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 in­
dustriously 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 sing­
ing has had the desired effect. From
behind me comes the sound of an
electric sweeper as mother sweeps
the bedroom floor. I call very soft­
ly, 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 cen­
tered 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 sac­
rifice that I was capable of making at
the time was that of attending school
very seldom. Choosing this alterna­
tive 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 morn­
ings 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 sand­
wiches which tasted like the best
of food at noon.

The things I liked best about straw­
berry picking were eating the berries
themselves, if they weren’t covered
with white insect powder, and watch­
ing 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 add­
ing an ounce in an hour seemed
cruelty to me. One day my brother
and I showed our rebellion by burst­
ing 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 din­
nner 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 ed­
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
ern school with its modern children, tucked it under my cloak until I reached my desk. To add to my embarrassment the teacher asked me if I came hatless, while I was tucking it in my desk.

So it was a great boon, when my cousin from the north made a visit to Tennessee, in 1936, when I was nine years old, and brought me back with her.

"Jerks" at Camp

Martha Finney

Perhaps it would be well to explain the significance of the word "jerks" before proceeding further. "Jerks" is a Girl Scout colloquialism for the daily early-morning calisthenics. Of all the institutions in a Girl Scout camp or under the sun, this one is to me the most distasteful.

There is one main reason for this dislike. Consider for a moment a typical morning at camp. The bugle sounds, and it is necessary to report for jerks immediately. At six-thirty of a summer's morning the grass is very dewy, and consequently after a few minutes of running and jumping about in it, not only the slippers are wet, but also the bottoms of one's pajama trousers. Having cold, slimy slippers is sufficiently uncomfortable, but to have clammy pajamas clinging to one's ankles is unbearable. In addition to the physical discomfort, this condition also makes it impossible to slip back into a warm, inviting cot for a stolen few moments of laziness before the bugle calls for the Colors ceremony.

How much more satisfying it is to substitute in place of this ordeal a swift plunge into Lake Erie, which succeeds in awakening one so completely that there is no temptation to climb back into bed.

My reading library enlarged when grade school work had begun with the well-known additions of Robinson Crusoe, Alice in Wonderland, Uncle Tom's Cabin, and Black Beauty, a book that caused many tears to flow, and instilled in me, as I remember, a passionate love for horses.

As the years progressed, school became more closely an intrinsic part of my life. My parents were helping and encouraging, and sets of books were bought for reference work. They lent whole-hearted support in any worthy affair that had connection with the school; their willingness to help made me love them more than ever before.

Experiences rather than people influenced my early years: certain trips away from home; occasional rides into the country, accompanied by lovely hikes in the fall on cushioned rugs of scarlet leaves; cold but happy hunting excursions in snowy winters, when I carried a gun more for ostentation than for meat for the pantry. The physical exertion made me feel fully alive and exuberantly in secret communion with Nature.

My dog, on whom I tagged the suitable name of Mutt, was a big joy; and although his size did not equal that of the St. Bernard whose picture decorated one wall of my room, I cared for him much more than for the big brown-eyed, inert canine. I remember especially one occasion when he played the role of "Mary's Little Lamb," and followed me to school. He did look very gentle and subdued sitting on the seat with the teacher; but too much commotion was aroused, and Mutt reluctantly had to depart.