ALL IN A LIFETIME

by

Gilbert Thomas Stephenson

and

Grace White Stephenson

1961

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JOINT INTRODUCTION

In our little book, We Came Home of Warren Place, which was published in 1958, we wrote jointly because we had lived jointly since we had come home to Warren Place in 1950.

In this volume, which is not for publication but for our children and grandchildren, we write separately. During most of the early years we write about we had lived separately. Twenty-six years of Grace's life and 28 of Gilbert's had been lived separately, until our marriage in 1912. The recollections of our respective childhoods, youths, and college years are different. Trying to merge our recollections during these three decades, which we tried first, proved to be confusing. Beside, in these recollections Grace writes from the girls and woman's and Gilbert, from the youth's and man's points of view.

Each of us has introducted these recollections in his or her own way - Grace as a woman; Gilbet, as a man.

Gilbert Thomas Stephenson
Gilbert Thomas Stephenson

Grace Morris White Stephenson
Grace Morris White Stephenson

Warren Place,
Pendleton, North Carolina,
March 1 1961

GILBERT'S INTRODUCTION

Don't you, whoever you are, wish that your grandparents and then your parents had written out and left for you to read their recollections of their own life and that of other people around about them when they were your age? In this young country of ours so many and so great changes take place in one person's lifetime that anyone's grandparents, anyone's parents, and oneself seem to have lived in a different world.

In what I am writing out in the following pages I am trying to do partly for our children but mainly for our grandchildren and possibly for our great-grandchildren what I wish my grandparents and my parents had done for me. Among my cherished possessions are: my Grandfather Fleetwood's Diary, 1850-1851; his letter to his fiancee (my grandmother) six months before they were married; and my Grandfather Stephenson's one and only letter, that has been preserved, to his wife (my grandmother) while he was a soldier in the Confederate Army. And I have the letters I received from my parents from 1899, when I entered college, down to their death. Suppose I had and in due course could pass on to our children and grandchildren diaries and letters descriptive of the conditions and surroundings that prevailed here in the South during the latter half of the nineteenth century, including the Civil War and the Reconstruction Period. Such records would be invaluable to the historian as well as cherished family possessions.

Although my recollections herein recorded are, unavoidably, autobiographic, they are not so in the sense of being about myself only or even mainly. They are my recollections of other

people and other things as well as of myself only and of things that affected other people as well as myself - all in my lifetime. Perhaps, indeed, this should have been called my Book of Rememberance.

I have divided these recollections into six sections or parts. Each of the first four covers roughly a decade; the fifth two decades; and the sixth is a message addressed to my grandsons.

In the first part I tell what I remember of my childhood and early schooldays. That was the decade, 1890-1900. In 1890 I was six years old and in 1900, 14, having been born December 17 1884. During this decade I reach elementary school-age and by the end of the decade I already was in college.

In the second part I tell of my youth and college years which, I hope, will be of special interest to our grandchildren as they enter and pass through the corresponding period of their life. I was a teenager. In 1899 I entered Wake Forest College and in 1902 was graudated. Then after a sbabbatical year at Warren Place there followed three years of graduate-school work, one at Wake Forest and two in Harvard. After another sabbatical I I spent three years in the Harvard Law School, being graduated in 1910, the end of the decade.

In the third part I tell some of my recollections of my early years in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. This brings me to the decade, 1910-1920. In the summer of 1910 I took a refresher course in the School of Law of Wake Forest College, passed the North Carolina Bar Examination in August of that year, made a visit to and decided to open an office and "wait for clients" in Winston-Salem. I opened an office there in January 1911 and, with time out for the War Year 1918 when I was engaged in

war work, was engaged in the practice until 1919. In 1912, December 19, Grace and I were married in Elizabeth City and thereafter made our home in Winston-Salem until the summer of 1922. During this decade our two sons were born: Thomas Wilson (Steve) August 8 1915; James Henry (Jim) June 6 1918. During this decade we were in the midst of World War I, 1912-1918.

