



Roberta

As remembered and related by Edna Roberta Cyrus Love

Written by Hermia Lourene Dixon Shifflette.

For anyone who loved her.

This is a true story. If someone remembers things a little differently, that's all right. Memories are very personal things.

*“What is wanted is not that we should
find ultimate truth, nor that we
should become secure,
nor that we should have ease,
nor that we should be without hurt,
but that we should live fully.
Therefore we should not fear death,
nor anything in death,
we should live our lives in love with life. . .
and when we fail, to begin again each day.”*

- John McQuiston, DD
The Benedictine Way of Living

On October 7, 1917, when Sarah and Joe Cyrus had lived in the little log cabin in Smokey Valley for five years, Sarah gave birth to her sixteenth child, Edra Roberta. Of their fifteen children, five had died. The year before their move to Louisa, Kentucky, their oldest, Tilda, had married at age nineteen. Four years after the move, Lindsey married at age 21, and a year later, Ethel married also at 21. Three months later, Roberta was born.

Now the family home was comprised of 88 year old Grandpaw Cyrus, (who died when Roberta was one and a half years old); Dorothy, age 19; Jeff, 17; Sheridan, 10; Raymond, 7; and the little ones who had been born there - four year old twins, Frank and Irene, two year old Lucy, and now baby Roberta. Poppy Joe had wanted to name this baby for his wife and when they did not, he began calling the baby Sally, a nickname for Sarah. Many still occasionally refer to her by that pet name.

Jeff went to work everyday driving a bus between Louisa and Sandy Hook, but otherwise, there were eleven people of all ages and needs living together in the small two-story log house. Such closeness required a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect from everyone involved, and invoked a family unity that could never be challenged. Roberta was five years old when the additions were being built on to the house, and she still remembers being lifted up into the rafters by the workmen.

Being the baby of the family, Roberta was often petted as such. Poppy Joe brought her a little bag of candy every day. She always shared it with everyone, saving one for herself, which she carried around with her all day. Sarah and Poppy Joe also would let her come get in bed with them at night. Roberta remembers being very small and calling down to them, then Mommy coming to meet her at the bottom of the stairs with a lamp. Sarah and Poppy Joe were both big people, but did not mind making room for their baby girl.

As with many large families, the smallest child is a joy, but is also a source of fun for the sibs to tease and torment. There were narrow, shallow closets on each side of the fireplace and often, when mommy went to town to sell butter and eggs or to get groceries, Roberta's brothers put her in a closet and kept her there.

Sarah sold milk, butter, and eggs to get them through the depression. She took the horse and buggy to town, taking along Frank or one of the other boys to help carry the heavy things. She delivered to regular customers' houses, including Fred Vinson. Roberta remembers that the Vinson's lived down the same street the Louisa hospital is on and that it was small, but was a "cute little white house". Later, Dorothy took over this delivery job.

Jeff was particularly good to Roberta and frequently gave her coconut bonbons, telling her that tomorrow he would give her candy she had never eaten before. When tomorrow came, the candy he gave her was still bonbons, but, of course, not yet eaten. Roberta loved her dolls and Jeff often talked of the new doll he planned to give her. For some reason, he never did, but she remembers going to sleep at night with her arm stretched out to receive the doll in case he brought it after she went to sleep.

Roberta's pony was Dolly Dimple. The pony had been used in the coal mines before coming to the Cyrus family. She was an all over white pony in the winter but changed color to almost yellow gold in warm months. Dolly Dimple was an especially gentle pony. As soon as her bridle was slipped on, she wore a responsibility to care for the children who rode her, placing her feet just so, careful not to jostle any of the little ones who sometimes climbed on her back five at a time. Some people have believed that the pony belonged to Frank, but Roberta insists it was hers and that it passed to Billy Joe when she left home.

