

**Katharine Hill Apperson**

**This is Your Life**

In honor of your birthday, many of your friends and loved ones have graciously agreed to contribute anecdotes about you. This booklet is a collection of these anecdotes and memories, plus a few photographs and other mementos, all arranged in chronological order. I think you will be interested to know that nearly everyone responded to the questionnaire, and there is a remarkable similarity to the comments people make about you.

Read and enjoy! These statements are arranged in chronological order, with those who have known you longest coming first.

**Brooke Road...Richmond, Virginia...Ingles Ferry...Dublin**

“ I remember with great pleasure our times at Myrtle Beach when we were all much younger. John had all the children organized to do chores, Helma cooked, we all shopped and enjoyed the beach. No one had an accident or got sick and in retrospect it seems just perfect.” Elizabeth Walker...sister

“Memorable Occasions: ...Leading the Richmond German with her cousin Ralph Nesbit at Cousin ‘Willie’s’ invitation when he was President!...Taking my new red Pontiac convertible to Easters at UVA with Armistead Peyton! She was a true Southern Belle! And still is!!!” William Palmer Hill, Jr....brother

“On July 4<sup>th</sup>, when I was about 8 years old, Catherine’s brother, Billy, and our cousin Tucker Harrison, both boys a couple of years older than us, challenged me to hold Progressively bigger firecrackers in my fingers and let them explode. The 1” and 2” ones were not so bad, but when we had worked up to the 5” size my fingers were a mess. However, Catherine made my showing off for her worthwhile by being very solicitous of my swollen thumb and soaking it in water.” John B. Young...cousin

“...Always teased her about looking like Katharine Hepburn... Have so many happy memories. She and Johnnie visited Harry and me. We had a great weekend in Charlotte with them. I had a visit with you (Ellen) and Kat after Johnnie died, etc., etc.” Ethel Jordan Gravely (Tina)...friend of 65 years; bridesmaid

"I can't remember...It has been so long ago. The party sounds glorious. I know you will have a grand time." Marjorie Christian Schley (Kitty's grandmother... Duncan, and my grandmother, Janie, were sisters)...has known Kitty about 60 years

"Katharine experienced a memorable adventure while she was at La Rivière, a cousin's home in Radford, Va. On August 14, 1940, Katharine and Roberta went to lunch in Christiansburg, Va., and when they returned New River was surrounding the home. There was no way to get near except by boat. Katharine and Uncle Billy and Aunt Sallie were taken out in an Old Town Canoe and had to climb over a wire fence into a flat boat to escape from the rising river. That night the river receded and Uncle Billy walked back in at 9:00 P.M., but Katharine, Roberta, and Aunt Sallie spent the night with a relative, Elberta Harris Miller. Katharine worried about the safety of her parents, who were visiting at Ingles Ferry on New River, too. The road leading to that house was completely flooded by the raging river. However, being built on higher ground, that house was not touched or damaged by New River." Roberta Ingles Steele...first cousin

"My winter with Aunt Kit and the family was a lively one and my first impression of Katharine was her fascination with movie stars and the scrap book she kept. There were many 'bad hair' days and the trauma of selecting the right lip-stick. In the summers at 'the Ferry,' Elizabeth and I were the tomboys while Katharine enjoyed the company of the aunts. After those carefree days we were all married and went our separate ways, Sadly enough, in recent years, have seen too little of one another but are always eager for news and delighted to see one another when possible. I'm sure this will be a wonderful celebration and mean a great deal to Katharine." Mary Bullard...second cousin, once removed.

"I remember when she was reading 'Macbeth' when the rest of us were still into 'the Bobsey Twins.'" When she won a history prize in Junior High, the presenter infuriated lots of us saying 'even though' she is a girl. Her wedding day was so hot that it took two bath towels to dry her off after the service." Sue Dickenson Durden...long-time girlhood friend and bridesmaid.