The fourth part covers the decade, 1920-1930, which we have called our period of major adjustments. It was during this decade that I began my active career as a trustman; that we left our hone in Winston-Sslem for one in Raleigh, North Carolina; and that, near the end of the decade, we left our hone in Raleigh for one in Wilmington, Delaware. It was during this decade also that I left the employment of the Wachovia Bank and Trust Company to enter that of the Equitable Trust Company. I was becoming more and more active in the affairs of the Trust Division of the American Bankers Association and, unrealized by me at the time, was on my way to becoming President of the Division in 1930. Steve and, perhaps to a less extent, Jim have their own recollections of this decade. In 1920 Steve was five and Jim two; in 1930 Steve was 15 and Jim, 12.

The fifth part covers two decades, 1930-1940 and 1940-1950. They were the years of the Great Depression of 1929 and the early 1930's, of World War II and its aftermath. Steve and Jim have definite recollections of both these decades, for during the first one they were in prep-school and college and during the second one they were in military service. Thomas Fleetwood (Tom) and Nancy Hall (Nancy), our two oldest grandchildren, must have some recollection of the latter part of the second of these decades. In 1950 Tom was eight and Nancy, six. Susie (Susan White)

was only three and, of course, remembers little or nothing of even the latter part of the decade.

The sixth and final part is a message addressed to our grandsons and a brief statement of my philospohy of life.

This record of our recollections does not extend beyond 1950. That was the year we left Wilmington and came to Warren Place. Eight years later, in 1958, we wrote the book, We Came Home to Warren Place, descriptive of our life here at Warren Place during this eight-year period.

My part in these recollections really is a supplement to my Journal which I have kept without a break since Christmas 1902. Furthermore, preceding this Journal is another volume with an introductory sketch of my life up to 1902. All this is, in a measure, anticipatory to our life since we came home to Warren Place in 1950.

While I have had to depend in the main upon my own memory for most of these reminiscences, I have called to my aid a few of my contemporaries who, as it turned out, remembered names and details which had escaped me. For example, my closest blood kinsman, William Maddrey Stephenson, just 11 months younger than I, read and helped me with the decade, 1890-1900, when we were boys together; Thomas E. Browne, my classmate at Wake Forest, with the decade, 1900-1910, when we were undergraduates together; and Dr. Wingate Memory Johnson, the most intimate friend of my early manhood, with the decade, 1910-1920, when we were young professional men in Winston-Salem. Here and there from many others I have picked up dates, names, and details which had escaped me.

Gilbert Thomas Stephenson

Warren Place,
Pendleton, North Carolina,
March 1 1961 1961

GRACE'S INTRODUCTION

My contribution to this book of memories will be much less vivid than Gilbert's, especially those of my early years. This is due primarily to the fact that I did not have "roots" as he did.

The first break came at ten years when my father died. Two years after that I was sent away to school in Washington. After two years there I went to the Atlantic Collegiate Institute in Elizabeth City for four years and then entered college.

I shall attempt, however, to write out some of the few recollections of the first ten years of my life. Then I should like to tell of the two years in Washington City when a shy little country girl who had attended only a one-room school was thrust suddenly into a graded school in a big city.

Then come recollections of my pre-college and college years. Somewhere in that period I shall attempt to tell of my experiences as a girl visiting on the Outer Banks of North Carolina.

The years following my college years (1907-1912) may have something of interest to contribute to this book. It was during that period that I taught school. I began my schooling in a one-room school. Twenty years later I began teaching in a two-teacher school.

It was during this period, too, that I met and married the man who has been mu husband 48 years (December 19 1912). It was when I married him in 1912 that I began to take "roots." From

then on I became a part of Warren Place. Absent as we were most of the time for 40 years, it still was "home" to us.

Even our wedding and early years of married life contain some customs and incidents that soon will seem incredible to our granchildren.

Many of the changes that we have seen take place in our mature years have been written about in our Letters to our children and grandchildren and in our book, We Came Home to Warren Place . These Letters were the source material of our book. But I hope, even at the risk of come competition, to record some recollections of these years in the following pages that may be of personal and even historical value in the future.

