
Shared Reminiscence

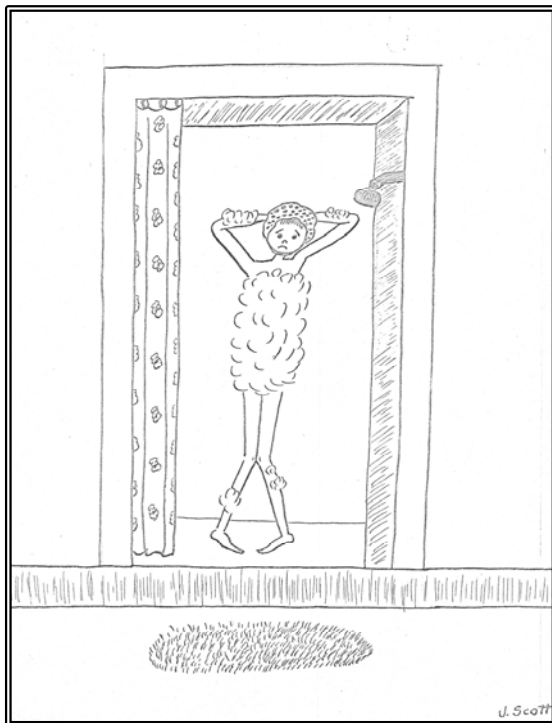
Because I'm So Well Adjusted (?): Part II

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Chapter 5: Changing from Student to Faculty Wife¹

My husband accepted his first teaching position. As he had graduated in late summer, jobs were limited for the fall college session. He accepted this position, sight unseen, at a small church school in Tennessee, and left several weeks earlier than I. When the time came for me to join him, I hopped on a train, with my one year-old daughter, a bouncy “Teeter-Baby” chair, Frank’s hunting and fishing equipment (I can’t remember to this day why I ended up having to transport these items to our new home!) a suitcase, and a bag of diapers. At this point in our lives, these were all of our worldly possessions. As the train travelled through the night, I wondered what my new life as a faculty wife—instead of as a student—would be like.

We arrived at the station, which was located about fifteen miles from the college. I held my baby in my arms, along with all of the above mentioned items—which was some achievement, believe me! I stepped off the train. It was raining. It was dark. I was standing in damp bushes—and no husband in sight! The train pulled away, and I never felt so alone and helpless in my life. But soon Frank appeared out of the darkness, driving a borrowed car. We drove through the winding hills and I could tell by his conversation that he was trying to prepare me for what was to come.



“Honey, you’ll just love living out in the country.”

“Country? Is this place way out in the country?” I asked, trying to maintain a calm voice.

“Yes—about two miles out from a town that has a population of a thousand people. It’ll be a great learning experience for you.”

I thought to myself—“Great learning experience, huh? That’s always the way he words things when something sort of unpleasant is about to happen or something unpleasant has to be done. It’s a great learning experience for ME!”

We soon arrived at the college and drove up in front of a large white frame dormitory. It was dark, and I could not see my surroundings very well. Frank carried “our worldly possessions” into the dorm, and I carried our little girl. As we entered the apartment, he explained “This is the girls’ dormitory, and just as the college president told us, we have four rooms.”

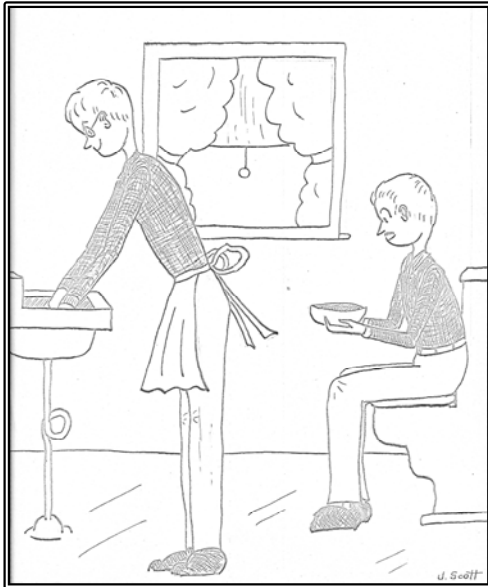
I started looking around. A living room, a bedroom, a bathroom and a large cement shower stall! “Where’s the fourth room?” I asked.

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"The shower stall, I guess," he stammered.

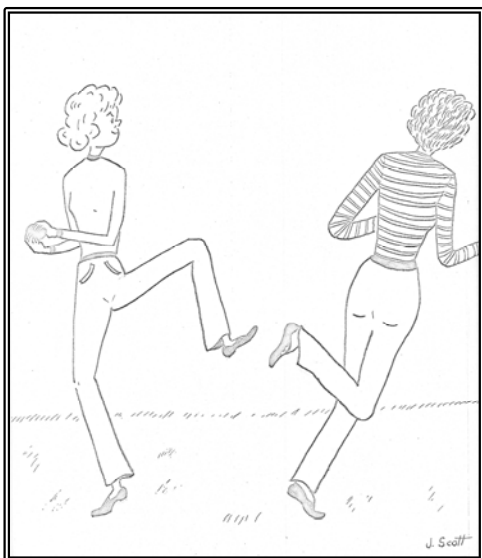
Little did I know at that moment what frustration that fourth room—the shower stall—was going to cause. We unpacked our things and I decided to take a shower. After having "soaped" myself up, standing there ready to enjoy the nice feeling warm water gives to you, the water completely cut off! And into the drain of the shower came cold soapy water. It seemed that whenever the girls on the floor above us took a bath, our water cut off, and THEIR bath water bubbled up into our shower! Here I was, standing in someone else's dirty bath water! It was almost more than a soul could take. However, soon I solved that problem by taking a bath when I knew the girls were in class, and I kept a mop and disinfectant right at the shower door!

Frank next informed me that breakfast was served at 6:30 a.m.!!! We did not have a kitchen, so would be eating in the college dining room. "You can do anything if you really work at it" Daddy's words went through my mind. OK. My husband has this new job. So what if the living conditions aren't what I dreamed of. I would just have to work at accepting this new life—FOR THE TIME BEING.



I managed to eat the dining room food for a while, but soon found that there were several single faculty members—two male, one female—who also found it unappetizing. We decided we should pool our resources and cook some meals ourselves. As we had the larger apartment, it was decided we would put the hot plate we had purchased in our place. But, problem number one popped up. No suitable electrical outlet or space except in the very large bathroom of our apartment! Cook in the bathroom??? How unsanitary! However, this is exactly what we did. I think my parents must have grown one more gray hair when they read my letter, informing them that the Spanish professor was seated on the toilet (with lid down, of course), shelling green peas, the English professor was washing potatoes in the basin, and the Physical Education teacher was cooking the meat on a hot plate—all in the bathroom! But oh how good that food tasted.

This particular college did not have any kind of infirmary, doctor, or nurse. When the students found out I was a former nurse, my own medicine cabinet soon become the college dispensary. One night, I received a phone call from one of the football players. The star player felt sick, as if he was going to faint, and would I please come to the boys dorm to take a look at him. I happened to have some vials of ammonia in my own medical supplies and took this with me. I gave the young man a whiff. The next day, he played a terrific game. Best in his life, he said. I was next approached by the whole football team. "Will you give each of us some of that stuff you gave him?" they asked me. Naturally, I did not honor this request.



