



Preface to the Poems

These poems were written by my first cousin, Helen May Hawes Hudgins. She was older than my other cousins, and I did not have the opportunity to know her well, but my mother and she were of an age and were good friends. My mother often

spoke of Helen May with love and respect. Portions of her obituary follow:

Mrs. Helen Hawes HUDGINS Franklin, TN Age 90 December 25, 2003:

Born in Lake County, TN, the daughter of the late Webe and Nellie Beth Peacock Hawes. She was a Court Reporter with local attorneys at the Williamson County Court House, as well as a published author of poetic, historical and genealogical publications and musical compositions. She was a songwriter contracted with Acuff-Rose. Charter Member of Pioneer Club and United Daughters of the Confederacy.

Preceded in death by her husband, Ward Hudgins, a local attorney and former U.S. District Attorney for the Middle Tennessee District, who died in 1966 and her daughter, Robin Hudgins Cashman, CLU. Survived by sons, Mike Hudgins of Maury County and Tom Hudgins of McEwen, TN; daughter, Elaine Hudgins Husband of Franklin, TN; brothers, W.E. Hawes of Leonardtown, MD and James E. Hawes of Oakland, MD; sisters, Lillian Hawes Meeks of Arlington, VA, Martha Hawes Blythe of Boroni, FL and Dorothy Hawes Newkirk of Lakeland, FL; ten grandchildren; twelve great grandchildren...

She was born in Tiptonville, Kentucky in 1913, the great great granddaughter of the early Kentucky pioneer, Richard Hawes. As a child, she lived with her family in Union, City, Tennessee. Educated in Washington, D.C., she moved to Franklin with her husband in 1939. A songwriter for Acuff-Rose Publishers and a member of ASCAP, Hudgins has written songs for Eddy Arnold, Joni James, Ray Price, the Osmond Brothers, Bob Wills, the Texas Playboys, and Kirk McGee. She has been a member of many historical societies, including the DAR, UDC, and the Kentucky Historical Society.

Her published writings include:

- –Saga of the Red Son of Blue Thunder, 1991
- –McGavock Confederate Cemetery (with Helen Potts), 1989
- –The Richard Hawes Family of Kentucky, 1986
- –A Sketch of Simon Bolivar Buckner, 1983

All of the Union City folk have passed now except Dot, and I am now 80. Helen May's poems deal with the passage of time and the importance of family. These subjects resonate with me more and more as I get older.

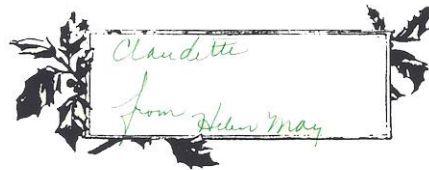
Claudette Hawes Hennessy



Poems
By Helen Hawes Hudgins



*Why does anyone write poetry?
I do not know but you
have requested that I "write them down":
You might ask, "Well, are they any good?"
I don't know that either, but here they are.
This little booklet is for you,
my children, my children's children
and my great grandchildren.
You know who you are!*



Christmas 1993

Do You?

Do you dream about another time
When your world was new and young
Your Book of Life unopened
And all your songs unsung?

Our lives are such a treasure
So fragile and so brief
How come we know so little
Until it's time to leave?



Ode To The Sweet Potato

They call you "sweet potato"
You're also known as "yam"
You're at your best when honeyed up
And served with old, red ham.

A dash of mace, a butter lump
Gold treasure of the vine
You're nice on any table
But nicest when on mine!

Time

“You ask about Time,” the old woman said
Adjusting her skirt and scratching her head -

Tell the young women that Time is their Friend
Their greatest ally to build and to mend.

O sure, they all say they haven't got time
They're just all too busy; and falling behind.

There's so much to do and not enough hours
Who's got the time to spend with the flowers?

Listen --

Your time is your own to use as you please
The tool of your life; your A, B and C's.

Take time to praise, to listen, to laugh
Take time to be patient forgetting the gaff.

Take time to read little books to small ears
Take time to love them and call them your dears.

Build it up slowly; wisely and well
You've asked an old woman, and gladly I tell.

“My message is true,” the old woman said
“And now, please excuse. I'm off to my bed.”



