

LEE TAYLOR

**THE
MAN
BEHIND
THE
SMILE**

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The Man Behind the Smile
An Autobiography

TheManBehindTheSmile.com

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An Autobiography



Lee Taylor

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the many friends and family members who helped me discover and learn truths to live by during my lifelong journey:

To my best friend Glenda, called to heaven in 2021

To Meredith, the love of my life

To Barb, my spiritual daughter

To my family and cousins: Ethel, Verdi, and Walteen

To Connie and Joyce, and all my friends in the dance world

To Victor and all my friends of the bridge world.

THE MAN BEHIND THE SMILE

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This book reflects the memories, feelings, and opinions of the author, Lee Taylor, who takes complete and sole responsibility for the contents and apologizes for any instances where his perceptions as related here might be construed as damaging to anyone mentioned or implied, or an invasion of their privacy. The author also apologizes for any sayings or quotes that may have been borrowed inadvertently.

Second Edition. First printing

ISBN: 978-0-578-28443-9

ISBN: 978-0-578-29532-9

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022905905

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Introduction

Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. – Sir Winston Churchill

I wrote this book because it is so important to record and tell each other our personal life stories. This allows me to preserve the history of the experiences and events and describe them as one who lived through them, so that future generations can learn and benefit from what I did RIGHT and what I learned from my failures. I was inspired by an appeal in Alex Haley's *Roots* for us to learn of our family members' histories and to record our own.



I became dismayed at the funerals of so many family members; the story of who they were, what they did, and how they impacted others was omitted from their obituaries. This was first brought home to me dramatically at the funeral of my Great Aunt Irene; there was no mention of her being one of the first Black women to sing in the choir of the well-known evangelist Billy Graham or of the many other things she accomplished in her 98 years of life.

How I Came to Write This Book

I am not a great writer or storyteller, but for over 50 years, I collected and recorded chronological data of the people, places, and life events I experienced. In 2014, I took a course on life story writing. This gave me the confidence to begin writing narrative stories.

I stopped writing due to life events that you will read about later. Then, in 2017, I realized I could use my gifts as a lifelong picture taker to create a pictorial presentation of my life story on my personal website from the thousands of photos I had taken or inherited.

Finally, in March of 2021, Glenda Marshall, my best friend forever, passed from this life. Realizing that time may be short for others and myself, I returned to writing narratives hoping to complete them in 2021.

In January of 2022, I also realized that with each passing day, there is a danger that any one of the hundreds of people who came into my life may depart forever before reading how much they meant to me. For this reason, I decided it is more important to publish a partial autobiography early in the year rather than to delay it any longer. This publication of my abbreviated autobiography story contains selections from a complete account of my life which I hope to complete and publish in the future.

To the Reader

Dear reader, I hope that by reading my story, you and others can benefit from the values and truths I learned from the blessings of my life's experiences. Due to this book's brevity, I can only include a few of the hundreds of people who helped me reach this point in life, shaping who I have become. Much of my personal life's journey involves the close family members I lived and grew up with and remain connected to this day.

I have included picture group collections to represent some of the people I share great relationships with but could not name/include in this short publication. In my complete life story, I will share much more of the stories of friends and family that are only mentioned in this publication.

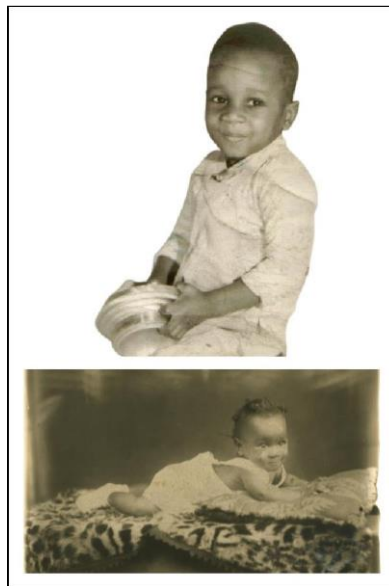
Personality and Character

Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person – Mother Teresa.

I am a Smiler



The first thing people notice about me is *my smile!* When I make eye contact — even with strangers, I have a smile on my lips. If I know someone, they get my full smile with teeth. I also have the secret smile, which I wear when confronted by adversity or when words cannot be spoken. I like to create surprises; when I have planned a special gift or event, I smile in the secret knowledge of how it will be appreciated. I am blessed with the ability to find humor in my life experiences and encounters with people.



I was a smiling happy baby — so much so that my father’s sister Bessie remarked, “there’s something wrong with that boy!” My father retorted, “we all thought there was something wrong with you, too, because you didn’t smile until after you were two years old!”

My early childhood was filled with nursery rhymes, Sunday newspaper funnies, toys, the love of my mother and extended family, and Sunday me, and I smiled back at them, whenever possible. For example, on bridge games, one of the opponents my table because I was smiling during

school church. Older adults smiled at It is my way to find something good more than one occasion at duplicate has called a directing official over to the game (the cards I held were so terrible). They wanted to know if I were breaking some rule – more often than not, the official would respond to the objection with, “That’s just Lee.”

I am an Aquarian



I was born under the astrological Sun Sign of Aquarius (born January 19-February 19). I strongly identify with being an Aquarian. My mother was also one. Once, while I was visiting her, I saw a brief pamphlet on her coffee table about this sun sign. I began to read and was immediately interested in learning much more because many of my character and personality traits were a match their descriptions: I was independent, original, sometimes called a “head-case,” curious about life, had difficulty articulating ideas and thoughts, and sometimes dressed in weird attire. Most importantly, everyone is my friend, and I get along with everyone.

I am Phlegmatic.

What you may recognize: I am easygoing and relaxed, patient, well-balanced, pleasant, enjoyable, inoffensive, and a good listener. But I also keep emotions hidden and can be aloof. I was brought up to be respectful of my elders. My father was an in-your-face “intimidator,” while my mother was an “Interrogator,” criticizing and questioning everything). With two such parents, I developed a defensive mechanism in my childhood of aloofness; I used vagueness and passivity to protect and preserve my privacy.

It is said in child psychology that the personality and character of a child are set in the first 2-6 years of their childhood. That seems to be true about me. Many more of my character traits are discussed and expanded on how I developed from this basic personality framework.

I am a Rationalist

Doubtful, Skeptical, and Thinker.

What you may recognize: I am open-minded and willing to listen and learn. I seek alternative solutions to problems and difficulties. Born a doubting Thomas, I instinctively question what I am told and cast a skeptical eye on everyone and everything in my sphere.

Behind the Smile: I seek to learn and understand from the experiences of others, but I am not willing to take these as the whole truth. Often, I will wait to voice my thinking on the correctness of a subject so that I have time to reflect. Usually, I don’t speak my beliefs for fear of conflict or misunderstanding. I am willing to share but not impose; I recognize that my personal “truths” may not be the whole truth.



The Star Trek character Mr. Spock is one of my avatars; he symbolizes for me the internal struggle to do what is “right and rational.”

I find [human] illogic and foolish emotions a constant irritant.

I often suppress my emotions when faced with conflicts, much as I internalize emotional hurts instead of expressing them.

My happy childhood ended sometime in 1954 when I was nine. Mother, the center of my childhood universe, asked me to make a prayer to God. She wanted me to ask for forgiveness for something that I knew in my mind and heart I didn’t do. At that moment, my childhood ended. I made the rational decision to comply with the demand to pray but silently changed the prayer: instead of a lie to God, I prayed for what was true. God answered my prayer. Thus, began the first step on my path to character.

My Character Description

The focus of this chapter is how I developed from my natural-born personality gifts as a smiler, aquarian, extrovert, and rationalist. Here I explore the aspects of my identity that were developed and shaped by experiences into my values and beliefs.

Who I Am

My outward personality and character, as seen by others.

I am a WATCHER: “I’ve watched, and still ponder what I’ve learned.”

I am ALOOF: Sometimes, I must act distant and hide what I think.

I am a CONTRARIAN: I look for the opposite side of the opinion.

I am a THINKER: I have a “figure it out” brain.

I am PUNCTUAL: I strive not to be *late* by being *early*.

I am a LONER: Comfortable in being by myself (Me, Myself, and I)

I am a SKEPTIC: Truth and *opinions* are not the same. “Check your Premises” (Atlas Shrugged)

I am BALANCED: At times, flexible and focused.

I am a NON-LOSER: I may not *win*, but I will *not* lose.

I am a TOOL MAN: Power Tools (Thank you, Jim Powell)

I am an EARLY RISER: I awake at odd early morning hours.

I am a SMILER: “Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person.”

I am a TRAVELER: Searching for new roads to happiness

I am a GIFT-GIVER: I use gag gifts to provide extra joy with the main gift

I am HONEST: Truthful with myself and honest with others when the truth is not always possible.

I am a PICTURE TAKER: Life is a Picture! Pictures show that we lived!

I am a CONNECTOR: Between People and Groups.

I am a GODFATHER: Entrusted to protect and guide.

I am a ROMANTIC: Not afraid to give love without need or conditions.

I am a CONTRARIAN: I look to learn and understand the opposite side of conventional opinion.

I am a LISTENER: I strive to hear beyond the spoken words.

I am an INSTRUCTOR: I share my knowledge with others who have a passion for learning.

MY PASSIONS

I am a DANCER: “When you dance to your own rhythm, life taps its toes to your beat.”

I am a CARDPLAYER: “Life is a card game, with aces and jokers.”

I am a BRIDGE PLAYER: “The Ultimate Social Game for Thinkers”

Behind the Smile

I am SPIRITUAL

I have my own personal connection to the God-Spirit.

[My] God is an Awesome God – Rich Mullins

I trace my personal connection to the God Spirit back to a time in my childhood; this was the only time, after that, that I prayed directly to God for a specific outcome - the prayer was answered, and from that day forward, I have felt a spiritual connection, with no need to pray like that again.

I am a Military VETERAN



On November 25th, 1966, I began a twenty-year Military Career in the United States Air Force. I was twenty-one, having reached the “legal adult age” for drinking by entering Basic Training: where I embarked on the same “*Rite of Passage*” into *Manhood* as done by my father, uncles, and other men of past generations in our country’s history.

This graduating experience fixed early the character values of adulthood that I would build upon for the rest of my life.

*...I am a Warrior.
I have answered my Nation’s call.
I am an American Airman.
I am faithful to a Proud Heritage,
A Tradition of Honor,
And a Legacy of Valor.
– Air Force: Airman’s Creed*

To my brother and sisters who served and wore the uniform, be proud, for you have earned the right to be called a US Veteran!

From this day to the ending of the world, But we in it shall be remembered. We few, we happy few, we band of brothers... – Henry V, William Shakespeare

Share your service stories of both the good and bad times.

I am a CONNECTOR

I am comfortable with people I know and even strangers regarding our similarities and differences. I enjoy connecting groups, family members, and friends with each other. My aunt-godmother Marie helped me to develop my abilities in this area. I enjoy being approachable and understanding of others.

I am a GIFT-GIVER

I use gag gifts to provide extra joy with the main gift. I have learned to show love and appreciation for those special to me with a small and thoughtful gift. Bringing a smile to their face is more precious to me than the monetary cost. For those who are close, the gifts are based upon something unique to the recipient;(e.g., the color green, the number 14, a cat and dog, etc.). When celebrating an event, I precede the presentation of the gift with a gag gift.

I am a PICTURE TAKER

"Life is a Picture," "...Pictures show that we live! "

From childhood, I have taken pictures of family and friends. I am blessed to do so because it gives me a recording of the events and experiences we shared. In a photograph, their faces tell stories and help others remember who they were beyond the passing of time.

I am a NON-LOSER

When you lose -Don't lose the lesson

Behind the Smile: As a non-loser, I recognize that when setbacks occur, I will find the positive aspect, learn from the experience and develop a strategy not to lose if something similar happens again.

My Personal Avatars

Behind my smile, I sometimes think of myself as the characters Mr. Spock and Gandalf.



Mr. Spock:

"Evil does seem to maintain power by suppressing the truth " and "Live long and prosper."



Gandalf: The wizard from the science fiction trilogy Lord of the Rings seeks to combat evil by being a connector between dwarfs, elves, men, and others of Middle Earth.

"I believe that evil exists and that I am a force for good"

Ever since joining the Boy Scouts, I felt it my duty to do good deeds as a service to others.

