

Memories of Fern DuBose

I am Fern Delite Hall McMahan DuBose. I was born on December 4, 1939, in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, to my mother, Diamond “Eloise” Sparks (12/6/1922 – 2/4/2010), and my father, Rufus David Hall (10/24/1919 – 2/6/2014). My mother was born at her Roby grandparents’ ranch house called “Chacra,” located between Glenwood Springs and New Castle, Colorado. This was the home of my great grandparents, Ornon Milton Roby and Mary Eleanor Sherwood Roby. Great grandfather Roby sold real estate and wisely retained mineral rights to properties, which remain in the family today. When we lived with them, I remember many nights playing games after supper and great grandfather Roby helping great grandmother with the dishes. I also remember that as a child, great grandmother Roby nursed me through rheumatic fever, chicken pox, mumps and measles. During the years I lived with my Roby great grandparents, our family celebrated “Decoration Day.” This holiday became “Memorial Day” after WWII. We would take flowers grown in their yard to decorate family graves at the nearby cemetery.

Mother’s parents, my maternal grandparents, were Ora “Bell” Roby Sparks Pyeatt and Walter Enfield Sparks. My mother was 4 years old when her parents divorced. After her mother’s divorce, she and her mother continued to live with her Roby grandparents until she married William “Bill” McMahan. For as long as I can remember, we called Bell “Grandma Bruin.” This term of endearment came from a book she read to us as children, Old Mother West Wind by Thornton W. Burgess. A bear in the story was called Bruin and she called herself that, which became her nickname.

Grandma Bruin was a quiet woman, who loved playing Scrabble and doing crossword puzzles. She always put everyone else first. I remember when grandma Bruin would serve chicken for dinner. She would wait for everyone else before she took for herself. Often, all that was left was the neck, but she’d never complain. When she married Niler Pyeatt, she became step-mother to his five children, and then had two more children with Niler: Lawrence and Melvin Pyeatt. I remember calling grandpa Pyeatt “Grandpa Snazzy.” He was always dressed to impress and looking for the next big break. My great grandparents Roby often rescued him from one business deal gone wrong or another. I remember Grandpa Snazzy as being a bit of an opportunist. He and Grandma Bruin stayed together until he passed away. Grandma Bruin worked many jobs to support herself. She would iron clothing for people and provide home health care, and she’d sort peaches for the local Palisade growers.

In later years, Grandma Bruin’s health became challenged by gallbladder problems. She called the pain her “bilious attacks.” A doctor once told her she had a bad liver, and I remember her taking “Dones Little Liver Pills” religiously. In her 80s, she had emergency gallbladder surgery, which took care of her liver problem. As a flight nurse at the time, I accompanied Grandma Bruin to Denver for surgery. Grandma Bruin also had severe osteoporosis. She broke both hips, a finger and had multiple spinal column fractures.

My grandfather on my mother’s side, Walter Enfield Sparks, served in the Army Medical Corps in France during WWII. He attended William Jewell College and Viola Bible Institute in Kansas. He became an ordained minister at the Calvary Baptist Church in Los Angeles, California. Because the Baptist Church would not allow a divorced person to serve as a minister, grandfather Sparks couldn’t have his own church. He did, however, fill in for other pastors. To

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support his family, grandfather Sparks had a small farm in the Fruitvale area near Grand Junction.

As to why Grandpa Sparks and Grandma Bruin divorced, I was told she simply didn't love him. Grandpa Sparks would go on to marry a divorcee by the name of Lillian Cantrell McMahan. She was the mother of Bill McMahan, who would eventually become my step-father. Grandpa Sparks worked as a traveling salesperson for Minnesota Woolen Company selling blankets, jackets, hats and wool shirts. Grandpa Sparks would later officiate my wedding to my future husband in Ouray, Colorado.

I remember Grandpa Sparks had some very strange eating habits. I recall how he would drive the cooks crazy at the Beanery Restaurant (now Pufferbelly Station). He would walk into the kitchen and make his choices. Grandpa Sparks liked to listen to the radio. "The Bell Telephone Hour", "One Man's Family", and "The First Nighter", were some of his favorites. I remember he kept himself occupied by cracking walnuts, shelling popcorn and mending work gloves.

