

Celebrating



Nanny Ann

ANN BULLION JONES

DECEMBER 24, 1929 –

AUGUST 25, 2025



Leftover Stew and Pinto Beans

Brenda Worrell

Ann was a very special lady. I used to spend the night with Phyllis when I was little and after I grew up, she would give me her leftover stew and pintos – the dishes she always brought to eat while we made apple butter at Mt. Olivet. God bless her beautiful soul.

A Pirate's Bribe

Stephanie Boyd

I had gotten in trouble because of my grades being low, and Nanny Ann told me if I made all A's and B's that she would take me to Long John Silver's. I brought all my grades up, except I had one C. I was so disappointed in myself and didn't want to tell her. She was proud of me for doing better and took me to eat at Long John Silver's anyway.

Special Bond

Jaye McKinnon

To this amazing woman who gave me so much in life. You had such a big part of making me who I am today. You taught me so much and I will forever be thankful, grateful and blessed to have you in my life! You are my inspiration and hero. I have always looked up to Nanny Ann. I was privileged to have her and for her to take me in as part of her family. We had a special bond. I love you so much Nanny, and this isn't goodbye: it's I'll see you again!

The Things She Loved Kids and Judge Judy

Joe & Pat Terry

Nanny Ann will always hold a special place in our hearts. She kept our son and daughter all the years they were in school. She took all the school kids to school in her car and she didn't allow them to cross the road. We didn't have to worry about them at all. She was an angel. She made home-cooked food for them daily, kept them clean and took care of the kids that were sick. Every one of the children she loved just the same as she loved her family and *Judge Judy*. We can't say enough about her; she was a saint. She is with Jesus and others that had gone on before. We look forward to seeing her again in Heaven.

Miss Ann's House

Terry & Jennifer Elliott

Nanny Ann kept our son when he was little, and she was always good to him. He's 21 now and still remembers going to "Miss Ann's" house. May she rest in peace.

Doing Hair

Julie Mullins

Ann was a dear friend. I did her hair for the years she was able to get out and drive. She was so kind to me. I miss her. Will pray for the family! ♥

Smelling the Memory

Holly Barlow

Some of my best summer memories happened at one of the sweetest lady's houses – Ann Jones. Some call her Nanny, but I called her Ann.

To know Ann was to love her. I can still smell the memory. The entrance of her home was filled with love and care to all who entered!

Ann taught us many things, including what it was to make and be friends. She taught us to mind our manners and work hard. She had little chores around her house, and it was always fun to take part in the little chores and get rewarded for them too! Stacking wood, feeding the animals, helping pick up and clean up after the day – we thought these were fun activities.

Some of my fondest memories include my friends and I heading up to the playground and doing what kids did back then, having fun and being outdoors. There were no video games at Ann's. We talked, laughed, played on the swings and slides and made friends like a child should be doing.

I recall on the fence line she had an abundance of honeysuckle bushes growing. I remember one day one of my friends taught us all about those and the smell and how to suck the juice out of the flower part! Still alive today, it was good and fun!

Let me tell you about the food that her hard working hands would prepare! You would definitely not go hungry at Ann's house. Mashed potatoes, green beans, spaghetti, hot

dogs – we never knew what was on the menu, but we knew it was being prepared fresh. You could smell it, and when it was ready, you went to eat!

Just a feeling of safety was in her home, and you knew you were loved; she truly was a wonderful lady who helped raise many children in her time. I always loved it when the grandkids would come and stay for vacation. Those were always my favorite times. I loved playing with Jill. Ann had all the Barbies and Barbie accessories you could ever want!

Kids now days will never get the joy of meeting Ann, but she will hold a piece in all of our hearts forever!

Love and see you in heaven!

Taking Care of the Sick

Teresa McGrady

One day when Marcus was about 3 years old, I came in that evening after work to pick him up and when I walked in, I didn't see him. Nanny Ann was in the kitchen with some of the kids, so I went in to ask her where Marcus was. She stood there for a few seconds just looking at me, and then finally said "Oh yeah, he's been so sick all day." I asked her why in the world she didn't call me so I could have come and picked him up. She said "Don't you think I can take care of him sick, just the same as I do every other day? I think I'm more than capable." I told her that I was just thinking of the other kids, so they didn't get sick, and also that it's more work on her to take care of him since he was sick. She took me back to the room she had him in, and said "See, I am taking care of him and keeping him away from the other kids." I don't think I ever convinced her that I wasn't saying she was not capable, LOL.

