

# THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JAMES GERALD ELLER

## A STORY OF A MOUNTAIN MAN FROM GRAHAM COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

By J. Gerald Eller (written 1996-1999)



My daughter Jerri requested that I write my life's story - so at last - during a winter vacation in Edgewater, Florida in 1996, I began the attempt. As I began trying to recall my trials, tribulations, successes, and failures and various other experiences dating from my earliest childhood, I found a few memories still resided within my deteriorating mind.

Depending upon how long this manuscript survives, my descendants who may read it will doubtless include many more than those now in existence - my first born [Jerri Lee who married Ty Cathey and their Joe Eller and Holly Ann, who married Tom Walters, and will soon have her Ph.D. in Molecular Biology]; my only son, [Steven Fisher who married Sarah Reid, and do not plan for children]; my youngest, [Jeanne Marie who married James William Hubbard and their James "Jay" William, Jr., and Robert "Bobby" Clayton]. Juanita and I are wondering about our first great grandchild. Who will it be?

I can remember very few significant events prior to my beginning the first grade in Robbinsville School in 1927. I do remember that some events were traumatic, some were dangerous, and some downright embarrassing - I shall omit most of the latter. From those early days, I remember my mother taking me with my brothers and sisters to visit her grandmother (my gr. grandmother) Margaret Ann Davis Carpenter before her death in 1927; I must have been about age 4. She was the only great grandparent I can claim to have seen. She lived with her daughter, my mother's aunt, Elvira Carpenter George, in the Tallulah Valley of Graham County, NC.

I remember my first vaccination at age three or four (for typhoid) which produced in me a three-day coma, probably anaphylactic shock from the impurities in the vaccine of that time. For three days I was unaware of what was going on. Dr. M. V. Maxwell, who vaccinated me (the same who had delivered me on July 30, 1921), refused to vaccinate me ever again; I received no further vaccinations until I entered military service for World War II when I was vaccinated for everything at one time - but without any adverse reaction, except the smallpox vaccination did not "take," although administered two or three times.

While I was in graduate school at Carolina after the War and your mother and Jerri were still with her parents, I mentioned that I had never had a smallpox vaccination to "take." Aunt Evelyn announced that she would vaccinate me and guarantee it would take. She brought the vaccine and needles home from work and one week-end when I was home she did the job. By the time I started back to Chapel Hill by bus it had really taken - I was feverish and by the time I got to Chapel Hill I was so sick I do not remember how I got from the bus station to my room, for the next I knew it was morning; I felt miserable for a day or so but I knew I was well vaccinated this time.

I suffered a potentially serious accident during my pre-school days. This occurred at my grandparents' house. 200 yards down the road from my house. A tire on the Model-T Ford of my uncle Earn was parked in the yard and had developed a hole through which the inner tube protruded like a aneurism, - tires in those days were prone to do this but this had attracted the

attention of my brother Claude as he passed on his way to school. He came running back to tell me to come see the sight, so I raced back with him to see the tire. On the way we passed my father, who was driving in the same direction in a heavy logging wagon pulled by a team of horses. The wagon had to pass very close to the car. Just before the wagon and horses reached where I was standing gawking at the tire, I backed out into the path of the on-coming wagon, but my father failed to see me. The near horse knocked me down and dragged his hoofs across my body, and before Papa could react, the front wheel of the wagon passed from my beltline on my left side, across my chest and off my right shoulder. When I regained consciousness, I was lying on a bed in my grandmother's house, with Dr. Maxwell hovering over me. He found no serious injury but said I should remain quiet for a few days. My brother, Claude, carried me piggy back home where I basked in all the special attention I received for the next several days. There were no obvious lasting effects.

I was sick often as a child, especially in the winter time when I was prone to head colds followed by severe ear aches and swollen tonsils; somewhat like my grandson Bobby. I can remember many nights of pain and little sleep. I suffered dreadfully and could not hear well. In those days without antibiotics it was a common practice for all children to have their tonsils removed before beginning school, whether or not such surgery was needed. No hospital or surgeons existed in Graham County so each summer a temporary tonsil clinic was set up in the local school building. A surgeon from Waynesville removed my tonsils at this clinic during the three days he did nothing but remove tonsils in assembly line fashion from all students who were to begin school that fall.

I remember vividly being placed on the gurney and wheeled away into the back hall area where an ether mask was placed over my nose and mouth. I panicked at the awful smell of ether and felt I was suffocating. I tried to wiggle free but was held firmly in place and was told to count backward from one hundred. I began to try to count but quickly went to sleep. I remember my last words were "I am dying" and a voice said "Oh no you aren't."

When I regained consciousness, I was lying on an army cot in a classroom with my mother at my side. Other children lay on cots in this make shift ward. My throat felt like it was on fire, but ice cream quickly brought that under control. In those days ice cream was a real luxury, available in Robbinsville at only a couple of places. I remained in the school overnight with my mother in attendance; I was fed ice cream as often as I wanted - I had dreamed of such a treat. After going home the next day, I received special attention from everyone for a few days but suffered no complications and began to thrive.

With the removal of my tonsils, my hearing improved at once. For the first time, I heard the train whistle at our house from about one mile away. Also, for the first time I heard the whistle of the local band mill just across the hill. Removal of my tonsils eliminated much of my winter health problems and I began to grow rapidly. I am certain I was born with allergies; they subsided until they reappeared when I reached my late thirties and are still with me. Allergies are inherited; in my case from my mother.

Nothing has happened during my life that I am reluctant to reveal. Of course, I did a few foolish and embarrassing things that add nothing to my stature or to this story. My worst episode came in the 3rd grade when I got carried away in a Wild West phantasy and began to wonder how bank robbers felt after robbing a bank. (At that time, I was very fond of reading cowboy stories and playing out roles in my imagination) I decided to experiment and see how it would feel to become a robber, so

rather than robbing banks, I began to steal pencils from my classmates until I was caught. I was made to confess and apologize before the entire class. Also, when my class lined up, I was forced to march last in line - three paces behind the next person. I was humiliated beyond belief and decided then and there that robbing would not be my future profession. My over-active imagination had gotten me in trouble and not for the last time. I have never wanted to experience again the awful humiliation that came with being caught stealing. It took me a long time to put that behind me.

Don't tell me children are not influenced by what they read, see or hear. In my case the most exciting source of new ideas was from Wild West magazines - now it is movies, TV, and the computer. Children are prone to "act out" ideas that come to them, just as I did. Getting caught was the greatest thing that could have happened to me.

I have spent no time in jail or mental institutions although there were times when I probably qualified at least for the latter. No doubt I deserved or needed both on occasion. My life story is not really a fairy tale; however, as I begin to recall the conditions of my early beginnings and compare them to the unexpected events that led to a successful career which took me out of Graham County, it does take on at least for me the aura of a fairy tale. For example, any thoughts during my school years that I would go to college and then to war never was in my young mind. Becoming a college professor certainly never crossed my mind.

I was only a poor rural country kid born and reared in a very isolated spot in the southern Appalachian mountains of Western North Carolina, (Graham County, NC). My family, by any standard, was quite poor - really poverty stricken although they did not know it - any thought of attending college had never crossed my mind. Perhaps my mother had such hopes because my two older sisters, mostly on their own, had each managed two years of college by the time I finished high school.

My genetic inheritance gave me a keen imagination, better than average intelligence and a good set of instincts. I was influenced greatly by my parents to work hard, be honest, and follow the Golden Rule. They were not prone to preach - rather they set good examples of what they expected of us. I grew up knowing I was expected to go to school and mind my teachers. I have my parents to thank for my character development. I was told that if I got a whipping in school (whipping was a big thing in schools of my day) I would get another when I got home. I never got a whipping in school, but I did have to go the principal's office once for throwing objects at passing cars. I also knew that on Sunday, I was expected to go to Sunday school and church - and this I did until I went away to college in 1939, but during that time I never was moved to join the church.

It was in the 6th grade that I first discovered that I might have some special academic talent. National standardized comprehensive tests were given for the first time that year in my school. I made the highest marks of any in my class, beating out my good friend, Clarence Williams, by less than one point. This came as a complete surprise to me - probably also to my classmates. In the 7th grade Clarence and I led the class again except he beat me less than one point. Clarence was my closest friend in grammar school but we drifted apart in high school, mainly because he did not play basketball and I did. He joined the Army immediately upon finishing high school and had a successful military career - married an English girl - settled in Yorkshire, England and became a total anglophile.

At my school we had only 11 years of school before college (1-11). All grades were housed in the

same building. The twelfth grade was added the year after I graduated in 1938. High school began with the 8th grade and ended with the 11th. I ceased being a good student as soon as I got to high school because of the intrusion of two new discoveries - girls and basketball. I also became a sort of smart-aleck and ceased paying careful attention in class, except to talk to my buddies and look at some girl. My grades in high school were never great, but I had no major problems in doing passing academic work. No one counseled me to attempt to do better.

Each year in high school I was elected president of my class and played on the first team in basketball. The first Student Council was begun when I was a senior and I was elected as the President. It always seemed that without my trying I was always the one nominated for any elective office that came along and always won.

Our school did not have a gym during those years, so we practiced on an outdoor court, often in the mud. We played all of our games away from home at schools that had gyms. We had a very good basketball team and lost very few games. In explaining how we did it, Arnold Hyde, our coach (and my life-long friend) said if you practice your team in the mud while wearing heavy boots and then put them in a gym in tennis shoes they can outrun and out jump any team.

My basketball career began in the 8th grade when Floyd Millsaps, my teacher in the 7th grade, announced that a basketball team was to be organized. Because of the depression, the school had not sponsored any athletic team for three years. On the day announced for the first meeting during the noon period of basketball candidates, I elected to play some other game with my friends elsewhere on the grounds. Suddenly Floyd Millsaps was in my face. He grabbed me by the arm and said come with me - you are going to play basketball. He was right - I did play basketball and it became a center of my interest for the next years. Even when I went to college, I had ambitions to be a basketball coach.

A twelfth grade was added along with a group of business courses the year following my graduation from high school. Our very popular principal lured several of us who were not going to college to return and take a year of post-graduate work in business. That was when I learned typing and some accounting. I have often said that learning to type was the greatest thing I learned in high school - that was not true of course, but I have always enjoyed typing and this skill has been of great help to me.

I was told I was born at 5 o'clock in the afternoon of January 30, 1921 in the house on the head of Moose Branch where I lived until I went away to college in 1939. I was delivered at home by Dr. M.V. Maxwell, our family's physician. When I joined the navy, no birth certificate for me could be found in Raleigh, so Dr. Maxwell signed a statement which was accepted by the Navy as evidence that I was a real person. After the war I did obtain my birth certificate from Raleigh.

Child birth in those days always took place in the home, and mine was no exception. However, my mother was attended by a physician rather than the usual midwives who had delivered some of her earlier children. By the time I came along, Mama was well experienced in the ways of child birth since I was her seventh child. She gave birth to a total of eleven children, but many did not survive early childhood infectious diseases. By the time I was born in 1921, she had lost four children: 3 girls and a boy - all to infectious diseases. Death from these causes was a constant threat in those days to the very young - typhoid, whooping cough, diphtheria being the most deadly. I was one of the fortunate ones in that respect. By the time I came along, my mother, perhaps from her experience with death, had become passionate about keeping a clean house and was obsessive

about taking care of her children. This probably explains why I was never allowed to go swimming as a youngster - and never learned to swim even later.

Our house was located near the head of what is still officially designated as Moose Branch, but known locally as "Eller Branch." The stream is really a fair sized "brook," too small to be called a "creek." Its origin was about two hundred yards above our house and received a tributary from the large bold spring adjacent to our house which supplied our water for drinking and cooking. Anything smaller than creeks in Western North Carolina are called 'branches,' I never heard the word "brook" except in stories. Moose Branch flows directly north to empty into Long Creek which joins the Cheoah River near Robbinville, about one mile from our home. We were the last house on the branch; but our land extended through a low wind gap at the head of Moose Branch into an adjacent watershed known as Poison Branch, another tributary of Long Creek.

Long Creek flows into the Cheoah River which empties into the Little Tennessee River before entering the state of Tennessee. Because of the water gap produced by the river, access into Tennessee from Graham County was easier than access to the rest of North Carolina. Graham County should have been in Tennessee. For years merchants from the county obtained their goods from Tennessee because of easier access.

We children all called our father "Papa," and our mother "Mama." Papa, who was about 44 years of age when I was born, was Jonathan Wesley Iona Eller. He was born 28 Sep 1877 in Eller Cove in Reems Creek Valley near Weaverville in Buncombe Co., NC, to Williams Huey "Bill" Eller and Sarah Lucinda "Lou" Bradley; he was the eldest of their fifteen children. Papa's first two names were selected from his two grandfathers, John Wesley Eller, and Jonathan Bradley (not for John Wesley, the famous Methodist minister). In order not to offend either grandparent, his parents chose a third name, Iona, by which he was known in his family. He is the only person I ever knew with the name "Iona." Iona is a small island off the coast of Scotland. How his parents came to choose this name is unknown to me. In pronouncing his name, his family and my mother left off the last "a" and called him "I-on'." However, few others called him by this name. At some point for reasons totally unknown to me, he acquired the nick name of "Smith" and in Graham County he was known as "Smith" or "J. W.", except to his wife and siblings who still called him I-on'. Many of his nephews and nieces called him "Uncle Smith."