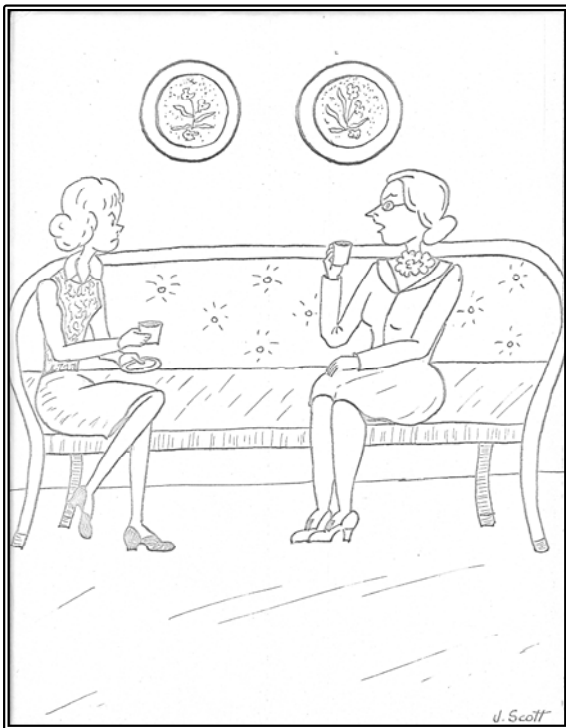
Adjusting to being a faculty wife came slowly. We attended the football games and, by this time, I knew most of the players on a personal basis, as this was a small school. During one game, my "ammonia" got caught behind the lines, trying to make a pass. The big brutes on the opposing team were trying to slaughter him. I stood up and yelled, "Damn it, don't let them get you!" suddenly I felt something jerking my coat. My faculty husband, not too pleasantly, reminded me that I was not a student anymore—to sit down—shut up—and act like a faculty wife should! This was going to be hard, as I was only several years older than the students. Hmmmm—something else to work on.

During the year, a softball game between the women students and the women faculty members was to be held. I was selected as the pitcher for the faculty team. Little did I know that this particular time “you can do anything as long as you work at it” was going to fail me. The game turned out to be an exciting one—very evenly matched teams. It was the last inning. I had even managed to pitch balls over homeplate occasionally. A student was on third base, trying to steal into home for a run, and she kept running back and forth between third base and home base. I had seen this happen while watching a real ballgame, but could not figure out how to tag her out. High I.Q.? No common sense! Suddenly, I get the bright idea that if the ball just touched her in some way she would be “out.” As I was not quick enough to get close to her to tag her, I got within five feet and tossed the ball at her, hitting her in the back—but gently! Emotion was already pitched high between the players, and this was the final straw, I guess. Both teams broke into tears, and the game broke up—never to be finished. One must remember that the young faculty women were just a few years older than the students they were competing with. What made it even worse for me was that my very own husband accused me of hitting the girl because I had previously expressed dislike of the particular student! I was never able to convince him otherwise. You see, psychologists have this hang up about everything you do has to have some hidden reason behind it. Most women would be quick to inform them that that is a lot of “hog wash”—right? We do things just because that is the way we feel at THAT particular moment. No hidden motives involved.

Such were our years at our first job. Looking back now, I realize that these actually were some of the happiest days of our lives, and that these students were the nicest, most serious, and interesting we were to ever know. In fact, we travelled back for a twenty year reunion with them recently, and all had many laughs over those experiences of long ago—except the “woman” whom I had hit in the back during the softball game. She managed to give me a very cold glare.

Chapter 6: I'm Intellectual—You Aren't

We remained at this college for two years, when Frank decided to leave the teaching profession and I decided I'd had enough “learning experience” living two miles away from a town of one thousand people. We moved to Washington D.C. During this time, Frank Jr. became part of our lives. We purchased our first home, and life actually proceeded pretty routinely for three years. But the love of teaching was pulling at Frank, and we decided to return to this profession. He accepted a job at a private girls' school in Georgia. The teas were more frequent—the faculty get-togethers more intellectual—and my smile



beginning to stiffen. Faculty members were “requested” to live on campus, and we had been informed that our apartment would be located in a former sorority house. We were NOT informed that it should be condemned! The moving man felt so sorry for me, as they unloaded my furniture, that they went out of their way to carefully place each piece into the desired position. They had seen the nice little home I had left—they now saw the upstairs apartment in this very, very old house that was to be our next home. Even the steps—which were on the outside of the house, running across a roof to my front door, looked as if they would fall down with each heavy piece of furniture they carried. As I walked about, looking it over, I glanced into the bathroom. The college president had promised to have everything clean and ready for us. The bath tub looked as if it had not been washed in years! This was the last straw! I just sat down and cried. Again to the rescue comes my husband. He offered to pitch in and together we managed to clear away the dust and debris of years long gone by. For a person who grew up never picking up after herself, never having to do any kind of

cleaning, I certainly had changed! I had almost become a general handyman.

In the apartment beneath us lived another faculty couple. They were originally from Europe. As the weeks went by, I tried my best to be friends with the other wife. I had usually been able to get along with just about anyone. I found it difficult to do this this time as she frequently walked into our apartment without even knocking, walking back to our bedroom, and proceeded to turn the thermostat down to a cool sixty degrees—regardless of how cold the weather was outside. It did not matter if Frank was trying to get dressed—in she walked. I would politely ask her to phone me and tell me to turn the thermostat down (it controlled the heat in both apartments), but she would not do this. As I had to live near this woman, I felt we needed to be able to get along. One day I managed to bring this up in a conversation. Her answer to me was, “You and I will never be able to be friends! I am the intellectual type—you are not. People who are not intellectual cannot get along with those who are!” And she flounced out. She was the type that spent all day sitting in the woods, looking at the leaves and bugs, while her kid stayed in the sandbox—*my* sandbox—throwing sand in my kid’s hair! This was her idea of being intellectual!

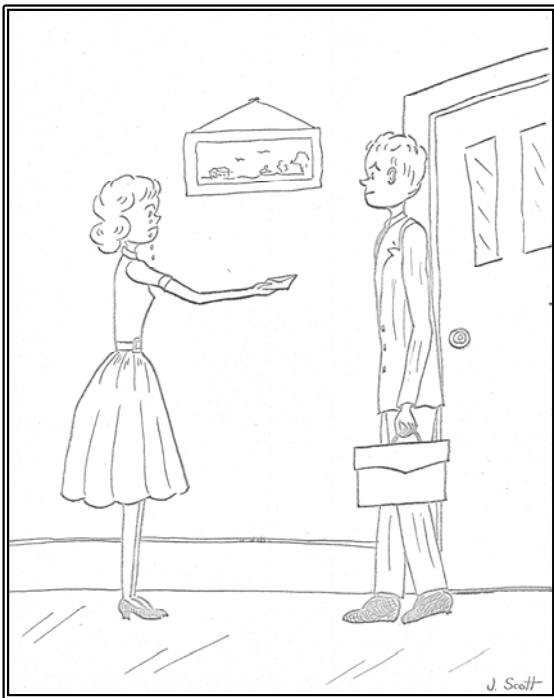
I can maliciously say that some weeks later, she received a very bad sting by a bee! Knowing that I was a nurse (and I was surprised she would trust herself to my low intellect) she came to me for help. Naturally I gave this help, but inside me was a devilish little bit of glee that she HAD to come to me.