Never Be Late for Work

Teresa McGrady

One morning I was dropping Marcus and Jake off before work and I noticed my car was driving funny when I pulled in. I got out and I had a flat tire. This is 4:30 in the morning. I walked in and asked her if I could borrow her phone because I had a flat tire and needed to call my dad. My husband was working out of town. I wanted to see if my dad would come to take me to work. I also needed to call work to let them know I'd be late. She said: "Leave that car parked," and she handed me the keys to her car and said "Take mine; there's no need for you to worry about being late for work."

Always Toys

Steve, Teresa, Marcus & Jake McGrady

Several different times she would ask me to get Marcus and Jake and walk up to the building with her. She kept that building full of toys. We would walk in, and she'd tell the boys to go in and look at all the toys and pick out the one they liked the best, and they could have it. Of course, they would end up picking out 2 or 3 each and she'd say there's no point in making them choose.

Nanny Ann was the best!! She treated Marcus and Jake just like her own. She was so good to me too. There's nothing she wouldn't do for you. We loved her so much!!



My Story of Nanny Ann
or
What Really Happened to the Volvo?

Dylan Kirby

From the time I was just four months old until well after I left for college, I had the honor of being one of Nanny Ann's babies. She wasn't just a caregiver; she was a constant in my life. Her home was a second home and safe place to me, and she played a huge role in shaping the man I became.

As I got older, our relationship naturally shifted. I went from being one of the kids running around her house to being the one helping out – stacking firewood, mowing her yard, tending her many flower beds or whatever else she needed done that day. Of course, that “help” often came with a plate of home cooking as payment and a little secret kept just between Nanny and me. That secret was that she'd let me drive her around in her little Volvo, even though I was only 14 and didn't have so much as a learner's permit. Looking back, I'm still not sure which one of us was braver!

One weekend while I was mowing her yard, she told me to drive her up the road to Woodlawn Church so she could help some of the church ladies get ready for “canning day.” She added that she had fixed lunch and if I wanted to eat to come on. And let me tell you, her cooking was enough to make anyone bend a few rules. (It was probably a big reason I was a fat kid growing up, ha ha!)

As fate would have it, when I pulled into the church parking lot, there was a police officer sitting right across the street at the school. I got nervous, and in my flustered state, I managed to bump the pastor's car right there in front of the officer.

I think that might have been the first day I ever heard Nanny Ann cuss in all the years I'd known her. The officer came over, and it turned out he was the parent of another one of “Ann's babies.” After giving us both a good scolding, he decided to let it slide – though not before Nanny gave him a firm talking-to right back for his tone toward us. Somehow, the whole situation got smoothed over with a bowl of beef stew and a slice of cornbread, which, if you knew Nanny, makes perfect sense. Did Nanny Let me drive after that? I'll let that stay a secret between her and me. ;-)

That day sums up everything I loved about her: her trust in me, her humor, her toughness and her heart. She taught me responsibility long before I realized she was doing it. Nanny Ann was one of the greatest blessings in my life, and the lessons she gave me will stay with me forever. I loved that woman dearly, and I always will.

Kemper

Jennifer Jones

When Ann was raising and selling cocker spaniel puppies in the 1990's, she brought a litter to our house in Charlottesville to sell. I fell in love with a beautiful black puppy I named Kemper. Ann and I decided that every time a customer came to look at the puppies, we would hide Kemper in the storage shed. It took Jonathan quite a while to figure out what we were doing, and needless to say, Kemper became our family pet for many years.

Christmas Gifts

Jennifer Jones

For many years, during the Thanksgiving holiday, Ann would have me help her wrap Christmas gifts for each child she babysat. We had a process where she would bring me a gift already in a box and taped. I would wrap it, then ask which child's name went on the tag. Countless times when I asked how to label the gift, she would laugh and tell me it was mine! She got such a kick out of tricking me into wrapping my own gift!

