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[Reminiscence]

REMINISCENCE

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Bradley - REMINISCENCE

“My childhood was not very different from that of the average child. I was born down in Dublin, Georgia, Laurens County. My father was a Pharmacist there for forty-five years. I was one of seven children - four brothers and two sisters. My mother was one of the most devout Christians I have ever known. Father was a fine man too, but somehow children, as a rule look more to the mother for spiritual guidance. There has never been a happier home than ours was. Large families are happier than small ones I think. We had our squabbles as most children do. Sometimes we were sad then again we were glad. We loved a lot and fussed a lot. We lived comfortably but not luxuriously. Father did not believe in indulging children too much.

“My father and mother were both musical and with only one exception all of the children inherited that talent. Most of us had good voices and we played not only on the piano but other instruments. We had an old organ that had been handed down to my father from generations back. We would gather around at night and sing 2 to mothers accompaniment. When we were old enough to take music lessons a piano was bought.

“I was the youngest girl so my brothers and sisters thought I was the favorite, but I really don't think there was any preference shown.

“Father, in those days did not believe in Public Schools, so along with three or four other families, we went to a private school. This teacher has now retired and lives in Milledgeville, Georgia. Since I went to this private school, I did not have to wait until the required age to enter, so began very early. After several years we entered the public school, and as I was well advanced, I graduated very young.

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"I displayed a decided talent for music, at any rate every one thought so, and I was given every advantage both in piano and voice.

"I was too young, my parents thought, to go away to college so they decided to keep me at home a year.

"Funny how little things can turn your whole life.

"One night I was in bed just recuperating from a cold, the telephone rang and it was the school Superintendent under whom I had graduated. He had been called over long distance by a superintendent of a school, in a neighboring town, asking him to recommend a music teacher. The one they had run away and married.

"Well, to make a long story short I went down there to finish out the term. Never did any one feel so little and helpless as I did, when I started out on my first job. I never will forget my trip down to this place. I went on the train and though it was only a short distance, I had to change trains at a little junction. Well, much to my dismay when I reached this junction my train had left me. There was nothing to do but spend the night. I knew this depot agent's wife, so he carried me to his home for the night. To go back a little I tried to dress myself up to look the part of a dignified teacher. I had a hat with a feather on it, of which I was very proud. That night we went up the street to visit some friends. When we returned there were feathers - feathers all over my room. Much to my chagrin the cat had gotten hold of my cherished hat and torn the feathers completely up. The next morning we got up, found some ribbon and fixed my hat and I went on my way, reaching my destination around eleven o'clock.

"In a small town the teacher forms, to a certain extent, the social life of the community so every one was curious to know how the new music teacher was going to look. I learned this later.

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“As no one met me at the train, I walked up the street to the little hotel, which was only a short distance. On my way I passed two men who scrutinized me rather closely, not rudely, but in an interested sort of a way. They were not old as we term age today but were considerably older than I - nice looking, well dressed. I hurried by but unfortunately I dropped my bag. As I paused to pick it up I heard this remark. ‘You can have her, Drew. I'm not running a kindergarden’. I did not dare look back to see which one made this remark but it wasn't long before I found out. Well, anyway he changed his mind before the year was out. Five years later we were married.

“I did not accept a teachers place the following term for I wanted to go to college. In September I went away to a College and Conservatory of Music out in Mississippi. People wondered why I didn't go to one of our fine Georgia Schools but there were several reasons. One was, I was given a scholarship. Then, too, after the first year I was given a tutors place in the Conservatory and helped pay my own way through school. I went there four years and the last term I was a full fledged teacher. I was young to be on the faculty, but I have always been a hard worker and conscientious, so I think I made good. During that time I was also studying. The third year I was there I took my AB degree and my BM degree, majoring in 5 voice. The fourth year I took a BM degree, majoring in piano.

“Well, I had promised Mr. Bailey I would marry him as soon as I finished college, but when I came home that summer my mother begged me so hard to stay at home with her a year, I did. I felt that I was due her that much. Mr. Bailey didn't like it much but he couldn't do anything about it, so he waited.

“I was elected to teach piano and voice in my home town school, so in that way, I could work and still be with my mother. My fiancée was not very far away in the little town where I had done my first teaching, so I got to see him several times a week. I've never regretted staying with my parents that year. I was really too young to marry anyway.

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“The following June I was married. I won't say that my married life began with the very brightest outlook - that is too broad a statement, but I do know it seemed to me I was the happiest creature on earth. I just wondered if it would last. Well, in one respect it did. It was not unmixed with clouds, adversities and disappointments. We all have those if we live long enough. Our love was the one bright star that was never dimmed. But there, I'm getting ahead of my story.