Lines To A Cricket

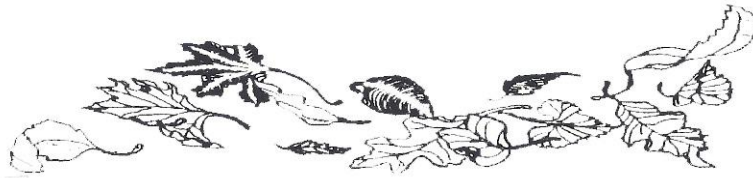
There is no warm and crackling fire
In this, my small abode
But a cricket came, regardless
When leaves turned red and gold.

My daily fare is very plain
I wonder what you'll eat
If you decide to stay around
And jump so near my feet.

Or will you find an exit
Just big enough for you
And leave without a single chirp
Oh, is it really true?

A cricket in the wintertime
Brings good luck and cheer?
Stay; tiny cricket
It's very nice in here.

I will listen for your song
I will be your friend
And we will sing together
Until the winter's end!



From World of Poetry, this received a Golden Poet Award.

Love is the Key



“I love you, Mama,” my
children would say
As they flew out the door and went
on their way.



And just for a moment I had the recall
Of my own little Mother, there in the hall
Handing out lunches and mittens and coats
“Here's a big hug, and here are your notes.”

Today I'm the Mama - the children are mine
So fast they grew up, so fleeting was time.

Before I was ready, each flew from the nest
Oh Lord did I do a thing that was best?
Did I teach them a thing they could use as a tool
To carve out a life that is good and not cruel?

If I have done this in the best way I know
Then I can sit back and watch their life flow

The house is so silent so clean and so still
Where's Annie and Richard, and where is that Will?
Oh there's the phone, some neighbor, I guess
Checking to see if I'm getting my rest

Across all the miles my daughter's voice said
“The baby can talk, Mom, here's little Ned”.

His very first words to me were this
“I wuv you, Gwanny” ... he blew me a kiss.
An echo came thundering down all the years
“I love you, too”, I said, through my tears

I know they remember that Love is the key
Dear Lord, I am grateful and I'm thanking Thee.

1.

God's Garden

There is a garden in the bosom of each man.

The seed has been planted by God.

It can flourish, flower and come to Harvest

If we seek above all else, the Gardener

But it will shrivel and decay

And be choked

Without the Light

Which is the Word of God.

(This I believe.)



An Old Man Dreams

The old man sits in the sun by his door
And looks down the road as if searching for
Someone or something he loved in the past
Watching and waiting, as shadows are cast.

Soon he is dozing and dreaming begins
He sees them so clearly, again and again
His Mother and Father -- oh. is it they
To whom the old man has something to say?

Or will his sweet Mary come into view
And both of his brothers with their sister "Boo"?
Does he see the child lingering there
Reaching for sunbeams, the wind in his hair?

All through the day he dozes and dreams
He's with them again, or so it seems
Reliving the days that now are all gone
But stored in his memory, as sweet as a song.

Now daylight is fading, the sun's going down
The old man awakens and turning around
He opens the door and goes in his home
Where no one is waiting, for he is alone.

Maybe tomorrow will not be the same
Maybe tomorrow they'll call out his name
He'll walk out to meet them there in the Light
Together -- Forever -- they'll vanish from sight!



The Star Bumper

When I grow up, I'm gonna bump

Right into every star

I'll be so tall that if I fall

The journey will be far

I'll never have to use a chair

To see what's on the shelf

Whatever they've got hiding there

I'll find out for myself.

I'll be so glad when I grow up

I'm tired of being little

Then all my fears will go away

And Life will be no riddle.



The following 7 poems were written and entered in the Poetry Category for United Daughters of the Confederacy, Franklin Chapter #14, Tennessee Division.



Men In Grey

Think you yet of men in grey
Who smiled and waved and marched away
Believing it would not be long
And as their voices burst in song
Many a tear drop fell.

Think you yet of their brave deeds
Afoot or riding blooded steeds
In sun and rain and then in snow
Afraid no more to let it show
As their own tear drops fell.

If you are bored with life today
Then read about the men in grey
Oh it will take you quite a while
And as you read you'll try to smile
But many a tear will fall.

Then come with me upon the hill
To see the markers small and still
And listen to the silence there
Then we will pray our little prayer
And let our tear drops fall.

Received Honorable Mention for Tennessee ~ 1986. U.D.C.