"Mama", was Lillie Kansas Rogers, who was 33 years of age and 10 years younger than Papa when I appeared on the scene. Others knew Mama as "Lillie." She was born 24 Feb 1885 in the Beech Creek section of Cheoah Valley, Graham County, NC, to David Jasper Rogers and Susanna Malinda Caroline Carpenter. Rogers was a Scotch-Irish name while Carpenter, like Eller, was German. We now know the Eller name is of German origin, derived, according to the best authorities from the German word for "Alder." My mother told me once "Eller" was Scotch-Irish. Later, when I learned it was German, I asked her why she had told me earlier it was Scotch-Irish and she said, "During the first World War, it was not very popular to have a German name." I have been able to trace my Eller, Rogers, and Carpenter relatives back to Pennsylvania where they appeared in records before 1750.

After my retirement in 1983, I was able to document my Eller lineage back to my immigrant ancestor, John Jacob Eller who came to Pennsylvania before 1753, at which time he was married to another German immigrant, Maria Eva Goettge; afterwards they moved to Rowan County, NC. In 1998, I was senior author of a huge family history/genealogy entitled *Descendants of John Jacob*

*Eller.*

While Eller is a German surname, my German genes are mixed with others of Scotch-Irish, English, Welsh, and Cherokee Indian origin. Early German immigrants at first intermarried only among themselves, but this soon broke down in colonial America with the second and third generations. The genes contributed by me to my children were matched, of course, by an equal number from Juanita, whose ethnic background is very similar to mine. Her family name of Fisher was also of Germany origin, but like my ancestors, much intermarriage had occurred between her German ancestors and various other ethnic groups. Therefore, the genes we have passed to our progeny are beyond doubt of great ethnic diversity - but judging the results we passed along some strong genes. We feel doubly blessed in that each of our children seemed to have received such "good" genes from us and have made good use of them.

If we trace all our various gene lines back even 5 generations we would be astounded at the number of ancestors we have. Also, when we marry and have children, we must remember that our spouse contributes an equal number of genes to each of our children - another reason, among many; this insures that no two people with the same genetic constitution ever occurs except for identical twins or clones. The first cloning of a mammal occurred in 1997, I predict we will hear of a human clone by 2000. In fact the rate of genetic advance is such that many new and unique ethical problems will have to be faced by our grandchildren - get ready Holly!! [ I am revising this story on my computer on April 10, 1999; later this week Holly, who is nearing her Ph.D. in molecular genetics at Wake Forest University, will visit us here in Asheville and she and I attended a symposium at Western Carolina on the Human Genome Project, which promises to revolutionize biology in the 21st century. Holly is on the cutting edge of this new technology.]

Many of our social problems of today are caused to a great degree by the misunderstandings of human diversity. To understand the basis for diversity one must understand genetics. Mother Nature has built into the system of sexual reproduction a number of safe guards that insures that no two human beings, even siblings, will have exactly the same combination of genes.

Papa was married twice; my mother was his second wife. He had married first on 3 March 1901 in Graham Co., NC, to Theodosia "Doshia" Hooper, when he was 24 years of age. She lived only six months after the wedding and they had no children. Papa and Mama were not married until 21 May 1905, by which time he was 28 and Mama was about 21 or 22. Doshia's large framed picture always hung on the wall in the bedroom of my parents. Only after I was grown and married did I realize how unusual this was. I doubt that second wives rarely tolerated pictures of the first wife hung so conspicuously especially on the bed room wall. What this signified, and how my mother felt about the matter, one can only guess. Knowing my mother - the picture would not have been there if she had not approved. I never heard my father mention his first wife, and my mother only mentioned her when asked about the identity of the picture.

I know no details about how my parents met. I feel certain I must have heard something about this from my mother or other relatives. I am equally certain that my Papa never mentioned the matter. Papa's younger brother, Earnest, had already married Viola Rogers, a younger sister of my mother. I suspect it was through them that my parents first met. Their marriage record shows my parents were married at their home, so they probably were the match makers. For two brothers to marry two sisters was a very common occurrence in those days when social contact was much more restricted among non-relatives. Ernest's and Viola's children are double-first cousins.

I had many regular 1st and 2nd cousins and a swarm of them on Sunday afternoons played at our house, or at the home of our Eller grandparents who lived only a short distance from us. My cousin playmates always included Harold, son of Uncle Zan and Aunt Kate Eller, "Tommy," his sister, and Arnold Rogers, son of Aunt Ivalea and Uncle George Rogers. Ivalea was a sister of my father and George was an uncle of my mother. Until I finished high school there were only three houses on our branch; ours, my grandparents, and Uncle George Rogers.

We played all sorts of games: baseball, basketball, "base," "marbles," "hide and seek," "kick can," "Cowboys and Indians" and many more. Usually we had only great fun, but occasionally disputes arose. One such dispute stands out in my memory. My cousin, "Tommy" Eller (female), slightly younger than me, got angry with me and ran to grandma Eller's house and returned with a huge stone marble almost as large as a pool ball. She threw this and struck me in the temporal region of my head. No lasting damage but it could have been fatal. After I got to high school these Sunday afternoon affairs gradually disappeared and I began to play with the town kids at all sorts of games - most commonly sand-lot baseball. [Last week (early April, 1999, I learned Tommy had died. She had married Sachel Stratton and left a passel of children and grandchildren.]

Marbles was the most popular game among all the youth of my early years. Every boy carried marbles and at recesses (15 min each morning and afternoon) and lunch (a full hour) marble games were played in the school yard. To play marbles one drew a circle whose dimensions could vary from a few to many feet in diameter. Any number could play but each player first had to "put up" a given number of marbles which were bunched closely together in the center of the ring. Then players took turns shooting from the outside circle at the marbles which soon were scattered within the ring. The object was to knock a marble from the ring while your "shooter" or "taw" as it was called remained within the ring so that you continued to shoot as long as you knocked another marble from the ring without your "shooter" going beyond the circle. Every boy had his favorite "taw" often a steel ball bearing. As long as you could knock marbles from the ring and your taw remain inside you continued to shoot. Agreement was reached before the game began, as to whether or not the game was for "keeps." If for "keeps" you kept all the marbles you knocked from the ring. Obviously this was a low level type of gambling with marbles as the prize.

The game was so popular about the time I was in the fifth grade that a tournament was held for the high school students. This created great excitement among everyone and some of the older boys acquired great skill. For months a student named Elmo Ghormley had been winning all the marbles. He had so many marbles that he kept them in a sack at home from which he sold marbles to other kids. I remember going with my older brother, Claude, to buy marbles from Elmo. Everyone expected him to win the marble tournament, but he was defeated in the final round by Archie Elliott, who immediately became a hero in the school and in town.

Another marble game preceded the one described above. It was played by my father when he was growing up. It was played with huge stone marbles - not the glass marbles of my day. This began with a square marked in the ground and not a ring. A square was marked off and a marble was placed at each corner with one in the exact center of the square - which was about 12 inches to a side. At some arbitrary distance from the square a line was drawn and called "Head Taw." You started the game by shooting at the marbles in the square from Head Taw, the object being to shoot alternately to first knock out the marbles at the corner, then to win you had to knock out the middle marble. In the meantime you had the option of shooting at the "Taw" of your opponent and

if you hit it he had to go back to "Head Taw" and start all over again. My grandmother had a huge sack of these old fashioned marbles and it was the largest of these that my cousin "Tommy" used to knock me in the head (as described earlier).

Another Sunday afternoon adventure stands out in my memory. With my older brother Claude, and my two cousins, Arnold Rogers and Harold Eller, I was caught stealing water melons. We were not very smart about it. Before we left our house to go to the neighbor's water melon patch, I was sent to borrow my father's pocket knife after which we were seen by him to set sail directly across the hill toward the neighbor's water melon patch. We were well into eating the melons when my father suddenly appeared. He took one look and headed toward the neighbor's house where he paid the farmer and settled the matter. We received from him only some disappointed looks. Disappointment in the expressions of my parents was a powerful tool - much more effective, I think, than ranting and raving. By reading their faces we could always tell how they felt about us, other people, or any situation.

My grandfather, William H. Eller and his brother John H. Eller, had moved from Eller Cove in Reems Creek Valley in Buncombe County about 1887, after having bought land in 1884 on which cabins were built, land was cleared and crops were planted. They settled about twelve to fifteen miles from Robbinsville on Little Snowbird Creek in the Snowbird Mountains in a cove which became known as Eller Cove, a name that persists today. What brought them to Graham County is not known with certainty. A family story says they came because Buncombe County passed a "fence law" meaning that free range for cattle no longer was legal. Cattle had to be kept within pasture fences and not allowed to roam freely. If this were the cause for the move they chose wisely because Graham County was the last county in North Carolina to pass the fence law, in about 1932.

My genealogical studies have brought forth another theory as to why they left Buncombe County. My gr. grandmother, Sarah E. Hamilton Eller had been widowed in the Civil War with the death of her husband and my great grandfather, John Wesley Eller. In 1884, Sarah remarried - to another Eller, John Chrisley Eller, a cousin of her first husband who had a drinking problem. This marriage soon failed and I think was a primary reason why the family decided to leave Buncombe County.

I can remember very well when our cattle roamed on the open range. One of my most hated chores was to go hunt the milk cow in the late afternoon and bring her home for milking. Sometimes the cows had wandered two or more miles from home. I rejoiced when the fence law was passed and we had to keep our cattle in pastures. While I had to learn every farm chore known to man, for some reason I never had to learn to milk. Milk and eggs were dietary staples for us and we were never without a milk cow and a number of chickens.

My grandfather and his brother John were both Free-Will Baptist ministers and together they founded two churches that still survive - one in the Atoah Community of Graham County and one in the Beaver Creek Community of Cherokee County, NC.

After I retired from Western Carolina University in 1983, I got into genealogy of my Eller ancestors. This led to the organization of the Eller Family Association and to the publication of the Eller Chronicles, newsletter for the association, published by Juanita and me. We remained heavily involved with this organization for 12 years publishing the newsletter four times each year, and helping organize and hold national Eller Family Conferences each two years beginning with the first

in Salisbury, NC in 1989. My genealogy work slowed greatly with the publication of a huge book in 1998.

My Eller grandparents and my father-to-be moved from the Snowbird Mountains to Moose Branch about 1900 and together purchased a single tract of land - some 70 acres - at the very head of Moose Branch, one mile from Robbinsville, the county seat. The tract was later divided equally with Papa taking the uppermost portion, so my place of birth was on the head of Moose Branch on property adjoining that of my Eller grandparents. After my parents were married, Papa built the two-story, frame, boxed, house of seven rooms on his portion of the property in which all my siblings were born. Clap boards covered only the front and was the only part of the house ever to be painted. There was no electricity or running water in the house. We had kerosene lamps and obtained our water from a near-by spring.

My grandfather David Jasper Rogers, a carpenter, built our house. Papa was a good rough carpenter but not in the class of my grandfather Rogers, whose old tool box, built by him, sits on the front porch of my Barker's Creek cabin. Jerri and Steve on an expedition to my old home place found the box and brought it home. When we sold the Barker's Creek property we gave the box to Jerri. Our house had a front porch extending across the full width at the front. From this porch two doors opening into the interior, one into the living room and one into an adjacent bedroom. Two front doors were not unusual in houses of that day. Above the two rooms was a second story of two more bedrooms. Extended to the rear of these four rooms, was a single story. From the living room a door opened into a connecting bedroom in the corner of which were stairs to the second story bedrooms. Also from this connecting bedroom, was the door to the relatively large dining room from which a door on one side led to a back porch and a door on the other side led to the kitchen. From the kitchen one door led to a large pantry at one end and another door opened onto a smaller back porch at the other end. The only furniture in the kitchen was a wood range, a dish cabinet, and a fairly large table on which pails of freshwater sat. It was the children's chore to see that the 3-4 pails of water were refilled as needed. Also, a children's chore was to keep the wood box behind the wood range filled with wood.

Our "rest room" was a crudely built "outhouse" or "privy" set over the branch until health authorities in the early 1930's eliminated that practice. After that the privy was built over an open pit. Toilet paper was unheard of and every privy had an old copy of the Sears and Roebuck catalog from which one tore pages taking care not to choose the slick shiny pages. The first privy I remember was a "three holer" set over the branch below our spring - a large hole, a middle size hole and a small hole. Two learning experiences in that old privy had to do with sexuality and smoking. A female cousin (who will remain nameless) lured me into the privy when we were both about 4-5 years old to explain and attempt to demonstrate how babies were formed. Needless to say that was quite a revelation for me. My brother Claude and I kept our "cigars: hidden in the privy. These were made of "rabbit tobacco" rolled in a sheet from the Sears catalog. I never enjoyed smoking these except for the feeling of daring to do something clandestine.

I have many memories about our dining arrangement. Our dining table was built by Grandpa Rogers who with his crippled daughter, Aunt Ida, had come to live with us after Grandma Rogers died. The table had to accommodate as many as 10 people; four at each side and one at each end. The table was over 8 feet long and 4 feet wide. A long wooden bench was placed on one side with chairs at the other side and at each end. Securing and preparing enough food three times a day for

such a crowd was only one of many heavy chores which my mother faced every day - in fact, just setting the table for so many was a chore - another one left to one of the children.

