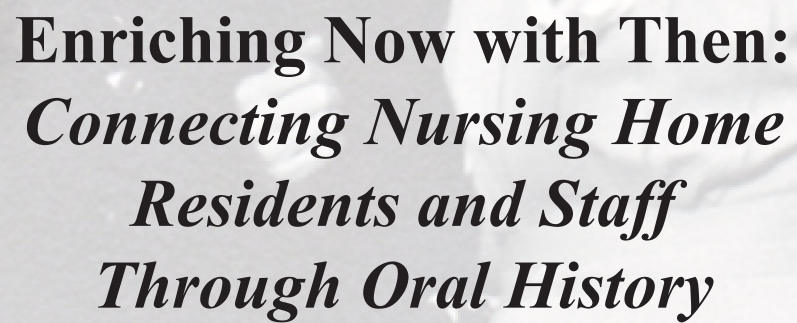

Enriching Now with Then:
Connecting Nursing Home Residents and Staff Through Oral History

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ENRICHING NOW WITH THEN:

CONNECTING NURSING HOME RESIDENTS AND STAFF THROUGH ORAL HISTORY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research report presents findings on how increased staff knowledge of nursing home residents' pasts may improve communications and relations between residents and staff (i.e., nurse aides and nurses), and, possibly, improve job satisfaction. As part of this research, oral histories were successfully conducted with 13 residents from the nursing home unit of a CCRC in southwestern Ohio, with three-page written versions of those histories enlarged, laminated and posted on the walls outside their rooms for staff members to see and read at their leisure. Most stories centered on single slices of life (e.g., an overnight train ride, first job as a teenager, sandlot baseball) and all recounted events occurring in adolescence or early adulthood. After all the stories had been accessible to staff for more than a month, both residents and staff were interviewed regarding their recent communications and any effect the stories may have had on their mutual relations. Key findings include:

1. Despite cognitive impairments, including mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease among four of the residents, 13 of 15 participants – including all 5 of those with Alzheimer's and/or other mild/moderate to severe cognitive difficulties – were able to share enough details, and long-term memories to form a coherent story.

2. Nineteen of 28 staff members had conversations with the residents about their stories; seven of 13 residents reported having related conversations with staff.

3. All 13 residents enjoyed sharing their stories; 12 wished to share another.

4. Eighteen of 28 nurses and nurse aides (14, "very much"; 4, "somewhat") stated that knowing more about the residents' pasts through the stories helped make their jobs more satisfying and/or helped them to do their jobs better.

5. Fourteen of 28 nurses and nurse aides indicated that knowing more about the residents' pasts through the stories served to improve their perceptions of and/or relations with residents and more closely connected them to the residents.

6. Five of 13 residents noticed improved relations with staff members after making their stories.

7. Eleven of 13 residents said they would like staff to know more about their pasts.

8. Twenty-seven of 28 nurses and nurse aides (and all five key informants) said they would like to know more about the pasts of the residents they care for.

9. Though nearly all residents and staff said they would like to talk more and listen more (respectively) about the residents' pasts, nine of 13 residents responded "not at all" when surveyed about how often they talk about their pasts with staff.

10. All five key informants from the CCRC's administrative staff perceived, in addition to their own increased job satisfaction and/or better job performance, a positive effect on the participating residents' self-esteem and well-being.

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INTRODUCTION

Enriching Now with Then tests how increased staff knowledge of nursing home residents' pasts may affect relations between staff members and the residents they care for and, possibly, improve job satisfaction, specifically among nurse aides and nurses.

The study came about, in part, due to previous observations over the years while visiting others in nursing homes, noting how little nurse aides and nurses seemed to know about the pasts of those they cared for.

Staff members generally knew what certain residents wanted on his or her hamburger, or what TV or radio shows particular residents liked to watch, or listen to, but surprisingly few appeared to be aware of much, if anything, about the residents' earlier years, the time of life when they were about the same age as the staff caring for them.

As we move forward in an era of increased focus on resident-centered, more personalized care in nursing facilities… ways to improve relations between staff and residents… become all the more important to explore…

It seemed that knowing more about the history of the residents – that the man in Room 219 had two purple hearts from Saipan in WW II, that the woman in Room 180 taught piano and violin – would give staff members a more personal connection to them, in short, have a humanizing effect that would lead to better communications, relations and overall care for the residents. It was also theorized that understanding more about the residents would make the jobs of nurse aides and nurses more interesting, satisfying and rewarding.

The hypothesis seemed well worth investigating, and it is hoped this research validates that assumption. For as we move forward in an era of increased focus on resident-centered, more personalized care in nursing facilities, at a time when annual turnover among nurses and nurse aides in these facilities is routinely over 50 percent, ways to improve relations between staff and residents and increase job satisfaction among nurses and nurse aides most surely become all the more important to explore, document and explain.

LITERATURE REVIEW

BENEFITS OF ORAL HISTORY

The therapeutic benefits of reminiscence for older persons have been documented and espoused by a growing number of researchers since Dr. Robert Butler published his seminal findings on reminiscence and life review (Butler, 1963), two of the more prominent among them being Faith Gibson (2004), and Edmund Sherman (1991).

Though reminiscence will, obviously, appeal more to some than others (and those not professionally trained as therapists should always respect an individual's wishes

not to explore certain topics), this research was encouraged, in part, by Gibson's observation that: "It is better to take a risk than to sit by and watch apathy, fear, sensory deprivation, loneliness and helplessness continue in older adults" (Gibson, 2004, p. xvi).

That philosophy provides a good starting point to the particular benefits of reminiscence/oral history endeavors with older persons. First and foremost, reminiscence provides an accessible, meaningful social activity for people who, due to frailty and short-term memory impairment, may suffer from isolation, loneliness and poor self-esteem. All that's required is someone who wants to talk – and a listener.

"Reminiscence is particularly valuable because it …. is usually an acceptable and easy way to establish initial contact and to convey genuine interest and empathy for others … reminiscence deepens relationships and demonstrates respect for and appreciation of other people and the life each has lived."

As reminiscence involves long-term rather than short-term memory, it is an activity usually open to those with moderate Alzheimer's disease and other cognitive impairments. As Butler writes in his 2002 essay on *Age, Death and Life Review*, "In late life, people have a particularly vivid imagination and memory of the past. Often, they can recall with sudden and remarkable clarity early life events. They may experience a renewed ability to free-associate and to bring up material from the unconscious" (Butler, 2002, p. 1).

And even though reminiscence involves a naturally introspective element, Sherman, in *"Reminiscence and the Self in Old Age,"* stresses that it also has "an inherently communal and discursive aspect that … flourishes in the company of others" (Sherman 1991, p.8). Gibson adds: "Reminiscence is particularly valuable because it …. is usually an acceptable and easy way to establish initial contact and to convey genuine interest and empathy for others … reminiscence deepens relation-ships and demonstrates respect for and appreciation of other people and the life each has lived" (Gibson, 2004, p. xv). Reminiscence connects the talker and the listener in a very real, meaningful way, and it can do so in a very short amount of time.

As well as connecting one to others, reminiscence helps connect, or re-connect, the participant to himself or herself, serving as a vehicle for self-integration. Sherman notes that reminiscence is valued by many gerontologists because it "facilitates an introspective and integrative life review process in elderly individuals" (Sherman, 1991, p. 9).

Sherman and Gibson both value reminiscence as a way of boosting one's self-esteem, essentially by reminding one's self and others of past accomplishments, of the fact that a person now old and frail was once strong, handsome, beautiful, intelligent, widely admired, heroic, etc. As

Gibson notes, "Recalling their personal life stories reminds them and others of each person's singular identity and value as an individual" (Gibson, 2004, p. 31).

Reminiscence holds the possibility of assuring people that their lives were and are meaningful and of importance - to themselves and to others.

Perhaps most importantly, at a time in life when some may question their worth, reminiscence holds the possibility of assuring people that their lives were and are meaningful and of importance - to themselves and to others. The simple fact that another person is interested enough to ask another what his or her life was like, let alone put the response down in writing, is an affirmation in and of itself that a person's life is of some interest and value.

Further, reminiscence may serve as a beneficial life course/life review function as promoted by Butler almost 50 years ago and re-emphasized in *Age, Death and Life Review*, wherein he wrote: "Over time, my patients taught me that memories, reminiscence, and nostalgia all play a part in the process (of life review). Far from living in the past or exhibiting 'wandering of the mind,' as was commonly thought, older people were engaged in the important psychological task of making sense of the life they had lived" (Butler, p. 2).

Gibson reinforces that sentiment, emphasizing that by telling their stories to other people older persons consolidate their sense of personal identity; and "by reminding themselves of who they used to be, they retain a stronger sense of self in the present. ... Memory and identity are inextricably linked, and each person's sense of identity provides a sense of continuity through time" (Gibson, p. 31).

SHARED ORAL HISTORY

While the therapeutic value of reminiscence for older persons is supported by scores of researchers in addition to Butler, Gibson and Sherman, the benefits of such reminiscence when shared with others who care for older persons in nursing facilities have been only minimally observed and recorded. An extensive literature review on the subject uncovered only one related study, "Audience-Based Reminiscence Therapy Intervention: Effects on the Morale and Attitudes of Nursing Home Residents and Staff" (Goldwasser & Auerbach, 1996).

This research, conducted in 1996, did not pertain to written reminiscences, but involved 36 nursing home residents and 27 nurse aides who sat in on (or remained absent from as part of a control group) single 45-minute resident reminiscence sessions and single 45-minute sessions with residents focusing on their present concerns and situations.

The research found that randomly selected nurse aides who were present while residents were interviewed about the past or present "demonstrated significant improvements in general attitude toward those interviewed and job satisfaction compared to

(staff) who were not present" (Goldwasser & Auerbach, 1996, p. 101).

The improved attitudes were "irrespective of interview formats" (present-focused or past-focused). However, the interview formats in this research did make a difference when it came to staff perceptions regarding residents being friendly and less hostile. The nurse aides who listened in during present-focused and reminiscence sessions perceived the residents "as less hostile and friendlier" compared with residents whom they did not listen to, and this was even more the case with reminiscence than present-focused sessions.

Interestingly, when resident views toward staff were measured, "significant positive effects on the residents' morale and attitudes toward staff" occurred only when staff were present for the reminiscence sessions (Goldwasser & Auerbach, 1996, p. 101). That is, nursing home residents' attitudes toward the aides who care for them improved simply because the aides had been present for 45 minutes or so as they shared a bit about their pasts.

Having the nurse aides present for present-focused interviews, however, did not elicit the same positive attitudes from the residents, suggesting that some type of bonding mechanism may be at work when parts of one's past are made available to another.

In the discussion section of the research, the authors stress that while the reminiscence intervention did not affect residents' self-concept, it clearly did improve the residents' morale and attitude towards nursing staff. That is a finding made all the more significant, as the authors wrote in 1996, because no previous studies had examined the effects of reminiscence shared by older persons with the nursing staff who care for them.

METHODS

OVERVIEW

The author of this study conducted one-on-one reminiscence sessions with 15 residents in the health care unit (nursing home) of a southwestern Ohio CCRC. The reminiscence sessions yielded brief biographies accompanied by two-page page slice-of-life stories (e.g., first job, family holidays, summer pastimes). The biographies/stories, which followed an "as told to" format but listed each resident as author of his or her own story, were laminated and placed on the walls outside or inside residents respective rooms, plainly visible to staff and visitors (See Appendix A). Directly before each reminiscence session, participants were asked questions (See Appendix B) regarding how often they discussed their pasts with staff; how much they felt staff members knew about them; and whether they wished that staff members knew more about their pasts.

After each story had been up on the walls for at least a month, residents as well as 28 nurses and nurse aides (See Appendices B & C) and five key informants were interviewed with a set of questions regarding any change/improvement in perceptions of resident/staff attitudes and

relations. The surveys for residents contained additional questions on their experience of relaying and sharing their stories, and the surveys of staff contained additional questions addressing the possible relationship between knowing more about residents and job satisfaction. The research also included in-depth interviews with key informants at the CCRC (administrators, social workers, activity directors, see Key Informants on pages 14 and 15).

Signed permission statements to use residents' stories and confidential survey responses from both residents and staff (including key informants) were procured before interviews/reminiscences and surveys commenced.

PARTICIPANTS

RESIDENTS

Fifteen resident participants were selected semi-randomly, with staff input and a goal of choosing residents who might benefit most from social stimulation and reminiscing, regardless - except in extreme cases - of cognitive difficulties and short-term memory problems. In two cases, hearing impairments were successfully addressed with special audio equipment. Ten of the participating residents were female, and five were male. Of the 13 from whom stories were actually obtained and made available, eight were female. The ages of the participants ranged from 77 to 101 years, with most in their mid to late 80s. Of the 15, five were in the mid to moderate stages of Alzheimer's disease, and more than half had some cognitive impairment. The length of time participating residents had been at the facility ranged from four months to four years, with the median length of stay being roughly two years.

STAFF

Eighteen nurse aides (17 of them female) were selected at random (and according to availability) by nursing supervisors to participate in the research. Twelve worked the day shift, and six worked the evening shift (6 p.m. to 6 a.m.) Their length of employment at the CCRC ranged from three weeks to 15 years. The average (mean) length of employment among the aides was 34 months; and the median was 18 months.

Additionally, 10 nurses were selected at random (five from the day shift; five from the night shift) by their supervisors and by the researcher (according to availability) for voluntary participation. Of the 10 nurses, eight were female. Their length of employment ranged from three months to 13 years. The average length of employment among the nurses was 62 months; and the median was 42 months.

All were aware that an oral history project was being conducted in their facility, and that related stories had been placed outside (or, in two cases, inside) residents' rooms, but none were aware that they would later be asked to take part in the survey or were in any way compelled to have read any of the stories before being interviewed.

KEY INFORMANTS

Five key informants, all female, were selected by the researcher for interviews after the reminiscence stories had been placed on the walls for at least a month and after all residents, nurses and nurse aides had been interviewed. Their employment at the CCRC ranged from one year to 26 years, with a median employment length of four years. They were selected primarily for their positions at the facility (director of social services; director of nursing; director of resident programs; a resident wellness coordinator; and a resident wellness program director), which gave each a specialized overview of residents, staff and staff/resident relations. The five key informants were made aware of the general intent of the research while it was in progress. All were questioned individually and in private, with confidentiality assured regarding their answers. The questions posed to the key informants examined their general knowledge of residents' pasts, but were mainly designed to elicit open-ended responses assessing their view of the overall benefits (or lack thereof) they had observed regarding the oral history project, its possible affects on residents and staff and possible influence on resident/staff relations.

REMINISCENCE SESSIONS

All reminiscence sessions with residents were conducted in private, one-on-one interviews. Detailed notes were taken in lieu of tape recording to promote informality in conversation. Sessions sufficient for gathering basic biographical information and short, linear narratives ranged from single two-hour sessions to as many as five sessions lasting from one and one-half to three hours each. Sessions were prefaced with questions regarding how often participants discussed their pasts with staff; how much they felt staff members knew about them; and if they wished that staff knew more about their pasts (see Appendix B).

After these preliminary questions, reminiscence sessions generally began with talk about the residents' childhoods, parents, schools, special talents/abilities and pleasant memories from their adolescence. Each was asked what he or she thought to be the most interesting/special thing about them.

The reminiscence sessions yielded brief biographies accompanied by photographs and two-page page stories (e.g., first job, family holidays, summer pastimes). The subject matter for the stories was arrived at through brief, introductory conversations in which the researcher probed for aspects of the residents' younger lives that they felt were pleasurable and interesting to recall and discuss. All stories related to positive experiences in the residents' lives, with most pertaining to the residents' adolescence.

The resultant biographies/stories were written up by the researcher, featuring an "as told to" format that required final approval by the residents themselves (and, sometimes, residents' family members) and listed each resident as author of his or her own story. The stories were then laminated

and placed on the walls outside or inside residents respective rooms (Appendix A), plainly visible to staff and visitors. In a few instances, family members or staff with knowledge of certain aspects of the residents' lives, would add details and/or points of clarification in the stories, which ensured greater accuracy and veracity in the final product. Also, in many cases, extra copies (both laminated and electronic via e-mail) of the residents' stories were supplied to interested family members and friends of the residents. Directly before each reminiscence session, participants were asked three questions regarding: how often they discussed their pasts with staff; how much they felt staff members knew about them; and if they wished that staff knew more about their pasts (Appendix B).

INTERVIEW SESSIONS

All interviews were conducted in private (with the exception of two nurses who preferred to be interviewed together), with assurances that all answers would be confidential. Residents were asked additional questions regarding the actual telling and sharing of their stories, and staff, including five key informants, were surveyed regarding the possible correlation between knowing more about residents and job performance and satisfaction. As with the oral histories, detailed notes were taken in lieu of tape recordings to promote informality in conversation.

The residents' views on reminiscing and sharing their stories with others in this research provide interesting additional testament to the value of reminiscence of older persons in nursing homes. But, as the value of such reminiscence, in and of itself, was considered a given at the start of this project - and, considering the paucity of research regarding the benefits of staff knowledge of residents' pasts in nursing homes - the answers to the questions regarding staff/resident relations in Appendices D & E (along with the verbatim observations/elaborations of the residents and staff, represent the core purpose and findings of this research.

FINDINGS

RESIDENTS

As previously described, the 13 participating residents who had their short biographies, photos and stories placed upon the walls outside their rooms, were all asked three questions as a preface to their reminiscence sessions. Residents had three Likert-Scale answer options (A lot/ Some/ Not at all. See Appendices B and D) to each question, followed by an opportunity to elaborate on the third ques*tion,* if they so chose.

1. **Do you talk about your past much with nurses/nurse aides?**

Nine of the 13 residents responded "not at all" to the first question; and four responded "some." None of the residents felt that he or she talked "a lot" about their pasts with staff members. Representative

elaborations on this prefatory question include:

Once in a great while. Not that much.

Sometimes the girls (nurse aides/ nurses) will ask me for advice, maybe about getting married, and I'll tell them a little about myself, my past, and draw on my own experience. But, usually, there's not much time to talk at any length about things. They're very busy. They really work hard. When we talk, it's usually about their work, their tasks. Once in a blue moon, we might talk about things from long ago. But, mainly, we talk about the old days with people our own age … the other residents.

2. Do you feel that the nurses/nurse aides know who you really are?

Six residents felt that staff did not know who they really were as people; five felt that staff knew "some" about who they were; and two residents stated they felt that staff knew "a lot" about who they really were. Representative elaborations include:

Well, I think they know a little about where I'm from, and how old I am, but, no, they don't ask about my feelings and things like that. They never ask that kind of stuff.

That's a hard question. I think they know me pretty well as who I am now, but not who I was as a child. Or as a teacher. I guess I might say about 50 percent of them know who I am inside, and about 50 percent don't know and probably don't care.

3. Do you wish the nurses/nurse aides knew more about your past?

Nine residents said they "somewhat" wished staff knew more about their pasts; two said they "very much" wished staff knew more about their pasts; and two said they didn't care ("no") if staff knew more about them or not. Representative elaborations include:

Maybe I wish they knew a little more about me. I'd like them to know how hard I worked and how much I cared for all the children I looked after.

I guess I wish some of them knew more about me. I had a lot of experiences growing up, as a wife, and as a teacher. I've had an interesting life. And I love to talk. I love to share about myself.

After each story had been up on the walls for at least a month, residents were surveyed with three three-point Likert-Scale questions (Very much/ Some/ Not at all) combined with open-ended follow-ups regarding their experience in sharing their stories as well any change/improvement in perceptions of resident/staff attitudes and relations. Three questions pertained to the telling and sharing of the stories, and two questions related to perceptions of resident/staff relations (Appendices B and D).

The three questions pertaining to the residents' telling and sharing of their stories (Appendix B, questions 4, 5 & 6) were:

4. Did you enjoy telling your story?

Ten of the 13 residents said they "very much" enjoyed telling their stories, and three said they enjoyed it "somewhat." Representative elaborations include:

Yes, I enjoyed it very much. I was surprised at all the people and places that I could remember. Those were pleasant, happy times – happy memories for me. It was nice to think about all that again. I hadn't for 10 or 20 years, I'd say.

Well, I like to talk about my childhood, if people will listen. Everybody likes to talk about themselves, don't they? And I like to think about the past. I had an interesting childhood; came from a big family. It's a way of making sure that all that stays close to me; that the people from those times stay close to my heart. They're all right over there (pointing to photos on her table). And I like remembering about my children's childhood days, too. I had four great, very talented kids who've given me lots of happy memories.

5. Do you like having your story available for others to read?

Seven stated they "very much" enjoyed having their stories available on the walls for others to read; six said they enjoyed it "somewhat." Representative elaborations include:

It makes me proud. A good number of people have read the story and came up to talk to me about it: residents, staff, visitors and family. I'm very proud of my family, the way I was raised, and it makes me happy to share that with other people. I like them knowing that part of me.

I like making available a part of my life that has passed, or is passing, away. Many young people have probably never been on a train, at least not an overnight one. I've had a pretty interesting life that I enjoy sharing with people, letting them get to know me.

6. Would you like to tell another story?

Ten said that they would "very much" like to tell another story, two stated that they would "somewhat" enjoy telling another story, and one stated, "No, one is enough." (It should also be noted that two of the initially participating residents did not enjoy the reminiscence sessions enough to want to continue, and that their answers could, thusly, be inferred as "no" to questions one – and, perhaps, two – above.) Representative elaborations include:

Yes, I'd enjoy that very much. I'd like to talk more about my time in the navy. Any time we bring out things from the past and share ... I think it's a good idea that we take the time to know more about each other. And older people are such a storehouse of knowledge and experience. It's good to share it while it's still there. I feel I've had an interesting life and I'd like to pass that on to others.

The two questions related to the residents' perceptions of resident/staff relations (Appendix B questions 7 & 8) were posed in a combination three-point Likert-Scale and open-ended format (Several/ One or two/ None at all and Very much/ Some/ Not at all) and are as follows:

7. Have you had conversations about your reminiscence story with any of the nurse aides or nurses?

Seven of the 13 participating residents said that the posting of their stories on the walls outside their rooms had led to conversations with staff about the stories and the residents' pasts. Four said they had had "several" such conversations; and three said they had had "one or two" such conversations. Six residents responded "none" when asked if the stories had led to any related conversations with staff.

8. Have you noticed any difference in your relations with the nurse aides or nurses now that they know a little more about your past?

Eight residents stated that the posting of their stories had led to no difference ("None") in their relations with staff; while five residents said that they had noticed "some" positive difference in their relations with staff. None of the residents stated that making their stories available to the nurses and nurse aides had "very much" changed their relations with staff. Representative elaboration on how residents perceived changes (or no changes) in resident/staff relations include:

Some. In a general way. I couldn't say "no," because there have been too many aides who've come up and talked to me about the story. Some seem to respect me a little more, though I can't be sure why I say that. Just a sense I have. Maybe because they didn't realize I'd had so many experiences. Certain things they've said; certain things they've done.

Not really. All the aides have always been very kind, considerate and helpful – before my story was on the wall and after.

Yes, a little. At least it seems that way. We might talk a little more.

Staff (Nurses/Nurse Aides)

After all reminiscence stories had been posted for at least one month, 18 nurse aides (12 from the day shift; 6 from the night shift) and 10 nurses (5 day shift; 5 night shift) were interviewed regarding their knowledge of residents' pasts and how the availability of the reminiscence stories may have affected their perceptions and relations with the residents, and, possibly, their job satisfaction.

Both the aides and nurses were given a combination Likert-Scale and open-ended answer survey with seven questions (see appendix C):

1. **How much do you know about residents' pasts? (A lot/Some/Not much)**

Of the 28 nurses and nurse aides, 20 said they knew "some" about the pasts of the residents they cared for, four said "between a lot and some"; three said "not much," and one said that she knew "a lot." When asked to specify the kinds of things they knew, most answered that their knowledge pertained to basic information, such as if residents were married, had children, where they were from, education levels and occupations.

