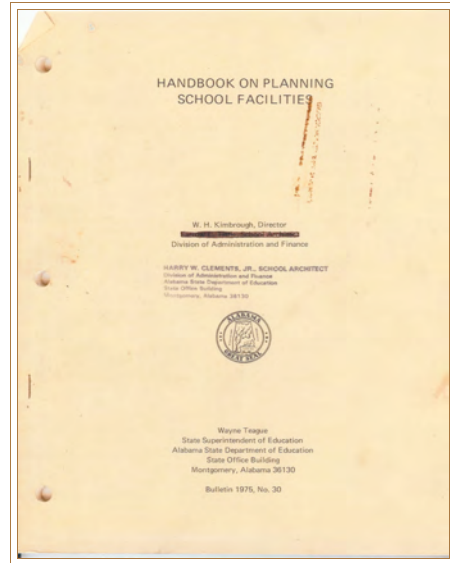
I had been very active with the organization of Council of Educational Facility Planners International and was instrumental to get their Annual conference to be held in Atlanta. Sen. Herman Talmadge was to be the keynote speaker. An hour before he was to speak before more than 200 attendees from all over the world, he called to tell us he was involved in an accident and would be unable to be the speaker. I suggested Gov. Jimmy Carter be asked. The Auburn group of three of us and the Atlanta group of three were hosting the conference. They voted,Charlie, you go get him and with that I did so.

I took a taxi so I could get to his office faster, if he was even in his office. He was in. I told him our situation and he said to me, "Well Charlie, Lets go." Just like that. The man did a wonderful, standing ovation, impromptu speech. He was right on target for the interests of the conference attendees. I told him if he ever decided to run for President, I wanted to be one of his "Peanut Parade" workers. He smiled and shook my hand again as one of his aides, Hamilton Jordan, took my name and address. About a year later he organized the "Peanut Brigade" and Hamilton Jordan came to Auburn to offer me the job of logistics coordination during the campaign. I was deeply involved in the final stages of the dissertation and declined the invitation. The only time I ever voted for a Democrat for national office was when I voted for him to be President, but not for the second term.

Dr. Wayne Teague and I became good friends, as he was my professor in three courses of Higher Education and Public Administration. He taught a fun course, Politics in Education, 504. He bought his gasoline and had his automotive repairs and service done at my service center. One day he stopped in and asked me to introduce him to another good friend of mine, Johnny Jackson, who was the owner and operator of "The Tiger Cub." Johnny was a very close friend and confidant of Gov. George Wallace. The Tiger Cub was a coffee, soup and sandwich shop where football and politics prevailed. It was said that the game plan for Saturday's game was made on Wednesday morning in the Cub. I was a regular breakfast customer with Johnny and Prince Webster because it was only half a block away and food and coffee was good. Especially his bowl of chili.

Professor Wayne Teague wanted me to introduce him favorably to Johnny, as he wanted to be appointed to the vacant position of Superintendent of Education, State of Alabama. We went to the "Cub" at a slack time of the day and had a good introduction and discussion with Johnny. Wayne bluntly asked Johnny to ask the Governor to appoint him. I was mortified with the frankness of the conversation. Later that afternoon, Johnny came by to fill up with gasoline. I tried to make amends that Teague was a blunt and straight to the point, no nonsense kind of person. The next week the headlines read, "Teague, Appointed as State Superintendent." Wayne made arrangements for me to write a "Handbook on Planning School Facilities." In order to remove any trail or connection, he directed Dr. Tom Morgan, my committee chairman, to assign me to write the manual for the State of Alabama, Educational Facilities Department for use in the planning and construction of new educational facilities. I got a grade of "A" and ten semester hours credit for this work, plus \$200 a month stipend for six months to write it. There was a stipulation attached that my name could not be printed, as the author of the book and all credit was to go to Mr. W.H. Kimbrough, director of Administration and finance. I accepted that stipulation. That manual is still in use in determining the specifications for

new construction of Educational Facilities. I was also assigned to work with the Montgomery County school system for a period of nine months as assistant to the Director of Finance. This assignment was for 20 hours credit as practicum and a grade of "A". This was a frustrating assignment. It was about a three hours commute every day. I had finished all of the academic studies and was now being assigned these duties listed as "practicum," simply trying to fulfill the requirement of 70 academic hours for the doctorate degree. I was beginning to become very frustrated and angry about these things.



One day in 1976 a young man came running down the street from the railroad tracks screaming and yelling, "bring the wrecker, bring in the wrecker." We looked up in that direction and saw a big truck with a trailer loaded with boats. It was obvious that it was stuck on the railroad tracks. There was a caution sign to the side advising low clearance vehicles do not use this crossing. Obviously he did not see that small sign. Tom and Forrest responded immediately and were about to hitch onto the truck to pull it off the tracks when they heard that awful sound of the train approaching about a half mile away. They quickly disconnected from the truck and moved the wrecker to a safe distance just in time before the impact of the locomotive. The fiberglass boats and debris was scattered for about a half mile down the tracks. The tractor and trailer as well as all boats were totally destroyed. John Hunt, the driver, called the home office and was told that he was fired and would be responsible for the loss of the boats and any damage incurred with the railroad. He sat down at the service station and wept. I took him to our home and told him that he could stay three days with us to sort out things of his life. I was busy at that time collecting honey and offered him a paying job to help me.

He quickly agreed and the next day we put in a full day of extracting honey. He seemed to really enjoy what we were doing. He helped me for three days. John made a lot of collect phone calls back to his home in North Carolina. I took him to the bus station to get a ticket back to his home. He told me that he wanted to buy me out of the honey business. I told him that it would take \$16,000 to do that. As he boarded the bus, his last comment was that he would see me in a week with a check and start hauling bees and equipment to North Carolina. I did not think I would ever see him again but sure enough he came, brought his check and had a truck and trailer to start hauling away the equipment. I was glad to see it go, even though it was a very profitable business. I had no idea of how to dispose of those 500+ beehives and equipment if I needed to relocate after receiving my doctorate degree. His boat accident was a miracle in action for me.

I had taken every academic course recommended for the doctoral program for Educational and Public Administration. There simply were no more courses for me to take. The last academic course I took at Auburn was Analytical Statistics 704 under Professor Dr. Charlie Greenshields. He was a very likeable man, teaching a horribly alien course. There were two tragedies in that class. First, I had absolutely no concept of

Analytical Statistics, and was unable to comprehend the significance of this course of instruction. The other tragedy was that Dr. Greenshields was an alcoholic. There were eleven of us in that class. Some of the classmates knew of his weakness in alcohol. They devised a plan for the class to take him to the Officers Club at Gunter AFB and treat him to a meal and a drunken party. We each put \$5 into the kitty for his party. My membership card was used in planning this scheme. One of the women got a very nice thank you card and we all signed it, some boldly like John Hancock. Dr. Greenshields never gave exams during his course lectures. The final exam determined the final grade. A male and a female of the class carried him over to Gunter, providing him cocktails enroute. Everyone was to go by and tell him how great he had been to our class. The evening at Gunter was a huge success in that he passed out after the meal. The party was over. He was poured back into the car that brought him over and taken back to Auburn.

The party was planned for the night that we were to take the final exam. No exam was ever given. A grade of "C" was not acceptable in the Doctoral Program. I was terrified that I would flunk this course, like I had done back in cadet training with my inability to understand Morse code. The morning the grades were to be posted, I practically guarded that bulletin board where his grades would be posted in print. I was shocked. I almost yelled "War Eagle." We all made a "B." I hope there is a Charlie Greenshields out there somewhere to provide a safe haven for ones like me, to bypass impossible, inane hurdles. Thank you Professor Charlie and I do hope you are now a recovered alcoholic.

At last the day arrived when I had completed the academic coursework and the required number of academic hours to complete all requirements for the doctoral degree including the dissertation. The dissertation was a useless information exercise in organizational writing of how Alabama Schools are financed. I had to travel all over Alabama to glean financial information from a selection of the 67 county schools. It had been four long years in the struggle from the master's degree to this doctoral degree. I had accelerated as rapidly as possible in the academic arena, but I had been assigned these inane jobs, called "academic practicum" which took me away from Auburn and family and my hobbies of operating the "Downtown Union 76", and "Papa Bears Honey" production. Now that I had earned the DEd., I was not sure that I was as enthusiastic about it as I had been when I first began the pursuit in quest of that coveted goal. I had absolutely no desire to join or promote the alumni association.