We had two scary places in the house that troubled me as a child. A closet under the stairs was dark inside and I was apprehensive about what might be lurking there. Also, as you mounted the stairs you came to a landing where the stairs turned and at that point a side access opened to undeveloped attic spaces above the dining-kitchen wing. This was for me a scary spot. Looking into the darkened undeveloped space was frightening. I always ran up the stairs. I don't recall how old I was when I first mustered enough courage to stop and peer through the opening into the dark attic regions. Even when I was grown I had a strange feeling as I passed that spot.

Because we had no electricity cooking was done on a wood stove and kerosene lamps were the only source of light. The only additional heat was from wood burning cast iron stoves in the living room and kitchen. When I was a junior in high school, we obtained an Aladdin lamp which was vastly superior to kerosene lamps and which made reading much more enjoyable at night. That was a real luxury. As already mentioned, we had no indoor plumbing of any type so all water for cooking, drinking and bathing came from a large spring located some 25 steps from the back porch adjacent to the kitchen. Another water supply was located a bit further away where a trough (we called it a spout) had been placed in the branch running from the upper spring. Here we caught water in buckets and tubs for use in washing clothes and for cleaning chamber pots each morning.

How did we take baths you no doubt wonder. It was far from simple and so much trouble that daily baths were not required or practiced or considered necessary, except as we became old enough to go "courting." Saturday night was the traditional time for the weekly bath for which an ordinary circular galvanized wash tub was used. Water was first heated on the cook stove in the kitchen and used to heat a partially filled tub which was then placed in our large pantry off the kitchen. This pantry was about ten feet square so sufficient room did exist for the tub placed in the center of the floor. Two or three children sometimes used each tub of water. Sitting down in a wash tub of water required great flexibility and only small children managed this maneuver. Adults just stood up and stooped as they used a bath cloth.

On special occasions when a quick bath was necessary one took a "sponge" bath. This was from a small pan of warm water often used in a bedroom. One used a wash cloth and soap to wash all areas of the body. We all were adept at doing this quickly before someone came into the room while we were undressed. Bathing was accomplished very quickly during cold weather because bedrooms were never heated. Before Mama and Papa passed away they acquired electricity in the house and also running water but no indoor bathroom was ever in the house.

When I first began composing this material, we were spending our first winter in Florida - at Edgewater, Florida on Jan. 18, 1996, where we had rented a place on December 28, 1995. I pause to compare our living conditions here with those of my home which I experienced until I was nineteen years of age and went away to college. This duplex has two separate bathrooms, one for me and one for Juanita. It has of course all the usual amenities such as refrigerator, electric stove, electric dishwasher, washer and drier, TV, telephones, computer with FAX, a garage that opens directly off the kitchen with a door controlled by a remote device. All of this would have been foreign to my parents, me, and to all my siblings until after we were married.

I remember all my grandparents, except my maternal grandmother, Caroline Carpenter Rogers, who died before I came along. After her death my grandfather Rogers and his unmarried daughter,

Aunt Ida, who was paralyzed from her waist down and bound to a wheel-chair existence, came to live with us. They were a part of my earliest memories. I remember Aunt Ida most distinctly for she lived many years with us before her death, but I have only hazy memories of my grandfather Rogers. I remember exactly how he looked but the only specific event I can remember was one morning when he came to awake me and started tickling me and pulling the covers away. He always loved to tease us children. I got very upset with him on this occasion which only made him laugh and continue tickling me. My memory of my grandfather Eller is much more hazy. I remember seeing him only one occasion, although I am certain I saw him often during my first three or four years. He was said to be a straight-laced stoic without much sense of humor.

Aunt Ida was a most remarkable individual. Despite her affliction which required her to use a wheel-chair she was always a very happy and upbeat person. By nature she was an extrovert and enjoyed visitors. She especially enjoyed the men folk including the boy friends of my two older sisters. She was quick to laugh and joke. Despite her severe affliction, she had an innate zest for life. She was able to take care of her personal needs except she was incontinent and had to sleep on oil cloths and heavy padding. This had to be removed and cleaned daily - a task that my mother performed for years.

Aunt Ida probably had as much or more moral effect on me and my siblings as either of our parents. Because of her winsome personality she was able to coax or con us into doing and believing things that our parents could not. I remember her scaring the daylights out of me by telling me about the devil or "bogey man." She made him so real that I was watching for him for years. She made it clear that the only defense against the devil was to always do the right thing and mind our parents. She extracted a heartfelt promise from me that I would do just that.

My younger sister Jeanne and I are convinced that Aunt Ida had a tragic love affair. Tragic because she soon took sick and died - we think of a broken heart. I failed to recognize it at the time, but I now think this definitely contributed to her death. My Uncle Zan Eller lost his wife and came with his three children to live with his mother, my grandmother Lou Eller, and his sister, Aunt Louise Eller, who remained unmarried for years in order to take care of Grandma Lou. The youngest daughter of many large families in those days got trapped into remaining at home to take care of elderly parents. We children enjoyed having our cousins living so close. Uncle Zan visited our house almost daily and would sit on the front porch to talk and laugh with Aunt Ida. It was obvious she enjoyed his visits and looked forward to them but any other significance escaped us.

This went on for months, even years, until I recall his last visit. He arrived just as we were sitting down for supper, but Aunt Ida remained on the front porch talking with him. When she finally joined us at the table, her face was very red and she wore a grim expression that I had never seen before. We soon learned that Uncle Zan had told her he was going to be married. Aunt Ida soon took to her bed and went into a decline that ended in her death.

Years later, I learned from my sister Jeanne that she knew of an event which occurred in the middle of the night in our house about which I knew nothing. She was sleeping at the head of the stairs that led from Aunt Ida's bedroom. One night she was awakened by sounds and heard Papa speak and be answered by Uncle Zan. Zan and Papa, Jeanne said, went into the back yard and talked for a long time. When she asked Mama about this she was told that Uncle Zan had entered our house to search the kitchen for Paregoric. Paregoric was an opiate medicine which some abused like a drug. By the time, Jeanne told me this story, she also had surmised that Uncle Zan may have been visiting

Aunt Ida. She also felt very strongly that this was Aunt Ida's only known love affair.

I am not certain if Papa built our house before or after he married Mama. I think they lived mainly at logging camps for the first few years. I remember comments made by Mama about cooking in a logging camp and how she disliked staying with her in-laws because they had so many hunting dogs lounging about. I think my older sister Edora was delayed starting to school on time because they were living in a logging camp far removed from any school.

My grandfather Eller and his sons were great hunters and kept a passel of hunting dogs, which were allowed to sleep under their house. Mama said the house was always full of fleas. By the time I came along the dogs had disappeared and I remember my Grandmother Eller's house as being well kept by my Aunt Louise. In any event, almost from the beginning of their marriage as already related, Papa and Mama had two other adults, Grandpa Rogers and Aunt Ida, living with them. I am certain that Grandpa Rogers contributed to the upkeep of the house and my Aunt Ida received a stipend (\$10) from the county because of her affliction most of which she turned over to Mama. She would often slip a nickel or dime to us kids.

Papa made his career in the timber and lumber business. Except for mountain farming, this was the only way to make a living in Graham County. If a man were not a farmer, he had to make a living in the timber industry, either a logger or sawmilling or both. Papa was never involved much with the small scale farming on our place except during periods when he was not on a logging or sawmilling job. At those times he assisted in the plowing and planting, but timber and lumber were his interests. Until I was old enough to do the farm chores, he hired a man to plow and help put in our corn and potato crop. The kitchen garden was always supervised by mama with plenty of help from us kids. On some occasions my father rented land from other farmers on which we grew large fields of corn. I helped do the ploughing, hoeing and gathering these crops.

Papa was a skilled craftsman at the many tasks required for timber cutting,, logging, and sawmill operations. He knew how to handle both horses and oxen and preferred oxen for logging purposes. He always said they were less prone to be injured and could be maintained more cheaply. After working all day, the oxen were turned loose at night to find their own food except in winter. Once while in high school Papa bought the timber rights for a large timber holding near Robbinsville. He and I cut most of the timber with the assistance of only one other man, after which he moved in a small circular sawmill and cut the lumber. Much of the timber was chestnut oak which was the best source of tan bark and had sale value. We removed the bark after the trees were on the ground by the use of a curious instrument called a "fro." The bark from several trees were collected at a point along the trail and later sledded to the trucks below. This was the roughest work I ever did.

When most of the timber was on the ground and ready to be logged, he moved a sawmill as near to the logs as possible and bought a yoke of oxen. He taught me how to handle the oxen and I spent considerable time logging that summer. It was a frustrating experience. Oxen are very slow moving animals and I was not geared to operate at such a low rate of activity. I startle people today with my stories about having had the experience of working oxen.

Papa ran this job like he always did. He purchased the timber rights, which meant he paid a "stumpage" fee for each thousand feet of logs cut from the property. He hired men as necessary to complete the timber cutting and logging and I assisted him at the mill. I always wanted to be the "block setter" the one who rode the carriage that carried the log into the saw. I soon learned a level of skill was required beyond my experience. I had to be able to calculate in fractions instantly -

no time to figure it out on paper. That is when I learned a new measure of respect for Papa because with his third grade education he could calculate how to cut a log in order to get the maximum possible lumber from it. With my tenth grade education at the time I never learned to do it. Fortunately for all concerned, I had to soon stop and begin school so papa hired a real block setter.

Between his independent operations, Papa was usually sought out by other operators to assist in their work, usually working as the "sawyer." The "sawyer" maintained and controlled the circular saw used to cut logs into lumber. It was the most skilled job associated with the lumber industry at that time. His last work, after he was 70 years of age, was to serve as an advisor and trouble shooter for a large mill in North Georgia for Bill Broyhill, a member of the famous Broyhill furniture family. During that time he met H.C. Hennessee whose son was the step-father of Jeannie's husband, Jim Hubbard. Mr. Hennessee always asked me about Papa when I met up with him in Sylva.

Papa was gifted at doing any kind of work which was done with the hands - blacksmithing, mechanics, carpentry, and etc. He was especially skilled at doing the mechanical repairs associated with sawmilling and including "filing," "hammering," and "setting" the large circular saw. Such was required to keep such saws sharp and in operation. I gather that before I came along he had some success and made some money, but as long as I can remember, he worked extremely hard at these same kinds of work - which was among the most brutal and difficult work possible -but only managed to make enough money to barely keep his family clothed and fed. His entire life was marked by very hard work, but he seemed happiest at work. He classified men into two categories, those who were good workers and those who were not. I guess I became a hard worker in part to win his approval although I have no memory of such thinking at the time.

My family was largely self-sufficient with respect to food. We bought very little food at the store, mostly such staple items as salt, sugar, pepper, flour, lard and coffee. A standard breakfast cereal was Quaker oats. The bulk of our food was grown on the small farm or was gathered from nature (mainly blackberries). Mama always had a large vegetable garden and we always had good sized patches of potatoes (both sweet and Irish), corn, and melons. We had several different varieties of apple trees from which she canned or dried apples. Apple sauce was always called "fruit" because it was the only fruit we had. Mama canned hundreds of jars of beans, corn, and wild blackberries. She made lots and lots of jelly from apples and blackberries. She also canned pork, especially pork sausage. Beans were strung on strings to dry into "leather britches" or what Mama called "Shuck" beans. To me these were great eating when cooked with ham.

Other food saved for the winter included potatoes and turnips which were stored in straw covered with dirt to form mounds in the garden. Cabbage was turned into sauerkraut and stored in barrels, crocks, or cans. Corn from the field was first gathered and put in the crib. As needed it was shucked and shelled and carried to the grist mill, either on the back of a horse or on our own backs. I remember "toting" many a sack of corn to the mill and back. Food had to be canned, dried or stored because we had no refrigeration. Our "refrigerator" was a "spring box" set in the branch just in the over flow from the large bold spring which supplied our water. Milk and butter were always to be found in the spring box. I was pleased that Mama had an electric refrigerator for a few years before she stopped housekeeping and began to live with her children.

We kept chickens for eggs and for eating, especially when company came. Our chickens were allowed to run wild and roost in an apple tree. One had to be alert to find the nests. Sometimes a

hen managed to hid her nest and lay 12-14 eggs and begin to incubate them before we found her nest. Sometimes she would appear with a flock of baby chicks without our ever knowing where her nest was hidden. More commonly we did find the nest and gather the eggs. When a hen's behavior indicated her hormone system has prepared her to "sit" on eggs and incubate them, she would be placed on a prepared nest in the barn or under the house.

We always had at least one good milk cow. Milking was a twice daily task for someone, usually my mother. Papa, when at home, would sometimes milk as did my older sisters, but for reasons I cannot explain I never learned to milk, and Mama never insisted that I do so. Making butter from soured milk was an art known to every housewife. A large jar of milk was placed close to the stove to keep it warm while it was "clabbered," and became ready for churning. Mama churned at least once a week using a wooden dasher made by Papa and a large crock called the "churning jar." One of the few prized mementoes from my old home is Mama's churning dasher and jar and jar lid. We never went hungry but during the dead of winter in the middle of the depression, I can remember times when we came near to that state.

We had at least one horse as long as I was at home. I think perhaps my earliest memory was of our team of horses, "Bell" and "Frank" and a mule named "Fred." In time these were replaced with the single horse that remained with us until she was over twenty years old and no longer able to work. Her name was "Maude" and she and I spent many hours together - plowing, "skidding" wood from the forest, hauling everything from wood to groceries on a sled made by Papa. I often had to take Maude and the sled to the store to haul groceries, cow feed, hay and such. In time I became embarrassed to have to do this after most people had cars and trucks.

