

My Life Story



Madge "Jackie" King, Story Teller



Thomas King, Story

Acknowledgement

As we near the consummation of the Ethnic Life Stories Project, there is a flood of memories going back to the concept of the endeavor. The awareness was there that the project would lead to golden treasures. But I never imagined the treasures would overflow the storehouse. With every Story Teller, every Story Keeper, every visionary, every contributor, every reader, the influence and impact of the project has multiplied in riches. The growth continues to spill onward. As its outreach progresses, "boundaries" will continue to move forward into the lives of countless witnesses.

Very few of us are "Native Americans." People from around the world, who came seeking freedom and a new life for themselves and their families, have built up our country and communities. We are all individuals, the product of both our genetic makeup and our environment. We are indeed a nation of diversity.

Many of us are far removed from our ancestors who left behind the familiar to learn a new language, new customs, new political and social relationships. We take our status as Americans for granted. We sometimes forget to welcome the newcomer. We bypass the opportunity to ask about their origins and their own journey of courage.

But, wouldn't it be sad if we all spoke the same language, ate the same food, and there was no cultural diversity.

This project has left me with a tremendous debt of gratitude for so many. The almost overwhelming task the Story Keeper has, and the many hours of work and frustration to bring forth a story to be printed. I salute you.

To the Story Tellers, thank you for letting us share in your heart and soul. It is my prayer that some or many of the stories will influence many young persons to another level, to be enmeshed in the pursuit of learning of other cultures that make up our community and the world.

This has, indeed, been a project of "Many" for the Community. Thanks to the following who have played a role in helping to achieve the goal. The list is practically endless, first names only. You know who you are and what you did . . . sincere thanks to each of you:

Caroline, Charity, Charlotte, Bob, Dana, De Ann, Ed, Eric, Erman, Jim, Joha Oke, John K, John M, June, Kay, Kendall, Maria, Mark, Michelle, Myra, Norma, Pat, Rachel, Rob, Starr, Susan, Valerie, and special recognition to Jim Coombs, SMSU, Map Department.

Jim Mauldin
Coordinator
Ethnic Life Stories
'01 '02 '03

The Ethnic Life Stories Project....

...giving the Springfield community a window to its diversity through the life stories of ethnic elders.

Liewe Se Storie Afrikaanse	Afrikaanse (2)
ÖSÖ GAY HÄY WÖ TAN	Apache
قصص من الحياة	Arabic (2)
Ga-no-du Ka-ne-he-lv-s-gi	Cherokee
自傳	Chinese (2)
Life Stories	English (5)
Histoires De Ma Vie	French (2)
Lebensgeschichten	German
סיפור חיים	Hebrew
Mayer rah-Khaan Knee-Hindi	Hindi
生きてきた道	Japanese
나의 살아온 이야기	Korean
DZĪVES STĀSTS	Latvian
ജീവിത കഥകൾ	Malayalam
OPOWIESC z ŻYCIA	Polish
Imanawangtanan Wawanaycasjas	Quechua
Povestea Vie Ţii Mele	Romanian
Жизненные истории	Russian
Historia De La Vida	Spanish (8)
പുഴയ്ക്കി ചിന്ത	Thai
Kuwento Ng Aking Buhay	Tagalog
CHUY-N [◎] Tjĭ	Vietnamese
געשיחטע פון מאיך לעבען	Yiddish

Birthplaces of the Storytellers

2001 2002 2003

Yohannan Abraham
Pathanamthitta, Kerala, India

Janet Akaike - Toste
Kofu, Japan

Tony Albuquerque
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Martha Baker
San Antonio, Texas

