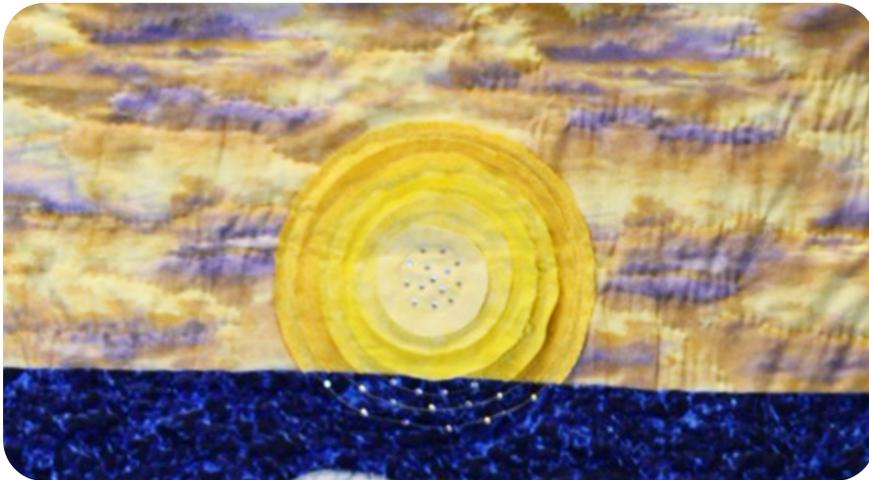


As my sisters, cousins, Dad, and I were frolicking around in knee-deep water chasing each other and having a ball, we didn't notice the fierceness of the tide moving away from the shore.

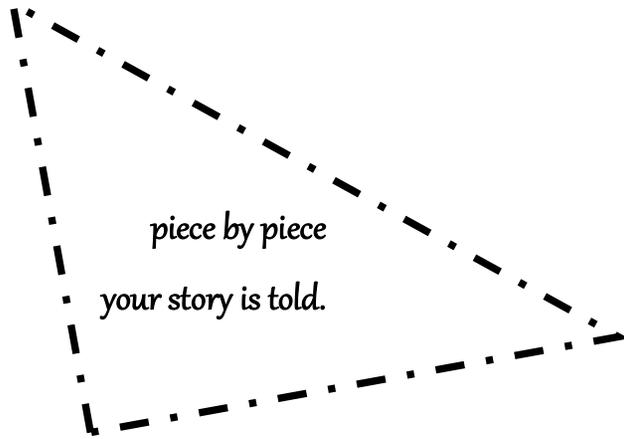
The next thing I knew, I was holding my dad's hand and we were being swept away into the ocean as the sand that we stood on disappeared from under our feet. In a matter of seconds, the knee-deep water turned into waist-deep, then shoulder-deep water. Looking back, my sisters, cousins, and the beach were drifting several feet, and then yards behind us.

I heard him call out "My God!" I remember flinging my arms and legs around trying to keep my head above the water,

coughing, inhaling then spitting out salty water as I bobbed around in the ocean. In my mind, I was calling God and crying, trying to look around for my dad; and then the soft warm sun was still shining on me. Time stopped for me as the ocean pulled me down into the darkness. Gurgling, choking, spitting, I fought with all I knew to go back up to the lights that danced on the ocean. I went up and down several times. I couldn't count, think, or breathe. Whenever I came up, I looked for the beach, which was farther and farther away, and I couldn't see my father! I remember slowly sinking into the darkness again and being still. This time, my arms and legs were just floating. I couldn't remember breathing or praying; just being still. Then slowly I started floating, slowly back up to those dancing lights on the ocean...



BELINDA MACK ALSTON became interested in quilting in 2005 with the desire to preserve her mother's clothes in a quilt. Her favorite quilting style is art quilting, which includes miniature and small quilts. Quilting offers her the freedom to move from making bed quilts to making clothing, purses, and postcard quilts, all as an adventure into her creativity.





TOPAZE

CATHY ALSTON-KEARNEY

I had a strained relationship with the front bedroom of Poppa's house on Cobb Hill. It had a history. Actually, my relationship with the room felt strange, tenuous, and a little spooky. It had been my mother's room.