“Mr. Bailey was a big merchant in a small town. He had only a high school education, but his many years of experience had taught him more, perhaps, than he ever would have learned in books. He was a number of years older than I - loved home and at meal-time and at night he loved to be there.

“People thought we would not be congenial for while I loved my home, I was not quite so settled in my ways. Those things adjusted themselves.

“He did not know one note from the other, nor could he carry a tune, but he learned to love opera and other cultural things as well as I. In other words the longer we lived together, the more congenial we became.

“Our first baby, a girl, was born when we had been married about two and a half years. That same fall we made enough to finish paying for our business. He did not have it entirely paid for when we married.

“Our next goal was a home of our own. We were paying rent then. I was a little inclined to want a car first. Numbers of my young friends had them; but my husband insisted that a home was more important right then. In January just as the World War broke out, we built our home. I see now, it was a mistake to have built the kind of home we did, in such a small place. I could not see what the future held for us. It never occurred to me, but what we would both always be there 7 and times just as prosperous as then.

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“Like most merchants, Mr. Bailey prospered during the war. Afterwards, though, there was a terrible slump in merchandise and our business suffered a terrible blow. We took it with a smile; we just cut down our mode of living, but were just as happy.

“My husband was old fashioned in his ideas of what women should and should not do.

“One night he came home from work with a part cross and part hurt expression on his face. I was worried for he was usually in a good humor. I didn't say anything, just waited for him to speak. ‘Well’, he said, ‘I was certainly hurt and surprised at something I heard this afternoon.’ Why, what have I done, I said? ‘I never thought the time would come,’ he said, ‘when my wife would take part in politics.’

“Well, I didn't vote that year. After that his views began to change and soon he was taking me to the polls every election day. I don't take any active part in politics, but I vote my convictions. I think every woman should do that. I am interested in public affairs, but I don't go wild over elections like some people. Of course, I think we all get a ‘kick’ over seeing our man go in.

“I didn't do any work outside of my home the first years of our married life. It wasn't necessary from a financial standpoint. My husband thought I had plenty to do, to look after our home and little girl. I took an active part in church affairs. I am naturally religiously inclined and was reared in that kind of atmosphere. I kept up my music, especially voice. I did lots of club work too. At one time I was first District Director in the Georgia Federation of Music Clubs. So, even though I lived in a very small country town, my activities were not confined to my environment.

“My husband was unusual in this respect. He was very ambitious about my voice. Not many men would consent for their wives to leave them and go away for three months at a time to study. Well, he did, and not only that, he gave me the money. One thing, he knew

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that I had been accustomed to a larger town and felt that I needed a change. So instead of taking just pleasure trips each summer, I would go away to study.

“One summer I spent in Atlanta. I had only one child then, so I took a little apartment and kept house for three months. He spent his vacation with us and also came up for week-ends. I look back on that as being one of the happiest summers of my whole married life. I studied under Miss Lula Clark King. She is still teaching in Atlanta. She helped me lots.

“The next summer I went to the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago, Illinois. I continued my voice lessons and also studied Public School Music. The following summer 9 I completed that course. I don't consider any musical education complete now without Public School Music, in fact; even school teachers now have to know how to teach it.

“After I completed this course in Chicago, I began coming to the University of Georgia summer school. That was during the time when the University had such a fine school of music. They had one whole week during each summer devoted to Grand Opera, concerts etc. The best of talent was assembled here for that week. It was truly a gala occasion. Mr. George Folsom Granberry, of New York, was director of the School of Music, and also directed Opera. He was nice to me and I feel that I owe more to him than any musician I have ever contacted. He gave me outstanding parts in Opera. That helped to broaden my musical career more [than?] all the study I had had. I kept that up for seven consecutive summers. Sometimes, I would feel badly over spending so much money on myself, but the time came later in life when I was truly glad that I had not spent my time in idle pleasure.

“We were a little disappointed that our family [was?] so small, for we still had one child. I like large families when you can give them what they need to become good citizens. Just as we had resigned ourselves to just one child, along came a little boy. No need to tell you we were happy, we were just thrilled to death. We named him Louie for his 10 father.

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“About that time I began to realize that finances were getting bad. Mr. Bailey said little about it, but I knew he was worried, though he tried to hide it. Our business had never quite recovered from the depression following the war.

