

Mother's Day celebrations

We can thank Carol for the following essay about mothers and their relationship with their family.

This is a truly BEAUTIFUL piece. Please read this at a slow pace, digesting every word and in leisure...do not hurry...this is a treasure. For those lucky to still be blessed with your Mom, this is beautiful. For those of us who aren't, this is even more beautiful. For those who are moms, you'll love this. Carol

The young mother set her foot on the path of life. "Is this the long way?" she asked. And the guide said: "Yes and the way is hard. And you will be old before you reach the end of it. But the end will be better than the beginning."

But the young mother was happy, and she would not believe that anything could be better than these years. So she played with her children, and gathered flowers for them along the way, and bathed them in the clear streams; and the sun shone on them and the young Mother cried, "Nothing will ever be lovelier than this."

Then the night came, and the storm, and the path was dark, and the children shook with fear and cold, and the mother drew them close and covered them with her mantle, and the children said, "Mother, we are not afraid, for you are near, and no harm can come."

And the morning came, and there was a hill ahead, and the children climbed and grew weary, and the mother was weary. But at all times she said to the children, "A little patience and we are there." So the children climbed, and when they reached the top they said, "Mother, we would not have done it without you."

And the mother, when she lay down at night looked up at the stars and said, "This is a better day than the last, for my children have learned fortitude in the face of hardness. Yesterday I gave them courage. Today, I've given them strength."

And the next day came strange clouds which darkened the earth, clouds of war and hate and evil, and the children groped and stumbled, and the mother said: "Look up. Lift your eyes to the light." And the children looked and saw above the clouds an everlasting glory, and it guided them beyond the darkness. And that night the Mother said, "This is the best day of all, for I have

shown my children God." And the days went on, and the weeks and the months and the years, and the mother grew old and she was little and bent. But her children were tall and strong, and walked with courage.



And when the way was rough, they lifted her, for she was as light as a feather; and at last they came to a hill, and beyond they could see a shining road and golden gates flung wide. And mother said, "I have reached the end of my journey. And now I know the end is better than the beginning, for my children can walk alone, and their children after them."

And the children said, "You will always walk with us, Mother, even when you have gone through the gates." And they stood and watched her as she went on alone, and the gates closed after her. And they said: "We cannot see her but she is with us still. A Mother like ours is more than a memory. She is a living presence....."



Your Mother is always with you.... She's the whisper of the leaves as you walk down the street; she's the smell of bleach in your freshly



laundered socks; she's the cool hand on your brow when you're not well. Your Mother lives inside your laughter. And she's crystallized in every tear drop. She's the place you came from, your first home; and she's the map you follow with every step you take. She's your first love and your first

heartbreak, and nothing on earth can separate you. Not time, not space... not even death!.... is where your story begins

The second picture was taken at Applebee's, on Saturday, since the twins could not make the Sunday breakfast at the Parkhouse restaurant in University City. Finally, the last picture was taken at the Viejas Casino, where we enjoyed lunch and some Bingo. Grandma was the big winner, with a \$150 win on a "you pick em" card.

Grandma thanks everyone for the celebrations, shopping trip, gifts, flowers, and phone calls on this special day.

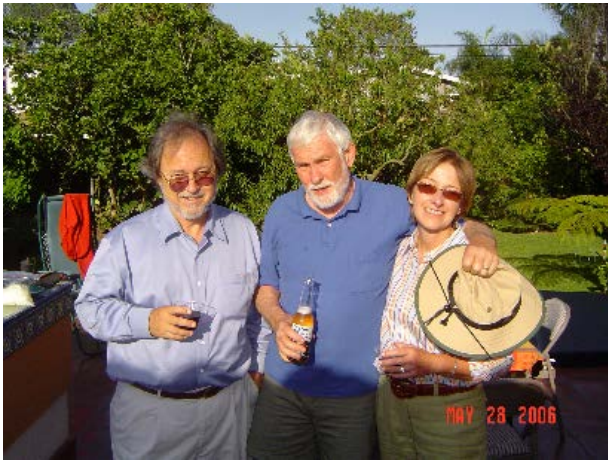
The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News

