

"Gone With The Wind"

by Jean Bass Crawford

The Woodmont shuttle bus ran down Twenty-third Ave., South beside my house on the corner of Hampton Ave. and Twenty-third. I think the shuttle bus was built old and subject to breakdown, but it was the only public transportation linking the Hillsboro bus line—which ended at Woodlawn—with the West End bus. Before it started running—which must have been about 1939—one coming out from town had to be met at the end of the streetcar tracks at Hillsboro and Blair Blvd. Because it so frequently broke down, the Woodmont shuttle was the bane of maids and gardeners who worked along its route, but for me, the shuttle was the way out into the world.

During my high school years, it was the shuttle bus that most often made it possible for me to go to town on Saturdays. In those war years when my mother's car was allowed three gallons of gas a week, it would have been wasteful to drive, but meeting friends in town on Saturdays was one of the highlights of my weekends. Usually, we tried to go to the 11 a.m. movie because it was cheaper. Town was full of interesting things to do and see in those days. Before the development of big suburban shopping centers, downtown bustled on Saturdays. There were lots of places we liked to eat lunch. There was Candy's on Church St. near Fifth. It specialized in sandwiches; or there was Candyland on Church at Seventh, which then, as now, served sandwiches, limeades, chocolate drifts, and other luscious ice cream delights. More solid fare was offered at Zanini's, a wonderful Italian restaurant on Capitol Blvd., which I still think served the best chocolate pie I ever ate. I remember its tile floor and the balcony where, in the evening, musicians played. And there was Kleeman's—usually reserved for evenings out with one's family—a huge place of white table cloths, chicken-on-egg-bread, cracker-ball soup, and apple pie. The stores downtown made shopping interesting and fun. All the "dime stores" were on Fifth Ave. That's where I bought the dark red fingernail polish I thought was so exotic in those days.

For serious clothes shopping, I usually wound up at what for many years was the Kiddie Shop but seemed to grow up with me and became the Ruby English shop on Union Street. But for fun, on our Saturday outings, the place to go was Rich-Schwartz on Sixth Ave. It smelled delicious because the perfume counter was at the front door. The ladies' room on the top floor not only had a feeling of luxury but had a comfortable sofa with a telephone beside it so that we could call home or call other friends. It also was a haven where we could experiment with smoking. The only problem at Rich-Schwartz was that the salesladies—who always dressed in black—seemed very stern when we went "just looking" in the dress department.

Another delight of Saturdays in town was visiting a record store. There was one in the Arcade, but one I liked better was on Eighth Ave. near Broad. There were little booths where we could take the records to play them before deciding whether or not to buy. Frank Sinatra, Woody Herman, Benny Goodman, Xavier Cugat, Glenn Miller were all there for the asking.

The movies that we saw in

those days may have been overly romantic by today's standards of "tell it like it is," but they were wonderful movies just the same. I'll never forget Paul Heinreid, lighting two cigarettes at once—one for himself and one for Bette Davis, or Lawrence Olivier as wild and moody Heathcliff in "Wuthering Heights"; most of all I'll never forget Clark Gable. He shaped my notions of what a man ought to be like. *Gone With the Wind*, which I saw as often as the opportunity presented itself, first came to town when I was in the eighth grade. I saw it first in the evening with my parents, but the second time was on one of our Saturday outings. I remember standing in line for ages waiting to get in. Mary Byrd Douglas, Lumpkin Allen, Mary Ann Keefe, Frances Johnston I think, and several others from our eighth grade class at West End High School made the excursion together. Mary Byrd was the lucky one. Because her mother worked at the Banner and knew Milton Randolph, who wrote about the movies, Mary Byrd was given life-sized figures of Scarlet and Rhett, Ashley and Melanie, that were designed to be used in the theater lobbies where the movie was shown. I remember them standing on the front porch of her home on Whitland Ave. I thought nothing could be more desirable to own.

Gone With the Wind was probably responsible for the style of evening clothes worn by our generation from early teens to maturity. Full skirts, over crinoline or hoops, and off-the-shoulder bodices were the order of the evening. Ballet slippers and a corsage—often pinned in the hair—completed the outfit.