A Southern Lady

What is a Southern Lady
And what's she all about
They talk and write about her
And try to figure out.

Is she really any different
From ladies everywhere
Always staid and polished
Is she becoming rare?

How would the artist paint her
If he would earn his fee
And leave behind a portrait
To gaze at you and me?

Her hair is any color
Her eyes are brown or blue
Or maybe they are violet
Who knows? Not me or you.

Does she remain forever young
Her life without a care
Is everyday a golden one
With only sunshine there?

If we would read our history
We would know her well
For in her time, just as today
There's much that she could tell.

To be a Southern lady
Is really nothing new
She lives next door or down the street
And she's a lot like you.

She tries to do her very best
But often she will fail
She smiles and cries and prays a lot
But she can drive a nail

And do a lot of other things
When she knows she really must
She's got D-E-T-E-R-M-I-N-A-T-I-O-N
She'll do her job or bust.

God Bless you, Southern lady
God keep you strong and true
I think the Southern lady
Is you - and you - and you!



A Southern Family



The summer song is on the lips
Of the Southern family
We hear the phantoms whispering
Of days that used to be.

Inscriptions made on heart and mind
By History's golden pen
The Southern family's standing tall
And proud of where it's been.

My Grandpa was at Shiloh
And Uncle John was too
While Grandma sang her Bye-low
And prayed the whole day through.

She talked to me of Fishing Creek
Where Zollicoffer died
I saw the tree they planted there
Now tall and green and wide.

I learned about Kentucky
And how they fared up there
And how the ones who gave their blood
Still live in legends rare.

Atlanta burned ... and Vicksburg fell
Oh, Lord could it survive
The fragile Southern family
With nothing left but pride?

And when hard times brought ole Br'er Wolf
A-scratching at the door
The Southland lay defeated
With hearts so tired and sore.

By God's own grace each family
Put shoulders to the wheel
And with each rag and remnant
Began to build and heal.

They did survive and left to us
A record of their time
Though stained with blood and many tears
It's yours and it is mine.

You are my kith ... I am your kin
There is no mystery
We both belong to that rare clan
The Southern Family.

So let us sing our summer song
Rejoice and celebrate
The Southern Family's standing tall
Our land is sweet and great!

My Confederate Ancestor

I hold an old picture here in my hand
And look in the face of a soldier named Dan
Eyes that are steady gaze into mine
The years fall away and now is the time.

To speak to the picture with words from my heart
Oh, Dan, you're remembered, we're never apart
I carry your name, they call me Danielle
I live in the house that you loved so well.

And see the same river that flows from the hill
The land that is fertile, and beautiful still
Your memory is honored my ancestor Dan
You were more than a boy but not yet a man

When duty and Dixie
Called you away
But you left a picture
My treasure today!



Honorable mention - State of Tennessee, U.D.C. 1989

A Southern Home

With walls and halls - with doors and floors
And roofree over all
A southern home was best for me
And sweetly I recall.

The gentle folk who dwelled within
Lived in a kindly way
The quality of love they gave
Is seldom seen today

'Tis true, the work was very hard
And many dark days came
But in that home they bravely said
"The sun will shine again."

Together they did sow and reap
Together they did stand
I never knew just what it meant
'Til I became a man.



And saw again that Southern home
Just as it is today
A little worn, but still serene
I bow my head and pray

God thank you for my Southern home
I brush away a tear
And walk away - remembering,
'Twas love that I learned here!

First Place (tie vote) - State of Tennessee, U.D.C, 1990

A Southern Child

A Southern child may never know
A Russian or an Eskimo
And visit far-away Japan
Or have for friend a China-man.



But in his world 'neath Southern skies
He hears the whipporwill that cries
And knows each tree by name and leaf
He's glad that wintertime is brief.

The land ... the land ... it seems to say
I'll sing for you both night and day
I'm rich in legend, tale and song
This is your home, where you belong.

Field and flower: river and creek
Forests majestic, creatures that squeak
All of this and then much more,
Waits ... for every child to explore.

And when the child becomes a man
He'll ne'er forget that it was grand
To leave his barefoot print, now gone
Upon the land that sings a song.