Grandpa Sparks wife, Lillian, became a grandmother to me. She was a wonderful cook and known for her Sunday fried chicken dinners. She grew wonderberries for her delicious syrups and pies. I remember her as being very cheerful, even after she'd spend many hours tending to her garden, chickens and geese. Her flowers were well known throughout the area, and her bulbs and cuttings were shared by many of our family members and friends, and in community gardens, which still remain today. Grandma Bruin and Grandma Sparks were always pleasant and friendly with one another. They were a beautiful example of Christian grace and kindness to everyone in our complicated blended family.

My mother recalled being a quite spoiled as a child. Discipline was rare, but she remembered Grandad Roby turning a hose on her during a tantrum once. Mother had very little contact with her birth father. During the several times she remembered he visited, a beautiful set of China dishes and a purple wool dress were two treasured gifts from him. An early memory of my great grandad Roby was probably around 1943. On July 4th, Grandad Roby lit a dynamite charge in his yard at 6:30 in the morning, waking everyone in the neighborhood in celebration of Independence Day. This became a tradition until the town thought it unsafe and asked him to stop. I remember that eventually Grandad Roby's dynamite stash became fuzzy and unsafe. Grandad Roby and Uncle Melvin set the box adrift on the river and shot it with his 30-06 rifle. There were two huge blasts and the remnants disappeared down the river.

Another memory I have of Grandad Roby is his work ethic. My grandparents taught us how to work hard, and they made it fun. One of his favorite sayings was, "We all work, so we can all play." Grandma and Grandpa Roby set the example of a good relationship for us kids. When Grandad was done in the fields, he still helped Grandma in the kitchen. Grandma always helped Grandad in the fields, when she finished her inside work.

My mother married Rufus Hall in 1939. She was just shy of 17 years old and had to quit school when she became pregnant with me. (Mother was a very good student and found it hard to have stopped her education. At the age of 53, she would get her GED.) I was born 2 days before her 17th birthday. Mother loved music and was a talented musician and singer. She performed at the

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Sheridan Opera House in Telluride. She played violin and taught herself how to play piano by attending the piano lessons of her cousin, Virginia Van Horn. Mother played piano for the church and was our church choir director. Mother also soloed many community functions and funerals. She played piano wherever needed. During peach season, she would pack peaches alongside Grandad Bruin, as she sorted.

According to mother, my father, Rufus, was a handsome, young Texan she'd met at a sledding party at the Civilian Conservation Corps camp. His parents were Jerry David Hall and Beulah Beatrice Gregory Hall. Grandfather Hall died in 1936 of Tuberculosis. Beulah died of a heart attack at the age of 41. I never knew my paternal grandparents.

Rufus worked at a filling station and a movie theater. He would often visit the Roby home and help grandad with chores and projects around the house. Rufus had been living at the filling station on a cot, but when he became ill in the winter of 1938, my grandparents Roby took him in and nursed him back to health. Because he was sick, Rufus had lost his job, but he soon found another job with the railroad. After he left, he only came back one time, and we never heard from him again. I would learn much later in life that Rufus joined the Marines and served our country in the military during WWII. He would marry again and have two more children. He would eventually retire from the sales force of Lone Star Cadillac Company in Dallas, TX. His second wife, Paula, would never know that he'd been married before or had another child.

During the World War II years, we lived with my grandparents Roby on Rapid Creek. This is where I'd come to know my uncles: Lawrence and Melvin Pyeatt. The Roby and Pyeatt families farmed peaches. From a young age, we kids were enlisted to help the family wherever we could. My great grandparents Roby had fun stories about the dances they would have at their old homestead near Craig, Colorado. The dances would be held in the barn where beds were set up for the kids and everyone brought food for a potluck meal. Grandad would play the fiddle and the adults would dance all night long. They'd always get home in time to feed the animals and milk the cows the next morning. I remember Grandma Roby dancing us kids around their house. As WWII neared the end, I recall mother worked nights at the canning factory in Palisade. She supervised German prisoners of war. Mother was a devoted woman of faith and her concern for the spiritual welfare of others often focused on their relationship with the Lord.

