

## **Hands** by Sue Berry

“What do you want with that old piece of junk,” I heard my husband exclaim. I had heard that exclamation many times during our thirty-four years of marriage. “It’s free. Let me see what I can do with it,” was my response. “You think you can do something with THAT!” he said. I had to admit, as I looked at the heap in front of me, its future looked doomed. There it sat. Old, filthy, and in a million pieces. An old pump organ. What could you do with a cast off that would have been better used as kindling for a bonfire than taking up space in a garage? However, it spoke to me. Not literally, but it’s graceful lines, intricate wood carving, and the faded fabric reached out to me. It sat there all broken in silence. It was as if I could here a soft melody drawing me toward it. At one time it had been the center piece of a beautiful country home. It sat in a place of honor for all to gather around to celebrate holidays, birthdays, and other special occasions. It would have been the beacon where family and friends gathered in good times and sad times such as the passing of a family member. Today it was a cast off, like so many things in our culture today. We cast off the old and unused. But does it have to be that way?

Determined I began to load the many pieces hoping they were all there. Uhhhh! The DIRT! The GRIME! The old organ had sat abandoned in an old house for years before it was given to my friend. Like a vagabond it had been moved from place to place until my friend offered it to me.

The more trips I made to the trailer the more I began to doubt. However, I would not let my husband see the doubt beginning to creep in. So home with me my new old friend went.

A short time went by and I knew I had to begin or the dreaded husband’s, “I told you you didn’t need that old piece of junk!” would be heard and a criminal inquest would begin and I didn’t have much of a defense. So one spring day I began. “Did you need help?” my husband asked.

“No. Crowbars and chainsaws are not needed on this project,” I said. I gathered screwdrivers and other small tools to begin my work. I soon found that I had to dig through layers of dirt just to find the screw holes! This baby needed a bath! Out came the Murphy’s Oil Soap and a bucket of hot water. The more I scrubbed the dirtier it got! Is that possible, I thought? How does dirt make more dirt? Actually it makes mud!!! I didn’t falter, I kept scrubbing , and scrubbing, and scrubbing. Finally there was beautiful walnut wood where a dirty murky haze had been. I smiled. Things were literally looking better. Then I picked up a screwdriver. This part was not as easy as I thought. How do you take apart an antique organ? I began thinking I had to unbuild the organ, you know, do the opposite of how it was built. As I slowly worked figuring out what piece was put in place last, I began to think of the hands who had built the organ in the early nineteen hundreds. Was it an Irish or German emigrant who came to the US for a brighter future? Wonder whose hands played the first tune? Wonder how many children hands had learned to play music on the white ivories? Wonder how many times hands played *Amazing Grace* or *The Old Rugged Cross* had been played? Suddenly a strange peace came over me. It was as though many voices were whispering, “Thank you”. Today the grand old organ no longer plays music but she is once again a place for others to gather around to share in what life has to offer. She sits as a serving station in our Lake House dinning room. She is one of the first things that everyone sees when they enter our home. She’s no longer dirty, broken, and cast aside. All who see her are amazed at her beauty. I smile, and think of the hands who built her, touched her, played her and finally the ones who put her back together. Just because something is old, disheveled, and broken doesn’t mean it should be cast aside or destined for the burn pile! Sometimes it takes hands of today to save what was made by hands of yesterday.

## Changing Life Words

by Joyce Zinner, Boyle County

You just don't know how your words may change someone else's life. The day, Mom said, "Just tell Joyce she can't do something, and she will;" mine changed. I was 13. I had no drive, determination, or grit. Mom gave me all three that day when Mom told someone, I could. In my mind, Mom said to me, "Put your mind to it, and you can do anything!"

My first test of "I could do anything" happened when I joined The Needle Knockers, a 4-H sewing club. I desired to sew, and make Grandma proud. Grandma W started to teach me but suffered a stroke. The club leaders, mothers of the other girls, were great sewers, nice and patient. However, the daughters teased me about my lack of sewing skills. Mom couldn't sew. That was odd, since Granny added extra money to the family's budget by sewing. Her stroke made her incapable of helping me. Granny even broke her Singer sewing machine trying. That didn't stop me. Afterall, Mom said, "I could do anything."

The first three years, I arduously made projects: a towel, a blouse and an apron. Red ribbon, red ribbon, red ribbon! I took comfort in that I did all the work. Mom's words, "I could do anything;" and the red ribbons made me try harder. I would not give up. I was driven to get the blue ribbon.