June, 2006

Birthday party for Bud

Sunday, May 28 was a special day for Bud because it was the 65th year for him. In order to properly celebrate this special occasion Margaret (with help, we suspect, from Bud) put on a fabulous dinner party for many friends and family. We arrived in time to enjoy lots of snacks (the shrimp was delicious), followed by a variety of entrees and side dishes. The outdoor grill was fired up, and a large slice of salmon was expertly broiled. Because of another family party on the same evening (Kristy's graduation) we could not stay for the entire party, but we did enjoy helping Bud celebrate this special day, and wish him many, many more of the same. We did get some pictures, as follows.

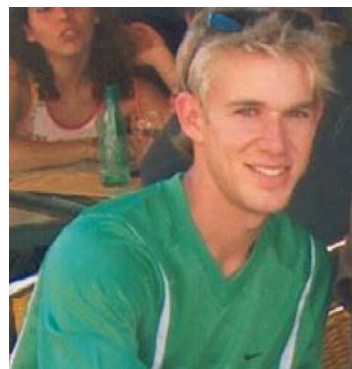


New college graduates – Kristy, Brett, and Megan



This spring there were three grandchildren who graduated from college, and we are happy to congratulate them on this important first step in their

careers. On May 28th Listy gave a party for Kristy, and we have some pictures..



On the way to the airport (another Australia jaunt for ISO) Francie stopped off with Lyle, Brett, and Bryce. We had a chance to congratulate Brett on his graduation, and talk about his future plans. He will be staying in San Francisco for a while, and may continue his studies on cinema making.



Megan also graduated from UC Berkley, in the midst of a rain storm. Since her party is scheduled for the 11th, the full story will appear in the July RFNL. And CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THREE!!!

The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News

June, 2006

Some news from Aunt Eloise in Sumter SC

A week or so ago we were pleasantly surprised to receive in the mail a large envelope from Aunt Eloise in Sumter. The contents consisted of a section from the Sunday, May 14th edition of the local paper, **The Item**. That issue highlighted one of Sumter's most prominent citizens, Eloise Riel. For those of you unfamiliar with the Sumter Riel family, Eloise is the wife of Grandpa's older brother, James Riel, who passed away some years ago. The picture shown at the right column was taken in 1978. Pictured from the left are Dr. Jason Silverman, History Professor at Winthrop College, in North Carolina, his wife Susan (older daughter of Jim and Eloise), Eloise, Jimmy, Debbie (younger daughter) and husband Dave Nix, owner of a local construction company. The children are Scott and Andy Nix. Jason and Susan have a son, Alexander, born after the picture was taken. Andy and Scott are grown up now, of course, and Andy is a Chaplain in the Army. Scott lives and works in Charleston SC. Many of you met Scott when he and Eloise visited us shortly after Jimmy died. Susan's son Alexander is shown in the below picture.



Scanning the fairly large newspaper clipping was a challenge. It was not possible to cut and reorganize, so we had to scan the entire **FACES** page (see page 4). We hope you can read it.



A JOYFUL HEART

Eloise Riel's friends, family and co-workers say she's special because she gives her time, talents and other riches "generously" and "joyfully"

By IVY MOORE
Item Features Editor

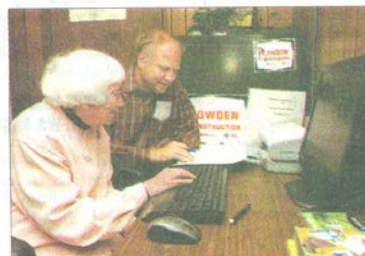
In her quiet neighborhood in the western part of Sumter, Eloise Riel is having an uncharacteristically slow day. Sitting in her den wrapping gifts for children at her church, watching golf on TV, cooking and reminiscing about her life hardly qualifies as multitasking for the 89-year-old woman who hasn't stopped working and giving of herself to others since she was a young girl growing up in the Shiloh section of Sumter County.