Roberta remembers that she was around eight years old when Lindsey became ill and Sarah had gone to be with him in Flatwoods. When Sarah returned on the train, she called home from Louisa for someone to come to town for her. At that time, the road was mud up to the horses' knees. As Raymond got in the wagon to go for Mommy, Roberta told him that Mommy had said she could go to town with him, but he refused her. Although Roberta ran along the way, sometimes cutting across fields and hills to meet him, Raymond remained stubborn and still would not let her get in the wagon. Roberta was coming over Town Hill, three miles from home, when the wagon was coming back with Sarah and they picked her up. Sarah

hugged her and Roberta remembers that her mommy cried. Evidently, Raymond was not the only stubborn one in this story.

Willfulness is seen frequently as a Cyrus family trait, along with the infamous temper. The hot tempers came from Poppy Joe. Sarah had been known to throw a bucket of water on someone letting his or her temper get too hot. Roberta also experienced that cold cure.

The one-room school house was on the hill just across from the Cyrus home, and the teacher, Miss Rose, gave Roberta the responsibility of making the fire in the Franklin Stove every morning before school and also to sweep out the school after classes. For this she was paid five cents for each task, which would come to about two dollars a month. When Roberta was eight or nine years old, she liked a little boy in school named Midas Prince. He took quick looks back to where she was at her desk, then would smile and duck his head. That was about the extent of the relationship until Roberta took the next step and passed him a note. It said, "Sure as the vine winds round the kettle, we would marry, but we're too little". The teacher, Sarah Rose, intercepted the note and read it to the class. Roberta was very angry with her for doing that. That same day the teacher had given to her the two dollars pay, but after Miss Rose read that note, Roberta got up and laid the money on the teacher's desk. She felt that was Miss Rose's money and she did not want anything to do with it. Miss Rose brought it back to her, saying "That's your money. You earned it". Roberta kept it, but she never forgave the teacher for embarrassing her.

Roberta spent long afternoons playing in the woods. On the path leading to Dorothy's house through the woods were many patches of moss she could use to build little dollhouses and furniture. Roberta also spent hours playing on an old buggy and a surrey which were stored behind the barn. She enjoyed braiding the fringe most of all. (There were several other wagons and buggies around the farm that were used by the family. Later, they added a Model T and Roberta remembers an Overland.)

Roberta, Irene, and Lucy were close in age and were pals. Lucy preferred to do the outside work, while Roberta and Irene did the inside chores, with Roberta sometimes helping with the hoeing and other outside work. Lucy also preferred to sleep alone, whereas Roberta and Irene shared a bed. Lucy was a tomboy and never wanted to go on dates, but Roberta and Irene had a good time talking about and flirting with boys.

The schoolhouse only went through eight grades, which was sufficient for most people in those days. When Roberta was near completing the eighth grade, the teacher, Mary Lou Branham, went to Sarah and Poppy Joe to convince them to let Roberta go to high school because she was such an excellent student. Miss Branham knew girls from the country rarely went beyond the eighth grade because they were needed at home. In response to this suggestion, Irene offered, "If you let 'Bert' go, then Lucy can go, too. I will stay home to take care of the house and help Mommy." This is what was decided, and with that, Irene abandoned her long-held dream to be a teacher. Sending Roberta and Lucy to high school was not an easy commitment. Poppy Joe had to drive them to town every day in the buggy and return to take them home. There was always deep mud and big mud holes to navigate. He also drove Sonny Wellmon from down the road. Whenever the buggy became stuck, Sonny got out to push. When Sonny climbed back in, he usually got mud all over the girls. This did not help their self-esteem. The two girls were already painfully aware that they had nothing to wear to school but old clothes. Times were hard. Also, only one other girl besides Lucy and Roberta wore long hair and Roberta thought that made them look country, or hillbilly. When Roberta's hair was loose, it fell well below her waist.

When the girls came home from school, they had to milk cows, do dishes, and many other chores. They had no time to even open a book. Roberta quit school at Christmas break of the tenth grade because she felt she could not compete with the other students. A month later, Lucy also quit school. They were the only ones of the family to go to High School.

