

- **Claiborne County (TN) Progress**

## **Nell Quesenbery Report**

**May 1, 1980**

**HELEN PAYNE (May 6, 1915)**

**By Nell Quesenbery**

Helen Payne's May birthstone is an emerald, which matches the green of her eyes and the gold of her hair. Helen was such a pretty child, her teacher, Professor Wagoner, called her "Sunshine."

She was the youngest daughter of Robert "Bob" and Mattie Payne. Bob Payne, being a partner in the Payne Brothers Motor Car Co., handled the first Ford dealership in Claiborne County.

The Payne family lived in the most imposing house in Lone Mountain, surrounded by a black wrought-iron picket fence, resting on a foundation of large hand-hued stones. Appearing on the wrought-iron gate was the name of this property, "Bonney Pines." Where pines once dominated were now giant Japanese elm, growing on acres of landscaped lawns. In its own special garden was the family swimming pool. A private rose arbor, with white fences, was nestled on a small corner dip of the lawn.

Helen's family consisted of her parents, Robert and Mattie Payne, Mattie's mother, Dorcas Mason, her sister, Ethel, and her brothers, Paul, Robert, Frank and Owen. Later, Frank's child, Estele, a beautiful dark-eyed little girl, would come to live with the family.

Blessed with a beautiful voice, Helen, for many years, has helped give the Lone Mountain Baptist Church a joyful, special sound. However, listening to the choir sing "Rock of Ages, cleft for me," the melodious entreaty of these words always causes a hot stab of tears in my eyes and an ache in my throat.

Under the kindly tutelage of Daddy and Mother Durham, Helen attended Southern Seminary, a private school for girls in Buena Vista, Virginia. Helen studied voice, but always preferred “plain singing.”

Coming to a very young womanhood, using one of her Papa’s cars, she would drive to the Tazewells, picking up Pauline Robinson, Dick Yoakum or other young friends of her crowd. Not long ago, Dick, upon reminiscing back to those days, told me how interesting he always found Helen to be.

My mother, Louise, was a particular friend of Helen’s, as well as her cousin. Consequently, Helen was often our visitor. Playing nearby, I often listened to their conversations. Sometimes, Helen would use her beautiful voice to hum or sing the latest popular song.

At the outbreak of World War II, Helen, now a lovely stylish woman, traveled to Corey Street, Detroit, Michigan, to do defense work. During this time, in my memory, I can still see Aunt “Dark” (Dorcas) in her rocker before the cozy fire and Aunt “Mat” sitting on the day bed, busily knitting woolen sweaters in Lone Mountain to send to our soldier boys in Europe.

Helen helped build the “Hell Diver.” This new fighter plane created great excitement and hope for the American cause. It was placed on display outside the Connor-Jefferson Defense Plant, attracting large throngs of people to pass by and look. Granny Dora and I, visiting that summer on Corey Street, a couple block away, were taken to see this plane by my father, Dennis Marchio.

Then an internal change took control of our planet. Before, vast numbers of mankind have died of drought, war, pestilence, famine and natural disasters, but the aspect of this grim accounting has only been alarming in the sense of the natural, as nature balance the sheets. The atomic bomb was made by man, ending World War II, but the fear then became that man, in turn, may bankrupt himself.

After the war, in 1946, Helen’s father, Bob, passed away. Helen, being the only single child, returned home to act as companion to her mother, Mattie.

Turning sixty-five in May, Helen retires from the Payne Ford Tractor Company.

Happy Birthday, Helen Payne. May you have many, many more.