2. **How do you get to know about residents' pasts?**

All of the aides said they had gained most of their information from talking to the residents in the course of their work. Other sources of information included care cards (basic information from residents' charts), "talking with family members" and "talking with other staff members." (While the nurses usually mentioned knowing the same kinds of things as the aides about the residents, their sources of information more often included family members, other staff and medical charts.)

3. **Have you read any of the residents' stories? (All/ Several /One or Two /None) Did you enjoy reading them?**

Regarding the number of nurses and nurse aides who had read the reminiscence stories placed on the walls, 19 said they had read "several," five had read "one or two," three had read "none," and one said she had "read them all" of the stories. Elaborations on the above question (3) from both the aides and the nurses were very similar, and include:

(Aide): It's especially cool to see who these people were in relation to who they are (now). You look at them and it's just amazing to think of some of the lives they have led.

(Nurse): Yes, it's nice to know more about them and their lives when they were my age now. We get so caught up in the job sometimes, so caught up in how these people are now. It's good to remember who they were and not take them for granted. The stories help keep the humanity of these people I work with in the front of my mind.

4. **Have you had any conversations about the stories with the residents? (Several/One or Two/None)**

As to the number of conversations spawned by the stories, ten nurses/nurse aides said that they had "several" conversations with residents regarding the stories; nine said that they had "one or two" related conversations; and nine stated that they had no conversations with residents relating to their stories. (The aides, presumably because they have significantly more one-on-one contact with the residents, were more than twice as likely as nurses to have had at least some conversation about

the stories with the residents.) Representative elaborations include.

(Aide): Several. Probably every time I see them, the ones who can still talk easily. They brighten up every time I mention the stories. Sometimes they'll bring the stories up to me.

(Nurse): One or two. It's wonderful for them to have someone to talk to about their pasts. They talk with a good deal of nostalgia, and you could sense their pride in their stories.

5. Have the reminiscence stories changed anything regarding your perceptions of or relations with the residents? (Very Much/Some/Not at all)

In response to any change in perceptions of and relations with residents related to reading the stories, 14 of the nurses and nurse aides said that the stories had either "some what" (11) or "very much" (3) positively influenced their perceptions/ relations with residents, while 14 stated that the stories had no ("none") affect on their perceptions/relations with residents. (Answers of the nurses and nurse aides were very similar to this question, with exactly half in each group indicating that the stories had no influence on their perceptions of and/or relations with residents.) Representative elaborations include:

(Nurse): No, I love them all. They all have something very special about them.

(Aide): Somewhat. It helps you think of them in a different light, as a different person – different than how they are now. It makes me think, Wow, they were just like me once.

(Aide) Not my perceptions, but it helps when you're working with them to relate the past. I like just knowing more about them. It gives me things to talk about with them. It helps in my job. It reminds me that all these people have been through so much. That he or she is not just an old person. It helps remind me to always respect them. It makes them more human.

(Aide): Very much. Yes, the stories make me feel more comfortable around the residents. The stories are good conversation starters. And they make you want to make that person feel like the person they were. It brings that back to them. They will talk way more if you bring up their pasts.

(Nurse): Not really my perception – not on a deep level. But, yes, I'd have to say that knowing that a certain resident was a Navy Wave changed the way I look at her. It kind of personalizes the relationship. I've been focusing on the job quite a bit, but it's nice to have that extra information. When you're in there doing some rather personal things with them, it's nice to get them talking about themselves and take their minds off of things. It lessens the anxiety.

6. Does knowing more about the residents' pasts affect how you feel about your job? (Very Much/Some/Not at all)

Pertaining to how knowing more about residents' pasts affects the way the nurses' and nurse aides feel about their jobs, answers among the nurses and aides followed a common pattern and percentage: 18 stated that having read the stories and knowing more about the residents' pasts had either "very much" (14) or "somewhat" (4) positively affected the way they performed or felt about their jobs. Ten said that such information had "no" bearing on how they performed or felt about their jobs. Still, 27 of the 28 nurses and nurse aides surveyed said that they would like to know more about the pasts of the residents for whom they care ("very much," 20; "somewhat," 6; "between "somewhat and very much," 1; with only one saying she did not care to know more about the pasts of the residents. Representative elaborations include:

(Nurse): No, the job is rewarding in and of itself. One of the reasons I do this is after my mom had a stroke, I saw the need and the value.

(Aide): Very much, because it makes them (the residents) more of a person and less of a job. It makes you more sensitive to them.

(Aide): Yes, very much. Especially on the hard days, when you are busy and someone is not cooperating. You can think a little more about the person inside. You keep reminding yourself that this is a person – someone's mother or father; once someone's child who has feelings, a person who has done and experienced great things with his or her life. It reminds you why you're here – to help make their lives better any way you can.

(Nurse): Very much. It makes them go from being a number (i.e., "the lady in Room 189") to being a person. I hate to put it that way, but it's true. We don't always get the time to know people the way I'd like to.

(Nurse): Very much. It makes you understand what makes them (the residents) the way they are. It's not that I don't think of them as a person, but knowing more about them makes me think of them more like a family member, like this could be my grandma. It makes you more tolerant. More compassionate.

7. Would you like to know more about the pasts of the residents you work with?

Nearly all of the 28 nurses and nurse aides surveyed said that they would like to know more about the pasts of the residents for whom they care ("very much," 20; "somewhat," 6; "between "somewhat and very much," 1; and only one saying she did not care ("No") to know more about the pasts of the residents. Representative elaborations include:

(Aide): Somewhat. It's nice to connect them to an actual background, and it gives me a better connection to them.

(Nurse): Very much. Our generation is missing out on a lot of things not knowing more about where they come from and what things were like in the past. I was raised near my grandparents, and I feel very lucky that way. Kids today don't even know their own parents. A lot is lost by not knowing the older generations. They have so much to teach us, especially regarding the work ethic.

(Nurse): Very much. It gives you knowledge and a better sense of who you're working with – who these people were. It helps you relate to who these people are. It makes me feel closer to them.

8. Additional comments?

(Aide): I think talking about the past to residents, letting them know that you're interested in who they are and the times they lived in, can really brighten their day. I've seen it for myself.

ADMINISTRATIVE

KEY INFORMANTS

After all reminiscence stories had been outside residents' rooms for at least one month, and all 18 nurse aides and 10 nurses were surveyed, five administrators were interviewed (from 10 to 20 minutes, each) to elicit their views of the oral history project and possible benefits for the residents and staff. All five indicated they had "a lot" of knowledge about residents' pasts, given their positions and roles in intake and assessment meetings with the residents and their families, and all had read most or all of the stories. Each shared overall positive observations regarding the research, elaborating as follows on their knowledge of residents' pasts and how the availability of the reminiscence stories may have affected their perceptions and relations with the residents, and, possibly, their job satisfaction.

Key Informant I:

I think this project has been awesome – wonderful for everyone who works here. It helps the staff know the residents better as people just like them, and it lets the residents know that somebody cares about them. The (residents') families, too. It tells them that we care about who their moms and dads and grandparents are – and who they were. Also, I see a lot of pride in those stories from the residents. Many of them have led very interesting, accomplished lives, and I think it makes them feel good having it in writing and that others have a chance to know about them.

Key Informant II:

The stories bring them (the residents) to life. It adds another dimension to them. It's expanded my perceptions of them and, as far as relations, it's given me conversation starters. I love my job … and I

make it my business to know about these people. They like to be reminded about who they were. And I take what I know about them and incorporate it into activities. I let them know that I know they have a special talent or ability, like in music or in art. It gives them pride. The more I know about them, the better, the better I can do my job.

Key Informant III:

I've read most of the stories and had several conversations about them, especially with Rosie. The stories have enriched the work experience here. They give us a starting point for conversation, help build rapport between the staff and residents, which also builds trust and leads to better relations (between residents and staff). The residents just beam when you bring up (their stories). It's been good for staff, too. I've observed it, and some of the aides have told me how helpful the stories have been in their rapport and relations with the residents.

Key Informant IV:

I've read all of the stories, and I really enjoyed the detail. It's part of my job to know these people, especially those without family or friends or visitors. We get to know them better, and we become their families. I admire and respect all of our residents, but I did find myself admiring them even more after learning about some of the things they did. (e.g., I never knew Emily was a Navy Wave). I'd very much like to know more about all of our residents. It's interesting and it helps me do my job. It's been great for them (the residents), having someone with the time to listen at length to them and let them know you care who they are and who they were. It's important. It means so much to them.

Key Informant V:

I've read several of the stories and enjoyed them because they paint such a nice, detailed picture of the person. It gives you another angle as to who (the residents) are. Things have come out (in the stories) about them that we didn't necessarily know. Who they are now is far removed from who they were. Knowing about them (in the past) gives me common ground (with them), a connection. It makes my job more interesting, more satisfying. Knowing who they were helps us care for them better as individuals. It helps us interact with them on a more personal level. These people are like our families, and we would like to know as much about them as we possibly can. This has been wonderful. You can see it on their faces. It's made them (the residents) feel good. It's made them feel important.

DISCUSSION

To conduct research in the social sciences is often to explicate the obvious, and this study may well be a case in point. Yes, it is generally interesting to learn of someone's past, and, of course, knowing more about a person does tend to strengthen

the connection to him or her, making working with the individual(s) more interesting. Simple concepts, agreed.

But in such simple concepts something profound is often rooted.

It is, in fact, deeply and broadly significant whenever one human being becomes more tolerant, more compassionate towards another, as, it is hoped, this research has borne out.

It may seem a small thing to offer small portals into a person's life, shine a little light on an older individual's adolescence, provide a few conversation starters, build some easygoing banter, facilitate and ease certain work tasks to make the day pass more pleasantly. But it is certainly no small thing when all of that adds up to people in the later, too often lonely and vulnerable, years of their lives feeling a little more personal interest, "a little more respect" coming their way, knowing that others have learned from their experiences and feeling better about themselves because of it. And it's no small thing to enrich the work lives of those caring for them and make their jobs "more meaningful," "more satisfying"; no trivial matter at all to help an aide "feel better about what I'm doing."

It is immensely meaningful that at least half of the staff members in this study noted feeling a more personalized relationship with the residents, that many felt more deeply sensitized to their humanity.

It is, in fact, deeply and broadly significant whenever one human being becomes more tolerant, more compassionate towards another, as, it is hoped, this research has borne out in the statements of the nurses, nurse aides and key informants in this research. It is immensely meaningful that at least half of the staff members in this study noted feeling a more personalized relationship with the residents, that many felt more deeply sensitized to their humanity, that "this is someone's mother or father, once someone's child … who has done or experienced great things with his or her life"; "that he or she is not just an old person"; that, "Wow, they were just like me."

On the face of it, that's another seemingly simple concept, but, in employment settings where people *are* the work, the task at hand, it bears continual repeating, as evidenced by elaborations from a nurse and nurse aide in this research: A) "*It makes them go from being a number, the lady in Room 189, to being a person."* B*) "It makes them (the residents) more of a person and less of a job."* Even for nursing home staff whose labor with the residents is not of the physical variety, whose job it is, indeed, to get to know and better understand

the residents, keeping in mind the rich and varied pasts of the older people they work with can be difficult. As nursing home psychologist and noted author Ira Rosofsky observes on his own tendency to overlook the younger lives of the older residents he treats, "I have to remind myself that I'm seeing only a slice of life … the last slice" (Rosofsky, 2009, p. 82).

Throughout the findings, the plain-spoken eloquence of the nurses and nurse aides – accented by that of the key informants – emphasizes the importance of being so reminded and illustrates the observation of noted reminiscence researcher Faith Gibson, quoted in the introductory pages of this study: "Reminiscence deepens relationships and demonstrates respect for and appreciation of other people and the life each has lived" (Gibson, 2004, p. xv). And, reminiscence connects the talker and the listener in a very real, meaningful way. Although the "listener" has become the "reader" in this research, the therapeutically connecting result appears to be very much the same.

The findings in this research also support (and are supported by) those of Goldwasser and Auerbach cited in the literature review of this study. Goldwasser and Auerbach wrote that while both present-based and past-based interviews with nursing home residents had positive affects on staff perceptions of residents, the past-based interviews yielded the best results regarding staff perceptions of residents as "less hostile and friendlier." Regardless of temporal format, Goldwasser and Auerbach observed, "Procedures that involve personalizing staff involvement with residents have positive effects on these staff members" (Goldwasser & Auerbach, 1996, p. 111).

Accordingly, similar findings pertaining to enhanced job satisfaction in this study, in which 64% of staff (and all five key informants) noted a positive influence on their jobs, may be particularly relevant given the continuing problem of nursing personnel turnover, which is especially prevalent among nurse aides, 66 percent annual turnover rate, nationwide, and 69 percent annual turnover rate in Ohio (American Health Care Association, 2008).

The subject of nursing home staff turnover seems particularly relevant to this research due to the type of nursing home it was conducted in. It is an upscale facility with nurse and nurse aide seniority levels (average length of employment levels approximately five years and three years, respectively) indicating turnover rates far lower than the previously cited Ohio and national averages (69% and 66%, respectively). It is thus reasonable to assume that the benefits of this shared oral history project would be even more pronounced in a nursing facility where staff, due to shorter terms of employment, would be less likely to know about the pasts of the residents.

While this study hoped to identify an even tighter link between increased staff knowledge of residents' pasts and improved staff-resident relations, the fact that half of the 28 nurses and nurse aides interviewed acknowledged a positive influence in perceptions of and/or relations with residents is encouraging. Further, it is the

researcher's view that the percentage of staff acknowledging a positive change in relations/perceptions regarding residents would have been significantly higher had the question been posed less specifically.

To their credit, many of the aides and nurses answering this question emphasized that their sense of professionalism and spirit of equanimity toward residents kept them from altering their views and treatment of residents (e.g. "No, it doesn't change how I relate to, or perceive, the residents. I treat them the same. I keep things professional.") The question was not designed to elicit answers regarding judgmental views and/or treatment of the residents, but, apparently, was open to that interpretation. Problems with the wording of this question also seem evident when taking into account the somewhat contradictory answers of several staff members to this question in relation to their answers to other questions. For example, while only half stated that reading the stories had led to some change in perception or relations with the residents, 19 of the 28 said they had had conversations about the stories with the residents – and, again, 18 said it had a positive affect regarding their jobs. It seems likely that at least part of that "positive affect regarding their jobs" would be attributable to their more informed perceptions of and/or relations with the residents.

This research found that moderate Alzheimer's and related cognitive impairments presented no obstacle to obtaining an interesting slice-of-life story.

Regardless, changes in perceptions and/or relations between staff and residents were noted more often by staff than by residents, with only five of 13 residents noting more friendly, respectful relations with staff. Still, five of 13 residents observing positive effects is not insignificant, especially given the benefits perceived by key informants and the sentiments shared by those residents (e.g., "I think they've treated me better. I can't point to anything specific, but I can feel it." "Maybe a little more respect." "It just feels a little different in a good way"). Again, the residents' views on staff in this research support Goldwasser and Auerbach's assertion that residents sharing their pasts with staff resulted in better perceptions of staff by residents.

Though not a primary focus of this research, the experience of the participating residents provides an intriguing lesson in the strength of long-term memories, even among those with significant cognitive impairments. As noted in the "participant" section of this research, more than one-third of the residents who articulated a story for the research had a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and/or other moderate cognitive impairments. In answering questions about the distant past (60 to 95 years ago) and putting together a coherent narrative on the

events of one's early years, this research found that moderate Alzheimer's and related cognitive impairments presented no obstacle to obtaining an interesting slice-of-life story, rich in detail and substance. In a few cases, those with Alzheimer's seemed more fluent about their respective pasts and the specifics of them than those without.

This is in keeping with the views of Robert Butler and statements from his work also referenced in the literature review of this study: "In late life, people have a particularly vivid imagination and memory of the past. Often, they can recall with sudden and remarkable clarity early life events. They may experience a renewed ability to free-associate and to bring up material from the unconscious" (Butler, 2002, p. 1).

Another interesting revelation of this study relates to the contrast of how little residents said they talk about their pasts with staff and how much both residents and staff indicated they were interested in sharing/hearing information about the early years of residents. For instance, nine of 13 residents answered "not at all" when surveyed about how often they talk about their pasts with staff. Interestingly, 11 of the 13 residents said they wished staff knew more about their pasts, and 27 of 28 staff members stated they would like to know more about the residents' pasts.

Not to be overlooked in this research is the value of reminiscence, in and of itself, for those in nursing homes. Thirteen of 15 residents said they enjoyed telling their stories; 10 of them "very much." Twelve of the thirteen who completed the reminiscence sessions said they would like to tell another story, nine of them "very much." Additionally, the statements of staff – especially key informants, who unanimously observed positive effects of the reminiscence sessions and stories ("The residents just beam when you bring up their stories"; "You can see it on their faces. It's made them feel good. It's made them feel important.") – provide encouraging testament to the enjoyment and benefits of reminiscence among residents, and support previously discussed findings from Robert Butler, Edmund Sherman and Faith Gibson.

But, perhaps no one sums up the pleasure and rewards of reminiscing better than one of the participating residents: "I do a lot of remembering. It's a way of staying close and connected to people and places and things – keeping people and places alive; keeping my younger self alive. So much of the old days were wonderful for me."

As stated in the introduction to this section, most of the findings – especially regarding staff members, their relations with residents and feelings about their jobs – are in keeping with what common sense might expect to reveal. But, the findings, as previously emphasized, are nonetheless relevant in that they support Goldwasser' and Auerbach's conclusion from over a decade ago that ... "procedures that involve personalizing staff involvement with residents have positive effects on staff members" (Goldwasser & Auerbach, 1996, p. 111), and add to what remains a very small body of work pertaining to nursing home staff exposure to resident

reminiscence, whether orally or in printed form.

As this research indicates, the benefits will extend beyond those doing the reminiscing to the staff members themselves, making nursing homes more personal and humane environments in which to work as well as in which to live.

As such, it is hoped that this research will initiate a dialogue with those who may have performed (or be interested in or aware of) related research as well as prompt further study of the benefits of reminiscence for nursing home residents and the sharing of their' past lives with those who care for them. Another, perhaps more important, desired outcome of this study is that more nursing homes will come to understand the value of staff knowing more about the residents' pasts. As this research indicates, the benefits will extend beyond those doing the reminiscing to the staff members themselves, making nursing homes more personal and humane environments in which to work as well as in which to live.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The interview/reminiscence techniques employed to elicit the stories used in this research, as well as the style used in writing them, have been developed and honed by the author of this research over several years. The main ingredients required are time and a curious, interested listener with an (inherent or cultivated) ear for dialect and details. The emphasis is on a certain aspect of an individual's life, not necessarily the whole. This allows room for the specifics - the names of old friends, the color of one's first bicycle, the lace on a childhood doll house - that make for good stories and stronger, more personal connections between storyteller and reader.

The layout and presentation of the stories can be simple or ornate, depending upon the nursing home's budget and preference. The stories used in this research were designed using a common computer graphics package known as InDesign CS3. The stories were laminated for protection and placed on the walls using a putty-like adhesive. The cost of printing and laminating the three-page stories was less than $5 each, less than $100, total. Later in the project, the nursing home provided wooden frames to enhance the presentation.

As this research indicates, however, it should be emphasized that the methods used to gain and share knowledge about nursing home residents' pasts are far less significant than the primary result of those methods - i.e., a better understanding of, and tighter connection with, nursing home residents through increased knowledge of their pasts and what has made each the unique person that he or she is.

Nursing home personnel can also avail themselves of training offered either free or at low cost through a range of story recording materials offered by *StoryCorps,* (www.storycorps.org) a nationwide (non-profit) enterprise

engaged in recording important events in the lives of ordinary Americans, many of them older persons. On its Web site, *StoryCorps* makes available, free of charge, an instructional companion piece and discussion guide to a collection of its stories found in ***"Listening Is an Act of Love: A Celebration of American Life From the StoryCorps Project."*** It includes an array of story gathering techniques designed to serve beginners well.

Finally, the methods can be simplified to obtain information on residents that does not necessarily follow a narrative form. A list of answers to questions such as "hometown," "first job," "first date," "best childhood friend," "favorite subject in school," "summer past times," fondest memory of parents," etc, will suffice. This, and other abbreviated methods may be useful in collecting and sharing information on residents who may have trouble with a narrative format. Some of this information may be obtained from family, friends and information gathered during intake and assessment.

Both logic and research indicate that almost anything done to familiarize staff with residents will be beneficial. As one aide in this study put the byproducts of her increased knowledge of residents' pasts so poignantly: "It reminds me that all these people have been through so much. That he or she is not just an old person. It helps remind me to always respect them. It makes them more human.

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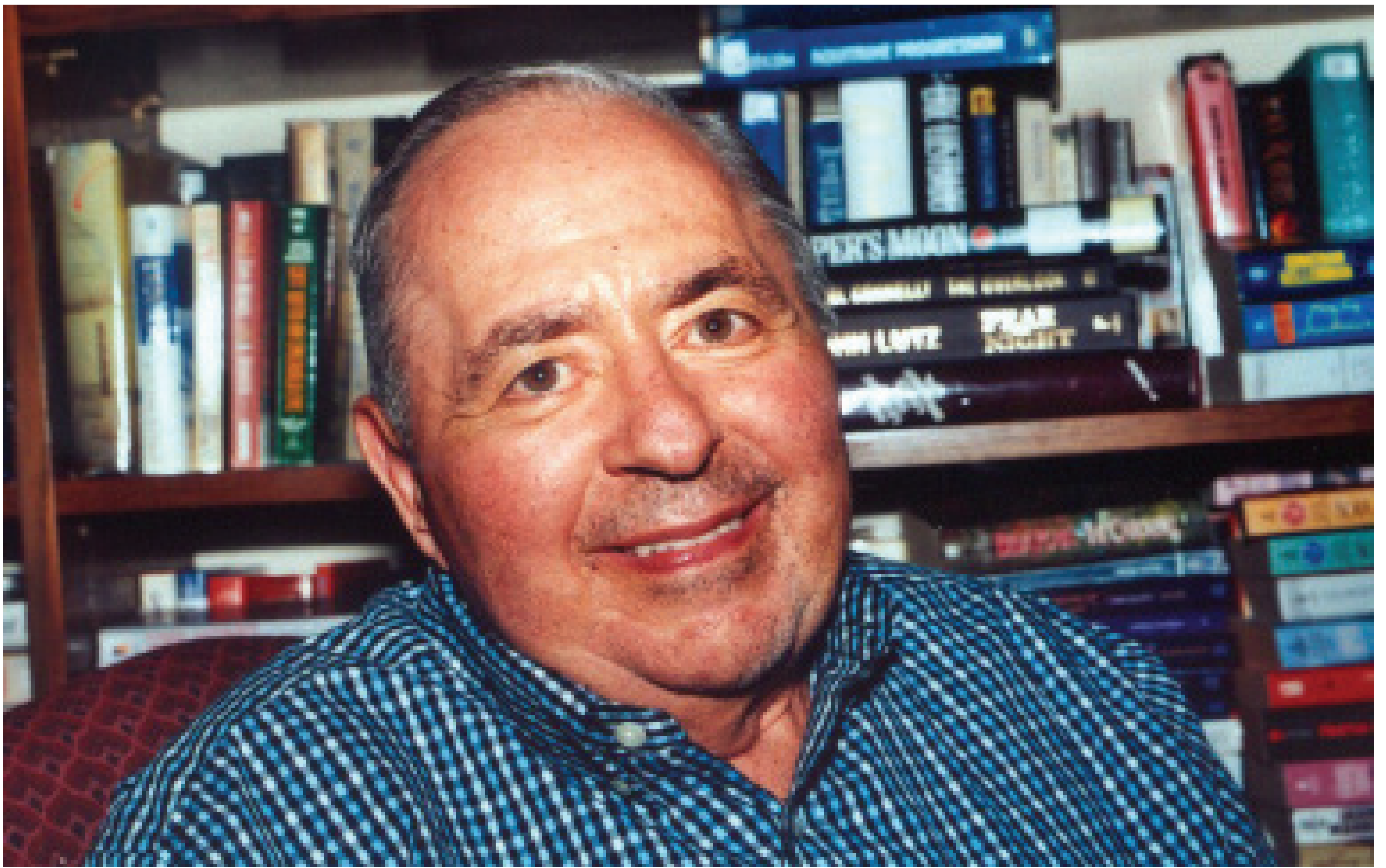
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A



Al Bruno

Albert William Bruno was born in Holy Cross Hospital in Chicago on March 4, 1931, to Filliberto and Antoinette (Broccolo) Bruno. Al, the oldest of four boys and one girl in his family, grew up at 8126 South Wolcott Ave. - in the Irish section of Chicago's renowned south side - and graduated from St. Ignatius High School.

