SKETCHES OF

BORDERSSON



AN INTIMATE STORY OF A MAN WHO BROKE SOCIETY'S BARRIERS WITH UNIMAGINABLE GRIT AND DETERMINATION ON HIS JOURNEY TO BECOMING A HIGHLY ACLAIMED FASHION DESIGNER OF WOMEN'S CLOTHING; ALL WHILE RAISING EIGHT CHILDREN AS A SINGLE FATHER

WRITER: COLENE (SMYER) HANK

(EACH CHAPTER SERVES AS ONE DEVOTIONAL FOR THE ELDERLY)

Copyright by Colene Smyer Hank 2012



INTRODUCTION

Matthew 9:36

"When He saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like a sheep without a shepherd."

COMPASSION DEFINED

Throughout the Bible, descriptions of the magnanimous compassion Jesus displayed toward others showed Him to possess the very character of God. His feelings of sorrow and empathy toward those who were suffering always stirred Him into action with the mission of lifting their burdens so that life would be

more tolerable. Since Christ's greatest desire was to help everyone without showing discrimination, He quickly became known as the "Friend of sinners." Being deeply moved by people experiencing pain, sickness, sorrow, loneliness, or hunger, His expressions of compassion would cause Him to intervene in the lives of those existing in the very "belly" of society; individuals classified as the untouchables. The book of John 6: 37 discloses the motivation for His courageous actions when Jesus said, "Whoever comes to me, I will never drive away."

At this point, it is important to state that even in today's society; one cannot claim to be a follower of Jesus without mirroring Christ's same actions of compassionate behavior toward the downtrodden in this world. Truly the Kingdom of God is still about reaching out and touching them through actions of grace, mercy and love.

THE MEETING

One hot summer day when the bees were buzzing and the writer was playfully kibitzing with the Christian Health Care residents at lunchtime, a staff member approached with such directness and determination, it was clearly obvious she was getting ready to deliver an important message. Without hesitation, she looked deeply into the eyes of the writer exclaiming, "There is a man you need to meet because he is someone you will want to write a spotlight about." (A short summary of his life to be placed on the resident's easel.) She continued, "He was in the fashion design industry and has the entire wing in a buzz because of his fascinating life. I can't pronounce his last name, but his first name is Richard and you will find him on <u>A</u> hall!"

Folks, when someone approaches out of the blue delivering this kind of message, it is the writer's opinion that God has just placed His shoes on her feet and it is time to "boogie." Without hesitation, the writer scurried down <u>A</u> hallway peering outside each resident's door searching for a name tag that said, "Richard."

Bingo! Suddenly the name Richard popped into view followed by a last name that was absolutely impossible to even phonically sound out. Using the greeting of only Richard, the writer announced her arrival saying, "A staff member just told me to come by your room because she felt we should meet." And...meet we did! Folks, that feeble introduction opened up the most fascinating conversation of the writer's earthly life. Within ten minutes of listening to this little man sitting in a wheel chair, calling himself "Dick", it was obvious a spotlight summary would not be even a remote possibility. This little guy, speaking with such a soft intoxicating voice, had lived life to the fullest and possessed an exciting story to tell.

As our conversation unfolded, the lilt to his voice and unique pronunciation of words proceeded to add even more flavor to each fascinating tale. The word sewing was pronounced as "sewin" and working became "workin." As he shared what he classified as ordinary happenings in his life, the room became electrified due to the acts of compassion he had shown toward others on his earthly walk. Now at age 80 and faced with numerous physical challenges, this guy was still showing grace, love and mercy toward complete strangers who lived and worked all around him at Christian Health Care.

Consequently, after a few brief moments together, the writer and Dick reached an agreement that his life's story should be recorded so the residents might receive inspiration to keep moving forward as each new day dawned. So often residents feel a sense of hopelessness as their physical mobility declines and assistance in their daily living is required. Also, since Dick knew the writer composed devotional material for residents, he was acutely aware that his own story would take on a spiritual flair. Although Dick was much honored to offer his life's journey as an inspirational tool for the elderly, he expressed hesitation because he believed he was such an imperfect person.

PERFECT PERSON? HAS A PERFECT HUMAN BEING EVER EXISTED ON THIS PLANET CALLED EARTH? NO! Only the Son of God who came to dwell among us was and is perfect! Paul addresses the sinful nature of man in Romans 8:19, 24, 25 by stating, "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do----this I keep doing. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God----through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

Therefore, this now settled, the button on the tape recorder was pressed and the reels began to busily turn so as not to leave out even one tiny morsel of inspiration for mankind to enjoy of Dick's life. Thus, over time, as the writer listened to more and more of Dick's story and observed the expressions on the face of this interesting man, the grit and determination he possessed when facing adversity became glaringly apparent. Dick's personality would shift gears and his entire countenance would change right in front of the writer's eyes. When the writer saw his posture become extremely erect and his neck would bow, she braced herself for sorrow and tragedy. On the other hand, if a pleasant tale of humor was about to surface, his soft brown eyes would dance playfully and he would rare back in a relaxed position in his chair.

Soon, it became obvious to the writer that Dick Du Puis possessed an uncanny ability to compartmentalize happenings in his life. He transformed himself into the person he needed to become in each situation in order to react appropriately and achieve the desired outcome. His motto even today is, "No matter what life deals you, whether happy or sad, you simply accept it and deal with the challenges." At this point, the writer had definitely concluded that this charming man named Dick Du Puis, although gracious and compassionate, was turning out to be a complicated enigma.

Finally, dear reader, before you turn the page to Chapter One, be sure to securely fasten your seat belt and prepare your emotions for a wild ride. Have your box of tissues close at hand, ready to wipe from your eyes both tears of joy and sorrow. Dick Du Puis' story is so lively that at times, you'll find yourself teetering with him on the precipice of a cliff holding your breath, fearful of the outcome. While at other times, you will laugh until your sides hurt because his lively capers have caught his tail in a tight crack.

Last, you are invited to curl up in your favorite chair and turn the light on to your soul as you take the hand of a truly compassionate man from Gueydan, Louisiana who experienced all life had to offer and looks back in the rear view mirror with no regrets.





DEDICATED TO THE RESIDENTS OF CHRISTIAN HEALTH CARE & REHAB CENTER EAST, TIM TRAFFORD AND MELODY CHILDERS FOR THE UNFAILING LOVE PRAYER AND SUPPORT THEY SO GENEROUSLY DEMONSTRATED THROUGHOUT THE WRITING OF THIS BOOK.







established 1899

WE SPEAK FRENCH HERE!

BEGINNINGS



Chapter One



Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace."

GUEYDAN IS BORN

If one dusts off the cover and looks deeply within the book called, "SELF", it is critical not to merely scan its pages, but delve whole heartedly into the first chapter called, "BEGINNINGS." For it is in the beginning season of our lives that light is shed on the secrets of our existence. Youth with its insatiable passions is classified as a time when the imagination runs wild, resulting in the acquisition of wisdom, desires, flavors and appetites that will surface as new found concepts in the distant lands of our adult lives.

Consequently, before detailing the sketches of compassion that formed our subject's very fiber, the backdrop in which he spent the formative years of his life must be explored. Richard "Dick" O' Neill Du Puis, born in Gueydan, Louisiana, as a mere child rambled at ease exploring the unexhausted landscape of colors and textures that so abundantly existed in this small town.

The town of Gueydan (Gey daw) established in 1899, became known as the "Holland of America" because of the Frenchman named Jean Pierre Gueydan's magnificent vision. He, along with some Northern capitalists, concluded that it was possible to reclaim and put into cultivation what was known as the "wet prairies" of Louisiana. The invigorating salt breeze from the Gulf during the summer months accompanied by the rich black loam soil formed by decayed vegetation inspired them to develop a plan for a series of canals to be dug around and across the town that would drain the water from the area.

Thus, the cypress swamps and wet prairies around Gueydan, made ready for cultivation, are known today as a thriving town with an enormously rich heritage. Not only is the quaint town of Gueydan alive and well, but proclaims with pride the glories of all aspects of its flavor, making it the tourist attraction Jean Pierre Gueydan predicted back in early 1900. Those marshy lands once labeled as worthless, possessed the necessary natural ingredients that, over time, although once thought of as discordant, harmonized into one of the most fascinating backdrops on earth. Thousands of little mosses and fungi, overlooked by most, unsuspectingly turned into a thing of beauty.

Even today, the rhythm of God's universe is truly alive with graceful fragrant flowers and foliage in rich shades of peaceful green growing in great abundance. Thousands of birds can be heard ushering in the light of each glorious day that easily coexist with all types of wildlife.

Then, when the herbage becomes noticeably bleached by the hot summer sun, through experience, the locals are energized certain of the change that is in the air. Although the humid air of summer has appeared to lessen the vigor all around, new energy begins to stir among the hearts of the people. Local knowledge tells them that with the arrival of autumn cold fronts, tens of thousands of migrating ducks and geese will be circling in the skies above. This unchanged migratory pattern has brought over 150 species of birds to the rice fields in Gueydan since its beginnings causing it to become the duck hunting capitol of the world.

Additional excitement was created when water from the levees was released to provide moisture as irrigation to the rice fields. Not only was it interesting to observe, but provided a time for residents to gather the crayfish from the drainage ditches that were swept out in to the fields along with the water. At other times, Dick told of tying a chicken neck to a string and lowering it into the canal water with the hope of catching a crayfish for the dinner table. When he felt the pull on the string, his mouth watered in anticipation of the meal he would be consuming that evening.

Since this sophisticated canal system designed by Jean Pierre Gueydan and his associates not only surrounded the town, but contained cross canals that served as pumping establishments, it was a flume, a trough for conducting water, that provided Dick O'Neill Du Puis with his favorite safe swimming hole. Due to their design, they resembled a wooden swimming pool; a place the reptiles would not frequent. It was on hot summer days, when the older ladies could be seen cooling their lined faces with woven palm branch fans that Dick ran by them to enjoy a dip in the refreshing waters of the canal.

Another way to refresh the spirit on a hot summer day was by eating a slice of watermelon sold from a wagon being pulled by a horse right through the heart of town. Snapping turtles were also food products that were sold from a wagon in the same manner. Dick's task was to hold the stick the turtle was biting until his mother could kill it and prepare it properly for their meal.

Since rice was grown in abundance in the fields all around, the Republic Rice Mill located right across the street from Dick's home had an enormous place in the lifestyle of the residents. Since the old tin building had three floors, it sometimes offered a place of safety during a

flood. Also, if powerful threatening winds were approaching, the entire O Neill family would cross the street to the mill and crawl into an empty railroad car waiting to be loaded and take refuge from the storm. Rice from the mill was sold in burlap sacks, becoming a staple of the residents' daily diets. Dick recalls eating it every day at his noon and evening meal. It was so important to the O Neill family that Dick's mother taught him at a very young age how to prepare perfect rice; a recipe he used with his family and still enjoys today. The rice recipe is as follows:

1 ½ Cups Cold Water, 1 Cup Rice, 1 tsp. salt

Wash rice 5-6 times.

Dick's mother would say, "Sonny, take 1 ½ Cups of cold water to one cup of rice and place them in the pan together. Do not cover. Wait until the water boils high and reaches the level of the rice. Then, cover and turn the heat down as low as possible. (Simmer for about 20-30 minutes) Turn the fire off and let the rice rest for 20 minutes. Fluff with a fork and add salt.

CAJUN INFLUENCE

All these wondrous ingredients of beauty found in the bayous, marshes and prairies were such a powerful draw to the descendents of the Acadians, now called Cajuns, their migration to this area turned Vermilion Parish, to which Gueydan belongs, into truly the Cajun capitol of the world.

Consequently, due to the warm and wonderfully hospitable nature of these people, the air around Gueydan is thrillingly alive with the sounds and smells of their music and food. The dance halls ring and tremble as people stomp their feet to the rollicking tunes; a unique sound unequaled anywhere else in the universe.

Also to accompany this rich heritage of music and joy is their devotion toward preparing spicy wonderful food consisting of recipes only they can concoct; gumbo, sauce piquant, crawfish and jambalaya to name only a few. Even when locals move away, it is common for them to continue preparing their favorite Cajun recipes with those much appreciated spices enjoyed as a child.

In addition to the contribution of their music and food, one must never forget the impact of their colorful language on the people all around. When Dick was a young lad, Cajun French, a dialect of the French language, literally permeated almost every household in the Parish. In fact, as our subject grew up in Gueydan, both his grandparents and parents spoke French fluently. Unfortunately, many of the next generation entering into mainstream society did not continue this practice. Thus, it is much appreciated to witness, "We speak French here," on signs throughout the town of Gueydan, signifying the intent and effort of the locals to keep this romantic beautiful language alive.

Last, the writer would be remiss not to mention that these proud Americans even wave their own Cajun flag in honor of their highly regarded heritage. This show of unity serves as a model for all society to follow so that all races and colors of people that make up this country called the United States are respected and honored everywhere. After all, it is truly the melting pot comprised of people from all over the world that make up our proud nation today.

Consequently, all the natural ingredients from Mother Nature combined with the magnificently seasoned music food and language of the Cajun people create the perfect recipe for the town call Gueydan to offer such unique attributes that they are unequaled anywhere in the world. For those residents living in this "Most Cajun Place on Earth," they must frequently ask themselves the question, "When you have all this, what more do you need?"

PERFECT PALLET

Thus, this was the pallet of colors and textures that comprised the environment in which Richard "Dick" O Neill Du Puis spent his youth; causing him to fall deeply and passionately in love with every aspect of life. It was here that he developed compassion for his fellow man and wildlife as well. When this little fellow named Dick freely roamed the area, he was so busy letting his imagination and dreams go wild that not even the loud croaking of the toads and frogs disturbed his concentration. After all, his thoughts were those of a busy little boy at play. The peace he felt when being near the roots of the Cyprus reaching out of the water like inviting arms and the moss hanging from the trees waving to him as the Gulf breezes cooled his face let him know all was well in his little world.

Then, toward evening, stretched out on his back, with eyes focused toward the soft sky above, he learned a final lesson. His youthful notion that soft blue was the color of choice when painting the clouds was dramatically disrupted by a blazing fiery red sunset that lit the sky at the close of day. Abruptly standing at attention, this young boy bestowed upon himself the gift of soaking in 30 minutes of pure artistry.

Finally, this exquisite landscape was the backdrop that formed the very foundation of Dick's life. Its vast and titanic features would be to him like an intoxicating perfume of which he would never tire. Repeatedly throughout his adult life, the colors textures and hues that he had so carefully stored in his mind as a youth would surface in just the right way and at the appropriate time. After all, he was Richard "Dick" O Neill Du Puis, a home grown southern boy from Gueydan, Louisiana.

References:

http://www.gueydan.org/Hollanddisp.html http://www.vermilion.org/towns

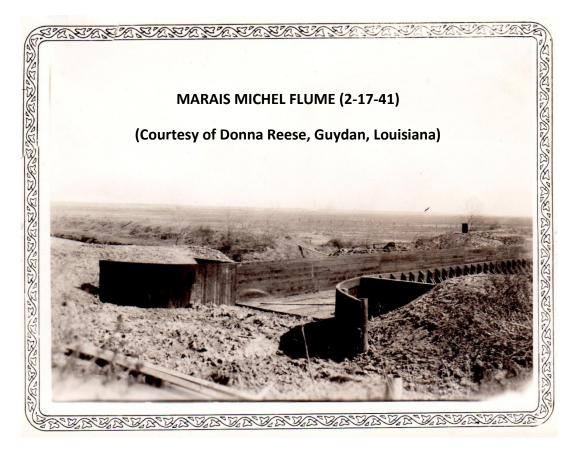
http://www/realcajunrecipes.com/heritage

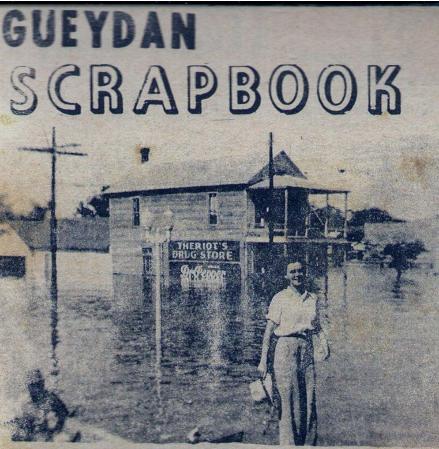


Flooded Rice Fields in Gueydan, Louisiana



(Above) Republic Rice Mill beside Canal in Gueydan Louisiana





1940 FLOOD--It happened 29 years ago in the month of August and Mrs. Harris Miller is shown in the front of the boat that was needed to get around in the town of Gueydan. Hollis Gillintine loaned us this photo that marked the last time that Gueydan had to endure flooding like this. (Craw fish boil in 1970, picture courtesy of Helen Gaspard Hayes)



<u>Chapter</u> Two



Proverbs 2: 9-11

Then you will understand what is right and just and fair---every good path For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

PRIDE AND ARROGANCE

As the winds of change had blown through the little town of Gueydan causing even the most discordant materials to dance in perfect harmony, one might mistakenly assume peace would automatically follow. Listening to the slight mummer of the town, the children at play and the delicious sounds of wildlife calling to each other, one day would expect to empty gracefully into the next.

However, when thoughts and emotions of man are present, perfect peace is but a superficial notion. Due to the requirement for wisdom and understanding to be present when reconciling differences of opinions, the yearning for unity among the human species seems but a passing fantasy. As events unfold, no matter the location on earth, when people try to avert the sharp tongues of war, the inner demons called pride and arrogance rear their ugly heads.

Examples of these human tendencies due to differing political persuasions could be found even in the small town of Gueydan, Louisiana. Two large white homes located within walking distance of each other, and owned by Dick Du Puis' future grandparents, Mr. Trahan and Judge O'Neill, had diametrically opposing views regarding the election of Louisiana's legendary populist, Huey P. Long. Long, described as being charismatic and immensely popular for his programs and willingness to take forceful action, was not without his detractors. His opponents accused him of displaying dictatorial tendencies for his near-total control of the state government. While enjoying the nick-name "Kingfish" because of his belief that every man should be a king, he also dwelt with pointing fingers due to strong-arm tactics used to accomplish his agenda. After a failed attempt at his impeachment, he supposedly stated, "I used to get things done by saying please. Now, I dynamite-'em out of my path."

Consequently, this colorful political personality caused emotions to run high in the lives of the two men that lived in such close proximity of one another right in the heart of Gueydan. Since Richard 'Dick" O'Neill Du Puis' mother, Anita Marie Du Puis' parents had died leaving her an orphan, she was taken in by her mother's aunt who was married to Dick's future Grandfather Trahan; one of the occupants of the homes described above. Dick speaks with great animation about the personality of his Grandfather Trahan. Given his position in the community, he was not only familiar with, but deeply involved in, politics on a grand scale; supporting Huey P. Long with great enthusiasm. In fact, he was so dedicated to this belief that he became Long's Representative; a position that swayed the decisions of many voters. He truly believed Huey P. Long was a rising star and good for the people.

On the other hand, Joseph O'Neill Sr., (soon to be Dick's other grandfather), who lived in the large white house so near to the Trahan dwelling, was acutely aware of his neighbor's political convictions and took great offense to the situation. Furthermore, due to the fact that O'Neill was a highly respected Judge, as well as the town blacksmith, he was not about to alter his position on this matter. Using a voice of great authority, he stated clearly he would never support a candidate who lacked honor and integrity. Thus, it was these two opposing stands that caused the future grandfathers of the little grandson, Dick O'Neill Du Puis, yet to be born to become arch enemies; a well known fact all around the Gueydan area.

In addition to the two grown men being unable to respect the art of disagreeing agreeably, Joseph Gaston O'Neill Jr., Judge O'Neill's son, and Anita Marie Du Puis, the adopted daughter of Trahan, had stars in their eyes for one another. As often the case, the love bug respecting no one had bitten the two with such intensity that nothing could possibly stop their march to the altar. As a result, this courtship left many in the town scratching their heads wondering not only how two such opposites could possibly attract, but how the war drums between the two family members would cease in favor of happiness between their children.

Surprisingly, Anita Marie, Dick's mother, described as truly a gracious gentle southern lady with every fiber of her being, was welcomed with open arms by her father-in-law, Judge O'Neill. She was known to have small hips, a beautiful bust line and smooth supple olive skin that she carefully protected from the rays of the hot sun. In fact, due to her personal appearance, Dick stated she could have passed as being of Hispanic descent by those unfamiliar with her background. She could always be seen wearing a hat, long sleeves and gloves in order to keep her skin from tanning dark like hide. Lifting weights to keep her arms and bust firm was an unusual habit, but one performed on a regular basis. Not only was Dick's mother's appearance pleasing to the eye, but had earned a reputation of showing compassion for her fellow man that matched her beauty.

On the other hand, Joseph Gaston O'Neill Jr. was as handsome as Anita Marie Du Puis was beautiful. Having been born with a light complexion along with dark wavy hair, he did not go unnoticed by the ladies. To accompany these good looks, he had developed a reputation of loving a good time. Thus, the best description for Joseph Gaston O'Neill Jr. would have been a "rogue". Even when just a little boy in school, he was known to have a mind of his own; a trait that is obvious to see simply by looking at his picture at the end of this chapter. In fact, a story circulated among the Gueydan residents regarding one of his Halloween capers. In order to pull it off, he secured two other friends to be his "partners in crime." Without disturbing the sleep of the town's occupants, they were all surprised the morning after Halloween to find a local's buggy setting on the roof of a building located on Main Street. Due to the prankster personality of Joseph Gaston O'Neill Jr. having been so well established, the locals were absolutely certain, had it been possible, the horse that pulled the buggy would have been there just for extra shock value. Thus, although he worshiped his wife, he simply had an eye for the ladies; a situation that always caused Dick tremendous anguish. The tears of sorrow he witnessed falling from his mother's eyes tore at his heart strings with such intensity that he became her protector forever.

Soon after the starry eyed couple married, and in good and perfect time, it was announced that a child was to be born. Not only was Richard "Dick" O'Neill Du Puis born in 1930, but on the same day when Huey P. Long won his election to office; a situation that would threaten war between the two grandfathers unless the peace pipe was smoked by all. Long's high opinion of himself, and gratitude toward Grandfather Trahan's hard work to get him elected, caused him to make an unbelievable offer to Dick's mother. He sent an important message to Grandfather Trahan that if his daughter would name her new born son, "Huey P. O'Neill", he would gift the proud family with an inscribed plaque in honor of the special occasion.

Consequently, if the Gueydan residents listened carefully, at this moment in time, they could have heard the O'Neill war drums pounding loudly for a call to arms. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCE WOULD A GRANDSON BELONGING TO THE HONORABLE JUDGE O'NEILL EVER BE NAMED AFTER HUEY P. LONG! In the Judge's mind, his grandson would be called Joseph Gaston O'Neill III. However, wisdom and discretion caused cool minds to prevail. Anita Marie Du Puis O'Neill, Dick's mother, who could have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her actions, declined the offer from Long and named her new born son, "Richard Harold O'Neill"; a decision that quieted the family war drums.



Dick O'Neill Du Puis' father can be seen in the front row, far right. His personality stands out!



(Grandma Trahan)





(Grandpa O'Neill --Judge)



(Joseph Gaston O'Neill, Jr.)





(Anita Marie Du Puis O'Neill)

Huey P. Long (U.S. Senator and 40th Governor of Louisiana)

Chapter Three



1 Corinthians 7: 7

But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift; another has that.

DAWN OF DAY

As the light of day softly streamed through the window and playfully danced with the shadows on the ceiling above the wicker crib that held the infant Dick O'Neill Du Puis, all seemed perfect in his little world. Soon, just like every other day, he would be awakened with a sweet kiss from his adoring mother as her familiar scent fragrantly filled the room. Thus, this was the pattern of each ambrosial morning that continued until Dick became a curious active little boy. Then, with senses totally captivated by the fragrant essences of the Bayou, he would excitedly bound out of bed anxious to make an intimate acquaintance with the moods and manners of the world in which he lived. Even at an early age, it was evident this little boy was about his Father's business committing the days of his youth to memory. Without his knowledge, he was building a pallet of textures and colors that would propel his mind into a creative whirl, which would later be labeled as a gift from his Creator. Due to his innate spirit of adventure, he could be seen walking all over the property that belonged to both his grandfathers, curiously observing the shiny liquid greenness of each blade and leaf.

LIFE WITH THE GRANDFATHERS

In spite of the differences and animosity that existed between Dick's grandfathers, they both were astute enough to never allow their feelings toward one another to flow into their grandson's little heart. Although Dick lived with his parents under Grandfather O'Neill's roof, he recalls distinctly walking by himself to see his Grandfather Trahan at the early age of four.

Grandfather Trahan loved Dick with such passion that he wanted to scoop his grandson up in his arms and hold him lovingly on his lap. Unfortunately, Dick remembers his grandfather having such an enormous belly that there was absolutely no room for sitting. Although they tried this routine repeatedly, his grandson would roll right off onto the floor every time. However, this challenge did not put a damper on Grandfather Trahan when showing affection toward Dick. His solution was to scoop Dick up and raise him to eye level in order to plant a juicy kiss on his cheeks.

Even at age 80, Dick can still describe every room of his Grandfather Trahan's home with amazing clarity. His grandfather knew exactly what he wanted and had designed every feature of his home down to each intricate detail. The dining area was an octagonal shaped room with transom windows around the entire perimeter that acted as natural air conditioning. The table was in the shape of an enormous lazy Susan with place settings on the bottom level, followed by serving dishes on the second tier and crowned royally with a beautiful centerpiece on the top. Dick humorously remembers his Grandfather Trahan sitting like a king at the table and powerfully serving the meat as if performing an official duty to each member of the family. In addition, he fluently conversed in both French and English even though Dick's grandmother only spoke French.

In contrast, Dick's Grandfather O'Neill's home was a very large and elegant dwelling that was decorated with furniture imported from France. It was also known to contain the only organ in the town of Gueydan. Since the house was two stories and divided by a single hallway, the right side of the structure had been converted into a court house where his grandfather, Judge O'Neill, held trials. The left side resembled an apartment where the entire O'Neill family lived. The top floor of the home served as the location for the Gueydan Catholic Church. Grandfather O'Neill's blacksmith shop was in a building just outside the house which allowed him the ability to have two careers going simultaneously. Given the fact his Grandfather held a prominent position in the community both English and only "proper" French were spoken in the home.

HOUSE KEEPING

Dick remembers his mother running a very neat and orderly household. In the summer time, she would pull the moss out of the trees, wash it and let it dry. It would then be used in stuffing the mattresses for the hottest season because the air would flow freely through the material causing a cooling affect. However, during the wintertime, the chicken and wild duck feathers were plucked and saved in paper bags. When an ample supply had been collected, they were used for making pillows and quilts for beds. Sometimes, enough feathers had been collected to fill an entire mattress.

Since the floors were not varnished, Dick's mother would grind a red brick into a very fine powder that she would then rub into the floor, creating a beautiful rose patina which Dick described as warm and elegant.

Outside, the O'Neill home was surrounded by a fragrant gardenia hedge that also provided beautiful bouquets for the family and favorite teachers as well. One of Dick's favorite spots to play was in the giant oak tree in the front of the yard. Since it had been planted when his dad was born, its branches were so large that his mother would hoist him up just so he could walk at ease amongst them.

Another chore for his mother to perform daily was sweeping the ground around the front and back doors. Since the ground was so firmly packed, it resembled a hard wooden surface that was kept free of leaves and debris. One of Dick's favorite past times was to poke small sticks down the holes that could be found here and there that provided homes for large bugs. He would get a kick out of the bug flipping the stick right back at him in due time.

MANNERS ABOUND

One very important value taught in the O'Neil home was the importance of having manners. It took only one lesson for Dick to commit the behavior of practicing manners to his memory forever. As a young boy, he enjoyed immensely assisting his Grandfather O'Neill with his blacksmith work. His favorite job was to turn the wheel causing the fan to make the coals hot. Judge O'Neill allowed Dick this pleasure as long as he remembered his manners. Unfortunately, forgetting this one day and interrupting a conversation between his grandfather and his mother, he received a clunk on the head from his grandfather's thumb that caused an egg sized bump. Enough! Lesson learned!

GIFT EMMERGES

During the summer, when Dick's nap time was scheduled, his mother would place a soft pallet on the wooden floor that had been freshly mopped with cold water. The afternoon breezes would blow across the moist floor producing a cooling effect in the room. Since Dick needed help with drifting off into sleep, his mother would rest beside him and ask him to close his eyes and tell her what he was thinking. He would reply, "I am "lookin" at pictures. I see a pretty white horse and a beautiful rose that is red with velvet petals." As he continued to speak to his mother the objects in his mind would be described in complete Technicolor; alarming her so greatly that she contacted a physician. Lacking the ability to visualize, she was certain something was wrong with her little boy. During the conference with the physician, she exclaimed, "Something is wrong with my Sonny, because he is seeing things!" However, she went home with the assurance that it was perfectly normal for her little boy to be seeing things.

Although Grandfather O'Neill was a widower when Dick's family first lived with him, he soon married a lady that rapidly became everyone's favorite. Dick enjoyed watching his new grandmother make door stops out of catalogues by folding every page until it was shaped like

a fan. This fan shaped catalogue then became a decorative way to keep the doors open. However, to the family's surprise, what 5 year old Dick was really focusing on was the pages containing the pictures of the models wearing women's clothing. Finally, he asked if he could have these particular pages and placed them in a large orderly stack. Then carefully studying the pictures, he used his little scissors to cut off the arms, legs and heads of the models, leaving only the garments they had been wearing. This little 5 year old boy was already tuning into his dream of being a designer of women's clothing. Later, when Dick had established his career in the clothing design industry, his mother confessed to him how worried she had been when this incident occurred, fearing he had deeply seeded psychological issues.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION STRIKES

From 1929-1940 when The Great Depression created hard times throughout the world; it showed no favoritism to anyone. Thus, Dick recalls with sadness how, during these horrible economic times, his Grandfather O'Neill lost all his money. Thus, having no income, his beautiful home went into a hopeless state of deterioration. Additionally, when the Gueydan flood of 1940 took place, the elegant French furniture on the ground floor of his dwelling was totally destroyed.

On the other hand, Grandfather Trahan during this time always seemed to be without financial issues. Since his main source of income was from his farm machinery company, Dick never figured out how he stayed so solvent.

Thus, it was during this time that Dick's father, a professional welder, moved the family to different locations in order to find work. Unfortunately, his dad's love for having a good time severely affected the whole family. Possessing a personality as big as life itself, his standards were very different when it came to handling money. He simply did not provide the funds necessary for running a household. Instead, he would blow it on a big car or use it to buy drinks for everyone at the bar.

Also, at this point, two sisters had been born making it necessary for the family to now find a permanent dwelling. Consequently, Dick's family settled into a very small home located directly across from the Gueydan School. It was at this time that Dick O'Neill Du Puis would know what real hardship was all about. He was a little boy who would grow up very fast due to the curves life would now throw his way; a learning experience that would be training for coping with tragedy in his adult years as a father.



(Dick, age 1, ready for Mardi gras)

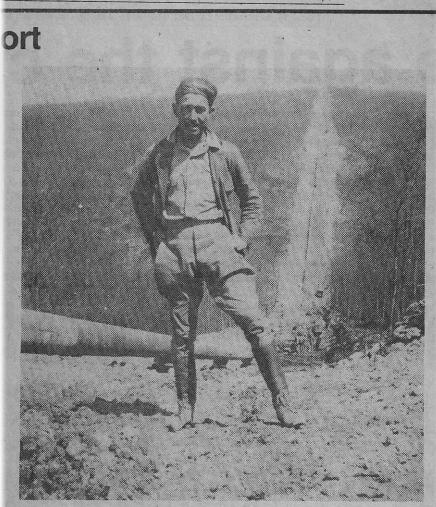


(Dick, age 4 with his sister)



(Dick with his sister and father below)

& The Terrebonne Press-Houma, La. Tuesday, September 21, 1982



(Dick's father in newspaper article about his work on the pipe line as a welder)

'The Big Inch'

German submarines along the U.S. coast forced the construction of the War Emergency Pipeline, often referred to as "The Big Inch," said J.G. "Frenchie" O'Neal of Chauvin. The 24-inch gas pipeline ran 1,800 miles from Longview, Texas to Elizabeth, N.J. and was the longest and largest pipeline ever constructed until then, O'Neal said. O'Neal, a welder on the job, stands on Chestnut Ridge, Penn.

(Grandfather O'Neill's wedding picture



Chapter Four



Proverbs 19: 11

A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

DANCING EYES

In old age when our heads are crowned with gray, we reminisce about the treasured summers of our youth, now living at our hearts core-----far, far within. It is through this remembering we realize, no matter how deep the winter's snow, life's beauty has far outweighed its bitterness. Thus, even in the chill of the soul's coldest December, our very being feels a golden glow from knowing special people have tenderly caressed us through acts of patience mercy and love.

When listening to Dick Du Puis recall the summers he spent at Aunt Evelyn's farm, it becomes crystal clear the enormous patience shown to her nephew with the dancing eyes. Even now, when Dick recounts the capers he pulled on his good natured aunt over the course of several summers, waves of mischief playfully skip across his face accompanied by fits of laughter.

During the summertime, Dick loved to spend the majority of his vacation helping his aunt with the chores on the farm. Since her husband had a saloon in town, he was rarely home, which meant her three children needed to do their share of work to keep the farm prosperous. There were arrays of animals requiring care plus the fields of cotton, rice, sugar cane and corn that must be tended.

In addition, house hold chores seemed a never ending task for his aunt. Dick loved to watch as she used a broom to beat the mattresses and covers so the feathers inside would stay evenly distributed. Then, that evening, Dick and his cousin Roland would make a flying leap into bed allowing the 8 inches of feathers to totally incase their bodies. Every summer, things would be moving along peacefully at Aunt Evelyn's farm until her nephew, Dick O'Neill Du Puis' brown eyes would start to dance. This behavior signaled the birth of a caper that would test his aunt's patience to the breaking point. Clearly, Dick knew exactly when his time was up because Aunt Evelyn would go to the barn, hook her horse to the buggy and leave only a cloud of dust behind as she rapidly drove out of sight. Her mischievous nephew could be assured that her destination was to pay a call on his mother exclaiming, "Come and get your son!" TIME WAS UP! VACATION HAD ENDED!

As you enjoy Dick's capers that follow, shine the Medal of Honor to a rich luster and prepare yourself to place it around Aunt Evelyn's neck for showing extreme patience in the line of duty.

CAPER # 1-MYSTERY OF THE MISSING CHICKENS

Aunt Evelyn had several prized chickens on her farm that she raised to provide eggs and meat for the family. The feed she gave them was neatly stored in a large armoire nearby for convenience. Just for fun, Dick talked his cousin Roland into catching the chickens and placing them inside the large armoire along with the feed. Since closing the doors resulted in creating total darkness, the captive chickens felt no alarm and quickly began roosting thinking night had arrived. Meanwhile, Aunt Evelyn, not hearing the normal clucking and crowing sounds that always filled the air in the barnyard, frantically began searching for her prized chickens. After failing miserably to locate them, she decided the best solution would be to tempt them with their feed. Unfortunately, to her shock and surprise, when she opened the doors to the armoire where the feed was stored, the captive chickens flew in every direction, but mainly in her face. BUGGY OUT! VACATION OVER!