Neither Auburn University School of Education nor the Educational Administration Department never, ever, assists its graduates to obtain positions of employment. I was able to find challenging employment in a position that was to provide me with great pleasure, Director of Tourism for the Chatt Flint Area Planning and Development Commission, operating out of La Grange, Georgia. It was a long daily commute. The concept of the Commission was excellent. My first Tourism assignment was to develop a plan for a fishing rodeo on West Point Lake. I had a lot of latitude and met some real sporting and sportsman characters. My job was to develop the overall concept of the rodeo and it's impact on the tourism business for Georgia businesses. My plan was approved but I was not there long enough to see it implemented. I was there only six months. Another assignment was to research the feasibility of a Georgia Welcome Station

on Interstate 85 at West Point. It was fun working with the Dept. of Transportation and submitting a positive plan and location site. This was completed as per the plans I had submitted about a year after I left. An assignment that I had a lot of fun with was to determine where the Cusseta Creek Indian Chief MacIntosh had his cabins before he was assassinated by his people, chopped into pieces and thrown into the Choctahachee River. I was ahead on this assignment as I had several years earlier, made an in-depth study of this despicable Cusseta Creek chief who had participated in the massacre at Ft. Mims and then so greedily betrayed his people by selling their lands to the State of Georgia. I found nine foundation cabin sites with stones for pillars and declared this to be the site of his village near the town of Whitesburg. I engaged the Commission artist and draftsman to help me in presenting an artist concept of his last home site. I submitted a concept plan of developing the site into a state park for historical education and tourism, but I don't know the status if the park was ever developed.

By far, my most significant achievement with Chatt Flint APDC was my work with the State Department of Children and Family Services in Atlanta in developing the Heard County Day Care Program. There was no organization to the Heard County Day Care centers. Heard County had several child day care centers throughout the county, each was acting autonomously in the care of their children and receiving supplies and instructions directly from Atlanta. Because of my degree in education administration I was assigned to look into the situation in Heard County. The problems the children centers were experiencing, were immediately obvious. I made a strong recommendation that all children day care centers be organized under the control and authority of Ms. Agnes Jackson, a director of one of the day care centers. This was done immediately with very positive results. She held this position, funded by the State of Georgia and Heard County until her retirement. Ms. Jackson and I worked closely to determine the number of under-privileged children that received no organized social benefits or care. The number was appalling. I made another very strong recommendation that three qualified child-care personnel be employed and trained in the ability to visit the homes of these home-bound children and those children less than six months old, who were not eligible to attend a day care center. This rankled the County Social Services workers who were inept and not doing their job. Our plan was approved and we hired three workers. They were given training for two weeks and enrolled in an ongoing program to provide professional care for these children. They visited each home assigned to them twice a week. This meant that sixty homes were provided professional care and instructions in nutrition, sanitation and care. Heard County now has two childcare programs, one in the centers and one by home visitation. The Atlanta Dept of Family and Child Services hailed the program as the best childcare operation in the State of Georgia. This pilot program became the standard for Georgia. Chatt-Flint and Heard County Officials gave us a luncheon banquet for our work on this project.

Mary had been the pianist and organist for the church for six years. Now we were relocating to Thomasville, Ga. The church had no one to take her place. Churches seem to have a manner to fill particular needs when they arise and often seem insurmountable, and this was the case, until an accomplished lady joined the church and volunteered to take Mary's place at the organ. The church presented Mary with a lovely silver cross necklace, engraved with appreciation for her six years of faithful and dedicated service.



One Sunday afternoon Dr. and Mrs. Barksdale came to our home for a visit. Dr. Barksdale had been my chemistry professor back in 1947 when I was a pharmacy student. He remembered me as the student that burned down the Pharmacy lab. He was glad and laughed about it as he said it was a good deed I did because they built a nice big Student union and cafeteria on the site. I didn't comment. Ms. Barksdale was a coworker with Mary in the library. They were a very interesting couple with fascinating and extensive world travels. After almost an hour of their oohs and ahhs over our artifacts, Ms. Barksdale asked me to consider the position of President of Birdwood College in Thomasville, Georgia. She said she was on the Board of Directors of the College and could assure me of the position if I accepted the offer with a salary of \$24,000. It was time again for a "big time" family discussion, as this would mean a permanent move to Thomasville if we accepted. Eddy and Frieda were in Ft. Collins, Colorado, so they were out of the loop of discussion except to write them of the offer and seek their opinion.

She then spent more than three hours that afternoon telling us of the history of the college and its current decline into bankruptcy. She wanted me to evaluate the feasibility of closing the college for the church or perhaps keeping it alive in some miraculous manner if I thought I could succeed in developing the college to a viable institution. The college was started in 1954 in the home of a Primitive Baptist preacher with only a few students. Their rally the next year was "stay alive in 55". The unaccredited college had no salaried faculty or staff except the President, Riska Rogers, who had been coerced by the church into performing duties to keep two classes, history and algebra active. There was no money. The college was in competition with a local University of Georgia branch center.

The college was bankrupt, and was a strong candidate for closure and sale to satisfy the indebtedness to a local bank. I took a trip to Thomasville and evaluated the situation. There were so many number one priorities that all of them needed to be accomplished together, immediately. I hardly knew where to start first, if we accepted the offer. I found the people of Thomasville extremely pleasant in welcoming me and pledging support for the college, if I thought it could be redeemed and viable. They wanted a plan of action.

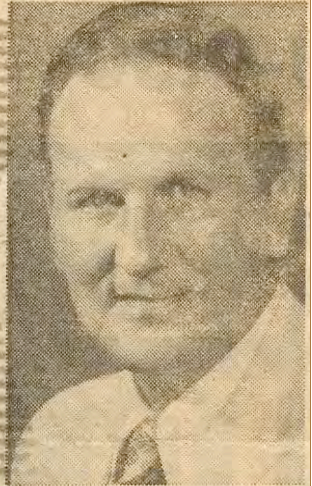
We meditated the pros and cons of the offer for about two weeks. There were so many ifs and unknowns about the status of the college; we simply had to have faith that our decision would be that of the will of the Lord if we evidenced prudence in all of our considerations. The Downtown Union 76 station would need to be disposed of if we moved. None of the children wanted the station. They did not want to be encumbered

with the station, even though it was free to them and a very profitable business. Tom and Cammy could stay in our home and continue their studies at Auburn. Another option would be to sell the house and property, and buy them a mobile home to share during their studies at Auburn. Moving to Thomasville would be a major disruption in the calm and placid routine of our lives. We considered all of the available facets of the offer and particularly as to whether the work there would benefit our family and the lives of those who might be influenced by my presence there. Mrs. Barksdale asked for our decision the next week. We vote to accept the offer, to be in position by the first of July 1977.

I immediately tendered a two weeks resignation from Chatt Flint APDC in La Grange Georgia. The house sold the first day I put a sign at the driveway. I sold the service station inventory to Mr. Tarpley who was an experienced service station operator. This arrangement was acceptable to the owner, Mr. Buck Hughley, who made arrangements with him for the rental of the station facilities. That took care of that little situation. Tom and Cammy picked a mobile home of their choice and had it moved to the mobile home park they had selected, which was near the campus. Mary and I went to Thomasville and bought the house Mrs. Harvard, a member of the Board of Trustees, had selected for us. It was next door to her daughter, who was a very good neighbor. The transition was going very smoothly.

The college was named Birdwood College in recognition as the plantation name given by the donor owner, Hon. William Cameron Forbes who was appointed by Pres. Theodore Roosevelt to a diplomatic position in the Philippines in 1904. Pres. Taft appointed him as Governor General of the Philippines in 1909 and he served as Ambassador to Japan, appointed by Pres. Hoover. He retired to Thomasville and established his beloved Birdwood Plantation with authentic oriental gardens and a polo field, with many polo pony barns. The pony barns were used restructured and used as classrooms for the college. In 1934, Lt. Col. George S. Patton came down from Ft. Benning to play polo regularly. He was a dear friend to Miss. Pansy Poe who often told me of their warm friendship. His bedroom was directly above my office in the plantation home. Some of the Thomasville people remember him very well as a very ruthless polo player who usually led his team to victory at Forbes Field.

We rented the biggest available U Haul truck and made several trips. Forrest, Cammy and Tom really pitched in to help us move. I even moved the two hives of bees I had kept over from the sale of the bees. Forrest was brave enough to put Cammy's two cats in the cab with him for the final trip and will never forget chasing them when he let them out to do their business. That was a hilarious ordeal, indeed.



NEW PRESIDENT
Dr. Charles Bryant

Things Changing At Birdwood

Constitution State News Service
THOMASVILLE — Birdwood, a small junior college here for 22 years, has a new name — Thomas County Community College, a new president — Dr. Charles E. Bryant, and a \$94,000 federal-state grant for campus improvements.

My first day at the college I was greeted by three persons. Ms. Horne was there wanting a job as Dean of Academics if I could find anyone to become a faculty member. She had grave doubts for the continuation of the college but was willing to assist in the search for qualified instructors. I wasn't impressed. Mrs. Vera Maxwell wanted the job as librarian. She told me of her leadership role in helping to organize the Peanut Brigade for Jimmy Carter in his recent successful run for President. She was a proud leader in the campaign. She smoked foul smelling cigars. Ms. Gayle Whitehurst was there to ask for a job as social science instructor. Those three were my welcoming committee. Mr. Riska Rogers had long gone, and I never saw him again. I felt sorry for him in his impossible role.

We all went to lunch. A part of my interview with an applicant was to take the person or persons to lunch and observe them eating. I note their manners and demeanor, which told me of their early training and their concern for others. I noted whether they start pouring salt onto everything before they tasted the food, which told me about their reasoning, logic and curiosity to learn. I note the conversation pattern, whether they talk incessantly, were uncertain to engage in conversation and if their conversation was meaningful. I was able to learn a host of little things that revealed the person during the course of a meal. I do not claim to have ever been a psychoanalyst, but it is for a certainty that I based my decision to employ as much on the observations during the course of the meal, as I did on the vita or resume. That was my little secret, which I never told anyone. Several people were rejected from employment and they never knew why. It was that luncheon.