Al's father came to this country from Calabria, Italy, as a 14-year-old boy in the early 1900s, settling in Chicago with an older sister and working as a tailor. Though neither of Al's parents attended school beyond the eighth grade, both continually stressed the value of education to their offspring as a way to improve one's self and get ahead in America. Al and all of his siblings graduated from college, with Al being the first in his family to earn that distinction, graduating from Maryknoll University (north Chicago) with a B.A. in philosophy and theology in 1952.

Though Maryknoll served as a preparatory school for priests at the time, Al had an inkling he'd like to get married and raise a family and serve his faith in other ways. He did so - following two years with the U.S. Army's Counterintelligence Corps in the Cincinnati area - by entering the teaching profession after earning a master's degree in secondary education from Xavier University in 1958 and later working on a Ph.D. in education from Chicago University.

Altogether, Al taught and/or administrated school for 42 years, teaching Latin, math and history. He taught at Cincinnati County Day School and was principal at Oberlin High School and Northridge High School (Newark) before spending his last 20 years in education as assistant superintendent of Hamilton City Schools. After retiring, Al continued helping with the development of young educators as a supervisor of student-teaching programs for Miami and Xavier universities.

Spendere Tempe

"Spending Time Together"

- by Al Bruno

My father only had a fourth-grade education and spoke broken English, but he remains the wisest, hardest-working and most decent man I've ever known. My mom only went only eight grades herself, but I'd say pretty much the same about her.

Dad came to Chicago from Italy, Calabria to be exact. It's the toe of the boot at the southern tip of Italy, a region known for producing olives. His name was Filliberto Bruno, and he came to America, through Ellis Island, as a boy, just 14 years old, seeking opportunity and a better life. He spoke no English when he arrived, but he had acquired some skill as a tailor in the old country that - along with a good, solid work ethic - would stand him in good stead in the new one. By the time I was growing up, he had worked his way up to a good job as a quality control specialist with the clothing manufacturer's, Hart, Schaffer and Marx.

"His name was Filliberto Bruno, and he came to America, through Ellis Island, as a boy, just 14 years old, seeking opportunity and a better life."

Despite my parents' lack of education, they both were determined to ensure that their children succeeded in primary and secondary school and, some day, college. They both saw America as the land of opportunity, and, for them, opportunity meant education. Mom and dad emphasized to us that doing well in school was how we could best make something of ourselves, make an even better life for our own children.

My parents certainly did their part. Dad worked hard, and he and mom both saved every chance they got to provide the resources for all five of their children to go to Catholic schools - the whole 12 years. Like me, my brothers and sisters all graduated from (St. Theresa Little Flower Elementary School; and, like me, my brothers and sister all graduated from Catholic high schools in Chicago.

Us kids kept our part of the bargain, as well. We knew the sacrifices our parents were making, and we all did our best not to let them down. Every one of us graduated from college. My sister, Elena, is a registered nurse; my brother, Tom, is an orthopedic surgeon; my brother, Bob, got his degree and went on to become an executive with Hart, Shaffer and Marx; and my brother, Tony has his own manufacturing company. We all did pretty well for ourselves and made our parents proud.

We were a close-knit family. I guess we had to be, growing up in what was known as the Irish ghetto on the south side of Chicago. I got called *Dago* and some other names, had a few fights, but I fought back alright. My mom saw to that. She had an iron will, a very strong woman. Very early on, she taught me to stand up for myself, stand my ground. She'd say, "If you come home crying because of some shanty Irish, I'll beat you up double." I was more afraid of my mom than I was of any kid, so I learned to take care of myself at a young age. When I got older, my nickname was *Big Al* - like Al Capone.

It really wasn't that big of a deal. South Chicago was an okay neighborhood. Lots going on. We lived in an unassuming, one-story frame home on a residential street, lots of trees. We were 81 blocks from the center of downtown and 18 blocks west of it. Really, I got along fine with the Irish. Two of them were my best friends, Rich O'Keefe and Tom Donahue. We played football and softball together. Used to use a ball 16-inches in circumference because you couldn't hit it as far and we could play with fewer kids in a smaller field. As south-side kids, we rooted for the White Sox. Sometimes we'd make it over to Comiskey Park for a game. It was seven, eight miles away, on the corner of 35th Street and Shields Avenue.

My mother was very religious, a devout Catholic. When I was a kid, she went to Mass and communion every day. My father was a little less inclined toward the formalities of faith, but a fair, kind and generous man.

On Saturday afternoons, dad liked to listen to opera on the radio. We had this large old Zenith in the living room, and dad would sit in his chair, listening to the Metropolitan Opera from New York City. That's how he relaxed.

I didn't go for the opera much, but we had another little radio in what we called the Little Parlor, just a little play room at the back of the house. On Saturdays when I wasn't outside playing ball with my friends, I'd go in there and listen to those great radio programs of the '30s and '40s: *The Lone Ranger*; *Captain Midnigh*t; *The Shadow*; *The Green Hornet*; *Bill Stern*. I can still sing you the theme songs to most of them.

The radio would sometimes bring the whole family together in the living room. We'd listen to the White Sox games, and we'd also gather around the old Zenith and listen to President Roosevelt's fireside chats. My parents were big supporters of Roosevelt and the New Deal programs and they wanted their children to have an appreciation for the importance of politics and history.

Sunday was kind of a slow, lazy, family day in our home. We'd dress nice and go to Mass with mom in the morning, then she would come home and make us a big afternoon dinner. Spaghetti, lasagna, chicken or roast beef. A nice salad, sometimes soup. Mom was a great cook, still used the old-country recipes. We'd always finish off the Sunday meal with a big bowl of fruit and nuts - *spendere tempe*, we called it. Translated, the idiom means "spending time together." We would sit together as a family and just talk and laugh, be close. My parents took a special interest in each of us, and they made it their business to know how we were doing in school, how we were getting along with our friends - what was on our minds

"We'd always finish off the Sunday meal with a big bowl of fruit and nuts - spendere tempe, we'd call it - "spending time together."

As the oldest child, I naturally assumed the role of responsibility - for myself, and for my brothers and sister. In addition to learning, hard work, conscientiousness and loyalty were values my parents made sure their children understood and adhered to. We stuck together as a family, and we kids have stuck together throughout our adult lives, despite being miles apart

After my first Act of Contrition and First Holy Communion, I became an altar boy at the Little Flower Catholic Church. The Latin responses came fairly easy to me, maybe having Italian speaking parents gave me a bit of a head start in that area. I was a fairly devout young man, and after 12 years of Catholic schools, I went on to two Catholic colleges, Loyola University in Chicago for two years, and two years of seminary training at Maryknoll University, also in Chicago

I suppose I had some sense of calling when I started in the seminary, but by the time I was wrapping up my studies, I had a stronger pull to get married and raise a family. Maybe I just wanted to have what my mom and dad had.

I graduated from Maryknoll with a degree in philosophy and theology. Not going into the priesthood meant I was eligible for the draft, and it wasn't long before I was in basic training at Fort Leonard Wood (Missouri). Afterward, I was sent to Cincinnati to work with the U.S. Counterintelligence Corps. My job was doing background investigations on people applying to work for government intelligence operations - the CIA and other classified units related to the army.

It was in those years that I met my first wife, Joann Nichols. We got married Nov. 12, 1956, at St. Mathew's Church in Cincinnati and had five kids - including a set of twins - in six short years. All of them, Larry, Lorrie, Mary Beth, David and Michael, not only graduated from college, but went on to post-graduate studies. They've given me 10 wonderful grandchildren. Plus, I have four step-children through my second marriage to Joan. My family, her family, they've all made me very happy, very proud. My parents would be, too.

Dorothy Harris Pierson

Dorothy Pierson was born on a snowy morning on Feb. 11, 1917, in her parents' farm house on Harris Rd., 12 miles north of Hamilton. She is a direct descendant of Joseph Harris, a successful Irish (potato famine) immigrant for whom Harris Rd. is named, and the daughter of Arthur Everret Harris and Clara Hoffman Harris.

Along with younger sister Mildred, Dorothy grew up on her parents' 80-acre farm, rising early to help with milking the cows, feeding the animals and a host of other chores. Her father and mother both headed local Four-H clubs, and Dorothy spent a good deal of her adolescence immersed in raising livestock and winning an array of Four-H ribbons. Dorothy's farm-girl work ethic transferred easily to the classroom and helped make her valedictorian of her Milford Township High School graduating class in 1934. She went on to earn her B.S. in secondary education (while playing violin and viola in the college orchestra) from Miami University and master's in education from the University of Cincinnati. She taught English, debate, music and special education in the Hamilton City Schools for more than 30 years.

During the Second World War, Dorothy became the first Butler County woman to join the Navy Waves (Women's Auxiliary Volunteer Emergency Services), serving as a navigational information officer in Charleston, S.C. She returned to Hamilton after the war and married, Wilbur Pierson, her Darrtown Methodist Church choir mate, in 1947.

Our Farm on Harris Road

Country Girl Learns Lessons Lasting a Lifetime

by - *Dorothy Harris Pierson*

When you're raised on a farm, you get used to all sorts of things before you know that any *getting used to* is required – the smells, the chores, drinking milk right from your own cows, eating the meat you've raised. You're born into it, and it all seems quite natural.

I grew up on Harris Road, about 12 miles north of Hamilton. The road is named after my great grandfather, Joseph Harris, who fled to America during the Irish potato famine - escaping the British as well as starvation - some time between 1845 and 1852. His grave in the Darrtown Cemetery says he was born in 1838. The 80 acres of land that my parents owned was the original Harris homestead, where my great-grandfather's old log cabin once stood.

We grew up connected to the past and connected to the soil and the cycles of nature - spring and fall, life and death. I think it helps you appreciate things more, because you're aware of where they come from and all the work that's involved in the production. We planted and harvested our own corn, wheat and hay; had about 30 head of cattle, maybe 10 of them Jerseys for milk; 40 or so white turkeys; a coop full of chickens; a couple nice dogs and plenty of barn cats to keep the mice out of the hay and the granary. And we had a flock of sheep, about 17 or so, for their wool. They'd wander halfway down the lane and all of a sudden get scared - like they were lost - make the saddest noises, and run back home. Mom had a little lamb she called *Bright Eyes*. I guess the lamb had lost its mother, so mom fed her warm milk from a baby bottle. Had to be warm milk ever after, or *Bright Eyes* would turn her head and not take it.

Our big German Shepherd was named Bird. She was a good watch dog, but gentle with the cats. Sometimes they'd come up to the porch where she slept and nuzzle into her fur to keep warm. Rex, our white Rat Terrier, made everybody smile, especially my dad (we called him *pop*.). That little dog followed him everywhere. Always at his feet. Pop could get Rex to do all sorts of things - sit, stay, beg. And he'd eat almost anything pop gave him: little bits of toast, bananas - you name it. But Rex's best trick was climbing up the round rungs of ladder in the barn loft then jumping down into the hay.

We also had a large flock of geese, guineas, bantams and ducks. We used the geese for dinner and to sell. Also, mom used the goose grease - the fat - for medicinal purposes. But, mainly, she used the geese for their feathers, so she could make pillows out of them. Mom made pillows for all of us at home, and she also made them any time a relative or neighbor got married. That would be her gift to the newlyweds – nice, soft pillows with slips she sewed herself.

Geese molt and loose their feathers about every six weeks in summer. And we always made sure to collect the feathers inside the barn, where there was no wind. The slightest breeze and the feathers would be off into the air. I guess I had the hardest job when it came to getting the feathers, but I kind of enjoyed it. First, my sister Mildred and I would herd the geese into the barn, behind a closed door in a stall. My mom and her mom, Grandma Hoffman, would wait inside the middle of the barn with towels and wash tubs or wash boilers for collecting the feathers. Sis would mind the stall door, shutting it as I went in and out to catch the geese. I brought them out two at a time. I'd grab one by the neck with my right hand, and another by the neck with my left. They'd honk, wail and flop their feathers something awful. I'd scurry out of the stall, sis would shut the door real quick, and I'd drop one goose in mom's lap and the other in grandma's.

They'd pluck the geese from the underside real fast – there was kind of an art to it that I never mastered – then let the geese go for a month and a-half till we went at it again. We'd use every goose we could catch, because it takes about three pounds of feathers to make a pillow – a good one, anyway. It might take you six or seven geese just to get a pound sometimes.

As plentiful as they were, you didn't want chicken feathers, either. The quills are too short and stubby. Like sleeping on a bed of thorns. Only goose down for mom's pillows. If there were any extra, we'd sell them at our Saturday market stand on the Butler County Courthouse square. They brought a fair price in those days: 90 cents a pound for grey feathers and a dollar a pound for white ones. I didn't mind grabbing geese for feathers, but I didn't care much for catching chickens to eat. Mom did that. It didn't seem to bother her. She didn't even need an axe most of the time. She'd just wring their necks with her fist, a quick, hard twist, and that would be that. *That* would be dinner.

A farm is kind of like a factory – everything there is for a purpose, to help you produce something. You get real practical as a matter of course. You don't let yourself sentimentalize what's around you. That's especially the case with beef cattle.

Pop was the director of the Four-H cattle club in my Four-H years, and every year, in late summer or early fall, he'd buy me and sis each a calf to raise for the next year's Butler County Fair, in September. I almost always got a White-Faced Hereford - a cute face with big, soft eyes and long eyelashes - and sis usually got a Black Angus. For a whole year, we'd be in charge of feeding, watering and grooming our calves, teaching them to walk with the leash and halter, getting them ready for show and sale at the fair.

You couldn't help but get close to your calf, making sure the dew was off the clover before turning it out to pasture, feeding it the right grain in the evening, giving it lots of water. We'd end up talking to our calves quite a bit. Then show day would come at the fair and you'd get your Curry comb out and groom your calf real nice, put some shoe polish on its hooves to make them shine. You'd take that calf to the fair looking the best you've ever seen it, then have to say goodbye. But it was just something you accepted. Emotionally, I guess a person learns to keep a distance when necessary. The calves I raised for the fair, I didn't even give them a real name. I called every one of them the same – Teddy Bear.

"In the days before 911, if you had an emergency, you called your neighbor."

Now, dairy cows are a different matter. Sis and I had one, Lily, that we both adored. She was gorgeous, a beautiful beige Jersey with cream colors down the front. Very domesticated, not real bright, but very easy to get along with. Almost like a house pet. She was the only cow in the barn that let sis and I milk her at the same time, one of us on either side of her. Sometimes when we were milking, we'd point the teats sideways and give our cats a squirt of milk. They'd stand up on their two hind legs and open their mouths wide to get a drink.

We had another Jersey, Ruby, who was very playful. And smart. Ruby figured out how to loosen her chain and get out at night by giving a quick jiggle of her head. Then she'd undue the barn latch with her nose. Sis and I spied on her one night to see how she was getting free. Ruby just liked to wander. Once out of the barn, she liked to walk behind our house to the garden and help herself to some lettuce and beans. For awhile there, it seemed that every other week or so we'd get a call from someone telling us Ruby was loose again and having herself a nice stroll down Harris Road. Ruby just seemed to have a second-sense on when the lane gate might be open.

When my parents went to the World's Fair in Chicago, they took Ruby down the road to my relatives' farm to keep her from roaming while sis and I were in charge of the farm. My Aunt Muriel Hoffman was there to keep an eye on things, too. Turns out, though, that there was another animal, an 18-month-old heifer, that got us all into a little trouble.

It was a Sunday afternoon, maybe 4:00 o'clock, and our hired hand had wandered off somewhere. Aunt Muriel was inside, and sis and I were just finishing up our chores. Sis was younger, so I always gave her the choice of jobs. She chose to water the cows, so I went off to feed the turkeys. Not long after, sis came running, making a lot of commotion about a cow falling into the spring. Sis had taken the cover off to dip some water into her bucket, and as the cows were jostling each other trying to get a drink that calf somehow ended up about six-feet down in the spring. Remember now, this was during the dust bowl year of 1934, and drought was pretty much nationwide, including Ohio, so the cows had good reason to gather by the water.

In the days before 911, if you had an emergency, you called your neighbor. I hopped into our Ford V-8 and drove to Clarence Manierser's place. His aged dad was there, and his brother from Dayton and a couple of nephews. They all came over on the spot with block and tackle and a hoist. Our neighbor, Fred Kramer, came to help, too.The calf was down in the spring, standing in a few feet of mud and water. It seemed pretty calm, considering. The first try, she slipped out of the harness and fell back in. But the next time she was home free. And so were we all. My parents weren't too upset with us. Pop just said to make double-sure that from then on we did our chores together, instead of splitting them up. He had some pretty stern words for our hired hand, though.

Days off on a farm are generally few and far between, and you put in some long hours. But you're taught a sense of responsibility and appreciation for the simpler things; and you come to understand the virtues and rewards of hard work early on. I think that has surely enriched and guided my life all the years after. What you learn early, you generally learn well.

Emily Marie D'Ercole

Emily Nagel D'Ercole was born in Fort Hamilton Hospital on August 12, 1921. She is the youngest of six children of Louis Nagel and Anna (Ender) Nagel, who emigrated from Switzerland with her son, Huldrich, following the untimely death of her first husband. Emily lived in Germany and Switzerland in early childhood before her parents returned to Hamilton and took up permanent residence at 914 Greenwood Avenue. She attended Madison Elementary, Roosevelt Junior High and graduated from Hamilton High School in 1940.

She is an accomplished milk glass artisan, painter and master of various crafts, especially known for her talent in making Christmas ornaments and homemade greeting cards. In 1941, Emily was crowned the first *Miss Hamilton*, winning by popular vote as tabulated by the Journal-News. The contest was held as part of Hamilton's sesquicentennial celebration (i.e., the 150th anniversary of its founding in 1791). In her last year of high school, Emily worked at the soda fountain in Radcliffe's Drug Store at the corner of High and Second streets. She was quick with the milk shakes and congenial with the customers, though she doesn't recall her pockets being waited down with change from any big tippers at the time.

In 1943, Emily signed on with the U.S. Navy WAVES (*Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service)*, launched with help from Eleanor Roosevelt in August of 1942. Though WAVES didn't serve on combat ships or aircraft, and were, initially, restricted to duty within the United States, they were an official part of the Navy, subject to military procedure and discipline, and received the same pay as males of equal rank. More than 27,000 women served in the WAVES during World War II.

Emily met her husband, Johnny D'Ercole (an Italian name that translates to *House of Strength*), at the Chelsea Naval Base near Boston, and the couple had four daughters (Marianne, Elizabeth, Angela and Tina), all of whom were raised in Hamilton (in a home made more interesting and jovial with one bathroom at 101 Mavern Ave., and later at 122 Eaton Ave). Their youngest daughter, Tina, followed with distinction in her parents' footsteps (and left a few of her own) as one of the 81 women first admitted to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, on July 6, 1976, and being among the first 55 women to graduate from the academy on May 28, 1980.

Going My Way

- by Emily Marie D'Ercole

I grew up with one foot in the new world and the other in the old one, thanks to my parents' roots in Switzerland and Germany. In my early years, I spoke English, German and Swiss-German, basically just a different German dialect. But, as the years went on, and my parents - doing their best to assimilate - spoke exclusively English, I lost the foreign languages.

My mom, Anna (Ender) Nagel, was born and raised in Switzerland - in St. Moritz, a resort town at the foot of the highest peak of the Eastern Alps. It's known for skiing and winter sports, and hosted the 1928 and 1948 Winter Olympic Games. My mom told me stories of ice skating all winter long on the frozen Lake St. Moritz.

Mom was widowed and already had a child, my half-brother Huldrich, when she married my father. After her first husband died, she emigrated with Huldrich from Switzerland to join her older brother, who was living in Hamilton. She wasn't much older than 20 when she met my dad here in Hamilton. They were married around 1912 and had five children. Dad raised Huldrich as his own, the same as the rest of his kids.

"I didn't think of myself as particularly pretty. But I was the first Miss Hamilton in 1941."

When I was just three or four years old, my mom took all six kids and boarded an ocean liner in New York City and sailed for Germany and Switzerland to see my parents' relatives. Dad stayed in Hamilton because of his job at the Niles Tool Manufacturing Company. I looked out at all that water and was very afraid. I remember my mom getting seasick and having to go to the sick room. The captain of the ship invited me and my sister Pauline into his office, where he let us play.

I don't remember much about living in Switzerland and Germany, except that I think there was more snow. That and my mom's sister's hat shop. My aunt Pauline was an excellent hatmaker and seamstress, and she had a nice shop in St. Moritz, on one of the main streets in town. You could look in the window and see rows and rows of beautiful hats for women as well as for men.

But we only stayed in Europe for a couple years. I missed my year in kindergarten, I remember, so I had to start school in Hamilton a year late. We were all very happy to be re-united with my dad, and I'm sure he felt the same. We lived in a large, two-story home at 914 Greenwood Avenue, in Hamilton. Right next door to *Hoppy's Beer Garden*. My dad used to take my mom there at night, and my sister Pauline waited tables when she got older. One of my favorite memories from growing up involved a different kind of liquid entertainment: my momma throwing a swimming party for me and my friends on my 9th or 10th birthday. We had the party by a pond up at Seven Mile, just north of Hamilton.

When I was 20, I received a surprising honor - being in the running for *Miss Hamilton.* I didn't even know I was entered in the contest. It was something the ***Hamilton Journal News*** was sponsoring. I guess the readers were the voters. It was my brother (John) Hans who told me I was in the contest and getting a lot of votes. That was news to me.

Turns out that I won, which furthered my surprise because I didn't think of myself as particularly pretty. But I was the first *Miss Hamilton* in 1941. I got to ride through downtown in a horse-drawn wagon, and later I was given a free trip to New Orleans. I had a chaperone and everything - a woman who worked with me at Beckett's Paper Company. I remember I was supposed to look up a soldier from Hamilton while I was there. And I recall having a very nice dinner at a fancy New Orleans restaurant - *Antoines*.

When I was in school, I made a little money baby-sitting for Bob Stevenson and his wife. They were very kind, influential people who lived on the west side of town. I baby sat so much for them that they fixed up a side room with a bed for me, so that I could spend the night. I don't remember how much baby sitting paid in the 1930s, but I suppose I made 50 cents or a dollar a night. But back then a dollar could take you a whole lot further than today.

The second half of my last year in High School, I got a job working at Radcliffe's Drug Store. It was located on the first floor of the Renschler Building, on the corner of High and Second streets - in front of the courthouse. I got the job after the young man who was working there left to join the army. I used to come in there from time to time, and I probably got a good recommendation from Mr. Stevenson.

