

JUDGE JOLLY MOVES TO TOWN

*Mary Ann Connell**

“There’s no friend like someone who has known you since you were five.”

ANNE STEVENSON¹

Judge E. Grady Jolly, Jr., moved to my hometown of Louisville, Mississippi, in 1946. On the first day he arrived at Mrs. Legan’s fourth grade classroom, I was playing a solo, “The Old Lamplighter,” for the class on my alto saxophone. I had practiced hours for this performance and knew that this was to be my moment of glory.

Soon after I began, Mrs. Legan interrupted my performance and went to the classroom door to escort a new freckled-face boy into the class. “Mary Ann,” she said, “Let me interrupt you for a moment to introduce your new classmate, E. Grady Jolly, who has recently moved to Louisville from Columbus, Mississippi. He will be joining our class.” I was furious that my solo was interrupted, but I smiled and minded my manners, with the hope that Mrs. Legan would seat him in the back of the room and I could continue my performance.

The opposite took place. She seated him on Row 2, directly back of my seat. Once he was settled, she indicated I could continue. I was unnerved by the interruption; however, I picked up my saxophone and began again with my performance for the class of a tune about an old man making his way down the street lighting the street lamps at night fall.

At the melodic arc in the song, I did what every player of a reed instrument dreads doing. I squeaked with a loud and piercing noise. I was humiliated. The new boy in class brazenly started

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¹ COIL OF SERPENTS 39 (1977).

laughing, pumping his head up and down on the desk, obviously making fun of me. I finished my solo, returned to my desk in front of him, and continued to hear him snicker and make fun of me for the rest of the day. I was determined never to speak to him again.

My anger gradually subsided as he and I became friends and spent hours in each other's homes. I adored his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Jolly, and his sister Mary Anne Jolly. They were a family-oriented group and accepted me into their home with kindness and love. They frequently took me with them to family night dinners at the First Presbyterian Church, which I loved. I still remember the caramel cake that someone brought each week. I would start my place in line at the dessert end to get a piece of that cake before moving back to the casseroles and fried chicken.

My beloved saxophone continued to be a part of my life and of my friendship with E. Grady. One day in the 7th grade, he and I were walking home from school down South Columbus Avenue. He said, "Put that saxophone down. I will carry it for you." I did. He carried it about 30 feet and put it down. "This thing is too heavy," he said, "You need to carry it yourself."

E. Grady and I shared an interest in our studies. Our friendship and friendly competition continued to be a central part of my life as we moved through junior high school and high school. We participated in many extracurricular activities, such as the student newspaper, the L.H.S. Review, and student council. In the seventh grade we participated in a debate on the subject of whether wiretapping should be allowed in emergency situations to protect our nation's security. My partner and I used an example of an American ship crossing the ocean with thousands of sailors on board when a public officer learned through wiretapping that the enemy was planning to torpedo the ship at a certain time and point. We posited the question: *Should our officer have to remain silent and not inform the captain of the ship because he had learned this information by tapping without a court order the phone of the enemy?* Our opponents were E. Grady and Phil Snow. We learned much about wiretapping, working together as a team, and learning to speak in public. One of the most challenging things about our debate was having to switch sides and be prepared to argue either position. E. Grady was much better at that than I was.

As we moved through junior high and high school, we learned to dance to music played on our 45 RPM records, such as "I'm Looking Over a Four Leaf Clover," "Earth Angel," "Three Coins in a Fountain," and "In the Chapel in the Moonlight."

We were elected Mr. and Miss 8th Grade. E. Grady is nine days older than I am. I call him each year on his birthday on October 3rd. When one of the assistants in the Office of the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals answers the phone, I ask to speak to "Mr. 8th Grade" and identify myself as "Miss 8th Grade" calling. The call is always answered as soon as possible by the judge. If I forget to call him on his birthday on October 3rd, he ignores my birthday, nine days later on October 12th.

As we entered Ole Miss in the fall of 1955, E. Grady and I took many of our classes together. We had outstanding professors, such as Dr. Jim Silver, Dr. and Mrs. John Moore, Dr. Allen Cabaniss, and Dr. Kitchens. Many mornings we had fried donuts and a Coke at the alumni house grill for breakfast, we walked the Grove and talked about life, philosophy, politics, and the beginnings of our questioning of matters of race, especially why white children and black children went to separate schools, played football games on Friday nights, but never against each other. We developed into thinking adults at Ole Miss.