“I had had several opportunities to help out the family budget by teaching, but my husband would not consent on account of the children. I was soon to find out, that life was not always to be as carefree as it had been so far. When our boy was one year old, he was stricken with colitis in its worst form. I nursed him, with the help of friends, for four weeks. He began to get better, but was in a terribly weakened condition. Then he developed double pneumonia. I felt that we could never pull him through that, but we did. The Lord certainly must have spared him for some good purpose. I don't know yet, for in some respects, he has had one of the sadest lives of any child I've ever known.

“Well, troubles never come singly. Since then my life has been full of adversities. Before Louie had regained his strength, our little girl was rushed to a neighboring town for an emergency appendix operation. All this sickness was a terrible strain on us, mentally, physically and financially. When Mary was able to return home from the hospital and little Louie was on the road to recovery, we thought surely our troubles were over for a while.

“One afternoon a short while later, I was on the porch 11 with the baby, when two ladies drove up to the house. They introduced themselves, told me they were looking for a voice teacher, and asked if I would consider taking them. Well, I said, I have taught a good bit in my life, but not lately. I then told of all the sickness I had had, and what a care my children were. They insisted, so I finally told them I would teach them.

“They lived twenty miles away and were to drive over twice a week for their lessons. That was the beginning of my returning to my profession. Soon other pupils began coming and in a short while I had all the pupils I could teach, right in my own home.

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“It was the wisest decision I ever made too, for in November we lost our business. Mr. Bailey did a big credit business. That, along with the depression, just ruined his. That left us about [where?] we first started out. We had our home though, and I was teaching, so we still felt that we had such to be thankful for.

“Well Mr. Bailey soon got him a job traveling, selling flour and feed-stuffs. He didn't make anything like the money we had been accustomed to having, but with my help we managed. Once more we thought our difficulties were over, for a while at least.

“One night we were sitting at the supper table and all at once he began gasping for breath. His face was ashy white. I hurried him to the room, ran to the phone 12 and soon the doctor was there. I have never seen such suffering as my husband endured. The doctor sat by him all night, and just before dawn he seemed to rest a little easier. When the doctor left, he told me that the trouble was Angina [Pectoria?], and in the worst form. I began to realize then what was before me, two children and a husband, who could likely be taken from us at any time.

“I was elected to teach piano-voice and public school music, in a school sixteen miles away. I knew it meant leaving my home and children, a good part of the time, but I accepted the place. It seemed that some kind providence was coming to our rescue in every emergency. I taught there in the same school for seven years, commuting in my car. Most of [that?] time Mr. Bailey was not able to work and I was the only support. He helped me lots with the children. Mary, of course, was in school, but little Louie was not old enough, so he was his dady's constant companion.

“After about six months my husband was able to go to work again. He bought out a small grocery store and things began to look brighter for us.

“Mary graduated from high school, and then came the question of sending her to college. With the help of a sister of my husbands, we entered her at the University of Georgia. I

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brought her to Athens on Monday, September 25th. The following Wednesday night she was called back. The death 13 angel visited our home, taking the beloved husband and father. Even though I knew for several years he would probably go suddenly and at any time, I was not prepared for it. He dropped dead on his way home from work; little Louie and his dog were the only ones with him at the time. Those were truly dark days for us, and for a while, it seemed that I just could not take up life again. But I did, for I had my two children to live for and who had to depend on me for everything. Mary returned to the university after a week, and I resumed my teaching. Louie too was in school, had just entered. That fall was the loneliest I ever spent, but we made the best of it. I took a couple in to board with us and that helped lots.

“Mr. Bailey did not leave us a great deal. He had borrowed on his insurance, always hoping he would get in physical condition to take out more. But he never did. We owned our house though and had a few thousand in cash. I was not afraid of the future for I felt capable of earning a living for my children. Money takes wings though when sickness comes. When Mr. Bailey had been dead only three months, Louie was taken desperately ill, ‘pneumonia!’ the doctor said. After a few days though we noticed a slight swelling in his hip and he began complaining of pain. As soon as we could we got him to a hospital for Xray. Ostromylitis was the diagnosis, bone infection in the worst 14 form. For six months it was a battle between life and death. Then, too, I was faced with the possibility of his being a cripple even if his life was spared.

“Doctors, hospital, [nurses?] and operations played havoc with my little bank account for I gave him the best attention I knew how. The strain was beginning to wear me out both physically and financially. I was trying to teach all day and stay with him at the hospital at night. I saw he was getting no better at that place, so with the help of friends, I got him at the Scottish Rite hospital at [Decatur?]. That was the saving of him. He was there for two years. They let me bring him home for Christmas, but I carried him right back. That is truly a wonderful place. It’s true he is left a cripple, but had it not been for the Scottish Rite he would not be here now. He is still under their care. I have to carry him back at intervals for

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examinations. In another year he is scheduled for another operation on his hip. That is to try to lengthen his limb and correct his limping.