I worked behind the fountain, and I also waited tables - there were about a half-dozen black, round tables where people could sit and eat lunch. I wore a dress uniform and an apron. Like something from an old movie. We always had a lunch plate for the people who worked in the building and the courthouse - meatloaf, beef and potatoes, green beans, bread and rolls. It sold for about a quarter, maybe 30 cents if they had a coke or cup of coffee with it. I remember a group of women from the beauty shop upstairs always came in for lunch. I might have gotten a few tips, but nothing to write home about.

I liked the job, the friendliness of the people who came in. You got to know everybody and have a few laughs. I was good at it because I was raised to be friendly and courteous and that's about 90 percent of being a good waitress. Plus, I got to be pretty quick at the fountain. I could make a good milk shake and a quick, appetizing sundae or banana split.

" How about you going my way to the movie tonight?"

Things changed pretty quickly in Hamilton after Pearl Harbor. You didn't see half as many men around. My brother Hans joined the army and Alvin was already in the Navy. I guess that kind of influenced me. I wanted to do my part. So, not too long after the Navy Waves service was instituted in August 1942, I went down to the Post Office and signed myself up. I didn't feel particularly brave, it was just something I wanted to do. My parents were both proud of me, and I still remember my momma saying, "Emily, you've always behaved yourself well, the way we raised you, and we expect the same out of you in the Navy. Remember where you came from." Just a couple weeks after I signed up, my brother Huldi (Huldrich) drove me and my parents to the train station in Middletown, and I was off to New York City and basic training at Hunter College. The U.S. Navy had contracted with Hunter College - once an all women's teacher's school - to use its Bronx campus as a training facility for the WAVES.

I was many things - excited, apprehensive, happy, sad - when I got on that train. Huldi and my parents and I joked around on the way to the station, and we all tried to keep things lighthearted before I left. I'm sure my parents were sad to see me go, but that sadness was tempered with pride. A lot of my nervousness dissolved upon meeting so many young women on the train going to the same place I was going. They were from all over the country, and we bonded immediately in our common cause and destination. We were all talking, laughing, keeping our spirits up.

Basic training was just six weeks. We did calisthenics, sit-ups and push-ups, just like the men. And we received instruction according to our assignments - clerical work, the signal corps and medical corps. At first, I thought I was going to Washington because of my skills in shorthand and typing, but I ended up in the medical corps and was later shipped to the Chelsea Naval Base, just outside of Boston. About a dozen of us girls took the train there. One of my more vivid recollections of the whole experience is being met by a cattle car at the train station and being transported to the naval base in it. We all rode standing up.

I served as a nurse's assistant at the Chelsea base hospital, and achieved the rank of Pharmacist Mate, Second Class, by the time I was discharged after the war. It was a memorable two-and-a-half years. I had a good friend there, Shirley Whitehead. People good-naturedly called us the *Goldbrick Sisters.* And, it was at the base where I met my husband, Johnny D'Ercole. He was a handsome man who came to work in the personnel office at the base hospital, though I didn't pay much attention to him at first.

But, I guess he had his eye on me. One day I came back to work after lunch and there was a picture from the then-just-released movie ***Going My Way,*** and a note from Johnny saying, "How about you going my way to the movie tonight?" Who could say no to that? Not me. From the beginning I was taken by Johnny's manners. He was a gentleman in the best sense of the word, very polite, thoughtful and courteous. And kind. That covers a lot of ground. We were married a couple of years later in St. Paul's Community Church San Diego, March 24, 1945, right before Johnny shipped out to the South Pacific. We had four lovely daughters and were together 51 years - all of them happily ever after.

Floyd Vickers

Floyd Vickers, founder of Vickers Wrecking demolition specialists in Hamilton in 1962, was born in McKee, Ky. (50 miles southeast of Lexington, pop. 878), on March 6, 1927. He and his wrecking crew were a frequent presence in the Hamilton Journal News throughout the latter part of the last century, whenever an old building (like the Hamilton Foundry or old stone jail behind the Hamilton County Courthouse) or bridge had to come down.

Floyd is the only son of Neil and Millie (Nunn) Vickers, though he grew up with three older half-sisters (Katy, Helen and Lydie, "they helped raise me") from his father's previous marriage. Floyd's father was a part-time farmer and former deputy sheriff in Jackson County, Ky., and owned a small country grocery store near the family's home on the McKee-Ervin Road.

While his half-sisters minded the store, Floyd traveled the Jackson County hills with his father, a well-known, much-liked, highly respected man in the area legendary for trading horses, cows, hogs, land and just about anything else of monetary value. Floyd left his formal education after the eighth-grade at Sand Springs Elementary School to travel and work with his dad full-time.

As his father was too fair a man to ever make much profit on his swaps and trades, Floyd left Kentucky at age 17 to find more lucrative work (80-cents an hour) making electric motors for Brown and Brockmeyer in Dayton, Oh. He later moved on for more money at Moraine Ready Mix, where he learned to operate the heavy equipment used when he started his wrecking business in Hamilton. Floyd married Geneva Richardson in 1944 in Drip Rock, Ky., and raised two children, Betty and Merit, in their home in Trenton. The home on 1659 Wayne-Madison Rd. has been in the family for nearly half a century and is on the national register of historic places.

I Never Stopped Lookin' Up to That Man

- by Floyd Vickers

I'm six-feet, three-inches tall, four inches higher than my dad ever stood, but I never stopped lookin' up to that man. Neither did anybody else that knowed him. They don't make 'em like that anymore.

Neil Vickers. Born in McKee in 1877. Always chewing on a peppermint. He was known by everyone in Jackson County. He'd been the deputy sheriff there before I was born. And he owned a small, country store on the McKee-Ervin Road. Besides a-selling groceries and farming a little tobacco and corn for a price, he probably swapped something or another with every man on every mountain within 100 miles. He got around.

My dad traded just about everything but his own wife and kids. Horses, mules, cows, hogs, chickens, crops, land, furniture. But not cars or trucks. He got cheated on a vehicle once and that was the end of that. He was real smart about a lot of things, but he was no mechanic. Dad could fix a horse or mule – shoe 'em, break 'em, ride 'em like the dickens – but he couldn't fix a car. And he stayed away from things he didn't know how to fix.

> *"One day, he took off to the hills on his mule and came back carrying an old Billy Goat across his saddle."*

Just about every day when I was a-growing up, while my sisters watched the store, dad would take off on his horse or mule to find something to trade for. Sometimes he'd come back with the horse he'd left on, sometimes not. Usually, he'd show up drivin' a calf or carryin' a puppy. Always something.' One day, he came back with an old Billy Goat across his saddle, a live one. Don't know what or why he a-traded for that old goat, but he sure enough didn't get the better end of that bargain. That old goat was a-nothing but trouble from the get-go. Chewin' on everything in mom's vegetable garden, a-wanderin' off every time you turned your head. That old goat was good for nothin' but a laugh.

My dad liked to take me places with him, and I liked to go along. When I finished the eighth grade at Sand Springs, the year I turned 13, dad and I both figured I'd a-had enough schoolin.' In some ways, I think I knowed more than the teachers, anyway. Mom didn't like it much, but me and dad had a better idea, we had other plans.

Dad wanted me to drive a truck for him, so he could have some company and he'd have a better way of takin' his trades home with him. I'd learned to drive a truck 'cause neighbors were always leavin' their trucks and cars in our yard 'cause the roads didn't go no farther toward their homes in the hills. So, they'd just park 'em at our place and take off toward home on their feet. They'd leave the keys in, and I practiced a-drivin' and a-shiftin so's I got pretty good at it from the time I was just 11 years old.

Anyway, first thing my dad does when I finish eighth grade is go to the Jackson County Clerk of Courts and get me a license. He knowed the clerk of courts, so he just pulled a few strings and, simple as that, I'm 16 instead of 13, with a real license to drive a car. Things were done a little differently in those days than they are now, at least down around McKee. I got all the education I needed ever after bein' with my dad. I really don't think he'd ever been to school, but he could read and write, and he was real good with figures - and a find judge of character. Me and him would get into our old, blue Dodge half-ton - it had sideboards - and go a-drivin' on those dusty back roads, up and down the hills, a-lookin' for deals. Once, up on Barn's Mountain, dad got himself some land for 40-cents an acre. As I recollect, he sold it back to somebody else for a dollar on the acre and made himself a pretty good, quick profit.

Since McKee was so small, a lot of times we'd end up drivin' up to Richmond, the county seat of Madison County, for auctions. Dad would take the livestock he'd bartered for to sell there. I used to hook my bicycle onto the side of the truck and go ridin' around the streets of Richmond while my dad was a-sellin and a-buyin.' Afterwards, we'd go to this place in downtown Richmond where you sat at these big cafeteria-like tables and eat all you wanted of about anything you wanted. We always got our fill there.

For all of his trading, I'd say my dad didn't really come out ahead much. He kept a good roof over our heads, and kept us fed real well. But he didn't end up with any more than he started with, after all was said and done. Probably just too honest, too nice a guy.

He was a person that everybody liked. Everyone thought the world of him, 'cause he treated everybody with kindness and respect. And fairness. If he ever made a trade that didn't work out for the other guy - say a mule that my dad bragged on wouldn't work or got sick - he'd take back the mule or whatever it was that didn't work out for ya. If you were low on cash, hungry, and stopped by the store, he'd give you credit. If you were coming home late from a night out on the town and decided you wanted something to eat, all you had to do was knock on our door at home - any time, midnight, 2 in the mornin,' three in the mornin,' four in the mornin,' it didn't matter - dad would have me go over, unlock the store and sell the men a can of pork and beans, a loaf of bread, a can of soda, whatever it was they wanted.

"He could write a check on a piece of brown paper he ripped from a grocery bag, and the bank would cash it."

Dad was also known around McKee for goin' people's bond. Guess he just couldn't stand to see a man waste time away in jail. I remember men comin' up to me in later life, sayin,' "If it wasn't for your daddy, I'd have growed up in jail." My dad's money was good everywhere. He could write a check on a piece of brown paper he ripped from a grocery bag, and the bank would cash it. As long as it had Neil Vickers name on it, they'd take it. Saw it with my own eyes.

For all that, my dad was still not a man you wanted to cross. He'd covered the county on horseback as sheriff, and he was good with his Smith-and-Wesson 32, if he had to be.

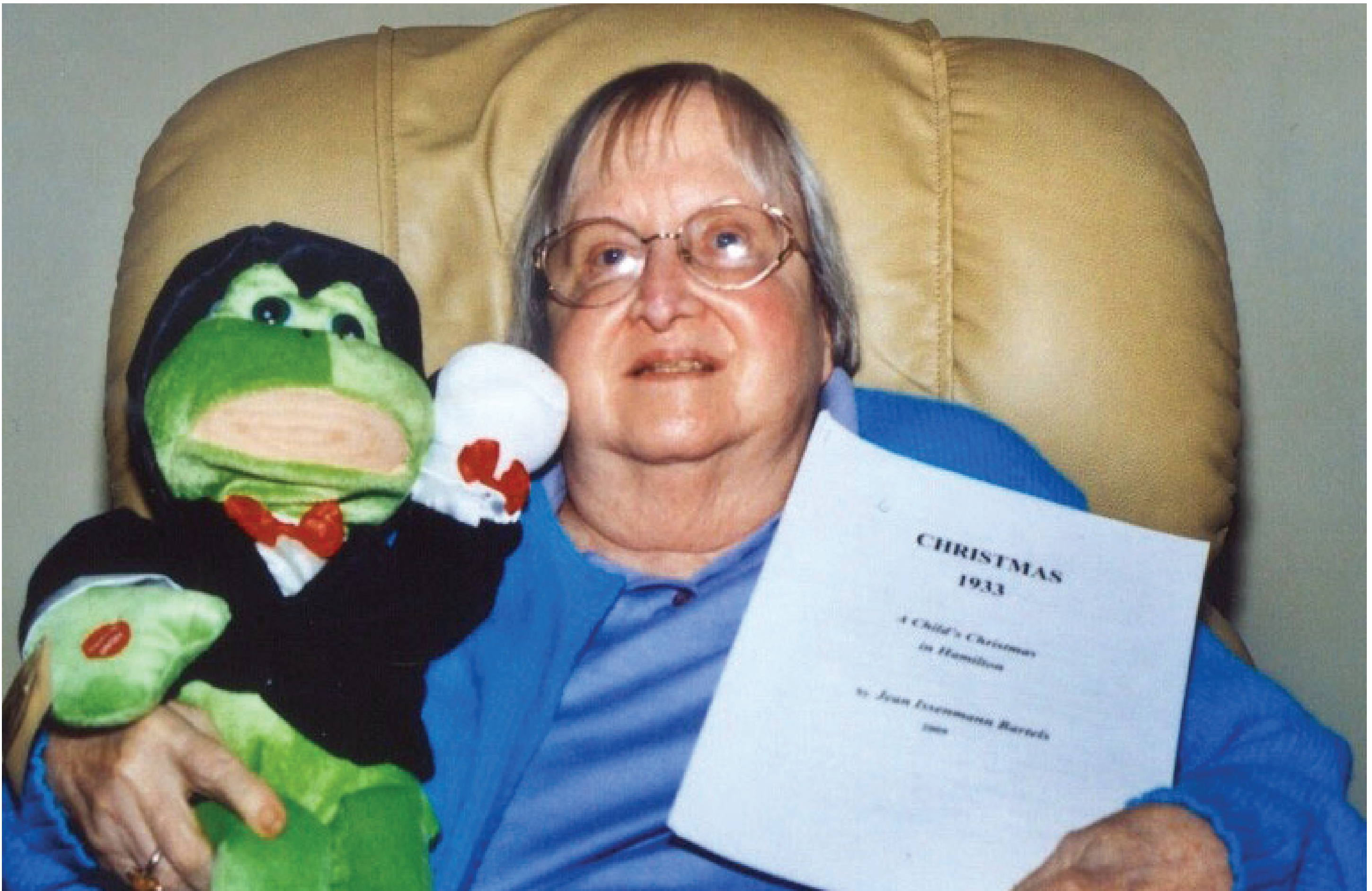
He told me a story once, this was before I was born, when he was going to collect taxes up in the hills at the Adkins place, where folks weren't opposed to makin' a little moonshine. A revenuer wanted to come along with him. Dad said no, he didn't want that kind of trouble. Dad wasn't opposed to a nip of moonshine now and then himself. But the revenuer followed.

Next thing ya know, one of the Adkins' women starts a-makin' noise like she's calling hogs, men come a-runnin' in from all around, and dad gets his face carved up with a knife. My dad shot the man to wound him, and said later that he regretted not having a bullet to waste on the revenuer. There wouldn't have been any trouble if it was just my dad. They knew him. Afterwards, my dad didn't have any bad feelings toward the Adkinses. And I don't think they held any grudge against him.

Dad carried a gun with him at times long after he was through bein' sheriff. And just about everybody knowed we had a Smith-and Wesson in a cigar box under the scales in our store. I'd say that's what kept any of us from ever havin' to use it. My mom and sisters could use it as well as I could.

My dad could be kind of a sentimental man, and I think I got some of that from him. I never did like to fish much or shoot animals. I used to hunt squirrels some, but I couldn't stand to see them suffer - see them dead. But I didn't mind shootin' a snake or rats. I'd get 'em with my Beebee gun.

I left Kentucky and all that when I was 17. My brother-in-law found a factory job for me up in Dayton. I made enough money working with my dad to keep change in my pocket, but not enough to live off of, otherwise I'd have stayed put. I came home every weekend from Dayton on the Hillbilly Highway. Couldn't wait to get there and see my family and my dad. I missed that man. God, how I still do.



Jean Issenmann Bartels

Jean Issenmann Bartels is the daughter of Erwin Issenmann and Hilda Lukens Issenmann. She was born in Hamilton's Mercy Hospital, Oct. 19, 1928, and grew up in Hamilton at 834 High St., sharing a bedroom with her grandmother, Mayme ("a quiet, kind woman who ruled the roost with a soft glove").

A graduate of Hamilton High School, Jean earned a bachelor's degree in home economics from Ohio University and a master's degree in education from Miami. She taught home economics at Hamilton High School and went on to oversee the home economics program for all of Hamilton's City Schools. After a 40-year courtship, Jean finally married the boy next door, Charlie Bartels, in 1994, and helped looked after Charlie (who died of complications related to Alzheimer's disease in 2006) in the final years of his life.

Jean has been active in Hamilton's civic affairs for most of her adult life, and is a former president of the Hamilton Senior Citizen's board of trustees, as well as former board member of the Hamilton YWCA (which her mother founded).

During summers off from teaching, Jean often traveled to Europe with her mother, visiting, among other countries, her ancestral homes of Germany and Alsace Lorraine, once a part of Germany now belonging to France.

Jean retired from the Hamilton City Schools in 1982, noting that her students seemed to get collectively smarter over the years and decades. "I loved my students, loved the classroom, loved teaching" Jean says. "I was just a big kid myself. I guess I still am."

Christmas in Hamilton - 1933

- by *Jeann Issenmann Bartels*

I was an only child, and if love can spoil someone, then I guess you could say I was spoiled. But I don't think it works that way. Love usually gives a child strong roots and a soft heart. I'd say love's the opposite of spoiling. And I never felt more loved than at Christmas time, when family drew nearest. Even during the Great Depression, when I was growing up, Christmas was a big occasion in our house. Probably because of my parent's German heritage. I'd start getting excited about it right after Thanksgiving, maybe a little before.

You wouldn't see the courthouse and downtown all lit up like now. And people didn't decorate their houses much – we might have put a wreath up over the fireplace and lit a candle. But mom and grandma would always get busier in the kitchen, and there'd be a wonderful, month-long smell lingering from the breads and cookies and desserts they made for the holidays.

And the whole month or two before Christmas, mom would be even more secretive than usual about all the work she was doing in her sewing room. I was never allowed in there. Strict orders. I might have stolen a peep in there once in awhile. But I never did go in. It helped build the suspense, because that's where almost all of my Christmas presents came from. I never had a store-bought dress till I was 12.

The week after Thanksgiving, mom would always help me write a letter to Santa Claus. I'd let him know that I'd been a good girl, that I didn't want too much for myself, maybe a jump rope and a new sweater and some clothes for my dolls. Even with Santa, I was taught that it was impolite to ask for too much. After the letter was signed and sealed with a special wax, mom would walk with me down to the old post office across from the courthouse. They had a big mailbox especially for letters to Santa Claus and I'd be all excited to drop mine in.

Daddy always drove the family down to Cincinnati, so we could see the seasonal store windows at Shillito's, on the corner of Ninth and Race Streets. They had animated figures dressed up like characters out of Charles Dickens, skating and dancing around. I was on eye-level with them at the time, and I could imagine myself in there, skating and dancing on the ice.

When we all had our eyes full of the holiday figures, my parents would take me into the store so I could sit on Santa's lap and tell him what I wanted for Christmas, in case he didn't get my letter. Some kids would be a little afraid of him, but not me. I'd tell him to make sure he didn't miss our house, because my mom was leaving out the best oatmeal-raisin and sugar cookies in town for him. They'd be there with a glass of milk on a little stool by the fireplace.

"My Uncle George Kessler and his wife, Elsie, made me a big, beautiful doll house. I'll never forget the sight of it standing there beside the Christmas tree, as tall as me."

Afterwards, we'd go over to Pogue's and McAlpin's, and my mom and dad would do a little more shopping. My dad usually got my mom a dress for Christmas, and she'd get him a tie. (I think my dad slept with a tie on.) McAlpin's had a very nice dining room where we'd stop for lunch. I'd usually get chicken salad and my very favorite dessert, a chocolate sundae with whipped cream and a cherry on top. It looked almost as good as it tasted.

On Christmas Eve, my two aunts, dad's sisters, Mimi and Lily, came and got me in their black Model T. They'd take me to their home on Ninth Street, next to the old firehouse, where they lived there with dad's mom, grandma Minnie. They'd fix me some hot chocolate and cookies and read to me in front of the fireplace. *"The Night Before Christmas"* was my favorite. Mimi and Lily didn't have children of their own, so they gave me lots of attention and affection, went out of their way to make everything special. They loved me like I was their own, and I loved them right back.

While I was in my aunts' bed sleeping so Santa would come, mom and dad were back at home decorating our tree with big, shiny lights, some of those old ornaments with bubbling water in them, and lots and lots of tinsel – put on one at a time, or else! Then my parents would put all the presents under the tree. My dad was a meticulous wrapper, and he made the gifts look even more irresistible to my young eyes.

When everything was ready, my aunts would take me back home. Somehow, they always managed to get me through the door and back upstairs without disturbing my sleep. The next thing I'd know, I'd be waking up in my own bed and creeping downstairs for a glimpse of the tree and presents. But, that was another rule, I couldn't go into the front room and open any until we'd had breakfast and all my aunts and uncles were there.

Mom and grandma would bake delicious coffee cakes and strudels for breakfast. And no sooner was breakfast over than mom and grandma would start preparing the Christmas feast, always a capon (a large chicken), gravy, sweet potatoes, sweet peas, and two kinds of dressing – oyster, which I love to this day, and regular – biscuits and two or three pies. They were excellent cooks.

I had my own little stove, an old black, cast-iron Estate, that I used to help out in the kitchen. I'd make rolls and dumplings and strudels, but never as good as my mom's or my grandma Mayme's. And I always set the table with our finest china for holidays, and we'd eat, maybe 12 of us, around a big circular table about three in the afternoon.

My most memorable Christmas was the one when I was about five. My Uncle George Kessler and his wife, Elsie, made me a big, beautiful doll house. I'll never forget the sight of it standing there beside the Christmas tree, as tall as me. It was a two-story, six-room masterpiece, painted a brilliant yellow with beautiful brown and beige trim.

The detail was amazing. The roof itself was a work of art, slanted steeply and made of tiny real wood shingles. Also, Uncle George had designed a front porch with steps and railings. And he'd made little wooden beds, tables and chairs for all the rooms. The kitchen had a sink and stove, the bathroom had all the fixtures, made out of metal.

And Aunt Elsie did a beautiful job of interior decorating. She had put wallpaper in almost all of the rooms and used little scraps of fabric to make white lace curtains, a quilted bedspread and a red-checkered tablecloth for the dining room table. And she had sewn miniature throw rugs for the floor. Believe it or not, there were even tiny plates and cups on the dinner table, and pots and pans on the stove.

"That was the same Christmas that my mom made me and my favorite doll, Manilla, matching outfits – nice flowing dresses with identical vests and gloves."

For what must have been an hour or so, I went on pointing out little details to my family, putting my fingers on the windows, the kitchen faucet, the handles on the miniature stove, the curtain rods, the headboard on the bed - and on, and on. I just couldn't stop looking at it all, and how beautifully and perfectly it was crafted. The only thing I've seen like it before or since was the giant doll house on display at the Rutherford B. Hayes home in Fremont (Ohio).

That was the same Christmas my mom made me and my favorite doll, Manilla, matching outfits – nice flowing dresses with identical vests and gloves. And all my relatives, gathered in the front room with the fire going, doting on me and my doll and my doll house.

I don't remember what happened to that old doll house, or my old doll, for that matter. It's funny how you lose sight of how precious some things are when you're busy trying to be all grown up and putting away your childhood.

But, as you get older, certain parts of the past take on more value. How nice to know that so much of it is all still there, deep in your heart, ready to warm you just by thinking of it.

Jack Hart

John "Jack" Hart left his engineering studies at Rutgers to join the U.S. Navy in 1943. He flew patrol bombers and trained others to fly an array of navy aircraft while stationed in Florida and Texas during World War II. He is the eldest of four children of Kenneth Darius Hart and Ruth Husted Hart, both from Mansfield, Pennsylvania. His mother was an elementary school teacher and his father taught science, history and civics in West New York, New Jersey (just across the Lincoln Tunnel from New York City). Jack's father was well-known for authoring the Oxford Series textbook, "*Visualized Problems of American Democracy*."

