

# THINGS IN MOTION...

*All things are in motion and nothing is at rest ... you cannot go into the same (river) twice. —Heraclitus (540?-480?) B.C.*

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## THE PERSISTENT YEARS

**I**N THE HILLS and valleys of our personal life journey there are sections of the route which seem to stand out—times when our existence was more vital and filled with wonderful memories. In my own history, the years of my earliest recollections are especially enjoyable to re-live in quiet times. I had a cat named Tabbo who was my faithful companion. Tabbo taught me my first lesson about death when I found him under the doorsteps one day ... lifeless. I don't recall being terribly upset, just a little lonely that he couldn't play with me anymore—that's what being dead meant. Some two years later I was applying that same rule as my baby sister lay lifeless from Typhus fever. I wondered if my father who was hospitalized and too sick for visitors would be the third one in my family to die and be buried in Mt. Zion cemetery. My Uncle Anderson's funeral was just a month before Gwendolyn's. The turmoil surrounding me at that time found me sleeping at first one neighbor's house and then another; a period that is not clear to me now, except for the day that my father came home from the hospital—that was a happy occasion when my sister and several of our neighbors helped load my Dad and the flowers that had accumulated during his month of illness and then to unload everything at home—and stay for supper. The farm workers, Sing, Lut, MayBeth and Cora had spent all day cleaning, doing laundry, and finally cooking a big supper for us—I was glad to be home again! It was October; in November the entire group of farm workers would gather to say goodbye as we left the Shaw Place.

During my first two months as a first grade student, the schoolbus picked me up in the front yard of the Shaw Place, and six or eight people would already be on the bus. Suddenly, the bus was picking me up at the Burnett Place—and I was the first one on the bus—with my choice of any seat. That was a privilege of importance!

My next four years were spent on a large and very old plantation. The farm workers numbered twelve families, which included three or four youngsters who were my age and we often played together, aware of differences between our standing on the farm, yet holding no grudges or resentments; we were just boys having a good time in the swimming hole or on the back of a mule. I learned from them; they learned from me. All of us tagged along after the grownups, helping (when allowed) to drive a two-mule team, put up new fences, plow in the fields, pick cotton, pull corn, shock oats, and shake and stack peanuts. Toward the end of each year, we'd help with peanut thrashing and the grinding of corn and oats for feed. We made a game of stacking bales of peanut hay in the huge barn lofts. This was in the mid-thirties when the country struggled to pull itself out of a terrible depression and times were hard—wild game was often the only meat to grace tables at mealtime. Like the other boys, I learned to hunt and fish and like them all, I never felt I was the least bit poor.

Perhaps the most important lesson passed on to me during my days on the farm was the value of having and being a good neighbor. If a family was struck by trouble, the neighbors came without being called; they rallied to keep a farm going and the family fed and cared for. I never felt that I was less than welcome during the time that friends took care of me. That way of life has largely disappeared, but the memory lingers on. #

