

Joyce Graham O'Brien Remembers:

My first visit to Carol Villa was on July 4, 1952, for the family reunion. I had been dating Mickey just a few months, and he invited me to the annual barbecue. However, he was working that morning at Rosemont Gardens, and his parents, Dot and Joe, picked me up at my home, and I was quite nervous. Of course I was amazed at the beautiful antebellum home and overwhelmed by so many people. Fortunately, Mickey arrived shortly after we did, and I really enjoyed meeting the Johnson family members.

One of the things that made my transition into the family easier was that I already knew the Walter Albritton and Seth Johnson, Jr. families because of my living in Wetumpka and attending school there. I was grateful that they were all there on my first visit to Carol Villa.

After Mickey and I were married, we visited often with Uncle Mac and Aunt Gene at Carol Villa. My daughters, Lindy and Nancy, remember playing with Gene Burt and Charlie Mac there and finding the big house fascinating. Lindy remembers Gene and Charlie had a gadget that showed cartoons on the wall, and they would find a dark place in the house to see the pictures. Charlie Mac also always loved to tell ghost stories to scare them. Lindy said that she always believed there were dead slaves in the quarters behind the house; obviously, another Charlie Mac story. They had lots of fun times there when they were young.

One specific thing I remember, though I'm not sure about the occasion; it may have been when Uncle Dave died because Nancy was three years old then. We were eating a meal at Carol Villa, and the magnificent long oval table was covered with food, and much of the family was there. Nancy stood beside the pickle dish and ate most of the pickles. Aunt Gene remembered that, and when Nancy was married, Aunt Gene and Uncle Mac gave her a pickle fork in her sterling silver pattern. We have remembered that gift and its significance many times over the years.

Of course, I went to the Montgomery Drive-In on lots of dates, most of them with Mickey. Seeing Carol Villa at the end of the long driveway and behind the drive-in was always special. I don't think I ever watched any movies while sitting on the front porch, but I have heard others talk about enjoying that kind of entertainment.

Mickey loved to share stories about the times when he actually lived at Carol Villa with Uncle Mac and Aunt Gene. Mickey's friend Bennie Fowler used to pick him up for school at Starke, and according to Bennie, Mickey was never ready. Bennie said he felt almost like a nephew too as he spent many mornings drinking coffee and visiting with Aunt Gene while waiting on Mickey to get ready for school. After

he was grown, Bennie still went back to visit Mac and Gene at Carol Villa, and he still talks about those days fondly when I have had occasion to see him at Starke reunions in recent years.

What a wonderful legacy all the Johnson family members have from having either lived in or visited Carol Villa! It was a special place in the history of Montgomery and the history of the Seth and Neva Johnson family. ☺

Neva Caroline Albritton Williams Remembers:

I remember spending memorable nights at Carol Villa with some of my cousins. Grandmother always arranged to have cousins close to my age there when I visited (usually Nancy Lillian Johnson Harle and Betty Ann Johnson Zay). We had fun dressing up in costumes that were in a trunk upstairs. I think they were Aunt Katie's when she took dancing. Of course, we all heard the ghost stories about "Fling Down" from the older family members.

One special thing we did in the summer once or maybe twice was to work with Grandmother at a Vacation Bible School at a Negro church near Carol Villa. I also remember going to church with Grandmother at Dalraida Baptist Church.

I remember going to Carol Villa with my family on almost every holiday and visiting with all the aunts, uncles and cousins. There were always big dinners and the grownups always ate at the "big" table in the dining room. All the children had to eat in the kitchen. One of our uncles was always in the kitchen seeing to it that we ate our food and did not misbehave.

I remember riding the train from Montgomery to College Park, Georgia with Grandmother to visit Auntie Conley (Grandmother's sister). My cousin Shirley Conley (who was my age and lived in Florida) would also be there visiting. ☺