Jack married Bernice Reynolds shortly after the war and worked as a station inspector for the Pennsylvania Railroad. Jack and Bernice (now deceased) moved to Westover a few years ago to be near their son, Bill, a professor of geology and director of Miami University's Geology Field Station. Jack's son and late wife remain the pride and joy of his life.

Born on Jan. 3, 1923, Jack grew up in the heyday of professional baseball in Bergenfield, New Jersey, a relative stone's throw across the Hudson River from three of the hottest teams of the time: the New York Yankees; the New York Giants; and the Brooklyn Dodgers. He favored the Dodgers (maybe because he recalls being able to sneak a look at their games through a gap under the right-centerfield fence) as a kid, but shifted his allegiance to the Yankees after the Dodgers moved to Los Angeles in 1958. Some of the happiest memories of Jack's childhood (besides playing the Sousaphone in his high school marching band) are attached to his days as a catcher in sandlot games and later as a three-year starter behind the plate for Dumont (NJ) High School roughly 70 years ago.

... And There Used to Be a Ballpark Right Here

- by Jack Hart

When I was a kid, baseball was it – the only game in town. We played morning, noon and night. I remember being out there behind home plate with the moon rising and the stars starting to shine. So dark you could hardly see from home to first base. We couldn't get enough of it, none of us could.

Those were the glory days of baseball, the 1930s, when it truly was the Great American Pastime. And I lived right across the Hudson River from the center of it all, New York City. Yankee Stadium, Ebbetts Field, and the Polo Grounds were all right there, just across the George Washington Bridge.

I was a Dodgers fan then. Didn't care much for the Giants or the Yankees. Guess I just had an affinity for the underdog. And I liked the names: Boom Boom Beck on the mound and Al Lopez behind the plate; big hitters Hack Wilson and Lefty O'Doul in the outfield; and Casey Stengel, the manager.

"We'd look for the flattest, smoothest stone for home plate, then dig up some other big rocks for first, second and third base."

I don't recall actually getting in to see any of the games, but my dad and brothers and I would listen on the radio. We had a good-sized RCA in the living room, and it was a special pleasure to sit around with my family and listen to the ball game. You'd hear the crack of the bat through the radio and the announcer drawing out the suspense ("a high, fly ball, Wilson going back, back, back, the runner tags, here comes the throw at home").

As much as I liked the Dodgers and their catcher, Al Lopez, my childhood hero was the Hall of Fame Yankee catcher Bill Dickey. He had a tremendous arm. Hardly anybody stole second on him. Plus, he could really hit. Had a lifetime average of over .300, with lots of homers. He was number 8, just like Yogi Berra who came after him. So that's the number I had to have when I played catcher on my high school team, the Dumont Huskies. I still like the number 8. It's lucky for me.

I don't know if I became a catcher because I liked Bill Dickey, or if I liked Bill Dickey because I was a catcher. But for as long as I can remember, it was always my favorite position. Think about it, the catcher's the only guy on the field who can see everybody else. And you're in on every play.

At any rate, my dad bought me a catcher's mitt and catcher's mask when I was nine or ten. I think I had the chest protector, too. That made me pretty popular in the pick-up games we played near the Bergenfield Armory. Some of the kids were lucky if they even had gloves. Sometimes the team at bat would share theirs with the kids in the field. Heck, there were times we were lucky to scrounge up a ball.

It was just sandlot ball. But, boy, what fun. We'd find a vacant lot, and start shaping a baseball diamond out of it. A pretty primitive enterprise, all around. I used to make a couple dimes cutting grass with my dad's old manual lawn mower. One of those old-fashioned jobs with no motor, just long, curving blades. It's called a *reel mower.* I'd use that to mow out a base path or trim up the outfield. Somebody would always bring their parents' garden rakes to smooth out the ground around home plate, the pitcher's mound and the infield.

We'd look for the flattest, smoothest stone for home plate, then dig up some other big rocks for first, second and third base. Somebody would walk off 30 paces between the stones; and maybe 20 paces from the mound to home plate. I think we used an old towel for the rubber on the pitcher's mound. There wasn't any back stop, unless you count the catcher. Or whoever else might be standing behind home plate.

No umpire, either. We played on the honor system. That meant the batter usually told you if a pitch that wasn't swung on was a strike or not. The pitcher or catcher might disagree with the batter here and there, but I don't recall it ever being too big a deal. We didn't want to argue. We just wanted to play.

Our uniforms were our regular summer clothes: jeans, a tee-shirt, Keds - the only tennis shoe around then - and a ball cap. The cap was as much a part of our heads as our hair was. Every kid had one, usually torn, tattered and worn at the same tilt or angle as the professional players we idolized.

My friends in those days were my teammates, the kids I played with. Kip Waterhouse was our pitcher. He was a right-hander with a curve that moved a couple of feet. Sometimes, if we couldn't get enough guys for a whole team, we'd let a girl play with us. I remember one girl in particular, Julia Smolenski. She played first base, and darned if she wasn't the best on the team. One of the best batters, anyhow. I think she swung the same old 32-inch Louisville Slugger that the rest of us used. We'd wrap black masking tape around the base for a better grip – and sometimes to patch up a crack.

"Catching seven or nine innings of Bobby Meyns could really do a job on your hand. After a game, my left palm would be pink and puffy for a long while."

All that sandlot ball paid off when I went to Dumont High School. I was the starting catcher for three years. It was sure nice to play on a real field for a change. We didn't have dugouts, but there was a real chain-link backstop; bleachers; real bases; a raised pitcher's mound; an exact 90 feet between the bases, and 60 feet, six inches from the mound to the plate.

And, we had real uniforms. Same as now, the Dumont Husky colors were brown and orange. I'm thinking that we had those old-fashioned baseball pants, with orange socks that came up to your knees. We had button-up shirts with brown lettering and orange caps. It was a thrill to be all decked out in a uniform and playing in front of people

My best friend at the time, Dick Carmelich, played first base. He had a great reach. Our pitcher was Bobby Meyns. He had a hard fastball, and good curve and a change-up that left many batters swinging at air. In high school, you used the same pitcher almost every game. And me and Bobby had great communication. It was simple: He had three pitches, and I gave him one of three signals: one finger for a fastball; two fingers for a curve; and three for a change-up. Maybe now and then I'd reverse that, do it all backwards, to keep the other team from stealing our signals. And once in awhile Bobby would let me know a slider was coming, but we kept things pretty basic.

Something a lot of people forget is that the gloves when I was a kid weren't like the gloves today. Not as big, not as much padding. Catching seven or nine innings of Bobby Meyns could really do a job on your hand. After a game, my left hand would be pink and puffy for a long while.

I was good sized for a kid in those days, 5-feet, 11 inches, a solid build, 170 pounds or so. I suppose I was a pretty good hitter, because

I remember hitting clean-up, at least during my senior year. And I loved chasing down pop-ups and fouls around the plate. That and throwing runners out at second, just like Bill Dickey.

We were a good team. Won the league title when I was there, beating our rivals, Teaneck and Hackensack. Don't know what we would have done to celebrate back then, maybe go out with a few teammates for a coke or ice cream. After high school, I got an academic scholarship to Rutgers University in East Brunswick, New Jersey. I studied engineering there. Didn't play baseball. Wasn't much time for it with all the studying.

I never played organized baseball again. But, you know, baseball is a simple game with simple pleasures. It doesn't have to be organized for a person to enjoy it.

When my son, Bill, was growing up I'd go out with my old glove and play catch with him (he turned out to be a catcher, too); or maybe pitch him some baseballs, teach him how to hit. Just the two of us out in the yard, tossing the ball around, enjoying the weather, talking back and forth. Baseball always had a way of bringing you close together. I suppose that's a big reason why so many of us old timers still love the game.

Sammy Elizabeth Matthews Wiseman

Sammy Elizabeth Matthews Wiseman was born Jan. 16, 1921. She was named Sammy at the request of her grandfather Samuel Hall, who declared he wanted his daughter to name her first child *Sammy* whether it was a boy or girl. The name has always suited her just fine.

Sammy entered the world in a small farmhouse in Lancaster, Kentucky (pop. 3,734), about 25 miles south of Lexington. Lancaster is known for its proximity to *Camp Dick Robinson*, the first Union military training camp south of the Ohio River during the Civil War. The camp was seized by the Confederate Army and renamed Camp Breckinridge before reverting back to Union control later in the war. Lancaster is the seat of Garrard County, and, to her Westover friends, Sammy is the town's most notable native.

She is the only child of William McKinley Matthews and Laura Lee Hall, and was doted on a healthy amount but in no way spoiled on the small farm where she spent her first five years. Sammy's dad came to Hamilton before she started school, moving the family to a modest house on Lane Street and taking a job as a machinist at the Ford Motor Company.

Sammy attended the old Monroe Elementary School and remembers walking to and from school every morning and every afternoon with her best friend, Edna Fisher. Sammy graduated from Hamilton High in 1939. Her best subject was math, and she enjoyed all of her studies. During her last year of high school, Sammy's fast fingers and congenial personality got her a job typing, filing and answering the telephone in the office of a local paper company.

Sammy has been married twice, had no children, but lots of dogs. She says her special gift in life (besides modesty) is "just getting along with people; I've always been pretty good at that."

Just Getting Along

- by *Sammy Elizabeth Matthews Wiseman*

My name is Sammy Wiseman, and that's always suited me very well. People ask me if my full name is Samantha, or something full-blown and fancy, and I tell them no, that I was named after my grandpa, Sammy Hall, my mom's dad. He told my mom that he didn't care if it was a boy or a girl, that he wanted her to name the first baby Sammy. That was me, and I'm glad of it.

I was my parents' only child, but I wouldn't say I was spoiled. My mom and dad were very good people, and they loved me, I'm sure, but they didn't have enough money to spoil a goat, let alone me. At least not in the early years.

We lived on a small farm in Lancaster, Kentucky. It's a small, rural town, about 25 miles straight south of Lexington. I couldn't tell you much more about it, because we moved up to Hamilton when I was just five years old. Guess my daddy just got tired of trying to make a go of it on a small piece of land and heard he could make better, steadier money working as a machinist at the Ford Motor Company in Hamilton. I suppose a friend or family member told him about the job. It seems like half of Hamilton is from Kentucky.

So daddy moved us to a small house on Lane Street, not far from the old Monroe Elementary School. Dad or mom would walk me to school when I first started. In the first grade I met Edna Fisher. She lived on Central Avenue, and from about second grade all the way through high school, I'd always stop at her house on the way to school so we could walk there together. After school, we walked home together, too. She was my best friend for 12 years. After graduation, and not walking back and forth to school together, we just kind of lost track. We talked some, but really didn't see each other much after that. I'd like to see her again.

My daddy was a big man. If he was under 200 pounds, he was underweight. He stood about 6 foot two or three. Had a high, intelligent forehead. Clean-shaven - didn't believe in moustaches or beards. And he was as good a man as he was tall. His family and his work always came first. That's about all he was interested in was his job, his wife and his daughter. He looked after my mom and me real well. And he liked jokes. If he ever heard a joke, he never forgot it and was ever-ready to pass it on next chance he got.

"And he was as good a man as he was tall. His family and his work always came first."

He liked baseball, too, but my mom didn't care for it, so sometimes daddy would take me to Crosley Field to see the Reds. We didn't go too often, because my dad felt bad about my mom not coming along. But we had a good time, just sitting together, talking, having a hot dog and some popcorn. When I got older, daddy would get me a beer.

Sometimes, daddy could be almost too protective. When I was in high school, I got a job at a small printing company, mostly secretary-type stuff. I had taken typing in high school and did pretty well at it, and I was pleasant on the phone, as much as I grew to hate that thing. That phone never stopped ringing. I got pretty good at doing things one-handed because the other was always holding the phone. The job paid alright for the times, maybe 35 or 50 cents an hour. But I only kept the job for three months or so, because my daddy liked me to be at home when he got back from work.

I worked there mainly on Saturday mornings and from four to six after school. That's the part he didn't like. Me being away at dinner time. So, I had to quit that job, but I later got similar work with the Champion Paper Company after high school. My first job was good preparation.

My mom was a kind-hearted woman. Not real tall. She came up to daddy's shoulders. They made a real nice fit together. Both had brown hair and brown eyes. Mom was not quite as outgoing as daddy. Kind of quiet and reserved. But not to a fault. And she was a little more religious. We went to the First Baptist Church every Sunday as a family. And I think that was mostly because of my mom.. But daddy didn't mind. We all got decked out in our Sunday best and enjoyed the service.

Mom was a good cook and an expert with a needle and thread. She could sew anything, and she could sew it fast. Start a dress in the morning and have it finished that night. She made my graduation dress - a pretty white one, about calf-length with short sleeves. And she made every one of my Halloween costumes from scratch. I can't remember them all, but one year I think I was a witch and another a princess. I wish I had saved those costumes. They were really special to me.

I don't remember any big vacations while I was growing up, but we did travel back to Kentucky just about every summer to visit friends and relatives. And once in a while we'd have to go back to Lancaster for a funeral or a wedding or some other family gathering.

I'll never forget the time when I was just six or seven, when we went back for a funeral for a man that was a friend of my dad's. We all knew the man real well, and I was very familiar with what the poor dead man looked like. But, some time during the wake or the funeral, I saw a man who looked just like the guy who was supposed to be dead. It gave me a mighty shiver, a terrible start, but I kept my tongue. I didn't say anything. You know kids and funerals, they never know what to do or say.

When we got back, I finally told my parents that I thought I'd seen the dead man and asked them how that could be. They kind of laughed and apologized and told me that the man had an identical twin brother, and that was the man I saw. I was real glad to hear that, let me tell you.

"When we got back
I finally told my parents
that I thought
I'd seen the dead man."

I was just a young woman when mu daddy died, and I remember I cried and cried about it. I asked my mom how could it be that such a good man like daddy was taken from us so early? Why were so many other no-account, mean and ornery people still walking around while a loving, caring, smiling man like daddy was gone? She just told me those questions were better left to the person upstairs.

It never really bothered me much, growing up as an only child. You don't know any difference. Besides, there was my friend Edna Fisher, and I always had pets. We had a nice cat and a dog when I was growing up. I loved them both, but I'd have to say I was a little closer to our dog. He was a Pit Bull, you know, the kind with the bad reputation. But he was the nicest, sweetest dog. He used to sleep on my bed at night, followed me all around. I taught him a few tricks, shaking hands, rolling over.

That dog was always hungry, always nosing around for food. He'd come under the table at dinner for scraps. We'd feed him anything to see if there was anything he'd turn down. I don't think there was. He even ate jello.

I guess you could say Edna Fisher was like a sister to me. We hit it off right away in first grade and, like I said, stayed best friends for 12 years. We were about the same size and had a lot of the same likes and dislikes. We could talk to each other, gossip like young girls do. We played dolls, jump rope, hopscotch. Mostly, Edna came to my house, and we'd play together in my room.After high school, she married Reverend Schoen and moved somewhere north in Ohio. I married young myself, too young. It only lasted a couple years. I got married again later, at age 26, to Earl Wiseman. We had a nice life. If I have any real gift, I guess it's for being at peace with myself; just getting along well with people. Taking life as it comes. Folks sometimes say they wish they were more like me. I tell them, *no,* just try and be more like yourself. That'll do just fine.

Ludley Cassius Durrough

Ludley Cassius Durrough Jr. is the son of (former Hamilton Fireman) Ludley Durrough Sr. and Verna (Burkhart) Durrough. Ludley, born in Hamilton on March 13, 1926, got his middle name from an uncle whose name was reversed, i.e., Cassius Ludley, long before Cassius Clay (before he was Mohammed Ali) made it resonant as the heavyweight boxing champion of the world.

Along with his older sister, Jeanette, Ludley grew up in Hamilton at 1671 Kahn Ave. His wife, Diane, resides in the couple's home on Eaton Hamilton Rd. A graduate of Hamilton High School, Ludley served with the U.S. Army's 12th Armored Division in Belgium and Germany during World War II, receiving a purple heart for shrapnel wounds to his legs. He returned to Hamilton and married Harriet Wood (deceased) shortly after the war was over. Together, they farmed 180 acres on Stillwell Road (between Wood Station and Bunker Hill Rds.), just north of Hamilton. They raised Hereford, Holstein and Jersey cattle, as well as chickens and eggs, and continually brought in a bumper crop of corn, oats and hay.

Before working as a hired hand on the Charlie Lewis Farm on Stillwell Rd., and later turning to farming as a career, Ludley worked after school, on weekends and during summers as a bicycle messenger for the Western Union Telegraph Company, located at the corner of Market and Second Streets in downtown Hamilton. An Elder Beerman's store stands there now. Besides building up his stamina and his legs - and thickening his wallet to an enviable degree for a young man in that era - the job entailed an immense amount of responsibility in the war years that Ludley held the position, as he recounts in the pages that follow.

Freewheelin'

My Days as a Western Union Bicycle Messenger

- by Ludley Durrough

I was born and raised in Hamilton. And I got to know it real well – better than some might have wanted me to – in my years as a bicycle messenger for the Western Union Telegraph Company. That was back in the early 1940s, when I was a teenager. Wish I had the legs now that I had then.

Western Union had its main office in Hamilton on the corner of Market and Second Street. There's a big Elder Beerman store there now. I first started at Western Union in response to an ad to pass out pamphlets and flyers on a nearby street corner. Somebody must have liked me, because after just a few days of that I was offered a position as a bicycle messenger.

"When I wasn't working, I used to put my little rat terrier, Spot, in the basket and take him for a ride."

It took me all of one second to say yes to the offer. I was only about 14 years old, just started high school, and that was kind of a prestigious job at the time, working for Western Union. The pay was good, about 33 cents an-hour, as I recall. Plus, you often got tips. And you wore a nice uniform, olive-drab, with fancy Western Union patches near the shoulders and a hat like you might see on a policeman or military officer. In the summer, we wore khaki short-sleeve shirts, with knickerbockers and knee socks instead of long pants. It didn't hurt you with the girls.

I had my own bicycle, the prized possession of my youth. A 26-inch Schwinn. Fire-engine red, with thick balloon tires. It had a nice-sized metal basket in the front. When I wasn't working, I used to put my little rat terrier, Spot, in the basket and take him for a ride. I can still see that old dog, ears flapping in the wind, having the time of his life. I put a suspension rack on the back - spring-loaded - after I got the job so I could carry more telegrams, if need be. Also, that's where I kept my flat-tire repair kit – a rubber patch, glue and a little air pump. I had about three or four flats a year. You had to be prepared, you had to get places in a hurry.

On school days, I usually worked from four to eight p.m. And sometimes I'd work all day Saturday or Sunday to boot. In the summer, I worked a regular 40-hour week. With tips included, I made maybe $15 a week during the school year and close to $20 a week when I was full time. It sounds like peanuts now, but that was good money for a kid back then. My dad made me give half of it to my mom – room and board, he called it. "No use wasting it all on good times and girls," he said.

I had enough to buy my own school clothes, odds and ends and still had plenty left over. And most of it *did go* to good times and girls: Rosemary, Lois, Alberta. I dated around. Took them to the Saturday matinees at the Palace and held hands. Got to see a serial, a western and a mystery, all for a quarter.

Afterwards, we'd go to a little place on High St. for a hamburger and a coke or malted milk. Lunch for both of us was under a dollar – 10 or 15 cents for a hamburger, a nickel for a coke, a dime for a milk shake.

I worked hard, but I loved my job. I had a lot of energy as a kid, and I enjoyed peddling all around town, seeing what's what and where's where. There was a hill on Grand Boulevard I didn't much care for riding up, but most of Hamilton is relatively flat, so it was usually easy riding. My legs got strong and used to it pretty quick.

One thing though, Western Union was kind of like the post office in that neither rain, nor sleet, nor snow, nor nothing stopped the deliveries. We were expected to go out in all kinds of weather and I did. I had a poncho they gave us for rain and sleet, and an overcoat for winter weather.

Another liability was the cars. You had to watch out for them, both the moving ones as well as the parked ones. One day I was zipping down Main St. and a guy in a parked car opened his door right when I was riding by. Poleaxed me. I hit the pavement pretty hard. Cracked three ribs and had plenty of scrapes and bruises. I had trouble breathing because of my ribs and couldn't work for a couple weeks.

Most of my deliveries were related to money; people and soldiers wiring home to mom and dad for some spending money and odds and ends. I delivered to a lot of businesses, too. Deals that had to be sized up and signed in a hurry.

"... the envelope was always marked with a black star if a soldier had been wounded."

Believe it or not, I also ran a lot of telegrams and money transfers back and forth from local whorehouses. I'm not sure what that was all about, but I always liked delivering there because they tipped so well: 50 cents, sometimes a whole dollar, whereas most other places might give you a nickel or dime, if they gave you anything at all.

The one aspect of the job I didn't like – nobody did – was taking bad news to the homes of local soldiers. You knew what it was because the envelope was always marked with a black star if a soldier had been wounded. And there'd be two black stars if a man – *boy* might be a better term, a lot of them were awfully young – was killed in action. I had to get the next of kin to sign that they'd received the message.

If we delivered bad news to someone who was home alone, we were instructed to ask them if they'd like us to contact someone for support, and to stay for awhile and make sure the person was OK.

A couple of times, I remember giving some women a shoulder to cry on or trying to comfort them with a hug. I didn't know what to say. What could I say? It was rough.

I hated that. Never got used to it. There were times during the war when I'd be delivering one or two of those every week it seemed. I'd dread it all the way there, and it would stay with me at night some times. Make it hard to sleep. It was my job. But, as I said, I never got used to that part of it.

Still, for the most part, the people I delivered to were glad to see me. Besides the money transfers, there was some good news that came with the telegrams. Birth announcements, grandparents sending birthday wishes to their grandchildren, soldiers sending anniversary greetings home to their wives, or messages to their girlfriends.

In August of 1944, when I was 18, I went off to the war myself. I took my field training at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana, then shipped out overseas in time for the Battle of the Bulge (aka Ardennes Forest). I was with the Army's 12th Armored Division, riding in a tank, when we took a hit from the enemy right in the wheels. I got shrapnel in both legs and was in a hospital in France for six weeks. Got a permanent trip home and a purple heart for my trouble.

While recuperating, I'd think about my parents getting that black star on the Western Union telegram, hoping they wouldn't worry too much. And I'd think about the kid on a bicycle who had to deliver the message, hoping it wouldn't be too hard on him either.

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The Western Union Telegraph Company began as the New York and Mississippi Valley Printing Telegraph Company in 1851. The company introduced the first stock ticker in 1866 and its first money transfer in 1871. Western Union was delivering millions of messages (including singing telegrams), nationwide, in the years Ludley worked for the copany. Western Union delivered its last telegram in January of 2006.

Lucille Pottenger Sauer

Luella Lucille Pottenger Sauer was born at her parents' farm house in Pleasant Run (south of Hamilton near the current intersection of Route 127 and the 275 outerbelt) on Aug. 13, 1908 - the same year that ushered in the Model-T and Mother's Day and marked the last time the Chicago Cubs ever won the World Series.

Lucille, the second of seven children (six girls and a boy) of Ira Pottenger and Ollie Harden Pottenger, grew up on her family's 80-acre farm, learning early in life the satisfaction of hard work and pennies saved. At age six, Lucille was already helping her father tap the hard maple trees that grew on the family's land for sap to make maple syrup. She led an old, blind horse by the reins to collect and haul the sap and syrup. Lucille also picked the various berries (blackberries, raspberries, dewberries) along with the apples that fell to the ground from her father's orchard. Her father paid her two cents for each quart of berries picked, and her family sold the fruit, syrup and other vegetables at an open-air market on the Dunlap-Springdale Road.