No matter their own very large family, Sarah and Joe Cyrus kept an open house. Any and all who were hungry were welcome at their table. On Sunday's, the family dinner table was especially popular, and Sarah cooked abundantly for such occasions. A picture taken one particular Sunday demonstrates the typical guests who shared a meal with the family. One guest pictured was Brother Rayburn, a member of Lindsey's church. The other man in the photo was Mart Bradley, a bachelor who lived near Irene in a broken down old house. He wanted no one to be around his house, but Roberta remembers how the kids used to watch for when he was not at home and then would look in his windows. They said the roof had come right down into his bed, but he still slept there. Mr. Bradley came to the Cyrus home regularly for dinner and, as Roberta recalled, ate a lot! Another dinner guest posing for this picture was Aunt Sis Bradley, a very close friend and

neighbor. Fifty years later in Columbus, Ohio, Roberta pieced a quilt and found a lady to quilt it for her, discovering that the lady was the granddaughter of Aunt Sis Bradley!

Ethel owned a camera and was the one who took the pictures. The picture of Sarah feeding the chickens had been posed because she had wanted a picture of herself in the dress that Sheridan had given her. The "Sheridan dress" was a soft semi-sheer fabric in navy blue and was always a favorite dress.

In the later pictures, Sarah looks wasted and sad. She had been ill for a very long while. Dr. Hayes, with Dr. Jarred from Ashland, performed exploratory surgery to determine the source of her illness. Roberta remembers that after the surgery, Dr. Hayes explained TB of the bowel to the family. He said Sarah's intestines were all black and eaten up. They closed her up and sent her home to die. For six weeks the girls took turns sitting up with her each night. She also remembers that after Mommy died, Poppy Joe looked all over the house to find pictures of each member of the family to sit along the inside of her coffin so Sarah could take something of each of them with her. Two weeks later, Roberta had her seventeenth birthday.

Roberta had an appendectomy at Louisa Hospital a year after her mother's death. She still owed the debt for the operation when Poppy injured his thumb. It rapidly turned black with infection and he was admitted to the hospital to fight the subsequent gangrene. Roberta stayed with him, working many jobs for the hospital as she took care of her father. The work she did paid the debt to Dr. Hayes while earning room and board. Plus, Mrs. Hayes gave her a dollar a week spending money.

It was during this time that Herman Dixon occasionally stopped by to talk with Roberta. He was ten years older, but he liked her and asked her to go for a coke a couple of times, although Roberta never ever allowed a boy to pay for her. (She hated owing anybody anything.) Herman had been very close with another girl, but when that girl was attracted to someone else, he turned to Roberta for comfort. He leaned on her in his misery and her heart went out to him. They decided to marry, although they had no plans for living arrangements and decided they could just keep the marriage a secret.

They got a license on Wednesday and drove to Kenova, W. Va. on Saturday where they were married in a minister's home, with the minister's

wife coming from the kitchen to witness. It was October 10, 1936, 3 days after her nineteenth birthday. Then they drove to Ashland for their wedding night. Herman was attracted by a sign that told him there were drinks available in the dry town, so he stopped off in there, leaving Roberta sitting in the parked car. He met an old acquaintance inside and they drank together, forgetting the time. Roberta remembers how odd it felt, just sitting in the car and waiting for him on a strange, dark street on her wedding night.

When the newlyweds returned to Louisa, Roberta went back to work at the hospital and lived at home. Jeff and Pearl lived there now with Lucy and Poppy Joe. Roberta confided to Lucy and Pearl that she had married Herman. They approved of Herman, as did Mrs. Hayes. Everyone liked him. After about a month, she approached the subject with her Dad who was now home recuperating from the amputation of his arm due to gangrene. As she was shaving him one morning, she talked of how much she liked Herman Dixon, how she thought she would like to marry him. Poppy thought, then said "Well, the Dixon boys have always been nice to me". She had been unsure of his reaction because he and Mr. Dixon, both political activists as democrats, were adversaries - always on the opposite side of any issue. But, with this positive response, she and Herman became openly married. They quickly found an apartment above a flower shop in the Dixon-Moore Building on the same floor where Roberta's friend, Mary Billips, also had an apartment. Herman had a watchmaker's shop on the first floor for a time. They very quickly looked for a better place and soon found a little house to rent. The house was owned by Herman's father and was conveniently close behind Herman's parents' home where the couple shared many meals. Their first daughter, Eleanor, was born, and Herman set up a tiny but neat watchmaker's shop on Main Street just across from the church. Roberta thought that was very "uptown" and felt it was not proper to go there to talk to him while he was working.