Most of us started dancing early. Home dances were all the rage in the eighth grade. In honor of my fourteenth birthday, I had a dance at home that year. I'll never forget how thrilled I was when flowers began to arrive for me that day. Some were from boys (or their mothers) who were invited to the dance, some were from family friends. Anyway, there were too many to wear at once, and I would have to alternate them. I was in ecstasy. For a shy teenager who felt too big all over, it was a brief moment of glory. The dance had not really started when we all had a scare. Elmer Davies, who had taken his coat upstairs upon his arrival, slipped at the top of the steps and fell all the way down, hitting every step on his seat. Although he was white as a sheet when he got to the bottom, he was not seriously injured and managed to get up and carry on bravely, but he must have been horribly sore. The dancing was done in the living room. The rug had been rolled up for the occasion and we played records. Of course, some of the boys kept slipping outside or upstairs to the bathroom to smoke, but it was in general a successful affair.

Later that spring I was invited to a much more sophisticated dance. My classmate Johnny Butterfield had joined the Delta Sig fraternity and he invited me to go with him to his first dance. It was obvious to all concerned that we were very young for this affair and Johnny's mother called my mother to see if it would be all right for him to invite me. I was grateful that my mother had the wisdom to approve. Not many eighth graders had joined fraternities, so we were very impressed with the "grown-up" nature of the dance we were to attend. I had a new dress—pale blue with

black lace insertions in the long full skirt. We were delivered to the Belle Meade Country Club by a chauffeur, had dinner, then danced from 10 until 2. There was to be a breakfast afterwards but I had been told to come home after the dance. Somehow, the chauffeur who had taken us to the dance failed to return for us, so Johnny's older brother offered to take us home—after the breakfast. I called home to explain that it was necessary for me to go the breakfast and of course was delighted with the whole situation. I finally got home in the wee small hours of the morning.

About 9 a.m. my mother came in to wake me. I was supposed to catch that shuttle bus and go downtown to take my piano lesson from Miss Frank Hollowell. Alas, one side of my face was swollen to enormous proportions. I—who thought I had grown up and entered the world of glamour and sophistication—had come down with the mumps!

It was indeed a bit of a squelch, because it seems to me that my chief ambition during most of my high school years was to become "sophisticated."

High school was not one long social whirl for me. I worked hard, so much so that by my senior year I felt as if I had the weight of the world on my shoulders. When I transferred from Stokes School to West End High School in the eighth grade, the principal, Dr. Yarborough suggested that, since I had picked up an extra credit in a summer school course I had taken just for fun, I could probably complete grades eight through twelve in four years instead of five. That meant that I had to take five subjects every year and be tutored one year in English and take an examination so that I would have the correct number of English credits. Why that seemed like such a great idea I don't know. Actually it made life hard for me in several ways. I had a lot of studying to do which, coupled with my extracurricular activities, kept me very busy.

I spent a lot of time in high school working on the West Wind, the school paper of which I was co-editor my senior year. We always seemed to be frantically trying to finish the paper, write the headlines and get it to the printer. It frequently was delivered to Rich Printing Co. on Commerce Street after hours and had to be slipped under the door. Excellent training for what was to become my life's work.

I also got involved in forensics. Mrs. Inez Alder, a genius of a speech and drama teacher, was responsible. She somehow got me into competition in original oratory that involved traveling around the state. I won a couple of trophies with a speech I made called "The Citizen of the Post-War World," an idealistic statement which I delivered with much fervor. I remember that Mrs. Alder worked very hard to get me to speak in a lower register. She had me stretched out on the floor of the stage in the auditorium with books piled on my stomach intoning in a slow, low voice "Roll on thou deep and dark . . . blue . . . ocean . . . rooooooilll."

By no means, however, did my life become all work. Spend-the-night parties were frequent. Wordie Sanders had one almost continuously. Every other Sunday afternoon was devoted to Theta Phi sorority meetings at which we tormented the pledges by making them "scramble like an

egg" or explain themselves to us "old ladies," or during which we made plans for the next dance or outing. We had some beautiful dances. I remember one winter dance at Belle Meade Country Club for which the ballroom was decorated with branches sprayed white and hung with cellophane icicles. Francis Craig's orchestra played on a bandstand decorated to look like an iceberg. The effect was glittering and lovely. For several years my principal Christmas present was a new dress to wear to one of these dances.

