



“I Am Second.”



by Sue Wright

Marian Reineke

If you're old as I am, you'll remember the Orange Biographies of Famous Americans children found in school libraries during the 40's and 50's. I couldn't get enough of them. Each was an open door into the life of a notable person: a GPS tour of places they lived on a time line depicting their daily activities and personal accomplishments. I still love reading a good biography or autobiography, and Marian Reineke's for I AM SECOND is no exception. Her "orange book" of memories provides us not only a nostalgic look at her life but is an engine for remembering our own. I experienced a lot of "me too" moments reading Marian. How about you?

“Family history is fascinating to me,” Marian begins. “My own family's, for example, is deeply rooted in Kansas City, Missouri. (Mine too!) Where my great-grandfather, Isaac Jackson, and my great-great grandfather, Larkin Steele, farmed near what is now 20th and Jackson. Jackson Avenue is named for my great-grandfather, a fact I recall my fourth grade teacher at Greenwood Grade School which was located at 27th and Cleveland—now closed—disputing with me. She insisted the street must be named for President Andrew Jackson. To prove my claim, mother sent me back to school with enough documentation to change the teacher's mind.

“In 1852, Great-great-grandfather Steele donated an acre of his property for a schoolhouse, and later, Great-grandfather

Jackson served as a member of the school board. Before she married, my grandmother, Nell Jackson Rex taught in the school that came to flourish on Great-great-grandfather's donated acre. Located at 24th and Elmwood, this school has also been closed.

“My mother was attending Kensington Baptist Church—the church presently housing the Haitian Baptist Church that Second Baptist partners with reaching out to Haiti—when she met my Dad who was a Methodist (Marian! My dad grew up a Methodist too!). Harriet and Shirley Board—yes, my father's name was Shirley—were married at Kensington Baptist but would ‘compromise’ on a choice of church by joining First Baptist, an American Baptist Church at Linwood and Park. I remember picking up Grandma every Sunday morning with my Dad and dropping her off at Kensington Baptist where she taught a married couples class. From there Dad and I returned home for mother and on to worship services at First.

“First Baptist was a large church with over 1000 people in services some Easter Sundays. Unlike Kensington, a neighborhood church, First was a congregation drawn from people city-wide—my church peers coming from high schools throughout the Kansas City School District. Our years at First, my mother taught a Junior High Sunday School class and Dad was a deacon and greeter. My parents also helped to feed

the BYF group every Sunday night. I sang in the choir from grade school through high school and was eventually married at First Baptist.

“True of most families in those days, our family had only one car—the car Dad took to work each day (*That was us!*). As a result, I couldn't get to First Baptist for Vacation Bible School and attended VBS at Kensington Baptist instead. Kensington was within walking distance of our house and First was not. I took piano from the organist at Kensington whose house was also within walking distance. I recall saving part of my allowance money each week to buy a donut at the local bakery on those days I walked from piano. It would be for me, the start of a bad and life-long habit. (*Anybody ever eat a donut from Dodd's Bakery in Englewood? They were delicious!*)

“Growing up at 23rd and Myrtle, I lived just six blocks from my grandparents, so whenever I got mad at my parents, it was easy ‘running away’ to Grandma



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and Grandpa's house (*I ran away at five to jump a train and ride the rails a block from our house but sneaked back home before my folks found out. They never let on if they knew, anyway!*). Usually on these occasions, Mother would have called Grandma by the time I arrived and set me up for feeling very contrite.

"The summer before my freshman year in high school, we moved to another area of Kansas City so when I graduated it would be from Southeast High which sits at the entrance of Swope Park. It is closed, like other schools in my past, making it even sweeter, my alma mater, William Jewell College, is not only open but going strong. (*Yea, Jewell!*)

"While at William Jewell, I was blessed to meet many wonderful people, names dear to us at Second Baptist even now, including Dr. David O. Moore who was the new professor for New Testament and with whom I shared membership on the College Union Board. My English teacher was Margaret Prather and my major professor was Dr. Bruce Thomson, head of the Sociology Department (*He was the best!*). A close friend of my mother's and someone who had once babysat me also taught at Jewell—her name—Lutie Chiles. I would meet Charles Reineke, a student and my future husband, at Jewell, too. We married after graduation and then moved to Kansas State in Manhattan where Charles got his Doctorate in Chemistry. Our daughter Susan was born there.

"From K State, Charles took a job at Dow Chemical Company in Midland, Michigan, as a research scientist, and it was in Midland that our son Karl was born. Our family of four attended First Baptist Church where I would find myself once more blessed to meet people of both William Jewell and Second Baptist connection. This time it was Jim and Marcia Pierce (*Marcia and I were Panaegis sisters!*)—a couple who had grown up in Liberty, but were younger than Charles and I so we hadn't known them in their and our Jewell days. We became good friends, our daughter Susan becoming their sons' regular babysitter.

"In 1984 my life took a path I never expected for me and my family. My husband was diagnosed with cancer and died in 1987 at the age of 49. Amid his declining health, my mother was to require placement in a nursing home in Kansas City. Thankfully, relatives saw to her needs until I was able to transfer her to a nursing home in Midland after Charles' death. Being an only child, I wanted Mother close so I could take care of her. After my son finished college in 1991, my children and I and my mother moved back 'home' to Liberty where my Mother died in 1994. She had lived in a nursing home for 11 years.

"I remember fondly how Betty Pierce—Jim Pierce's mother—latched onto me as soon as I was back in Liberty and took me to church at Second Baptist. The second Sunday I was there, I heard someone from behind me say—"Well, if it isn't Marian Board!" It was Margaret Prather. In 1992 I joined the church and Dr. Tanner's Bible Study Class where Dr. D.O. Moore and Margaret Thomson were members. After thirty years in Michigan, I learned for sure, what goes around comes around . . . more years of adult care-giving, too.

"In 2004, my mother's first cousin and her husband, who owned a house in Parker, Colorado, asked me to become their Power of Attorney. They didn't have children and were living at home

but dependent on 24-hour assistance. My cousins made me promise I would never put either of them in a nursing home. Three months later, my cousin's husband was dead, but she lived on to the age of 98—dying in 2007. I commuted to Colorado many times in those years and, with the help of a care manager, kept their affairs in order.

"Caring for my husband throughout his illness, my mother during her residence in a nursing home, and serving as Power of Attorney for my cousins, I learned how challenging the role of caregiver to an adult can be. And perhaps that's the reason I feel so called to prepare others for this often unexpected and complicated task, most recently answering that call by helping the Deacon Encouragement Team compile a Caregiver's Guide for sharing at Caregiver Seminars sponsored by our church."

And what does Marian enjoy more than anything else these days? She enjoys being grandmother to her four grandchildren. "I call them, 'the light of my life,'" she says. (Guess it's no surprise I call them, her little sequels!)

Please, won't you take a page from Marian and share a slice of your "orange" soon? Suewrights@att.net.