I treasured a painting I proudly displayed in my office that depicted my philosophy of administrative Leadership and office relationships. I reviewed or explained the picture with every employee during the course of an interview. The large painting print, 3' x 5', depicted two horses pulling a wagon loaded with hay. The careful observer notes that the team of horses are working equally in unity and with harmony, without a driver. They have come from a far distance and are confident of the path before them. I would ask the applicant to provide a name for the picture. An applicant was denied employment because she had no concept of the picture. Employment to her meant only a paycheck.



The litany of top priorities was so long and everything needed to be done at once before starting anything. The first thing I did was to change the name of the college from Birdwood College to Thomas County Community College, with Board approval. I isolated myself for a week, calling on Board Members, Church leaders, the bank President, County and City elected officials, and the Superintendent of Education. I found considerable hostility and resentment from the University of Georgia extension center which was a one-person director with several high school teachers, teaching their nighttime classes. I felt that I could deal with this situation when it became appropriate to do so. I found encouragement from almost everywhere else. I cultivated a friendship with Mr. Jack Kelly, one of the three brothers who owned and operated the local daily newspaper. His friendship was a tremendous asset to the development of the college. He had three articles every week relating to the progress of the college. I formed a plan of action and set about to put that plan into action. I always coordinated my plans and actions with the local Board Members and Jack Kelly, the chairman. We became friends.

I was able to obtain six qualified instructors, a finance person and a Dean of Students, whose primary job was to help students obtain Pell Grants for tuition. We began classes that fall with more than 100 students. It was a very successful start. We made arrangements with school principals and went into the surrounding areas within 50 miles, and conducted extension classes at the public schools, which more than doubled the number of students for our second semester. Each semester, the student numbers grew.

I received encouragement from so many persons of the area. Dr. Bernard Sleiger, President of the prestigious Florida State University in Tallahassee, came up one day to have lunch with me. He was a very funny man, always laughing and filled with humor and sage expressions. I had been a fan of his for a long time. He told me that a college president needed three things; first, he should have gray hair or no hair to give him that mature look. Secondly, he should have horn rimmed glasses and some facial hair to give him that academically intelligent look. Thirdly he should have hemorrhoids to give him that concerned look. Dr. Marshall S. Woodson, former president of Davidson College in Virginia, and now retired in Thomasville, often came to the office to sit and chat, providing me encouragement when I seemed to need it the most. Dr. Hendricks, President of Valdosta State University, visited several times to simply chat and encourage me to recruit students, and after their two years with an Associate Degree, please pass them on to him at the university. He willingly provided us with much surplus laboratory supplies.

Rev. Bill Nearing's wife encouraged me to install a course of instruction for an Associate of Science degree as a Physician's Assistant. I considered her recommendation as a very good addition to make the college a true Community College. You see, a Junior College has a single mission; to provide the student with a preparatory education for attending a four-year institution. The mission of the Community College has three objectives. One is to provide the student with this same preparatory academic program. Another mission is to provide a continuing Education Program with CEUs, in such things as cake decorating, quilt making, ceramics and similar crafts. The third mission is to provide an education preparing the student for direct employment. There was a need for this program qualifying local ladies for a very important vocation in the medical field. I located a

college in Rapid City, South Dakota that had developed a curriculum and accredited package for the course of instruction in Physician's Assistant. I made reservations to visit the college for the purpose of buying 15 of the student packages. Tom and I flew to Rapid City for a very pleasant three-day visit. We first bought their curriculum and student packages to be shipped to Thomasville. The President of the College loaned us a station wagon to go see the Mt. Rushmore Monument, Wind Cave, Crazy Horse Monument, Deadwood and other sights.



Tom did the flying out there and back, even in a light snowstorm. He also did the driving as we played the tourist role to the hilt. On our way back from Wind Cave late at night, we took a wrong road and ended up on a trail ending in a huge field of sage grass. Bison were moving across the field and one huge bull came up and rubbed his hoary hair against the station wagon. I thought it was going to turn over. As soon as he could, Tom carefully drove through that huge herd of bison and got us back to town. I think we both were somewhat terrified when we realized the size of that herd of bison that surrounded us. We were truly in the wilds. One of the nights, the President invited us to an evening meal at his beautiful western style home perched alone high atop a very pronounced flat mesa top. We were served bison steaks. Tom and I looked at each other, smiled, took knife and fork in hand and enjoyed the meal. The physicians assistant program was instituted with great success for the 15 students who each gained employment even before graduation with their earned Associate Degree. They had two instructors who led the program. This is an ongoing program with Thomas University as it is known today.

Students and visitors to the library, which also housed the voluminous records of the Primitive Baptist Church, complained that the library smelled foul with Vera's cigar smoke. She was offended and planned to quit work soon. I asked permission of the board of directors to permit Mary to become the librarian. She went to FSU for more than a year obtaining her Master's of Library Science (MLS) Degree. Mary was honored to be elected to membership in the International Library Science Honor Society, Beta Phi Mu. She became the college librarian. With her assistant, Pansy Stewart, they made the library a welcome center for student studies and towns folk to come browse and read the daily newspaper with coffee. Not exactly a social center but folks did enjoy the environment.

One of the nicest gentleman I ever met was Dr. Roland Clanton. He was a veterinarian and was beloved by everyone who knew him or knew of him. He talked slow in a South Georgia drawl and thought like lightning. I consider it one of the outstanding highlights of being in Thomasville, was to have been able to spend many hours in his presence soaking up his sage wit and wisdom. He was short on advice and long on listening. He was clever. He owned many acres of valuable property within the city limits of Thomasville. He would not sell it because he wanted it for his lame and recovering animals to have a large pasture to roam and forage. He had a large pond, filled with fish. He said he had Fur, Fins, Feathers and hair and he loved them all. He built a large covered pole-barn in his pasture and had a monthly fellowship dinner. The various

merchants and entrepreneurs took turns in hosting the monthly feast and fellowship. He called it "The Fellowship." He had two rules. Behave and Have Fun and everyone did. He had a policy that his invitation meant that you would bring someone with you the next month. The first week I was in Thomasville, he came to the college to invite me and asked if I would become the official maker of the grits. Cheese grits was served every month whether it was a dinner of steak or lobster or poultry. Sometimes, the sponsor wanted me to fry to a crisp and crumble about ten pounds of that good Sunnyland sausage, made by Mr. Dude Harvard's company and put it in the grits. It was a countywide fellowship with about 300 people in attendance. You were a friend to all God's Creatures, Dr. Roland Clanton. I know you have brought many South Georgia laughs to all His children in heaven. Perhaps there is a pasture for your friends. Peace

Thomasville has long been noted with great civic pride for hosting the Nation's First Rose Parade. It was the biggest annual affair in Southwest Georgia. The Rose Parade Marshall was carefully selected to be a well deserving dignitary. In 1979, The Nation's First Lady, Mrs. Rosalyn Carter was selected to perform the honors and lead the parade.



The college facilities were selected to be the headquarters of the event. A huge circus tent was erected on the old Polo Field for the festivities. Two days prior to the event, two Secret Service men thoroughly examined my office and private bathroom, telling me not to reenter until Mrs. Carter had left Thomasville. They acted so pompous and authoritative I laughed at them. Mrs. Carter arrived on campus amid a caravan of limousines and dignitaries. Mary and I were to form a hospitality line to greet her and welcome her to the campus. The area was my office walkway. We performed our duties and I stepped back from

the long line of dignitaries welcoming dignitaries to speak to her, as she stood alone near my office side door. The Secret Service officer held up his hand for me not to approach, but I was near enough to hear their conversation. He was insisting she go into my office and she did not want to. He spoke sharply to her to tell her that it was time for her to use the bathroom. She 'sort of snorted' and said something I couldn't hear. I couldn't help but laugh out loud as I left that scene. Oh My.

Forrest came to Thomasville and spent several days with us to paint the entire Comanche 250 aircraft. It was a real chore to prepare the surface and eventually paint. I think he told me that painting an aircraft that size was the equivalent of painting five automobiles. It took many gallons of paint and he had to always wait until the wind was calm and the humidity was right on those foggy mornings and evenings. He was so patient and professional in that huge project to paint the aircraft. I know I was very proud of his work.



Cammy came to Thomasville to live with us and was a welcomed delight again. She and Forrest had continued their strong friendship, which blossomed into a young wholesome romance. They wanted to be married when she got her



Associate Degree and Forrest finished his education with Alabama Aviation College in Ozark, Alabama. We



We agreed with them and gave them our blessings. Mary played the piano at her graduation as she received the Associate of Science Degree. They had a beautiful but simple, church wedding in the Thomasville Presbyterian Church. Rev. Bill Nearing officiated at the ceremony. Geoff Burkart was best man. The ladies of the church and friends hosted a very nice reception in the fellowship hall of the church. I was an elected Ruling Elder of this church for the previous two years. This is the church where President and Mrs. Eisenhower attended Sunday Services when he vacationed in Thomasville.