Grace Ballenger
Shanghai, China

Ruth L.V. Burgess
Poona (Pune), India

Sara Fajardo Calderon
Guatemala City, Guatemala

Olga Codutti
Rosario, Santa Fe, Argentina

Claudine Arend Cox
Boulay, France

Adalyn Cravens
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada

Taj Farouki
Wadi-Hunayn, Palestine

Malca Flasterstein
Holon, Israel

Edgar Galinanes
Mayaguez, Puerto Rico

Reynaldo Gumucio
Cochabamba, Bolivia

John Hernandez
San Antonio, Texas

Yung Hwang
Okjong, Kyungnam, Korea

Madge (Jackie) King
London, England

Edward P. Ksara
Tangier, Morocco

Hyman Lotven
Kapulah, Russia

Regina Lotven
Nancy, France

Sterling Macer
Mason City, Iowa

Gwendolyn Marshall
Jackson, Mississippi

Maria Michalczyk-Lillich
Sandomierz, Poland

Edith F.L. Middleton
Glasgow, Scotland

Loan Vu Nigh
Thai Binh, Vietnam

Jorge Padron
Pedro Betancourt-Matanza, Cuba

Ruth Penaherrera-Norton
Archidona, Ecuador

Eric Pervunkhin
Moscow, Russia

Ioana Popescu
Bucharest, Romania

Josefina S. Raborar
Manila, Philippines

Juan Salazar
Tuman, Peru

Eligio Sanchez
Mexico City, Mexico

Tong Trithara
Audhaya, Thailand

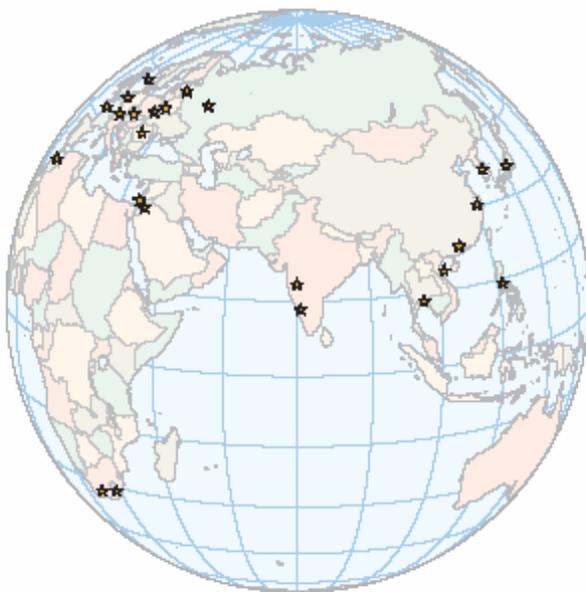
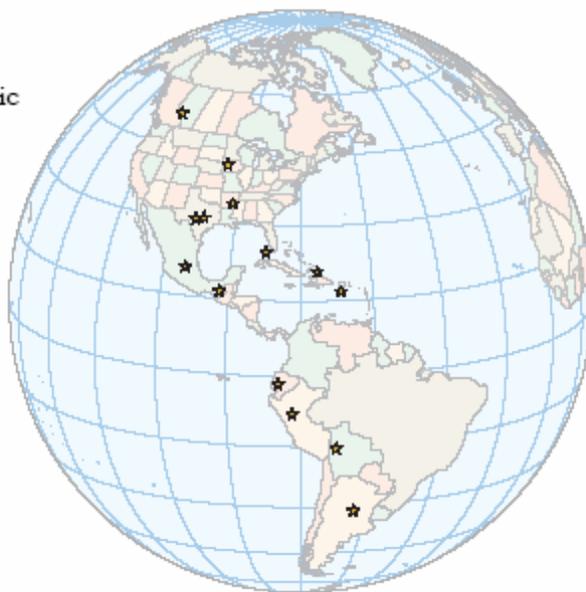
Cyril Vermooten
Beaufort West, South Africa

Joy Vermooten
Nqaberie (Natal), South Africa

Ilga Vise
Riga, Latvia

Hiltrud M. Webber
Domnau, Germany

Tobby Yen
Chung (Zhongshan), China





Madge (Jackie) King
London, England

DEDICATION

I dedicate this story first to my late parents Bill and Lilly Curtis for giving me life and then teaching me to embrace it and enjoy it.

To my dear husband Tom for all his patience and the time he spent putting together my life story. More importantly though for being my friend and confidante through fifty years of marriage and lastly and most importantly for being the father of our two lovely daughters.

To Andi and Jen my two most treasured gifts from God and the loves of my life. I have told you many times how much you were wanted and when God finally sent you to us how much you are loved. Thanks Andi for giving us our grandchildren whom we love dearly.

For all the people who have been in my life, I thank you for your friendship and love and hope that in some small way I have enriched your life as you have mine.

I now have a new friend, Jim Mauldin, and I thank him for allowing me to share this story of my life.

God bless you all.

CHAPTER ONE: MY FAMILY HISTORY

My name is Madge Pamela Curtis King but everyone calls me Jackie. The reason for this is that during my last four years of school, I was required to study French and the teacher, who was from France, wanted authenticity, so we were all given French names. Mine was Jaqueline and so we girls used our French names even when not in school. It was great fun and we certainly enjoyed putting on fake accents and calling each other by name.

So it happened that when I met a young American serviceman at the Wimbledon Palais one night, I told him my pretend name never imagining that he was my future husband and it stuck. And so for all these years I have been called Jackie by most, and still Madge by a few.

I was born on September 5th 1933 in Saint James hospital in Balham, London and was attended at birth by a doctor of course. There weren't any unusual circumstances surrounding my birth except that my mum told me that the bells of St. Mary-Le-Bow church rang loudly that day making me an official cockney and the story behind that is if you were born within the sound of the bell of St. Mary-Le-Bow church you are a cockney. A cockney is a Londoner. They have their own little royalty called Pearly Queen and King and any children are prince or princess and of course it doesn't relate at all to the royal family and is something that pertains just to the cockney people. Even though I was born a cockney I never did speak like a cockney, they have a language all of their own.



Lilly Williams, Age 19

In London we lived in the bottom flat of a three-story house and we lived there until I was almost six years of age. My dad at that time (1939) knew that war was pending with Germany and so he moved us out of the immediate London area and took us in to what they called the greater London area which is in the county of Surrey. Where we had lived originally at No. 3 Warriner Gardens, Battersea, is where all the power works were at that time and would likely be a target for bombs. My dad was well aware of that and moved us into what he hoped would be a safer location. We moved there in July of 1939 at which time I was five, almost six. From the age of six until I was almost twelve there was war going on all around me. London suffered losses daily and that is how I remember those years. People earned their livings in many ways-factories, retail sales etc.

The terrain of my new location was mostly of rolling hills and with more grass than I had ever seen in my young life. When I lived in the heart of London there was always the smells and sounds of buses and trams. Then my family moved into Surrey on a new estate and I remember the smells of flowers and grass and the noise of construction going on daily building more and more houses to accommodate the influx of city people moving into the suburbs. Eventually many of my parent's siblings moved into this area for the same reason, to escape the city.

