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Belles Lettres, Autumn 1952

Eastern Kentucky University, The Canterbury Club

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TOWNSEND ROOM

Belles Lettres

*Eastern Kentucky
State College*

Autumn
1952

Belles Lettres

An annual anthology of student writing sponsored and published by the
Canterbury Club of Eastern Kentucky State College
at Richmond, Kentucky.

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VOLUME EIGHTEEN

Number 1

NINETEEN FIFTY-TWO

Contents

SERVE	H. Edward Richardson	3
REQUIESCAT.....	Shirley Spires	4
THE VOLUNTEER.....	Robert N. Griese	4
RESIGNATION.....	Shirley Spires	4
RADIOOPERATOR	Joe Kelly Smith	5
MAMA AND THE KITTENS.....	George Varden	6
DEFLATION OF AN EGO.....	Shirley Spires	7
THE RAIN	Robert N. Griese	8
AUNT JENSIE'S BATHTUB.....	Robert N. Griese	9
THE DEATH OF A SCHOOL.....	Wanda Smyth	11
ACT II—SAME SCENE.....	Vic. Venettozzi	12

FOREWORD

In the hope of promoting literary efforts and encouraging worthwhile reading, we, the Editors of BELLES LETTRES, take pride in presenting this, our eighteenth volume, which will be in two issues.

SERVE

H. Edward Richardson

**Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical
shuttle . . .
A reminiscence sing.**

—Walt Whitman

One time, in late autumn, Jeffrey passed the place of the tennis courts and looked at them in the splendid sun. The one to the south was lower; together they looked like two slight steps built for a spoiled giantess. Behind the courts stood the aged brick solemnity of Requiem Hall, where Jeffrey paused, with Requiem Hall to his left and slightly in front, and looked at a downward angle toward the tennis courts to the south. The splendid sun, commingled with his own loneliness and the recurring human desire to dream over the old faces and places in an ancientness, urged the constantly pealing drums of infinite time, mounting, militantly sonorous, until they concussed away the muddled days of a decade.

He recalled them then: the young men and girls there before the war, standing flocculent about the courts with an undaunted insouciance and self-assurance that young people glow in for a while before laying aside; how they would stand up on the smooth-worn bank above the upper court, making minute dust clouds with the scuffing of their sneakers, not conscious of their movement, facing the hot west sun in late spring and summer and fall; the casualness of their comfort—the girls lounging in lazy lure on the grassy spots of the bank, absorbing their bit of sun—a boy leaning on a racket, another foot-writing in the dust, another standing with his weight on one leg and the other leg bent in an attitude of rest; and those bouncing the white, car-stripped balls on the taut, vari-colored checks of catgut.

It was a carefree spot in Philosophy Hall, where those young seemed set off in a princely atmosphere of their own, without any knowledge of the great burden which was to be borne down so destructively upon them. Sweating, bronzed, lithe, they leaped over the lined courts absorbed in games now forgotten. One could lie in warm lassitude in the shade on the south side of the lower court, and doze from the soporific monotony of tennis shoes over the asphalt. Occasionally, a bright car would circle the seldom-traveled back drive, which formed a surcingle about the southern and eastern portions of the campus and came out in a westerly direction by the lower court; sometimes the car would be a convertible, filled with students evincing an anchorless freedom, laughing, waving, shouting, their hair wildly wind-whipped.

Across the macadam width of Richmond Avenue, rose in immaculate neatness the sharp-sloping blue roof of the Kingsley Service Station. Behind the gas tanks, by the square glass of show window, was a dark red water fountain, shaded by the short eave of the building which faced the courts across the street. Between sets, the youths would rush for the fountain, sweating and thirsty, in a healthy, momentary exhaustion; if they did not run, they would walk nimbly across the street in icon outline on the black asphalt, their white sports clothes standing out brilliantly in the sun; sometimes there would be anxiety in their talk and movement, an unworried anxiety, all greatly restrained—perhaps more of promise than anxiety, but at length powerful, and longing for expression.

Sometimes they would wait quietly after reaching the fountain, and each would drink slowly, letting the lines in his face relax as the cool kiss of liquifaction parted his lips and floated with steady pressure down his throat. Some, after drinking, would exhale and breathe heavily, straightening up after spinning a half-circle with their bodies away from the fountain, letting the next take his turn. Some would shower their faces, and the sun would then illumine the admixture of water and sweat drops. They would race, or walk effortlessly back across Richmond Avenue, bouncing or skipping as they came closer to the courts.