Tom was alone in the mobile home and being the trusting soul that he was, he never locked the door even when he would go to class all day. One-day the neighbor's little girl and boy went into the trailer and started a fire that burned the home in less than ten minutes. By the time the fire department responded the mobile home was ashes. He lost everything but the clothes he was wearing. Peggy Webster, acting as his Auburn mother, immediately came to his rescue. Forrest lost several guns, which Tom was keeping for him. I had bought a nice sailboat to sail the coastal waters. Sails to the boat were burned up. Nylons burns and melts fast and hot. He lost all of his trophies, all of the furniture and housekeeping equipment we had provided for them was gone, including antiques. We had overlooked getting MH insurance, so it was all a total financial loss. The children admitted their involvement but the parents denied it, so.....



Tom came to Thomasville to take one needed course in Biology. When the instructor discovered Tom was a diving enthusiast they planned a trip to Sea Camp in the Florida Keys. I flew them down to Marathon and from there we went to Sea Camp where the owner was a relative of the instructor. They went diving and underwater photography and I went snorkeling. It was a grand and glorious adventure to swim with zillions of small fish, each keeping in their school with the same colors and stripes. We got Florida lobsters, those without the claws and they were delicious. Tom made an "A" in Biology.

After Tom's graduation at Auburn, receiving the BS Degree in Agricultural Engineering, he worked for a leading Engineering Corp. in Augusta, Georgia. They had been unable to

find an engineer who was also capable of performing surveys in the mountains of Toccoa, North Georgia. They paid him well and he did the job well. Eventually he was asked to survey the huge canal from the Savannah River that ran the water wheels or turbines that generated the municipal electricity and powered the cotton mills. The water was contaminated with Ecoli and Hepatitis among other things. He was careful, but he contracted Hepatitis and almost died in his apartment. Margaret Webster came to visit him and found his situation to be an immediate emergency. She got him to a hospital and called us. We went immediately to be with them. He was a long time in recovery. I credit her with saving his life by her immediate actions to hospitalize him. Thank you Margaret.

Eddy's marriage with Freda failed and she returned to Auburn. Eddy remained in Colorado for another month or so and then came to be with us in Thomasville. He took a few courses at the college and transferred to Valdosta State University earning a BS in the field of Astro Physics. He met Ruby Gail Brock, who was a secretary at the college. Their friendship developed into a marriage at Ichetucknee Springs State Park, Florida. He continued his Education at Georgia Institute of Technology, earning a Master of Science Degree in Physics. We visited him and recognized that he thoroughly enjoyed his studies and Graduate Studies Projects in the field of lasers. Their daughter Phoebe Christine Bryant, and our first grandchild, was born there in Atlanta during his Master's Studies program as a student in GIT. The first time we saw her, she was in a shoebox.



State Senator Henry Russell was a friend who played a prominent role in getting the college postured to be free from control by the Primitive Baptist who wanted to sell the property and divest their interest in the college. Sen. Russell and I flew to Atlanta many times in my Comanche 250 aircraft, working with the State Legislature to change the state constitution to make it possible for a county to own and operate an institution of higher learning. We were successful in doing so. Now it was more reassuring that I could go to potential donors and ask for money for a specific need. We needed to buy the college from the Primitive Baptist, Ga. Convention for \$250,000 and to pay the \$175,000 debt the college owed. People gave money to buy the college but not to retire a debt.

I went to see Mr. Ball at Wakulla Springs, at Mrs. Britton's suggestion. He had married one of the Dupont sisters and was wealthy beyond description. He was paid not to claim Dupont inheritances. He took the money, moved to Florida and became extremely wealthy in the paper manufacturing business. He gave me a check for \$50,000 for the college. Mr. Rust was his brother-in-law and gave me a check for \$125,000. When I went back out to Mr. Rust's plantation where he specialized in providing semen for breeding Santa Gertrude cattle, he was quick to tell me, don't come back for more money. I laughed out loud and told him I came out to see how he did his semen extraction. We both laughed and I visited him several more times. Miss Pansy Poe, owner of Pebble

Plantation, gave a \$75,000 check. I gave her the bamboo polo ball that was inscribed as the ball used in the first game of polo played on Forbes Field at Birdwood, 1934.

She gave me another check for \$25,000. I had written Mr. Ted Turner for a contribution and he responded, to see him when he came to Thomasville again. I met him at the airport one day after he landed and was clearing off his aircraft. He whipped out his checkbook and gave the college a \$10,000 check. Mr. Jock Whitney gave \$165,000. The money seemed to pour in as I asked for funds to make the college independent and free from church control. I made sure each person I contacted knew of the recent progress of the college and knew of me. I approached these wealthy persons only after one of their friends had paved the way for me and I always carried a mutual friend. Of course the college enrollment was steadily increasing, I added a Continuing Education program, the first class was in cake decorating, that created a lot of interest with the ladies of Thomasville. Jack Kelly was boosting the college with his newspaper. I had a monthly thirty-minute TV program on the local TV station. It was a great comfort to me to see the community unity and young people turning from their mundane jobs to get an education and progress to the universities. I spoke to all the civic clubs, many churches and groups promoting the college. I would give ancient Roman and Greek coins to the president of the club, the senior member of the club, and the youngest member of the club. Some accused me of having to pay for people to come and hear me. Mr. Balfour was a retired lumberman. He loved to sing a solo about every month during the Rotary club meeting. He would throw his head back and singing his heart out, always singing “On Top Of Old Smokey.” Maybe this was the only song he knew. He was 90+ years old. He jokingly announced to the Rotary Club one day “When Old Brother Charlie Bryant passes away, his tombstone will read, Alas The Beggar Has Passed.”



I

The Church Session asked me to assume the pastoral duties of Dawes Presbyterian Church, a failing country church about ten miles north of Thomasville. I agreed to do so until arrangements could be made for a permanent pastor. I began to enjoy the Congregational membership very much. The little church began to grow from about 20 persons in attendance each Sunday morning to more than 100 each Sunday. We began a Sunday night service and a Wednesday night Bible study. The congregation was very responsive to all of these new programs. It was a gratifying joy to work with this church for two years. Because I refused to accept any money, they were able to accumulate enough money to hire a permanent pastor. My reward was seeing and experiencing the spiritual development and growth of the wonderfully united people of that church. There was another small and very pretty little country Presbyterian Church that had a reverter clause, stipulating that if a regular worship service was not held at least quarterly, the land and building would revert to the previous owner. I preached at that little country church every fifth Sunday, to block the revert clause. About fifty people would attend and for two Sundays of the summer, a “pot luck dinner” under the pecan trees was spread. I think the people came mostly because it was like a quarterly friendship reunion.

I was invited by the National Association of Junior and Community Colleges to be a guest speaker at their annual convention to be held in Miami. I was invited to speak on the subject of my success in turning a bankrupt college into a viable and accredited Community College in a three-year program. I was honored to speak on behalf of the City, County and College persons who had given so much to the success of the college. I flew myself down in the Comanche 250 aircraft, which always gave me a natural high to be flying. I changed my mind before landing and landed at the small Opa Laka airport rather than get into that hornets nest of aircraft at Miami International Airport, for which I had filed a flight plan. After landing I was so focused on the speech I was to deliver in two hours, I forgot to close my flight plan. Flight service began a search for the aircraft one hour after being overdue. The Thomasville Airport was notified that I was overdue and missing. Mr. Diekel called Mary to ask if I had checked in. I had not. A big boo-boo.

Friends at the Thomasville Airport got together a flight of six aircraft to search the proposed flight path I should have taken. Mary called the convention center and I spoke to her just before I was to be introduced. She immediately relayed that information and the flight search was called off. I felt honored and humbled that I had friends that would go out on a search for me. When I got back to Thomasville, I was still in high spirits that the speech had been so well received and the college successes were recognized by the presidents of Junior and Community Colleges nationally. The elation of the three-hour flight home was a boost to my euphoric feelings. I did not see anyone at the airport as I landed and secured the aircraft in my hanger. I raced home to tell Mary all about it. She said something to the effect, "Tell me about it after you take out the garbage." Crunch

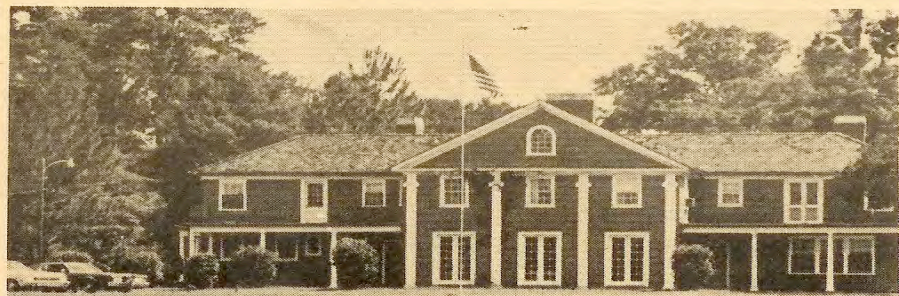
I had become friends with Robert Ginright, the architect for Flowers Baking Industry. I flew him throughout the Southeast visiting the Flowers Baking plants and outlets. His son in law was a Presbyterian pastor who had recently accepted a position in Mountain City, Tennessee. Robert and his wife were anxious to go visit them for a short visit. I agreed to take them. Now, Mountain City is truly in the mountains of North East Tennessee. It was such a pleasant visit that we overstayed and would be making a night take off from a short unlighted airstrip. That night after church services, the Congregational people went to the airstrip and pointed their automobile headlights so as to point out the edges and end of the runway. It worked fine. We went to Chicago once and landed at Meigs Field. It was a tiny little strip of pavement on an island near the Shadd Aquarium and The Field Museum of Natural History. Robert was a close friend of the man that was the taxidermist for hundreds of the birds in the museum. He came out and explained the various birds. It was a most interesting visit. The Shadd Aquarium took another day to see the marvels of various marine life. Robert prepared an artist concept of the campus and buildings with floor plans for a four-year Thomas college. I enjoyed his friendship and encouragement. He enjoyed the cheap flying as he bought the fuel. Flowers Baking Inc. occasionally paid me well to take him on some bakery inspection trips.