My mum's names were Lillian Frances Williams Curtis. She was born in Peckham, London on March 31st 1908. Her father John Edward Williams was born in Wales and was in the British army when he met my grandmother who at the time was the upstairs maid to the wife of his Brigadier. I never knew my grandfather because he died from injuries of an accident at his work. I knew my grandmother, whom we called granny Williams, very well. Granny was full-blooded Romany gypsy and a psychic



Granny Williams

with the ability to see what was in the future, good and bad. Sometimes when I was in her presence she would stare ahead without saying a word and then would suddenly snap out of her trance and carry on her conversation as though nothing had happened. Many times she knew someone had died before being told and would go to the persons house to see what she could do to help. All of her daughters and several of her grandchildren were blessed, or cursed, with this anomaly. I can honestly say that only a couple of times have I experienced this feeling and then to a much lesser degree than my mother or

grandmother. I have told my children about this part of their heritage and we have all kidded around about being part of a "Witchy" family. When my son-in-law, Joey, joined the family, he learned a lot of the family secrets including Granny Williams uncanny knack for predictions and so he too enjoyed teasing me about my "witchy powers". Of course I used to jokingly threaten him that if he did anything to displease me I would draw on my powers and he would be sorry! It was always good for a laugh! Some time ago we were sitting around the kitchen table just chatting about nothing in particular when the conversation turned to dying and funerals. I told everyone that when my time came I wanted no sad songs but wanted instead Barry Manilow



*Lilly Williams & Bill Curtis
Engagement photo taken early 1931*

singing in the background to which my son-in-law responded that they had already decided to play “Ding Dong the Witch is Dead” from the Wizard of Oz. It caused quite a laugh among all of us. Granny had been a scullery maid for Lord Kitchener earlier in her life and granddad’s family thought he married beneath his station in life and their union caused a rift in his family for a while. Eventually she was welcomed by everyone as they came to love her for the beautiful person she was. Sometimes she let my sister and I brush her hair, which was a real treat for us and something we cherished in memory long after she was gone. She wore her hair plaited and wound round and round her ears making it appear she wore headphones. But oh, when she let that hair down it was a glorious sight to behold. Black with just a few silver, never gray strands, it tumbled to the floor and she always laughingly chided us not to stand on it as she sat in her chair. We brushed gently and lovingly and formed a bond with her that was very special then and I still feel it today. She eventually became a midwife and delivered hundreds of babies, sometimes as many as five a week.

My dad’s names were Thomas William Curtis. He was born in Torquay, Devon on December 18th 1899. Both my paternal grandparents worked for the Southern Railway in London. Their youngest son Alfred fought with General Montgomery in Africa. Eventually gran and granddad received a telegram from the British Home office notifying them that he was missing, presumed killed in action. After months of heartache, they were informed that he had been wounded and was in a hospital in Africa and would return home soon. What a joy! When he got home, he and his brothers celebrated this safe return by having a few beers in the local pub and it was the only time I saw my dad inebriated!

Shortly thereafter, Uncle Alf married his sweetheart and lived a full, happy life. Granddad Curtis retired at the age of seventy and stayed retired for a year after which he and his governor, otherwise know as a boss, agreed it was time for him to come back to work. He remained actively employed until the ripe old age of eighty. He passed away at the age of ninety-two while I was on board a ship coming to the United States. Granny Curtis who was seventeen years his junior also lived a long and full life.

Mum was a vivacious, loving woman with long naturally curly hair and always laughing or smiling. She worked as an assembler in a munitions factory during the war as did most women who were not pregnant or nursing. After the war she worked in a bakery for many years until she lost her sight. Dad was a caring man but very Victorian in his attitude especially toward women. He thought women should act like ladies at all times, wear hats when they were going out and if he could talk all his women into it, wife and two daughters, wear gloves as well. Of course that eventually went by the wayside but he was very much a man who was not in his time. I always thought dad looked like



*Mum's youngest sister's wedding Sept. 1940
Front Row: Cousin Derek, Cousin Joan and me.
Back Row: Groom's parents, groom, bride (Aunt Daisy), Granny Williams*

Humphrey Bogart. Although the only time we could coax him in going to see a movie was if John Wayne or Laurel and Hardy were featured. One of the fondest memories of my parents that stand out clearly in my mind is Christmas 1940 or 1941. Mum and dad had somehow found a beautiful dollhouse for my sister and I to share and filled each little room with a little treat-apple, orange, chocolate bar etc. They brought it into our room



Bob & I posing for our first official photo 1936

silently and then left holding hands. It was so sweet. These were the days it was very hard to find anything like that and I'm sure my dad paid a little more money for these treats. Black marketing I imagine would have been the order of the day to get some of those things for his children. Sadly they are both deceased now. Mum had a massive stroke at age 77 and died four days later. My brother called and I was unable to go home. I was extremely upset. Dad died at age 87 from congestive heart failure and I was able to be with him for six weeks before he died. Mum has one remaining sister left and we stay in touch and in fact when we go home to England we always try to make a point of seeing her

As I stated before there were three of us children. My brother was the first-born and I was the middle child and then my sister was the youngest. My brother's name was Robert Alfred Curtis (Bob) and he died in 1998. My sister's name is Lillian Florence Curtis Jarvis and she lives with

her husband in Ashford, Kent, England. Both have visited us many times and in fact when Bob was terminally ill he made the trip here only three months before he died because he enjoyed being here so much. Bob died on the 3rd of January 1998 in a hospice center in Sutton, Surrey. He had cancer through his body and it eventually traveled to his brain.