Time marches on and life is teaching me something new each day. Our next experience involved another move. I was getting to be an expert at packing! Frank decided to go back to school and work on his doctorate. To those of you with husbands contemplating further education and you think perhaps you both are getting too old for that, all I can say is to encourage him all the way. He was in his forties (notice I’m not mentioning my age? Serves him right—I kept asking him to read this book before I sent it off.) We had two school-age children. It would not be an easy job. When we drove to the university campus in Georgia and I took one look at the army barracks that we would be living in, I shed a few tears again. Would I ever have that nice home of my own? I gritted my teeth, applied for a job at the local hospital to help out with finances, and settled down. The walls of the apartment were so thin that I could talk to the girl on the other side—I cooking in my kitchen on my hot plate, she in her kitchen cooking the same way. Maybe THAT’S why I can’t cook today! Too many hot plates in my past.

While in nursing school, it had been drilled into me that medical doctors were almost like Gods. (Some of them were in perfect agreement with this!) And I mean this was really planted firmly in my brain. I informed Frank that after he received his doctorate, he shouldn’t expect to be called “doctor” except in the classroom. He emphatically disagreed with me. I thought he just didn’t know what he was talking about. Months went by. He studied hard; I helped by typing and retyping his dissertation. The harder we worked the more I began to feel that he certainly had earned the right to be called doctor wherever he happened to be! When he finally finished this part of his education, I handed him a little brass door plate, engraved with “Dr. and Mrs.” On it. It would be nailed to the front door of the next place I would call home.

Chapter 7: Self-Psychotherapy and Formulating Ideas on Death

Our next home was in North Carolina, where Frank accepted another teaching job in psychology at a state college. Our third child, Betsy, completed our family. I think at this period of my life I developed a great little method of “self-psychotherapy.” As any housewife with three children knows, life can get to be pretty hectic at times. Even the little things seem to overwhelm you. Anger and frustration can build up inside. Even the fact that your husband leaves his dirty socks on the floor can be the most irritating experience anyone is expected to face. (Wonder why I keep bringing up the subject of socks on the floor? Could it be because he is STILL doing it and I STILL get irritated about it?) Talkative though I am, I found it hard to put into words some of the things that would build up inside me. I would try to explain these feelings to Frank, but lose my train of thought. Here is where that business course of many years ago came in handy. I simply sat down at the typewriter, and poured out my feelings on paper, fingers flying over the keys. When Frank came in from work, I would hand him the latest “letter” to read. He would wait until he had a quiet moment, read my letter, and usually not say too much about it. But I noticed that in the following days, he would, in his own way, try to work out a satisfactory solution to my “current” problem. It would be little things like not ever getting out of the house for time of my own. Or,



getting tired of chasing a two year old all day. His solution was to hire some outside help one day a week—at which time, I was to leave the house and go “do my own thing.” Then he built a small enclosed area in the backyard for the energetic two year old to play in. Perhaps being married to a psychologist has a good side to it, I thought. Over the years, I have written many, many “letters” to this husband of mine. It is a great way to bring out into the open the many little gripes, problems, worries, or what-have-yous that the average housewife and mother faces. Of course, having an understanding husband helps!

I also discovered that a great little psychological help was the “self-reward” system. For years, I managed to keep up some kind of outside interest—such as art or golf or reading. I would find a few minutes of each day to do some of the things I really enjoyed. I would say to myself, “Take time to do this, Jean. You’ve earned it.” I always felt just a bit guilty about this though—as if I should be spending my time cleaning or cooking. Guilt did not stop me, however. Then recently I read a magazine article by Dr. Joyce Brothers, a psychologist.

She seemed to be advocating this same thing—implying that a housewife needed this type of release occasionally. I haven’t felt guilty since!

Now I was thirty-five years old (I can just see my friends counting on their fingers), matured tremendously in some ways; still lots of room for improvement in others. Fate again stepped into my life to teach me another lesson. I use the word “fate,” but deep inside I am sure it was God. Up to this point in my life, even though I faithfully attended Sunday school and church (with a little firm prodding by Frank) there were some things I never formulated strong ideas about. One of these was death. Suddenly I felt a strong urge to know more about the Bible. As a child I had learned the Ten Commandments—the twenty-third Psalm—read the Bible occasionally. Always said my prayers—but feeling like they never got above the ceiling of my room.

I heard about a Bible study group that was forming, and I decided to join. That first night we met in someone’s home. We listened to a discussion, and at the end of the program everyone was asked to kneel in front of their chair. It was the time of fashion of extremely pointed toe shoes. In my character flaw to find something amusing in most situations, I could hardly keep from laughing at the difficulty in kneeling with those pointed toe shoes on. But the situation soon became not so funny. I noticed that each woman in the room was offering her own little prayer—OUT LOUD! The words just poured out of their mouths. This was something that I had never been able to do and still to this day find it very hard. Within a few minutes I was expected to voice prayer. I would think of something to say and someone else would say it before they got to me. I did not receive one bit of benefit from prayers offered by the other women. I was too busy trying to formulate my own prayer! My mind went blank! Therefore when it was my turn—complete silence. Not a word could I utter. Quiet—for the first time in my life.

I attended many of these meetings, and as time went on I noticed that every single woman there seemed to have a completely different religious background or belief than mine. They all had “religious experiences.” I never had. They did not approve of wearing makeup or smoking. I did both of these things. They did not approve of playing cards. I did. I began to feel very mixed up inside. And the evening that the discussion was about death seemed to be the final thrust of whatever was working on me. I decided I needed to do some reading—some digging for information of my own. I also wrote to my father, whose opinion I valued very much. He was a Methodist preacher’s son. I asked him his opinion on death. I asked him what he thought happened to a person immediately after death? Did this soul just lie in the ground until judgment day or did it go to heaven right then? Yes, this was a thirty-five year old woman asking these questions. A woman who had been too busy growing up, having fun, studying to be a

nurse, getting married, and raising three children, to give much thought to the religious side of her life. I am sure those of different religious backgrounds or those whose life work is in the field of religion might disagree with the answer my father gave to me. I am not trying to force my ideas on others. I am simply telling of another stage in my life of learning.

His answer to me—written on long, yellow sheets of ledger paper, many pages of them, narrows down to this:

“You can join all of the discussion groups you want; you can read all of the books you want; you can talk to all of the preachers and religious experts you want, I can only state how I believe. You would get different answers from each person you asked. My belief came about through a personal experience as a child. When I was a young man of fifteen, my own mother was very ill, and knew she was dying. She called me to her side, and told me. Then she raised her arms upward and said ‘There’s Annie! (a younger sister who died some years earlier). Oh, it is so beautiful! And there’s Jesus.’ Then she died. I know that my mother’s soul went to heaven right at that moment. This is what I believe. I pass it on to you. Use it as you wish.”