But, of course, this picture could not be real, Jeffrey thought suddenly,

standing in the late autumn day, watching the sun reflecting brightly from the silver-fenced back-guards. The imagination plays tricks, and when we dream or remember, we glorify.

But he knew some of the faces had been real ten years ago, and that they were gone now. He stood, gazing at the whole place intently. Across the street some strange garagemen were working clamorously on a car. From the west, it being late, the sun lowered and glimmered a little. A cool wind swept in, running its fingerless and invisible hand across the courts, brushing away nothing, for the courts were empty and very clean.

REQUIESCAT

Shirley Spire

Come to my funeral; gather round;
Celebrate sticking me in the ground;
Gape at me—murmur something profound
With sugary breath.

Sing at my funeral, if you must;
Sing as they cover me with the dust;
Sing of my life, my love or lust
But not of my death.

Send me some flowers when I'm dead;
(Or buy you a fifth of Scotch instead)
Flowers of purple, orange or red,
But please don't send white.

And after I'm at last reposed,
I'd rather not have myself exposed;
See that they keep the casket closed
To spare them the sight.

THE VOLUNTEER

Robert N. Grise

The Lord upon the clouds did write;
He wrote for all to see:
"Who will love and serve," He wrote,
"And give his life for me?"

Those words He wrote upon the clouds
Did glory to the sky impart,
And while some men passed them by,
They weighed upon my heart.

And then with firm conviction
I raised my voice to say,
"I will serve and give my life
In love for Thee this day."

RESIGNATION

Shirley Spire

Some men go for low-necked dresses,
Painted lips and platinum tresses.
Some men go for violet eyes—
Slinky shapes without disguise.
And as I none of these possess,
I'll never have some men, I guess.

RADIOOPERATOR

Joe Kelly Smith

The other night at 8:30, just as I started to turn on the big ball game, my wife came in the living room, where we (her father, our two children, me and Bill, and I) were sitting around the radio, and announced, "Oh, I'm glad you have all heard the programs you wanted to hear. It's just time for the Baptist Hour and Brother Brown is going to speak.

"But, Mom," protested Jane, "the program our home ec teacher told us to listen to comes on at 8:30. They are going to give directions on how to make an angel food cake. I just have to hear it."

"Not on your life!" chimed in Bill. "The best murder mystery on the radio starts at half past eight. I haven't missed it for eleven weeks, and I don't intend to start now."

"And just when I wanted to hear the 8:30 news!" broke in Grandpa.

Here I had thought I could listen to the ball game in peace. I tried to think of how we could strike up a compromise. There was only one radio in the house. Finally a brilliant idea struck me. It was a push-button radio.

"We'll all get what we want," I said as I pulled my chair up closer so that I could push the buttons. "I know no one wants to give in so we'll just share some of each of the programs."

That didn't exactly seem to suit, but finally everyone agreed. Here is what we heard:

"The lineups for tonight's game: For the Dodgers; Reese, shortstop; Robinson, second base; and catching tonight is . . . General MacArthur who last week . . . held up the First National Bank, the Ace Loan Company, and . . . tried Our Best Flour in only two cakes and here's what she has to say . . . Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every . . . ball to center field . . . and then all a pinch of salt . . . President Truman reported to Congress today that . . . The wages of sin is death but . . . he reportedly used a blow torch on the safe after trying to work the combination. All the work was in vain, though, because all he got was . . . an appointment as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. His only comment on accepting the appointment was . . . That Roberts sure is pitching a dandy game tonight. There is a good crowd here, too. Looking around awhile ago I saw . . . Simon Peter, who also bringeth his brother . . . All right, Pete, get out of here. Something tells me that . . . if you want a lemon icing on it you should . . . bounce to the pitcher . . . Truman also announced that his daughter Margaret was going to sing at . . . the state penitentiary for twenty years after which . . . two men looked out from behind prison bars. One saw mud; the other saw . . . Hank Thompson hit a home run over . . . the eggs . . . who were racing down Main Street trying to catch . . . the president's yacht which . . . staggered up to a patrolman and blurted out . . . the other scores are Pittsburgh 4, Cincinnati 2; St. Louis 1, Chicago 0 . . . Pour the batter into a shallow pan and bake until . . . the Lord shall come again . . . Here is some late news from Korea . . . the Reds scored two runs in the seventh and one in the eighth and now lead the Pirates, 5 to 4. Home runs were hit by . . . Senator Taft, who, in an address at Cleveland, Ohio, today said . . . Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? . . . It's because I love you. Now you stay here while I go to . . . Brooklyn in the first of the eighth . . . And if you want further proof that crime does not pay, let me cite you the case of Bob Ford who . . . was out trying to steal second base . . . Be sure not to slam the oven door because if you do your cake might look like . . . the Dean of Men at Columbia University who today reported to the committee that . . . Umpire Dascoli just sent Leo Durocher to the showers in the game between the Giants and the Braves for arguing about . . . whether or not to use Our Best Flour . . . At this point I happened to look up and saw from the expressions on the faces of the listeners that no one seemed to be getting much out of his favorite program, so I turned the radio off.

