

Judge Orson "Pete" Johnson Remembers:

I was born August 5, 1946, in Hardaway. I have faint memories of Carol Villa before Mama and Papa Johnson died. I remember going to see them when they were ill. They had me climb up in the bed with them, and made a fuss over me. I remember going to Mama Johnson's funeral.

It is my recollection that Carol Villa was the name given to the home by my Grandfather in honor of his first daughter Caroline and his mother.

I remember going to Carol Villa for big family dinners. There was always a feast, even plenty for the little ones. We sat at a small table in the hall or at the end of the dining room. It was hard to behave with all those cousins around. There was always more than you could eat, but I tried. And there were always cakes and pies. And Oh My, the home-made ice cream!

My next memories were visiting Uncle Mac and Aunt Gene when I was nine years old. It was during the Democratic Convention. We were all Democrats then. I still am. I remember on that visit going down to the drive-in and watching "The Kentuckian" with Burt Lancaster. I remember getting homesick and explaining my tears to Aunt Gene by saying that I had squeezed lemon in my eye while squeezing it into my tea. And I remember that Gene Burt and I would gang up on Charlie Mac.

The greatest fun was sliding down the banister. I always got caught and got a whipping or a scolding. Playing in the barns out back was great fun. I remember the back outside stairs were very tall. I fell down those back stairs once, but didn't tell anyone because I didn't want to get in trouble.

We usually went by Carol Villa whenever we went to Montgomery. Aunt Gene and Uncle Mac were always welcoming and glad to see us. Uncle Mac was the most enthusiastic person I knew when I was a boy. After my daddy, Dave, died in 1958, my mother (Vaunita) still went by to see Aunt Gene and Uncle Mac whenever we went to Montgomery. This continued after Carol Villa was torn down.

When I was at Huntingdon in the spring of 1964, I remember Uncle Mac coming and getting me and taking me to Carol Villa for home-cooked meals. Uncle Mac would pick me up at Huntingdon on Saturday mornings and take me home to Hardaway. He was going down to see about Uncle Spencer's cows and his own.

I was in school at the University of Alabama when Carol Villa was torn down. I did not know that it was being razed. It hurt to learn that the wonderful old house was gone, and that I did not have a chance to say goodbye. I fussed at Uncle Mac about tearing it down, and he let me know quickly that I didn't have to suffer in that big, old, cold, drafty house. I forgave him, but I still missed Carol Villa.

I remember the ghost tales about Mr. Fling Down. I can remember older cousins kidding us about it. I would not go upstairs by myself at night. Fling Down followed us to Hardaway, but his origins were at Carol Villa.

I remember going with Uncle Mac and my daddy to see Uncle Mac's cows behind the house. I got to open the gates, at least those that I could open.

I feel blessed to have grown up in a wonderful family that had such a great home place. ☺