For years after her death, it remained a carefully preserved shrine to her memory. An elegantly framed photo of her college formal sat atop the dresser angled toward the bed. The mirrored vanity decoupage with little cherubs held her Avon perfumes-pink Cotillion, blue Rapture, and the tall, slender, golden bottle topped with a big gold jewel, Topaze. Topaze was her favorite. Dusting powder, lipsticks, nail polish, and matching horn handled manicure tools completed the collection. The turned mahogany bed with its white chenille coverlet was flanked by flowery armchair and an antique gate-legged table holding lamp, ashtray, cigarette case, and one large conch shell. A pair of cameo silhouettes hung above the headboard. Three still life oil canvases peeked from behind the wardrobe that was still full of dresses, handbags, and shoes. Everything was there, just as she left it.

When I was eight or nine, Grandma Lillie moved me into the room. It was really strange at first. Exciting but also scary, like there might be other ghosts drawn into the space by

Mommie's palpable presence. I slept with the light on for at least a year. Grandma put a large brown grocery bag over the lampshade as a makeshift night light.

Most nights I fell asleep staring at her smiling visage, her long supple neck encased in pearls. Her shoulders were framed by a tea-length strapless gown; carnations at her wrist and a tall, dark tuxedoed brother beaming, his photogenic hands resting on her bare shoulders. The scene became a familiar comfort. I dreamed of them dancing and laughing and that her dress was the faintest baby blue.



Mommie's high school Yearbook-Nash County Training School Eagles Class of 1952-became my other window into her world. It seemed she was on every other page. Smiling, posing with the newspaper staff, glee club, superlatives and, of course, the senior class. Her signature look included tailored skirts paired with knit sweater or crisp white blouses and always pearls. I was immersed in all things Ethel Mae.

Remembering Mommie was my bedtime routine. Bath, a sniff of the Topaze bottle, prayers and climbing between the sheets to imagine, then dream of her. Bit by bit, week by week, the room and Mommie became mine.



CATHY ALSTON-KEARNEY grew up in rural North Carolina, where her grandmother was an avid quilter. She enjoys narrative and story quilts and quilting. She is a local pastor, school administrator, and non-profit director, whose life's calling and work is strengthening families.



*stitched together through
the windows of your soul.*



THE PROMISE OF THE ROSE TREE

JANE BALL-GROOM

Forward Note: Sitting at my mother's kitchen table in Mount Vernon, New York, buttering one of her delicious honey, walnut tea cakes, I was enraptured by stories of her youth in the South Carolina Sea Islands. Mentioning places such as Beaufort, Parris Island, and Port Royal, resonated within me, a girlhood romanticism of South Carolina's low country. She spoke about many things, one of which was the spark that ignited my passion for genealogy. One such story centered on something she told me one day; lingering in my mind for many years.



I believe those early days listening to Mother talk about the richness and the sadness of her childhood, ignited my passion for genealogy. Growing up with my father's people, the Balls, I now needed to know who exactly were Mother's people. My first published book, "Yet Another Day, Journey of my Soul" answered most of those questions that had been left blank for so many years. "The Promise of the Rose Tree" is written to honor the great, great and great grandparents whose shoulders I now stand on. The Rose Tree is simply a metaphor symbolizing their struggles, fears, prayers and hope for a better life. I write to honor them and to remember my mother.

Handing me a glass of the 'dreaded' cold milk, she whispered, "We were never slaves, you know. We were always free issues." Mother continued with stories about people I had never met, called them names such as 'old man' Shemetalla, grandmothers Celie and Mary. Then she'd burst into laughter about 'blue Mondays in Savannah.' To this day, I don't know what she meant about the 'blue Mondays'. Although now, I can summarize; remembering the glint in her eyes and smile on her face as she spoke about a time undoubtedly precious to her memory. I did question, the fact about we were never slaves, since we were Negroes and being only in the fifth grade, my little knowledge of history as told to me by my English teacher was that Abraham Lincoln 'freed the slaves'.

As I grew into womanhood, taking on the many challenges and opportunities afforded me, I moved from New York to North Carolina; working in professional positions, raising my children; and finding time to delve into family ancestry.