Eloise works full time at Plowden Construction Co., a job she started 40 years ago after a long career with the highway department. In her spare time, she bakes, spends time with her family and friends, reads, works on her memoirs and travels – and that's just what she'll admit to. Last month she completed an accounting course at Central Carolina Technical College (she got a 98 on the final exam) and just last weekend, she and her female co-workers took a trip to the mountains near Asheville.

Age is a non-issue for Eloise. "Joyful giving is what defines her," her daughter Debbie Nix says.

It's difficult to get Eloise to talk about herself, but her unselfish nature, her lifelong generosity to both friends and strangers, is almost always the first thing mentioned when anyone else speaks of her.

Her boss, A.D. Plowden, says, "If you want to get someone to say something bad about Eloise, you'd have to pay them – a lot – and they'd have to make something up."



A.D. Plowden, owner of Plowden Construction Co., says Eloise Riel's unselfishness and optimism help to make her a good employee – and a great friend.

FACES

An occasional series profiling some of the interesting people who live in our communities.

TODAY: ELOISE RIEL

Eloise has touched many lives in different ways. Rebecca Johnson, like scores of other young people who have attended Shiloh United Methodist, benefited from a tradition Eloise and her late husband Jim – she calls him "Jimmy" – started years ago.

The 25-year-old Johnson, who can't remember when she didn't know Eloise, professes a special bond with the woman she calls "a role model."

"She sent me a dollar every week in the mail while I was in college," Johnson said. "She wrote me and kept me up with everything that was going on, sent me the church bulletins."

While the Riels did that for every member of the church who went to college, Johnson said Eloise was especially supportive when the two shared an illness.

"We went through cancer treatment together" not long ago, Johnson said. "I knew I could get through it if she could."

Johnson smiled as she remembered opening the weekly envelopes. "The dollar bills were very crisp," she said. "They'd go in any drink machine or snack machine. I've never seen a dollar bill that crisp. I think she must have ironed them."

Eloise laughed when she heard Johnson's story. "I did!" she said. "I just starched them and ironed them ... when it was hard to get new bills to send."

Johnson said her friends at the University of South Carolina were envious.

"It may not seem like that much," she said, "but those bills were perfect for the laundry and snack machines, and they always came just when I needed them."

SEE **FACES**, PAGE 8A

(Continued on page 4)

The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News

June, 2006

PAGE 8A • The Item

A JOYFUL HEART

SUNDAY, MAY 14, 2006

FACES

FROM PAGE 1A

It was a gift that Johnson calls an "act of love." "You can tell she really cares," she said of Eloise. "She's such a good-hearted woman, does so much for everybody. Anything you ask her to help with, she'll do. ... I just hope I can be like her, to do the things she does."

Jim and Eloise had an exceptional relationship, friends and family say, and Eloise refers often to "Jimmy" in everyday conversation. While she won't talk about her own acts of kindness, she credits Jim, who died eight years ago, for many.

She also cites her upbringing for her optimistic disposition.

Eloise grew up the seventh of 10 children on a farm in Shiloh, where her father operated a store and served as the community's postmaster. The relationships within the family were to serve as examples to her all her life, she said.

"Being born into a Christian family was wonderful," she said. "We knew we were loved. They didn't tell us 'I love you' like people say 'I love you' today, but we knew we were loved."

She learned her work ethic early.

"My father raised cotton and tobacco, mostly, I chopped cotton, wormed tobacco — that was the worst. Before I was old enough to string tobacco, I used to count out sticks for everybody. I thought that was a pretty important job."

There was time for play, too, she said. "With so many of us, we had enough for card games and ball games, and we used to go swimming in Lynchess River."

After graduating from Columbia College with a degree in mathematics — she would have studied civil engineering at Georgia Tech if the university admitted women back then, she said — Eloise went to work for the highway department, where she remained for almost 30 years. In 1966, at 50, she started a new career at Plowden Construction, where she'll celebrate her 40th anniversary next month.

Plowden noted that despite her mild demeanor, "Eloise is a maverick. She got a college degree in the '30s and worked in a man's world ... (and) she can work in any environment and not create any kind of "testosterone panic."

