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Learning for a Lifetime: Motivations for Lifelong Learning in the Life of Evelyn McQueen Cook.

David James Timbs
East Tennessee State University

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Learning for a Lifetime:
Motivations for Lifelong Learning in the
Life of Evelyn McQueen Cook

A dissertation
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Education Leadership and Policy Analysis
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Education

by
David James Timbs
May 2003

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Dr. Russell West, Committee Member

Keywords: Lifelong learning, educational biography, life stages
ABSTRACT

Learning for a Lifetime: Motivations for Lifelong Learning in the Life of Evelyn McQueen Cook

David James Timbs

As a growing population ventures forth into the 21st century, people are living longer than ever before. Recent statistics indicate an ever-increasing adult population. With a larger and older population, communities will find themselves striving to ensure a high quality of life for these persons. Individuals, as well, will find themselves seeking out activities that will keep them actively involved and engaged in their post-retirement years.

The purpose of this biographical study was to explore the motivations for lifelong learning and engagement in the life of Evelyn McQueen Cook, a 75-year-old resident of Johnson County, Tennessee. Her life is presented in the context of an educational narrative and analyzed within the contextual and theoretical framework of lifelong learning. Data were collected through a series of interviews with her. Interviews were recorded and tapes of the interviews were transcribed. Using interpretative analysis, data were examined to determine themes. Further information was collected through photographs, postcards, letters, and certificates. Findings were presented thematically within a chronological context.

The importance of family, formal educational opportunities, the influence of teachers, the opportunity to travel extensively, self-directed learning, cultural experiences, career choices, and involvement in community all emerged as strong motivations for pursuit and engagement in learning opportunities over the span of her life. Financial concerns, lack of confidence, ability, or interest, long-held beliefs or feelings, loneliness and a sense of isolation, gender and being an only child, and age all emerged as distracters or barriers to learning.

Recommendations included the need to provide adults more opportunities that allowed them to reflect upon their educational experiences, both formal and informal. Specific recommendations were noted for predominately rural communities. A need for further educational biographies was also suggested.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated with much love to my wife, Anne, for the endless patience and unwavering support that she has shown to me during this long, arduous process. She never failed to believe that this project could be finished and her belief in me enabled me to persevere to the end. She has been my largest source of inspiration.

This dissertation is also dedicated to Evelyn McQueen Cook, whose willingness to participate in the study allowed it to happen. She is a truly amazing woman whose story speaks universal truths to us all and encourages us to venture forward with a life focused on learning.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my family: Without their constant encouragement, this would not have been possible. My wife, Anne, and our children, Nathan and Sidney, have patiently waited for this study to come to a successful conclusion. My parents, Jim and Wanda Timbs, and my brother, Danny, have been key to my success as well. My parents have always encouraged and supported me in my educational endeavors, instilling in me the belief that if I wanted to achieve something, I could do it with hard work, honesty, and perseverance. By transcribing hours of taped interviews, my mother added to this study in another, more practical, way as well.

To a willing participant: Evelyn McQueen Cook has been the most wonderful topic for a research study and her encouragement throughout this process has been phenomenal.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Experience is the stories people live. People live stories, and in the telling of these stories, reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones. Stories lived and told educate the self and others, including the young and those such as researchers who are new to their communities.

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxxvi)

As people travel on the journey through life, they weave the strands of each experience into the fabric that reflects their lives. Each strand woven into the mix changes the pattern and, ultimately, the final result. Each person incorporates these strands at different times, in different methods, with different tools, or even not at all, letting them fall by the wayside as cast-off threads or unnecessary elements needed for the final design.

Such, then, is the manner by which people’s lives take shape. Every opportunity for learning, every task attempted, and every destination reached becomes a part of their life stories. Through the telling of these stories, researchers can learn a great deal about the human experience and, more specifically, glean an understanding of what factors motivate people to continue learning throughout life, to continue striving for a deeper understanding, and to continue searching for the loose strands of experiences yet to be woven into their lives.

The stories that emerge from one’s learning become important threads in this pattern that forms over one’s lifetime. To understand when, how, and why people learn sheds some light on the theoretical process of learning and how it relates to the experiences individual persons have.

Hayes (1998) suggested that learning is an act of becoming. To visualize one’s life in this context is to see each and every opportunity, experience, and set of circumstances as a learning situation. Humans now find themselves in a time when they are living longer. In addition, cultural, economic, and social barriers are being reduced physically as well as electronically, via the internet and continued computerization of everyday activities. Thus, the number of persons achieving lifelong learning is increasing. In effect, they are valuing learning
opportunities throughout life more than in the past. The best way to achieve this realization is by committing themselves to the process of learning every day throughout their lives (Coughlan, 1994).

To explore, then, the characteristics of lifelong learning is a worthwhile undertaking for two reasons. First, placing people’s learning in the context of their experiences and their surroundings invites a process of determining who they are and where they fit (Hayes, 1998). Secondly, by examining the characteristics of one person’s journey within the general context of the theoretical framework of lifelong learning, researchers give credence and meaning to every person’s journey. As suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), everyone lives stories and, therefore, everyone has a story to tell, a lesson to teach, and a kernel of wisdom gleaned from what they have experienced and what they have learned.

The relationship between a person’s life journey and the experiences and opportunities of that person provides a basis for studying how motivations, distracters, and modes of learning can mark the journey. Identifying commonalities can aid researchers in determining the most effective methods of delivering motivational opportunities to adults throughout their lives in hopes of fostering some level of lifelong learning. Finding the connections between one person’s life journey and the collective literature related to life stages and lifelong learning provides the cornerstone of such a study.

**Purpose of the Study**

As a growing population ventures forth into the 21st century, United States citizens, as well as world citizens, are living longer than ever before. Recent United States Census statistics indicate an ever increasing adult population, continuing the trend which began in the late 20th century (*National Population Projections, 2000; The older population in the United States: Detailed tables, 2000*). The population projections represented in Figure 1 represent not only a growing population, but a longer-living population as well, compared to that of current 2000 census data.
With a larger and older population come many challenges, chief among them the task of ensuring a certain “quality of life” that people who retire in their fifties and sixties have come to expect. By 2045, millions more Americans will retire with several decades of productivity left. The challenge arises then: what methods and what approaches can be used to motivate an aging population to continue the pursuit of learning and growth throughout their ever-longer lives?

Hayes (1998) emphasized the importance of such a pursuit, likening it to the epitome of our life’s journey. “What I’ve discovered is really quite simple,” he wrote. “Knowledge sought critically and passionately, for its own sake, gives purpose and meaning to life” (p. 175). Yet all persons seek knowledge in different guises, at different times, and through different means. In short, the journey of lifelong learning is an individual one.

The study of one individual’s journey as a lifelong learner introduces the dual task of telling one person’s story of that journey while relating it to existing theories of motivation and lifelong learning. In this study, the life of Evelyn McQueen Cook, a 75-year-old native of

Figure 1. United States Census Bureau year 2000 population figures and year 2000 population projections for 2025 and 2045.
Johnson County, Tennessee, will be presented through use of an educational narrative in a biographical format with this dual task in mind: presenting her story and analyzing it within the contextual and theoretical framework of lifelong learning. This study also serves the purpose of preserving the educational life story of a woman who has made significant contributions to not only the field of education in Johnson County, Tennessee, but to cultural, religious, and civic areas of that community as well. Evelyn McQueen Cook’s commitment to learning and to continual growth has spanned different stages in her life, from her early schooling in Shady Valley, Tennessee, to Berea College, the University of Tennessee, Johnson County High School, various Department of Defense schools throughout Europe, the Central Office of Johnson County Schools, Nashville’s Bicentennial Mall, religious institutions, and, most recently, to the Heritage Hall restoration project in downtown Mountain City.

Today, adults need to transform deeply held frames of reference to make sense of their experience in ways better suited to increasingly complex demands (Marsick, 1998). One challenge that exists, then, is that of exposing adults to what opportunities are available throughout life to enhance their lives and their learning. Ultimately, this narrative process may provide valuable insights into the growing additional challenge of encouraging an aging and growing population to consciously view learning as a lifelong process.

Research Questions

This educational biography will apply several concepts from theories of lifelong learning proposed during the past two decades (Aslanian & Brickell, 1982; Csikszentimihalyi, 1982; Doherty, 1980; Gordon, 1989; Hayes, 1998; Houle, 1992, Marsick, 1998; Mezirow, 1990). In light of the increasing need for an awareness of lifelong learning as a quality of life issue for an ever-growing population of adults, the framing of Evelyn McQueen Cook’s life within these parameters may serve to provide insight into this issue through the exploration of three questions.

1. What specific motivations have existed throughout Evelyn McQueen Cook’s life to inspire her to continue seeking out opportunities for learning?
2. What distracters have existed in Evelyn McQueen Cook’s life to serve as barriers to taking advantage of lifelong learning opportunities?

3. What modes of learning have manifested themselves in the learning journey of Evelyn McQueen Cook, and what effects have resulted from these?

Significance of the Study

Information obtained about the learning experiences of Evelyn McQueen Cook, subsequent effects, and missed learning opportunities due to barriers will provide a biographically-based analysis of one person’s life framed in the context of lifelong learning. Education biography is neither a mode nor a technique. An education biography is a “method of critical reflection through which the theoretical questions of epistemology become an existential debate about the meaning of adulthood. It is a method of research centered on adult learning that brings about transformative learning among adults involved” (Dominicé, 1990, p.194). It is a process meant to engage one in filtering one’s own life through a set of lenses focused directly on educational experiences, both formal and non-formal.

By analyzing the lifelong learning journey of one person in the context of the present body of research on life stage theories and lifelong learning, connections may be formed between experiences in that person’s life and subsequent outcomes. In addition, further relationships affecting one’s seizure of learning opportunities can be identified and explored.

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This study is delimited to one subject, Evelyn McQueen Cook, and will incorporate only examples from her life in the discussion of lifelong learning as an adult female. As a male researcher, to avoid gender bias the writer will have to rely upon literature and the subject’s own descriptions and recollections of her experiences to shape the educational narrative. Creswell (1998) suggested one challenge of biographers is that they cannot partial out their own biases and values. Biographical narratives then become “gendered class productions” reflecting the lives of the writers. Denzin (1989) alleged these points need to be acknowledged and reflected in written biographies.
Overview of the Study

This qualitative study is presented in 13 chapters. Chapter 1 has provided an introduction, a statement of the purpose, and significance of the study in relation to the problem. In addition, limitations and delimitations are discussed. An overview of the study is also presented. In Chapter 2, a review of related literature is presented that examines the evolution of current lifelong learning theories as they relate to four areas: motivations for lifelong learning, distracters from lifelong learning, modes of lifelong learning, and life stage theories. In addition, a discussion of education in the context of lifelong learning is presented. Chapter 3 includes a description of the methods and procedures used in this study. Within Chapter 4 through 12, data collected through multiple interview sessions with Evelyn McQueen Cook are summarized, analyzed, and interpreted in a biographical narrative format. In Chapter 13, a summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for education and research is presented.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Learning is an act of becoming, and lifelong learning yields the richest dimension of human experience available to us. Learning of our own volition throughout our lives is the key to a meaningful future. Learning, understanding, and re-understanding provide the impetus for moving beyond the American Dream.

(Hayes, 1998, p. 301)

Educators often talk of students’ growing or blossoming, alluding to that realization of potential that leads to those epiphanies that occur in life when knowledge evolves into understanding. The firing of connections in the mind that transpire when learning takes place does resemble that of a flower growing to the point of blossoming when all is revealed. Viewed on a continuum, however, learning can be described as a continual growth process where the blossoming and firing of connections take place repeatedly in a person’s life.

Hayes (1998) referred to learning as an “act of becoming,” with lifelong learning yielding the “richest dimension of human experience available to us” (p. 301). The concept, then, of continual education throughout a person’s life has become increasingly important in recent decades, as people who are living longer search for educational opportunities, both formal and informal, to enrich their lives.

In the past 25 years, several studies have focused on the growing interest in lifelong learning and its impact on education within modern American culture (Gordon, 1989; Gross, 1977; Hayes, 1998; Houle, 1992; Marsick, 1998; Mezirow, 1990; Winter, 2001). Coupled with these studies have been governmental reports from the Census Bureau and other entities that emphasize the importance of meeting the educational needs of a growing and aging population (Aslanian & Brickell, 1982; The older population in the United States: Detailed tables, 2000; Ouzah, 2001; Perkins, 1999; Imperatives for policy and action in lifelong learning, 1976).

Within the context of lifelong learning, the issues of motivation and opportunities for educational growth have been addressed by several researchers (Coughlan, 1994;
Some studies have found connections between Erikson’s (1950) life stage theory and opportunities for learning experiences (Gross, 1977; Houle, 1984).

**Transforming through Education**

Coughlan (1994) suggests that Toffler has offered perhaps the most astute definition of education. “For each of us to be satisfied and productive, happy, and making a significant contribution in life, we need to self-actualize or realize our potential as human beings,” says Toffler. “The best way to do this is by committing ourselves to the process of learning every day throughout our lives” (Coughlan, 1994, p. 141).

To ensure that this self-actualization and realization of potential occurs, modern society insists that its citizens are involved in a formal educational system from an early age until the young adult years. In addition, people of all ages seek out such informal opportunities for education as a trip to a museum, attending a rodeo, reading a book, or conversing with someone with different life experiences. All of these spur a person’s intellectual growth and offer more life connections to bring about Toffler’s self-actualization by consistently inspiring them to reevaluate his or her life’s experiences within the context of new experiences.

To that end, much of a person’s education, and the resulting experiences he or she has, comes from the willingness of that person to seek out opportunities and to take advantage of the experiences and situations everyday life presents. “Every man who rises above the common level has received two educations,” wrote Edward Gibbon. “The first from his teachers and the second, more personal and more important, from himself” (Gross, 1977, p.174). The task of realizing that an education is more than mere formal learning is key to understanding how a person becomes a lifelong learner. It involves using formal educational opportunities as a springboard to finding the thirst for knowledge that lies within the heart and mind.

Longworth (1999) saw the lifelong learning process as a journey upward that encouraged learners to progress from mere data acquisition to wisdom. This process is depicted as a
“Learning Ladder,” with widening spaces between the rungs and higher difficulty as the learner progresses upward:

![The Learning Ladder](image)

*Figure 2. The Learning Ladder (Adapted from Longworth, 1999)*

Longworth noted that “It is sad that much of our current education, particularly in schools, goes little beyond the information rung and, moreover, is not actually designed to do more than that” (p. 90). Motivating and encouraging adult learners to move up the rungs of the “Learning Ladder” will help them achieve a sense of change in their lives as they learn and apply what they learn within their daily lives.

Mezirow (1990) pondered the constant transformation people experience as they become more educated. “Again, one’s education allows a person to contextualize information from one experience to another, using formal education as a foundation and everyday opportunities as the layers which enrich and add to one’s learning” (p. 14). People are in a state of change and growth as they move from one learning opportunity and experience to the next. Transformative learning, then, is the process of learning through critical self-reflection, which results in a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of one’s experience.
The fact that many advocates of formalized education, such as teachers and professors, do not sometimes fully recognize the role classroom education plays in “setting the stage for life,” and can actually be an obstacle to nurturing lifelong learning. Too many higher educators place more emphasis on classroom performance and experience than on real life application and stepping stones for further learning. Adler (1986) suggested that one’s education can be begun in institutions but it can never be completed there.

This thought has enhanced the concept of lifelong learning, a process that helps adults constantly reframe their experiences in light of their desire to grow and learn throughout their lives. “Today’s demands of learning,” writes Marsick (1998), “require a new model: that of lifelong learning” (p. 120).

**Conceptualization of Lifelong Learning**

While adults have learned from their experiences and daily opportunities throughout history, this review of literature is framed in the research of the last 25 years of the 20th century and first years of the 21st century. Much of the current body of research has its basis in contemporary adult education efforts, which grew out of early roots in community development, agricultural extension, libraries, and night schools (Marsick, 1998). These efforts were charted early by Toffler (1970) as he sought to find approaches to adult education that kept people engaged in learning and thinking about learning well beyond the formal years of K-12 education.

In 1961, Houle first suggested that there were eight core characteristics of a lifelong learner:

1. High income groups
2. Participation is positively linked to the size of community the length of residence, and the number of different educational activities available
3. Participation is linked to nationality and religious background
4. Age is important; young adults rarely take part in learning activities beyond formal schooling
5. Married people participate more than single persons
6. Families with school age children participate more
7. Professional people are more active in pursuing opportunities
8. The higher the formal education of the adult, the more likely he or she will participate in continuing education  (p. 6)
These characteristics influenced the formation of adult education programs in the 1960s and gave educators and other people who delivered services to adults a framework in which to work. Faure (1972) first formulated the concept of life-span learning, which offered the view that a person’s learning experiences were related to the events and circumstances that occurred over the span of a person’s life. Lengrand (1975) helped define the concept of lifelong learning at a time when the issue was emerging as not only an educational issue but a political one as well. Both researchers brought to the national agenda the idea that America’s adults were living longer and needed more and improved programming that addressed their learning needs. For the first time, the concept of lifelong learning made its way into major studies. Consequently, the ties among experience, opportunity, education, and learning began to emerge and become the subjects of research studies themselves.

In 1976, the Wingspread Conference’s policy paper stated, “Lifelong learning is an evolving concept.” The report encouraged a new perspective toward learners and learning throughout the life cycle. “Lifelong learning not only includes a vertical time dimension,” wrote the report’s authors, “but it includes an inner dimension that reflects the personal growth needs of human beings for self-expression and dignity” (Imperatives for policy and action in lifelong learning, p. 10). The Wingspread report also emphasized the ability to engage in self-learning and the utilization of all educative resources, both formal and non-formal.

Following the Wingspread Report, Gross (1977) asked the question that set the course for future studies: Why lifelong learning? Gross concluded, “Adults who take command of their own learning often master more things, and master them better, than those who rely on being taught” (p. 17). Those same adults, he also suggested, have greater zest for life and make better use of the things they learn in life.

Likewise, Hummel (1977), a Swiss educator, offered that the development of the concept of lifelong learning is one of the most striking events in the history of education, comparing it in importance to the Copernican revolution. Mezirow (1991) said the late 1970s and early 1980s
were a time when the realization came that adults filter all of their experiences through the “frames of reference that define their life world” (p. 161). Like the enlightenment that occurred with the Copernican theories, the theory of lifelong learning became a major moment in the history of 20th century education.

In a study on lifelong learning, Doherty (1980) conceived a triangular explanation of the learning process:

![Lifelong Learning Triangle](image)

**Figure 3.** Lifelong Learning Triangle (Doherty, 1980)

Doherty offered that the volume of research on adult learners, at that time, was restrictive. The focus of previous studies has been on the reasons why and the conditions under which adults participate in learning activities. Through the Lifelong Learning Triangle, the researcher suggested that three concomitants of learning existed in a learner’s education experience, with the individual conditions of each playing a role in what a person gained from learning experiences and opportunities over the span of a lifetime. According to Doherty, a learner’s psychological and social traits, learning orientation, and degree of participation in learning activities were connected to one another and had to be viewed as a whole and in company with determining the effectiveness of various educational efforts.

Aslanian and Brickell (1982) suggested that it is not simply that some adult learning takes place outside formal education institutions; it is that most of it does. Like Doherty, these authors noted that several factors played into a person’s ability to continue learning and continue learning within the context of life experiences. “Adults never outgrow their need to learn,”
wrote the researchers. “Change touches the life of every adult, although it touches life at some points more than at others and it touches some lives more often than others” (p. 162). The researchers offered that there existed both a cause and effect relationship and a correlational relationship between life experiences and learning:

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 4. Life and Learning Relationships (Aslanian & Brickell, 1982)*

The correlation between life circumstances and a person’s ability or interest in learning became an important part of how adult learning programs were designed and how and when learning opportunities were presented. It was noted that learning can precede, accompany, or follow life transitions. Additionally, every adult who learned because of a transition pointed to a specific event in his or her life that signaled or triggered the event (p. 164).

Houle (1982) concluded that formal education is just the beginning of one’s learning. “The man or woman is far more able than the youth to know, to understand, to explore, to appreciate, to discern subtle relationships, to judge, and to look behind the surface of things to their deeper meaning” (p. 142). Once again, the ability of adults to place learning opportunities and life experiences within the context of previous education (both formal and informal) emerged.

Further correlations were suggested by Csikszentmihalyi (1982), who suggested that effective learning must be intrinsically motivated and must allow one to reach life’s ultimate goal of happiness.

In addition, Aslanian and Brickell’s (1982) suggestion of change and transition as results of learning experiences influenced research on lifelong learning for the rest of the decade.
Gordon (1989) foresaw the coming Information Revolution and saw adult learning changing to cope with the increasing amounts of information that were flowing into society. “Lifelong learning has become a new imperative for individual and corporate survival,” wrote Gordon. “It is the latest phrase-on-a-t-shirt phenomenon” (p. 31).

By the early nineties, the concept of lifelong learning was making its way into mainstream educational thought. What had once been practiced by a narrow group of organizations was now an educational effort by several segments of society. Houle (1992) reasoned, “Although lifelong learning has only recently emerged as a full-scale theoretical construct, its operational form is familiar. It has been practiced for many years by three American institutions: the Cooperative Extension Service, the public library, and the museum. They are now changing, reaching out to people of all ages” (p. 155). Countering the seemingly more materialistic mindset of the 1980s, Hayes (1996) noted that “America’s treasures lay not in its shopping malls, but in its libraries” (p. 70).

Hayes (1998) built a portion of his case for lifelong learning around a statement by science writer John McCrone who wrote, “Each emotion is a body of ideas wrapped around a relatively small kernel of sensation” (p. 71). Hayes suggested that living and lifelong learning are the process of connection the sensations to ideas and ideas to learning. Although lifelong learning had been discussed in concept, the approach Hayes used suggested that societal concerns of economic progress and achieving a higher quality standard of living are important aspects of the lifelong learning paradigm. To this end, Walsh (1993) found that many more older persons are open to the “idea of continuing creative growth, self-actualization through their later years, in the immense amount of leisure that is available to them” (p. 65).

The emerging idea that age should not be a factor in whether one continues to learn influenced the development of formalized adult programming in the late 1990s (Perkins, 1999) as well as more informal programming for adults such as traveling groups, seminars, and visits to libraries and museums (“Learning at all stages of life,” 2001). Perkins noted that lifelong
learning activities provide older and retired persons opportunities to enjoy life more by stimulating their minds and curiosity.

A study analyzing the impact of a problem-based strategy on learning found that persons learned better when placed in “problem-based” situations and are asked to work through them as an exercise (DeWitt, 2001).

Admittedly, America, Canada, and Asian nations have been practicing what is variously called lifelong learning, adult education, and continuing education for a very long time (“Learning at all stages of life,” 2001; Winter, 2001). In other countries, as well, the concept of lifelong learning for adults has found its way into mainstream education. In England, Beckett (2000) found that increasingly the growing population of retired people wanted to learn something new.

Haspah (2001) captured the changing picture of the adult learner who pursued both formal and informal learning opportunities throughout his or her lifetime. “Lifelong learners must be imaginative and able to innovate in a fast changing world of internet time,” he wrote. “They are both dreamers and doers” (“Learning at all stages of life,” p. 2). In essence, people must be willing to stretch themselves and want to learn, especially in the area of technology. Recent trends provided by the United States Census Bureau show people are moving in this direction, with internet usage at 54 million households in 2000, up more than nine percent since 1998 (“Home computers and internet use in the United States,” 2001).

Finding the Motivation to Learn

“All learning begins with experience,” wrote Jarvis (1987, p. 16). Experiences and opportunities, however, are only a part of the learning process. Becoming inclined or motivated to learn or to take advantage of experience and opportunity plays an important role in the process as well.

The reasons people become motivated to learn are as equally important as the learning experiences and opportunities themselves. “Living is a constant struggle between the dual forces of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, of deliberate learning and incidental learning” (Hayes,
So, motivations can be classified as being either extrinsic or intrinsic, an important point to consider before specifically discussing individual motivations.

Hayes (1998) went on to speculate that the competitive nature of American society in the late 20th century has only heightened this realization. He wrote:

People whose motivation is primarily external anchor their existence on a pose, which is another way of saying that their existence is based on nonexistence. External motivation edges out intrinsic satisfaction. Life is punctuated by reaching plateaus which are not by themselves desirable—they may exist only to prompt us to make the next move. (p. 19)

Has the nature of American society and, because of American influence, of Western society caused extrinsic motivations to outweigh intrinsic desires to learn? In answering this question, Doherty (1980) suggested that adult learners are motivated for three reasons:

1. They want to move ahead in areas which have meaning to them.
2. They want to move ahead from what they already know.
3. They want to move ahead at times and in places that are convenient for them. (p. 23)

In answering the question of whether these are intrinsic or extrinsic motivations, Doherty’s study was inconclusive, offering that there was no definitive answer to what variables would predict lifelong learning behavior.

It seems, then, that what would appear to be extrinsic motivators for some learners could equally appear to be intrinsic motivators for other learners. Motivators of both types change as a person matures and progresses through life as well. Hayes (1998) wrote, “A person’s motivations must stem from a continuum made up of one’s genetic, social, and learned responses. In a sense, purpose is the residue of motivation” (p. 59). A purpose, then, or a reason, becomes inherently important in understanding motivation. Csikszentmihalyi (1982) conceived that deliberate learning can be either intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. When a person chooses to learn and feels responsible for his or her choice, the motivation is intrinsic. Dinmore (1997) also suggested that adults learn to achieve both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards.

Gross (1977) suggested that an adult’s motivation to learn is different from a child’s or even a young adult’s motivation. Adults are less willing than children to accept on the authority
of a teacher that what they are learning will prove its worth later in life. They also realize that one often learns a great deal in ways other than taking courses.

Houle (1961) proposed that there were three classifications or subgroups of learners (p. 15). Goal-oriented learners use education as a means of achieving some other goal, such as securing a particular job; activity-oriented learners participate for the sake of the activity itself and the social interaction; and learning-oriented participants seek knowledge for its own sake.

Houle pointed out that these were not “pure types” as they could be represented them by three circles that overlap at the edges. This concept of overlapping motivations and learning orientations becomes important in later motivational research as multiple intelligences are discussed and educational practices are modified to reach learners of many styles.

A study by Morstain and Smart (1974) typified and extended Houle’s original three types into a six-factor solution as to what motivates adults to learn:

1. Social Relationships—this factor reflects participation in order to make new friends or meet members of the opposite sex.
2. External Expectations—these participants are complying with the wishes or directives of someone else with authority.
3. Social Welfare—this factor reflects an altruistic orientation; learners are involved because they want to serve others or their community.
4. Professional Advancement—this factor is strongly associated with participation for job enhancement or professional advancement.
5. Escape/Simulation—this factor is indicative of learners who are involved as a way of alleviating boredom or escaping home or work routine.
6. Cognitive Interest—these participants, identical to Houle’s learning-oriented adults, are engaged for the sake of learning itself (p. 85).

The groups of learners suggested by Houle emerged as a cluster of reasons, or motivations, for learning. Houle’s (1961) eight characteristics of adult learners are merged with his three types of learners in the newly formed six factors conceptualized by the researchers.

Aslanian and Brickell (1982) found that most adults seek learning opportunities because they want to use the knowledge or in order to cope with some change in their lives. Wlodkowski (1985) added that although it is difficult to scientifically understand how motivation enhances learning and achievement, it is clear that people work longer, harder, and with more vigor and
intensity when they are motivated than when they are not motivated. Hayes (1996) also cited that economic motivation, suggested early on by Houle (1961) and by Morstain and Smart (1974), emerged in the century’s last decade as a major reason adults pursued learning opportunities.

The presence and influence of others emerged as important motivators for learning. Dominicé (1990) found a clear interaction between schooling and the influence of the parent. The authors of educational narratives often describe how their parents had expectations of the future for their children. One woman in her thirties wrote:

I am certainly aware that one of the reasons I have returned to school at my age is to meet my mother’s expectations. She obliged me to sacrifice in other aspects of my life and to put school first. (p. 202)

Coughlan (1994) also found that an important motivator is family and family life. An elderly Kentucky woman is cited as saying: “If I had my life to live over, I’d start barefoot earlier in the spring and stay that way later in the fall. I’d go to more dances, I’d ride more merry-go-rounds, and I would pick more daisies” (p. 69). This concept, says Coughlan, comes from realizing that family life and quality of life are related and that “whether we are 25, 45, 65, or 85 years of age, we can continue to learn, to grow, and to contribute” (p. 70).

Age has also been found to be a positive motivator as the quality and length of life have improved in the last several decades. Shiotani (2001) conducted a study among elderly Japanese to discuss how their educational experiences (formal and informal) related to their self-perceived Quality of Life. Among his findings were a list of outcomes for those seeking learning experiences:

1. Opportunities for friendship (80%)
2. Increased energy (64.2%)
3. Increased social awareness (54.2%)
4. Positive physical health (35.9%)

These results suggest that lifelong learning plays an important role in developing not only intellectual and technical abilities but also in enriching the lives of elderly persons (p. 49).
Berger (2001) also found that older persons who are lifelong learners have a thirst for knowledge. “They are,” he wrote, “the ones whose eyes dance” (p. 110). Lifelong learners are the ones who continue to grow mentally and enrich their lives well into their 70s, 80s, and beyond.

Identifying the Barriers to Learning Opportunities

Barriers to securing learning opportunities and enrichment experiences can be as important as the motivators previously discussed. Berg (1976) cited Senator Walter Mondale’s proposed “Lifetime Learning Act” of 1975 as one of the first governmental admissions that the concept of lifelong learning needed support and that adults, if they were to participate en masse, needed support in removing barriers to learning.

Mondale’s “Lifelong Learning Act” proposed to support research and demonstration projects designed to further lifelong learning. The act called for a study of the existing barriers to lifelong learning and how they might be eliminated. The bill supported training teachers to work with adults, curriculum development, and dissemination of television cassettes and other media appropriate for adult education (Foster & Franklin, 2001).

Distracters in the learning process for adults have been categorized and studied by several researchers (Berg, 1976; Foster & Franklin, 2001; Gross, 1977; Hayes, 1998; Houle, 1992; Wlodkowski, 1985). The most prevalent distracters or barriers are ones that also hinder adults in other areas of their lives.

The two most frequently cited reasons for non-participation are lack of time and money (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). Other reasons include age, lack of confidence, poor memory, feelings of frustration, and lack of adequate reflection time. Failure to distinguish between formal and informal learning experiences and the resulting positive outcomes is also a barrier to achieving a mindset of lifelong learning.

Dao compiled a list of the top reasons for adult nonparticipation in educational activities. The study focused on 278 employees of 17 organizations who were asked to respond as to why
adults do not participate in educational activities, both formal and informal (Houle, 1980, p. 150). Included were:

1. Not enough time to participate
2. Individual and personal problems (including cost)
3. Too difficult to succeed in educational activities
4. Against the social norms to succeed in educational activities
5. Negative feelings toward the institution offering instruction
6. Negative experiences with educational activities
7. Results of educational activities not valued
8. Indifference to educational activities
9. Unawareness of educational activities offered.

Reasons one and nine were the most prevalent reasons not to participate. A study by Johnstone and Rivera (1965) was one of the first studies to typify the barriers adults face in seeking out opportunities. The authors categorized the barriers into two categories: external or situational barriers and internal or dispositional barriers (p. 88). Barriers were then linked to gender, age, and socioeconomic status. Women and older citizens experienced barriers to lifelong learning more often than other groups.