Our family was affected by the great economic depression that began with the stock market crash of 1929 and continued until after the beginning of World War II. Beginning with the third grade and throughout my college years my life coincided with the depression. People experienced hardships which by today's standards could not be imagined. Money was non-existent. The only money we saw came from Grandma Eller who received a government pension from the death of her son, James Alva, during World War One. Aunt Ida because of her affliction received a small payment from the county (never more than ten dollars). During the 1930's when Papa worked he was paid in "script" or "an order to a particular store" - all just pieces of paper used in lieu of money. When he ran his own job he paid his workers in this manner but only after making arrangements with some store keeper to honor his written orders. He would simply write on a slip of paper, "Pay John Doe \$xx.00" and add date, and signature. I was entrusted often with this substitute money to purchase necessary items from the store on my way home from school.

I don't think the depression left real scars on my psyche, but it did affect the way I felt and what I did as a young lad. Most people in our county were in about the same condition. I did feel often that I was more deprived than most of my friends who seemed to always have enough money to buy a coke or hamburger when I had nothing. Also, I was made to feel somewhat worse off because it seemed that I had to wear the shabbiest clothing and shoes. When I got a pair of new shoes they were worn forever. Among Papa's talents was the ability to repair shoes. Many are the nights that I can remember when, after supper, he got out the "shoe stand," "shoe last," a light special "shoe hammer" and a box of tacks (the latter he called "sprigs."). Setting up the stand and last between his legs while seated in a straight back chair, he would take a piece of leather purchased for that purpose and cut and shape it and using the "sprigs", he attached new soles and

heels to the shoes. Most shoes could be repaired with new heels and soles two or three times before they had to be replaced.

Before my day, shoe repair was even more advanced in that shoes were made completely by hand. I remember seeing some pairs of shoes stored away in the back of a closet that had been made by my grandfather Rogers or perhaps my great grandfather Rogers. The soles and heels were attached not by "sprigs" but by wooden pegs whittled from hardwood. Mama also had to make clothing for the girls and patch and repair the clothing of the males in the family. I wore many sets of patched bib overalls to class before I entered high school.

Mama and Papa grew up during the time when sheep were kept for their wool which was spun and woven into cloth. Mama had been able to do all those things while a young girl, but by the time she was married those things had largely disappeared. Mama and Papa were products of the early 19th century although born in the latter part of that century. This was true because of the isolation of the mountain region from the general culture of the time. New thinking and new techniques etc came to the mountains about fifty years after they appeared in the general population outside the mountains.

After the death of my parents, I have spent much time thinking about them, and of the questions I wish I had asked. I cannot fully characterize either to my satisfaction. While both were "simple mountain people," by most standards, I think they were really two complex people with major personality differences. However, they both were intelligent, hardworking and up-standing.

As I contemplate their personalities they become more and more of an enigma. It was only after their passing and I have aged that I begin to realize much about their nature and why they behaved as they did. I wish I had made greater efforts to get closer to them and learn what they were really like. We never had very profound discussion about anything of any real importance beyond the cares of the day. In retrospect, I know they were very efficient in conveying to us what they expected of us in the way of behavior and values. This was done by example and my subtle comments about other people and events of the day. We learned that they had no respect for people who did certain things like drinking whiskey, stealing, etc. They were equally opposed to card playing, dancing, and use of makeup. To them the latter were as deadly sins as lying and cheating. They deplored people who were lazy and my mother had no respect for women who failed to keep a clean house and provide clean clothes for her family. They were products of a Calvinistic and Puritanical belief system where all matters were either black or white and all people were good or bad.

I am certain each of my siblings have different perceptions of the nature of our parents. The older children, including my oldest sister Edora and Hildred no doubt saw them differently because they saw them as much younger parents. I remember Papa only as elderly with a full head of totaly gray hair. He always had a reddish brown mustache and I think his hair before turning gray was of the same color. Some of his siblings had hair of that color. Mama said Papa's hair was largely gray when they were married. He was twenty eight at the time and by 30 he was completely gray, a characteristic of many members of his family. I inherited the same tendency and was not much beyond 30 when I had more gray hair than not. Papa shaved his mustache once and scared me and my younger siblings. Mama made him grow it back and he was never without it again. In recent years, Juanita suggested I wear a mustache because after losing my teeth my upper lip began to disappear. I accepted but I really wear the mustache in memory of Papa.

I remember Papa as being rather stoic and serious minded at home with little to say. Occasionally he would joke or kid with us but not very often. He was not without a sense of humor but he was more animated and talkative in the presence of visitors or when talking with men on the street. I worked by his side many days in the field, forest, and around the house with but few words exchanged between us, and that generally pertained to some aspect of the particular job at hand. I wonder now what was this quiet man thinking as he went about his work obviously lost in thought.

Papa was often away from home on logging or sawmilling jobs. By the time I came along, Mama had assumed all responsibility for child rearing, running the household, and directing much of the farm operations. She never worked in the fields, but she was the one to say when it was time to plow and plant. Plowing was done by Papa or by a hired hand before I was large enough to take on the task. One of my chores that left an indelible memory was the spring ritual of cleaning all the stables in the barn and hauling and distributing the horse and cow manure over the garden and vegetable patches.

Papa had little to do with discipline, leaving that to Mama. He gave me one thrashing because I scared him. We were at the barn and I was in the loft and he was below. I made some sort of noise which he took to mean I was seriously hurt. When he rushed up the ladder to find me without injury, he grabbed some bailing wire and thrashed me a bit and admonished me for scaring him. Papa, at home, was quiet, never loud or demanding. I remember only one time when my father put his foot down and a wild scene erupted between him and my older brother Claude. About a year before Claude died with a brain abscess developed from an ear infection that was never successfully treated; he took to being rather sassy to Mama and Papa.

One evening we were all sitting in the living room shelling corn when Claude sounded off and Papa went for him. Claude ran with Papa right behind out of the house across the potato patch and into our outhouse. Claude tried to keep Papa out but he forced the door and he struck Claude. This was traumatic to all of us, especially to me, because I looked up to Claude and had to hear some of his remarks and boastful threats, but nothing more came of the matter. I could never blame Papa for what happened because Claude was really asking for what he got on that occasion. The next winter he took sick and died before spring in the hospital at Franklin, NC. That experience caused me to harbor an exaggerated fear of death and funerals. I still dislike funerals and never attend unless I cannot avoid it.

I respected and obeyed Papa, and my respect has only grown as I grew older. But as I look back and recall those days, I am convinced that my two older sisters begun to "look down" upon Papa and simply ignored his presence. They soon surpassed my parents in education and were excellent students who quickly were accepted among what might be called the more sophisticated folk in the town. I think this went to their head and they never got over it. Their friends came from homes and families a bit more pretentious than ours and stood higher in the social order than our parents. Papa to them, I think, had come to be seen as a rather crude person. He usually wore his bib overalls, chewed tobacco and spit indiscriminately. He was lacking in the social graces that they had come to observe in other men so Papa was lowered in their sight and never recovered. This is one of the reasons why I grew to lose a measure of respect for my two older sisters.

Papa would launch into a long-winded story in the presence of his peers, usually about some

logging, sawmilling experience or about hunting and fishing. He did much hunting and fishing as a young man growing up on Little Snowbird, a place still renowned for its fish and wildlife. By the time I came along I never knew him to hunt at all and to fish only on one occasion when he took my cousin Harold Eller and me back to Little Snowbird where he had been reared. In his story telling he added elaborate detail to his stories including descriptions of the weather and a host of other extraneous matters. Because he made no effort to inject humor into his stories; we children often found his stories boring. But I remember some that still linger- like the time he was walking across the mountain between Robbinsville and Andrews and suddenly rounding a curve in this very crooked road he came face to face with the first elephant he had ever seen. A circus was in the process of moving from Andrews to Robbinsville and had chosen to walk the elephants across the mountain.

Another of my father's stories had to do with his tracking a rabbit after a snow. The tracks led into a deep hole left where a tree had turned up by the roots. When he came to the edge of the hole, a wild cat which had been perched among the tree roots sprang at him. He was carrying a double bitted axe on his shoulder at the time. His reflex action was to bring the ax forward from his shoulder with one hand and fortunately bury the blade in the wildcat and kill it. I now regret very much that I did not make greater efforts to engage him in conversations about many things before it was too late. I am fairly certain that he never understood why I was determined to get my doctorate after I had finished college. I am not certain he even understood why I went to college in the first place.

Papa's attitude and demeanor at home, I now think, was shaped much by Mama. She was a strong-willed person who insisted that things be done her way in and around the house. By the time I came along, she had established herself as the dominant voice in our household. She was an energetic worker and possibly more ambitious for improving the lot of the family than Papa. Her voice ruled, and Papa seemed to go along with that without question or rancor. I think any conflict over the dominant role in the home had been settled long before I appeared on the scene. Mama was often exasperated at Papa, and this was made quite apparent to us by her looks and subtle remarks. She never openly criticized Papa but she left no doubt that she wished he would do some things differently, but this is true for all couples.

By the time I appeared they had experienced more hardships and disappointments than most couples now experience in a life time. Life for them was hard and they must have been devastated emotionally over the loss of so many of their babies to infectious diseases. Because life had dealt so harshly with them, they were scarred in ways that we cannot begin to know. By the time I came along I think their romance and marriage had soured for both of them, although three more children followed me, with one lost in days following its birth. They never wavered in their daily

concern for the general welfare of the family and they never shirked any task that needed attention even though I am quite certain they often felt miserable and suffered bouts of depression and deep gloom. Such feelings if they existed were felt more keenly by Mama than Papa. He had a greater capacity to accept what life dealt him than Mama. Mama was more the type who displayed her every emotion while Papa was a complete stoic.

Undoubtedly Papa was often frustrated and disheartened because of his failure to achieve more from his hard work. No man ever worked harder to support his family and it seemed no doubt that the harder he worked the less he was able to acquire. However, he enjoyed the full respect of

every citizen in the county who knew him. His dealings with people on all matters were marked by a deep sense of fairness and honesty. He enjoyed total trust by his peers because his word was his bond. He was even tempered - I can say that I saw him angry only twice and heard him use profanity only once in my life.

We children were never mistreated or abused in any manner. Both parents dealt fairly with all of us except for one situation that still baffles me. My next younger sister Jeanne, who is now deceased, and my mother began to have difficulty as Jeanne reached High School age. Jeanne was never defiant and was obedient and did her chores but there was a definite personality clash between the two. I thought sometimes Jeanne was not treated fairly by my mother and this troubled me and probably drew me closer to Jeanne. Mama never seemed to have much patience in dealing with Jeanne, who was quite different from her sisters. Jeanne's childhood was spent following my older brother and me about and she was a tom boy from the first. When she started to school she insisted on wearing bib overalls just like we boys. At some point that year or the next Mama put her foot down and put her in dresses. This early behavior of Jeanne may have been an indicator of her later life style, but that is a story to be deferred

It was from Papa that I learned how to use all sorts of tools and do all sorts of jobs required for farming, cutting trees whether for firewood or for lumber, plowing, hoeing, digging, building and maintain fences - in my early years all the cleared land on our place and that of my grandparents was enclosed by a high rail fence, made from chestnut trees cut from the land and split into rails - one of the many things my father could do with saw, axe, wedges and sledges. One of his greatest legacies to me was I learned to be a good worker, willing to work hard at any task before me. I enjoyed being told I had done a good job. This accounted for much of my later success in life. Papa had a greater impact on the kind of person I became than he ever knew. I did not realize it until I was a mature adult. He set an example of being totally honest, sober, hardworking and very much inclined not to stick his nose into other people's business. He was not nearly as judgmental of others as my mother. Both parents were hardworking God fearing people who hid their emotions. We probably knew they loved us although neither they nor we thought in those terms at the time. The Ten Commandments had been drilled into us to such degree that we knew we were expected to honor our parents and we did this each in his or her own way. I hope they knew we loved them but I wish we could have told each other so before it was too late.

The public road leading up the branch to the "Eller place" from the street in Robbinsville was about one mile. The road led through a thick forest to a huge gate set in the rail fence at the lower edge of my grandparents place. Wagons, buggies and, by the time I came along, cars had to stop at the gate, someone get out and open the gate, and close it after passing through. The road continued, passing my grandparent's two story barn, their garden, and then passed closely adjacent to their unpainted but substantial two storied frame house of 6 rooms. The house had an interesting feature not uncommon with mountain homes - one could enter the combined kitchen and dining room only from an outside porch from which another door led into the living areas. The road continued past my grandparents' home up a slight incline to our house, passing as it did so closely adjacent to our own two-story barn which contained a large loft area and several stables to end in our front yard. We kids, including my cousins, spent many happy hours playing in our barn.

The upper Moose Branch area was known as the "Eller place." No one else lived on the branch except my Uncle (also my Great Uncle) George Rogers, and Aunt Ivalea Eller Rogers. He was my uncle by marriage since he married my father's sister. He was also my great uncle because he was a

brother of my grandfather Rogers. They lived in a log hut on land bequeathed to them by my grandfather Eller located away from the main road. Uncle George was an individual who never learned to cope with life. He and Aunt Ivalea had fifteen kids, adding to the number of cousins I grew up with. Their life was extremely hard partly because they had one mentally deficient child, actually an idiot, who knew nothing and which they insisted on keeping in their tiny over crowded log cabin rather than relinquish her to an institution.