They Call Me Mr. Lee

One, two, three, hey, look at Mr. Lee – The Bobettes

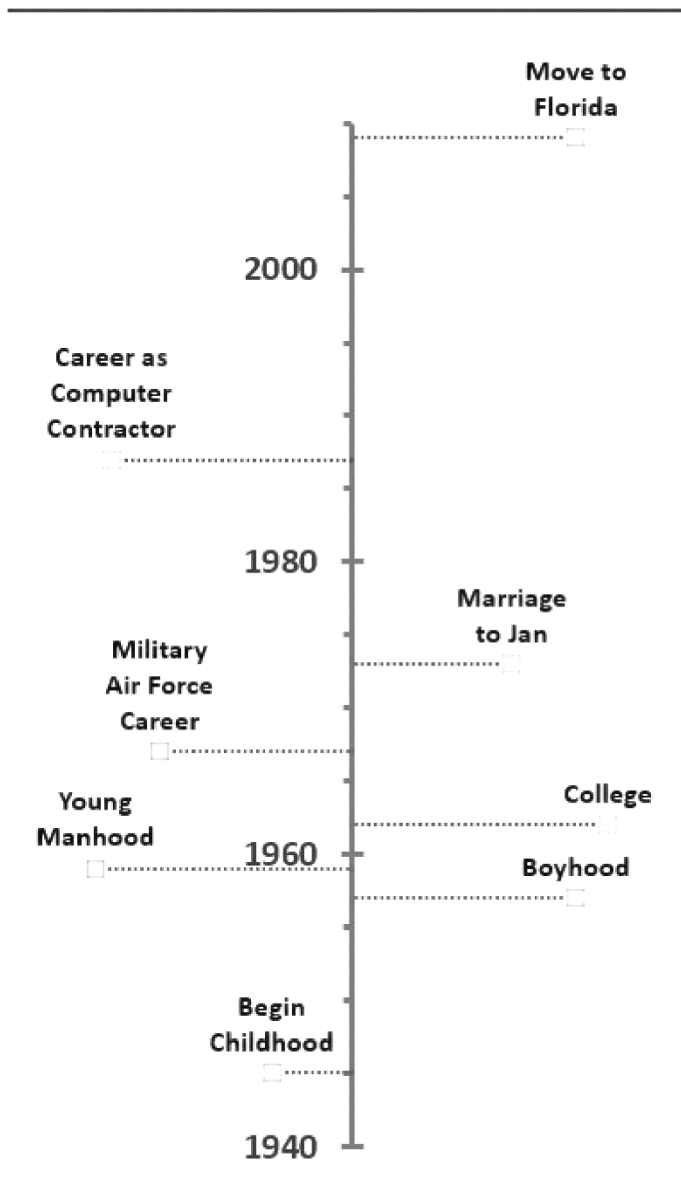


I am Mr. Lee. My Aunt Bessie was the first to start calling me “Mr. Lee” from the 1957 song by the Bobettes. Both casual and long-term friends have used it as a greeting or salutation for me. But Glenda, my lifelong best friend, often greeted me as Mr. Taylor. Behind the Smile:

*I am who I'm meant to be, this is me
And I'm marching on to the beat I drum
I'm not scared to be seen
I make no apologies, this is me
This is who I'm meant to be, this is me
This is me - Benj Pasek and Justin Pau*



Timeline



Life Story and Chronology

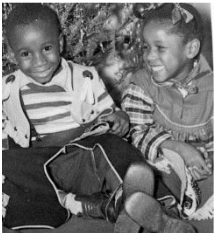
Childhood

1945-1957

My mother (Berthenia Turner) was the youngest of three sisters born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. She relocated to New York City during WWII. My father, Floyd Lee Taylor, was the second oldest of ten children (seven boys and three girls) was born and raised in Aberdeen, North Carolina.



My father and mother met and married in New York. I was born on February 18, 1945. I was named after my father but given the second middle name of Bertram by my mother to make sure I wouldn't be a "junior" (another story!). Everyone called my father, "Floyd" and me "Lee."



My parents lived together until shortly after my sister Sandra's birth when mother filed for legal separation. It was 1948, so I would have been three years old (picture). I have no memory of my father during my early years. Mother found a job as a records clerk at Harlem Hospital. For the next five years, our family was just my mother, sister, and me.

Childhood was a happy time: the love of my mother, family, school, community, and church shielded me from awareness of poverty and the racial prejudices of that era.



As a young boy, I got anything I wanted if I behaved well and was willing to wait for it. My mother provided safety and security. We had a television, refrigerator, telephone, and two

cats named Sylvester and Sylvia. I would play outside with the girls – I was the only boy in my neighborhood apartment building. I had the freedom to explore all of Morningside Park. I had a Schwinn three-speed bicycle, which I rode as fast as I could pedal along the entire half-mile length of the park.

I had roller skates, a scooter, and a winter sled. Howdy Doody, Hopalong Cassidy, and Davy Crockett were on the television. Mother gave me an allowance to go to the local movie theatre on Saturday mornings to watch classics like *Abbott and Costello*, *Meet the Wolfman*, and *The Creature from Black Lagoon*. I remember laughing with my mother as we listened to *Amos 'n' Andy* on the radio and later on television.

I spent hours staring out of our living room window year after year at the four-story sycamore trees that ran along the park's curbside boundary. When it rained, I never tired of watching the water cascading down the paved stairways and walkways of the park and out onto the street. Chores for my sister and me included errands to the supermarket and doing dishes after our meals.

I got a chance to be with all my cousins at Thanksgiving when all the New York Taylor brothers and sisters brought their families to my Aunt Marie's house to have dinner. Since there was only one stove and oven, we

ate late afternoon or early evening. My mother cooked a different turkey dinner for the three of us but sent my sister and me to celebrate Thanksgiving with my father's family.

I lived in Harlem, the Black section of Manhattan. I lived at 6 Morningside Avenue, near 114th Street, across the street from Morningside Park (–North-South: 110th street to 123rd street East-West: Morningside Avenue to Morningside Heights). During my childhood years, Harlem was over 90% black.

I was blessed to grow up with two extended families: The Taylors –my father's mother, brothers and sisters, and children) and the Turners—my mother's mother, two sisters, and their children).

Between 1940 and the early 1950s, eight of the ten Taylor siblings and Grandmother Taylor relocated from Aberdeen, North Carolina, to New York City. I was the second oldest of eleven cousins. My three aunts and grandmother lived within two blocks of us.

Despite my mother's bad feelings for my father, she ensured my sister, and I bonded with our paternal aunts, grandmother, and cousins. I was permitted to visit Aunt Marie by myself; I'd pick up bottles for cash deposit return and run grocery store errands for her.

Mother interacted with only a few other adults: Mrs. Nesbit, the President of my elementary school PTA and active in our church, who lived three blocks away, and Mrs. White, my Sunday School teacher. Mother's best girlfriends were Beulah in Washington DC and Bud, who lived far away in Brooklyn.

Mother taught us to read, spell, and count. She read *Mother Goose*, "Little Red Riding Hood," nursery rhymes, and "Simple-says" stories' by Langston Hughes to us, as well as all the comic strips from the Sunday newspaper; "Dick Tracey" was my favorite.



Elementary School: PS 125 was located on the West boundary of Harlem and, at that time, was the only racially mixed School. I was allowed to skip kindergarten. I was placed in the honors class at every grade level in elementary school. My schoolmates were of different races, ethnicities, and religions. A Chinese boy, Gordon Poy, was my best friend. My sister Sandra and I walked to school. It was about half a mile. I attended church nursery

school two blocks from PS 125 during the third and fourth grades until my mother got off from work.

My first baptism was in an African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E) Church. Later in childhood, after my sister and I were turned off by the religious zeal and the "sanctified" expression of members in the congregation, Mother joined the Presbyterian Church of the Master.

We journeyed to Birmingham, Alabama, twice in my childhood; Mother took us by train on "The Silver Comet." Each two-day trip, she packed sandwiches, cookies, and fruit for us to eat because we ran out of food

on the first train ride. We visited Grandmother Turner, cousin Verdi, Aunt Irmatine, Uncle Joe, and their children John and Cynthia on the first trip. We met Aunt Elma and our teenage cousins Portia and Ethylene on the second visit to Alabama.

The End of My Happy Childhood

In 1954, Mother, the center of my universe, started to change when I was nine. She became increasingly “negative” in her outlook and behavior. Before this time, her emotions had always been controlled, and she rarely had outbursts of any kind. But now, she became increasingly withdrawn and showed little interest in what we were doing. I didn’t know what was wrong, but home was no longer a happy place to be. I sought refuge by staying outside to play as often as I could. Because I had the freedom to be out, I would sometimes visit my Aunt Bessie and younger cousins, staying over for supper a couple of times before being called to return home. One day, Mother accused me of abandoning her and my sister. She demanded that I pray to God, asking for forgiveness. Mother had raised my sister and me always to tell the truth and that there would be consequences if we did not. We were taught to pray to God from our earliest years every night. But at that moment, my childhood ended. I decided NOT to lie to God; instead, I silently prayed he would make my mother well. God answered my prayer. Some days afterward, with the consent from my mother’s sister Irmatine, my Aunt Marie was able to have Mother committed to a medical facility to treat mental illnesses. This was the first of many psychotic breakdowns from paranoid schizophrenia mother would suffer throughout her life.

Living with the Whitfield family

1954-1957



In 1954, after my mother was hospitalized and treated for her illness, my sister and I went to live with my Aunt Bessie and Uncle Walter Whitfield and their four children: Walteen (age 5), Jimmy (age 3), Lois (age 1), and baby Debra at 315 W. 113 Street.

Over the next three years, I shared a bunk bed off the main bedroom with Cousin Jimmy, while my sister Sandra shared a bed in the back room with Walteen and Lois. We all formed a lifelong bond during these family years; Aunt Bessie became a surrogate mother figure, and the four cousins became our brothers and sisters. I remember Sunday dinners, Saturday night hot dogs, pork

& beans, White Castle hamburgers, and food shopping. I also remember soap operas, playing, taking clothes to the Laundromat, and Aunt Bessie spraying for roaches! During that time, my godmother Aunt Marie made it possible for my sister Sandra and me to visit Mother twice a month; she was hospitalized at Central Islip.

Boyhood

1957 – 1958

In July 1957, Mother was pronounced well enough to be released from Central Islip. Regrettably, Aunt and Uncle Whitfield could not support the three of us and their own family, so Mother sought support from the New York City welfare services. We were homeless for a couple of days and had to stay in shelters until arrangements could be made.

We lived in hotels before Mother could find a rented room arrangement at 140 Street. We stayed there for over a year until late 1958, when we were placed in the Endicott Hotel. It was branded one of the worst welfare hotels in the city and located at West 81st and Columbus Avenue.

For three years, I attended Wadleigh Jr High School in Harlem. It had a 99% Black enrollment. Under the tutelage of Ms. Clara Bell-Mathews, my 7th and 8th-grade math teacher, I discovered I had a knack for Algebra. This became a foundational skill for my pursuit of math and science throughout the years to come. When I graduated from junior high school, I was surprised that my three aunts and grandmother regarded it as an important milestone event.

Boy Scouts

My mother realized that her son, growing up without a father, needed to learn what it would mean to be a man someday. In 1958 she enrolled me in a Boy Scout troop. I learned what it meant to be a man from the Boy Scouts. My years in scouting were the happiest of my adolescence. I learned to tie knots, make campfires, identify different trees, camp outdoors, and march in formation. I went on weekend overnight hikes and went away twice for two weeks to summer camp. I learned to take pride in my merit badge achievements. At the closing of our meeting each week, we would recite the words of the Boy Scout Oath and Scout Law. I studied and pondered their meaning – especially the word “Honor.”

Young Manhood

1959 – 1966

In early 1959, my mother succumbed to a second psychotic break that required hospitalization. My sister and I went to live with Aunt Estelle and Grandmother Taylor. I lived with them throughout high school and four years of college before joining the Air Force at age 21.

I took the long subway ride to lower Manhattan for high school, returning for dinner and schoolwork afterward. I got my first afterschool job as a supermarket bag boy. During this time, the Church of the Master became very important to me.



Reverend Dr. Eugene Callender, minister of Church of the Master. From age fifteen to seventeen, I was active in my Church youth group, where I was blessed to be mentored by Dr. Callender. After a full Sunday at church, he and I would sometimes go bowling together. Reverend Callender was there to support me every time I had to hospitalize my mother for her recurring episodes of mental illness.

Reverend Callender helped me in the most challenging decision of my teenage years: To make my first moral choice: this would become the cornerstone of other difficult decisions I would be compelled to make later in life.

I became president of the church youth fellowship. My sister Sandra and her best friend Margarett attracted boyfriends Charles and Spurgeon, motivating them to join the group. Three Smith sisters (Sandra, Roselyn, and Linda) also joined the group. This led to a boyfriend rivalry. As fellowship president, I had to mediate between the two girl cliques.

My sister was rebellious against authority; my Aunt Estelle later confided in me that if she had had the same type of trouble with me, she would have had to stop supporting us. As big brother, I became the chaperone for Sandra after we returned from any Sunday church activities.

College Years

1962-1966

I entered Bronx Community College in the fall of 1962. I would graduate with an A. A degree, and then transferred to the City College of New York before flunking out in May 1966.

I enjoyed an active social life during those years. It was the early 1960s, and my Baby Boom generation was coming of age. Many of us were the first in our families to make it to college. It was a time of discovery, civil rights, Malcolm X, radicals, liberals, independence, and learning about life.

March on Washington



On August 28, 1963, I joined with 250,000 others in the first “March on Washington.” I vividly remember riding in a cramped school bus, singing civil rights freedom songs like “Blowing in the Wind” and “We Shall Overcome. I remember arriving in Washington DC and making the long walk to the stairs beneath the Lincoln Memorial. as I gazed out at the thousands of others—Black and White—who had made the same journey, I listened with pride and appreciation to the notable speakers. I heard Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King make his unforgettable “I Have a Dream” speech and would forever afterward incorporate his words into my being:

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. – Martin Luther King

In the summer of 1962, I got a summer/afterschool stock-boy job working for Arthur Grand “Artie,” the owner of the Lillian Shop, a small retail store in Harlem located on 125th Street, the central shopping district in Harlem. I was seventeen, had just graduated from high school, and would be starting college that September. There were five salesgirls and a manager, Bernie. Both Bernie and Artie were Jewish. From nearly the first day, Artie became my mentor and father figure. Until I turned twenty-one, we discussed my thoughts and feelings about life, dating, and race relations for the next four years. Artie trusted me with his car for weekend dates. It was a time of growth and discovery. On Weekdays, I attended classes and then went to my part-time job at the Lillian Shop afterward, working until closing. Then I went home to have dinner with Grandmother or Aunt Bessie, spending a couple of hours on homework or preparation for a test.

The Content of My Character

One day in 1964, I was approached by one of the salesgirls to join with her and others in stealing cash by not making out a sales slip and depositing the money into the cash register. They had been doing this for some time before I was entrusted to operate the cash register. However, they couldn’t continue unless I was “brought in.” The salesgirls appealed to my sense of racial solidarity: we were “Black,” and doing this to a “Jewish” boss. They told me I needed and deserved the extra cash I could get just by joining in.