Year four came. Aunt Teal, Dad's sister set out to help me. Grandma B. was the best seamstress in Peoria, until she died. I sure hoped Teal had her talent, as I did not seem to get any genes from either Grandmother. Teal got out Grandma B.'s sewing machine, a Nekki. It could zig and zag. Wow! I may have a chance. I "could do anything". I was to make a dress. OH NO! I needed all the help I could get! I had grit. Despite the project being a dress, I knew a blue ribbon was going to be mine, this time! I would show the snooty girls. The A-line dress was

apricot with white shoulder buttons. The dress was simple but dressy. With drive, determination and grit, I finished the project and project book. I got a blue ribbon at the county fair.

Could I get one at the state? To my dismay, when I made my dress, until the time I had to model it at the Ohio State fair, I developed. Yep, hips bigger and breast bustier!

Being embarrassed, I told the leaders, "We're going on vacation, I won't be able to go to the state fair."

I knew that the State Fair was on the way and we could have gone. I never let Mom know what happened. The dress got entered anyway and I GOT A BLUE RIBBON! I did it. I got the blue. I could and did set my mind on something and did it! I did it just like the other girls! I found my drive, determination and grit.

The drive, determination and grit all came on that day that I heard Mom's words, "Put your mind to it, and you can do anything!" These words changed me. After I heard them, I was willing to do something new. I may not start off well but, I would succeed just as I learned to sew. After fifty years, I learned to solve difficult math equations, ins and outs of DNA, RNA, reading music, playing an instrument, sheep farming, soccer, football, basketball, and more.

Every time I want to quit Mom's words come back again. Mom's gone but she left me with drive, determination and grit! Thanks, Mom!

Mom had one other sentence that I used to give me drive, determination and grit. Mom's other words of wisdom were, "God helps them, who helps himself." –Ben Franklin. Between the good Lord and Mom, "I can do anything" including, coming back to life, and walking again after a terrible accident. I survived the accident and months of hospitalization and physical therapy. So listen when someone speaks, you never know what pearls of wisdom they may give you. Thank you Lord ! Thank you Mom! Your words changed my life.

## **A Valentine's Adventure**

**Julie Johnson**

"It was a dark and snowy night," I thought to myself as I stared at the taillights of the car. I know that is a very cliché thing to think about, but it was the only thought I had as the cold snowflakes were landing on my nose. My frozen hands were still clutching the Walmart bags as I watched my parents speed off in the snow. "Now what?" I sighed.

I could go back into the Walmart and call someone but it would take awhile for someone to come pick me up.

As I stood staring at the taillights in disbelief, I pondered how I ended up in this situation. It had been a long day. I didn't get a candy gram for Valentine's day but all my friends did. I had to write a paper to write for English class and I ended up having to babysit. Not the most fun way to spend Valentine's Day when one was sixteen. The two children I was babysitting were easy to entertain. I did get a little work done, but not my

English paper. When my parents came to pick me up, they decided we needed some items at the Walmart. I was less than thrilled. My mother had a long day at the College

Post Office since it was Valentine's day, so I did not grumble. Like all good parents, they decided we would go to McDonald's for ice cream afterwards.

When I came out of Walmart clutching the bags of groceries, it was snowing

heavily. My father had come with the car to pick us up. My mother got in the car and I opened the door but my books were in the way. I slammed the door and began to walk around the rear of the car to the passenger side. As I did, I heard the tires begin to squeal as they gained traction in the snow. The icy pellets of snow hitting my face brought me back to reality. "How am I going to get out of this situation?" I asked myself.

I started trudging in the slushy snow thinking of a plan.

The car was not slowing down and I decided that I was not going to catch it by running up the hill. I quickly thought up a solution to my situation, as I slipped in the slush. The plan had been to go to McDonalds to get something to eat. I would either catch up to my parents then or go call Papa who lived in Nicholasville and have him come pick me up. This seemed like a good idea, since I hadn't caught up to the car yet. The cold snow was beginning to seep into my shoes, as I paused to catch my breath. The car was about halfway up the hill. As my teeth started chattering, I was hoping my parents would realize I was not in the car.

Frantically, I was trying to get my parents attention, but I could barely see a few cracks in the snow covered windshield. Suddenly, I saw the car pause about halfway up the hillside. The rear defroster was beginning to work and I could see that the car had halted. I ran the last hundred feet to the car. My father had gotten out of the car and yelled at me for going around the rear of the car and slamming the door. My mother had

been talking to me the whole time assuming, I was in the back seat. When Dad could look through the cracks in the snow on the windshield he could make out a figure in the blizzard. I opened the door to the warm car and tossed the Walmart bags on top of my books. I was grateful to be reunited with my parents again and to be enclosed within the warm safety of the car.