During the war a lady whom we called aunt Flo stayed with us for about a year. She was a single lady and good friend of mum. She was not able to find a place of her own due to the war housing shortage. So she stayed with us for a year and then eventually moved on to different relatives of ours and stayed with them until she was able to find a place of her own.

The person with whom I identify most is without a doubt my mum. She was always there for me in moments of fear, such as during the war years, and in times of joy. We always had our talks over a cup of tea and a nice fire. I admired her for many reasons but especially because it was hard to find food to feed her family because of the war rationing but I never heard her complain. I'm quite sure there were times when she did without herself in order to put something on all our plates. Many years later when I questioned

her about it she would just smile and say, “I always had my cup of tea and that was enough”. At that time she was a very slim woman!

After the move from the inner city in 1939 my family stayed in the same house where I grew up. I lived there until I married and came to the United States and the rest of my family lived there until they married or died. After my parents died my brother bought the house and stayed there until his death.



*Bottom Row, Second & third from left: Gran & Grandad Curtis
Fifth from left: Me
Third row from right: Dad
Mom partially hidden behind Groom's head.*

CHAPTER TWO: EARLIEST MEMORIES AND CHILDHOOD

My Nickname

All my life I have been a cat lover and because of this I was given a nickname by an uncle when I was a little girl. In England cats are called “Moggies” so Uncle Ted always called me Moggie when he visited. I really liked this name.

My Typical Day

During the cooler months it was my job to clean out the fireplace in the morning and start the new fire for the day. I always pretended I was Cinderella. Coal and coke was burned at the time. My sister and I had to keep the house clean on a daily basis. We entertained ourselves as children by looking for pieces of shrapnel from bombs and when not sheltering from air raid warnings we played hopscotch and skipped rope etc. Since food was rationed we never had full tummies but occasionally we had treats and at other times had horrible mistreats. The former was when a neighbor told us that a shop a few miles away had something called peanut butter and that we should take empty jam jars to be filled. We had no idea what we were queuing up for but were told it was tasty and was to be spread on bread. The latter was when another neighbor said that the co-op shop around the corner had got some meat in so once again we queued up and discovered that we would be eating whale meat that day. Ugh! It was oily and black and horrible but it filled a little hole in our tummies. My dad was able to grow some vegetables so we survived although each day was a challenge.

My Homes



I remember our first home as being the bottom flat in a three story house in Battersea, London. We had to go down several steps to our front door and there was a wrought iron railing all around the house.

Our second home was a two-story row house with three bedrooms, one bathroom and a living room. The bathroom contained only a toilet with no shower or bathtub. The bathtub was located in the kitchen. We had no refrigerator, just a food larder and no hot water. We had to heat the water on our cook range for bathing purposes. In later years perhaps the late fifties these homes

were up graded. We did obtain another room after moving there. It was a bomb shelter erected in our back garden (yard) and stood there until the late sixties.

My sister and I were encouraged to cook but the absolute rule was that any mess we made we had to clean up. Mum always used to say that “a good cook always cleans up after herself” and I have kept that as part of my psyche my whole life because even now if I do any cooking or anything at all in the kitchen I always clean up immediately. So I was taught well.

I shared a room with my sister and our bed was under the window and we had a fireplace across the room. We always had cats and they were all mackerel tabbies. My cat “Jim Jim” was huge and lovable. He disappeared after I left home for the USA.

Starting School

I started in infant school at age three and I don’t remember much about that. Mum walked me there. Later in senior school my favorite teacher was Miss Thorogood who taught domestic science. Miss Holden was the teacher I liked least of all. She taught music but was short on patience so I didn’t develop an interest in playing a musical instrument.

Celebrations

My family was always big on having parties for any reason at all. They were always held at aunt Polly’s house because she had the most room. All the sisters in the family (mum’s sisters) brought food and drink and somebody would play the piano and everyone would sing. My mum had a beautiful voice. We even had a party once for christening the new “Loo” aka the toilet.

National Holidays

Of course we celebrated on the obvious ones such as Christmas, Easter etc. mostly the same way we do here except we had Father Christmas instead of Santa Claus. Also there is an extra day after Christmas in England which is known as Boxing Day and that came about over the years going back many years when the royals and the gentry of England’s aristocracy would have their servants gather all the food that was left over from Christmas dinner and they would put it in boxes and take it to the poor people in town. Hence the name Boxing Day so that also is a holiday so people in England in effect mostly have Christmas eve, Christmas day, and Boxing Day which makes for a nice three day holiday. England has so many other days celebrating patron saints etc and there are also several bank holidays, which literally means that banks close for business under a Royal Proclamation. Like most people, the Brits use all these holidays for relaxation.



Betty & I standing in front of the house. 1949

Fond Memories

A lot of childhood memories are of spending time in air raid shelters but I also have some fond memories one of which is when some friends and I rode our bikes to a favorite place called Belmont where we collected armfuls of Bluebells. We rode home with these beautiful flowers and presented them to our mums who were delighted.

Frightening Experience

When I was eleven my mum had a miscarriage and when I saw the blood I was so scared. I thought she was going to die. I looked after her until the ambulance came to take her to the hospital. All ended well.

Best Friend

Betty was the girl next door and when we met she was seven and I was six. We had just moved into the house when she came out in the back where I was and said "hello, my name is Betty, who are you"? I told her and from that moment on we were friends. We played games as children and went to dances together when we became teenagers. We each knew everything about the other and were truly best friends. She still lives in the house she grew up in and when I go to England I go to visit her and we sit and talk about when we were growing up together and we have fun.