When I was 3 ½ years old, Mother ended her marriage to Rufus by filing abandonment. She would go on to marry William "Bill" McMahan on August 17, 1942. Mother and Bill had three children who are my half siblings: J. Stephens McMahan, Shannon McMahan Jones and Rebecca McMahan Guitar. Bill had been a miner and worked for Idarado Mine in the San Juan Mountains of Colorado. He'd advanced quickly from a miner to management positions that included hiring workers and becoming Idarado's safety director.

I remember when Bill was drafted into WWII. The military pulled miners to mine metals for building Army equipment. Bill was sent to Idaho and our family went with him. While we were living in Idaho, my half-brother, J. Stephen McMahan was born. After a short leave, Bill was called to full time military service. He would have to complete basic training twice, after the Army lost his initial paperwork. When Bill deployed, Mother, Steve and I went to live with grandparent's Roby. Daddy served in the 871 Signal Corp of the US Army AirForce. He was

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sent to Guam where he loaded bombs onto cargo planes. While serving in the military, rations would include packs of cigarettes. Bill learned to smoke cigarettes and would struggle with cigarette addiction the rest of his life.

At the age of 5, I started school at Palisade Grade School. There were 30 students in my class. I would go on to attend 2nd grade at Mt. Lincoln Country Grade School just west of Palisade. I missed most of that school year due to illness. I remember that my parents had a car with a crank start. Most days it would not start, so I had to walk over a mile to school. My grandparent's Roby bought me a bike, but I was often too tired to ride it. One of my earliest memories of school was a teacher, who left a significant impression on me. I was working on an art project and I colored everything green. I can still remember being questioned by the teacher about this color choice. I would not draw or color after that.

When Daddy returned from military deployment, our family moved to Ouray, Colorado, where Daddy would work in the mines again as a contract driller, and I would repeat 2nd grade. As a child, I was quite unwell much of the time and would catch any virus or infection going around. I remember there wasn't any playground equipment at the school I attended. We played a lot of outdoor group games like Annie, Annie Over and Red Rover. Girls played Jacks. Boys played marbles. My brother, Steve, got in trouble with Mother for scuffing and wearing out the toes of his shoes because he'd spend so much time on his knees playing marbles.

At our little house in Ouray, it would be 2 years before we would have an indoor bathroom. Winters in Ouray were very cold and the trek to the outhouse was made by shoveling many feet of snow to clear the path. Mother raised chickens and had a big garden. I remember mother sewing my school dresses and my Brownie uniform. She also crocheted beautifully. Mother and most of the women of that time always tried to follow a "Chores for Days of the Week" schedule. It was a neighborhood challenge to see who would get their wash hung out on the line first on Monday morning. A ringer washing machine and two rinse tubs were standard, as were a wash board and lye soap. During winter, the clothes would freeze on the line, so we would have to bring them inside to dry. In January of 1946, Daddy adopted me. Daddy was, at times, a difficult man with a short temper. He was often angry. As he grew older, his health declined and his anger amplified. He would eventually die by suicide.

At the age of about 7 years old, I decided to run away from home one day. I don't remember why. I announced my plan to mother, who was ironing clothes. Mother ironed and packed my dresses to take with me. I marched down the hill from our house only to be invited in for a visit by our neighbor, Mrs. Zook. We chatted for a while and she gave me a cookie. I would go home after that, not knowing until later that mother had alerted Mrs. Zook of my plan.

While we lived in Ouray, I met my life long best friends Judy Tristant Smith & Vera Green Crick. Life centered around church, work, school, and family. As youngsters, we got jobs as soon as we were able. I started working at about the age of 12. I was never asked my age and always paid in cash. I waitressed and help set bowling pins at the Elks Lodge. In those days, setting bowling pins was done by hand. I remember when waitressing, the miners always left good tips. Vera and I also walked a dog for a local woman. In addition, I worked at a motel. I always enjoyed my summer jobs. It gave me enough money to buy school clothes.