#### **Sweet Briar College...dating...marriage (1930s and early 1940s)**

"One of my favorite stories about Kitty centers around a very special weekend in her life when your father proposed to her! We were working at the highway department during World War II in the early 1940s. Kitty and I made plans to visit Johnnie and Billy Hill who were both stationed in New York. We had never driven to New York, and we'd never confronted one-way streets in

our lives! I'll never forget leaving Mrs. Hill's house that morning bound for a weekend in the Big City. Much later, your mother told me that your father had proposed to her. (I think she said we were all four on a bus going somewhere) while we were on that fun and propitious trip. I've never forgotten it – being a romantic at heart!!!” Julia Gray (Saunders) Michaux...friend

“Kitty made my daughter a needlepoint pillow for her wedding gift – no greater gift. I had two SBC girls visiting me – Kitty took them up to see, hear, & play the carillon at her church! (your singing group, Ellen...one Chinese, one Ethiopian)” Elizabeth Lee McPhail...friend from Sweet Briar...1934.5 & 6

### **Schenectady...Chagrin Falls...Erie...Lake George (1942-1958)**

“When she was in Glen Ridge in Schenectady, she made me a woven leather belt which I still treasure – Schenectady, Ohio, New York – so many good memories – Hope you'll send us a snapshot of you all, and drink a toast for us. I'm sure she missed having electric trains in her dining room – How we'd love to join you! Who has the train set?” Miriam and Roland Carreker...friends since about 1949

“ ...A friend of Kitty's from Sweet Briar took me over to meet Kitty one afternoon. Kitty and I started talking and never stopped. That was about 50 years ago – during the war! Kitty, John, Griff and I had our most fun times at Lake George at Uncle John's summer home right on the lake. One of our most exciting evenings was when we put the children (at least four, maybe five or six) to bed on the second floor in little cots that were in a row on each side of the room. Well, when we went up to check on them we discovered that two children had fallen out of bed and were lost under the eaves of the roof somewhere. We crawled around, shining our flashlights into every crevice. Finally found the two last ones and the rest of the night was peaceful. Uncle John's lakeside was beautiful, and we all helped keep it ship-shape. Whenever we went swimming, on coming out, each one had to put another rock on the shoreline. Wherever we were the four of us played bridge at least once a week. Once, when we were in New York City for the weekend, after going out to a night club and getting back to our hotel at 1:00 a.m., we put our suitcase between the two beds and got out our cards to have a little bridge game. Griff and I send you our best wishes for a happy birthday. How we would love to be there to help celebrate! Lots of love... Pat and Griff.” Pat and Griff Edwards...friends since she and John moved to Schenectady

“Growing up in Blacksburg promised the realization of a girl’s dream – attending formal dances at V.P.I. My sisters and I were anticipating this happy time for ourselves – soon, soon...Here in our house on a dance weekend was Kitty donning a beautiful evening gown and combing her hair which didn’t need to be combed again – it was perfect already. She was almost ready to go. John (and Jim) were in school at V.P.I. and John had invited Kitty to this particular set of dances. John was very handsome and Kitty so lovely. What an attractive couple they made! Poor Kitty had no privacy. We girls just sat there and watched wide-eyed as she dressed. John arrived and was engaged in conversation with our father, Kent. As Kitty hurried down the stairs, she turned to me and said, ‘Just remember – every little doggie has its day.’ I almost burst into tears I was so envious of her – going to a dance at V.P.I!!!!” Nita B. Apperson Little...first cousin (half) of John’s

“When Kitty and John were dating they came to our house in Blacksburg to go to a VPI dance. Kitty had dressed in her white evening dress and was sitting at the dinner table, I was serving her a cup of coffee, and stumbled and poured the whole thing on her white dress. I was so embarrassed I cried.” Mary Kent Apperson Elliott...cousin my marriage

“The four of us were bridge players. We used to drive from Bay Village – west of Cleveland – to Chagrin Falls – east of Cleveland – for dinner and bridge. We had little children in those days. Now I have great-grands – amazing! I am glad to hear from you because Kitty had forgotten how to write, and she is not as old as I am! Shame on her! I have many fond memories of Kitty and Johnnie. We had wonderful times in those days of tiny children, tiny houses, tiny budgets, and much huge love! We also had tiny incomes – how we made it I’ll never know! Have a marvelous time at the party. I certainly wish I could be there – Much love, Addie.” Addie Comstock...old friend since the end of WWII.