As we were sitting in McDonald's eating ice cream and laughing over the incident, I was very grateful for rear defrosters. I found out years later that some friends of the family were actually, in the parking lot that night and saw the whole thing. They would have picked me up if the car hadn't stopped. Aside from having a funny story to tell at family events, I now know to be more aware of my surroundings in the future. At least, I did get my English paper finished for the next day. Hopefully, my next trip to Walmart will not be such an adventure.

*Memoir: Hospital Visit With Jesus*

By Monica Lucas

Dad was diagnosed with cancer six years before his death. Every single April, he would spend one to two weeks in the hospital. This happened for six consecutive years, like clockwork. He seemed relatively healthy the rest of the time. We even joked about the upcoming April each year, not really believing it would happen again. We spent many Easter Sundays in the hospital with family, egg hunts, and food. His four children took turns staying with him in the hospital. Mom stayed many nights, too.

He was the best dad in the world. I know everyone thinks that, but I know it's true. He was a man who went to work each day, then hurried home to be with us. He never missed a ballgame, parent/teacher conference, or dance recital. He laughed and joked and played and taught. He was deeply religious and God was the center of our lives. He was our moral compass and an amazing role model.

Dad was my rock. He was the kindest person that I have ever known. I will always remember the day I was walking down the hospital hallway toward his room as a nurse was coming out of his door. The nurse had tears in his eyes. I asked if everything was ok. He looked at me and said, *"I don't think I've ever had a patient like him before. I had to poke him three times to take his blood and HE apologized to ME by saying he was sorry that his veins were so bad! I needed to apologize to him, not the other way around. He sure is a special man."* I nodded. That's my dad.

It seems odd to say those days with him in the hospital were some of my favorite days, but they were. He loved to talk. He told stories of his childhood and the early years of his marriage with mom. We talked about religion and politics. While we often had good talks when he was home, this one-on-one time was more intimate, more special. I realize now that I know wonderful stories of his childhood that I may have never known. I know funny stories of his life and his sad times, as well. We spent a lot of days laughing, crying, talking, and praying. But the memory that sticks with me most vividly – one we laughed about later - is this.

One Monday in April 2011, I was planning to spend the afternoon and evening with Dad at the hospital. The next morning at 8 am, I had a flight to Philadelphia for a conference I was to attend. Our night was going as

usual. We had chatted, I had helped him with his dinner, and we had had a good visit. It was 9 pm and I was about to head home to get some sleep before my early flight. He was lying back with his eyes closed and I kissed him on the forehead and told him I was heading out a little earlier than usual. He opened his eyes and smiled at me and said, *“Good night sweetheart, drive safe. I will just lie here and wait for Jesus.”* Then, he closed his eyes again. I sat back down in the chair next to his bed and took his hand. *“Were you praying?”* I asked. He smiled and shook his head. I asked what he meant about waiting for Jesus. *“Oh, Jesus was here earlier today, before you came. He sat right in that chair where you are. He told me he would be back for me later.”* He said with a soft smile, as if reminiscing. I felt some panic rising in me. *“Wait. What do you mean? Did he say he would be back later or did he say he would be back FOR you later?”* I asked.

Dad smiled again with a faraway look in his eyes. He seemed to think a minute. Then he looked me right in the eye and said, *“Jesus said he’d be back for me later tonight.”* Then, he drifted off to sleep. At that point, I wasn’t sure what to do. My gut told me he had had a dream about Jesus. My head said to go home and get some sleep. My heart said, *Don’t Leave!!* So, I didn’t.

I spent the night with him, sitting in the chair next to his bed and holding his hand on and off. Occasionally, I’d touch his face to make sure he was still breathing. I called his name when he would move or wiggle. I actually woke him twice to make sure he was alive! I paced a bit, but spend the majority of the time sitting in the chair watching him and holding his hand or checking his breathing. I kept a lookout for Jesus to come, while praying He didn’t. I never saw Him. If He came for Dad while I was there, He didn’t take him.

The nurses started coming in around 6 am to get the day going. Dad woke and was surprised to see me still there. I asked how he was feeling and if he had seen Jesus. He said he was fine and he had not seen Jesus during the night. I told him why I had stayed – that I didn’t want Jesus to come and take him, and if He did, I wanted to be there for it. We both had a good laugh, then I caught a plane. During the next year, we laughed a lot about that night and Dad enjoyed telling people the story about the time I scared Jesus away.

## Lazy Gardener Does Well

By Cynthia Dare, Henry County

Some folks might call me lazy or disorganized. I say I am hopeful. When catching a rare rain end of July, I am a believer. Here are a few tips.