At the time my father wrote this letter, he was not sick. He had never had a sick day in his life. But two months after writing this letter, he became ill and suddenly died. I asked myself, “Was God trying to prepare me for this? Was he trying to make me formulate my own ideas about death in time to be able to face my own father’s death?” I had never even been to a funeral. I had never had anyone close to me die. I did not want to go to the funeral home to see my father’s body. I felt I could not stand it. But some knowing person insisted that I go—that I would be sorry later if I didn’t go. I hesitantly approached the casket, looked down at my father, and over me came a sudden peace of mind. I thought to myself, “This is not my father anymore. This is just a physical shell he occupied while living on this earth. My father is in heaven—wherever and whatever that is—NOW right this minute.”

After the funeral, many people came by the house. My two sisters and I were standing in the kitchen alone. At exactly the same moment, all three of us gave a little laugh. At exactly the same time, as we discussed this experience later, each of us had the same thought. Our father used to always talk about little old ladies who chattered too much. Sometimes he had very little patience with this excessive chattering. As visitors came to the house after the funeral, many such old ladies—nice though they are, bless them—were among these visitors. The thing that provoked our simultaneous thought was that daddy was laughing or amused at us for having to stand there listening to them. It was a weird experience—that the three of us would have the same thought at the same time and while doing this, felt an unusual closeness to him.

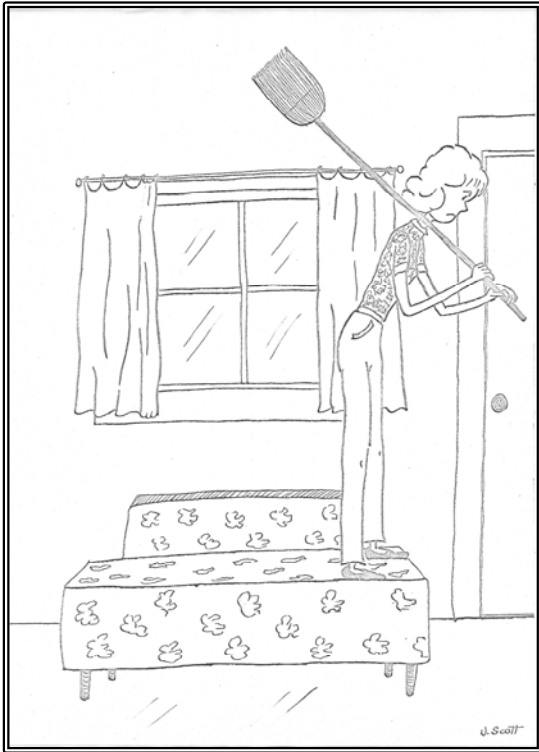
I had taken another big step towards maturity through this experience of dealing with death. To this day, I still feel very, very close to my father, and sincerely believe that someday, I will be with him again. God carefully took me through several experiences that helped me formulate “just another philosophy of life.” If you have never experienced the help that comes from God, I suggest you do a little “digging” on your own. No human source can help you in the way that HE can.

Chapter 8: The Snake, the Fox, and the Furnace

Things began to improve for us financially. I had the nice brick home I had always wanted, and in addition to this, we decided to purchase a lovely little cabin in the mountains of Southwest Virginia, located on the most picturesque stream I had ever seen. We used to look forward to the times we could travel to these lovely mountains. But a little excitement was to follow me even to this peaceful spot. I had taken up art as a hobby, and one day I decided to sit on the front porch of the cabin and sketch some of the surrounding countryside. I kept hearing a soft “click-click” but did not pay any attention to it, thinking it was the baby birds in the nest over the front door. My daughter Linda, who was twelve years old at the time, carefully avoided disturbing the nest and used the back door to come out and see what I was doing. Suddenly she let out a blood-curdling scream! Looking in the direction she was pointing, I saw a huge snake over the front door—the door I had just come out of! He was eating up the baby birds. He quickly slithered down the drain pipe, but Linda was almost as quick. She picked up an ax that had been lying

nearby, and in a mad rage chopped the snake into small pieces. What was I doing all that time? Standing in my chair screaming for Frank. There have been some things in my life that I wasn't even willing to TRY WORKING AT—and snakes were tops on my list! I detested them so that when I walked through the knee-high bushes, going down to the stream to check on the kids or curious to see if Frank had caught any fish, I would sing at the top of my voice. My family must have thought I just loved to sing while strolling out in the woods. Little did they know I was doing it to make noise—I wanted all snakes in the vicinity to know that something was walking their way and for them to scam for safety!

We took a little white kitten to the cabin with us on one of our visits. We let her outside one evening, and when she came in, we noticed a cut place or a bite on one of her legs. However, we did not think anything of it at this time. We were all sitting around reading, with a nice fire blazing away in the

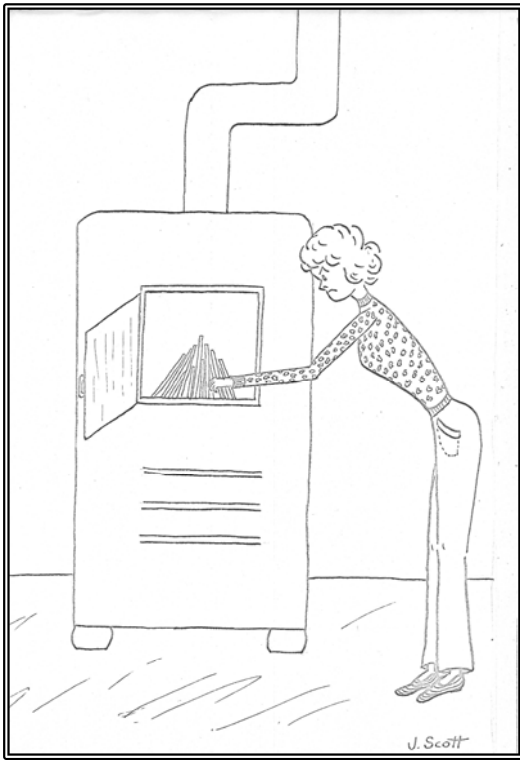


fireplace, when suddenly we heard a scuffling noise on the back porch. Frank opened the door to see what it was. Something grabbed him by the pants leg, and tried to come into the cabin. It was a fox! He kicked the fox away, slammed the door quickly, and grabbed his gun. I grabbed a broom but must not have intended to go very far with it, because I stayed inside the cabin, standing on the couch, with broom aimed for action if needed! I heard Frank shoot—and then shoot again—and then again. To this day, we still disagree about how far away that fox was from him when he was shooting. I say five feet. He estimates it a much greater distance—to rationalize for the many times he had to shoot before he killed the fox! He then proceeded to cut off the fox's tail, thinking that the kids would enjoy having it. We left for home the next day. In our local newspaper, we read that there were a lot of rabid wild animals in the mountain area we had just left! We called the local veterinarian, questioning him about the kitten who had the injured leg. He suggested that the cat be put to sleep; that more than likely it had been bitten by a rabid fox. We reported that Frank had cut off the fox's tail, and wondered if he could get rabies from having done this. He assured us that there was no danger, but for the next several weeks, my psychologist

husband suffered all kinds of imaginary complaints, and he was sure each one indicated he was coming down with rabies!