The students put on a campaign to have the college owned by the County and supported by a small millage property rate increase. Mr. Bill Flowers, of Flowers Baking Industry put on a massive campaign, which defeated the student movement. His brother Langdon Flowers, was a strong friend and advocate of the college and supportive of the students,

but his brother Bill's campaign against increased taxes killed the drive and it was never put on the ballot, by political order of the weakly led astray County Commissioners. The College Board of Trustees and I simply did not have the ability to convince the County Commissioners to the need of public money to bring about the college of our aspirations.

This was a severe blow to my drive for a four-year college. I felt it was a personal affront to me since I had so laboriously spent three years of my life doing what I kept publicizing that I wanted to do, which was to develop the college into a four-year institution serving all of Southwest Georgia. Mr. Bill Flowers was so opposed to any tax. I do believe he would have resisted a penny tax to bring his mother back to life. I learned that money has power. He spent more money on defeating the student's proposed referendum than the meager tax millage increase would have cost him in twenty-two years. I was bewildered.

After resurrecting the college from foreclosure and giving it new life on the way to success, perhaps in retrospect my most proud single achievement as a legacy was that I had led the college in obtaining accreditation. This was a three-year struggle involving Thomas County elected officials, the city of Thomasville officials as well as every person affiliated with the college. We made it. Registrations soared. I had returned almost all of my meager salary into defraying the expenses involved in the many flights to Atlanta and other places such as the trip into Harlan County airport to meet with a key director in the accreditation effort. The almost vacant little airport was nestled in a box canyon along side a winding river. There was only one way to get into the tiny little strip and the same way to get out, regardless of the wind direction. That was some ride, winding into that canyon, landing and departing, but it was an important trip for accreditation. It was personally expensive hosting the influential officials of The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. They expected it from membership institutions and particularly those institutions such as ours seeking their services of accreditation. These accreditation leaders could whimsically say yea or nay to our membership. SACS is sometimes referred to as similar to a Country Club or Fraternity.



College Administrative Building

Thomas County Community College

The Chancellor of the University of Georgia System, Vernon Crawford and five education specialists have been in Thomasville evaluating Thomas County Community College, to see if TCCC could possibly join the university system.

TCCC is an independent two year college granting the Associate Degree and is currently a candidate for accreditation.

Another achievement was that I labored for more than a year in developing a master TCCC office planning guide of the process and procedures whereby we could bring the college into a four-year institution. I was beginning to prepare the foundation for this four-year institution. During the process, I signed a declaration that every instructor would be required to have an earned Masters Degree in the field in which that person was teaching, within three years. This was a very unpopular notion with some of the faculty. I instantly became the ‘bad boy’ of the campus. It became increasingly difficult to restore harmonious relationships with the faculty as they became increasingly hostile to me and to the concept of a four-year institution because this was a threat to their cozy nest.

I discussed with the board of directors and Doc Clanton, my future abilities to progress the college to the level, which I had designed and desired. They all encouraged me to stay on, play a low profile role in administering the college operation for a few months and they would take care of the dissident faculty and staff. I listened, but I believed that it was time for me to move on, take my personal pleasures and satisfaction in the tremendous achievements that had been made at the college and quietly leave in dignity. I knew what I had done for that community and the college without expecting praise or honor. Satisfaction in knowing that the college was vibrant with a hope of progress to become Thomas County College was my payment of pride in having done a good job under adverse conditions. Knowing that the college was now vibrant with a hope of becoming a four-year institution was my sufficient payment of praise. Jack Kelly and chief correspondent reporter Coke Ellington, with their daily newspaper, continued to honor me with praise. I told them to stop and concentrate on welcoming and praising a new president who would hopefully carry forth the plans I had made for a four-year institution. My hopes and aspirations were fulfilled when the little bankrupt and closing Birdwood College developed, became accredited and eventually became Thomas College and then Thomas University as it is today, using the basic plans I had developed.



I began to consider an offer that had been made to me to become President of Chamberlain Hunt Academy, an old private academy in Port Gibson, Mississippi. The opportunity to work full time with young people of the ages from seventh grade through senior high school was very appealing to me. Mr. Jimmy Persons, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, was very persuasive in encouraging me to visit the campus. Mary and I drove to Port Gibson and had a very nice welcome by the board and many



of the townspeople. The old Academy was a boarding school begun in 1879. It was now operating twelve months of the year with about 400 students. The students all wore military uniforms. Military discipline prevailed with a Military Commandant of Cadets. Many of the faculty lived in the dorms. The old brick buildings were very picturesque on a beautiful two hundred acre campus. CHA was an

old boarding school begun in 1848, operating twelve months of the year with about 800 students. We were shown the president spacious home and offered a salary of \$24,000 with meals in the cadet dining hall, medical care, country club dues paid and a vehicle. Since the position of President required the person to be a long time member of good standing in the Presbyterian Church, I was automatically to be made a Ruling Elder in the beautiful and unique Presbyterian Church on Church Street. I did not fully agree with that policy, but since I had been an elder since 1962 of the various Presbyterian churches where we had lived, I accepted the privilege and honor to serve the church in that capacity. The Port Gibson Presbyterian Church steeple was a hand with a finger pointing heavenly. Truly We accepted their offer to join Chamberlain Hunt Academy and made plans to immediately fill the vacant position.

Our home in Thomasville was located in a very prominent part of the beautiful City. A retiring Army Colonel learned of our leaving and assumed the house would be offered for sale. He called from Fort Gordon, Augusta, Georgia and made a very attractive offer without ever seeing the house and before we had even considered a price. His only stipulation to the sale was that I had to remove those dangerous and cursed honeybees, that he had been told were in the yard. Mrs. Grace Harvard took the bees to her plantation estate to pollinate her fruit trees and huge flowerbeds. She was such a sweet petite little lady, enormously wealthy, and she thoroughly enjoyed her cheek of snuff.

We returned to Thomasville, resigned and prepared to make the move to Port Gibson. Many of the students joined with our family to load the two U Haul trucks with our furniture. Eddy drove one of the trucks and I drove the other. We had fun along the way. When we arrived in Port Gibson, Mr. Claude Hill, the academy custodian, had a crew of big muscular students waiting to unload the trucks and place the furniture in the appropriate rooms. They all worked well into the afternoon and evening. Mrs. Hill, the Academy Dietitian, had prepared a fried chicken dinner, which she sent over for all of us to enjoy. The Hill's became dear friends and we shared many laughs. I experienced a tremendous feeling of gratitude and welcome by all of those who helped us, and visited us for the next several days, bringing us messages and gifts of greetings and welcome.

My first day on duty, Mr. Persons came to the office and we had an informal chat. He told me there were certain things about the position as President CHA that he had not told me about, for fear that I would not accept the position. He led right to the subject, first telling me that I was mandated to adopt three students of different families who had been wards of the state before coming to CHA. I swallowed hard on that because it involved Mary also. We had no information on the three children or what was actually expected of us as their adopted parents. Secondly, I was expected to travel the state and raise at least \$200,000 each year for the Academy. Thirdly, I was expected to meet with Presbyterian churches and their quarterly Presbytery group meetings to make an appeal for money. I learned to always carry a male and a female cadet in military dress with me as they worked wonders on their appeal to the men and women of the churches. Fourthly, I was expected to preach to all the Presbyterian churches that gave me an invitation to do so. Fifthly, he told me that the use of drugs on the campus and in the dormitories was rampant and that I must take positive action to stop the use of drugs. He said I was to take

any cadet found using any drug home immediately, without a trial or hearing. I told him to Stop, Stop, Stop... If he put one more of his secret mandates on me, I would recall the U haul trucks. He was a big tall man. As he stood to leave with my last comment, towering above me, he left saying that would be enough for now. I emphatically agreed.

I also learned that afternoon that about half of those well dressed cadets in their starched military uniforms with ribbons on their chests and brass on their collars, were children of local parents who were sending their children to CHA to avoid sending them to the all-black Port Gibson high school. The concept of a racially integrated school was met with such strong and positive resentment that the public schools were 100% black. This was a major problem for me, as the community cadets brought the affluent resident cadets loads of marijuana, glue for huffing and other drugs. It was bad situation and I saw no solution.