"Aunt" Lucy Horton related a story to her granddaughter, Lucy (Green) Buford (now deceased) about two young Franklin boys who had a dangerous experience in the late afternoon of November 30 1864, just before the Battle of Franklin. The boys lived in the still-standing and beautiful home situated where Margin Street, 5th Avenue South and Lewisburg Avenue meet. Now called the historic Campbell-Otey home it is owned by Mrs. Lillian (Campbell) Stewart. It is where she grew up and it was her parent's home, James and Gordy Campbell.

One day Lucy Buford told me the story and when the U.D.C. Poetry chairman announced the subject for 1991 would be "A Confederate Hero"; I used "poetic license" to develop a story in poetry form. First I gave each boy a name and the following COULD HAVE HAPPENED!

The Confederate Hero

On the last day of November
In eighteen sixty-four
The little town of Franklin
Was caught in the horrors of war.
And two mere lads named Charlie and Ray
Were caught in the conflict too
They ne'er forgot that awful day.
The story they left is true.

They had the chore of gathering wood
Each day ere sundown came
They'd hitch up Old Bess to the wagon
And always their route was the same
Just down the road a short distance
Then at the curve, they turned left
Over the tracks of the railroad
And there lay the river itself.

They'd scramble down from the wagon
And search all the banks for dry wood
When all of it had been loaded
They'd head back for home and Ma's food
This day, however was different
On rounding the curve they saw
Soldiers and horses and wagons
The boys stared in fear and in awe.

Soldiers in blue were in front of them
Then in from the fields came more
Surrounding the boys in their wagon
Such was the terror of war
Charlie, the oldest was trembling
He knew little Ray would soon cry
Somehow he had to protect him
Some way they had to get by.

Then out of the crowd stepped a captain
Clad in the color of blue
He ran to their wagon and shouted
"What are you boys up to?"
Charlie said, "Sir, our Ma's waiting
For us to bring her dry wood
We're just on our way to the river
We'd turn around if we could."

"Clear out a path," the Captain yelled
"Let these two lads turn around"
"And as fast as you can do it boys
Get yourselves back into town
There's gonna be a battle here
There's danger in the air
So hurry home while there's enough light
To get you safely there."

"But what about Ma's firewood?"
Little Ray spoke up in fright
"Boys, tell your Ma the captain says
You'll eat a cold supper tonight."
When the boys and the horse got safely home
They told their Ma what would be
She kissed them and hugged them
And bravely said, "You are both heroes to me."

*The following 5 original poems are my adaptations of Prayers From The Ark by Carmen Bernas DeGasztold
(from the French translation).*

Prayer Of The Rabbit

Lord, my ears are very long
I have heard what they are saying
About the sweet dove ...
That any day now
She'll come winging back to us
O Lord, this Ark floor is so hard
Understand please
I am grateful for our safety here
But being a rabbit
I must confess that I dream of
The soft earth
And the cool grasses
Where I may build my small nest.
You gave swiftness to my legs
So, when the sweet dove is sighted
I shall thump across this wooden floor
And tell my friends the news!
That will bring me great joy; Lord.
Amen

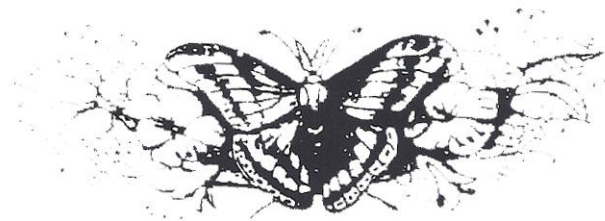


Prayer Of The Owl

Our Lord,
Nocturnal creature that I am
My fears of disturbing others haunts me
And yet
My neighbors do stir; noisily; at odd hours
Much to my discomfort!
O give me patience
For I know that when You decree it
The Ark will be emptied
And once again, I will find a strong tree limb
Where I may sit and watch the passing parade
Of each mysterious night.
O, for this wisdom of expectation, I thank You.
- Amen

Prayer Of The Butterfly

O, Lord
Yesterday I was a lowly worm
Earth bound and colorless
Then today came...
Suddenly I emerged into a creature
With wings of silk
As brightly colored as Your rainbow
I am destined to soar
Over the fragrant blossoms
Until my death
My prayer is one of Thanksgiving
For You have been so kind
To transform a worm into a winged jewel!
As I fly low to kiss each petal
I shall tell them how good You are
To a Butterfly
- Amen



Prayer Of The Frog

Well, here we are, Lord
All of us who were chosen for this voyage
of many days' duration.