I didn’t sleep well that night. I knew that what I was being asked to do was wrong. Before I went to work again, I called my minister, Reverend Callender, and told him I had something important to talk with him about. We met that same night. It didn’t take long. He just listened as I told him about the scheme. He asked what I thought I should do. I replied that I had to quit because I couldn’t stay and be part of the conspiracy. He asked whether I thought that would be enough. I conceded that no, it wasn’t enough, that the person, who had befriended me from the start, loaning me his car on weekends, was owed an explanation.

The next day, after work, I told Artie what had happened and why I could no longer work at the store. I didn’t give names, but he knew—business owners are not stupid! I will never forget his face or the words he spoke to me. He expressed his empathy. He declared his outrage at this egregious attempt to corrupt a young man by drawing him into an evil conspiracy.

Artie didn't let me quit. He called all of them into a meeting where he fired the ringleader and told the others that they were all on probation. For the first two or three weeks afterward, I got the "traitor" and "Black Judas" treatment. Still, eventually, they had to acknowledge their guilt and respect me for making a moral choice.

Everyone has [their] own particular road which leads [them] to liberation – on the road of virtue, another the road of evil.

– The Saviors of God, by Nikos Kazantzakis

A "defining experience" happens when life places an obstacle before you that brings forth the courage to stand up for your beliefs. How did I know it was wrong for me to join the group? Where did I find the courage to "do the right thing" and choose the right path rather than go down the wrong road.?

On my HONOR, I will do my best to do my DUTY

– The Boy Scout Oath.

I found within me a sense of duty, honor, and justice instilled and nurtured from my days as a Boy Scout; I also found the courage to act upon it. I realized that the hours I spent memorizing, reciting, and pondering the meaning of those words had allowed me to internalize them into my belief system. This life event became my *rite of passage* into adult manhood.

There would be other roads I would encounter later in my life where I would have to choose. But all of them were made easier because of this event that set the direction of my life's *moral compass*.

I had on and off dating relationships with three young Black women: Lena, Glenda, and Alma.

On Saturdays, I would be at the store opening and leave before closing when I had a date. Then I'd board a subway, pick up my date, and go out to a movie or play in downtown Manhattan. The date would end after midnight in the Bronx. Then I had to take a long train and bus ride back home to Manhattan.

There were Sundays Mornings services at the Church of the Master, then home for Sunday Dinner – most often with Aunt Bessie. Then it was back to church for the Young Adults Group meeting. Afterward, home for academic study. This continued until May of 1966, when I flunked out of City College, at which point I had to decide whether to enlist into the military or be drafted.

Military Air Force Soldier

1966-1986



I enlisted into the US Air force on November 25, 1966, and remained for a tremendous 20-year career, concluding with military retirement on December 1, 1986

After basic training, I entered technical school for training in supply logistics as an inventory management specialist. Each airplane or pilot requires thousands of parts and components to be maintained, fixed, repaired, or replaced. Hundreds of people directly service the planes, and hundreds more provide indirect support. In the late 1960s, the Air Force supply system had been automated to operate on a Sperry Univac Mainframe computer system. Through excellent instruction and well-documented procedures, I gained a superior understanding of how the supply system worked with the computer, graduating

as an Honor Student.



For my first duty assignment, I was assigned to the pilot training base in Big Springs, Texas, from 1967-1969. There I excelled in office work and later in customer maintenance service. I was promoted to pay grade E-4 a year earlier than my contemporaries. I lived in a two-person room in the barracks, where we had weekly cleanliness inspections of the rooms and common areas. The most unpopular assignment was cleaning the latrine, our shared bathroom. After a couple of inspection failures, I volunteered to take charge to make sure it was done right. Thus, I was christened the “Latrine Queen.”(Smile!)

Yokota Air Force Japan (1969-1970)

At Yokota, I was a “fast burner,” receiving a promotion to Staff Sergeant (pay grade E-5) years before others with much more time of service. I enjoyed an active social life of bowling leagues and pinocle playing at service clubs. I made numerous friendships with my supervisors and coworkers. Everything was great until my last six months. The Squadron First Sergeant decided to make me the Barracks Chief, responsible for supervising the cleanliness of all the dormitory common areas shared by 40 others. Once again, I was the Latrine Queen! (Smile-I survived!)

Strategic Air Command, Offutt AFB, Bellevue NE

1971-1976

In 1971 I applied for career-change training into the field of computer operations. I received a direct assignment to a weather organization. My internship required learning to use and operate punch-card machines, magnetic tape, and paper tape. It also required that I operate a mainframe computer, special purpose machines, and printers. I progressed rapidly in my training and received a \$3,000 reenlistment bonus –a lot of money in 1971! During this assignment, I would meet and marry my wife, Jan Rengel.

7011 Computer Services Flight, Western Germany

1976-1979

I am stationed with my wife for this 3-year assignment. I got promoted to Technical Sergeant (paygrade E-6). It was during this period that I learned two of my Life Lessons:

Don't Take it Personally when there are disagreements with others at work over policy and procedures to affect your health and happiness-leave it there.

Pay Attention to those who do not clamor for attention – be mindful that you need to let them know you are ready to help them also.

The whole story of both these Life Lessons is told in my complete Autobiography book (future).

Headquarters Strategic Command, Bellevue, Nebraska

1979-1983

I became NCOIC (Non-commission Officer-in-charge) of a 24- hour computer operation servicing over 200 users. I receive a promotion to Master Sergeant (paygrade E-7)

Air Force Systems Command, Andrews AFB, MD

1983-1986

In 1983, Jan and I received assignments, hers to the Pentagon. In this last assignment, I am introduced to the ARPANET (The forerunner of what became the Internet and part of my first civilian job assignment).

In early 1986, I realized that I had reached the year that I could retire! I put in my papers and retired officially on December 1st, 1986.

One door closes, another door opens – Alexander Graham Bell

I successfully interviewed and accepted a job offer to start what became a 20-year career as a contractor in computer services.

Marriage



In late 1971, I first saw my future wife, Jan, in a bowling alley. I was soon captivated by her attitude of independence as a young military woman and her interest in bowling and pinochle.



After a torrid romance, breakup, and finally deciding "you look very good to me," we married on November 3, 1973. I was twenty-eight, and she was twenty-six. Jan and I shared common interests in thoroughbred racehorse breeding, reading science fiction, and several other hobbies.

We were stationed together in Omaha, Nebraska (except for a 1-year separation when she was stationed in Iceland). She was my *bride*, and I was her *husband*. We enjoyed friendships with other married couples, bowling leagues, and playing pinochle at the base service club.

In 1976, Jan and I received a joint military assignment to Germany. We would return to Omaha there years later. This was one of the happiest periods in our marriage. We lived off-base among the German people. There were birthday celebrations with our neighbors in Hermeskeil, weekend trips filled with volksmarches, and "wine probing." We journeyed together to the Western European countries of Norway, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and France. Our most memorable adventure was on a weekend trip to Paris for the European horserace championship. We were invited to join a group of people from England who had brought their bookmaker instead of using the parimutuel betting of the French racetrack.

We developed a taste and appreciation for German white wine and beer. I went on a 10-day vacation to Spain and acquired a liking for Sangria. (Smile!)

We returned to Offutt AFB from Germany, stopping in New York City. My college friend Eamon Toscano introduced us to Stock Market investing and trading.

I purchased my first personal computer, a TRS-80, which became the foundation and keystone of my technical preparation for a civilian computing career.

When we went together to the Aqueduct racetrack in New York City, I remember Jan's loud cheering as the *bionic* filly "My Juliet" beat the 3-year-old male champion "Bold Forbes." I learned to give all my gifts to Jan at Christmas. I will forever think of Jan when I see forest green gifts! I thank her for giving me home projects to learn, making me a "power tools man."



In 1980, Jan and I realized “the American dream” by purchasing our first house in Bellevue, NE. Thanks to our neighbors, Hank and Gloria, I learned my first lessons of lawn care and shoveling snow during Nebraska winters. (Smile!)

In 1983, we relocated to job assignments in the Washington DC area; our friends, Jim, and Serena Powell, also relocated from Nebraska. We lived in on-base housing at Bolling AFB. I became a landlord, renting out our Bellevue home until our return in 1995. In 1991, Barb Lile, one of our renters, came into my life and later became a lifelong friend.



Time and circumstances prevented Jan and me from having children. In 1984, we got our first dog, Frodo, who died three years later, but led Jan to search for another dog, meeting miniature schnauzer breeder Carol Weinberger. Thus began a lifelong friendship and led to Jan developing a passionate interest in the world of Dog Showing. Since 1987, raising Jan became a recognized breeder and handler of miniature schnauzers dog show champions. These little “guys and girls” became our “children.” I supported her passion by becoming a Show Ring Steward for ten years at Dog Shows in Maryland and Virginia. We were both happy in our careers and hobbies.



In 1995, we moved back into our house in Bellevue upon Jan's military retirement. This was another happy period. I learned and experienced the enjoyment of Lawn Care, snow removal, landscaping, and hanging outdoor Christmas and Halloween decorations. I became a “Tool Guy,” a weekly shopper at the local Home Improvement store, purchasing power tools for indoor and outdoor projects. I became friends with neighbors Chuck and Janet Crosslin and Betty McGee. We enjoyed being uncle Lee and Aunt Jan to my nephew Kwam during the summer months of 1999 and 2000.



Jan and I remodeled our house to accommodate her growing family of dogs, converting a portion of our cellar for kenneling. During her periodic out-of-state trips to dog shows, the retired older show dogs became our children for me to care for. We came to an accommodation that allowed me the freedom to go on job-related travel and quarterly family visits to care for my mother in NYC.



At the end of 2006, I make the difficult decision to end 33 years of marriage.

Career as a Computer Contractor

1987- 2005



I ended my 20-year Air Force career on December 1, 1986.

I approached my second career with confidence and determination – My attitude was, ‘ I am going to work and be successful somewhere!. My wife Jan was instrumental in getting me a job interview with a company based in Bellevue, of all places! I was employed by three companies, with job assignments in Albuquerque, Hawaii, Washington Dc, New Jersey, and Omaha-Bellevue. To advance in my career, I took college night classes and received a second bachelor’s degree in Computer Science in

1994.



In 1999, I began a 5-year contract assignment as a Solutions Engineer. This was the pinnacle of my work life. I used the best of my abilities to understand and relate to people (both ordinary people and technical “geeks”) and developed problem-solving solutions using computers for customers. I concluded my professional work career with retirement in October 2005.

Times and Places

My Age	Life Stage	Location	Places	Year Period
0-11	Childhood	NYC	6 Morningside Ave 315 W. 113 St.	1945 - 1956
13-14	Junior Teen		142 W. 140St Endicott Hotel	1957-1958
14-17	Late Teen		315 W. 113 St.	
18-21	Early Adulthood			
22 - 23	ADULTHOOD	Texas	Amarillo	1967 - 1969
			Big Springs	
24- 25		Japan	Yokota	1970
26 - 31		Omaha, NE	Offutt AFB	1971 - 1976
32-34		Germany	Hermeskeil	1977 - 1979
35 - 38		Bellevue, NE	9606 S. 24St	1980 - 1983
39 - 41		Maryland	Andrews AFB	1984 - 1986
42		MIDDLE AGE	New Mexico Hawaii	Albuquerque Honolulu
43 - 49	Washington DC		Bolling AFB	1988 - 1994
50 - 60	Bellevue, NE		9606 S. 24St	1995 - 2005
61	Senior Years	Bellevue, NE	9606 S. 24St	2006
62		Ralston, NE	Renting	2007
63 - 64		Papillion, NE	Renting	2008 - 2009
65 -66		St Petersburg, FL	Renting	2010 -2011
67 - 73		Pinellas Park, FL	Renting	2012 - 2017
73 - 77		Largo, FL	Bay Palms Condo	2018 - 2022

Washington DC

During the twelve years (1983-1995), I lived and worked in the Washington DC area, making several trips each year back in forth to New York City. This was a happy period of reconnecting with my New York family and friends. I alternated my visits, staying with my mother and sister Sandra and other times with my Aunt Bessie. Each trip is spent with dinners and card parties with my three aunts. Glenda Marshall from my college years reenters my life.

Bellevue Nebraska

2007-2008

I retired at age 60 in 2005 and divorced the following year. Even though I had a tremendous nightlife of dancing, I soon became bored with all my free time during the day while my younger friends and companions continued to work. Skipping ahead, at the end of 2008, nothing was holding me in Omaha, Nebraska. I was

looking for a chance – to meet people – and do things. This caused me to consider exploring the possibility of moving to another state (Florida, Arizona, or Texas)

Florida

2009-Present Day

Three terrific dance friends, Juanita, Doug, and Yvonne moved to Pinellas Park, FL, in 2007. In short, I asked to visit them in January 2009; immediately upon leaving the airport; they started a campaign to convince me to relocate to Florida -not even letting me unpack before taking me to a dance! It worked! (Smile!) I returned in May, found a place that I could rent for three months, and returned in September to see if I wanted to move “lock-stock-and barrel.” YEP! It was a done deal by October, although I extended the temporary arrangement into March (who wants to leave Florida to travel back to the cold Midwest during the winter?)

In the years since moving to Florida, I have been blessed to pursue personal goals, enjoyment of sharing in the joy of birthdays, retirements, weddings, graduations, boat cruises, family gatherings, traveling, honoring the passing of friends and family members, pursuing my passions of social dance and duplicate bridge. I purchased a Condo in the city of Largo in 2017 and once again enjoyed the friendship of my neighbors. I return to Nebraska each year to reconnect with my many friends in Bellevue and Omaha.