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I remember Sunday drives with Mother and Daddy. We would explore the roads and trails of the San Juan Mountains. I came to appreciate the beauty and nature, although at the time, I would rather have been swimming with friends. As I got older, we would explore 1800's mining ghost towns and go treasure hunting.

As a student, I got average grades and spent most of my school years in Ouray. During those school years, I continued to help mom raise chickens, hunt for mushrooms, and pick choke cherries for jelly. I am a tomboy at heart, but my Grandparents Roby always insisted I wear dresses. I would have much preferred pants, climbing trees, riding bikes and swimming the canals with the boys, but they weren't really interested. My Uncle Melvin Pyeatt played with me as a child. I loved to read Nancy Drew Mysteries. My father insisted on "lights out" at 10 p.m., but I'd spend many nights with a flashlight under the covers reading Nancy Drew.

I remember learning how to swim at the Ouray Hot Springs pool, and I swam well enough in those early years to compete. My first experience of television was in Denver, when I was there for a swim meet. We were staying in a motel with a black and white television set in the room. I don't remember what we watched. I loved swimming and competing. I would go on to become a water safety instructor and trainer for the Red Cross, and I taught swimming.

I recall the polio epidemic of 1952 and the development of a vaccine in 1953. I remember when the first telephone lines were not private, and we shared the line with at least six neighbors. It was always entertaining to listen to conversations, and there were times neighbors would jump in to say they needed to use the telephone. When private telephone lines were introduced, we felt so blessed we could use the phone any time we needed to without interruption.

On May 31, 1956, I married the love of my life, Harvey "Earl" DuBose. Earl was born on May 31, 1936, and passed away on August 19, 2014. I remember Earl's family was very poor. In those early days, his family would call for the doctor by putting a sign out on the road in front of their house that said they were in need of medical services. Dr. Weidline would make rounds and stop in when he'd see the sign. Earl's parents would trade fertilizer for Dr. Weidline's fields in exchange.

My uncle, Melvin Pyeatt, was one of Earl's friends and classmates. When I visited the Pyeatt's, I remember Earl being 10 years old and playing with the boys. The boys were nice to me, but their fun didn't include girls, especially one in a dress! As teenagers, Earl and I would spend time together and double date with Uncle Melvin and his friends. When we went steady, we would write a letter to each other every day we weren't together. A postage stamp was .03 cents back then. Earl gave me his class ring to wear on a chain around my neck. When Earl was a senior in high school, he was class president and we would attend prom together. Earl graduated Palisade High School Class of 1955.

By my senior year, I'd made honor roll and graduated from Palisade High School in 1958. I loved music, band, drama, and chorus. My love of music and band lead me to play baritone saxophone in concert band. In marching band, I played any instrument the band had available. I never had any formal music lessons or instruments of my own. I always found what I needed through the school program. I would compete in a solo saxophone music competition and I

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recall one of the judges commenting on my performance. He noted I had excellent stage presence, which gave me confidence in public speaking and performing in front of a group. I also remember in my senior year, we girls were allowed to wear pants on Friday. This was a big deal, as we'd always been expected to wear dresses. I remember we would roll up the cuffs of our pants to mid-calf and wore our white and brown saddle oxford shoes with ankle socks.

I knew Earl was a good man with a gentle nature. He was kind, intelligent, generous and handsome. Our first "house" was a little camp trailer outside a residential home in Palisade. In our 2nd year of marriage, we would move into an apartment and eventually a little house. We were both anxious to start a family, but chose to delay for 2 years. Earl was encouraging and supportive as I finished high school. He would wait for me at the school while I finished play practice. Back then, I remember Daddy telling me girls didn't need math, because they just got married. So, I graduated with basic math skills. When I'd eventually go to college, Earl and my daughter, Carmell, would be my math tutors.