Since I occupy a little more space
Than some of my tinier contemporaries.

I must say we are rather packed in!
I cannot always keep from jumping around

And my prayer is

That no big foot or hoof

Will come crashing down

Just as I reach a leaped-for destination.

Lord, some of the animals are frightened
By the swishing and lapping of the water

Which we hear

But it is like music

To my lonesome frog ears.

One day when we are all back on

Your earth

We will think of the safety of the Ark

And Thank You.

- Amen

Prayer Of The Fly

Our Lord

Both friend and foe speak unkindly of me
They call be "that pesky fly".
What a reputation! What a let-down!
Surely they can see my other traits.

I am very small but You have packed
Great power into my tiny form
And who else can soar so high?
Moreover who, I ask fervently, who is more graceful
Even my name is beautiful: F-L-Y

Though generations to come will speak of me
As "that pesky fly"
I thank You that I can soar above
Whatever I wish to avoid
And there is much to be avoided
At this carnival!

I look down with my great fly eyes
And think how nice it would be
If all the people who wish to
Could come and fly with me.

Thank you, Lord, for many things
But mainly, for my Rapid Transit System-
I shall need it!
- Amen

Around The House

Think of a woman -- here are the words
None of them adjectives -- all of them verbs.

Raking and painting and chilling 'til cold
Waxing and broiling and pressing a fold
Plaiting and hanging and mopping a floor
Mashing and oiling and closing a door
Combing and shaking and threading a needle
Mixing and stirring and singing a little
Frying and patching and moving a chair
Driving and sweeping and letting in air
Pushing and dressing and kneading her bread
Nailing and parking and planning ahead
Writing and cooking and polishing shoes
Rolling and packing and reading the news
Reaching and stacking and sewing a seam
Sweating and squeezing and pouring off cream
Filling and folding and measuring things.
Scraping and brushing and tying with strings
Peeling and patting and hemming a skirt
Rubbing and boiling and shifting the dirt
Planting and picking -- a few of the words
Describing a woman -- all of them verbs!





I Love Mommie Best

I love my little playmates

I love my little pets

But if you want to know the truth

I love my Mommie best.

I tell her all my secrets

When she pins up my hair

She makes my world a happy place

Because she's always there.

She watches from the window

When I go out to play

And blows me little kisses

They all float my way.

When I say my prayers at night

I ask the One above

To take good care of Mommie

'Cause she's the one I love.

We girls in the stenographic pool at the Department of Justice talked of many things during our coffee and coke break. A lovely young girl named Charlotte was from Utah, of the Mormon religion, and while we thought she missed a lot by not partaking of these beverages, we respected her belief and admired her. One day she related a story to us, saying it was true. I have never forgotten it; after more than 50 years I put it in poetry form - here it is.



The Children

This is a story of two children who
Kept with their father a strange rendezvous
If it should bring a tear to your eye
Maybe the angels will understand why.

An old man lay dying, alone in the room
No one was present to comfort the gloom
In anguish and pain, he prayed and he cried
For the kindly old Padre to come to his side

All through the night a snow blanket fell
And the poor, dying man had no one to tell
Of the vision that came to his weary, old mind
Of the children who had been dead a long time.

Just as the dawn was clearing the night
The door was opened, and then to his fright
He saw the old Padre standing there
Gave him his hand, and gone was despair

"Oh. Padre, I've prayed for you all the night long
But who sent the message, for I'm all alone
No one had heard me as I called your name
Buried in sorrow and wracked with my pain."

"It was the children", the kindly man said
"They begged me to come to their old father's bed.
They danced just like angels all through the snow
With no coats or mittens to keep out the cold."

"The children - but Padre, how could that be?
Both of them died when they were just three."
"The children," he whispered - "so loving, so fair"
"Bless me now, Padre, and I'll meet them there."

A man named R.L. Sharpe wrote the following inspirational poem which is my all-time favorite –

Builders

Isn't it strange
That princes and kings
And clowns that caper
In sawdust rings
And common folks
Like you and me
Are builders for eternity?

To each is given
A bag of tools
A shapeless mass
And a book of rules
And each must make
Ere life has flown
A stumbling block
Or a stepping stone