Red Dodge Truck

Jennifer Jones

When Jonathan and I were dating, we usually spent Sunday afternoons with Ann. Every Sunday, we would take the red truck and go to the different stores, fruit markets and variety shops. Ann would drive, I would sit in the middle and Jonathan would be in the passenger side. I remember her laughing and flooring the gas! That truck could fly!! As a side note, the police pulled her over and could not believe the truck would go that fast. (Of course they let her go with a warning.)

Ducks

Jonathan Jones

Mom loved ducks. I remember her using the duck eggs to make pound cake (It was actually very good). It was really exciting when the duck would nest and attempt to hatch the eggs. Unfortunately, sometimes the duck would end up with maggots while sitting on their nest. Normally this would be the end of the duck, but on one occasion mom poured about half a gallon of gas on the duck to kill the maggots. The duck disappeared, and we just assumed the duck died. Nope! It waddled down our hill about a week later, still drunk from the fumes. It was at that time I truly believed Mom could perform miracles.

Smoke Bombs

Jonathan Jones

It is no secret that James and I loved our fireworks. Once James left for college, I was left to carry on the tradition. My room was at the very back of the house. In order to get to an outside door, I needed to pass through the following rooms: James' bedroom, mom's bedroom and the hallway. Then I had to go through the living room or kitchen to reach the front or back door. I remember sitting in my room with a smoke bomb (small, round and yellow). For some reason I was curious as to how much flame it would take to light the fuse. (While I am saying this, I am beginning to understand the hell I put my mom through). Needless to say, the fuse lit, and I panicked. I could have easily tossed it out the window, but no, I carried the smoke bomb with vile yellow smoke spewing through the entire house. To make matters even worse, Mom met me as I was opening the back door. It was the only time in my life I was completely speechless. Needless to say, my 4th of July was without fireworks.

Trick or Treat

Jonathan Jones

I think Mom looked forward to Halloween as much as I did. My first memory of mom and Halloween was at a carnival in Hillsville. I think it was at the high school – it was a walkway with tall cardboard walls with circular holes cut in them. As we walked, hands and arms would protrude through the holes and grab us. (It scared the crap out of me.)

One particular arm grabbed Mom and she proceeded to return the favor. She shoved her arm in the hole and then I am not sure what she grabbed, but the person on the other side of the wall let out a scream that leads me to believe he was scarred for life.



Dishes

Carlene Poole

The story that I will never forget is when my mother died tragically some 45 years ago, and Ann did a very selfless act. She came to our home after the funeral. We didn't use paper plates in those days. The house was full of relatives and lots of people – everyone from professional individuals to the humble factory workers that had brought food to our home. I was busy in the kitchen, making sure everyone was fed. I looked at the stack of dishes, and in walked Ann. "What can I do," she said. What an angel that was sent heaven above. I said, "Well, you could wash a few dishes." This angel stood at the sink and washed and dried dishes for over an hour. I know this was a Godly woman, and I am not sure I ever thanked her properly. She was many things to me since her daughter Phyllis and I were good friends, but that day she was someone who came in and rescued me. God sent her, and I want to thank her family and say what a wonderful, selfless woman she was. I will never forget her.



The Duck Stories

Darlene Edwards

Imagine you get on an elevator in a hospital with a little lady in the back corner. The doors close. Suddenly, you hear a quack. Yea, that's where this story is going. In 1987, Marie (Ann's baby sister) had gall bladder surgery. This was full blown surgery – not the 4 little hole variety – so it required a 5-7 day hospital stay. Of course, Marie got bored. Well, Aunt Ann just happened to have a bunch of baby ducks. So, she decided to smuggle a baby duck into the hospital to cheer Marie up. Believe it or not, they didn't get caught. Just a nice little duckling visit. Probably the only time a duck was smuggled into Twin County Hospital. Talk about sisterly love.