Mashpee, Massachusetts

2015-Present Day

I found the love of my life, Meredith Hinds Harris, in the fall of 2014 (see Chapter, My Search for Love). Since January 2015, I have journeyed back and forth by airplane and automobile to spend the summer months with Meredith at her home in Mashpee.

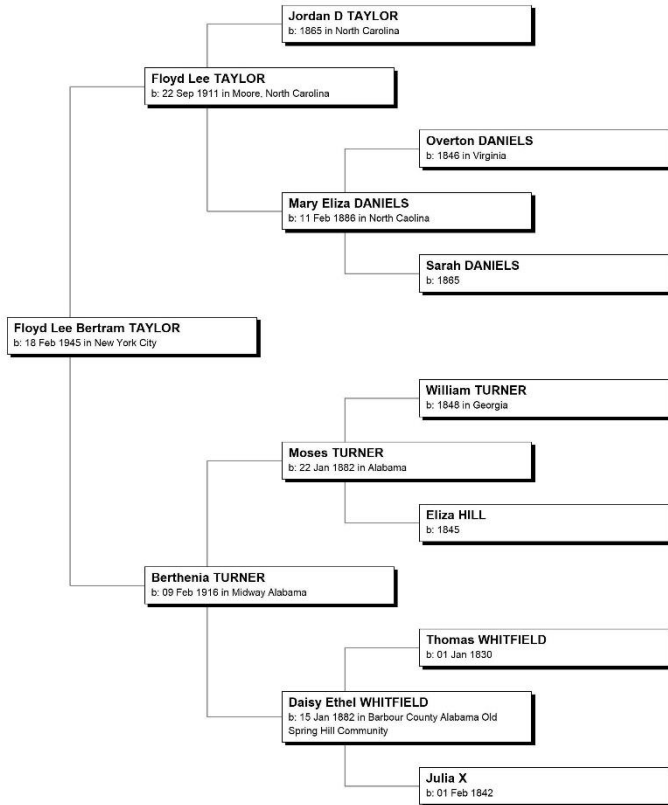


Family Taking Care of One Another

In this abbreviated publication of my life story, I include only a partial mention of all of the family members I've known in my life. What follows is an account of what I directly witnessed and experienced with those named during difficult times. Through their example, my family taught me how to express love through acts of service and taking care of one another.

Family Background

I come from great people. My family came from North Carolina and Alabama. They were the Black survivors of slavery, reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Great Depression, and WWII who gave life to us, their descendants. I was blessed to grow up with two extended families: the "Turners" (Grandmother Daisy, two aunts) and the "Taylors" (Grandmother Mary, eight uncles and aunts).



Family Turner



Descendants of Grandmother Daisy Ethel Whitfield

*Major Family Members in my story are *italicized*

Thomas Whitfield b. 1830 Jan 1 and +*Julia X* b. 1842 Feb 1

|----Lionia Whitfield b. 1859 Jun 24, |----Lula Whitfield b. 1860 Dec 25, -Della Whitfield b. 1862 -Thomas Whitfield b. 1864 --Carrie Whitfield b. 1866 *Mittie Cora* Whitfield b. 1870, Alabama, -Rosetta Whitfield b. 1872 |--*Ida* Whitfield b. 1874 Joseph Albert Whitfield b. 1876, |----Stephan Whitfield b. 1879

Daisy Ethel Whitfield b. 1882 Jan 15, Barbour County, Alabama Old Spring Hill

+Moses Turner b. 1882 Jan 22, Alabama

--*Elma Dartmoor Turner* b. 1912 Jul 31, Midway, Alabama

| +Eugene Agusta Nix b. 1908 Nov 26, Oaky Streak, Butler, Alabama, d. 1982

| |--*Verdi* Lauretine Nix b. 1934 Oct 10, Birmingham, Alabama

|| |--*Michael* Wellington Nix b. 1957 Apr 18, Birmingham, Alabama

|| | +Margie Louise Hall b. 1954 Apr 24, Wilcox, Alabama

| | |--Rita Denise Nix b. 1959 Jul 27, Clayton, Alabama
 | | |--Roderick Darryl Nix Sr b. 1966 Sep 16, Birmingham, Alabama
 | |--Lorenzo Eugene Nix b. 1936 Jan 28, Birmingham, Alabama
 | +Jonnie Mae McCall b. 1938 Oct 13, Clayton, Alabama, d. 1997 Jan 27
 | |--Veronica Jean Nix b. 1957 Aug 23, Bolling AFB, Washington DC
 | +Kennedy Funny b. 1960 Dec 11
 | +Anthony Barnette
 | |--Marjonna Tenaye Barnette
 | |--Zachery Lorenzo Barnette
 | +Dan Oscar Williams b. 1911, Geneva County, Alabama, d. 1950
 | |--Ethelyne Williams b. 1941 Jun 13, Barbour, Alabama
 | +Calvin Grimsley b. 1946 May 18, Colquitt, Georgia
 | |--Karen Kennese Grimsley b. 1970 Jan 9, Newark, New Jersey
 | +Bernard Reid b. 1963 Dec 11, New York City
 | |--Kelvin Lamont Grimsley b. 1967 Aug 28, Newark, New Jersey
 | +Veronica Adams
 | |--Portia Mae Williams b. 1942 Nov 12, Louisville, Alabama
 | |--Derek Jerome Williams b. 1961 Oct 28, Barbour County, Alabama
 | +Clarence Glenn b. 1939 Dec, Barbour County, Alabama
 | |--Victoria Glenn b. 1965 Oct 22, Alabama
 | +Jerry Chambers
 | |--James Lydell Glenn b. 1969 Jul 29, Macon County, Alabama
 |--**Irmatine Turner** b. 1914 Oct 16, Midway, Alabama
 | +John Joseph Collins b. 1910, Alabama, d. 1985
 |--John Moses Collins b. 1944 Feb 22, Birmingham, Alabama,
 | +Jean Carol Lowe
 |--Cynthia Collins b. 1945 Oct 1, Birmingham, Alabama
 | +John Jackson
 | |--Ricky Juarez Jackson b. 1962 Mar 2, Birmingham, Alabama
 | +Brenda Johnson b. 1964 Jul 13
 | |--Ricky Collins
 | +Brenda Wife Of Ricky Collins
 |--**Berthenia Turner** b. 1916 Feb 9, Midway, Alabama, d. 2007 May 22, New York City
 | +Floyd Lee Taylor b. 1911 Sep 22, Moore County, North Carolina
 |--Floyd Lee Bertram Taylor b. 1945 Feb 18, New York City
 | +Janet Louise Rengel b. 1947 Oct 21, St Cloud, Minnesota
 |--Sandra Elaine Taylor b. 1946 Aug 8, New York City, d. 2013 Jan
 | +Alvin Green b. 1938 Nov 25, St Petersburg, Florida
 | |--Kwam Taylor Green b. 1986 Aug 27, New York City

Grandmother Daisy married Moses Turner. They had three children: **Elma, Irmatine,** and **Berthenia.**



Aunt Elma Nix-Williams

The matriarch of the Turner-Nix-Williams tradition of family service. It was a joy to see her at family birthdays, Thanksgiving, and reunion gatherings. Her support to family members has been made known to me by her children.

Aunt Irmatine Collins

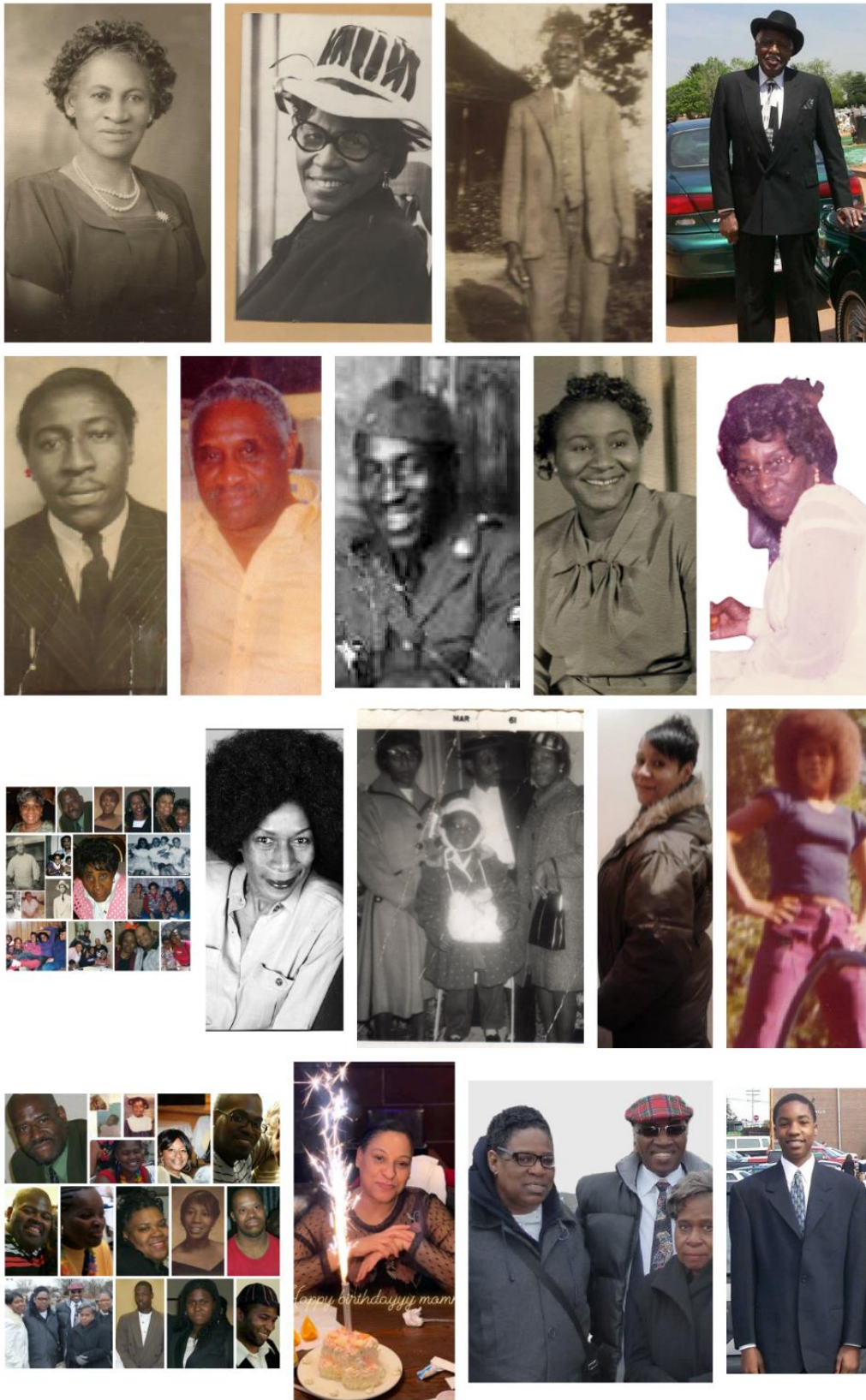
She was pivotal in the life-changing event in my story when she came to New York City in 1954 to sign consent papers for my mother's hospitalization. I thank her for making the long train ride from Alabama to sign the legal documents for mother to be treated for mental illness. By doing so, she rescued my sister Sandra and me.