So many times, so many ways; seeking in vain to find just one name; spirits of my heritage; these three found, wonderfully and happily claimed! No more searching in vain, their time in history; whispers of silent shame.

Sun up-sun down, imaginary chains inflicting the deepest pain; days, months, years; so many ways to shutter and stumble in fear, sometimes bent but never broken. From Carolina's red mud to sun-drenched Florida shores, one born slave, one born free; Warren County, NC, or St. Augustine by the sea, good or bad, their stories told are at the heart of my soul.

For their roots are well grounded in generations past; stories told of Phoebe Dupont, Hinton & Rowanna Moss; up for the

toss; chained and unchained; seeking hope through quiet thoughts, whisperings in the night; always pushing forward, empowered by God's holy might and the promise of the rose tree, always in sight. The legend spoke of a rose tree grown in each and every yard, only to be seen when times were hard; melting of snow and the first spring day. Each one seeking the promise of the rose tree, sometimes in vain, but never in shame, for they knew the promise was in the petal of the flowers that grew within the spirit of the mind; keeping them always guessing, 'When will it be our time.

Phoebe ran her race; bolstered by God's holy grace; undeterred by segregated laws, loved one man; waited by the shore for his un-seemingly, long lost return. Keeping the promises always in sight; the rose tree grew even around her heaviest frights.

Deep down they knew; voices in the wind; promises spoken; hopefully, prayerfully releasing their shackled minds, strengthening body and spirit. With all of this, Hinton & Rowan, still not detained, some time ago had jumped the broom or so they say; it had been a glorious, but a secret day.

Living amongst cabin row; mastering toil, sleepless nights; survival ways, until one day, tears of joy! January 1861, Emancipation day! The promise not yet fulfilled; until that date, three hundred years late; August 1866, babies in tow; husband strong; marched up the steps to see the magistrate, obtain a certificate; legal now; so long ago; finally here – callings from far away, over there.

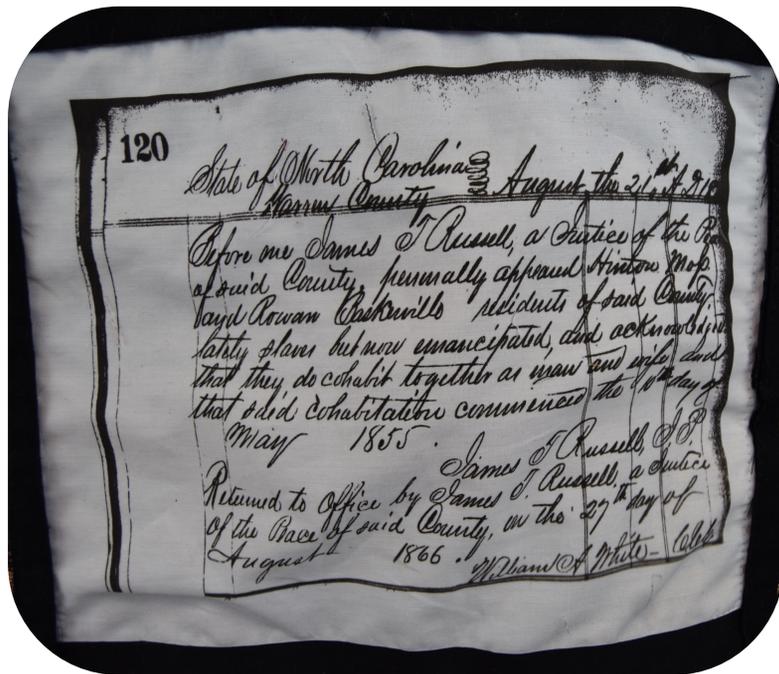
How many stood up; lines too long, only remembered now in songs from weary, rested souls. If just for a while; this moment for them; their time to shine back then; fulfilling

promise or prophecy, whose to know, what matters now; setting aside the blame; no longer having to live or hide in the shade of slavery's shame.

Mr. and Mrs., the words echoed through tunnels of dust. This thing now done, achieving the great, 'we must'; legal man and wife; legalized, moralized; children in tow. It seemed they grew, a few inches taller; as they left courthouse square; looking forward ready to bear, days ahead of continued, but different strife; they had run the race; grateful for God's holy grace.