Calm, soft-spoken and precise in her speech and choice of words, Eloise doesn't seem like the kind of woman who'd make a snap decision. In fact, one of the few times she made up her mind without long and careful deliberation involved her husband.

The incident, as she tells it, happened almost 70 years ago. "He brought around a note of introduction," she said. "He worked for a boy who was married to a friend of mine, so she wrote the note. He wanted a date that night, but I already had something to do. I went back to my room after he left and my roommate said, 'You look funny. What happened?' And I said, 'I just met the man I'm going to marry.' I was surprised, and she was, too. I don't know why I said it."

The marriage lasted 60 years, until Jim's death in January 1997.

Today would mark their 68th anniversary.

The Riels have two daughters, Susan (Silverman) of Rock Hill, and Nix, who lives near Dalzell and teaches at Thomas Sumter Academy. Nix, like Johnson, said she hopes she can be just like her mom. She's well on her way, following



Chris Moore / The Item

A.D. Plowden says Eloise Riel was the first female estimator in South Carolina when she came to work for Plowden Construction Co. in the 1960s. She became project manager and then corporate treasurer soon afterward. Eloise said she'd wanted to major in civil engineering at Georgia Tech, but the university didn't admit women in the 1930s, so she studied math at Columbia College instead.

her mother's example of generous giving. Nix works in her church as both a lay leader and Sunday school teacher, and she's heavily involved in Walk to Emmaus, a program designed to strengthen the church by creating leaders using the model of Christ as a "servant to all."

She serves on the national board for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society and works hard for cancer research fundraising at TSA (whose motto is, fittingly, "Acts, not words"). She's also volunteered at Camp Kemo summer camp for cancer patients for nearly two decades.

"I'm not sure when I realized how exceptional Mother is," Nix said last week.

"I just basked in her strength of character and soaked up everything I could learn from her. My friends always loved being around Mother because she was so patient, would stop and listen to them and do 'that extra something' to make them feel welcome."

She remembers many instances in which her parents showed exceptional generosity. "We all have people we come in contact with on a casual basis," Nix said.

"Well, Mother and Daddy put one of theirs through college!

"They discovered through weekly conversations with their regular checkout girl at the grocery store they frequented that she couldn't afford to go to college. So they sent her to nursing school with the only request being that when she was financially able, she would do it for someone else."

Nix added, "Any Saturday today finds Mother making homemade goodies from scratch that she takes to the 'old people' — who are all about 25 years younger than she is!"

In her characteristic self-deprecating way, Eloise said, "They probably get tired of me knocking on their doors with cakes for them."

She'd never mention it, but others point out that she also takes baskets of goodies to her doctors and others who care for her. Dentist Robert Segars just grinned when he described her famous pecan tarts. "She brings them every single visit," he said.

His staff noted that it's not just when she has a scheduled cleaning, either. "There's not a holiday that goes by that she doesn't send us something," they said.

While her modesty precludes Eloise talking about all she does for others, Nix can recall many examples of her selflessness.

"There are a lot of cute posters and signs that say things about giving," Nix said, "but Mother is a living sign to me and I see it on a daily basis; it's much more impressive that way. She absolutely believes that we are blessed so that we can be a blessing to others."

"On countless occasions, I saw Mother sacrificing something for someone and being so happy to do it."

Nix noted that her mother's giving was not restricted to the material.

Besides joyful giving, she said, "The second greatest gift Mother gave me was her living faith."

While the family went to church and talked about God, "... what spoke much louder to me were her Christian actions," Nix said. "Mother taught me that if you believed in God, your life had to reflect your belief ..."

She's not sure what traits she shares with her mother, but in echoing the refrain of many Eloise has come in contact with, Nix added, "I know I want to be just like her."

Co-worker Debbie Woods noted that "Miss Eloise's official title is corporation treasurer, but she can do anything. ... I tell you, she could have taught that accounting course at Central Carolina."

Eloise's 14-year-old grandson calls her frequently.

"When I was taking the class, he'd always want to make sure I did my homework," she said. "He asked me if I could top a grade of 107. I said I couldn't top it, but I could match it. I'd already made a 107 on a quiz."