Part two of this story was many years later – probably around 2011. It was in the spring, the time the farm supply stores have – you guessed it – baby ducks. I went home from work one evening and heard a funny noise coming from the upstairs of our house. Tanner and Hunter were still living at home at that time. I heard the noise and said to myself "Please let it be a puppy." Not. Those two had purchased several baby ducks from Tractor Supply and built them a Taj Mahal area in the upstairs of our house. At that time, Aunt Ann was living at home alone. I knew she would love to see the baby ducks so I went over there one evening to get her and brought her to my house. There was some resistance from her because she was afraid Phyllis might call and she wouldn't be there to answer the phone. I think we took the phone off the hook and put a sign on the door that she was with me. I had to promise her that I'd bring her right back but didn't tell her why we were going to my house. By this time, thankfully, the boys had at least moved the ducks outside. We had a laundry tub inside. So, we brought them inside for a bath in the laundry tub. She thoroughly enjoyed herself. There was just something about Aunt Ann and ducks.

Aunt Ann kept (and helped raise) both Tanner and Hunter from birth. (Sister Ima/Susie had done the same for Zack). When Tanner had his tonsils out at age 3, we took baby Hunter to Aunt Ann around 5:00 a.m. No problem for her. She would welcome them at any hour, any day, for however long.

When our church had Vacation Bible School, she kept Hunter when he was too young to go so the other two boys could go and Michael and I could help teach. She probably made hundreds of gallons of Kool-Aid for Bible School over the years. And sent snacks. It was her mission to get the kids fed.

After our boys were in school and not staying with her daily, if she knew I had a busy week or something unusual going on, she would bring spaghetti and beef stew (the boys' favorites) to our house. Never just one dish, always both. Never a regular pot. No, it was always a vat of each! Enough to feed an army.

With just these stories, it's clear what kind of woman she was. She was nurturing, selfless, caring and compassionate. She loved her family and she loved all the kids she kept. There could not have been a better babysitter for our kids and hundreds of others.

There also could not have been a better Aunt.

I loved you, Aunt Ann, and will always miss you. I appreciate everything you have done for our family more than anyone can imagine. I am so blessed to have had you as my aunt.



Lifetime of Memories

Francisco Quitana

How Many Kids?

Ann was my favorite babysitter as a child. She would let all the boys go up the hill to play – one of my best memories. She was like, “If you see a woman or a man come up the hill who you don’t know, run and hide.” Now I know that it was social service people to see how many kids she really had. She was a strict nanny to a lot of us. I know when I was there, there had to be 20 or 30 kids 🤪.

Missing Thumb

When I was around five or maybe six years old, we were digging out a hole to build a city for the Hot Wheels. There was this big rock in our way, so I put my hands in the hole to try and pull it out. Big mistake because as I did this, another kid used the shovel at the same time and went through my finger. I screamed so loud that Ann heard me from the house. As she ran up to see what the commotion was about, I was crying because it hurt so badly. I remember that blood was everywhere.

So here my thumb is just hanging on by a little piece of skin, and she said: “You will be OK, just come with me.” Then she put my hand on ice until I can get medical treatment. She’s like “You are going to lose that,” and I’m like “What? I’m going to lose my thumb?” She laughed and said, “No honey, you will lose your nail so they can sew your finger back on.”

Well, I still have my thumb today, but I carry the scar for life. She kept me thinking about other things and not my mangled thumb.

Run Away Golf Cart

So I was like seven, maybe younger. I stole her golf cart (way before Mario Kart) and took it up the road, hit a bank, and rolled it near Woodlawn School. I got a few scratches and hurt my 7-year-old pride a little. She was more worried about me than the golf cart, but she was a little mad. My dad, God rest his soul, beat my 🏇. After that day, she would always tell me when I went outside not to steal her golf cart, and I never did gain. She gave us all tough love that I still hold dear to my heart. Nanny Ann was an AMAZING WOMAN.

Dog Food Diet

I remember there was this one kid. I can’t remember his name now. But he used to sneak up to the dog cage and eat dog food. When Ann found out this was happening, she would tell him as we went out to play that he shouldn’t be eating the dog food because she couldn’t afford to feed both him and the dogs. Strange part was this kid kept doing it. I’m not sure why, because she fed us well and gave us a lot of food. Anyway, from then on, he was only allowed to play outside in the mornings. When he

wouldn't eat his food at lunch, Ann wouldn't let him outside because she knew what he was waiting for. He had to sit inside the rest of the day.

Never Be the Last to Finish Lunch

We got in trouble one time for hiding from this one kid because we would finish lunch before he did. He would look for us and start crying because he was alone up the hill. We hid under Mr. Jones' trees that were growing. She was so mad we did this to this kid every day.