One night after Herman had been drinking, they had a serious argument. He hit Roberta in the face, cutting her with his ring. The next morning, she took the baby and went back to her family home where she and Lucy discussed the matter. Lucy advised her that since their mother was dead, there was no place for her, as a woman with a baby, to go. She had no choice but to return to Herman and make the best marriage she could. That is what she did, and Herman never hit her again. A second daughter was soon born, named Hermia for her father.

Four months later, Roberta's father, Poppy Joe, died. He had intended to go to town that day, but he wasn't feeling well and laid down on the bed. Lucy was with him and sent word to Roberta in Louisa that Poppy Joe was dying, but Roberta arrived too late to say good-bye. Shortly thereafter, Herman's father bought a house he rented to them, and the family of four moved to the small green house with a porch on Clay Street, four short blocks from the Dixon home. While living there, another daughter was born. Fred Vinson suggested they name her Linda.

Herman was happy with the life in Louisa. He was near his parents and enjoyed socializing with his buddies. Despite the struggles, he seemed content with his lot in life. It was Roberta who insisted that they move on. She went to Ashland to get a Columbus newspaper, found an ad for a house to rent, contacted the agent and rented it. It was difficult because they required that one-fourth of the tenant's salary cover the rent, but Herman did not have a salary, only variable earnings. Roberta, however, succeeded in making the arrangements. She also found Herman a job with Harrington Jewelers. Mr. Dixon let them use his car for the move to Columbus and eventually turned it over to them. The couple arrived in the big city of Columbus and settled their infant and two toddler girls in the new home. The two-story house was flush with the sidewalk on Front and Fulton Streets located in a rundown district just outside the downtown area. Roberta remembers that she bought a "bedstead" for two dollars, then had to go buy a mattress. That was the beginning of furnishing the home, but they soon realized they must find a safer place to live.

Two months later, they found a nice home to rent on Highland Avenue in the North End near where Tilda and Fred lived. The family stayed there for two years, enrolling Eleanor at Milo School. It was at this time that a fourth daughter arrived whom they named for Herman's mother, Marcella. When Roberta came home from the hospital with the new baby, it was to three sick little girls. They all had the flu and Roberta was extremely upset that she had not been there with them when they needed her.

When Marcella was one year old, a reporter came to Roberta's door. He wanted to do a story about Columbus, Ohio's connection to the Treasurer of the United States. He photographed "Fred Vinson's four little nieces" sitting stair-step style on the piano bench. The article and picture were printed in the Columbus Dispatch.

Tilda and Fred had a very large house on Star Avenue, which was suitable to setting up a business. They began by renting rooms to truckers at one dollar for an hour or a night. Fred became an agent for connecting drivers with trucks needing to be hauled. When Tilda went to Arizona to be with her son Randall who was ill with TB, Roberta's family moved into their home. For the three years they lived there, Roberta assumed the business responsibilities. With this arrangement, Roberta was able to save enough to buy a house.

Herman and Roberta purchased their first house and moved there while pregnant with their fifth child. The house was in the South End on Moler Street, just off High Street. Moler Street was only about six houses long, ending at a weeded slope to the railroad tracks and the river. The baby boy they had dreamed of finally arrived. Jeffry Herman was born when the girls were eleven, nine, seven, and five years old. Everyone was delighted with that chubby baby. Roberta had received a message about him from her dad before she knew that she was pregnant. Tilda had taken her to visit a spiritualist church where a medium told her that Poppy Joe wants her to know that he is with Mommy, and Charley is with them; then said "It's a boy, and we're proud of him." (Charley had been their big, black family dog.)