Grace Morris White Stephenson

Grace Morris White Stephenson

Warren Place,
Pendleton, North Carolina,
March 1 1961.

CHILDHOOD AND EARLY SCHOOL DAYS
1890-1900

GILBERT'S RECOLLECTIONS

My first recollection of any sort, I believe, was of January 1892, when my Grandfather Stephenson took me to Pendleton to enter the Pendleton School taught by Mr. David Kindred of Boykins, Virginia. I had turned seven the December before. I had not been put into school before because I was so young and lived so far from the school - two miles on a dirt road. There was no school bus then.

Several other things about my life before 1892 had been told me so often that I seemed to remember them myself. For instance, about my Grandmother Stephenson's cousin, Elidah LeDay (or a name something like that), coming up from Louisiana to visit her Aunt Shilometh (Lousy) Darden and my grandmother; but I doubt that I really remember her visit.

Even with respect to my early school days I am somewhat doubtful of my honest-to-goodness recollection. For another example, I seem to remember, but am not quite sure, that when my grandfather took me to enter school, he told Mr. Kindred, if I misbehaved, not to whip me himself but to send me home and he would do it. How like a grandfather! I may have heard my grandfather tell my grandmother and my parents this so often that I came to believe that I had heard him say so himself.

It may be as well for me to begin my recollections of my early years and school days with what I really do remember about school life between 1892, when I just had turned seven, and 1900 when I had become 15.

School Days

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School Days

During this eight-year period I attended three schools -

first Pendleton, then Severn, then Conway for only a half-session, and finally back to Severn for the latter half of the 1898-1899 session. As we shall see, all three of these schools had much in common.

Each of the three was a one-room school. The Pendleton and the Conway school house each was a two-storey building but only the one room on the first floor was used. Each of them was a wooden, weatherboarded, unpainted building. I do remember in the Pendleton School sitting next to the wall on the east side and through a knothole in the weatherboarding seeing hogs rooting the ground outside.

The desks were homemade with a flat, slanting board top for book-rest and writing and a shelf below for books, slates, pencils, rulers, and other school paraphernalia. The seats, also homemade, were hard wooden benches attached to the desks. That is, the desk and the seat were made together. The room was heated by one or two wood-burning stoves. The fires were started and kept going by the older schoolboys. The water supply was a bucket filled at the school or at a neighbor's pump or well. There was a single dipper for all of the pupils to drink from. The wall behind the teacher's desk, consisting of a chair and a table, was a blackboard of canvas or of black paint on the wall itself, with a supply of chalk and erasers. On the Pendleton School, some teacher, perhaps it was Mr. Kindred himself, had written at the top of the blackboard, "Order is Heaven's First Law." This remained on the blackboard as long as I can remember.

Instead of tablets and lead-pencils the pupils had slates and slate-pencils. On slates the younger pupils learned to write

their ABC's, to copy sentences put on the blackboard by the teacher, and, as they advanced, to do their arithmetic. For cleaning their slate they were supposed to have sponges or rags but, I am sure, some of us used a more natural, if less sanitary, method of cleaning our slates.

The once-famous and still-popular song, School Days, with its "School days, school days, dear old golden rule days, with reading and writing and 'rithmetic taught to the tune of the hickory stick," and with "He wrote on my slate, 'I love you so,'" must have been written by one who was familiar with the country schools in the 1890's.

It is accurate to speak of the teacher, not teachers. I never went to any but a one-teacher school. In the Pendleton School was, first, Mr. David Kindred and, later, Mr. Jeff. Joyner; in the Severn School he was my Uncle Wiley Fleetwood; and in the Conway School, that one half-session, Mr. Andrew Britton. I do not know the educational background of either Mr. Kindred or Mr. Joyner. My Uncle Wiley was a graduate of Wake Forest College, Class of 1883. Mr. Britton, the adopted son of a well-to-do farmer, named DeLoatch, of the Conway (then Martin's Crossroads) or the Zion community, was a graduate of the University of Virginia. At that time a degree from this university gave a graduate as much prestige as a Ph. D. degree from Yale or Harvard does now.