#### **Charlotte, N.C....Sterling Road...Myers Park...Covenant Pres...**

“Mrs. Apperson has always had a special place in my heart. Ellen and I became friends in elementary school when the Apperson family moved to Charlotte. Ellen used to host spend-the-might parties in her brothers’ rooms upstairs for girls from our church youth group. Mrs. Apperson would prepare wonderful snacks and breakfasts for us for those parties, and as we got older, we moved outside to their nice brick patio on Sterling Road for parties. That patio looked so pretty surrounded by lots of colorful Sweet Briar tulips and daffodils! When I was expecting

our first child, Scott, Mrs. Apperson and Ellen gave a lovely baby shower for me. They had cloth material with bird designs, and the guests set to work with needle and thread to cut out the designs and make a mobile for the baby's room. It was a wonderful idea for getting guests involved at a party. Several years after Ellen returned to the United States from living in Austria, where Mary Lou McFarland and I had visited her, Mrs. Apperson gave a lovely dinner party for Ellen's Austrian roommate, Valerie. Mrs. Apperson was such a charming hostess that she put the shy, unsure Valerie at ease immediately. When Ellen and Kirk were married, I had a wonderful time as a member of the wedding party. It was a joyous, fun-filled weekend of wedding festivities, and I have often thought in the years hence that I had never been involved in a wedding in which all of the guests and family members enjoyed each other's company so thoroughly. Here again, Mrs. Apperson was the gracious hostess, putting everyone from out-of-town at ease during what could have been a very stressful time. She carried through on the festivities beautifully! All this is told to illustrate my point that Kitty Apperson enjoys people. She enjoys being around others, making them comfortable and renewing friendships. For so many years she has been a faithful elder at Covenant Presbyterian Church, serving with a committed Christian spirit. She has been a true shining ray of sunshine to so many in our congregation, sincerely concerned for others. When I hear the scripture from Proverbs 17:17, I think of Kitty Apperson: 'A friend loves at all times.' These words perfectly describe this wonderful lady whose friendship I deeply treasure." Jane Taylor...a friend

"She was a 'golf widow' for a long time and all of us had a hard time breaking 100 (50 on nine holes.)" Charlie and Louise Allison...friends about thirty years

"I reminded Kitty the last time we talked that she has remained in my memory for years - via a beautiful Crewel embroidered pillow she made for me about 20 years ago. I still use it in my bedroom and think about her each time I 'fluff' it! And then there is the 'Brigadoon' after-party when you graduated from MPHA, Ellen! I shall never forget how Kitty stood in her kitchen all day long making sandwiches, etc. for the gang. And then, when all the teenagers came to celebrate a wonderful performance, I heard a piper - marching down the street to 1901 Sterling Road! Great fun!" Betty Zoret...former neighbor, since 1961 when she moved to Sterling Road

"Was a marvelous choir mom, support in operettas, musical events, etc." Dick and Betty Peek, organists and choirmasters from Covenant Presbyterian

“While visiting Katharine and family, at the death of her husband John, I had told Kitty how much I admired a ceramic Sandpiper which was displayed on a shelf. Sometime later, she came to me with the bird gaily decorated with a bright green ribbon. ‘Merry Christmas,’ she whispered, handing me the treasured item. In all her sorrow of losing her husband- she thought of making someone else happy with her gift.” Mable Ward Apperson...sister-in-law

### **Weddings...Grandchildren...Trianon...Sharon Towers (1980 – present)**

“Helen had previously met Kitty at Sweet Briar when she and Mother attended Ellen’s senior recital there in 1971. Much later we frequently saw Kirk and Ellen at St. Paul’s after their marriage in 1978, and although Kitty visited them at V.E.S. I did not meet her until after Mother’s funeral at St. Paul’s and burial at Presbyterian Cemetery, June 13, 1979, when she and Mother’s R.M.W.C. friend, Mrs. Susan Hicks, came for that occasion and spoke to us afterward at the cemetery. We immediately decided to continue our conversation and invited them to a family gathering at our home for supper, since they were not returning to Charlotte until the next day or so. Kirk also came with them and we spent a pleasant mealtime outside on our patio. We later renewed our friendship with Kitty when she returned to V.E.S. for Katharine’s christening (June 1981) and Jim’s wedding to Toni at the chapel (June 1982). There were other visits, church here at St. Paul’s on frequent occasions, with the last family gatherings in Lynchburg when Kirk was ordained deacon at St. Paul’s, and John stayed with my brother James here overnight. All of these family gatherings, most of them church centered, have let us see Kitty frequently and keep up with her many and varied activities. Our congratulations and best wishes on her 75<sup>th</sup> birthday!” Sam Williams, Jr....an ‘outlaw’ – my father and Ellen’s father were first cousins