Giving a Present

I was eleven and had been sent on an errand to get my gran because mum was ill and needed help. On the way to gran's house I saw a ring on the ground and bent down to pick it up. It was the prettiest thing I had ever seen and when I got home I gave it to mum to make her feel better. She kept it for many years.

CHAPTER THREE: THE TEEN YEARS

Our School System

I started in infant's school at age three then moved on to junior and eventually spent the last four years at Malmesbury Road secondary school for girls. In the first eight years the school was mixed or co-ed as is called here, but the last four years I was in an all girl school and was required to wear a uniform consisting of a navy blue drill slip with white shirt and striped tie. That was bad enough but even worse was when I was evacuated from October 1944 to April 1945 living in the North Country and had to wear basically the same uniform with the addition of a panama hat. How we Londoners hated that silly hat but at least we didn't stand out as everyone wore the same thing. All three schools were in walking distance of where I was living at the time. I finished high school or senior school as it was called at the age of fifteen and immediately went to work for the government as a telephonist. At this time I was given the choice of attending college two days a week, paid for by the government and so I became a student at Kingsway Day College for

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL FORM 1
KINGSWAY DAY COLLEGE
Kingsway Street, Kingsway, W.C.2

REPORT on
GURITS *large*
for session ending 31 JUL 1950

PREP/DEPT. G.P.D. *Via 321* COURSE 4-7a

SUBJECT	MARK	TEACHER'S SIGNATURE
Art/Drawing		
Arithmetic	<i>Good amount work in a lot of subjects</i>	<i>M.</i>
English	<i>Excellent work in the class</i>	<i>J.B.</i>
English Literature		
Class	<i>Excellent work</i>	<i>M.</i>
Dramatic Literature	<i>A highly interesting student</i>	<i>J.B.</i>
Geography	<i>Very good work in the class</i>	<i>J.B.</i>
French	<i>A highly interesting student</i>	<i>J.B.</i>
Handwriting/Handcraft		
History/Current Affairs		
Living in London/General Knowledge		
Mathematics		
Singing and Appreciation of Music		



Left to right: Audrey Thole, me and Betty Ellens.

girls in Holburn, London.

My first report card from college July 1950.

Sadly at the end of a year and a half I decided, in my wisdom, that it wasn't much fun and so I quit and once again became a full time worker at the ripe old age of seventeen.

Dating and Entertainment

There were no restrictions on my dating but there was a curfew. I actually dated very little, preferring instead to do things with a group of people. We went to dances quite often even with our parents and we had fun. My favorite place to dance was at the Wimbledon Palais De Danse in Wimbledon and eventually I came to know some of the musicians in the Teddy Foster orchestra. One night one of the men with whom I had shared conversation over a cup of tea offered me a ride home on his motorcycle. I

readily accepted but when he stopped in a deserted area I was scared to death. I thought he was going to rape me but instead we just talked for a while and then he took me home. This was something I shared with my mum but we agreed it was not a story that my dad needed to hear, as he may not have understood! Going to the pictures or movies as they are called here was a weekly event and roaming around London going into parks etc was something I enjoyed. Some of my closest friends were Audrey Thole, Betty Ellens, Joan Faringdon and Johnny Excel. Unfortunately I lost touch with most of them after I came to the United States. Betty is the only one I see when I go home as Audrey moved to Ireland and we lost touch, Joan disappeared, and I have no idea where Johnny is. There have never been any school reunions. As far as I know it just isn't done in England.

Working and Transportation

Having said earlier that I finished school at age fifteen and went to work for the GPO, (government post office which controlled the telephone system) my money was spent on entertainment, clothing and transportation. Money was also spent on room and board to mum, which is a tradition and expected when you go out to work. The distance from my house to work was about eighteen miles and I used public transportation consisting of a bus for the first part and subway for about fifteen miles. I would buy a season ticket each Friday to use for the following week. At this time I started at Horseferry House in Victoria, London and while there I was sent periodically to other government offices to fill in for vacations etc. I was thrilled one day when my supervisor told me that I would be going to Scotland Yard the next day and would be there for about a month. During this time I answered the 999 board for a short time-this would be the same as 911 here. Sometimes it got a little crazy but the overall experience is something I look back on with fond memories.

For the last two and a half years before I came to the United States I worked at the Duke of York Headquarters, which was a military complex in Kings Road, Chelsea, London. There were several regiments of soldiers there including the Coldstream Guards who are easily recognizable by their bearskin hats with the red plume worn on the right side and their crimson jackets. The Duke of York H.Q. is not the same as it was in the early nineteen fifties although there are still soldiers of the Territorial Army working and living there. Tom and I made a point of going there last year (2002) just for old times sake and were surprised to find a very high fence all around it but were able to look through an opening to see major renovations in progress. Apparently the army has a 1.5 million pound façade restoration project going on right now. The



*G.P.O. Hourseberry House
Jackie King fourth from right.*

H.Q. has a rich history dating back to the reign of King George III.