One of the most detrimental factors adults face in taking advantage of learning opportunities is feeling as if they are too old to learn (Houle, 1992). With increasing age come related problems that hinder adult learning, such as hearing and vision (Houle, 1992, p. 115).

Wlodkowski (1985) also offered that some people may not participate in learning activities because they require eyeglasses, hearing aids, increased illumination, or increased time for learning. Certainly, some adults feel embarrassed to try to learn because they think they have grown “rusty” or cannot learn as quickly as others.

Wlodkowski also concluded that a person’s memory is an issue when learning. Cattrell (as cited in Wlodkowski, 1985), suggested, “Fluid intelligence is measured through such things as memory span, spatial perception, adaptation to new situations, common word analogies, and abstract reasoning” (p. 10). Both researchers suggest that fluid intelligence is less reliant on experience and education and is more a factor of age. The second type of intelligence, crystallized, increases or remains stable up to age 60. The older person tends to increasingly
compensate for the loss of fluid intelligence by greater reliance on crystallized intelligence. Lifelong learners, then, must learn to substitute wisdom for brilliance to make it past the memory problems which deter many learners.

Gordon (1989) suggested that the Information Age, which swept through much of the world in the 20th century’s last two decades, left many adult learners feeling frustrated with the pace of change. “Adaptability,” he wrote, “is the key. Computers are a prime example” (p. 29). Certainly, many adults have felt uneasy when sitting down to a computer and that uneasiness translates into feelings of inadequacy that prevented them from becoming involved in learning situations focused on technology was involved or where participants were required to think or act at a fast pace.

Reflection time has also been a deterrent to some adult learners, researchers have found (Brookfield, 1990; Galbraith, 1991). They often do not feel as if they have ample opportunities to reflect on what they have learned and how it can be transformed into part of their daily lives. The challenge, the researcher offers, is to realize how many forms of media can be grounds for discussion about learning. Many believe that:

only formal classes offer these opportunities but also an awareness of educational opportunities from books, motion pictures, television shows, and a host of other media sources. Educators seeking to foster critical reflection in adults must have as a central concern the development of media literacy. (Brookfield, 1990, p. 240)

Along the same lines, Dinmore (1997) concluded that some people feel that informal learning experiences are less valuable than formal educational experiences and therefore do not take advantage of them. Cultural events, trips to the library or museum, or even the act of reading a book are not considered by some people as learning experiences because there is not a teacher present and they are not seated in a classroom.

In his discussion of educational biographies, Dominicé (1990) suggested that finances were a chief barrier and distractor for many people. Several participants discussed how they dropped out of school or decided to move away from home and earn their own money in order to escape their parents’ expectations. Likewise, some had to discontinue educational experiences
because they had to move back home to assume responsibilities when a parent or sibling was unable to do so any longer.

Lobertini (2000) found the financial requirements of education, both formal and informal, to be a barrier for many of the participants in her study, which focused on rural women who had returned home once they had received educations. Related to cost are the barriers of child care and family problems (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

**Modes of Learning: From the Classroom to the World**

Motivating adults to overcome barriers to learning requires communicating exactly what opportunities are available and how to transform oneself. Over the past 20 years, lifelong learning has become a worldwide concept, emphasizing to people that educational experiences do not always have to be inside a classroom.

In Malaysia, for instance, the message is clear: learn or be left out. “This learning will take place both inside and outside the formal education system, directing the spotlight onto the lifelong learning philosophy. The consensus is that the truly educated never graduate” (“Learning at all stages of life”, 2001). Encouraging people to realize that learning can occur anywhere and anytime is crucial to bringing the concept of lifelong learning to full fruition.

Researchers have identified several successful modes of learning, both formal and informal. Gross (1982) suggested that immersing oneself in a new situation can be a prime way to learn. Tough (1977) had earlier offered that self-education is not always undertaken with an eye to academic credit. Therefore, informal situations such as visiting libraries and museums or attending cultural event such as musicals and other performances are prime ways to teach oneself.

Along these lines, Gross (1982) discussed the “Invisible University,” based on the statement by Socrates that “Not I but the city teaches” (p.19). Museums, religious organizations, and other self-selected learning opportunities fit into this category. Gross suggested, “While dramatic intervention may be called for from time to time (such as formal coursework), far more
important is the day-to-day, week-to-week expansion of awareness, interests, and learning capability” (p. 20).

Aslanian and Brickell (1982) noted that non-educational institutions may be better places for adults to learn than educational institutions because their teaching is “accessible, convenient, realistic, immediate, and applicable” (p. 160). Such institutions include the workplace, churches, prisons, libraries, the armed forces, and other locations where education has become a significant function.

Some researchers have discussed the nontraditional places in a community where learning may occur. Adams (1982) pointed to the local shoe shop as a place where learning can occur. “Can greater social use be made of what might be described as accidental learning?” the researcher asks. “Could talk in a country store become one means of focusing knowledge about civic affairs so that racist, sexist, and exploitive relationships were altered?” Adams concluded the following:

The curriculum does not grow from a fixed notion of what should be taught, nor from a textbook or ideology, but rather from the life of our county, its households, its schools, its religious ceremonies, its festivals, and its public affairs. (p. 216)

The educational opportunities and learning experiences that are found in everyday involvement in our communities are just as meaningful and enriching, then, as those found in the classroom.

Building on this concept of the opportunities that await outside the classroom, Catalano (1984) stated that the “world is your classroom” when you combine travel with learning. Libraries and museums were mentioned as resources again, as well as computers, television, and correspondence courses which could be enjoyed from the comfort of home.

Both Dinmore (1997) and Kolb (1984) suggested that experiential learning, the most prevalent for adults, is integrative and non-disciplinary, thus becoming the basis for interdisciplinary studies. Kolb wrote that this learning model uses experiences as a basis for learning in a cycle that includes “concrete experience, reflective observation, conceptualization,
and active experimentation” (p. 75). Adults, then, are concerned with integrating their experiences in order to make sense of what they are learning from them.

In discussing experiential learning, Mezirow (1991) offered that a definition, calling it “a process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding” (p.189). It is the frame of reference and the realization of where learning “fits” into the structure of day-to-day living that provides the bridge from experience to transformation.

This transformation lay at the heart of Dominicé’s (1990) understanding of how adults learn. The researcher connected learning to people’s life histories, concluding that the formation and transformation of their knowledge, culture, and value systems are the result of different processes that characterize their lives. Adults learn within the context of their lives and they learn when they can reorganize and enrich what they already know. There is an obvious interaction between family, school, and social life in the learning process for them.

Volunteer experiences, as well, offer adults an opportunity to learn. Coughlan (1994) suggested that adults must make a commitment to the vision they have of their personal lives, including volunteerism, in the context of family and professional commitments. There are seven suggested principles to achieving this:

1. Create a vision of yourself.
2. Create a vision of your family life.
3. Create a vision of your professional life.
5. Develop love in your life.
6. Look for the flow in your life, the process of total involvement.
7. Consistently reevaluate all of the above. (p. 67)

Coughlan noted that too many adults come to the realization that their lives are passing them by without true fulfillment. The writer suggested that people have to constantly evaluate whether the experiences they are having are truly enriching and fulfilling to their lives. What makes one happy and productive should be a key factor in deciding to participate in activities.
Transforming Through Life’s Stages

Erikson (1950) offered that as people move through the various stages of life, they basically move through eight stages of “generativity, becoming concerned with what might be called our ‘cosmic contribution’” (p. 219). The nature of extrinsically motivated and intrinsically motivated people related directly to age and maturity, two categories related also to learning ability. Erikson suggested that the level of a person’s maturity is correlated to maturity and, therefore, to their inclinations to be extrinsically or intrinsically motivated:

If we fail to mature, and the nature of our personal motivation remains extrinsic, we become in a sense “outwardly-in” focused, which means we become obsessed with ourselves as is the case with individuals who spend hours telling others the details about their latest surgery). If we mature, our motivation becomes intrinsic, our focus becomes “inwardly-out.” (p. 232)

Growth and gradual transition characterize the life stages suggested by Erikson. These stages each influence and correlate with the ability of an individual to learn and help make up the pattern of a person’s lifelong learning experiences, as represented in Table 1.

Table 1. Growth and Transition through Lifestages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lifestage Conflicts</th>
<th>Age Span</th>
<th>Lifestage Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust vs. Basic Mistrust</td>
<td>0-1 years</td>
<td>Trust and confidence grow in extrinsic forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt</td>
<td>1-3 years</td>
<td>The time in life one struggles between holding on and letting go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative vs. Guilt</td>
<td>3-6 years</td>
<td>Responsibility becomes a part of the ego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry vs. Inferiority</td>
<td>6-13 years</td>
<td>Development is disrupted when family life may not prepare one for school or when school life may fail to sustain the promises of earlier stages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity vs. Role Diffusion</td>
<td>13-20 years</td>
<td>Integration taking place in the form of ego identity is more than the sum of the childhood identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimacy vs. Isolation</td>
<td>20-45 years</td>
<td>This stage is about man’s challenge &quot;to love and to work&quot;, following Freud’s &quot;Lieben and arbeiten&quot; theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generativity vs. Stagnation</td>
<td>45-60 years</td>
<td>Interest shifts to establishing and guiding the next generation or settling for interpersonal impoverishment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Adapted from Childhood and society, 1950, p. 233.

Using Erikson’s work on life stage theory as a foundation, researchers and authors (Cross, 1981; Gross, 1977; Hayes & Flannery, 2000; Knowles, 1973; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991) have explored further the relationships that exist among life stages, life events, and adults’ ability and
willingness to participate in learning activities. Connections involving motivators have been researched as well.

Certainly, the term “lifelong learning” expresses the “ideas that learning never ceases from birth to death and that (until senility) educational programs can be devised for people of any age” (Houle, 1984, p. 223). However, as people progress from one life stage to another, especially as suggested by Erikson, educational needs change along with motivations and distracters.

Gross (1977) also offered that how one learns depends on his or her temperament, circumstances, stage of life, as well as need, taste, or ambition. Success in learning depends not on the subject itself or the conditions, but the learner’s engagement. Gross wrote that learning is often a “lever for life-change,” referring to education’s ability to bring about life stage marker events (p. 67). Moving from one stage of life to another can therefore be a result of a lever tripped by education. Additionally, life stage events can also be hindrances for education as well.

The sequential pattern of development posed by several researchers and authors (Houle, 1984; Gross, 1977; Knowles, 1973; Levinson, 1978) proposes that “often these specific periods of development have been related to chronological time—either specific periods, as suggested by Houle and Gross, or broad age parameters, as suggested by Erikson” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

Another alternative to the “life stage” theories is the “life events” approach offered by some researchers. Although this approach is essentially along the same lines, it suggests that adults who learn because of one kind of transition differ from those who learn because of another. Such transitions are linked to age but do not necessarily occur in a linear fashion across time. It is being in transition from one status in life to another that causes most adults to learn. Adults learn what they need to know in order to be successful in their new status (Aslanian & Brickell, 1982). As suggested by Aslanian and Brickell’s “Life and Learning Relationships” diagram in Figure 4, change occurs in a linear fashion, looking at life with definitive beginnings
and endings. These transitions mark stage changes but can occur more than once in life and with different results. Examples would be marriage, becoming a parent, completing an advanced degree, or relocating to a new home.

These transition events, or marker events, are important transitions to learning or a cessation of learning. According to the researchers, “the number of triggering events in each life area corresponds closely to the amount of time adults spend in each life area” (Aslanian & Brickell, 1982, p.164). Most triggering events, Aslanian and Brickell found, are related to career and family events.

Researchers (Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989) suggested that people in transition have both strengths and weaknesses to cope with transition. The researchers divided them into four major categories, typifying them as the “Four S’s”:

1. Situation: How does the person assess the transition?
2. Self: What are the person’s inner strengths for dealing with the transition?
3. Supports: What kinds of internal and external supports does the person have?
4. Strategies: Does the person have a wide repertoire of strategies for coping with the transition? (p. 109)

This model is neither orderly nor sequential. Moreover, researchers concluded, “Helpers are needed to assist adults in transition in examining their present situation and future scenarios from differing perspectives” (p. 110).

Clarke (1998) suggested that over the life cycle transitions were role-oriented. The researcher devised a parallel construction life model that emphasized the changing roles of Sustainer, Supporter, and Satisfier (p. 218). Each time one of the roles was assumed, a person’s ability or willingness to participate in activities was affected, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. Persons in the Sustainer role are required to concentrate on providing for themselves and for their families. Supporters are further required to provide, but in a much more involved role, such as caring for a newborn child or an elderly parent. Those persons in the Satisfier role are given to self-satisfaction and are the most likely and able to pursue enriching
experiences as adults. As stated, this researcher approached lifestages as being role-oriented, as demonstrated in Figure 5:

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Figure 5. Role-oriented, parallel construction life stages.
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In a different approach, Cross (1981) synthesized both approaches into two organizational charts, one that emphasized the life cycle and one that emphasized the changing roles due to transitions in life and the accompanying personality changes. The life cycle chart correlated phase, age, and marker events, as shown in Table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase and Age</th>
<th>Marker Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaving Home (18-22)</td>
<td>Move from home; college; select mate; enter job market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving into Adult World (23-28)</td>
<td>Marry; establish home; become parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search for Stability (29-31)</td>
<td>Children begin education; progress in career; possible divorce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming own Person (37-42)</td>
<td>Promotions; 3-generation family; aging parents; empty nest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settling Down (45-55)</td>
<td>Cap career; launch children; grandparents; new hobbies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mellowing (57-64)</td>
<td>Possible loss of mate; health problems; prepare for retirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Review (65+)</td>
<td>Retirement; physical decline; change in finances; death of friends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Adapted from *Adults as learners* by P. Cross, 1981, p. 174.

This phasic model again suggests that adults move from one life phase or stage to another based on definitive age guidelines as well as specific marker events. The correlation of age and marker events to motivations and distractions from learning has been explored as well.

According to Cross, developmental-stage research involves vertical progression rather than linear progression. It is not age-defined, but rather defined based on a person’s handling or reaction to marker events. It provides an interesting point of reference for comparison between
age-oriented theories and those more focused on maturity and ability to cope with life transitions. Stage-oriented research suggests that a person moves from one developmental stage to another on a vertical basis as opposed to movement from one stage to another on a linear track. A stage-oriented progression is demonstrated in Table 3:

Table 3. Milestones of Ego Development as Suggested by Stage-oriented Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Character Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presocial</td>
<td>Impulsive; fear of retaliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-protective</td>
<td>Fear of being caught; externalize blame; opportunistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conformist</td>
<td>Conformity to external rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious/conformist</td>
<td>Differentiation of norms, goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conscientious</td>
<td>Self-evaluated standards; guilt; self-criticism; form long term goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>Add to Conscientious: Respect for individuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomous</td>
<td>Add: Coping with conflicting inner needs, tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>Add: Reconciling inner conflicts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Adapted from *Adults as learners* by P. Cross, 1981, p. 178.

Cross offered that the major differentiation occurs where the phasic researchers “spend more time describing the stage rather than explaining its origin” (p. 176). Stage researchers, on the other hand, give much more attention to the explanation of “why” than to the actual description. Table 3 reflects Cross’s interpretation of the milestones of ego development. The movement is directly related to a person’s ability to cope with life’s changes and challenges and is based on theories developed by Loevinger (1979).

Summary

An extensive amount of research has been conducted in the area of adult motivations for learning, modes of learning, and life-stage events. As pointed out in this chapter, much of the research conducted in the last decade has been centered on the area of meeting the formal and informal educational needs of a growing population of older citizens who are in better health and living longer than ever before.

In effect, it is a field that has received much attention and consideration, both by researchers and authors alike. There are diverging theories in some areas (life stages) as well as similar theories in others (motivations and distracters). This study will be different from previous studies, however, in that it will seek to reach new conclusions based on a targeted, in-
depth analysis of one person’s life through an education biography. Generalizations have been made about an entire perceived culture (adult learners), but this study will seek to analyze these theories and conclusions.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

We must remember that our primary obligation is always to the people we study, not to our project or to the larger discipline. The lives and stories that we hear and study are given to use under a promise, that promise being that we protect those who have shared with us. And, in return, this sharing will allow us to write life documents that speak to the human dignity, the suffering, the hopes, the dreams, the lives gained, and the lives lost by the people we study. These documents will become testimonies to the ability of the human being to endure, to prevail, and to triumph over the structural forces that threaten at any moment to annihilate all of us.

(Denzin, 1989, p. 83)

The qualitative method of research was the logical choice to give a voice to Evelyn McQueen Cook’s reflections on her journey as a lifelong learner. Lincoln and Guba (1985) provided the four basic procedural principles for qualitative inquiry that defined the parameters of this study: (a) understanding a situation is more desirable than explaining, predicting, or controlling it; (b) the researcher best achieves this understanding by becoming the prime instrument of data collection; (c) analytic induction is employed; (d) there is contamination because the researcher’s and participant’s beliefs affect research. The understanding of and adherence to these four principles are crucial aspects of such a study.

As the Denzin quote that begins this chapter suggests, the art and the act of storytelling permits humans to share their life stories as they perceive them. Researchers acting as biographers, then, have the challenge of taking already filtered stories and presenting those stories as viewed through yet another filter. Derrida (1972) saw this as looking through a glazed window and trying to discern what was inside.

Further refining the biographical process into an approach focused on one’s educational journey, Dominicé (1990) wrote that life history can be used in education as a tool for critical reflection, and the dynamics of this reflection can become for the researcher the real object of this research (p. 194).
Within this chapter, methodology for giving voice to one person’s life story in the context of learning and education is described. A focus for the study, a rationale for selecting a qualitative research design, a view of the study as it relates to biographical research design, and a description of the study’s participant are presented in Chapter 3. Phases of the study, instrumentation, data collection and analysis procedures, a description of the manner in which trustworthiness will be ensured, and pertinent ethical issues are also addressed.

Focus of the Study

This study focused on the formal and informal experiences of Evelyn McQueen Cook as a lifelong learner. Crucial to the study was information revealed about the motivations and distractions that have presented themselves within the context of learning. The study provided some voice to her story and will explore contextual and chronological marker points in her educational biography.

Fit of the Study to a Qualitative Research Tradition

As this study examined the life experiences and educational opportunities of one person and her reflections on those experiences and opportunities, the qualitative research tradition selected was biography or life history (Creswell, 1998; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). Combining the approaches of Denzin (1989, 1990) and Dominicé (1990), Evelyn McQueen Cook was interviewed about her experiences as a learner in her life from childhood through the present day.

Denzin (1989) suggested that a person has a life or set of life experiences that are his or hers and no one else’s (p. 28). Further, he offers that a life is lived on two levels termed the surface and the deep. At the surface level, the person is what he or she does in everyday life, routines, and daily tasks. At the deep level, the person is a feeling, moral, sacred inner self. This deep, inner self may only infrequently be shown to others.

The qualitative method of biography and life history, then, allows a writer and researcher to explore this deep, inner life of another and capture the experiences and learned behaviors through the telling of one’s story. Dominicé (1990) proposed narrowing the biographical and life history even more closely to focus on an individual’s life story as within the context of
learning and educational experiences, both formal and informal. In composing an educational biography, Dominicé suggested there must be a conscious effort from the beginning on the part of the qualitative researcher employing this approach. The practice “dictates that this kind of life history is not an autobiography in which the author is totally free to talk or write about his or her life. Participants have to focus on the process of how they became themselves and how they learned what they know through the various contexts, life stages, and people who were relevant to their education.” (p. 193).

Further narrowing Denzin’s interpretive biographical approach with Dominicé’s concept is the thought that the methodology of educational biography requires different phases, which could be taken as stages of awareness about one’s life. The oral narrative is the first self-interpretation of the life history of adults centered on the role of education in their process of learning and development.

Using the research of Denzin and Dominicé as a basis for this project, the interviews with the participant will be conducted primarily to obtain a thorough description of her educational opportunities and experiences throughout her life, with the ultimate focus of framing it within relevant research pertaining to lifelong learning.

Following the interviews, the data were organized around emerging themes and subsequently examined in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Again, the purposes and goals of life history research was adhered to throughout this process (Creswell, 1998; Denzin, 1989; Dominicé, 1990; Gall, et al., 1996).

Participants

Education biographies focused on life history narratives require a limited number of participants. Recently, this method has become a popular approach (Gall et al., 1996). The sole participant in this study is Evelyn McQueen Cook, a native and resident of Johnson County, Tennessee.
Successive Phases of the Study

Following Institutional Review Board Approval, interview sessions were scheduled with Evelyn McQueen Cook at her home located at 251 North Church Street in Mountain City, Tennessee. These sessions lasted approximately one and a half hours each and were tape recorded, with Mrs. Cook’s permission. Some preliminary classifying and analyzing of data, as suggested by Dominicé (1990), will be performed to guide subsequent interview sessions.

The data were coded and classified by category using QSR NUD.IST 4 software (QSR NUD.IST 4 User Guide, 1997). In addition, supporting documentation in the form of letters, photographs, and other official documents were collected for use in the study. An external reviewer audited information from the text files, coded materials, and supporting documentation chosen for inclusion in the study’s record.

Instrumentation

Questions for the initial interview were devised to gather factual information pertinent to the participant’s life. Subsequent interview sessions followed the approach suggested by Levinson and Levinson (1996), which urged researchers interviewing subjects in a biographical study to view the interview sessions as a conversation between friends. A loose set of opening questions guided the opening conversation and follow-up questions emerged as the conversation proceeds. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have suggested that in this situation, both the researcher and the participant are engaging in an oral history conversation during which each brings forward oral history material (p. 111). Topically, the interview sessions focused upon educational and learning experiences, but emerging themes and strands were further explored as they arise.

Data Collection and Recording Modes

Data were collected primarily through interviews with the participant, Evelyn McQueen Cook. The researcher took written notes as well as tape record interview sessions. These tapes were transcribed into a text format using Microsoft Word 2000. Coding of transcripts was
accomplished through the use of QSR NUD.IST 4 (*QSR NUD.IST 4 User Guide*, 1997). Nodes representing categories or key concepts were developed as the coding process occurs.

Certainly, Dominicé’s (1990) framework of educational biography insists that there be a continual analysis of data during collection. Educational biographies reject the tradition of a research design in which the phase of content analysis is planned after collecting the data. Transformative research introduces a dynamic in which new hypotheses emerge and are enriched by their continuous discussion (p. 196).

The interview sessions were conducted following a chronological time frame, as suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). These researchers suggested “involving participants in creating annals and chronicles as a way to create a framework on which to construct their oral histories. Annals and chronicles can be thought of as a [chronological] shaping and narrating of personal and societal histories” (p. 112). The interview sessions continued until the chronological time frame has been covered and no new information or themes are emerging either through actual conversation or analysis of data, as suggested by Dominicé’s (1990) approach.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

The primary data analysis procedure used in this study was an interpretive strategy suggested by Denzin (1989). In the analysis of a subject’s life history, the individual’s biography is reconstructed and the structural-objective factors that have shaped his or her life are identified (p. 56). Paired with the focus provided by Dominicé’s (1990) approach to constant analysis while creating an educational biography, the analysis focused on a chronological arrangement of data from the interviews. These data were formatted as text files in Microsoft Word 2000. Using QSR NUD.IST 4, the text files were reconfigured to reflect the various themes that emerge during analysis. This process was continual throughout, as new themes and strands emerge. An external auditor checked the trustworthiness of the thematic categories and nodes as deduced from the original text files.
Logistical Issues

The interviews were conducted at the participant’s residence in Mountain City, Tennessee. Appointments were scheduled conveniently for Evelyn McQueen Cook. All interviews took place in early evening, with follow-up sessions scheduled accordingly.

Trustworthiness of the Data

Denzin (1989) wrote that sociologists as listeners are seldom in a position to accurately determine the factuality of a person’s story. Denzin further suggested that stories told are never the same as stories heard and that stories are shaped by larger ideological forces that put pressure on people to establish their individuality in the stories they construct (p. 77).

Considering this, the researcher ensured the truth of the findings of this study by examining the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the data gathered (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although the primary source for the study was data collected from the subject through conversational interviews, secondary sources such as letters, photographs, official documents, and other artifacts related to the subject’s educational life history were used to verify factual accuracy and credibility.

Great care to provide a thick, rich texture through text and inclusion of artifacts within the study enhanced the presentation of themes and paradigms. This further advanced the transferability of the study as well as provided a solid foundation for determining dependability and confirmability.

In addition, the researcher used a peer debriefer to provide an external check of the research process. As defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), this person served as “devil’s advocate” by checking for clarification of facts, ensuring consistency, and providing me an opportunity for framing the researcher’s thoughts in an objective setting. Written accounts of the sessions were kept.

Member checking was employed throughout the interview process to ensure clarity of fact. Wanda Payne, an English teacher at Johnson County High School, served as peer debriefer.
and auditor. Her knowledge of Mrs. Cook’s life and her familiarity with Johnson County proved invaluable in this process.

**Other Ethical Issues**

The quote from this chapter’s beginning reminds any researcher who is completing a study based on another person’s life history that the chief concern be to retain the dignity of that person’s story. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also emphasized, “We need to be thoughtful of our research participants as our first audience and, indeed, our most important audience, for it is to them that we owe our care to compose a text that does not rupture life stories” (p. 173).

In regard to the narrower concept of educational biographies, Dominicé (1990) encouraged researchers who employ this method to remember that one of the most important components of the process is that it gives adults the opportunity to be more in charge of their education by becoming conscious of why, what, and how they learn in the global context of their life histories.

**Summary**

An interpretive educational biographical approach was used to conduct a qualitative study using conversational interviewing as the primary data collection source. The study presented information about Evelyn McQueen Cook’s perception of her experiences and opportunities as a lifelong learner.
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA ANALYSIS

I have traveled many, many roads in life and that is comforting to me in a way.

Evelyn Cook

The purpose of this interpretative educational biography was to explore the motivations and distracters to learn in the life of Evelyn McQueen Cook. The study also explored the modes of learning that have emerged in her life, both formal and informal. An extensive biographical narrative was presented and subsequently analyzed in the context of emergent themes related to motivations, distracters, and modes of learning.

As initially planned, interviews were conducted over a period of three weeks at the home of Evelyn Cook in Mountain City, Tennessee. A conversational interview style was used. Interviews were structured along a chronological track with subsequent follow-up sessions used for clarification and member-checking. Photographs, letters, post cards, certificates, and other artifacts were collected following the interviews. These were useful in verifying data collected during the interviews and provided further detail for the narrative presentation.

Introduction to Evelyn McQueen Cook

The subject of this study, Evelyn McQueen Cook, is a native of Johnson County, Tennessee, a rural county nestled in the most northeastern corner of the state. She was born on May 10, 1927, and was 75 years old at the time of the interviews. Born and reared in Shady Valley, Tennessee, she is a 1945 graduate of Johnson County High School in Mountain City, Tennessee and a 1949 graduate of Berea College in Berea Kentucky. She was awarded a master’s degree in English and educational administration from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Tennessee. She currently lives in a century-old home she with her husband, Edward Cook in Mountain City, Tennessee. The narrative will be presented chronologically with emergent themes noted in a subsequent analysis.
CHAPTER 5
IN THE SHADOWS OF THE MOUNTAINS

The Iron, Cross, and Holston Mountains cast a long, familiar shadow over the narrow valley tucked into the northern corner of Johnson County, Tennessee. It is in this valley that Margaret Evelyn McQueen Cook’s early life began and unfolded. In this narrow valley, family farms were carved out of the rugged landscape and their fertile soils were tilled and toiled for generation after generation (Figure 6).

Figure 6. A 1963 aerial view of Shady Valley.
The small community of Shady Valley provided the setting for the early parts of this story, which began on May 10, 1927, when Evelyn was born on the family farm in Shady Valley, the only child of Marcus Hale McQueen and his wife, Myrtle Lee Gentry of Laurel Bloomery:

I was born in what came to be the tenant house on our family’s farm that was where my mother and father started their housekeeping. It was early in the morning. Dr. Hutchinson was the doctor and my father went around saying he had a red-headed baby, which I was when I was little. I have been a redhead, a blonde, and a brownette, and I refuse to be a gray head.

Family Roots on the Home Place

Like many native Johnson Countians of her generation, Evelyn’s family had deep roots in their community. Deep rooted in Shady Valley, the McQueen family had farmed the family homestead for six generations in the narrow mountain valley bordered on all sides by the steep mountain ridges so familiar to the residents of Johnson County (Figure 7). Family was important:

My mother was Myrtle Lee Gentry of Laurel Bloomery. My father was Marcus Hale McQueen and he was born and reared in Shady Valley on the same farm that I was born on. I was the sixth generation to be born on that farm. My mother taught one year while she was pregnant with me and she didn’t teach anymore. She was a homemaker. And my father worked for the state highway department; he was a foreman of that. And before that he was a foreman building the Shady Valley school, which was a WPA program back in the thirties.

Figure 7. A typical Shady Valley farm, circa 1936.
Our home was a white house, a kind of modified Cape Cod, I guess, with a great big living kitchen. When I was a small child, it was a living kitchen, with a long hallway, and upstairs were the sleeping quarters. There was a parlor that was kept closed for family occasions.

![Figure 8. Myrtle and Marcus McQueen at their home in Shady Valley (date unknown).](image)

As with many family farms, each generation had added a unique feature to the farm, either to the house itself or to the landscape. One such feature was the Spring Lot, a grouping of trees planted on the farm by her Grandfather McQueen, which provided the setting for several family memories:

The really neat thing about the home place was what we called the Spring Lot. My grandfather had planted a whole bunch of trees in the back and they say it is awful looking now. I will never go back again because it is grown up and everything but my mother kept it manicured. But there was a spring house, which was wonderful, and picnic tables, and a little outdoor fireplace that was built in later years.

But my grandfather was a great entertainer. He loved to have people in and my mother and father kept that up so there were lots and lots of parties in that Spring Lot which was wonderful. And that Spring Lot was also where my daddy and I had our little summer outings that my mother thought were so crazy. I wanted to name my book I’m writing Green Onions and Buttermilk, but I guess I won’t because someone said it sounded like a cookbook, but Daddy and I would go into the garden and get these fresh onions, warm from the earth, and we would come by the back door and get glasses and
cold cornbread, big hunks of cold cornbread, and we’d take those over to the spring house and we’d dip up great big glasses of cold buttermilk and then we’d come and sit on one of those benches and eat our green onions and cold buttermilk and cornbread and my daddy would say, “The King of England don’t eat no better than this!” and I said later on, when I was eating in fancy restaurants in Paris and so forth, that I had to agree that nothing tasted any better than the cold buttermilk and onions eaten with my Poppa Mac whom I loved so dearly.

Family and the traditions associated with family were important in Evelyn’s childhood, especially those shared with her cousins who lived on either side of their farm in Shady Valley and two who lived in the closest large town, Bristol, Tennessee. Growing up as an only child on a family farm in a small, rural community, Evelyn looked over the hill to her Uncle Cornelius McQueen’s home for company and childhood playmates:

On one side of me was my Uncle Cornelius, who was my daddy’s older brother and he had a whole bunch of kids. His youngest was five years older than I and her name was Glenna. She was the bane of my existence. Everyday I wanted to go play with her and everyday we got into a fight because Glenna could do things that I couldn’t do. She could wear make-up and she had dresses that I couldn’t have, so we invariably got into a fight. And her mother was kind of ‘otherworldly’, Aunt Annie was. She kind of existed on a different plane so Glenna’s older sisters took care of our fighting and they would send me carting off home. And yet I loved her and wanted to go back the next day and play with her.