The second week I was there, I was called over to the Commandants office one afternoon and told that “this cadet”, pointing to a terrified young cadet, “was caught with a joint of Marijuana that was still smoking, in his hand”. I called Mr. Persons who told me to take the boy home immediately. He lived deep down in Southern Louisiana, back in the Bayou Country. His family was quite affluent and very well educated. The boy loaded his belongings into the CHA Ford sedan, and I drove him home, after calling his parents to tell them of the incident and actions I was taking to expel him from the Academy. We had several hours to ride in solitude enroute to his home. I stopped to get us a soda and refreshment. He became friendly and told me that he had never smoked marijuana, with a believable sincerity. He said some cadets came to his room and began to smoke the Marijuana. He said that he did not smoke any, because the Dorm Resident Leader had smelled the smoke and quickly opened the door and saw this cadet with the “joint” in his hand. He told me that the cadet standing next to him had forcefully put the joint into his hand when the door was opening. I stopped along the way and called back to ask the Commandant to check that story. He said that he had already done so and the cadet with me was innocent. The guilty cadet had confessed.

When we arrived at their beautiful Southern Antebellum home, the boy rushed to his mother and father sobbing, “I am Sorry.” They consoled their 14-year son, not with, “that’s all right,” but with words of comfort that they would talk about it later. I too became emotional and controlled myself, but my heart was breaking as I considered the anguish these loving parents had suffered during the recent hours as we rode together to bring him home. I asked them to sit down with me, and their son as I explained what had happened and that their son was not guilty of any wrongdoing. There was a flood of exhilarating joy in that Family Circle. She immediately directed that we all sit at the huge formal dining table, seating perhaps twenty persons. Her servant served us as we enjoyed a hearty meal of Cajun Style Shrimp, Etouffee, which she had prepared for us for our arrival. I was touched by all of this as it had taken hours to prepare this meal. She knew my mission was to return her son, yet she and her maid/cook had prepared this meal in my honor. She said I had graced her home by my presence. Their home, speech, dress, and gracious hospitality was the model of a Southern Living Lifestyle of yesteryears.

After this wonderful meal and fellowship, we discussed every aspect of his return to CHA in positive and negative terms. They invited me to spend the night with them and they would have the answer at breakfast. I was agog with the lavish splendor of the guest room of antiques. At breakfast on the patio, the father told me that after they had prayed about the situation, they would like for me to take their son back with me and that it was their son's wish also. He was welcomed back as a hero because he did not "rat-on" the guilty party who had confessed to handing off the joint before he could smoke it. I had compassion for the boy and decided to keep him as a cadet with one month of suspended privileges and walking tours. He walked a trail alongside the football field with a rifle, two hours after class, every day, rain or shine, cold or freezing. I knew from first hand experience all about that walking tours from my Aviation Cadet days. It was grueling.

It was about two months after we arrived that I was asked to preach at the old, old Natchez First Presbyterian Church. We arrived early that Sunday Morning. An Elder and his wife had coffee and cookies for us. We were escorted into the sanctuary where we were given a good briefing. I was showed the church bulletin and all I was to do was have the Morning Prayer, Preach and have a short benediction. The congregation wanted the speaker to stop sharply at 11:52, sing a Hymnal, pray the Benediction and be on their way out at exactly noon, just before the loud bells overhead rang. He told me "Aint nobody never been saved after twelve o'clock". Mary was to occupy the gated pew, reserved for visiting dignitaries. All of the pews had gates and were considered personal and private property of the owners who had paid the price to the church. Most were passed down through the family for generations. The gallery, previously reserved for slaves, was now for visitors in general or those waiting to purchase a pew. The pulpit towered above the congregation. The acoustics were excellent. The congregation was very kind and attentive with no sleepers. I had occasions to preach all over the state of Mississippi and some in Louisiana. I often took a male and female cadet with me. Preparing a sermon was far more difficult than preparing ten classroom lectures. I looked forward to speaking to a church congregation and was equally glad when it was over and I was back home. Gratuities were made payable to the Academy. I never got any money.



Mary and I hosted dinners and socials in the president's home. A retired Marine Colonel and his wife, who were members of the Presbyterian Church, were our guests one evening for an informal dinner. He was an official with the Grand Gulf nuclear power station. A few days later he



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visited and encouraged Mary to join with him in a position to direct the computerized inventory of the construction of the nuclear plant. The position was challenging as well as carrying a very attractive salary. We both agreed that she should accept the position with Bechtel, as it would slow down and perhaps dry up the social expectations of the wife of the CHA President. It worked. Some of the ladies of the community resented that Mary no longer had those social teas, brunches, luncheons, and dinners. I told the Board of Directors they had hired me, not her to be a hostess. They reluctantly accepted this.

We had a delightful couple as neighbors across the old River Front Highway, known as Church Street in Port Gibson. Colonel and Mrs. Jake Lewis Abram became our good friends. Their estate was called "Rattle Snake Ridge". He was a 1932 graduate of the University of Mississippi, School of Law. His love of flying compelled him to forsake his successful law practice and join the Canadian Air Force in 1937 because the US Air



Corps was not taking any pilots. After Germany's bombing of London he was sent to England in a group called the American Flying Eagles. He later joined with the American Eighth Air Force and flew fighter aircraft in the North African campaign. After the war, he resorted to his law degree and served 36 years in the Air Force as a Judge Advocate



General, JAG. His love for flying was always in his heart and mind. He and I really enjoyed flying the Comanche 250 because he said it handled like his old fighter plane, the P-47. He would ring the aircraft out good. He and I bought an Ultra Light Aircraft business. The man had gone bankrupt and had never opened the packages of the three aircraft with a spare engine and lots of spare parts. We only wanted two aircraft but we had to buy all three. Tom came out to

Port Gibson and we very carefully assembled two of them and proceeded to taxi test them on the CHA football field. At last we both mustered enough courage to attempt a flight. He double dog dared me to go first. After becoming airborne, I looked back over my shoulder and there he was... right on my tail. Under that 'brain bucket' of his, was one of the biggest smiles I have ever seen. It is said that one can tell how much fun the other is having flying these things, by the number of bugs on their teeth. For some, it's tooth.

Col. Jake and I flew together almost every afternoon, weather permitting. When I left CHA and Port Gibson, after three years, Colonel Jake insisted I take that third aircraft. I brought the two ultralights to Panama City where Tom and I reassembled them and enjoyed many hours flying together with those two frail and fragile little things made of aluminum rods, fabric, wires, and Velcro. No license was required to fly these things weighing less than 250 pounds and powered by a 48 horsepower Kawasaki Snowmobile engine. Little two cycle lawn mower engines powered some twin-engine ultralights.

I was honored to fly with such a distinguished gentleman and officer as Colonel Jake. We sometimes took a cooler and sandwiches or fruit and would fly to our favorite sandbar on the Miss. River, build ourselves a campfire of driftwood, even in July, and have ourselves a picnic while I encouraged him to tell me of some of his combat fighter missions and experiences. He said that his Plexiglas canopy was shot, and he experienced a sudden pain in the back of his neck. He called in Mayday and got a priority landing clearance because he told them he was wounded in the back of his neck. He was afraid to move his head. The medics rushed to his aircraft and found no wound in his neck. They all roared with laughter when they determined that the hole in the canopy was making a fine stream of cold pressurized air strike the back of his neck, creating a wound sensation. Three years after I left Port Gibson I returned to be at his funeral. His charming and delightful widow told me those ultralight aircraft, which she had feared for his life, had surely revitalized him and had surely extended his life by at least three years.



The Port Gibson Bank, where Mr. Persons worked, was an affiliate of the Bank of Jackson in Jackson, Miss. The Port Gibson Bank had turned over almost a half million dollars of CHA money to the Jackson Bank for investment in stocks and bonds. In researching the records, I found that the Jackson Bank had been “churning the stock” for about six years and the total principal was now down to about \$250, 000. I reported this to Mr. Persons who did not believe my findings. Three of us went to Jackson to confront their brokerage manager. I had the records in hand as he admitted that yes he was guilty but would make restitution. They paid only about \$100,000 of the more than double that amount they had churned. You see, every time they sold or bought a stock, the bank got a commission. Doing this repeatedly to gain money for the broker is called churning the stock. Mr. Persons was humiliated and I think he wished I had never found out. I took that money and with the permission of the board of trustees, I contracted for the construction of a 40-cadet two story brick dormitory with an adult live-in supervisor.

The Academy had a senior resident Physician and his nurse wife, with a seven bed lying in dispensary. We went to Disney World, Orlando and Mary made a misstep and crushed her right foot. We rushed back and were pleased with the manner of treatment and therapy as they treated her injury. We enjoyed going to Vicksburg with them to eat at a restaurant called Top Of The River. They had no menu. When the maître d' seated a diner, they only asked for your choice of a beverage. The waiter would immediately bring a small skillet of cornbread, a bowl of turnip greens, a platter of French fried dill pickles, and a large platter of cooked just right fried catfish with Southern hospitality. Uh Huh. This became our favorite dining place, although we were provided delicious meals by Mrs. Hill in the CHA cadet-dining hall.



