

*Faded Memories
- Unleashed*

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FOREWORD

WE ARE ALL our own identity and are responsible for the choices we make in life.

It's upsetting for me to hear others complain of having had such a hard life or that their parents were divorced or alcoholics and abusive, blaming those circumstances for why they have failed or who they have become.

I don't blame my parents for the choices I have made because I think that all my experiences have made me a stronger person. Heaven knows, I have made some bad choices in my life, but with my faith I have managed to overcome most of them.

The orphanage taught me religion, responsibility, character, faith, etiquette, and social graces; it also provided me with my education, love, caring, food, clothing, and shelter. Should I and my brothers and sisters not have had the opportunity to grow up at the Mills Home Baptist Orphanage, I can't imagine how we would have turned out.

I am at peace with my life today, in my golden years, and look back with pride on my past and from whence I came.

I have been fortunate not to have let my childhood hold me back, but have been able to keep looking forward and looking for the good and purpose in life. I have come to realize that everything that happens to us in life happens for a reason, and only God knows the reasons behind it!

My brothers and sisters have had to endure these times along with me, and I appreciate them so much for it. They may have a different outlook on our early childhood, but these are my own memories and

feelings that I have carried throughout my life.

Writing this book has been therapy for me and I am happy to share my experiences with you and hope it will help to assure you that, just because your childhood may not have been a fairy tale, you still have the opportunity to have a fairy-tale ending.

I wish to thank my cousin, Jimmy Canady, for providing the photos of the Canady family.

DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS dedicated to the memory of my mama, daddy and my sister, Jo, and my four remaining sisters and brothers whom I love dearly. I appreciate them for sharing most of these childhood memories along the way with me.

I also dedicate this book to my three children and hope they will have a better understanding of the experiences their mother has endured, and what has helped to form and make her who she is today. I hope they also realize that I may not have been the “perfect” mother, but that I have tried hard to be. My children and grandchildren are the light of my world!

Looking back, I’ve tried to understand better the meaning of “home,” and those we call “family,” and knowing that, “what doesn’t kill us, makes us stronger.”

My children will come to learn, after raising their own, that no person or book can make you a “perfect” parent or a “perfect” child, but you can enjoy the “perfect” moments along the way. My hope is that they will come to know that there are no two children alike in this world, and that they, too, are their own identity. They and only they are responsible for their actions and the decisions they make throughout their life.

While listening to other kids at the orphanage repeat their childhood memories, it only reminded me that things could always be worse. Nearly three-quarters of them had been abandoned and had faced extreme poverty, and half had been sexually abused. Far too many had been rescued from traumas caused by serial foster-care

placements. But you would never know by watching the children at play. Mills Home has saved hundreds of kids from their distressed lives.

I feel that I have battled my bleeding heart for my entire life, trying to touch my emotions, delve into them, experience them, and move forward. I am learning to keep myself protected while I remain exposed and empathetic without being untrusting and guarded. I have been unable to open my heart to people around me because of being susceptible to pain. I've learned that when I remove the shield, I become vulnerable and that can hurt.

Affection is the number one source that makes me feel safe. I never felt I could handle or deserved the love that someone had to give me. It took a lot of sensitivity and patience for those who could break my barrier. Down deep, I always craved love and strived to be loved, like everyone else. I feel I was put here on earth to love completely.

I believe that if we had thrown all our problems in one large pile, after seeing others' problems, we would be picking ours back out.

There were other children in the orphanage that had a much tougher childhood than me and they have achieved a great deal. There are others who have never been able to escape their faded memories.

I was born in the land of cotton . . .

CHAPTER 1

I WAS BORN in the small town of Wilson, North Carolina, located just on the outskirts of Raleigh.

Born into the family of Herman and Hazel Canady, on a cold, windy morning of March 14, 1943; they named me, simply, Geraldine, with no middle name. I have always been known as “Jerrie.” Mama named me after the nurse who tended to her while she was in the Wilson Memorial Hospital, giving birth to me.



(Daddy)



(Mama)

My three older sisters—Reba Josephine (Jo), Alice Faye, and Patricia Ann (Pat)—waited anxiously to see their new baby sister arrive home from the hospital. They’ve always told me that I had lots of black hair and big dark eyes and looked like a little Indian baby. They said that I was sucking on my mama’s tit when they first saw me and all they could see was my long black hair and dark eyes.



(House we lived in when I was born in Wilson, N.C. [Then and Now])

Our family lived in the upstairs unit on the right side. Shown in the photo are Jo, Aunt Johnnie (Mama's sister), and Alice Faye. This home has since been restored and has become one of many historical homes in Wilson. I, being the fourth of four girls, have two younger brothers: Sonny Boy and Robert Lee. Our mama had had two miscarriages and six children by the time she turned twenty three years of age.