Across another nearby hill sat the home of Evelyn’s Uncle Willis McQueen and Aunt Hattie. Their daughter, Lois, was near Evelyn’s age and was one of her best childhood friends, as the two young girls, along with their other cousins played together throughout childhood:

I played with my cousins and we did things like, we had playhouses. There were great oak trees around the house and the Spring Lot and so forth, and they had moss between them and the roots would come out and so between each root would be a room and so we played house under those big oak trees and made up all kinds of stories.

And I had two hideaway places that were wonderful. One was above the cellar. Mom and Dad had a cellar that was just a building. It wasn’t built into the side of the hill like some are but this was just a kind of little house, and behind it was a little ladder that went up into the attic and the only way you could get up into the attic was to climb that ladder. That attic became one of my playhouses, and no one was allowed up there except very special people. I think I allowed two people up there, two of my cousins. That was my place where I went and I could become Huckleberry Finn or Peter Pan or anybody I wanted to. That was my hideaway.
The other place was around the path into the cellar proper and that’s where I had my dolls and a little table and chair and a little tea set and that sort of thing.

Traversing the path to Aunt Hattie’s required making one’s way past a landmark that dots the landscape across the Appalachian region, the family cemetery. While Evelyn passed the cemetery many times while going to play with Lois, the spot took on a new air the summer before she began school:

Lois, of course, was near my age. We started to school together. She was a very good friend and I went over to Aunt Hattie’s to play all the time. And it was in their family that was the first death that I ever knew. Uncle Willis died the summer before Lois and I were to start to school. And it was a terrible, terrible thing. I didn’t quite know what was going on. But it was, you know, instead of the house being happy, it was all sad, and I couldn’t understand why. We went up on the hill and they put Uncle Willis into the ground and I didn’t understand all that.

But I did know that the graveyard was someplace where I was threatened with the graveyard because I had to go up the hill and down the hill to get to Aunt Hattie’s house and I wanted to go that way all the time. And Momma would tell me I had to be home before dark. And someone told me, I don’t think it was Momma, that you don’t want to pass that graveyard after dark because something will come up from under those stones. I was scared to death of that graveyard, and I still dream about it sometimes.

That family spot would play into Evelyn’s life twice again as she returned there later in life to bury first her father and then her mother.

As it did later the year her Uncle Willis died, the McQueen home played host to family celebrations, especially in the home’s parlor that took on a magical aura during the holiday season:

That parlor was where Christmas happened and that was marvelous. The most wonderful Christmas that I ever had was when I guess I was six or seven. Uncle Willis had died and left Aunt Hattie and six children. Aunt Hattie had no education, an eighth grade education, and what was there to do in Shady Valley at that time? But anyway Daddy told me that we were going to invite Aunt Hattie and her children to spend Christmas with us, and that as a result of that, I would have less Christmas than I ordinarily would have and that wasn’t a great deal. But he said that he was going to spread Christmas out and whatever I got, the children would get like in quantity, and so my other cousins May and Fred and my granny came from Bristol and brought all kinds of city fixings for Christmas plus Granny’s famous angel food cake and so forth and the place was just wonderful.
Mom and my Uncle Tardy and I had gone into the woods and gotten the Christmas tree and brought it and put it up in the parlor and my mother had locked the door as that’s German fashion, and I didn’t realize that until we lived in Germany later in life. She decorated the tree and locked the door. I didn’t see the tree decorated. I was not allowed in there. So that was the mystique there.

So about dark Aunt Hattie and her family all arrived, and for some reason or other we used to shoot firecrackers on Christmas and Roman candles. We went out into the yard and shot fire crackers and Roman candles and what not, and then all of us decided to go down to Glenna’s which was just down thru the field to my Uncle Cornelius’s house and wish them a merry Christmas. So we all walked down on a crisp, crisp Christmas Eve, snow on the ground, and the sky was clear and the stars were sparkling. And we went down with our hands full of stick candy and oranges and so forth, and then we were coming back, and I remember we tried to figure out which star was the star that had led the shepherds to the baby Jesus, and we all stood and I remember that was just such a wonderful moment.

Then we came up on the porch of the house, and as we came upon the porch we heard this thump, thump, thump, thump and my mother met us at the door and said, “I think Santa Claus has just come”. So Lois and I were what six or seven and we still believed in Santa Claus and we were so excited.

Evelyn said that her parents took great care to make Christmas very special and mysterious, with the decorations and visiting family more important than any gifts she received. The time was even more special as she was able to share the time with her cousins:

My mother said, “Now, we are just going to open the door and let you in but you let your cousins go in first.” So Lois and I stood and looked around the corner and the room was absolute magic. We didn’t have electricity so we had the candles that Mama had lighted on the tree, and in the other corner was an Aladdin’s lamp on a gold oak table that looked like just a corner of gold.

In the corner where the tree was presents were spilling out all over the place. So we went in and there were stockings all on the fireplace and we all sat down and my cousin Fred said that Santa Claus had told him to dispense the gifts. All of us sat down and I have no idea what I got for Christmas, I have no idea. But it was the most wonderful, magical Christmas ever because see I was an only child, and that was a wonderful Christmas because it was shared with family.

My parents always did something to make magic. Like one Christmas I had to go up to Tardy’s when he lived in the tenant house at that time up on the hill. I was sent up there for something and when I came back there were steps all along the back porch and a place where Santa had apparently put his sack over the transom of the window so I thought that Santa had come in that way. But every Christmas they did something to
make magic. And I guess that is one of the places that I got my feeling of magic. So now ever since that, every Christmas is my special holiday as it is a lot of peoples.

Surrounded by not just her immediate family but her extended family as well, Evelyn had several adults in her life whom she observed and learned from while growing up. Her Aunt Hattie, who was left to rear six children alone, became a source of strength and determination for the young girl as she watched her do what she needed to do:

Aunt Hattie was left with those six kids and one went to live with a cousin and we saw very little of her. That left five and all the kids worked on the farm and did everything that they could. Aunt Hattie made soup and carried soup in two great big containers down to the little elementary school in Crandull, the first little school that I went to. And when we would come home in the afternoon, when there was snow on the ground, we would see great big red blobs in the snow and we would know that was where the soup had sloshed over that Aunt Hattie was carrying.

And another cousin of ours was the mailman, Big Chet Blevins. He said his greatest, the saddest thing in his life, was having to go by that little lady, Aunt Hattie, carrying those heavy things of soup and not be able to pick her up because of course you couldn’t in a government vehicle. He couldn’t pick up anybody. And he said that had always remained the saddest thing in his life. So anyway Aunt Hattie would bring that soup down and she would put it on the stoves and that soup and that was our hot lunch for the whole school. That’s what Aunt Hattie did.

There was one great big kettle in the little room and a big kettle in the big room and how she carried that soup I will never know. But she did what she had to do. Aunt Hattie was a fun person and so once she got over the immediate heartache of Uncle Willis’s death, [her house] was where all the people gathered in. She had an old-fashioned organ and they had a Victrola and we played things like “Beautiful, Beautiful Brown Eyes” and “Wabash Cannonball” and all that stuff. And we gathered around the organ and sang. She made candy for us. The house became a happy place again and it was a wonderful place to go.

Early in her life, then, Evelyn realized how important her extended family was to her. While her parents were perhaps the most influential in helping shape who she would become as she matured, the cousins, aunts, and uncles on both sides of her family played pivotal roles in the formation of her value system. Character traits such as honesty and integrity were learned from them, as well as the simple importance of family and friends and “knowing where you came from.” These lessons would carry through life with her, as she would often look back to her Shady Valley roots for guidance and inspiration.
From the Two-Room School to Shady Valley’s New Rock School

Evelyn’s mother had chosen teaching as a profession when she first married. She actually taught for one year before giving birth to Evelyn in 1927. After that, she dedicated herself to making a home for her family on the farm in Shady Valley.

As in most small, mountain communities, the local schoolhouse was an important focal point for the surrounding residents and, along with the church, a major part of life in the community. From first grade through the fourth grade, Evelyn attended the small, two-room clapboard clad Crandull School in the lower region of Shady Valley. A mile’s walk from home, the school served 50 students in eight grades until the new Shady Valley Elementary School opened in the mid-1930s:

School was wonderful. I was going to the little Crandull School, which was a little two room school and I would come home every night, walking a mile. Stephanie [her daughter] says, “Oh yes, mom, you walked a mile to school.”

There was a little room and a big room. The little room had first, second, and third grade, I guess, and when you got to be a fourth grader you went into the big room with fourth and fifth grade on one side of the aisle and the big people on the other side of the aisle. I never got to the other side of the aisle because we moved to the new school.

It was at Crandull School that Evelyn was exposed to two artistic forms that would intertwine themselves with her life’s journey, influencing her career as well as her personal hobbies and civic causes throughout life: literature and the experience of acting in front of a group:

Behind the principal in the big room was this bookcase with probably a dozen books in it and that was the most marvelous, wonderful place I’d ever seen in my life at that time. And I just begged the principal to carry those books home with me but he was reluctant for me to take them because those were the only books we had in that little school. But I finally talked him into it and that was when I discovered Edgar Allan Poe and “The Gold Bug” and all kinds of stories. I have a feeling that that book I loved so was a college sophomore lit. book and that was wonderful.

And when we would have Friday afternoon programs, there was some kind of panel kind of a thing that would turn the two rooms into one room. So when I graduated into the big room, we got to pull the panel back for the principal and get the little stage area ready for the Friday afternoon program.
These programs, “elocutions” as she referred to them, gave the children a chance to express themselves in front of their classmates as well as experience drama and literature from a different perspective than merely just reading it. At times, adults would join the children at school and perform plays that everyone would come in to view:

We would recite poetry and read little things and tell little stories. Anything to get them up on their feet. Oh, and they would do plays there and I remember when I was a real tiny, tiny little kid, probably in the first or second grade, my mother was in a play there and in the play she died and I thought my mother had died, and I went running behind the little curtain there, you know, to see what had happened to my mother. I didn’t realize at that time about plays, so that was a little scary.

It was also at Crandull School that Evelyn suffered two realizations early in life. First, she discovered that she was not athletic, a lesson that would be iterated to her later in life on a golf course in Germany. Secondly, she learned that she could not do math “worth a hang:”

I remember in the Crandull School was when I learned that I was not athletic. We did “Crack the Whip” and I was on the end and threw my shoulder out of place. That ended my “Crack the Whip” days. And they played baseball and I couldn’t throw a ball, and I couldn’t hit a ball, so nobody wanted me on their team. Any other game, there wasn’t any basketball or anything like that, I think we threw a ball over the school, something called “Auntie Over” and I couldn’t throw the ball over. And we had horseshoes, and I couldn’t throw those. So, if we didn’t play something like “The Thread that Runs so True” or something that had no athletic stuff in it, I just had to stand around and look because I was no good. So I learned that I was not athletic. But I was an avaricious reader. I never had enough books.

I also learned that I could not do math worth a hang. I’ve often told John Mast [a mathematics teacher at Johnson County High School] so many times that if I’d had him for a math teacher, it might have been different. But I’ll tell you what happened and I don’t know whether I can blame this on it or whether I’d have been in the same fix otherwise.

When I was in the fourth grade, I was only in school for two months because I had one childhood disease after another. I had whooping cough, and two or three others, that kept me out of school about all year and apparently that was the year, or maybe the third grade, anyway, it was the year where you learn number combinations and I missed all of that and when I went back into school for the little bit of time, they were doing things like “What’s nine and seven?” Well I had no idea and had to figure it out by counting on my fingers under my desk and I’m still counting on my fingers under my desk. I learned at that time that I was behind in math and because I was behind and wasn’t good at math, I learned to hate math. I still to this day hate math. It is a hang-up that I have that I picked up somewhere along the line. My daddy even had to have, well,
he thought he had to have and he was right, a tutor come in when I was in the eighth grade to prepare me until I would be able to do Algebra and so forth in high school because he was afraid I wouldn’t be able to.

A decision was made during the midst of the Great Depression to consolidate the four small schools in Shady Valley into one central school building that would serve students from the entire valley. The construction of the school was funded through the Worker’s Progress Administration (WPA) and provided not only a new school for the valley but also needed jobs and income for many of its residents (Figure 9). Before becoming a foreman for the state’s highway department, Evelyn’s father was among those who helped construct the new school, built entirely of materials found in the valley:

Daddy was a foreman at the site where they were building the new school. He would come home and tell me about this wonderful school that was being built all out of rock and wormy chestnut inside that they had, I guess, gotten from somewhere in water, because Shady Valley used to be under water, the whole center of it, they say, and he would come home telling us that it was going to have a tiny little library, indoor plumbing, and a classroom for each class, you know, and I thought that was the most wonderful thing I’d ever heard about. And we were going to be able to ride a school bus to school, which was unheard of. That was the first consolidated school, I guess, in Johnson County.

![Figure 9. The Shady Valley School House, under construction by the WPA in 1936.](image-url)
The new school, still a community gathering spot for the residents of Shady Valley, would serve grades one through eight, and Evelyn entered the school as a fifth grader, an experience she relates as a bit unnerving but one of the most marvelous of her life up to that point:

I went in as a fifth grader probably, and there is where my world started expanding, because up until that time my world had been made up of family and people from the lower part of Shady Valley.

It was another world. It was the first broadening experience, I guess, of my life as far as the Valley was concerned because my life has been like the waves when you throw a pebble into a stream. It has gone from a tiny, tiny little nucleus which was my home and the little Crandull experience. The Crandull experience was a big experience because I walked with my cousins a mile to school and I met kids I’d never met before. And then we got on the school bus and went to the big school and it was wonderful because we had a hall to stand in and talk with people and we had different rooms and a little library and a hot lunch. And I got to meet all of the kids from the whole Valley and that was a real broadening experience. And then that was the first time we made contact, school-wise, with the rest of the county, because they had something called a Blue Ribbon program that, I think, was put on by the health officials and we got to make something. I remember, one of the classes make a replica of Mt. Vernon and each class made something and we had blue ribbons we put across our stomachs and we came over to Mountain City on a school bus and we marched in a parade. I don’t remember what grade I was in, maybe 7th or 8th.

Those broadening experiences coupled with the influence of the teachers she encountered at Shady Valley Elementary stirred in Evelyn a realization that the world was much bigger than Shady Valley. She also discovered that the world could come closer to her through reading and books again became a treasured part of her life. Unlike the mathematics and athletics that had proven difficult and uninspiring for her, reading became an area in which she excelled:

I learned to love anything to do with reading and with words. And I think part of that has to do with the fact that I was an only child and spent quite a bit of my time alone in spite of the fact that I had cousins on either side of our farm. Reading was a way to have friends.

You know, Charles Dickens said in his biography that when he had to live in an attic because his daddy was in debtor’s prison, he said that as long as he had books he was never alone. Probably that’s part of it. Probably I had some tendency toward that kind of learning and that made me better at that than I was at math. Probably another reason you like stuff is because you’re good at it. I just loved stories and still do.
Books became a part of Evelyn’s life, a familiar influence that has remained throughout her adulthood. Those early books instilled in her a sense of adventure and piqued her imagination in a lasting way:

Oh, I read everything. Tom Sawyer, Huckleberry Finn, Gone With the Wind. It came out when I was an eighth grader and I thought that was the greatest thing that had ever happened. Of course Bobbsey Twins, Nancy Drew. And somebody by the name of Grace Livingston Hill. I read all of her books. Jean Stratton Porter, I read all of those. Those four were the four sets of books that I loved. Of course, Fred, May, Uncle Dave, and Momma and Daddy would get me things like Robin Hood, King Arthur, and those kind of stories. I just ate those up. That is when I first had that yearning to go to England. And when I went and got inside some of those cold castles, I discovered that knighthood was not quite as romantic as I thought it was as a teenager.

The teachers at Crandull School and, later, Shady Valley Elementary exposed Evelyn not only to books and theatre, but also to invaluable lessons about culture and the larger world outside Shady Valley:

Miss Lizzie Eastridge was one of my first teachers. Chase Garland, of course and his sister, Ada. She left Shady early on, but she was a marvelous teacher. Noah Blevins was the teacher in the big room. Those are the only teachers I remember from Crandull. I had Chase Garland and his wife, Matilda Garland, at the rock school. Matilda gave me a further love of literature. She always had an extra book or something that she wanted us to read. She was wonderful in that I learned the first grammar with her.

Chase was a marvelous history teacher. He could make ancient history come alive. I remember I got up to give a report once, and I was saying something about “A-rabs” and he said, “Evelyn, that is not ‘A-rab’, that’s “Arab.” I was so humiliated.

The teachers at Shady Valley Elementary were instrumental in laying the groundwork for Evelyn’s later academic success as she progressed through high school. Her parents, also, were intent that Evelyn be prepared for high school and, later, college. Expectations were high from both her parents and her teachers, providing a great deal of extrinsic motivation for Evelyn. In addition, some degree of intrinsic motivation to succeed and to perform well in academics, especially those related to language arts, was beginning to form within her. Troubles with mathematics would remain a struggle for her well into her adult life, becoming at times a frustrating barrier to her learning and academic preparation.
Church-going and Tent Revivals

Another aspect influencing Evelyn’s childhood in Shady Valley were religious experiences gained in the church. The local church acted as an extension of the family in helping frame and shape young minds with good ideals and values through Sunday School and summer tent revivals. Some of these experiences, however, caused Evelyn to question the messages she sometimes heard and the method of delivery by which those messages came. Rather than motivating her to join a particular church, the experiences bred a period of questioning and inquiry:

I went to church with my mother. My mother taught Sunday School when I was very small and then she stopped. My father never went to church, so they sent me to church with Aunt Hattie and her family and we had to walk, gosh, I guess it was two miles over to the Harmon Church and we never got back for lunch because one of the cousins always had us for lunch and we’d stop and I’d play with them. I’ve often wondered as an adult how those cousins, those women, got it together. You know they went to church and yet they fed like twenty people sometimes, I’m sure. I don’t know how they did it.

So I went to Sunday School and I remember little cards that had pictures from the Bible on them. I remember, very well, though, that when we were in the eighth grade, there was one of those revivals, you know the hellfire and damnation kind, where they made everything bright red and my cousin, Lois, joined the church that night. She was scared to death and I was scared to death too, but I was afraid to join the church until I talked with my mother and father about it. So I didn’t know what to do. So I went home and talked with them and my daddy said, “When you join the church, I want you to join for a different reason than being scared.”

He said, “I want you to think about what you’re doing and then I want you to join.” So I ended up not joining until I joined the Methodist Church when I was twenty-two when Cook and I were first married. But it was alright that way.

Later in life, when Evelyn became a lay leader at the First United Methodist Church in Mountain City, she said she would revisit her early exposure to religion, at least in her mind. It iterated within her the belief that each person travels on his or her own spiritual journey, and that the timing is not the same for all persons in terms of those epiphanies that characterize most people’s religious experiences.
Traveling Over the Mountain To The World Beyond

While a young girl in Shady Valley, Evelyn dreamed of traveling and read of far away places in books and studied about them in school. One place outside Shady Valley she did travel to was nearby Bristol, Tennessee. She would often spend time during the summer with her older cousins, Fred and May. Traveling to town and being afforded several days with them was not only educational but also culturally enriching as well:

Well, I got to spend summers, like two or three weeks or something like that, with May and Fred in Bristol and that was wonderful. It was another expanding experience I had as a child. They were my cousins and Uncle Dave Heaberlin was the chief of police on the Tennessee side.

They had a big old two-story house on Kentucky Avenue which was not far from King College. I would spend time with them and Fred was a telegrapher in the days when they had those things. He was very interested in words. Fred was the first one to get me interested in words, the magic of words. The first word that he ever taught me was valetudinarianism which is hypochondria. Anyway, I learned that word when I was very, very young. He taught many words to me. He and May taught me a lot of interesting things.

And I got to go to see movies when I went to Bristol. Uncle Dave made me so proud because he would take me downtown and put me in the Paramount Theatre to see an afternoon movie and I didn’t have to pay because Uncle Dave was all dressed up in his chief of police uniform and everyone said, “Hello, Uncle Dave, how are you?” and to me they’d say, “Oh come right in, you’re Uncle Dave’s niece.” And I just thought that was the most wonderful thing in the world. They called me “Sweet Pea”. Popeye had a little baby in the newspaper column and that’s where they got that from. And so that was one experience I had in the summertime.

Evelyn credited her mother with influencing her yearning to see what was on the other side of the mountain and to look beyond the fence rows that stood juxtaposed against the landscape of the family farm. Like the books that made her dream of European locales and visiting the lands trod by Shakespeare, Evelyn’s mother put in her a burning desire to travel over the mountains which surrounded Shady Valley one day, while her father impressed upon her the importance of roots and respecting one’s heritage and never forgetting your origins:

My mother had a tremendous influence in my life. My mother lost her father when she was very young and the Dickey family from Bristol took my mother and put her in Virginia Intermont for high school. I don’t think she graduated. But the Dickeys owned
the White Oak flat which is now a nature conservancy in Shady Valley and they came over quite often.

My grandfather lived on that place because my mother and her mother and all her siblings came back and lived in Shady Valley and that’s how she came to be there.

But they took her to Florida in the wintertime with them for two or three years and when I was little, from the time that I can remember, she would always say, “There’s more to the world than what’s between these mountains.” And my mother was very happy with my father. I’ve gone through that and wondered about it and the answer is that she was very happy.

But there was something in her that was a restlessness that wanted to see the world and she had seen just a tiny bit of it and knew there was more out there. And when I would listen to the Grand Ole Opry as a kid, because that’s what we did with the radio, my mother would say, “There is more music in the world than the Grand Ole Opry,” and Mrs. Dickey was an accomplished pianist, and my mother would tell me about different composers and so forth before I’d ever heard of them.

When Evelyn would decide later in her life to travel with her husband to Europe, she often reflected on this sense of wonder and desire to explore that her mother encouraged in her:

So she put that desire to travel in me, I think, that, plus all the reading I did. Now my father didn’t put any of that in me because every time I’d go home, he’d take me for a walk around the farm and tell me how many generations had been on that farm and how important it was to them and how he hoped I’d carry it on. So he was the one who taught me ethics and honesty and integrity and all that sort of thing but my mother put this other in me.

It was with this sense of adventure and wondering of what was around the next bend coupled with her love of her home and a desire to make her parents proud that Evelyn journeyed over the mountain to begin her experiences at Johnson County High School in Mountain City following eight years of education in the two schools in Shady Valley. Soon after arriving, something in her sensed that a change was in order and a new segment of her life began, supported, somewhat reluctantly but with willing hearts, by her parents.
CHAPTER 6
CROSSING OVER THE MOUNTAIN

When Evelyn finished the eighth grade at Shady Valley Elementary, she was afforded an opportunity to board a bus to cross the mountain each day to attend high school in Mountain City. There was no high school requirement in effect at that time, so not all students attended school after the eighth grade. From Shady Valley, Evelyn and several others ventured to Johnson County High School on a bus privately funded by their parents as no public school bus service was yet available in Johnson County. This began a journey that would begin expanding her world over and beyond the mountains surrounding Shady Valley.

Moving From Country Lanes to Glistening City Streets

All parents have trepidations when their children reach milestone moments in their lives, hoping they have influenced them enough to make the right decisions and take the right path when confronted with choices. Realizing what a transition attending high school in Mountain City would be for his daughter, Marcus McQueen visited the high school to pave the way for a successful beginning for Evelyn:

It was a different world. My daddy had preceded me across the mountain and talked to Justin Rambo who was a big crony of his, a democrat and so forth, and had told Justin that I was coming to high school and wanted to be certain that I got in with the “right crowd”, whatever that meant. And Justin had two daughters in school who were older than me. I don’t know whether they were the cause of it or whether I just stumbled into it, but I got to be close, lifetime friends, with Marjorie Lowe and Margery Ann Jones, who both lived in town here. Both lived on Main Street. Across the street, in front of the First Christian Church, in that blue house is where Marjorie Lowe’s grandmother lived, Grandma Wilson.

Meeting Marjorie and Margery Ann proved to be an important event in the high school freshman’s life. She began feeling a pull to spend more and more time with her Mountain City friends and participating in after school activities but the bus to Shady Valley traveled back home but once per day and it left soon after school was over each day:
I hadn’t been over here three months until I knew that my life was not going to be complete riding the school bus everyday and going home. There were too many things over here to do that you couldn’t do if you had to climb on the school bus and ride home.

Evelyn’s closeness to her childhood friends in Shady Valley and to home itself on the family farm was important to her but the draw of new experiences and new opportunities by living in Mountain City provided a tugging at her that was hard to resist:

There were two worlds involved in coming across the mountain. There was the world of my friends on the school bus from Shady Valley. They were good friends, good pals.

You know, I guess it was an hours drive from Mountain City to the lower part of Shady. In those days, we paid for that school bus. Then, I think it was $12 a month and Theona’s [Mcqueen, her cousin] father drove the school bus.

But, I learned there was a great big world away from Shady Valley. And you know what I loved? I loved streetlights and rain glistening under the street lights and I loved the idea of being able to walk by people’s homes on a sidewalk. It was like, who were those people? Dick and Jane who were always out walking or riding on a sidewalk. And of course my world had been made up of country roads and lanes. I just thought it was absolutely marvelous, a wonderful world. I just wanted to be a part of it.

Finally, Momma and Daddy relented and Daddy got me a place to board at Grandma Wilson’s. So I moved over and went home on weekends. I think it was either my sophomore year or late in my freshman year. I’m not quite sure, but I spent most of my high school career over here.

When Evelyn did move over to Mountain City, she became even closer to Marjorie and Margery Ann (Figure 10) and began participating in after school activities such as plays and the band. In addition to weekend visits home, her father visited during the week when he was in Mountain City as part of his job with the state highway department:

I have to tell you, and I’m sorry I have to tell you, that I don’t really think I missed home all that much because Daddy would come by very often because he worked for the highway department, and I saw him almost everyday somewhere along the way and I would go home on the weekends and through the week life was full because my two best friends were across the street and we either would phone each other or see each other. You know, we’d phone each other and say absolutely nothing. We wouldn’t be home five minutes until we’d phone each other.
When Evelyn moved to Mountain City to live during high school, she was not only closer to friends and school activities, but she was able to participate on a daily basis in activities common to small town life during the early 1940s: the corner drug store with soda fountain, the movie theatre, and the opportunity to gather with friends in town on Saturday nights:

Marjorie, Margery Ann, and I would walk down to the movies. There were two movie theatres. One was right about where John Muse’s office is. The Taylor was up closer to where Johnson County Bank is. The movies didn’t change very often. Or we’d walk down to the drug store. I feel sorry for kids who don’t have a drug store.

The movie theatre meant the world to Mountain City. You’d go to the movie and then go across the street to the drug store and have a soda or something. It was small town America and it was marvelous. Everything that teenagers could want or need, in those days. I mean, who had a car? Older boys had their father’s car when they were juniors or seniors, but other than that you rode a bicycle or walked around town. That was sufficient.

I remember one of the first movies I saw was a black movie, with Lena Horne in it. Uh, “Cabin in the Sky”. I thought Lena Horne was so beautiful.

We got to leave school and go down to the drug store and have lunch. We could see who was courting because they would always be in the back booths.
These social experiences and the fact that she was living away from home so early made the eventual transitions to college and, later in life, a career overseas much easier to make. She did not wonder until later in life about the sacrifice of time with her made by her parents:

As an adult I’ve often thought back and wondered about the loneliness they must have felt when I moved and especially later when Cook and I went off to Europe. But they never talked about it. They made some sacrifices, I know, and that was one of them.

Like many teenagers, Evelyn’s high school friends were among some of the best she had in life. The experiences, both serious and light-hearted, impacted her greatly and have remained memorable and treasured throughout her adult life. Additionally, her closeness to these friends who lived in Mountain City contributed greatly to her longing to move to Mountain City and live during the school year. As this was quite a significant event for her, the importance of these early friends was heightened all the more.

**Attending High School in the Era of World War II**

Another aspect that influenced the social lives and concerns of Evelyn and her peers was World War II, which was ongoing for the duration of her high school career. For young high school students, the war seemed distant most of the time, as there was no television to relay events, only radio. However, word would occasionally make its way home that some Johnson Countian had been killed in action:

There was lots of weeping by the girls because all the boys were going. There was a song all the men left with us were either too young or too old and that was about the size of it. We had concern, you know, that when banquet time came, who was there to take us to the banquet? Because one by one the boys were all marching off to war and we would go down to the bus terminal to see them off and every once in a while there would be word drift back that somebody had died.

For example, when Mr. Everett was principal and Margie Ann and I were seniors he told us to come with him, and we went out to tell Louise Nave that her husband had been killed in the war.

On December 7, 1941, Evelyn was home for the weekend and listened to the radio in the parlor as they spoke of the events at Pearl Harbor:

They interrupted the radio to say that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. So I knew that was something important, but I didn’t know as I had never been through a war. So I went in
and told my dad and mom that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and I said, “What does that mean?”

My dad said, “That means war.” I said, “Will we know we are in war?” and he said, “Oh yes, you will know you are in war.”

Back in school, there was a sense that the war had changed things. Rations as well as bond drives had their impact on Johnson County High School. Nothing, however, compared to the visits made to the high school by soldiers who had once walked the halls as students. The world and its problems, very suddenly and not under the best of circumstances, made their way to Johnson County:

And the next day, on Monday, when I went back to school, there was a whole cluster of people crying in the hall and one of the girls, a Madron girl, one of Wanda Payne’s aunts, was crying because her brother was at Pearl Harbor. He survived but she didn’t know it yet.

So, very soon we knew we were at war and we all gathered in to hear the proclamation of war by FDR, and then we had bond drives, war bond drives, and the really exciting thing in the high school was when a Navy boy, Army boy or Air force guy would come back in their uniform. I mean, the roughest ugliest old farm boy suddenly was so glamorous because he had on the uniform, you know. And the teachers that would have probably kicked him out of their class were just wonderful to the boys when they came back, and they would march up and down the halls. They were just spoiled rotten. And the ones that really got us were the football types who had been popular already in high school, and they went away and came back in uniform. It was wonderful. So it was a combination, I guess, somebody said it was the last glamorous war because there was no television to show you.

Looking back, Evelyn later contemplated the glamour she and her friends perceived during the war. With no television, they relied on radio and war briefs shown before movies at the theatre.

Neither communicated the true horror of war:

Because of no television or anything, the war did not seem as big as it was, I guess. You see, the radio was full of war all the time and that was the era when Kate Smith was singing “God Bless America,” and there was all the movies that I watch some of them now, and they are all filled with propaganda which was wonderful in that era, you know. I doubt, though, that we realized the reality of what was going on sometimes.

On the other hand, I guess in a way I did know some because I was dating Bill Leake during my sophomore, junior, and senior years and his father had been in the pineapple business in Manila, and they had a wonderful home, and they had come home
for the summer. He went back to settle things and got caught and was put in a prison camp. So Bill Leake and I followed MacArthur on a map in the history room we followed all the way thru the Pacific back up island by island by island to the Philippines. We charted him every step of the way knowing that Bill’s father would be released and then when he was released, he died before he got home. So in that sense the war was very close to me.

In comparison with later generations, especially the generation who came of age during Vietnam, Evelyn believed that many view her generation as somewhat naïve in how they perceived the world and themselves during the war:

You know the big difference in today and then is that television shows you the horror and I know it is a terrible thing to say but World War II was a glamorous war. It was glamorous because of all the Hollywood attention and the music; I mean there was wonderful music that came out of World War II. Wonderful movies that came out. And as I said, the boys coming back and all of this hoopla and everything. We knew people were dying but there is nothing like television to bring it home and let you see the horror of it so it was kind of a romantic time.