Missing Snake

Once we saw a snakeskin inside one of the cars up on the hill. This kid broke one of the windows. I didn't break the window, but I did go in the car to get the snakeskin. I took the rap for it, and my parents yelled at me, but I swear I didn't break the window. I did want the snakeskin, but I never found the snake. I looked everywhere for it.

I Prefer Girls

I remember I asked Ann once if I could play with the girls instead of the boys. She said: "You know you can't do that, but may I ask you why?" I said, "Because I love girls. They are pretty, and boys are gross."

Daily Loaf

She would have so much bread – just like a bread store. She would give us loaves to go feed her ducks. I remember I would tear the bread up and throw a piece for them, and a piece for me until the whole loaf was gone. I probably ate a loaf of bread a day.

A Great Woman

She was a GREAT woman and hands-down my favorite memory of any babysitter I ever had. She was very strict, but it built character. I loved her and she will missed. There will never will they be another woman as great as she was period. It's amazing how she always looked the same. Only the hair color changed. SHE WILL BE MISSED AND ALWAYS LOVED.

Second Mother

Stephanie Bond (Hall)

Some people come into our lives and leave a mark so deep that their love continues to guide us long after they're gone. Ann was one of those rare, beautiful souls.

She wasn't just our babysitter – she was a second mother, a teacher, and a constant source of love and stability. Every day, she made us homecooked meals, but it wasn't just the food that filled us up – it was the care she put into everything she did for us. With Ann, we learned more than just how to eat at the table with our friends. We learned values, kindness and respect.

One memory that's stayed with me for years is the time I came home from school talking about a classmate's new Cabbage Patch doll. I loved it, and my mom and dad didn't have the money at the time to get me one right away, so they asked Ann if they could borrow some money until payday. Without hesitation, Ann said yes. It wasn't just about the doll – it was about Ann's heart. She saw how much it meant to me, and she wanted to help however she could.

That was who she was: always giving, always loving. She truly loved us. She wanted the best for us, not just in the moment, but for the future. She taught us right from wrong with gentle guidance and led with love, never judgment.

I remember how she'd let us wash and clean her car, help with housework and other small chores and even encourage us to bring our grades up – teaching us responsibility and rewarding us for a job well done. It wasn't about the chores and grades. It was about teaching us pride in our work and showing us that effort matters.

Ann helped shape the people we became. She believed in us, nurtured us, and filled our childhoods with safety, structure, and love. Her impact is immeasurable – and her memory, eternal.

Rest peacefully, sweet Ann. You gave us so much more than we ever knew at the time. Thank you for everything.

The Love/Hate Relationship with Holidays

Phyllis Ayers

My mother always had a love/hate relationship with the holidays. She loved having all the family in and loved having all the food around. But she had a knack for getting other people (usually Jennifer and me), to do the actual cooking. She always wanted a dozen different casseroles for Thanksgiving, and she did lots of prep work, cutting and slicing and peeling 20 pounds of potatoes, but the actual cooking we always did. Christmas was the same, usually the same casseroles. But Christmas was more involved. There had to be a freshly-cut Christmas tree. Once she didn't have access to the trees at the nursery, she normally roped one of the parents into bringing a tree to her, but then she'd also convince them to decorate it for her. She loved the outside of the house to be decorated for Christmas, so again parents often Linda and Wayne would spend hours decorating to make her happy.



We always opened gifts on Christmas Eve. I'm not sure why this was our tradition unless Christmas Eve was her birthday, so that way – as she would say – she got Christmas and birthday all over at once. We all knew that we dared not accidentally wrap her birthday gift in Christmas paper. If that happened, we heard about it all year long. And the presents,

so many presents. My mother used to always tell us that as a child, she was lucky to get, in her words, “an old orange or apple for Christmas.” There was no limiting gifts with the grandchildren when she was around. Every grandchild had multiple gifts under that tree. Mother also loved to have someone give out the gifts. Someone would hand them out as all of us opened them as we received them. Well, not my mother. She would let all of her gifts surround her and wouldn't touch one of them until everyone else was finished opening theirs. Then she would open her gifts. You better not leave that room while she was opening her gifts because she'd call you out by name. She saved gifts from the children she babysat for to open them too. Even if she had already opened gifts, she'd tape them back up to open that night. She loved getting gifts and she loved giving gifts.