Lucille finished elementary school in Georgetown and attended Round Top High School (in Bevis, close to where the 275 outerbelt now intersects with Route 27). At age 16, she began working as a youth supervisor (and later as an assistant to the matron) at the Butler County Children's Home in Hamilton. Lucille worked at the home 10 years and fondly recalls her time there some seventy years later. She left the home after marrying George Sauer on June 3, 1936. The couple settled on 15 acres of farm land in West Elkton, raising fruit, vegetables and - by far their most precious crop - a daughter, Luella.

At Home Away from Home

My Job at the Butler County Children's Home

by - *Lucille Pottenger Sauer*

I was the second oldest of seven children, and I grew up working from the time I was walking, as far as I can remember. My older sister, Glyde, helped mom, and my job was giving my dad a hand wherever he might need it. I made sure he had plenty of water to drink when he was working, and I helped him tap our maple trees, make syrup and get all our berries picked. We had a couple of horses, *Old Bill* and another old, blind mare that I used to lead around by the reins when I was helping dad collect sap or haul this and that from our woods. Didn't have a name for the blind one, just called him *Horse* and left it at that.

Dad paid me pretty well for the work. I was a good quick berry picker, and I got two cents for each quart. A penny was worth something in those days, and they added up. It was nice being young and having my own money. I used it to buy school supplies with, even in first grade. I always had an extra pencil to lend to my cousin or friends. I was proud to be paying for my own paper and pencils and books.

> *"I'd get room and board and a dollar a day. I said yes on the spot."*

My mom made most of my clothes, though now and then we might get some hand-me-downs from people trading clothes for some produce from our farm. My parents had a fruit and vegetable stand near our farm on the old Dunlap-Springdale Road. I worked there sometimes, too. We sold berries, cider, syrup, apples, and other fruits and vegetables. Usually we were paid in cash, but sometimes we took clothes or other odds and ends for trade instead of money.

My sister Glyde's real first name was Jenny, but mom and dad called her Glyde after a character in a serial in the *Journal News.* The writer kept you guessing as to whether *Glyde* was a boy or girl. Anyway, we all called her Glyde ever since. My dad called me *Fuggie* till I was about six. Then, one day I crossed my arms over my chest and declared I didn't want to be called that any more. I wanted to be Lucille, and that was that. Nobody ever called me *Fuggie* again.

My dad liked giving nicknames, as if our own, full-blown names weren't enough. I was Luella Lucille, so I sure didn't need any *Fuggie* to go with it. My youngest sister, Clara Laverne, was called *Sweety*; and Evelyn was *Tootsie*.

Glyde was the first in our family to work outside the home. She had a job at the Butler County Children's Home in downtown Hamilton. It was a complex of brick and stone buildings high on a hill at 425 South "D" Street. It's been there in one form or another from 1869 to 1985. I believe it was first opened by a Christian group to look after children left orphaned or with no means of support after the Civil War.

Glyde worked in the kitchen there. Then, one day she came down with the mumps. I decided I'd go to work in her place, unannounced. George Sauer, my future husband, gave me a ride in his trusty, black pick-up truck. He dropped me off at the stairs of the home, then went on his way to his job as a millwright at Leshner's in Hamilton. He said he'd be back that evening to pick me up.

So, I went down the basement to the kitchen, and told the man and woman working there that I was going to be filling in for my sister that day. They told me that wouldn't be necessary, as they had already arranged for a substitute. I told them that my ride wasn't coming back for another nine hours, so I might as well work as not, even if I didn't get paid. The next thing you know, I'm washing dishes, pots and pans; peeling potatoes; making myself useful. Then, the matron, Edith Braine, comes into the kitchen, introduces herself, and tells me there is a position at the home available for someone to supervise some of the older girls at the home. *Older* meant girls almost as old as I was at the time - 16. I'd get room and board and a dollar a day. I said yes on the spot. I'm not sure I even went home that night, though I suppose I must have to gather up a few clothes and tell my parents the news. It was the only job I ever had outside of working at home. I stayed their 10 years, one of the happiest times of my life.

My first full day on the job I was given a room up on the second floor. It was within shouting distance down the hall from the dormitory rooms I supervised. I oversaw about 25 girls, ages 13 to maybe 16. They slept about eight to a room in thin beds dressed with dark wine-colored bedspreads. Next to each bed was a small metal locker.

By today's measure, my room wasn't much, a 12-by-12 square with a bed and a rocking chair - and a shared bathroom around the corner. But, it was *my* very own. It was the first time in my life I'd ever had a room to myself. I loved it. Kept it neat and clean. There was a nice view out the window. I could see the swimming pool down below and the Ruth Hospital (part of the home named after a child who had died) as well.

Mainly, I was in charge of making sure the girls got up on time, got to breakfast and off to school (at Adams Elementary and Hamilton High) and did whatever chores they were assigned around the home - usually housekeeping kinds of work, dusting, mopping, helping out in the kitchen now and then. I also helped with their homework some and was responsible for making sure they were in their beds with the lights out by nine at night. Aside from that, I made sure they had the proper, right-fitting clothes to wear. I sewed and mended for them in my spare time. I liked for them to look nice.

As I said, I wasn't much older than the girls I looked after. We were really just kids together. They all liked me, and I liked every one of them, too. I was good at the job, because I like people. Always have. Like Will Rogers, never met a man I didn't like - or a woman, either. And most of the girls needed a little extra kindness. They were there for the same reasons kids end up in county homes today: their parents had died, gotten sick, or had problems that kept them from being able to take care of their children in a healthy way. So, I tried my best to make it like one big, happy family. The girls made it easy on me. They never gave me any real trouble to speak of. They behaved themselves very well, and I knew how to look the other way regarding the little stuff. That's how you get along, be reasonable and respectful and people will generally be reasonable and respectful back.

" If I've had one real talent in this life, it's always been liking what I did, not doing what I liked."

Though it was never my official role, I often served as a confidante to the girls. They would come to me with their problems - like if they'd been scolded or were having trouble getting along with the other girls. We'd find a quiet place to sit, sometimes outside, and talk. Mostly I just listened and let them know I cared. That's what people usually want when they're sharing their troubles, just to know somebody cares. That came natural to me, because I did.

Those were some long working days. And at night, I took classes at the Hamilton YWCA. Basically, I was on call at the home 24 hours a day, almost seven days a week. I usually got Wednesday afternoons off - after 2. And once a month, I had a weekend off. On Wednesday afternoons, I'd walk four blocks then over the Miami River bridge into the center of town. I'd just stroll along, window-shopping. Sometimes I'd go into the Woolworth or Kresge stores, five-and-dimes, and get myself something. You could get a little bottle of perfume or a pack of pencils for 10 cents then. And I could get a ham sandwich and a coke at the lunch counter for 10 or 15 cents, total. There was a scale where you could weigh yourself for a penny. I was always about 98.6, just like your body temperature should be. I never spent much. I saved about $25 of my $30 a month. Used a good chunk of those savings later on to buy my husband a tractor on the condition that he get rid of our old mule. Cost me $540.

On my weekends off, I'd go home and see my family, help a little around the farm, but mainly try and relax. Every year, I'd get two weeks off during the summer, and I usually took my little sisters with me on a trip. We always rode the train. I took my sister Dorothy with me to see Niagara Falls. And I took Ruth on a sightseeing trip to Washington, D.C. It was beautiful. And *Sweety* went with me one year on the train all the way to California and back. We went down the coast and up to Utah. Seemed like we were on that train forever. But it was fun. I took Tootsie with me to Chicago and to Missouri to visit Glyde after she got married. I had the money and the time, and it was nice to spend it with my sisters. If I've had one real talent in this life, it's always been liking what I did, not doing what I liked. There's a big difference there, and it's made all the difference for me.

Walker “Sparky” Sparks

Sparky was born on June 30, 1919, in the village of Drip Rock, Kentucky (population 150), which then consisted of a post office, a general store, a pharmacy, a mill operator, a doctor, and two Baptist ministers. Drip Rock is located in the east-central part of the state, near the border of Jackson and Estill counties. The village was named for the steady dripping of spring water from a limestone ledge near the old schoolhouse.

The son of Bill Sparks and Clare Webb Sparks, Sparky was raised with an older sister, Irene, and two younger sisters, Alena and Christine. The family lived on an 85-acre farm that supplied Sparky with a bumper crop of warm and nourishing memories. Sparky finished eight grades at the Drip Rock school, an old one-room school house with just four or five members in each class. He remembers walking with his sisters, two miles each way - “through the holler and across the creek” - to get there and back. His favorite subjects were history and math.

Around age 13, Sparky had to quit school to help run the family farm after his dad became too sick to work. On top of planting and harvesting a large crop of field corn and soybeans, he milked 10 to 15 cows every morning and evening, and tended to the family’s 20 hogs and 50 chickens. Sparky also helped with his parents’ one-acre garden, which supplied the family with sweet corn, beans, peas, onions, tomatoes, lettuce and cabbage. In his spare time, Sparky wasn’t opposed to sampling some of his neighbor’s moonshine: “A couple of swigs and I was feeling pretty good pretty fast.” Except for slaughtering hogs, Sparky enjoyed his work on the farm.

Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Sparky enlisted in the U.S. Army and was one of the 160,000 soldiers to storm the coast of Normandy on D-Day, June 6, 1944, the largest amphibious military invasion in history. Half a year later, he took the shrapnel wound that likely contributed to his eventually losing his left leg (and earned him a purple heart) in the Battle of the Bulge. He happily remembers the day he returned home on the train to Kentucky after the war. Sparky later settled in Hamilton with his wife (and childhood sweetheart), Anna Webb, and went to work for the Diebold Safe Company, learning the craft of a locksmith and safe building. The couple raised three children, Trondle (named after Sparky’s old army buddy from New Orleans, Herbert A. Trondle). Darris and Regina.

Wherever I Might Want to Go

- by Walker "Sparky" Sparks

I was born at home in Drip Rock, Kentucky, on June 30, 1919, the year prohibition came in. My mom had me three years after my older sister, Irene. My younger sisters, Christine and Regina, came a few years after. I've been called *Sparky* since I first grew ears. We were a pretty close family. We all got along. You've got to on a farm. There's too much work; no time for fightin'.

My dad was Bill Sparks, and my mom was Clare Webb Sparks. There were four different lines of Webbs where I came from, and I later married into one unrelated to my mom's family. That was Anna Webb. We were sweet on each other from way back - kind of grew on each other, you might say. She lived nearby and used to come over and help in our fields, and I'd help out in her family's. She could work as good as a man out there - plus she could cook a whole lot better.

I didn't mind school, and I especially liked math and history. I even liked the two mile walk through the holler and across the creek to get there and back. I got good enough grades, but when I was 13 or 14 I had to quit school to help with the farm full-time. Dad got sick pretty bad with some type of stomach problems, and couldn't hardly work at all.

There was a lot to be done. Cows to be milked first thing in the morning, then again at night. Hogs and horses to be fed and watered; 50 chickens to clean up after. And 85 acres of feed corn and soybeans to put in and harvest. That's a lot of days behind a horse and plow - a lot of sweat. I also helped put in our vegetable garden every year. It was big, about an acre, and produced more sweet corn, beans, cabbages, lettuce, tomatoes and onions than we could eat. But I enjoyed the work. Farming suited me just fine.

About the only thing I didn't care for was slaughtering animals, especially hogs. To me, that was the dirtiest job there was. Thank goodness we only slaughtered two or three times a year. A good-sized hog will give you enough meat to feed a family of five for half a year, maybe more.

We'd wait till one of the hogs got nice and plump - my dad was the judge of that - then we'd pick a day for the slaughter. My mom's brother, Pres Webb, would always come over to help. We'd get up at the crack of dawn and get a fire started and boil up water from our spring in a big, 30-gallon kettle. It usually was my job to shoot the pig. I'd take my old 22 and aim it right between the pig's eyes. Sometimes it would look back at you, sometimes it didn't. No difference to me, either way. I didn't mind the shootin' part; it was the butcherin' that got to me.

"I didn't mind the shootin' part; it was the butcherin' that got to me."

After I shot the pig, my dad would take his butcher knife - it had about a foot-long blade - and cut the jugular vein near the hog's neck and the blood would start flowin' something awful. Dad would cut the whole head off. Afterward, we'd hoist the hog carcass up on a scaffold near the barn and make sure all the blood drained. That might take 15 or 20 minutes. Then we'd take the carcass and pour scalding hot water all over it to loosen up the hair and bristles. If you got a good scald, the hair came off pretty easily.

Once the hair and bristles were off, my dad would start carving the hog up for the smokehouse. He liked to keep his knife razor sharp and ground it on a whetstone between cuts. Dad was a good butcher, and very quickly we had big slabs of ham, bacon, pork lion, ribs and meat for sausage to take to the smokehouse.

On butchering day, we'd have a small fire going in the smokehouse - always hickory wood - so we could flavor and preserve the meat. We'd usually have pork loin that very night, a celebration of sorts. My mom was a great cook - so was my wife, for that matter - and she'd season the pork just right and make biscuits and gravy and a big dinner to go with it. And a cake or pie for dessert.

Besides pork, we had plenty of chicken to eat. And all the sweet corn and other vegetables we grew in our garden. We might not have had a lot of money, but we always had more than enough of food for the five of us. If a farmer's family is going hungry, he might want to start looking for another line of work.

There was never much time to relax, but Sundays I tried to take it easy. I'd go to church with my mom and sisters. They'd have on nice dresses and proper hats, and I'd be in a white shirt and tie. We were Baptists, but there wasn't too much fire and brimstone. You'd see your neighbors and maybe talk awhile. And my mom always fixed a big Sunday supper, fried chicken, biscuits and beans. Afterwards, we might go out and sit on the porch and feel the breeze.

> *"To this very day, I wake up sometimes and still half expect to have both my legs under me."*

Sometimes, if I was ahead on the chores, I might play some baseball with my friends. We'd clear a field out, mow the grass and find some flat rocks for bases. Made our own bats out of ash or hickory wood. We played bare-handed. Nobody had a glove, though there were many times I wish I had. That ball was hard.

When my dad could still get around okay, he'd relax by going hunting or fishing. He'd take me with him, and I got to be a better shot with my 22 than he was with his. Of course, I never pointed that out to him. We'd hunt raccoons, rabbits, squirrel. I enjoyed the hunting and shooting, but, like with the hogs, I didn't enjoy the butchering and cleaning. But I did it. For some reason, we never bothered keeping the skins. Buried them in a hole with the head and the guts.

As you might imagine, there wasn't a whole lot of meat to be had from a squirrel, and not much more from a rabbit, but a good-sized raccoon could go a long ways. A couple of them would be enough for our family's dinner. There's a fair amount of meat there. And we didn't waste much. We ate the legs like little drumsticks.

My dad and me weren't the world's best fishermen, but we did alright. We'd find us a nice, shady spot along the Kentucky River, bait our hooks with night crawlers and let the fish start biting. We caught our share of catfish, and some carp and blue gills on the side. Dad was fishing partly for food, but I fished for fun. I didn't like cleaning the catfish, and I didn't like eating them, either. Just never cared for the taste.

When I joined the army and got sent to Europe in World War II, I dearly missed those days on the farm - and those days hunting and fishing with my dad. Many times I wished my rifle was for killing food, not for aiming at another man.

War is an awful thing. I was part of the infantry under Eisenhower during the D-Day invasion, transported to Normandy on a small watercraft - amphibians, they called them. There wasn't any of that tough-guy stuff. Most of us were throwing up over the sides because we were sea-sick. We were just real scared and quiet. Kids 5,000 miles from our homes. All I can remember is clutching my pocket Bible and praying and wondering, over and over "Will I ever get back home." When I hit the beach, it was just noise - loud, terrifying noise - and confusion. I couldn't even tell you what I did from there. Later, I got hit in the leg by some shrapnel in the Battle of the Bulge. I don't know if the blood poisoning that cost me my leg was related to the wound or not, but in 2006 complications developed and the leg had to come off.

I never have got used to it not being there. To this very day, I wake up sometimes and still half expect to have both my legs under me, ready to go back out in the fields, ready to go hunting or fishing, ready to take me wherever I might want to go.

Rosalie Jendrek Goertemiller

Rosalie Jendrek Goertemiller was born in *Mercy Hospital*, Baltimore, Md., on April 10, 1927. She is the daughter of Frank Joseph Jendrek and Gertrude Helldorfer Jendrek, and, excepting her first year in Baltimore, is a lifelong resident of Hamilton, Ohio.

She grew up at 432 Ridgelawn Avenue in a home on a hill overlooking downtown Hamilton, and fondly recalls the colorful Christmas lights of the city twinkling below during the holiday season.

Rosalie attended *St. Peter in Chains* Elementary and Hamilton High School. She went on to earn a bachelor's degree in English literature (with a minor in Art) and a master's degree in history (with a special interest in Ohio River paddle boats) from nearby Miami University.

Rosalie taught English, history and art at Hamilton High and later taught at St. Peter's, St. Mary's, and St. Stephen and Veronica's Catholic schools before retiring in the early 1980s. She has been married over 60 years to Robert Goertemiller and is the proud mother of two children, Joseph, of Dayton, and Catherine Marie, who resides in Toledo.

Some of Rosalie's warmest childhood memories are those of overnight train rides to Baltimore with her mother and younger sister, Marie Cecile, to visit and spend summers near the seashore with her grandparents in the 1930s and '40s. The family always got its own compartment for the 24-hour ride, complete with a private bathroom and separate sleeping berths - and plenty of windows for taking in the world as it rolled by.

Lonesome Whistle Carries Trainload of Happy Memories

... by Rosalie Goertemiller

I've always loved the sound of a train whistle. It's kind of a sad, far-off sound, but it brings me close to some of the happiest days of my childhood. It's music to my ears; heaven in my heart.

When I was a young girl growing up in Hamilton, we used to visit my grandparents - my mother's parents - in Baltimore (Md.) at the beginning of each summer. And we always went by train, steam-engine in those days. Back then, you could catch the train in Cincinnati and get on the *National Limited*, an express on the old *Baltimore and Ohio* line that would take you almost non-stop to Baltimore.

Me and my sister, Marie Cecile, loved going to Baltimore and seeing all of our relatives, but we loved most of all the train ride itself. We'd look forward to it for months. Marie was four years younger than me, but we shared a bedroom, and we'd lie awake at nights talking about what we would wear, what we would pack, who and what we might see.

Usually, it was just my mom and my sister and me. My dad, of course, had to stay home and work (as a vault designer for the Mosler Safe Company). But he joked that it gave him a chance to be a bachelor again. It gave us a chance to feel really important. We always went first-class, got a state room; that is, a private compartment on the train, just for my mom and my sister and me. And we rode what you called "high iron," which was a part of the train situated higher off the rails for a smoother ride. Our compartment was plush, black and purple velvet, with roomy, comfortable seats. We had our own wash basin and private bathroom, and we each slept in our own cozy bunk up above.

Not long after school was out for the summer, my sister and I would get out our matching *American Tourister* snakeskin travel bags, and start packing for the trip – even thought there wasn't that much to pack. Most of the clothes we would need were already at our grandmother's in Baltimore, we just brought overnight bags for the train ride. Usually, we'd pack a nightgown, underclothes, toothbrushes, hairbrushes, toiletries, maybe a book or two and a few other odds and ends in our bags.

But most important was what we would wear for the ride. People got all dressed up to ride the train in those days, and we were no different. Marie and I would wear pretty much the same silk dresses with flower prints, cream-colored patent leather shoes ("Mary Janes"), white gloves and matching hats; *Juliet caps*, we called them. If the weather was cool, we'd be wearing nearly identical coats, olive-drab trench coats with big, fancy lapels. My mom had one, too. She always had on a nice dress and a dashing hat, a lady's fedora like you might see Marlene Dietrich or Ingrid Bergman wear in the movies.

We felt like we were really something, and we loved it when people on the train now and then would look at us and think we were somebody famous, all dressed up like each other. Once somebody asked if we were some kind of a singing celebrity act. We were tickled to death. Mom liked it, too.

So, you can imagine our excitement when the big day would finally come. The train left from the east yards in Cincinnati at 7 a.m., and we'd get up at 4:30 or so in the morning to get ready for dad to drive us in his old Plymouth Sedan to the station. We'd get there early with our tickets around our necks so we wouldn't lose them. And, out in the train yard, there'd be the *National Limited*, shining a brilliant black in the first light of the morning. Marie and I would be so excited that we'd beg mom to let us just walk right out and board the train early in the yard. Sometimes she did.

A steam-engine always gave you a pretty good jolt when it first started up. We'd hear the whistle blow and be ready for it. Not long after the train pulled out of the yard, mom, Marie and I would go down to the dining car for breakfast. It was just like a restaurant: white tablecloths, sparkling silverware, menus. Pullman Porters in white shirts and ties to wait on you.

When I was in my early teens, I got the "eye-opener," a two-ounce shot of strong, black coffee in a nicely designed miniature cup. My mom did, too. I felt all grown up. Then there'd be a nice breakfast - bacon and eggs, sausage, cream of wheat, orange juice and maybe some more coffee.

Afterwards, we'd go back to our compartment and look out the window and watch the world go by. It wasn't long until we were in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains and we'd feel ourselves climb a little as we looked at the trees and the rivers and streams we crossed. Mom would usually bring along a magazine to read, *Vogue* or *Life*, maybe. She could pretty much relax, because my sister and I were always on our very best behavior on the train.

Around noon or one o'clock, we'd get our appetites back. Sometimes a porter would come through with a cart you could choose from. Other times, we'd return to the dining car for a formal lunch. I remember the train served delicious fried chicken. Very spicy. Wonderful. I've never had anything like it since. And I always got chocolate ice cream in a nice glass bowl.

After lunch, Marie and I might look out the windows some more. As the train moved through the Blue Ridge valleys and twisted around the hills, we'd get a glimpse of the steam engine itself, and the first few cars. We'd often pass through small towns and people would frequently be standing or sitting near the tracks, waiting to wave as the train came by. It may seem strange nowadays, but grown men and women would be out there just to see the train go by and wave their hats. My sister and I always got a thrill out of waving back. When we tired of that, we'd get out our Nancy Drew books and read awhile, then maybe take a short nap.

"I can't think of better sleeping medicine than the soft rumble of the train and the people I loved best sleeping just a few arm lengths away."

At about the halfway mark, perhaps a little past, the train would make a stop at Harper's Ferry, where the abolitionist John Brown staged his unsuccessful raid on the federal armory in 1859. We stayed on board, but I enjoyed getting a good look at the city as the train slowed down. I'd try to imagine what the city must have looked like 80 years before and wonder which buildings might have actually been around in those days.

Pretty soon, we'd walk back to the dining car. Now and again, we'd stop and say hello to our fellow travelers – or they'd say hello to us, compliment us on our outfits. Folks were friendlier on trains then. Not like riding airplanes today, where everyone just looks ahead or buries his or her face in a newspaper. People talked about where they were going, where they came from.

Dinner was my favorite meal on the train. Food just tastes better when it's dark, I guess. I usually had fish, potatoes and brussels sprouts. And, of course, another bowl of chocolate ice cream. To this very day, I can't get enough of it.

Marie and I especially enjoyed looking out the train window at night. We'd be on the lookout for the rivers we'd cross, the ones with the beautiful, exotic names – like Susquehanna, Youghiogheny, Shenandoah.

But, what I really liked was looking into people's houses. At night, windows would be lit up in the towns and villages, and you could see quick little pieces of people's lives. They'd be washing dishes, reading the paper, playing board games. Maybe a family sitting together on the porch. We always waved, just in case they could see us.

At nine or ten at night, mom and my sister and I would climb up in our bunks and get some rest. I can't think of better sleeping medicine than the soft rumble of the train and the people I loved best sleeping just a few arm lengths away. When I have trouble falling asleep these days, I'll picture myself back on the train at night and pretend I hear the sound of the tracks underneath me.