Dorothy's eighteen year-old daughter, Ruby, had been married two years when she and her husband, Bascomb, came to Columbus to find work. They stayed with Roberta and Herman for a few months while trying to get their start. While Bascomb worked at Timkens, Ruby was available to help with the children so that Roberta was able to go to work. With such a large family, Roberta had to find ways to supplement their income. She had sold Avon and mail order fashions door to door in Louisa and, in Columbus, she continued to sell Avon. While living on Moler Street, she searched for positions that would give her working hours compatible with her children's needs. Jeffy was still a tiny baby when Roberta took a night job at Owens-Illinois Glass Company. It was possible to walk the ten or twelve blocks to work and Ruby could watch the baby. Roberta's duties were to do "anything that needed to be done", from sweeping to packing. She was forced to quit after two or three months because she was frightened to walk alone in the night, and the hard labor caused her to be almost too stiff to walk home in the dark of morning. Sometimes her back hurt so much she could not walk. When that happened, she crawled.

She applied for a license to keep children for Child Welfare, and for many years, between other jobs, there would be one to five extra children with her own. Roberta favored the tiny newborns, often caring for several at one time, bathing them in turn by the fireplace and believing that their crying was a darling sound. Many adoptive parents received their child at Roberta's door.

Every Saturday, Roberta washed her four little girls' hair and rolled it in curlers. She was determined that her daughters' appear as nicely dressed and turned out as any other children, and she always strove to buy good, quality clothes for them. She firmly believed it better to buy one expensive garment rather than three of less value. She took care to present herself tastefully dressed at all times, as well.

Her strong pride motivated Roberta's courage, drive, values, and the high standards to which she raised her children. Along with a deeply ingrained dedication to the Lord, Roberta also had profound reverence for life in any form. All human life, of course, was considered precious, but so, too, was all animal and plant life. Her voice would drop with wonder when she told of the awe she felt as a child when she watched the ashes of her father's burned-off fields carry the life of the plants back down into the earth to renew the next planting. Her awareness was fostered by the basic beliefs that her parents held sacred. Joe and Sarah also instilled in their family an air of gentility. They addressed everyone with honor and respect, but fully expected that respect to be returned. Roberta confirmed that heritage through her bearing, always one of a great and gracious lady, and Democrat to the bone.

Roberta's family did not miss Sunday School. Her children were very well behaved, lined up in the church pew. If they fidgeted in any way, they would draw their mother's "look", which froze them in place. The three oldest girls and Jeff, took piano lessons, with Eleanor becoming accomplished. Hermia went on to voice and art lessons. Roberta strove to give her children every advantage they wanted, although each half-dollar was a struggle to find.

When Bascomb was laid off by the Timken Company, he and Ruby returned to Louisa to wait out the layoff. About that time, Herman's nephew, Bud, came home from the war, moved in With Herman and Roberta, and later brought in his new wife, Bernice. Bud found work at Timken's and, on Herman's advice, went to Jeweler's School. Bernice helped take care of the Dixon children as well as four children from Child Welfare, including one

child with spina bifida. Herman now worked for Levinson's Jeweler's. Pop Levinson had offered him a higher salary to leave Harrington's and the Levinson's always included Herman's family in their Jewish feasts.

By this time, all the girls were attending Southwood School and Roberta began to campaign to purchase a nicer home in a better neighborhood for raising their family. Herman felt that such a move would be beyond them. Anyway, they were "too old". He was forty-one and Roberta was thirty-one. But Roberta wouldn't rest until she had made it happen. They moved to a big house with a large fenced yard she had found at 253 East Gate Street. They settled into the home with plenty of room, a deep backyard with two peach trees and a plum tree, a big front porch, and a huge garage. In later years Herman was able to set up a watch repair shop in the basement.

Eleanor started Barrett Junior High School and the other girls went to Siebert Elementary. Jeffy played with the little white puppy, Cricket. A happy life, but Roberta continued to work hard to provide for her family's needs. She persisted in selling Avon as well as the Ladies Fashions from glossy pictures the Fashion Company mailed to her. When Bud and Bernice lost their apartment and came back to Roberta's to stay until they found a place, Roberta was able to work those weeks on the General Motors Assembly line while Bernice took care of the children. After that, she again accepted children to board from Children's Services.