MAMA AND THE KITTENS

George Varden

We didn't know about the kittens until after Mama's funeral. Mama had always said that she wanted her ashes thrown into the Gulf Stream off the Florida Keys. It had been there that she had met Papa, and she said it was the real beginning of her life and she wanted it to be her final resting place. Mama had gone to the Keys with Aunt Nora in August, 1913, two months after Uncle Chester died. Aunt Nora realized that her husband's legacy would not last too long, but she did not want to remarry without Uncle Chester's permission. She had heard of an outstanding medium called Felixo who was practicing at Key West at that time; so, with the money Uncle Chester had left her, Aunt Nora went to Florida to consult her late husband on the advisability of taking another husband, and she took Mama, who was barely twenty-one, to lend her moral support.

As soon as their train pulled into Key West, Aunt Nora arranged a seance for the next afternoon with Felixo. When they were received into the medium's house, they were surprised by his appearance. Mama had told me she expected to see a wizened old man, but Felixo was young and respectable-looking like a preacher just out of divinity school. He led Mama and Aunt Nora into his study and had them form a sort of a circle with him. Then he completely darkened the room and asked them to join him in the singing of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" to give more power to whatever spirits might be near. He slipped into a light trance to summon up Uncle Chester, and Felixo had Uncle Chester's shade almost completely materialized when Aunt Nora's loud sobs brought him out of the trance. Aunt Nora had reached over to comment to Mama on how lifelike Uncle Chester looked, and Mama had not replied but lay limply in her chair and breathed heavily. Felixo was not alarmed but he was deeply impressed by Mama's natural trance. He brought Mama out of it slowly and saw her and Aunt Nora to their hotel. Before two weeks had passed Mama and Felixo were married.

Mama and Papa lived in Key West for about five years. A local committee for civic righteousness and a coalition of church leaders demanded that they either stop their hymn singing in seances or leave town. Since Papa couldn't raise the power he needed without his hymns, he and Mama came here to live with her relatives. Mama made Papa give up his practice because she didn't want him to get into any more trouble with the authorities. So Papa dropped his business name which he had taken because his own name Gregory did not lend the proper atmosphere for a medium and took up farming. Here we lived until Mama died.

Mama had been sick for a long time, and we were somewhat prepared for her death. Nevertheless, the next two days were hectic. I telegraphed Aunt Nora to come up for the services, and I told her we would stay with her a few days. I arranged for Mama's cremation. Papa didn't like the idea too well, but since it had been Mama's wish, he complied with it as well as he could. I hired old Mrs. Elmand to take care of the house while we were gone and to be our housekeeper when we got back.

Aunt Nora came up for the funeral, and she and Papa and I took Mama's ashes to the Keys and strewed them onto the Gulf Stream. We stopped over and visited Aunt Nora and her husband for a few days so that Papa could regain some of his old strength. Coming back on the train, Papa told me again how he had met Mama and of her last words. Mama had been sick with cancer of the breast and she knew her time was about up. One night, she reached over to Papa, who was sitting up with her, and told him, "Gregory, the grave is not the end; death cannot part us. I'll not leave this life until you do. We'll go to the great beyond together." The next morning Papa woke up in his chair beside the bed to find her dead.