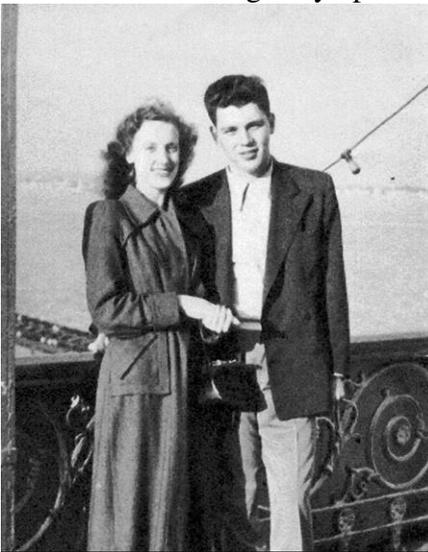
My Favorite Actor

As a teenager my absolute favorite film star was the handsome Dirk Bogarde, an English movie star of the time. I wrote to him asking him to meet me outside the cinema. I was fifteen and truly thought he would come. The fact that it was raining cats and dogs did not deter me and though I had confided in mum she didn't say anything to stop me and so I left the house to meet my movie star! After about an hour I came back to the house, came inside where my mum greeted me with a big hug and a cup of tea. Not a word was said as we sipped tea in front of the roaring fire while I dried out. I must have looked a sight, soaked to the skin and with my curly hair hanging down in wet ringlets. Much later we talked about it and had a good laugh. I told my girls about it and we joke about it too and on the rare occasion I see him in one of his films I tell them he could have been their father if he had played his cards right! Oh the follies of youth!

Life Shaping and Rite of Passage

The one constant in my life was always my mum. The way she conducted herself – never having an unkind word for anyone even though she dealt with the public daily and I'm sure had days when she could have exploded. She lived her life by the golden rule and encouraged her children to do the same. Having lived with her example all of my growing up years into my teen years and even after I got married, her way of life, her living by the golden rule, is the way I have chosen to live my life. I hope in doing so I have honored her.

In England there are special ceremonies marking your passage from childhood into adulthood and it primarily boils down to the fact that the twenty-first birthdays was celebrated for being very special and the time when most



Tom & I enjoying a day at the seaside September 1952.

people entered adulthood. This was when they were given the key to the house door although in truth they had it before then. Families were prone to give huge parties and the birthday person would receive silver cardboard keys signed by each member of the party giving the keys. Mine was sent to me since I had already arrived in the U.S.A.



Joan Faringdon & I taken in her back garden. 1944

CHAPTER FOUR: ADULTHOOD

Ambitions and Realities

Growing up I had always thought that I wanted to be an actress on the London stage. This ambition started when I was a child. During the war years I joined a group called the Robinson Troupe and we entertained people who were bombed out. They would be placed in shelter of some kind, large community buildings etc. and our little troupe would



My first souviner in America. July 1954

dress up and we would go and entertain them. My specialty was Carmen Miranda. I had a costume made and I watched her many times and thought that I had it down pat. So this was my special thing that I did and of course the people, having lost everything, were grateful just to see children having fun and just enjoying themselves. Eventually when I did go to college at an all girls school we had to adapt to different parts, female and male, and after appearing in one of the productions at the Drury Lane theater in London it became apparent that I was not very good at acting so my goal changed. At that time also I had met my young man with whom I fell in love and so things just changed. It was fun at the time but I would never have been one of the great ones and so I was wise enough to realize that and gave it up. Actually the only thing holding me back was my lack of drive. I thought acting was what I wanted to do more than anything and realizing it wasn't really what I wanted to do it

just didn't really worry me. I did continue to do some theater work over the years. In fact when I moved to the United States I did some local theater work and enjoyed it but again realized it wasn't what I wanted to do the rest of my life and put it to rest.

Having majored in drama and journalism while attending Kingsway Day College I dropped the drama part and decided I would concentrate on journalism and it took many years for that realization to come to pass. I do still love to write but I have never had anything published but have many rejections slips which is ok. I just write for fun and who knows, one of these days!.

Wedding

I left my parents home at the age of nineteen because that was when I got married and am very happy to say fifty years later we are still married and just celebrated our Golden Wedding anniversary. I met my young man at my favorite dance hall and he asked me to dance. After he trod on my toes a few times we sat down and talked instead. We dated for almost two years and eventually decided to



Tom & I cutting the cake at our wedding reception.

marry even though people thought we were too young. We were married on July 11th, 1953. It was a beautiful sunny day. I dressed in my wedding gown at home as was the custom of the time. Then my dad and I walked out to our wedding car, which was decorated with ribbons. Our driver drove away from the house and instead of going directly to the church he drove around and around and finally I said “what are you doing, where are you going?”. He said “I’m just driving you around a few times to make sure you know exactly what you are doing in marrying this Yank”. I told him I knew exactly what I was doing and so he proceeded then to the church. The ceremony was performed at my local parish church, which was St. Peters in Carshalton, Surrey. The ceremony was at 4pm and was performed by the Vicar in residence, Reverend Ney.

Family



Dad & I leaving the house for the church.

My husband Tom is a good man and a loving husband. Our two girls rate him way up there as a father. He is caring considerate and a nice person to be with. Handsome too. Tom and I have two daughters-Andrea whom we call Andi is 38 and our first-born. She is of medium height, red hair and the mother of our three grandchildren. She and husband Joey have been married twenty years. Jennifer whom we call Jen-Jen is 32; single (divorced) tall, medium brown hair. Both are lovely young women with strong family ties.

There have been some unexpected turns in my life the most obvious of course was in my coming to the U.S. I was the child who was the homebody and never went too far from home.

Also becoming a mother since expert doctors

had told me that I could never

conceive. After almost twelve years of marriage I finally had a child and six years later I was blessed again.