Earl proposed to me on the Colorado Monument. It was a lovely evening with the lights of the Grand Valley below us. Our parents had to sign permission for us to marry, because we were both underage. We tied the knot on his 20th birthday. I was 16 and a half. We would honeymoon in Aspen, before it was "Aspen." When Earl and I married, he worked as a roofer and did general home construction. He would also become a certified paramedic.

In 1957, I went to work for the Stoner family packing peaches along with Earl's sisters, Betty and Francis. I was a fast packer. By the end of that season, I had made enough money to buy Earl a wedding ring. In 1958, I went to work for the United Fruit Growers packing shed platform. Many farmers brought their fruit to be packed and shipped from there by rail. Grandma Bruin worked as a sorter. We worked many late nights and a lot of hours during peach harvest. Nothing would go to waste on Grandma Bruin's shift. She set any overripe peaches to the side and ate them at her next break.

Early in our marriage, Earl and I had taken out a loan to buy a little black and white television set. Earl paid half the amount and went back to pay it off with his next paycheck. The store wouldn't let him pay the balance owed. They required monthly payments and interest. He was mad. After that first experience, Earl and I never took out a loan or paid interest again. We always saved for what we needed. At first, Earl called it our "cigarette fund." Neither one of us smoked, but every paycheck, we'd put away in savings what we figured smokers spent.

In 1958, Earl went to work for Crescent Creamery as a milk man. He ended up working 38 years in that industry. As a milk man, Earl made many friends across the valley. I remember as Earl worked his way up through the ranks and the small dairies sold to larger ones, Earl's main concern was for the employees and how they and their families would be affected by the changes. Eventually, he'd become the General Manager for Colorado West Dairies and worked in the butter and cheese commodities market for Sinton Dairy Foods.

Earl would also make a little extra money as a football official. With that money, we saved enough to buy a VW Bug. We paid cash and got it directly from Germany. When Earl had to work in Denver for Colorado West Dairies, we got an apartment there. To save money and wear

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and tear on our own vehicles, Earl would shuttle rental cars back and forth and we'd drive them instead of using our own.

Earl was a great father. We have two daughters: Shelda and Carmell. Our first daughter, Shelda, was born in 1959, when I was 19 years old. The morning I gave birth to Shelda, I was ironing Earl's shirt and told him we're having a baby today. I was only in the hospital one day. Grandma Bruin picked me up and brought me home from the hospital in her car. On the way home, we got a flat tire. I got out of the car and changed it. Grandma Bruin was beside herself. I was just anxious to get home and surprise Earl when he came home from work. Carmell would follow two years later, when I was 21. At that time, fathers would have to wait outside of the maternity ward. They could come in after the baby was born.

By 1962 Earl and I saved \$3,000 to build our first home. We bought a piece of property on central Orchard Mesa. We built the lower level first, and as soon as the bathroom walls were up, we moved in to save on rent. I remember the Cuban Missile Crisis. It was scary. I remember President Kennedy wrote a letter published in September's issue of Life Magazine announcing he'd ordered a naval quarantine of Cuba to prevent Soviet ships from bringing more weapons into Cuba. We were advised to find a "fallout shelter" to protect us from radioactive fallout resulting from a possible nuclear explosion. We decided to stock our basement with food and water in the "fruit room." Even though it was a small space, we thought we could tolerate it if something happened. I remember when the US became involved in the war in Vietnam after nearly 10 years of tension, and then ending with so many American lives lost. A tragedy never forgotten.

Earl joined the central Orchard Mesa Volunteer Fire Department in 1964. He served as Fire Chief for 23 years and as a member of the Fire Board until 2012. From 1965 to 1968, I worked for the Colorado State University Experiment Station during winters when the kids were in school. I worked for Dr. Norm Luepschen. He was the plant pathologist. I did general plant pathology lab work and secretarial work. By 1966, we would buy 7 acres across the street and rent the little house there. We'd also buy two more rentals on Pinyon Avenue. On April 4, 1968, I remember the assassination of Martin Luther King. Just a few months later, on June 6th, Bobby Frances Kennedy would be assassinated. These were very hard times for our country.