Descendants of Overton Daniels

* Major Family Members in my story are *italicized*

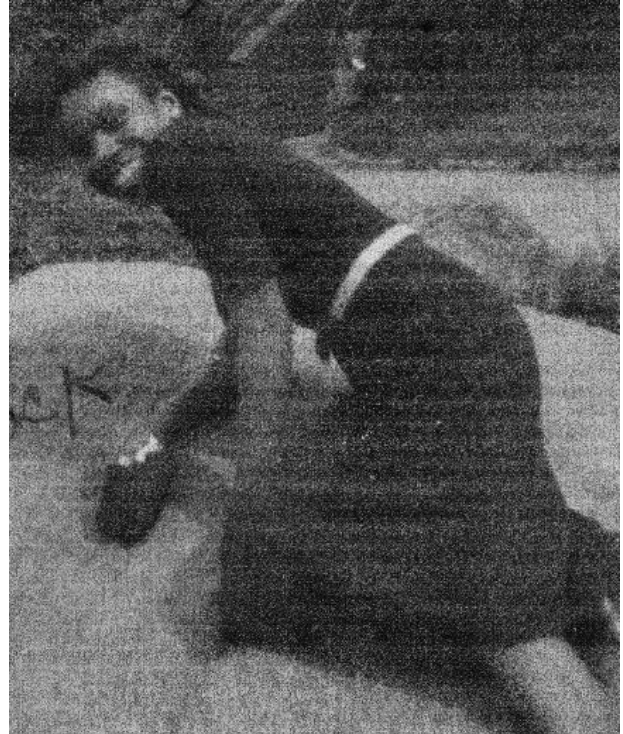
Overton Daniels b. 1846, Virginia
+Sarah Daniels b. 1865
|---**Mary Eliza Daniels** b. 1886 Feb 11, North Carolina, d. 1967 Sep 15
| +Jordan D Taylor b. 1865, North Carolina
| |---**Marie Alice Taylor** b. 1910 Jan 2, North Carolina, d. 1997 Aug 26, New
| |---**Floyd Lee Taylor** b. 1911 Sep 22, Moore, North Carolina, d. 1980 May 3
| | +**Berthenia Turner** b. 1916 Feb 9, Midway, Alabama, d. 2007 May 22
| | |---**Floyd Lee Bertram Taylor** b. 1945 Feb 18, New York City
| | | +Janet Louise Rengel b. 1947 Oct 21, St Cloud, Minnesota
| | |---**Sandra Elaine Taylor** b. 1946 Aug 8, New York City, d. 2013 Jan
| | +Alvin Green b. 1938 Nov 25, St Petersburg, Florida
| | |---**Kwam Taylor Green** b. 1986 Aug 27, New York City
| |---**Sarah Estelle Taylor** b. 1915 Jul 22, Moore, North Carolina, d. 1994 Mar
| |---**Bessie Irene Taylor** b. 1916 Oct 24, Moore, North Carolina
| | +**Walter Edward Whitfield** b. 1917 Aug 6, Carbon Hill, AL, d. 1986 Oct
| | |---**Walteen Marie Whitfield** b. 1949 Dec 15, New York City
| | | |---**Doris Whitfield**
| | |---**James Rudolph Whitfield** b. 1951 Jan 19, New York City, d. 2001 Dec
| | | +Regina Miles b. 1951 Aug 28, New York City
| | | |---**Reginald Walter Whitfield** b. Jun 19
| | | |---**Curtis James Whitfield** b. Aug 25
| | |---**Lois Antoinette Whitfield** b. 1951 Feb, New York City
| | | +Robert Hall
| | | |---**Stacie Lynette Hall**
| | | +Harry Henderson
| | | |---**Rachel Henderson**
| | | |---**Christopher Henderson** b. 1981 Jul 15, New York City
| | |---**Debra Ann Whitfield** b. 1952 Mar, New York City
| | +Anthony Young
| | |---**Dwayne Everette Young** b. 1975 Jun 9, New York City
| | |---**Kimberly Lynn Whitfield** b. 1983 Sep 28, New York City
| |---**Uncle Tip Charles Henry Taylor** b. 1919 Jan 29, Moore, North Carolina
| | +Ena
| | |---**Charlene Taylor**
| | | |---**Cha-Ron Taylor**
| | |---**Rose Marie Taylor**
| | |---**Claire Taylor**
| | |---**Nina Taylor**
| |---**Curtis Owen Taylor** b. 1921 Jun 19, Moore, North Carolina, d. 1975 Apr 21
| | +**Mary Elizabeth Faison** b. 1926 Jan 14, Sampson County, NC, d. 1997 Dec
| | |---**Shirley A. Taylor** b. 1947 Nov 16
| | |---**Loretta I. Taylor** b. 1956 Jun 1
| |---**Willie Robert Taylor** b. 1923 Jul 16, Moore County, North Carolina, d. 1999 Aug
| | +Mary E. Dickens b. 1912 Sep 23, Roxboro, NC, d. 1986 Aug 9
| | |---**George Phillip Taylor**
| | |---**Charles Taylor**
|---**Irene Daniels** b. 1899 Jul 22, North Carolina, d. 1998 Jan 25, New York City
| +Norman White b. 1891, North Carolina
| |---**Norman Joseph White** b. 1921 Mar 25, Moore, North Carolina, d. 2011 Jan
| | +Myrtis Pennington b. 1920 Dec 15, New York City
| |---**Nome Poem White** b. 1949 Dec 14

Family Taylor



Eight of the ten Taylor brothers and sisters migrated from Aberdeen, North Carolina, to Harlem in New York City in the 1940 and 1950s, including Grandmother Taylor.

My Parents – Floyd Taylor and Berthenia Turner



My parents met and married in NYC and produced two children: a boy (Floyd Lee “B.” Taylor) and a girl (Sandra Elaine Taylor). I was the second oldest of eleven Taylor cousins.

My Mother



Berthenia Turner-Taylor was the youngest of three sisters born and raised in segregated Birmingham, Alabama. She gave me many gifts, including a happy childhood, ensuring my teeth were fixed so I could smile, and seeing that I joined the Boy Scouts. Her greatest gift to other family members and me was providing us the opportunity to support her during her long-suffering with mental illness. My mother epitomized courage and the determination to be independent and take care of her children. I thank my mother for how she raised me during childhood and boyhood, for the early education she provided, connected me to both extended families, and for seeing that my teeth were corrected -providing me with my full tooth smile for life.

When it was my turn to care for my mother, I visited her in the hospital during several episodes of her psychotic illness. In 2001, Mother lost her apartment because she was in the hospital. I was forced to have her permanently committed to a nursing home and became her guardian. I would travel to New York four times annually to care for Mother for five years. Aunt Bessie welcomed me to stay with her during each visit. I was blessed to be with her the day before she was called to heaven; she awoke from dementia, recognizing me for the first time in months.

My Father



My father, Floyd Lee Taylor, was the second son of seven brothers and three sisters. He received a medical discharge from the US Army due to a leg injury. His war experience later caused him to become an alcoholic for the rest of his life.

My Sister Sandra



Sandra Elaine was a bright and shining star, one of high achievement, spirited discourse, and expansive expression. Courageous, holding her head up high - she epitomized the phrase “To Be Young, Gifted, and Black.”

In her zenith, Sandra was at her best, giving to her family and friends, traveling far and wide to attend family funerals and weddings. I owe her everlasting thanks for introducing and later reconnecting me to my best friend forever, Glenda.



I am most grateful for our combined efforts to love and support our mother throughout her lifelong struggles with mental illness.

I give thanks to my sister Sandra for taking care of our mother during times of illness and being a faithful daughter.

I am thankful that Sandra honored me when she once remarked: “Lee, I want to find a man just like you.”



My sister’s greatest gift to me was her son Kwam. As a parting gift, Sandra helped my nephew and me forge a special bond in the final weeks and months of her life. In 2001, Sandra suffered a psychotic break and was hospitalized, orphaning my nephew Kwam. I paid off my sister’s bills and became a temporary guardian for nephew Kwam. Years later, in the last months before her death from cancer, I made several extended trips to New York to support her during hospital stays and home care.

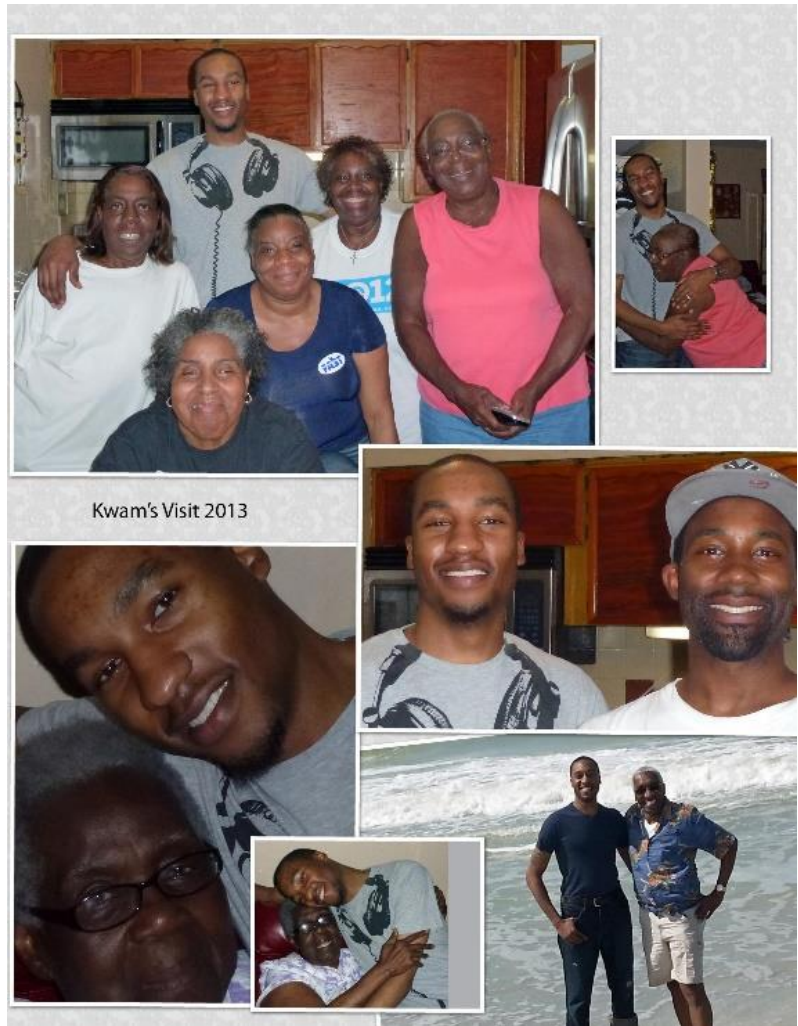
My Nephew Kwam

I am honored to be both uncle and godfather to my Nephew Kwam.



When I became his temporary guardian, I regret that I concentrated on discipline and academic success rather than showing him love and understanding. In his mother's last months of life, I was able to relieve him from the duty of having to take care of his mother and miss workdays.

I have helped to reconnect nephew Kwam to his father Alvin Green's family here in Florida.



Kwam is a great dad to his junior son. I love Kwam and stand ready to do my best for him

My Aunt Mothers

I was blessed to have three Aunts who were surrogate mothers to me.



Aunt Bessie Irene Taylor

She was my aunt, spiritual mother, and –most of all – my best friend.

Among the many insights and life lessons, I learned from my Aunt Bessie were to endure, persevere, and be quietly dependable. She epitomized what it means to be a caretaker, a mother, a nana to grandchildren, and a sister to her siblings. Most of all, I learned from my Aunt Bessie how important it is to say, “I love you,” and say it as often and in as many ways as possible.

Aunt Marie Alice Taylor

She was a “connector” who found ways to keep family members in touch with each other. I owe my aunt a debt of gratitude; because of her, I got to know Cousin Charlene’s son Cha-Ron and later learned and met Uncle Henry’s other daughters, Claire and Nina. I am blessed to continue her example. Aunt Marie has been my role model for being both an uncle and godfather. My last time spent with Aunt Marie was in a room at a nursing home. I regret that she had lost both hearing aids and couldn’t hear her Godson Lee say how much he loved her. I will never forget her words as we held each other: “I am so Happy-Happy.”

I give thanks to my godmother-aunt Marie for taking action to rescue my mother, sister Sandra and me when my mother suffered her first psychotic illness. In the two years that followed, Aunt Marie made it possible for us to stay connected by visitations to mother.

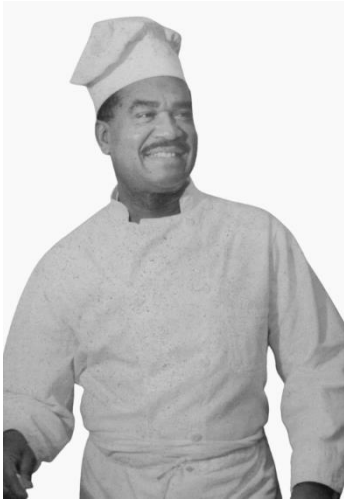
Aunt Sarah Estelle Taylor

She was a talented and creative baker; she was affectionately known as the “Cake and Pie Lady.” Aunt Estelle was outgoing and friendly, the “life of the party.” She was the household breadwinner who found a way to raise my sister and me through my teenage and college years.

I give thanks for the blessing of Aunt Estelle, who raised me during my high school and college years after Mother suffered a second psychotic illness.

Sometime in the late spring of 1977, I was blessed with a *defining moment* when I spent a four-week vacation with Aunt Estelle. The blessing was neither the length of time we spent together nor the number of activities but the quality conversation we shared. Aunt Estelle gave me an enduring gift of love by speaking to me of the sacrifices she made as the caretaker of my grandmother and the six years she spent as a parent-provider for my sister and me. I regret that I was still a young man of age 32, not yet wise enough to explicitly speak the words “ I love you, for what you did,” but she knew. Aunt Estelle is my role model for one who shows love through acts of service.

Uncle Walter Whitfield



(Husband to Aunt Bessie) provided financial support to my sister Sandra and me during the three years we lived with him and his family. For that, I owe him a debt of gratitude. Uncle Walter was a hard worker and family provider, working three jobs throughout most of his working life. He was my role model for how to be a provider-husband. He showed me how to carry responsibility for children and wife and shoulder the burden of raising grandchildren. Through him, I learned to courageously arise every day, go out into the world, and endure the conflicts in work environments to bring home a paycheck.

I thank Aunt Bessie and Uncle Walter for providing a home and support for my sister Sandra and me for three years after my mother's first psychotic break.

Grandmother Mary Eliza Taylor



She raised me during my teenage years.

She taught me many things that have served me well throughout life.

She taught me Independence.

“Boy, I will teach you how to cook, sew, wash clothes, iron, and clean. The young women of today don't know anything!”

She taught me to be skeptical of politicians.

We watched TV, and some politician said how terrible things were and how great it would be if we voted for him. Grandmother Mary showed she wasn't fooled by saying: “Don't be ‘talk ‘purty’”

When my sister required correction, my grandmother taught me what is most important in learning:

“Girl, you got book learning, but you got no common sense!”

My Cousins



I feel a brother-sister closeness to each of my first cousins. Over the many years, we have developed a shared understanding of what it means to be caretakers and providers and to support family, parents, brothers, sisters, and other relatives.

I give thanks for the aid and assistance of cousins Lorenzo and Ethel for being there for my mother during her times of illness.

Thanks to cousin Jimmy, who helped me when my sister Sandra suffered a psychotic break requiring hospitalization. His intervention help me take care of my nephew Kwam. Thanks to cousins Ethel and Lorenzo for their aid and comfort to my mother and sister during difficult times. Thanks to cousin Walteen for being my Big Sister to aunt Bessie.



I am grateful to both my Taylor and Turner families for their outpouring of aid, support, and comfort to me at my mother's passing and, years later, my sister.



Thanks to Michael, Calvin, Veronica, Kennedy, Cha-Ron, Charlene, Debra, Shirley, Regina, and everyone else



Friendships

Friends become our chosen family – unknown.

There are hundreds and hundreds of people near and dear to me. Yet, I can only name a few for this chapter of my life story.