1. Continue planting seeds and a late garden grows. Scatter many and see what comes up in a small area. Move or compost seedlings to thin bed.
2. Containers are successful for the tomatoes to keep the weeds out and the water in. Be certain to allow enough room for the vines to seek their comfort even if it's ground level.
3. Pull little weeds as they appear. Direct any watering right to the plants.
4. Pick every day. Then the available energy goes to new produce. Enjoy the fruits, or veggies as it were, of minimal labor.

## HOMEMAKER HEARTS

By Jennifer Duncan

My blood is a blend of city and country, of starched napkins and 'pass the bowl of taters' and of the hum of traffic in the distance to that of the Ruby-throated hummingbird at my front porch.

The ingredient list which makes up this concoction of me can be best shared through a description of my two grandmothers.

My maternal grandmother, Mary, was born and reared in St. Petersburg, Florida. She was the eldest of 12 children, all of whom were girls except Jimmy, second from the youngest. She grew up quickly under the heavy weight of responsibility. My great-grandmother suffered from post-partum depression (a term not known in those days) and, for this reason, the care of the children and the daily tasks of housekeeping fell to my grandmother. She adored her father, a Merchant Marine, and whenever she spoke of him, it was with love, pride and of his masculine good looks.

Grandma, who initially instructed we call her Grandmother, was not the milk and cookies type. Her demeanor was stoic and dignified. She expected children to behave, to be clean and to disappear a bit into the background. Except, that is, for me. Having done nothing by effort to deserve her favor, I had won Grandma's approval early in my life. I often spent weekends with Grandma and Grandpa. Their home was a sanctuary and provided me with time away from the noise and constant chatter in my home from my five younger siblings. Grandma would allow me to stay up with her to watch the Lawrence Welk show and The Tonight show with Johnny Carson. I always slept in Grandma's bed in Grandma's room (she and Grandpa had their own rooms). The next morning, I would awake to a place setting of a bowl of whole grain cereal, buttered toast with jelly and two dainty glasses, one with milk and one with orange juice. To me, it was fine dining.

The aroma of coffee and bleach make up my childhood memories of Grandma's kitchen. As I ate my breakfast, she would tidy up the kitchen with her bleach-soaked rag and have a sip of coffee here and there while we discussed the plans for the day.

## HOMEMAKER HEARTS – page two

Frequently, those plans included a home manicure at her kitchen table. As my fingers soaked in the warm, soapy water, she would tell me the importance of beautiful hands to a gentleman's eye. I dreamed of the day I would have the hands of a lady, and I am still dreaming.

I've not yet had the blessing of meeting my paternal grandmother, Rosha Elizabeth. My Kentucky grandmother passed away when my father was only 13 years old. I know nothing of her upbringing but when I think of her, I imagine everything country that is good and wholesome. Perhaps I would have called her Maw-maw. A cousin of mine who, as a toddler, knew my Maw-maw, told me she remembers her as always being warm, soft and smelling of biscuits. Through all the stories shared with me, I have developed a love for this woman whose blood flows through me and has rooted me in Kentucky. I am sure my garden dirt nails would please her. The family stories speak of a quiet woman with an engaging smile, a kindness and generosity of spirit and a deep and committed love for her Heavenly Father, her husband and her eight children. Pictures show me she was not a petite woman but then, how could she be, for all that love could not be contained in a small package.

Growing up, I always believed my two grandmothers were very different from one another. But, now that I'm grown and have the gift of insight, I think there are more similarities, really. At their cores, they both deeply loved their families and spent all their time caring for them and providing them with the best they had of themselves. My grandmothers were hardworking, responsible and sacrificing women. Neither had an abundance in terms of monetary possessions but they were each so skillfully mastered in the art of homemaking that they were able to quilt in me, their granddaughter, from city fabric and country fabric, a homemaker's heart. As with any well-made quilt, the memory of my grandmothers will live on as I weave my own thread and story into it and pass down my patchwork homemaker heart to the next generation.

## "ANNIE"

By Nancy Snouse, Greenup County

If you are lucky, once in your lifetime you may meet someone who changes your life and how you look at life. I met that someone when Annie came into my life.

In 2013 I remarried, after being a widow for 10 years, and Annie was a friend of my new husband, Bill. She and her husband, Steve, lived in Pickerington and attended the same church as we did. Annie was a realtor and helped us find our first home.

Annie and I found that we had many things in common during the house hunting excursions. As we grew our friendship we became like sisters.

One of my favorite memories of those house hunting days was the day she showed us what became known as "my dream home." I wandered upstairs alone and just fell in love with the house. I was so afraid that we wouldn't get it as there were other offers on it. I started back down the stairs and just sat down on the steps and was crying when Annie and Bill walked in to the entryway. Annie stopped when she observed me on the stairs and crying and sat down by me and said "Let's all just stop and pray about this and if it is God's will all will work out. Well, needless to say, I got my dream home thanks to Annie and her diligence.