Life hasn't always been as easy. The hardest thing she's ever had to do, Eloise said, "is go on without Jimmy."

"It was hard at first," she said quietly, "but I eventually realized I'd have to learn to do things for myself."

The couple were so close, Jim even bought Eloise's clothes. "It was just something he wanted to do," she said, "and he was good at it."

Talking about Jim makes Eloise smile. He loved practical jokes and always had a devious twinkle in his eye.

She recalled one elaborate practical joke he involved her in for months. The Riels had sold their home to a young couple with whom they became good friends. When the couple reported that some of the

neighbors were critical of "something they did that didn't conform to their ideas, Jim got these flamingoes and stuck them in (the couple's) yard." Later, Jim sneaked one of the flamingoes away and sent it traveling the world.

"Pinky" had been kidnapped, and the couple received letters tracking his whereabouts, complete with photographs of him in front of the famous sites he'd visited — places such as the San Diego Zoo and atop an Air Force jet at Ramstein Air Base in Germany. Then a coded message appeared in the classified section of *The Item* — Pinky was being sent to Kuwait. "Duty calls, off to war, love Pinky," the first message read. Others followed, and the couple tracked Pinky's progress around the globe and ultimately learned how to get him back.

The Riels didn't reveal they were the culprits until they returned Pinky to his Sumter home — and that was after an April Fool's Day when 11 people in cahoots with them mailed cards to the couple, each "confessing" to being the mastermind behind the prank. (Eloise noted sweetly in hers that she was sorry Hallmark didn't have a "proper card" for the purposes of confession.)

Eloise's rapport with young people is legendary, her friends say. When asked why children like her so much, she answers simply, "I like them."

That sums up a lot, says longtime friend Traci Quinn, whose 8-year-old daughter, McKenzie,

in her house, and whenever we go to see her McKenzie heads first for a hug and second to the box. It's always got something new in it," she said. "Eloise does things like that for all the children in her life — actually for all the people in her life. We've never been to see her that she wasn't working on something for someone else — a stocking for some baby's first Christmas, a cake for a neighbor, a rug she's hooking for a friend."

She says the source of her joy is simple: "Eloise just likes people. You can't even say she just accepts everybody, because that would imply she likes people in spite of themselves. She really just likes everyone without being judgmental or even thinking about what there might be to be judgmental about. It's humbling."

Woods added, "And everybody loves her. Her son-in-law (once) said, 'Even the devil could get along with her.'"

Plowden noted that Eloise does many things for other people that "nobody knows about." One example of many: "I think it was back in the '70s, there was a bad bus accident in the area. She and Jim made it possible for a lot of those people to go to college. She told them that if any of them could get accepted into a legitimate college or university she and her husband would pay for it — and they did. I think she sent about six people to college."

Plowden compared her to the hero of the film "Magnificent Obsession," who gives unselfishly and anonymously.

"All the generous things she does for people .. money has never been a goal for her, it's always been a tool."

He also cited her work ethic.

"She's the first one here in the morning. She's multidimensional. I think if we ever told her she had to retire, that we weren't going to pay her any more, she'd ask, 'Can I still come in and work without pay?' Her stability and consistency are remarkable. You always know what Eloise will do in a given situation. Whatever the right way is, she's going that way."

It's just a natural tendency toward optimism.

"I guess the reason for my outlook of life is that God meant for us to be happy," Eloise says.

Asked if she has any regrets from her life so far, Eloise smiled.

"There is one thing," she said, "Jim was a Citadel graduate, and he kept his clothes immaculate. He always liked the crease his pants just so. One time I ironed it just a tad center, on purpose. It drove him crazy. I never hit him about it."

She chuckled. "He'd have gotten a kick out of that."

Reach Features Editor Ivy Moore at iym@th item.com or 803-774-1221.

"There are a lot of cute posters and signs that say things about giving, but Mother is a living sign to me, and I see it on a daily basis; it's much more impressive that way. She absolutely believes that we are blessed so that we can be a blessing to others. ... (She) taught me that if you believed in God, your life had to reflect your belief ..."

DEBBIE NIX