Life is important - like the people we know who are special. – unknown

Glenda Maxine Marshall



My Best Friend Forever!

You have been, and always shall be, my friend

~ Mr. Spock to Captain Kirk

So much of my personal life story is entwined with my greatest friend, Glenda. Over 58 years, we shared our life journey, whether it be going on cruises, sharing vacations in Florida, dining at our favorite restaurants, celebrating her retirement, or exchanging gifts. More than anyone else, Glenda was my companion for my family birthdays, celebrations, weddings, funerals, and graduations.

Glenda and I understood each other's life stories as no one else could. We were there for each other through all the disappointments and feelings of anger, sorrow, and joy over parents, sisters, nephews, and family. I knew her as the eldest daughter caring for her mother and sisters; she knew me as the eldest son who cared for my mother and aunt Bessie. We were Aunt Glenda and Uncle Lee to our nephews.



Special Friendships



Gilbert Hill



There is nothing I like better than conversing with aged men. For I regard them as travelers, who have gone a journey which I too may have to go, and of whom I ought to inquire whether the way is smooth and easy or rugged and difficult. Is life harder toward the end, or what report do you give it?" — Plato, The Republic

Gil is my inspiration for friendship and brotherhood; we are proud military veterans and hold strong beliefs and opinions.

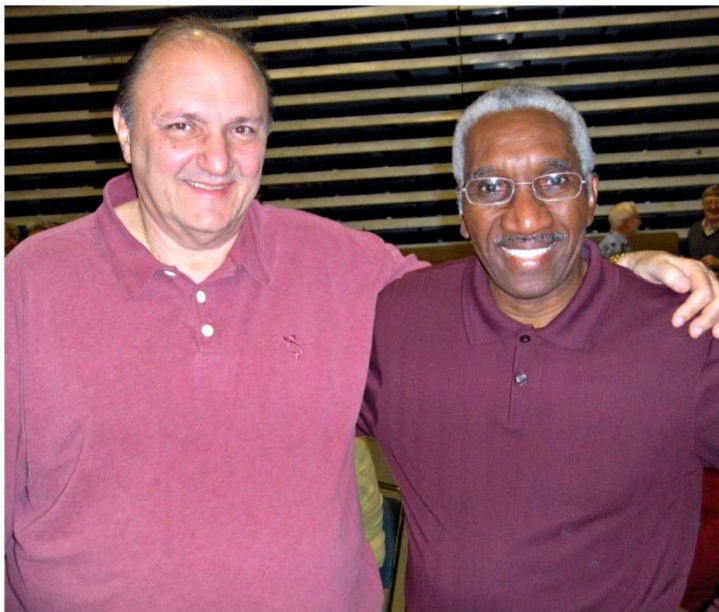
Thanks for your friendship with that of your lovely wife, Nancy.

Victor



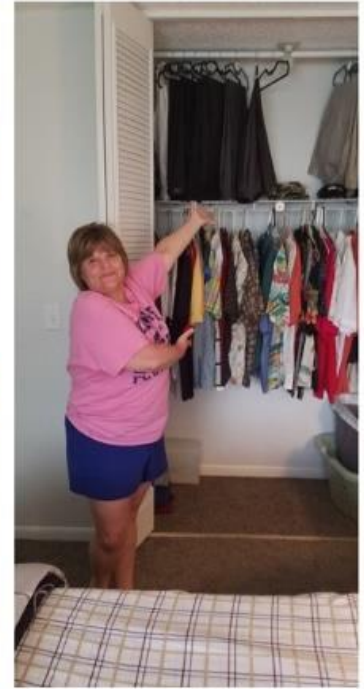
Thank you, Best Friend Victor, for allowing me into your home and for friendship with your wife Claudia and “Beanie.”

Thanks for the airport transportation, our memorable adventures in pursuit of Gold Points, and welcoming my lady love Meredith into your lives with shared birthday dinners, celebrations, and cheese and carrot cake delights.



Barb

You are my spiritual daughter.



God blessed me to serve as a spiritual parent: being there as you revisited disappointments and crippling memories from childhood, helping you through some rough periods in your life. It is a joy to witness you facing new life challenges on the winding road to fulfillment of your destiny.

Stephanie and Eamon



My Friends of a Lifetime!

A good friend knows all your best stories. A best friend has been there to live them with you.

From college and friendships, parents and your children our shared stories.

Happy birthdays phone calls each year!

Thanks for being my friends!

Joyce



My friend for all seasons!



Thanks for the Hyatt Hotel and resort travels; exploring New York City, the vacation of a lifetime to Cancun, movies, sharing Thai food dinners, and the many adventures to come.

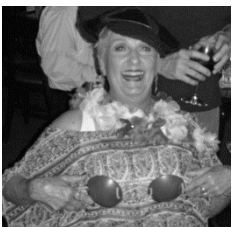


Connie



My Dance Partner for every Dance!

Connie, thanks for our special connection on the dance floor!.



We are the 'Fred and Florence' personalities.
"May your Coconuts never get lower than your grass skirt."

Donna; Jim, and Ruth



Long-time friends; through all the ups and downs. I am proud to be your family friend.

Juanita, Doug, and Yvonne



Thanks, dear friends, for welcoming me into your lives and homes throughout the years.

Cynthia



Straight to Number One!

Cynthia, we share discovery and understanding of ourselves from reading “The Mastery of Love”; which lead us both to later find the love partner of our lifetime. Thanks!

Friendships from Times and Places

*Many places I have been...
But I don't regret, nor will I forget.
All who took that road with me – "The Hobbit" by Billy Boyd*

I regret that I cannot name everyone whose friendship helped me become the person I am. So, I will try to call them friendship groups.

If you are in one of these groups, please know that I am grateful for the blessing of our time together.

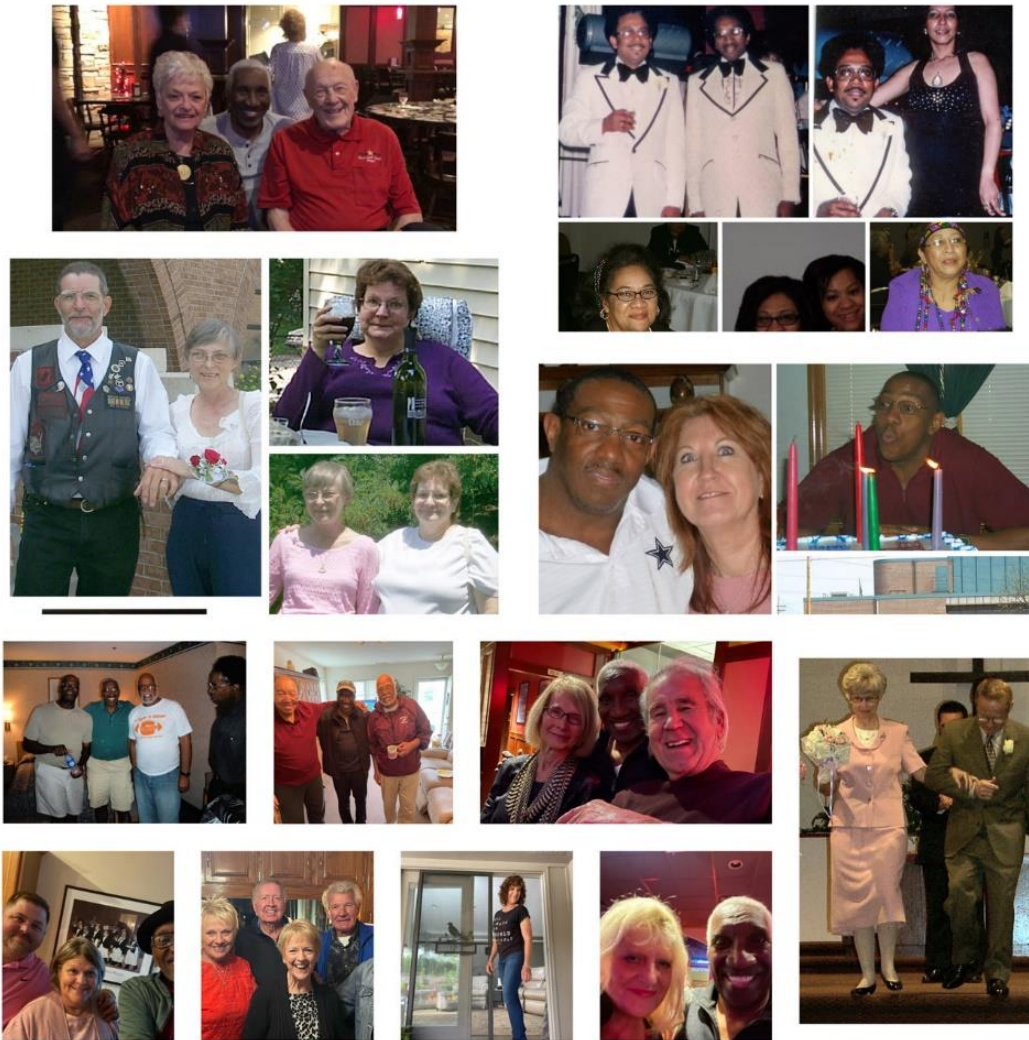
If you are in one of the group pictures, know that I look forward to writing about our shared experiences in a forthcoming memoir.

Friends I met in New York City:

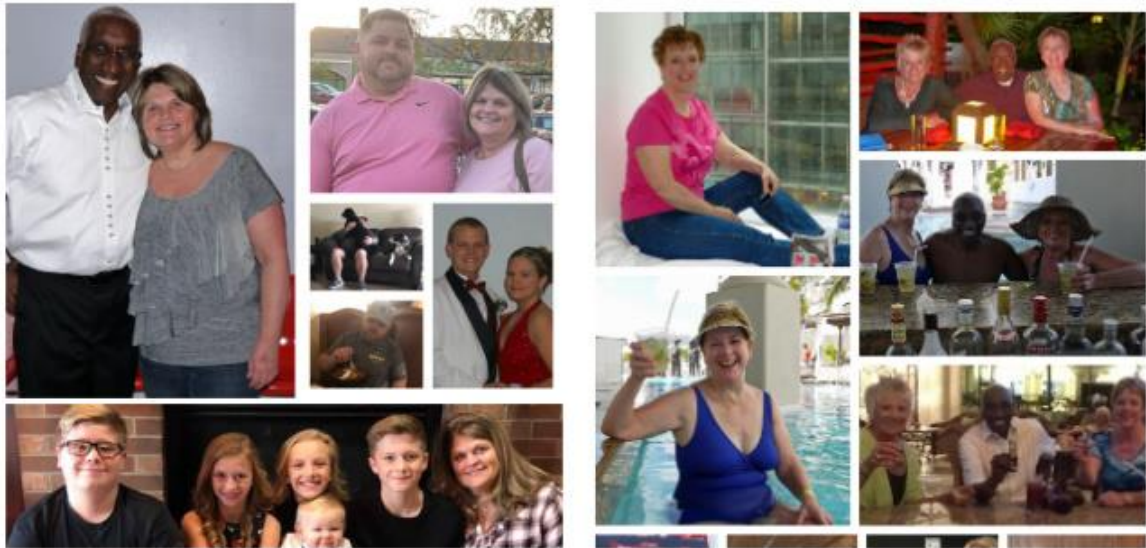


Family and friends of Glenda; Stephanie, and Eamon.

Some of the many friends I met in Omaha



My friends from bowling leagues, pinocle, and Dance; neighbors Chuck and Janet; Betty and Lloyd.



Friendships from my work career



Gayla, Ron, Ron Jr., the entire project engineering team, Fletch and the Bellevue Lions, the Bellevue SAIC office team, and all my coworker friends throughout the years.

Friends I made in Florida.





My Florida Condo Neighbor Friends

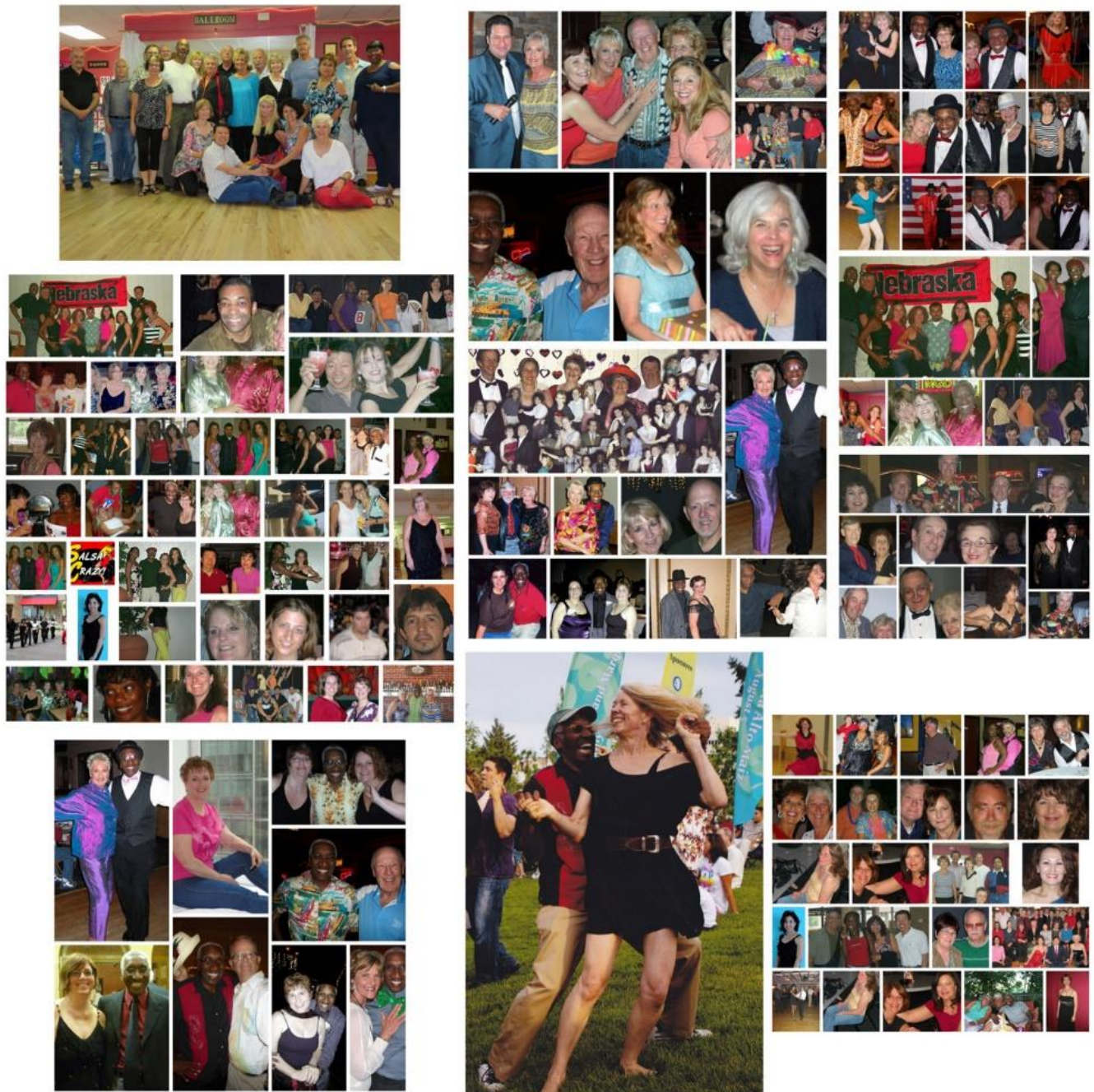
Friends I made on Cape Cod



Meredith's family and friends have become my friends.



