

### **Aunt Gene Burt Johnson Remembers:**

My first trip to Carol Villa was with Katie when I was in Junior High School. I remember the BIG dining room and the BIG table. Pete sat by me and asked, "What is your name? Where do you live? What's your Daddy's name? Who is your Mother?" I had never met him and didn't know he had been to law school.

While I was dating Mac, I went to Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners at Carol Villa. After I was married and lived there, I remember big crowds for Sunday dinners. It seemed that Mama Johnson could cook a fat chicken that would feed everyone – no one left the table hungry.

Bessie and Queen were Mama Johnson's cooks. Bessie was the best cook. Queen was afraid of storms and hid in the dirty clothes box. The wood stove in the kitchen cooked great biscuits and kept us warm in the winter.

I remember ...

- \* The big rooms, 20 x 20 with a 12' foot ceiling. There were fireplaces in every room. The dining room was the only room without wide plank pine floors; they were narrow.
- \* The swing on the front porch and the rocking chairs. Papa Johnson had his own chair; it was a metal spring type chair.
- \* The pump house and the big tank for water. You could hear it turn on and off. I always conserved water because I was told it would break or the well would go dry. The tickets for the Toll Bridge were in the pump house. Who has them now? Someone borrowed them from me.
- \* The chicken yard on the side of the house and the pecans trees.
- \* Grandmother's white rose that was at the back door; we moved it to Carmichael Road, but it didn't come to Cecil.
- \* A Christmas tree with dolls in the tree. Dot had made the clothes for each doll.
- \* A Sunday Family picnic, bales of cotton were sitting in the side yard. Wylie took Melanie's and Gene Burt's pictures on the bales of cotton.
- \* The colored panes of glass around the front door. I can still hear it slam.

I asked Papa Johnson to watch Gene Burt when I had to hang out diapers. He often sat at his desk and played Solitaire with Gene in his lap or took her to walk outside when she started walking. Two memorable pictures were taken; one on a walk with Papa Johnson and Gene holding hands with their other hands behind their backs. The other picture needs explanation. One time Gene was in Papa's lap, and she had an accident so he prevented future accidents by lining his lap with lots of newspapers. I snapped this picture when they had both fallen asleep.

Mama Johnson loved hats and had pierced ears. She went to the beauty shop up over Klein's Jewelers. She always had her nails manicured. Gene Burt's hands look like hers.

When Mac and I married and I moved to Carol Villa, we moved into the upstairs back bedroom above the dining room. It had a closet, the only one in the house, and we added a bathroom. It seemed that everybody lived there too... Emily, Paul, Katherine, Seth Arthur moved from California and lived there awhile; even Mr. Veder, Emily's father-in-law, lived in Carol Villa. Phillip, Musette and Miriam lived there. Jeanne Suzanne went one summer school and lived there. William Spencer went to the first grade at Starke's Military School; Mickey O'Brien also went to Stark's. They both lived at Carol Villa while at school. The rooms were always full!

After Mama and Papa Johnson were gone, the first family reunion was held at Carol Villa. Camp stew and barbeque were on the menu. The tables were set up in the pecan trees up from the house near the scuppermong arbor.

When Mac and I lived there alone, I begged for furniture to fill up the rooms. To fill the living room, I used a second hand couch from my family; I made slipcovers for it, a dressing table that I used as a desk, the washstand from Mama and Papa Johnson's bedroom furniture. The dining room furniture stayed with the house. The rugs were Olson rugs; they were reversible. The hall tree and the roll top desk were Mac's.

We picked up pecans from all of the pecan trees and used the money for Christmas - that was our Christmas Savings Club!

I lived there 20 years. Mac lived there 46 years. We had many good times in that big house. When Mac told me he was selling the house, I cried; I didn't want to move. @