Rising from the huts of history's shame, generations came, sowing their seeds; shoulders strong; beautiful, bright, businesses of their own. Men, women, children - fathers, mothers; sisters and brothers; aunts, uncles, cousins, they came brushing away the shame; all the while testifying to our ancestor's plight. Strong shoulders, they stood becoming their best. Each generation staking claim, reaching higher ground, degreed; building even greater legacies strong in mind, goodness in heart; realizing the power of their names. Forging high purpose, they knew which way to go; choosing journeys exceeding the past, opening doors; rising up, gaining strength insuring, this time it will last. Their litany stands in the shadows of their names as some became, space engineer, chemist, medical lab technician, bookkeeper accountant, corporate VPs, writer, artist; IT security; teachers, lawyer, entrepreneur, musician, broadcast engineer, and author.

So many more now on their way; always remembering the significance of one important day; the promise fulfilled, the rose tree grew, yet for another day; freedom they knew was here to stay.



JANE BALL-GROOM is a career business administrator, community advocate, genealogist, and author. She is the former Workforce Development Director of Kerr-Tar Regional Council of Governments, which serves the six county Kerr-Tar region. Currently, Ms. Ball-Groom is the founder and Executive Director of Pier View Community Innovations and the author and producer of four books.



GETTING THE MESSAGE

Arlene S. Bice

“It’s time for you to go. You must sell everything and leave!”

“What?” she says groggily. “What?” The Voice is loud enough to wake her out of a deep sleep, direct enough to make her pay attention, even being sleep laden. It’s 3 a.m.

“Who’s awake at 3 o’clock in the morning?” She looks around, not knowing if she is looking for a man or woman. The Voice escapes her description. It was loud and firm. Sort of like an echo, a sound coming out of a tunnel. Lady Jane and Mz Lizzie, her two rescue cats, affectionately called *her girls*, are always by her side. They sit up on the corner of the bed, look at her, look around the room, up toward the ceiling, and look back at her again. Sleep will not come back again this night.

The second floor bedroom faces a quiet side street. As she gets up and goes to the window, she sees no cars on the street. No noise, no sounds, the quiet sits, like the corner church when it’s empty.

Shaking the sleep from her head, she automatically knows that she will be moving, soon! Messages like this have come from the other side before. When she tells herself that maybe it is her imagination and ignores the message, she later regrets it. She cannot ignore something as life changing as selling and moving away. This is big, heavy

duty! It is time to pay attention. If the Great Spirit commands with such authority, it must be her path. Remarkably, in a down market, her apartment building sells quickly, including the business. She even found a couple to rent her apartment and buy her sporty car.

The most difficult part of this plan is to find out where the Great Spirit has planned for her to go. Where is she supposed to live? She calls on her channeling friend, Uzuri, who lives in San Francisco. It is through Uzuri, she will find her answer. As, Arlene names a state; through Uzuri, the Ancestors reply “yes” or “no”. As a confirmed snow bunny, loving the cold over the heat, she starts in the far north and slowly works her way down the east coast. After a series of “no, no, no,” she calls out North Carolina. “Yes” is the resounding answer. Continuing through Uzuri, the Ancestors describe the house as a white ranch with red brick. High grasses, where wild animals lurk, wave in the wind along the back of the property.



The time comes to explore. As she cruises along Highway 158, driving west from I-95, she spots a sign in Littleton, LAKE GASTON. It calls to her. She slowly, but with purpose, turns the corner to see this place so prominently announced. She falls in love on the way; with the forests, fields, coves, and finally, the lake. Uncharacteristically, the real estate office is open on this Sunday. Within a week, she goes under contract to live, not on, but near the lake.

Eight months later as she goes through her old notes, she learns that it matches Uzuri's description exactly!

It isn't long after moving in, that a Native American Brave spirit appears, with a request. "Take care of the land, respect it, do no harm. I welcome you." Hearing his words in her head, she feels them all over. That is how it goes when this happens.