I don’t know if this is part of this, but I have to get it off my chest. Andy Wright did a wonderful program at music club on James Taylor. And I have to tell you that I had never heard of James Taylor.

Anyway she gave us printouts of the words and I read the words and she played part of the music and so forth and that Taylor plus others I thought, “What is the music saying about our generation and this generation that’s been going on now for some time?”

Our generation, with the music and the movies and everything, we were idealistic and romantic. We were naïve. In James Taylor’s music, I sensed the opposite. They [the songs] were dark, a lot of it, and it is saying something and I don’t know exactly what it is saying but I’ve been thinking about ever since music club. But the sixties and seventies were a very different era from the one I grew up in and the Vietnam War was a different war.

As a member of Johnson County High School’s class of 1945, Evelyn’s graduation coincided with the end of World War II. While the war does not to have overshadowed or eclipsed her high school years in importance, it is apparent that the war made a significant impact on the culture of the school and on the emphasis placed on patriotism and the somewhat glamorous aura that surrounded the war. The absence of television played a key role in keeping the horrid details of the war at a distance. Still, Evelyn’s high school career, while like that of many students from
any generation, was notably affected by World War II as shown through her stories of visiting soldiers and the recurring images of friends and family members reacting to the dreadful news that a loved one had been wounded or died in the war. These realizations emerged later in her life.

High School Teachers: Modeling A Passion for Learning

Continuing the broadening experiences with which her teachers had provided at the schools in Shady Valley, the teachers at Johnson County High School, through both formal classroom teaching and through displaying a passion for learning, exposed Evelyn to lessons on life as well as introducing new academic areas to be explored. In addition, Evelyn formed several significant memories with her peers, some comprised of typical high school antics which others, sadly, were related to World War II, which lasted throughout her entire high school career.

The personalities of her high school teachers almost appear to be “larger than life”, beginning with the stern yet influential principal of Johnson County High School during part of her high school years, Paul Everett:

Paul Everett, when he was principal, didn’t put up with any nonsense. He was always calling. I mean, if he saw a boy touch a girl then he would call the “Birds and Bees” meeting and the young ladies would go with the women teachers into the home economics area, and the young men would go into the auditorium, and Paul would lecture them about the birds and the bees and we would get a lecture about the proper kind of behavior and so forth. You know, you didn’t talk in the hall. I’ve always said this, and I’ve had other alumni agree with me, that he didn’t know you existed until you got to be a senior. When you got to be a senior you could do no wrong. I mean, you were on his good list and you were free to roam and go into his office. He taught American History so he got to know seniors. We loved him and were scared to death of him, but when you were a senior, you saw him in a different light.

As it was the 1940s, almost all students attending high school then were college bound, and the classical curriculum at the school reflected that fact. However, in keeping with the tradition of rural schools, all girls were expected to take home economics classes and all boys were expected to take agriculture classes. It was in one of her home economics classes that Evelyn had another
broadening experience and realized that she had a great deal to learn about cultural and social expectations and traditions:

The curriculum was strictly college-bound. You had home ec and you had some agriculture or shop class. The home ec teacher was in love with the ag teacher. Yes, that’s all she talked about. There was home economics which we college-bound girls were expected to take, and most of us didn’t like it. It was a good time to sit and talk about boyfriends and who was dating who and why. As I say, this one teacher we had who was not much older than we were and she was kind of like us. She sat and talked with us about her love life. And then we got Frances Shoun who was the opposite. She was a no-nonsense gal, I tell you.

She sent me in one day. Call this an expansion of learning. She sent me into the closet area to get a frog. We were getting ready for junior-senior prom. Well, not prom because under Paul Everett you didn’t have a prom. It was a banquet. The home economics classes did it and when we were freshmen and sophomores was when we got to serve. Then the juniors gave it and so forth.

So we were getting ready for the banquet and she sent me in to get a frog. And I went in and I looked and I looked. I presumed that she was talking about some kind of ceramic frog. I came out and said, “Mrs. Shoun, there is no frog in there.” And she said, “There are several frogs in there. Go get me a frog.” So I looked and looked and in desperation I went back and said, “Honestly, there isn’t a single frog in there.” So she came in and showed me these little things you stick flowers in that are called frogs, you know, and, again, I was horribly embarrassed.

It was also in Mrs. Shoun’s class that Evelyn almost committed an act that she feared not only in high school but later in college as well: disappointing and embarrassing her parents. An intense desire to please her parents motivated her to make good choices but also created in her a sense of fear of how they would react and feel if she ever did disappoint them:

And the other thing that happened in Mrs. Shoun’s class that was embarrassing, this is when Mr. Donnelly was principal, it was during the war, and everything was rationed. You can’t imagine how rationed everything was. I just feel real sorry for Frances Shoun when I look back and think about what a hard time she must have had getting together food to teach class with. We would snitch food and she finally said, “The next person that eats anything from my larder is going home.”

Well, as my cousin Theona says, I must have been smoking opium because I opened a box of raisins that was sitting on the table and got a handful. Well, not only did I get a handful, but several other people got a handful. Meanwhile, I got sick and went to the sick room and curled up with a hot water bottle and was out of it when Mrs. Shoun came in and discovered the open raisins and she started in.
She went from girl to girl and said, “Did you open those raisins?” And they could say, “No”, you know, telling the truth. And she said, “I’m going to find out who opened those.” Well, Marjorie and Margery Ann were in the same class with me and they came in and said, “Boy are you in big time trouble. You’re going home.” And I said, “What, what, what?” They told me and I was scared to death. I said, “Oh my god, my mother and daddy will not be able to open their front door in Shady Valley if I get kicked out of school. What am I to do?”

The fear of being caught and disappointing her parents drove Evelyn to seek refuge in the office of the principal, Mr. Donnelly. Here, she fully confessed to the crime of stealing the raisins, hoping beyond hope that Mr. Donnelly would intervene and prevent her expulsion from school:

So my friends and I decided that I had better go down and confess to Mr. Donnelly, and it just so happened that the three of us worked in the office with Mr. Donnelly, so we were good pals, but I was scared to death to go and tell him. He was a different kind of principal from Mr. Everett altogether. So I went down and I was crying and he said, “What is the matter?” and I was sobbing and couldn’t tell him. He said, “Calm down and tell me. It can’t be that bad.”

So I said, sobbing, “I opened the raisins.” And he said, “You opened the raisins?”

“I opened the raisins and I’m going home.”

He said, “What do you mean you’re going home?”

“Mrs. Shoun said that anybody that opened the raisins or ate anything would go home.”

And he said, “Well, nobody sends anybody home around here but me. I don’t think you’re going home. Let’s talk about this.”

And we talked about it. And so he gave me some very good advice. “Go back up and keep your mouth shut and don’t open any more raisins.”

Evelyn recalled that this was the closest, in high school, that she came to being expelled from school. This fear of disappointing or embarrassing her parents would serve as a deterrent to her several times during her years in high school and, later, at Berea College. It kept her from “living on the edge,” she said.
Mathematics, in high school, again became an area in which she struggled. Evelyn recalled Ray Shoun as one of her teachers as well, but not because he inspired in her a passion for the subject he taught, as Hazel Shull did in her history class:

Ray Shoun taught Algebra and Chemistry, plain Geometry, and physics, all of which I took, none of which soaked in. None of which soaked in. I tried to memorize enough plain Geometry theorems or whatever you call them to get through and I had the flu and I kind of got out of sync on memorizing so I had a little bit of trouble there. He was so bright and so good in all these subjects that he catered to the kids that were good and who understood what he was talking about.

To the rest of us he just kind of said, “Well you are going to college, you know, and we will see that you get a good enough grade to get in. You are never going to learn anything about math anyway.” And so we just kind of got through and didn’t really know what was going on.

Other teachers made an impact on Evelyn, but none more than Della Hawkins and Myrtle Buchanan, both English teachers at Johnson County High School. Again, drama and books, in the form of fine literature, further increased in importance and relevance to Evelyn, especially during her junior and senior years of high school. She became involved in student publications as well, serving on the 1944-45 staff of the Maroon and White yearbook staff (Figure 11).

Figure 11. Evelyn McQueen, seated on the right, and the 1945 JCHS yearbook staff.
Experiences in Miss Hawkins and Mrs. Buchanan’s rooms made a lasting influence on Evelyn:

English was out of this world. I had Della Hawkins in my junior year and she did a wonderful job with American Literature. I just learned, I guess that is when I learned to love poetry because basically what I had done in the past was read stories and that sort of thing. She also taught French and I learned that foreign language was fascinating and then she up and left us.

We didn’t know until the beginning of our senior year. Everybody looked forward to having her because she wasn’t aloof but was someone who kind of had a mystique around her because she only taught juniors and seniors. The underclassmen really looked up to her. I don’t think kids are as naïve today as we were then. We kind of had these idols that we looked up to and I think that was alright. So anyway, we had her our junior year and she got a job in North Carolina and left.

Evelyn recalled that she and the other students were devastated that Della Hawkins was leaving. They could not imagine anyone coming in and continuing to lead them through their study of literature the way that Ms. Hawkins had. In fact, they were sure of this the day that Myrtle Buchanan walked through the door to begin teaching English at Johnson County High School. As they spied the mud on her shoes and noted her apparent lack of zeal, they feared the worst:

Myrtle Buchanan came into our lives. Now, the first day of school, Margie, Margery Ann, and I went down to the bus to see Della off and we cried and we hugged. We thought our lives had come to an end. The war had taken all of our boyfriends and now it was taking our teacher and we weren’t going to have an annual and we weren’t going to get a trip. The world had crushed in on us.

We came back up and a day or so later, in walked Myrtle Buchanan and she looked for the world like Eleanor Roosevelt. Miss Della’s shoes were always polished and Mrs. Buchanan’s had cow stuff on them because she helped Poppa milk before she came to school and they were those old school marm looking shoes. We thought, “Oh my goodness. This is terrible.”

She had to help Papa milk so she always came in late. We could hear her click, click, clicking down the hall to our senior home room and we knew that as she came through the door she would strew papers from the door all the way to her desk and she would lay her stuff down on the desk and it would slide off because her desk was always heaped high because she had so many things that she wanted to show us, teach us, share with us that her arms could not hold all the things she wanted to share with us. So somebody would come along behind her and pick up all the papers and put them on her desk. And I said that in later life when education professors would talk about how a neat desk was the sign of a good teacher, I would just sit there and think back on Mrs. Buchanan’s desk, which was always absolute chaos.
Noting that this was one of those moments in her life when she jumped to conclusions too quickly, Evelyn, as well as her classmates, was instantly enthralled with Mrs. Buchanan the minute she began to teach:

But when she started teaching it was wonderful. Talk about making literature come alive. She had these mannerisms that were incredible. She stood right next to the front row and she rolled a pen all the time and she quoted poetry without ever looking at the book and she kind of spit on the front row, but kids remember the witches scene from Macbeth which she quoted from memory. But I remember so much more. Wordsworth, Tennyson. She loved that literature and she made me love it.

Anyway between Myrtle Buchanan and Della Hawkins, I knew I wanted to teach. I also knew that I had to go to England, someway, somehow. Although, in those days, it seemed like forever away because only the rich and famous traveled to Europe. But somehow, I knew I had to do it.

The seeds planted by Myrtle Buchanan and Della Hawkins would grow and bring forth fruit after Evelyn graduated from Johnson County High School in 1945 and made her way through the mountains of Kentucky to a college campus she had never seen. At Berea College, in Berea, Kentucky, she would begin her formal training to become an English teacher, a purveyor of the classical literature and theatre that she had grown to love so much.
Evelyn always knew she would attend college. It was a goal set for her by both parents, her teachers, and by herself. After graduating from Johnson County High School in 1945, Evelyn had planned to attend Virginia Intermont College in nearby Bristol. However, as with many young men and women, the influence of romance pulled her heart in a different direction.

It was the summer of 1945. The end of World War II was causing an upswing in national pride and the number of returning soldiers spilling onto college campuses. It was in the peak of these developments that Evelyn McQueen began the long trip into the hills of Kentucky to Berea College.

Leaving Home Is the Hardest Part

When Evelyn packed her belongings and kissed her parents good-bye on the front porch steps of their home in Shady Valley, she thought she was following her future husband off to school. Bill Leake, also a Johnson County High School student, was an upperclassman at Berea College and the love of her life:

Well, I was going to Virginia Intermont, but Bill Leake and I thought we were in love and we thought we were going to get married and he was going to Berea because Dr. Glenn had gone to Berea and so I changed courses in midstream and went to Berea. I went up with Hubert Hines, who was from Shady Valley and he had a car and we drove up and he was a sophomore or junior one there and he let me off and I went three or four days earlier than I should have gone because that was the only ride I could find.

Anyway I went with my little goods and what belongings I was taking and Hubert dumped me off and he had his friends and so forth and went his merry way and there I was in this dormitory practically by myself because the freshmen weren’t due for three or four days. I remember I went into this room and there were ticking beds, not made up. Just ticking, no curtains, no nothing, and I thought, “I can’t do this.” It was terrible and nobody was around. I was all alone. And then my roommate came from West Virginia and that was probably even worse because she ended up being as homesick as I was.
Though the loneliness and apprehension of being in a strange place far from home weighed heavily on Evelyn those first few days on the Berea College campus, she said she never felt that returning home was an option:

   It was lonely. Bill was there and so he was a bit of home and Hubert was there. I saw him once in a while but it was lonely business.

   I wonder about these kids who go away and come home without finishing, because there was nothing in my mind that said you are allowed to go back home. When I went to college, I went to college to go to college to finish college and so forth. My mother and daddy had sacrificed and that was what they wanted for me and that was what I had learned that I wanted.

   I mean there was no question. It was tough at times. I got lonesome and so forth but as far as quitting and coming home, no. It was not an option. It was never an option. Loneliness in daunting and challenging circumstances would become a distraction to overcome several more times in Evelyn’s life. The intrinsic desire to continue on, however, coupled with the seeds of determination planted by her parents, would motivate her to concentrate on moving through difficult situations. The decision to remain at Berea ranks among those times.

   Among the Bluebloods

   One of the first persons a young college students quickly becomes acquainted with is the dormitory roommate. Evelyn’s roommate at Berea College hailed from a small town in West Virginia. Evelyn says the college’s dean of women at the time was a “true blueblood from the Northeast” who saw it as her duty and responsibility to teach the girls about proper speech and etiquette. Her name was, ironically, Dean True. Evelyn recalls:

   Oh, Dean True was a real blueblood, right down to her blue stockings. She was from New England and she was stiff and starchy and tough and she was our housemother. So the first night we met we had to tell who we were, do some imitation or whatever we wanted to and of course all through that era I was Veronica Lake because I had the long blonde hair. She was a movie star that wore her hair down over her eye just like I did, so I did the Veronica Lake thing.

   Well, they asked my roommate where she was from and she said “West, by God, Virginia”, and everybody went into apoplexy and Dean True turned about a dozen colors. She said, “That will be enough of that,” and went on to somebody else.
Evelyn’s roommate, it turns out, became quite a distraction and source of anguish not only for Evelyn, but for the other girls in her dormitory as well. When items began missing around the dormitory, Dean True led Evelyn through a period of anxious investigating:

It was my freshman year and I was elected to be a student representative in our end of the dormitory. Things went swimmingly for a while, and then people started missing things. A string of pearls would disappear, a ring would disappear, a watch would disappear, and one day a wallet disappeared with the month’s spending money in it.

We eventually figured out that it was my roommate. She was a kleptomaniac and Dean True helped us work with her. She said, “I know all about that because I have a sister who’s a kleptomaniac. I have watched and I have known but I needed proof. Will you put up with her, will you put up with this, room with her a little bit longer, and we’ll see if we can help her?”

I said, “Well, I guess.” So I put up with her until Christmas and then she started wearing my sweaters and then washing them in hot water and then they were all shrinking up so I said, “Dean True, I can’t afford this!”

At Christmas time she sent her home and that was the end of that but that was the big trauma of my beginning freshmen year. I don’t know if we ever did help her.

Despite the shenanigans with her roommate and the presence of Bill Leake, Evelyn still battled loneliness at times. One day that fall, she decided to venture over to the Tab, the theatre on the Berea campus, and participate in try-outs for the latest plays. Once again, drama entered her life as an outlet and a source of inspiration:

I was experiencing loneliness, even though Bill was there, and I tried out for a play, the role of Elvira in “Blithe Spirit.” Dr. Blank was director, and he was the guy that had started the national thespian organization. He was one of three people I guess who started the thespians and he was the director and I tried out for Elvira and we went hour after hour after hour and my competition was Hilda Lane who was a senior and had been in the Tab for four years.

Well, I just got to the place where I knew that Hilda had it and I let down and Hilda got it, and then I got a lecture. Dr. Blank called me in and said, “You had that part in the bag. You were perfect for that part.”

But he said, “You are new. You’re a freshman. I didn’t know what you were made out of.” He said, “When you let down, I can’t have somebody in the lead that won’t follow through, so I had to go with the person that I knew.”
Evelyn said that experience taught her a great lesson, which was to never let down and to never give up. She learned from her mistake, and rebounded to perform in several other Berea College dramatic productions, including one with a pivotal that no one ever saw performed:

I was the angel in “Why the Chimes Rang” and it was perfect. We had an elevated thing at the back of the stage and the curtain would come open and there would be the angel on the elevated platform and she would deliver her speech at the end and so forth. Well, I was standing there and I was all preened. I had my long blond hair all fixed and my halo just right waiting for the curtain and all of a sudden I heard the audience applauding and then I heard sounds of footsteps and so forth and lo and behold he [Dr. Blank] had a new curtain guy. He had pulled the wrong curtain and the front curtain closed instead of opening the curtain instead of the back curtain opening for me to make my speech so I missed out on being the angel in “Why the Chimes Rang.” So those were my two fiascos to do with the theater.

Evelyn’s love for the stage and for performing would greatly influence not only her teaching but would guide her lifelong desire to bring good, quality theatre to Johnson County and to provide a performance space for Johnson Countians as well. Her experiences on the stage would push her to expose countless students to the thrills of public performance and to the great learning which takes place when we participate in such experiences, either as an actor or member of the audience.

**Home Beckons, Even From College**

While her experiences with her sticky-fingered roommate and her time at the Tab were among the most memorable of her first semester of college, Evelyn said that first semester away from home brought about many changes for her. It was the longest time she had ever spent away from home and by the time she returned home for Christmas break that December, she had adapted many of the habits that seem to befall many first-year college students. The changes were surprising to her mother when she arrived in Shady Valley:

We came home at Christmas and at the end of the year. My goodness, my mother had this image in her mind of a college girl returning, you know, dressed up in her college outfit and so forth. I came home wearing a pair of blue jeans that were rolled up because in those days we rolled our jeans up and had on bobby socks and saddle oxfords and a little red bill cap and in those days I had a very small waist that I was very proud of so I had a great big red belt around my waist and I uh I was wearing somebody’s GI coat and I don’t know where that came from.
My mother took one look at me and said, “Is this what college teaches you?” But Christmas was marvelous. It was wonderful.

Reminiscent of the Christmas holidays of her childhood, Evelyn’s first Christmas home from college was just as special. Continuing her parents’ custom of inviting someone in for the holidays, Evelyn brought a fellow student home with her that Christmas:

I brought, going back to that tradition of having someone to visit, Poodle Casey, another student at Berea. She was kind of an orphan that we all adopted. She grew up in Texas and we never quite understood what happened to her family. Apparently she didn’t have a family. I don’t know who was sponsoring her in Berea but anyway she was there and she was just going to be on campus at Christmas so I brought Poodle home with me and Mom did what they had done for my relatives a long time ago.

Every present that I got Poodle got one and Bill came over quite often and brought somebody, I can’t remember who now, but anyway so we had a good time. It was wonderful. Great being home waking up to the smell of country ham and hot biscuits and coffee and everything coming up the stairway, you know, great, wonderful.

Coming home began to represent to Evelyn a time when she reconnected with her family and her roots. In later years, it would represent times when she concentrated on grounding herself before setting out for another adventure or experience, another stage of life. As such, home became a refuge and a safe harbor, of sorts, where she could collect her thoughts and set forth again.

Life Lessons: On Racism and the Value of Hard Work

Growing up in the rural Appalachian Mountains in the 1930s and 1940s, Evelyn often heard racial slurs used in conversations. It was a belief, almost a fact of life, that permeated the culture during that time. Prejudiced views were part of Evelyn’s perspective on the world and these views were one of the first challenging issues she had to face at Berea. They also provided the basis for some intense soul-searching, leading to a changing of mind and heart of not only Evelyn, but later her father as well:

Well, one of the big aha experiences of my life came at Berea, and this goes into the expanding learning, you know, lifetime learning. I grew up in Shady Valley where many bragged that the sun never set on a “n-i-g-g-e-r” and my daddy was very prejudiced. My mother said very little one way or the other at that time, so when I went to Berea I went with the idea that I somehow was better and all white people were much better and Berea at that time, because of Kentucky law, couldn’t have blacks enrolled in school but they
used every opportunity that they could bring blacks in and expose us to them because I guess they knew that a lot of us were from prejudiced areas.

I can remember blacks coming in and sitting down to eat in the little school snack bar and I can remember that Lucy [her roommate] and I literally got up and walked out on more than one occasion.

Well, Berea’s motto was from Saint Paul, “God hath made of one blood all nations of men.” and every time I saw that I would get angry because I would think, “You know, that is not true. That’s not true.”

At every turn at Berea, this notion that seemed imbedded in her was challenged. She recalled the day she finally reached a new level of understanding and a clear change of heart as one of those moments in life when some sense of clarity is reached concerning an emotional and challenging topic:

One day, I guess during my sophomore year, I had what I suppose you might call a little epiphany. I was walking through the college bookstore and it hit me that everything, the book covers, the sweatshirts, the jackets, everything in there had the motto “God hath made of one blood all nations of men.” I was walking through there and I stopped in front of a jacket, just stopped, and all of a sudden I realized with every fiber of my being, “That’s right.”

I think it came from Berea’s pounding this in and I was fighting it every step of the way and all of the teachers, you know, they weren’t standing up there talking about it, but they were in all kinds of different ways making sure we got the message that God made us all equal.

I remember there was a black prince from Africa that had come to go to school at Berea and he had been baptized by a Baptist missionary. He went out to the Baptist church in the other end of Berea and they wouldn’t let him in, because they weren’t accepting blacks in those days. That story was told to us and all kinds of things and it just, you know, it just became something I really thought about and came to believe all I’d heard and been taught while growing up, about blacks, was wrong.

Excited and overwhelmed by her seemingly sudden realization concerning the ills of racism, Evelyn longed to share her feelings with her father and her Uncle Cornelius, hoping to prod them into having a change of heart as well. It was a change she would have to wait many years to see realized:

Then I came home and tried to talk to my dad and my Uncle Cornelius about this and they would have none of it. More than one day I would run upstairs and throw myself on
my bed and cry because I couldn’t convince my uncle and my Papa Mac that blacks were equal and then my daddy had a situation happen.

I was back here teaching then and a bunch of blacks were working on the highway in Shady and they spent the night over there in a vacant house and a bunch of kids, one of whom at least I had in my class, shivareed those blacks in the night with guns. I don’t think they meant to do any harm but those blacks left and never came back again, but when my daddy heard about that the next day I think he had an epiphany.

Well, my mother then began to speak up and by then television was available and my daddy would hear intelligent blacks speaking on television and so forth, and before he died he had come around which was wonderful to me. But that was one of the great things that Berea had taught me.

Another important aspect of Berea College, which still holds true today, is the work ethic the college worked to instill in the students who attended there. The college charged no tuition to students, as most of them were from poorer families in rural areas, but it required all students to participate in some kind of work on the campus that contributed to the operation of the campus. For Evelyn, this was both a task for her, as she had rarely worked on the farm while growing up, and an important lesson as well. She learned the value of hard work and the satisfaction of working at an unglamorous task when asked to:

Another great thing that Berea taught me was a respect for all kinds of work, because even though I had grown up on the farm in Shady Valley at what you would call a poverty level and so forth, my mother and daddy kind of sheltered me. They sort of spoiled me, to tell you the truth. I didn’t get out and milk and I didn’t do stuff like that. They petted is what it boils down too. But when I went to Berea I had to put my hands in dishwater up to my elbows and I had to do hard work.

The first year, you did institutional labor, they called it, and that was nasty work. I think they were doing that to see what we were made of and then after that you could choose your work and after that I chose to work in the library, but I learned that any kind of work that you do, if you do it well and so forth, is honorable and anybody who works is an honorable person. Anybody who tries to work and do their best and so forth, that was another tremendous lesson that Berea taught me. I guess those were the two big lessons that I learned outside of my field.

The instilling of a strong work ethic in its students is something Berea College still prides itself upon. Evelyn’s view of persons and their stations in life would forever be softened by her time at Berea, as she grew in her appreciation for those who worked hard and displayed characteristics
of honesty and a commitment to doing a job well, no matter what it was. This would serve her well as she worked with students from rural Kentucky and Tennessee as well as from various military bases in Europe. Again, these experiences at Berea are reminiscent of her father’s earlier admonitions to her to not forget her roots and to be appreciative of life’s gifts.

**Wordies, Wordies, Wordies: The Seeds of Buchanan and Hawkins Grow**

While the great societal awakening of race and work, the beginning of a love with the stage, and the opportunity to be away from home rank as influential experiences for Evelyn while at Berea, two other experiences rank higher. Following the influential Della Hawkins and Myrtle Buchanan, the professors in the English department further developed the literary and writing skills of their young student from Shady Valley:

I knew I wanted to be in the English department from the very beginning. There was not one question in my mind. And I had some wonderful professors who picked up where my high school teachers left off.

I had Emily Ann Smith, who was known throughout the South as one of the best English teachers in the entire South. She was absolutely marvelous and I took what they called an area major which was about every course in English that was offered. I didn’t have a minor in something. I just piled more and more English on and it was wonderful, absolutely marvelous.

Evelyn’s time in the Berea College English department also challenged her to face the biases which she grew up with and to learn to read classical literature in the context it was intended, not to be offended by apparent vulgarity. She recalled this as her first experience with controversial literature and leaned on it heavily when she faced censorship discussions during her years as a literature teacher:

I remember I had Jerry Hughes for a summer course in English and he assigned us *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Well, being from a small town and all, I said, “I’m not going I’m not going to read that filthy old book!” because during high school days we had that certain section that was where, you know, she nurses the old man there in the end.

He said, “You will read it or you will fail.” So, I read it, and found the context, and that was something else that was a good lesson in finding that when something is in
context it makes all the difference in the world as to whether it is pornography or whether it has a purpose and that of course had a wonderful purpose about life.

And that lesson followed me into the classroom when I became a teacher in all kinds of ways, which I’ll talk about later. I really began to think about the purpose of a piece of literature, you know. You don’t judge it just by the words in it or by the scenes in it or anything else alone. You judge it by the purpose of it. What is it trying to show you? What is it trying to teach you? So, that was one of the ways that that experience followed me into my classroom many years later.

In addition to realizing and thriving on the value of classical literature, Evelyn also began honing her skills as a writer at Berea College. Again, like her love for teaching literature, this was to become a skill and flair that would greatly shape her life as an adult:

Emily Ann Smith tried to teach us writing. I had advanced courses under her in writing and she would throw papers in the air and say, “Wordies, wordies, wordies! When are you going to learn that less is more?”

But she taught me a great deal about writing, and all in all I got an education at Berea in literature. In particular, I didn’t have to take a back seat to anybody that I met in all the years that I was oversees and I have given Berea credit for it, and have given Emily Ann Smith and her bunch of teachers the credit, because they did a fantastic job.

By taking all those courses you know I had a really good background in literature but didn’t know straight up from a hole in the ground about grammar. I didn’t know grammar, because Della Hawkins taught literature, Myrtle Buchanan taught literature, and somewhere along the line I didn’t get much grammar.

Oh, I had advanced grammar and syntax under the toughest old teacher you would ever want to know and she talked to Emily Ann Smith and Emily Ann said, “Evelyn, how could you possibly know so much about literature and be so dumb in grammar?” But I learned my grammar when I started teaching. I need to tell you that is when you really learn, when you have to teach it.

The formative years spent at Berea would prepare her for a successful career as an English teacher. The classical curriculum of Berea College created within Evelyn, as well, an appreciation for the connections among art, music, and literature. Her teaching career would be marked by constant attempts to draw connections for students between all the disciplines involved in becoming a well-rounded student of the humanities.

In addition, the end of her freshman year at Berea also saw another person cross her path, another person who would go on to influence her more than any other:
The other great thing that happened at Berea was I met my husband. It was 1946, at Berea, the end of my freshman year. I was ready to come home on the train. We had a train in those days. I was waiting for Bill and we were going to take the train home for summer break and in came this sailor. He was looking the situation over and I thought he looked pretty cute and my roommate was giggly so we met and that was that. He says I gave him my address, but I say I did no such thing. Anyway, and he says he tried to find Shady Valley, Tennessee, on the map and said there was no such place. And that’s where that began.
CHAPTER 8
COMING HOME WITH A YEARNING TO KEEP GOING

That young sailor had just returned home from World War II to his native Kentucky and was preparing to enroll at Berea. When that sailor, Edward K. Cook, Jr., entered Evelyn’s life that fateful day on the train station platform in Berea, Kentucky, little did she realize that this man would become her traveling partner on life’s journey for the rest of her life. Their travel would take them home to Shady Valley, then around the world, and back again. She would write a book, *Just a Country Boy*, about his childhood years, dedicating it “with love to my husband, who lived the adventures [in this book] with courage and the retelling with patience. This, on the occasion of our fiftieth anniversary.”

Marriage Seemed Right

When Evelyn McQueen returned to Berea that fall after spending the summer in Shady Valley, she gave little thought to the young sailor she had noticed at the train station in the spring. He had not contacted her over the long summer break and she returned to school focused on beginning her sophomore year studies and spending time with her girlfriends in the dormitory. Then, one night soon after school started, the handsome, young sailor drifted back into her life:

So the next fall, I was in the West End, the part of Berea that is the town. There’s town and gown, as they say in Cambridge. So we were in the West End, my roommate and I, and these three disreputable looking guys were coming up behind us. They’d been playing poker all night.

One of them yelled, “Hey Blondie” and so forth and I said, “I’ve never seen you before.” And he said, “Oh, so you’re snobbish now are you?” That’s how we got reacquainted.

It turns out that one of the “disreputable” guys was Edward Cook, who immediately recognized the young, blonde girl he had met the previous May. While he took her seemingly pretending not to know him as a sign of snobbishness, the two became quick friends and their dating relationship became a steady one as the year wore on:
So from there it went on for a while. We were in the same speech class. I remember a speech he gave. He was all dressed up in a gray suit and a pink tie with elephants on it. That should have given me a clue, being a good democrat, that I was getting involved with a republican.

We dated, you know, and didn’t do anything that the textbooks say you should do to make a good marriage. We didn’t date a whole year, we married in July. I don’t think we ever talked about what our beliefs were, what our aspirations were. I think we were caught up in a springtime of romance and G.I.’s returning from the war and all that sort of thing. It is a thousand wonders our marriage ever lasted but fifty-five years later, here we are.