CAPER # 2-ROCK CANDY

Since one of the main crops grown on the farm was sugar cane, Aunt Evelyn would process it and make enough syrup to fill a 50 gallon oil barrel. As the syrup set, rock candy would form on the sides just above the syrup line. The family always enjoyed the rock candy as a very special treat that was served on a plate and placed in the center of the table for a perfect ending to a meal. Unfortunately, Dick witnessed his aunt procuring some candy from the barrel one day and knew exactly where to find it on a regular basis. So, he taught his cousin Roland how to reach into the barrel and pull out the delicious sweet treat called rock candy. Then they proceeded to gorge themselves until the supply became scares. Consequently, they had to dive deeper for more down through the sticky syrup. As luck would have it, Aunt Evelyn discovered the two sugar bears up to their elbows in syrup, with the sticky substance running from their shoulders down the length of their arms and onto their clothing. BUSTED! Their aunt now understood why the two boys had been refusing syrup at the table when she served pancakes. These two culprits were fully cognizant the syrup had been totally contaminated by their dirty sweaty bodies. THERE GOES THE BACK END OF AUNT EVELYN'S BUGGY DOWN THE DRIVE!

CAPER # 3-THE CASE OF THE HUNGRY ANTS

Aunt Evelyn decided it was time to freshen the appearance of one of her rooms with new colorful wallpaper. So, having chosen her pattern, the first step in the process was to paste newspaper over the entire wall which would act as a base for better adherence. This accomplished, the next step was to mix her paste using cornstarch and water one day in advance of the papering process. Since she had committed to memory her tried and true recipe, it was finished in no time and left on the table to set up over night. Unfortunately, her nephew's creative mind concocted the theory that by adding sticky sugar to the already prepared paste, it would enhance the adherence of the product. He knew beyond doubt how proud his aunt would be with this ingenuity. The next day, his Aunt Evelyn arose very early and had papered the walls within record time. Then stepping back and admiring her work, it was apparent she felt satisfied the tired room had come to life with the beautiful pattern she had chosen. However, in just a while, the family started noticing tiny holes here and there on the walls, with more appearing each day. Those pesky ants had detected the sugar in the paste and invited all their friends and relatives to partake of the delicious feast. Thus, in record time, Aunt Evelyn's beautiful paper was literally eaten right off the walls. VACATION OVER!

CAPER # 4 BETTER THAN SNUFF AND NOT HALF AS DUSTY

Dick figured out by observing his Aunt Evelyn's habits that she enjoyed her snuff immensely. So, Roland and Dick thought of a creative way in which to use a little of it. They proceeded to sniff some of that brown snuff up their mischievous noses and immediately broke into BROWN SNEEZING FITS! Brown spray flew through the air and all over the walls. Not a pretty sight! Aunt Evelyn made great sounds of alarm, almost to the panic stage, thinking something was terribly wrong with the two boys. This time before her nephew was sent home, he had some housekeeping to complete in the form of scrubbing walls.

CAPER # 5 GRANDFATHER O'NEILL'S EVAPORATION PUZZLE

The momentum from the capers pulled while on summer vacation at Aunt Evelyn's farm once carried over to his Grandfather O'Neill's home, except with a new partner in crime, being Dick's cousin Alfred. Both boys, fully aware of their grandfather's hobby of making sweet wine, knew also of the place where it was stored. Furthermore, since they had relatives as nurses, they were able to obtain hypodermic needles to pull off their caper. Using the needles, they punctured the cork on the wine bottles and enjoyed sucking out one half inch of the alcoholic beverage from each container for their pleasure. Thus, each time Grandfather O'Neill opened a bottle of his prized dessert wine to serve with a meal, he was absolutely stumped as to why he had an evaporation problem. Dick and Alfred sat stoically at the table daring not to even glace at one another. The issue of the evaporation puzzle was a challenge his grandfather ruminated over for years without ever finding a solution.

FORGIVENESS

It has been said that forgiveness is never earned, but given to another as an act of mercy and grace. Since Aunt Evelyn demonstrated these traits on a daily basis, it is truly understandable why Dick labeled her as one of the sweetest, most even tempered, forgiving individuals he ever met. In spite of all the capers he pulled each time on the farm, when the next summer arrived, he would hear her comment to his mother, "Since Dick is now a year older, he will not have a problem this year." Although she was astute enough to realize this was probably not a possibility, her love for the nephew with the dancing eyes was so great forgiveness always flowed from her kind heart.

Today, as Dick Du Puis looks back fondly at all the pranks he pulled on his Aunt Evelyn, due to the hardship he was to endure as a mere child at age 12, he realizes those years on her farm were his final time of youth. The next chapter of his life will be so heavy with the weight of responsibility, we will all long for his eyes to dance just one more time.





(BUGGY LIKE AUNT EVELYN DROVE)

DICK, AGE 11



Chapter Five



James 1: 2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you

PERSEVERANCE

Scripture doesn't use the phrase **"IF** YOU FACE TRIALS", but "WHEN YOU FACE TRIALS", signaling it to be an eventuality for every individual on earth. It also offers encouragement for us to use these difficult situations as profitable times of learning; opportunities for developing perseverance. Certainly, one basic truth most people find when reflecting back on an impossible circumstance having just been faced, it becomes clear that the depth of human character has definitely been on trial.

may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

Consequently, as you read about the hardships Dick carried on his shoulders at such a young age; it will become apparent that his Creator was at work in his life offering strength for the laborious journey. Then, later on when his adult years unfold on these pages, there will be no doubt in your mind but that the enormous hardships he endured at age twelve prepared him for the horrific tragedy he would face as a husband and father.

FIRST STITCHES

Still residing in the small house located across the street from the school, Dick was now joined by two younger sisters he nicknamed Teta and Sugar. Also, with another child expected to arrive soon, the family was buzzing as plans were made to maximize every space in the already overcrowded dwelling. Since Dick's father still a professional welder, spent the majority of time on job sites away from home, family responsibility fell completely on his mother's shoulders.

At the same time, due to health issues, it was determined that Dick needed corrective surgery that would require hospitalization. Consequently, his mother brought baby bibs that had stamped designs on them to Dick and encouraged him to pass his time by learning to embroidery. Without realizing the importance of this suggestion, his mother was totally oblivious to the fact she had just started her son's career as a much sought after fashion designer of women's clothing. Thus, falling hopelessly in love with sewing, the next project he completed was to embroidery kimono jackets for the child soon to be born into his family.

Therefore, by the time Dick had regained his health, he had begun cutting patterns out of butcher paper and using material from feed sacks to make additional bibs. At this point, it is important to note that at age twelve, a needle and thread in Dick Du Puis' little hands would be the stimulus for creating a dream responsible for propelling him to reach for the stars. A window to his mind had opened to a broader and brighter view of what it meant to be refreshed, renewed and made whole.

ILLNESS STRIKES

Thus, in good and perfect time, a little sister named Selena O'Neill arrived into this world with loud cries and gurgles. Unfortunately, Dick's mother suffered complications from improper procedures after delivery and was quarantined due to infections. Her condition was so severe she was completely bed ridden; a situation that would last two years.

Therefore, with no other options of assistance available to the family, at age twelve, Dick was removed from school and placed in the role of nurse and parent to every member of the household; a duty that meant he would totally fill his mother's shoes. In addition, since his mother was so contagious, only Dick was allowed in the room to perform all care procedures. He fed and bathed her as if she were a small child. Following the physician's strict sanitary guidelines, he carefully entered and exited his mother's room so as not to harm any member of the family. This twelve year old boy fully recognized that his mother's life was literally in his hands; an enormous responsibility indeed.

Since his mother was considered to be in such a toxic state, the door was barricaded, barring all family members from entering. In addition, the new born Selena had developed an intolerance to milk which meant Dick had to boil rice, place it in a sugar sack and twist it until milk flowed through for his baby sister's bottle. He was also responsible for all cooking, which meant the only advice available would be from his mother's voice if she felt well enough. Then, when his sister was old enough to partake of solid food, Dick would first chew it in his own mouth, mix it with his own digestive enzymes from his saliva, and then pretend to kiss his sister, passing the food into her happy little mouth. Under her big brother's care, baby Selena thrived and appeared to be extremely happy in her little world. In order to fulfill all responsibilities, both in and outside the home, Dick had to figure out a logical way to have his eyes constantly on his baby sister. Thus, using a cardboard box with material inside for cushioning, he fastened a rope to the front that allowed his sister to be pulled around the house as he took care of his duties.

At night, all the siblings slept in the same room with a cot serving as Dick's bed. Then, two chairs were placed facing each other, with quilts on the cushions forming little Selena's bed. This make shift bed was then placed between Dick's cot and the wall; an arrangement used until his sister learned to walk. At this point, it boggles the mind to think that a little guy only twelve years old was able to function as family care provider during the day, given the sleep deprivation suffered from all Selena's feedings. Also, serving as a care giver for the family meant he made sure his two other sisters were clean and properly dressed for school; including the shampooing and curling of their hair.

Since there was no washing machine, Dick did the laundry in the bath tub which was laborious indeed. He recalls his father arriving home after being on a job for two weeks with greasy filthy clothes and handing them off to Dick. They were so soiled; the bath tub would be almost black which required heavy scrubbing from a little boy's tired arms.

As time passed, Dick noticed rips and tears in his sisters clothing. Fully cognizant of the family's lack of finances, out came his needle and thread for mending purposes. While his sisters attended school, Dick would not only mend their clothes, but also cut the grass outside. This activity meant pulling his baby sister in her cardboard box out into the yard and placing her in a safe harbor while he mowed the lawn. Dick still recalls vividly how embarrassed he felt not being in school with the other children. Thus, living directly across from the school, he carefully planned his outdoor duties at a time when none of his classmates would observe him in the yard.

As one year ran into the next, and his mother started regaining her health, it was determined the barricade to her door could be removed; allowing all family members to resume their usual close relationship. Unfortunately, baby Selena, had not bonded with her mother and felt no draw to run to her when the bedroom door was open once again. Since she had been conditioned not to enter her mother's room, a plan had to be devised to reverse this process. Consequently, this problem was solved by stringing jelly beans in a line that went from the door to her mother's bed. As progress was made, the jelly beans were lessened and placed only in her mother's hand. Dick can remember the soothing sound of his mother's voice softly coaxing his little sister to come toward her. Selena would pry her mother's hand open, quickly remove the jelly beans and then run out of the room like crazy. However, after a while, to the family's great joy, the love that poured from his mother's heart entered the very fiber of Selena's being with such intensity that it would last a lifetime.

ONE AND ONLY OUTING

Reflecting back, Dick had so little free time for his own enjoyment, that he vividly recalls the excitement of hearing the circus come to town one day. This meant not only wonderful circus performers had arrived to Gueydan, but also the opportunity for riding on the Ferris wheel; one of his favorite things to do as a child. After devising a way to transport his siblings on a large bicycle his father had welded for him, he discussed the idea with his mother of taking his sisters with him to the fair to enjoy a ride on the Ferris wheel. Since his father had welded a large basket and seats to the bicycle, there would be room for all to safely make the journey from the house to the fair grounds. Dick remembers peddling his little legs incredibly hard as he transported his sisters down the streets of Gueydan. Then in preparation for the ride on the Ferris wheel, he carefully placed his sisters on either side of him and tightly held little Selena in his arms. Oh, what freedom he felt as the seat was lifted off the ground, high into the air! The pleasure of feeling like he had taken flight into the wild blue yonder served as a healing balm to a tired little boy who had so much responsibility on his twelve year old shoulders. Unfortunately at this moment, he was unaware that two older women from the community were watching them take this ride with disdain in their eyes. In fact, their disapproval was so great they would make a call on his bedridden mother the very next day to let her know clearly of their disapproval regarding the Ferris wheel ride. Surprisingly, Dick's mother, who was so gentle and even tempered, firmly let the ladies know that if people in the town would have reached out to offer the family assistance in this time of need, Dick would have enjoyed a ride on the Ferris wheel without such enormous responsibility wrapped in his caring arms. Thus, the two ladies glaring back with judgmental eyes and pursed lips, departed quickly stomping their angry feet as they marched stoically down the street.

When Dick Du Puis, now in his eighties, reflects back on these two difficult years of life that required him to abruptly jump from a mischievous child into manhood, he harbors no grudge, bitterness or resentment toward anyone in his family. Displaying his ability to compartmentalize, he simply stated, "I did not mind the responsibility. My mama was sick and I needed to help her. That is just how it was at the time." He continued by saying, "I could not think about the lack of free time or dream of frolicking with my friends because of all the household chores waiting to be completed each day."

Finally, if Dick ever chooses to dust off the cover of his book called Life and delves deeply into this chapter at age twelve, there will be an array of valuable lessons recorded that demonstrate perseverance. Then, if he decides to test this time of his life for its intrinsic value, one would hope he sees his behavior as a reflection of Jesus' teachings for all mankind. There is a reminder of this in Galatians 6: 9 that reads, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we don't give up."

Certainly, one thing that stands out to all who read about the hardships Dick faced in his young life as the oldest son, it must be acknowledged that he fought the good fight and finished the course that was set before him.



(Dick , his sister Teta, and their father)





Dick, Teta, & Sugar

Dick's mother, just before her illness set in with Baby Selena





Selena playing dress up.

Selena, almost two, just

when Dick would have finished

his responsibility.



<u>Chapter Six</u>

JOURNEY TO WHOLENESS

Isaiah 41: 10

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous hand.

JOURNEY TO WHOLENESS

Photography has captured spectacular shots from nature of plants found in places exposed to the most fierce weather conditions on earth. For example, after monsoon rains pour down on the parched smoldering desert sand, unsuspecting changes not visible to the human eye cause the once tired barren floor to abound with arrays of living color as wildflowers smile brightly among the thorny cacti. Another example of this phenomenon can be found on the highest mountains atop their windswept, storm-ravaged peaks. Living in this savage climate are some of the brightest lichens, mosses and flowers humankind has ever discovered.

Thus, these two examples prompt the question, "Isn't it a puzzle these storms and difficulties bring about such true perfection in nature?" Scripture offers an explanation by stating that even God's children are purified and perfected through unimaginable human afflictions faced in life; serving as the catalyst for their journey toward wholeness.

BACK TO SCHOOL

The human sacrifices and hardships Dick O'Neill Du Puis had faced for two years in his young life, when only twelve, serve as a poignant example of such circumstances depicted above. After two years of being parent and nurse in the O'Neill household, his bedridden mother finally regained her health and resumed responsibilities. Even though she once again cared for the family, Dick supported her efforts beyond measure. He continued to assist with all the chores in order to lessen the burdens carried on her shoulders. Just recently, Dick's baby sister Selena reminded him of how he used her little body for drying the wet kitchen floor.

Setting her on a large towel, he would playfully drag her around the room as a creative game for her entertainment while drying the floor at the same time.

However, in spite of his success as a family caregiver, since he had missed two years of school, it would now be necessary for him to repeat sixth grade. Unfortunately, this would mean, at age fourteen, all his classmates would be only twelve; a hard situation, indeed. However, the one advantage Dick had going in his favor was his small stature, which would allow him not to tower over others. Although his small size would later present challenges, perhaps for now, he had finally caught a break.

Thus, one can only try and imagine Dick's restless sleep the evening before his first day back in school. Realizing how the normal peer conversations usually unfold at that age, it must have been a traumatic event for this young boy. Before the school bell rang, he would have been questioned and unmercifully teased by his new and old classmates, as well. Furthermore, since Gueydan was a small town with only one school, there would be no such thing as privacy.

However, his classmates not fully grasping the grave responsibility and hardships Dick had endured for the past twenty four months could not possibly comprehend why their pokes and jabs would be only a bump in the road to this young man. Now possessing maturity beyond his years, he would enter school with his head held high and conquer brilliantly any challenge that arose. Dick O'Neill Du Puis was back on track and would never grieve over his lost youth.

DANCING EYES RETURN

As Dick continued to fulfill the curriculum requirements and enjoyed free time to be a boy once again, the dancing eyes his Aunt Evelyn knew so well, started playfully to surface. Dick's mother observed evidence of this behavior when her son started dodging confession time with the priest and firmly insisted this situation be corrected immediately. This went on until she looked him in the eyes and said, "Today, you are going to confession and I will witness you personally kneeling in front of the priest!" So, Dick with his ears pinned back, had no other alternative but to kneel at the confessional and give a full accounting of his actions.

Thus, stammering a bit, he finally blurted out, "Sorry Father, but I have sinned!" Speaking in a very heavy French accent, the priest asked, "Ok son, how have you sinned?" Still on the dodge, Dick made up what he labeled as boring sins such as, teasing his sisters and telling lies to his mother. Unfortunately, the priest kept prying, letting Dick know his look of guilt was obvious.

Finally realizing it was hopeless to continue this charade, Dick yelled out, "Ok Father, I am sorry but I stole something!" Extremely concerned, the priest quickly wanted to know if it was valuable and continued to press even harder on the young reluctant sinner in front of him. Finally feeling totally hemmed in, Dick exclaimed, "I STOLE SOME PERSIMMONS!" The priest surprised him by asking, "Were they Japanese Persimmons?" Then, observing the affirmative nod of the young boy's head, the priest firmly stated, "Since the only Japanese Persimmon tree in Gueydan grows in my backyard, all you had to do was ask for them. You stole those persimmons from me!"

Recalling this caper at age 80, Dick clapped and roared with laughter as he recounted the priest's final question being, "AND----WHO'S LITTLE BOY ARE YOU?"

RAT DU PUIS

As Dick was progressing smoothly in school, the largest stumbling block was biology. In fact, he was told by his teacher the only way he would pass was through submitting a project for extra credit. So, he bargained with his teacher in the typical Du Puis fashion and was granted permission only if his project was truly <u>spectacular</u>.

That evening when walking by Republic Rice Mill with the biology project on his mind, he discovered the biggest rat he had ever seen in his life. At this moment in time, Dick visualized a message traveling across this old rat's body that read, "BIOLOGY PROJECT"! After transporting it home, he first carefully skinned it outside and then carried it right into his mother's clean shiny kitchen. When the smell of something cooking beckoned his mother, she found that old rat boiling on top the stove in a pan right from her cupboard. Disapproval was not only written all over her face, but expressed verbally as well. In great haste, she rapidly disposed of everything that old rat had touched plus demanded a total sanitizing of the kitchen from her son.

However, undaunted by the scolding, Dick carefully removed the tender rat meat, followed by a delicate disjointing process; as if he had MD after his name. Then, staining a piece of wood for the base, Dick proceeded to reassemble the rat's skeleton until it was absolutely perfect. In the eyes of this young man, the rat now in a sitting position, needed only to hold a kernel of popcorn to merit wearing the name <u>RAT DU PUIS</u>.

Needles to say, not only was this project labeled by his teacher as spectacular, but allowed him to pass biology in a sensational manner. In fact, years later when Dick's sister returned to Gueydan for a visit, "RAT DU PUIS" was still eating his popcorn while residing in the high school trophy display case, unaffected by all who gazed at him in admiration.

THE RABBIT

Another creative way in which Dick earned credits was to become a rabbit for the athletic teams in school. Although Dick's small stature prevented him from playing sports, he still had the reputation of being the little guy with enormous endurance. Therefore, when the coach approached Dick with the opportunity of using this endurance to earn extra credits, he jumped at the offer.

Consequently, the Gueydan residents would often see Dick as the rabbit running out in front of the sports teams for endurance training. He laughingly recalls the athletes wearing down to the point of sprawling out on the ground in complete exhaustion. At this point, he would sit on a log watching them until they started up again. This being his signal, he would take off in front of them until the chase ended. THIS LITTLE RABBIT HAD JUST EARNED SOMEMORE CREDITS!

DRUM MAJOR

Even though Dick had conquered every challenge presented, those two years he had missed in school continued to shadow his every move, causing him to always be searching for credits. Thus, informed by his teacher more credits were still needed to graduate, he put on his head the much worn thinking cap and came up with a plan. After analyzing the situation, he decided to play a musical instrument, hoping it would put him in the black column. Since the school furnished the tuba, this would be the perfect solution, especially since his family had little finances to spare for renting or buying an instrument. Unfortunately, this not being quite the ticket, Dick then decided becoming the Gueydan Drum Major would solve all the challenges in one fell swoop. After all, the Drum Major wore a fancy uniform and led a large band composed of students from five local schools. However, the band director let Dick clearly know he was too small to fit into the expensive uniform whose last occupant had just graduated. Instead, Dick was told he could wear a plain uniform and walk directly in front of the majorettes in the fall.

No way! Absolutely out of the question! Dick O'Neill Du Puis was not about to walk meekly behind a Drum Major who would be prancing and showing off in all his glory! Thus, Dick proceeded to learn how to twirl a baton over summer and by fall had learned all the routines and could throw it higher than the telephone poles. Additionally, being a natural showman as well as double jointed, he strutted like a peacock and pranced with his knees even with his waist as he marched along. Some in town described him as resembling one of those expensive horses that was seen dancing along all the parade routes.

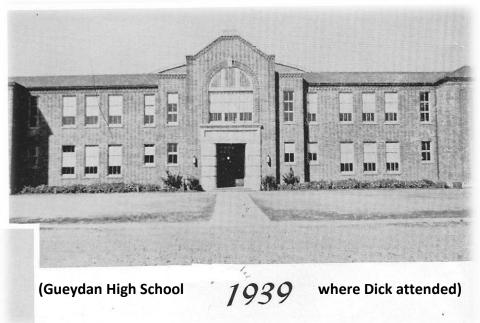
At this point, a very proud Dick became the Drum Major even though it meant the school had to purchasing another expensive uniform and add an extra red feather on top of the existing

white one on his hat. The extra red feather made it possible for all band members to keep this little guy who possessed such heart within their vision. As they followed this showman performing for the crowds along the parade routes, who would have ever imagined a full scholarship, would have been offered from a major Louisiana University to a little guy who was told he was too small for the task?

POWER OF ENDURANCE EVALUATED

In summary, it is important to apply at this point, James 1: 2-3 that reads, "Reckon it nothing but joy...when you find yourself hedged in by the various trials, be assured that the testing of your faith leads to power of endurance." Certainly, the tenacity, creativity and endurance Dick applied to the challenge of making up for the two years he was removed from school are, in and into themselves, show stoppers. Time after time, as you read about his quest for gathering credits, there was not even a hint from this young man of succumbing to defeat and throwing in the towel. In fact, it almost appeared that Dick actually enjoyed being challenged by the impossible. He had a goal in his mind and succeeded against all odds. Not only was he given obstacles to overcome, but had to work around the fact he had been born small in stature; a physical condition that had its own built in limitations.

Finally, as the rest of Dick's high school years unfold in the next chapter, an unimaginable strength will surface from the very soul of this young man that will allow you, the reader, to visualize him as living atop one of the windswept, storm-ravaged peaks of life described in the introduction of this chapter. To date, you have only witnessed a preview of the strength this young man will apply in breaking through society's barriers in order to follow what appears to be an impossible dream.



DRUM MAJOR DU PUIS





(HOUSE DICK LIVED IN DURING HIS HIGH SCHOOL YEARS)

Chapter Seven



Psalm 139: 13-14

You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

In society, there is an unwritten law derived from the "human mind" that encourages people to plod along in a push-and-pull fashion pretending to be an exact replica of one another. Consequently, anyone who dares to soar like an eagle, using extra ordinary vision, is often ridiculed persecuted and bullied until uniformity is accomplished once again. Yet Scriptures clearly specify the fact that our Great Creator has breathed His character within the very fiber of each and every individual.

Thus, we are so fearfully and wonderfully made that there will never be a replica soul made of you and me. The poet, Helen Lowrie Marshall, in <u>A Gift So Rare</u>, stated that the glory of all creation rests on this very deviation. The charm of who we are depends upon these unique qualities; traits that many of us spend a life time trying to hide. After all, how will people react if we step out of the box with our thinking and actions; totally away from the acceptable norm of the madding crowd?

However, sometimes we have the great fortune of crossing paths with a person who dared to exit the cozy-tight cookie cutter space in which he lived and stepped into the sunlight with arms stretched wide open. Then as the first rays of sun bathed his face with soft glowing warmth, the realization that yesterday was the past and was pitifully lacking entered with such intensity that there was nothing left but forward motion. Since the door of sameness was forever closed, the part of him that was different from everyone else was all that would allow him to cross the barriers of society and follow his dream.

STITCH BY STITCH

The charm and unique qualities bestowed by God upon Dick O'Neill Du Puis, waiting in the wings for the right moment to surface, could no longer be kept in the special secret place. Thus, at age fourteen, Dick progressed from simply stitching rips and tears in his family's clothing to making their total wardrobes; all without a sewing machine. Recognizing their outfits were falling apart at the seams while doing the laundry, he solved the issue all on his own. He reasoned that by sewing French Seams when making their clothing, he would prevent the fraying and splitting of their garments. As you view the picture below of a French seam, it is important to note that Dick was totally self taught; without the finances to purchase sewing books or patterns. He just knew the garments were falling apart in the laundry and figured out a workable solution.



<u>SHH</u>—<u>SHH</u>—<u>SHH</u>! <u>DON'T TELL!</u>

Then, by age fifteen, not only could he sew and crotchet, but was making all his mother's clothing, as well. Unfortunately, since Dick's passion for sewing was an embarrassment to his father, every member of the family was placed under a very strict "gag" order.

Therefore, if anyone asked about his mother's clothing, everyone in the family was to say the garments were purchased at the high end department store in New Orleans called Masion Blanc. (Ironically, when Dick had become a much sought after fashion designer of women's clothing, his garments were sold at this very store.) Dick's eyes beamed as he told about his mother driving to New Orleans just to look at the clothing he had created.

Unfortunately, the "gag order" and planned response to inquiries about the O'Neill family's beautiful clothing had a short life span. When a light shines as brightly as the sun, it is impossible to hide it under a bushel basket. Thus, the beauty and glamour that resulted from Dick's needle and thread spoke volumes on their own, commanding the attention from everyone.

Therefore, the "cat got out of the bag" when his sister was asked to be in a friend's wedding. Especially for the occasion, Dick made her a gown of sea foam green organza with a full base skirt and a low trousseau in the back. Across her hips, he placed two live gladiolas just prior to her entrance down the aisle. Needless to say, this beautiful creation did not go unnoticed. As a result, Carole Rowe, the young lady who had been crowned as queen of the Rice Festival approached Dick's sister with a mission on her mind. She had fallen hopelessly in love with the gown and wanted to know where Dick's sister had purchased it. She would go to any length to locate that identical gown for her big event that was in the offing. Pressed to the point of insanity, his sister exclaimed, "My brother "Sonny" made it for me!" Busted! THE CAT WAS REALLY OUT OF THE BAG! No more lies! The news that Dick Du Puis had a God given gift of designing and sewing clothing spread like wildfire all over Gueydan. Also, this disclosure caused a time of reckoning for Dick's father. Would he support his son who had a talent and passion for an art that was considered to be feminine rather than masculine? Boys simply did not sew. They became welders!

As a result of this confrontation, Dick did design and sew the gown that Carol, the Rice Festival Queen wore that year. Interestingly, at the age of fifteen, Dick's eye for design was already formed. Even though Carol wanted a gown identical to the one his sister had worn in the wedding, Dick was astute enough to recognize Carol's shape dictated a different design. Already possessing knowledge beyond his years, he knew she simply would have been unable to wear the same style and color.

BROKEN BARRIERS

Given the fact that everyone in Gueydan now knew about Dick's incredible ability to sew, he decided the next step for him would be to sign up for home economics. After openly discussing it with his parents, his father finally resigned himself to the fact that his boy "Sonny" would not be a welder. Furthermore, it was at this juncture in Dick's life that his mother was given enough money by his father to purchase "Sonny" a new Singer sewing machine.

Thus, the matter now put to rest; Dick then approached the principal, Mr. Bush, with the request for enrolling in Home Economics. Since it was against society's rules, how could he allow this young man to enroll in a class viewed as only acceptable for women? In a very firm manner, he expressed to Dick and his mother that it would simply be improper for a man to make women's undergarments. However, Dick's mother suggested the decision be left up to the parents, instead. Consequently, after polling all the parents, it was decided Dick would be allowed to enter on a trial basis only. If anything unpleasant came up, he would be out of the program.

Unfortunately, the very first project Dick had to sew was a woman's half slip and matching under pants. Having sewn everything by hand for the females in his family, the project presented absolutely no challenge what so ever. However, as he carried the box containing the finished slip and under pants to school, his friend TJ inquired about the contents of the package. Then, when discovering it contained women's under garments, he grabbed the box, pulled out its contents and proceeded to play touch and go with the other boys nearby. However, when the bell rang, everything was returned to an angry Dick who felt a bit of embracement about the whole thing.

Feeling flustered and out of sorts, Dick arrived in class just as the public address system came on requesting that all students proceed to the auditorium at once. Then when the audience settled, Principal Bush stood in front of the student body and announced firmly, "I saw something this morning that I never ever want to see again." He then began describing the incident that had occurred with Dick's project. He told them how much nerve it had required from Dick to enter the class and let one and all know their behavior was out of line. When Dick's parents heard about Principal Bush's stand, they were not only grateful, but extremely impressed. This principal had taken firm action against the behavior of bullying others.

After this incident, things progressed smoothly allowing Dick to thoroughly enjoy home economics. He vividly recalls classes being held in a romantic little cottage, rather than a sterile classroom in the main building. The students not only gardened, but learned all household responsibilities. A picket fence and an arbor with flowers growing over it offered a warm welcome at the main entrance. Inside, the cottage was beautifully appointed; including a formal dining room with a breakfront containing beautiful flatware. One important assignment was for six students to work as a team in preparing a meal to serve twelve people. Each student was allowed one guest for the fabulous six course meal. In addition to learning meal preparation, the cottage housed a nursery that contained a crib along with a doll that would wet its diaper so the students could understand the responsibilities of being a parent.

In comparison, the FFA program was equally spectacular which included a regular farm that was totally run by the students. They raised chickens and cows and learned to be responsible for all aspects of their care. They actually butchered the cows and were taught how to cut meat properly. The meat was then placed in the school freezer lockers which were then sold to the community. Since no freezers existed in Gueydan, people had a freezer just like a mailbox that contained their meat they had purchased. In short, Gueydan had a very advanced program that taught the students how to be responsible citizens in society.

LIFE IS GOOD

At this point in Dick's life, things had come full circle which allowed the opportunity for him to gain meaningful fun experiences that broadened his horizons. He was a popular young man who was well liked by both girls and boys. In fact, his photographs testify to this popularity with the girls. However, he will become very serious when describing the respect he always showed to women. Since his mother held a special place in his heart, these feelings of respect automatically transferred toward all females.

After assisting his father with welding projects, Dick saved enough money to take his sister on an outing to New Orleans. Possessing a sense of adventure, he first made all the clothes they both would need and then drove excitedly toward the Big Easy. Signing the hotel register as Mr. and Mrs. O'Neill, allowed Dick and his sister to not only enjoy the finest accommodations but experience all New Orleans had to offer. Dick's age was never questioned because he looked older than his years; the results of such heavy responsibilities at age twelve.

THE OPEN SKY BECKONS

As Dick's graduation time approached, the wide open sky seemed to beckon him out into a world he longed to embrace. Although he loved his family beyond belief, he realized it was time to close the door and turn the key on his life as a southern boy residing in Gueydan, Louisiana. He had recognized at a very young age that his uniqueness caused him to not fit in with the norm. Thus, feeling his soul stand straight and tall, he made his final farewell to family and friends, possessing full knowledge that he would never return. Stitch by stitch this young man would sew silver threads into a tapestry so sensational that heads would turn as applause filled the air. Interestingly enough, his classmates added their blessing by voting Dick O'Neill Du Puis as the most likely to succeed.

(Dick and a couple of friends)



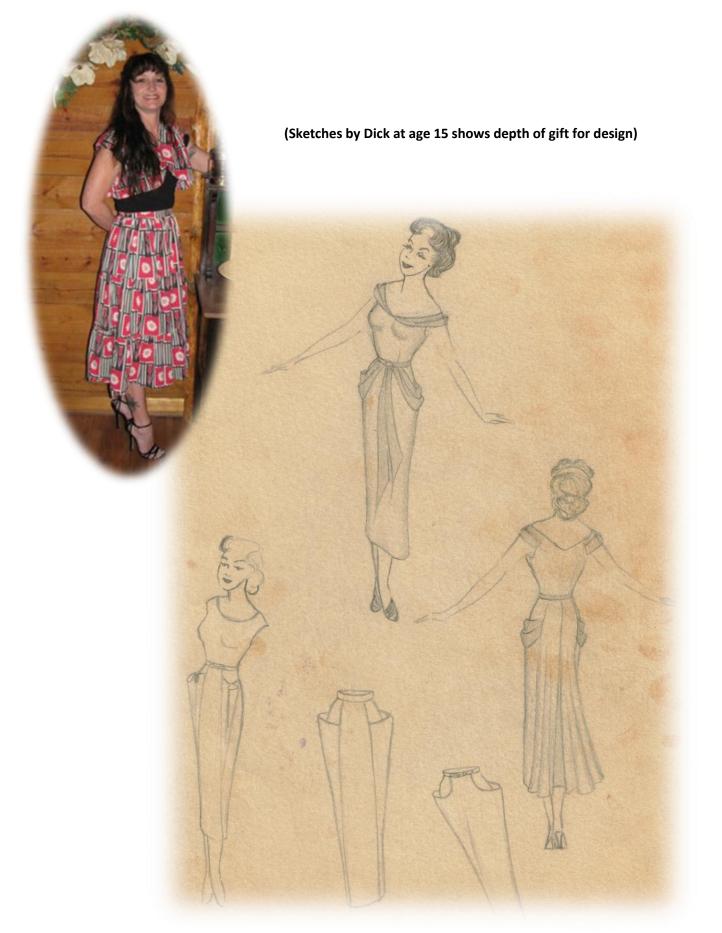


(First girlfriend)

(Dick in school play)



(Dress Dick made for his mother at age 15)



DICK'S GIFT EMERGES



(Dress designed for Carole Rowe, the Rice Festival Queen)

Strapless light blue netting over matching taffeta lining with full skirt gathered to the fitted bodice making her already small waist look even smaller.

Home Economics

00000

(Dick is in center third row below)



(Dick and his sister Teta in New Orleans wearing the clothing he designed for them)

ANCHORS AWEIGH !

NEW HORIZONS

Chapter Eight



Galatians 5: 22-23

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

TOMORROW

DUPUE

"Tomorrow" arrived at the first light of dawn; full of dreams stored in a young boy's heart. This "tomorrow" whose contents was a time slow-built, made up of joys and tears, stood apart because it's very fiber contained all the "yesterdays" from the life of Dick O'Neill Du Puis. Thousands of seeds that were so carefully and painfully sown had reached a ripe fruition and would now transform "tomorrow" into the golden bounty of "today". DUPUS

Thus, on a clear September morning, Dick opened his eyes feeling the pull from the universe calling him toward the fulfillment of his destiny. Although now departing as a sailor in the United States Navy, haloed were the joys of yesterday that were so deeply carved in the recesses of his heart. He would store forever the memories and lessons learned as a southern boy living in the bayou and wet prairies of Gueydan, Louisiana. Later, when he needed to steady and balance a troubled spirit, sounds from friendly voices of the town folk would play soft soothing strains in his head. If restless yearnings made bare his soul, he would need only to borrow from the bank of yesterday's memories for the courage to shape the next "tomorrow".