“I went to college at Davidson – 500 miles from my parents but only 25 miles from Aunt Katherine. It was a real comfort to have her close by and I’ll always be grateful for her hospitality. She had me over for meals on several occasions and always sent me back to school loaded down with leftovers. She came to hear me sing with the College Choir a couple of times and she hosted a luncheon for me on my graduation day.” John Baxter James, Jr....great-nephew (Kitty’s son, Liz’s grandson)

Haven’t been with her enough to know about anecdotes or sayings so will just include several photographs that might bring back happy memories of her Sweet Briar sponsored trip to

Holland.” David and Anne Brown...Related by marriage through our common children, that is, our children in common

“Our friendship with Kitty began at Ellen’s and Kirk’s wedding when she and R.W. realized that he and her husband were at Virginia Tech, in R.O.T.C. at the same time. We were so interested in hearing her tell about Ingle’s Ferry and we still have the picture postcard she sent about the ferry. We were happy to have her visit us at Chapel Hill at the time of Mo’s (Margaret’s) wedding. It is always a pleasure to spend time with such a warm, interesting and friendly person.”Margaret (Moggie) Moffett...sister of Ellen’s mother-in-law

“This is not really an anecdote, but my favorite times with Katherine were when we walked up and down the beaches at Topsail Island, Litchfield Beach and Virginia Beach, gossiping, talking about family...and heads down looking for shells.” Bridget...sister-in-law

“I met Kitty through a mutual friend, Carrie Marshall Gilchrist. Kitty was in our weekly bridge club. C.M. invited Kitty and me to come and spend the night with her and go to the Junior League Follies just a month before she died. It was a happy time for all of us.” Anna Louise Spigener...friend for 16-18 years

“I saw Kitty when she came to visit with Liz (my very good friend for fifty years, more or less.) At one time Kitty invited me to come to Charlotte with Liz. I came and had such a good time. Kitty was a super hostess. We have kept in touch through the years – and hope to send a special card for the celebration of her 75<sup>th</sup>! My children did that for me in 1991 and it was a highlight of my life. It will be the same for Katherine. You are so good and loving to do this. My daughter lives in Roanoke also, and I’m going down tomorrow. You two must meet and I hope to propose that pronto. She is working at the Roanoke Memorial Hospital and loves the work. Her name is Frances (Jake) Holsinger. Best of luck to you and yours.” Pauline Ragland...friend of 15 years

“I remember going to the pool with her.” David Brown...grandson

“There are so many, but what comes to mind occurred in the summer of 1978. Ellen and I had been married only 3 months when I left for Army Basic Training in Columbia, S.C. It was very difficult to be apart for the entire summer, but I did have an opportunity to visit with Kitty in Charlotte. Self-conscious about being a new son-in-law, self-conscious about my haircut and

uniform, I know I was anxious. But Kitty was so gracious – as always – and immediately put me at ease. What a wonderful gift for hospitality she has!” Kirk Brown...son-in-law

It is hard to choose from a lifetime of memories, especially mother-daughter memories. One of my earliest images is of the greeting which took place when my mother came home from her long stay in the hospital. I was about two, and I really didn't understand who she was. She had been gone so long and I was too young to remember her. She was sitting in a wing chair in the living room on Clifton Park Road, and I can just barely remember coming around the back side of her chair to get a look at her. I knew that everyone was excited about the event, but I was anxious. Now that I am a mother, I can imagine what emotion that homecoming held for her. There is no doubt in my mind that Mother inherited some of Mary Ingles' strength, courage and endurance to have gone through her ordeal with such grace. Kirk and I have often marveled at the task Mother faced after being away from her three children for so long. I'm sure that she felt discouraged at times in her efforts to reconnect with all of us. You accomplished that and more, Mother, and we all appreciate your cheerfulness, patience, generosity and selflessness. Happy Birthday! Ellen Brown...daughter