Evelyn said she was always a girl who “played it safe”, but she admits to being swept away by the young Edward, whom she has called “Cook” most of their lives together (Figure 12). It was a situation that did not please her parents in the least, who saw an early marriage as a sure sign Evelyn would not complete her college education, one of their most important goals and expectations for her. The marriage, like her moving to Mountain City to live while attending high school, was another step away from home and was one of the first times Evelyn really felt as if she was stepping out on her own and making her own decision:

The first thing I ever did that defied my parents, and it wasn’t a big defiance, but it is not what they would have wanted, was to marry because they so desperately wanted me to finish college. They were scared that I wouldn’t finish college and so I was determined that I would. There was no way that getting married was going to keep me from finishing college. They had this fear, plus they loved Bill and this was a strange guy that they didn’t know anything about and I had met him just recently. They were real worried about that. But I stepped out on my own and did what I wanted to do.

Once they were married, Ed and Evelyn moved in the government housing available to returning G.I.’s who were attending school. Evelyn’s move from the dormitory into the small housing unit was another transition and she went about the work of setting up housekeeping while both of them attended classes:

I was married the summer before I went into my junior year and we moved into government housing, G.I. housing. It seemed right for us. It may not seem right for everyone. I made that promise to finish school not just to my parents, but to myself. It probably spurred me on a little bit, as a matter of fact.

You know, a really funny thing, when I lived in the dorm, we had to be in at 9 o’clock and we always wondered what went on. The guys could wander all night long if
they wanted to. The girls had to be in. It is a very interesting thing to me, some people accused me of getting married so I’d know what went on after 9 o’clock around town. I have to tell you, “Not much.”

Still, the transition from single college student to married college student did bring changes:

Anyway after we were married, it became a different college world. Being removed from the dormitory takes you out of the circle of girls and that sort of thing, you know. And you get into another circle. You get with the young marrieds and your life sort of changes and, plus, we had the car so we’d go to Cook’s home on the weekends, which was about an hour away.

Evelyn said meeting Ed Cook and marrying after only a few months was one of the few times in her life when she acted quickly and took a risk. She faced the skepticism of her parents and helped them realize that this was the right decision and the right timing. The experience only enhanced her last two years at Berea, she said, and prepared her for the eventual decision by the couple to move to Europe for twenty years. Marriage became one of the most positive and motivational events in her life.

![Evelyn McQueen, then 20, and Edward Cook, Jr. marry on July 26, 1947.](image)

*Figure 12. Evelyn McQueen, then 20, and Edward Cook, Jr. marry on July 26, 1947.*

**Learning the Value of Taking Risks**

Evelyn’s decision to marry early on in her relationship with Ed has caused her to question the value of taking risks over the course of her life. Again, she said she was always one to play it safe and not to venture too far from the protective eye of her mother or father without worrying
about the assured consequences of making a bad decision or becoming involved in a questionable situation:

One of the questions I’ve always had is, “Is it better for a young person growing up to live on the edge just a little bit dangerously and learn what they’re made of and so forth so that as they go through life, they’ve lived on the edge and dangerously so they can cope with life, or is it better to play it safer?”

Now, I lived a safer life. I lived a life that I thought was what my mother and father wanted me to do and I’ve wondered at times whether that stunted my character in any way, you know, made me less courageous or whatever.

While at Berea, Evelyn recalled a situation during her freshman year before she met Ed. Some of her girlfriends wanted to sneak out of the dorm one night and she had planned to join them. As with the raisins in Mrs. Shoun’s room in high school, she again feared the reaction of her parents if she was caught:

You know, an example of that, going back to this business about what happened out a night, three or four of my girlfriends and I decided that we were going to find our way out of the dorm one night and we were going to meet our boyfriends and go out to the West End and do something dreadful like drink a coke at the café and come back.

Well, we made all of our plans and everything and we looked for days. I mean this was a game on Saturday afternoon to find some way out of there and we finally found a way out in the basement. A screen that you could unhook and get out. And so we went down, we had our plans made, and we went down and they went out and I put my foot up on the transom and as I did that I literally saw a vision of my mother and father and what they would feel if I got kicked out of school which is exactly what would have happened if we had been caught. I thought, “You know all the time they’ve put into my education and all the dreams they’ve had, I can’t do that to my parents.”

So I pulled my foot back in and went upstairs and went to bed. I was sent to Coventry for days. I mean I was called every kind of a coward that you can think of. But I’ve never been sorry for doing that but there is still that question in my mind about these people that do things and are they stronger for having done it? I don’t know. I don’t have an answer for that.

While she has struggled to understand what has kept her, and others, from moving in certain directions or making certain decisions, Evelyn credited the two men in her life, Bill Leake and Ed Cook, for helping her take risks in relation to her yearning to explore. Like her mother who constantly reminded her that there was more to the world than the mountains that surrounded
Shady Valley, these two men brought the world home to her because they had been out into it and she liked what she heard and wanted to experience it for herself:

A thing that I’ve been thinking about, in all this business you’ve got me thinking about, is that the two major men in my life, Bill and Cook, were both world travelers. Cook had been in the service and he had plowed the waters back and forth from Japan returning G.I.’s. Bill had been all over the world when his mother and father would come home in the summers from the Philippines.

Bill lived here then, but they lived in Manila before he and his mother came back to live with the Glenss when Mr. Leake was incarcerated in a prison camp in Manila. But they had come around the world and he had ridden camels in Egypt and all of that.

But I have to say that I was initially drawn to those two guys because I wanted so much to break the bonds of the here and now and travel and see the world and know what was out there and so forth. But then I have to say that this little sailor was awfully cute and that added to it also.

The natural tendency of her new husband to take risks and to set out for parts unknown had an uncanny effect on the young Evelyn, bolstering her confidence and creating within her an itch to take a chance and jump into situations feet first:

My husband helped me not play things safe. He is a risk-taker and has been out on his own since he was fourteen years old when he went to Detroit or someplace to work. He then joined the Navy when he was eighteen. He has always been as independent as a hog on ice. He was independent before that because of the way he was reared. That has played in to my life too. That is something that I wonder about.

Again, Evelyn has admitted that, in retrospect, this “letting go” was probably hard for her parents and she has gone through the same thing as her own adult daughter, Stephanie, has married and moved a world away to Japan to live. She has wondered if this characteristic is even harder for parents in rural areas, like Johnson County. This could account for many children never leaving home, even to attend college in Johnson City or Bristol:

From the word go, I think a lot of parents hold on to their children here. They hold on because there is a sense of security for parents to do that. You know, I’d like to have Stephanie in my back door. Well, I don’t know that I would but I’d like to have her closer.

Risk-taking, then, has become a positive motivator in her life, but it has grown out of fear in her early life. That fear of disappointing her parents or of making a poor choice kept her from taking
risks and having what could have been some enriching and expanding experiences. Her marriage, however, was a defining moment in her life, a time when she did take the risk, make the choice, and move forward, excitedly, into the unknown.

The First Job: Learning as Much as Taught

When Evelyn married Ed and the two moved into married housing on the Berea campus, she settled back into her coursework quite quickly, working fervently toward finishing her degree in English and getting a teaching job. As Ed had started school a year later than she, the couple would have to remain in Kentucky an extra year once she graduated. Evelyn knew this and realized she would have to be very focused if she wanted to finish on time and be prepared to land a job. Ed, however, still displayed many of the characteristics of a young man who had joined the military and set out to participate in the Pacific theatre of World War II. He had chosen to settle down and marry, but did not, much to Evelyn’s chagrin focus as intently as she did on his future planning:

He wasn’t into much of anything. That was something that always bugged me because one of the things that I always felt was that you have two or three ways to go, and he majored in agriculture. I tried to get him to do teacher training, because you know county agents don’t change every year. But he just said it’d work out.

While Ed did continue his studies at Berea, Evelyn graduated in 1949 and soon secured a position near in a school in Kingston, Kentucky, beginning that fall. The job, her first, proved to be one that stretched her and provided further opportunities for learning, both inside school and in the world as well:

I taught my first year at a little place called Kingston which is just a few miles outside of Berea. That one year of teaching got my feet wet as far as teaching. I had to do everything. I had to keep the little library, I had to teach five classes of English, I had a homeroom, the whole nine yards.

Interestingly, the biggest learning curve for Evelyn during that year of teaching would not prove to be endless hours of studying and planning for course preparation, but concentration and practice on the skill needed to reach school in the first place: driving. Cook’s father had given the newlyweds a car when she graduated and the skills of driving and parking seemed elusive:
Talk about the learning curve! The first week I went to Kingston, I passed a school bus that was stopped and I came home and said something to my husband about it. “Good heavens,” he said, “don’t you know that you don’t pass school buses? Where did you learn to drive?”

And so that was an important lesson. And another one, we got a brand new car when I started teaching. Poppa Cook gave us one. Brand new Dodge, beautiful, wonderful. And I took it up on campus and I got a little scratch on one side because I couldn’t park very well. I came home crying.

Cook said, “Now don’t you worry. You go right back up there and try this again or you’ll always be afraid.” So I went up and did it again. I got a little scratch on the other side. I came home and told him and he exploded. I now dodge parallel parking when I can.

Her parking abilities continued to be a source of amusement and discussion years later when she returned to Johnson County to teach at the high school:

The old Mr. Green that used to be up at the high school when I was on the hill was talking about my driving. I drive fairly well, I just don’t park well. He said, “Oh, Mrs. Cook doesn’t park, she just kind of pulls up and stops.”

As with mathematics and athletics earlier in life, Evelyn’s parking abilities were not among her more marketable. However, she did drive back and forth to the little school in Kingston for a year before Ed graduated and the decision of where to go next was made, forcing her to give up the first teaching job she had after only one year. “After that first year of teaching, we came home,” she said. “Home to Shady.”

Back Over the Mountain and Into the Valley

The decision for the Cooks to return to the McQueen farm in Shady Valley was made because the couple wanted to live near her parents. They liked the area and wanted to build a life in Johnson County. However, jobs were scarce and the couple was faced with the prospect of making yet another tough decision, whether to stay or to move:

We moved everything to Shady Valley because I didn’t have a job and he didn’t have a job. In fact, he didn’t know what he was going to do. So, I went to see Mr. Fritts, who was the school superintendent then, and he said there were no openings the following year but there would be an opening the year after that and I could have that.
Faced with the reality of no employment, Evelyn’s father offered to give her $1,000 to help her go back to school and pursue her master’s degree:

   So my daddy said, “Don’t sit around here and do nothing. Go down to the university and get yourself another degree.” He put all of $1,000 in the bank and said, “Now you make that go as far as you can.”

Once again, Evelyn packed up her belongings and set out over the mountain in pursuit of further education at the behest of her parents. This time, however, she was married and both husband and wife reached the inevitable decision that while she was away at the University of Tennessee studying, he would spend the year away working to put aside some money for them to return to Johnson County one year later:

   This was, let’s see, we married in 1947, so this was 1950. I was married and Cook went off to Ohio to work. You know, in this learning that goes on, it occurs through adversity, through bad things that happen. If both of us had received jobs, I would most surely not have gone back to school as quickly. That was one good thing that came out of all that.

While the year apart was extremely difficult for the young couple, it did present Evelyn with yet another opportunity to prove to herself that, even in difficult circumstances, she could accomplish what she set her mind to.

   A Quick Year At the University of Tennessee

   With Ed in Ohio, Evelyn settled into a small room she found to rent in Knoxville, ever mindful of the $1,000 she had to get by on for the year. She was also mindful that work on her master’s degree had to be completed in that year’s time and within the budget she had:

   I went to the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and found a room at a house for $23 per month. I made that $1,000 work for me even down to having my thesis printed and bound. I got my degree in three quarters.

   They said it couldn’t be done but I said, “I’ve got to. I have a job to go back to and I’ve got to get this degree now.” It was a master’s with a major in administration and supervision and a minor in English. If I wasn’t at my desk in my room, I was in the library or in class.

   While Evelyn sometimes battled loneliness in her small room in Knoxville, she did befriend one other married lady who was also working toward a degree at the university. Evelyn commented
that she has looked back through her life and observed that, in many instances, the presence of one or two unlikely persons during trying times were a source of motivation and comfort to her. Her friend made in Knoxville while attending graduate school was not different, with Evelyn noting that it is often the simple, everyday things, such as having a meal with someone, that give us that little extra push that we need to keep going:

Ed was gone, so we were apart basically the whole year, so there wasn’t anything for me to do. I met one married woman in Knoxville and she used to take me home to her house and we would have hot biscuits and potato soup. That friendship carried me through. It was a pretty lonely existence but I had to do it. I had no choice. I did it.

Near the end of her time at the University of Tennessee, a letter arrived in the mail inviting Evelyn to a banquet inducting her into a prestigious organization for educators. Surprised and puzzled by who would have nominated her, Evelyn invited a friend to go along with her to the banquet:

Interestingly enough, in the very house, in the very room that I occupied, there had been an Evelyn Cook before. She was from down in Tennessee somewhere and her degree was in business administration or something. She had gone and so that spring an invitation came to that address to join, I’m not going to say which organization, but it was one of the prestigious organizations for educators.

So I went. We were in a downtown restaurant and I was sitting there with another friend who was going and this fellow was introducing the different people and so he called my name and I got up and he had a big smile on his face. As I walked up, the smile turned to horror and he said, “You’re not the right Evelyn Cook.” Of course, I was horrified. That was one of the most embarrassing moments of my life but I was exonerated and very happy to tell the group when I was inducted into this same organization in Karlsruhe, Germany many years later that, “Thank God, I am now the right Evelyn Cook.”

Even that experience, as embarrassing as it was, turned into a positive as she used the story over and over again during her years as a classroom teacher:

That experience and other embarrassing experiences that I have had have been wonderful in my teaching because you are forever having teenagers who miss getting this something or other or miss getting into something. They are devastated and you are able to say to them, “This is not the end of the world. This is what happened to me and I survived.”
Survival seems to be the word which best describes the year Evelyn spent at the University of Tennessee. She left Knoxville, nine months after arriving, with a newly minted master’s degree and returned home to Shady Valley, as did Ed. Admittedly, the work was hard and she said that had she not had that year off, the degree most certainly would have come, but it would have come much later in life:

So that has been a very profitable experience. I wouldn’t take anything for it but I wouldn’t want to go through it again. That degree would not have come that soon. Had there been a job that first year, what I would have done was crawl into a car with John Butler and Cook and other people and tootle off to East Tennessee State like they all did and get my degree that way. But it just so happened that I could do that.

The degree, which would open up many doors later in her career, came to her through hard work and determination, indicative of the work ethic instilled in her by her parents. Once again, her motivation came from firmly believing that she had to accomplish the goal set before her, no matter the challenges.

Settling Into a Teaching Career in Johnson County

When Evelyn returned to Johnson County in 1951, she began teaching at Johnson County High School that fall, returning to the same building and the same English department which had meant so much to her during her years in high school. During that same time, her father became impatient that Ed was not going to find a job and helped nudge him, as well, into a career in education:

I got that degree and I came home and had my job waiting for me. My daddy was a very impatient Scots-Irish kind of a guy who wanted us to get on with it. He listened to Cook and me as we were living with them in Shady. It was time for us to settle down and I knew what I was going to do but what was Ed Cook going to do?

Well, he listened to this and that, and finally my daddy came over to his friends on the board of education and said, “For God’s sakes, give my son-in-law a job before he drives us all crazy.” They gave Cook a job as principal at Shoun’s School and that is how he got started in education. So he was principal and I was teaching English at the high school.
As Evelyn settled into her classroom on the second floor of Johnson County High School, she felt as if she were home again, traversing the literary landscape in the same building where she herself had first experienced Shakespeare, Beowulf, and Twain:

I was there six years. When I came in, I had five classes of freshman English and I was in the school with most of the teachers that I had had and you had to prove yourself. Well how could you prove yourself when your major had been a double major in literature and you had five sections of freshman English? I had some of the most difficult, but wonderful boys. I had a whole bunch of them in fifth period, which was right after lunch, and they were a handful. Somehow I survived.

It was also a time when I realized, quite quickly, that you learn how to teach by teaching. You don’t learn it in class.

It was during this time, as well, that she met a fellow colleague who would go on to become a lifetime friend and partner in several community projects later in life. Dorothy Gunn Howard taught physical education at Johnson County High School and included classical and modern dance as part of the curriculum. Together, the English teacher and dance teacher worked hard to build a drama program for the school and community, a task which would become a lifelong endeavor:

During this time, of course, is when I met Dottie Howard and that is when our whole business in drama started. The only kind of play that was given back in those days was what we call a farce, you know, the plays that don’t amount to a hill of beans. Dottie and I both felt that we needed more and that we needed to have proms. Dottie was wonderful in modern dance and I was deep into drama. We thought we could do so much.

However, the support for a strong drama program, especially one that included any sort of dancing, was not always easy to come by. In fact, many in the community did not support the idea of public dancing. Still, the two young teachers became creative and innovative in their pursuit of exposing the students to cultural experiences. Motivated by a deep-seated desire to help the students stretch their minds led the two down a road which included a time period when some impressive productions were presented in the high school auditorium:

Mr. Everett was principal at that time and he didn’t believe in dancing. We had to wait and Mr. Gavlak came in as principal and he let us have our first prom.
In the meantime, we both knew that farces didn’t give the kids enough to really develop their skills and we thought we’d really like to do a real play. So, we launched out and did a real play and it was success. There was not much television in those days, so everybody came to the play. We filled the auditorium. Over the years we were there together, we did “Charlie’s Aunt” and “Arsenic and Old Lace,” “Ten Little Indians,” and “The Man Who Came to Dinner.”

Years later, after Evelyn and Dottie had both retired from the school system, they would return to the abandoned auditorium in the old high school building and dream of once again bringing quality theatrical productions to the community. It was in those six years back in the halls of Johnson County High School Evelyn really developed a penchant for theatre in Johnson County and, interestingly enough, decades later, with that penchant still alive, the auditorium would once again spring to life.

**Pulling Up Roots and Leaving the Mountains Again**

In the spring of 1957, the itch to be on the move again began to stir inside Evelyn. She and Ed were living in Mountain City at the time, just a few blocks from the high school. She was extremely happy with her job, lived near her family in Shady Valley, and she and Ed were planning to start a family. However, something seemed to be tugging at her, pulling her toward crossing the mountains again in search of another adventure:

I remember it well. We were driving back up the street toward our little house on a Friday night in May. We had just seen the spring production at the high school, “Our Hearts were Young and Gay.” The set was wonderful, marvelous. It really made you feel like you were in Paris. Something in me just said, “I’ll never see that.”

I talked about it with Cook and we both realized that, you know, we’d never be able to do any real traveling to Europe. I mean, back then, only the rich and famous did traveling like that. But he said, “I’m happy right where I’m at, doing the things I’m doing.” He was happy with being a principal and coaching and doing things like that.

The more the couple talked, however, the more inevitable it seemed that they would leave, with Evelyn once again pulling up her roots and moving away from home, away from her parents and friends:

Cook said that if we left, it would be a long time before we returned. And he was true to his word. It was twenty years before we returned back home. It was a big decision, the biggest we’d ever made, and it was a life-altering, life-changing experience.
That decision centered on applying to the United States Department of Defense in search of a placement overseas in the educational system maintained for U.S. troops and their families stationed abroad. It had been a possibility discussed by them in some depth and they had made inquiries about being selected to go abroad and live near the bases, with Ed working first as a teacher and later as an administrator.

By the fall of 1957, that yearning to see the world spawned by the spring production at Johnson County High School would have the couple boarding a train in Johnson City to begin the long trip to Memphis where they would fly to Châteauroux, France. Here they would begin work at their first of many schools. It would be two decades and several assignments later before the two returned home to the mountains of Johnson County once again.
When Ed and Evelyn Cook made the decision to apply to the United States Department of Defense as educators, they knew that if accepted, it would be many years before they returned home if they were to make a career of it. The summer of 1957 was spent in anxious preparation once they heard that they, along with longtime friend and fellow Johnson County High School teacher John Butler, would be assigned to the school in Châteauroux, France. However, a development in the personal lives of Ed and Evelyn almost derailed the fulfillment of their longtime dream to live and work abroad.

Sheltering a Secret

Late in the spring of 1957, Evelyn and Ed were elated to find out that Evelyn was expecting their first child. Their joy, however, was tempered by the realization that her state might interrupt their plans for moving to Europe. They made the decision to keep Evelyn’s pregnancy secret. Aside from the family doctor, Dr. Glenn, no one knew.

Ed and Evelyn wrote to their Ed’s superintendent in Europe to inform him of the situation. Throughout the summer, Evelyn waited with bated breath to hear from Dr. Myering. She recalls that she just knew he would call or write and cancel their plans because of her state. Additionally, she grew increasingly worried that her parents or friends would suspect something and urge Evelyn not to go to Europe, as she did not know the conditions in France. Alas, no word came from Dr. Myering and no suspicions made their way to the surface. The day arrived when the Cooks and John Butler, who now knew her state, made their way to Johnson City to depart for Europe (Figure 13). Evelyn was set to deliver the baby in December, and still no one in her family knew of the pregnancy:

When I packed my suitcases I brought my maternity clothes from Kentucky and I packed them and locked the suitcases because I knew my mother was going to come over and help me pack. She had suspected, but later I learned that she said to herself, “If I go over and she has a locked suitcase, I’ll know.” So I found out later that she knew and she didn’t tell my daddy.
Once again, her mother was supportive of Evelyn’s desire to move out beyond the mountains of
Johnson County and explore the world, tasting all the experiences a life abroad had to offer.

During the long flight to France, Evelyn worried that as soon as they arrived, Dr. Myering would
inform them that they would have to return home, as they were not prepared for their newest
arrivals to be expecting a child so soon. She recalled the irony that on her first trip to Europe,
with her long held dream coming true, she was preoccupied with worry as others were excitedly
chatting about France:

I was worried all the time that all these people were talking on the plane about how
exciting it was and everything. I was worrying about the state I was in, worrying about
whether I would be accepted, whether I was doing something wrong, and all that sort of
thing. So, the first feeling I felt when we got off the plane was a tremendous feeling of
relief that it was all right because Dr. Myering immediately said he didn’t write but it was
ok. “I didn’t write, but I am so glad you came,” he said.

He took one look at me, you know, standing there pregnant, and said, “How nice
that you are going to have a baby.”

So I went straight to this gorgeous hotel with some kind of Napolean bathtub and
chandeliers and great big huge desks and all that sort of thing, and opened up my suitcase
and got out my first maternity outfit. I put it on and was comfortable for the first time in
weeks.
With the worries over her pregnancy and its effect on their stay in France assuaged, Ed and Evelyn finally were able to enjoy the reality of where they were and soak in the ambiance of Paris and pinch themselves to make sure they were really where they were. Châteauroux seemed half a world away from Shady Valley and Johnson County. They were expecting their first child and were experiencing the emotion of having their feet firmly planted on European soil. They were overwhelmed.

The Glittering Lights of Paris and the Louvre Museum

Paris, France, was several thousand miles away from the books at Shady Valley Elementary where she first read and dreamed of Europe. Evelyn recalled the first night that she spent in Paris, after a quick afternoon of sightseeing led by Dr. Myering. Their group had entered a Parisian restaurant before sunset:

Then our principal met us and said they wanted to take us to dinner so they took us to a little restaurant for dinner. Then I began to feel the ambiance of Paris. I began to relax. Then he said, “Evelyn, I want you to do something.” I said, “What”? He said, “Come outside with me but let me lead you outside, I want you to close your eyes.”

I did that. I went outside and closed my eyes. He said, “Turn this way.” So I turned the way he said. He said, “Now turn around and open your eyes.” And I turned around and opened my eyes and there was the Arch d’ Triomph all decked out with flags and the tri colors, lights, and so forth because it was Bastille Day. This was evening and the Champs Elysees was all lighted up and the Arch d’ Triomph was like a million dollars and I knew then that I was in Paris.

Evelyn admitted that the mere experience of being in another culture and another country seemed dreamlike, but at the same time, it made their home in Tennessee seem even further away:

I felt a million miles away from Shady Valley. I felt so far away that when I tried to tell somebody about a little theater that we had close by I couldn’t remember what the name of the town of Abingdon was. That’s how far away I felt; far, far away.

The following day, Evelyn was taken to the Louvre Museum before they left Paris for Châteauroux. Here, reminiscent of the bookstore epiphany at Berea College several years earlier, Evelyn said she experienced another of those moments in life when things become clear.
It was on this day that she says she began to clearly understand the very truth and nature of art and its effect on those who view it:

Speaking of lifetime learning, the next day we went to the Louvre. Knowing that I couldn’t possibly do much in the Louvre, I knew that I wanted to see the Mona Lisa. Now I knew nothing about art, I was absolutely ignorant about art. The song “Mona Lisa” was popular so I guess that is one reason I knew about it, but really I had had music appreciation at Berea which had helped a little but I didn’t have an art appreciation course and I didn’t have humanities. So I knew almost nothing about art. Alright, I go to the Louvre and we go to see the “Mona Lisa” and my first impression was how small it is. You know, I thought, “What’s all the excitement about this little painting?”

It’s like a foot up and a foot across. It’s not very big. I don’t know how big it is. Very small, for a piece of, you know, artwork. But anyway, we roamed around a little bit and I had my first artistic awakening which is very important in my life. We came around the corner and down the hall, and there, upon a platform with light coming in from the window, was the “Winged Victory.” And I looked at the “Winged Victory” and the light made her look as though she were soft and real and her bust line just looked soft.

And I stood there, and tears rolled down my cheeks and that was my introduction, number one, to Greece and, number two, it was my introduction to sculpture and the fact that a sculpture speaks in the same way that a poet speaks or a novelist speaks or that a musician speaks, and then I knew that I had to know more and that was a tremendous, tremendous experience.

The intoxicating nature of Paris would remain with Evelyn during their twenty years abroad, inspiring her to study and experience firsthand the unique cultural offerings of many of Europe’s largest cities. In addition, her fascination with art would lead her to become a student of art history, especially that of Greece. Later, she would befriend Nick Mavroki, an owner of a tour company in Greece, who would teach her much about Greek literature, history, and art. In England, she would buy art books, which she would study diligently so she could understand more about the time periods and the circumstances that inspired artists and sculptors. Indeed, art joined theatre as not only a major source of enjoyment for her as a viewer but for her as a student and teacher as well.

Making a Quonset Home In Châteauroux

Ed and Evelyn, along with their friend John Butler, made their way in the next few days to their new home nearly two and a half hours outside of Paris. Châteauroux, a fair-sized French
city, was home to an American air force base. On the outskirts of this town, Ed and Evelyn would settle in as dorm counselors for the school. Dr. Myering especially recruited the Cooks for this position as he wanted a young, married couple in the dorm with the boys and girls. The pair followed several unsuccessful sets of single counselors who came and went before them:

Yeah, we were out in the countryside, outside of Châteauroux which was a fair-sized town. But the school was removed, and we were, Cook and I, particularly removed. We had three long Quonset huts. They were just kind of thrown up, and one stretched one way for the boys, and one stretched another way for the girls, and in between was a room that served as a dining room and a rec room for the kids. There was a kitchen off the back and then our little room that we lived in.

Settling into their small living space took some adjustment to the Cooks, especially considering the impending birth of their child. Still, they worked to make the best of the situation and go about their jobs as counselors to the sometimes difficult students:

We had a room that had two-day beds that we used as couches in the daytime and slept on at night, a desk, a small closet and I think one chest of drawers and a very small bathroom and that was it. That was it.

Well, it was very bleak and across the street from us was the high school, but you see the thing that happened was when the high school was not in session and our kids went home on the weekends, Cook and I were left in this great big thundering echoing bunch of Quonset huts all by ourselves with nobody there. To walk to the PX and the movie theater where all the action was took about 15 or 20-minutes.

The student had informed the new couple that counselors came and counselors went, warning the Cooks that the students were not pushovers:

Well, my husband walked in to speak to those students when we arrived and said, “I was a dormie in high school. There isn’t anything that you can think of to do that I didn’t think of first and somebody may go but it will not be us, it will be you.” That sort of set the tone and, after a while, had a calming effect.

While the challenges faced by Ed and Evelyn on the base were far different from those faced in their dealings with students and parents back in Johnson County, they quickly learned that consistency and firmness were the best rule of thumb with any group of students. True to their word, the students who had run off previous dorm counselors began to be kicked out of the dorm for their behavior:
And the first ones to go were a couple of twin boys that belonged to one of the other commanders. They were just terrible, so we sent them home and the base commander came driving up, this was our first experience with authority, his driver came driving up with his little flag flying on the front of the jeep. He came marching in, and all the kids were looking this way and that because they thought, “Boy they are really in trouble now. The base commander is here, and he will really give them what for.”

He came in took off his hat and said, “Are you Mr. Cook and Mrs. Cook?” We said, “Have a seat.” and he sat down and he said, “Well, I’m glad at last somebody took those two boys on. How would you like to come and spend the week end with us?” So that was that.

This was the late 1950s, sort of just before the beginning of the youth revolution. It was on the verge. Some of them were spoiled army kids or air force kids and, don’t get that wrong, there were wonderful army and air force kids. These kids were wonderful once we got them settled down. Once they saw that authority was there, it was fine.

As the Cooks adjusted to their new roles, Châteauroux began to feel like home. Overcoming the challenge of the students’ behavior helped them move on to really establishing relationships with the students, especially as the birth of their child approached that December.

**Stephanie Arrives and the Family Grows**

On December 19, 1957, Stephanie Cook was born to her parents while they were stationed in Châteauroux, France. Evelyn had spent the first few months worrying about not only the many children she and Ed were charged with supervising in the dorm, but also with Stephanie’s impending arrival. This stressful situation led to many sleepless nights in their little room at the back of the Quonset hut:

I was counseling students and I couldn’t sleep at night. So I learned another lesson that I never in a million years want anything to do with something where I had to be in charge of kids overnight. I couldn’t sleep. I was always worrying about what might happen, what might happen, what might happen. So anyway, that was that and I was to deliver Stephanie in December and that just added to the stress.

Anyway, I got the kids dressed to go to their Christmas prom and they took off to their prom and I took off soon after that to the hospital. They had been asking for days, “When are you going to have that baby? We want a dorm baby! When are you going to have the baby? We are going home pretty soon, you’ve got to have a baby before we go home.”

Well, anyway when they got home that night a whole bunch of them jumped up on the table and did 15 cheers and I had the baby later that night and so they knew before
they went home that we had a little girl for the dorm. We brought her back after Christmas and they stood in line practically to do things with her so I had built-in babysitters.

Finally, Evelyn was able to call home and “officially inform my parents” that she had, indeed, been pregnant and they now had a beautiful granddaughter:

I guess we called Dr. Glenn, he knew of course. We told him and then we wrote the letter to all our family and friends. My mother told my daddy and he got on the phone to Dr. Glenn and he was just yelling that he had a grandchild and Dr. Glenn said, “Mark, why don’t you get out in the yard and talk to me across the mountain? It will be a lot cheaper.”

Stephanie’s arrival called for adjustments in the Cook’s Quonset hut lifestyle. They carried on throughout the rest of the school year, modifying their living conditions and dealing with their first Christmas away from home, which was also their first momentous Christmas as a family of three:

It was tough. At Christmas, I cried because everybody went either to Italy or to England, which I was dying to get to, or off to Germany or somewhere exciting and Cook and I were stuck by ourselves, because she was born on the 19th of December.

We were there in that dorm and we had to fix her formulas and everything and in order to fix her formula he had to light an old black gas stove, which was about six feet long and served as a cook stove for the kid’s food. Anyway, Christmas passed and we lived through it and that was a very lonely time by the way.