My parents were not churchgoers in the usual sense of the word but as a child I went to Sunday school. I have always believed in God but as an adult I don't attend church regularly. My belief in God has always been important at different times but more importantly I think as a child during the war when I prayed harder asking that we all survive another night and then another day etc.



Tom & I on our honeymoon in Torquay August 1953.

I cannot recall any particular experience I have had that could be considered partially spiritual.

Work History

Most of my adult life has been in America having come here as a young bride of twenty. At first we lived in North Dakota since my husband was still in the Air Force and then we moved to West Virginia where his home was originally and then to Indiana for his college education. Upon leaving college we moved back to West Virginia and stayed there for thirteen years until work finally brought us to Missouri where we have lived for the past thirty-three years. The first twenty-nine years were in southeast Missouri and the last three here in Ozark. I have actually had very few jobs in my lifetime but the first one as I said before was in England as a telephonist. After coming to the U.S. I worked for a telephone company in West Virginia for a few years as a service representative then worked for North American Van Lines in Indiana in the rating department helping the drivers with their papers. The first job involved working with the public and the other did not. After an absence of many years I returned to work as a claims technician for the state of Missouri, a job, which I enjoyed very much because once again I was working with the public. I am retired now from the state job, which I held for only six years. It was a job that was supposed to be part time but actually ended up being much more. It began in 1991 and ended in 1997. I thoroughly enjoyed all my jobs but the last one was especially pleasing because I worked with clients one on one and in most cases was able to send them home happier than when they came in to the office. My most favorite job was as a stay at home mom.



Tom & I celebrating our silver wedding anniversary July 11, 1978



Tom & I celebrating our Golden Wedding Anniversary, July 11, 2003.



Andi graduating from SEMO Dec. 1998



*Jennifer graduating from SMSU
Dec. 18, 1992.*

CHAPTER FIVE: LIFE MISSION

I'm not sure that I have ever had a so called mission in life but I have always felt that I am a representative of my birth country, England, and that people meeting me would assume that all English people are like me. To that end my mission has been to act responsibly, be nice and give a good impression to everyone I meet. I honestly feel that I have accomplished what I set out to do. Over time I don't think my mission has been any different. I just live my life in a responsible way.



*Proud Mom with Jen
Jen September 1970.*

My greatest accomplishments in life without a doubt would be one: staying happily married for fifty years during lean years and more bountiful ones and second: would be raising two children and watching them grow into responsible young women with strong family ties.

Perhaps the lowest point in my life would be after being married for so many years with no children and being told by my OB/GYN to go home and adopt, as I would never have any of my own. Fortunately that low point ended when a couple of years later I found out I was pregnant. There have been so many high points in my life but I suppose the birth of my first child would have to be number one, followed by the second birth six years later.



Proud Mom with Andi January 1965.

The two most rewarding aspects of my life have been raising two nice human beings and staying happily married to the same man for fifty years now. I had to make some concessions along the way as did he, but the rewards of being in a happy marriage is most satisfying

In trying to name a person who has had a profound influence on my life it seems as though I keep repeating myself but it has to be my mum – no doubt about it. Remembering all the many kind things she did for her family and every one she came in contact with she truly epitomized a

person who lived by the golden rule. One particular deed she did I remember very well and it happened right after the war ended. We received a parcel (care package) from America and it contained several things including dresses and shoes, which were used, but in good condition but most importantly there was a five pound canned ham. We children didn't know what ham was but no matter – mum cut off enough for the five of us to have a sandwich each and then took it next door to the neighbors and told them to do the same thing and then pass it on until it was gone. That had such a lasting, profound effect on me at twelve years of age and prompted me to emulate her in my life.

CHAPTER SIX: LATER YEARS



Jen & Andi

I am now retired but since I never really had a lifetime job there have been no adjustments as such. My husband and I pretty much share chores around the house so we just enjoy each day. I haven't really become involved in the community, just trying to meet people since we are relative newcomers here in the town. I heard about the Hospitality club in Springfield and joined that so am now enjoying new friends. I

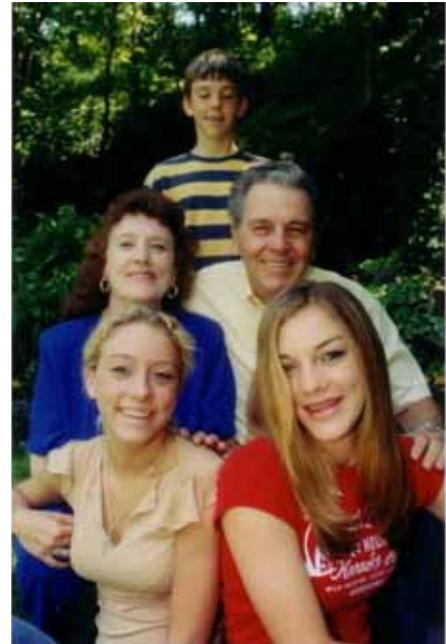
also heard about, and became a member of, the British Sterling Club.

This is a group of people, men and women, who were born in the British Isles. We meet once a month in each other's homes and eat English goodies and drink lots of hot tea with milk. My husband and I spend a lot of time traveling and when at home we do things with our daughter and grandchildren. I enjoy going to shows and lunching or having dinner with friends. I really love to entertain at my home.

As I said before I did study journalism in college but never really had any strong desire at that time to write. In later years I studied writing with the Children's Institute of Literature in Connecticut and received my diploma after completing the course in two years. As I grew older and the children came along I decided that I might write again and I have written some things that have not been published. Years ago I used to write children's stories and maybe one day I will write again but it isn't as important as it once was.