A year after Herman's father had died, his mother came to live out her life with them. Roberta had volunteered to take care of her rather than see her go into a nursing home. Grandma needed constant care, as she was very feeble and senile. Roberta cared for her with the loving tenderness she would give to a newborn baby. Grandma died a few months later and Herman and Roberta took her home to Louisa. She looked so sweet, pretty, and dignified in her coffin that Roberta was distressed, wanting so much for her children to see and remember their Grandma restored that way. She called Ruby, who was watching the children in Columbus, and asked her to bring them. Ruby and Bascomb set out to drive to Kentucky with the children through a severe winter storm, breaking down on the way and being rescued by the Highway Patrol.

Roberta found a position as a nurses aide at Grant Hospital. Later, she worked as a nurses aide at Mt. Carmel for a short period of time, and then Doctor's Hospital. Nursing was work that Roberta enjoyed and had done for Dr. Hayes in Louisa. While working at Doctor's Hospital, she felt that she

should be able to qualify for a Licensed Practical Nurse certification and applied for the course. She did not have time to attend school, go to work, and also care for her family, so she took the books home where she engaged in self-study. She took the test with the class and was later approached by the Head Nurse who informed her that she had achieved one of the highest scores ever. They wanted to hire her immediately, but could only offer night hours. Roberta could not leave her children at night, so found work at Riverside Hospital where she worked for three years.

The next spring Marcella became ill with Rheumatic Fever and was prescribed one year of bed rest. Roberta turned the dining room into a bedroom for her and everyone tried to help Marcella pass the time. As that year passed, Roberta found an ad in the newspaper for a used baby bassinet and impulsively bought it saying "we might get another tiny baby to care for some day". Two weeks later she got a call from a woman who had heard that she boarded children and asking would she take care of hers when it was born. The baby was brought to Roberta directly from the hospital. The mother showed little interest in him, although Roberta encouraged her to. His name was Lawrence James. That was ironic because Herman and Roberta had chosen James Lawrence for a boy's name should they ever have another. He came to them just at Christmas time and the whole family saw him as their special gift. It was unbelievable when his mother offered to let them keep him, a few months later. Of course they would keep him. It was equally unbelievable that he could ever have left their home. Jimmy was adopted as James Lawrence Dixon.

Two years later, with her own children old enough to care for their younger sibs, Roberta got a steady job at Omar Bakery, regularly bringing home loaves of bread and big bags of pastry that her brood made short work of. Herman was now working in Precision Instruments at North American Aviation. After three years at the bakery, Roberta found a position at Doctors Hospital as an LPN. She was an excellent nurse, receiving tributes from many sources. The head nurse for Roberta's assigned floor was a tough older lady. Small and bird-like, Mrs. Strickland ruled like a drill sergeant, but she admired and mentored Roberta and they became dear friends for life.

Roberta kept a welcome mat out for anyone who needed a place to stay, not unlike her mother. Besides Ruby, Bascomb, Bud, and Bernice, Roberta's niece Nola, (Jeff's daughter), stayed with the Dixon family while attending school. Frank's daughter, Sarah Lou, also stayed with Roberta

when she started a new job. When Lindsey's son, Charles, left the service, he came to Herman and Roberta's house for a few weeks, bringing along an army buddy, John Amos.

Herman and Roberta continued to have conflicts in their relationship. They had recognized early on that their marriage had not been one of true love. Herman had carried a torch for his first love throughout their years together. When not working, he preferred retiring to the newspaper or his workbench, whereas Roberta would rather go to church or take a drive. Yet, in spite of such discord, they both wanted to keep their family secure and lived together for 22 years on that momentum. When that need lessened as their children matured, there was nothing left but habit. And habit could not pacify the friction that was a constant. They divorced in 1958.

In 1957, 1958, and 1959, Roberta's three oldest daughters married, Hermia moving to California. Roberta was left to care for sixteen year old Marcella, eleven year old Jeff, and seven year old Jimmy while she continued to work as a nurse.