When one left the street in Robbinsville and started up "Moose" or "Eller" branch road, the road passed through uncleared forest land belonging to Bemis Lumber Co. For years and years it lay undeveloped and it was a pleasant walk except in winter when the road became impassable due to mud. I walked to and from school for eleven years along this road and knew every bush, tree and stone. While I was in college the land was opened for development and low grade houses began to be built along the road, much to my regret. Our house provided a sylvan setting and my life there was reasonably happy.



I have many memories of my Grandmother Lou, but only one memory of my grandfather "Bill" Eller. As already indicated they lived a few hundred yards below our house. I recall seeing Grandfather Eller on his hands and knees working in the soil preparing to plant water melons. He had dug a fairly deep hole and was working a mixture of manure, soil, and fertilizer into the hole until it was elevated into a mound in which he placed the water melon seeds. In my mind's eye I can still see him hunkered over that water melon hill. He died from infection following an operation for "prostate trouble," the common affliction of many old men including me. The story told to me at some point was that his operation was not successful and his doctor, the same Dr. Maxwell that delivered me, had come to attend him. He was in such distress because of not being able to empty his bladder that he seized a scalpel from the doctor's bag and plunged it into his bladder. Urine hit the ceiling. He died in a few days - and was buried in the Metz cemetery in the Atoah community where he and his brother John had founded a Free-will Baptist ministry that remains active today. He was said to be a very serious stern minded individual, perhaps a bit self-righteous. Some of my older cousins developed an active dislike of him because he was always preaching to them. He was widely respected in the community as a minister and as a Justice of the Peace. A cousin tells me at one time he served as a U.S. Marshall, but I can find no record of this. He performed many marriages as shown by marriage records of Graham County. My father also suffered from enlarged prostate and had two operations that prolonged his life much beyond that of his father. I also have the same problem and have had one operation in which cancer was detected, but it has not recurred. My male descendants should take heed and protect their prostates!

Papa and his brothers were skillful hunters and fishermen. Once, my father took his 11-year old brother Ernest bear hunting. They used muzzle loaded rifles. Ernest killed the bear. My father lost two brothers and a sister while they lived on Little Snowbird. The two brothers were next in line after him. One was named Walter and I can remember he would often by mistake call me Walter early in mornings when he called me to get up and make the fires. Offrey, the other brother, was grown and married when he died. A third brother, James Alva, was killed in the last battle on the last day of World War I in Germany. My first name, James, comes from Uncle Alva who I never knew since he was killed before I was born.

Some of my father's neighbors on Little Snowbird were Cherokee Indians, descendants of those who escaped the Trail of Tears in 1838 and remained in Western North Carolina. Papa was always a friend to Cherokees, employing many on his timber and lumbering jobs. As a very young lad, I accompanied my father to town on Saturdays (in those days everyone went to town on Saturday including many Indians) and my father was one of the few whites to whom Indians would talk. He and some of his Indians friends talked and laughed together. My father did not speak Cherokee.

My parents had about the equivalent of third grade public education. Both could read and write quite well. Papa must have received his schooling in Buncombe County, Mama attended school in the Sweetwater community of Graham County where she was born. As indicated already, Papa was well versed in arithmetic, especially when it involved estimating or measuring board feet in standing trees, logs, or lumber. His reading was limited to the Bible and shaped-note song books; the latter also called Christian Harmony books and were in wide use among country churches of his day - and even today in some. He loved to sing although his voice was not nearly as good as his 1st cousin, Doak Eller, who was rather famous locally as an excellent singer. Mama did not have time to do much reading and that was limited to the Bible.

My first church and Sunday School experience came when I accompanied my father to the small Free-Will Baptist Church founded by his father and uncle in the Atoah Community. To reach the Church required that we walk about 3 miles and some of my earliest memories involve my church attendance or my walking to and from church with my father. Once when I was quite small, I was sitting with my father in the choir and he gave me a dime to put in the offering. I thought that was much too much money to give away. I rarely had a nickel let alone a whole dime. Suddenly I had an inspiration. I slipped the dime into my shoe and when the collection plate passed it remained in my shoe. On the way home, I asked my father if we could stop at the store. When I bought some candy he became suspicious and I explained that I had "accidentally" let the dime slip into my shoe and could not recover it in time to put into the offering. My father only smiled.

Papa was a Christian and a church member, but he never discussed the subject of religion with me or insofar as I know with any of my brothers and sisters. He never once engaged us in a serious conversation on the subject; but neither did my mother. There was a reason. Religion and politics were subjects never mentioned in our home because Papa and Mama were of opposite persuasions. Mama's family was Missionary Baptist while Papa's was Free-Will Baptist. Papa was a Republican and Mama was a Democrat. Until I entered High School I attended church with my father. Then I began to attend my mother's Baptist Church in Robbinsville because most of my school friends attended this church. One thing we learned very early as young children, we were expected to attend Sunday School and Church, but the choice of church was left to us.

This was typical of the discipline in our home and the values instilled into us by our parents - they did not lecture or preach - they taught more by example and by subtle persuasion. Looking back, I

have decided my parents were intelligent about child psychology and the rearing of children. We understood what we could do and what we could not do. We knew we were not supposed to lie, cheat, or steal, but we also knew that our parents held many things, now widely accepted, as mortal sins: dancing, card playing, and for a while, wearing make-up. Young girls and women were not supposed to cut their hair. As long as she lived Mama pulled her hair into a bun on the back of her head and kept it in place with hairpins. The only time I can remember seeing Papa cry was one afternoon when I found him sitting on the back porch in tears. I found Mama and asked what was wrong with Papa. She explained that Edora, my eldest sister, had slipped across the hill to a neighbor's house who had "bobbed" her hair. Papa was heartbroken, but Mama seemed less perturbed. Mama and Papa came from quite different family situations and this, as I look back, was quite evident in many ways that at the time I did not recognize.

Papa's family were staunch Republicans while Mama's family were Democrats. The latter situation probably explains my own long ambivalence about my own political affiliation. I considered myself a Republican until I finished college. Only after I became a faculty member at Western Carolina, a state-supported school in a Democratic controlled state, did I gradually become aware of some of the basic differences between the two parties. I found Democrats were more progressive and future oriented than Republicans who were champions of the status quo. Democrats looked at ways to improve conditions in education and economics, especially for the common or poor people, but the Republicans then and now are out to protect business interests and the wealthy class. I realized that my beliefs coincided more with the Democrats than with the Republicans, but this did not prevent me from voting Republican in two or three national presidential elections. Papa voted Republican and Mama, when she voted, voted Democratic.

Every day was a work day for Mama even Sundays when she stayed home to prepare Sunday dinner for those of us who went to church. Monday's for her was a hard day because that was "Wash Day." Wash day began with building a fire under the huge iron pot located near the spout, mentioned earlier. The iron pot was filled with water and brought to near boiling. Homemade soap was added to the pot along with the clothes. After a through soaking the clothes were removed and scrubbed on a washboard in tubs of warm water. After wrenching they were squeezed as dry as possible and hung on a clothes line to dry. My mother would abide only clean clothes to hang on her clothes line. Any clothes that did not meet her eye test went back for more scrubbing. She was the same way about her kitchen utensils, dishes, and floors. Juanita was most impressed when she observed Mama's technique for washing dishes. She says Mama could keep her hands in scalding water longer than she thought was humanly possible. Mama had little use for other women who kept unclean houses and this included some of her relatives.

Mama, like all women of her generation, had a hard life which today would be considered unacceptable drudgery. When I was born in 1921 there was not more than a half dozen homes in the county with indoor plumbing of any kind, and this was limited to running water and no indoor bathrooms. Everyone had the "little house" which acquired so many different names, "out house," "chic sales," etc. In our family it was called the "Closet." I never knew it to be called that by any other family except my grandparents. Mama, bless her, did get electricity and running water, before she died but no indoor bathroom facilities.

Our home had the bare minimum of furniture, some of it made by grandfather Rogers, including a large dining room table and many straight back cane bottomed chairs, as well as other tables. The only bought furniture were the bedsteads (first ones of wood, later replaced with metal bedsteads when the wood bedsteads became infested with bed bugs -much to my mother's mortification), a dresser in one bedroom and later a kitchen cabinet. One luxury item stood in the living room - a large upright organ powered by foot. Grandfather Rogers played the organ and my two older sisters learned to do so. He and my father both read music and my older sisters were quite musical but by the time I came along no one remained at home long enough to teach me much music.

Heat was limited to a wood fired stove in the living room (which at times also doubled as a bedroom), and the wood fired cook stove. In time it fell to my lot to be totally responsible for

cutting the wood to keep both stoves in operation. Throughout my high school years and even before, I had to rush home after school and start cutting wood. I seemed never to be able to get ahead - it was almost a daily task. I had to go into the woods and select trees to chop down and chop up unless Papa was home and we could use a cross cut saw together. Sometimes when Papa was out of work we would spend several days cutting wood and acquire enough to last for several weeks - that was a great satisfaction to me. Also, some first cousins, Harold Eller and Arnold Rogers and I would team up and cut wood.

When Papa was running a saw mill he would have truckloads of waste wood (slabs and edgings) hauled home for wood. That was better than having to go to the woods for it, but it had to be split and chopped into proper sizes. To transport firewood from the forest, two methods were used. Sometimes I would hitch up our old work horse and drag (or "snake" as it was called) trees into the "wood yard" at the rear of the house and then either chop or saw them into firewood. If no one was around to help me use the two-handed cross-cut saw I would "buck" saw by myself. The other method was to chop or saw the wood in the forest and then transport it in a horse drawn sled or on a wheel barrow. I have hauled hundreds of cords of wood out of the forest on a simple wheel barrow made by my father, but made so strong that it could carry a heavy load. I competed with myself as to how much wood I could roll at a time. When possible I cut wood on a hill above the house so that I could roll the wheel barrow more easily. I had lots of wrecks when I spilled the wood and had to reload and start all over. It was also my task during most of my high school years to be the one to get up first in the morning and build the fires, both in the living room stove and the cook stove. The secret was good kindling wood and the best available was pine knots. Some days were spent tramping the woods looking for pine knots. I am sure my memory is faulty on this point but I remember that I seemed to always be cutting and hauling fire wood.

I return to Aunt Ida. She was an important member of our household, and all us children have fond memories of her. She functioned as a baby sitter for the young children and their first teacher. She was the one who guided the children and taught them the rudiments of being civilized and responsible. She drilled us in our homework in spelling, arithmetic and etc. My oldest sister tells the story that she did not get to start to school until she was nearly nine years old because of circumstances that I do not know. When she entered school she could already read and write, having been taught at home by Aunt Ida. The teachers let her decide in which grade she should be placed. She chose the fourth grade and they allowed her to enter that grade where she did excellent work. In fact, she was a top student in her class throughout and went to college for two years and began teaching. I remember being drilled, especially in spelling, by Aunt Ida. She had a great sense of humor and she was always laughing about the time she asked me to spell the word "tore" and I said "r-i-p tore." I confused the meaning with the spelling.

The presence of Aunt Ida and my grandfather Rogers in the home had to be an extra burden on my mother and in a different way on my father. My mother was devoted to both Aunt Ida and her father. I never really understood why the two chose to live with my parents instead of one of my mother's two sisters. Papa seemed to tolerate their presence without complaint. If any problem over the arrangement existed, it had been long settled when I came along. My memory of Aunt Ida remains sharp but I have only very limited memory of grandfather Rogers. While my mother and father had a total of 12 children, the number of children in the house at any one time that I can recall was limited to my two oldest sisters, Edora and Hildred, my older brother Claude before his

death at age 14, myself, and my younger sister Jeanne. By the time I started to school, Edora was not often at home - either in college - or after beginning teaching she lived elsewhere prior to her marriage. Sleeping arrangements at times was very crowded. Three bedrooms often had two double beds each. One bedroom was for Aunt Ida and sometimes a younger child slept with her. Sometimes a bed was in the living room, especially during times of illness. Bedding consisted of a straw filled tick on which was placed a feather bed - before mattresses. Covers included wool blankets and heavy quilts. Quilting was a winter time affair, one in which my Aunt Ida participated.

How my mother got all the work done now seems a pure miracle. I know it meant that she worked from the time of arising, often quite early if my father had a job to which he walked from home, until she crawled exhausted into bed at night. It was only after Papa died and Mama was living first with one of us and then the other, that we discovered she had a keen wit and laughed easily. Throughout my life at home, I remember my mother's moods which ranged from somber to obvious agitation about something. We rarely knew what caused the frown and worry on Mama's face but now it is all so clear. Her life was hard and almost with any respite. Even though all the children pitched in to do all sorts of chores, she was the one on whose shoulders fell the total responsibility for keeping the house and home going.

My father functioned best when he was on a job and was in some measure only an extra burden for Mama when he was home. I never observed anything resembling affection displayed between the two except once. Papa had been away from home for several weeks when he suddenly appeared one late afternoon while we were sitting on the front porch. Mama jumped up and hugged him and then looked embarrassed. People of their generation and background withheld any show of emotion especially of an affectionate nature. They wept and grieved when death came to a loved one, and this was a frequent event in the life of my parents. They lost so many very young children to infectious diseases. I think this probably accounted for my mother's extreme concern about cleanliness. It no doubt accounted for "that look" on her face which we sometimes did not understand - she was remembering her lost ones - and no doubt pondering why her life had taken such a hard course.