This isn't a surprise. She knows when spirits are living with her. The awareness comes one day while she is writing at the computer. A strong aroma of meat roasting on an open fire permeates the air. Curious, it is January. All the windows are closed and locked. The house is surrounded by a forest blocking any view of another house. It isn't hard to figure out. When this happens again, she just smiles, knowing her Brave is nearby.

He plays with *her girls*. She watches them watch him (now knowing it is him) enter the reading room through one doorway and leave by another. The *girls* are like synchronized actors with their heads and eyes moving the same as he crosses the carpet. While she's in the reading room, book in hand, she looks up to see the *girls* on the floor, the impression of his hand on their belly fur. It shows as he plays with them.

Later, she walks into the living room to see a three-foot snake making tracks across the carpet. She scoots to the pantry for the yardstick, slips it under the center of him,

and carries him out the back door, and over the ledge of the deck, where she drops him, trying her best to do it gently. Before she lets him go, she says, "I will not harm you, but you must stay outside of my home. You are welcome out here, in your natural habitat." With that said, she never sees another snake in the house or on the property. She also avoids running over the many that she sees weaving their way across the roads, refusing to harm them.

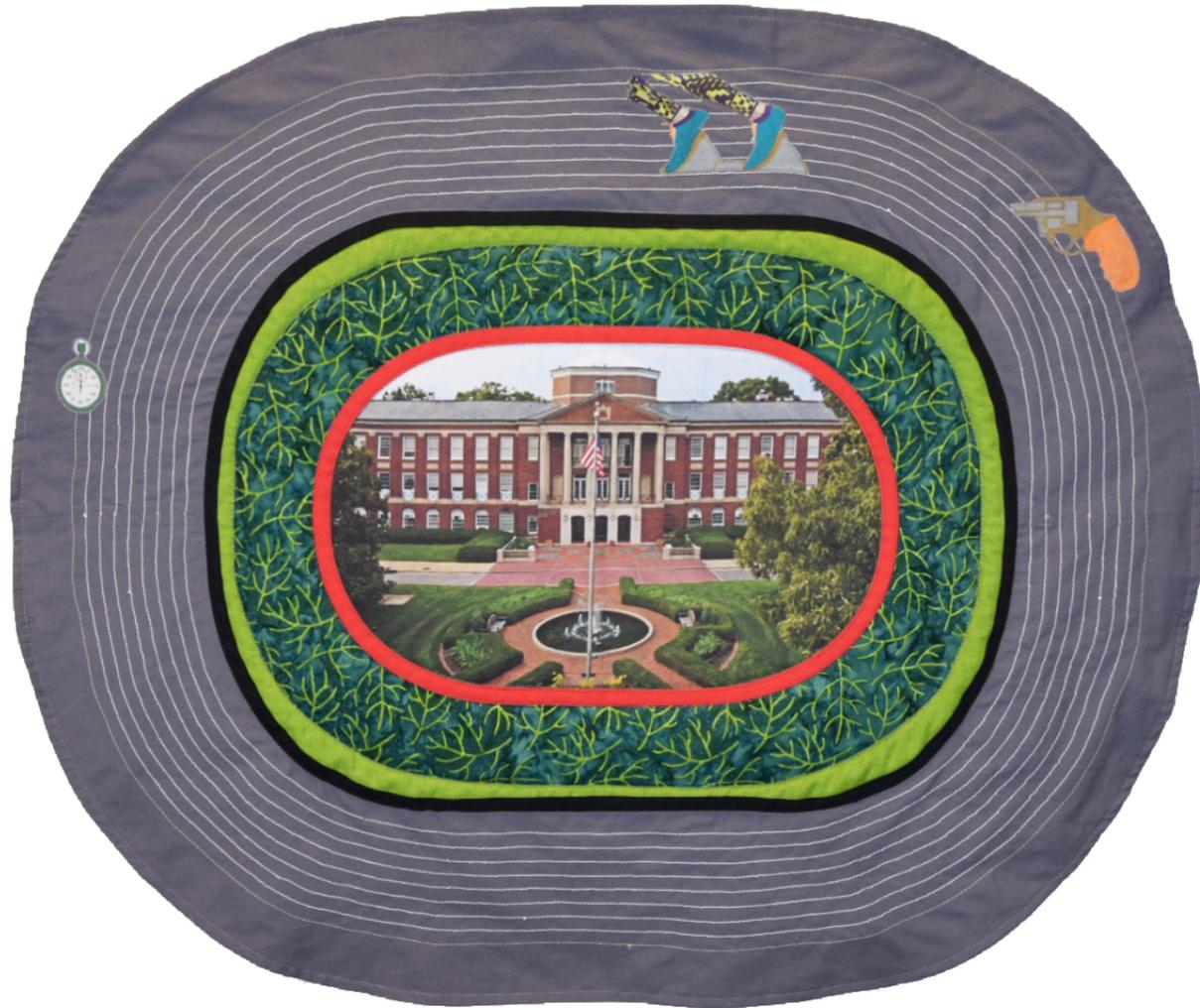
It takes a year or two to realize why she was sent to live in the seclusion of the North Carolina woods. Writing is a lonely profession. Solitude is necessary and can be difficult in a bookshop, in the middle of a town where she was active socially and in the community. Her intention is to open the door of writing to others, especially women. Her writing is about extending a helping hand. The road has not been a smooth one, but it has taken her to where she belongs for this time period.