After four or five years, Frank decided to become a Clinical Psychologist. We moved to a town high in the mountains of Southwest Virginia. It was a coal-mining area. The house we bought had been built by a former coal mine owner. All of life, there lay dormant in me a little bit of the "snob." I had held dreams of wanting to live in a great big beautiful house. In this new town that we moved to, there was only this house for sale—the biggest house, on the biggest hill. We had to buy it in order to have some place to live. I learned, during my three years there a great lesson and a little of the snob was knocked out of me. Happiness isn't necessarily "living in the biggest house on the highest hill." That house nearly wore me out, just keeping it clean. No more big houses for me, I decided.

I almost lost my sense of humor in that house. We moved in and after a few days, Frank had to return to the main Psychiatric Hospital, with which the local clinic was associated, to receive further training. I was able to be left alone except on weekends when he would return home. Before he left that Monday morning, I asked him to start the furnace. It looked as if the weather was going to turn much colder. This house had a coal stoker furnace. I had never had any experience with this type of heat. He did not agree with my weather prediction, hinted that I was a worry-wart, and left for the rest of his training without doing a single thing about the furnace. The temperature started dropping very rapidly. It began to rain; the wind started blowing. I decided that I would have to start the furnace myself. I went to the basement and took a good look at that huge metal monster that was to supply me with heat. With that high IQ of mine, I



knew that the first thing that I must do was start a little fire in the furnace. And to start a little fire, one needed kindling wood. Where was I to get kindling wood? I glanced around the basement and spotted some long pieces of wood on the floor. (I found out later that it was real expensive molding!) I chopped it into small pieces. Now here is where my former Girl Scout training will come in handy, I thought. I remembered that at camp, we had built a sort of tiny teepee with the wood, placed papers in it, struck a match, and you had a nice little fire. This I did—but no fire! I tried and tried, but could not get the thing going.

Here I was in a strange town—did not know a soul—cold weather was coming, and we had to have some heat. I hated Frank at that moment! Why did he leave me in such a situation! I went upstairs, looked out of the window to see if I could spot some kind of help. I noticed a teenage boy walking by, and I told him my problem. He offered to come in and start the fire for me. Within minutes, he had my little teepee of expensive molding flaming away. Flaming away? I thought he was going to burn the house down! Black smoke began to pour out of the chimney. However, as most things do, my fire soon settled down.

My next step, I decided, was to drain the air out of the baseboard hot water heat. The former owner had explained

that this had to be done before the heating system would work properly. I really hadn't listened very carefully at the time, as I thought Frank would be the one to get things lined up for winter. I vaguely remembered the man's instructions—too vaguely. (I found out later that all you had to do was lift up a little metal door in the long baseboard, take a screwdriver, and give a little twist to a screw.) But, remember? I had not listened too carefully. I completely removed every single baseboard in the house. This was a matter of about five hours work as each one of them was about fifteen feet long and weighed about a thousand tons! High IQ? Books, maybe yes. Common sense, at times, a definite NO.

Then I realized that it was raining into the bedroom through one of the windows. It was the type that opened by a crank. I attempted to close it, but it wouldn't cooperate. By this time, having spent all day long "getting our heating system in operation" I was completely exhausted, tense, angry—you name it, I felt it. I think I came as near cracking up as I ever hope to come. I sat down for a minute, (in the bathroom with the door closed—so the kids couldn't see the state their mother was in) and offered a prayer to that God that had helped me through so many other minor and major problems in my life. I actually prayed—sitting there on the toilet, with lid down, of course—that God would show me how to close that window! Yes—I was in such a state of mind that I sat there waiting for an "answer". But it didn't come. And this next feeling I am really ashamed to tell. I got mad with God! "You promised you wouldn't put more on one person than he can take! Well, I can't take anymore!" If someone had been nearby, they would have had me committed to the nearest mental hospital. Thank heavens, I was alone. I sat there feeling so very sorry for myself—but suddenly, I thought, "What the heck. The stupid window can just stay open! Let it rain in. Who cares?" I marched out of the room, slammed the door, calmed myself down, replaced all of those baseboards, cooked a good meal, and sat back to enjoy MY heat. I learned more that one day about our heating system than Frank did the whole time we lived there.

Although I thoroughly enjoyed living in this coal mining section of Virginia, making many wonderful friends while there, life could get to be a little boring at times. Shopping was rather limited and most of the entertainment consisted of bridge luncheons. Once a month, Frank had to travel to another small town, along with the Clinic's psychiatrist and social worker. Here they conducted their mental health clinic for those who could not travel to the main one. We three wives had heard them rave about this lovely motel, located high on a mountain top—gorgeous view, wonderful food, and a good golf course in the town. They finally consented to let us tag along on one of their trips. We three women were as excited as if we

were going abroad! The big day came. We were looking forward to a perfect weekend. First we would shop. How wonderful it would be to be able to shop in some really nice stores. Then we would play golf, come back to the motel for a swim in the pool, and then eat some of the delicious food we had been hearing about. After unpacking at the motel, we left our husbands to their work and took off for our shopping spree. You will never know what long faces we had when we saw that the local shopping was worse than what we had at home. But at least we had the golfing ahead of us. We returned to the motel, changed clothes, and headed for the golf course. Guess what? We never could find it! Oh well, at least we had that delicious food to look forward to. Our grand weekend had been a complete failure so far. We again returned to the motel, but kept our golfing shorts on as we planned to play some “putt-putt” golf after eating. The motel manager had stressed that everything was informal, and that shorts were suitable for dining there in the evening. Our husbands returned from their work, and we went down to the dining room. There was a tremendous line waiting, and after standing about for over an hour, one of the men suggested that we eat at a local VFW club—he had heard that they served good steaks. Everyone hopped into the car, and we made the winding trip down the mountain. By this time, it was 9 p.m. We had last eaten at 11 a.m. Frankly, I was about to starve, and not in the best moods over the way the whole day had gone so far. We walked into the club, sat down ready to order, when a man came up to us and said, “I am afraid I will have to ask you folks to leave, Ladies are not allowed in here in shorts.” That was the last straw! I had never in my life been asked to leave someplace. Out I flounced, nose held high in the air—dignity very hurt. In fact, it was humiliating.

We returned to the motel. It was now about 10 p.m. The dining room had cleared out some, and we were finally seated at a table. Frank had mentioned that the frog legs were good and I ordered these. We waited, and waited, and waited. Finally our food arrived. Frog legs cold and greasy; salad wilted and greasy; rolls and coffee cold! What a day! But being an optimistic person I thought, “At least tomorrow morning we can enjoy the swimming pool before we leave for home.” The next morning I opened the draperies to glance down at the pool. There was a gale wind blowing; rain was pouring down. Naturally—no swimming. Such was our “Great Weekend,” and such is life sometimes.

