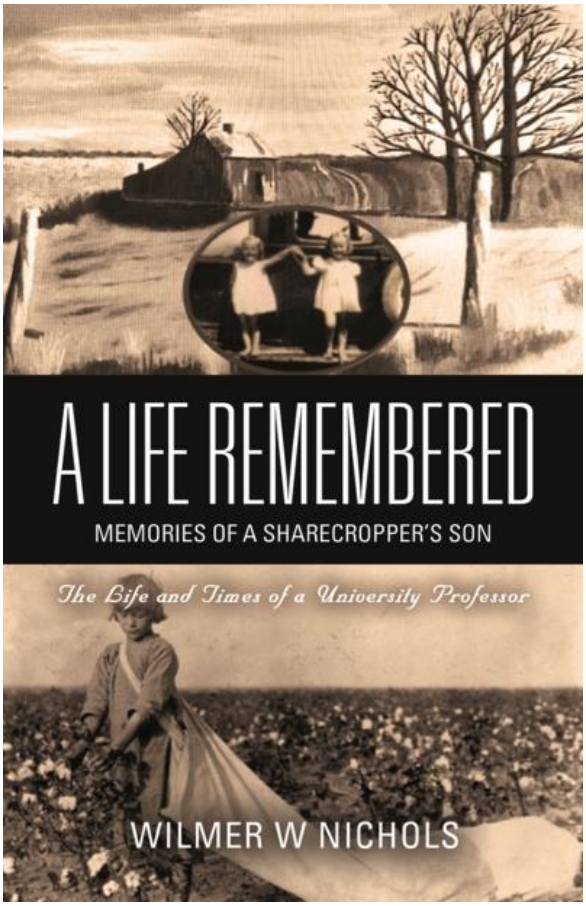

The book tells the story of how a poor country boy with limited secondary education became a world renowned University Professor.

A Life Remembered : Memories of a Sharecropper's Son

By Wilmer W Nichols

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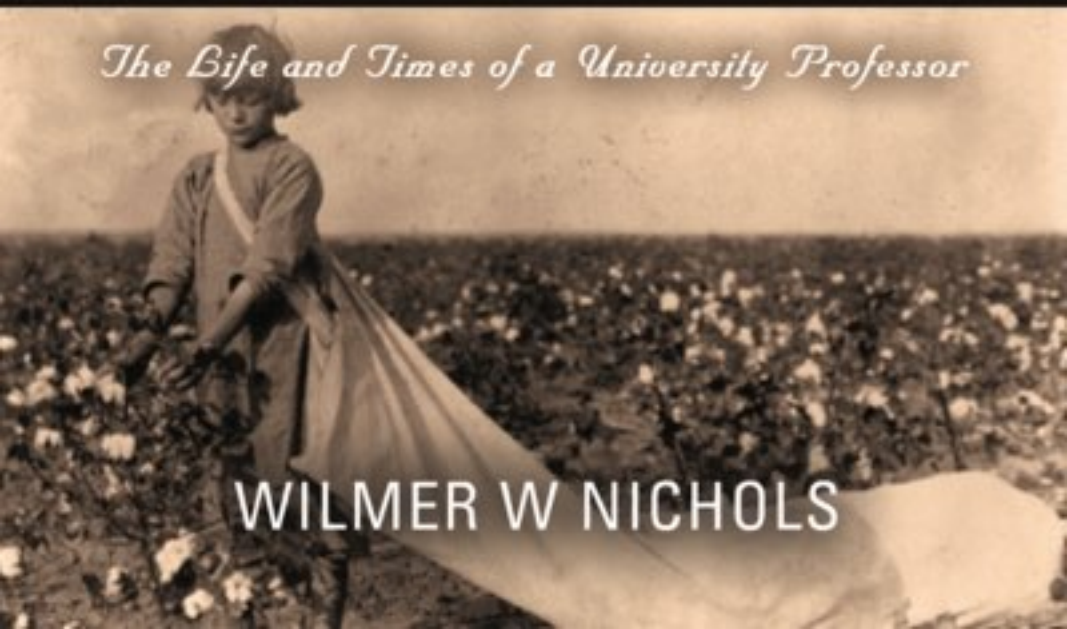
A LIFE REMEMBERED