Another person whose friendship we enjoyed dining with was Miss Gertrude Meyerkourt. Her father was with the US Treasury and was sent to Germany in 1923 as a member of an envoy team of US experts, sent to assist Germany in recovering from their WW I war debts, forced upon them by the victorious British and French. She was nineteen years old when she accompanied her father, as her mother had died the previous year. Her social circle of friends included, as she endearingly described him, “That handsome gentleman devil,” meaning Adolph Hitler. She apparently never talked of her experiences as she was somewhat of a recluse and the townspeople knew little of her, although she had lived in Port Gibson for almost twenty years. We enjoyed her as she often called to come up to our home and chat for hours. She described her friends in Berlin as “Café, tea and crackers.” She said they would often sit at a sidewalk café for an entire afternoon talking politics and social problems, snacking on crackers, anchovies and tea. She had a good laugh as she recalled, “That handsome devil would spit dry crackers when he talked too fast.” She said she would usually sit beside him and didn’t get the spray of crackers. She supplied him with note pads of paper when he was in prison so he could write his book. She held the chapters for him until he got out of prison. She felt that he was ‘Rail-Roaded’ into prison as a political prisoner. She blamed those naughty evil French.



One day she brought a folder of light blue ruled legal sized notepaper pads, written on both sides in German. She said it was the lost chapter of his book that she would not let him include in “Mein Kamph.” It detailed as to how he was going to remove those terrible Jews. She said she hid a chapter on the Jews and he had rewritten the chapter. It was not as strong and as graphic as his original chapter. She read a portion of it in German, knowing I didn’t understand a word. She told me that her will included the burning of everything in a locked trunk she had. I begged her to please let me make a copy and I would never reveal it as long as she lived. She adamantly and angrily refused, saying she enjoyed reviewing her treasure chest of memorabilia, and did not want her precious memories trampled upon, even after her death. She clutched those three light blue ruled notepads filled with writing, ever so tightly to her bosom shaking her head and declared that her precious memories would be burned in her grave. We remained good friends. This very interesting lady died two years after we left Port Gibson, with her chest of memories being burned with her. What a loss. She had no living relatives and we seemed to be her only friends.

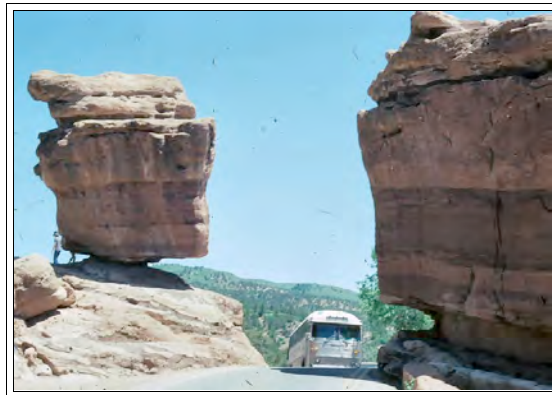
We had one lone black student enrolled in the seventh grade. He loved to attend all of the football, basketball and track meets of the Academy. I learned during the first game he attended that this very innocent little fellow needed bodyguards for his safety. I did not believe what was about to happen to him that night until the Commandant and I intervened, protecting him. CHA students accepted him, rival schools were a problem. He seemed to be oblivious to all of it.



Coach Randy Hynum was never able to teach his boys to act as a team and to be aggressive. They never won a game in the three years I was there. The CHA students, as a whole, felt that aggression means confrontation and this means that somebody is going to have to move out of the house. They could never overcome their feelings of insecurity and loneliness of being without a family and they were in this world all alone without a close friend and did not want a close friend who might betray them. They were outstanding at track, which was an individual effort. The students as a whole excelled in individual competition efforts but did very poorly in team efforts requiring cooperation..



I was able to persuade the board of directors to let me buy a used Greyhound bus for the Academy. Coach Randy Hynum and I went to St. Louis, Missouri to select and buy a very good bus for thirty thousand dollars. One of the CHA instructors, a nephew of Senator Al Gore, was an excellent artist and sign painter. His father was the chairman of



the art department at Jackson University. He painted large beautiful Old English red letters trimmed in gold on each side of the bus, "Chamberlain Hunt Academy." I liked



him and appreciated his work in teaching art, music and math, but I had to dismiss him from the faculty. CHA had a mandatory nightly study hall monitored by rotating faculty on a weekly basis. He was terrified of the larger CHA cadets and they knew it and goaded his fears. One night when he was study hall monitor, they got unruly and he whipped out a cattle prod he had secretly made and used it on some of the boys. Oh Dear Gussie, what a roar ensued. I didn't think I had a choice, and his father agreed

that perhaps he needed to find another field of endeavor other than Secondary Education. I had a commercial license to drive the bus and thoroughly enjoyed taking the students and chaperones on a three weeks summer tour of eleven National Parks of the Western States and a weeklong trip to Washington DC and Williamsburg. Randy and I swapped turns in driving.

I enjoyed the warm friendship of Edgar Crisler, his wife and his Mom. They owned and operated the local weekly newspaper. They came to visit me, asking that their very petite daughter, who was to enroll in CHA that fall, be permitted to go on the bus trip to the Western States. They said they would never be able to take her because of the newspaper but they wanted her to go, if I would look after her as if she were my daughter. I fully agreed and that little thirteen-year old girl was the cheerleader of the students throughout the trip. She was indeed a joy and a truly significant addition to the trip.

We really liked Bill Cassells who successfully managed several thousand acres of a previous plantation estate. It was more than a mile from his mailbox, up on the highway, to his front yard. He invited Forrest to come out and deer hunt. He was instructed not to shoot does and grown bucks with a nice rack of antlers, but to kill as many young bucks with deformed antlers as he wished. He was trying to develop a strong herd of bucks with well-developed antlers. I thought this was a very interesting project. He and his wife took Mary and me for a boat ride on the Mississippi River for a few miles and then he turned into a river tributary and traversed this waterway for more than a mile. He stopped at a very nice sandbar and we built a campfire. He said that all of this was on the property he managed. They had packed a huge chest for our outdoor sandbar evening meal. She took four large rolls of aluminum foil and covered them with burning ashes and sticks. We sipped delicious coffee and iced tea as we prompted them to tell us of their lives and families. After more than an hour, we spread the blankets she had brought on the cool sand. She passed out the foil packages that were too hot to hold. We each unwrapped a foil package, revealing a steaming meal of roast beef, corn on the cob, a baked and seasoned potato, and two round flat cakes of Mexican wrap bread. She served a tossed salad in a separate bowl. I have taken time to describe this meal, as it was perhaps the most memorable outdoor meal ever. The sun was setting as we got back to their home.

I kept the Comanche 250 aircraft at the Vicksburg airport. A friend of mine who owned a Comanche 300 with a three-blade propeller rebuilt the engine completely, charging me only for the parts and materials used. He was a really good aircraft mechanic with a PHD in Nuclear Physics working with the Grand Gulf Nuclear Power station. He and I flew it for a two-hour test flight. It flew out good. Then tragedy struck. One afternoon that same week, a man 'hot wired' the ignition and stole the airplane. He did not know how to select the fuel tanks and ran out of fuel shortly after take-off. He turned back to the runway and almost made it. The aircraft was a total loss. He had been out of jail only one week because he had stolen and sold two tractors from a highway building project. He told the authorities he had taken the aircraft to sell it, saying he already had a buyer and now he did not know what to tell that potential buyer who had given him a down payment. The man had serious mental problems and I was out a \$30,000 aircraft.

He ALMOST Made It.....



The TV personality, Justin Wilson, ‘The Raging Cajun Chef’ was entertaining the Port Gibson Chamber of Commerce members, their mates, and guests at the CHA Cadet Dining Hall. Mrs. Hill came to the head table and whispered to me the message she had just received from the Vicksburg Police Dept. that I should come to the Vicksburg airport as soon as possible. I had spent time with Mr. Wilson, listening and laughing with him all afternoon. I did not want to leave until after he had finished. I then went up to Vicksburg with flashlight, to sadly see that pile of broken aluminum. The aircraft had been acrobatic certified and when Col. Jake and I flew it together, he pretended he was back in his P-47 days in North Africa, strafing and chasing German and Italian fighters. This was his first flight since his war days. He got all fired up to get an Ultralight and begin flying again.

We had a cadet that was mildly physically impaired and moderately mentally impaired. His stepfather had many times, as punishment, put the child into the clothes dryer and closed the door, without ever turning it on. The mind of this fourteen-year-old boy was so severely damaged that we could not help him. After two months he was sent to the state authorities with our report of findings. The stepfather had committed suicide and the mother had been imprisoned. He was one of the three children that the State of Miss. had assigned to me to be his legal guardian. There were two others.

There was a conference of Secondary Education Military Academies and Institutions in Knoxville, Tenn. which I was invited to be a guest speaker. Mary and I decided to take a short vacation and attend the conference as well as the 1982 World’s Fair. The fair was interesting in many of the exhibits, but it fell short of the excitement of the exhibits of the World’s Fair of 1995 in New York with all of the family having fun. We went to Cherokee, NC, for our third time to see the play, ‘Unto These Hills’, but it had been cancelled due to weather. Maybe one day we will get to see it, and not be disappointed.