Not so gorgeous but exciting nevertheless were the USO dances which became a part of my life toward the end of my high school career. I seem to remember going to these mostly in the summertime. I don't remember how it came about, but I became a member of the Southern Belles, an organization of teen-aged girls who were transported to dances given by the USO for servicemen in our area during World War II. Sometimes we went to Smyrna to the Army airbase, sometimes to Ft. Campbell in Clarksville, but more often to dances for the young men who were at the Classification Center in Nashville. These were usually held downtown at the YMCA. These affairs were carefully chaperoned. The girls came and went together on buses and no one was allowed to leave a dance with one of the soldiers. However, there was no rule against giving out telephone numbers. I met several nice young men who later came to see me and with whom I went out on dates. (We sometimes went by means of that shuttle bus, since they had no cars.)

Summer's were some of the best times. The summers I was 14 and 15 I went to Camp Nagawicka in Wisconsin. A marvelous experience! Mrs. Whitson, the camp representative, could always round up a large group of girls for this camp and a group of boys for St. John's, the boys' camp across the road. Martha Davis, Mary Winn, Jane Elam, Linda Bell, Frances Ragland, Myrtle Stanford, Al Whitson, Royal McCullough were some of the campers. Ann Stahlman was a fishing counselor and her sister Mildred taught fencing. The next couple of summers I spent some time in Monteagle. Someone was always organizing a picnic or a hike or a swimming party or a trip to Clara's. There were dances sometimes in the Assembly grounds and sometimes in Sewanee at Sewanee Military Academy where summer school was in progress or at the University where the Navy V12 boys were attending classes year round.

When I graduated from high school in 1943, World War II was in full swing and the news was often grim. During my high school years we had listened to the radio at strange hours many times to hear the news from Europe and to hear Churchill vow that Britain would never be defeated. On a Sunday afternoon as I was riding home from a sorority meeting with a carful of friends, we heard the news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

During high school I, and I think most of my friends, were touched but lightly by the war. We accepted rationing of things like sugar and meat and coffee and gasoline. My grandfather, who lived with us part of the time, dried out the coffee grounds to be used a second time. My mother

clipped recipes for sugarless desserts. In the summertime people saved gas carefully to have enough to make a trip to Franklin to spend the day swimming at Willow Plunge. Everyone was patriotic, girls knitted sweaters for the Red Cross, people bought War Bonds.

But in the next few months, boys we went to school with would be drafted and some would not come home again. And even when the war ended in 1945, the world would not go back to being what it was before 1941. Soon the world in which we grew up would also be gone with the wind.

Random Social Thoughts On Our High School Years 1940-44

"A Sociological Eye-View"

by Mary Winn Cannon

Oh! Youth! Where art thou now? The Frivolous Forties—so gay—so carefree—so sheltered! What a wonderful world. We didn't have to seek escape. We had security and knew little of fear or worry except for loved ones serving in World War II. To be reckless was to drive over 40 m.p.h. We ate bacon with abandon, never wary of nitrates or price. We had no penicillin and no polio vaccine but we DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WE WERE MISSING. It was a nuisance when your parents said "NO" to a date for a movie, state fair, or circus in August or September, because it was POLIO season and we avoided crowds. Sons of doctors apologized for such and it was accepted.

Night air (thought bad for sinus) kept me from summer hayrides, etc. In our fair city the medical specialists were numbered 1 allergist, 1 plastic surgeon, 1 radiologist, 3 orthodontists, 1 clinic for orthopedics and 1 for ENT.

Donelson was a suburb of about 100 population foreign to us.

The "Holocaust" of a teenage girl in the 40's was gas rationing and lack of silk hose, and garter belts with real elastic. (Nylon had been invented from coal, water, etc., but was available only to DuPont execs, armed forces for parachutes and maps, and via PX to girls overseas.) The guys in the service had the candy bars, chewing gum, cigarettes and nylons. But strangely, we civilian teenagers never felt deprived of such luxuries. We just accepted it.

Ours was a world of rationing: tires, gas, meat, butter, cheese, shoes—and shortages of soap, Kleenex, TP, coffee and all metals. This era saw the birth of oleo (a lard glob with a capsule of yellow coloring to be mixed in by hand). No sweat—we adjusted. Our parents fretted trying to make the old auto last, getting tires retreaded etc. and we suffered with lollypop pants with a scarcity of elastic to hold them up, and all cotton bras. We didn't need girdles, so the lack of stretch fabrics eluded our teenage concerns. There were no Dolly Partons, so an all-cotton bra sufficed nicely (not even elastic).

The status symbol of our high school years was a parent with a "B" gas sticker since bus riding was best known to us.

Doctors and farm owners had gas priorities, so we managed, with both readily accessible.

Our entertainment was possum hunts, hayrides, spaghetti suppers, at home with ping pong besides the teas and dances.