It was then that a crisis struck. Shy, quiet, naïve Marcella was pregnant. All of Roberta's mothering instincts rushed to protect her baby girl in any way she could. In those days, there were few options. Roberta took Marcella to a home for unwed mothers with the intention of giving the baby up for adoption. This disaster almost broke her heart but she had no time for that. She had to cover Marcella's disappearance before anyone became suspicious. She must protect her daughter's reputation. Roberta sold her home of eleven years in a panic and moved to a half double on East North Broadway in the North End of Columbus, a move that changed the boy's school. She kept Marcella's secret from everyone, including her daughter in California.

Then the full tragedy was realized. Marcella gave birth to twins who quickly died. Roberta bore that pain alone, keeping strong for Marcella's sake. The final blow was when she learned that Marcy in her naivete had long ago told everyone in the old neighborhood that she was pregnant.

Now Roberta took stock, cut her losses, and moved on. Leaving the rented half-double after six months, she bought a house on Crestview Road, still in the North End of town. When she applied for a loan, the loan officer was very impressed with this single woman's credit history. Incredulous that she had managed so well on so little money, they were happy to give her any

amount she wanted. She continued to work as a nurse, raising her boys, and helping her married daughters. Marcella married at 20. Hermia, returning from California with her two children, lived with Roberta while her husband worked in Cleveland and looked for a house.

During this time, Roberta had a love interest for some years, but it had not worked out. She was content with her independence, so that was all right with her. She felt strong and capable and liked being the one in control of her life.

In 1971, Roberta purchased a '71 Chevrolet Impala. The colors she preferred not being available, she special ordered a beige chassis, brown top, and beige interior, as well as other options. Linda and her children drove with Roberta to Detroit, Michigan where Roberta picked her car up from the assembly line and drove it home in triumph. She drove "her" car for many years and, no matter how it aged, her pleasure and pride in it never lessened.

Jeff had graduated from High School, then from Columbus Tech., found a job, and was subsequently drafted by the Army. Roberta was terrified as she watched the soldiers receive their assigned destinations. Jeff narrowly missed being sent to Vietnam. He was stationed in Germany for two years and for those two years, Roberta grieved for him, finding comfort in writing a story about her son. Jeff returned to a job and an apartment, marrying three years later.

Jimmy was the only one living at home when Roberta had called for service on her refrigerator. While the repairman was there, he bumped his head painfully on a cupboard. Though Roberta was sympathetic, she also thought it tremendously funny and laughed at him. To apologize, she offered him a cup of coffee. A few days later he came back with a replacement part, and later to "check on the refrigerator" and have another cup of coffee. Two weeks later, he was at her door again asking if she had anymore of that coffee. Roberta did everything she could to discourage his interest. She knew that he was much younger than she, and, stressing that, told him to please not come back. However, he would not be stopped from checking on her from time to time, and at one of those times, Roberta needed him.

Jimmy's friends were trouble, and the trouble eventually touched him. This was big trouble because although he was not personally guilty, he was associated and he was over eighteen. Roberta was desperate and did not know where to turn. But her G. E. repairman did. He took charge, calling in

favors from influential lawyers and a judge. The trouble went away, and Jim Loar was a welcome friend.

Jim Loar was Roberta's junior by twenty years, yet the amazing thing was that they seemed totally matched. Roberta was a young and gay woman in spite of her calendar age, and Jim had been mature and serious all of his life. Their appearance has always been one of belonging together. Jim was the first to fall in love and he seriously pursued her. She glowed from the attentions he gave her; his compliments, his courtly manner, his generosity. He wanted to give her the moon. Roberta was overwhelmed. No one had ever cherished her this way. How could she help but love him?

The confirmation that their being together was "meant to be" came as they got better acquainted and shared their life stories. Jim Loar had come from the very same little community in Kentucky as Roberta. He had actually attended the same one-room schoolhouse she used to sweep! He also personally knew many of her family and friends from Louisa. One may shake one's head in wonder that they found each other in Columbus, Ohio, but no one could deny that they were destined to do so.