MEMORIES OF A SHARECROPPER'S SON

The Life and Times of a University Professor



WILMER W NICHOLS

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About the Author

Wilmer Nichols was born and raised in upstate Mississippi north of Tupelo. He was the youngest son of Walton and Jessie Nichols who were the parents of ten children: seven boys and three girls. Wilmer was born in the middle of the Great Depression to parents who were scratching out a living on someone else's farm as sharecroppers. At the age of seventeen, he dropped out of Baldwyn High School and joined the US Navy and served four years during the Korean War along with his brother Bobby. After being discharged from the Navy he completed one year at Northeast Mississippi Junior College before transferring to Delta State College in Cleveland, Mississippi. After graduating with a BS degree in mathematics he obtained a position at Cape Canaveral working in Project Mercury spacecraft tracking, including the one with astronaut Alan Shepard, the first American in space. Wilmer then entered the University of Southern Mississippi and graduated, Cum Laude, with a master's degree in Mathematics, Physics and Biology and then went to the Manned Spacecraft Center (aka Johnson Space Center) in Houston, Texas and worked on the Gemini and Apollo Projects.

He completed a summer course in Classical Physiology and Modern Instrumentation at Baylor University School of Medicine and then went to the University of Alabama in Birmingham and graduated, Magna Cum Laude, with a PhD in Physiology and Biophysics. Upon graduation he was invited to The Netherlands to work at the Institute of Medical Physics in Utrecht. After almost two years he was recruited to the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland. While at Johns Hopkins he met Dr Richard Conti, the soon to be Chief of Cardiology at the University of Florida College of Medicine in Gainesville, Florida and he invited Wilmer to join his staff. During his tenure at the University, he completed Sabbaticals at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, Australia and Cambridge University in Cambridge, England. Wilmer has authored and co-authored five medical textbooks and over two

hundred scientific articles. He and his co-authors submitted their sixth textbook in February of this year. In his spare time, he rides a Harley Davidson Motorcycle, flies a Cessna 172 airplane, drives a Plymouth Prowler and on occasion smow skies in Utah and sails in Tampa Bay.

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Prologue

During the summer of 2003, I was on a mini sabbatical at Cambridge University, England, working in the School of Clinical Medicine, Addenbrooke's Hospital. There, I delivered a lecture in the William Harvey Lecture Theatre located within the hospital. The theatre was named in honor of a graduate of Cambridge University, William Harvey (1578–1657), an English physician who made pioneering contributions in anatomy and physiology. He was the first known physician to describe in-depth the circulation and properties of blood pumped by the heart.to the brain and the rest of the body.

It is befitting for me to speak here since my life's research has been in the study of blood flow through the arteries of the body, including the brain, heart, kidneys, and eyes. William Harvey and other Cambridge University graduates are mentioned numerous times in the textbook, "Blood Flow in Arteries," that my colleagues and I have authored over the past several years. The book was originally written by my friend and mentor Donald A. McDonald at the University of Alabama, School of Medicine in Birmingham, Alabama.

McDonald was an Englishman who had five degrees from Oxford University and was a professor at St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London, where William Harvey was a former professor. Spending time at Cambridge University as a visiting professor was a dream come true from my undergraduate days at Delta State College in Cleveland, Mississippi.

A few years after my mini sabbatical at Cambridge, I was selected by the European Artery Society to receive their annual Lifetime Achievement Award. The award was presented at Queens College, Cambridge University, in October 2009. It was an exceptional occasion for me and my wife Arlene and, indeed, a special honor since I am a high school dropout who only finished the 10th grade.

I will start from the beginning and tell you what I remember about my life from about 1937 when I was about three years old to 2015 and a little beyond. The part of my life before 1937 was what my mother (1900-1987), father (1897-1979), and two of my brothers, Ben (1926- present) and Bobby (1932- present) told me.

My name is Wilmer Wayne Nichols, and I am 84 years old. I now realize I should have written this book, or at least started it, a long time ago, because I may die before it is completed. I believe after one reaches the age of 80, they are living on borrowed time and can kick-off anytime. Also, I want to put the trials and tribulations of my life, as I remember them, down on paper before I forget them since most of us have a memory bank that deteriorates with time, some faster than others. Since my life has been a bit unusual, I thought it may be of interest to some readers.

My first thought was, I am not a celebrity like a movie star, a popular singer, a famous athlete, a war hero, etc. So, who would be interested in reading a book about my life? So, if nobody is interested in reading this book, then that's OK, at least my children and grandchildren will know how their daddy and grandpa grew up and lived his life. So, here is my first attempt at writing prose. I am not a very good writer, even though I have written several medical textbooks and scientific articles.