You must remember I brought her back to that one room. That took a lot of maneuvering, I am here to tell you, because in the daytime our little office room served as a place for the kids to come and tell us their problems, it served as a place for the principal to come over and talk about how horrible the teachers were and if they didn’t do what he wanted them to they could just pack up and leave. And then almost as soon as he left his secretary, who was French, came over and she and I pretty soon discovered that I loved goat cheese and she loved pineapple.

You couldn’t get pineapple in the French market at that time so I kept little tins of pineapple and she kept goat cheese and so we exchanged and she came over every day for lunch. As soon as she left it was time for school to be out and either the kids were coming in or the teachers were coming in to tell us how horrible the principal was and so it was like Grand Central Station.

The little room became used for a multitude of reasons at all hours of the day, but, especially at night, the room transformed into the thing most resembling a home for the family:
The kids had lots of problems at night. They would come in and what we would do is I would put Stephanie in her pram and roll her into the bathroom. When the kids got through and it was time for lights out or for them to be in their rooms, I then would have to get all the kids out of there and roll her back in and put her in her bed and hope that nothing happened. I just hoped she would sleep through the night. This went on from December until June.

Overcoming the loneliness and challenging conditions living in the Quonset hut at Châteauroux brought Ed and Evelyn to a crossroads. They needed to make a decision affecting not only their future, but Stephanie’s future as well. Evelyn recalls that living another year in the Quonset hut was not an option. If no other choices were available, they would have to pack up, as their friend John Butler did, after one year and return home to Johnson Country, their international adventures all but over. They were not allowed to return home after the first year and Evelyn recalls that it was difficult, at times, with the new baby to know if what she was doing was right, as she did not have the luxury of calling her mother or any close friends to pick their brains about child-rearing:

The first year we could not come home so we had to be in England a year and then we could come home and that was quite an experience. It was tough. I had said, that people critical of Dr. Spock were not allowed to talk about him in my presence. Without the Dr. Spock book I would not have survived.

For example, one night before I got into the Dr. Spock book when Stephanie was just a baby, all of these great big white spots appeared in her eyes, down on her cheeks and so forth, I thought, “Oh my goodness, she is going blind.” We took that child out in zero weather, with snow flying everywhere, to the emergency room because I had no idea what was going on, and the doctor was not very nice. He said, “There’s nothing wrong with the child,” as though to say she has a couple of dumb-headed parents. He said, “Take that child home and put her in a warm bed. She’s alright.”

And I read later in Dr. Spock exactly that, if you see white spots don’t panic and so instead of living with aunts and uncles, mamas and daddies and grandparents and so forth, I lived with Dr. Spock because I didn’t have any, had maybe a couple of women around, that had children but most of these teachers that came and went were single and so that was a very trying experience I’m here to tell you.

We had her christened into the Methodist church, baptized in the Methodist church I think they prefer to say by a cousin of hers. Cook’s cousin was the chaplain at Châteauroux, and so he was able to do the christening and that was wonderful.
Excursions to Brussels and Paris: Opportunities for Learning

In 1958, the city of Brussels, Belgium, hosted the World’s Fair. Evelyn and her friend John Butler took a group of students to the event while Ed stayed home with Stephanie, who was just a baby:

So John Butler and I took a bunch of kids to the World’s Fair, and had to sleep in what virtually were tents. Great big things that were, you know, partitioned off for boys and girls, but anyway breezy, cold, but it was wonderful. I had never been to a World’s Fair before, and it was just great, all the different countries. I was intrigued by Russia, of course and thrilled, with England because of Shakespeare and all that business because I still had not been to England and it was great. I remember being thrilled with the good American exhibit. The kids had a good time and we drove through lots of beautiful countryside, and stopped and saw where Napoleon had been crowned and this that and the other so that was very nice.

On other occasions, Ed and Evelyn took advantage of their proximity to Paris to enjoy excursions into the city, which became a welcome break from their busy life on the military base (Figure 14).

Figure 14. Ed and Evelyn Cook in the European countryside (1958).
The weekends away from the military base gave Ed and Evelyn an opportunity to explore the countryside in France as well as a chance to experience the hustle and bustle of a large European city, getting a taste of its cosmopolitan lifestyle:

We went to Paris one weekend, and we were in the American bar of the Napoleon Hotel, and I looked over and I said to Cook, “That looks like Errol Flynn.” He said, “Well, I will just go find out.” I wouldn’t have dared. So he went over and asked and he said, “Yes, as a matter of fact, I am”.

He was a big movie star in the 50s. He was the swashbuckling type, you know, and so he said, “Who are you?” So Cook told him and he said “Oh, my father is an educator in London. I will just come over and have a drink with you.” He came over and sat down and told us all about his father who was an economics professor, and this that and the other and told us a big story. The girl who was with him happened to be his latest little gal and so he invited our dorm kids, all of them to come up, and see the set in Paris where he was making “The Sun Also Rises.” They did and that was fun.

Three Years of Learning On the Blessed Isle of England

Except for a brief two-day jaunt into England during their year in France, Evelyn had not had the opportunity to experience the country she had become so enthralled with through literature (Figure 15). Finally, their second assignment brought them to England and a little cottage home near the school. After the year in France and the first year in England, they had a leave which allowed them to come home for a visit. Despite their trials, however, the Cooks strongly desired to remain in Europe, but needed a change from their life in the Quonset hut. They expressed their worries about their living situation to Dr. Mason, was director of the entire European program for the Department of Defense educational organization:

Dr. Mason, who was head of the whole school program overseas, came down and visited us in the dorm and asked us what we would like to do and we both said, “Go to England or go home.” Cook also said, “Administration or go home.” And so the following year he was assigned principal of Alconbury School, which was between Peterborough and Cambridge in England.

Already, the nomadic lifestyle which they had adopted had them saying good bye to yet another home, though they were setting off for a better station:

We got in our little red Renault and put enough diapers in it to last us and we started our trip across to England. You know, it was kind of sad as we left because Stephanie had been born there and she had stayed there for six months. That was her first home and it
was kind of sad to leave it. I don’t know to this day why, but for some reason we locked everything up and I couldn’t understand why we did that. We crawled out the back window and put the window back down and got in the car and I can’t remember why we did that. It might be that the door locked from the inside or something I don’t know but anyway we crawled out the window. And off we went to England.


In England at long last, Evelyn spent much of her time there traversing the countryside and conducting pilgrimages to all the locations she had read about for much of her life. As Stephanie was still a baby at the time, she did not work while they lived in England:

I substituted just a little bit in England. Stephanie was a baby so I was home with her, and that was when I did all my touring of England. We only had one car at the time, and Cook would go in with somebody to work and I would take the car. Sometimes I would take Stephanie, and sometimes I would leave her with a wonderful nanny that we had. So that’s when I went by myself to Shakespeare Country in the middle of the winter when no body was there.

It was wonderful! You can’t feel the spirit of a place when there are ten thousand people around. And you know I just went into the church where Shakespeare is buried by myself early in the morning, nobody there but the guy who was the caretaker. And I went into his home by myself and just wandered around. Later, I went back, in the spring, and that’s when I did the thing that is I think the most important thing to do in Shakespeare country, and that is to take the walk from Stratford over to Shottery, the same walk that Shakespeare presumably took when he went to see Anne Hathaway. It’s through the country, you hear the birds, and you get the feel of the English countryside and its wonderful. So I did that.

I went many places. I went often to the theater in London by myself. I’d get on the train and go to London. I heard the Carolina Brass yesterday and they played several
themes from “West Side Story” and I remembered that one of those times I went by myself to see “West Side Story.” The fog was so thick when I got off the train I thought, “I will never find my way out of this fog.” So I really saw what London fog was like. I mean you can cut it with a knife.

Evelyn recalled that the images that Della Hawkins and Myrtle Buchanan had drawn for her so eloquently with words many years earlier came to life as she traveled throughout the British Isles, uncovering the ageless mysteries held by the many castles which dotted the landscape and retracing the literary footsteps of the many writers and poets who had so influenced her own passion for literature and teaching.

Ed and Evelyn’s travels were chronicled by not only pictures and slides, but by many, many postcards home to their friends who could trace the experiences of the family from one historic location to the next. John Butler had returned home to resume his teaching career at Johnson County High School, where he would later become principal in the 1960s. Postcards from the Cooks and his frequent visits to Europe kept his connection with Evelyn. One postcard mailed from Ireland detailed her visit to Blarney Castle in 1959 (Figure 16). Her postcards would not only describe for him the sights she was visiting, but they served as a way for both of them to maintain their friendship, which lasted several decades. The two exchanged many letters over the twenty years that Evelyn spent away from Johnson County. She would later say that the letters and postcards to and from her family and friends at home helped her maintain an important connection:

Being in Europe was very exciting, very exhilarating. As I look back on it and think about it, I think I told you this before, one of my feet was always in Johnson County. I never left this behind, really. There were things and people that kept me connected and that was important.

Living in England for three years afforded Evelyn an invaluable opportunity to become a student of the land she loved so much. In addition to the books she acquired on England’s history and art and her trips into the countryside, she attempted to actually live there rather than act as a tourist on an extended holiday. Some of the customs she adopted while there, she still
practices today. Some are as simple as offering afternoon tea served “like the English drink it” with a bit of milk and sugar.

Figure 16. Postcard to John Butler describes a trip to Ireland (1959).

She has come to view the time she had to spend learning so much about England as one of the most valuable experiences in her life that most directly affected her teaching once she later came back into the classroom:

I had to see England. I mean that is why I went over to begin with. To see England. So we were in England three years, and I explored England microscopically and that is why I
did not see it all. I never got to Scotland until last year, but I did the rest of England microscopically village by village, taking slides. Of course they have long since become passé. I’d record the date and categorize all the stuff. Dr. Noss, one of our best professors at Berea, had a whole closet full of little black notebooks that he made notes in on onion skin paper with pen and ink, notes on everything and so I tried to do that.

Now, a lot of the time I had to be home with Stephanie. So I read. I read about architecture, cathedrals, country churches, I read about Elizabethan architecture, Victorian architecture, I read about art, I read about everything. I knew the literature fairly well, poets, novelists and that sort of thing, but I didn’t know about architecture, I didn’t know about art and so many wonderful painters, and so forth.

I read about all those people and all the different kinds of architecture and made notes in my little black book and then went to see these places and it was absolutely wonderful. To stretch a trip to England over three years, to live there, was absolutely wonderful.

The Cook family remained in England for three years, moving to Cambridge for the last two years. At this point, they had settled into a life away from America and away from the mountains of northeast Tennessee.

With the adventure, well underway, Ed, Evelyn, and Stephanie moved on to what would become one of the most interesting locations they would ever live: Ankara, Turkey.
CHAPTER 10
SETTLING IN FOR A LIFE ABROAD

When the Cooks made the decision to remain abroad for the duration of Ed’s career with the Department of Defense educational system, they knew their lives would never be the same again. Stephanie would assuredly complete her education in schools throughout Europe before returning home to attend college. They would have occasional visits from their Johnson County friends and even from Evelyn’s mother, but they would not be a part of the growth and changes taking place in Johnson County throughout the 1960s and much of the 1970s. However, rich experiences awaited them in Turkey and Germany as Ed became one of the youngest school superintendents in the Department of Defense system. This time would also see Evelyn’s return to the classroom and her first administrative assignment since earning the degree from the University of Tennessee years earlier.

Stephanie Begins School and Evelyn Returns to School

Ankara, Turkey, impressed Evelyn as one of the most arid places she had ever been. It was not an assignment she was keen to accept, and she had a hard time warming up to the idea even once they moved there. The cultural differences from their homes in France and England were striking as well. However, from an emotional standpoint, their years in Turkey are extremely significant to Evelyn for two reasons: first, she returned to the classroom and, second, her love affair with Greek culture and history began in earnest during their time in Ankara.

When Stephanie reached school age, she began school in a Turkish kindergarten near their home, recalled Evelyn:

Stephanie was in Turkish kindergarten, so she didn’t go to an American school right away. She went to an American school later, but we put her in Turkish kindergarten several hours a day so she got very proficient in Turkish. That was a wonderful experience for her.

Stephanie’s time in school meant that Evelyn had more time to explore Ankara and to take advantage of the cheap military flights available to nearby Greece. In addition, an opportunity
came, though tragically, for her to return to the classroom, something she had been longing to do:

I started work in a very unhappy situation. Either four or six, I think it was six, of my husband’s teachers were killed in a plane accident the first Christmas we were there, and one of them was the librarian. He was desperate for teachers, because there weren’t that many in Turkey, you know, that you could just call on in the middle of the year so I went to work as a librarian and worked there for the rest of the year.

The next spring, the senior English teacher at the high school announced that he was leaving and the position was offered to Evelyn, a prospect she was thrilled with:

The senior English teacher left and I got to do my thing. I got to teach British literature. Oh, man it was wonderful. And soon after that we got a new principal who was very much on the ball, and I asked him if I could do what actually ended up being a humanities course, in a sense, but I called it for want of a better word “continental classics.” He said, “Why do you want to do that?” I explained that we are here in the midst of this rich, wonderful world and these students need to experience it through literature and through real life and so forth and so he said, “Write a curriculum and let me look at it.” So I wrote a curriculum and let him look at it and he passed on it so I taught continental classes for the next three or four years while I was there.

Unlike the schools at the other bases where they had been assigned, Evelyn says the school in Ankara had several students who were very talented and quite ambitious. Many of them were children of U.S. employees of the embassy in Ankara. Among these was Sylvia Nassar, who would later write the critically successful book A Beautiful Mind:

That is when I had Sylvia Nassar in those classes. She was a standout. She was marvelous. But all these kids were wonderful. Now they were not pushovers, they were bright, most of them because their parents, were hand picked in those days.

I don’t know what the situation is now, but anyway people were hand picked to go to Turkey because it was kind of a sensitive location. What we had were Embassy kids, AID kids, we had students whose fathers were generals and colonels and heads of different departments and so forth. We had kids at the dormitory that came from Africa and here and there, and again sons and daughters of embassy people and high ranking officials and those kids were going off to the best schools in America and colleges and their parents expected them to get a good education and so forth. They were well-traveled kids and you could not BS them and I loved it. I have never been a teacher who liked to have a bunch of yes men or women as students. I liked to be challenged because it kept me on my toes and made me know that they were thinking and these kids were challenges.
The curriculum revolved around a study of classical literature, founded in an intensive study of the impact and influence of Greek literature on the history and literature of the west. The students plowed through the material, thoroughly enjoying the challenge and relishing any opportunity to load up in the school van and go out on an expedition:

They loved it, yes. They just loved it. I went to Izmir with my husband to a superintendent’s conference, and I came back with a narthex. A narthex is a great big long stick of a thing that grows in Turkey that has a hollow inside, and it was what presumably Prometheus used when he stole fire and brought fire down to mortals.

I brought this narthex back and put it on the back wall, and so told the class if anyone could guess what it was I would give them a prize, and of course nobody guessed what it was. When they finally found out, they made a great big portrait of Prometheus and stuck that thing in his hand and so forth. We had all kinds of fun.

I will tell you about my favorite fieldtrip actually. We went to Termessos, which was a place, a spa that was so high on the mountains, so inaccessible, that Alexander the Great, when he marched through there, passed up Termessos because it was so inaccessible.

We decided we would go to Termessos, so Turkan, our Turkish friend, got us a little plane because she knew a pilot who owned a plane. Turkan knew everybody and everything so we piled on this little plane and we landed in a field and we got jeeps and we went as far as we could up the mountainside in the jeeps. Then we got out and walked the rest of the way. I would never be able to do that now.

So we got to the top of the mountain, and there completely unspoiled, completely unvisited, was this wonderful spa, and the kids went this way and that way while I sat down and rested with Turkan and the other adults with us. Then the kids screamed, “Oh, you’ve got to come, you’ve got to come!” We tore our way through the underbrush, I mean laurel and all that stuff, and emerged into what was the most beautiful amphitheater that was just sitting there with the backdrop of it the ocean way off in the distance and the mountains and so forth. They said, “Oh, can’t you see doing “Prometheus” or “Oedipus” in this very spot?” And so that’s the kind of thing that kept it real for them. It was wonderful.

In addition to the field trips, Evelyn was able to keep it real for the students by giving them a voice in choosing what they would study. Keeping them within the bounds of a college-bound curriculum, she guided them but let the specific decision of which books or which pieces of poetry be made by them:
I told them after we got started, “I will take the first six weeks to tell you what you have to study and after that you can choose a program of study for the rest of the year.” So I made them study Greek history or mythology and gave them a test every day. It was tough, and they screamed and they groaned and they moaned, but they learned the whole background.

Then they wanted to do Greek drama, which was what I hoped they would, and then that is when we did The Inferno and that’s when I did King Lear for the first time. They wanted to do King Lear and I thought, “Why can’t they do Hamlet or something that I am familiar with?” So I had to dig also, and I can’t remember what else we did now but we did all kinds of neat things and so that was a reason that Turkey was so wonderful because I had those tremendous kids, and, you know, they challenged me and I challenged them and we just had a lot of fun.

**Becoming a Student of Greece**

The time in the classroom with the students also caused Evelyn to again itch to learn more about the culture she was living in the middle of. She said she returned to the classroom in two ways, both as teacher and as student. Like she had in England, she purchased books and visited museums, eager to soak in the culture of that area of the world. Through a tour with friends, she became friends with Nick Mavrokis, who owned the tour company they were using in Greece. With Nick as her teacher, Evelyn learned about Greek culture and history, spending many days touring Greece with him:

He had a tour company, and on this one particular, wonderful day, he was the guide for us when a group of us went on a trip. I guess it was the first time I was in Greece, actually. I sat by him and just plied him with questions all day long, and by the end of the day he saw that I was a real Grecophile. I probably also told him that I was very dumb and so he set out to educate me, and boy did he do a job.

He took me out to Piraeus to show me something that was not yet put in a museum, and it was the great, big statue of Minerva with the helmet. You see that on the back of any number of books. She was still in a storage facility. She is now in a museum, of course, but she had been brought up from the sea and put in storage. He took me to see her. He told me that not many people would have this opportunity before she gets put in the museum and he did that kind of thing for me all the time.

Evelyn’s letters and postcards home from Greece spoke of the wonderment and sense of fascination that she had for Greece. In one postcard home, she described the scene at Ephesus as she had relived what it must have been like for Paul to have spoken there (Figure 17).
Through her time with Nick, she became more and more versed on the history of Greece by visiting landmarks and studying the land’s geography. She also became quite interested in art history and the intricacies involved in creating the timeless masterpieces which dotted the Greek countryside and filled its museums:

Lou would take me up on Parthenon Hill, Acropolis Hill and we would stand and look at the caryatids and I have done this with my students many times over and he would say, “See all that marble on their heads? Why do they not look tired or why do they not look like they have a load on their heads?” I didn’t know. I have had students who did know and he would point out to me the bent knee and the smile and so forth, and he would say, “That bent knee says it all. That just says they are standing there relaxed.”

Then he would tell me the reason in many of the Greek statues you will think you will be seeing the real body through a very thin garment and it looks so warm and so soft and so forth. He said that they dipped their models, with these gossamer gowns on them, in water or something until the gown would cling to their bodies and then they would sculpt and you know just all kinds of little things like that. He taught me to appreciate art and the process.
During this time, Evelyn admitted she was a student again, though none of it had to do with being in a formal classroom. She was learning firsthand about Greece:

I was a student once again and he taught me so many things that I just can’t tell you how important it was to me. Anyway, my love affair with Greece was one of the major reasons why Turkey was so wonderful.

She would return to Greece often during their time in Turkey. She visited even after they moved on to Germany. The influence of Greece and her time with Nick on her teaching became immeasurable, she said, because of all the things she wanted to gain from her time abroad, chief among them were the skills to become a better teacher when she returned to Johnson County, very much aware of the rich experiences she was having:

Oh, I think I did realize the opportunities I was having, because always in my mind, you know, one of my feet was planted in Johnson County and the other planted wherever I was. All of the time that we were doing these things I was very much aware of the fact that I was a little farm girl from Shady Valley, Tennessee, and that these marvelous, wonderful things were happening. But I never had any feeling of inferiority about my Berea College education. I mean that education in literature stood me in so many places, so many times. It was wonderful, absolutely wonderful.

**On Being Married To a Traveling Superintendent**

While the Cooks lived in Turkey, Ed became the youngest superintendent ever in the Department of Defense school system. There were five total superintendents in the European organization, with Ed being posted in Ankara. While the position did allow the family to move to a more comfortable home, it also meant Ed was gone much more often than when he was a principal. At one time, his schools were located in an area roughly the size of the United States. At times, Evelyn recalled that it felt more like she was married to a salesman than to a superintendent:

Cook was the youngest superintendent, and there were five superintendents, I guess, in Europe and the Middle East. He was the youngest one, and that was kind of neat. I said that I would never marry a traveling salesman, and now I married a traveling superintendent. He was gone half the time. He had schools in Ethiopia, he had schools in Pakistan, he had a school on Crete, he had a school in Athens. Anyway, he had schools all over the place. He put down his area once superimposed on the map of the United States and it was larger than the whole United States.
If he wasn’t gone there, he was gone to Germany because they would call all the superintendents in to Karlsruhe, Germany, which was the headquarters. So, several times a year, he had to take a plane and he was gone for days, and I was a mama and a daddy and everything, and teaching and so forth.

The Cooks spent five years in Turkey, a length of time that allowed them to settle in to Ankara and have some semblance of normalcy. They were also afforded opportunities for more travels as a family, which they always enjoyed. A goal of both Ed and Evelyn’s was to take advantage of all the travel opportunities that their life offered them. They were able to travel cheaply on military flights when there was room, and they were able to combine family vacation time with school-related trips on occasion. Evelyn recalled that these experiences, like the trips to Greece, were some of the most enjoyable and awe-inspiring events of their time abroad. For example, one trip took them to Germany for a superintendent’s meeting with a sightseeing trip built in to Amsterdam in Holland (Figure 18). They also took a meaningful trip before Christmas one year to Israel during their extended stay in nearby Turkey (Figure 19). All of these made for interesting notes home to family and friends, which again provided a way for the Cooks to remain connected with their family and friends while, at the same time, offering them a way to share some their international experiences.

![A postcard home from Amsterdam, Holland (1965).](image)

*Figure 18.* A postcard home from Amsterdam, Holland (1965).
In addition to opportunities for travel, Ed’s job allowed them to move to a nicer home, which Evelyn enjoyed decorating. Working for the Department of Defense meant that they could be moved at any time, with little warning. Such was the case only three months after moving to a new home in Ankara in 1966:

We had lived in a lower middle class house and then we moved to a little bit better place. We could have split shipments of goods, and I have to tell you this because it is another funny thing. Each time we moved, we could send a shipment back to America and we could send another shipment to a new location. So we bought furniture and we bought all kinds of lovely things, but I sent all my lovely things back home until they would be here and not be banged around.

We sent like a three piece, seventy-five dollar living room suit that we bought in a dime store in England to Turkey. Well, then Cook was superintendent and, all of sudden, we were in this little very humble house with very humble furniture and somebody came down from headquarters one day, one of the big wigs, and he said, “When is your real furniture arriving?” I said, “Well, its here.” It embarrassed him to death.

But anyway we finally moved to a better location and then we moved up on what they called “Snob Hill,” which was down the hill from the Officer’s Club and so forth. It was where all the Americans tried to live and it was where the rich Turks lived. We moved there and I did all kinds of things that I won’t go into to make my furniture fit the location and it was marvelous. We had not been there three months until Dr. Mason said, “I need you in France.” De Gaulle was kicking the Americans out of France and it fell
Cook’s unhappy duty to be the superintendent there to close all the schools and that was where we went next.

It was very traumatic to leave Turkey. The former president Inonu invited us for a farewell dinner and we had all kinds of wonderful things done for us before we left, but it was a sad time.

**Back to France for De Gaulle’s Revolution**

Returning to France was a bittersweet time for the Cooks. They had made a home in Turkey and the situation in France was a tense one, as De Gaulle was swept into office promising to close all U.S. military bases in France. This meant that the schools that served the dependents of U.S. military personnel had to be closed as well. Dr. Mason had selected Ed for this task, and Evelyn and Stephanie moved along with him:

Off to France we went because we had to. In France I had my 40th birthday, and that was the only traumatic birthday I have ever had. I thought my life was over because I had turned forty. It seemed like when I was under 40, I was still young, but it seemed like when I got to be 40 I was suddenly old. I don't know why, but it just seemed like to me 40 was old. I just had a terrible day, walking the floor terrible.

Anyway, that was a very traumatic year as I told you Dr. Mason sent Cook to close the schools in France. People didn’t want to leave. Teachers, some of the teachers, particularly in Paris who had been there for years, said, “We are not leaving.” But of course they did.

The political situation in France under De Gaulle was one of independence and one of the ways that independence was being achieved was by severing ties with the United States. It was a tense time to be there, Evelyn recalled, and it taught her much about the world situation and understanding that other countries do not always share the same opinion or regard for issues that Americans sometimes do:

We were in Paris the night that De Gaulle came back into power. Horns don’t blow in Paris, at least they didn’t then, and when we came out of a movie, we heard all these horns blowing. We thought, “What is going on?” We discovered that the horns were blowing because De Gaulle had come back into the city in power and he wanted France to assert its autonomy. He didn’t want to be tied in with Americans and so forth. He wanted rid of us and so he gave his ultimatum that the Americans would be out of France in such and such a length of time, so they had no choice but to close the bases.
According to Evelyn, this was no small task as there was still a large contingency of Americans based in France. The closures of both the bases and the supporting facilities, including the schools, had to happen quickly:

We went to Orleans, which was the superintendent’s headquarters, and Cook started the process of closing the schools down there. Closing the schools down meant two or three things. It meant families were moving out, and so as families moved out the commissaries and all the things that supported the American bases got smaller and smaller and smaller. I remember one woman went into hysterics and said, “I can take having to leave, I can take my children having to be uprooted from school, but I can’t take the fact that there is no hair spray in the PX!”

Certainly, the year in France was one of the most worrisome and hectic years the Cooks spent in Europe. Watching the French resurgence from the inside proved educational in itself, along with watching the hand wringing occurring within the American organization as well. When the Americans left for good at the end of the year, Evelyn said she realized things would never be the same between France and the United States. Many had said the French would never make the Americans leave. They did not think it could happen, but it did.

**Having a Try at Junior High**

Because many teachers were already reassigned or had left Europe altogether, there were vacancies at the schools that needed to be filled by persons already in France. Once again, Evelyn was called upon to fill a teaching slot vacated by someone else. This time, she had her one try at teaching junior high school:

So everything was nervous, nervous, nervous! I went in as a seventh and eighth grade teacher because the schools were in session and the teachers were there but there were no seventh and eighth grade teachers for whatever reason so I went in to that spot. It was terrible. I didn’t know anything about junior high. I know less today than I did then.

I mean they are a breed in themselves. I have said that I discovered perpetual motion, because they were never still and one would say one thing and somebody over here would laugh, and somebody over here would giggle. They were like dough. You could push them down in one place and they would pop up in another. I had a terrible time with them. Anyway, I would go home every night and tell Cook these stories about what had happened and he would say, “Oh it can’t be that bad, blah, blah and stop complaining.”
Evelyn said that after visiting her classroom one day unexpectedly, Ed never again questioned her venting and complaining. Her time with the junior high students was probably the most difficult experience she had throughout her entire teaching career. That fact was validated by Ed’s visit:

One day he comes marching into my classroom as superintendent with his entourage with about six of the likes of you [supervisors]. They marched in the door without knocking or anything, and there was one particularly long-legged, long-armed girl sitting on the front row who was always upsetting her books and so forth.

Well, anyway she said, “Oh, tee hee there is your husband, Mrs. Cook.” About that time, she turned over her desk and all of her books went everywhere including right under Cook’s feet and he stumbled and almost fell. He stayed about one minute and left. That night he said, “You’re not going to hear anymore out of me.” Well, anyway, I survived and about half way through the year, I was able to move into a senior English position.

The family spent the entire school year in France. Stephanie, who was in fourth grade by this time, was able to travel extensively with her parents and see much of France, Spain, and England. Evelyn later thought the traveling they were able to do was the best educational opportunity they had while living abroad:

Well, we were there all year. Our traveling we saw some more things I wanted to see. We went all over France and that was wonderful, wonderful place. We went to Spain, and we spent Christmas in England. While we were there, we went to see “The Sound of Music” movie which was just out, and by then we had known that our next assignment would be in Munich, Germany. Stephanie and I went and I said to her, “Now that’s the countryside that we are going to. That’s what we are going to be seeing.” So we were really excited about that and now when I see “The Sound of Music” I get very nostalgic about that and about the years that we spent in Germany.

Moving on to Germany in 1967 for the second half of their 20 years abroad, the Cooks realized that Stephanie was coming in to her teen years and they needed to make an attempt to provide a good setting for her to enjoy junior high and high school years. They also invited their two nieces and nephew over to spend their senior year abroad with them, going to school and having the experience of living in Europe. Their nephew, Warren, spent his senior year in Orleans before the family moved to Germany. Stephanie’s other cousins would join them in Germany during their senior years.
CHAPTER 11
FROM GERMANY’S BLACK FOREST TO THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS

With the schools in France closed, the Cooks closed yet another chapter of their nomadic lives. Off to Germany, they shipped the large items and packed their tiny Volkswagen Beetle and their Volkswagen bus, and set out for the long journey to Munich during the summer of 1967. Traveling by car, the family drank in the European countryside as they drove, eager to be in a country which, only 20 years before, had been ravaged by war but now hosted one of the largest contingencies of U.S. military troops in the world:

We had a little entourage into Germany. I drove my Volkswagen and Cook drove our camper. We drove in tandem all over across France and across Germany into Munich and started our new life which ended, I guess, ten years later in Germany. I guess, in some ways, those years were the highlight of our life because Stephanie was going into the teen years and, as far as our family was concerned, it was probably the highlight of our life. It was a wonderful experience, although I did not want to go to Germany. I didn’t want to go to Turkey.

I didn’t want to go to Germany because I came through the war years, and to me Germany was not an attractive place to be, and particularly Munich, which had been the seat of Hitler’s rise to power. But it ended up being a wonderful place.

When I went to England, what happened was I reinforced what I already knew and added to it, particularly things like cathedrals and castles. When I went to Turkey, it was new stuff, and when I went to Germany it was new stuff again, so those two places that I did not want to go were the places that I had the greatest learning. That probably tells you something, doesn’t it?

Far from the Quonset hut where they first lived in France during the late 1950s, the Cooks moved into an attractive apartment in Munich, where they hosted friends from the states and even visits from Evelyn’s mother, Myrtle McQueen (Figure 20). The family returned to Tennessee for occasional visits, but they looked forward to times when they could share their European homes with visitors:

We moved into the non-commissioned officer’s housing, which was an apartment complex, until our duplex became available over on the other side of the base, which was for captains through generals. We had a couple of months in a wonderful apartment that was up so high that we looked out on the tops of all the pine trees that were around there.
and we had a little balcony that we could grill on and John Butler came to visit us. He was the principal of Johnson County High School by that time. He said it was like having a playhouse, a tree house, and so we settled in and started the process of learning about Germany and found it was the closest thing to being in the United States of anywhere.

Figure 20. Myrtle McQueen and her granddaughter, Stephanie, near Munich, Germany.