Christmas Day, though, was a different story. We always had to have tenderloin and biscuits for breakfast and the big Christmas meal as soon in the early afternoon as we could get it on the table. Many times, I'd be in the kitchen getting the big Christmas lunch cooked and I'd see the Christmas tree going out the back door. According to Mother, the minute those gifts were opened, then Christmas was over and that tree had to come down. I begged her to leave it up, but never once was I successful. It became a joke as to who she would convince to take it down first.



Fiddler's Convention

Phyllis Ayers & Marie Fowler

All of you know that my mother dedicated her life to service of one sort or another. From taking care of my oldest brother, Joseph, to volunteering at the Training Center once he went there, to babysitting a host of children, to making food for everyone, to helping at the church. All of that left her little time to take part in fun activities. So when I would visit her I would always make sure to take her out to dinner, take her shopping or whatever else I could convince her to do. The convincing was always the hard part. One year I was there during Fiddler's. Since I was a child, I have always been enthralled with the Galax Fiddler's Convention. My mother used to load us all up in the truck and head out to the truck route to watch the hippies skinny dip in Chestnut Creek. We never went inside – always on the periphery – but I could hear the music. I remember my mother and my aunts Poly and Ima (Susie) and Neda flatfooting to bluegrass in our kitchen. Never Marie though. My mother taught me to flatfoot when I was very little. My aunt Marie loved Fiddler's but not the music or the flatfooting.

That summer when I visited and Fiddler's was going on I convinced Mother and Marie to go with Don and me one Saturday night. We had a special parking place by the lottery booth so everything was convenient. Our friend Bobby had a mobile home there so Mother and Marie could have their dinner in a nice air-conditioned spot. We all had such a wonderful time eating and flatfooting. Well, Mother and I flatfooted. It was getting late so time to leave, and Mother and Marie had to go to the bathroom. We told them we'd say our goodbyes to everyone and meet them at the car. They were arm in arm coming to the car. Don was driving up the hill to get out of the park and the two of them were in the back seat giggling like a couple of school girls. Don asked, "What's so funny?" Both kept giggling but wouldn't say a word. I looked back at them and said, "You peed your pants, didn't you?" Little did I know it could have been so much worse with the two of them. Yes, Marie couldn't get her pants down in time so she peed on her underwear. The two of them decided it was better for her to take off her underwear, and then they tried to decide what to do with them. Reasonable folks would just toss them in the trash, but underwear cost money and they'll be perfectly good after a washing. Then they decide to play a joke. They thought it would be a good idea to take the wet underwear and put them in Bobby's bed. Thank goodness they didn't follow through on that idea. Instead, they wrapped up the pee bloomers and put them in Marie's purse. My mother didn't get out much, but when she did... Maybe taking them to Fiddler's wasn't such a good idea after all.

Nannys' Spelling Bee

James Jones

When Mom started her child care nursery, she would never cuss around the kids. Instead, she would spell. So you would regularly hear things like, "Get your A, Double-S back in here" or "Where the H.E. Double-L do you think you're going?"

Now one Thanksgiving we decided to buy Mom a dishwasher so she wouldn't have to wash dishes in the sink. Of course, Mom being Mom, she didn't want anything to do with a dishwasher.

She told us, "I don't need a D.A.M. dishwasher. I can wash my own dishes!"

But we ignored her and had the dishwasher installed anyway so it would be ready to use for Thanksgiving and Christmas. And we did use it to clean up the Thanksgiving dishes that year.

When we all came home for Christmas, Phyllis asked Mom if she had been using her dishwasher. Mom proudly walked over to the dishwasher and said, "Well, yes, I've been using it," as she flung open the dishwasher door and showed us it was full of canned goods.

I could tell she was very proud of herself for out-smarting us.

Attack of the Killer Praying Mantises!

James Jones

When Jonathan and I were growing up, we used to play in Dad's fields where he raised trees to sell in the nursery. There were a lot of Praying Mantises in the trees and we would catch them and pit them against each other in our makeshift "fighting to the death" arena.