Our train usually ran on time and pulled into Camden Yards in Baltimore about eight or nine a.m. They'd feed us a light breakfast at 7:30 before we unboarded near the harbor - pretty much where the Oriole's Camden Yard ballpark stands today. My mom's brother, our uncle John Helldorfer, had connections with the railroad, and always got on at the Mount Royal station to join us and celebrate the last 15 minutes of our trip.

I looked forward to seeing my mother's family, yet I was always a little bit sad that the train ride was over. But, a few months later, we'd be returning to Cincinnati the same way we traveled to Baltimore. And it made the close of my summer vacation a lot easier to accept, knowing I had the train ride home to look forward to.

So, I feel very lucky to be living here, not far from the railroad tracks. The trains don't go by much, but I love to hear them when they do. Especially as I'm drifting off to sleep. That old whistle remains the opening note to my favorite dreams. It still takes me on a beautiful ride.

Thelma (Hampton) Woodall

Thelma Woodall was born at home in Combs, Ky., on September 11, 1932. Combs is located in Perry County in the southeastern coal fields of Kentucky. Hazard (county seat of Perry County) was the nearest city of any size. She is the eighth of nine children (five boys, four girls) born to Andrew Madison Hampton and Mornen Hampton. Her mother was of Native American descent (most likely Cherokee) and had a sister named Pocahontas. Thelma's mother always had a vegetable garden, and canned the vegetables to eat year-round. A talent passed on to Thelma.

Thelma's father worked in the coal mines, leaving the home every morning with his hard hat and miner's light and walking three miles to work. He walked the same three miles back home, returning each evening with his face and hands covered in coal dust. As a young girl, Thelma was always out at the end of the road to greet him.

When Thelma was seven years old, her father took higher paying work at the Champion Paper Company in Hamilton. The family found a home at 208 Warwick Ave., not far from the paper plant. Thelma graduated from Hamilton High School in 1950. Shortly after graduation, Thelma eloped to Covington, Ky., with her high school sweetheart, Don Woodall ("only man I ever dated, only man I ever kissed"). They settled in Fairfield and raised four children (Greg, Melody, Clint and Brad) - and a garden. Later in life, Thelma developed a talent for oil and watercolor landscapes. Her work has been displayed in community buildings throughout Hamilton.

Eight Wasn't Enough

Large Family Teaches Kentucky Girl Lessons in Laughter

by - *Thelma Hampton Woodall*

My birthday is easy to remember, 9-11. Nothing much special about the year, though: 1932. Al Capone finally went to jail for tax evasion that spring; Jack Benny made his radio debut; and the Mickey Mouse comic books came out. And Franklin Roosevelt was first elected president.

I was born in our old farm house in Combs, Kentucky, way down in the coal country of the southeastern part of the state. My mom had lots of practice giving birth by the time I came along. I was the eighth of nine children. Ella, Hazel, Dotha, Cecil, Edith, Andrew, and Clyde all came before me. My baby sister, Opal, came three and a-half years after. Opal and I used to sleep in the same bed as mom and pop. Later, when we moved to Hamilton, Opal and me shared a bed there. I suppose that might be unusual nowadays, but we didn't give it a second's thought back then.

"My mom had lots of practice giving birth by the time I came along. I was the eighth of nine children."

My poppa was a coal miner - and a sharecropper, mainly corn and tobacco. Just a little guy, like me, no more than five-feet and an inch. But he was kind of a mighty little fellow, didn't act his size, I guess you could say. My momma wasn't any taller than he was, but she was wider, and she could keep him in line. Not that it really took much, he was a good man. Not quite as affectionate as mom, but kind to his children. And very kind to me; I was his little girl. Poppa's little pet.

Every day he'd leave for the mine with his hard hat and coal light. And the black metal lunch pail momma always packed for him - couple of sandwiches, maybe some cookies, and milk in his thermos. It was a good two or three miles, both ways, but he didn't mind walking. Gave him time to think, he said. Every evening, I'd walk down to the end of the road, a half-mile or close to it, to greet my pop. He'd give me a hug, sometimes carry me a little ways toward home. His clothes, his face, his hands would be covered in coal dust, but I didn't mind getting dirty if he didn't. And he always saved me something sweet to eat from his lunch pail, a cookie, some candy, or a bite of apple.

My dad was a union man, real interested in politics and President Roosevelt. While he was in the mines he instructed me to stay home and listen to the radio and memorize the news and whatever Roosevelt and others in Washington might have to say. When I greeted him home from work, that's the first thing he'd ask me, "Now tell me, what'd our president have to say today?" I tried to tell my pop exactly what Roosevelt said, line for line. Pop was so interested, he could hardly wait for me to finish my sentence before he was saying, "Is that right? What'd he say next." I always had a real good memory, and rememberin' all those Roosevelt speeches made it even better.

Pop loved that old radio we had, a big Philco that took up a fair amount of wall space in our living room. It must have stood three or four feet off the ground. He liked to fiddle with it, always trying to get the sound better. I think sometimes he liked to fool with that old contraption more than he liked to listen to it. Good thing he wasn't around for cable TV. He'd crouch behind the radio with his screwdriver, changing the channels, talking away, "How's that sound now? Better? Is that good?" I liked to dance to the radio - the Carter Family and hillbilly music - but I think my mom would have been just as happy if that old radio had found its way to the trash. She didn't have any use for it at all. For her, it was just noise.

Pop also loved his chair - a big, brown tweed easy chair. His throne. When he came home from work, he loved to plop down and read the newspaper from Lexington. In the offseason, when he wasn't farming, he'd sit there reading for hours, folding and shuffling the paper, drinking his coffee and chewin' on his Mail Pouch tobacco. Commenting on the news now and then. Talking to himself or whoever was walking by. He was a happy man in that chair. Always had a big wad of *Mail Pouch* in his mouth. He kept a big coffee tin beside his chair to spit into. And he didn't dare miss. Momma would have killed him for getting tobacco juice on her nice floors. And it might have cost him a kiss. Those were hard to come by after nine kids.

Momma was a good one. Her family came first, above all, and none of us ever doubted it. She was a hard worker, always busy, fixing food in the kitchen, making biscuits and corn bread, darning socks, patching up our jeans and dresses. She made most of our clothes when we lived in Kentucky. And she always had a nice vegetable garden, full of beans, lettuce, onions, cabbage, cucumbers and tomatoes.

When I was young, my job - besides keeping an eye out on Opal - was helping mom with her canning. She canned about anything that lived: beans, tomatoes, peaches, pears. We'd make pickles out of the cucumbers and sauerkraut out of cabbage and can that, too. Our garden wasn't real big - maybe 50 by 30 feet, but you'd be surprised how much you can grow in that space. With momma's canning, we ate out of that garden all year round. And it all tasted as fresh as the day it was picked, sometimes even two years later. Just about everything was stored, airtight, in Mason jars. That, or with sealing wax. We got that at the store over in Hazard.

My momma would say to me, "Thelma, you think them beans is ripe? Why don't you go out and pick us a bushel and we'll get to canning." I loved helping my momma. I was a good girl, liked to work, liked to stay busy like mom. So, I'd go out and pick the beans, the very best ones I could find and bring 'em back to the kitchen.

While my mom was washing the beans, I'd wash out the Mason jars - if I hadn't already. I always had small hands that would fit right in the jar. Made it easy to clean. So that was always my special job. Just take a little sponge, some soap and water, and rinse 'em out real good so there wasn't a trace of soap taste in our cans. You don't need that kind of spice. In good weather, I'd spread some newspaper and take the jars outside to dry in the sun.

Momma and I would fill the jars with beans, then she'd add some water, little slices of salt meat and maybe a teaspoon of salt. I say *maybe* because my mom never measured anything. She didn't need to. She had it all up there in her head - or on her tongue. She'd put a little dash of salt or sugar into the mix then take a taste with her finger to see if she had it right.

She always did. Especially when it came to making pickles. For dills, she'd quarter a cucumber and put it in a jar with just the right mix of vinegar to water. And a half-teaspoon or so of salt. You can spend all you want at the grocery store, but you'll never buy a pickle as good as my momma's dills. Same goes for her sweet pickles. Less vinegar and about a half-cup of sugar in the jar with the water is what she used for them.

Everything she made tasted great. Peach preserves, blackberry jelly, applesauce. She was really good with chicken and dumplings. And biscuits. Anything with dough. She made wonderful cookies, cinnamon and ginger cookies four inches in diameter. It made the house smell like heaven. When I got older, I watched my momma real close when she cooked so I could get the recipes all written down.

People find out about me growing up in a big family in the hills and want to know if it was like *The Waltons* on TV. I tell them *no*, not even the Waltons were like the Waltons. Nobody is. That's all fairy tale stuff. In real life, there's a lot of bickering back and forth in families - between husband and wife, and between the kids. We were no different, my mom and dad did their fair share of spittin' and spattin', usually about nothing.

> *"And you know how brothers are with their little sisters. Why, they think we were put on this earth to be teased."*

And you know how brothers can be with their little sisters. Why, they think we were put on this earth to be teased. I got plenty of it from them, I'll tell ya. They called me *Booba* ever since I was little. And they liked to put little surprises in my school notebook. It had a zipper on the outside and they would hide worms in there. Once I opened it up and out jumped a bullfrog. Scared me a good one. They stopped at snakes, though. At that point I think my parents might have stepped in. Snakes would be takin' things a little too far.

So, I kind of stuck with my little sister, took it upon myself to watch over her, help her with her studies, tell her what was what. Walked her to school when we moved to Hamilton, made sure she stopped, looked and listened. When she got older, I taught her how to kiss - give your lips a lick, pucker up and keep your eyes shut. No, it wasn't quite like *The Waltons.* I'd say we had more fun. More laughs, anyway.

Fred Hugenberg

Fred Hugenberg was born on May 7, 1909, in Norwood, Ohio (pop. 21,670), a tree-lined neighborhood just north of Cincinnati founded as a stop on the old Montgomery Road Turnpike.

He was one of five boys and one girl born to Frederick Hugenberg Sr. and Helen Hagendorn Hugenberg, who raised their children in a modest home at 1743 Cleveland Avenue. Fred attended St. Elizabeth's Elementary School and spent two years at St. Xavier High School before graduating from Norwood High in 1927. Standing 5-feet, 11 inches tall (with his cleats on) and weighing close to 150 pounds, Fred played an aggressive offensive and defensive end for the Indians.

An altar boy at St. Elizabeth's Church 90 years ago, Fred can still recite prayers from the Catholic Mass in Latin. Starting at age 11 or 12, he had a paper route, delivering the old Cincinnati Post, Norwood's evening paper at the time (folded Dec. 31, 2007). He got to know who the good tippers were, and who had dogs to beware of. Fred also developed an accurate throwing arm tossing papers onto the porches of some 75 regulars on his daily route.

Fred attended the University of Cincinnati and was studying chemistry before discontinuing his studies to marry his high-school sweetheart, Elisabeth, on July 31, 1931, in Milford. He went to work as a chemist with Proctor and Gamble and stayed with the company 42 years, helping refine the ingredients of Ivory soap ("99.44% pure") and its offshoots, producing fresher-scented cleansing agents less likely to dry the skin. We can all thank Fred for making the world a cleaner, better smelling place in which to live and breathe. Upon retiring, Fred bought a 212-acre farm just northeast of Oxford. Fred and Elisabeth (deceased) raised four children in Deer Park, Bob, Jim, Martha and Barbara. Fred considers them his finest achievement in life.

Prayers You Thought You'd Forgotten

- by Fred Hugenberg

I was born on a spring day in Norwood 100 years ago, and the world I came into had far more horses on the streets than cars. Our roads were made of dirt. In many ways, everyday life in 1909 had more in common with a thousand years ago than it does today. No TV, no radio. Indoor plumbing still wasn't that widespread. You wanted air conditioning, you slept on the porch

Ninteen-0-nine was the year Robert Perry discovered the North Pole and the Lincoln penny replaced the Indian head. Jack Johnson was the world heavyweight boxing champion, Mary Pickford made her acting debut, Boston traded Cy Young to Cleveland and the Wright Brothers delivered the first military airplane to the federal government. Ohio's ex-governor, Bob Taft, was just a half-twinkle in the eye of his great-grandfather - the newly elected 27th president, William Howard Taft. *Shine on Harvest Moon* was the hit record of the year. That song still sicks in my head.

"The world I came into had far more horses on the streets than cars."

My dad made OK money as a chemist for a paint and varnish manufacturer, but not enough (we ate a lot of rutabaga) to afford allowances for six kids. Or even one kid, for that matter. So, when I was 11 or 12, I borrowed $3 dollars - about the price of a nice pair of shoes then - and bought myself a paper route. That's how it worked at the time. You had to buy the route; you had to put down some money to make some money.

I delivered the Cincinnati Post (then-owned by newspaper mogul E.W. Scripps) an afternoon/evening paper that came out every day but Sunday. It was alright in the summer, when your time was more your own, but it made for a long day, delivering the paper after school. I'd go down to the end of the trolley line at Sherman and West Norwood avenues and collected my papers. Must have been 75, maybe 100 of them.

There's more to delivering papers than just getting them to the door. Before I left on my route, I had to fold the papers, first in half, then three times over, then a fold at the bottom to tuck things in and keep the paper tight for tossing. Then I stuck all my papers in my sack, a canvas bag I slung over my shoulder, and I was off.

That was quite a few pounds digging into your shoulder at the start. The nice thing, though, was it got lighter with each paper I delivered. My customers were mainly on the west side of Norwood. If they had a porch, I'd save myself a few steps and just give the paper a fling towards the door. I tried to make sure never to throw it too hard in case my aim was off and I might hit a window. A few steps on almost 100 papers add up pretty quick, and I got where I could get my route done in just over an hour.

If it rained, I put some plastic over my bag to keep the papers dry. The homes that didn't have porches or awnings, I put the paper inside the outer door, or on the doorstep to keep it from getting wet. I had a raincoat and a decent hat with a brim to keep the water off of me. Lightning might have stopped me a time or two, but never the rain. Snow neither. I just trudged through it. Snow was better than rain.

The biggest obstacle for a paperboy was the same as for a mailman - dogs. I don't suppose that's changed any, either. I got nipped a couple of times. Nothing serious. Still, you had to be careful. I like dogs, but when you're coming onto somebody else's property, the dog's not always going to like you back.

That was the case with a German Spitz on Baker Street. That little dog didn't care for me. Got me good on the ankles a couple of times. If he'd of been any bigger, I think I might have stopped delivering to that house altogether.

Some of the customers weren't so friendly themselves. One woman on Cameron Avenue was real particular about where you left her paper. Had to be just so, placed inside the door or she'd let you know about it. Other people would get on you if they didn't get their paper by such and such a time. You know how some people are, you just can't please them - no matter what. You're just a kid, so they give you a hard time.

Collecting was my least favorite part of the job. I think I collected at the same time I delivered papers on Saturday afternoons. You had to go up to every door. Sometimes they didn't like being bothered, and sometimes they just didn't want to pay, so you had to wait till the next time. I tried to collect every week. Because that's how I got paid; I got a percentage of the subscription rate. It wasn't very much - less than a penny a paper delivered, A real pittance in these days. For sure.

Newspapers were cheap when I was young. You see the Sunday New York Times selling for $5. I remember the Sunday paper selling for a nickel. You could get the paper delivered to your door - seven days a week - for a quarter. A monthly subscription might run 75 cents.

"Funny, the things your mind holds ... you hardly know what day it is but you remember your kids' birthdays, phone numbers you haven't dialed in decades. Your mom's rutabaga."

Anyway, my weekly take home was maybe $2 or $3. Not bad, really, for the times. And now and then, I'd get a tip. Usually, it was just some cookies or something else to eat, but once in awhile I might get a nickel, maybe a dime if someone was really feeling generous. There was a Scotsman, I can't recall his name, who gave me a ten-cent tip at Christmas time.

It was enough for me to buy myself a little something to eat or drink at the soda fountain, or get a little penny-candy from Hanrahan's on Cleveland Avenue. Licorice, gum drops, bubble gum. And, believe it or not, I was able to save quite a bit. When I finally had enough money, I went to Addison's Bike Shop on Easton Avenue, just a little woodshed across from the library. I picked out a brand-new, shiny red bike, 26 inches, with fenders and a basket. I rode that bike everywhere. For awhile it was almost as much a part of me as my shoes.

Not long after I bought the bike, I sold my paper route to a kid named Ed Solomon. I got the same $3 for the paper route that I paid for it the year before. I was glad to be done with it. I was tired of all that trudging around. Tired of that bag on my shoulder.

The only other job I had as a kid was being an altar boy. Of course, the rewards there were strictly spiritual, it didn't pay anything. But, make no mistake, it was work - at least initially. The entire Mass, except the gospel, was said in Latin in this country - and, I think, everywhere else - up till the mid-1960s. To be an altar boy, you had to memorize all the responses of the Mass in Latin. A lot of pages, a lot of prayers. You did it by rote, the nuns drilled it into you. I enjoyed it, though. It added to the mystery of it all. It was a special privilege being up on the altar at St. Elizabeth's, serving for Father Barleman and Father Gressle, if I'm remembering the names correctly.

You'd be up on the altar with the whole congregation looking at you. And all the nuns (we had Sisters of Charity) in the front pews. A young man in those days couldn't help but feel blessed and holy up there, lighting and snuffing out the candles before and after Mass, pouring the water and the wine from the cruets, ringing the bells during the Consecration, holding the shiny gold paten at communion time. Being so close to the priest, so close to God

It's been awhile since I've been to church, and longer than I can remember since I've heard a Mass said in Latin, but the prayers in that language come back to me here and there: Introibo ad altare Dei ("I will go to the altar of God"); Ad Deum qui laetificat, juventutem meam (The God of my youth and my joy"). Suscipiat; mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa. That one, you had to beat your heart with your fist as you said it.

Funny, the things your mind holds on to as time goes on. You hardly know what day it is, or what you had for breakfast, but you remember your anniversary, your kids' birthdays. Phone numbers you haven't dialed in decades, a 10-cent tip, an old dog. Your mom's rutabaga. Prayers you thought you'd forgotten.

APPENDIX B

Research Questions for Residents

(Before Reminiscence Sessions Begin)

1. Do you talk about your past much with nurses' aides?

A Lot Some Not at All

2. Do you feel that the nurses' aides know who you really are (i.e., the real you)?

Yes Somewhat No
Please Explain

3. Do you wish that the nurses' aides knew more about your past, more about your life?

Very much A little No
Anything in particular?

Research Questions for Residents

(After Reminiscence Sessions Made Available to Aides)

4. Did you enjoy telling your story?

Very much Somewhat No

5. Do you like having your story available for others to read?

Very much Somewhat No

6. Would you like to tell another story?

Very Much Somewhat No

7. Have you had conversations about your reminiscence story with any nurses' aides?

Several One or Two None

8. Have you noticed any difference in your relationship with the aides now that they know a little more about your past?

Very Much Somewhat Not at All

APPENDIX C
Research Questions for Nurses & Nurses' Aides

1. How much do you know about the residents' pasts?

A Lot Some None at All

2. How did you get to know about the residents' pasts?

Residents Family/Other Staff Charts/Care Cards Other

3. Have you read any of the residents' stories ?

Several One or Two None

4. Have you had conversations with residents about their stories?

Several One or Two Other

5. Have the reminiscence stories changed anything about your perceptions of and/or relations with the residents?

A lot Some Not at All

6. Does knowing more about the pasts of the residents affect how you feel about your job? Please describe.

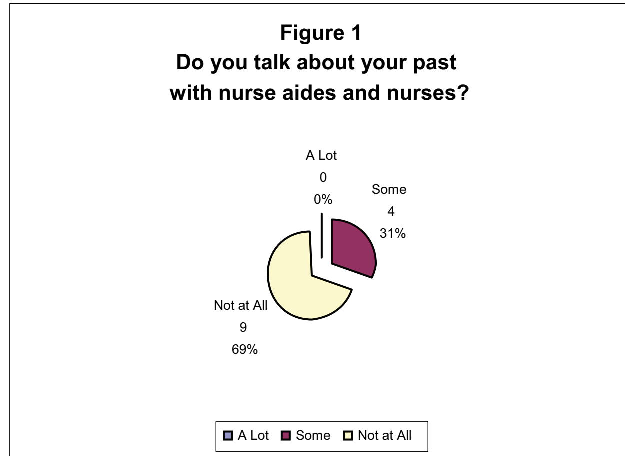
Very much Somewhat Not at All

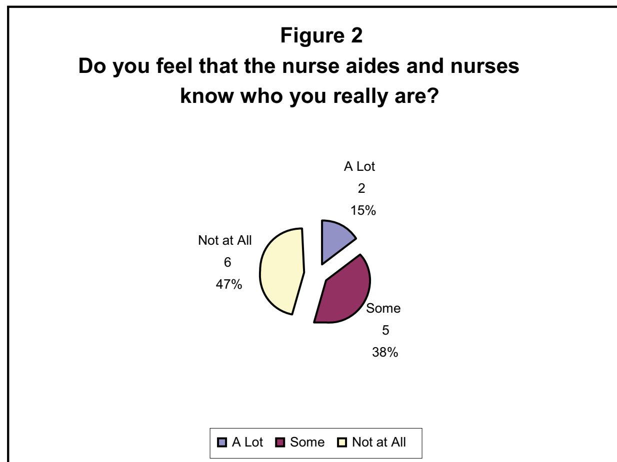
7. Would you like to know more about the pasts of all the residents you work with? Why?

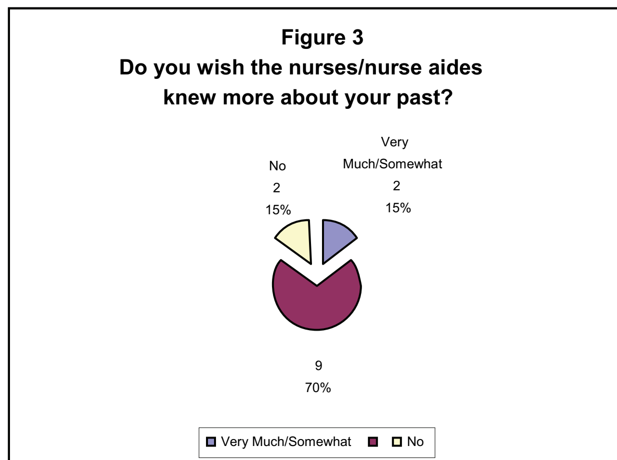
8. Any other comments, observations, concerns?