Fired From the Job

When the Cooks moved to Germany, Evelyn had fully hoped and planned to continue teaching. Soon after moving to Germany, however, Evelyn was faced with the sudden realization that her days spent in the classroom were over, as a congressional inquiry into the European school system resulted in dependents of superintendents no longer being able to work within the system. It was devastating:

We had been in Munich for three or four weeks when Dr. Mason, who was head of all the school systems everywhere, called a meeting of the superintendents and during that meeting he said, “I am going to do something I have never done before in my life and probably never will again.” He said, “It’s an interesting thing that I have to do. I am going to give a person an outstanding award and fire her in all the same breath.” And that is when I got my walking papers.

Dr. Mason was having an awful lot of flack. He had a congressional investigation about the fact that he was hiring a lot of dependents of principals and superintendents,
and so I came under the old nepotism thing, even though I was a fine teacher. I suppose he was getting so much heat, he had to let me go. I was fired and had no job and Stephanie was in school and Cook was going off to work and what was I going to do with my life.

Shocked, Evelyn thought she could accept the decision until the day school actually started.

Ironically, she had scheduled a dental appointment, and the dentist’s office happened to be near the base’s high school:

I went to the dentist the day school opened and his office looked down on the high school, the Munich high school. I stood there, and the tears just rolled down my cheeks. The dentist said, “Don’t be upset. I am not going to hurt you.” I said, “I am not upset about you.” He asked me what was wrong and I told him I was upset because school was starting, and I was a teacher, and I wasn’t part of it. “Oh, you’re a teacher,” he said. I said, “Well, I was.” He told me about how his father was a superintendent back in Illinois, and so I talked it out of my system with my dentist.

The experience of once again having to figure out how to overcome a challenge stressed Evelyn, but it did not make her give up on enjoying their time in Europe or seeking out enriching experiences. It only encouraged her to seek out new avenues for growth and opportunities.

**Joining the Officers’ Wives’ Club**

Realizing that she would not last long with too much idle time on her hands, Evelyn looked around for something to occupy her time. She was invited to join the Officers’ Wives’ Club, which ended up being an educational experience all on its own. The Club had its own intricacies and traditions, which she was quick to learn. She also discovered the culture that existed outside the circle of her usual school teacher friends:

I started going to their meetings and, of course, they do lots of traveling and lots of buying of things and so forth, just typical of what you would think an Officers’ Wives’ Club would do. They were upset with me because I did not know how to play bridge nor play golf. But they found out that I could write a little bit, so they said I could do the newsletter. I did the newsletter and they liked it so well, they decided they were going to make me president and I said, “I can’t be president. I don’t know anything about protocol of the military.” They said, “Oh, you don’t have to worry. We don’t have a general here at the present time. It’s only when you have a general’s wife that you have to worry about protocol.”

Moving from the classroom to a room filled with women was a transition that Evelyn handled with grace, building on the tradition that women from the South are hospitable and personable:
They gave my part of the country a great compliment. They said, “You are from the South and Southern women know about these things.” I thought that was very nice. So I became the president of the Club, and the first day that I was to make my acceptance speech was the first day that I had worn bifocals. I went in and I had my little speech prepared, nervous as a cat, and here I was in front of whole room full of colonels’ wives, majors’ and captains’ wives, all of whom the colonels’ wives took under their wings.

Well, who had taken this poor little civilian? Well, nobody, and I was sticking out like a sore thumb. I was the only civilian up, to that point, who had ever been president of the Club, so I was really nervous. I got up to make my speech, and I looked down at my paper and I couldn’t read a thing on that paper. It was just dancing up and down, and, finally, I just put it aside and said, “I am very sorry but I am going to have to give this acceptance speech off the cuff because this is the first day that I have worn my bifocals and I can’t see a thing.”

I had that group of women in the palm of my hand, because they were, almost all of them were colonel’s wives, and they had already been through this. They knew exactly what I was talking about and they thought that was wonderful. Well, things went very well.

Soon after she took over as president of the Club, however, the news reached the base that a general was moving to the base. That meant that his wife would be joining the ranks of the Officers’ Wives’ Club, as well. Evelyn panicked, as she remembered what she had been told about protocol. Once again, she returned to school, only this time she was concentrating on learning etiquette and protocol, for very soon she believed she would be put to the test:

The other women in the Club said, “Well we are going to send you off to school. You are going down and you are going to learn how to deal with a general’s wife.” It was more like a workshop, you know, that would tell you all the ins and outs of what you do with a general’s wife and so forth, the protocol behind it. There is quite a bit to it.

But, it turned out that the general’s wife was wonderful. I should not have worried. She was just the salt of the earth and, it also turned out that her general was one of the ones, I mean her husband I can’t remember his name now but he was one of the ones indicted over graft and stuff in the Vietnam era, so in the middle of the year, they left.

While Evelyn never attempted bridge, she did return one final time to athletics, where she tried to acquire a knack for golf:

They told me that I should learn golf after I got to be president or learn to play bridge. I thought golf would be less intimidating. I didn’t want to learn to play bridge because I can’t sit still that long, so I took up golf. I went out the first day, and there was
this great big, tall black pro who was very imposing looking and he said, “Why are you here?” I told him the whole story and so he tells me what to do. He shows me how you put your feet and how you put your hands and how you grip and all that stuff. I listened very carefully and I did what I thought he said. I got ready to swing and I swung and, I don’t know what I did, but if he had not dodged I would have hit him in the head and he would probably be dead.

When he finally revived he said, “Mrs. Cook, do you have another sport?” I said, “No, this is the last one.” And so that ended it all and they just put up with me as a peculiar person who didn’t play golf and who didn’t play bridge and I got by.

Looking back, Evelyn views losing the teaching position in Germany as one of the most fortunate things that happened to her while in Europe. Not only was she able to join the Officers’ Wives’ Club and have those experiences, but she was also able to spend more time researching the history of Germany’s literature, music, and art. Much as she had in the other countries where they had lived, she became a student, once again, of those things nearest her heart, the arts.

Turning an Ear and an Eye to German and Italian Art

As Evelyn worked to fill the time she had while Stephanie was at school and Ed was off taking care of matters at his schools, she began buying books once again. Over time, she became enthralled with German art and music, taking advantage of the Munich opera as often as she could. Building again upon the humanities foundation built at Berea College and solidified in France, England, and Greece, she added a repertoire of German knowledge to that foundation:

Who knows what would have happened had I been able to teach seniors there in Munich? But I had a tremendous number of wonderful experiences as a result of not teaching. It gave me more time to study, because I studied the first year that I was in Turkey. Of course, the first half of the year I was studying really hard and of course the studying I did in Turkey related to my teaching because it was all about Greek literature and that sort of thing. The studying I did in England was out of the curiosity built up in my youth. In Germany, I got fascinated by King Ludwig and all of his castles that he put up here and there, like Neuschwanstein and Linderhof. He practically bankrupted Bavaria in building some of them.

And by studying him, I became very interested in Richard Wagner, because Ludwig was a great patron of Wagner. Wagner lived at Neuschwanstein a while, and so in order to learn something about Wagner, I had to study about Wagner. While at Berea, my music appreciation class had gone to see “Lohengrin,” which happened to be a
Wagnerian opera, in Cincinnati. I decided I better learn something about experiencing opera, so I got tickets to the Munich opera, which was absolutely marvelous experience, wonderful.

Evelyn recalled that not only was the musical experience at the Munich Opera House memorable, but the ambiance of the Opera House has been something which has stayed with her the rest of her life:

The two experiences that I remember have to do with Wagner, whose music is as heavy as all get out. My two friends and I decided that we would endure the entire “Ring Cycle.” So we went for all four. We started with the Rhine River shimmering on the stage and ended up with the Götterdämmerung, with everything going up in flames at the end of four nights. I mean they just go on forever. I wouldn’t have missed it for anything.

The other wonderful experience that I had with Wagner was going to see “Tristan and Isolde.” I decided that I was not going to go because there was a new snow, and when it snowed in Munich, it snowed and I didn’t have anybody to go with me. I thought, “I am not going out in the snow tonight.” Then, at the last minute I said, “I can’t miss this.” and so I called a cab and he zoomed me down to the opera. By the time I got there, the doors had closed and the opera had begun and, of course, they don’t seat you until the intermission.

But this man said to me, “Come with me and I will take you.” Well, I didn’t know where we were going, and I was a little bit apprehensive but he put me in the elevator and up we went up, up, and up, and when the elevator opened we came out into a place that just had boards, just a boarded floor that looked very bad, and I guess in today’s terrorism I would have absolutely hit the panic button. I was feeling pretty nervous, and so he motioned for me to come with him, and I went with him. He took me into a tiny balcony which, when you sat down, you were up against the ceiling between two carved angels that floated on either side. I was able to stand in that little balcony, and look down on the stage, and that gorgeous music just wafted up. It was one of the most perfect moments that I have ever had as far as music is concerned. I can’t explain it, it was just marvelous.

Throughout her time in Germany, Evelyn took advantage of opportunities to travel with Ed on several of his trips to various locations. They traveled to Italy because he had schools in Italy, spending a great deal of time in Florence and Rome. One particular trip to a museum in Italy impacted Evelyn greatly, much like her visit years earlier to the Louvre in Paris. From then on, she developed a keen interest in Italian art as well:
I discovered, for me, the heart and soul of Italy was Florence. I had one of those experiences like I had when I saw the “Winged Victory” in Paris. I was a little more knowledgeable by the time I hit Florence, but I wasn’t prepared for the impact that Michelangelo’s “David” was going to have on me. It is absolutely wonderful. It is youth, it is young manhood, in all its splendor. He is just so marvelous. You just stand and look at him and get cold chills. You get tears in your eyes. I mean it just has a deep, emotional impact on you.

Something else in that very same room that had an emotional impact on me was the half done work that Michelangelo left. For the first time I had this experience that I’m sure a million people have had before me, but it seemed like when you looked at that half done piece of marble like the statue was in there, and all the sculptor had to do was remove the outside marble, and the statue would just emerge out of there, you know. I think those were called the slaves if I remember correctly. Anyway, I got a whole new feeling of what a sculptor must feel as he is hacking away. He must see it, and he must just hack away, and bring it out.

The hours of wandering through museums, pouring over books, and sitting perched on the edge of an opera house seat would serve Evelyn well as she constantly worked to expand her knowledge of the arts. Later, as she taught again at Johnson County High School and worked to help bring an organized arts presence back to Johnson County, she would draw on these experiences. They created in her a passion for the arts and for what they can teach those who allow themselves to experience fine literature, fine music, fine art, and fine theatre.

Returning to Work: The PREP Initiative

Ed and Evelyn later moved to Augsburg, Germany, a small town north of Munich. There they would spend the rest of their time until Stephanie graduated from high school. Ed would spend his last two years as superintendent in Karlsruhe, Germany, one of which Evelyn would spend back home in Shady Valley.

After moving to Augsburg, however, Evelyn was soon offered a non-teaching role in the educational system. An initiative was underway to get an organized adult education program off the ground that would offer U.S. military personnel the opportunity to pursue a high school degree in lieu of their GED (General Equivalency Diploma) while still serving in the military. For the first time in her career, Evelyn put to use her master’s degree in educational administration and she returned to work once again:
When I got my master’s degree at the university, I majored in supervision with a minor in English. I thought at that time I would probably work myself up in Johnson County to be a supervisor some day, and then we went overseas and the whole thing changed. A wonderful job opened up, and I got it just simply because I had that degree that I hadn’t used for all those years.

What happened was they started a whole new program called PREP, “Pre-Discharge Education Program.” It took the place of the GED. Somebody got the idea that GI’s needed a real high school diploma. There were a whole bunch of GI’s that did not have anything, and there were also GI’s that had GEDS, but wanted a real high school diploma.

Back in the academic element once again, Evelyn rolled up her sleeves and went to work assisting to design a course of study for the participants in the program. In addition to being academically sound, the program also had to be accredited by the North Central Accreditation Association:

I was asked to be uh, what would probably be a principal of several little adult high schools we were simply inventing. It was a wonderful thing because we had Dr. Stanavage, who was head of North Central Accrediting Association. He came over, got excited about this program, and we sat down with him. We decided how many hours of instruction it takes to get a year in senior English for example. We came up with that kind of formula, and so this PREP was accredited by the North Central Accrediting Association and we had little one room school houses, little two room school houses all over the place. I even had a school on the USS Little Rock that was going through the Suez Canal, I had a school in Northern Turkey, and I had several schools in Italy, so my husband and I were able to travel sometimes together to Italy.

Evelyn remembered this as an exciting time as both she and Ed were busy with their own schools and they were able to travel quite a bit together:

He had his schools and I had mine and so it was wonderful, absolutely wonderful. We got to do our own curriculum, and just what every educator dreams of and that is to make your own school system and it was just great. So I did that. They had changed the guidelines by that time, and I was able to work again.

True to fashion, Evelyn wanted the PREP experience to be special for the graduates. She insisted that they all wear caps and gowns, a suggestion that, at first, was resisted by everyone but the students. However, she prevailed and the students wore cap and gowns at the first PREP graduation (Figure 21).
Later, Evelyn said that the news of the caps and gowns spread all over Europe. Everyone else then began doing that in their programs. The GIs loved it, she said, because they could proudly send those photos home to their parents. A general even sent a “Thank You” note to her for making the program so special. Her administration of the program would prepare her for more administrative experiences in Johnson County once she returned.

**Coming Home to Johnson County**

When it came time for Stephanie to graduate from high school in Augsburg, John Butler and Evelyn’s mother traveled to Germany to celebrate with the family. As Stephanie returned to Tennessee with her grandmother, Ed and Evelyn moved to a tiny apartment in Karlsruhe, which would be the last place they lived in Europe. Here Evelyn spent one year as the deputy director of the PREP initiative for all of Europe. Stephanie had started college at Davidson College in the fall of 1976, and Evelyn was sensing that their time in Europe was coming to an end, which she reflected to her friend, John Butler, in a letter sent shortly before she returned home. Finally, she and Ed discussed the need for her to return home a year earlier than expected:

One night my husband said to me, “You have got to face the fact that your mother is dying and you have got to go home.” That was in 1976. My mother had called, I think, and talked to Cook. She said to him, “Son-in-law, it’s time for somebody to come
home.” My daddy had been dead several years, and my mother had cancer. She didn’t say that to me, but Cook told me.

So, I tendered my resignation, and at Christmastime we came home. Stephanie had entered Davidson College, so we all had Christmas in Shady. I stayed behind, and Cook went back to do whatever he could to get an early retirement but he had to stay. I was with my mother again in Shady Valley, after all of the exciting life overseas and so forth. I was with my mother and we had the winter of the deepest snows in years.

Returning home, Evelyn and her mother spent the long winter in the house on the farm in Shady Valley. It would be a time of revisiting her roots, having long talks with her mother, and transitioning back to a place where she and Ed would work to rebuild a life in the shadows of the mountains in Johnson County, their adventures abroad coming to a close. From this vantage point, she would begin yet another challenging and rewarding chapter in her life.
When Evelyn stayed behind with her mother in Shady Valley during the winter of 1976, she said it was one of the loneliest times in her life but also one of the richest. The bowl-shaped valley sees some of the area’s coldest temperatures in the winter, with the blowing snow making the mountain roads impassable for days on end. While the snow was falling that winter, Evelyn recalled that she and her mother spent some of the best time together they had ever had.

The Valley Speaks Its Stories

Snowbound with her mother, Evelyn heard family stories that she had never heard before. Still in shock, somewhat, about leaving Europe so quickly, the stories her mother told her comforted her and made the transition to life back in the states all the easier:

I mean to tell you, the snows just came and came. My mother and I were there, and did not see a living soul for days and days and days. It was something else. It was extremely sad, it was very lonely, but, in retrospect, it was one of the richest experiences in my whole life because my mother and I were there alone and we got to talk about things that we had never talked about. That was when she told me about her childhood and when she told me, I can remember sitting in front of the fireplace, about when her father left them. She and her older brother were the two oldest kids, and he presumably left to get a job, and he would get the whole family back. Well, he didn’t come back.

Learning those stories, some for the first time, became treasured times for Evelyn. During that long winter, she and her mother developed new traditions of their own, trying to while away the hours they spent inside the farmhouse:

And she told me that story and a million others like it. I mean it was just a revelation, because my mother was a very quiet person who kept things to herself, you know, and we were able to talk about her death, because that is often the sort of thing that you talk all around but don’t talk about. But we were able to talk about her death and what her life had been like and so in that way it was tremendously rich.

But the days dragged on. We finally got a sort of a little ceremony that we would do each and every day so there was something to look forward to each day. We would get up and dress as though we were going somewhere, as though somebody were going to come, put on our make up and everything, and then have breakfast and fix up the house. We would read or I would write. Then we would have lunch, and in the middle of the
afternoon we would have tea. We got through the winter that way. And John Butler and some of my friends would call every day to find out how we were doing.

Evelyn spent the winter on the family farm reliving family history. That spring, she was invited by John Butler to present the commencement address at the 1977 graduation ceremony for Johnson County High School. A new high school facility had been constructed during Evelyn’s absence from Johnson County, and she was excited to enter the building, speech in hand, to share some of what she had learned with that year’s graduates. It had been 20 years since she had left Johnson County and it was something of a homecoming for her:

It was very exciting, very exhilarating. As I look back on it and think about it, my speech was too long, but it was exciting to come back. I never left this behind, really. I remember that the afternoon I was supposed to go, my mother was going to come, and we had a terrible electrical storm and lightning played through the house and everything. The whole thing just upset my mother, and she wasn’t able to come, and I have always been sorry that she could not come and share that evening with me.

Ed returned home that fall and the two settled into the family home place again, just as they had after moving from Kentucky many years before. While Ed was officially retired, Evelyn accepted a job offer and began teaching English at Johnson County High School once again during the 1977-78 school year:

So Cook finally was able to finish up overseas and come home, so we lived in the home with my mother for another full year. I started teaching in the fall of 1977 when he came home. My mother died in December of 1978, I don’t remember the date, but anyway while I was teaching my mother died, and it is interesting because one of my very favorite pieces of literature, and I know you and I have talked about this before, is “Our Town.” Of course we had our little cemetery where my mother and daddy are buried and my grandparents and my great grandparents are buried on the hill above the house.

So when we took my mother up to the graveyard, I opened my purse to get out a Kleenex and there was my copy of “Our Town,” because I was teaching it at that particular moment in time. I thought how ironic that here I am on the hillside burying my mother and that “Our Town” was so much a part of that.

I had told Ed that there was no way I was going to live in Shady Valley because I wanted to be involved in the high school. So, anyway I had no intention of not living there as long as my mother was living as I was going to be with her. But I knew when my mother was gone I would not be there anymore, so of course that is what happened.
Evelyn’s return home signaled her return to teaching as well. Her time with her mother would be extremely poignant and memorable for her as she and Ed made the decision to sell the farm and move to Mountain City. They crossed the mountain into Mountain City like she had those many years earlier when she first started attending Johnson County High School. This time, however, she would not return to the white house on the Shady Valley farm, but those memories from the winter of her return, however, would imbed themselves deeply in her and affect her for years to come.

On Returning to Johnson County High School

Evelyn’s return to Johnson County High School was significant on several levels. Her teaching was built on the cumulative experiences of 20 years in Europe, experiences that she hoped would enrich her students and make their learning real for them, just as Myrtle Buchanan and Della Hawkins had for her 36 years earlier:

There wasn’t a question that I would teach again. One of the reasons that I wanted to go overseas to begin with was to enrich my background until I would be a better teacher and could tell the kids all of these things like Della Hawkins had told me. In order to fulfill that, I had to come back and go into the classroom. I also needed to get back home again and reacquaint myself with people that I had known before.

The other reason why Evelyn returned to teaching was a more pragmatic, practical reason:

Stupid enough, it never occurred to me about the financial situation. I wrote a paper once which I gave to one group overseas titled “What is a Teacher?” I ended it up by saying a great teacher is one who never asks when the paycheck is coming. But money is one of those things you need to survive, but that’s not the main reason you teach. Now looking back on it, I don’t know what I would have done had I not taught because now I have a retirement and all that sort of thing which has given me a good lifestyle. It didn’t dawn on me then. I just wanted to teach, I just wanted to get back in the classroom, and when I went back into the classroom it was crazy but wonderful.

Evelyn spent what she considers to be several wonderful years in the classroom at Johnson County High School, leading seniors through the literary landscape of the England that she loved so much. During this time, she also organized the first trip to England taken by Johnson County High School students. Since that time, many trips abroad have broadened the
Making the Move to Administration

When Lowell Stalcup became superintendent of Johnson County Schools, he approached Evelyn about putting her administrative degree to use once again. At first, she hesitated, as she did not want to leave her classroom. However, the massive amount of grading which she was doing was taking its toll on her and on her time with her husband, making the move to administration an attractive one:

Somewhere along the line I was grading papers. I always felt that if you were going to teach writing, you had to give them themes, and if you gave them themes they had to be graded. So I was grading, grading, grading all the time and my husband got to saying that all he ever saw was the top of my head. Lowell Stalcup was the superintendent and he asked if I would take the job as assistant principal. I guess in order to get away from grading papers I said, “Yes.”

While moving into the assistant principal’s position gave Evelyn a chance to leave behind much of the paperwork she had as an English teacher, she feels that she lost that “spark” that happens in the classroom when you are interacting with students on a daily basis. She enjoyed working with her friend John Butler, who was the principal, and she felt a tremendous amount of responsibility to succeed in the position, as she was the first female administrator ever at Johnson County High School:

I guess the thing that made me stay in the position was the fact that I had never liked to fail at anything, and I felt by getting out would be a sign of failure. Plus, I thought I was plowing ground for women because no woman had been assistant principal or principal.

And so I thought, and this sounds pretentious and I don’t mean it that way, but I really did think that if I got out, it would be a blow to women because here is a woman, the first woman, and she says, “I can’t take it. I can’t do it. I’m going to get out.” I was determined that I was not going to get out, and so I think I did a fair job. I think I did about as good a job as most of the assistant principals at that time. It’s a tough position, and anything that you do, you’ve got Monday morning quarterbacks that can tell how it should have been done and so forth. I did at the time what I think should have been done. You know I have no regrets as to the job that I did.
While Evelyn’s time as assistant principal at the high school was a time for further growth, she relished the experiences she came to have in her last administrative position in the school system, that of secondary supervisor. Moving to the Central Office became one of the highlights of her career, a job she had prepared for much of her life. She felt as if she was teaching again, working with new teachers as they entered the field, while also collaborating with experienced teachers on curriculum issues and improvements to the secondary program:

But being assistant principal was not that tough. All you ever saw was basically the problems and that sort of thing, so I don’t think that I would do that again were I given the chance. When I came into Central Office as a supervisor, that was a whole different story. I loved that. I loved working with teachers. I loved watching teachers teach, and I loved being able to tell them the good things they were doing and being able to say, “Have you considered trying this or trying that?” I loved seeing them change.

You wonder if teaching isn’t something like being an artist or being a musician, you wonder if there is something inside a person that can make them become an outstanding teacher. I don’t know. I don’t think it can be taught. There are some techniques that can be taught, but I think you’ve either got it or you don’t.

Evelyn also recalled that it was invigorating to be working with a team of other supervisors and Central Office personnel who shared a passion for curriculum and for moving forward with improvements which offered more and more to the students in Johnson County:

Minnie [Miller] was back in by the time I got there. Margaret [Wallace] was elementary supervisor, and I was the first secondary supervisor they had ever had. That was under John Payne. That was a very, very worthwhile experience. I enjoyed that.

Looking back, I think Central Office was a good place to end. John Payne was very much about curriculum and that sort of thing. He was interested in building better schools and, of course, Minnie was there with that same push and with that same urgency that she still has. I think I was able to make some contributions from my time in Europe, like helping to put together the five year plan. Also, we did all these little things at Gatlinburg where we went down there and sat down with the board of education and planned where we wanted to go. I was copying that straight from my husband because that was the way he did his school system.

I loved the people in Central Office. I loved working with Minnie and Margaret and John Payne and I adore Audrey [Reece]. You know it’s just a good family, a good place to be, and I enjoyed it very much. And I came home and Gerald Buckles came in as superintendent and so he asked if I would come out of retirement. I went back in for a whole year. Anyway so then I retired for good.
While Evelyn believed she could keep working, she said her friends were growing tired of giving her retirement parties. She believed her time with Johnson County Schools had been well-spent, but she was looking forward to her time with Ed.

![Evelyn and Ed, at their home in Mountain City after her retirement.](image)

*Figure 22.* Evelyn and Ed, at their home in Mountain City after her retirement.

At another crossroads in her life, she knew that her days as a teacher and administrator had drawn to a close. By the same token, she knew that new challenges and opportunities could be found if she pushed off and sought them out. And push off she did, to find yet another new adventure, another new destiny.

**Hearing the Ringing of the Bell**

While at Central Office, Evelyn and Minnie Miller, the supervisor of instruction, made an agreement with each other that they would “ring each other’s bells” when it was time for retirement. Evelyn remembered just “feeling” as if it was time and she heard her own bell being rung:

> I thought that I would just dry up and blow away. I just dreaded retirement like no body’s business, but Minnie and I used to laugh about it and I was getting into my 60s then. I would say, “I hope I know when to get out of here.” Minnie would say, “I promise you I will ring your bell if you don’t know when to go. I will ring your bell and you do the same for me.” That is a good thing to bear in mind.

But one of the things that rang my bell was that I had eye surgery, and so I was finding it harder to read all the stuff that I had to read and so forth. That was one of the things that helped me decide that I should get out.
Besides her eyesight and the feeling that it was time to retire, Ed was again beckoning her to make a change:

I took my retirement, and, of course, Cook was not working. He kept saying, “If we are going to have any time together, we should have it.” But I thought, “I can’t stand the thought of getting up every day.” I mean what are you going to do with your day? I thought, “I’ve gone to school all my life. What am I going to do?” But I soon found that there are other worlds to conquer.

_Selling Bricks to Celebrate Tennessee’s Bicentennial_

In 1994, Evelyn joined forces again with her high school drama partner, Dorothy Howard. Together, the two were named to co-chair Johnson County’s 1996 Tennessee Bicentennial Committee. Charged with planning Johnson County’s yearlong celebration, the two formed a committee representative of each area of the county and set about raising funds to pull off all the events planned by the committee:

I guess you could say that Dottie Howard and I made history as far as Tennessee’s 1996 Bicentennial was concerned. We served as Johnson County’s co-chairs for organizing our county’s part in the celebration. Much was written, and we got a great deal of enjoyment out of it, about the two little old ladies from Johnson County who worked so hard and sold so many bricks for the Bicentennial Mall in Nashville.

Each county was assigned the task of selling engraved bricks that would be used to pave the walkways at the planned Bicentennial Mall in Nashville. As with their plays from high school, the pair decided that if they were going to do the brick sales, they would do it right:

We went to the first meeting, I don’t know, way early on and we both were like, “Selling bricks?” I was just not for it, but as we learned more and heard more we both got more and more excited. We sold bricks all over the Johnson County.

Of course, there were other fundraisers for the Bicentennial, but the bricks are what everyone remembers because we sold more than any county in the state except for Davidson County. I think we ended up with over 400 bricks in the walkway. The entire committee in our county really generated a lot of enthusiasm. We sold tiles, watches, shirts, coats, just about everything you can think of. The entire county was involved because we really emphasized the celebration in every event in every community.

In addition to the brick sales, the Johnson County Bicentennial Committee made a name for itself when it hosted the traveling museum in Johnson County. School buses shuttled students from every school in the county for two days, bringing them to the parking lot of the National Textiles...
building for a tour of the museum (Figure 23). It was later learned that Johnson County was the only school system in the state that ensured that every student in every school had an opportunity to go through the museum.

*Figure 23.* 1996 Bicentennial Traveling Museum. Dottie, Johnson County historian Tom Gentry, and Evelyn pose outside the traveling museum which visited Johnson County as part of the Bicentennial.

The other big event put together by Evelyn and Dottie was a Bicentennial play for Johnson County. This stirred familiar memories in the two and the idea of getting a theatre facility back in the county was born:

More than the celebration, though, it was a time for Dottie and me to get together again. It was during this time that the idea for the theater really began stirring in me again, too. The Town of Mountain City gave us $1,000 seed money for the celebration and the County Commission did the same. By the time all was said and done, we were able to give $10,000 back to the city. This became the original seed money for what is now the Heritage Hall restoration process.

The momentum generated by the Bicentennial would carry Evelyn into one of the most challenging projects of her life, spanning several years and resulting in one of the largest private fund raising efforts in the history of Johnson County. In her retirement, she found a destiny, one
that would have a cultural impact on Johnson County for years to come. It would also be one in which she returned, yet again, to the very place, the very building, where a love for drama and the stage became a part of her life 60 years earlier. She would return, yet again, to the auditorium of the old Johnson County High School.

The Nightmare Becomes a Dream Which Becomes a Reality

When the present Johnson County High School opened in 1966, the former facility was converted into much needed office space for Johnson County’s government. The old auditorium quickly became crowded with surplus school furniture, assorted records, and other cast off equipment. When Evelyn first returned to Johnson County in 1976, she was pleased to see the new high school facility but was saddened by its lack of a proper performance space other than the small theatre that it housed:

You know, I remember back in 1977 saying what a wonderful new high school I had come back to teach in. My only sadness was there was no auditorium for performances. I went down to look at the old auditorium in the old high school, which is, of course, now the county office building. What I found just made my heart sink. It was filled to the brim with stuff. It had become just a supply room and depository for surplus school property.

So, I have thought about that original dream I had about restoring that auditorium. I’ve thought it must have been a nightmare rather than a dream.

After the Bicentennial, there was $10,000 seed money for a theatre project. The dream of restoring the old auditorium to its glory complete with 21st century refinements resurfaced once again, this time as part of a larger community effort under the umbrella of the Johnson County Family Wellness Board:

We got involved with the Family Wellness Board. This was, and still is, an entrepreneurial board that helps projects get started. They are really the motivating force behind the community center which we have seen completed and the auditorium which is just now getting ready to go underway.

So, it was not until 1998 that the Wellness Board said, “Go for it! Let’s do it.” We had that $10,000 seed money and a dream.
Many legal issues had to be worked through and the building itself had to prove sound enough for fire marshals and architects to deem it worthy of renovation. The biggest challenge, then, would be to raise the money to move forward with the work and bring the dream into reality, providing a quality performance space for Johnson County:

From 1998 until now, we have had an advisory committee of seven who have worked through the nitty gritty, getting approval from the Board of Education, working out an agreement with the city, communicating between lawyers and engineers and architects. At some points it seemed like it would never all come together. Then, one day, Richard Rose came over from the Barter Theatre to give us his opinion. He has renovated about 48 or 49 theatres in his career. He went around, bounced on the floors, knocked on the walls, tested the sound. He walked back out on the stage and said, “Go for it. It’s doable. I’ve seen worse.” And that really sealed it for me that we could do this if we could find the money.

Well, the decision was made not long after for the auditorium committee to split off from the Wellness Board which was working full tilt on getting the community center project off the ground. Some sources with the state told us to do that and it makes sense, really. We had a better chance of getting the project funded in phases that we did all at one time. So the community center came first and that opened, of course, in 2000 right behind the auditorium and near the city pool. Of course, the library had been constructed years earlier and it was now time for the auditorium. That’s when the idea of naming the whole area Heritage Square emerged. It is a great concept. It was to be a central location that offers something for the whole family.

While plans for the project were on the board and all the major parties had reached agreements, the issue of funds still held the group back from starting:

We had hoped to follow right behind the community center group and have the auditorium renovated and up and going by now, but Tennessee’s budget crisis delayed us for three years.

