

I was born in Middle Tennessee about 60 miles east of Nashville. My parents Julia Harrison Estes and Cleveland Avant Cantrell had seven children before me. Two had died in infancy. I was one of those middle years unplanned models. My mother told how on the Sunday morning of my birth the doctor was late, much too late and I just took the matter into my own hands and did the job all by my self. I have held on to that characteristic, believing if help doesn't arrive when you think it should just get in there and do it on your own.

The doctor filled out my birth certificate, taking full credit. He asked my parents for the name and was told they hadn't really thought about one. When he said he had to put something down my mother said oh! just call her Julia Cleveland. The whole incident was forgotten until I went to get a birth certificate for work. Affidavites, family bible etc., had to be taken in to Nashville to prove I was Bessie Harrison, later I changed to Bess Harrison.

Being the youngest of six had its definite advantages. I was pampered and loved by all the family. When the other children were grown or in school I had the undivided attention of my mother and father. I was very close to both of them and I am sure they decided that while unplanned, I filled a real need for them.

There was much social life in a big family. We had lots of Aunts, Uncles and Cousins. My parents were active in school functions, community work and church activities. My father was a nurseryman, having his own business my mother was a great cook, an excellant seamstress, and helped with my fathers business. To grow the nursery stock, apple, peach, cherries, pears, plum trees for some 30 salesmen in the field he needed large acreage of land. So I grew up on an 800 acre farm, 9 miles out in the country from Smithville. There were Tennessee walking horses to ride, trees to climb and fall out of and fields of grain to run through like so many deer. I am told I never walked until I was grown. My mother, who was such a proper lady, thought I would never be anything but a tom-boy.

We all had our chores and responsibilities, seasoned with strict disapiline. We were allowed to grown calves, pigs and chickens for our money making projects. My big brother likes to tell the story of how I fastened my chickens up in the coop to count them and see how much money I was going to have. In my tom-boy fashion I forgot all about them until 3 or 4 days later and found them all dead but one, starved. I learned you can't even count your chickens after they were hatched if you didn't assume your responsibility.

But the most important part of our heritage was love. Our parents set a beautiful example for us by the great love, respect and admiration that they had for each other. There was always time for all of us, to hear our needs. And most of all to be admonished about how we should behave.

After I finished high school I went to Nashville to Lipscomb College. I really wanted to be a nurse, but my father felt the only occupancy for a proper young lady was to teach school. So I studied elementary education, transferred to Tennessee State Teachers College to finish my requirements. I taught grade school three years out in the country. While I loved the children, I longed for the lights of the big city. I visited my brother in Detroit and applied for a secretarial job there, using my minor in Commercial work. I loved the excitement and received a liberal education in the halls of industry. Since Lipscomb was a church school and my family strict I was totally unprepared for things I encountered. My associates used to speak about the halo over my head as the sun shone into my desk. I lived there until my father's death four years later, and came back to take care of my mother (for a now grown up girl that was quit an adjustment.)

So my mother, my neice and I took an apartment in Oak Ridge. I was secretary of the Directory of Thermonuclear Studies. Also at that time a certain Glenn Elmore was doing work in the nuclear study of water for the Oak Ridge National Labs., an acquaintance of my neice's boy friend. By coincidence the boy friends car was wrecked and he recruited his friend to drive us all to the Supper Club in Knoxville, the rest is history. June 6, 1948, eights months after I left Detroit we were married, almost 34 years.

Our son Glenn Van Ness Jr., was born two years later. He is now an attorney for Amadarko Oil Company in Denver. I am still waiting for a daughter-in-law.

Volunteer work, garden club and Japanessee flower arranging filled all the time I had left over from being a wife and mother for the next 25 or so years.

Two years ago when Glenn took a sabbatical to teach Chemistry At Spelman College I decided to try my wings studing art seriously. That year plus the next at Suny completed my work for an art major last May.

With that completed and Glenn retiring we decided to celebrate our milestones with a two month trip to Europe.

Now we have a full time job of doing nothing and enjoying each other in the process.