Friends I made from the world of dance.



Special dance partners Connie, Juanita, Joyce, Ann, Cynthia, Karen, Cindy, and Donna. Thanks to dance teachers: Rick, Ron, Marty; Blandon, Billy, and Christie; Corrine, Shelley, Carol, Jackson, and Dylan. Thanks to the many friends at the Dance Studios: JustDance, Delray, Suncoast Ballroom, Dancers Co-Op, and Bayou. Thanks to all the welcoming dancers at Jitterbugs, Arthur's, Omaha Swing Dance Club, PlaMor Ballroom, Ozone, Jazz on the Green, Gulfport, Torpedo Room, Bayou, and the Cabaret Dance Club. Thanks to everyone I met on the dance floors in Omaha and Florida.

Friends I made from the world of bridge.



Special thanks to my partners Victor, Babs, Roy, Peter, Ken, Donna, Sheryl, Audrey, and Catherine. Thanks also to the club managers, officers, and game directors. Thanks to the hundreds of friends, I've met across the bridge tables at the St Pete and Clearwater Bridge Clubs.

Friends are made through friendships.



Thanks to the friendships from the families of Jim & Serena Powell and Carole and Frank Weinberger.

Thank you all for being exceptional in my life!

Thanks, everyone not named or pictured, for your love and friendship

My Passions

The things you are passionate about are not random, they are your calling.

– Fabienne Fredrickson

Passion for Dance

I am a dancer.

I don't dance because I want to.

I dance because I need to.

I tell a story by the movements of my body.

I dance because I get this amazing feeling through the movement of my arms and the rhythm of the music.

I dance because it makes me happy

I am an artist, and athlete, and a dreamer.

I am a dancer Unknown.

Dancing is my passion.

Dancing means dreaming with your feet.

– Dahi Tamara Koch

When I dance, I become “Mr. Bojangles.”



Mister Bojangles, will you dance for me...

My name, Bojangles ... and I dance for you....”

–Jerry Jeff Walker

In May 2002, I challenged Gayla, a co-worker friend, to take a six-week dance class at a local community college to improve her chances of dating. She agreed only if I signed up to take the dance lessons with her. The course was “Introduction to Latin dancing.”

I loved it! I then wanted to go out dancing - I found a Friday night Jitterbug-Swing venue, which immediately became the highlight of my week. This soon led to another dance class and the discovery of a weekly Thursday night Latin Dance – which changed my life forever.

I enjoy several dance styles, but I like to mix up everything. I know many types of dancing, such as Swing, Latin, Ballroom, Country-Western, and Free-Style.

I have been asked many times if I teach dance. I *instruct* new partners on what it feels like to move to the rhythm of music, not be afraid to shine, do what they feel without fear of being criticized, and feel connected to a leader who understands, that it's not about him but making her the attraction.

When I am connected to a partner who also feels the music, nobody can stop me from moving my feet fast to the rhythm of the music. My feet have the freedom to move independently without me thinking of how to move them. As the male lead, I can perform again in the following dance with a new partner, enjoying this expression with each new female follower.

The poetry of your body. What I cannot express with words, I express with my body. I move to the music, let it flow through my limbs. Form the notes within me make them visible. Become one with the music. I become an instrument. I become music. I am music. I am entirely in the moment. I live and breathe and swirl in a circle, flow in gentle movements with the harmonies, fly through the skies. I am all mine, all my own. I am free.” – Dahi

Tamara Koch

No matter where I am if music strikes my ears, I feel like dancing to the music’s beat, rhythm, or melody. Swing and Latin music are my favorites. Dancing will always remain a part of my life!

Passion for Cards

I am a Card Player.

...Each player must accept the cards life deals him or her: but once they are in hand, he or she alone must decide how to play the cards in order to win the game.

“Life Is A Card Game” - Poem by Hailey Agnew

Thanks to childhood experiences with my cousins at Taylor family Thanksgiving gatherings, I developed into a card player. As “rug rats,” we were given playing cards to emulate our uncles and aunts who played bid whist. I would remember the sounds of the shuffling of the card deck, the exhilaration and laughter of voices, the put-downs, and boastful declarations before the cards were dealt for years to come.

I rediscovered the joy of card-playing during my early military service, learning barracks poker and blackjack. In 1969, I discovered the joy of double-deck pinochle; I would play with supervisors and coworkers after hours at work and on weekends. I met my future wife Jan while playing pinochle. Some of my happiest card-playing memories are playing “rummy” and “Tunk” with my aunts Marie, Estelle, and Bessie as an adult. During the 1980s and 1990s, I would regularly travel to New York City and each time competed with them in at least one all-night card game. Aunt Bessie and I continued our best friend relationship by playing “head-to-head” tunk during my frequent return trips to New York.

I continued my journey as a card player with poker tournaments in Las Vegas, where I perfected my smiling “poker face,” learned from hard experience to hide my emotions at the table,

I learned to take chances but to only lose what I could afford.

In 2009, I discovered the game of duplicate bridge, which became my ultimate Card game.

Passion for Bridge

I am a Bridge Player

With duplicate bridge, I discovered the pinnacle of card games:

“The ultimate social game for thinkers”

In January 2009, I took an introduction to duplicate bridge class at a local community college in Omaha. As a lifetime card player, I quickly was captivated by the logic and rules that bridge presented. To play, I joined one of the local bridge clubs. Even though I was a neophyte bridge player with no clear idea of how to play with a partner, I had some early successes. This went on until my lack of knowledge became evident that I needed training in bidding fundamentals. I am forever thankful to Carol Phillips for providing my fundamental bridge training.

I had fantastic success going to my first two Regional tournaments. The first in August 2009, in a Knock-Out team event and the second in January 2010.

Story: I went alone to the Orlando January 2010 Regional with only 10 Master Points and asked for a partner from the partnership desk. I was partnered with a partner who had only 50 MPs. We competed in the second game of a 3-game Side Game series and won! We asked how many points were informed that if we played in the 3rd game of the series, we would get GOLD points regardless of the outcome! We registered, went out to dinner for steaks and wine, returned and amazingly won again!

In the years that have followed, I've built many close friendships with partners and teammates. I've enjoyed several bridge cruises with friends Roy & Judy, and Babs & Bob. I went with my best friend and partner Victor Malozi to bridge regional tournaments in 2010-2011. Victor and I had fantastic success as new players, winning 29 gold points.

I have loved the challenge of learning and developing mastery of bidding, hand play, and defense with like-minded partners and players. Roy and I tried to master the precision bidding system for a whole year before happily returning to the 2/1 bidding system.

No other card game has presented me with the challenges and satisfaction of using my social talents for partnering and teamwork.

I am absolutely thrilled by the social relationships and friendships I've developed from the game competitions. I have also experienced the added satisfaction of being a mentor and instructor for many newcomers and inexperienced players.



Here is a life lesson from duplicate bridge “Learn from the mistakes of others. You won't live long enough to make them all yourself.”

My War Stories from the Bridge Table

Director calls – doubling my partner Victor’s bridge bids

Director calls –(mannerisms) “He’s smiling,” “He’s laughing” – I see amusement in so many hands that they caused me to smile!

Unit Director Karl would explain, “that’s just Lee,” and chastise me not to do it again with tongue-in-cheek.

Have you said or heard any of the following?

“I didn’t get any cards the whole day.”

“Not our day.”
“We got screwed.”
“North-South got all the hands.”
“We drew an unlucky pair number.”
“Look who we have to start the game against!”
“That was dumb of me.”
“I screwed up on trick one.”
“You missed my signal.”
“I forgot I was playing notrump.”
“I forgot what was just played.”
“You must pick up the children before playing your winners.”
“Count your tricks.”
“What was your plan?”
“The opponents got all the hands.”
“They got away with bad bidding.”
“Why didn’t you lead my suit.”
“What were you thinking?”
“We got slaughtered.”
“We scratched.”
“We got Gifts.”
“We got gold points!”

Other Passions

You are the books you read, the films you watch, the music you listen to, the people you meet, the dreams you have, and the conversations you engage in. You are what you take from these. You are a collective of every experience you have had in your life ... ~Jac Vanek.

Picture Taker

A Birth Certificate shows that we were born,
A Death Certificate shows that we died
Pictures show that we live! ~ unknown

I am a chronicler of the events I share with my family, friends, and the people I meet.

We keep this love in a photograph, We made these memories for ourselves, And time's forever frozen
~ Ed Sheeran

Thoroughbred Horse Racing

Since 1972, I have enjoyed the excitement of watching and wagering on horse racing events. I share this passion with my friends Gil Hill and Bill Dane.

League Bowling

My love for League Bowling started when I was stationed in Japan (1969) and continued in Omaha, Nebraska (1971-1976, 1980-1986). At the height of my passion, I was bowling in five leagues. My most memorable bowling experience came with *The Soulful Five* bowling Team, started by my friend Wilbur Sells, with teammates Wilbur Sells, Ezra Brown, Lee Milner, Joe Wilson, Conrad, NC Hall, Dupree, Walt, Ted Pree, Joe Wilson, Milt Weatherly, Walker, Fred Darden, Lee Hart, Lee Milner

Book Reading



Since Childhood, I have enjoyed reading books of fiction, mythology, fantasy and science fiction, murder mysteries, and many other subjects that interest me.

My Search For Love

Dating in College

My search for love began at age eighteen in 1963 with dating during my college years. It was supposed to be the time of “free love,” with young women liberated because of the Pill. I knew nothing about dating except for these two bits of advice from family adults: “don’t get the woman pregnant” and “look for someone to marry.” I had low self-esteem; I didn’t think I was handsome and afraid of being rejected.

Being a rationalist, I read books on dating, conversation, and sex to gain knowledge and understanding. My motivation for dating was, “Please let me date you, and I’ll be yours to take” – I got what I asked for!!!



Lena was my first girlfriend. I was attracted and captivated by her independence and clear desire to be herself as a unique person. Lena will always be the epitome of the “liberated woman” before the term became known or fashionable. She became my *someone* to go out with to events, shows, movies, concerts, plays, dinners, and dances. We were a couple, but we were not close. I was her “escort” and companion. But it was a “relationship,” and so enough for me; it served as a beginning.



The following year, Glenda arrived at the college. She became my second girlfriend. Such a difference in personalities! Glenda was fun, gregarious, and generous. I will forever remember our first date and laughing with her at the opening scene in the movie *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, where Jimmy Durante’s character kicks the bucket. Many years later, Glenda and I would become best friends, closer than brother and sisters.

I dated Lena and Glenda on and off over the next two years: We were the first in our families to make it to college. It was a time of discovery, parties, independence, and

learning about life.

Lena and Glenda came from families with two parents. They both lived in the Bronx, a “foreign country” to me. It took two hours for me to get home after taking either of them home after a date—lots of long train rides, walks to train stations, and buses. No fun going to 9 am Sunday Church Service after getting in after 3:00 AM from a Saturday night date!.

In early 1965, I met and dated Alma, another young woman from my same community college; but she grew up and lived in my Harlem neighborhood and was within walking distance. What a change! Alma was easy and comfortable to be with. Our two most memorable dates were going on a West Indian boat ride to Bear Mountain State Park and one where we learned together the perils of getting intoxicated and having to be taken home separately.

Ever has it been that love knows not its own depth until the hour of separation. — Khalil Gibran

Sadly, in the fall of 1965, Alma's father died, leaving behind a wife and five young children. I don't recall saying any comforting words to Alma; this was the first death of anyone I knew. Some weeks later, she visited me at my aunt's apartment. Alma told me she now had to support the family. I had no words, no thoughts of heroically volunteering to marry her – nothing. I just thought things would work out.