The Friday after we got back, Mrs. Elmand told me about the kittens. Our black cat Cartheuser (Mama always named our cats for famous mediums) had had a litter of kittens in the barn the day Mama died. Papa had told Mrs. Elmand to have them drowned as soon as they were born, but she

had been so taken by one of them that she wouldn't let the hired man kill it. It was creamy white in contrast to Cartheuser and all of her other kittens. I told Mrs. Elmand that it would be all right and for her not to worry Papa about it now.

Two months to the day that Mama had passed away, Papa held a seance in the parlor. Mrs. Elmand, Papa, and I formed the circle and sang "Faith of Our Fathers," "Rock of Ages," and "In the Garden." Papa tried in vain to contact Mama. Things had been going very well and we had just begun to hear a rapping when Mrs. Elmand screamed. I turned on the lights and found that the creamy white kitten had rubbed against her legs. The kitten sidled over to Papa and crawled into his lap and purred itself to sleep. Mama, and Papa especially, had never allowed the cats to come up to the house from the barn, but Papa took a liking to this kitten right away, although he never could think of a name for it. It never left the house again. It'd stay in the kitchen during the day, but after supper and on Sundays it sat on the front porch. At night, it crawled onto the bed where Papa slept. Mrs. Elmand regretted ever having saved the kitten's life. She had to give it food straight from the table. The kitten wouldn't eat table scraps or catch mice. Mrs. Elmand said that Papa had just plain spoiled it.

Papa tried more seances, but they produced no results other than leaving him more tired than before. He finally decided to try slate writing. He put a piece of chalk between two old-fashioned slates and bound them together. He put them on top of the kitchen table and he and I held them down firmly. We heard the scratch of the chalk writing on the slate and felt its vibrations all the way up to our shoulders, but when we opened them, all that was written was a scrawl which I finally made out to be m e o w. I realized then why we hadn't been able to make contact with and materialize Mama. Papa didn't say anything, but I knew that he, too, understood what the spirits were trying to tell us. After that he didn't try to get en rapport with Mama's spirit anymore. He just sat around the house, half in a daze, with the kitten in his lap and a smile on his face.

Then one afternoon I found him sitting alone in his chair. The kitten was nowhere around. I went to wake him so he could take his medicine but he was dead. I called the doctor and the undertaker and they came and took Papa into town. I went out on the back porch to try to find myself, and, in the half light of the day and night, I saw the kitten down by the barn curled up in a ball near Cartheuser.

DEFLATION OF AN EGO

Shirley Spires

Did you think I was to love you
Till my body blends with dust
And my every thought be of you—
What an egotist you must
Be to assume I'd not forget you
For a never-ending while!
Did you preen to think I'd let you
Hold me captive to your smile?
Did you visualize me shattered
By the absence of your Kiss?
For a time, I grant, it mattered;
But the point I make is this—
If you'll pardon my intrusion
In your misdirected mind—
Best you part with the illusion
That the adage "love is blind"
Is a truth with no exception
For my love has learned to see.
As for you—has your perception
Ever chanced to fall on me?

THE RAIN

Robert N. Grise

"It doesn't look like rain," he said
As he lingered at the door.
"Better take your raincoat, anyway,"
She said. "It rained on you before."

"Nonsense," he exclaimed,
"Not a cloud in the sky.
I won't wear my raincoat."
And he slipped out rather sly.

"What a beautiful day," he said
As he tramped along the walk;
"All this about the rain
Is only foolish talk."

Now Mr. Jones he did meet
While on his balmy way;
"Looks like rain," said Mr. Jones;
"Should have worn your coat today."

"Of course not," he replied,
"The sky's as blue as it can be;
I will not wear my raincoat,
And not a drop will fall on me."

He continued on his journey
To the office and his work.
"Carry an old raincoat!" he scoffed.
"Why, they would take him for a jerk!"

He tipped his hat to Mrs. Smith
And smiled at Mrs. Brown;
It was sure to rain, they said,
"Before you get to town."

He quietly held all comment,
But continued on his way.
It seemed "going to rain"
Was all that people had to say.

He was so sure it would not rain
He did not see the sky,
And all those dark black clouds
Did not even catch his eye.

Then, it seemed the clouds could hold no more,
And with a roll of thunder they gave way,
And it really rained an awful flood
On his bright and sunny day.