Mama was the glue and the strength of our family. As mentioned above, she came from a different background than Papa. She was born in the Sweetwater Community where the most enlightened people in the county lived. They were all Scotch-Irish families from which came the leaders of the community and county. Her Grandfather, Thomas Carpenter, was the first Superintendent of Schools in the County. He and his neighbors were great believers in education. Although Mama had little more formal education than Papa, she came from a community and had relatives who were supporters of education. By the time I came along, it was understood in our home that we kids attend school regularly. We were told that if we ever got a punishment in school, we would get another one at home. For me, the pattern had been well established by my older sisters, both of whom were teaching before I finished high school. For them, I suspect my mother was the one who insisted that they go to school and stay there until they graduated. Like Papa, Mama had about a third grade education. She could read and write. That was the extent of education for most young ladies of her community in her day. Her one brother went on to finish high school and had enough college to begin teaching. In my father's family none of his brothers and sisters finished school. I doubt if Papa really thought much of formal education. I have no idea if he was happy or proud that I graduated from high school and college and went on to graduate school. Somehow, I always

thought he wondered what I was up to.

## My School Years in Robbinsville

I started to school in the first grade in early September, 1927. I was a confused and scared and I am certain showed very little ability. Aunt Ida made some effort to teach me my letters before I started school. I don't remember if I could read or write before going to school or not. Apparently not, since my most memorable event in the first grade was an assault inflicted on me by my teacher, a Miss Skinner, after becoming frustrated with my reading. She slapped me several times and thumped me on the head more than once.... all because I was reading aloud the story of Chicken Little. When I came to the sentence "Chicken Little ate the seed" I would say "Chicken Little eat the seed." She would correct me but I would read it the same way again. I guess she thought I was just

being obstinate when actually I was just confused and probably embarrassed. Her method of making her point was with her hand and fist. I didn't tell my parents because we had always been told that if we were punished in school, we would be punished again at home. Today that teacher would be in deep trouble. So much for educational methodology in those days.

In the second grade, I missed a great deal of school after a cut on my big toe made accidentally with an ax. In the summer before school started, I was bare foot and carrying a sharp double bit ax when I stepped against the blade and cut my big toe on my left foot. The cut was not very deep but it became infected and was very slow to heal. When school started, I could not wear a shoe on that foot - although kids went bare footed during the summer, they did not do so at school. On my left foot in lieu of a shoe, I wore a heavy wool sock over the bandage on my toe. I wore only one shoe to school for some time and the infection did not heal although Mama was using all her home remedies. When it got cold and a sock would no longer work, I used an old shoe with the toe cut out for a while. I was growing more and more embarrassed about my affliction and began to dream up excuses to miss school. I managed to get away on several occasions. That darned toe did not heal until well after Christmas. It finally got to the point that I could wear a regular shoe but it still caused me pain all winter long. My academic progress could not have been very impressive but I was pleased to learn that I was promoted to the 3rd day. Academic progress in the 3rd grade remained slow but I learned a very valuable lesson in another way.

I began to read outside of class and my first love was Wild West Weeklies, pulp magazines about cowboys. This led to improvement in my reading but it also led me into my life's greatest embarrassment. A class mate, LaVerne Maxwell, a town boy, shared a love of cowboy stories so he and I exchanged magazines and we also began to act out some of the stories. One of us would be Billy West and the other Buck Foster, or Joe Scott (cowboys in a serial about the Circle J ranch) Sometimes we would shift identities. I got carried away with this phantasy of playing different characters and one day on sudden impulse I thought to myself "How would it feel to play the part of the bank robber." This idea came just as the recess bell rang, so on the way out, I stole a pencil from the top of a desk and put it in my pocket. I suddenly had become a "robber" and it brought on a feeling of daring and adventure. I did this two or three times during the next days, but I was caught red handed and reported me to the teacher. She made me stand up before the class and confess that I had been stealing pencils. She was probably as mystified as I as to why I was stealing pencils when I had my own. She punished me by making me always walk last in line as we marched in and out of the classroom. Also students were told not to speak to me for the next two weeks.

The teacher reported me to my sister Edora who was then teaching in the same school. I am certain Edora and my mother had a talk about this and decided that I was receiving enough punishment because the matter was never mentioned to me at home, but I can well remember how low I felt, and how difficult it was for me to face my classmates at school. I remember this as one of the lowest moments in my life. I think in the 3rd or 4th grades I began to show more academic promise and I suspect now that was due largely to the fact that I had become a reader of

anything thing I could get my hands on. (Upon rereading this I found I have included this earlier - so I guess this shows how the event left its scar with me.)

In the fifth grade I fell in love for the first time, but alas little came of it because I fell in love with my teacher, Ada Moody. I had my first "crush" as we called it in those days. She was a good teacher and because of my special feeling for her, I guess I began to work harder because I did begin to take my school work more seriously and did better work. In the 6th and 7th grades I had my first male teachers - they were both athletic inclined and began to teach us various games requiring athletic skill. It was in these two grades that I first learned that I had become one of the top students in my class. At the end of each year a battery of achievement tests were given. I made the highest in my class - 0.3 of a percentage point above the next student, my good friend, Clarence Williams in the 6th grade. In the 7th grade I came in second because Clarence beat me 0.3 of a percentage point.

In the 6th and 7th grades my love life kicked in with a bang. I was in love with a different girl each year but neither of them knew it. My academic successes did not last long when I got to the 8th grade which then was the first year of high school. We had only 11 grades then and the last four were "high-school". In the 8th grade, I suppose, I took off on a wild tangent and began to act up in class, talking a lot when I was supposed to be paying attention, etc. Another girl in the 8th grade was the recipient of my deepest love but she too walked in ignorance of it.

My high school basketball career began in the eighth grade. Robbinsville had dropped basketball because of the depression, but that year, Floyd Millsaps, my old 7th grade teacher, and a man I admired greatly, issued a call for all students interested in basketball to report to the court at lunch time. We had a full hour for lunch in those days. I did not report and was playing elsewhere on the school yard at lunch when Floyd suddenly appeared and told me in no uncertain terms to get myself down to the basketball court. It seems that in his 7th grade class he had seen some athletic promise in me. I did as he directed and basketball soon became my passion along with my long range interest in girls. My academic work suffered. While I always passed my tests and courses, I did only enough to do so. I certainly did not apply myself. I had no special desire to make high grades on any subject (until the 10th grade when I took a history course under the principal of the school who I remember as being one of the best teachers I ever had and who planted in me a lifelong love for history.)

Floyd Millsaps, my 7th grade teacher and high school coach for two years, became played the most significant role in my decision to go to college - more on that later. Here I am remembering him years later when I was teaching at Western Carolina and Floyd was a student of mine in a graduate course in Biology. Floyd and my other high school coach, Arnold Hyde both became lifelong friends and role models for me. Both attended my retirement party at Western when I retired in 1983.

In the 9th grade I pursued my two passions more aggressively. Basketball remained of prime interest but a new girl came to town and joined our class. She was Dorothy Smith. For the

remainder of my high school and even after going to college I was carrying the torch for her. We had a very on again and off again romance that finally fizzled out long before I met my future wife. Boy-girl relationships in those days were very tame, although emotions could run high. I remember very well the day at college when I suddenly became aware that I did not have any feeling at all for Dorothy Smith and that was one of the happiest days of my life. I allowed her to make my life miserable for almost five years during which time I could have been having fun with other young ladies.

I suppose I should attempt to give a lot of advice to my grandchildren and great grandchildren who will someday face the same kinds of experiences with sports, girls, or other high school obsessions. I will only say that don't take matters too seriously too quickly especially in the romance department. You may lose a girl or boy friend and think your world has ended, but good old father time has a way of curing all such ills and suddenly one day you meet the real one. Also, very few people end up marrying their earliest loves.

Throughout my high school career I was elected each year as class president. I didn't attach much significance to it then nor now, but I suppose it indicated that my peers had begun to see something resembling leadership qualities in me although it would be many years before I found myself in a position where I learned for the first time that I was indeed blessed with leadership ability. When I was a senior in high school, a new principal organized the first Student Council in that school and I was elected the first President of the Student Council. My senior year in high school was a joyous experience in that I had lots of fun that year - basketball - girls - and big man on campus. At commencement another innovation of the new principal was to do away with invited speakers. In their place, he and the teachers chose 6 senior to speak. As class president, I had to be the first. Public speaking even then was a heavy chore for me. I was prone to panic attacks and it took me several years before I began to feel comfortable before an audience. Somehow I got through the speech that evening but no one including me remembers what I said.

During the summer following my graduation in March, 1938, the high school principal recommended me for a scholarship at the University of North Carolina but nothing came of it. That was the first time anyone had suggested to me that I should go on to college. Later that same summer the same man approached those of us who had been first string basketball players with a proposition that we accepted. A new commercial course was being launched that year in the high school to teach typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping. He suggested that we return and take these courses and also allow the school to sponsor us as an independent basketball team. That year the prospect for a basketball team from the students was almost nil. Four of us agreed to do so and did. I had a job that summer from which I could not leave until after school had started. By the time I enrolled, I was allowed to take only typing and bookkeeping because I would have been too far behind in short hand. That pleased me because I mainly went back to school just to play basketball and because the object of my affections - Dorothy Smith - also had returned to take the post

graduate work. I learned to type quite well, a skill that I have used to great advantage over the years and without which now I would never attempt to write this story.

One day during the following summer of 1939, I was hanging out on the streets in Robbinsville when along came Floyd Millsaps who told me that he and Herbert Carpenter, a cousin and another school teacher, were going to Cullowhee the next day and wanted me to go with them. I agreed to do so and only on the way to Cullowhee did they broach the reason for inviting me along. They wanted to see if they could find some financial assistance at the college that would allow me to begin that fall. They said that I should go to college.

By the time we left the campus to return home, I had been told to expect to hear from the Business Manager in a week or so and that they hoped to be able to render some assistance. Two weeks later came a letter enclosing the offer of a work contract at the college for \$45.00 per quarter for which I would be expected to work 180 hours per quarter. That was 0.45 cents per hour. I accepted and made application to enroll that fall. I still had a big problem. It was to cost a total of \$60.00 to enroll for the fall quarter. Raising the additional \$15.00 beyond my work contract proved to be difficult. My parents wanted to help but had to tell me that they simply could not help financially. I almost gave up the idea when one day I overheard Mama say to Papa, "I don't know what Gerald is going to do - but if he has it in him he will find a way." I did find a way but I do not remember how I acquired the extra money, but I got a job of some sort and was able to register as a freshman at what was then Western Carolina Teachers College in the fall of 1939. Floyd Millsaps and Herbert Carpenter changed my life totally and completely by taking enough interest in me to do what they did. I never will forget them and what they did for me. Both are now gone, but on many occasions I had the opportunity to thank them.

Like most entering freshmen even in those days, I had little idea about what major I wished to pursue. My ambition was to become a basketball coach like Floyd Millsaps and Arnold Hyde, another of my high school coaches who became a life-long friend. The first quarter I signed up for grammar grade education simply because in the session on instructions for registration that curriculum was outlined on the board so it was easy just to copy it without much thinking. I knew I could change to another major later. In the back of my mind however I knew that I was going to major in history - a carryover from the one course in high school that I enjoyed most. Before the quarter was over I was told by more advanced students that history was not a very good major for a prospective school teacher because there were so many already in the field and getting a job teaching history would not be easy. I also learned that the major that offered the best job prospects was science. I was taking a science course at the time and begin to think seriously about changing my major to science. So when I registered for the second quarter I declared a major in science and a minor in history. The amount and depth of course work required for a science major was not great. One year each of biology, chemistry and physics with one or two additional electives

was all that was required. When I entered graduate school after World War II in Zoology and Botany, I had to take several additional undergraduate courses to make up for my deficiencies.

In my second quarter at Western I took introductory biology under Clinton Dodson. To me he was a most impressive individual. He was tall and elegant looking with a very deep bass voice and a classroom personality that appealed to me and most students. I will return to Mr. Dodson again because he was the person who led me to become a biology major and go to graduate school - more than any other person he affected my entire future professional life.

Working off that 180 hour contract meant that I had to spend every possible hour when not

actually in class at work. At first I was assigned to the campus maintenance force and did a bit of all kinds of work until I was given a regular assignment to report each morning at 7:30 A.M. to the steam plant and fill up the big hoppers on three steam boilers with coal which I had to shovel into a wheel barrow and wheel in and dump into the hopper. By 9:30 I was as black as the ace of spades and just enough time to rush to the dormitory, take a shower and dress and get to class. My work schedule dictated that I could only study at night.

About two months into my first quarter, I got my first big break at Western. I was helping dig a ditch near Robertson Hall one morning when Mr. Seymour, professor of sociology and my instructor in Freshman Orientation ( a one hour course required for all freshman), came by, stopped, and began a conversation with me. In a few minutes he said he would like for me to do some work for him. I told him I would be happy to do so but I had a work contract for 180 hours and to fulfil it I had to work every spare minute. "Oh! No!", he said. "I mean let me have your contract changed so that you will come and work as my office assistant and grade papers." Eureka! No more digging ditches and shoveling coal.

For the remainder that year and throughout my sophomore year, I was the student assistant to Mr. Seymour. I had caught his eye in my orientation course because after having a unit of instruction on the use of the library, all freshmen had been given a rather detailed test. I had made the highest grade in the class on that test so Mr. Seymour sought me out.