In 1969, I worked as an Avon lady. When big orders came in, Carmell, Shelda and I would unpack them. The girls loved to play Avon lady. My time as an Avon lady didn't last long. I felt guilty selling products to people who, it was evident, they didn't have money to spend on extras like Avon. The last straw came when I took my fashionable boots off before I went in to a customer's house. Their dog ran off with my boots and destroyed them. I quit.

Shelda and Carmell would both do well in school and find their way in the world. They had many friends, and were very connected to their church and community. As the girls got old enough to work, Shelda would help Earl with office related tasks and Carmell would learn to detail the milk trucks. Earl was always one to see deeply what the girls needed to grow and learn. He was able to teach and explain life and work to them, so they could flourish. I remember Earl's chaperon skills were a little lax, when I came home to find Shelda and her boyfriend sitting on the couch in the living room while Earl had fallen asleep on the floor.

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What was instilled in us as kids, and we went on to instill in our own kids, was a strong work ethic and the value of working hard, following our faith, and knowing right from wrong. Community was so important. Everyone watched out for one another. We all learned early how to take care of ourselves and do for ourselves. When Earl was a teenager, he got taken to jail on a hunting violation. He called his dad to come get him. His dad didn't have the money to get him out and told him to figure it out himself. He did. We always believed God was in control. We wouldn't worry about tomorrow. We'd focus on what we could do today.

As the girls got more self-sufficient, I enrolled as a student at Mesa Junior College, and by 1973, I became a Nursing Student. I graduated in 1985 magna cum laude with a BS in Nursing. In 1991, I would go on to receive my MS in Administration from Central MI University in a program sponsored by St. Mary's Hospital. I started out as a staff nurse at Hilltop Rehabilitation and Extended Care. I worked at both St. Mary's Hospital and Community Hospital in various roles. I found intensive care nursing to be very stressful. I flourished in the emergency room where patients were short term and critical patients were interspersed between a wide variety of not so serious conditions – some funny, some heartwarming and some very odd. We would unexpectedly deliver babies, pull Jelly Belly candy out of kids' noses, stitch up all manner of injuries, and often found ourselves dealing with all kinds of emotional and mental health issues.

I would spend time as a flight nurse, as well, on both helicopter and single engine plane. This assignment was not for the faint of heart, as we flew in conditions that would challenge the most experienced pilots. My longest assignment was Director of Emergency Services at St. Mary's Hospital – a job I truly enjoyed and excelled. I would move on to work for a company called Professional Seminars Healthcare - A group of doctors and nurses who volunteered and traveled the world to teach medical procedures to medical staff in other countries.

As Shelda and Carmell got older, they participated in 4H. We had pigs and cows that left their mark on our lives. Daisy, a cow Earl bred many years for calves, would stick her nose hairs up to the electric fence to see if it was on. If she found it was not on, she would lead the other cows from the pasture to run amuck in the neighborhood. When Grandma Bruin was 77 and visiting with Earl and I, she helped gather up the wayward cows following a Daisy breakout. The bond Earl and Daisy had was strong. When Daisy got old, Earl had to put her down. It was one of the few times I'd seen tears in his eyes. She was part of the family. We'd also had two hogs. I believe their names were Chisel and Bulfred. They became very bonded to Earl, as well. He'd scratch them behind their ears with a dried-out corn cob. Chisel and Bulfred would hear Earl's car drive up and they'd lay down, put up their ears and wait for their daily scratch.

Shelda and Carmell would both go on to college and pursue careers as medical professionals. They would marry and have children of their own. When we retired in 1996, I was 57 and Earl was 60. We joined up with a company called Adventure Caravans, where we would take people on the RVing adventures of their lives. We would go all over the United States, Canada, Mexico and into Central America. We made wonderful friends and spent years organizing and navigating our groups to all corners of North America, South America and Europe.