As Dick boarded the bus headed for boot camp in San Diego, California, his soft liquid eyes filled with sorrowful tears as he recalled the sad farewell from his mother. Although logic told her it was time for her boy "Sonny" to leave the nest, parting brought such intense pain to the core of her very being. Just that morning, the trusty old cot that was the only bed Dick had ever know, was removed from his "make-shift" bedroom in the dining room. Then, prior to making his exit, he had allowed his eyes to rest once more on the Singer sewing machine,

his one valued earthly treasure, in a final sweet caress. In his absence, he could imagine his mother tenderly dusting it as her tears of love splashed softly on the closed wooden lid. She would be recalling the familiar hum from its motor, as her "Sonny" busily sewed the family's clothing. Instead, in its place would be only a deafening silence. Then, wiping away this time for reflecting, Dick bowed his neck vowing to step forward in a manner that would make his mama proud.

BOOT CAMP

After passing his physical and losing his curly locks of hair, a strenuous time of training had begun for the group of new recruits to which Dick belonged. In addition, the men were enrolled in classes where an abundance of information was delivered daily. Although Dick noticed his friend sitting beside him alertly taking copious notes in shorthand, this held very little interest to him. However, the studious man, who would later marry Dick's sister, Teta, firmly delivered the message, "If you don't want to get shipped overseas, you'd better pay attention." Consequently, having been sharply brought into focus, Dick began soaking in the information like a sponge. Also, included in these classes was an aptitude test that all recruits had to complete before receiving their final placement. On this exam, Dick scored off the charts in the area of caring and compassion; traits he had previously developed and practiced at age 12 when nursing his entire family. Therefore, when all was said and done, Dick O'Neill Du Puis had been one of three recruits chosen out of eighty men to qualify for six months of training for becoming a medical technician. This meant moving close by the San Diego Hospital for a period of intense education.

SEWING EMERGES

While all these events were unfolding, Dick's God given talent of sewing started to pluck at his heart strings. When God blesses his child with such an enormous gift, it will dramatically surface in the most unpredictable circumstances. However, what seems out of sync to the human mind is perfect and always right on time with God. Thus, Dick's intense passion for sewing, he thought would be buried until after his Navy career had ended, emerged with breath taking speed and intensity. Answering the call, Dick visited a local retail store where he purchased a portable Singer sewing machine with an ample supply of thread and needles. Bingo! He was in business making money on the side sewing rips and tears, as well as stitching on uniform adornments. Little did Dick realize, at this moment in his life, the purchase of that little portable Singer sewing machine would shape his entire career in the U.S. Navy.

THE LONE STAR STATE

After completing successfully his six month program near the San Diego Hospital, he received a transfer for more practical work at a medical center located in Corpus Christi, Texas. It was here that he was assigned duty in the nursery; a job that presented no challenge due to his two year stint with his baby sister Selena.

While there he met an officer's wife whose legs were paralyzed and was diagnosed as being in a very serious emotional state. Since she was placed under a 24 hour watch, part of Dick's responsibility was for her welfare. Thus, having developed a feeling of trust toward Dick, she insisted that he be assigned as full time caretaker when she was sent home.

Therefore, after much negotiation, Dick was approved for this position, which meant living at her residence both day and night. He not only offered professional services, but also designed and sewed clothing for the patient that had a positive impact upon her total mental state. Soon, her daily tears were replaced with laughter; a situation that created feelings of jealously in her husband's heart. She also had a little girl for Dick to pamper and love at the same time; a circumstance that made things even more irritating for the spouse. How could a total stranger help his wife when he had failed so miserably?

At this point, it is important to pause and recall why Dick was such a natural at providing care to this total stranger. After all, two years of training had already occurred when he took care of his bedridden mother as a boy of only twelve. Unfortunately, regardless of Dick's high level of professionalism, through no fault of his own, the jealous officer husband became so irate that he was instrumental in having Dick shipped overseas to Korea where an ugly war was taking place between two communist countries and the Allied forces.

HOSPITAL SHIP

Due to Dick's extensive training as a medical technician, he was immediately assigned to a hospital ship anchored in the Port of Pusan; on a vessel that housed thousands of people. Dick vividly recalls boarding the enormous vessel carrying his duffle bag on one shoulder and the portable Singer sewing machine tucked away in its own safe little case. The ship was so large it contained three real stories with that much repeated again beneath. The very center, being classified as the most stable area, contained the operating room. The ship's gigantic size allowed it to accommodate 1000 patients on the second and third floors, with the crew residing below.

Since congress never declared war against North Korea or China, these two communist forces positioned themselves to take over the U. S. zone in South Korea; the conflict that would change Dick Du Puis' life forever that was called simply, a police action. However, this

altercation is recognized by most today as the Korean War. The label police action simple meant it was a localized fight, without the declaration of war. Regardless, the U. S. and Allied troops probing northward in an offensive move faced such horrible conflict on the front-line; the soldiers dubbed it the "meat grinder."

Thus, remembering his duties as a medical technician, Dick vividly describes the environment much like the TV show Mash depicted. The horrors of war were so intense and ugly, the hearts and minds of both the wounded and caretakers were forever changed. Dick recalls picking maggots out of the wound of a soldier who had been exposed to the elements for an extended period of time. Then, when a soldier's peace of mind was so disturbed by the atrocities faced, he would be pulled out of battle and placed in the hospital ship's psychiatric ward for a time of restoration.

When Dick first arrived on the ship, he was assigned to the psychiatric ward where his working uniform was a robe and pajamas. This comfortable attire allowed him to be non-threatening to the patients as he carried out his responsibilities. In the event of a refusal to take prescribed medication, Dick had placebo pills that he would consume as a demonstration so the patient would follow suit. If the patient's medication was a red liquid, Dick would consume a strawberry flavored drink to coax compliance. When a soldier had difficulties showering due to fear, Dick would stand under the nozzle with the patient wearing his pajamas. These techniques were not part of the training program, but common sense strategies Dick developed out of need.

THE SINGER HUMS

After settling into his responsibilities with proficiency and ease, his little Singer started to hum as it sewed rips and tears for the population living on board. As a result, word spread like wildfire about the odd man who sewed, causing a strange reaction from the crew. Some expressed strong warnings in the event the Captain learned of this activity.

Consequently, to Dick's great consternation one day, he was summoned to the Captain's quarters. Fully expecting a stern reprimand, he received the surprise of his life, instead. The Captain, who was smaller in stature than Dick, asked if he would do alterations on his uniforms. Given his small size, every item of clothing he wore required resizing; a big headache for a Captain on the open sea. Therefore, over a period of time, the Captain and Dick developed a warm relationship of mutual respect. However, outside his officer's quarters, he pretended Dick was the same as everyone else. When the Captain conducted inspections, he would walk along tapping his leg with a rolled up magazine as a show of power and authority. Then, as he passed Dick, he would tap his own leg and then Dick's in rapid fashion; the only show of familiarity.

After a short time, the Captain recognized the young man's gift of sewing as an asset and moved Dick to a large office of his own where he was assigned responsibility for all linen supplies. In addition, a support crew was organized to assist him with the task of refurbishing surgical pads and everything on board that involved sewing. Even the cooks requested the mending of dish towels and potholders from Dick's crew; which earned him a beautiful birthday cake as a show of appreciation.

Day after day as the little Singer sewing machine hummed along, Dick became more and more aware of the large number of wounded that lay hour after hour on beds with no privacy. The fact that they were out in the open with their bodies exposed to all who entered stirred deep feelings of compassion within Dick's tender heart. Therefore, after approaching the Captain with a solution, he was granted permission to design and sew screens that were placed beside the beds of the injured; a gift that meant everything to those so badly compromised. He also noted the robes of the wounded hanging in a make-shift fashion over the portholes in an attempt to block the blistering rays from the sun. Therefore, additional screens were made to cover portholes, preventing the hot sun from weakening their compromised fragile bodies.

Then, one day when Dick was busily working in his office, a man appeared in his doorway in dire need of assistance. His entire body was so covered with dirt and grime that it was evident he had been on the front lines for a long period of time. He had been sent to Dick's office for a total clean-up. Unfortunately, since he had no extra change of clothes, Dick gave him a bathrobe, slippers and all the necessary items for the purpose of showering while his uniform was freshened. Additionally, possessing a heart filled with sympathy for the man in such a downtrodden state, Dick proceeded to spend the day in fellowship with the needy man. He took him to a movie, gave him a tour of the ship and treated him to ice cream. It was such a time of relief for the poor soul that he compared it to an experience in a fancy hotel.

As a result of this incident, Dick's doorway would be filled with one soldier after another calling for "Dick Du Puis". This occurred so frequently that he finally instructed his staff to prepare packages consisting of a robe, slippers and all the necessary toiletries for accommodating the battle worn men. Consequently, as each fragile man appeared at his office door, not only was the package ready, but Dick would put his work on hold and have a time of fellowship with each individual.

Even though Dick's new assignment of being in charge of the hospital ship's linens was an enormous job, it was still impossible to fight off the nightmares created by war. The ugliness and brutality of battle caused such a deep emotional darkness that light seemed so dim there was no way for it to shine on the souls of mankind.

Thus, for the first time, Dick who had always been gifted with making the best of every situation or challenge knew beyond doubt it was imperative that he find a healing balm for his troubled soul. In order to survive the horrors he was facing every hour of each day, a solace for his entire being must be created; a place where he could regain his balance and hold on to his peace of mind. Job 3: 26 best describes Dick's emotional state with the cry from this scripture, "I have no peace, no quietness; I have no rest, but only turmoil."

Then, one day when happening upon two, 5 gallon cans of green and white paint that had been sent to the ship in error, Dick requested permission to claim them for his own use. It was at this moment Dick's creative mind visualized a way to turn his gray mood and office into a sanctuary for his hungry depressed soul. Furthermore, little did he know that the thoughts traveling through his troubled mind at this instant were alive with the power of guidance from the Holy Spirit. Not only was this little man setting out on a journey of self healing, but one in which the long arm of God would use to embrace others in the process.

Thus, in typical Du Puis fashion, he painted the bins and walls in his office different shades of green and the floor a pure dark green that was then waxed to resemble an emerald jewel. In addition, his mother had sent two Christmas trees that he immediately reconfigured into one beautiful shape. It was then adorned with lights and ornaments that she had included as well as some he had picked up in Seoul. Also included in his mother's care package were records for his phonograph that filled the atmosphere with the familiar voices from home of Bing Crosby, Perry Como and Dean Martin crooning old time favorite sounds of the season.

Then shortly after this enormous find, he spotted bolts of green wool ordered for the recovering of pool tables in a corner being unused. Since no one on board knew how to accomplish this type of repair work, the material was just classified as excess baggage. However, in Dick's creative mind, they had "<u>DRAPES FOR MY OFFICE</u>" written all over the fabric.

Since Dick had grown up during the Great Depression, his background experience of making something spectacular out of nothing caused his creative personality to surface immediately. Thus, the once gray office to which he had been assigned shone like a beautiful royal emerald. Then, as Dick carried out his responsibilities, the wonderful setting he had created began to soothe his soul like never before.

However, upon spotting this total make over, everyone exclaimed, "YOU ARE GOING TO DIE BECAUSE OF THIS DECORATING!" This straight forward remark did not cause Dick to convert his room back to gray or shake in his boots. Fully cognizant of the healing that was occurring to his mind, he continued forward. Even though he had been told an inspection was on the schedule, the music kept playing from his phonograph as well as his heart. Somehow, he would get through this terrible war and find light on the other side.

Consequently, when the Sergeant of Arms entered with his clipboard and found Dick sewing, dressed in full uniform and wearing only slippers, he barked, "SAILOR, YOU ARE OUT OF UNIFORM!" Dick then tried to explain he was wearing his slippers to prevent any scuff marks from marring the floor until after the inspection. Interceding immediately was the familiar voice belonging to the Captain saying, "YOU ARE ALL DISMISSED! I WILL COMPLETE THIS INSPECTION PERSONALLY!"

This time, Dick was absolutely certain his head was on the proverbial chopping block, but was surprised beyond words at the request that followed. The Captain had witnessed personally children living in almost inhumane circumstances in a Seoul orphanage and suddenly had visualized an opportunity to reach out to the downtrodden through the use of Dick's green sanctuary. Thus, he proceeded to describe the upcoming annual Christmas party as being an opportune time for his sailors to reach out to those in need. Therefore, upon entering Dick's room of healing, the Captain's vision had traveled beyond the usual. It was apparent to see how the hand of God was already starting to reach to His other children in need. Therefore, it was immediately decided that this year Dick's green sanctuary would be the place designated for the annual Christmas party.

What a celebration that occurred in Dick's beautiful office that year. A number of sailors had volunteered to act as big brothers to the orphans from Seoul scheduled to arrive on board for the Christmas celebration. The Captain would personally hand to each orphan the present purchased by the big brother. Then, the sailor and orphan would spend the day attending a movie, eating and touring the large ship.

As the time grew near for the party, gifts began arriving from the excited crew members that were placed beneath the tree at the far end of Dick's office. There were so many gifts the tree could not accommodate them all. However, in spite of the excitement, the sailors were totally unprepared for the destitute state of the 25 plus orphans that appeared that day. Never in their lives had they seen such poverty. At this point in time, they had to reach to the depths of their souls for wisdom to handle the feat ahead.

That Christmas, as the sun set over the large hospital ship, the crew was filled to the brim with emotions never before experienced. The scripture from Philippians 4:7 encapsulates it best with the words, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Inner peace comes from knowing and accepting that God is in control. And....it had been proven that very day to all with open hearts. Having been label as an enormous success, on year two, the nurses on board asked Dick if he would consider designing and sewing their gowns for the annual party. What a wonderful break from their tired uniforms! As a result, wolf calls filled the air above the heads of the nurses as they made their appearance for the grand event. The compliments caused a warm glow to appear on their faces as they happily entered into the room where designer Du Puis received them with joy.

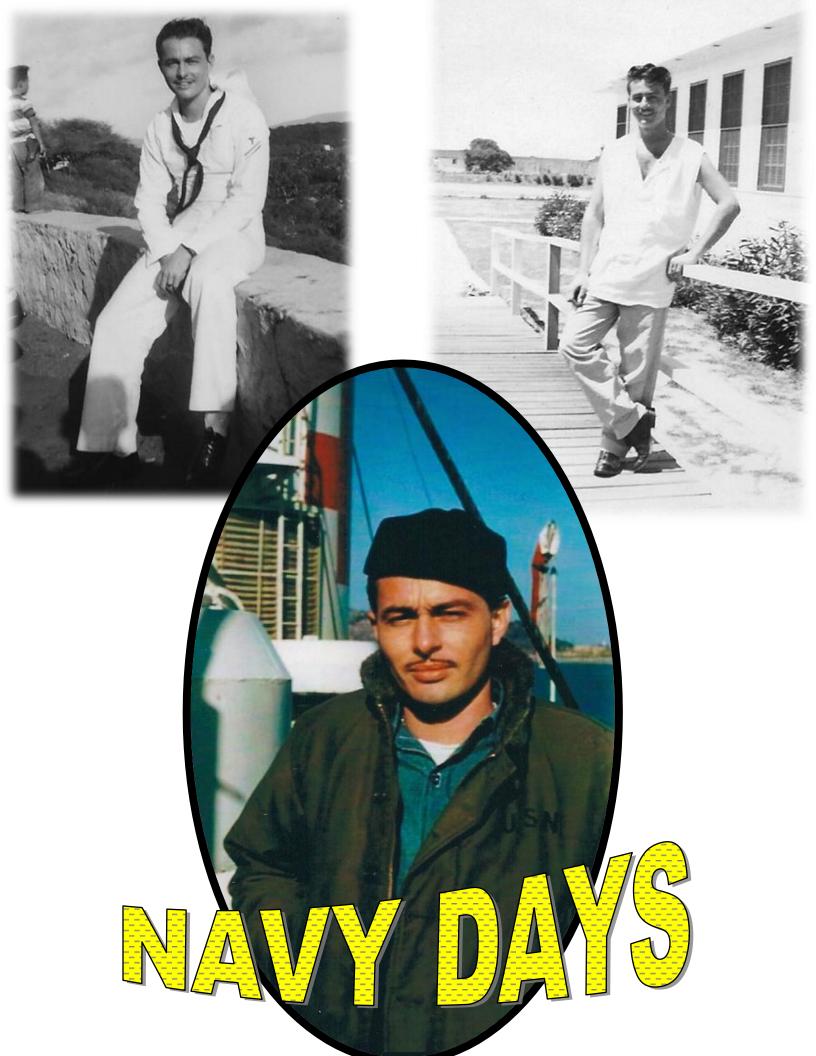
As Dick shared every detail of this wonderful Christmas on board an enormous ship as a young man in the Navy, his eighty year old eyes absolutely came alive with joy as he recalled the number of homesick hearts touched right in the middle of the war in Korea.

REFLECTIONS

One never knows when a little word or deed may open a window of light that shines brightly on a desperate and wounded soul in need. It took only one portable Singer sewing machine to be purchased by a man possessing extraordinary vision and courage to set off a chain reaction of compassion that would change thousands of lives forever. Also, it is important to acknowledge how instrumental the Captain of the ship was for thinking outside the box regarding one of his crew member's ability to sew. However, the most critical recognition should be in the form of praises to God for placing his child from Gueydan, Louisiana in just the right place at the correct time. In his omnipotent wisdom this event may have been one of the reasons for bestowing on Dick the gift of sewing. Furthermore, it certainly wasn't a coincidence that his Captain was smaller in size, and also possessed an open mind regarding human kind's individuality. Not only did the Captain show vision and acceptance of another, but desired that his crew benefit from it as well; a dramatic act of compassion toward his fellowman.

In summary, having been perfected by the fire of trials and hardships as a young lad, God's love poured from Dick O'Neill Du Puis' heart with such force that it transformed a mundane hospital ship into a vessel of radiant beauty and grace. What started out to be a quest to find inner peace, transformed not only one sailor, but a multitude of crew members into peacemakers. Matthew 5: 9 says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." And...so it was that day.

It is no wonder that Dick reflects back on his experience in the Navy as being extremely fulfilling and rewarding. Once again, he demonstrated his wonderful ability of making the most out of every situation during his life. His statement, "This is just how things are in my life right now. I must accept them and make the best of the situation each day," is a motto he still upholds.





Below: Dick and his father



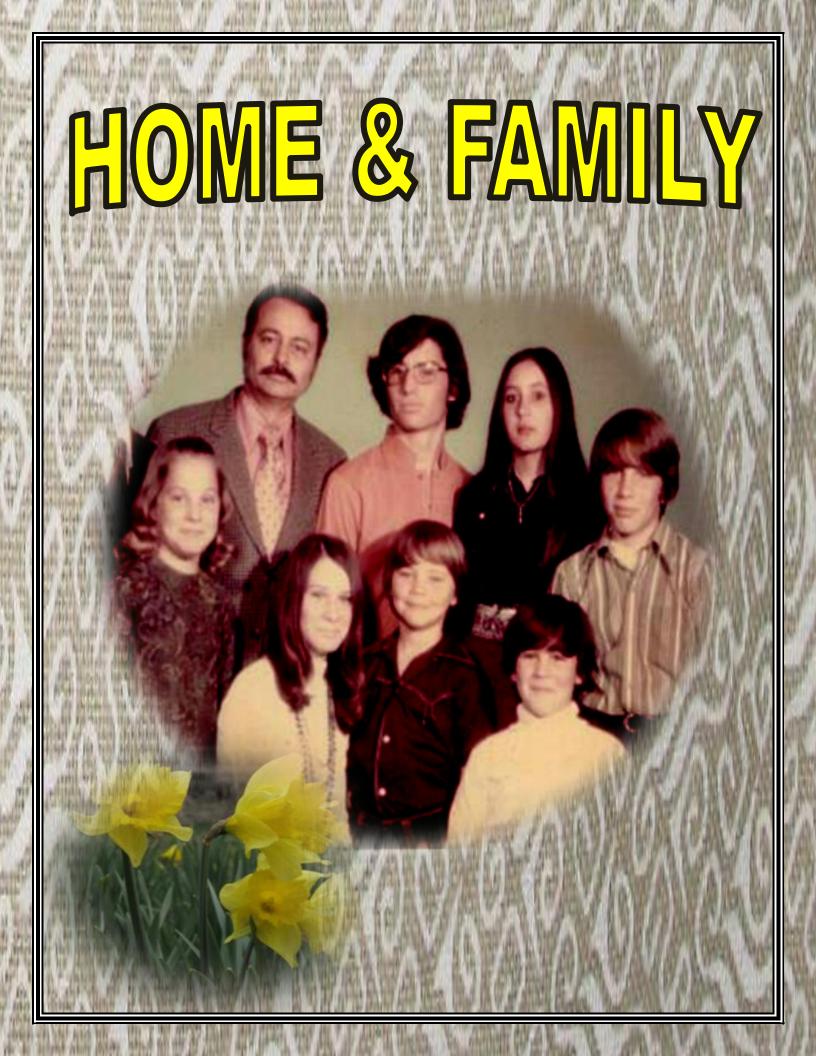
Left: Scrubbing and painting

Below: Dick & a nurse





(Dick and one of the orphans from Seoul)



Chapter Nine

TIL DEATH DO US PART

Hosea 2: 19

And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy.

What beauty in the running brook of true love's emotions. As one stream, it gently empties into branches of excitement where wild and tame desires are one. It gurgles in far off places where dreams are but the fantasies of youth, creating a picture that is painted and framed, whether on life's stage or in its wings; producing an afterglow for the golden years. Then, as it ripples from shore to shore in the mind's eye, its wavelets are seen as progressing and beautiful; a memory stored wisely for use in growth or dissolution; in life or death.

Today, the portrait stored in Dick Du Puis' mind of Jo Anne, his one true love, is still crystal clear, fresh and alive with humor as well as splendor. Sitting in his recliner, now older and encumbered by physical challenges, when recounting their courtship and marriage becomes, once again, the boy with the dancing eyes. Truly, the running brook of love's emotions has lasted "til death do us part" and beyond.

LOVE BUG BITES

Dick met his future wife at the USO in Long Beach, California listening to the Bell Sisters while waiting for the Navy vessel headed for Korea. He first set eyes on Jo Anne as she skillfully played a song called "Rinky Dink" on the piano, making it sound like an old tin can. There she sat holding court and basking in the adoration of this gigantic room filled with lonely service men far from home. Since the USO was a place the military men would go to meet girls and dance, she was truly on show as the center of attention.

Thus, swept into the emotional waves of the moment, Dick found her so fascinating that he made a bet with another sailor for \$5 that he could get her to dance with him. Responding in a voice of absolute certainty, his buddy retorted, "Ha! With all the other guys around her, you won't be able to get within 10 feet. She won't give you the time of day!"

Walking away with steps of determination, Dick shot back, "You just watch! I will get her to dance with me!" His mind was set on winning the bet because \$5 was a lot of money to a sailor making only \$50 per month.

Thus, when she stopped playing, he elbowed his way through the wall of men and asked her to dance the Blue Tango with him. Watching this event unfold, his buddy sat with mouth agape because it was not only an impossible feat, but realized Dick would be much shorter than this flirty piano player wearing the flouncy outfit accompanied by matching "HIGHER THAN HIGH HEELED SHOES."

Unfortunately, to Dick's dismay, Joanne turned wearing a haughty expression on her face asking, "Do you even know how to dance the Blue Tango?" It was obvious this woman was enjoying herself in front of the other men at his expense, causing his wave of courage to recede.

Although Dick had always held a passion for dancing and was told he was good at it, at this moment, his confidence was stretched to the outer limits as he held Joanna's hand and led her out onto the dance floor. Walking side by side, the reality of being much shorter as compared to this confident, striking lady wearing the tall hair do became a glaring reality in Dick's mind.

Needless to say, when the last strain of the Blue Tango had ended, he hastily made a bee line toward his buddy with his hand outstretched, ready to collect his \$5 bet. Boy! Was he glad that moment in his life was over!

Exactly one week later and still in a holding pattern on shore, Sailor Du Puis went again to the USO to kill time. Upon arrival, he was surprised when he felt a tap on his shoulder and turned to gaze upon Jo Anne's smiling face asking him to save the Blue Tango for her. Then, precisely as if on cue, the band began playing the Blue Tango; an arrangement she had carefully planned in advance. One dance led into the next for the two young people so in love with the magic of the moment. However, unbeknownst to the young couple, the matron for the establishment had been counting the number of dances and let Jo Anne know clearly that she had gone over her limit of three per partner.

Consequently, Jo Anne immediately told the matron she no longer worked there and invited Dick to go somewhere else for the evening. Climbing into her little black bug convertible, they sped away into the night laughing and feeling totally carefree. After driving about 20 miles, she parked the car in front of a beautiful home where she lived. Then, leaning over to Dick, she asked him to kiss her goodnight. Startled, Dick gave her a quick peck and was told immediately, "YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO KISS. I'M GOING INSIDE TO BED. GOODBYE!" Therefore, to Dick's surprise, he was left standing on the curb and was told he would have to catch a bus back to his quarters, some 20 miles away. He described himself as looking like a fool while waiting for hours on the bus for the trip back to Long Beach.

However, exactly one week later, he found himself in a total state of shock as he heard that all too familiar voice state, "You know I cannot stay here, so let's go somewhere else." Still fuming over being kicked to the curb only one short week before, shouted loudly at Jo Anne, "YOU KNOW I'M NOT GETTING IN THE CAR WITH YOU AFTER BEING STRANDED THE LAST TIME. I'M NOT THAT CRAZY! YOU CAN JUST FORGET IT!"

After a bit of negotiation, Jo Anne talked him into <u>WALKING</u> down the street to an amusement park filled with rides and games. Since the evening proved to be interesting with a lot of laughs, she offered to meet him the following week. Unfortunately, Dick informed her that he would be shipping out the next Wednesday at dawn.

Thus, before sunrise the following week, as the large navy vessel was moving slowly out of port with sailors standing on deck waving to loved ones below, Dick heard Jo Anne's familiar voice call out, "Hey Dick! Wave so I will know where you are standing!" As Dick began waving, instantaneously, all the sailors on deck began waving as if on cue. Then, thinking quickly of another plan, Dick pulled his cigarette lighter from his pocket allowing the flame to draw her attention to his location. Once again, right in time, the sailors followed suit creating total confusion for the searching eyes below.

Although it was impossible for Jo Anne to locate him, at that moment, he felt vindicated for getting dumped at the curb on their first evening together. Now it was his turn to stand and laugh at the fate of the feisty lady who had played Rinky Dink so skillfully just a short time before. She had nowhere to go but down the road in her little black bug convertible.

In spite of this tenuous beginning, for the next six months, the two love birds faithfully communicated by letter. Unfortunately, one letter arrived from Jo Anne letting Dick know she desired to marry him. Thus, in typical Du Puis fashion, he responded quickly that since his plan was to enroll in fashion design school after completing his service in the navy, marriage was not in his plans.

Then toward the end of his time in the navy, Dick was informed his next transfer would be to Hawaii where his sister, Teta, and her husband lived. He would lovingly be received into her place of residence as a welcomed brother. As Dick relived this assignment, he knew the wonderful Captain on board the hospital ship was responsible for getting him this great location. Living on the beach was unheard of for a sailor; an arrangement Dick would greatly cherish. After getting adjusted to his new environment, Dick remarked that he would cruise the lobbies of the hotels "strutting his stuff" wearing only a bathing suit so the girls would think him to be handsome. Thus, it was on one of these walks he heard, "Dick! Hey, Dick!" Turning toward the sound of a familiar voice, once again, he found himself gazing into Jo Anne's big eyes. She had just arrived with her grandmother for a two week vacation. This unplanned surprise gave the couple an unexpected romantic time to be alone and enjoy one another in a totally different environment.

Then, once again for another 6 months, letters were exchanged between the two star struck friends before Jo Anne began talking of marriage. Reacting with blunt and forceful words, Dick indicated his plans had not changed about marriage or going to school. There was no way he would give up his dream of a lifetime.

OUT INTO THE WORLD

Immediately upon completing his service in the navy, Dick entered the Berkley College of the Arts in Berkley, California where he lived with his aunt while pursuing a career in fashion design. Due to the fact he was totally self taught in all aspects of design and sewing, his expectations were high as to the amount of advanced knowledge he would need to assimilate. No matter the situation, at this moment in his young life, he found himself eager and trembling in anticipation at the thought that he was finally knocking at the door of the most prestigious fashion design school in the country. He was ready for the challenge he had dreamed so long about during his childhood in Gueydan, Louisiana. He would leave no stone unturned in taking the necessary steps to make his way into the world as a sought after fashion designer. He was ready to seize the moment!

Consequently, for two years, he worked hard and applied himself in every course of study. He found the curriculum to be surprisingly easy in every aspect. When the students were required to design and sew a garment for the runway show, Dick would easily present an array of fashions as compared to a single entry from his classmates. Therefore, his garments made up the majority of the runway show, with his classmates' creations blended in at the appropriate intervals.

Then one day, he was called into a professor's office and told he would be wasting his money if he completed the remainder of the program. It was determined by the entire staff that this young southern boy from Gueydan stood head and shoulders above the norm. His foundation was so strong the school curriculum was beneath his skill level in every aspect. The gift God had bestowed upon this boy at birth once again shone brightly for all to see. There is nothing impossible for such a loving Heavenly Father!

BACK TO JO ANNE

In the usual manner of their happen stance meetings, Jo Anne and Dick coincidently crossed paths again in the San Francisco Train Station one day. Just as Dick was seeing a friend off, Jo Anne was arriving to spend time with one of her own friends, as well. Immediately, spotting Dick, she spontaneously cried out, "Dick! I have always loved you and you're never getting away!"

Therefore, spending time together at Dick's Aunt's home allowed the couple to fall deeply in love, which eventually led to the words, "TIL DEATH DO US PART."

Although Jo Anne's parents expected her to have a large wedding, Dick and his bride were married privately by a priest with a cleaning lady as their witness. Even though his wife's grandmother adored Dick, he never gained his in-laws approval. In their minds, as people of wealth, their daughter had married beneath her social status.

However, since Jo Anne's grandmother loved them both dearly, she purchased a trailer in Long Beach for the young couple as a wedding present. Then, in good and perfect time, Ricky, their first born son entered the world. Once again, grandmother stepped forward and decorated the little nursery with all necessary items.

MAKING A LIVING

In order for the young couple to survive, Dick sought work at a shoe store and continued to sew for clients from his home in his spare time. Simultaneously, Jo Anne worked as a model to bring in a supplemental income. Given the fact she possessed an attractive appearance while pregnant; it provided the ability to work right up to delivery time. Besides, Jo Anne appeared so stunning in maternity clothing; she wore padding and continued her career in this arena.

After Ricky was born, Dick provided most of the child care by placing his son in a cushioned cardboard box just like he had made for his baby sister Selena, and set him right by his sewing machine. If Ricky became fussy, Dick would rock the box with his foot and keep right on sewing. He not only made clothes for clients, but also for Jo Anne and the baby. Word of mouth was his only method of obtaining referrals which allowed him to support his family.

THE WELL GOES DRY

Although Dick's sewing had provided enough money to keep his family going, one day he realized he was in a dry period with not enough clients to generate the amount of income necessary for running the household. Thus, in the usual Du Puis mind set, he began scanning the society pages in the newspaper with a plan in mind. Soon, he noticed a lady's name that

had appeared repeatedly and made contact with her announcing that she had just won a designer dress contest. Her only obligation would be to appear for the fittings. At this point recalling the scheme, Dick smiled broadly and exclaimed, "NO WOMAN IS GOING TO TURN THAT DOWN! She came for the fittings and I made her a print dress. She then talked me up a storm causing an avalanche of business." Thinking back on this time, Dick recalled a client that was a tall majorette who drove a convertible to her fittings. She was so tall; she just stepped over the door and slide inside under the wheel as smoothly as silk.

Unfortunately, in spite of this flurry of activity, another dry spell that lasted two weeks arrived causing Dick to realize he must hit the streets in LA with his sketches in hand. Without doubt, Dick knew he had reached a crossroads in his life. Since he now had one son, in his heart he knew his family would continue to grow, which meant he had to get going. From the beginning, both he and Jo Anne had expressed their love for children and the desire to have a large family.

As usual, Dick Du Puis was right on track with his wisdom regarding family. When the time was right and not a minute before, Daneen arrived followed by Neal, Jodi and Brock; a blessing from God of five lovely children.



TETA, (DICK'S SISTER) GRANDMOTHER, DICK AND JO ANNE IN HAWAII

SISTER TETA & DICK

IN HAWAII





JO ANNE AND DICK ON EASTER SUNDAY

(PRIOR TO THEIR MARRIAGE)

DICK DESIGNED AND MADE JO ANNE'S DRESS





JO ANNE, DICK AND RICKY, THEIR FIRST BORN SON

Chapter Ten

JOY IN THE MORNING

Psalm 34: 18

The Lord is close to the broken hearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.

MASTER PLANNER

Every part of nature teaches that the passing of life is an inevitable event for all of God's creation. Although it usually appears as a wonderful gradation and harmony that reflects the changing of seasons, the unexpected chill of life's coldest December when a loved one abruptly departs makes the human heart feel icy bruised and broken.

Psalm 31: 9 best describes the desperation of those left behind using the words, "O' Lord have mercy on me in my anguish. My eyes are red from weeping; my health is broken from sorrow."

Thus, the Master Planner must have known that it was necessary for tomorrow's pain to be screened from our eyes because of mankind's inability to handle preannounced sorrow. Perhaps it was designed in this manner to allow His children to savor each day's blend of happiness and sadness in morsel sized pieces. Certainly, one thing Scriptures make clear is that God knows precisely how much each person can handle without exacting too great a cost.

However, the most important truth to remember during the dark moments of our journey is that God will never leave or forsake His children; guaranteeing dawn to follow the blackest night. Psalm 30: 5b supports this view by stating, "Weeping may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning.

HITTING THE STREETS

Due to a dry spell of clients requesting Dick's services as a designer as well as the joyous arrival of more children, he knew it was time to hit the streets with his resume. Desperately in need of income to support his growing family, he first began his search by showing his work to houses that made cheaper clothing. At this point, his sketches called for a crepe fabric that was draped and wrapped on the body which received raving reviews by everyone. He even created sketches especially for Dorothy O'Hara that were show stoppers she absolutely adored. Unfortunately, lacking experience in the field meant that no fashion house wanted to take a chance on him.

Undaunted by rejection, in pursuit of his dream to create clothing for couture houses in Los Angeles, he also interviewed with Edith Head who was popular for her movie costume designs. It took only a glance at his sketches for her to immediately offer him a position with her company. However, it was during the interview when observing an entire room filled with young artists straddling chairs busily sketching designs that he asked Edith to show him the garment construction area. Unfortunately, her immediate response was to inform him that he was being hired exclusively as a sketcher.