Chapter 9: If I Wasn't Well-Adjusted, I Couldn't Have Put Up with Him

After three years passed, Frank again decided he wanted to return to teaching (with a little push from me! I wanted to move out of the coal mining area). We moved to another town in Virginia, located just a few miles from the place he was born and very close to our mountain cabin. He accepted a job at a state college, again teaching psychology. We have been here about ten years now, during these years I found I had become a fairly well-adjusted person. I had to be, or I would not have been able to accept the many unusual hobbies my husband suddenly developed an interest in. Actually, these hobbies prompted me to write this book. I would repeat Frank's latest “interest,” how he would get me involved in it, to my fellow bridge club members, or to a friend over a cup of coffee. Their answer would be, “You ought to write a book!” Frank could not see anything particularly unusual about some of the things that happened at our house. But I knew better! I knew other housewives had not had the same experiences I had. Their lives seemed almost dull in comparison.

I think it all started with the buffalo. It seems that three psychology professors were sitting around “chewing the fat” one day, when one of them suggested that they order some buffalo meat from a game preserve out west. They placed their order. Later they planned a deer hunting trip, and as they left, one of the wives was informed by her husband that the buffalo might arrive during their absence and for her to take care of it. The three great hunters left, loaded down with camping and hunting equipment—one of them even had some homemade beef jerky! It was so hard that when he tried to eat it, he broke off his front tooth.

The next morning the phone rang in the home of one of the wives. It was the freight department at the local train station, announcing that a buffalo had arrived, and would she please hurry down to pick it up. Innocently, she piled her three kids into the station wagon, and drove to the station. A huge burlap bag was hurled into the back of her car, and she drove off. Suddenly a horrible odor arose from the bag. Rotten buffalo? She returned to the station and informed the man that she wished to return the

merchandise! It was spoiled! It turned out that the sender had not bothered to refrigerate it, and the train had been turned off on a railroad siding, staying there for several days.

The freight man said, "Sorry lady. You may file a claim for damaged goods, but we cannot take it back."

"But what am I to do with this huge smelly thing?" she asked.

"Dig a hole and bury it, I guess."

She drove home, trying to think of some solution to the messy problem in the back of her car. Her husband would be out of town for several days. She was new in town, I was new, and the third wife also. None of us knew of anyone we could call on for help. She called the police station for advice. Their answer was "Dig a hole and bury it." She called the sanitation department. Same answer. How could she dig a hole that big? It would be the size of a small grave! Then she remembered meeting one faculty member—who had a nice smile—and who might possibly remember meeting her. She called him, and he did remove the rotten buffalo from her car, placing it in the back yard. This created another minor problem. Every dog for miles around must have smelled that rotten meat. Her yard was soon filled with dogs. She was even afraid to let her children go out and play. Wonder how she felt about her husband and mine at this point?

When the hunters returned from their great expedition, they were informed of the buffalo arrival. Ah! But they had a ready solution. It seems that one of their students, a woman who lived in the country, had mentioned that a bear was after her chickens. Knowing that these teachers like to hunt, she asked if they were interested in killing the bear. Oh yes! They'd love to. But did they go out and hunt it the way most men would have done? No—they did it like psychologists would do it. They decided to hang the buffalo by a rope from a tree branch near where the bear had last been seen, and each day lower it just a little, gradually getting the bear to come to this spot, in anticipation of being able to reach the meat. However, this is one psychological test that failed! The bear wouldn't cooperate, and to this day, I assume that buffalo carcass is still hanging from that branch.

Frank next decided to raise Egyptian Quail. This involved purchasing an incubator and a brooder. How many housewives have incubators and brooders in their basement? Can you even vaguely imagine the noise of fifty or more little feathered creatures chirping at you whenever you go to the basement to do your laundry? Or can you imagine the odor that hits you when a certain someone has been lazy about keeping those little metal "bird houses" clean? I was patient, understanding, tolerant, a perfect angel of a wife throughout the whole thing (but behind his back, I'd gripe like the very devil!)

The quail did not end up being the tasty morsels he had hoped for, so he then turned to curing his own hams. Armed with a government booklet on curing hams, with me as an unwilling assistant, he placed two slippery pieces of pork on the kitchen counter. After using up all of MY sugar and salt and heaven only know knows what else, we wrapped them like Christmas packages and they were hung—guess where? Back in the basement where I do the laundry. Every time I bumped my head on them, I'd wonder how I ever ended up in a situation like this. But now I must say that they turned out absolutely delicious and I will gladly bump my head every day if he'll get around to curing another one! His interest turned away from the hams to wine making. For years now, I have had a jug of some kind of wine, brewing away on my kitchen counter—in the way of everything. During one of the wine-making sprees, he decided to make cognac. He presented a bottle of this to one of his fellow psychologists—another little old wine maker—as a very special birthday present. Many months later, we decided to celebrate some special occasion ourselves and opened a bottle of our homemade cognac. Frank got out the wine glasses, and proceeded to pour the liquid into the glass. Liquid? It wouldn't pour! It "clunked" out. Huge globs of it. Our very special cognac had jellied! And all these months, the other psychologist had remained quiet—too quiet, now that we looked back on it. Never one to be defeated, Frank ended up by eating it on vanilla ice cream!

Bee hives and honey became Frank's next interest. Fortunately, he decided to keep the hive at the cabin, and not in our backyard. I don't mind bumping my head on hams but I didn't relish the idea of getting stung every time I went in the backyard. He read books on bees, bought all of the necessary equipment—such as a funny looking hat with a heavy veil to protect his face and long gloves to protect his hands, (while I still wore last year's hat to church and the year before that's old gloves!) My job was to tie all of the strings, tuck everything in real good so the bees couldn't get inside his shirt. For many

years now, we have enjoyed having all of the honey we can use. As I had taken up art about this time, painting pictures for all of the relatives for Christmas presents (I check each time I visit to see which ones still have my paintings on their walls!) and occasionally we gave away jars of honey or bottles of wine, we decided to have special labels made for our “homemade” products. If anyone wants some second hand labels, I have about three hundred left! We only needed about a dozen but the printer would not print less than three hundred and twenty five. This is what the label looked like:

SCOTT’S CREATIVE ENTERPRISES

Outlets Located at

Childress, Cripple Creek, and Radford, Va.

This gift has been especially selected for you, after a careful analysis was made of your personality, using the most advanced scientific techniques, including tea leaves, phrenology, and voodoo. If you do not find this gift pleasing, it is because you have misrepresented yourself to your psychologist.

FRANK AND JEAN SCOTT, Proprietors

One of my sisters actually thought that we had gone into some kind of roadside business!

Next came the pheasants. One day the mailman delivered a huge box containing one hundred baby pheasants. The look on his face matched the look on mine—amazement and bewilderment. I accepted the box as if it was an everyday occurrence and, without even giving it a second thought, headed for my laundry area and the brooders and incubators and stuff like that! These birds earned their keep, however. We can now brag that we are the only people in our area known to entertain twenty five people at a pheasant cookout! And if hats will only come back in style, I plan to deck myself out with some lovely green, black, red, and white feathers,

To be fair to Frank, even though with each new hobby, I would inwardly scoff at his silly ideas, I must honestly admit that I enjoyed eating the pheasant, the ham and honey were delicious, and the wine compares with any you can buy! I have almost reached the stage that when he comes up with another new idea, I am the first to encourage him.