In a rural community, in which a farmer's education consisted of reading, writing, and arithmetic - the three R's - the local school teacher was looked up to as the educated man of the community, in respect and deference ranking alongside the minister. The consequence was that many an ambitious boy re-

garded teaching school the highest secular calling in life. It came next to the ministry into which latter one had to be specially "called." In the teaching profession the summit was a college professorship.

Pupils in these schools were known commonly as "scholars." In a one-room, one-teacher school there could, as a matter of course, be only one schoolroom. This was true of all three of the schools I attended between 1892 and 1900. All of the pupils, from the beginners to those who would have been 12th-graders in a graded school, sat, studied, and recited in the same room. Being deskmates in one of these schools was like being roommates in college. As a rule, the boys sat, two at a desk, on one side of the room; the girls, also two at a desk, on the other side. The older boys, perhaps naturally, gravitated to the rear on the boys' side and the older girls to the rear on the girls' side. The younger boys and girls were seated up near the front where they would be under the constant eye of the teacher. During my last half-session in the Severn School my Uncle Wiley permitted me to have a desk to myself over on the girls's side next the desk of my Cousin Betty Fleetwood and her chum, Verona Pruden, because we three were the most advanced pupils that session and had courses in common.

Imagine, if you will, the noise and confusion that were to be expected in the one schoolroom in which were heard consecutively, in sight and hearing of all other pupils, classes in ABC's, in reading, in geography, in history, on up to classes in Latin and Greek. Yet, as I remember, the confusion was not nearly so great as one would expect. We seemed to learn to concentrate

in the midst of the noise and the moving about of other pupils. Present-day pupils, I understand, do their homework while the radio and, sometimes, the TV are going full blast.

Nor was the teacher's problem of discipline nearly so acute as one would expect. Each of my four teachers was a mature man. Each of them had the respect of the older boys and girls. The younger ones, having been taught in the home to obey their parents, looked upon their teacher as having the disciplinary authority and disposition of a parent. I remember one morning in the Pendleton School, soon after two Collier boys had entered school, one of them said to the teacher, "Mr. Joyner, can (not may) I go out?" The older brother said to him, "There's the door; go on out." He was only trying to be helpful, not at all impertinent.

Although the song, School Days, refers to reading, writing, and 'rithmetic being taught to the "tune of the hickory stick," I do not remember ever having seen a pupil whipped by a teacher. Punishment was "staying in" at short recess or after school in the afternoon and possibly doing sums in arithmetic or writing or copying.

Already I have referred to the fact that in these one-room, one-teacher schools there were courses from ABC's on up to Latin and Greek and all in between. Now let me go into a little more detail about these courses of study.

The pupil started with his ABC's, getting the shape and the sound of each letter of the alphabet. He might have to write the letters out on his slate and then read them back to the teacher.

In our writing lessons we ruled straight lines across our slates and copied words and then sentences put on the blackboard or read off to us by the teacher. We had exercises in what was known as Spencerian writing - well rounded and well shaped letters slanting to the right. Reading the handwriting - my Grandfather Fleetwood's, for example, and being able to read every word of it - and comparing it with my own, my children's, and my ghanchildren's handwriting, I sometimes wonder if more attention should not be paid to handwriting in present-day elementary and secondary schools. My Granddaughter Nancy recently said of my own handwriting that it is series of straight lines with bumps on them.

In spelling is where, I think, the school of the 1890's starred compared with the one of the 1960's. Back in those days there was such emphasis on spelling. We had the Blueback Speller and Harrington's Speller. We had classes and recitations in spelling. But of more effect that spelling books and recitations, I believe, were spelling matches.

By us they were called spelling matches, not spelling bees as they often are called in litsrature. In the Pendleton School especially they took on the interest and enthusiasm of an athletic event.