A high-pressure sales team came to my office one day offering considerable sums of money to make a TV dramatization of the life of cadets in a Military Boarding



Producer, Dr. Bryant, Gov. Winters, Natchez Mayor, Clarence Gilyard

Academy environment. I set up an appointment for them to meet with the Board of Trustees the following week. They talked fast and reeked of slick sales pitches. I did not trust them but kept my opinions to myself. The Trustees saw fresh green dollars for their offers and a deal was made that CHA would provide cadets for filler scenes, our old military uniforms and props for their dormitory scenes. I asked to see the script and was denied. Uh Oh, something didn't smell right and I requested they shoot the scenes at Natchez at the old abandoned academy. They did so. When the movie aired a few months later, the plot was the life of gay Military Academy Cadets. The Trustees were humiliated that they had been deceived. I was glad I was able to prevent any scenes of CHA campus.

I hired a Director of Cadet Activities to provide wholesome activities of interest for the cadets in their leisure times. She had held a similar position at Keesler AFB, Miss. After one month, I realized this Bachelorette Lady had emotional problems and was unable to perform her duties as detailed in the job description. She invited a senior male cadet to her on-campus apartment late one evening. I told her that she should leave immediately, and that she would receive one month's severance pay. She did not take her personal belongings. She went to her parent's home in Tupelo, Miss. She called me the next day pleading for me to take her back, or she would pull the trigger to the pistol she was holding to her head. I tried to talk gently to her but she only wanted a yes or no answer about returning. I hesitated too long for her, I suppose, as there was a deafening blast in my ear and then silence. I called the Tupelo police. They called me later to confirm her death and get statements from me. Her family told me to burn her personal effects.

Beer drinking was a serious problem. The boys would pool about six dollars and one of them would act as runner. It was about half a mile to a service station that sold beer and wine. The runner could have set an Olympic Record for the dash to that store in the dead of night, through a heavily forested area, across a creek and through a kudzu patch they had hacked out. He would give someone the money to buy a \$5.00 case of beer and race back. It became almost a nightly sporting event and no one could catch them. A case of empty beer cans at the commandants' office door was silent testimony of their run.

Runaways were always a monthly problem. An eleventh grade girl from Bossier City, La. went to a church-hosted Valentines Day party and left with four cadets to return to CHA. She never made it back to her dormitory. An all-out search was made for her. One of the boys confessed that they had paid a man twenty dollars to get them a bottle of Ron Rico Purple Label 151 proof rum. The girl had drunk most of the bottle of rum, he said. When she passed out, they had their way with her physically and left her nude body on the railroad tracks. A group went down and got her back to the Academy. The girls Dorm Mother, Mrs. Nichols and I rushed her to the Vicksburg hospital with considerable speed as her breathing was sporadic and weak as well as practically no pulse. The nurse on duty told us that there would be no doctor on duty for another four hours and she would have to direct the girl's recovery, if possible. The nurse put a heating blanket over her and told me to start rubbing her all over to bring about circulation, after Mrs. Nichols introduced me to her as Dr. Bryant. I told her whoa, wait; I was the kind of doctor that didn't help anybody. She snapped at me and told me to put my hands under that warm blanket and massage her legs until she said to stop. I did. The girl's body was 86 degrees internally.

She survived. Her parents refused to come and get her. I turned the case over to authorities and never heard any more from them, nor did I want to. That poor young girl, as well as others at the Academy, faced a lonely, dismal life. I expelled the boys. This was always a dilemma for me as to whether I should keep a wayward behavioral problem teenager and try to instill values or dismiss one and concentrate on those with minimal behavioral and social problems. Once they are gone and out of CHA control, there is no hope of participation in influencing his or her developing citizenship values. I have often pondered this question in many fields of endeavor with relationships, young and old alike

One of the newer cadets had returned from a weekend at home with a bag of plastic modeling glue. The cadets would slit a tube of the glue, place it in a plastic bag and cover their face with the bag so as to inhale only the fumes from the highly aromatic glue. This is called huffing. For one boy, this was fatal. I was called out about 2200 hours to verify the young cadet was dead, with the plastic bag and glue in his hand. This was a sad case as he was so likeable. In fact all of the cadets were so very likeable. Some of those boys would lie just for the fun of it. There was absolutely no honesty among most of the cadets. I fully believe that a few of the cadets had absolutely no conscience whatsoever. I never understood how to deal with that kind of person, young or old. Perhaps incarceration would be the solution but not in an educational environment where freedom was not a privilege, but a right until it was forfeited. The Commandant of Cadets sometimes sent a cadet to the Port Gibson jail for an overnight holding experience. Most of the time it worked. Expulsion was the ultimate. Here is my dilemma at work again.

I was glad that I was able to bring to the academy a twenty station computer lab in an abandoned classroom. One of my last projects was to relocate a three-story house built in 1910 at a cost of \$1,400, to a location across the highway from the academy campus and near the president's home. It was sound. The house had been an eyesore and blocked the view of the beautiful old brick buildings. The house had many potentials but I did not stay there to carry forth with any project for it. I'm sure it became an asset to the Academy in its new location.



Mary and I had always felt that we were a viable part of the community life, socially, spiritually, and politically. There were so many interests in and about the environs of Port Gibson. The area was a Mecca of Civil War relics, spent bullets and discarded metal buttons and buckles. I got two metal detectors so we could swish and swish those things, sometimes finding more than a pop-top or a coke cap. We got interested in old medicine bottles and found oodles of them discarded into old trash piles, old garbage pits and the very old outdoor toilets. Sure, that was a great place to find discarded bottles but not very happy thoughts of what we were doing. The idea was to find them not broken, or not to break them with the spade. We always wore gloves. We were careful. The satisfaction of finding a whole bottle of the early 1800s or



earlier were great. Cleaned up, they look great. There is even a catalogue for antique or old bottles and some of them are right pricey.

During this old bottle collecting time, we got interested in collecting Avon bottles. Avon had glass bottles of every imaginable thing, tools and vehicles with men's' after-shave, figurines and feminine designed containers for cologne and every imaginable odor and shaped bottle to contain it. We were in Jackson, Miss at the coliseum trade fair one Saturday and found a concessionaire who wanted to get out of the business of Avon bottles. He had more than 400 Avon bottles, all different, and many had the unbroken seal and some had portions of the liquid contents. It was about closing time and I offered \$100 for the entire lot. He grabbed that money so fast I had reservations as to whether I had made a good deal. Oh, surely Charlie, this has to be the deal of a lifetime in Avon bottle sales. We packed the bottles in his boxes and carefully put them in the trunk and in the rear seat area. The boxes filled the car. Before we got to Port Gibson, 50 miles down the Natchez Trace, we both began having headaches. Bad headaches. When we got home, I went over to see Doc Amis. He roared with laughter, telling me it was the mixture of all those Avon bottle contents. We repacked the bottles in tight containers and sealed them tight. The odors still came through. When we got to Panama City, one of the first things I did was to go to the big local flea market where I found a fellow who acted like he had struck it rich to give me \$500 for the lot. I acted indifferent but I was bubbling with joy to never get close to another one of those Avon bottles. We earned that profit.

The adjacent little towns were so interesting. The area is so rich in early frontier history with such men as Andrew Jackson, Aaron Burr, and Gen. Wilkerson. We went to an old antebellum hotel south of Crystal Springs, Miss. that had been converted into a quaint restaurant. Dining was by appointment only and the diners ate in shifts on a schedule. We made reservations and were given a three weeks waiting schedule. We kept it too. We were seated at one of the three Lazy-Susan double-decker dining tables that comfortably seated perhaps twelve diners. The bowls of food were placed on the upper deck and spun around by the diners to serve themselves family style. The upper deck would go this way and that way as the diners took a bowl off, served themselves, and placed it back when they could find a vacant spot. The offerings of food were fabulous and the Lazy Susan was fun. After the diners had mostly finished, the food was removed and desserts, some were a work of art, were placed on the upper level. Now that was a scramble, but there was always enough and more as the servants would serve anyone who may have missed a favorite. We got to meet almost everyone at our huge circular table.

The old, old Grand Gulf cemetery was always of interest. One grave marker wrote of how the sailor buried there had died at sea and was placed in a barrel of rum to preserve him. Despite all of these historic places to visit with fascinating interests, there was an overwhelming negative aspect that nagged at me from deep within. I had no control of the incoming marijuana, as the community students brought the weed to the campus students by the bags full. I was weary of begging money. Having a co-ed boarding school was an almost impossible situation to maintain control of raging teenaged sexual hormones. The cash available did not provide for adequate supervision I had learned ages earlier to never make a policy or rule, unless it could be enforced with

punishment for violators. This was not possible at CHA. My negative feelings were as a laundry list. I never slacked in my duties and responsibilities but my enthusiasm was waning. I talked to the Board of Directors and decided to leave CHA. My resignation was accepted as they gave me a bonus of three months salary and permission to remain in the Academy President's home three months. We just quietly left with dignity no fan fare.

Pleasant Memories