Before her father died, Alma had graduated and was already working as a registered nurse. With his passing and the sudden need to support her mother and siblings, Alma joined the US Navy. After that last day in my living room, I never saw Alma again. Still, she will forever live on in my memories as “the one who got away.” She was the one I lost during that wonderful coming of age in my 20s when I had just started learning about dating and romance. From the brief period that Alma and I dated, I discovered one of my life's most important lessons about love: never wait to tell someone that you care and what you feel – you may never get another chance.

In late 1966, I enlisted in the United States Air Force. Over the next four years, I served my duty assignments in Texas and Japan. This precluded finding a suitable steady girlfriend, but I did experience my first casual sexual encounters.

Marriage to Jan, My Bride



In late 1971, I first saw my future wife, Jan, in a bowling alley. I was soon captivated by her attitude of independence as a young military woman and her interest in bowling and pinochle.

After a torrid romance, breakup, and finally deciding "you look very good to me," we married on November 3, 1973. I was twenty-eight, and she was twenty-six. Jan and I shared common interests in thoroughbred racehorse breeding, reading science fiction, and several other hobbies.

She was my *bride*, and I was her *husband*. We enjoyed friendships with other married couples. Jan and I remained married for 33 years. The marriage successfully met our personal, financial, and career goals. But our

marriage relationship ended at least 23 years earlier when we ceased to be lovers, becoming friends and companions instead. I regret my inadequacy in communicating my needs for love or seeking to understand hers. When I was age 15, my favorite aunt, Bessie, exclaimed in an emotional outburst: “ All men are dogs!” Witnessing the hurt and anguish on her face, I made a *promise of honor* never to be unfaithful so that any woman I married could never say the same about me.

Whenever temptation arose, I recalled my “promise” of fidelity and turned away – sometimes only barely! In keeping it, I made the mistake of equating remaining married to being faithful. Events would bless me to discover otherwise.

Then the rainstorm came over me

And I felt my spirit break

I had lost all of my belief, you see, and realized my mistake

But time threw a prayer to me

– “Love’s Divine” by Seal and Mark Batson

In the last year of my marriage, I learned that the *promise* to be faithful only applied to your partner and not to a *thing* called a “marriage” or “relationship.” When you and your partner are no longer in love, free both of you by ending it. In November of 2006, I ended our marriage. I had kept the promise of faithfulness I made as a teenager but was now free to seek a love partner. A promise made is a promise kept

Days of Wine and Roses

The lonely night discloses just a passing breeze filled with memories

Of the golden smile that introduced me to

The days of wine and roses and you – Johnny Mercer

With the ending of my marriage, I embarked upon a search for a love partner. In the seven years that followed, I learned many things about myself: the expression of love through giving and receiving.

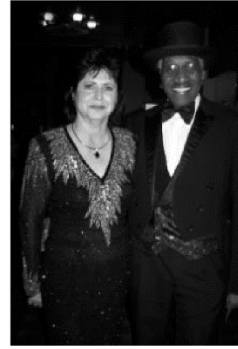
It began in Omaha in 2007, after my marriage ended. I met my first love partner at a Sunday dance party. We were both interested in Argentine tango; this led to a two-year relationship filled with stimulating intellectual conversation and explorations of personality.

My favorite remembrances of our time and places together include: a New York vacation and her fascination with the vast selection of shoes and purses in Macy’s Department Store, and me posing for and purchasing a sidewalk caricature portrait in Central Park.

In 2010, I moved to Pinellas Park, Florida, and continued searching for a love partner through the eHarmony online dating service.

Over the next four years, I met several extraordinary ladies. I thank each one I met as a potential lover, but the time or chemistry wasn’t right despite closeness and opportunity. We both decided to continue in friendship or separate and search for someone else.

There were two special relationships. I learned passion for work, elementary school, taking, sharing beach, and attending and family. Favorite first meeting date in a and a surprise birthday multiple boat cruises, Alaska and another to a and many trips by car



While I was in each faithful to the person – time—making sure not being “wedded” to the On October 22, 2014, the love of my life,



love partner to appreciate their genealogy, teaching cooking, picture-adventures at the the weddings of friends moments included a restaurant parking lot party. There were including one to theme park in Mexico, to several cities.

relationship, I was only one woman at a to repeat my mistake of relationship. Meredith Hinds Harris, came into my life.

Last Chapter

I Found the One

On October 22, 2014, Meredith Hinds Harris came into my life. She became the love of my life.

But time threw a prayer to me – "Love's Divine"

by Seal and Mark Batson.



I had sifted through 10-20 eHarmony “matches” every day; I had long since stopped looking at out-of-state profile match notices. But on October 22nd, in a “God wink moment” (a gift from God-the Universe), I received an eHarmony “smile” text message from Meredith, who lived in Massachusetts. This compelled me to look at her most exciting profile; otherwise, we would never have met. Because I believe you don’t turn down invitations out of hand, I returned her “smile.” We then began and completed the eHarmony matching question-and-answer process within two days. We then moved to direct email conversations during November, which led to our first phone calls. We agreed to meet in Boston on the first weekend in December for our first in-person date.

When I first saw you, I said, Oh my

I said, oh my, that's a dream, that's my dream

Then I found you, and I have had the most beautiful dreams any man's ever had.

You are my dream, all the things I never knew.

You are my dream; who could believe it could ever come true

And who would believe, the world would believe in my dreams too... – Tom Eyan & Henry Krieger



The following month, January, Meredith invited me to visit her at her home for a week. She then met me at a beach resort in Florida for a weekend. I made several more trips back to Meredith's, meeting her family and friends, and watching her participate in her triathlon events. Since that first weekend meeting and in the years that followed, I became thoroughly captivated.

I found a love for me ..., I found a girl, beautiful and sweet

Oh, I never knew you were the someone waiting for me ... - "Perfect" Duet by Sheehan & Beyonce.

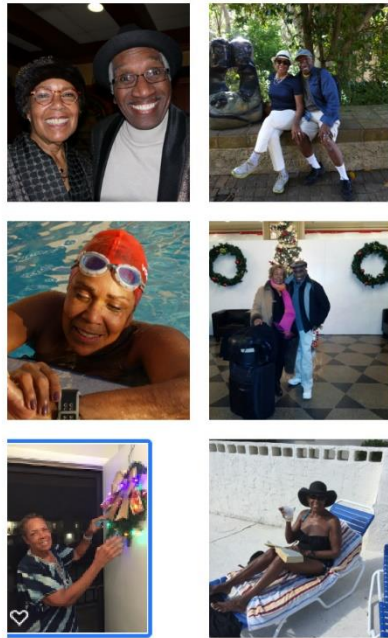
For the first time, I am with the perfect partner. Neither of us has children, but we both support our nieces, nephews, and family members. We take a supportive interest in each other's passions: Hers for triathlons (where I have joined her on team events) and mine for dancing. I am gratified that Meredith has taken an active interest in learning social dancing by taking private lessons. I share her enjoyment and enthusiasm as she finds dresses and shoes to wear for dancing, much like my search for the multiple hats I wear to dances.

And now we are one...; My soul has roamed the earth

In search for you...to know joy, joy, joy, joy...

And now we give thanks, Give thanks for each other....

For it is done... - "Consummation" by Nina Simone.



Present-day: Meredith and I share our time in spaces within each other's places: her house on Cape Cod and my condominium in Florida. We have made the long-distance separations work well for us; I am with her at her home in the summer months, and she is with me in Florida during the winter months. We split spring and autumn together and alone to pursue our passions and enjoyment of personal time.

Diversity

I am grateful to be recognized and respected as Lee Taylor *first*, as a man *second*, and *last* as being black.

...I have a dream [that] ... little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by their character...; that one day... little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers... we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men, and white men, Jews, and Gentiles, Protestants, and Catholics, will be able to join

hands and sing in the words of the old spiritual: “Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we are free at last.”— Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King.

I have been blessed to live “the dream” throughout my career, marriage, and search for love, passions, and friendships. The story of my life’s experiences and the character values that came from them testify to what can be achieved by good people everywhere.

Here is a roll call of others I’ve met: Stephanie & Eamon, Hazel & John, Chuck & Janet, Chuck & Teresa, Lourie, and Maria.

I Found My Purpose

To whom much is given, much is expected – Luke 12:48.

I only have to live my life and do what I am supposed to do. The recounting of my journey is not about how great I am or what great things I've done but my attempt to answer the question: Was I a good man? How well did I use the blessings of birth, family heritage, friendships, and the search for my life love partner is left for you to decide. Please reflect upon its meaning in each of your own lives.

Write and share your story!

The End of Life

*Many places I have been, many sorrows I have seen, but I don't regret, nor will I forget, All who took that road
with me – Billy Boyd*

In March of 2021, my best friend forever, Glenda Marshall, passed from this life. I realized that time is short, and we must make time and take the opportunity to share our memories with our living people.

"This is my story; this is my song." "Blessed Assurance" Fanny Crosby.

I am grateful that I can share "what I have learned and discovered, thus far, from my life's journey with the publication of this abbreviated autobiography.

Final Words

You have no promise that you will see all the seasons of your life, so LIVE FOR TODAY and say all the things that you want your loved ones to remember, and hope that they appreciate and love you for all the things you have done for them in all the years past! Life is a GIFT to you. The way you live your life is your gift to those who come after. Make it a fantastic one." ~ Ward Tanneberg
Tell your own story in whatever form to your family and friends and others you meet.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

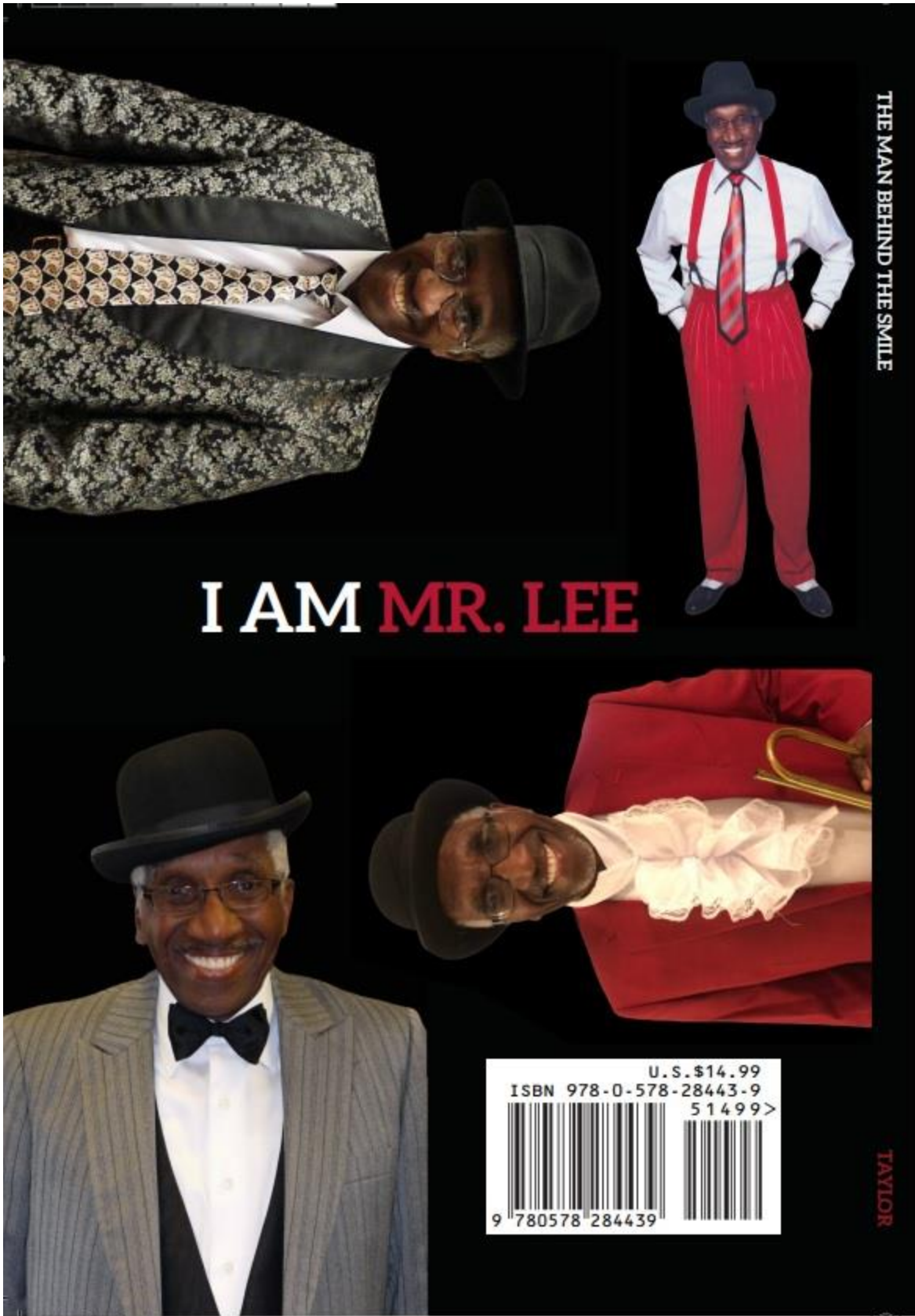
Thank you, Barbara Block, for helping me to focus my life story themes. Thank you, Betty Dawson, for rekindling my interest in finishing my written story.

Thank you, Gil Hill, for inspiring me to work on with getting my story edited and published.

Thank you, Cousin Verdi, for providing the stories of our family's ancestry.

Many thanks to my editor Martha Lang, for helping me structure my story into book form; to Larry Harte and Roy Sandstrom for their assistance in the publishing phase of the book.

Finally, to the thousands of people I have been blessed to meet and experience in my life's journey – thank you all.



I AM MR. LEE

THE MAN BEHIND THE SMILE

TAYLOR

U.S. \$14.99
ISBN 978-0-578-28443-9
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