There were two types of matches. In one type two leaders were selected, by the teacher or by the spellers themselves. Then the leaders, each in his turn, chose the spellers for his side, starting with the older boys and girls who were to participate and who were regarded as the best spellers. With the two sides chosen and the participants in two lines facing each other, the teacher called the words, and the spellers on one

side began to "dut down" or be cut down by the spellers on the other side. The pupil who misspelt a word was cut down by the one on the other side who spelt it correctly. The one cut down retired to his seat. This went on until only one pupil on one side was left standing, not having misspelt a word. He or she was the star and his or her side, the winning team.

In the other type all of the spellers were lined up in a single row. The teacher called the words, starting with the pupil at the top of the line. When one misspelt a word he went to the foot of the line. This went on until there was only one speller left standing or until time ran out on them.

The net result of making a game of spelling, as well as a regular course of study, was that pupils in the 1890's became and remained better spellers than their own children and grandchildren. When I got after our son Jim for his bad spelling, his answer was that, when he grew up, he would have a "steenographer" to do it for him. He did.

As regards reading, at the present time there is an almost universal complaint by educators, as well as the general public, about the low state of the reading habits of high school pupils. For example, the November 1959 issue of The Atlantic Monthly had five articles totaling 17 pages on the reading and writing (composition) of students. Everyone of the authors deplored the state of present-day pupils' reading and writing.

In the 1890's pupils were subjected to a series of upgraded readers. My series was Holmes's. I still have in my library Holmes's Fifth Reader, though I do not remember ever having studied it in class. Also, I have a copy of Appleton's Fourth

Reader of my mother's school days - back in the 1870's. All of these contained selections from classics of literature. In Holmes's Fifth Reader, for example, I find selections from the writings of Charles Kingsley, George Eliot, Benjamin Franklin, Edward Everett Hale, Charles Dickens, and many others. In my mother's Appleton's Fourth Reader I find the writings of such persons as William Wordsworth, Louisa M. Alcott, Lewis Carroll, Sir Walter Scott, Henry W. Longfellow, and many, many others.

I wonder - I simply do not know - whether the pupils of the 1960's are being brought into knowledge of these and other masters of literature as were the pupils of the 1890's. As for myself, I know that whatever appreciation of good literature I have stems back to my introduction to such masters in my reading classes in these local, country schools in the 1890's.

Georgraphy we studied in Maury's Geographies. Maury was a Virginian and had been an officer in the Navy of the Confederacy. There may have been some element of loyalty to the Confederacy that made us use Maury's Geographies. I do not recall anything distinctive about our study of geography except that we did have to learn to draw maps on slates or sheets of paper.

In history we studied North Carolina History, United States History, and World History. For North Carolina History my textbook was Cornelia P. Spencer's First Steps in North Carolina History, published by Alfred Williams and Company, Raleigh, in 1889. Before Spencer's there had been Wheeler's and before Wheeler's, Moore's. Wheeler had been a native of Murfreesboro where there is a marker to his memory. I shall say something of Mrs. Spencer when I come to my Harvard years.

In our library here at Warren Place we have the His-

tories of the United States which my father and mother of the earlier generation - in the 1870's - used. For example, I have my mother's Derry's History of the United States published in 1875 and used by her when she was a student in Chowan Baptist Female Institute, Murfreesboro, 1879-1881, a teen-age girl. I have photographs of her first as a freshman and then as a sophomore. I only hope - and I do believe - that our Granddaughter Susie will be as pretty as her Great grandmother Susie was. On the flyleaf of my mother's history someone - perhaps not my mother - had written these lines:

Love is a funny thing
Beauty is a blossom
If you want to get your finger bit
Poke it at a possum.

The one who wrote it had written "Original" after these lines.

I have my father's Goodrich's Pictorial History of the United States, published in 1873, and used by him as a textbook when he was a student at Woodland Seminary in 1874. This is my only source of knowledge that there ever was a Woodland Seminary.

I have one of my own textbooks, Goodrich's American Child's Pictorial History of the United States, published in 1865, the frontispiece of which is the likeness of an old man with a game leg and foot resting on a stool and under the picture the legend, "Come, come, boys and girls, no laughter, no tittering, while I tell you my stories about America - and, mind you, take care of my great toe." At that stage of my life, I see from this book that I signed my name "T. G." - Thomas Gilbert - perhaps

after the fashion of my father - J. Henry. Later, of course, I had more advanced textbooks in history but I do not have a copy of any of them.

