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Reminiscences of Randolph Avenue

Lois Mason Miller

I was born at home on Randolph Avenue, then known as Randolph Street, the baby girl in a family of three girls. I attended East Clinton Elementary School and always came home for lunch, unless it rained, for we lived so close. This was true for all my years in school through junior high and Huntsville High School on Randolph. Life was simpler then for Huntsville had a population of 16,000 citizens and we walked everywhere.

My Mother never had to chauffeur me to lessons and activities for my dancing teacher, Irene Jones, lived across the street and my piano teacher, Mrs. Edwin Jones, lived around the corner on East Clinton. In the summertime the neighborhood kids and we would walk downtown to the Lyric Theatre on Saturdays. We could attend the movie, buy a candy bar and drink all for 25 cents. Then we would walk home and reenact the cowboy movies, "Hopalong Cassidy." We had such fun!

In those days milk was delivered to your back door by the milk man. Fresh vegetables were sold off of trucks that came to your house. We had a Syndey who sold to us. The ice man came down the street in his green wagon pulled by a horse. He had huge chunks of ice to sale. Our favorite ice man was named "Joe." He liked us kids in the neighborhood and when we asked for a piece of ice to cool us off in the summer, he always had us first sing all together, "Joe, give us some ice!" Then he would give each of us some ice. We loved that cool taste!

When I was in high school, it was the big band era and jitterbugging was the "King of Dance." I jitterbugged many an hour and night at the Russel Erskine Hotel on Clinton Street, now a Senior Retirement Center. The old hotel was at its prime at this time. We had parties in the Blue Room, Green Room, or Red Room (like the White House), depending on the space needed. The dances were held in the beautiful ballroom on the first floor. The Red Room and Green Room were more for small luncheons and dinner parties. One of their specialities was turkey coquettes. Um good! I remember we were told not to go up to the roof of the hotel, but we did several times anyway, for it was an adventure to take the elevator and go to the top!

After I graduated from Huntsville High, I went to Tuscaloosa to enter the University of Alabama. Meanwhile, I had met William Miller and fallen in love while a senior in high school. We both enjoyed the university and in my junior year, he joined the Navy (this was during the Korean Conflict), and was away my last two years of college. We became engaged my senior year and were to be married after I graduated in June.

I had numerous bridal parties, but one I have the fondest memories of is the bridal tea Bill's grandmother gave for me in the home that is now the Peter Barber home on Randolph. Mamie Moring Miller was his step-grandmother having married William Press Miller, his grandfather. His father was E. P. Miller. The house was lovely that day with gardenias out of the yard, roses and other flowers throughout the house. Spiced tea, cheese straws, various finger sandwiches and lots of sweet goodies were served. Friends called from two to four and signed a guest book when they arrived. I still have that book!

At that time the dining room was straight back as one entered the front hallway. This is now a parlor. The house had a front porch which has since been removed. Bill used to bring me a fresh gardenia from Mamie's lovely bushes every night while we dated in the summer. We were married on June 28th.

Huntsville was a lazy little Southern town typical of those days in Alabama and the South where everybody knew each other. My family had a furniture business, Mason Furniture Company. My father was William Oscar Mason and my Mother, Mabel Mason, who is 90 years young, still lives on Randolph! Ah what sweet memories for those were the good ole days!

Louis Mason Miller lived in Clinton, Iowa, for over 20 years where she served on the Board of Education as President. She received the "Woman of Action" Award and she worked for the Governor of Iowa, Terry Branstad. Since returning, she has served on HHF, as Chair of the Library Foundation Board, as Chair and Vice President of the Housing Authority, as Vice Regent of Twickenham Town DAR, and presently serves as Vice Chair of the Republican Party in Madison County.