Consequently, even though he desperately needed a higher income, the knowledge that he would be pigeon holed as a sketcher, caused him to courageously decline her offer and continue to work at Leeds Shoe Store.

However, his lifelong passion to sew women's clothing soon prompted him to approach Don Miguel, a designer couture house in Los Angeles that specialized in "after 5" and evening dresses. Again, realizing his stumbling block would be his lack of industry experience he "LIED THROUGH HIS TEETH" by saying he had worked for a design company in New Orleans, Louisiana. Today, when he revisits this interview, he shakes his head in disbelief at his ignorance for lying and ignorantly choosing a city where no design company even existed. Laughing loudly, Dick exclaimed, "HOW STUPID OF ME! THE ONLY REASON HE TOOK A CHANCE ON ME WAS BECAUSE HE LIKED MY SKETCHES. HE KNEW FULL WELL NO DESIGN COMPANY EVEN EXISTED IN NEW ORLEANS!" Although Dick's sophisticated sketches had caught Don Miguel's eye the deal was not yet sealed. The interview for the position had just begun. "The proof was still in the pudding to come!"

Next in the interview process, Dick was given a trial of making a pattern for one of his sketches that had to come together perfectly. In order to complete this phase, he was sent to a room where a woman named Raquel was assigned to him as an evaluator and observer. Raquel "Rae" watched every move he made as if he were under a microscope. Without flinching, Dick knew the first challenge would be in using a dress form rather than a human

body for the purpose of sizing the garment. All his past experience had been built around French draping the fabric right on a live person. However, in his mind, since this presented absolutely no challenge, he went to work with great assurance.

After being handed soft muslin for the design work, his next step was to transfer it to a pattern. Quickly scanning the room, he noticed all the existing patterns had even cutouts that showed the exact size of the seams. As he tried to duplicate the process on his pattern, Rae asked, "Don't you have a notching tool?" Drawing in his breath, he had to admit this was a tool he did not possess, thus, prompting her to fetch one for him. Since he had been self taught, other than a little schooling following his career in the navy, he never received instruction in this technique. Dick Du Puis had simply taught himself to sew without any methodology and used his own common sense and creativity, instead.

Consequently, when the tool arrived, he viewed it as a miracle because it would notch through four layers of material at once. In Dick's mind, it was a very simple tool that he took to like a duck to water. (At this point, Dick paused to make it very clear that after this experience, he purchased a book and taught himself to draft. From that moment forward, the book became his career Bible.)

Finally, after completing his pattern and cutting it out, he confidently handed it to Rae. As if right on cue, at that moment, Miguel entered the room and asked Rae how it was going together. Using no words, she simply made the "OK" sign over her shoulder. Therefore, it was at this critical moment in time that Dick Du Puis, a little boy who had been born with a fire in his belly for sewing, landed the job of his life. His childhood dream of becoming a fashion designer was no longer a thought but reality.

As a result of being given a chance, Dick first started making patterns and within six months was invited to show his sketches to Don Miguel. Those breath taking sketches that only Dick could draw were not only accepted, but resulted in him designing the entire line for the company within only a year. Now on track, the sky was the limit!

HOUSE IN ANAHEIM

At the same time Dick was launching his career as a designer, it was apparent the trailer was no longer spacious enough to accommodate his growing family. Therefore, Dick and Jo Anne sold their trailer and used it as a down payment for a new home in Anaheim that was located within view of the Disneyland Hotel.

Settling in quickly, Dick had immediately designed the backyard into a beautiful Japanese garden paradise. Unfortunately, after arriving home from work one evening, he found that, without asking, his not so favorite mother-in-law had purchased and enormous jungle gym

and ordered it placed right in the middle of the manicured garden even though the children's play area was along the side of the house.

In addition to this unwelcome gesture, on another occasion, he entered his home to find she had totally rearranged the family room to the point of removing an aquarium as well as an entire wall. Upon arrival, he had wondered why the sofa, chair and table were setting out in the garage. Then when entering the redecorated family room, he found a baby grand piano sprawling in the center; all for her daughter Jo Anne. His mother-in-law's generous gesture had left absolutely no space to even walk around the room, much less to use as a functioning space for the family members. Needless to say, there was trouble in "River City" that night.

HOME IN CANOGA PARK

Within two years, in order to accommodate the needs of an active family, Dick and Jo Anne began the process of building a four bedroom home located in Canoga Park. Even though it was in California, they still made sure the living room contained a fireplace that was used creatively every Christmas morning. As Jo Anne sat with the children in the living room, they would be suddenly surprised to hear Dick playing Santa loudly arriving on their roof. Then, Santa would call down the chimney, "Have you been good little girls and boys?" Neal, their mischief maker, would excitedly look up the chimney and assure Santa that his behavior was absolutely stellar. This humorous lively conversation would then end as presents tumbled down the chimney onto the floor causing screams and fits of laughter.

Another experience involving their impish son, Neal, revolved around a client's wedding. Since Dick was now well established as a fashion designer with the house of Don Miguel, his entire family was invited to attend a client's very fancy wedding.

In preparation, Dick carefully designed and sewed each member of his family a beautiful outfit. All decked out in their finery, the family had been on the road for several miles when their little girl Jodi informed them of a problem in the back seat by stating, "Daddy, you'd better look at Neal!" Without turning around, Dick replied by saying, "Neal, quit whatever it is you're doing." This conversation went on until Jodi dramatically called out, 'DADDY, YOU REALLY NEED TO LOOK AT NEAL!"

At this point, both parents glanced in the back to find Neal stark naked, wearing only an enormous mischievous smile. As they had driven the many miles toward their final destination, Neal had proceeded to strip and throw his clothes one by one out the window into the unknown.

Therefore, upon arriving in a strange city without time to spare, Dick frantically searched from store to store piecing together an outfit for Neal to wear. As a result, the family finally

walked down the isle of the church all in their finery except for Neal who was dressed in a sun suit. He stood out by wearing a mix and match of clothing that spoke volumes to one and all about his larger than life personality.

MOTHER-IN-LAW TROUBLES AGAIN

Even though things settled down a bit after each dramatic event caused by the interference from his mother-in-law, it would be only a matter of time before the next eruption occurred. She was definitely a force with which to deal and one Jo Anne was powerless to overcome. Therefore, the once happy couple found themselves more and more at odds as each battle ensued.

Once, when it was determined that a new station wagon was needed to accommodate the family of seven, one was ordered in a rich cream with wood trim. Then upon being told the vehicle had arrived, Dick drove to the dealership to find that his mother-in-law had made arrangements to change the choice of color to a bright pink with gray trim. One can only imagine Dick's face as he shockingly stared at the station wagon that he would now be driving.

Another horrible situation occurred during the selection process for colors in their new kitchen. Upon arriving home from work, Dick discovered all the appliances had been replaced from white to pink. Therefore, the color scheme previously selected no longer existed. His new kitchen décor now matched the station wagon; pink and gray.

As Dick sadly reflected back to this time of chaos and interference, he openly admitted that Jo Anne submitted to the influence of her mother and played right along learning how to use it as a weapon in their disagreements. At no time did she show courage enough to push back. Instead, she would pack up the children and move in with her mother which served as a united fort of resistance.

In retrospect, Dick still feels puzzled by the rapid pace at which his marriage unraveled. As a breadwinner, he felt his wife was lavished with everything she desired and more. Unfortunately, since no mature discussion ever transpired between Jo Anne and Dick, he still looks back today with not only sadness, but how different things might have been with peace as the conclusion. Certainly, he is cognizant that two sides exist in every relationship. Perhaps, in all its dysfunction, this was a message from his wife that she simply desired more say in day to day decisions.

However, regardless of all the possible conjectures, the fact remains that, upon arriving home one evening, the locks had been changed and divorced papers filed. There was no turning back for either of them.

DARKNESS ARRIVES

Unfortunately, the summer days that gave her bloom were now made lifeless and bare for not only two people whose vows were broken, but even more so for five precious suffering children. Now working two jobs in order to comply with the judge's orders for alimony and child support, day and night had no separation for Dick Du Puis. Without a place to stay, he slept in his office and took daily showers at the Greyhound Bus Terminal. His one luxury was to walk through the men's cosmetic department at May Company and sprits expensive sample cologne on his person as a way of feeling somewhat human.

Then, as if things were not difficult enough, Dick was informed that Jo Anne would now remarry and add even more stress into the lives of their children. Thus, it was on her wedding day, as she was traveling with her new husband by car that the darkest moment was fast approaching.

Thus, completely on the other side of the world where Dick was busy purchasing fabric for clothing designs, was where he received the worst possible news. Through an interpreter he was told by a total stranger that Jo Anne and her new husband had just been in a car accident which resulted in paralyzing her entire body.

Therefore, in a state of total shock, Dick quickly flew home and arrived at the hospital in haste. Today, in his eighties, Dick still vividly recalls Jo Anne's arms reaching for him as he entered the room. The two people, who had been so drawn toward one another and had failed so miserably to settle differences, still wore love in their hearts.

Then, two years later, Dick was once again summoned to the hospital where he would make a heart breaking decision on behalf of his children. Since Jo Anne's new husband made the decision to depart the relationship, Dick had to give the order for life support to be discontinued for the mother of his children. Therefore, at age 33, Jo Anne departed this earth leaving behind five little children who would now be totally dependent upon their father. At this moment, there must have been a bell sounding the slow mournful death knoll in each sad little child's heart. Although three of the five children were too young to understand their circumstances, tears and sorrow always find a crack in the heart of even the young where they enter uninvited.

At this point, dear readers, it is important to stress how difficult it was for the writer to observe the hidden pain that was long buried in Dick's heart stir once again. The intricate details of many aspects of the tragedy lay uncaptured and unrevealed----and yet remained unforgotten. His love song had ended, replaced by a deafening quiet that had now entered the walls of his heart. Yet, with grouping fingers now clutching the empty air, he fully recognized the past would be only for him a yearning that must quickly be locked in his

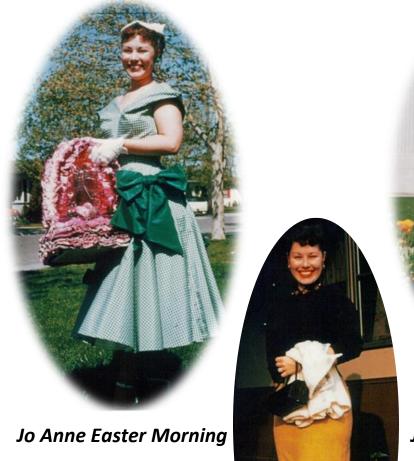
breast. His calling card had just changed to now read, "DICK DU PUIS, BOTH FATHER AND MOTHER." At this point in his life, he knew five little children's hands were reaching for the security of their father's trembling arms. His cozy-tight little world had just been rocked to the core. How was one to gain his composure and steady his step in the face of such tragedy?

Then following his usual pattern of behavior when facing difficulties, he raised his face toward the sky with the knowledge there would be another spring. The flowers would burst forth in color and fragrance signaling a new beginning. By placing one foot in front of the other, a new day would dawn when his pain and sorrow would be gone. Jeremiah 31: 13 best summarizes this moment in Dick's life with the words, "I will turn their mourning into gladness. I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow." By leaning on God during the troubled days ahead, Dick reasoned beyond doubt that his sad eyes would once again be made glad as joy arrived in the morning.



A TRIBUTE TO JO ANNE FROM DICK

(THE FOLLOWING PHOTOGRAPHS HAVE BEEN CHOSEN BY DICK AS A TRIBUTE TO JO ANNE)



Jo Anne Doing a Fashion Shoot in Los Angeles

Jo Anne, Age 18 First Year of Marriage to Dick



Jo Anne Really Pregnant

Jo Anne at the Beach



Chapter 11

Path to peace

Psalm 46: 1-2

God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the sea, though the waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

FORGIVENESS

One basic principle adults must acknowledge on this journey called life is the absence of guarantees for solutions as the endless trials rear their ugly heads above the daily horizon. Thus, at some point on our earthly walk, most of us reach what we decipher as the limit of our human knowledge and wisdom for handling encounters. Then, reflecting backward with regrets and forward in puzzlement and fear, this vulnerable state of humanness suddenly stops us in our tracks for a time of reckoning. Thus, it is at this point that a decision must be made to either blame others for our plight or bend the knee in prayer asking for our Father's wisdom mercy and forgiveness.

Perhaps of these three gifts from God, the one that proves to be the most unsettling is that of forgiveness. Due to the monster called PRIDE that easily takes root in the heart, not only is it hard to forgive others, but also ourselves. After all, we reason inwardly, "Won't I appear weak in the eyes of society if I let another individual run over me without taking him down? Won't this behavior coming from me be a direct affront to my manhood? Certainly by claiming responsibility for my own actions in a time of turmoil, won't I show weakness and lose approval from those around me?"

Consequently, accepting this reasoning process that originated from society and not God, we willingly choose to spend years of our lives pointing toward the mistakes of others while wrapping our own body in a blanket made of bitterness and anger. Then, if by some miracle we do accept responsibility for our own errors, but are unable to believe God has forgiven us; guilt easily enters and locks itself tightly in our breast forever. Thus, over time, our feelings of unworthiness become such a comfortable old friend that healing of our broken hearts becomes an impossible feat.

Sadly, while experiencing pain from mistakes that threaten to engulf our very soul, we have ignored the relief and wisdom that are ever present within the pages of God's Word. An example of this can be found in Romans 4: 8 where it reads, "Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him." Additionally, in Matthew 18: 22, Jesus answers Peter's question regarding the number of times we are to forgive each other by stating, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times"; meaning we shouldn't even keep track of how many times we forgive someone.

ARRIVING HOME

As Dick Du Puis flew the many miles on his long flight back to the United States toward the sad chaos that he would now face, being fully human, many "if onlys" and "what ifs" probably crossed his mind along with the uncertainty of the best way to proceed when stepping foot on his country's soil. One thing he makes abundantly clear today about this tragic time is the overriding concern he held for the welfare of his children. The suffering and chaos they had already endured after his divorce was constantly on his mind. Even though past mistakes and regrets could not be changed, there had to be a path in this world that would lead to peace and security for them.

Unfortunately, sometimes when one thinks the worst is over, additional storm clouds blur clarity like gray dense fog in the darkest night. Just prior to his flight departure, he had been informed that a devastating earthquake had caused major damage throughout the Los Angeles area. This disaster had damaged the historic home he had just purchased, immeasurably. The plaster on the ceiling and walls were waiting to greet him like piles of waste in every room; destroying the safe harbor where his five children were to sleep that first night under his care.

Then, when frantically driving toward the nightmare that awaited his arrival, he was shocked and surprised when a careless driver rear ended him, bringing on even greater delay and turmoil. When Dick retold this horrible time in his life, as an outsider, it was absolutely impossible to try and wrap the mind around the complexity of it all. One can only try and imagine the level of anxiety and stress he was feeling at this moment in his life.

At this point in his world, it felt like a monster had reared its ugly head with the goal of devouring his sanity. His body was moving through the unfamiliar landscape as if on auto pilot. So much debris was flying directly into his path there was not time for self pity, deep thought or even fear. Instead, as he took each labored step, the ground beneath felt colder harder and more unfriendly to his feet.

Thus, when Dick revisited the heart wrenching events that unfolded upon his arrival home, his voice took on an edge to cover the tremors that occurred like aftershocks within his soul.

It was as if the earthquake that had so violently shaken the city had found a crack within which to enter his heart.

First, upon reaching the hospital, he had to legally give the order for the removal of life support from Jo Ann's paralyzed body that lacked any hope for recovery. Without the luxury of the time to grieve this process, he had to move quickly forward toward his five frightened little children. They, along with their belongings, would be packed and ready for transport to their new home where Dick would now assume the role of both father and mother. Not only were their little lives in chaos, but would also be spending the first night away from their mother's home in a place that had been shattered by tremors.

However, through sheer toughness and endurance, the piles of plaster had been removed from a couple of rooms that would now be their make-shift living quarters until better accommodations could be provided. Reflecting back on their adjustment that night, Dick was amazed at the courage his children displayed. The ease with which they adapted in the face of such tragedy, Dick attributed to the result of them living the past three years without the family unit intact, as well as being around a mother that was terminally ill. Fully realizing how traumatized his children must be at this moment, Dick's tired eyes never left their little bodies that night. He was fully aware of every breath they took.

Regardless of all the terrible commotion that had taken place in their lives, it was apparent to Dick that establishing order and a daily schedule were to be his immediate top priorities so that balance might be achieved. A whole new life now awaited a father and five precious little children.

Consequently, after Jo Ann's burial, since it was necessary for Dick to continue the process of earning a living, he began the search for a housekeeper/babysitter immediately. Unfortunately, this presented almost an impossible task because of the responsibility the care of five children required. Thus, after going through five employees, it was obvious the task of locating a nanny would be next to impossible. As each employee had entered and departed their lives, Dick had dwelt with theft of money and food as well as the inability to control the children.

After a hard day of work, one evening Dick arrived home to find the front door open with boards protruding out that served as a ramp the children had built for roller skating throughout the house. This activity had not only demonstrated the lack of discipline, but had also left the beautiful old wooden floors scarred beyond repair. At this point, Dick knew it was absolutely critical to get immediate control of his children without delay. They were wild beyond imagination. Given the sheer number of children, running a tight ship would be required. Then, as a blessing from God, a relative from Gueydan, Louisiana whose maiden name had been Marie Trahan, a relative on Grandfather Trahan's side of the family, had traveled to California to visit a friend. When Dick received word of her arrival and had learned that she was now a widow, his heart skipped a beat. Could this be the answer to his prayer for a special nanny to watch over his children? She, after all, was a person he had grown up with in his small community; an individual he had visited during the hard times caused by The Great Depression that everyone experienced. He had fond memories of sitting in front of an old heater with Marie and enjoying the warmth of conversation together that seemed to lessen the impact from the trials all around. Sometimes they would have the luxury of toasting a piece of homemade bread on the heater as a special treat. At other times, added pleasure was experienced while enjoying a piece of Marie's sesame seed brittle; a recipe much like that used for making peanut brittle. Since she grew her own sesame seed plants, the seeds were a natural replacement for peanuts which made the sweet confection a special treasure.

Thus, rapidly recounting in Dick's mind, the pleasurable times he had spent with Marie, caused him to offer her the position of nanny without any hesitation what so ever. Then, when she happily and quickly accepted the offer that would propel her from a grieving widow into the world of laughter from five little children, Dick's heart was filled with unbelievable joy.

<u>NANNY</u>

The old saying—"They threw away the mold when they made Nanny," distinctly applies to the unique lady that would now serve Dick's household for many years to come. As a widow, moving to California from Gueydan would open up new horizons for this lady known to be so special.

Today, Dick and his children's reflections about Nanny bring a glow to their faces, love in their eyes and laughter to their lips every time they recall the mannerisms and actions that made her so unique. Certainly in every family member's mind, although she was always referred to as simply "Nanny", there was total agreement she was considered family.

When people, other than family, observed Nanny's behavior, they probably described her as being extremely gruff and to the point. However, Dick's entire family knew beyond doubt that she had truly a heart of gold. She would go about her day conducting her responsibilities in an efficient manner; letting the children know she meant business. In fact, she kept a diary of each child's day and reported to their father any wrong doing. It was clearly understood that the time needed for reaching home after school was 30 minutes; which became the golden rule. No flexibility! No time allowances! If a child was late, dad was called at his office and the fur would fly. Thus, every evening Nanny gave a full accounting of each child's daily activities and achievements.

On the other hand, even today, when the children acknowledge Nanny's importance to them, they clearly will stress to one and all the role their father played in their lives at the same time. He was a hands-on father that not only served as dad, but accepted fully the responsibilities of a mother. He conducted all the serious conversations with both the boys and girls about their bodily changes and necessary life style habits. He taught the girls about posture, style and how to conduct themselves as ladies. The boys were encouraged to be gentlemen and treat ladies with respect. They had boundaries and expectations that were not only stressed, but were enforced from a platform of love by both Nanny and dad.

NANNY'S UNIQUENESS

Once upon arriving home for dinner, Dick found the children's plates loaded with an all white meal. Their plates were filled with white potatoes, white gravy, white pork, white turnips, and white bread. It was obvious as he observed mealtime, his children could not identify one food from another, prompting Dick to assist Nanny with the art of meal planning.

Therefore, each Saturday after Dick had planned the menu, alternating turns between the boys and girls, he would drive them to the farmer's market where all the food items were purchased in bulk. The children learned how to not only shop economically, but also received lessons in responsibility as they loaded items for transport home. In fact, Dick described the entire basement of their home as resembling a food warehouse where cans of food products were lined up and neatly stacked just like grocery store shelves. In the kitchen, bulk bins held items such as rice, flour and beans to accommodate the amount needed for serving a large family. Every day, the children would have responsibility for making the salads for the family; a process that was carried out under Nanny's watchful eyes.

Once, Dick recalls with laughter, arriving home to the delicious smell of what appeared to be one of Nanny's wonderful soup recipes. When asking Nanny what kind of soup they were having, she replied with her Cajun accent, "Split Pea Soup!" However, as Dick stirred the soup, he was mystified as to how it could be called split pea soup with its color being white instead of green. When asking Nanny for an explanation, she retorted, "Well, I did not have any split peas so I used white navy beans. Since I followed the recipe for split pea soup, it is split pea soup!" Dick had to walk away to hide his smile because Nanny was very serious about the situation. There were just certain traits one learned about Nanny's personality and this was one of them.

FALSE TEETH

For some unknown reason, Nanny and her false teeth had trouble getting along. Once when the entire family decided to spend a fun day together at the beach, a large wave rolled in and hit Nanny in the behind, causing her teeth to fly out of her mouth and be carried out to sea with the current. Dick immediately had to spend \$800 on a new pair of teeth for a disgruntled Nanny.

Another mishap with her teeth occurred when a gentleman escorted Nanny from a party at the main house to her living quarters in the guest area. Standing on the balcony looking down at the gentleman, she couldn't believe her ears when he asked her if she was one of Dick's beautiful daughters. Believing this to be an utterly ridiculous question and a come on at the same time, Nanny gave a loud sound of objection from her throat causing her teeth to be propelled out of her mouth into the air coming to rest below at the gentleman's feet. The next day, a frustrated Nanny holding the broken teeth in her hand, presented them in disgust to Dick.

NANNY'S PRONUNCIATION OF WORDS

Although Nanny was an extremely bright lady, her word pronunciation certainly presented puzzles and humor for the whole family. In fact, many times it would require a creative mind to decipher the word and its meaning.

Once when preparing the family for the attire they would wear to a wedding, Dick began the process of designing and sewing an outfit for everyone. Since Nanny was family, it was expected she would also join them in attending the fancy event. Thus, Dick approached Nanny asking her what color she would like her gown to be. Without hesitation, she loudly and confidently called out, "POTTED BLUE"! Since Dick was so familiar with her word pronunciations, he knew without asking, the color of her gown would be powder blue. However, she looked at him in a serious manner stating, "Don't be thinking you will choose my shoes. I will do that for myself."

Therefore, when the time came for the family to leave for the wedding festivities, Nanny proudly walked into the room wearing the elegant powder blue gown sporting a pair of ugly white shoes that contained perforated holes from one end to the other. These shoes were the ones she had chosen to her satisfaction because they allowed her feet to be cool and comfortable. Dick shrugged his shoulders and the family departed for the wedding with a happy Nanny in tow.

Another time, Nanny excitedly came running into a room informing Dick that a lady he made gowns for was on TV. When Dick asked Nanny who that person might be, she called out in a

voice of authority, "Gloria Leach"! Replying to Nanny that he did not know anyone named Gloria Leach caused her to experience great frustration, leaving the room in a huff. Then, a short time later, she loudly called for Dick to look at the TV so he could see his client Gloria Leach. Turning in curiosity to see who Gloria Leach could possibly be, he immediately recognized the familiar face of Cloris Leachman on the screen. When Dick said, "Nanny, that is Cloris Leachman", Nanny replied, "I told you she was your customer." Not once did she indicate the mistake of pronunciation. She simply left the room with a look of total satisfaction for being right.

Once, Nanny called Dick's office in total distress, sobbing so loudly that her voice could be heard easily by everyone around. She exclaimed, "Toad is in trouble! He is in the hospital! He is very sick!" (Toad was the nickname she called her brother Theodore.) Realizing Nanny had a tendency toward losing her composure during times of personal strife, Dick said, "Calm down, Nanny. Are you sure he is seriously ill?" Nanny shouted even louder into the receiver, "YES! HE IS IN 10 CENT CARE!" Once again, being familiar with her unique word pronunciation issues, Dick realized she meant intensive care and loaded Nanny on a flight bound for Louisiana.

NANNY THE TREASURE

Nanny had arrived at just the right time to a family in need of healing. Their hearts had been broken into pieces that would need to be tenderly put back together with hands that were strong gentle and full of love. Nanny, who had the unique personality a producer would have chosen for a TV series, had entered the jarred world of Dick Du Puis and his children at just the right time. Her values were clearly in place which caused her to be unaffected by glamour and a lifestyle that was so different from the one she had lived in Louisiana. She knew right from wrong and the children were expected to follow suit. Her mispronunciation of words, loud laughter, military style of following schedules and a heart filled with love offered just the right formula for the entire family. Nanny who was abundantly loved by Dick as well as the children, would live out the remainder of her years on earth adding much needed depth and stability to a wonderful family in need. At the same time, the blessings for her would be twofold. She would not only feel rewarded for her contribution, but also experience a daily wave of love from the family members that would totally saturate her soul and nourish every fiber of her being.

Proverbs 24: 3-4 best describes the calm that settled upon Dick's household with the words, "A house is built by wisdom and becomes strong through good sense. Through knowledge its rooms are filled with all sorts of precious riches and valuables." Although tomorrow would hold its share of toil and pain, the air for Dick's family would now reverberate with the sounds of joyful songs and laughter. Without doubt, he strongly believed time would gently erase yesterday's sorrows, replacing them with shiny new dreams as they walked together down this new found PATH TO PEACE.



NANNY THE TREASURE



Nanny and the dogs.

Chapter Twelve

THE FAMILY GROWS

Proverbs 22:6

Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it.

IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY

Throughout the Old and New Testament, the value of family is stressed repeatedly. As the Scriptures unfold, the word, "children", appears not only to describe young people, but adults as well; meaning both you and me. From the beginning, we are called, "Children of God". As our Heavenly Father, He never takes His eyes off our being; which means He never leaves or forsakes us; day or night. Furthermore, He is slow to anger, patient and forgiving, no matter how undeserving we are of this kind of unfathomable love. However, even though He is patient beyond our imagination, His love is so great, when necessary; His children will feel discipline coming from His mighty hand; not from a position of anger but out of His desire for us to regain balance in our lives. This fact is substantiated in Lamentations 3: 22 where it is written, "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail."

Furthermore, family was so important to Jesus, that just prior to taking His last breath on the cross, He asked John His disciple and close friend to take care of His mother. This very act from our Savior serves as the example for all mankind to follow. In fact, the purpose for Christ's death on the cross was to redeem His children from sin with the offer for each individual to believe in Him and become a member of the family of God forever.

From the beginning, God in all His wisdom realized the value of family to each and every person. Although society has never possessed the wisdom to develop the perfect formula for being a successful parent, it has been available for one and all who are willing to open the pages of His Word; the Holy Bible.

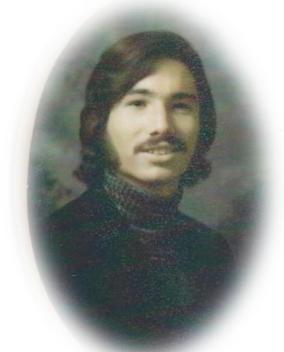
In today's society where the importance of the family unit has been diminished and replaced by self gratification, many children have no role model for developing the much needed parenting skills they will need later on. Instead, they spend not only childhood, but their entire lives hungrily searching for mom and dad; replacing the basic need with people or activities found within the darker side of life.

Consequently, unless individuals in society show compassion to these less fortunate young people by helping them find a new family, they will never walk down the path of peace or hope for a better tomorrow. The cycle of abuse in which they are caught as a victim will continue to repeat itself from generation to generation.

COMING TOGETHER

As Dick Du Puis' family began the arduous task of blending the array of colorful personalities into one harmonious unit, each day presented its own challenges. Not only was dad now totally in charge, supported by a competent and colorful Nanny, but the blending into the mix of each child's personality had to smoothly occur.

In order for you, the reader, to understand the complexity of the situation and also as a way to proudly introduce his children to you, Dick lovingly described each of his five children with the following words below:



SERIOUS, ORGANIZER, DELEGATED RESPONSIBILITY,

LEARNED TO SHARE WITH OTHERS



(NICK NAMED NINI) ORGANIZER, GO TO GIRL, ENJOYED CONTROL , MOTHER HEN, COULD PLAN AN ENTIRE PARTY FOR SELF AND OTHERS

DANEEN



LOVING, GIVING, UNSELFISH, CURIOUS, LOUD, MISCHIEF MAKER, EXPRESSED EMOTIONS EASILY, LARGER THAN LIFE PERSONALITY

NEAL



SHY, DADDY'S HELPER, SWEET, DOCILE, HAD TO LEARN TO SMILE ONCE AGAIN, WOULD INFORM ON HER SIBLINGS

JODI



SHY, AVOIDED PROBLEMS, PERFECTIONIST,

QUIET, WONDERFUL BABY,

HAPPY ALL THE TIME



A BUSY DAD

When school began that fall, the children soon adjusted and had an array of friends. They were involved in various activities which required dad's total participation. Out of dedication to his role as a parent, Dick always made sure his busy career as a fashion designer never overshadowed his responsibilities as a dad. No matter the situation, his children came first! Thus, many times the school activities were attended by the mothers of the children along with Dick as the only male. He also made sure he was at every conference to hear firsthand about the progress of each child. Today, he will tell you with laughter that his son, Neal, required dad's presence at school more than any of the other children. He truly was the mischief maker!

One evening, when Dick was busily entertaining fourteen guests at his dinner table, his daughter Jodi approached her dad informing him that her dance teacher desired to speak with him by phone, immediately. Hurrying to the phone, Dick found himself accepting her request that he host a party to occur the following evening for Jodi's entire dance class; a total of 60 people. Reacting quickly, he pulled together cupcakes punch and festive decorations in time to greet the noisy group at his front door. Then, at the conclusion of the party, Dick found he was shocked and honored to hear the dance teacher inform him that the girls' parents had unanimously voted him as FATHER OF THE YEAR for his tireless dedication to the program. He not only attended all recitals, but made by hand, all the costumes the children would wear. Today, that FATHER OF THE YEAR TROPHY, is prominently displayed on his dresser; a symbol that this father of five had his priorities in order.

COMPASSION EMERGES

Just four short months after the children had begun school, the already busy home became a hub of activity because of all the friends the children had acquired. Thus, it was only natural that Daneen (Nini), Dick's second oldest child, invite her friend, Mandy, for a weekend sleepover. This invitation would be the first sign that the compassion dad had always demonstrated to others had made an entrance into the hearts of his children, as well.

Therefore, as the weekend came to a close, an observant Dick noticed Mandy's appreciation of being included with family as standing out more than anything he had ever witnessed. Then, in just a few short weeks, an astute Dick concluded that this sweet beautiful girl should be invited to join his family forever as his daughter. Observing her behavior from a father's perspective caused him to conclude simply, "I NEEDED HER AND SHE NEEDED ME." Consequently, from that point forward, Mandy became as much a daughter to him as his own girls, Daneen and Jodi. Even today, the bond between Dick and Mandy remains strong and freshly alive. Still holding the hand of Dick Du Puis, her dad, she will tell you from a platform of love that she walks down the path of peace because "SHE NEEDED HIM AS MUCH AS HE NEEDED HER."



SENSITIVE, CARING, HIGH EXPECTATIONS, AMBITIOUS

Then, in just another short period of time, Jodi, still Dick's youngest daughter, followed suit and brought her friend Judy home for a sleep over which had an identical ending to Mandy's situation. Therefore, Judy became daughter number four in Dick's household because, once again, "HE NEEDED HER AS MUCH AS SHE NEEDED HIM."



SHY, STANDOFFISH, FOLLOWER, HUNGRY FOR ATTENTION

JUDY

Following Judy's arrival, Dick's youngest son Brock became friends with Shawn, a young man who also ended up joining Dick's family unit, bringing the number of boys to four. The Du Puis family now totaling eight children that were labeled by many as a miracle had been born simply because they all needed one another.



HAPPY, EAGER TO PLEASE, INQUISITIVE

Children. Dick's home in Pasadena was now bulging at the seams with children who willingly shared all the blessings in their lives with one another. As this scene unfolded, it was obvious to all that the acquisition of rare and beautiful treasures in the Du Puis household were not material things of this world, but children of God.

WORK AND PLAY

The following poem called "My Day" written by Helen Lowrie Marshall from her book called <u>A</u> <u>GIFT SO RARE</u>, best describes the climate Dick, Nanny and the eight children enjoyed together as a family.

My Day
This be my day
Some honest work,
A bit of play
To laugh and love,
And live and pray
With God beside me
All the way
This be my day.

The historic house in Pasadena that had been damaged so badly by the earthquake; the place where the children spent their first night together, soon became beautiful both inside and out. As the children and Dick toiled together, they were taught the importance of working as a family unit for the good of all concerned. Although they tease Dick today about being treated like slaves, they soon learned the importance of working hard and achieving their own goals in life.

Therefore, the once plain outside grounds became what Dick described as a happy welcoming garden for both family and friends. Spectacular flowers brightly bloomed, creating an enormous pallet of color and fragrance, while birds sang their notes of appreciation from the tree tops. Even Nanny took part in the pleasure of gardening by transporting her favorite plant on one of her flights from Gueydan to Pasadena. After the plant matured enough to produce pear-like fruit, Nanny would make a big production by walking out to the bush and counting the harvest for all to hear. They would hear her joyfully keep track by saying ONE...TWO...THREE...FOUR...! Then, when she reached NINETY-SIX, her voice seemed to almost tremble at the thought of reaching ONE HUNDRED! Unfortunately, Nanny being Nanny, when the one hundredth fruit never appeared, declared the situation a complete and utter failure. However, the rest of the family members were totally astounded by the marvelous yield.



(NANNY'S MAGICAL PLANT)

HOLIDAYS

Since the table in the dining room accommodated sixteen people, it became the center for not only entertaining guests, but for family holiday meals as well. Dick, a master chef, would work for days creating delicious recipes and table centerpieces that would always receive raving reviews. Then, as each child celebrated a birthday, their dad would prepare a meal to be served just like the ones he concocted for special guests. It was a big deal to celebrate a birthday identical to adult parties.

One special holiday occurred at Easter with not only a meal at the beautiful dining room table, but an Easter egg hunt, as well. Each child was given an empty basket with his own color of ribbon attached to the handle. The ribbon then wound its way all over the house which each child was told to follow in order to fill the basket with treats. As each child followed his own colored trail, squeals of laughter would fill the house. There would be no fighting or competition among the eight children because each child had his own colored ribbon to follow. In addition, that hands-on dad designed and sewed outfits for the whole family. They truly were a sight to behold in all their finery at Easter time.