Mr. Seymour was a character with a capital C. All Western graduates who knew him still tell Seymour stories. He could tell outlandish tales and do outlandish things such as asking unexpected questions on exams such as. "How many brick in the steam plant's smoke stack?" My favorite Seymour story was told by Mrs. H.T. Hunter, wife of President Hunter, who hired Seymour in the late 1920s. Seymour was a veteran of World War I. At a dinner party at the Hunters he told of how badly wounded he had been during the war from shrapnel - that he had many scars. Later, at another dinner party, he again recited his war experiences but proclaimed that he had "not received a scratch." Mrs. Hunter said, "Beside my husband John Seymour was the only man I ever wanted to see stripped naked." None of his manufactured stories ever did harm to anyone. He treated me exceptionally well and I visited in his home frequently to pick up or return his papers.

While I was in graduate school following World War II and before I was hired at Western, Seymour was forced to retire because he had become addicted to drugs - prescription drugs of some sort. It was obvious to many for many years that he had a mental quirk of some sort. This was aggravated by severe hypochondria that led to his going first to one doctor and then to another. Each one started him on new pills, but he kept taking his old ones as well. When I joined the faculty in 1947, he and Mrs. Seymour were living in the community at the edge of the campus.

Juanita and I began to "look after" Mr. and Mrs. Seymour. We would take them to Sylva to do their grocery shopping. Gradually Mr. Seymour became more and more ill and was in the hospital at intervals. One day his landlady called me to tell me that he was in a bad way and needed to go to the hospital, but refused to go because he still owed them for previous visits. I found him in the worst condition I had ever seen him and could tell he was almost dead. I told him we were going to the hospital and for him not to worry about the bills. He could not even stand let alone walking so I picked him up in my arms and carried him to the car and checked him into the hospital. He was in

the hospital about a week and seemed to recover a bit but took pneumonia and died.

Mrs. Seymour was absolutely helpless so far making arrangements for his funeral was concerned. With the help of Dean Bird and others we arranged for the American Legion to bury him in the Baptist Church Cometary in Cullowhee. He was a member of that church. In the process of arranging for his funeral I had to sit down with Mrs. Seymour and almost demand that she tell me of their financial condition. She was a very proud lady and not inclined to discuss her personal affairs. Gradually, she opened up and told me the whole story. They owed everyone in the county from the paper boy to the physicians, drugstores, milk man.... almost \$20,000. I spearheaded a drive within the University and community to raise money to help Mrs. Seymour. I talked with all those to whom they owed money and they agreed to settle the debts on whatever amount we could raise. We finally settled all the debts at about 30 cents on the dollar. I owed Mr. Seymour - he was the first person at Western to recognize that I had some ability and he took me off the ditch digging crew and gave me my first job at Western.

Clint Dodson, made biology interesting to me for the first time. After taking an introductory course in biology with him as a freshman, I took a year's work with him my sophomore year - a quarter of Invertebrate Zoology, a quarter of Vertebrate Zoology and a quarter of General Botany. It was in these courses that I really faced up the challenge for the first time that college level work was more than high school and one had to study hard in order to make good grades. I took pride in my work and in my grades for the first time and did very well in these courses. I think I made a B and two A's on these courses. I was also digging to become a good student in chemistry, physics and mathematics.

One aside about the above, a major cost to students during my first two years were text books. It was common for two or more students to share the cost of one text book. I remember that seven of us shared the cost of the text book in General Botany. The burden of textbook costs to students was recognized by the college so beginning with my junior year a textbook rental system was installed by the college whereby each student could rent all their textbooks for each quarter's work for only \$7.00. That text book rental system remains in effect at Western to this day and later, when I was involved in Administration I helped save the Book Rental System.

Near the end of the spring semester of my sophomore year while taking general botany and general chemistry, an event occurred which was to shape my future career and life. Mr. Dodson asked me to accept the position as his lab assistant in biology for the next year. That was an astounding surprise to me. In those days no higher recognition could be bestowed on a science major than to be asked to serve as Mr. Dodson's lab assistant. I had not recovered from the shock at my good fortune when Mr. Frank Brown, Chemistry Professor, offered me the same position for the coming year as his lab assistant. I turned down the latter for several reasons - the major one being that I liked Biology better and I knew in my heart that I was not a very good chemistry teacher because Mr. Brown's chemistry classes were the very worst classes I ever attended. All he did was read from the textbook.

So for my last two years in college, I was the biology lab assistant. This meant I assisted in the lab for the full year's work then offered in biology. Very soon after I began, Mr. Dodson began not to

show up for labs, leaving me completely in charge. Sometimes he would contact me in advance to let me know that he would not be present, but often not. I recall more than one occasion that Mrs. Dodson came and called me out of other classes to tell me that Mr. Dodson was not feeling well and wanted me to meet his lab or even his lecture class - this was the ultimate in responsibility. I learned later that it was not so much that he thought I was capable of doing the work as he was at that time suffering from poor health - much of it pure hypochondria.

When World War I began, the college, like all colleges and universities in the country, turned to devising programs to assist in the war effort. Representatives of the government and the armed services visited campuses to brief administrators on what they might do. Western responded enthusiastically. The first thing that brought home to us that our life was never to be the same again was the institution of early morning physical fitness for all male students. We were awakened at 6:00; reported to the gym or field by 6:30; engaged in calisthenics, running and marching for an hour. Our chapel programs (required assemblies of all students each Tues and Thurs following lunch) took on a patriotic air.

Each military service offered programs whereby college students could volunteer for service and would be allowed to remain in college for a period of time to complete as much of their education as possible. This was not designed to provide a way to escape the draft which was in full swing but to recognize the need for educated men to serve in the great war machine that was being built by the U.S. To coordinate these programs, Western appointed my boss, Clint Dodson. He entered into

this with great gusto which reacted on me because he left more and more of the lab responsibilities to me. Once he called me in to tell me that he wanted me to substitute for him that evening at a meeting of the student International Relations Club. He claimed he had a more important speaking engagement that he had to attend. He said just tell them what you know about these service programs we have going. By that time, I had signed up for the U.S. Naval Reserve Corp and was promised that I would be allowed to complete my undergraduate work before being called to duty.

I went to the club meeting expecting to say a very few words, but I discovered that this was more than a routine program. A debate had been scheduled between the Publisher of the local newspaper and Mr. Dodson on whether or not the military programs at Western were justified. The publisher was a strong republican and, like many republicans, considered the war to be "Roosevelt's War" and he intimated that all students in the service programs at Western were draft dodgers. Mr. Dodson had really thrown me to the lions because my opponent was a gifted orator and many years older than me. I did the best I could but I certainly was ill prepared for this encounter and I thought Mr. Dodson had really thrown me a curve that I did not deserve. It was a very painful experience for me. As I look back now, after knowing Mr. Dodson for another fifty years following this event, I know it to be totally in character for him to pull a stunt like that on me -- Dodson was basically a very lazy man and one who would go to any length, usually feigned illness, to escape anything he thought might be the least bit painful to him.

I enjoyed my last two years in college very much. I was "somebody" because I was the lab assistant in biology, a Student Senator and President of the Men's House Government Association. This caused other students and professors to look at me in a different light and automatically assume that I was an above average student. This led to my getting involved in other activities such as the

Science Club and student affairs. I was elected a Student Senator and at the end of my junior year elected to be President of the Men's House Government and Editor of the Catamount (the college annual). Students were not allowed to serve in more than one major office at a time so I had to elect between the two positions - so I chose to be President of the Men's House Government. This meant I presided over the Men's House Council which took up such matters as conduct, including trial of students charged with misconduct, within the dormitories.

Two additional events occurred during my senior year at Western that were to really shape my future more than any others - Juanita became my love - and near the end of the spring quarter as graduation was approaching, Mr. Dodson called me in for a serious talk. Among other things he said, "This war will not last forever, and when it is over I predict this institution will experience a great spurt of growth. As soon as the war is over, I want you to go to graduate school in zoology and botany and return here to join me in biology." In addition to marrying Juanita, that became my game plan for my future career. I never considered any other course and I remained in touch with Mr. Dodson while in service to be certain that he did not change his mind.

Juanita had remained through my graduation in the spring of 1943, after which she returned home and I returned home briefly before taking a job with the TVA in Bryson City. I was hired to be the Recreational Director at the Fontana Dam which was then being constructed. I was told that the job would not open up for a short time and in the meantime, it would be to my advantage to begin work with TVA at another job. I was assigned to a Grave Removal Crew who were removing dead bodies from all the cemeteries within the watershed of the coming Fontana Lake. Nothing much happened of note on this job that I care to write about. Suffice it to say that I had an unexpected and somewhat unusual experience unique to most people. I roomed in Bryson City with Arnold Hyde and Lawrence Stewart and wrote to Juanita every day and she to me.

In July 1943, I received orders from the U.S. Navy to report to Northwestern University in Chicago for training. For the past year Juanita and I had been together in college every day. Leaving her to enter the Navy was most difficult. We wrote almost daily and during that time of loneliness, we decided to be married as soon as my training was complete and I received leave after being commissioned an Ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserve.

I am certain much of my life, especially the successes, was a direct result of having Juanita as my wife. I feel she has been a part of my life all my life, but I know this was not the case, since I was about twenty one years of age and she was twenty when we first met at Western Carolina Teachers College. I was a senior in college and she was a sophomore (1942-1943). I thank God every day for her and our three children, their spouses, and our grandchildren. More wonderful blessings cannot be contemplated. Some say we are supposed to leave behind a better world than we found. Our major contributions to the world are our three kids and their offspring.

Just before I had to leave to report to the Navy my sister Jeanne came from California with her new husband Ray Cable with whom I had finished high school. Jeanne, who began work with TVA in Fontana after she graduated, had continued to correspond with Ray after he had entered the service and was stationed in Hawaii. He was there during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Jeanne and Ray had decided to be married as soon as he returned to the states although by that time he had been gone for four years. She went to California to meet him and they were married

there.

Jeanne, Ray and I (also Arnold Hyde and his wife Dot and Harold "Spider" Collins who would later marry Juanita's younger sister Violet) met Juanita, Violet and parents in Chimney Rock for the week end. Juanita and I stayed up most of the night knowing that I was soon leaving for service.

My tenure with the Grave Removal Unit of TVA involved digging up the remains of corpse and transferring them to new containers for burial at another site. This job ranked along with that of "ditch digger" but was a bit more interesting in a macabre way. All came to an abrupt end when I received orders to report for active duty at the U.S. Naval Training Center at Northwestern University in Chicago, IL. Northwestern University is located in Evanston, IL but their medical school is located in Chicago. There the Navy took over dormitories and other facilities for support of a Midshipman School for training line officers for the U.S. Navy. This involved an intense 3 months of the most concentrated work any of us had ever experienced. The demands, both physical and mental, were stringent and never ending, but very effective in producing "90-day wonders" the name given to us by regular Naval personnel.

From a peaceful pleasant existence I suddenly was plunged into the most stressful and demanding period I had ever faced. I boarded the train in Asheville. NC. (Juanita had come to see me off) and I rode the train all night long sitting up in a crowded and dirty coach. I arrived in Chicago about 3 p.m. where I was met by Naval personnel who shuttled me and others, also arriving at Union Station, to Abbott and Tower Halls located on Lake Shore Drive. By arriving late in the afternoon room assignments had bogged down in the mass of humanity that was assembling there from every college and university in the country. I was assigned to Abbott Hall but was told that my quarters would not be available until the next day. With about two dozen others, I was ordered to pick up my bag and follow this young Ensign. He marched us from Abbott Hall to Tower Hall. I was dragging - no sleep, dirty and grimy- and so tired that I could hardly walk. This hot-shot Ensign decided to give us a taste of what was to become. He began to call cadence and make us march at a fast clip. I could not keep up. He comes up beside me and began to harass me because I could not keep in step. My temper boiled and I said "Sir, had you not slept for the past 24 hours as I, I doubt you could keep up either." He said no more, but that SOB was my company commander and I never did like him. Later I ran into him in the Pacific and tried to talk with him again, mentioning that I met him at Northwestern, but he still was an SOB.

The first few days in the Navy were hectic, rushing, rushing, rushing, mustered at all hours of day and night in the hallway outside our rooms to be briefed by the company and platoon leaders on Naval matters. We had a lot to absorb in a hurry. I was a bit confused by it all and wondering what I had gotten into. I realized that here were hundreds of other recently graduated young men, but all of them seemed to have come from large Universities and most of them from the North and West. Many of them had Naval R.O.T.C. training. I began to question my ability to cope with the situation. My morale was shaken by another problem. It seems I had failed to read an item in my original orders stating that we would have to pay \$5.00 for our first pair of regulation naval shoes. I did not have \$5.00 and had to continue wearing my own white shoes. I was feeling desperate when I received a letter from my sister Jeanne. When I opened it out fell a five dollar bill which was the greatest present I can remember ever receiving. I obtained my regulation shoes, threw my old

worn white shoes away, and I began to feel a bit more like I might be able to cope with this new experience.

Three other classmates of mine from Western also reported to Northwestern - Raymond Rhodes and Bill Smith (two athletes) and Jimmy Cannon from Sylva. Jimmy, Raymond, and I ended up in the same Battalion but different Companies. Bill Smith was assigned to another Battalion which lived in Tower Hall some few blocks from Abbott Hall. Jimmy and Raymond "bilged" out. "Bilge" was the naval term for flunking. Bill and I completed the program and were commissioned.