The World History I have is a much abused copy of Myers's General History for Colleges and High Schools, published in 1896. The frontispiece of this volume is a picture of a View of the Attic Plains, with a Glimpse of the Acropolis of Athens.

Sometime, when I retire, I should like to go back and re-read these geographies and histories and see what changes in our knowledge of and approach to these subjects have taken place in my lifetime.

In the 1890's, in our community at any rate, the school year was eight months, broken into two terms of four months each. The first four-month term was "free school." That is, the school was maintained and the teacher's salary paid out of tax-money. The second term was known as subscription or 'scription school, in which the same schoolhouse and equipment were used by the same teacher whose salary, however, was paid by the patrons of the school. It was much later, well up in the 20th century, that the State guaranteed an eight-month public-school session to all pupils, white and colored.

It may be of interest to our grandchildren to know that their Great-great-grandmother and Great-great-Grandfather Stephenson gave the land on which the first Pendleton School building was erected back in the 1890's or before. They conveyed the property upon the condition that, if it ever should cease to be used for school purposes, the land and the building should revert to them or their heirs. It did cease to be used as a school after the Pen-

dleton pupils had been transferred to the Severn Elementary School and the Conway High School, the American Legion bought the building, and I gave it a quitclaim deed to the land and building.

During the subscription-school term the parent paid his child's tuition by the month. Among old papers here at Warren Place I have found several receipts for my tuition at the Pendleton School. It was $1.50 a month. One of my somewhat younger friends who attended a subscription school in the town of Scotland Neck, North Carolina, says that his tuition was $1.25 a month.

What the teacher's salary was I do not know. It was for only eight months of the year. It must have been very small compared with teachers' salaries at the present time - perhaps not over $75 or, at most, $100 a month.

Before going into schoolyard games and the lighter side of my school life in the 1890's, let me pay my respects to the one-room, one-teacher, ungraded, half-free-half-subscription village school of that decade. The school building itself was only a step removed from the log schoolhouse of pioneer days. Yet the one and only teacher was competent. He had to be competent to teach all courses from ABC's to Latin, Greek, and advanced mathematics. He had to prepare for college the few boys and girls who were going on to college. Since the school was ungraded he could push a pupil along as fast as he could go. My Uncle Wiley so pushed me along that, by the time I was 14½ years old, I was prepared, scholastically, not otherwise, to enter and did enter the Sophomore Class at Wake Forest College in 1899.

Now let me tell in some detail of our schoolyard games.

Schoolchildren in the 1890's, no less than in the 1960's, full of energy, liked to play games during the mid-morning and mid-afternoon short recesses and during the longer mid-day recess. I cannot speak for the girls' games. I hope Grace will do that. But I remember the boys' games of straight car, round cat, hail-over, marbles, stickfrog, and mumblepeg.

For straight car, round cat, hail-over, and all other ball games, our balls were all homemade - either all-thread or a rubber-ball core wrapped in thread until it was the size of the modern baseball. For their balls the boys obtained thread by unravelling the worn-out, home-knitted socks and stockings their mothers gave them. I do not remember ever having seen a store-bought baseball until I went to Wake Forest.

The bats, too, were homemade, of hickory or oak. In some cases they were not bats but flat paddles.

Straight cat was a quick game designed especially for short recess. It could be played by as few as four boys or girls. Girls inclined to be tomboyish sometimes joined in the game. Two players, each with a bat or paddle, stood 30 or 40 feet from each other. Another player, a catcher, stood behind each of the batters. The ball was pitched to one of the batters. If he missed and the catcher behind him caught the ball, he was out. If he hit the ball, he and the other batter had to exchange places and run the risk of being tagged by one who had caught the ball on the fly. Other players than the four could participate in the game by catching the ball on the fly and beating the runner to the base. Straight cat was not so exciting as round cat but could be played more quickly and by fewer pupils.