We attended each other's social functions and shared many good times. We also had our moments too. E. Grady was supposed to take me to the "Back to School Street Dance" the night before classes were to begin in the fall semester of 1958 (our senior year). The Street Dance was the biggest event of the year for those of us who had been at Ole Miss for several years. The streets around the Square were closed, a popular band was brought in for the occasion, and we all had a wonderful time seeing old friends from whom we had been separated over the summer. It was my favorite event of the year, and E. Grady knew it.

About 5:00 pm on the afternoon of the dance, E. Grady called to tell me he wanted to take Kay Haley from Columbus to the dance, but not to worry because he was sending a boy named Walker Watters from Jackson, Mississippi, to take me in his place. He assured me that I would have a wonderful time with Walker because he had just graduated from Harvard and was coming to Ole Miss to law school. I was furious with E. Grady. Walker would

not know anyone, would probably think the Street Dance was silly, and would ruin my evening.

I had no choice but to go along, so I dressed for the evening without any of the excitement all the other girls in the Chi Omega house were exhibiting. Then, there was a stillness in the house as one of the girls opened the front door to meet Walker, who said he was there to take me to the dance. A buzz began to circulate around the house as one of the most handsome boys any of us had ever seen walked in. I had a terrific time that evening with Walker. At every opportunity I could find, I waltzed by E. Grady with handsome Walker to make sure that the future judge knew I was fine with his abandoning me for the evening and was having a wonderful time without him. He had gotten my senior year off to a great start!

E. Grady made many good friends at Ole Miss, both men and women. Among those was Jimmy Walker, a tall, handsome, outgoing, friendly person from Lambert, Mississippi, who never met a stranger. He was destined for politics. He, E. Grady, and I soon formed a close-knit trio sharing many fun and loving times together.

On one occasion, I had a date with Jimmy Melvin from Jackson for the upcoming KA formal. I had returned to school from a weekend with my parents in Louisville without my dress for the dance. My mother said she could put the dress on the bus from Louisville, but it did not stop in Oxford, only in Pontotoc. Since I did not have a car, I could not get to Pontotoc to retrieve the dress. I was heartbroken to miss the formal.

Jimmy had a car. He and E. Grady offered to take me to Pontotoc to retrieve my dress at the bus station if I would agree to treat them to dinner at the Embers in Memphis. I accepted the offer because I was desperate. Jimmy was a first-year law student eager to show off his newly acquired legal prowess in the area of contracts. He drew up a formal contract on the back of a flyer announcing ticket sales for the 1957 Ole Miss-Mississippi State game that said:

In consideration of the offer on the part of my friends, Grady Jolly and Jimmy Walker, to take me to Pontotoc, Miss. on Nov. 22, 1957, I, Mary Ann Strong, do hereby in consideration of the aforementioned offer, promise to take

the above mentioned parties to wit: James Walker and Grady Jolly, to supper at The Embers Restaurant in Memphis, Tenn., on or before Dec. 20, 1957. I further promise that said meal may consist of any amount of food up to \$20 as money is of no consequence when it comes to such loyal and true friends as these.

Signed this the 22nd day of Nov., 1957

Mary Ann Strong

Witnesses:

Jimmy Walker

E. Grady Jolly

Helen Rhyne (Chi Omega housemother)

E. Grady and I graduated from Ole Miss in May of 1959. He entered law school. I went to California to teach school. We both eventually married and lived separate lives, but the bond of friendship was never broken. When he was sworn in as a judge on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, I took my mother to Jackson for the ceremony. She was very proud of E. Grady, but somehow could never let him move completely away from being the little sandy-haired, freckled-faced, mischievous boy beloved by everyone in Louisville, Mississippi. At the ceremony, she said to E. Grady: "I so wish your parents (Kathleen and Grady) were here today to see that you have finally made something of yourself."

He indeed made something of himself in the world of law, in judging, in gaining respect from his colleagues, in being a loving uncle to his sister Mary Anne's children, and in being my friend. My life has been enriched and blessed by our friendship over a long, long time. I hope this tribute, while not as esoteric and professional as those of other of his colleagues, will convey the admiration, love, and appreciation I have for this friend who has known me since he entered my life in the fourth grade and has remained a treasured part of it ever since. As Mary Shelley wrote: "the companions of our childhood always possess a certain power

over our minds which hardly any later friend can obtain.”² Shelley must have foreseen Judge Jolly’s role in my life when she penned those words.

² MARY SHELLEY, *FRANKENSTEIN* 250 (Maurice Hindle, ed. Penguin Books 1985) (1818).