Shortly after this, Annie was diagnosed with cancer. Never have I known anyone with the courage that Annie had. She never gave up hope and never became discouraged. She kept her faith thru 2 years of chemo and radiation and fought a courageous battle while always telling us things would be fine. She just knew if it was God's will he would heal her and if not she was ready to accept His will. Annie always had a smile on her face and seemed to always have a glow about her.

Annie lost her battle and went home to be with her Savior in 2016.

What she left behind in my memory was that of a warm, kind, gentle, God fearing lady of faith who made me want to be a better person and hope if I ever face the situation that Annie faced that I could show half the faith and joy that she imparted to all she came in contact with. Her favorite song that she always

wanted to sing when we got together for Home Study Group was "Blessed Assurance" and she always told us that she had that assurance.

God Bless you, Annie, and thanks for the faith and courage you imparted to me and to others. Thanks for the wonderful memories I have of our time shared.

**Christmas 1959**

By P. Diane Shrewsberry, McCracken County

**Snow was on the ground that cold, gray sky afternoon. More was threatening to fall and it was looking a bit more like Christmas every day. I as an 8 year old was becoming more and more concerned that we, our family, had NO Christmas tree. My school mates were bragging about the number of ornaments and icicles that were hanging on their tree. I was getting tired of keeping my mouth shut. I asked my mom daily about this "situation" as the time for Santa drew nearer with each passing day. "I know, I know!" She would say. "But I'm just too busy with cooking to look for one today, and your dad isn't going to get home from milking the cows till dark." Days continued to pass. I'd jump off the school bus, just sure to find a lovely cedar tree gracing our living room waiting for me to load the icicles on it! No dice. The Saturday prior to Christmas arrived, cold and snowy again. We had NO TREE for the Bondurant family. I was done with all this waiting around, so I took matters into my own hands. I snuck to the coat closet, donned a heavy coat, hat and gloves, "Mom, going out to play," I shouted and hustled to the kitchen to grab a saw bladed knife. Off I went to the fields. Searching for that perfect cedar.**

And there it was. Just gracing a fence row, awaiting me to save it from the new falling snow!! Looking back it may have been 4 feet tall but in my mind it was a giant! Yes, I did cut that cedar tree with a saw bladed knife! If mom could dig a hole for a mail box with a table spoon, then I could cut down a tree!! I remember dragging that thing over corn stobbles, over another fence and home we went. I was so proud of myself as I had relieved my parents of a chore! If mom was dismayed, she said nothing. That poor scraggly tree lost many of it's needles on our journey across the field, but once I loaded it's somewhat bare branches with ornaments, popcorn, and loads of those shiny icicles, it stood proud and tall in it's milk bucket of water.

Sometimes the best Christmases are the most humble, as were the beginnings of the celebration of Christmas itself.

A Surprise In the Night      By Barbara Bean-Slagle

God does answer prayers in unexpected ways. Here is my recent experience.

A few months ago, I ordered a cat book by Patricia Polanco, one of my favorite children's authors. I like the way she spins her stories. I hope to write a story about a cat someday so I'm collecting cat books. However, I hadn't felt like reading it.

Lately, I had just been sitting and staring out the windows at animals and birds instead of doing anything. My beloved husband died a few months before. One night, I was considering goals for this wobbly, old, single lady. One night I went to God in pray about this issue when several ideas came to mind. However, since I was wide awake by this time. I decided to go to my comfortable chair in the TV room. I picked up Ms. Polanco's cat book "Because of Thursday" to read for something to do.

I found that the book on this night was not all about the cat but more importantly about how an old lady who had a zest for life until her husband suddenly died. She remembers how happy she and her husband had been when they opened their little cafe. But now she wanted just to sit and watch the birds and bees play from the rocking chair on her porch. She had closed the café for lack of interest. One day a cat appeared on her porch wrapped in a towel with the word "Thursday." The rest of the story tells of the adventures she had that led her to new zest for reopening her cafe. This led to her being able to help the community in several ways as well as give her new purpose in life.

How I could relate to her that night!! I praise God for the interesting ways he speaks to us. It is a good cat story too but that wasn't the theme for this special night. I'm ready for my old zest for life also. Watch out world...here I come.

A MEMOIR

By Mary Ann Carrico-Mitchell, Henry County

I read a book review on HILLBILLY ELLEGY: BY j. d. VANCE AND IT SAID, "When I was young ....