One day, someone told us that Praying Mantises hatch from the cocoon-like things that are attached to the growing trees. So Jonathan and I gathered up a bunch of the cocoons, put them in a mason jar, poked holes in the lid and put the jar in the bookcase in Mom's living room.

That was in the fall and come winter time, with Mom cranking up the heater to 80 degrees, the insects started to hatch early.

By that time, Jonathan and I had completely forgotten about the mason jar with the cocoons. But when we got home from school on that fateful day, Mom, Phyllis and Sharon were all in the living room on their hands and knees with newspapers and fly swatters, whacking at something climbing up the walls in the living room!

Mom yelled at us to "go grab something and help us kill these D.A.M. termites before they eat my house up!"

Jonathan and I looked at each other in horror and Jonathan yelled, "Those aren't termites. They're Praying Mantises! Don't kill them or we'll have to pay a fine of five dollars for each one!" (Jonathan was referring to an urban legend we had heard at school.)

So Jonathan and I ended up catching as many of the Praying Mantises as we could and released them outside before the death squad could swat them.

Mom was so relieved they weren't termites she didn't even spell at us!

Hazardous Materials

James Jones

Like many young boys at that time Jonathan and I loved playing with fireworks. But we got bored with the off-the-shelf fireworks so we started making our own. Somehow, I got a hold of a chemical supply catalog and we ordered a chemical that was supposed to create huge thick smoke clouds.

A couple of weeks later, we got home from school and Mom meets us at the door and tells us: "A hazardous materials truck pulled up in the driveway this morning, and I had to sign for some bucket of chemicals you ordered. It's sitting out back on the sidewalk. Don't bring it in the house!"

Anyway, Jonathan and I excitedly rushed out back and tore into the bucket.

Inside the bucket was filled with packing peanuts, and in the middle of those packing peanuts was another smaller container. We opened that container and inside was a bottle of liquid with a medicine dropper.

We put a couple of drops of the liquid into a cup of water and smoke started to come out, but not nearly as much as we had imagined. So we got bored of it, packed everything back up into the bucket, took it out to Mom's aluminum building and stuck it in the very back and forgot about it.

Twenty years later, I'm living in Charlotte and I get a phone call. I answered and on the other end of the line I hear: "Let me tell you what you two D.A.M. idiots have done!"

Over the years, the chemical had leached out of the containers and ate through the back of Mom's aluminum building.



Mom Versus Technology

James Jones

One day I drove from Charlotte to pick up Mom and take her to her doctor appointment in Greensboro.

I had never been to this particular location, so I plugged it into my TomTom satellite navigation device for driving directions. I put the TomTom on the floorboard between us.

About halfway there, Mom saw a billboard for Biscuitville. Now Mom loved Biscuitville but there were none near her house, so it was always a treat for her to get a Biscuitville biscuit.

When she saw the billboard, she asked me if we had time to go through the drive-through. I told her we did and I pulled off the interstate to take the detour to Biscuitville.

As we are going through the drive-through, the TomTom keeps chirping in: "Make a legal U-turn, Make a legal U-turn..."

Finally, Mom bends over to get close to the TomTom and told it: "We're gonna get a biscuit but we'll get back on the road in just a minute."

To this day, I don't know if she was serious or just joking around. But knowing her sense of humor, I suspect it was the latter.

Part of the Family

Jaye "Jayebird" Weatherman

Nanny was more than just my babysitter. She was a second mama and my best friend! She taught me how to do life. When I was with her, she always made me feel loved and safe. She taught me how to keep a house clean, cook, take care of children, pull weeds, stack wood, and the list goes on. I never told her enough how much I loved her.

Growing up, I couldn't wait for the last day of school, summer break and Christmas. I had my suitcase packed so I could spend time with her. The memories we made that I will always cherish and keep with me. She played a big part in making me the woman I am today. She treated me like a part of her family. During Christmas breaks, we would decorate the outside, put up the tree and decorate it. She always made sure that we got Chinese food at Bamboo Garden after to celebrate the finished project. I always



enjoyed going with her to visit her kids: to David's nursery, to Jimmy's for fried pickles, to John's with her grandkids and to Phyllis' to spend time together. She especially never failed for us to go every Sunday evening to visit Joe at the training center. We did so much together and we always had fun while out and about on evening walks or just going to the grocery store.