IRON EYES CODY

The actor, Iron Eyes Cody, referred to by some as the "crying Indian", was a friend of Dick's mother's side of the family. Since he was originally from Kaplan, Louisiana, Dick's relatives knew him as Espera DeCorti; of Italian descent and not Indian. However, although Iron Eyes was not born an Indian, he lived his adult years as one married to an Indian woman (Bertha Parker) and adopted two Indian boys Robert and Arthur. Even so, the public remembers him in commercials with a tear, (actually made from glycerin) that rolled down his cheek as a way of bringing attention to destruction of nature from pollution.

Since Dick was well acquainted with him, he thought the children would get a kick out of meeting him in person. Therefore, Dick secretly invited him for an outdoor celebration with the family as a special surprise.

Thus, dressed casually in jeans, he arrived with his long hair that resulted in giving him his much recognized Indian appearance. Then, Neal being the first child to arrive, walked across the backyard, shocking his dad by totally ignoring Iron Eyes. Obviously unimpressed, he simply walked to the wading pool, filled his hat with water and poured it over his head as he sauntered away.

However, it was a different story when Jodi, the youngest daughter, arrived. She stopped dead in her tracks like a statue, with her eyes fixed on Iron Eyes as if locked in place. Her penetrating eyes pierced his face until Dick excused her to go and play. Then, in ten minutes,

she returned with two friends who also joined her in the act of rudely staring at Iron Eyes. Finally, hearing her dad curtly call her name so she would cease the behavior, she said, "Can I introduce him to my friends?"

Entering into the conversation, Iron Eyes gently stated, "Oh, my dear! I would love to meet your friends!" Then, without hesitation, Jodi sweetly made the first introduction by saying, "SUSIE, THIS IS JESUS! MARY, THIS IS JESUS!" Not wanting to hurt their feelings, Iron Eyes gently told them how glad he was to make their acquaintance.



(IRON EYES CODY)

ESPECIALLY FOR DAD

As the seasons passed, the eight children and dad shared numerous poignant moments, ripe with such love that they would forever act as a priceless fulfillment for the soul; a golden wealth of joy to cherish. Mistakes would be recalled as lessons learned, tears as sparkling diamonds of wisdom and a love so deep that its seeds of compassion would be sown throughout the cycles of time.

Then in a time of reflection, as a dad who left no stone unturned when it came to his eight children, would still have times when he second guessed himself or wondered if he had done enough. In his memory, it seemed only yesterday that they had begun their journey together as a frightened family in need of a steady hand. Yet, when he closed his eyes, the vision of each child's departure was as clear and bittersweet now as it was then. So many thoughts! So many questions unanswered!

However, sometimes a thing of awesome beauty arrives, unexpectedly, causing pent-up emotions to pour forth from the deepest shelf of the heart. That is what happened to Dick Du Puis upon receiving a poem his daughter Jodie had composed for him on Father's Day. The heart wrenching words written so tenderly by his once shy little girl, now all grown up, served as a benediction for his life, making him realize he had been given the honor and privilege of walking among those truly blest.





To My Daddy by Jodi

Little Girl on Daddies lap Up she looks and smiles " More Daddy more" she says When he makes her laugh Not caring about lifes trials Cleopatra tickle time Daddies hands show grace Only thing on his mind To see her smiling face Little girls learning life Missing Daddy Starts new life Must grow up Moms in need Girl to help her dress and feed Always knowing Never Doubt Daddies love Want be without Little girl turning nine Mamas gone will be just fine Go to live a life thats new Being taught Dads ways will do Lost the smile I used to have Pictures showed my sadness Never notice Daddy try Though all daily madness Tried so hard and did succeed Roofed my head Taught me to heed Cook and plant Paper and sew

Taught me everything I know "Walk like this " " Tummy in " " Get good grades" "Go Jodi you'll win " Now a woman Definately so Often wandered How'd I know Example died Who to follow Truth is easy Not hard to swallow Woman come from man Taught by Daddy That I am Ever grateful Always Thank Your Dad each day For love guidance talent This I can't repay Repay I'll try As you grow old Keep you warm when you are cold Feed you bath you Cleopatra Tickle Smile and pet you when your Fickle Surround you with the things You love, Kittens, Puppies **Turtle Doves** Circle of Life, circle of love Soon to be my turn Dad you are my first love In my heart forever burn

FATHER OF THE YEAR TROPHY

R. D. Du PUIS

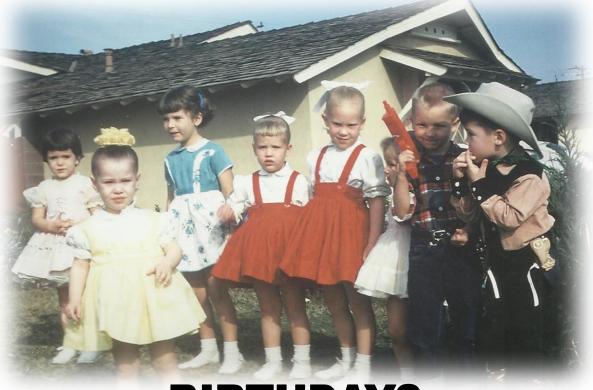




STEPPING STONES



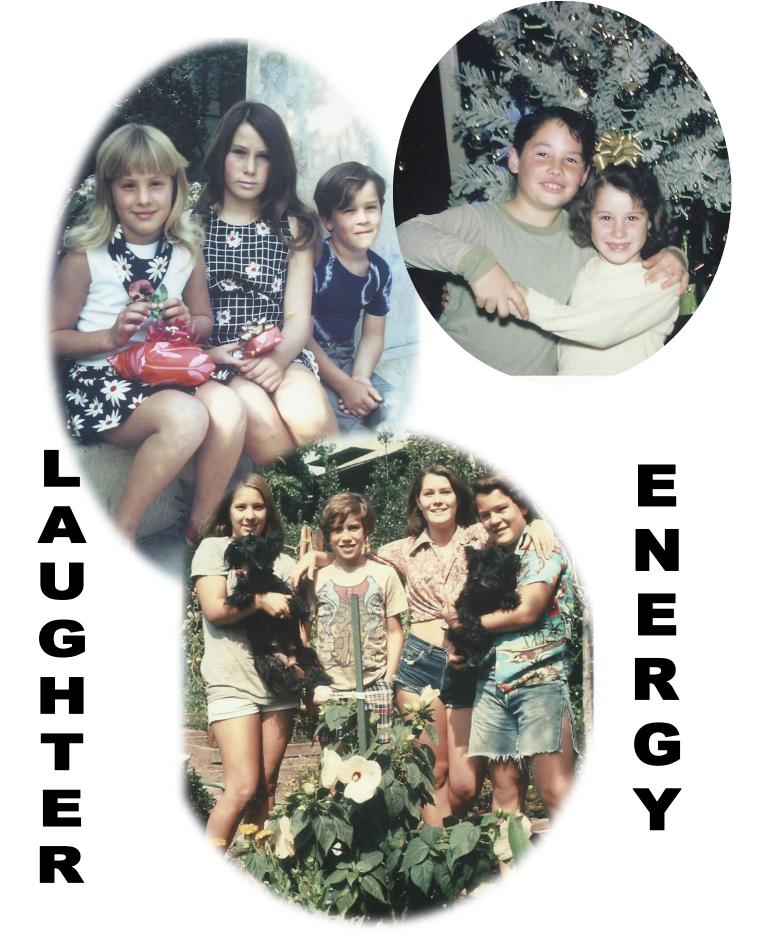




BIRTHDAYS







SPROUTING WINGS



TIME FLIES



DAD'S RULES

D A T E S

C U R F E W S





GIRL TALK





AFTER



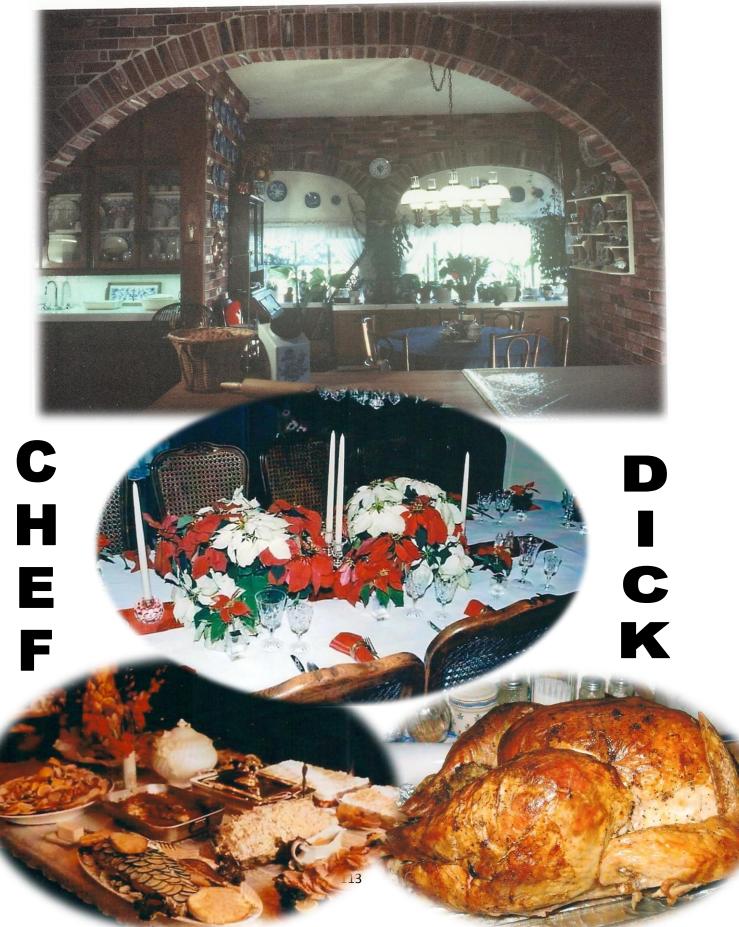
FRONT PORCH



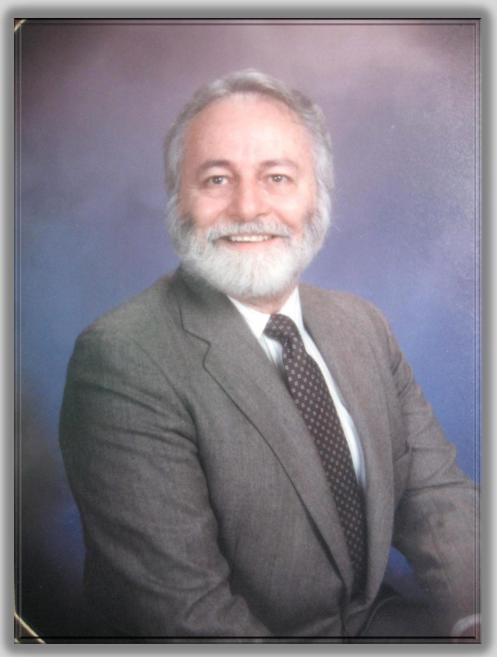




THE KITCHEN



FASHION DESIGNER





Chapter 13

FASHION DESIGN CAREER

Philippians 2: 2-4

Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

INTEGRITY

The American College Dictionary defines integrity using words such as soundness of moral principle and character, honesty, state of being whole, entire, or undiminished, sound, and unimpaired. Obviously, in order to be known by those around us as being a person of integrity, we must consistently live from the inside-out, rather than from the outside-in; a journey where purity of heart is an absolute. It's being in the world but not of it and counting others as being more significant than self. It's demonstrating these beliefs through the consistency of our walk and talk; wearing it like a necessary basic garment; a cloak of protection wrapped firmly around our being no matter the situation.

Unfortunately, in the world where achievement and status are defined by the recognition from man rather than God, the path to success is littered with the bruised and battered souls of others. Yet, when reflecting back on that journey, we may see as one of the wounded, our own soul that is beyond our recognition due to being so diminished and broken. Rather than having worn the basic garment whose fibers consisted of soundness of moral principles and character, we found ourselves making so many frequent costume changes while climbing the ladder of success, the result was our own self destruction and emptiness. Additionally, the most extreme sadness in the whole picture may be our inability to recognize our broken state because of a calloused heart.

WORLD OF FASHION

The world in which Dick Du Puis found himself as a women's clothing designer has been described by many as brutal, cut-throat and stunningly carnal in every aspect. After all, his assignment as a designer was focused on decorating the exterior of a woman with the latest, most beautiful covering available in society. It meant staying ahead of the curve in order to soar head and shoulders above the competition. Vision in predicting what fashion costumes would turn the heads of women meant success or failure; the focus on every mind of the designer and company owner.

Consequently, in this environment where making a good impression was paramount, selfish ambition or vain conceit could easily take root in the designer's heart; especially if the philosophy of the company's owner was of like mind.

Unfortunately, for Dick Du Puis, this was the environment in which he found himself as a fashion designer of women's clothing throughout his stay. In order for him to follow his lifelong dream as a designer, it would be necessary to quickly learn how to keep his footing in a fast paced world that differed so greatly from his childhood as a Gueydan, Louisiana boy. As he began this perilous journey, he might be compared to the shepherd boy David taking on the mighty Goliath; in an industry that possessed the teeth to eat the innocent beginner.

DICK'S MOTIVATION

Fortunately, the young boy calling himself Dick Du Puis who had faced so many hardships growing up, quickly accessed each step he took with such clarity that he was able to walk the path of his dream using grit, creativity and determination well beyond his years.

Repeatedly, as he told the story of his life to the writer, the description of the elegant gowns he designed always centered on the women who would wear them. He would tell how the fabric would swish and sway as the client sashayed across the room. Sometimes, he would draw a sketch showing the effect of the neckline upon her countenance. Above all, Dick took into consideration that God had made each woman with such uniqueness that his clothing creations were to honor and respect her attributes.

Therefore, as Dick worked as a designer for the major manufactures of women's clothing in Los Angeles, you will be amazed at how savvy and advanced he was in determining style and direction for each season. Every garment was completed to perfection, even if he had to overcome numerous obstacles all by himself. That is why, even at age 80, he is adamant about a designer possessing the ability to sew. He firmly believes it is critical for the designer to not only be talented at sketching, but have the ability to control the product in all stages until its completion. This requires a designer to not only understand each step in the process, but also apply a broad skill base to assure success.

CAREER PATH

Don Miguel—a designer couture house in Los Angles



(PHOTOGRAPH WAS TAKEN OF DICK DU PUIS WHILE WORKING FOR MIGUEL IN THE 50'S)

While working for Don Miguel, he designed cocktail dresses that sold for \$79.00 wholesale---a lot of money in those days. Then, after 2 ½ years, Neal Diamond, Don Miguel's partner, decided to go out on his own which resulted in the formation of a new company called Neal of California. As a result, Neal offered Dick a lucrative increase in salary as the designer of

women's clothing for his new company. Desiring to treat Don Miguel fairly, Dick informed him of Neal's generous offer, giving him time to match the opportunity.

However, after Don refused to bargain, Dick, along with his pattern maker Rae, joined Neal of California where he was responsible for the entire line. Since Neal featured the use of beautiful silk fabrics, this provided a challenge Dick welcomed. In this new position, with Neal's company, Dick would sometimes assist with the marketing, as well. One campaign built around the theme, "WE'VE ALWAYS BEEN A LITTLE DIFFERENT.....AFTER DARK DESIGNS BY RICHARD DU PUIS," was an enormous hit within the market place. The slogan was accompanied by a picture of a white dove on a man's head. The photograph below is not of a model, but of Dick Du Puis wearing the white dove on his head.



When Dick retold the story, he flinched and wrinkled his nose recalling how it felt to have the bird's claws piercing his skin as it perched on his head. He described himself as not being a very happy camper, an expression which the camera clearly captured.

However, in spite of all the pain from the photo shoot, the picture with the attention getting slogan was placed in the orders going to every customer. As a result, it created such tremendous excitement it was framed by many customers and placed in a prominent location on their walls, thus, solidly positioning the Neal of California brand in their minds.

While working for Neal of California in a room that contained a concrete floor, Dick requested it be carpeted as a solution to his reoccurring sore feet and legs. Neal objected with numerous excuses as to why it would not be possible. Then, when some important clients arrived requesting to view some garment samples, Dick proceeded to carrying them immediately into the room and hang them on the wall racks. However, instead of focusing their attention on the beautiful garments, Neal noticed they were intently staring at Dick's shoes. Looking up at Dick, they asked, "What do you have on the bottom of your shoes?" Replying without drama or hesitation, Dick explained, "I have pieces of carpet glued to the bottom of my shoes to prevent pain in my feet and legs due to the hard concrete flooring. Since my boss will not authorize carpeting, this is my solution." Needless to say, the carpet arrived in record time!

Another sample of the outstanding ability Dick possessed at marketing occurred when he requested a quiet room for himself where he could create without chaos. Thus, he was given a 16 foot square room that he immediately decorated with turquoise paint on the walls, off white carpeting and filled with black lacquer furniture. There was also a sofa, chairs and a beautiful dining room table adorned with sparkling crystal and china. All this was done so the customers would feel special as they sat at a catered lunch and viewed the beautiful Du Puis designs. Then, after receiving such royal treatment, they would be escorted into Neal's office where they eagerly placed numerous orders. Another experience that stood out in Dick's mind was when Jack Bryan chartered a plane to Las Vegas for his customers and proceeded to conduct a fashion show while in route. The models showed Du Puis designs as they pranced down the narrow isle motivating a landslide of purchase orders from the onlookers.

After working for Neal of California for approximately 6 years, Dick went to work for Miss Elliette who was married to Jack Bryan. Miss Eliette was a husband and wife team designing mostly daytime and after five evening wear. Then after Jack Bryan left Elliette and started the house of Jack Bryan, Dick followed him with his design crew of four people. (A pattern maker, sample cutter, sample maker and a production man) In another career move, Dick also did production patterns for the House of Warren Z, owned by Jack and Elaine Lerman who became lifelong friends. In fact, Dick often custom designed many of Elaine's gowns she wore when attending exclusive Hollywood events; such as the Academy Awards.

DESIGNER EXPERIENCES

Dick's design career stretched over more than 30 years of sharing his unique fashion creations; always providing excellence to his customers. He sketched his design and then followed it all the way to completion. If he needed to demonstrate a technique, he possessed the ability to sit down and show how it could become a reality. He never sketched anything that he was unable to complete personally.

As a fashion designer, Dick attended shows in many exotic locations---Paris and London. Although it sounds glamorous, he was so intently focused on the designs that were coming down the runway he had no time to himself. As the models were maneuvering on the catwalk, Dick was busily zeroing in on aspects of a garment that he would incorporate in his lines; a sleeve, neckline or the shape of a skirt. He would then begin sketching some of these features into his next season's creations; figuring out which ones would be well received by the market place.

Even though each city offered incredible entertainment, he will bluntly tell you he had no time to indulge himself in excursions due to his tight schedule. Only once he told of hiring a cab driver, handing him a list of places he wanted to see, and allowing only enough time to do a drive by.

As a part of this trip, Dick would have packed 10-20 pieces of his designs that he specifically needed to center on as he chose fabric or beading materials. (Sleeves, collars, belts) Then at the close of the show, he would continue on to other locations where he chose the appropriate fabrics and decorative items for the designs.

BEADING

Early on, since Dick had earned extra money by working for a lady named Mrs. Milano who was known as an expert in beading, he learned firsthand the fundamentals of the process. Therefore, he was able to reduce the cost of incorporating beading into his designs because of cutting out the middle man. This resulted in allowing him to set up factories all over the world for the company. Therefore, after a show, Dick would fly first to Tokyo and pick out prints and colors, followed by a trip to Hong Kong where he supervised as many as 100 ladies sewing a part of the garment he had sketched. One of the factories he was responsible for starting in Korea specialized in combining beads with feathers; a unique process for that time. Since he did not speak the language, he was met at the airport by interpreters who never left his side. They would even sleep in a chair outside his room until he awakened each morning.

At other times, Dick would arrive with his sketches to a location where ten ladies sitting in a circle would each be working on separate designs. Then placing a stool in the center of the

circle, he would roll from lady to lady monitoring all aspects of each design. It was at this point he would refine the design making all the necessary changes. Above all, a perfect pattern and sample had to be the result to assure the production of it to the masses.

Thus, this was the life of Dick Du Puis, the designer, who tirelessly traveled throughout the world with the goal of creating the most perfect garment for each woman. His worn and tattered passport had been hole punched 27 times to the Orient representing the demands necessary for a successful career in the world of fashion design.

BEADING DESIGNS FOR DU PUIS FASHIONS



Although the beading appears as an assortment of adornments placed on the collars in a random fashion, the pattern for these designs required an extremely intricate process and carefully constructed directions.





THE IMPACT OF BEADING ON A FINISHED GARMENT WAS TRULY DRAMATIC.

INTRICATE SLEEVE DESIGN



DESIGNER CONTEST

Throughout Dick Du Puis' career, competition was fierce at every turn. Thus, from the moment he entered the arena where industry giants designed at their well recognized sketching easels, he knew it was a must that each line from his pencil offer drama vision and impact; creating designs that were nothing short of spectacular showstoppers. It was absolutely critical to break barriers stretching his imagination to the outer limits by not patterning himself after the ideas of others, but leading the way with trendsetters, instead. Certainly due to his performance in the industry, at the end of a journey well traveled, no one would ever label Dick Du Puis as a follower. He was truly a risk taker and visionary beyond measure.

Therefore, it was apparent to all that Dick fully understood the necessity of this fact when, as a young designer employed by Neal of California, he entered the contest of his life. In 1963, after First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy took up residence in the White House, it was decided by industry movers and shakers that designers worldwide would be invited to create a fantasy gown suitable for her inaugural ball. All entrees would then be displayed by models on a catwalk just like a runway show in Paris or London.

Consequently, after tirelessly working on his creation to the point of absolute perfection, Dick hired two guards in uniform to deliver his finished entry to the designated site in a van lined inside with classy white paper for effect. Upon arrival to the hotel, one guard then held the top of an exquisitely designed garment bag while the other importantly carried the train. Onlookers were totally mesmerized by the dramatic arrival, being left in a state of anticipation of the garment concealed inside.

Then, when the magical moment arrived and numerous lights were aglow, all heads turned in anticipation toward the runway to the beat of many pounding hearts. Among the onlookers sitting at the Neal of California table located at the back of the room, sat a young courageous designer whose name was Dick Du Puis.

Then, as the first model pranced down the catwalk, thunderous applause resounded all over the hall in a demonstration of approval. At that moment, the skills and expertise of all the designers in the room were on display to the world.

Sitting spellbound and scarcely able to breath, Dick began committing every intricate detail of the fashions to memory as he carefully stored priceless information into the treasure chest of his mind.

Although time seemed to be quickly fleeting, in Dick's mind it appeared to stall as he nervously waited for his model to make her grand entrance down the runway. Thus, as

model after model dramatically moved along the catwalk to deafening applause, it only served to heighten his anxious state.

Unfortunately, the model Dick so carefully chose to wear his fabulous creation was simply not in the mix. Had something gone askew after all his careful planning? Since he had left no stone unturned, he could not imagine what would be causing the delay. His tongue felt numb as it stuck to the roof of his mouth that was as dry as cotton!

Then, alas! The beautifully shaped ivory face of his carefully chosen model wearing her shiny ebony hair in an elegant bubble hair style, appeared within Dick's view like a heavenly vision. One can only try and imagine the speed at which his heart began to beat. Quickly assessing the situation, he now realized in his anxious mind why everything felt frozen in time. It was very apparent the model wearing the Du Puis design was the last one scheduled to walk the runway. Why? What was the implication of being last? As a young designer, he was already sitting at the back of the room with only the wall behind him. Did he count so little?

However, these thoughts quickly vanished, when following Dick's directions to the letter; his model began royally floating along the runway as if carried effortlessly by a soft misty vapor enticing the audience to join her in perfect harmony. Wearing an exquisite white satin coat, draped gracefully around her tall slim body, the reflections were never purer or more distinct. Furthermore, the gapping onlookers were truly astonished as the rich fabric suddenly took on a silvery blue-gray appearance resembling the color of an oyster shell.

Understanding color and fabric so completely, Dick knew if he lined the beautiful white satin with a rich black taffeta, the material would appear as if it had been dipped into an icy liquid, thus creating an elixir to the human eye. Additionally, when selecting the fabric, he was also cognizant that a garment made of taffeta rustles and speaks to onlookers, creating a background effect like gentle wind whispering through the forest.

Even greater drama unfolded as the model turned so the audience could observe the sophisticated high rolled collar that turned into a regal train. Then, returning to her runway starting point and dramatically opening the coat, she displayed the black diamond colored lining allowing the material to sparkle like fairy dust. Not missing a beat, she followed this maneuver by raising her arms above her head and inviting the elegant coat to slither softly to the floor at her feet.

Then, sassily stepping forward, the audience saw what appeared to be a simple white silk gown identical to the colors in the coat, until a slender ivory leg suddenly peeped out a side slit. Gasping, the audience immediately realized they were witnessing the first show of leg in clothing designs using a slit in a garment. Since opera hose (panty hose) had just been introduced to the marketplace, Dick was once again on top of his game by realizing freedom from ugly hard to hide garters would allow women to now show more leg. However, it is impossible to describe the conflict between the company owner, Neal, and Dick that occurred over the decision to have a garment displayed on the runway containing a daring slit. Although Neal strongly balked, Dick stuck to his guns and won.

Thus, still buzzing about the daring slit, the audience was caught off guard by the elegance of the gown as the model strutted down the runway revealing the low cut back accompanied by cascading clusters of black organza roses that had the effect of a medicinal draught to the souls of everyone. Thus, what began as grand murmurs, soon reached a fevered pitch of "bravos" as the walls echoed with unrestrained applause.

Then, right on cue, the sound of a voice carried throughout the room announcing: "THE WINNER OF THE JACKELINE KENNEDY FANTASY INAGURAL GOWN CONTEST IS: "NEAL OF CALIFORNIA---DESIGNER: RICHARD DU PUIS!"

Can you only imagine, dear readers, what Richard O'Neill Du Puis, a southern boy from Gueydan, Louisiana, was feeling at this moment in his life? Like David, he had gone up against the Goliaths in the fashion design industry and won. At this moment, it is my hope that you are smiling and clapping right along with the proud writer!

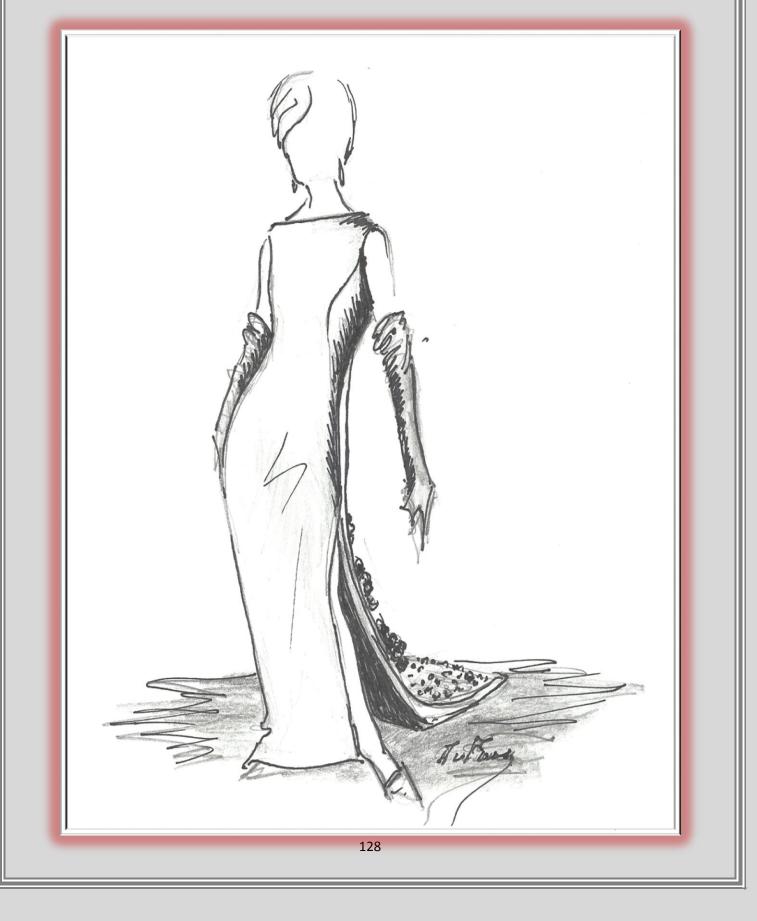
As a result of winning the contest, the elegant coat and gown Dick had designed and completed to perfection were transported to the fashion centers in all the major cities throughout the country for all in the industry to admire. In addition, Dick was informed that a photograph of it was placed in a time capsule in Los Angeles as an example of 1960 clothing designs of that era.

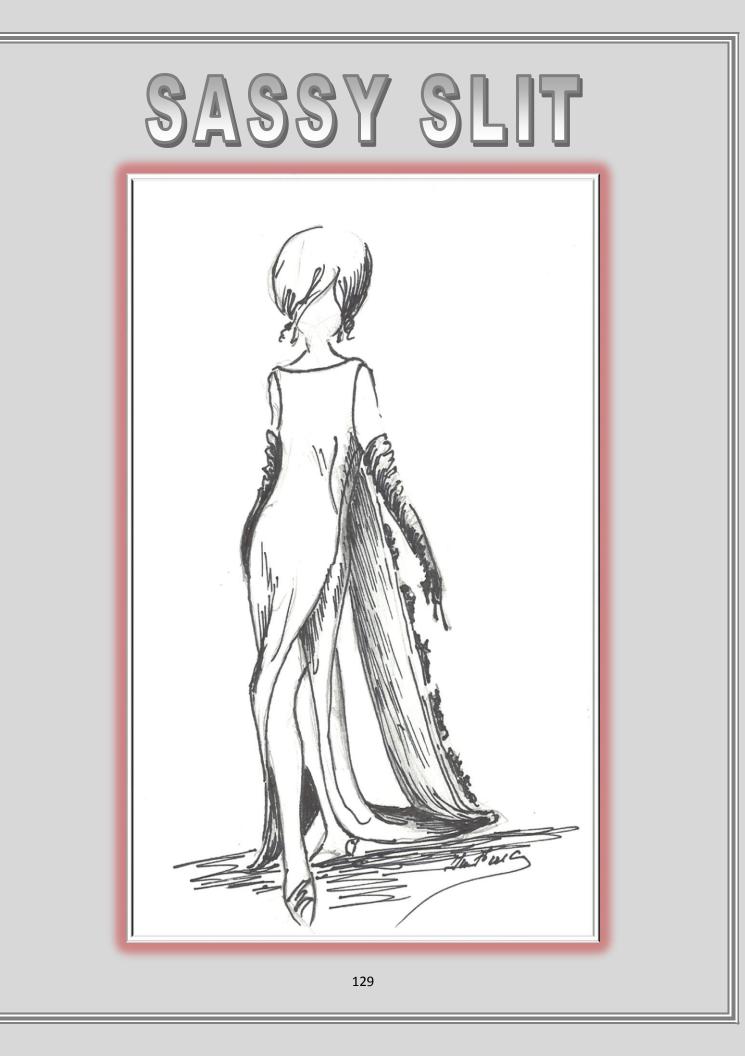
In conclusion, James 4:6 says it best with the words, "But He gives more grace. Therefore it says, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Amen!

JACKIE KENNEDY COAT

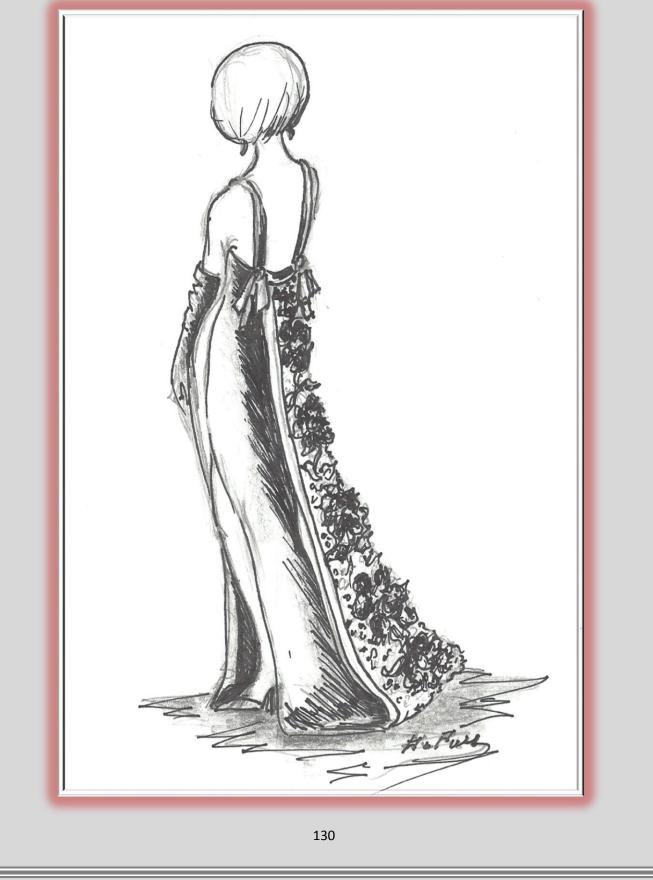


FRONT OF GOWN





BACK OF JACKIE GOWN



Chapter 14

PAR EXCELLENCE

Psalm 31: 24

Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope on the Lord.

DIAGNOSIS

Even after putting forth our best effort, layers of darkness sometimes fall around our being through no fault of our own. We simply open the windows of our soul to not only despair, but hearing the sound of the message, "Get your house in order. Your time on this earth is quickly running out."

Thus, after spending countless hours designing trendsetting fashions for an array of manufactures in the women's clothing industry, these bleak words were spoken to Dick Du Puis by his physician. As he lay in the hospital diagnosed with hepatitis, his condition was deemed terminal.

Furthermore, to make matters worse, the company he had served so well was denying medical insurance and workman's compensation, stating the cause of Dick's illness to not be work related.

However, fortunately for Dick, a student from UCLA who was writing a thesis, requested permission to study his case. Thus, after analyzing blood samples, it was concluded that no one in the United States had ever contracted this form of hepatitis and connected the source to fruit from Australia.

Consequently, Australia being the supplier of fruit to the locations where Dick conducted business trips, his company, "Neal of California" had to pay for all medical expenses and workman's compensation. Then, adding even more hardship as Dick struggled to live; he was told his services as a clothing designer were terminated.

However, proving that only God knows the exact second each of us will be called into his presence, Dick Du Puis's journey was not yet over. He still had places to go, people to see and above all, God's work to accomplish. Although wounded in mind, body and soul, he miraculously pulled through and went home to convalesce. Then, ironically, after the news spread of his recovery, the company that had treated him so shabbily invited him back as a designer once again.

However, it is when we are trudging through deserts of diminished hope that light streams its long-awaited radiance, clearing the dark-draped regions of our souls. It proclaims the direction of life's journey so clearly that it summons us into a new direction that is abounding with God's unimaginable blessings.