And now when'er he thinks of it,
His mind is racked with pain.
Oh, if he had only had his raincoat
The day he got caught out in the rain.

AUNT JENSIE'S BATHTUB

Robert N. Grise

Aunt Jensie wanted a bathtub. She said she had always wanted one. No one else on the whole Coon Range had such a thing in their house, but she wanted one anyway. Daddy and the boys just laughed at her, but Mother said that Aunt Jensie was a right deserving woman, and she's worked hard all her life and she ought to have something fancy around the place.

When she first told Uncle Bill, he just laughed out big the way he always does, but when he saw that she was set on having a bathtub, he got sort of mad.

"A bathtub!" he yelled. "Where inarnation did you get such a dern fool notion?"

"City folks has 'em," Aunt Jensie said with determination, "and I reckon I can have one too if I want it."

"Why, you don't need no bathtub," he said as he wiped his mouth with his sleeve. "You don't need no bathtub. Why, you'd have me toting water for you every week. If you got to splash water, go down and set in the creek—that is, if you think you won't scare the hogs."

That didn't set right with Aunt Jensie, and Uncle Bill could see it. He took a deep breath and said, "And what are you going to pay for it with?"

"I've saved four dollars and thirty cents egg money," she shot back at him. "And you're going to sell the calf when it comes."

"Sell my calf!" he yelled. "I'm going to keep my calf till fall. Where do you think we're going to get our winter money?"

"If you'd get out there in that tobacco patch and make a crop, we'd have some money next winter," Aunt Jensie fired right back at him.

He didn't have an answer to that and she knew it. His face got all red and he stomped out and slammed the screen door hard. He started off to the barn to have a look at the cow. He was madder than a wet hen, but he was licked and he knew it. She knew it too; she was going to have that bathtub.

The next day Mother helped Aunt Jensie fix up an order for the tub (Aunt Jensie don't write so good). She was getting it from a big store in Bowling Green. It cost twenty-four dollars and something, and the catalog said they would send it down on the train. Uncle Bill would have to get somebody to go in to Lewisburg after it. Mother said twenty-four dollars was a right nice price for a bathtub, but still, that's a pretty lot in these parts.

There was a picture of the tub in the catalog that Aunt Jensie showed around to everybody. It sure was pretty. It was setting up on four little legs made out like they was lion's paws or something, and there was holes in the front end to stick pipes through, but that was just for city folks, they said. It was all white inside, and at the top the sides were all flared out so you wouldn't hurt yourself getting in and out, and I guess so you could set on the side and wash your feet if you didn't want to get nothing else wet. Aunt Jensie was sending four dollars of egg money for a down payment. She said that she could pay them the rest when the calf came.

About two weeks later Aunt Jensie came over with a letter for Mother to read to her. She don't get letters very often 'cause don't nobody have nothing to write to her about. She was all hepped up about it; said she just knowed it was from the bathtub people. Anyway, it was a big letter with the store name spelled in big fancy writing across the top, and it even had a picture of the store building in one corner. Aunt Jensie 'lowed it was right nice of them to send their picture.

Mother read the letter and it said thank you very much for your order, and, yes, it was all right to pay them off when the calf came, and that the tub would be sent down to Lewisburg on Tuesday's train.

Aunt Jensie was just tickled pink and Mother said she was happy for her and only wished we could afford one too. She knowed Daddy wouldn't never hear of such a thing. Aunt Jensie said Mother could come over just anytime and take a real bath in her tub. I could just see her setting there in that big shiny white thing, soaking herself in a heap of water and soapsuds.

She said she was going to get Ben to bring up a barrel from the store so she could have two rain barrels. That way a fella wouldn't have to carry water clear up from the creek.

Well, sir, Tuesday came around and Uncle Bill got Ben to take him in to Lewisburg in his truck to get the tub. Ben waited for him over at our place, 'cause, you know, there ain't any road up to Uncle Bill's. Mr. John and Lester came along too; said they didn't know how heavy the thing might be; thought they would just come along for the ride, anyway.

Uncle Bill had spent most of the last few days messing around the barn, kinda fixing up and getting ready for the calf. He believed it would be a big strong one, but he didn't talk much about it 'cause he knew he couldn't keep it.