“When he was dismissed from there it seemed that there was nothing for me to do, but give up my teaching and stay at home with him. He was on crutches and had to have lots of special care. So I resigned my job. That's how it happens that I am not teaching today I guess. You know when you once get out of your profession, it's hard to get back especially at my age. There are so many teachers without jobs.

“After Mary finished her second year at the University of Georgia I decided to give her a secretarial course. I took her to Washington D.C. and entered her at Strayers Sea School. She lived with my brother. She was very lucky for through influence of some political friends there, she got a job in three months time. It was only a short time though before she fell in love, almost at first sight, and married. That was a blow to me at first, but on second thought I was really happy over it. Then when I met her husband I was even more so. Yes, she married a fine man and into a fine family. Her husband's father is American Consul General to [Liepzig?], Germany. I feel so sorry for him now during this European crisis. They have not been able to hear from his parents since [early?] in August. ‘that is off my subject though.’

“Finances were getting so bad with me that on the advice of friends of mine, I moved to Athens, Georgia. My idea was to open up a boarding house. I thought I could do that and be at home with my crippled child, too.

Well, that's the last thing I should have done. I know how to keep a nice house and set a nice table, but I knew absolutely nothing about the financial side of it. I opened up a lovely place on Prince Avenue, and right there is where I lost the last of my little savings. The sad part is, I even sold my little house in South Georgia and invested it. That too was gone. Then I began losing my nerve and my health. My boy too had several severe attacks of

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illness and that took more money. I saw there was no more boarding house for me, so I stored what I had in the way of furniture, sold part of it, and began looking for work

“As a last resort I went down to the Welfare Office and was certified for WPA work. My sister-in-law took my boy for me and found a little boarding school and put him there until I could get work. He just has to have good care. My first WPA assignment came right out of a clear sky - as they all do for me. I had given up hopes. Imagine my chagrin when I opened up my slip and read - ‘Library Project’ - book repairer 25¢ per hour. Of all things in the world I had never done, mending a book was the most unthought of. I soon learned it to be very fascinating work. Just to make an old book to look like new was really worth while. Anyway I was learning something I never expected to know. It was hard work and not much pay either, but it was honest. That project closed in two months. From September 10th to January 3rd of this year, I was without work. I can hardly tell you how I managed. My boy did not suffer though for he was still in this little school. By the way, it is a Catholic School and they certainly do take good care of him. He learns rapidly 17 down there. You see, two years of his school life was spent in the hospital so he is behind in his studies.

“The WPA is a wonderful plan, I think, to give employment to people who really need it. The greatest trouble with me, it has not been continuous work. I get so behind with finances between jobs. Then too, while no one expects a big salary on WPA, I would like to make enough to give my boy the necessities of life. His shoes alone cost me twenty dollars per pair, besides the fare to Atlanta to get them fitted.

“My next WPA job began January 3rd of this year. It lasted six months, and the pay was better than on the first one. I liked that fine. I was a field worker on the Real Property Survey. We made two surveys of Athens.

“At first I felt funny going into all kinds of places and contacting all sorts of people, but I got over that. I have to meet people, so on the job I certainly had a good opportunity and made

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a lot of friends. I was not accustomed to walking either, but I learned to do that too. Since working on that survey I feel that I know every mook and corner of Athens.

“Well, that job closed and I was wondering what I would do next. It seemed for six weeks that I wouldn't do anything. Again unexpectedly came another slip assigning me to what was then called the Federal Writers' Project. Since then it has been changed to Georgia Writers' Project. I like it very much especially the interviews and the 18 research work. As for my writing - well I'm trying, but I'm afraid those people in Atlanta think I'm hopeless.

“I think President Roosevelt is a wonderful man in many, many respects, especially his conceiving the idea of helping the unemployed. I appreciate the work, but of course I prefer private employment and I am striving for it all the time. There are other WPA jobs I might be better suited for. Music is my profession and of course I prefer something that I can do well. In other cities I understand, there are projects for musicians. Athens does not have one however.

“My mode of living of course is not what it once was, but my ideals are just as high. Money does not mean everything and even doing without luxuries does not kill. I attend church regularly and when Louie is at home he goes with me. We are both members of the First Methodist Church and I sing in the choir there. I can't take any part in social functions any more nor in club work. I don't have the time or money, but those are not essentials anyway. My one ambition now is to see my boy grow into manhood, with just an high aspirations as his parents had.