One little experiment occurred that I certainly will not encourage. We had purchased a new freezer. Frank decided that we should learn to cut up our own meat, he is a “do-it-yourself” man. I will never forget the day he drove up, heaved a side of beef out of the car, slung it on the kitchen counter, blood dripping everywhere, and said, “You’ve had a course in anatomy. Help me cut this up.”

“But that was human anatomy! I don’t know anything about COWS!”

Undaunted by my statement, he got out a saw—one used for sawing wood, not meat—placed an encyclopedia that contained a picture of how beef should be cut up on the counter and started sawing away. For months after that, I had to boil each cut of beef. I didn’t know which were tender cuts or tough cuts. In fact, I’ve never seen “cuts” of meat like the kind we ended up with! Every time I’d take a bite, I would have to spit out slivers of bone. After this, all of our meat was cut up and properly wrapped by a REAL butcher.

Chapter 10: The Beginning of the Empty Nest and a Career for Me

After some twenty years of being a housewife with three children, I suddenly felt the urge to return to nursing. A local doctor needed someone in his office on a part time basis, and even though it had been a long time since I had used any of my nurses’ training, he hired me for the job. It was exciting to get back into the medical field and to have something to talk about other than the latest recipe or the accomplishments of your husband and children. But one morning at work was a little too exciting. One of the practical nurses working in the office, asked me to check her blood pressure. We were the only ones there, as it was too early for office hours. I had not taken a blood pressure for many years, but assumed this routine was not something you could forget. I took her blood pressure, and, when finished, I turned

the small screw that releases the air from the blood pressure cuff. Nothing happened. I fiddled with it for several minutes, trying to figure out what I was doing wrong. This particular apparatus was unlike the ones I had been used to before. Things do change in twenty years! The woman's arm was beginning to turn blue—as the cuff was acting like a tight tourniquet. She began to panic—I began to panic. “I'll have to cut the cuff off.”

“No!” she cried, “we can't ruin the doctor's equipment!”

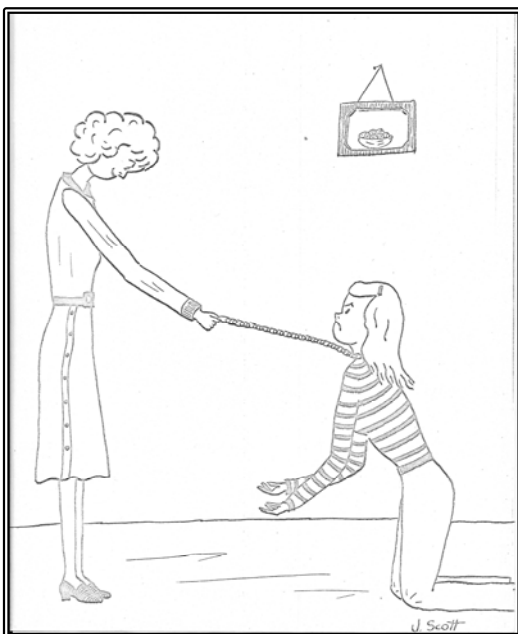
“Well, shall we ruin his equipment or let you lose your arm?” I picked up the scissors and cut right through the cuff.

We dreaded to report to the doctor what we had done, but bravely (?) I told my story. He was most understanding—but later told me he had more fun repeating the story of the registered nurse cutting his blood pressure cuff when all she would have had to do was detach the rubber tubing!

Even though I started out my part time career with a blunder, I remained at this job for several years. It was during this time that I had to learn to face one of the hardest stages in a woman's life—sending that first child away from home—the beginning of an empty nest. It was time for Linda to enter college. I placed her picture on a shelf near the kitchen sink. This is where I found I spent most of my time! But each time I looked at her picture, those first few weeks, the tears would come. Never again would she be all mine. She had taken that first step out of the nest, and would eventually fly all of the way out—that is, if we had been successful parents she would want to, and also be ready to be completely on her own. Luckily we had planned a trip to her college town to attend a convention. I eagerly awaited this visit, and the chance to see how she was getting along in college. The DAY finally came, and the first thing I did on arrival at the motel was to phone her and invite her to go shopping with me. We (or rather I) enjoyed this for about an hour, and then she informed me that she had a lot of studying to do and really should go back to her room. This left me at the motel alone. Frank was attending meetings. I sat around twiddling my thumbs for awhile, took a short nap and then decided I would walk the twelve blocks to her dormitory—thinking it would be nice to sit around in her room, meeting some of her new friends. When I finally arrived there, huffing and puffing, her roommate told me that Linda had gone downtown with some of the girls to shop! Hurt? You bet your life I was! But a word of wisdom to you mothers of future college students: even though they love you very, very much, those first days of college life are so exciting, being with new friends can easily seem more interesting than being with your parents. Looking back on how much I had wanted the fun of dormitory life myself, I should have had sense enough to realize that my own daughter could feel the same way.

Near the end of her freshman year, we received a phone call from her, asking our permission to go on a Fraternity Beach Party over the week-end. Remembering fraternity beach parties of the 1940's (do any

of you remember a drink called ‘Purple Jesus’—grape juice and gin?) and I was sure they were even worse in the late 1960's, we informed her that she was too young to go. She pleaded, but we stood firm. Several days later, we received the most unusual letter from her. It was a lecture—written in a very mature and sensible way—reminding us that sooner or later we would have to cut the apron strings. In many ways, perhaps we had been too strict and she pointed this out to us. (She wasn't a psychologist's daughter for nothing! Through the years she must have picked up a few pointers.) We could even agree on some of her ideas and actually we needed to have had these things brought to our attention. But the thing that caught my eye was a picture she had sketched. It showed a mother, standing and holding a chain. The chain was attached to a young girl, who was kneeling. No words were written on the paper—just the picture. Since we had decided to try to “loosen the apron strings” just a but, I took a pair of scissors and cut a piece of chain out, and mailed the picture back to her—without any words of explanation. We soon received a phone call



from her—a tearful apprehensive call asking what we had meant by cutting that hole in the chain?