I have three grandchildren. The eldest is Chelsea; she is nineteen and having just completed a stint with America Corp has enrolled at SMSU where she hopes to obtain a degree in early childhood education. Bailey is the second girl; she is sixteen and has just begun her junior year in high school. Keaton at thirteen is in the eighth grade. They live with their parents and are in the same town as me and I get to see them very often and I love being with them and yes I definitely feel that they have all been a fulfillment in my life.

The best friend I ever had is named Shelia Dwyer, another English bride, whom I met when both our



*Bottom Row: Chelsea & Bailey
Middle Row: Jackie & Tom
Top: Keaton
our grandchildren with us in
Ozark celebrating Chelsea's
graduation from high school*

husbands were in college. We all shared everything since we were all struggling financially but we were happy and had a very strong bond. She still lives in Fort Wayne, Indiana and we keep in touch. What I value most in a friendship is loyalty and the ability to be able to laugh together and cry if necessary.



Sheila & I sitting at her kitchen table after having a nice cup of tea.

I consider that I have had a very good life and the only thing I would have done differently, had it been within my control, would be to have had my children earlier so we could have grown up together. I don't honestly think I would want to relive any of the events in my life. I think I have made some mistakes but I have also done some wonderful things and don't really think I want to relive any of them. Been there, done that.

My wish for future generations would be peace of course. Almost as high on my wish list would be that future generations would have the support of a loving two parent family which is sadly lacking in so many families today.

CHAPTER SEVEN: MY SPRINGFIELD EXPERIENCE

Tom and I had lived in Sikeston, Missouri, which is located in southeast Missouri, for twenty-nine years and both of our girls had moved over to southwest Missouri. They would ask us from time to time to come to live near them. So one day we took them at their word and we came to southwest Missouri finding a piece of ground that we liked in Ozark and had a home built there, moving in on December 9th, 1999. Within three months our youngest daughter had a job offer that she couldn't really refuse and so she moved to Indianapolis. We told her to go ahead as it was some place else for us to go and visit. The older daughter was still here with the grandchildren so we settled in and this has become our home. The girls wanted us to come over to be near them because we really had no family back in southeast Missouri. It worked out well for everybody and we have been truly happy here and are gradually making new friends.

THE DAILY STANDARD, Sikeston, Mo., Sun., May 15, 1988 — Page 7B



Jackie King

Mrs. King addresses retired teachers group

Jackie King, a well-known Sikeston resident, was the guest speaker for the SeMo Retired Teachers meeting Thursday at the Hunter Memorial First Presbyterian Church.

Mrs. King was a child during World War II, living in London with her family. She related stories of her home life during the "Blitz Through the Eyes of a

Child."

She also discussed the English countryside and London.

Mrs. King has lived in Sikeston several years and is the mother of two daughters. She also has two grandchildren. Her husband, Thomas, is an engineer at Noranda Aluminum in New Madrid.

I have found the people here to be very friendly and in many instances when people would hear my accent they would invariably ask if I was from England and when I would answer yes they would say they had been there or wanted to go there and it was just nice to be able to talk about my birth country. We just found that people, generally speaking, are very open and honest here and that is nice to experience. We have gradually become members of different small organizations such as in Ozark, we are members of the On The Road Again club, which is the organization that belongs to the Parks and Recreation department, and we go to Branson and other places of interest for our trips and it is very enjoyable. We definitely feel we are welcome here and never had any problems at all.

Having said that people have listened to my accent and have been interested in my country for various reasons, they

enjoyed talking about England and many have heard my program entitled "Wartime London through the eyes of a child" and have expressed their feelings about that. I had a lady tell me once, a younger lady, after hearing my program that her father had been in the Second World War stationed in the European Theater having spent quite some time in England and never really having spoken about his experiences there and was always very quiet about it. After hearing my program she thinks she understands now that it is not

something he wants to relive. The object of the program certainly wasn't that, just to let people know how it was as a child going through the war

Throughout the years that I have lived in the United States I have tried to maintain my cultural identity to a degree in that I have never tried to lose my accent nor my love of tea, however I have always tried to blend in with my surroundings, embracing the old adage "When in Rome". Of course in my particular case I look like everybody else, my skin is the same color and so I am automatically accepted until I presume I would do something wrong at which time I would probably experience some difficulty. It's very hard I think for people of a different color to come into a community and be as readily accepted as I have been and for that we should all take some blame. My advice, although it sounds very simple, would be to embrace everyone and offer help and information if asked for. I think it would be up to people, newcomers and natives alike, to make this happen if in fact it was wanted. We have to keep in mind that some people are not good at mingling and some would rather be left alone. In most cases when you meet somebody, you can very quickly figure out which they would rather do, mingle with you or be left alone. Then you just have to go from there. My own opinion is that when you meet somebody for the first time, or the tenth time, just a smile will work wonders and that is part of my philosophy.

In conclusion I must quote my mum one last time. One of her favorite sayings was "Where there's life, there's hope." This was always said after something had happened to one of us which at the time seemed insurmountable but in retrospect proved to be trivial. To this end I would now like to share the following verse that I came across several years ago and adopted as my creed in life. I don't know who the author is but I will be forever grateful to whoever put pen to paper and wrote the following words:
"I am wounded, but I am not slain,
I will lay down and bleed awhile,
Then I shall rise again."



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