-Herman Ray Canady and Hazel Estelle Jordan-

The following article was written by a social worker in 1952, stating what Daddy had relayed to them. This may help in understanding my mama and daddy and who they were.



(Mama at twenty-three years old)



(Daddy in the army [1942])

“Mr. Canady was able to tell me that he and his wife, Hazel Jordan, lived on adjoining farms in 1937. She was almost sixteen years old when she became pregnant. There seemed to be no doubt in Mr. Canady’s mind as to who the father of this child was in that he said, ‘I know she is my baby, because she looks just like me.’ He went on to say, without encouragement from me, that he knew she had had sexual relations before engaging in such with him. He stated he asked her about this and she said, ‘I done this to myself.’

After he was forced by her daddy to marry her, he stated that they lived with his parents for about six months and then moved to a farm near Clayton. They were on this farm for one year and then moved to Wilson. They lived in Wilson until 1945. During that time, he worked in Goldsboro for about two years as a barber, commuting from Wilson. He then worked for a short time at Seymour Johnson Air Base and later for about seventeen months at Stallings Field in Kinston as a barber. He was then called into the army. About three weeks before his induction into the army, he and his wife moved to Raleigh.

Mr. Canady stated that it was while they were living in Wilson, and he working in Goldsboro, that his wife began to drink. She became associated with a woman of questionable reputation, and according to Mr. Canady, his wife began drinking with this woman. He stated this was during the war, when liquor was hard to get. They, therefore, largely drank beer and gin. He questioned his wife about her association with this woman and pleaded with her to stop drinking, but to no avail.

Mr. Canady, at this point, interrupted himself to say to the worker that if he said anything that was wrong that he did not mean to do so but it was because he had only a fifth grade education and did not know how to express himself. Worker assured him that he understood and encouraged him to express himself in those terms and in the manner that meant most to him and would be easiest for him to relate in. During the course of the conversation it was necessary for Mr. Canady to make this same explanation on several occasions. Mr. Canady seemed to feel it was necessary to tell the worker the details of many of his marital experiences and used those terms commonly

used by those not familiar with the scientific or more sociably acceptable terms.

At this point, Mr. Canady said that he had never been able to fully satisfy his wife in their sexual relationship, and while they were living in Wilson this became more a serious problem. He stated that his wife demanded an intimate relationship every day when once or twice weekly would have sufficed for him. This incompatibility in this phase of their relationship led to complications in their total relationship."

CHAPTER 2

DADDY’S FAMILY’S NAME was “Canady,” of German/Scottish descent. The Canady family never accepted my mama’s family. You most likely could associate these two families with the Hatfields and McCoys.

The Canady family was a prominent family from Clayton, North Carolina. This family consisted of business men/owners and farmers. Herman was the rowdiest of all the seven Canady boys and he was always known as the “bad boy” of the family. Most of the other members of the family were church goers and seemed to abide by the rules of society.

We called our Canady grandparents “Granny Cora” and “Grandpa Canady” (Arthur and Cora). They had eleven children that consisted of seven boys and four girls: Ralph, Battle, Winston, Gene, Ruffin, Herman and Paul, Lela, Cora Lee, Alene, and Rochelle.



(Grandpa Canady and Granny Cora)



(Uncle Winston)



(Aunt Alene)



(Uncle Paul)



(Uncle Ruffin)



(Aunt Cora Lee)



(Aunt Lela)



(Uncle Gene)



(Aunt Rochelle)



(Herman (daddy))



(Uncle Battle)



(Uncle Ralph)

Grandpa Canady and Granny Cora were churchgoers and grandpa served in every capacity at the church.

Granny Cora was a short, rounded, stout lady who would sit by the stove and spit her snuff into a spittoon by her chair. She was outspoken and didn't hesitate to speak terrible things about the Jordan family when she had the opportunity to do so. We never heard why she seemed to dislike the Jordan family so much. Granny Cora may have felt that mama was the cause of daddy drinking so much or maybe she just felt the Canady family was superior to the Jordan family. Our daddy could do no harm in her eyes. She would never believe that maybe it could have been his own fault for his failures in life.

Every Sunday, the entire Canady family would come together in Granny Cora's living room/bedroom area and sit around the stove and talk for hours.



(Typical Sunday afternoon)

Both of them would always be in their rocking chairs. Of course, Granny Cora's spittoon would be close by.

Granny Cora always had food on the table (covered with a tablecloth) and food was always available for her guests. She would never begin eating until everyone else had filled his or her own plate. To this day, that's a lesson I've carried on with my family.

She was born on July Fourth. Still, every year, there is a big celebration at the Baptist church for Granny Cora, remembering her

on her special day. Even though my family always referred to her as Granny Cora, her children referred to her as “Mammy.”



(Gathering at the church for Granny Cora's birthday)