Uncle Bill came down about 7:30. He looked tired and kinda worn out as he walked up to the men in the yard. They stood there talking for a while, and as they walked over to the truck he said, "It'll be the biggest, strongest calf in these parts." But he wasn't smiling; you could tell he wasn't happy.

Mother 'lowed as how Aunt Jensie would be over about the middle of the morning. Sure enough, she came ambling down the path about 10:30. Said she had cleaned up a little around the place, but she was just too nervous and excited to stay around by herself.

By the time dinner was ready, Mrs. Gilliam and Lester's wife, Annie, came over. They said Aunt Bessie and little Beverly and the twins were aiming to come over sometime in the afternoon. After dinner Annie and Aunt Jensie went back up to the barn to see how the cow was. Everybody else helped clean up the dinner dishes and then set around and talked for a spell. Mrs. Gilliam was telling some big tale about city folks or something when we heard Annie yelling to Aunt Bessie and the kids down the road. They all got to the yard about the same time, so everybody else come out and sorta stood around and talked, mostly just waiting for the men folks.

Mrs. Gilliam was the first to hear the truck coming up the hill. "I hear it!" she yelled, sounding all excited. And sure enough, in a minute there came the truck over the hill and down around the bend. It came on up the road slow-like, then swung to the left and started up the driveway. You could make out three in the cab, and there in the back setting a'straddle of a big long box with his arms folded, was Uncle Bill.

When the truck pulled up and stopped, everybody crowded around to get a good look. I bet it looked just like a Saturday night crowd at the tent store at Russellville. Anyway, Uncle Bill said, "Now you-all just stand back and let me off. You-all can see this thing up at the house."

Daddy quit work and came in about this time, and they all helped carry the big box up the path. Mr. John and Daddy were lifting on one side, and Lester and Ben were on the other, and Uncle Bill had a'hold of the back end. Little Beverly and the twins ran on ahead and all the rest of the folks followed behind.

"Billy sure looked like the devil riding a casket," Aunt Bessie said real loud, and they all laughed and hollered at him.

"Well, I felt just like I was in a funeral procession!" Annie laughed.

"Me too," Uncle Bill muttered with his mouth in a hard straight line, but none of the women folks heard him.

They finally got the tub into the house and set down in the kitchen. Lester and Ben worked around and tried to get the top of the box off while Aunt Jensie kept trying to hurry them up. She just about had a spell before they could get that tub out, and I think Annie and Aunt Bessie were just about as worked up as she was. Lester and Ben gave a big yank and there the bathtub was, setting there even prettier than the picture in the catalog. It was just as white and shiny, and, man! it was big enough to hold Sally Francis! Everybody just stood there saying, "Ain't it pretty!"

They set it out in its place on the back porch and Ben fixed up the hole in the bottom so you could pull the little stopper and let the water run out. After everybody had felt of it and looked at it for a spell, Aunt Jensie said,

"Ben, you and Lester fetch me some water; and all you women folks clear out of here. I'm going to try this thing out!"

Uncle Bill stuck his head in the door. "Got our bathtub fixed up yet?" There was a big grin on his face. "I'm aiming to take a bath in it tonight."

Aunt Jessie eyed him cautious like, then asked, "How are things out at the barn?"

"Jest fine, Jensie," he said. "We got twin calves."

THE DEATH OF A SCHOOL

Wanda Smyth

Most of the citizens of the Bend cannot believe that the school is closed this year. The white frame building has withstood too many changes in design, teachers, and generations. For the term of its existence, it was the center of social, educational, and spiritual life for the tiny community, so secluded in the Kentucky foothills. Here have been born the dreams and ambitions of many of its pupils.

This autumn, however, the one-room building is withering even as the leaves of the big oaks that surround it. The paint is peeling, and some of the carefully cut names on the sides and back of the building can no longer be read. Two windows are broken, and all the guards are gone. Such a thing never happened before. In fact, the Bend was always very proud of its rural school.

The younger children cannot remember the "good old days" of which our grandparents speak, because even in our day the school as the social life of the community was slowly dying.

One of the stories which Grandma Smyth tells about is the Sunday school. Everyone—absolutely everyone—went. Mothers hurried through dinner and made sure that each child was washed behind his ears. Then donning their Sunday bonnets, off they went with their families to Sunday school. In those days, people from College Hill rode over on horseback or in their buggies to attend the Bend Sunday School. "Religion was real and very alive in those days," says Mrs. Smyth.