OWN BUSINESS

Since the long-ago dream of designing and sewing women's clothing had so deeply rooted itself in Dick's heart, no matter the trials or tribulations faced, it could not be erased. Therefore, as his strength returned, he began to make plans for going out on his own; a new venture that called for change and courage. After all, during the years of working as a company employee, critical experiences along with a list of private clients had grown immeasurably. Also, since only two of his children now still lived at home, the basement level of his historic house would be the perfect location for this workshop.

Additionally, he determined his specialty would be designing clothing for the entire wedding party; bridal gowns, bridesmaids dresses, and mother of the bride attire. Not only would Dick design and sew the wedding garments, but would literally supervise every aspect to assure a complete look for each individual in the party. (Manicuring of nails, make up, and hair style) He would be present from beginning to end of the wedding, making sure the garments were fluffed up appropriately for a perfect finish.

This decided, he opened his doors for business, causing word of mouth recommendations to spread like wild fire. Given the fact that he contracted to design and sew the clothing for the entire wedding party, the length of time for completion would range from 6 months to one year.

As a result of his unique talent and customer service, by June, Dick's calendar was booked for the year. Consequently, Dick spent 15 years providing customers with such superior products and services that he was labeled by all as the preeminent designer; a much sought after and highly recognized individual.

Also, during this time, his very loyal existing clients kept him busy by writing their engagements on his calendar, indicating the due date for a completed garment to wear at

each event. (Opening of the opera or Academy Awards to name a couple) Then, after specifying the event, they would give him free rein to make all their decisions regarding the garment; a demonstration of complete trust in his ability.

In order for you, the reader, to realize Dick Du Puis' understanding of what it took to please a customer, plus his own trait of being a perfectionist, included for your enjoyment is a newspaper profile about his business and personality. It will show why Dick's business grew so quickly that he found it necessary to turn away customers. If he could not deliver perfect garments and a memorable experience for the customer, he would simply decline the opportunity.

PAR EXCELLENCE



A bride's best friend her fashion designer.

ACALADES

BEYOND

BELIEF!

Profile: Richard DuPuis

By Shirley Saltman

One of the nicest parts of our daughter's recent wedding was having all our dresses designed and executed by Richard DuPuis of Pasadena. We got Dick's name from a friend of a friend who had him design her daughter's wedding gown.

We first met Dick several months ago when we went to his 100-year-old Spanish mansion to meet him and find out what he could do for us. We were in for one of the grandest treats of our lives. Dick not only designs all his clothes, but he also creates the patterns and sews every stitch himself. His creations are works of art.

We watched as the bride's dress, the three attendants' gowns and my own lovely Mother-of-the-Bride frock were created. We quickly realized that what DuPuis does is to paint each person's picture; but instead of using oil and canvas, his media is fine silks and satins. His clothes totally reflected each of us and watching him go from sketch to finished dress was a thrill of a lifetime.

lick began sewing when he was a mere lad of 12 growing up in Louisiana. When he was 16 he entered a contest and his dress was the winner. (He competed against adults who had sewn for years.) In 1963, his dress design was chosen for display in the L.A. Museum of Natural History in Ex-position Park as a representation of the clothes of that year.

He began working in L.A.'s fashion industry as a young lad and learned everything from design to patternmaking to the actual fine sewing, a rare combination of talents and abilities in one person.

Each time we would go for a fitting (which we must admit we did more than was 134 necessary) we would enjoy tea in Dick's new modern kitchen. Often he would treat

just made, fresh bread with jam he had canned from his garden supply, quiche, or the best cookies ever eaten. His culinary skills matched his sewing abilities. One day we had a tea freshly brewed from just-picked garden herbs. Delicious.

One of the reasons DuPuis turns out such incredible creations is that he is a true perfectionist. The underslip he made for our bride had a small spot of something on it after it was finished. We assured him that no one would ever know. He said he would know and he made us another slip. He spent hours creating a pillow for the ring bearer. He wasn't thrilled with the result and spent more hours creating another one (which absolutely was a work of art).

The other thing that constantly amazed us was rare ability his at engineering the complicated dresses. We would sit by the hour watching him work in his basement workshop (yep, a real basement but more properly called a cellar since one could gain access from the outside cellar door).

In our frequent visits, we also met some of Dick's five children plus one adopted daughter plus two foster children. Dick was left a widower many years ago and raised the children by himself. His beautiful daughter Jodie will be getting married in June. We were so impressed with her that we invited her to join her dad as our guest at our wedding.

We were amused when Jodie related how she told her co-workers during the time of Princess Diana's wedding that her dad makes more beautiful wedding dresses than the one she wore. Her friends scoffed. We are here to testify that Jodie was right. Our daughter's dress was more beautiful than any wedding dress we have ever seen. It was an exciting experience. us to delicacies which he had A gift from a talented artist.

As the chapters have unfolded in this book, the talent God bestowed on Dick Du Puis at birth should now be painted vividly in the minds of one and all. After walking with him on his life's journey, it is absolutely understandable why at age 15 he was able to sketch in such a mature fashion. Having been born with a fire in his belly for designing and sewing women's clothing that could not be extinguished; he mastered techniques and broke creative boundaries that surpassed even those possessing the wildest imaginations. This teamed with enormous grit and courage; he waded against the current and climbed impossible mountains reaching unimaginable heights; all the way to the pinnacle of success. He stood up for what he believed and was not desirous of the lime light, but wanted only to create such sensational garments that women would feel special and more confident for having worn them.

SKETCHES

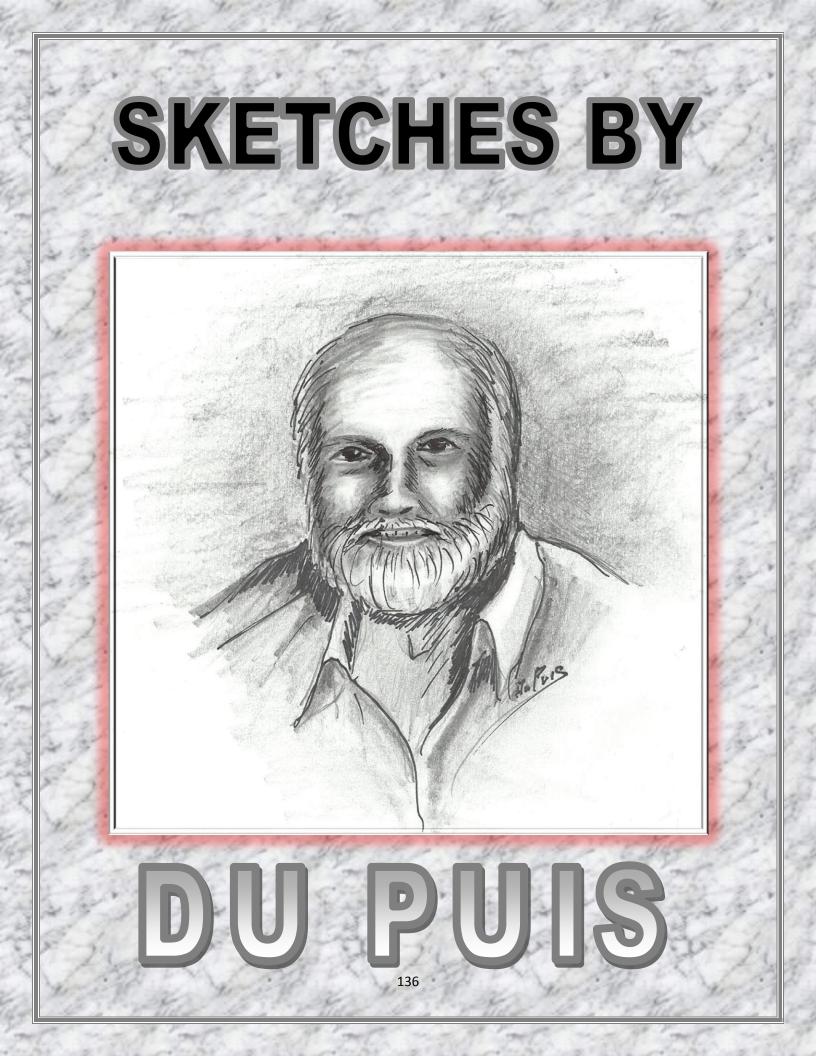
In preparation for the fashion show of actual creations Dick designed, it is important to witness a sketch taking on a life of its own as it makes its way toward becoming a finished garment. Also, in order for each sketch to take on a life of its own, some photographs of actual beading adornments used to enhance the design have been included.

Therefore, as you invite your eyes to feast upon the sketches he imagined for his clients in the next section, it is important to focus on the uniqueness of each design. It is apparent he knew each client personally and created the best look for her body.

Then, when you reach the actual fashion show in the next chapter, you will have comprehended the enormous task it took for a sketch to become a completed garment. As a designer, Dick visualized how the garment would appear from all angles; even down to the way the light would transform the fabric to the human eye, along with the sound the material made as movement occurred.

Last, all components must come together smoothly, resulting in the drawing of a perfect pattern to fit the various shapes and sizes of women.

Finally, having been fully prepared for the beauty you are about to experience, you are invited to turn the page and enjoy nineteen beautiful <u>SKETCHES BY DU PUIS</u>.



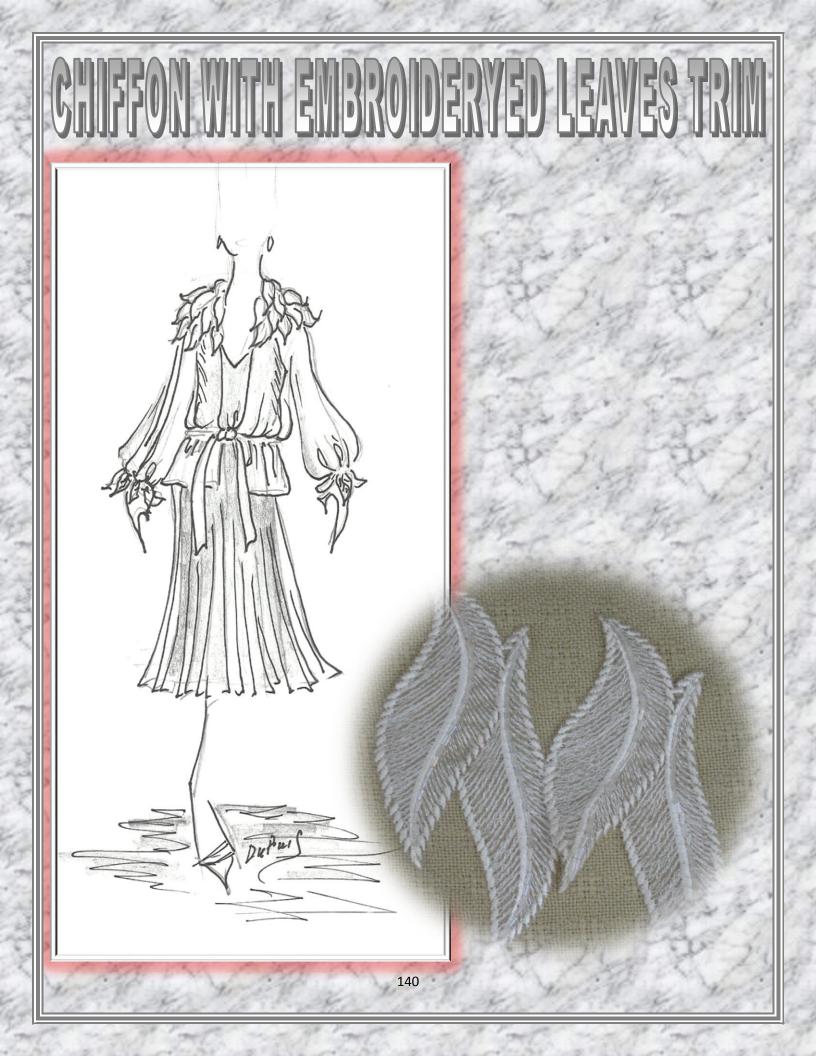
SIDE FLOUNCED CHIFFON WITH BEADED MIDRIFT

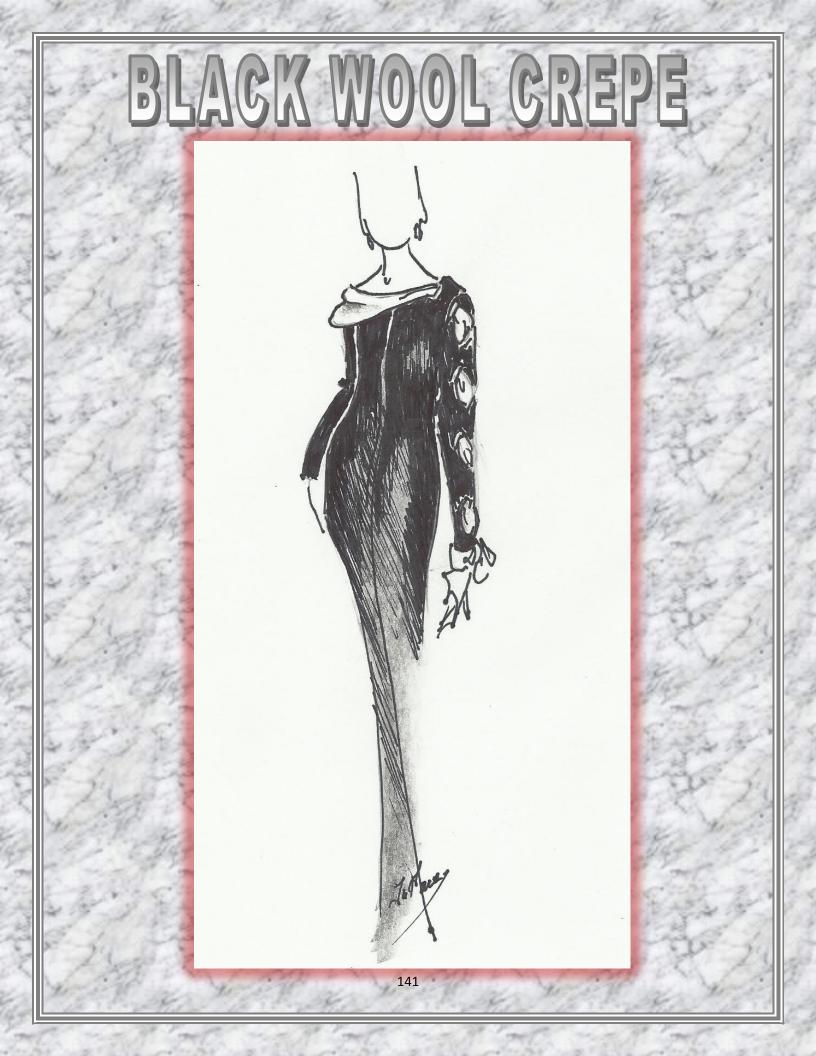






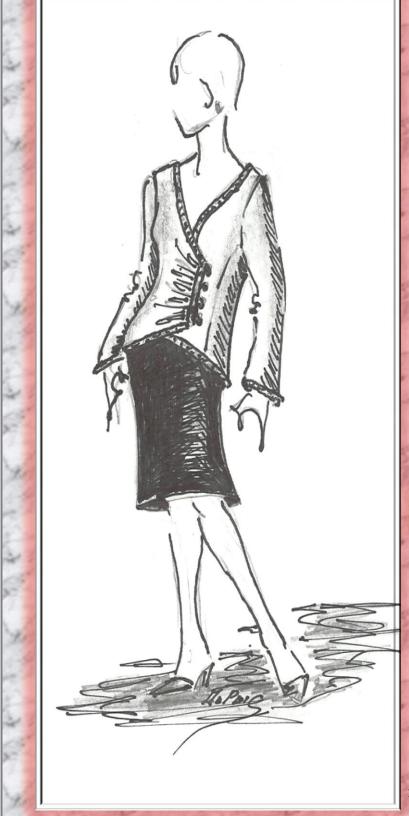








BEADED TRIM ON JACKET



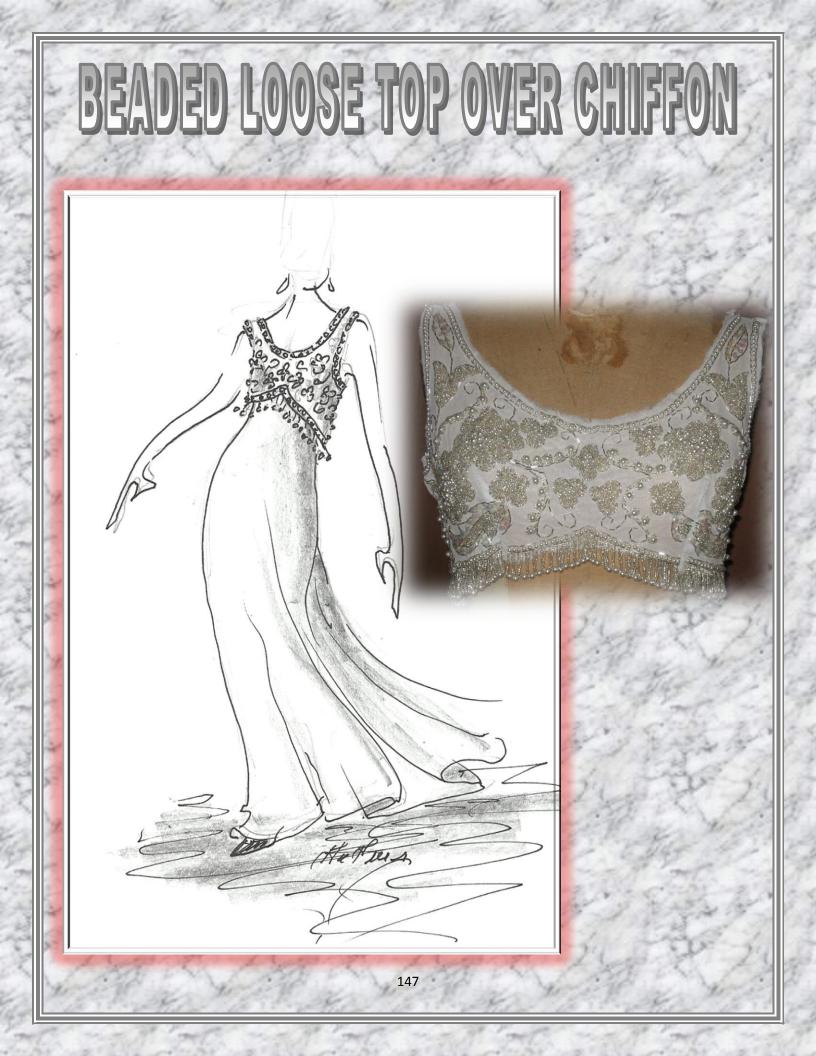


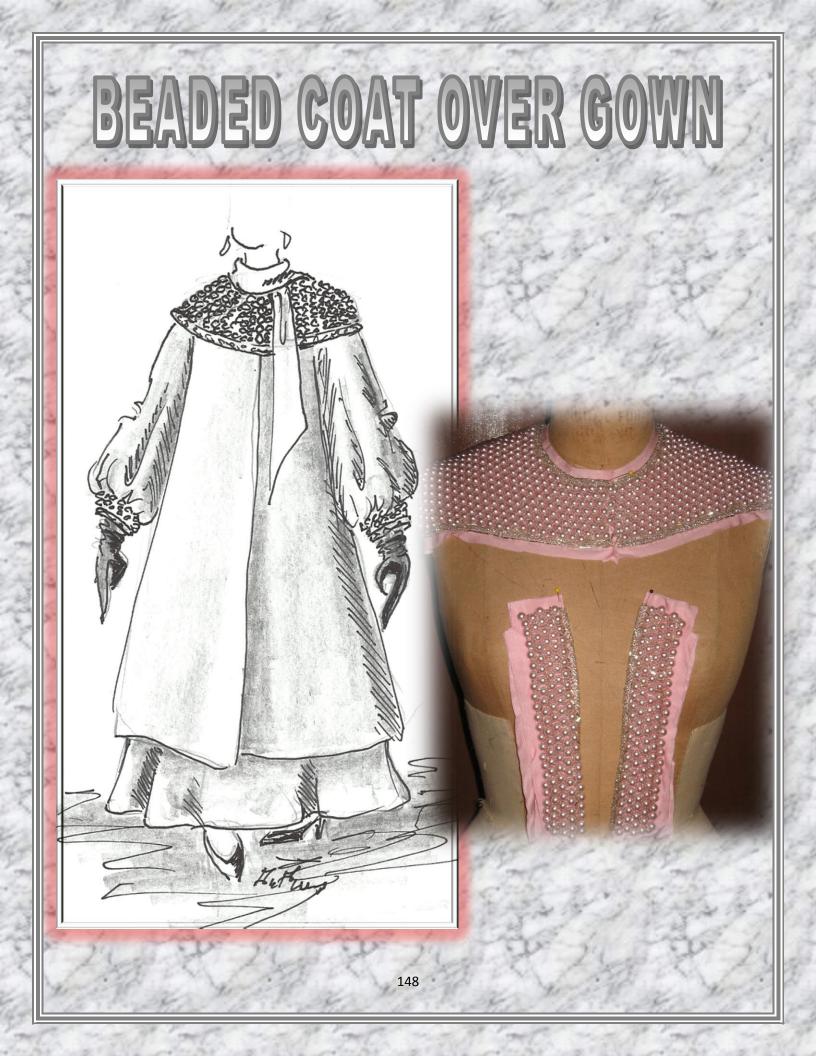


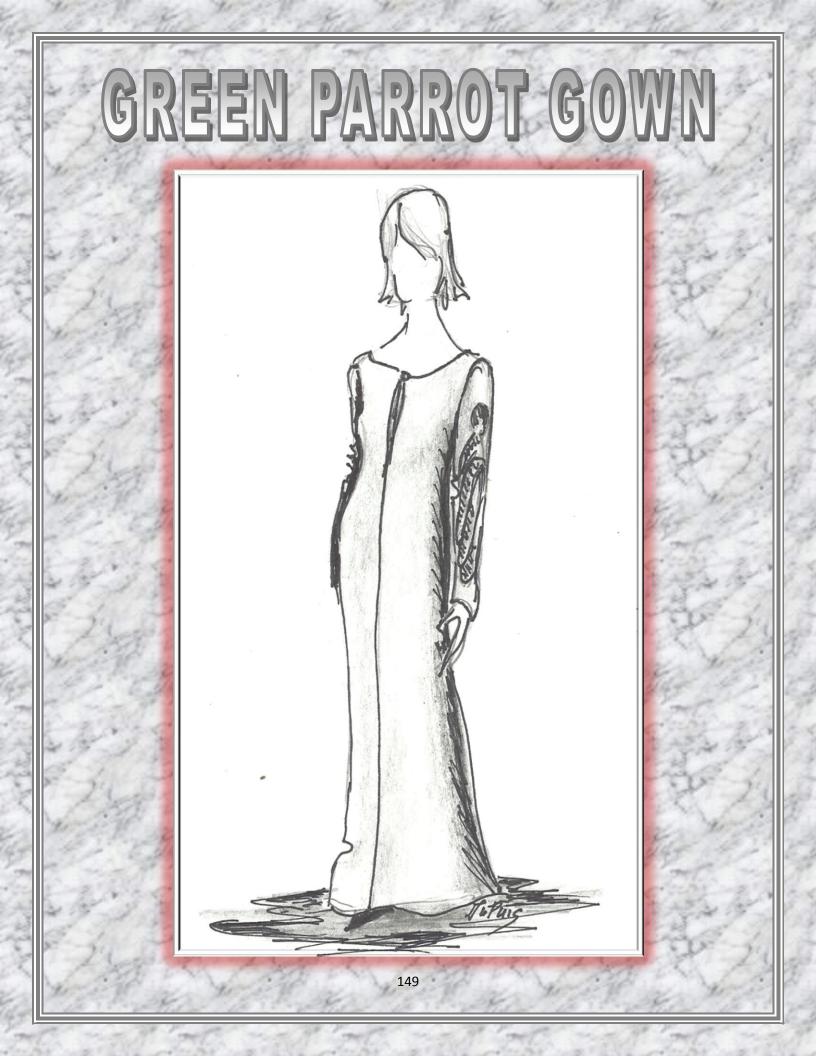
BEADED SNAKE GOWN



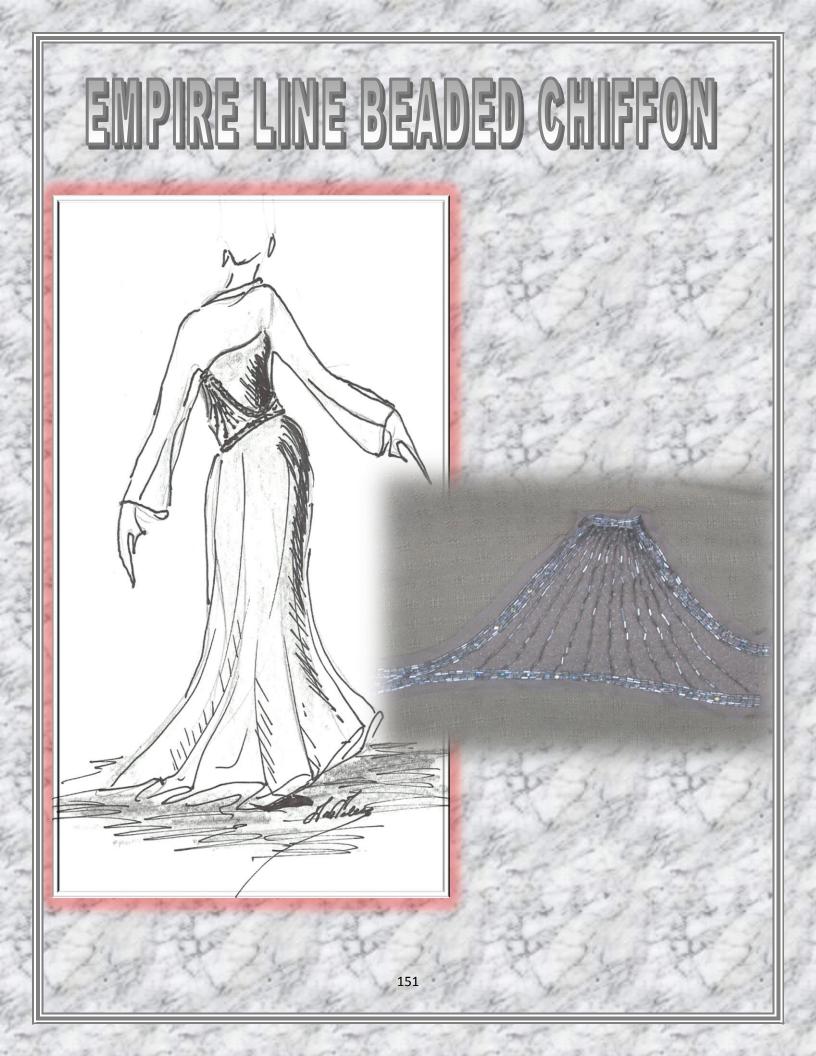








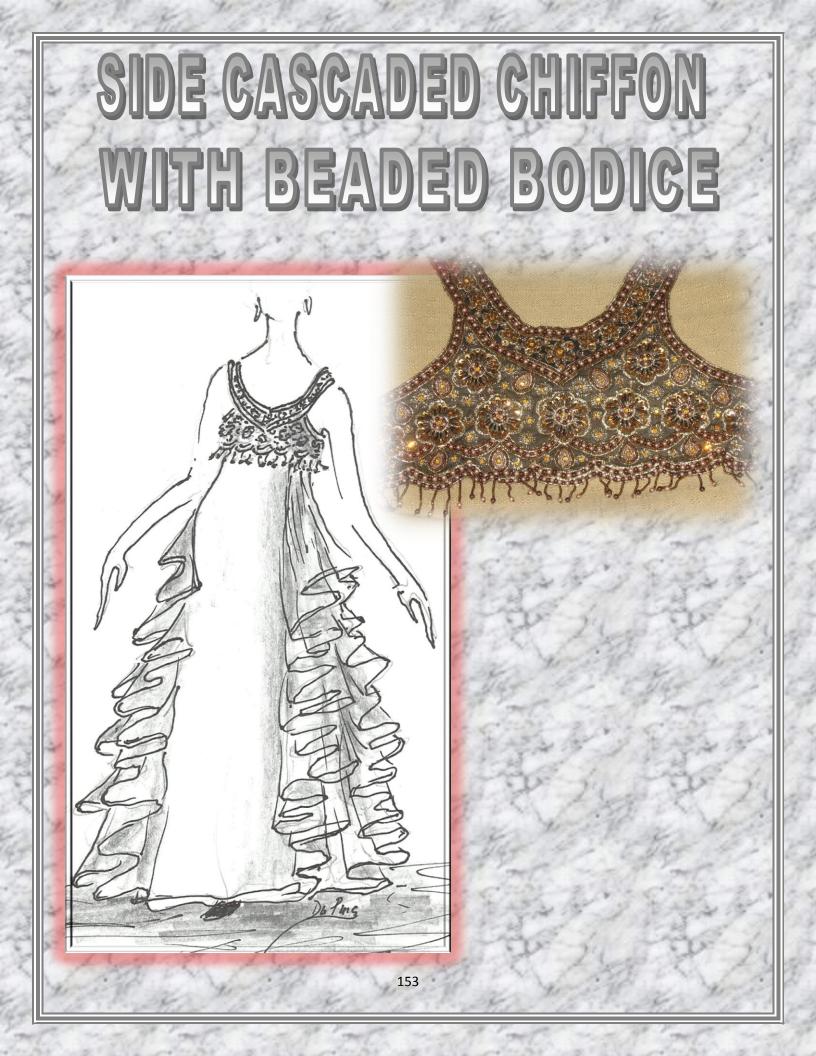




EGYPTIAN GOWN











Chapter 15

Ezekiel 34: 26

FASHIONS BY DU PUIS

I will bless them and the places surrounding my hill. I will send down showers in season, there will be showers of blessings.

What divergent paths man seeks to reach the mountain tops of life; possible only because God created each individual in His own image. Then, each unique person being so special to Him, was blessed with gifts and talents to use for His glory. Thus, loving His children so abundantly, the heavens and the earth were completed in their entire vast array with such perfection the human eye never fails to be stunned by their beauty. Then, allowing every fiber of our being to feast upon the assortment of colors and textures as God sees them, a deep pervading peace will fill our hearts with the realization we have been truly blessed by our Creator.

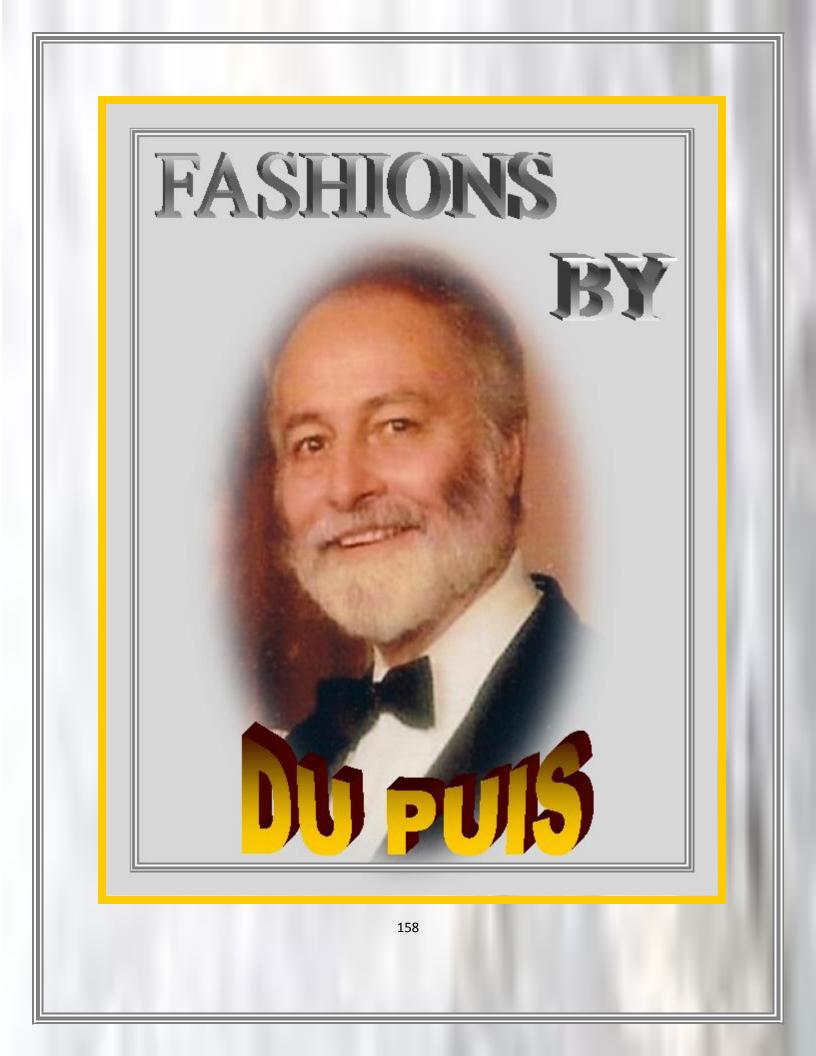
As Dick Du Puis walked this earth from childhood forward, it is obvious from the graceful sketches he drew that he not only saw the worth of the environment God created, but chose to embrace it whole heartedly. Every garment he designed was like a new exciting picture that had been painted and framed using intense or soft colors belonging to the natural landscape around him. When choosing fabrics, some resembled ripe persimmons dripping with flavor, while others were as soft and sparkling as dew on gossamer veils. Then, after completion, as the woman wearing it glided along with each proud step, the fabric would speak as if dipped and thinly brushed by the wind. In his quest to design the perfect garment for each person, the elegant pattern that became the finished product was due to the many small incessant things he noticed. Above all, no matter the size or shape of the woman within his view, he appreciated her many assets and created a frock that enhanced her feminine beauty.

As you feast your eyes on the stunning fashions Dick created when working as a designer for clothing manufactures in the industry as well as on his own, it will be obvious God has lavished his blessing upon this man since birth.

Actually, since Scriptures state the Lord chose us for His own before the world came into being, it is also clear Dick Du Puis as well as all of us, even before birth, were selected to fulfill The Almighty's plan and purpose. Then, after receiving our own unique gifts, so different from Dick's, we, too, will realize our God is blessed and is a blessing to all peoples.

Therefore, if we approach the <u>FASHIONS</u> <u>BY</u> <u>DU</u> <u>PUIS</u> on the following pages possessing an appreciation for the gift from God Dick was granted, which he then developed and so flawlessly applied, the dream he embraced when only five years of age will in turn enrich our lives forever. Furthermore, using great wisdom, we will also internalize the importance for always seeing the worth of all mankind, no matter the race or color of skin.

Finally, it is now time, dear reader, to turn the page and receive showers of blessings from God in great abundance as you delight in each and every aspect of the beautiful designs created by Dick Du Puis.