I will always cherish the talks we had while stringing and breaking beans

for canning. We shared so many laughs. I always loved canning season with her and making blackberry jelly. She was such an amazing strong woman.

I am so glad that she got to be part of my wedding day – even though she did threaten my husband. She told him: "If you ever hurt my girl, you will have to deal with me and I'll kick your ass!" We all had a good laugh but we knew she meant business. She lit up when she met my son, Scotty and then later my daughter, Sally. It was like love at first sight with all of them. I just wish they could have gotten to know Nanny the way I did. They would have been so spoiled and had so much love from her.

In the end, I am so glad that I got to go and tell her how much I love her and thank her for everything she has done for me. I truly miss my best friend. She will never be forgotten and I will always cherish the time we had together. I know in my heart I will see her again one day!

Always in My Corner

Candace Ayers

Nanny was my grandmother, so I have more stories than I can count, but the ones that stand out the most to me are when we spent time just the two of us. I loved going to grocery store with her. We didn't use the regular, front door. We always pulled in the back, to the loading area. Sometimes we would go in the front to locate the person who she was there to see, like a friend who worked in the produce section who had potatoes for her. Then there was the bread store where she would get old bread for her ducks, but there was always fresh bread and sweet rolls under the day-old bread that magically appeared.

Nanny's world always seemed to me to be an exotic series of barter and trades. The biggest mystery to me were the all-night auctions. I always begged to go with her to one of them, but I never made it. I think it was less the Indiana Jones style treasures that I was imagining and more bulk soap. She probably also didn't think I would be able to stay awake all night, which we all know for her was no big deal as she never seemed to sleep.

The Flea Market was the biggest treasure hunt around, though and Nanny loved it. I have great memories of looking at Barbies in their boxes and flipping through records as I got older. Nanny could spend all day, every day, shopping out there. I would think that we were done, headed back to the car, and there would be another little area set up that we would need to stop in.

One story that offers a glimpse into Nanny's world is that I was at her house in the summer. I was playing in the backyard, the fenced-in part, not the *Lord of the Flies* kingdom of buildings that existed up the hill. I got stung by a bee. I was very allergic as a child – as in, drive fast to the hospital for a shot – allergic. Well, somehow Nanny is notified that I'm stung. Probably I'm screaming, someone is screaming, who knows.

Nanny comes out of the house making a terrible face. She grabs a wad of something from her mouth and gently places it where the bee stung me. She had chewed tobacco to help with the bee sting. Needless to say, I did not know that Nanny kept tobacco in her house. I can't imagine she had a ton of experience chewing it, but in this emergency situation, she didn't hesitate.

Nanny was always in my corner and she was a truly unique, special grandmother who taught me so much.



My Mother's Gift to Me

Phyllis Ayers

I noticed in reading all the stories that many of them referenced my mother's encouragement for her children to get good grades. It occurred to me that my mother realized early on that education opened so many doors that were closed to her. She had no formal education. Circumstances forced her to quit school during her elementary school days. She was an avid reader, particularly her newspapers, and no one could do basic math better than she. She ran her own daycare business and could tell you to the penny money coming in and going out. Somehow, she was able to maneuver the host of governmental requirements, and no one was better than she at finding government monies to help her feed the host of children she kept.



Personally, she gave me the greatest gift any parent could. She taught me to read and write when I was four years old. I can't imagine how she found the time, but she did. I do have to say that my first-grade teacher wasn't too happy with my mother. Mother taught me to write in cursive, so I had little patience with all those pesky block letters Mrs. Jennings was trying to force me to do. She didn't appreciate my mother's efforts, but I did. At school I wrote in block letters, never particularly good ones, and at home I wrote in cursive. I remember once fussing about the beginning reading primers we were using that *Dick and Jane* series that was so slow and easy for me.

Mother told me to pretend I couldn't read it in five minutes and look more at the pictures. That way I could get through the day and read what I wanted when I got home. I realize now what an incredible head start that my mother gave me with my education. She took the time – time that she didn't have – to foster a love for reading and writing that has not only endured into adulthood but became my entire career. All of my working life was in some facet of education. Thank you, Mother, for giving me such a wonderful lifelong gift.