



# **Sliding Down the Banister of Life**

**A Biography**

**By**

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This work began as a fun thing to recall many of the humorous incidents of my life. Mary and my family urged me to put into writing some of these things that I knew of and often told them about. I only wish my older brother Sonny, were still alive to help me fill-in some of the names and incidences of our childhood days so many yester-years, so long ago, atop York Mountain. He is the only one of the seven children of our family that has been called home to be with the Lord. All of us are now into our seventies and eagerly anticipate the annual weekend of a family reunion we have somewhere that can accommodate about eighty of us. The “Do You Remember When” conversations prevail amidst a lot of laughter about each tale that has been told and retold of our early lives together. We had happy childhood experiences that will live on as long as we can get together to reminisce, share joys and sorrows, and look forward to another year together.

My thoughts have bounced through the years without an organized sense as to the chronology of the events. I have tried to organize these remembrances into somewhat of a sequence of the stages of my life; divided into five chapters. The first chapter is my early childhood life atop York Mountain before I was fifteen years old. Oh, happy days. This is followed by my recollections of the experiences of my high school days in Foley, Alabama and my one-year at Alabama Polytechnic Institute, now known as Auburn University. The third chapter is a recollection of my Air Force career reflecting upon the joys of family life, assignments, duties and some of the events in which I was involved during that career. The fourth chapter is devoted to reflections of retirement after the Air Force career with a new career in education. The fifth and final chapter reflects adventures in other activities, hobbies and life with a growing family of grandchildren.

The experience of writing these events of my life, family, friends and associates has been a nostalgic slide down the banister of life. This has been a family project. Mary has provided encouragement and suggested topics worthy of notation. Tom spent a weekend printing and binding copies to disseminate to my siblings for editing and commentary and provided his website as a central informational data holding center with technical service.. Eddy spent his Christmas holidays transferring hundreds of film slides into scanned digital print. In the final organization, we visited the Tidwells for a week during the New Years holidays. Cammy worked more than 100 hours in cleaning, sorting, scanning, and selecting pictures to be embedded into the script I had written. Forrest provided meals and kitchen goodies while Cammy and I worked with organization. Their sons Josh and Ben provided high-tech assistance. After this was completed and one copy was bound, I urged Mary to spell check for corrections. She got her blue line pencil and began to edit for two weeks. Oh how she turned those pages into blue with corrections. If one doesn't like red or blue corrections, don't give your work to a librarian or English teacher. She did a great job editing. No one wanted to add to or subtract from the script except to verify authenticity and editing corrections. Therefore, I must claim the text and extend an apology for not mentioning those thousands of persons whose lives have vectored with mine, having profound influences with my development and joys of life. The adventures of ones life cannot be retold in a simple document. Please forgive my omissions and commissions of any unintentional offense or error. I trust that you may enjoy reading this work as much as I have enjoyed the research, writing, and working with the family to assemble this work for the pleasure of all who may have an interest.

I have considered calling this work “The Dash”, as seen on many tombstones, but my life is not yet complete and I have much more to add to that dash. I want to retell my family and many friends of yesteryears that I love them, I want to finish many projects I began and have not yet finished, I want to see things, so many things and places yet to be seen, but most of all, I want to continue to be a healthy companion to my beloved wife Mary, until the Lord calls us to come together to be with him. I suppose if my creator would give me another life to live, it would be pretty much the same decisions, except that I would tell, as well as demonstrate to my dear friends that I loved them and cared for their well being. I would try to be a more gentle and compassionate person to all.

All of the accounts of events as told in this biography are true and correct to the best of my recollection and the military special orders directing the events and actions as retold herein, during my Air Force career. My mind is filled with so many fond recollections of relatives, friends and acquaintances; it is regrettable that the constraints of time and space do not permit amplification of those memorable experiences and relationships.

The Southeastern Native American Creek Indians believed that a person has three lives. The first life is that which is lived within the mother acquiring her spirit of life. The second is the life we know, of a person through interchanges of actions. The third life is that which passes through that veil between life and death into a new spirit form. As long as the person of the second life is remembered, the spirit lives on until that one is no longer remembered. The spirit is then passed into an eternity of anonymity. I have garnered so much from our culture and society, and have left so little. My greatest gift back to society has been that of being a father to three beautiful persons, two sons and a daughter who embrace those virtues and values their Mother and I have shared and embodied to them. My prayer is that their lives may be more salient, that their dash may be filled to overflowing with grace and goodness and that others may find refuge in the long shadow cast by their lives of service, honor, duty and dignity.



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**Charles E. Bryant**