BEADED CHIFFON

MOTHER OF THE BRIDE



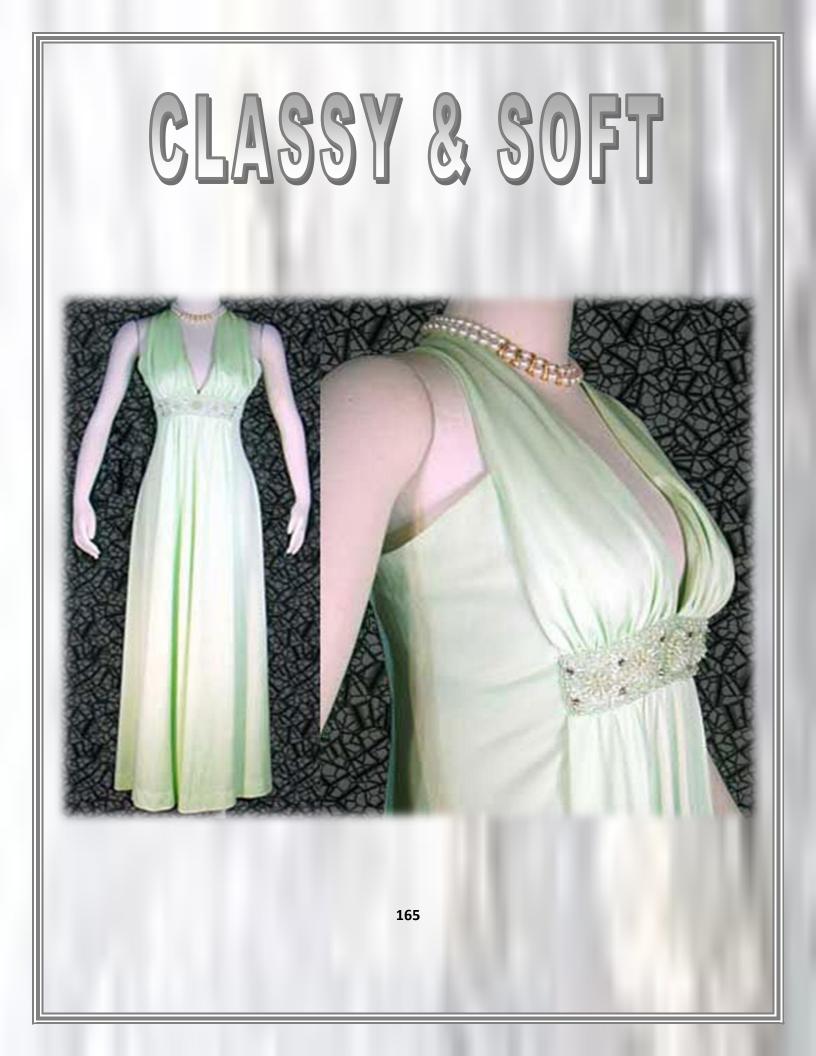
BLACK & GOLD EVENING

HEM DETAIL

SZS

163











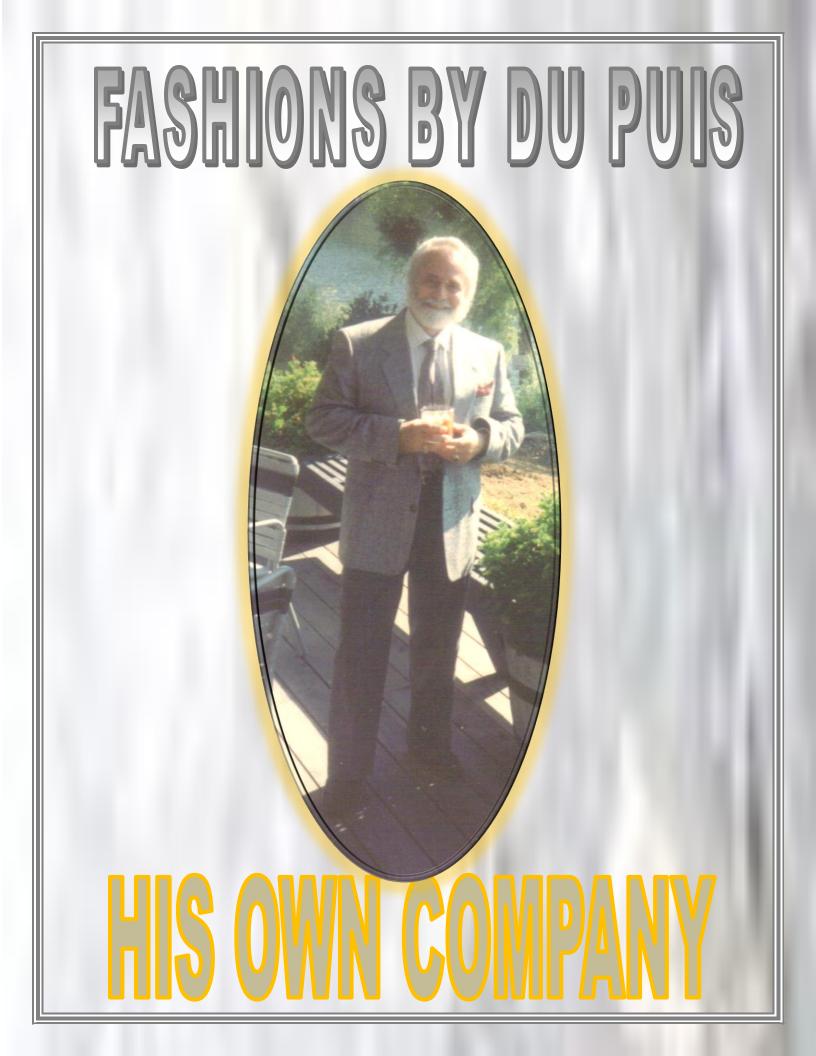




FULL BEADED BODICE







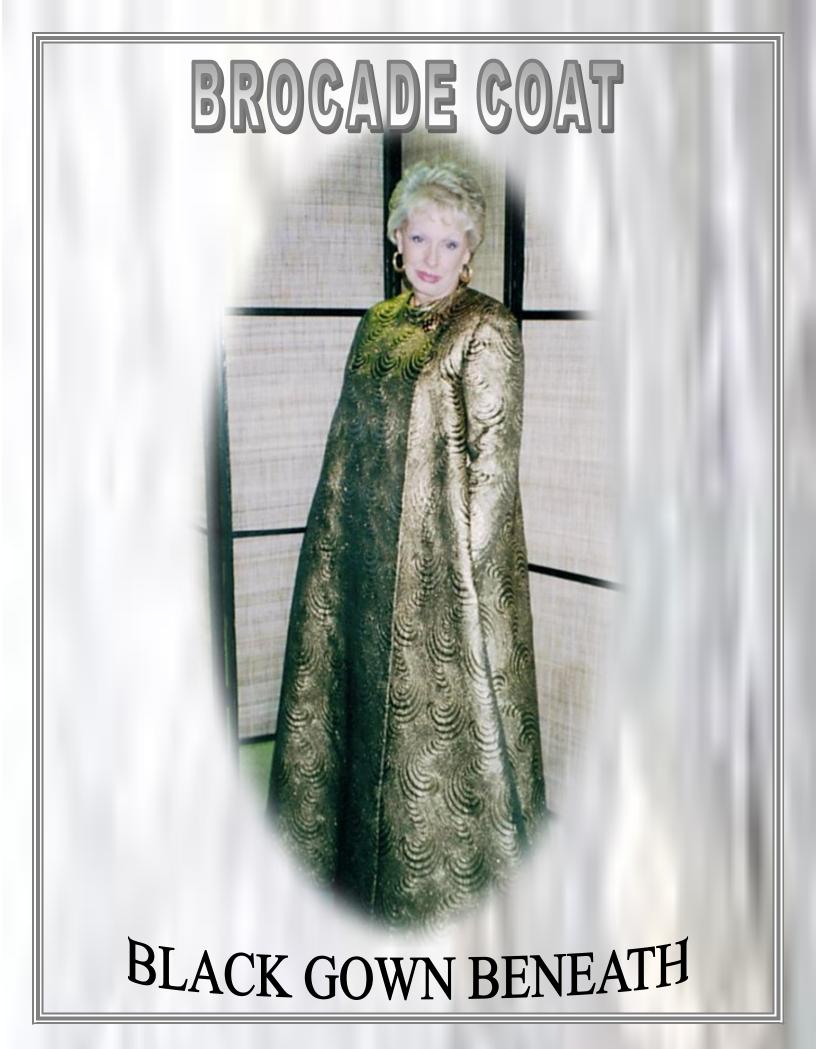
THE PERSIMMON GOWN

FOR OPERA GALA

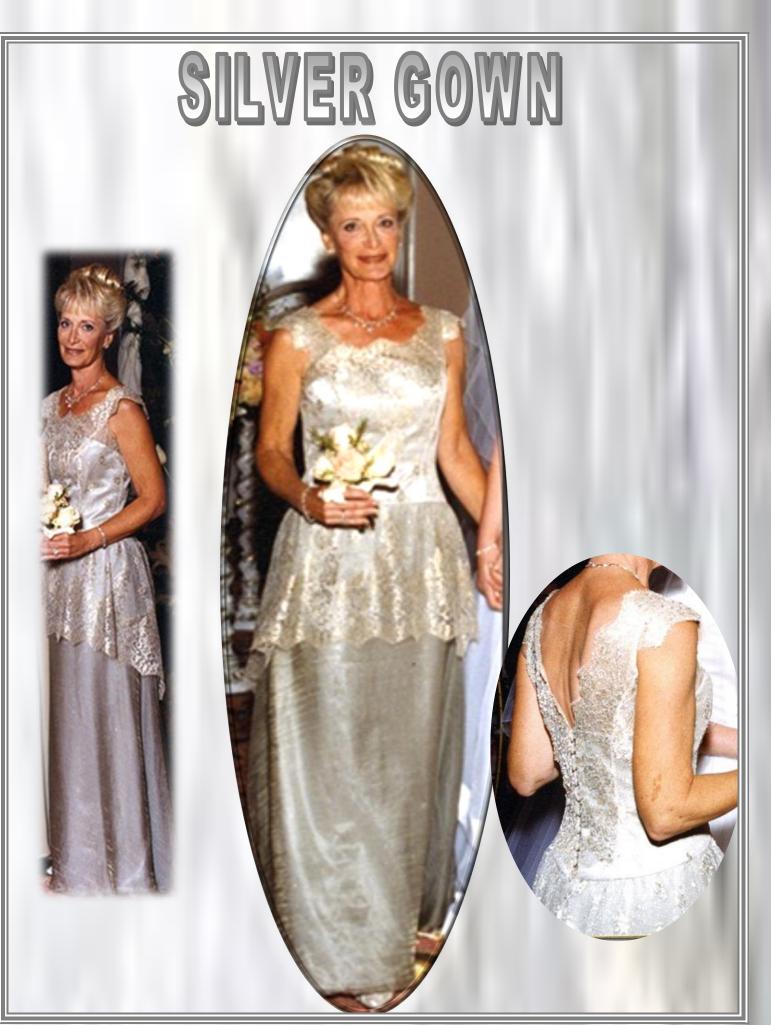


WEDDING GOWN









FLORAL CREPE





179



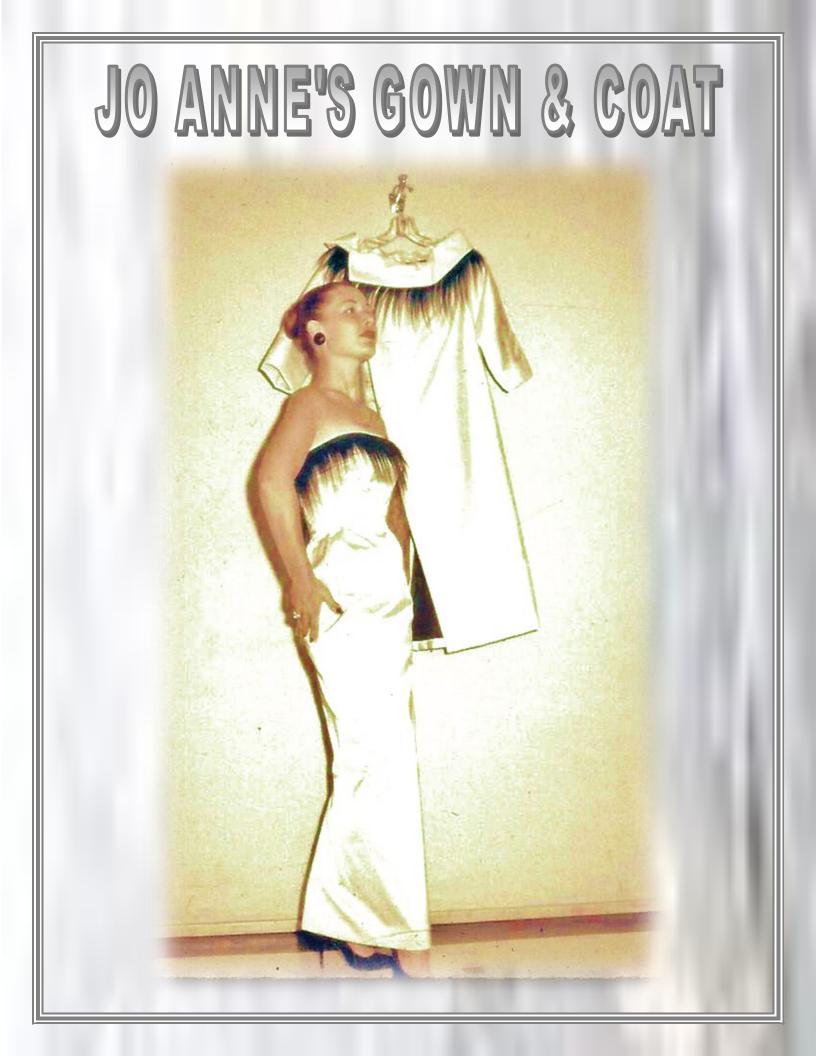
OSTRICH COAT

With Off Shoulder Gown

FINE WOOL SUIT

182







HAND SMOKED MATT JERSEY BACK





186

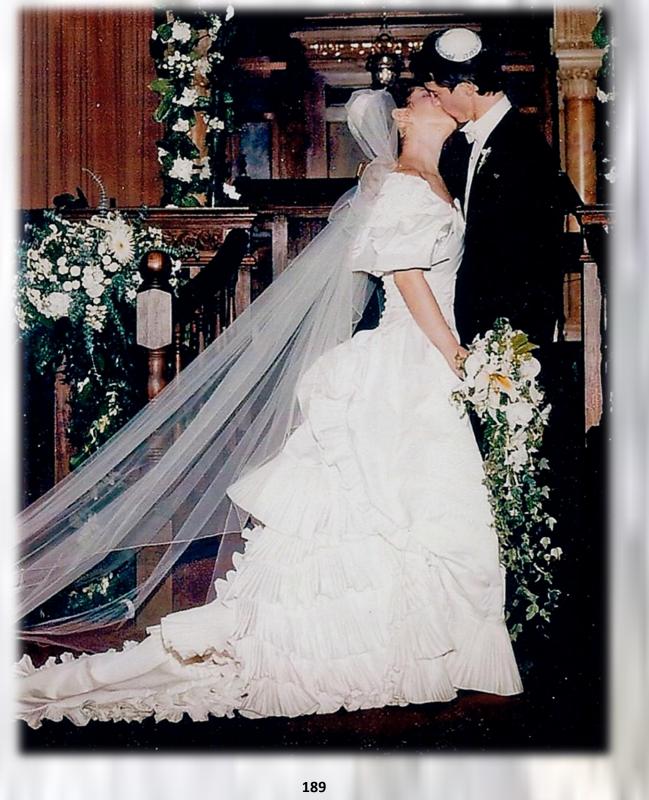


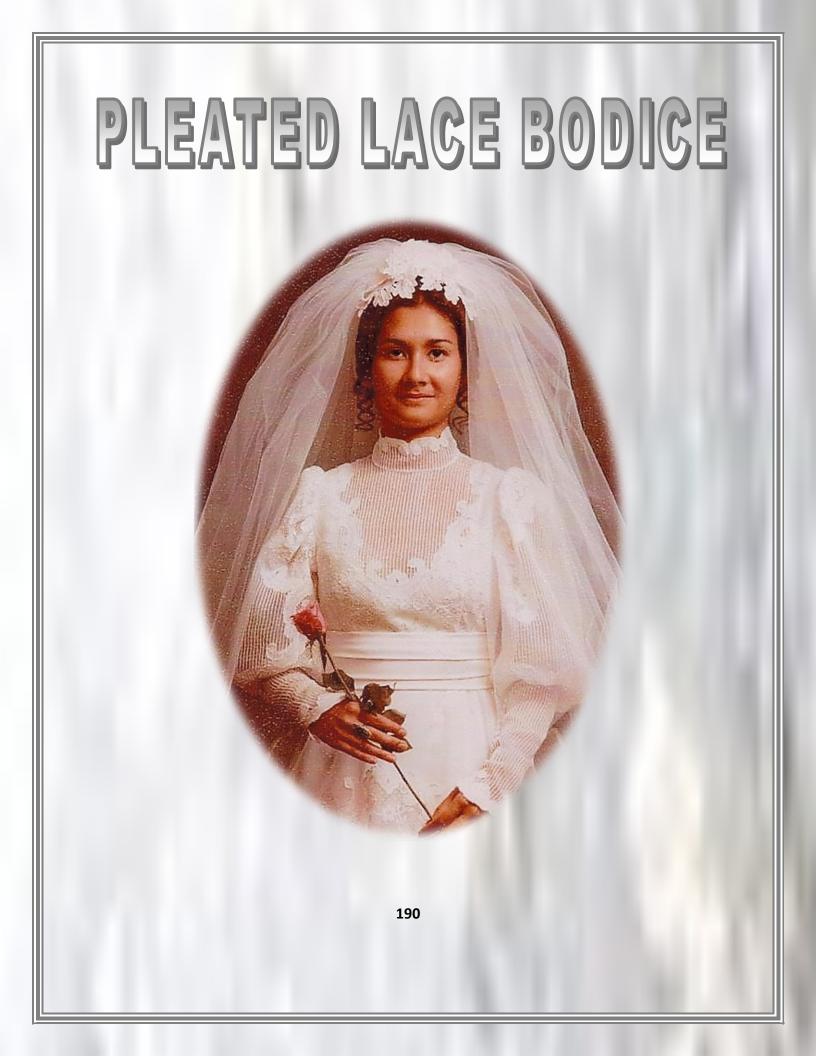
WEDDING GOWN

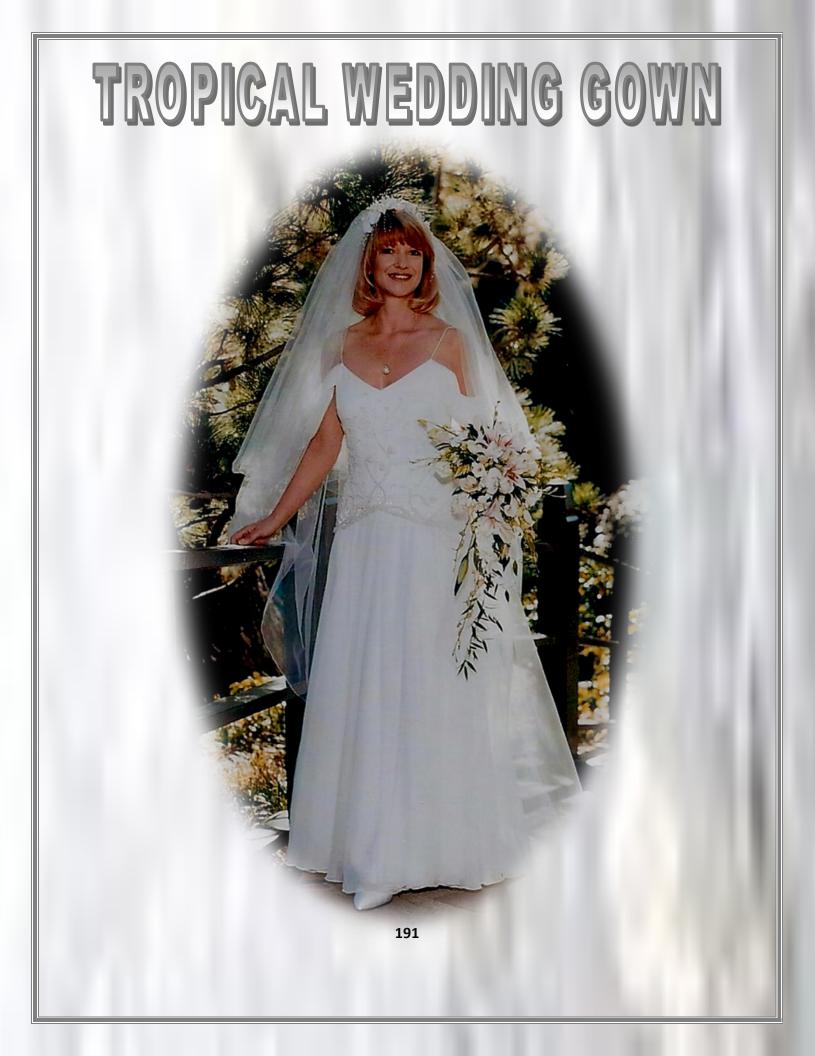


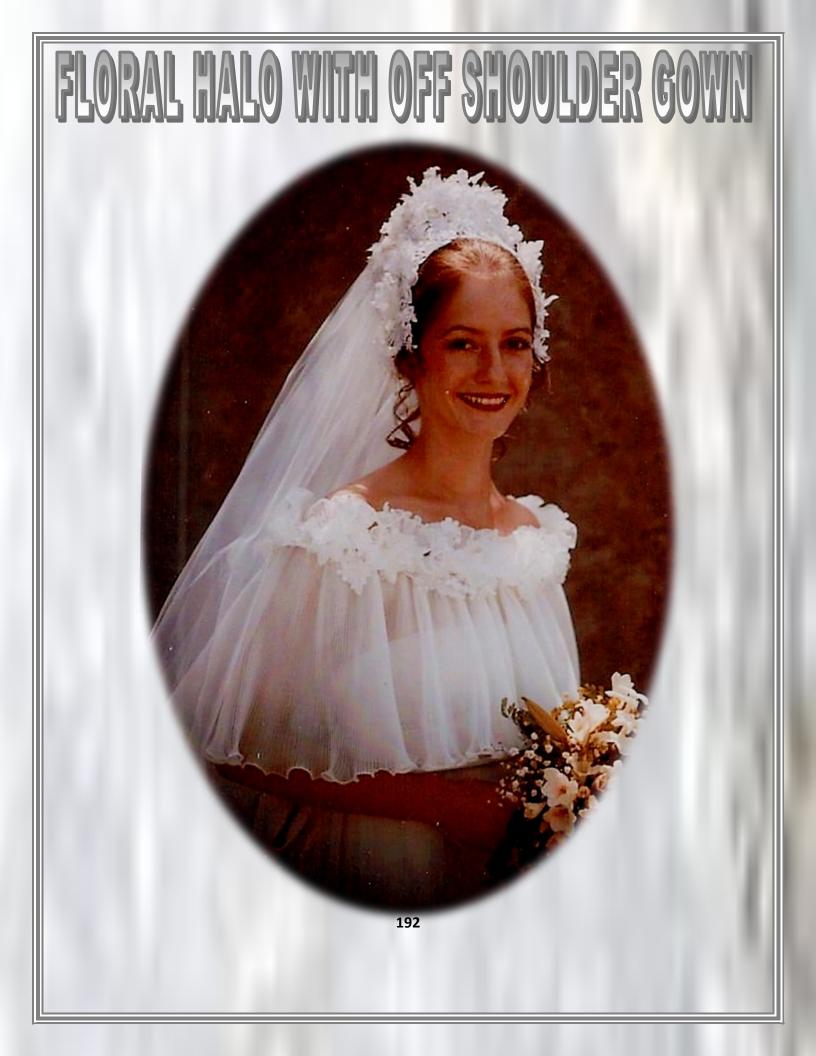
COLLECTION

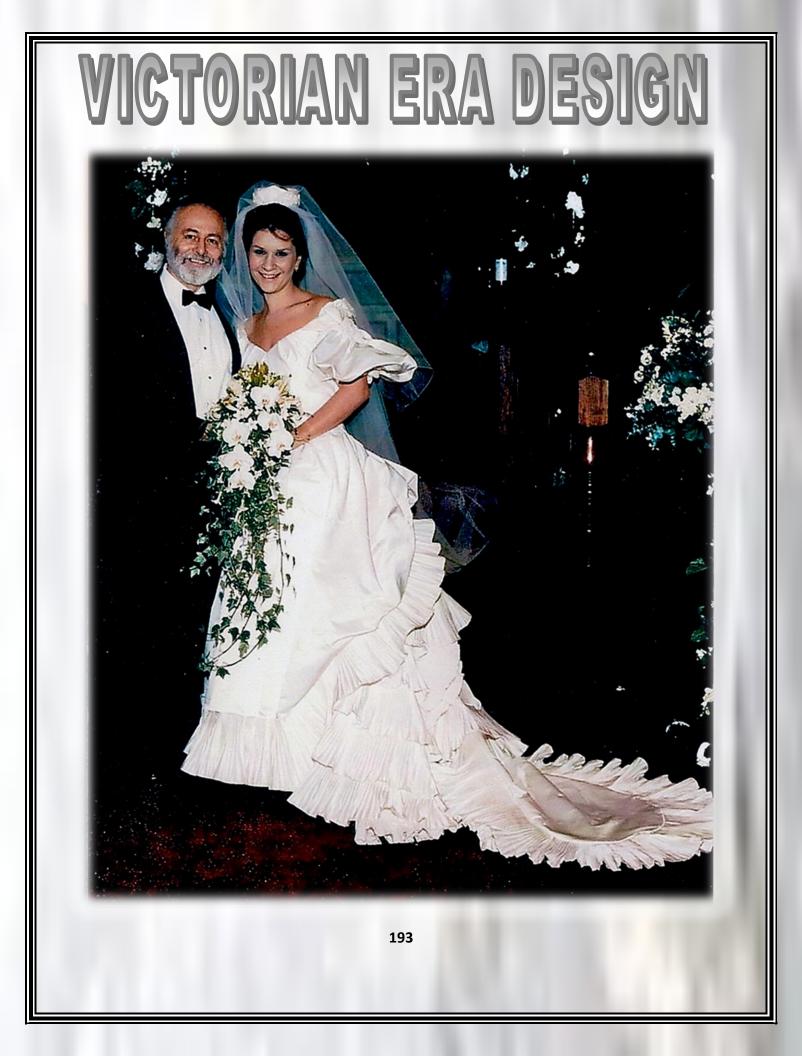
BUSTLE LOOK WITH TIGHT WAIST



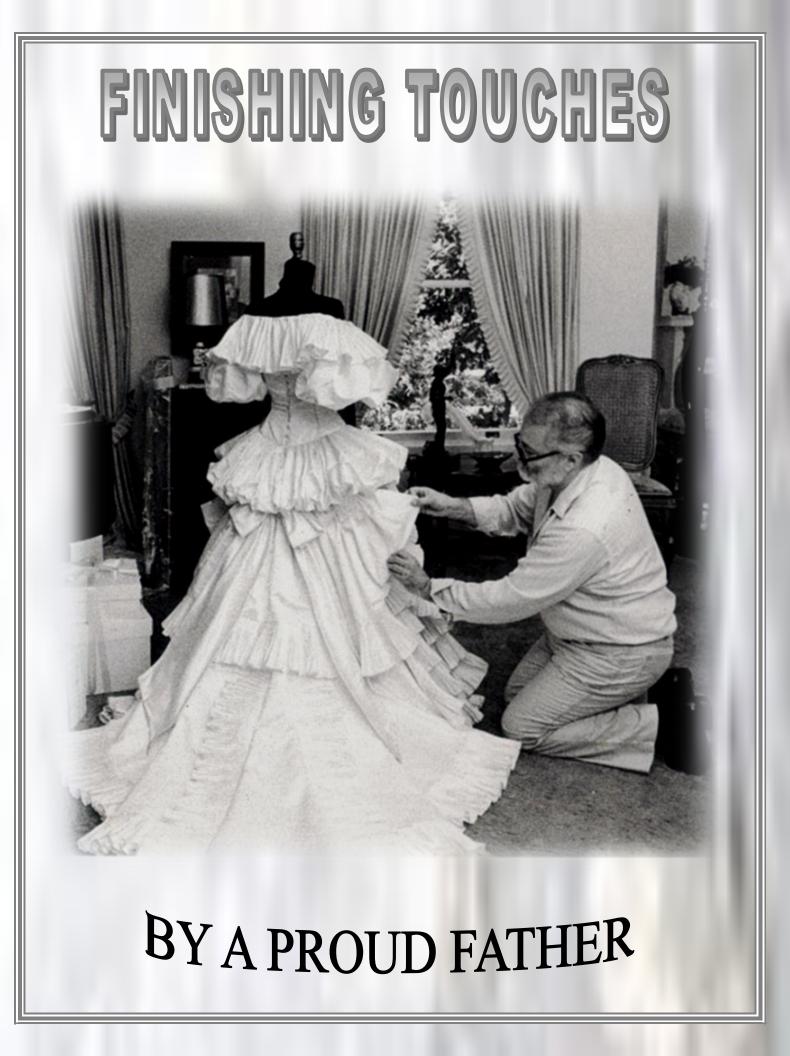




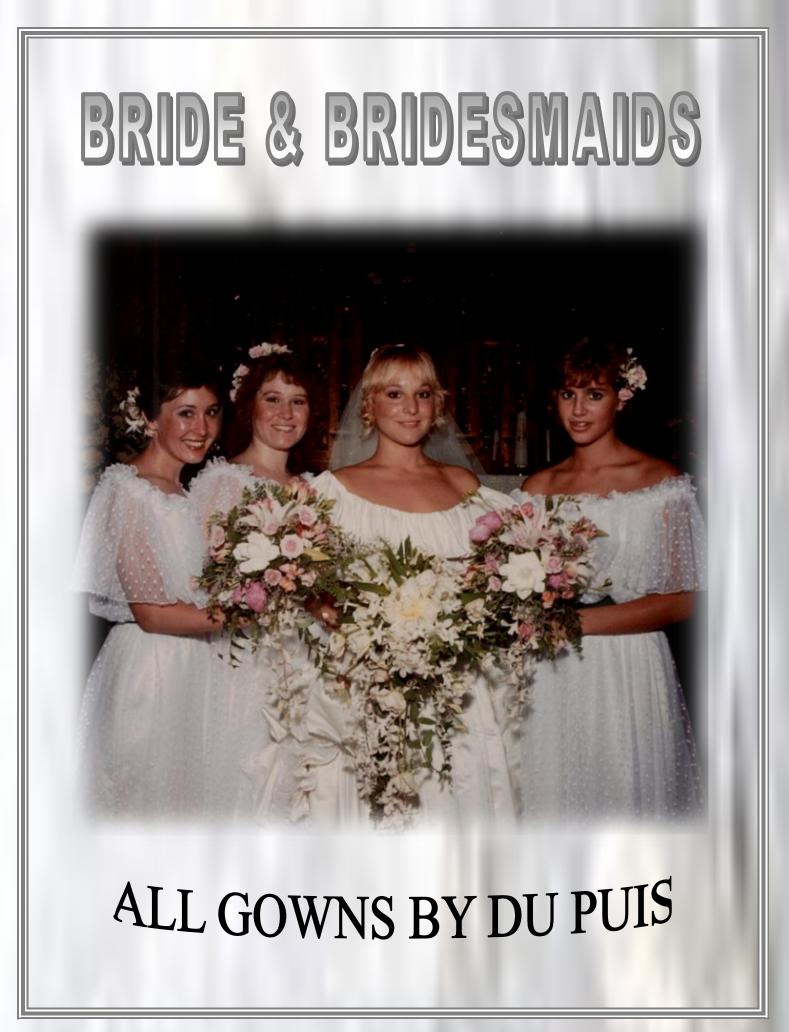




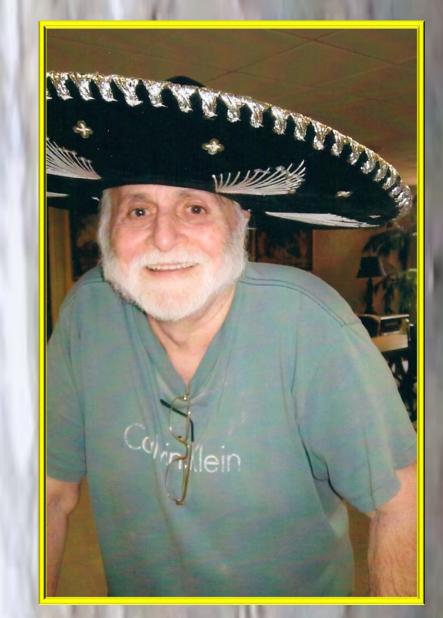








RETIRED



AND ROLLING ALONG



<u>Chapter 16</u>

ALICE

Matthew 10: 29



Not even a sparrow, worth only half a penny, can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it.

CREATION

As the story of creation unfolds in Genesis describing how thoughtfully and skillfully God used His wisdom to form the world in which we live, a visual image of His mighty power appears to be directed by unending compassion throughout the process. One can almost feel the touch of His tender affectionate hands as He so gently brought the land, sky and water into being. Even now as we recount the happening, His abundant love that is so unfathomable for the human mind to grasp, can be dramatically felt as everything was set into motion and the first light of day appeared. He must have smiled and rejoiced at the sight of His incredible workmanship. The words from Genesis 1: 20-25 certainly describe His wisdom and compassion deeply intersecting as the living creatures and birds of the air were born into life.

At this point, it is incredibly easy to picture our God softly holding the first bird and rejoicing as melodious notes of its song playfully filled the air with intoxicating music. The words from Genesis 1: 25, "And God saw that it was good," verify His pride regarding all His accomplishments; which includes creating man in His own image.

Then, when totally satisfied with His work and granting His children dominion over everything He created, as caretakers, an enormous responsibility was just placed on our shoulders. This truly is our Father's world and we are here at His pleasure and for His purpose.

DICK AS CARETAKER

When Dick Du Puis was but a mere lad, he was about his Father's business soaking in all God's workmanship while roaming the wet prairies in Gueydan, Louisiana. Thus, it was at a very early age that he fell deeply and hopelessly in love with all His Father's creatures throughout the world in which he lived.

Consequently, at his home, the area behind the garage served as a wonderful animal hospital for an array of creatures that needed Dick's healing touch. As a result, the outside wall of the garage was lined with cages of all sizes to accommodate the helpless and wounded.

Once, he even tenderly carried home a skunk he discovered along his path that was in danger of succumbing to injuries. Incredibly, as he nursed it back to health, Dick was the only person who could place food in its cage without getting sprayed. However, showing independence, it would turn its behind toward Dick, raise its tail in a show of importance and peer pointedly over its shoulder without ever taking action. Amazing, indeed!

Therefore, it was at this stage of Dick's life through offering compassion toward animals in need that he noted even the smallest sparrow had feelings. He soon learned to identify sadness, fear and joy by carefully observing their behavior.

Since the love and compassion Dick showed to all God's creatures continued throughout his life, these behavioral traits were automatically passed along to his children. Thus, it was a common occurrence to see them approach their dad tenderly holding a critically ill creature in their hands for him to heal.