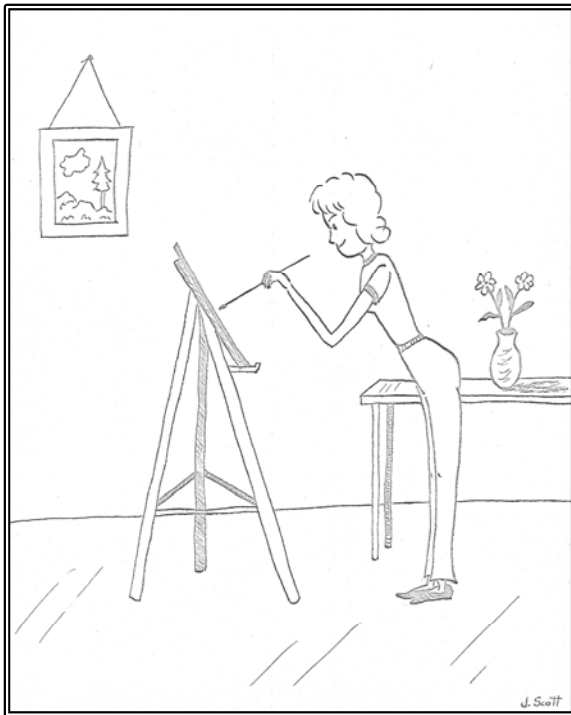
“Honey,” I explained, “That was just a way of trying to show you that we will bit by bit cut that chain, until you are completely on your own. But this won’t happen until we feel you are CAPABLE of ‘going it alone’.”

Some years later, our youngest daughter started going through the stages of wanting more freedom. During one discussion over whether she should be allowed to do something or not, she suddenly left the room, and returned with a piece of paper that looked as if it had been folded and unfolded many times. She handed it to me. It was Linda’s old picture of the mother and daughter.

“Here!” she said. “Linda told me that I might need this sometime. And I think now is that time!”

It is interesting to note that this first daughter, who had to remind her parents that the apron strings had to be cut sooner or later, went on to become a psychologist herself. I’m hanging onto that picture though. When SHE becomes a mother, and I am a dottering old lady watching her raise her own teenagers, I might feel she needs to take a look at her picture—but from the other side of the fence!

Along about this time, came the years of the horses. My husband, whom I have long suspected was born one hundred years too LATE, decided to satisfy his cowboy instinct by purchasing two horses. None of us had ever ridden before! Having always held the theory that a wife should TRY to take an interest in



her husband’s hobbies, I went along for horse-back riding lessons. Frank and Betsy, our youngest daughter, took to the saddle as if they were born in it. I ended up being the kind of rider that would be saying “Giddy-up” but at the same time be pulling back on the reigns as hard as I could. Scared to death the dern horse really would “giddy-up.” For six months I went along with the riding bit, but one day a new readers digest magazine arrived in the mail, containing an article entitled “How To Be Happily Married, But Incompatible.” It stated that it was not absolutely necessary for husbands and wives to do everything together—that it was healthy to have different interests. I wanted to be “healthy”—this was all I needed to hear to give up horse-back riding! They went their way with the horses, and I took up art and everyone ended up happier in the long run.

This happiness didn’t last too long though. I began to have various symptoms that made me think “that time of life” was creeping on me. I went to the doctors office where I had formerly worked, to look up an article on menopause. As I sat there reading it, the secretary suggested that perhaps I should have a test done to see if I was pregnant. “Me? Pregnant at my age? Don’t be silly.” She insisted and so a test was sent to the lab. I sat there reading the article, when the phone rang. She picked up the phone, said “Positive? Are you sure?” I walked out of that office, cried all of the way home, telling God that I simply couldn’t go through with it! I was too old! I had adjusted to a heck of a lot of things, but this? I couldn’t do it! Frank was getting ready to leave for a three day meeting. His first thought when I informed him of the news was that he would be seventy when “it” finished college! But for once in my life, I was extremely glad I was married to a psychologist. In about an half hour’s time, he had managed to come up with a few good points in favor of having a child at our age. This carried me through the weekend. I even told the cat he’d have to seek a new home! Weeks passed and I even found myself getting excited about having a small baby to hold once more. But this was not to be. I lost the baby, and then had to readjust to that. Most things happen for the best—in the long run—and life goes on.

It was now time to send my second child out of the nest. Frank Jr. entered college. Suddenly, time seemed to hang on my hands. I was not working in the doctor’s office at that time. I didn’t have enough to keep me busy. I would find myself feeling a little blue, more often than I thought good for me. For no

reason what-so-ever tears would come. I would give myself little lectures, but this really didn't seem to be the answer. I honestly think my psychologist husband didn't know how to handle this latest stage in my life. If he gave me TOO much sympathy, he thought I was the type that would "wallow in it." Therefore, he gave me none! However, my psychologist daughter, who was home for a visit, had a little feminine insight and knew her mother pretty well.

"Don't worry about Mother," she said to him. "She has a lot of fighting spirit in her, and she will end up doing something about herself. But Daddy, you should stop treating her like a patient and treat her like your wife. A little sympathy won't hurt her!"

Instead of sitting around brooding, I decided I had to develop a new interest. Pondering in what direction I should go, I decided that returning to nursing full time—directing my mind onto other people, maybe helping other people—was what I needed. I accepted a full time job as a psychiatric nurse in a private psychiatric hospital in my town. Little did the patients know that their smiling cheerful nurse was working as therapy for herself!

For those of you in your mid-forties who have been out of the working world for many years, it takes pure guts to go back to work! I had forgotten more than I ever knew. Everything was so strange to me. Medicines and procedures had changed. I had even forgotten a lot of medical terminology. Each day as I would leave for work, I would find myself almost unable to breathe, I was so nervous.

The first few days were such a strain, it is a wonder I didn't develop high blood pressure! I was assigned to a section of the hospital that housed the more seriously ill patients. My only memories of seriously ill psychiatric patients were those I had known at Duke, back in the 1940's. At that time, the drugs that are now available for treating nervous disorders were unknown. Patients then could be quite violent and sometime dangerous.

I found myself staying in the nurses' chart room as much as possible, making excuses to myself about going out on the lounge with the patients. After more or less hiding for two days, I gave myself a good talking to. "If you are going to be a psychiatric nurse, get yourself out there and get to work!" This I did—and much to my surprise, learned that with the newer medicine, patients were not all like they used to be so many years ago.



The hospital personnel were wonderful about helping me get through my first months there. I could not have done it without them. I began to thoroughly enjoy this type of nursing. In fact, I have enjoyed it more than any I have ever done before. People would ask me if this type of nursing was depressing. It had just the opposite effect on me. It has been one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. When you see a patient admitted, feeling very depressed or troubled, and after weeks of treatment is discharged as a happier, more well-adjusted person, a very wonderful feeling goes through you, as you feel you might have played a small part in their lives. The feeling is very similar to the way I felt long years ago, when I gave the candy to the lonely patients at Christmas.

This brings us up to the present time. I am still working as a psychiatric nurse—but on a part-time basis, with plans to return full time when my last child leaves home—and still enjoying every minute of it! I hope that the next part of life will be as happy and interesting as the first part has been. I

hope that I can maintain a sense of humor; a love of people; a good outlook on life; and with God's help, face the ups and downs that life will surely bring to me.

I cannot complete this book without mentioning the tremendous influence my own mother had on my life. Perhaps it was my Father's "sayings" that brought me through the rough spots. But in the background, there was always my mother—helping me in thousands of ways—and being a living model of the woman I would like to become.

If this first attempt at writing never reaches the public eye, at least my children will enjoy learning how their mother grew from a spoiled, self-centered young lady to become—dare I say it? A “Well-Adjusted (QUESTION MARK) middle-aged woman.