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One particularly hair-raising experience happened while we were crossing borders in Central America. The lawmen in these states were corrupt and tourists were susceptible to dangerous situations if caught by these unscrupulous characters. As our group attempted to cross a border state in Central America, corrupt lawmen arrested Earl for no reason and put him in jail. We'd always carried cash to pay for our safe passage and I was out of money. "Lord," I said, "what am I going to do?" The lawmen went to move Earl and I ran toward them upset, screaming, and causing a scene. A crowd started to gather around us. It was by the grace of God, the men let Earl go and our group was allowed to leave. We were told never to return.

By way of my work with Professional Seminars Healthcare, and then Earl and I retiring and joining Adventure Caravans, we got to see the world. Earl had a passion for photography and his camera went with us to every new adventure. Here is a snapshot of where we traveled: Netherlands and Kenya, Russia and Finland, Spain, Morocco, United Arab Emirate, Japan, Thailand, Hong Kong, India, Belize, England, Scotland & Wales, Mexico, Australia & New Zealand, Canadian Maritimes Provinces, Panama Canal and Central America, Europe, Churchill Manitoba, Artic Circle, Israel, Ireland, and Cuba. In all of our travels, Earl and I always sought opportunities to be of service to others. Even after Earl passed away, I still had a travel bug and continued to visit places I had not been to before.

Much later in life, I would eventually meet my birth father, Rufus Hall. Through genealogy work, I located my half-sister, Kathy Hall Smith. Kathy had a Master's Degree in Guidance and Counseling and worked for Amber University in Dallas, TX. My presence came as a shock to Rufus' family. Rufus' children and wife did not know he'd been married before or had another child. Kathy's mother, Paula, was very ill at the time. We would decide collectively it was best to not bring this new information to her. She surely would have divorced Rufus on the spot. Rufus' wife passed away and in 2004, Kathy developed dementia secondary to a car accident. She had one daughter, Stephanie Smith. Kathy passed before we had a chance to meet. When Rufus and I finally met, he'd told me that he'd always intended to come back and then somehow life just got in the way.

Earl's health began to decline four years before he died. I became his caretaker, which, at first, was not full time, but by the third year, he'd fallen and broke his hip. He'd been placed in the Palisade Care Center for rehabilitation. One of our last great adventures was when I broke him out. The center staff had told me Earl shouldn't go home yet. He wanted to come home and I wanted him home. Early the next morning, I went to the facility, got him dressed, gathered his things, loaded him onto a wheelchair and we headed home. Sure, the staff tried to stop us, but we'd have none of that.

Reflecting now on the life we'd built, much of it rooted in our faith in God and church, in each other and the children we'd raised, the community of friends and family that rallied from far and near, Earl's kind and steady leadership that lifted people up during the toughest of times, Earl would go home to his Lord and Savior with all my blessings that we'd be together again in the arms of our Lord someday. Until then, I still have things to do, places to go and people to see. I think about making another trip with my best girlfriend, but right now I'm hungry. I'll hop on my cell phone, tap into my McDonald's app and order breakfast. The kids that work at McDonald's know me by name. I still drive and will continue to until it's time to quit.

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Even today, I find myself learning and adapting to a world full of change. Earl and I followed God's word faithfully and I still practice His teachings. I think about how much words matter and turn to two Bible Psalms that carried us through and remind me to do better and be better:

Psalm Matthew 7:3-5 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own?

Psalm David 19:14 May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight.

Thank you, Lord, for your wisdom and guidance.

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A Note from the Scribe

Fern, it has been my honor and privilege to sit with you, listen and write your memories. Your sense of adventure, resilience and practical nature shine, as you continue to connect with the faith, family and community that have sustained you through this lifetime. The love you shared with Earl gives me a true sense of your commitment to one another. In our time together, I got to know Earl, as well, and have come to appreciate deeply the example you set, and all the lives you both touched. Your unwavering fearlessness, trust and belief in God are qualities that inspire me. I hope your family and friends enjoy this writing long after we're both gone.

Sincerely,

Kim Turner