I have had several jobs in my lifetime, some I hated, some I liked and well, some I loved. I entered the workforce, as did five of my older brothers, when I was eight years old. Daddy had never heard of the FISA (Fair Labor Standards Act), a law that prohibited children from working. If anybody came to our house to enforce that law, Daddy would have shot the son-of-a-bitch on the spot without hesitation. My Daddy was mean as hell, and he was also the toughest human being I have ever known in my entire life. He very seldom ever showed an ounce of affection toward Mama or any of us children. I saw him hug my brother Ben one time when he came home from the Navy after we heard he had been killed when a Japanese kamikaze airplane hit his ship in World War II.

We were really poor; we were even below the lower class rung of the socioeconomic ladder. My folks were sharecroppers in northeast Mississippi, so we always lived and worked in a rural area on somebody else's farm. Sharecroppers are similar to migrant workers, except they do not move quite as often. Farm work was extremely hard for us since we did everything by hand, and with horses or mules. During the first years of my life, we did not have any modern farm equipment.

I hated the work most of the time, but there were some good times to go along with the bad times. Like I said earlier, some of the content of this book had to be verified by my two surviving siblings, Bobby and Ben. Bobby is two years older than me, and he has always been my best friend. Ben is nine years older than me, and he has always been my hero; I love them both dearly. The other seven children are gone now; they either died from disease, some prematurely, or died accidentally at a young age.

At present, I am a Professor Emeritus of Medicine at the University of Florida, College of Medicine in Gainesville, Florida. I am still a member of the graduate faculty, and I still do some consulting work. I came to the University of Florida in the fall of 1974 from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine with a joint appointment in the Department of Medicine/Cardiology and the Department of Physiology, where I taught medical students, graduate students, and cardiology trainees. Even then, the majority of my time was spent conducting both clinical and experimental research in Cardiovascular Physiology and Hemodynamics. I officially retired a few years ago from a job that I dearly loved. I have a happy marriage of 56 years and counting, a great house in a wonderful area named Tioga, a few miles due west of Gainesville, Florida. Best of all, I have two of the most wonderful children, Cami and Cory, and grandchildren, Eric and Julia, that a person could have.

I am in the process of writing the 7th edition of the medical textbook "Blood Flow in Arteries" with a professor from St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, Australia, a professor from Hippokration Hospital, Athens, Greece and a professor from the Massachusetts

Institute of Technology and Harvard Medical School in Boston. I also hang out at Starbucks and the World of Beer in the Town of Tioga and attend many sporting events with family and friends at the University of Florida. Besides, I ride with a local motorcycle group and attend annual events such as Bike Week in Daytona, Gator Nationals NHRA drag races in Gainesville, and the Concours d' Elegance in Amelia Island an event where prestigious vehicles are displayed and judged.

I was born in the northeastern corner of the great state of Mississippi to a redneck sharecropper and his wife. Most people do not know what a redneck is; they think they do, but they do not. Here are a few definitions I found for "Redneck" on Google:

1) A working-class white person, especially a politically reactionary one from a rural area, "*rednecks* in the high, cheap seats stomped their feet and hooted."

2) R*edneck* is slang and a derogatory term for a poor white person, often who lives in the rural Southern United States and who usually has conservative or bigoted attitudes.

3) An example of a *redneck* is a poor, uneducated white person in the south who engages in prejudiced behavior. Well, I used to be a redneck, so I should know what one is.

These definitions are not correct!!! In the first place, I do not consider women rednecks; my mother was married to one for 65 years, but she was not a redneck. She did work outside, but she always wore a bonnet, so her neck did not get red. The term "*redneck*" came from hard-working white men, usually farmers, especially in the south, who worked all day outside in the field, and their necks would turn red from sunburn. Sure, most of them were from the south with very little school learning, but they were not dumb, and only a few engaged in prejudiced behavior; they were hard-working country men who provided for their family and sent their children off to fight for this country they loved. While I'm on the topic of word origins and incorrect definitions, I have another one

that I would like to include here, and that is "*Wimp*." Here are a few definitions from Google:

1) A *wimp* is a weak and cowardly or unadventurous person.
2) A *wimp* means someone who breaks under pressure, fearful, and who does not get the job done. If this is the definition, there are a whole lot of *wimps* out there.
3) One person said they used to think it was someone who was scared to lift heavy weights. A lot of people fall into this category. The typical example of *wimps* are bums because they are lazy.
4) The definition of a *wimp* is a coward or a weak person.
5) A person who never takes risks or stands up for himself is an example of a *wimp*. To *wimp* is to fail to do something out of fear or because you are cowardly.