Ten years after moving in, she lists the house for sale. The decision to leave the house has only been made because another message has arrived. It's time for her to go back into town. The day she considers her house is sold, she opens the back door to go out on the deck. There is a large snake squiggling in a figure eight at the base of the door.

He came to say farewell.



Arlene S. Bice is a teacher of poetry and memoir, author of twelve non-fiction books, including four on metaphysics. She is the recipient of the Florence Poets Society *Poet of Distinction Award*, published in several anthologies, and an award-winning artist. Her book review column, *The Reading Corner*, appeared for ten years in the *Register News*. This is her first quilt.



A WOMAN'S WISDOM OVER TIME

Virginia Karama Broach

How am I supposed to fall asleep tonight on the eve of my NC Senior Games Track and Field Competition? I tossed and I turned, but the excitement was overwhelming and my brain was fixed in a state of stimulation. I tried music therapy and I guess it worked because at 5:00 am, I responded to the buzz of my trusty alarm. I sprang from my bed like a pole vaulter and began a second inventory of my gear bag; turquoise track shoes, black stretch head band, navy blue & turquoise warm up suit; towel, wet wipes and band aids. Meredith College, here I come!

Upon arriving on campus, I was greeted by volunteer students serving as traffic coordinators. As far as my eyes could see, everyone appeared to be at least 50 years my junior. I politely asked a young man for directions to the track and field area and was told to drive to the end of the road and enter the adjacent parking lot bearing the sign, SENIOR'S BUS STOP. I thanked him and drove directly to the designated area. I was the only one at the stop and began to wonder if I was late or early. Just at that moment, I saw the bus rambling towards me.

I boarded the bus, which was a reassuring experience. The bus was driven by a senior citizen and all the passengers were 50 years of age or older. I sat next to a man who publicly stated he was 90 years old. Wow! All of a sudden, I felt great. When we arrived at the track area, I felt even more elated. The field was swarming with senior citizens warming up for their events. What a beautiful sight; senior citizens from all over the state;

short, tall, heavy and slight; Hispanic, Asian, Black and White; I loved it!

I began my warm up exercises consisting of leg extensions and jumping in place. This was also a good time to check out my competition, and so I did. The atmosphere was friendly and everyone appeared ready for his or her sport. I joined the competitors who were practicing for the Running Long Jump, which would be the first event. We each got several trials to gauge our speed and take off point without stepping over the white foul line. After everyone had practiced, the competition began. My name was called and I completed three jumps without fouling. My final score would be the best jump out of the three.

After completing the Running Long Jump, I was directed to the Standing Long Jump area for my second competition. There was a line of competitors waiting to perform their jump. I watched with great interest hoping to pick up a technique that might improve my jumping distance. I watched a man approach the jump point and began to swing his arms wildly like airplane propellers. While swinging his arms, he would bend his knees in sync with the up and down motion of his arms, being careful not to move his feet until takeoff, so as not to be fouled. His jump was awesome! I was determined that I would try to duplicate his moves when my turn came. Well, I stood at the line and performed my three jumps, using my newly acquired technique, and all three jumps were successful. However, I wouldn't know my final score until the end of the meet.