My Northwestern and Chicago experience was good for me in many ways. I was exposed to a large City for the first time. We had liberty from noon on Saturday to Sunday night. I explored much of Chicago. Service men could ride buses, streetcars and the EL free so I took advantage. Sometimes I went with others on liberty but generally alone. I had already learned in college that I was not a "party" animal. I needed some time to myself to think - mostly about Juanita. I saw several good shows which also included live performances by a number of well-known bands. The greatest reward was learning that I could compete with my peers from the larger Universities. The course work and training was most rigorous and demanding and my success did much to boost my confidence in my own ability and my desire to go to graduate school once the war was over.

Juanita and I continued to write almost daily and before the end of the second month we had decided we would be married as soon as I completed my training and received my commission. Juanita's parents apparently raised no objections and her mother began to prepare for one of the most elaborate weddings ever held in Lowell, NC. I was a different person when I left Chicago after being commissioned and rode the train back to Asheville where Juanita met me and we went on to her home in Lowell for our wedding. I remember so well the extreme happiness we experienced just being together riding down the mountain from Asheville to her home. My two sisters, Edora and Jeanne, attended the wedding, Jeanne being one of the Maids of Honor. Juanita wore a beautiful traditional wedding dress made by her mother- this was later worn by Jerri at her own wedding.

After the wedding, Mr. Fisher drove us to the Barringer Hotel in Charlotte where we had rooms reserved for two or three days. I remember so well as we were leaving him that he handed me an envelope which when opened later contained a check for \$250.00 and a note saying "Remember I will always be there for the two of you." We had a short but happy honeymoon in the Barringer after which we paid a hasty visit to see my family in Robbinsville; I was soon back aboard the train and headed across the U.S. to California with orders to report to the Fleet Destroyer School in San Diego, CA for training as a torpedo officer. I went by train back to Chicago and boarded the Super Chief for the three day trip to Los Angeles and then by another train on to San Diego. To cross the entire continent in this fashion was quite an experience for me. I kept remembering the writings of Tom Wolfe about America, however, I was not very impressed with the desert country of the west.

Another three months of intense training followed. I was impressed during midshipman school at how well the Navy organized and taught complex courses. The instructor in Torpedo School was an old Warrant Officer who had served for thirty years in the Navy before retirement, but had been called back to train torpedo officers. I still say even after graduate school that he was the most

effective and best classroom instructors I ever had.

Juanita joined me in San Diego for the last six weeks of my training. I lived in B.O.Q. (bachelor officer's quarters) until Juanita arrived to join me the day before Christmas. I had arranged for a single room in a second rate hotel in the center of San Diego where we lived for the remainder of the time. We lived in that dingy room at the St. James Hotel - the only place we could find. It was here that we learned later that our Jerri was conceived. I had to leave each morning before dawn to catch a bus to carry me to the Navy Base and I got back about six o'clock except two or three nights each week we had a night session. We did have free weekends and we continued our honeymoon.

During the course of my training we had two or three training exercises at sea aboard destroyers. My first time at sea was during a rough period of weather and everyone aboard the vessel, including the Captain, got very seasick. I have never been so sick in my life before or since. When I got to our room in the hotel that night Juanita says I was absolutely green. I continued to get sea sick each time I went to sea for the next couple of years but if you remain at sea you eventually get over it. By the last year of the war I never was bothered with sea sickness again even in violent weather.

Those of us in the torpedo training class knew we would be assigned to a destroyer. Our only concern was would we be assigned to the Atlantic or Pacific fleet. When my orders came through I was assigned to the USS Erben DD 631, Pacific Fleet. I was pleased because the Erben was one of the new Fletcher class destroyers.

Another sad parting came the day I left Juanita in that shabby hotel room to report first to San Francisco for further travel. Juanita had to remain another night for her train back home. Her train trips provided her with some new experiences and she still says the most courageous thing she ever did was to board the train in Gastonia for San Diego and watch her father and sister gradually disappear as the train carried her westward. She had a Pullman ticket all the way to San Diego but she missed her connection in New Orleans and had to sit up for the next four days. She arrived limp with fatigue and loss of sleep but we were happy to be back together again.

I arrived in San Francisco and reported in only to be assigned quarters in the Plaza Hotel in the center of San Francisco. No one could give me a clue as to when I would be shipping out or where the U.S.S. Erben was located. All such matters were kept secret especially the name and location of ships. I remained in San Francisco almost a month during which time I had only to report each morning to the Naval Office in the Federal Building to see if I had orders. We were also supposed to report for physical training but I simply failed to show up and nothing ever came of it. No one had a clue as to when I would be shipped out. I did not know if I had to sit there until the ship came in or if I would be sent to join it.

I walked all over San Francisco, rode the cable cars, went to movies and stage shows, climbed to the top of Nob Hill and the top of the St. Francis hotel, ate many delicious meals, and regretted that

I had not brought Juanita to San Francisco with me. Had I known that I would remain in San

Francisco for a month she could have been with me. Finally the word came to collect my gear and be ready to travel. When I reported in I was informed that I was being placed in charge of 250 enlisted sailors and taken to Treasure Island for overnight before boarding a transport vessel headed west. So I spent another night in the San Francisco but in the middle of the Bay.

We went aboard ship the next day and discovered only after we were at sea that our destination was the New Hebrides Islands in the South Pacific. So for the next three weeks we sailed southwest without any protective escorting vessels from possible Japanese submarine attacks. But we arrived in Espirito Santo in the New Hebrides without any problem except when we crossed the equator. All aboard Naval vessels who have never crossed the equator have to endure a special initiation into the Society of Shell Backs. Our group had to crawl on hands and knees down the deck while water from fire hoses were sprayed in our faces making it very slow going down the deck. We then were dunked into a deep tank of foul smelling slop and made to eat some horrible tasting food.

On the island at Espirito Santo, I was assigned quarters along with about twenty others in one of several Quonset huts set up for use by transient officers - those who were on their way to find their ship. There were about 150 of us and we had very little to do. Again, I could find no one who had ever heard of the USS Erben. This did not distress me so much as the fact that as long as I was in transient I could receive no mail, although I could still mail letters.

One day I went to the Fleet Post Office and in desperation cornered a nice looking young mail clerk and asked him if he had ever heard of the USS Erben. He said yes he had some mail bags that were going out to the Erben but he had no idea where the ship was operating. When I told him I had not received a letter for the past two months he took pity sake on me and searched the mail for my ship. He found a single post card from Juanita. Only those who have been in war and far from home know the thrill of even a post card.

We had only one duty on the Island and that was to censor mail each morning from 10 until noon. One morning I censored mail at a table with movie star Richard Ney, husband of Greer Garson ( a great world war II movie actress). This was my first experience in censoring mail. All letters from enlisted personnel for security reasons had to be censored by officers. The mail of officers was not censored; this produced a profound feeling that I never was able to get over - the great differences between the way in which officers and enlisted men were treated. I can recognize the logic behind the system, but my deep democratic nature still rebels. I hated to read other people's personal views and most intimate thoughts, although some letters were extremely funny and provoked much amusement, like a black mess steward who wrote to many girlfriends proposing marriage to each one. The climate in the New Hebrides was perfect and we had fairly good food and plenty of ice cream.

Again came the word to pack my gear and be on the dock at a given time. I was taken in a boat to a freighter and was off on another leg of my search for the USS Erben. I was the only transient naval officer on board this U.S. freighter which was operated by the US Coast Guard - the food was unbelievably good. We left port and headed northwest only to learn as we cleared the harbor that Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands was our destination. By this time the battle of Guadalcanal had been fought and the island brought under allied control. I spent one night on Guadalcanal on an army cot draped with mosquito net in an open space just a few yards from the dock. This was the

quarters for transient officers on Guadalcanal at that time. During the night I could hear all those strange jungle sounds which previously I had heard only in movies.

The next day I was taken across the bay to a tiny island called Savo Island to the main transient village of Quonset huts set at the edge of the jungle. A great Naval battle had been fought in the bay between Guadalcanal and Savo Island. We lost three heavy cruisers to the Japs in that battle. We lost so many ships that the bay was called Iron Bottom Bay. Again, I was assigned to a quonset hut on Savo along with other officers also in search of their ship. By this time I had been chasing the Erben for over two months and was beginning to think that it was a ghost ship because no one seemed to know where it was operating. I spent almost another month on Savo Island without a single duty to perform, not even censoring the mail. Each morning we were awakened by the black natives marching in single file out of the jungle, passing in front of our hut, and singing in Pigkin English various American songs. They were on their way to work for the Navy.

Then again came the word to pack my gear and report to the dock. This time when I got to the dock I saw for the first time DD 631 anchored about 200 yards out in the bay. I had finally caught up with my ship. I went aboard and was immediately taken under wing by the Executive Officer Lt. Town Moore, a graduate of the University of North Carolina, who introduced me to the other officers and to Captain Morgan Slayton. The Captain was regular navy but the Exec was USNR kuje ne. Everyone was very warm and cordial and said they were glad that finally James Gerald Eller had shown up because I had so much mail piling up in the wardroom that they began to wonder what was to be done with it.

Because my first name was James, I was immediately called "Jim" and as long as I was aboard the Erben I was known as Jim Eller. And on my first day aboard I found my long delayed mail, dozens and dozens of letters. The Exec told me to go read my mail and then report back to him and he would give me a tour of the ship. It took me about two hours to read all my mail. Juanita, bless her heart, had written me a letter every day. I heard from my parents as well and was relieved that all my folks back in North Carolina were O.K.

I toured the ship with the Exec. He was very friendly and I think partially so because I was from North Carolina. He was from Pennsylvania but had graduated at Chapel Hill. I think we got along so well during the tour that he made the decision to assign me to bunk with him in his cabin which was somewhat larger than the other cabins. For the next several months, I bunked in the same cabin with the Executive Officer and he and I continued to get along very well. The only problem for me was that during the day he was so busy using our cabin for his office that I had to spend my spare time somewhere else.

When we departed the Savo Island anchorage and put to sea in a couple of days, I learned we were on our way to support the landing of troops on the northern coast of New Guinea at a place called Hollandia. I had finally reached the war zone. Our ship was assigned antisubmarine patrol to protect the troop transport ships. We carried out our assignments without any problem and the landings went successfully without any appearance of Japanese planes or submarines. I began standing watch in the C.I.C. (Combat Information Center) where we had access to all the radar and radio traffic. We kept track from minute to minute of our exact location relative to other ships in

the formation and to our general location in the region that we were operating in.

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Having enjoyed a very happy and fulfilled life, I can say truthfully that I harbor no regrets concerning major decisions I made along the way. I had a career which allowed me the luxury of doing almost exactly as I pleased I often think of how lucky I have been to have been able to gain a very excellent education and be blessed with a wonderful wife, three priceless children and four bright and promising grandchildren.

Juanita is also involved at this time in writing her life's story. Perhaps our stories will survive to be read by some of our great, great or even our great, great, great grandchildren. It would nice to stick around and see more of our progeny but time marches on and the inevitable is not very far ahead for both of us. If this story is to be finished, I must be about it because come 30 January 1996, now only two weeks away, I will be celebrating my 75th birthday.

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Now it is 1997 and I have just begun to recheck my writings of last year.

A word to the young - Don't waste your precious time in your youth because when you reach my age you will look back and wonder where the time went. The older one gets, the faster time seems to pass. But some things are certain about life - life does come to an end - we each begin to die as soon as we are born. I do not fear death as I did in my earlier years, because life has a way of preparing us for the inevitable - all living things that reproduce by sexual means must die sooner or later - only those who practice asexual reproduction manage to be immortal. It is a waste of energy to worry about matters over which one has so little control.

Writing this brings forth many long forgotten events and triggers multiple trains of thought that lead into many long forgotten nooks and crannies of my existence. I began this story without any outline or structure in mind, but some pattern may emerge as we go along. I will be unable to provide as much detail about early events in my life - Juanita remembers everything that ever happened to her. My memory of my early years is not nearly as sharp as hers, and I have no early pictures, such as she has, to help me recall events. Her memory is a never ending surprise to me and others. She remembers all she has read, seen, heard, felt or smelled - words to songs and poems she learned as a child - dialogues of movies - menus of meals for a specific meal eaten fifty years ago. I am convinced her memory equipment is most unusual and is closely linked to her high intelligence level. I learned long ago that her I.Q. was considerably beyond mine. Had she gone on into a professional field instead of marrying me, I am confident she would have been highly successful in everything except for singing or quick recall about the difference between her left and right hand.

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I did not get back to writing this again until Jan 13, 1998 at which time we were living at 3529 Forest Branch Drive, Port Orange Fl., 32119 in a townhouse that we bought in August 1997. The story of how we find ourselves here involves some decisions and actions that were hardly in keeping with our previous image. While in Edgewater, Florida for the winter of 1996-97 we decided to buy a townhouse which we kept for two years, spending only the winter months there. After the first year we decided to sell our place on Barker's creek - which sold more quickly than expected -

and we immediately bought into a four unit cluster home at Hills of Avery in Arden, NC because we knew we would not remain in Florida.

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April, 1999

Now after a three years hiatus from writing this I am now 78 years of age and have just been fitted with a pace-maker for my balky heart. We are living full time at the Hills of Avery and expect this will be our final place of residence. We are especially fond of our four grandchildren: Holly will soon complete her doctorate and move on somewhere else for post-doc training, Joe works in Atlanta and is doing well, Jay has just finished his first semester at Western Carolina University, and Bobby is in his first year of high school, doing extremely well with his studies, baseball and girls. After reading what I have already written, I have decided to end this story at this point except for some appended appendices of documents and pictures.