

My First Recollection

Betty Lou Leach

My first recollection is indelibly photographed on my brain. In this picture, my earliest memory, I see myself seated in a low sewing chair, my feet thrust straight before me. I am nearly three years of age but rather small. In my arms I am holding my baby brother, who is only a few months old. I am industriously rocking back and forth, and singing in a thin, childish voice. I am very proud that I have been allowed to rock the new baby to sleep, and occasionally I glance down at his face to see whether my singing has had the desired effect. From behind me comes the sound of an electric sweeper as mother sweeps the bedroom floor. I call very softly, and she comes and takes the baby from my arms. He is sound asleep.

Forces That Have Shaped Me

Clemmie Poole

My earliest remembrances are centered around the joys that come from being a member of a family of six children and the sacrifices that result from such a condition. The only sacrifice that I was capable of making at the time was that of attending school very seldom. Choosing this alternative rather than working has brought upon me many woes.

We went to school only so long as strawberries or cotton or black-eyed peas were not in season. They seemed in season most of the time

to me, I suppose, because we had to earn our living by them. On mornings of these duties the family looked like stairsteps, I being fourth among the children, trudging down the dusty dirt road. My mother carried the tin pail containing the biscuits and sandwiches which tasted like the best of food at noon.

The things I liked best about strawberry picking were eating the berries themselves, if they weren't covered with white insect powder, and watching men crack off the heads of snakes. They did this by rapidly twirling snakes around by their tails and giving a quick jerk. With the end of the day came the climax. The empty pail was filled with the fruit and we strayed wearily home to shortcake or sugared berries.

I don't know which I hated worse, cotton picking or the pea business. Dragging a sack behind you and adding an ounce in an hour seemed cruelty to me. One day my brother and I showed our rebellion by bursting over fifty of the owner's melons. Of course we were such well-thought of children that we escaped the blame.

Picking peas was not so bad but shelling them! The dried peas which we had received as pay, were spread out on sheets and reached almost to the ceiling, which wasn't so low. There we sat around them and shelled our fingers sore. Mother locked the door and guarded it so that escape was impossible. She let us loose for lunch but excuses at any other time were given singly. I have grown to hate the customary New Year's dinner among some families: peas and hog head for good luck. I ate them for months at breakfast, dinner and supper.

During this time I longed for education. I remember plainly going to school after strict forbiddance without a hat in the snow. I had thrown an old black coat over my head and, on arriving at the mod-