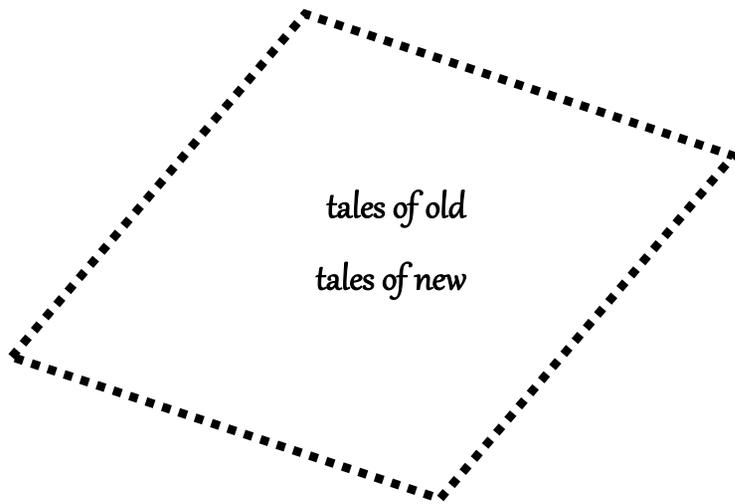


My last event was the 100 Meter Dash, which was on the opposite side of the field. By the time I walked over to the location, runners were lining up. I was directed to the line in the rear, which I assumed was for women in my age group. The coach announced, “on your mark – set” and then the sharp sound of the starter pistol banged into the air. I ran like a bat out of hell. The feeling was exhilarating. I felt like I was floating with my feet barely touching the ground. I loved the force of the air against my face and the cheers from the spectators seated on the bleachers. I kept running and the crowd kept cheering. When I arrived at the finish line, I was there all by myself. That was a good sign because no one ever passed me!

With a feeling of accomplishment, I exited the field and headed for the referees who had the final results of all the meets. A woman and her mother, both senior citizens, were anxiously awaiting their results. They both took first place in their respective events. My scores were still unavailable. The man from whom I borrowed the jumping technique was excited to learn that he had won first place with his dynamic jump. Anxiously waiting, my scores were still unavailable. Seniors came and went, some disappointed and some ecstatic. Finally, my scores were available. I won **FIRST PLACE IN ALL MY EVENTS. YEAH!**



As a child, **Virginia Karama Broach** remembers sleeping on pallets of folded quilts at her grandparents' home in Norlina, NC. The quilts were hand stitched by her grandmother and made of varied fabric types. Decades later, Virginia was introduced to the Heritage Quilters where she was given the opportunity to learn about the beauty of quilting. Working with the quilters she created her very own story quilt.





I PRAY THE LORD MY SOUL: “MARGARET’S COMING”

Margaret Juanita Woods Bullock

Over my more than 60 years of age, I have learned many things; most important is about my family. Through many stories handed down to me, I now know that over the years, we did not survive in this world without faith and prayer.

When I told my mother and father I was being transferred to a new job in a town called Warrenton, in Warren County, North Carolina, a place I could not find on the road map, they both laughed. I didn't think anything was funny and asked, "What is so funny?" It was then my mother and father shared with me the event of my coming into the world. My mother started to tell the story.

She and my father had been to visit my Uncle Henry and Aunt Merete in Newport News, Virginia. My father was looking for work. Uncle Henry was a Baptist minister at the Second Baptist Church on 32nd Street as well as a painter. Daddy said, "Uncle Henry thought I could help him on a paint job. Mama and I could not stay together in Uncle Henry's house." Daddy had brought Mama with him on this trip. She was pregnant with me and they didn't have a place to stay. They were hoping to stay with Uncle Henry and Aunt Merete. Well, knowing Aunt Merete, she told Uncle Henry that Mama could stay inside, but my daddy had to stay in the car, because she would not have that "Black Buck" in her house. You see my

daddy was Tootsie Roll chocolate and six feet, one inch tall. He was slim with bright brown eyes and not bad to look at from my point of view.