It really, really pisses me off when I see definitions of words like these that some asshole made up when they knew nothing about it. My nickname is "Wimp" and has been from birth. All my old friends and some of my early teachers called me Wimp then and still do to this day. At one of my Alma Maters, Delta State University, everyone called me 'Wimp,' even the President of the University and all the professors. The great basketball coach, Winfrey Sanderson at the University of Alabama, was also nicknamed 'Wimp.'

I was born into and grew up on several small farms in northeast Mississippi, which were not ours, in a poor white society. For some reason, that I have never understood, we moved a lot, but our life changed very little from year to year. The closest town to us, most of the time, was Baldwyn, Mississippi, which had a population of about 1200. Baldwyn and the rest of the entire state of Mississippi were dry when I grew up there. Therefore, a lot of people made their living selling beer, wine, and spirits; although, it was a lower shelf, cheap booze — for example, Pabst Blue Ribbon beer, Thunderbird wine, Sunny Brooke whiskey, and Gordon's gin.

My first can of beer was Pabst Blue Ribbon when I was 12 years old, and I bought it myself for 50 cents. My brother, Bobby, and me,

along with three friends, walked to a bootlegger north of Baldwyn on highway 45 and bought five cans of beer. Most of the religious people and all the bootleggers and a lot of the politicians wanted to keep Mississippi dry while only a few wanted it to become wet. The religious people wanted to keep it dry because they did not want their fellow citizens to commit sins by getting drunk and abusing their family and running around with sorry women. Politicians wanted it dry because the "black market" tax paid on illegal booze brought in tons of money to the state. All the illegal booze had labels to show that a Mississippi State tax had been paid on it. If a bootlegger was caught with booze that did not have such a label, then the penalty was much more severe.

One of the state's Congressmen, "Soggy" Sweat gave a classic speech in the state capital describing his stand on prohibition. "Soggy" was elected to the state of Mississippi House of Representatives in 1947. He represented a district in Alcorn County with the county seat in Corinth not far from where I grew up. The speech was delivered in 1952 on the floor of the Mississippi state legislature. His speech below concerned the prohibition of booze - a law that was still in force in Mississippi at the time.

"My friends, I had not intended to discuss this controversial subject at this particular time. However, I want you to know that I do not shun controversy. On the contrary, I will take a stand on any issue at any time, regardless of how fraught with controversy it might be. You have asked me how I feel about whiskey. All right, this is how I feel about whiskey.

If when you say whiskey, you mean the devil's brew, the poison scourge, the bloody monster, that defiles innocence, dethrones reason, destroys the home, creates misery and poverty, yea, literally takes the bread from the mouths of little children; if you mean the evil drink that topples the Christian man and woman from the pinnacle of righteous, gracious living into the bottomless pit of degradation, and despair, and shame and helplessness, and hopelessness, then certainly I am against it.

But, if when you say whiskey you mean the oil of conversation, the philosophic wine, the ale that is consumed when good fellows get together, that puts a song in their hearts and laughter on their lips, and the warm glow of contentment in their eyes; if you mean Christmas cheer; if you mean the stimulating drink that puts the spring in the old gentleman's step on a frosty, crispy morning; if you mean the drink which enables a man to magnify his joy, and his happiness, and to forget, if only for a little while, life's great tragedies, and heartaches, and sorrows; if you mean that drink, the sale of which pours into our treasuries untold millions of dollars, which are used to provide tender care for our little crippled children, our blind, our deaf, our dumb, our pitiful aged and infirm; to build highways and hospitals and schools, then certainly I am for it.

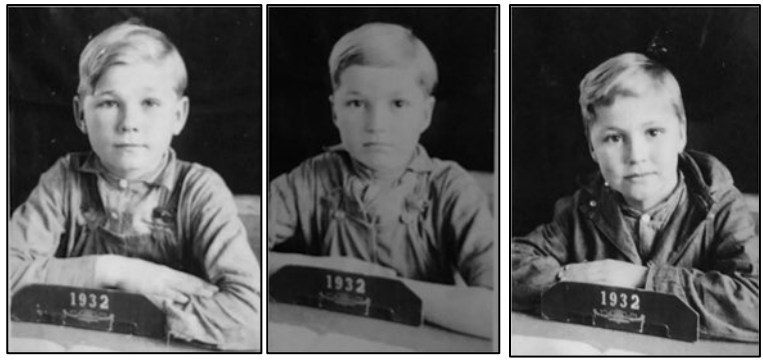
This is my stand. I will not retreat from it. I will not compromise."