Nevertheless, Roberta tried. She argued heatedly that this relationship could not be. She proclaimed it was wrong! She believed that as she became an old woman, he would still be young and should be free to go on with his life. Jim, however, was patient and faithful and let her rail. He just stayed by her until she realized that he had become essential to her. She finally acknowledged that and they were married on October 16, 1978.

After 12 years on Crestview Road, Jim and Roberta moved to a brick ranch house on a large, fenced, secluded lot on Esterbrook. With the fireplaces, finished basement rooms, a front porch with a swing, and an enclosed porch in back, they have the perfect home to enjoy Roberta's 11 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

Through her life of hard work, trouble and fears, Roberta impressed all who knew her, mostly with her cheerful nature. She was famous for her laughing spirit and sense of fun. While employed at Doctor's Hospital, she worked hard, but kept a happy attitude with the patients and other employees, laughing and sharing jokes. She had inherited a quick wit from her mother. She loved to sing and, in her youth, had been encouraged to study opera. As an adult, she sang solos for church services and sometimes Hermia joined her for a duet. When her children were small, Roberta was

part of a group who sang for prisoners in the Columbus jail on Third Avenue. She always sang around the house. Her favorites were hymns and the old country ballads, but she could also yodel. She would only yodel for her children, and they had to beg hard to get her to do it.

Roberta had other interests. She enjoyed traveling. She traveled to Los Angeles, California by Greyhound Bus in 1962 to visit Hermia and Jim. She returned to Los Angeles once again in 1967, but traveled by air, her first flight. While Jeff was stationed in Germany, Roberta and Jimmy visited him, touring Germany, Austria, Italy, and Switzerland. When she married Jim, they shared this love of travel. They journeyed to places such as Hawaii, Savannah, New York, Canada, Montecello, San Francisco, Yosemite, Washington DC, Graceland, and the Smokey Mountains. Lucy and Elman Clay joined them on several of their driving vacations. Roberta tells of the time that she, Jim, Lucy, and Elman Clay looked out from a Virginia Mountain side to the view of four states. She was so paralyzed with fear of the height that she dropped to the ground and quickly crawled back up the steps in the hillside to the car.

Roberta joined bowling leagues, winning enough trophies in a period of over twenty years to fill a room. She also loved the Cincinnati Reds. She watched soap operas and The Price is Right while simultaneously listening to each play of an afternoon game as called on the AM radio. Many people have been surprised by her sudden loud reaction to a caught fly ball while she had seemed so intently following the program on television. Her devotion to the Reds even eclipsed her fear of heights. Despite her terror of high places, she and Jim joined Ruby and Bascomb to climb into the nose-bleed seats to watch her beloved Reds play in the Cincinnati stadium, one of the best of all of her good memories! (She could not tolerate the height for long, however, and Jim paid dearly for better seats.)

Every year there were several big family picnics. When Roberta's children were small, these outings often included the zoo or an amusement park. As the children grew and had children of their own, the picnics took place beside a river or in the woods, often joined by Lucy and her family.

Family. That is what life was all about. Sarah and Joe taught that lesson well, and Roberta reinforced those lessons to her children and grandchildren. Everyone knows that there is one day in the year more important than any other - the day in May when all of Sarah and Joe Cyrus' children and their children's children come home. "Homecoming" means "Blessing" to this

extended family. A time and place to renew the basis of their spiritual lives and bask in unconditional love and support, enabling them to leave refueled with a year's worth of strength and serenity until coming home again. Her devotion to the home of her birth and the values it stood for defined Roberta.

Always, Roberta lived for the Lord. Through joyful times or painful times, her faith sustained her.

April 8, 2001

Because of the absence of documentation and sometimes conflicting memories, I decided to go with a vague format, writing in very general terms. Everything is true but maybe not exactly in order of occurrence. We can call it "literary license".

Mom read the first parts three weeks ago with interest and pleasure. Last week I read the rest to her, suggesting from time to time that we take a break, but she would not. We were surprised that she was able to keep her attention on it and heard it all, occasionally laughing at our comments, and often verifying it was true. I really wrote it for her and though I regret not doing so sooner, I am happy she knows about it and enjoyed hearing about who she has been.

She told me she was 14 or 15 in this picture.