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Claiborne County (TN) Progress

AUNT HELEN JENNINGS

By Nell Quesenbery

“Death is the finish of life,” proclaimed Pastor James Loy. As I listened to him, I knew Aunt Helen Jennings would have liked her funeral ceremony. She would have appreciated the charisma of this handsome minister, who for the last time was reading the Twenty-Third Psalm over Helen.

Dr. James R. Loy remembered that while reading Helen this scripture at the Claiborne County Nursing Home, Helen would say, “Yes, my cup runneth over.”

Then Rev. Loy spoke in such a way of his own mother’s last hour of life that I felt my heart yearn toward him with a sense of shared loss.

The funeral ritual ended with the entreaty to be ready; to be prepared, and the golden promise of eternal life. An old hymn of my childhood, “Precious Memories,” was so beautifully sung by the Chittum Chapel singers that ready hot tears poured from my eyes. Then Helen’s body was taken to a high and beautiful spot of the old Irish Cemetery.

Leaving the sun-laden cemetery, a heaviness settled on me, a sense of loss, many repeated losses, that had only left memories, “Precious memories, how they linger.”

I remember how Helen had helped me tell the story of my family in the “Mr. Hill’s Family.” Last Thanksgiving, she had helped me write the story of her father, Royal Sterling (Rial) Jennings, a northern Cavalry man who had fought in the Civil War.

Helen Jennings, born 1903, was the youngest child of Rial Jennings and his second wife, Nancy Howard Holland. My great-grandmother, Cordelia Jennings Hill, born in 1867, was the oldest child of Rial Jennings and his first wife, Eliza Jane Yoakum.

The lives and deaths of Rial’s children span a time period of 117 years, Helen being the last of this family.

Once I wrote some verse. Now I want to dedicate this verse to Aunt Helen, the last of the Rial Jennings’ family.

TIME - It’s All of Apiece

By Nell Quesenbery

While still a curious little girl, and learning many of the small wonders of the world, I remember only twice seeing an hourglass. But the imprint of these two occasions have stayed on my mind even until today.

How lovely the little clear glass urns, a slender shared neck, the whitest of thin sand. During the grave moment of being instructed that this was a measure of time, I was greatly awed, being only more impressed by the ticking, commonplace, Big Ben on the mantle.

Yet, while watching the measured time, way before the sands had ended their shifting destiny, I would become entranced by something else.

I know, our lives, like the fragile hourglass urns, are boundaries of time, but my mind doesn't seem to care; nor my soul seem to dread. Life for me has been all of "apiece."

Happy birthday wishes: Helen Painter, Ora Bolden, Jeffrey Jackson Bailey, Leona England, James "Fell" Jordan.

Get well wishes to Tom "Bud" Harkleroad of Maryville, Tennessee.

Congratulations and best wishes to Paul Riley and Kate Campbell Breeding on their recent marriage.

Thanks to Mrs. Lillie Burgan, Cincinnati, Ohio, for her kind words in her Letter to the Editor.

4-H Club of Powell Valley High School, visited Claiborne County Hospital last week bringing cards and messages of cheer. Thanks for visiting our son, Dennis Jackson Quesenbery's room.

Special thanks to Gertrude Harkleroad for the nice card and Irene Campbell Bargo for the nice cake she baked for Mom's birthday and all the calls.

Helen (Milton) Painter introduced me to three specially sweet women that had come to see Aunt Helen Saturday night. Milton's mother, Lola Painter, looks at one so sweetly and kind, that I felt that I'd known her forever.

I didn't know Birdie England, but Jack did. He said as a child his family traded with Charlie and Birdie England in their store. He also remembers once putting out a big onion patch for Charlie. Charlie England opened the first White Store in the Tazewells.

Marie Arnwine said that she had cooked at the Claiborne County Hospital for fifteen years and that she remembered me from Veda Brooks' yard sale. Veda Brooks has the most beautiful Iris that I've ever seen. I asked Marie Arnwine to tell Mrs. Brooks how well the different beautiful Iris that she gave me were doing. Veda's mother, Creedie Essary, kindly offered me some "airplane plants," which are, also, doing fine.

Five years ago, my sister Ann Hill, placed this Bible quote in the Knoxville Journal, without our knowledge. By accident, I found the quote after she had returned home: St. Matthew 11:28: “Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Blessed Easter, Everyone.