On the way back home to Durham, North Carolina, Daddy's old Ford car broke down on HWY 158 in a place called Norlina, NC. While Daddy was outside, trying to get the car started, he heard Mama scream, "My water broke!" Slamming the car hood down, Daddy looked in the car at Mama's condition; it was then he knew he had to get help! Knowing there was a town nearby, he told my mama, "I am going to see if I can use a phone to call the family. Lay down in the back seat while I go for help." They were only an hour from home. My mama told him to be quick about it! She wanted to be home near her mama when the baby came. You see, I was my mama's first and she was a little scared.



My daddy started running, but he thought, "I need to run through the woods." Running on the highway, someone might think he did something and would try to stop him before he got to the town. He said when he got to the town of Norlina, there was a service station on the other side of the railroad tunnel. As he ran through the tunnel, a train passed over his head. Arriving on the other side, he was glad to see the service station sign with the lit Red Winged Horse. Opening the doors, he walked in and approached a small, somewhat gray-headed white man behind the counter. My daddy asked the man if he had a

phone he could use. The man replied, "I don't let niggers use my phone." Hearing those words, my daddy turned to walk out the station. It was then the man said, "You can try using the phone at the bus station." The bus station was about a block away. So, my daddy walked fast, hoping he could get to the bus station before the man asked him what he wanted to use the phone for in the first place.

When my daddy got to the corner of the service station he looked down the street to see if he could see the Greyhound Bus dog sign. In about another block, he reached the bus station located in a white brick building. Walking fast, he opened the door, approached the food and drink counter, and asked a White, chubby man if he could use the phone. He pointed to the phone booth in the back corner of the room. Picking up the phone, Daddy heard the operator say, "Can I help you?" My daddy said, "I need to call Durham, NC." Hearing the operator saying twenty-five cents, he deposited two dimes and a nickel into the phone container. You see, back then, every home didn't have a phone. To get a message to someone, you called a person in the community with a phone; and they, in turn called the nearest neighbor or known relative.

Daddy dialed the person's number he knew could get a message to the family. "Hello, this Gene Berkley Woods, Elizabeth and Lonnie Woods' son. My car broke down in Norlina, NC, off Hwy 158 east. I need my brother, John Henry, to come get me and the car. I think Frances is about to have the baby, so don't take too long."

The person on the other end of the line asked my daddy if he was Frances Mae's husband and he said, "yes." Well, she started hollering, "I'll let everybody know what's going on." She couldn't wait to call Mr. Roy and Mrs. Flossie, my soon to be grandparents on my mother's side of the family. Under his

breath, Daddy said, "I bet you can't wait to tell the whole world if you could."

Coming out of the phone booth, the Greyhound bus driver said to my daddy, "I heard your phone conversation. If you can get some of the field workers to take you to your car and bring your wife back here, I can get her to Durham." There was a Greyhound Bus Station across the road from Duke Hospital. So Daddy asked, the colored field workers who had stopped at the bus station to get some sodas. They said yes and took him back to his car and my mama.

Before they left, Daddy called the person he had talked to earlier to see if she could call someone in my mother's community to let the family know that they would be trying to get my mama to Duke Hospital. Upon calling the person in the community, she told Daddy that her brother had already run to his mama's house and that John Henry and he were on their way. She also called the person in my mama's community to tell Mr. Roy to meet Frances at the Bus Station.

The field workers and my Daddy brought my mama back to the bus station. It wasn't a short ride. The bus driver still had to make all the stops on his route from Norlina to Durham, NC. Mama was scared but patient. She prayed to the Lord that he would let her have her baby in the hospital and not on this bus among a lot of strangers. She prayed that her mother would be at the hospital by her side. Mama said there was one older colored lady on the bus who told her not to worry that she would look after her on the ride to Durham. She had been visiting a sister in Richmond, VA, and was on her way back home.

Meanwhile, my grandparents were making their way to Duke Hospital. My mother's parents, Roy and Flossie Robinson, were coming from the country in the rural area of northern Durham. My father's mother lived in town near North