In the meantime, we have had fundraiser after fundraiser. One of our subcommittees has sold seats in the auditorium for $200 each. From four hundred, we only have thirty of those left. So between the galas, a Levi Strauss grant, other fundraisers, the seat sale, and our matching grant from the state of $150,000, we’re almost there. We’re close enough to begin renovation anyway. I think we’re right over $300,000, which is a long way from that seed money back in 1996.

It really is fast becoming a reality, though, this theatre, and I’m finding us more and more focused on what happens next now that it is actually happening. Who will run it, who’ll direct the events, you know, all that stuff now has to be figured out but it is marvelous. A dream come true. We are going to have, in a year or two, a state-of-the-art
theatre with light, sound, air conditioning, and plush seats to sit in. We have a new piano in storage, paint has been donated. It has been a real effort of many, many people.

Heritage Hall may turn out to be yet another of Evelyn’s legacies, another mark she leaves on Johnson County. Again, she demonstrated determination and an unrelenting belief that the dream of a theatre in Johnson County could be realized. Plans will soon be lifted off the table and brought to life in the halls of the old Johnson County High School. Bouquets of flowers will once again adorn the edges of the stage as theatre goers sink into comfortable plush seats to be transported for two hours to another time, another place. Evelyn said that moment is when she will realize the dream and rest for a bit before pursuing yet another project.

Feeding the Spirit of the Soul, Enriching the Spirit of the Family

Spurred on by her involvement in community organizations such as the Wednesday Music Club, the United Way, the Johnson County Arts Council, and, of course, the Heritage Hall committee, Evelyn has continued to give of her time and her talent. At the First United Methodist Church, she has served as a Sunday School teacher and a lay leader, which has challenged both her mind and her spirit:

For the last few years, I have served as a lay leader at the First United Methodist Church here in Mountain City. This has been a marvelous experience, because before I knew nothing about Methodism. I just went to church. Now reading the Discipline and becoming very familiar with the Order of Worship has given me a chance to grow and to get on my feet before the public again in what I think is an important service role in the church. I also served as one of the teachers in our Sunday School class which has been an enriching experience as well. Recently, I finished a study with the class on the major world religions, including Judaism and Islam. It was fascinating.

Stephanie now lives in Japan, with her husband Masaru Okabe, a Japanese scientist, and their son Kye. Evelyn communicates with them often and has visited on occasion, including when Kye began kindergarten (Figure 24). Stephanie’s marriage to Masaru brought two new cultures into their family, that of Japan and that of science.

Ironically, Stephanie’s marriage and subsequent move to Japan has meant that Ed and Evelyn do not see their daughter and her family except for a six week trip home each summer.
The similarities to what her own parents must have felt when she and Ed moved off to Europe have not escaped Evelyn:

And Kye, our grandson, suffers from no lack of creativity or ability to keep us interested. Their visits every summer are so important to me. We try to cram twelve months of living into one.

I have so often thought of the loneliness that my own mother and father must have felt when their only child packed up and moved halfway around the world. They didn’t say it, but I sense that there was some great sadness there. I’ve said that what goes around comes around because I now have a daughter who is content to live halfway around the world. I’ve often told Stephanie of the lack of communication suffered between my parents and me when we were in Europe. There were letters and postcards, of course, but for the two years we were in England, there was no phone. For four years in Turkey, we had no phone. At least now, I can call Stephanie whenever the urge strikes but I have so very, very often thought of what it must have been like, back home in Shady Valley, for my parents when we moved away.

![Figure 24](image-url). First day of kindergarten in Osaka, Japan. Evelyn attends the first day of kindergarten with her grandson, Kye Okabe, and her daughter.

Making these connections between the past and the present and the future have proven important for Evelyn as she has moved into what she considers to be a reflective time of life. It is a time for pursuing the answers to questions asked long ago and to begin putting everything in perspective:

With the auditorium almost underway, I feel certain that something will turn up for me to do. It always does. I feel young, active, healthy, and still very, very interested in things. I’ve been thinking a great deal about philosophy and religion too and maybe that comes with aging, I don’t know. You know, that big question, “What is life about?” Just to spend some time thinking.
At age 75, Evelyn has continued on with her sense of adventure and exploration. She has continued to read books which challenge her to think; she has continued to listen to music which stirs her heart and soul; she has continued to lean forward in a darkened theatre enraptured by live performance; she has continued to look for new questions for which there are no easy answers; she has continued to live. Most of all, though, she has continued to learn.
CHAPTER 13
FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The motivations and distracters that influenced the lifelong learning process of Evelyn McQueen Cook were investigated through an educational biographical study. Interviews were conducted at her home using a conversational interview style. Further descriptive information was gathered from photographs, letters, postcards, certificates, and other mementoes. Transcripts of taped interviews were coded into categories derived by the researcher. Emergent themes were drawn from the coded materials and used to organize and present the data in a chronological format in chapters five through twelve.

The specific purpose of the study was to explore one individual’s journey as a lifelong learner. The dual task of telling one person’s story of that journey while relating it to theories of motivation and lifelong learning was undertaken. The chronological narrative of Evelyn McQueen Cook’s story formed the basis of the study.

A great deal of information was available in the literature related to motivation for lifelong learning and the modes through which people seek out learning opportunities and experiences throughout their lives. However, few studies have been conducted that look closely at one person’s life and the specific experiences which he or she has had that impact or impede learning opportunities. With an ever-growing population of older adults in our nation, more and more people are looking for ways to remain engaged and involved in learning well into their retirement years. The research viewed the value of presenting an in-depth narrative of one person’s life as one way in which possibilities for encouraging people to practice lifelong learning could be ascertained and suggested.

Findings of this study were organized around three basic themes: motivations in the learning process, distracters in the learning process, and modes of learning. Emergent sub-themes or findings for each of the basic themes were presented. Each was discussed in the context of related literature.
All findings were directly related to one or more basic conclusions as well as recommendations and implications for further research or future practice.

Motivations in the Learning Process

From the educational narrative of Evelyn McQueen Cook, key motivating factors emerged in relation to her pursuit of and engagement in activities that enabled her to learn. Intrinsic and extrinsic factors were apparent as well as formal and informal educational settings.

Importance of Family

From an early age, the presence of family appeared to be a tremendous source of influence and motivation in Evelyn’s life. Her roots in the Shady Valley community of Johnson County, Tennessee, run deep and she recalled with great affection not only her parents, but many of her aunts, uncles, and cousins as well. Early experiences in her life such as church attendance and holiday traditions were recalled and framed within the context of extended family.

Several persons in her family played important roles in developing her interest in academics, specifically her parents and her relatives in Bristol. In addition to her parents, her cousins encouraged a creative imagination through play.

A passion for live entertainment was first inspired by her grandfather and her mother. Later, experiences with her husband and daughter would build on this fascination with the arts encouraged early on by her family.

A proud understanding for her heritage and her past emerged as Evelyn told her story. Several times, she mentioned that she had inside her a strong desire to live up to the expectations her family had for her. That intrinsic motivation pushed her forward several times in life.

Interestingly, her mother emerged as both the strongest motivating force for Evelyn to continue exploring and learning and the strongest distracter. By instilling in her daughter the belief that there was a much bigger world over the mountains which surrounded their home in Shady Valley, Myrtle McQueen played a key role in Evelyn’s ever-expanding reach out into the world for more experiences, even if they took her halfway around the world for 20 years. In the
end, however, it was Myrtle McQueen who told her daughter it was time to come home to Shady Valley.

This supports suggestions regarding intrinsic learning made by several researchers (Csikszentmihalyi, 1982; Dinmore, 1997; Dominicé, 1990; Houle, 1982). Family had been found to be a key motivating factor in learning by other researchers (Clarke, 1998; Coughlan, 1994; Morstain & Smart, 1974).

Formal Educational Opportunities

In terms of learning, Evelyn was able to take advantage of several formal educational opportunities in her life. As a student in the small Crandull Elementary School in Shady Valley, she had access to books and to experiences such as acting and being a part of a very small school. When the larger Shady Valley Elementary School opened, she was afforded access to a library, a stage area, and individual classrooms, all of which were luxuries for rural school students in the 1930s.

Once she finished eighth grade, she was again afforded the privilege of attending Johnson County High School in Mountain City, where she boarded for three of her four years of high school. Again, not many students had this opportunity. After high school, she attended college at Berea College, a school where students pay little or no tuition. The education she received there provided the foundation for her career in teaching. Later, her father funded a year for her at the University of Tennessee where she received a master’s degree in administration and English. Certainly, there was no lack of opportunities for Evelyn in regards to formal education, and this appears to have motivated her to enjoy learning and to continue her formal education when the opportunity arose.

Researchers (Adler, 1986; Houle, 1961; Marsick, 1998; Mezirow, 1990) have suggested that formal education is important in setting the stage for further learning experiences in one’s life. The process of learning cannot be completed within the walls of an institution, but it can certainly be started there and a solid foundation can be laid.
Influence of Teachers

Throughout her career as a teacher, Evelyn alluded to several influential teachers in her life, both from classrooms within schools and from the classroom that is the world. Teachers from Shady Valley introduced her to the world of school and of learning. These teachers included Lizzie Eastridge, Chase Garland, Ada Garland, Matilda Garland, and Noah Blevins. Other “teachers” in her early life included her mother, a former teacher herself, and her father, who instructed her in the areas of history, heritage, and character. Her cousin in Bristol, Fred Heaberlin, also appeared to be an early teacher, as he challenged her to learn vocabulary words at a young age.

Influential teachers from her high school career included Paul Everett, Frances Shoun, Ray Shoun, and Hazel Shull. Especially influential were Della Hawkins and Myrtle Buchanan, both of whom taught in the English department at Johnson County High School. Their passion for their subjects and for learning led Evelyn to become an English teacher herself.

Like her high school English teachers, Evelyn’s professors at Berea College encouraged her to stretch her mind both in and out of the classroom, on topics from censorship to racism.

The other teachers in her life included Nick Mavroki, who taught her much about the country of Greece, and her students, both in Johnson County and in Europe. She also recalls the motivation she received from her husband to take risks and to not shirk away from adventure and exploration. This is certainly born out in the 20 years the couple spent in Europe.

Again, researchers have suggested that the external motivation provided by teachers in a person’s life can often serve to trigger something intrinsically in a learner (Gross, 1977; Killion, 2000; Morstain & Smart, 1974). Understanding how this foundation is built and what can subsequently be built upon that foundation is key in understanding the importance of teachers, both formal and informal.

Opportunity to Travel

During elementary school and high school, Evelyn would study maps and read countless books, dreaming of traveling abroad to explore cold, musty castles in England or retrace the
steps of explorers through the homelands of Europe. When she and her husband became employees of the Department of Defense in their dependent schools program, they set off on a 20-year adventure that saw them live in France, England, Turkey, and Germany. During this time, they also traveled extensively throughout Europe, living a cosmopolitan lifestyle.

In each country they lived or visited, Evelyn was motivated to learn about the culture and the history. She would read books, visit museums, talk to local residents, and drive up and down the winding roads, exploring villages to gain a taste of the local flavor. Later, these travel experiences would serve her well in the classroom as she built upon them to expand the horizons of her own students.

Later, she would lead excursions back to Europe for students from Johnson County. She has continued her own travels, journeying several times to Japan to visit her daughter and family, and to Europe with friends. Perkins (1999) has suggested that traveling groups are one way for adults to remain engaged throughout their lives.

Self-directed Learning

Books played a prominent role in Evelyn’s childhood. Through reading, she found she was able to journey to any location and any time period in history. As she progressed through school, her teachers and family fed her insatiable appetite for books. This continued into high school and college.

Once in Europe, Evelyn found herself living in lands that she sometimes knew little about. She purchased books on topics ranging from architecture to art to literature. As she studied, she would travel to cathedrals, attend plays, browse museums, or sit packed on a tour bus as it bounced up and down the coast of Greece. She created her own learning plan.

While the source material came from the outside, the motivation and desire to learn became and has remained intrinsic in Evelyn’s life. Some researchers have suggested that self-directed learning is one of the most effective motivations someone may have, because he or she is the one deciding what is important or what is of value (Abdullah, 2001; Gross, 1977; Lowry, 1989).
Cultural Experiences

Drama, music, and literature were part of Evelyn’s life from an early age. The “elocution” programs that she participated in at Crandull Elementary, as well as Shady Valley Elementary gave Evelyn the confidence to perform in front of others as well as helping her realize the pleasure of watching such productions.

At Johnson County High School and at Berea College, she became more attuned to the art of performance and aware of the power which drama has to transport an audience to a different dimension. Upon returning to Johnson County to teach, she teamed with Dorothy Howard, not once but twice, to bring theatre to Johnson County. Aside from acting, drama has remained an important part of her life as a spectator, from the Barter Theatre in Abingdon, Virginia, to the concert halls of Europe. This motivation to be involved in drama has most recently manifested itself in her involvement with the Heritage Hall restoration project in Mountain City.

In addition to drama, Evelyn has spent her life as a student of literature, art, and music. This trio of interests has formed the core of who she was as a teacher and those things that have motivated her as a learner. Her visits to historical sites, opera houses, and museums have been coupled with her love of the written word to enrich her life and the lives of her students, all activities that have been noted as motivations in one’s learning experience (Coughlan, 1994; Houle, 1992; Marsick, 1998).

Career Choices

The career choices made by Evelyn throughout her life have often motivated her to seek out more learning opportunities. When she realized in high school that she wanted to become an English teacher, she sought out a college where she could receive a quality education. At Berea, she enrolled in every class offered by the department, hoping to be as well prepared to teach English as she could.

When she returned to Johnson County and no teaching positions were available, she accepted her father’s offer to fund a master’s degree at the University of Tennessee. She chose a
degree in educational administration that would provide an option in addition to teaching years later.

The decision by Evelyn and Ed to travel to Europe and work for 20 years proved to be a career choice that gave her some of the most enriching experiences she had in her life. Not only did she live in exotic locations, but she also continued her teaching career in France, Turkey, and Germany. It was also in Germany that she began her administrative career as well. When she returned to Johnson County, the experiences and opportunities she had in Europe served her well both in the classroom and as an assistant principal and central office supervisor, both of which were promotions.

While further education did enhance her career options, it also increased her ability to earn more money and work in a profession that she enjoyed. These are primary considerations that attribute to most people’s decision to seek out learning experiences in relation to career choices (Csikszentmihalyi, 1982; Doherty, 1980; Hayes, 1998; Houle, 1961)

Involvement in Community

While Evelyn’s involvement in school related affairs kept her connected to the community she was living in throughout much of her life, it has been her interest in civic affairs that has predominated her retirement years. She has remained actively involved in church, serving as a lay leader and Sunday School teacher. This involvement has created in her a reflective spirit and quest for gaining some understanding of life’s questions. In addition to church, various organizations centered around the arts count her as a member and leader.

She has twice been tapped to help lead major county events. She and Dorothy Howard successfully co-chaired the Johnson County committee that organized activities related to Tennessee’s 1996 Bicentennial. As a result, she became involved in efforts to renovate the auditorium of the old high school building, now known as Heritage Hall. Several years and many fundraisers later, that project is ready to start at any time.

Opportunities for involvement in community have been a substantial source of motivation for adults in the last two decades. These experiences offer multiple opportunities for
enriching learning experiences and a chance to contribute to the community one lives in (Coughlan, 1994; Shiotani, 2001).

Distracters in the Learning Process

From the educational narrative of Evelyn McQueen Cook, several distracters emerged as challenges or barriers to learning throughout her life. As with the motivations, these factors were intrinsic as well as extrinsic in both formal and informal educational settings. Interestingly, the distracters were discussed in relation to how she coped with or overcame each of them.

Financial Concerns

Often in Evelyn’s life, financial concerns at first appeared to be a limiting factor in terms of seeking out learning opportunities. Most poignantly, she realized she would never travel to England and see in person the places that so enthralled her as she studied that country’s literature and history. Two educator’s salaries would never provide the necessary funds needed to make such a trip.

By making the decision to move to Europe, Ed and Evelyn Cook eliminated this barrier. They merely traveled in and around the various countries they lived in for over 20 years. Merriam and Caffarella (1991) cited lack of money as one of the most prevalent barriers to adults seeking to continue learning opportunities. Other researchers also found cost to be a major factor in deterring adults from learning (Houle, 1980; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965; Lobertini, 2000).

However, a related theme that emerged in this study is the manner in which Evelyn dealt with the distracters, including financial concerns, in her life. This will be noted later as an area where further study is merited.

Lack of Confidence, Ability, or Interest

Throughout her life, there were several times when Evelyn lacked the confidence or ability to participate in an activity. Early on, mathematics became a self-described “hang-up” for her and she has struggled throughout her life to master the concepts involved in mathematics. She steered clear of math courses when she could, opting for the more left-brain oriented classes of history and literature. Likewise, athletics became an area where she did not feel successful as
well. From her attempts at games in the schoolyards of Shady Valley to her last-ditch effort to learn golf on a course in Germany, athletic ability has eluded her. She surmises that her lack of ability in each area led to a more serious lack of confidence and interest.

Important lessons have been learned, however, by her own perceived lack of ability in other areas. She lost a role in a play at Berea College because she “let down” and did not give everything she had to the try-out because she did not think she would get the role. In other instances, whether it was teaching junior high school, leading the Officers’ Wives’ Club, or selling 400 bricks for Tennessee’s bicentennial, she has not let her perceived lack of ability or lack of confidence keep her from working toward a goal. In this manner, it can be seen how adults can turn earlier distracters or challenges into learning opportunities. This reflection over time has been found to be an important part of overcoming barriers to learning (Brookfield, 1990; Galbraith, 1991; Gordon, 1989; Martin, 1991).

**Long-held Beliefs or Feelings**

When Evelyn entered Berea College, she was coming out of a rural, conservative upbringing. She was well grounded in the differences between right and wrong, comfortable in her beliefs and feelings about key issues. However, she was challenged to reconsider her beliefs concerning the equality of the races. For a time, her beliefs that she had grown up clinging to kept her from seeing the larger picture and from learning to look at an issue objectively until all the facts are presented. Similarly, she was challenged to read and discuss material that she, at first, did not find appropriate to be read. In both instances, she had to work through why she believed what she did.

Later, she would endure similar circumstances as a teacher, when she was challenged for material she was teaching. From her time at Berea, she learned to be open-minded to people and to issues. Her time in Europe further broadened her mind and helped her to develop a global perspective on issues. Had she not been willing to reconsider her long-held beliefs, many of the experiences she had in life would not have been possible. Again, these distracters that challenged her personal beliefs and feelings, while quite difficult at the time, turned into valuable
learning experiences which have allowed her to develop a much more global mindset and look at circumstances from several vantage points.

A similar event occurred when she was released from her job as a teacher in Germany because of political conditions at the time. Her beliefs in what she was doing and in how wrong the outcome of the situation had been could have little effect on changing the ultimate outcome. When this happens, researchers suggest that adults either adapt or they withdraw from any type of engagement with the community that allows them to continue learning (Gordon, 1989; Gross, 1982).

Loneliness and a Sense of Isolation

At several points during her life, feelings of loneliness or a sense of isolation overtook Evelyn and became discouraging factors in her life. During her first weeks at Berea College, she experienced homesickness and loneliness as she adjusted to life away from her home in Shady Valley or even the safe confines of Grandma Wilson’s house in Mountain City where she lived during high school.

These feelings would once again become part of her life during their first Christmas in France soon after Stephanie was born. The lonely Christmas spent in the Quonset hut on the base was one of the loneliest and most desolate times of her life, she recalled. Later, she would spend a long, lonely winter in Shady Valley with her mother after returning from Germany at the end of her time in Europe.

In each case, the feelings challenged her and became barriers that she had to overcome to pursue happiness. Her self-described “perseverance” helped her work through each period of loneliness with varying degrees of success. This demonstrated that new experiences can sometimes put people in lonely situations where discouragement can happen easily.

Gender and Being an Only Child

As a female and as an only child, Evelyn lived a life that was not quite the same as other girls her age or other peers her age that happened to have siblings. These issues were not predominant factors in the learning opportunities that Evelyn experienced in her life. Barker
(1998) has noted that more needs to be done to remove barriers to lifelong learning for women and enable them to overcome attitudes that sometimes predominantly favor men. This did not emerge as a major theme in this study, but Evelyn did voice concerns about feeling pressure as a woman to succeed in administration, an area in Johnson County often filled by males up to that point. She recalled wanting to return to the classroom, but believed as if she would hinder the opportunities of women to move into administrative positions in the future in Johnson County, especially at the secondary level. At no other points in the narrative, however, did this issue emerge as prominent.

**Age**

Age never played a role in Evelyn’s formal educational experiences. She progressed through high school, college, and graduate school as a traditionally-aged student. Only when she and Ed were in Europe did age affect her learning experiences. In the first instance, it was not her own age, but that of her mother that became an issue. In 1976, Evelyn’s mother requested that someone come home to remain with her as she was sick. After 20 years abroad, Evelyn’s European experiences came to a close as she returned to Shady Valley to be with her mother.

Later, her own age influenced her decision that she could no longer work as a supervisor in the Johnson County school system. Her eyesight was deteriorating, which made it difficult to read the massive amounts of material she had to for her job. This reason, along with others, contributed to her decision to retire. However, this has not affected her ability to remain engaged in the community and involved in leisure activities that inspire continued growth in her. Eyesight, loss of hearing, and other physical conditions exacerbated by age have been found to negatively affect a person’s ability to continue in a job or participate in particular growth experiences (Wlodkowski, 1985).

**Modes of Learning**

The educational biography of Evelyn McQueen Cook revealed that opportunities for learning manifested themselves in varying ways over the course of her life. Formal educational opportunities formed the core of her educational experiences. Elementary schools in Shady
Valley and the high school in Mountain City prepared her to attend Berea College, where she completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in four years time. Two years later, she completed a Master of Arts degree at the University of Tennessee in educational administration and English.

It was through experiential learning, however, that the most valuable experiences took place. This idea of learning through the transformation that occurs from one life stage to another suggests that it is the learning that occurs in everyday life that has the most effect on our lives (Adams, 1982; Dinmore, 1997; Dominicé, 1990; Kolb, 1984; Mezirow, 1991). In Evelyn’s life, there have been several instances where this has been true.

For example, her trips to Bristol when she was young were quite influential in that she was able to be in the “city,” visiting cousins and attending movies at the theater. Later, the move to Mountain City to live while attending high school allowed her to again experience living in “town” and being close to the corner drug store, the theaters, and, of course, her friends. These years proved formative for her.

Marriage and married life was another transition that affected her greatly. Erickson (1950) suggested that as people move through life stages, what they learn and how they learn changes. Aslanian and Brickell (1982) called these “marker events” that can trigger important opportunities or challenges for adults in relation to their ability to learn. When she married at the age of 20, Evelyn’s perspective on her education changed. When she graduated, seeking a job was not just the natural result of finishing college, but was also a practical matter, as she needed a job to help provide support for their family.

Travel has played a pivotal role in Evelyn’s life. Not only did the opportunity to travel all over Europe and, later, Japan, influence Evelyn’s teaching in a positive way, but it also made a perpetual student whose classroom was the world. Museums, theatres, and opera houses became important classrooms for her as well, supplementing the books she studied to become familiar about the places that her family lived and visited. She excitedly shared these
experiences with those around her and with those on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean through numerous postcards and letters.

In retirement, Evelyn has continued to learn through informal educational opportunities. Involvement in the Wednesday Music Club has been a source of joy for her as she has studied music history in the company of other women who share a similar interest. Frequent trips to the Barter Theatre help her to continue her love of theatre and her own involvement with the Johnson County Arts Council and the Heritage Hall restoration project have provided opportunities to educate others, including herself, on the importance of having a vital arts presence in Johnson County.

Membership in the First United Methodist Church has provided a place to reflect upon her life in the context of her spiritual well being. Serving as a teacher and a lay leader has continued to keep her involved and has kept her thinking about important issues.

Cross (1981) noted that as adults move from one life stage to another, there is a tendency to become more and more reflective, as persons attempt to put their experiences into perspective within the context of their entire life. This has certainly been born out as one reads Evelyn’s educational biography, related in a time in life when researchers have suggested that quality reflection is most apparent (Cross, 1981; Loevinger, 1979).

Conclusions

After studying the formal and informal educational progress of Evelyn McQueen Cook through the narrative process, it appears that much of what she has experienced as both motivators and distracters has related to findings suggested by researchers. The uniqueness of this story, as is true with each person’s own biography, is found in how she used motivations in her life and how she met and overcame the distracters that she encountered. It is in these stories that the true value of this study emerged. In as much as we can look at another’s life and say, “Wow!” there must be a time when we look at our own lives, reflect for a period of time, and say, “Wow!” to ourselves. There is so much in each person’s story that is unique and special to that person, yet there is so much that can connect and inspire us.
The motivations and distracters in Evelyn’s life became secondary to the intense desire in her to enjoy whatever station in life she happened to be at during that moment. It could have been on the farm in Shady Valley, it could have been in the lonely dorm room at Berea College, or it could have been in the empty Quonset hut in France with her newborn child. It could have been in her first classroom in Kentucky, it could have been in the ruins of an outdoor theatre in Turkey, or it could have been standing on the stage of the dilapidated auditorium in Johnson County. Wherever it was, it appears that she made the best of the situation, good or bad, and strived to get the most out of every experience, weaving each experience into the pattern that became her life.

In the end, she mentioned that she had traveled many roads in life, both literally and figuratively. “And that is comforting in a way,” she said. All persons travel roads and, as a result, all persons have a story to tell, a lesson to relate, and an experience to share. This study has shown that generalities offered by researchers can be applied to one person’s life, resulting in wonderful, specific instances that provide those kernels of wisdom and experience which prove the ultimate truth of those generalities.

Recommendations and Implications for Further Research

A need for providing adults more opportunities for reflection exists. In the uncertain times during which we live today, there is also a need for all adults, young and old, to have times and experiences that allow them to put their own lives in some context and perspective that emphasizes this practice of reflection. Further motivations for adults to learn well into their retirement need to be explored. In addition, more needs to be done to help adult learners overcome distracters and barriers to their educational progress, both formal and informal. Communities need to realize that a better-engaged, more involved adult population can become one of their greatest attributes in contributing to growth and progress within the community.

Further modes of learning should be explored within communities, especially rural communities such as Johnson County, Tennessee. Libraries, museums, theatres, distance learning classes, and community groups are valuable resources in a community that can help
keep adults involved once their formal education is over. Again, formal education needs to be viewed as only the beginning of lifelong learning.

Most of all, further educational biographies need to be completed. By reading about someone else’s journey through life, readers can become inspired and motivated to put their own lives in perspective, perhaps seeking out further opportunities to learn. Within these educational biographies, certain specific characteristics such as gender, presence of siblings, and geographic location need to be addressed.

In relation to gender, more educational biographies of both male and female learners would allow further exploration into the presence of learning opportunities and motivators in relation to gender. The idea of gender as a distracter or barrier to learning should also be analyzed within educational biographies.

A related area for further study could be the issue of whether a learner comes from a small family or whether there are several siblings present. A possible correlation between learning opportunities and the number of children in a family should be studied. This can often affect the financial ability of the family to provide educational opportunities, both formally and informally.

Educational biographies from a wide geographic area need to be completed, including those from residents of both rural and urban areas. Biographies focused on residents of different areas of the nation should be considered for study as well. In addition, subjects from similar time periods need to be selected so that a cross-comparison study can be undertaken.

Especially in rural communities that are so interconnected, personal narratives can become an important tool in not only motivation and inspiration, but also in the efforts to preserve local history.

Each person has a story to tell, and those stories are unique. From that uniqueness, though, come the truest indications of who we are as people and as learners. When this uniqueness spans a lifetime, the lessons are numerous and invaluable. From those lessons, we
can all learn. In the process, we weave a bit of someone else into the pattern that is our life, and we are the richer for it.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

ETSU INFORMED CONSENT

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR:  David James Timbs

TITLE OF PROJECT:  Learning for a Lifetime: Motivations for Lifelong Learning in the Life of Evelyn McQueen Cook

This Informed Consent will explain about being a research subject in an experiment. It is important that you read this material carefully and to decide if you wish to be a volunteer.

PURPOSE

The purposes of this research study are as follows: This study will focus on the formal and informal experiences and opportunities of Evelyn McQueen Cook as a lifelong learner. Crucial to the study will be information revealed about the motivations and distractions which have presented themselves within the context of learning. The study will seek to provide some voice to her story and will explore contextual and chronological marker points in her educational biography.

DURATION

The expected duration of the participant’s participation will be approximately one-two months. It is expected that approximately ten interviews of 1 to 1 ½ hours each will be required.

PROCEDURES

Following Institutional Review Board Approval, interview sessions will be scheduled with Evelyn McQueen Cook at her home located at 251 North Church Street in Mountain City, Tennessee. These sessions will last approximately one and a half hours each and will be tape recorded, with Mrs. Cook’s permission. Some preliminary classifying and analyzing of data will be performed to guide subsequent interview sessions. The data will be coded and classified by category using QSR NUD.IST 4 software. In addition, supporting documentation in the form of letters, photographs, and other official documents will be collected for use in the study. An external reviewer will audit information from the text files, coded materials, and supporting documentation chosen for inclusion in the study’s record.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS

The possible risks and/or discomforts of your involvement include: You may experience anxiety as you recall and describe experiences from your past.
POSSIBLE BENEFITS and/or COMPENSATION

The possible benefits of your participation are: Having the opportunity to preserve your educational biography through recording and reporting of key experiences which have contributed to your lifelong learning. There will be no compensation for participation in this project.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS

If you have any questions, problems or research-related medical problems at any time, you may call David Timbs at 423-727-9019 or Dr. Russell Mays at 423-439-7629. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423-439-6134 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research subject.

CONFIDENTIALITY

As the subject’s name will knowingly appear in the study, confidentiality cannot be maintained. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in the office of the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis for at least 10 years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming me as a subject. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, the East Tennessee State University/V.A. Medical Center Institutional Review Board, the Food and Drug Administration, and the ETSU Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis have access to the study records. My records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

COMPENSATION FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT

East Tennessee State University (ETSU) will pay the cost of emergency first aid for any injury which may happen as a result of your being in this study. They will not pay for any other medical treatment. Claims against ETSU or any of its agents or employees may be submitted to the Tennessee Claims Commission. These claims will be settled to the extent allowable as provided under TCA Section 9-8-307. For more information about claims call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board of ETSU at 423-439-6134.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

The nature demands, risks, and benefits of the project have been explained to me as well as are known and available. I understand what my participation involves. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to ask questions and withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty. I have read, or have had read to me, and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A signed copy has been given to me.

Your study record will be maintained in strictest confidence according to current legal requirements and will not be revealed unless required by law or as noted above.
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VITA

DAVID JAMES TIMBS

Family: Anne Marie Timbs, wife
Nathan David Timbs, son
Sidney Rebekah Timbs, daughter
James and Wanda Timbs, parents

Education: Johnson County, Tennessee Public Schools
1975-1988

King College, Bristol, Tennessee
English, B.A., 1992
Bible and Religion, minor

Milligan College, Johnson City, Tennessee
Education, M.Ed., 1994

East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee

Professional Experience: The Tomahawk, Mountain City, Tennessee
Staff Reporter, 1992-1994

Johnson County Schools, Mountain City, Tennessee
English/Journalism teacher, Johnson County High School,
1993-2001
Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction, 2001-