I suppose that Grandma Smyth is the Bend's best qualified citizen to tell about life as it used to be there because she is the community's oldest resident. When she came to the Bend near the turn of the century, it was one of the most flourishing communities in the foothills. At that time the Kentucky River, which surrounds the Bend on three sides, was the most important means of transportation. Therefore a farm on the river was desirable, and people were interested in building lasting homes in the Bend.

The attendance at school in the earlier days was high. It is unbelievable that fifty children could be crowded into the one room. The cistern had not been put in then, and the pupils took turns carrying water from the Beech Spring—so named because it sprang from what seemed to be the very roots of a beech tree—in a big five-gallon bucket. One dipper served all of them.

The school had its own activities then as the larger schools now do. The excitement of marble games and baseball in the spring would parallel that of our tournaments today in the consolidated schools.

Through the years, the annual Christmas play was an event to which everyone looked forward with anticipation. Every student had a part. If he couldn't be in a one-act play, he at least had a short recitation. Carols were sung by everyone after the performance was over. The joy and happiness in the hearts burned as brightly as the candles on the six-foot tree that stood in the front of the room directly under George Washington's picture.

The Christmas cards that the children exchanged were all made by them. Of course, some of the cards did not remind one of Christmas at all—some that are in my scrapbook are truly freaks—but they all came from the heart.

As I look back over the eight years I attended the Bend School, I remember many things. I remember soft autumn days and a playhouse by the

line fence. Even now there are broken pieces of glass, a stub of a broom, and stones that show that we once had a playhouse there.

I remember the first snows and coasting down an icy hill on a home-made sled. There were frosty mornings when we held out numb fingers and toes to a pot-bellied stove, red with heat around its middle. The remote corners of the room would insist on retaining an icy atmosphere, and so it was not unusual to have all of our first classes around the stove.

I find in my memory book, too, pictures of grey, muddy winter days when it was too bad to play outside. Some of us would play on a victrola that had to be cranked the six records that the school owned.

At the Bend School, I lived through my first big love affair and received my first kiss, all in the seventh grade. My name is one of those that are fading from the decaying walls of the building.

I remember dreams, hopes, and fears that I shared with friends at the Bend School. We knew (or thought we knew) exactly what we wanted our future to be. Our vocations were all planned; some had planned even the steps for carrying out their hopes. It doesn't matter that these dreams are forgotten and are now replaced by more practical ones. We had learned the importance of dreaming and making plans—that is what we remember now. By sharing disappointments as well as hopes, we learned, too, the basis for friendship.

I know that there are many advantages to be gained from consolidation. The Bend School is outdated and has been living on borrowed time for many years. The long yellow school bus that carried the few remaining pupils out of the Bend takes them to new and splendid opportunities.

But I wonder if the branches of the trees as they swing back and forth in the north wind do not wipe tears from the windows of the white frame schoolhouse on the hill.

ACT II—SAME SCENE

Vic. Venettozzi

The triple row of ribbons on the marine's tunic was hidden from view by the woman in his arms. Overseas bars and service stripes were visible on his left sleeve. This was goodbye—the goodbye this couple had said once before. They had believed that the goodbye of seven years ago would be the last of this type, but here they were again.

There were no tears, no patriotic speeches and waving flags. The only sounds were those always heard on any bustling station platform. The conductor bellowed his impersonal "All aboard," causing the woman to stiffen momentarily at the sound.

The marine slowly released himself from the woman who had spent the greater part of her marriage waiting for him. He gently brushed her cheek with his hand and then turned and hastily climbed the steps of the passenger coach.

She stood erect and silent while the last minute preparations for departure were being made. The marine appeared at the window nearest to her, and she raised her face towards her husband, her future, the father of the children they had not had time to have.

The strength to carry on which she had felt the first time he left to fight a war across the seas was not with her. The determination at that time had come from a conviction that he was leaving her to do his share for a just cause. Half her heart was being torn from her again and she refused to understand the necessity.

The train began its slow movement out of the station. He waved to her and she half-raised her arm in answer. Dry-eyed, she watched the train until it was out of sight. Once more she would experience those long days and endless nights, the terrible worry, the constant heartache. Worst of all, she would hear within her that nagging, nagging word over and over and over—Why? Why? Why?