Therefore, having nursed such an array of animals back to health, he had learned to concoct a variety of nutritional recipes to fit the needs of each species he treated. These formulas were based on the nutrients they would naturally receive in nature; with substitute ingredients only when necessary. Furthermore, since he provided as natural a habitat as possible for each animal in his care, the Du Puis backyard resembled a wildlife reservation.

ALICE

Then, one day when driving down a street with her daughter, a lady hit and killed a squirrel crossing to the other side. Horrified, she stopped to move it to the side of the road and was startled by movement near the body. Quickly assessing the situation, she found it had been carrying a baby so young that its eyes were not yet open. Realizing the movement was coming from the baby, she gently placed it into her tissue in hopes it would survive. Sadly, when tenderly carrying it back to her car, she noticed its hind legs were crushed and its tail was almost severed.

In a state of panic, she rapidly drove to her own veterinarian's office requesting emergency assistance only to receive the news that the situation was hopeless. However, recognizing the lady's determination to secure care for the wounded baby squirrel, the veterinarian directed her to a man named Dick Du Puis who held a reputation for healing animals that were in a state of crisis.

Consequently, after receiving the little squirrel, Dick rushed to his own veterinarian for a second opinion only to hear the same diagnosis; plus the additional issue of a lower broken back.



IN THE PALM

Undaunted by the discouraging news, Dick gently carried the fragile baby home and immediately began feeding her with his special formula which caused her to show signs of life almost instantaneously. Unfortunately, realizing the additional movement meant she would cause further damage to her broken back, Dick proceeded to design a brace just her size using collar staves from a shirt to keep her quiet. He then padded a box that even had a heating pad in it and placed her on her back to keep her still. Then noticing her little belly was cold to the touch, he covered it with a warm blanket. However, in spite of the brace, she still found a way to move around, causing the blanket to slide off. This action prompted the designer in Dick to surface, resulting in the creation of a miniature poncho with a belted waistline that solved the problem.

ALICE IN HER FIRST AND SECOND BRACE



As a result, after receiving intensive care and wearing the brace for 6 weeks, that baby squirrel began to thrive. Also, as a part of the care plan during this time, Dick had learned to apply a warm cloth to her body which soon resulted in the little animal being potty trained.

Thus, after surviving many days of critical moments, Dick finally made the determination that, although permanently crippled due to crushed hind legs and minus a tail, it was time to celebrate this tiny creature's phenomenal progress.

Therefore, with great fanfare, it was decided this little miracle squirrel's name would be ALICE! Dressed in a beautiful pink gown Dick made for her, Alice was then placed in a new bed made from a plastic box that contained a matching mattress, pillow and blanket. As a show of happiness, she would lay in her bed entertaining herself for hours by playing with a special toy that was designed for her pleasure



DICK AND ALICE GIVING &

RECEIVING LOVE.





Then, one day Dick drove to his veterinarian's office and asked, "DO YOU REMEMBER THE LITTLE SQUIRREL YOU THOUGHT COULD NOT BE SAVED? HERE SHE IS! MEET ALICE!" The veterinarian absolutely flipped out and even wanted the brace and special formula recipes to use in his own practice.

Thus, as time went on, due to Alice's unique environment, the world in which her healer lived became her natural habitat. She literally behaved as if she were a human being rather than a squirrel. She learned to move around her little world by using just her front legs and could easily climb from floor to ceiling using the drapes as a tree trunk. She was friendly with birds, cats, and dogs, but absolutely hated other squirrels. Therefore, when enjoying the outside world by sitting on the window seal, she would angrily chatter at any squirrel that appeared within her vision. However, the greatest joy she displayed was when she was held in the arms of both adults and children; sitting contentedly for hours upon end.

Consequently, in time, news about Alice spread far and wide resulting in a shower of gifts arriving for her constantly. Recognizing Designer Du Puis would soon outfit her in his fabulous creations, one client even sent a miniature armoire lined with silk moray fabric, along with hangers for her dresses. Another client who lost one of her garnet earrings had the other one made into a necklace for Alice. Literally everyone who met Alice fell hopelessly in love with her kind and gentle spirit.

In fact, she was so cherished that Dick frequently took her to nursing homes and children's hospital wards for entertainment and inspiration. Since her personality was bigger than life itself, Alice, the little squirrel whose diagnosis had been death, possessed the ability to shower the downtrodden with such compassion and love that not only did she serve as an inspiration to others for overcoming hardship, but was appropriately named the miracle squirrel. Given the incredible story of Alice, it is no wonder, after looking upon His creation, God's words, ("It was good!") were proclaimed by Him as a show of praise and adoration for His handwork.



DICK DRESSING ALICE IN THE CAR BEFORE VISITING

NURSING HOME RESIDENTS

ALICE'S WARDROBE BY DU PUIS





RELAXING!



SPRING FLING!

EASTER SUNDAY







WHAT MORE COULD A GIRL WANT?



LADY ALICE



RED WOOL COAT WITH PERSIAN TRIM

SHARING SECRETS WITH SANTA



FINAL NOTE

When making the decision to retire and move closer to relatives in Arkansas, Dick made the difficult decision to leave Alice in the care of a wonderful friend, Paula, who was President of the Society for Rescuing Squirrels. He even became Vice President of the organization and wrote articles in their newsletter. Needless to say, the story of Alice was a favorite among the subscribers. Having worked closely with Paula as she saved the lives of many adult squirrels, he felt without doubt that Alice would be happy in her new home. After all, Alice had spent countless weekends under her care over the period of time she had regained her health. In fact, Paula would be so desirous of wanting to be in Alice's company that she would sometimes just go visit her for a few days.

Then, one day after Dick had relocated to his new home in Arkansas, he received the dreaded phone call that it was time for Alice to depart this earth. In order to comfort her, he spent 1 ½ hours on the phone speaking soft and gentle words in her ear as she passed to the great beyond. Alice had lived a full and happy life as an inspiration to others for fifteen wonderful years all because of the good Samaritan who choose to stop, accompanied by the compassionate heart and healing hands of Dick Du Puis.



Chapter 17

AUTUMN DAYS

Leviticus 19: 32

Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God.

I am the Lord.

AUTUMN DAYS

During the autumn of our lives when our thoughts, like leaves, float restlessly upon the wind, our minds journey down long-forgotten pathways in a time of remembrance. Recalling the dreams eagerly stored in our youthful hearts, we smile at our naivety and child like faith that nothing was beyond our reach; a time when the world was our oyster and the sky truly was the limit.

Then, recounting the tears sown over hard lessons learned, at so great a cost, we wonder how new found hope brought forth tomorrows dawn when the rightness of things returned. Thus, at this point, we become fully cognizant that without the toils of life, a rich harvest we could not have gleaned.

When, finally, winter approaches and our limbs are made bare, we fully realize in spite of the many cold bitter nights experienced, life's beauty far outweighed the gloom. Truly showers of God's blessings have landed at our feet in great abundance.

Now observing our reflection in the mirror, we identify the gray hair which God labels as a "crown of splendor" signaling the book of our life has not yet closed. As long as we have breath, the Lord has a purpose for our lives. Above all, faith has been granted for the remaining miles of our journey so that we may tell our stories to others and learn the lessons

God desires. Psalm 94: 14 by stating, "They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green", serves as a testament to this fact.

TIME TO RETIRE

When Dick left California and needed to be near relatives due to declining health, he was faced with leaving the historic residence that had been home for 37 years; a difficult adjustment indeed. Now retired and no longer a sought after fashion designer, enormous courage and inner strength were required by a man whose body now was aging. Feeling the restrictions brought on by the passing of time, he could succumb to old age and throw in the towel, or bow his neck and make the decision to regroup and bear much fruit. Either he would now wither or stay fresh and green; a decision everyone faces during the sunset of life.

However, since at age five, Dick had fallen hopelessly in love with "sewin," that needle and thread were not about to retire into inactivity. Instead, they served as the catalyst for a total revival of his spirit. Thus, after two years in his new location, he made his entrance into the art of quilt making in a big way. Each quilt pattern was designed from a perspective that only a fashion designer's eye could imagine. Dick simply started with a blank piece of paper and drew the total dimensions and colors of the quilt from beginning to end. Since his imagination still soared to unbelievable heights, there was nothing ordinary about <u>Quilts by Du Puis</u>. Even in his sunset years, Dick Du Puis possessed the same visual imagery that so wondrously surfaced at age five while reclining on a pallet in conversation with his loving mother in Louisiana. Today, he is in several quilting guilds on line as well as within the local area and has received numerous awards and recognition for his workmanship.

Therefore, at age eighty, it was because of these associations that he received motivation while facing a severe health crisis at Christian Health Care & Rehab East. When his on line quilting friends got wind of Dick's predicament, small packages containing fabric squares and quilting supplies began to daily arrive. Surprisingly, the fabric that continued to be shipped had just the right hues for Dick to design a dusty colored quilt that contained 75 flowers. Although his circle of friends could not say anything on line that would be misconstrued as soliciting, enough signals were sent to each other that everyone knew exactly what to send in order to keep their cherished friend quilting. Due to their compassion, Dick Du Puis merrily quilted along as he healed at Christian Health Care. In addition, he met residents and staff that were desirous of learning how to quilt and graciously stopped and taught classes.

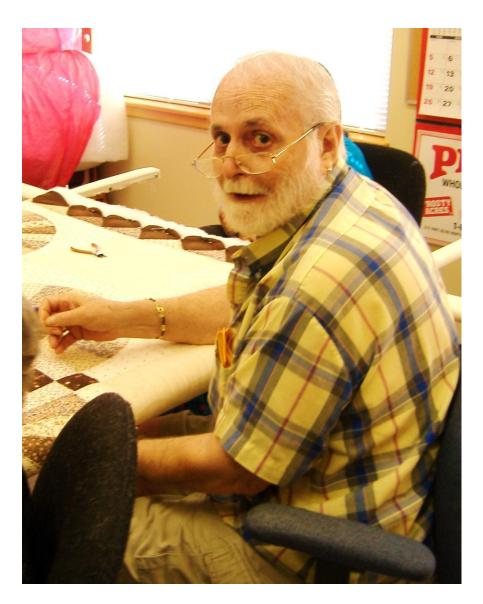


QUILT FROM FRIEND'S FABRIC SQUARES



GREETING CARDS FROM FRIENDS

Even today, Dick continues to design and sew beautiful quilt tops at home that are then transported to the local senior center in Yellville where a group of ladies complete the rest of the hand work. Two days a week he can be seen sitting with them as the only male quilting away; a behavior he started when in the high school home economics class. The all time favorite quilt Dick has completed to date is called "Dancing Flames On Water" which contains many of the colors found around the Gueydan, Louisiana area. One of the hardest to quilt was the one named "Roses For My Lady" containing an array of small pieces that required time and patience.



(DICK QUILTING AT THE SENIOR CENTER WITH THE OTHER LADIES.)

Also, another project Dick became involved in while at Christian Health Care occurred when his physical therapist sought his advice on different aspects of making a christening gown for her first grandchild. As a result, this relationship prompted Dick to rely upon his fashion design career as a surprise for her and produce a breath taking creation that caught the attention of everyone. Then in preparation for the christening, Dick's kind hands had the great pleasure of dressing the little girl in the stunning white delicate gown trimmed with pink ribbon, thus, establishing precious memories for family, friends and staff.



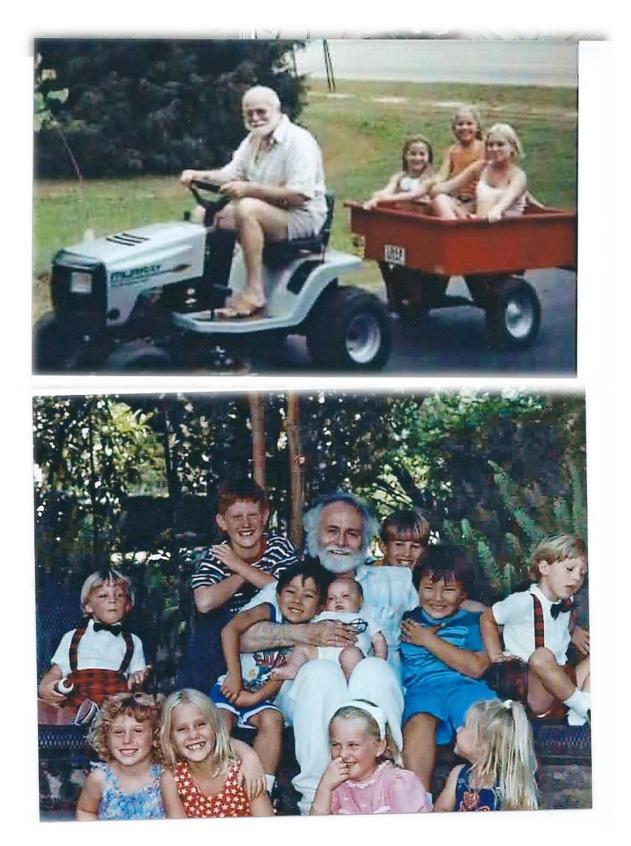


MEMORIES FOR THE AGES

PAPA DU PUIS

At this point, Dick's story would not be complete unless finishing with a focus on his children and grand children. He will clearly state with great pride to one and all that the blue ribbon achievement in his life has been and will always be his family. Today, he stays actively involved in all aspects of their lives through every form of communication possible. He spends countless hours interacting with them either in person, by phone or email.

PAPA AND HIS GRAND CHILDREN



It is not uncommon for him to send humorous poems to them as a way of showering love and affection. A great example of his continuing humor was displayed when he arose one morning to discover his mirror showed a reflection of his countenance as looking the worst for wear; a sight he thought they would enjoy. Thus, they all awakened to be greeted by the following snapshot via email from their Papa.



PAPA SAYS GOOD MORNING!

Certainly, when his family members look back at Papa Du Puis, they will all agree that he taught them to live life to the fullest through example. During times of adversity, he wore a jaw of steel and stepped forth with great courage. When experiencing sadness or sympathy, his face would be openly washed with streams of salty tears. However, the greatest gift he passed along was his ability to laugh at himself or the circumstances in which he navigated. It truly is refreshing that Aunt Evelyn's nephew with the dancing eyes is alive, well and extremely energetic even at age 80, during the autumn of his life.



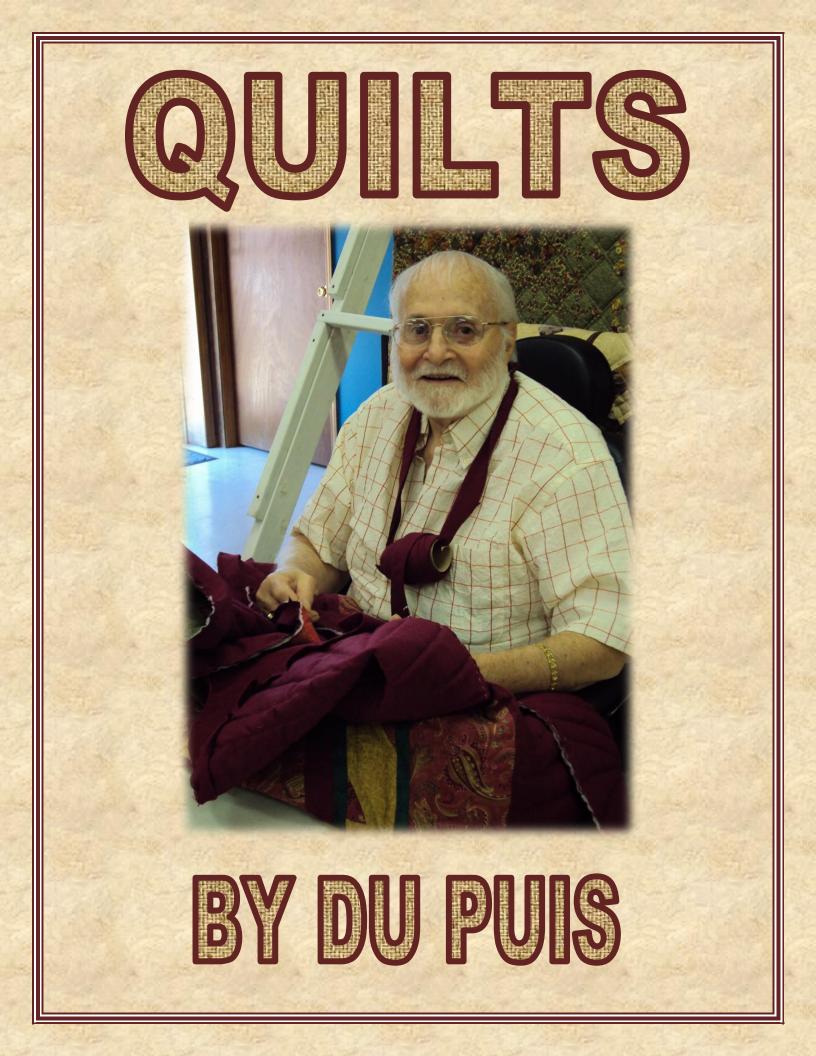
CLOSING THOUGHTS

Now that you have walked hand in hand with Dick Du Puis on his journey called life and witnessed repeatedly his acts of compassion to all God's creatures, may you now be cognizant that these streams of mercy and love never die. The timid hand stretched forth to aid another in need may stir a heart toward a life saving transformation and total renewal of the spirit. A sympathetic word softly spoken during another's darkest hour may awaken a soul to love forever. Thus, let no opportunity pass to assist another who struggles to stand, but shine on them a light of love that brightly illuminates the path. Lose not one chance to show sketches of compassion that become stunningly bright and beautiful as you love your neighbor as yourself. As a result, God's Word will then become the greatest benediction ever experienced as you witness your fellow man's life made whole in response to your acts of grace. Then, in a time of introspection, you'll soon discover it is truly more blessed to give than receive; a lesson Dick completely internalized as a boy of only twelve years of age.

Finally, it is critical to sketch acts of compassion toward all mankind, no matter the season of your life. Even during the autumn days when requiring the assistance of others in order to physically function, focusing outward rather than inward becomes absolutely critical for emotional security and completeness. In becoming the hands and feet of your Master, you will feel His tender touch when you reach out and show compassion to all of His children.

Amen!

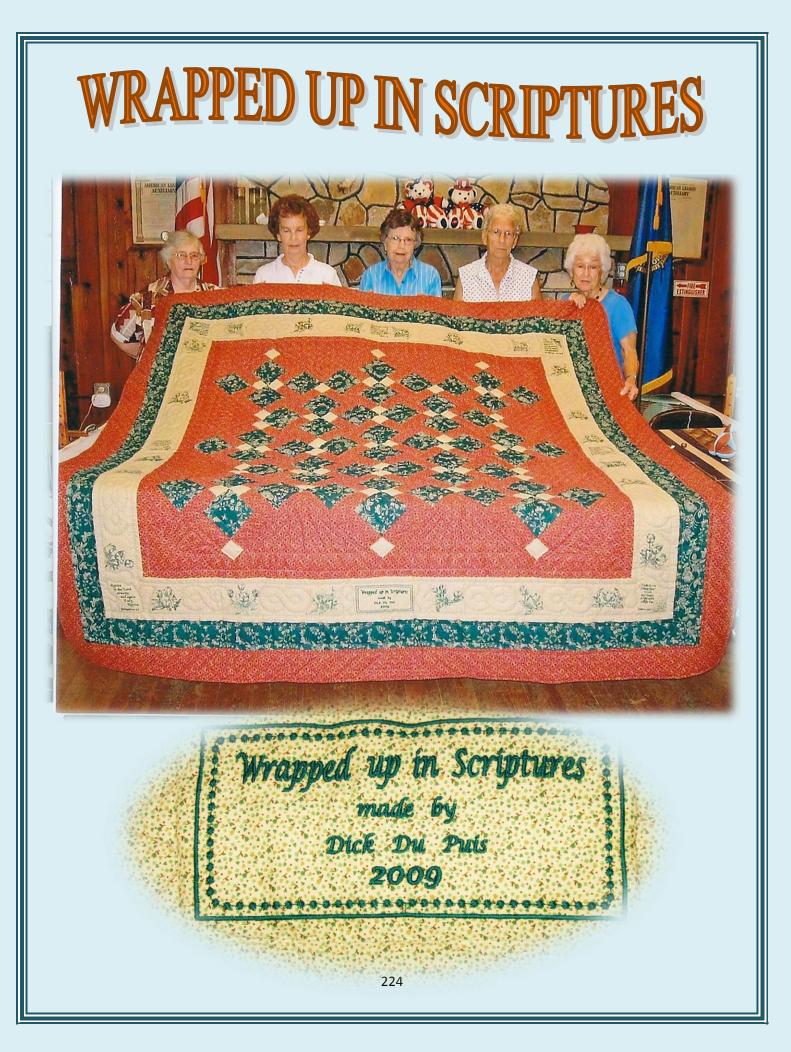














BECOMES



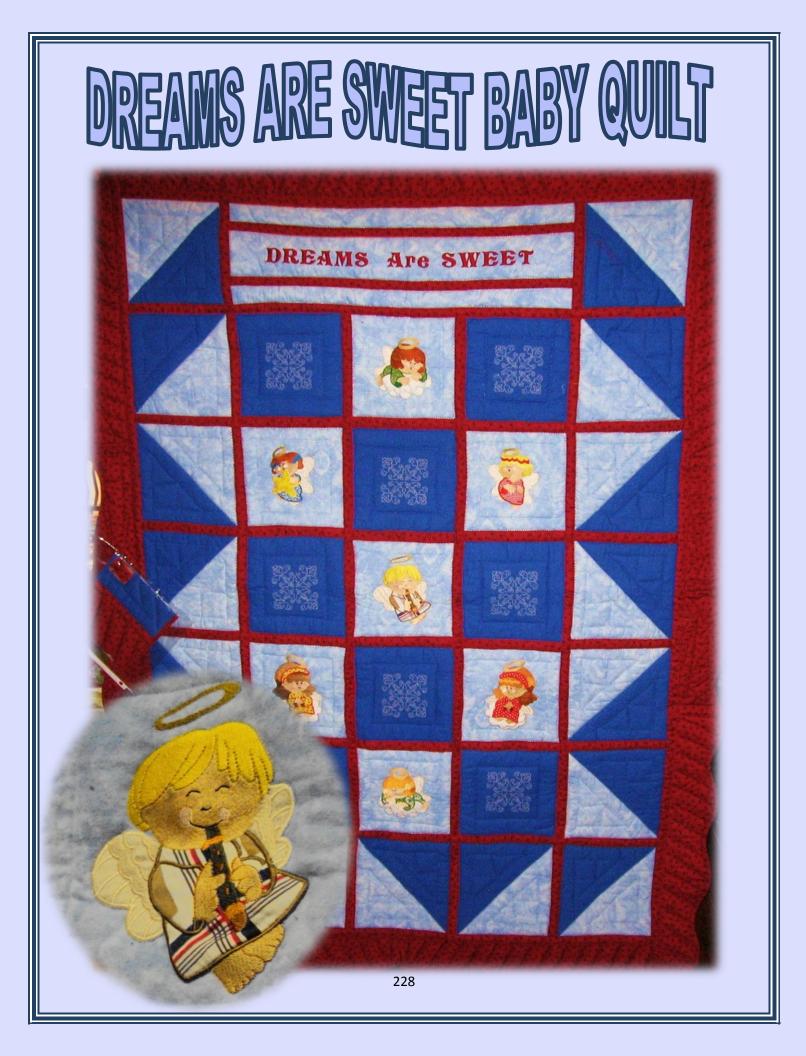


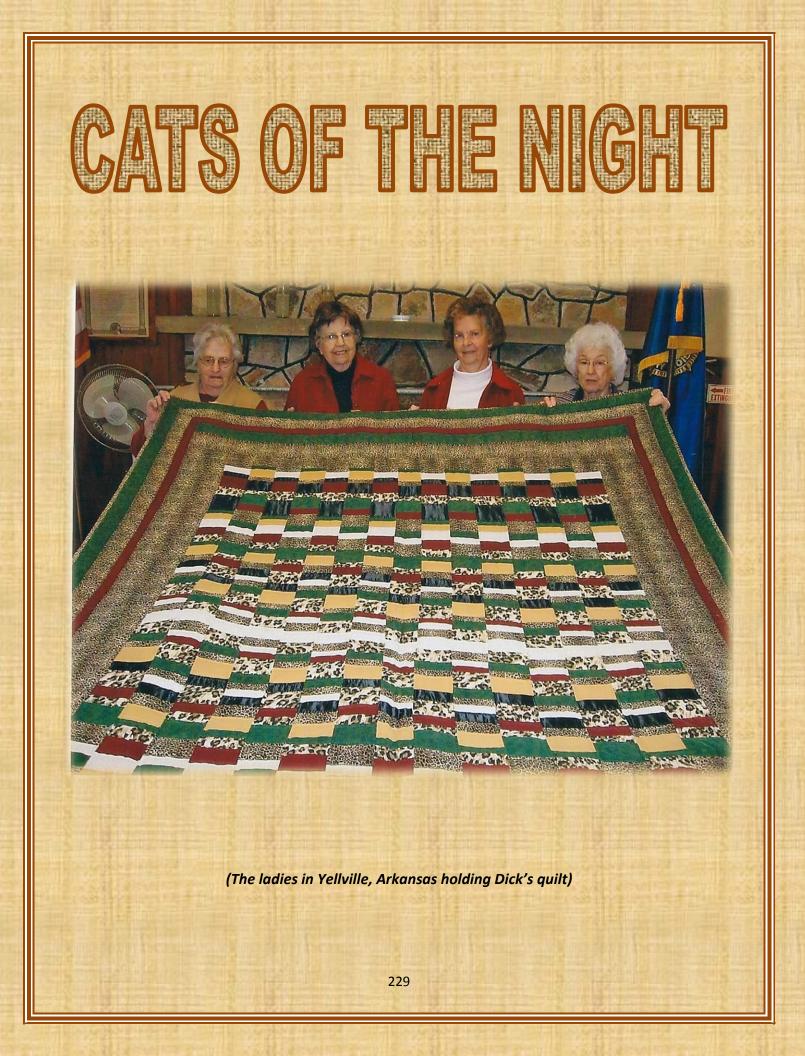
225

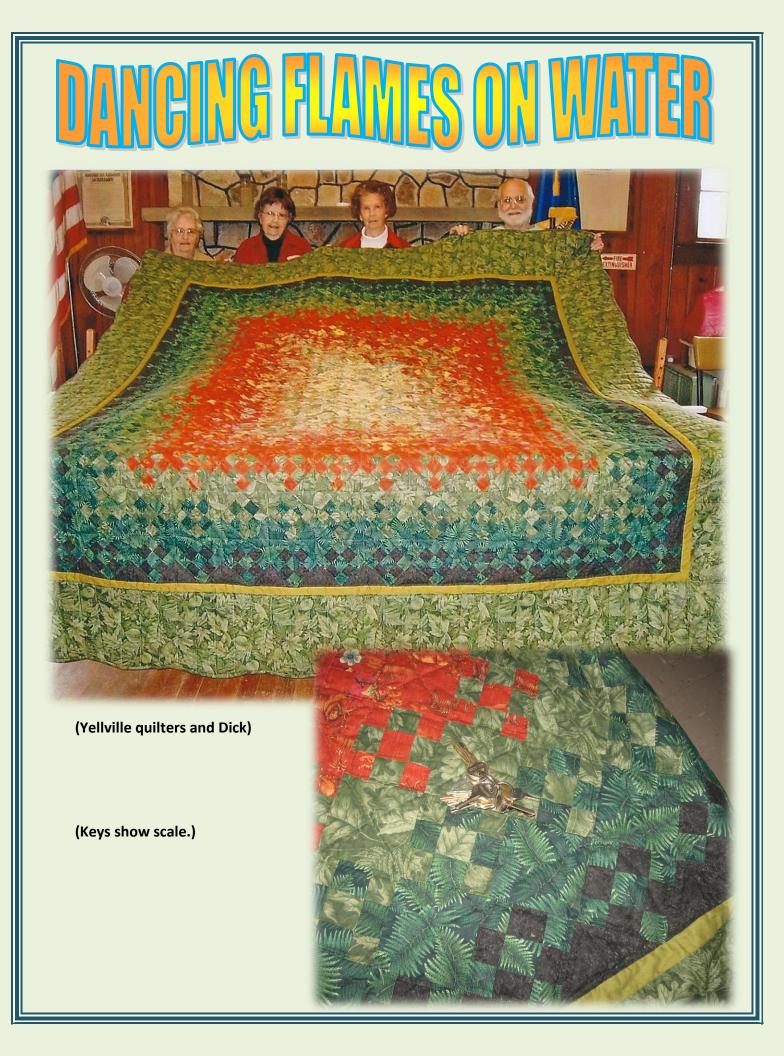


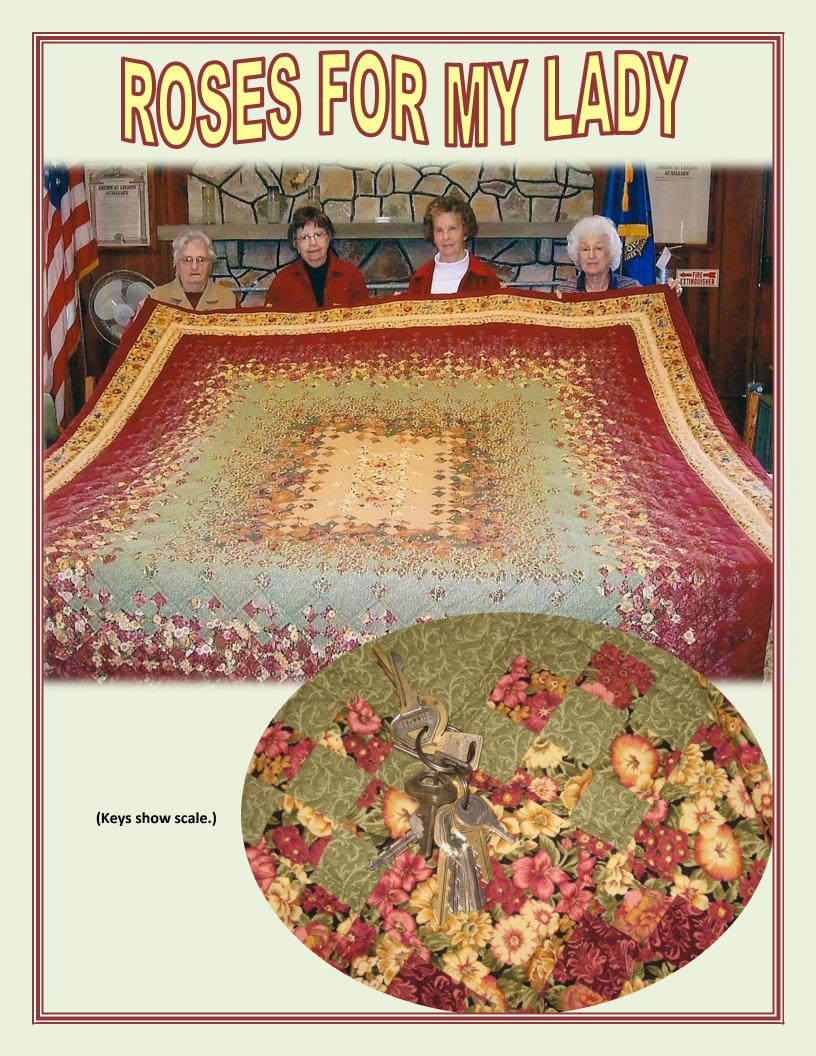
BUTTERFLIES IN MY GARDEN











IN LOVING MEMORY









SISTERLOU

(Poem in Nini's memory written by sister Jodi)

Open drawer	Spoke up not shy	Too soon to go
Something I see	Secrets not her style	Miss her a lot
Newspaper writing	Teen time was hard	Sleeping in memory
Bout my sister NINI	Wanted to share	Never forgot
Thoughts in my mind	Time spent together	l now will wait
Pain in my heart	Was seldom and rare	Remember her smile
One year ago	Mom's we became	Good times we shared
We'd never part	Something inside	Enduring this trial
She was a sister	On family ride	Have tried to thank
Sharing last name	Thoughtful for sure	Pain won't always be
When mommy died	Truth from within	Resurrection hope
Mom she became	She taught me how	Truth does set us free
Looked up to her	We'll see mom again	
Confident and free	More now in tune	
Popular and beautiful	Have the same goals	
Wished I could be	Living forever	
Drawn to her smile	Preach to lost souls	



MARCH 15, 2005......DIED.....? RESURRECTED!

Fashion standout

By Juliana Goodwin JLGOODWIN@NEWS-LEADER.COM

Dick DuPuis always stood out. In 1945, he was the first boy in his home economics class. In the Navy, he was the only sailor with a sewing machine in his duffel bag. He dressed his pet squirrel, Alice, in couture.

Now, nearly 81, he got people talking at a senior center when he started quilting with the women.

"I knit, that started a rumble," DuPuis said, seated in a wheelchair in his room at Christian Health Care. "Not only do I knit, I crochet."

DuPuis has always thought in colors, fabrics and threads. He spent decades as a fashion designer working for Don Miguel, Neal of California and Jack Bryan, to name a few. He had a successful business designing clothes for private clients and was known for his wedding gowns.

He retired 11 years ago and is giving a presentation at 10 a.m. Tuesday at Christian Health Care, 3535 E. Cherokee St. He will show some of his designs and talk about his life.

"The fabric gives me the inspiration," DuPuis said, explaining what inspires his creations.

Tim Trafford, activities director, said DuPuis' talents are so impressive, staff wanted to share them with the community.



A vintage sketch by Dick DuPuis shows one of his fashion designs.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

EDUCATION: BSE from Central Missouri State University, Warrensburg, Missouri, MA Ed. from Baldwin Wallace University, Berea, Ohio (Emphasis on reading and reading supervision)

<u>Business Experience</u>: 13 years as an instructor in public schools. Majority of career was spent in sales, sales management, corporate writer and trainer. Last position was Manager of Education and Training USA, for a nutritional company in New Jersey.

Currently serving as a volunteer reader and advocate for the elderly and reading tutor for second grade children.

CREDITS

Special thanks to Buttons Bower for her support throughout the project.

Gratitude to Mimi Martin for being such a great friend to Dick and supporter of the project---Brocade Coat (p. 176), Persimmon Gown (p. 173-174), Floral Crepe (p. 179), Gold Silk (p. 180), Fine Wool Suit (p. 182)

Special gratitude to Jane Hair, Gueydan, Louisiana Museum Curator

Thanks to Donna Reese for assisting with research as well as photograph on page 13

Gratitude to Thea Coss for supplying the beautiful gowns Dick designed on (pages 175-Wedding Gown, 178- Silver Gown)

Thank you to Genie Mule for photograph of wedding gown on page 177

Appreciation to Judy Leblanc for writing the story about Dick in the Gueydan Journal

Special thanks to Carole Rowe for providing photograph of gown on page 49

Recognition to Juliana Goodwin for writing story about Dick in Springfield News-leader as seen on back cover.

Appreciation to Jennifer Moore, MSU-Public Radio for interview of Dick Du Puis

An enormous thank you to Harvey, my husband, for his patience and wonderful support throughout the writing of this project.