

Dean Brown Albritton Remembers:

When I first drove up the long road to Carol Villa I was sixteen years old. Walter asked me to share the afternoon Christmas party that his grandmother was giving. I was so impressed with the large house that sat on a hill. The entrance way was decorated for Christmas and a large Christmas tree in the parlor had many presents under it ready for the families that had gathered to receive them.

As impressed as I was with the stately home, I was more impressed with the lady of the house - Neva Carmichael Johnson. From the moment I met her I knew that she was someone very special.

The names were called one by one and each person opened their gift from Papa and Grandmother Johnson. I watched with interest and I was so surprised to hear my name called. The gift was beautifully wrapped and I opened my present with great joy. To be remembered as a part of the family was something I have never forgotten.

When I finished high school in 1950, Neva Johnson gave me a lovely brooch that was heart-shaped with roses on the side, a gift I have treasured.

I watched her face death with courage. The family gathered around her bed for a prayer just before she died. She had written a note stating that she wanted Walter to say a prayer. He knelt down by the bed as I stood beside him. I was so overcome with emotion that I thought I would have to leave. I still don't know how Walter prayed that day.

What a thrill it was one year to spend several nights in that large house as a guest of Gene and Mac Johnson. We were on our way to Florida and we were riding down with Gene.

The scene that took place around the large dining room table the day before the house was to be torn down is a scene that is etched in my mind forever. Tears flowed down our cheeks as we all remembered so many happy days in Carol Villa. I am so thankful that I have some happy memories of a family that shared sad and happy times in a great house that was bursting at the seams with such a large family. Most of them are gone now, but those of us who were privileged to enjoy special times in that home will never forget memories that are deeply etched in our hearts. Even now I give thanks for the kindness of the Johnson family in allowing me to share their family celebrations.

Walter and I are still celebrating with our large family. Our fifty-seven years of marriage have been a great trip. I just hope that our family will remember our family gatherings with as much pleasure as I have in remembering Carol Villa. ☺