APPENDIX D

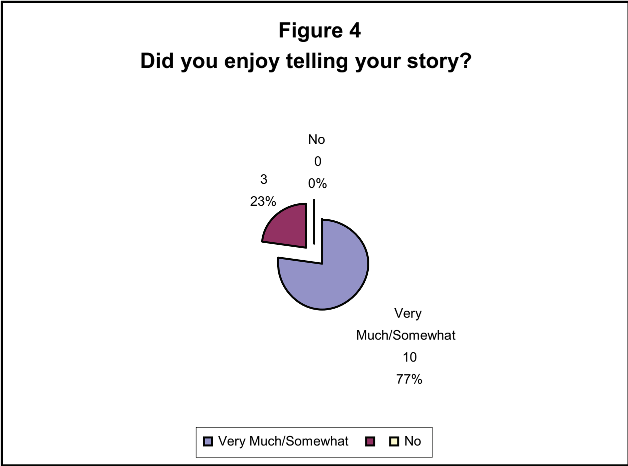
Resident Responses

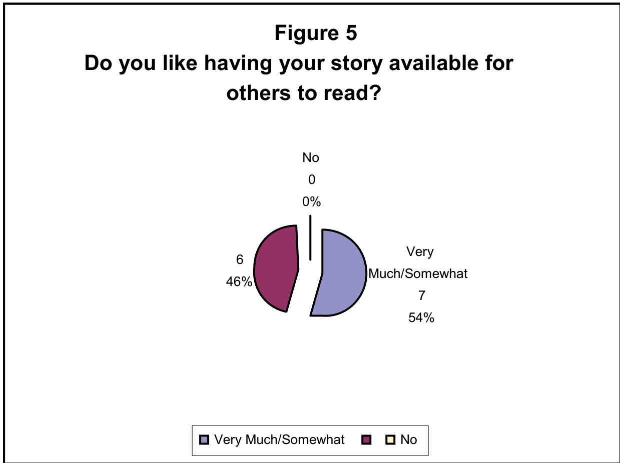


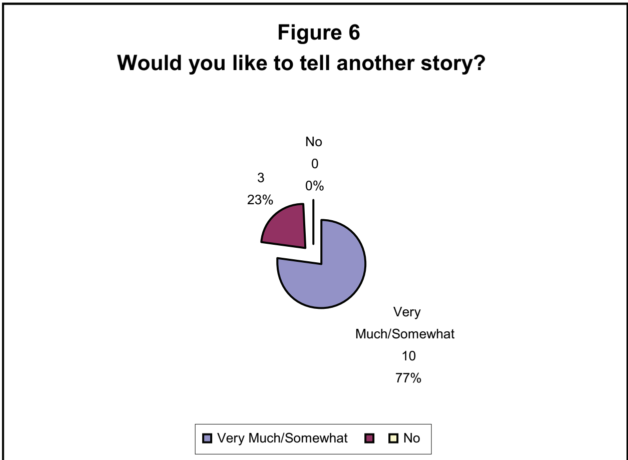




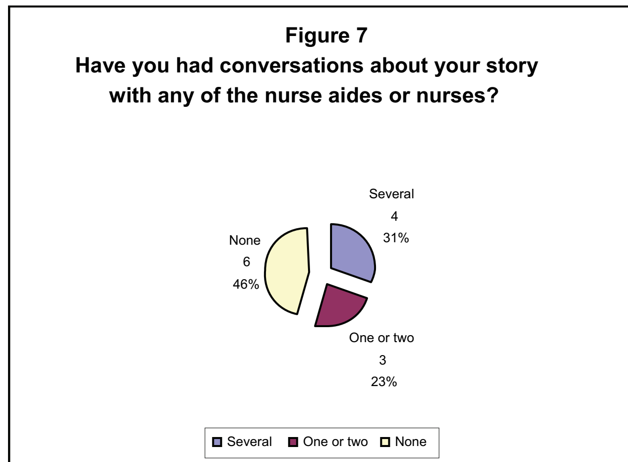
Resident Responses

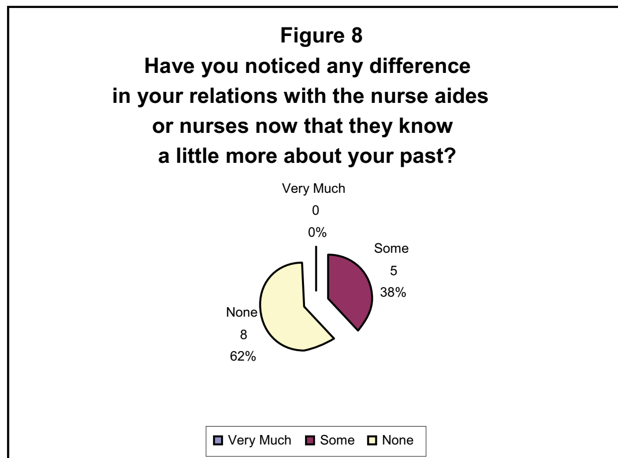






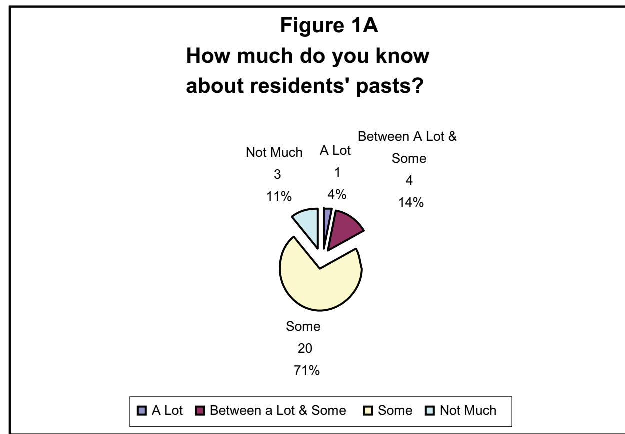
Resident Responses

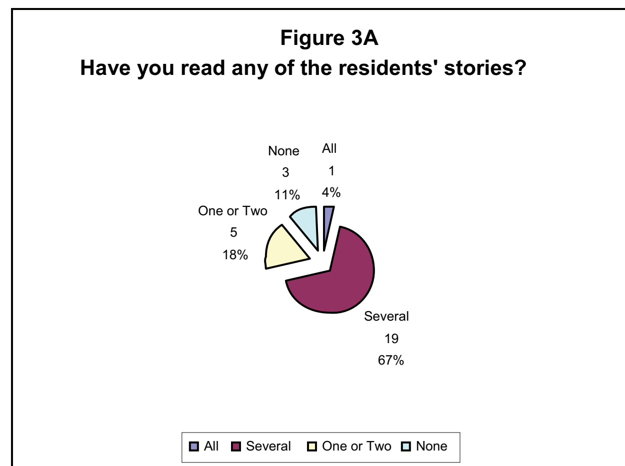


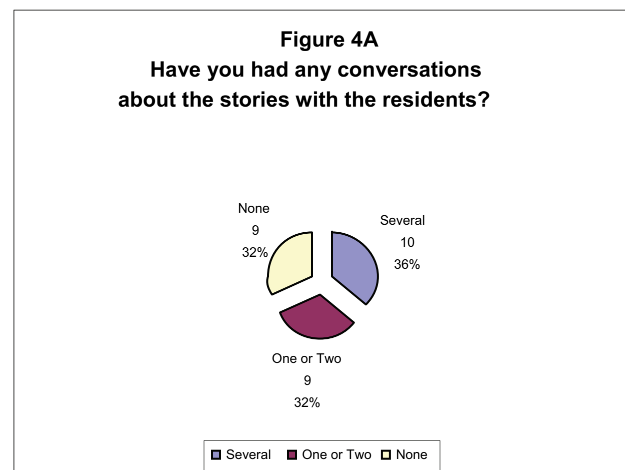


APPENDIX E

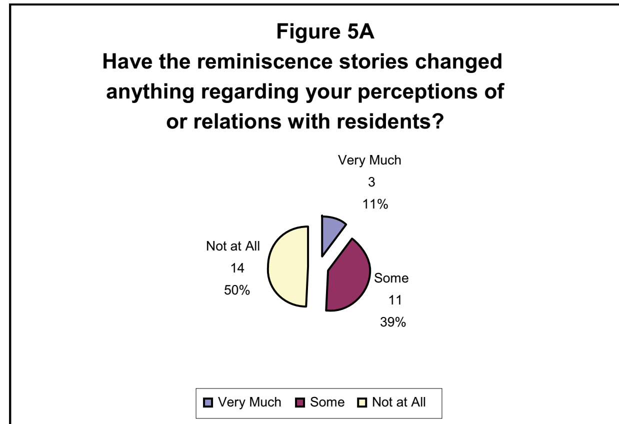
Staff Responses

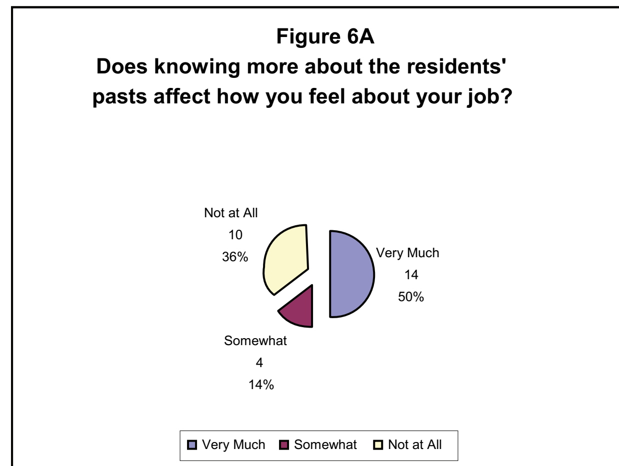


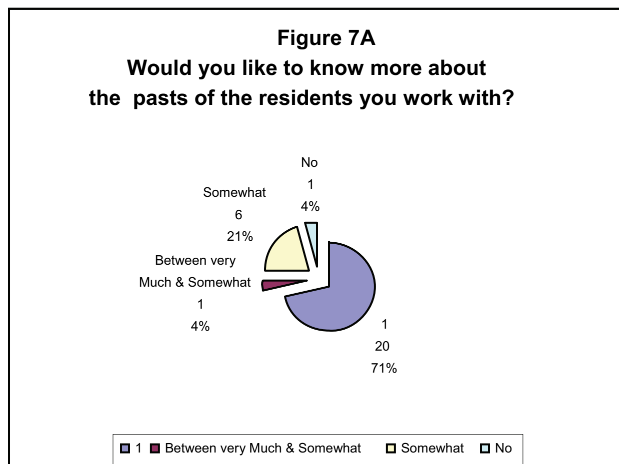




Staff Responses







APPENDIX F
Survey Elaborations From Residents

(Please note: Not all residents elaborated beyond the three answer categories offered, and responses that were virtually redundant to others' responses have been omitted.)

1. Do you talk about your past much with nurses/nurses' aides?

Once in a great while. Not that much.

Sometimes the girls (nurses' aides/nurses) will ask me for advice, maybe about getting married, and I'll tell them a little about myself, my past, and draw on my own experience. But, usually, there's not much time to talk at any length about things. They're very busy. They really work hard. When we talk, it's usually about their work, their tasks. Once in a blue moon, we might talk about things from long ago. But, mainly, we talk about the old days with people our own age … the other residents.

Yes, I think some of them know about my past – that I spent 40 years in education and 20 years in the Hamilton schools.

2. Do you feel that the nurses/nurses' aides know who you really are?

Well, I think they know a little about where I'm from, and how old I am, but, no, they don't ask about my feelings and things like that. They never ask that kind of stuff.

That's a hard question. I think they know me pretty well as who I am now, but not who I was as a child. Or as a teacher. I guess I might say about 50 percent of them know who I am inside, and about 50 percent don't know and probably don't care.

3. Do you wish the nurses/nurses' aides knew more about your past?

Maybe I wish they knew a little more about me. I'd like them to know how hard I worked and how much I cared for all the children I looked after. But, other than that, I don't really care much.

They know about me all that I want them to know. I don't really care.

I guess I wish some of them knew more about me. I had a lot of experiences growing up, as a wife, and as a teacher. I've had an interesting life. And I love to talk. I love to share about myself.

4. Did you enjoy telling your story?

Yes, I love to talk and share about myself. I do a lot of remembering. It's a way of staying close and connected to people and places and things – keeping people and places alive; keeping my younger self alive. So much of the old days were wonderful for me.

I like sharing memories, and, I guess you could say, educating the public. Most younger people walking around nowadays have no idea what it was like in a different time. Like the boy who saw a cow being milked and saying he wanted the other kind of milk, the kind that comes from a carton and not a cow.

Yes, I enjoyed it very much. I was surprised at all the people and places that I could remember. Those were pleasant, happy times – happy memories for me. It was nice to think about all that again. I hadn't for 10 or 20 years, I'd say.

Well, I like to talk about my childhood, if people will listen. Everybody likes to talk about themselves, don't they? And I like to think about the past. I had an interesting childhood, came from a big family. It's a way of making sure that all that stays close to me; that the people from those times stay close to my heart. They're all right over there (pointing to a group of photos on her table). And I like remembering about my children's childhood days, too. I had four great, very talented kids who've given me lots of happy memories.

Just going over the memories is pleasant, in and of itself. I do a fair amount of it. I have a good memory. I had a happy childhood. A lot of nice times to think back and reflect on. It helps keep me close to people who aren't here anymore.

Yes, it was nice remembering. Nice talking with someone listening.

5. Do you like having your story available for others to read?

It makes me proud. A good number of people have read the story and came up to talk to me about it: residents, staff, visitors and family. I'm very proud of my family, the way I was raised, and it makes me happy to share that with other people. I like them knowing that part of me.

It's nice for people to know who I was; who I am.

Maybe some; but, I really don't have any feelings one way or another. I'm a very private person."

It really doesn't matter to me. At my age, you really don't care too much about those kinds of things one way or the other. I really don't care.

Yes, it (the story) was a very important part of my life; and, if people want to know me, it's good that they know that.

I like making available a part of my life that has passed, or is passing, away. Many young people have probably never been on a train, at least not an overnight one. And, as I said, I've had a pretty interesting life that I enjoy sharing with people, letting them get to know me.

6. Would you like to tell another story?

Yes, I've enjoyed talking to you. I'm a private person, like I said, but I've found this to be very enjoyable.

No, one is enough.

Yes, I could tell stories about my dad all day long.

I'd like to tell another story about all my brothers and sisters and how we all got along under one small roof. We teased and fought some. But we surely loved one another.

Yes, I'd enjoy that very much. I'd like to talk more about my time in the navy. Any time we bring out things from the past and share ... I think it's a good idea that we take the time to know more about each other. And older people are such a storehouse of knowledge and experience. It's good to share it while it's still there. I fell I've had an interesting life and I'd like to pass that on to others.

7. Have you had conversations about your reminiscence story with any of the nurses or nurses' aides?

(This question neither prompted nor resulted in elaborative answers.)

8. Have you noticed any difference in your relations with the nurses/nurses' aides?

Some. In a general way. I couldn't say "no," because there have been too many aides who've come up and talked to me about the story. Some seem to respect me a little more, though I can't be sure why I say that. Just a sense I have. Maybe because they didn't realize I'd had so many experiences. Certain things they've said; certain things they've done.

Not really. All the aides have always been very kind, considerate and helpful – before my story was on the wall and after.

I think to some extent, yes. It's just a feeling I get from them knowing I was in the navy. It just feels a little different in a good way.

No, it's the same as always. They've always been very good to me.

Yes, a little. At least it seems that way. We might talk a little more.

No. I've always been close to all of them, anyway. They're like my own children, and they're very protective of me.

Yeah. I guess maybe a little bit. Maybe a little more respect.

Yes, with some of the aides, I think they've treated me better. I can't point to anything specific, but I can feel it.

APPENDIX G
Survey Elaborations From Nurse Aides & Nurses*

(*Please note: Not all staff members elaborated beyond the three answer categories offered, and responses that were virtually redundant to others' responses have been omitted.)

1A. How much do you know about residents' pasts?
2A. How do you get to know about residents' pasts?

(*The two questions above neither prompted nor resulted in elaborative answers.)*

3A. Have you read any of the residents' stories? (All/ Several/One or Two/None) Did you enjoy reading them?

(Aide): Yes, I enjoy reading about a time in their lives that I have no concept what it was like. Through them, I get a taste of it. The residents all have a piece of history in them. Now and then, when I find out something about somebody that I didn't already know, I'll kind of feel like it's a failure of mine. That I should have known before.

(Aide): It's especially cool to see who these people were in relation to who they are. You look at them and it's just amazing to think of some of the lives they have led.

(Aide): I really enjoy the insight you get into how much some of them can remember – how far back they can remember. The same person who doesn't know what day it is, or what they had for lunch, can tell you all sorts of details from back in the day – 60, 70, 80, sometimes 90 years ago. It's great.

(Nurse): Some of them have had fantastic lives, and I like comparing who they are now to who they were then.

(Nurse): Yes, it's nice to know more about them and their lives when they were my age now. We get so caught up in the job sometimes, so caught up in how these people are now. It's good to remember who they were and not take them for granted. The stories help keep in mind the humanity of these people I work with in the front of my mind. Like I said, I went to nursing school so I could help people, and I never want to lose sight of that.

4A. Have you had any conversations about the stories with the residents? (Several/One or Two/None)

(Aide): Several. Probably every time I see them, the ones who can still talk easily. They brighten up every time I mention the stories. Sometimes they'll bring the stories up to me.

(Aide): Several. I'll just bring it up in the course of conversations while I'm working with them, and they'll start talking more about it. They'll chime right in. It gives them enjoyment that some people take the time just to listen to how things were when they were young.

(Aide): One or two. Yes, I might bring it up and ask a question. And every time we go by Jack's story, he points up and says, "There's my story about baseball." And Emily's story. I liked the way her husband asked her out, and I'll say, "So, you went his way, huh?"

(Nurse): No, not with the residents, but with their families – at least three of them have brought them up to me.

(Nurse): One or two. It's wonderful for them to have someone to talk to about their pasts. They talk with a good deal of nostalgia, and you could sense their pride in their stories.

5A. Have the reminiscence stories changed anything regarding your perceptions of or relations with the residents? (A lot/Some/Not at all)

(Aide): No. I care for them the same, regardless.

(Aide): No. It doesn't change how I relate to (or perceive) the residents. I treat them the same. I keep things professional.

(Nurse): No, I love them all. They all have something very special about them.

(Aide): No, not my perception of them, but somewhat my relations with them in that it gives us more to talk about. There is more of a connection.

(Aide): Not my perception, because I have such respect for them, anyway. But, yes, it does help relations because it gives you more of an open window into their lives. It gives you a better overall picture of them.

(Nurse): Not relations. I'm an empathetic person, and that's the case no matter how much or how little I know about someone. But, I'd have to say that my perception of one or two residents have changed now that I know a little more about them. I was surprised to find some of them had done some of the things they'd done.

(Aide): Somewhat. It helps you think of them in a different light, as a different person – different than how they are now. It makes me think, Wow, they were just like me once."

(Aide): Some, maybe a little. One thing I'm really good at is making connections with people. I think the stories have helped strengthen the bond even more.

(Aide): Very much. Yes, the stories make me feel more comfortable around the residents. The stories are good conversation starters. And they make you want to make that person feel like the person they were. It brings that back to them. They will talk way more if you bring up their pasts.

(Aide): Not my perceptions, but helps when you're working with them to relate the past. I like just knowing more about them. Gives me things to talk about with them. It helps in my job. It reminds me that all these people have been through so much. That he or she is not just an old person. It helps remind me to always respect them. It makes them more human.

(Aide): Very much. The more you get to know someone, the better relationships you're going to have, the better day you're going to have. It makes the residents more approachable. It makes the job more fun and interesting.

(Nurse): No, not the perception, but it does, somewhat, improve relations. It gives you more to talk to them about.

(Nurse): No, not the perception. But, it does affect the relations: Like if they're having a bad day it can help get their minds off of what's bothering them. Just to bring up the story.

(Nurse): Not really my perception – not on a deep level. But, yes, I'd have to say that knowing that a certain resident was a Navy Wave changed the way I look at her. It kind of personalizes the relationship. I've been focusing on the job quite a bit, but it's nice to have that extra information. When you're in their doing some rather personal things with them, it's nice to get them talking about themselves and take their minds off of things. It lessens the anxiety.

(Nurse): Very much. For example, I didn't know Fred was a farmer. You kind of look at them differently. Relations, also very much. It makes them feel good when you talk about stuff from the past – that you took the time to get to know more about them.

6A. Does knowing more about the residents affect how you feel about your job? (A lot/Some/Not at all)

(Nurse): No, from the time I was very young I remember wanting to care for people.

(Nurse): No, the job is rewarding in and of itself. One of the reasons I do this is after my mom had a stroke, I saw the need and the value.

(Aide): Somewhat. It's nice to know that these people had such amazing lives. They've done some really great things. I don't mean that they aren't real to begin with, but it makes them even more real to me.

(Aide): Yes, very much. Especially on the hard days, when you are busy and someone is not cooperating. You can think a little more about the person inside. You keep reminding yourself that this is a person – someone's mother or father; once someone's child who has feelings, a person who has done and experienced great things with his or her life. It reminds you why you're here – to help make their lives better any way you can.

(Aide): Very much. Just seeing and imagining what they were like when they were young then matching them up to who they are now. It makes my job more interesting. And it reminds me that all of these people have been through so much, that he or she is not just an old person.

(Aide): Yes, very much. It makes it more interesting, and it (knowing more about residents' pasts) is good for activities, knowing which activities might interest which residents.

(Aide): Very much, because it makes them (the residents) more of a person and less of a job. It makes you more sensitive to them.

(Aide): Very much. It makes me feel better about what I'm doing. It personalizes the work. It makes it more comfortable for me and for the residents, I think. It makes a big difference.

(Aide): It doesn't affect the way I do my job, but very much as far as making (my) job more interesting and meaningful. I'm a very curious person. I like philosophy. I like to see how people were compared or contrasted to who they are now – the continuity. It's very interesting. Some people who are very mild-mannered and keep to themselves, you find out that they really got out there and did things when they were younger. And then you'll see some residents who are now very noisy and aggressive and find out they were just the opposite when they were young. Knowing about the pasts of the residents makes a huge difference in caring for them. If you don't know who they are, how are you going to care for them? It gives us a way to relate to them. I hope somebody wants to hear my story and know some about my past when I get older.

(Nurse): Very much. It puts you more on a personal level with them. It builds trust. It helps them trust you more because you're taking the time to deal with them on a personal level.

(Nurse): Very much. It makes the job more interesting; more satisfying. I feel like I'm piecing together more of the puzzle; that is, better able to understand who the people (residents) are, and why they are the way they are.

(Nurse): Very much. It makes them go from being a number (i.e., "the lady in Room 189") to being a person. I hate to put it that way, but it's true. We don't always get the time to know people the way I'd like to.

(Nurse): Very much. It makes you understand what makes them (the residents) the way they are. It's not that I don't think of them as a person, but knowing more about them makes me think of them more like a family member, like this could be my grandma. It makes you more tolerant. More compassionate.

7A. Would you like to know more about the pasts of the residents?

(Aide): *Not really. I figure everything I need to know here must be what they need me to know.*

(Aide): Somewhat. It's nice to connect them to an actual background, and it gives me a better connection to them.

(Aide): Very much, it's very interesting, especially if they didn't grow up in Hamilton.

Very much. Mainly for the reasons I already gave (i.e., you think a little more about the person inside).

(Nurse): Yes, it gives you something to talk about – a connection. If you know about a persons' past you can use it and bring it up when they (the residents) are depressed and feeling bad.

(Nurse): Very much. Our generation is missing out on a lot of things not knowing more about where they come from and what things were like in the past. I was raised near my grandparents, and I feel very lucky that way. Kids today don't even know their own parents. A lot is lost by not knowing the older generations. They have so much to teach us, especially regarding the work ethic.

(Nurse): Very much. It gives you knowledge and a better sense of who you're working with – who these people were. It helps you relate to who these people are. It makes me feel closer to them.

8A. Additional comments?

The stories were easy and enjoyable to read and give a good idea of who (the residents) are, who they were. Some will forget, so it's good that it's written down.

(Aide): I'd like to have stories about the people who maybe can't tell me about themselves - stories from those who can't communicate anymore.

(Aide): I think talking about the past to residents, letting them know that you're interested in who they are and the times they lived in, can really brighten their day. I've seen it for myself.

(Aide): I just love my job and helping the residents stay happy. Knowing more about them helps that.

(Aide): I want to emphasize that this is more than a job. … This is your life; this is their life. We're working with human beings. It's important who these people are; it's important who they were.

(Nurse): This has all been very good, because it gives you an outlook on the person from before they became ill.

(Nurse): These stories are great little pieces of history, and they'll be very nice for the families to have when the (the residents) are not here anymore. It's important for them.