I memorized my home address in case I ever got lost." I put my head down on my desk and started laughing. I have a very succinct memory of teaching my first child to memorize. First it was his phone number.

Then it was his address as we lived in military housing and he was four years old and all the houses looked alike. One day he was playing outside with the other children, and there were plenty of them. We lived in Florida and they were perpetually sticky hot and filled with sand.

One day he ran in the house and said to me, "Mom, what is the last number?" I asked him of his phone number. He said, 'NO!' So I asked him if it was his house number. "He said, "NO!" And then I said, "Son, I don't know what you mean." He was very frustrated with me, stomped his cowboy boot on the tile floor and clothed in his swimming trunks, he usual attire, ran out and slammed the door!

I can see this scenario as if it were yesterday. MY son is now fifty-four years old. At the time I wrote letters to my husband everyday, as did most of the other Navy Wives, and I told him what had been my son's remarks regarding the numbers and two weeks later I received an answer in the mail from my husband, at sea. It said, "Mary Ann, he is talking about infinity." I put my head down on the desk then, also, but I was not laughing.

My son was correct....my husband was correct...and had been afraid that that was going to be the answer. UGH. Educating smart children is not fun. Further stories of this later.

## MEMOIRS

"Living on a Farm"  
By Nora Vaillancourt Sweat  
Hardin County

I was so lucky to grow up on a cattle, sheep, tobacco, corn, and chicken farm.

In the spring of the year, my younger sister and I would go with Mama to the county seat to the hatchery to get baby chicks. As soon as we got home, we put the small chicks in the brooder house. The chicks had warming lamps and long trays for their food. Large jars filled with water were upside down so they could drink water when they were thirsty. Once the chicks got older and large enough, we would pick them up and carry them, because they could have flown away. The chicken house was empty, so the chickens had more than enough room to eat and roost. There were sections where they would later start to lay eggs. We did not have a rooster as the hens were not fertile.

The next thing was to plant the garden. We went to the tobacco patch. The man who share-cropped our tobacco had planted seeds for both the tobacco and tomato plants for our gardens. He also plowed the garden and used the disc to break up any large clumps of dirt. The next day early in the morning, we were hoping that it would be cooler weather. Mama used a push-plow to "lay off" the rows for seeds sown in rows; green beans, lima beans, and on the outside row was corn, since it would be tall. Mama dug a hole for tomatoes and green pepper plants and my sister, and I would pour water in each hole. Daddy would fill the dirt back in and pat it down. Mama would make two "hills" and poke holes for watermelon and cantaloupe seeds. With the sizzling summer sun, Mama or Daddy would need to water most every day.

I would go every morning and gather the eggs. Then, the sad day came for the chickens. She would take them out of the chicken house and laid their neck on a small tree stump. With one strike with an axe, the chicken started flopping all over the back yard. Mama had a large kettle with extremely hot water and the dead birds found themselves plunged in for a time until the feathers would be easy to pull out and "Oh, what a stench"! Mama then would fasten them upside down to the clothesline so the blood would drop out until it would no longer drip. Then back in the hot water, so that my sister and I could pluck all the feathers. Mama would usually pluck the tiny pin feathers. After all chickens were down to their bare skin, it was time for Mama to cut the chicken in pieces, two legs, two thighs, two wings,

two breast pieces, two back pieces, a neck, liver, gizzard, and a heart. The little chicks did not know that they would give their lives for our family to have fried chicken dinners. I placed the chickens in plastic freezer bags with ties to secure them tightly to keep any air out.

During the sizzling summer, we would go to the wild blackberry bushes on our farm, and we would pick them by the buckets. We would take them home and give them a quick spray of chilly water. Mama would freeze berries for cobblers and pies and turn the remaining berries into blackberry jam for Jam Cakes for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners.

My very favorite part of living on our country farm was our herd of beautiful Hereford cows with dark red fur and white tufts of hair on their head. We did not name any of the cows, but one cow was bred with an Angus bull before we purchased her. When the calf was born, she was black with a white face. As she got older, we all noticed how tame she was. Mama named her "Blackie" and she even let Mama milk her when she was planning to make homemade vanilla ice cream. The female cows stayed on the farm, but the steers went to market or to the slaughterhouse for a different kind of meat for our meals, beef. We also raised piglets until they were much larger animals. At that time, they would go to the slaughterhouse and then we had pork in the freezer as well. Chicken, beef, and pork gave Mama a wide variety of meat for dinners.

Even if I were offered a large amount of money to sell our farm, I would not have left my home. Realistically, I knew I would go to college, and I wanted to become a teacher, a home economics teacher and I was for thirty years. Since I am now in my mid-seventies, I have such fond memories of life on a fourth-generation farm. There is nothing like it!

## Just Bring Yourself

During the mid-seventies our Franklin Homemakers Club chose for their community project to make monthly visits to a nursing home in our area. I was a stay at home mom with three small children enabling me to take part in this project. We would take trays of homemade goodies and small gifts to distribute. This particular month we had filled larger baby food jars with candy attaching buttercups to each one. Knowing that we were visiting the aids already had the residents waiting in the lounge for our arrival. They greeted us with smiles taking such pleasure in our just visiting especially enjoying the children.

I was amazed at the sweet old gentleman who was our self-appointed escort to the areas that were unable to leave their rooms. As we would enter each room he would tell them why we were there as we placed their goodies on their night stand then let us visit for a minute before going to the next room.

As we were leaving he followed us to the parking lot, with a firm handshake and a pleading voice he said simply, "Come back."

"We'll be back." I promised. "What do you want us to bring you?"

His grin widen and his eyes twinkled with pleasure at this promise. "Ah," he drawled then added a snappy "some cheese and crackers."

Then he became very solemn and said, "No, don't bring anything. Just bring yourself."

It takes so little time to prepare cheese and crackers and less to fix nothing. Was this wise old patriarch scolding me? Didn't he realize just how much time I'd spent preparing those jars and bouquets? He did know how few moments I'd spent with those lonely people. I felt like Martha in Luke 10:40. I was so busy doing and fixing I'd missed the blessing of sharing in the wisdom and experiences of those lovely people's sorrows and joys. My heart ached as I ask myself, "did I do this good deed for them or for my own gratification?"

I have been an active club member of this same homemaker club for sixty years and over the years we have done many community projects but this one still stands out in my memory. I

realize now just how much those visits meant to him and the residents and how little effort it took on my part. My husband and I are now close to the age of that sweet old gentleman. Nothing bring a smile to our faces faster than looking up to see one of our children or grandchildren coming in the back door for a visit.

Submitted by Marie Pitts

**November 27 Is My Special Day**  
By Faye Sparks, Warren County

**November 27,1971** was my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. It was also the day I met THIS MAN. I was at work at The Telephone Answering Service. This was well before there were cell phones in everyone's pocket. I answered the phone calls for several companies and dispatched calls. He came by to finish some paperwork because he was scheduled to be out of town the following week. We didn't work the same shift, so we had never met in person. He was very intelligent, good looking and funny also divorced and 12 years older than me. He was an IBM computer engineer. I was a shy college student majoring in Agriculture/Animal Science. He knew a lot about computers, and I knew a lot about cows. Not really many common interests! As he was leaving the office he asked if I wanted to go out to eat with him when he got back to town. That really surprised me, so I just said OK not really expecting him to ask me out on a date. I didn't think about it again that week.

The next week he was back home, and he called me at work. Since my job was to talk to him and give service messages this was not unusual. After giving him the messages, he said "I'll call you later and we can decide when we are going out". At the time I was living twenty-five miles away at my parents' home for a few weeks. We decided to go out three nights later. I had to draw a map because we lived on a farm way out in the country. He came to pick me up and it was a really amusing time. I felt like a sixteen-year-old kid going on a first date! I had not lived with my parents for three years and we were well past the age of" invite him in so we can meet him" but he did come in the house and meet them. This started a casual fun friendship. I met several of his friends who were all adults with real jobs.

We spent a lot of time together the next few months. He attended the WKU Agriculture Club banquet as my date. Over the summer I met his daughter, his parents and siblings, nieces and nephews, aunts, uncles, and cousins. In July I even attended his two-year-old nephews birthday party. This was a very close family and I enjoyed going to Woodburn with him. By this time, I was totally in love with him but since he had previously been married, he was being very careful with his heart. So, no commitments just

enjoy spending time together. I was Okay with this because my main concern currently was finishing college.

I graduated from WKU and began a job in an office in January 1973. Agriculture jobs were not readily available for women at the time. I didn't really want to move very far away from him or my family. Our relationship had become more serious, but we had no plans for our future. He said even though he loved me, he was not interested in being married again. He was very honest about it and since I was only twenty-two years old, I was not really upset by this admission. We spent most of our free time together. He suggested that I use the employee tuition benefit from work and take more classes at WKU. I took several accounting and computer programming classes. He was always there encouraging me. I had learned much more about computers than he had about cows!

1976 was a difficult year for me. My mother was ill, and my dad had a heart valve replaced and an aneurysm repaired. Ken was with me through all these challenges. He was so helpful and loving to my family. He owned a building lot near his parents' home. He decided to make some extra money, he would build a house to sell during this time. He asked me to help pick out colors for paint and carpet. I really was just so busy with work and my parents that it seemed like another chore to add to my time. I told him to just pick out neutral colors since the house was going to be sold. His response was that he was seriously thinking about moving to the house when it was finished, and I could live there also if I wanted. When I questioned this, he said "well I thought we might get married soon". So, after 5 years of fun, friendship and romance, he was asking me to think about getting married.

**November 27, 1976**, He gave me an engagement ring for my birthday and ask me to be his wife. We were married December 23, 1976 and have now been married for forty-five very happy years.

**This explains why November 27 is so much more than just my birthday! I love you, Kenneth Sparks from my 21<sup>st</sup> year until now fifty years later.**

## Superstitions Through Granddaddy's Eyes

By Becky Greenwell, Union County

When it comes to superstitions, and tokens that protect and predict there seems to be a little less hullabaloo in today's society than there was in days past.

The world is still filled with those who wear their lucky shirts, or carry a rabbit's foot, or even stray away from black cats in their paths. There are also those who scoff at all the silliness of the situations.

When I was growing up in the 60s, I saw many times that my granddaddy had a mixture of superstitious beliefs. He had only a few "superstitions," and sometimes was very adamant about his beliefs. He was also outspoken about someone else's way of thinking.

Grandmother had a sister who was a nun and she wore her full habit and veil. Whenever times changed and the dress of the sisters changed Sister Germaine continued to wear her habit and veil. Granddaddy always told her she wouldn't remove the veil because she thought there was some magic in that hat. I think he was right, too. She was magical, loving, and special.

My grandmother was a firm believer in the powers of burning blessed palm, or blest as she pronounced it, whenever a storm was approaching.

As soon as a black cloud started rolling in, she would light her blest palm and pray her rosary.

My mother carried on the tradition and the belief was passed to me and my children. On one occasion when the boys were small, the weather turned to hail, wind, and torrential rains, they gathered their pillows and blankets, hunkered down behind the couch and shouted, "Get the blasted palm! Get the blasted palm!" A mixed pronunciation of bless-ed and blest, but they knew what was needed.

My granddaddy had his own superstitions.

My great-grandmother lived with them. There were times she and my granddaddy probably got along like typical in-laws do and did not always see eye-to-eye.

At the breakfast table one morning my great-grandmother announced how long before spring was going to arrive. She knew exactly because of the different signs from the caterpillars and the bark on the tree or some other such tell-tale signs of nature.

He looked at her and told her she was crazy. "Ah, woman, you can't predict the future because of some woolly bug, or bark on the tree or any other such malarkey. Besides that, everyone knows the groundhog has already seen his shadow and winter is here to stay!"

Of all the superstitions in the world, his was truly his trusty groundhog.

## A Life That Went Too Fast

Life is so short; I am nearly 85 years old and can't believe where the years have gone. So don't waste the years "sweatin the small stuff!" Save your energy for things that really matter.

I was with my husband for almost 63 years and it seemed like only a few! Time goes by so fast when you are having fun they say. God Blessed me with a special man. I know most everyone says that, but as anyone and they will tell you he was a special kind. My son once told me, "Everyone does not have what you and Dad had!". They said it wouldn't last when we married because I was so young, but when God puts you together you can beat all odds and when God puts true love in your hearts you can surpass any trial and obstacle the devil may try to throw at you.

For many couples these days they start their lives together with the idea that, "if I don't like this thing called "marriage", I can get a divorce", or they don't even want to get married, No Commitment! I was taught that if you really loved someone you would stick it out!

Love is kind; love suffers long; love does not envy; love is not puffed up; love does not behave rudely; love does not seek its' own way; love never fails; love endures all things; "The greatest thing is love 1Corn. 13"

I loved my husband with every fiber of my being and I know he loved me the same. Right after he passed one of his friends, that he had known all his life, called me. He said "I know I won't be here much longer either so I just wanted to tell you how much Ray loved you" I said, "I know he did". Then he proceeded to tell me that every time they talked, which was at least once a week, the last two or three years of their lives Ray would tell him how e loved me and wat a wonderful wife and mother to his children I had been. This friend died two weeks after telling me this, "what a blessing"! I really feel like we had a "Fairly tale" marriage, the kind most people can only talk about or read in a book.

Someone asked me not long ago if I would ever consider marrying again? I said, "It wouldn't be fair to any man because I would always be comparing them to Ray and I know no one would measure up to him. He was so handsome, so kind, so giving, so loving, so hard working and so true. I feel so blessed to have been able to call him mine.

Seems we just started this journey and it had to end, but I know we will be together soon in a land that will never end!

Janet VanBibber  
2/13/22