"Soggy" subsequently pursued his career in law; Judge Sweat was the founder of the Mississippi Judicial College, a division of the University of Mississippi Law Center in Oxford, Mississippi. It was where he taught. The writer John Grisham worked as his assistant as a law student in 1980. Before this, in the fall of 1974, when John was 19 years old, he was cut from the baseball team by my friend Coach "Boo" Ferriss at my Alma Mater, Delta State University. Years later, Grisham said that being cut from the Fightin Okra baseball team was probably the best thing that ever happened to him.

Anyhow, back to prohibition in Mississippi. When I was in school and working in Jackson, which is in both Hinds and Rankin counties, it was challenging to buy booze in Hinds County, where the University of Mississippi's School of Medicine is. So, we went across the Pearl River, which was the county line, into Rankin County, which had open liquor stores to buy our booze. We would buy whiskey, and it was OK to take it to a dance back in Hinds County as long as it was kept in a bag hidden under the table. If the bottle was sitting on the table when a policeman came by, he would tell you to put it under the table.

The county line between Lee and Prentiss counties in northeast Mississippi runs along the main street through the middle of my hometown, Baldwyn, and at present, Lee County is wet while Prentiss County is still dry. Other states also have weird liquor laws, but the general public will always figure out legal ways to get around them. For example, when we lived in Houston, Texas, alcoholic drinks could only be served in private clubs to members; therefore, all establishments such as restaurants, bars, night clubs, etc. were designated private clubs and charged $1.00 to become a member. In Birmingham, alcohol could only be sold by the bottle; therefore, if you ordered a cocktail in a bar, night club or restaurant, the waiter/waitress would bring the mix in a cocktail glass to your table and a miniature bottle of booze and pour it into the mix.

Daddy and Mama with their first two children Eva and Virgil about 1920



(Virgil) (Hop) and (Aud)

Three of my six brothers (1932).

I was the last of ten children; I left home, for the third time, when I was seventeen to join the Navy, and during that time, we had moved nine times. My addition to the family in August of 1934 increased the size of the family to ten members. Every year or so, the size of the family would decrease because of members leaving, dying, or getting killed. On one occasion, we increased the family size by one; my oldest sister died, and her daughter moved in with us. My maternal grandmother lived with us from the time I was born until she died; therefore, she was considered one of the family. In all honesty, I do not think she ever attended school.

My parents had only a grammar school education and did not really stress formal education or schooling in the family. None of the eleven children graduated from high school; me and my brother, Bobby were the only ones to graduate from college. I was the only one to graduate with an advanced degree (M.S. and Ph.D.); my brother Ben graduated from the Naval Air Center in Pensacola, Florida as a navigator and advanced to Lt Commander before he retired. It never occurred to me when I was growing up that we were poor. I thought everybody lived the same until I first went to town when I was about five years old. Me and my brothers always had a good time playing, swimming, hunting, and catching animals and

making them pets. We very seldom ever had a store-bought toy; we made all our toys.

We always had plenty to eat at home, even during the Great Depression. However, Mama would dig up dirt from the smokehouse and boil it to get salt, and she and Grandma would make washing soap from lard when we killed a hog. My Daddy started farming fulltime, supporting a large family when he was thirteen years old and continued farming until he was 53. He started with nothing and worked extremely hard for 43 years and still had nothing. When he stopped farming, Daddy and Mama had nothing to live on except the Navy allotment from me and Bobby, which was $100.00 a month. They were not eligible for social security, so they signed up for food stamps and welfare. So, did they give or take from our society? I know a lot of people who are totally against the welfare program in this country, because they think people who receive welfare are too lazy to work and, in most cases, they are black with several children. My parents were white and two of the hardest working people I have ever known, and they, God bless their souls, sent five of their sons to fight in three wars for this country, so should they not have received government assistance?

People born into the upper and middle classes have no idea what it's like being poor and homeless and seeing their children go hungry. One must experience it to understand what it's like. My parents never emphasized health or disease prevention. If one of the family got sick, then there was usually a home remedy for the illness. No one visited a doctor unless it was absolutely necessary, as it cost good money. The family focus was predominately on survival, with very little time spent on recreation and social activities. I do remember Mama and Daddy playing Rook and Dominos from time to time with relatives and friends. And on occasion, we would go to the picture show.

Our daily life usually focused on the present with little plans for the future. We were never encouraged to attend college. Most country folks like us didn’t even finish high school. Some people thought I would follow in one of my older brother's footsteps and

spend my life in and out of prison. I thought I would probably wind up pumping gas and repairing cars at a filling station or taking up tickets at a carnival Ferris wheel. There are two things I knew I would not be, and those were a sharecropper or a migrant worker. Almost every time I take the cotton out of an aspirin bottle, it reminds me of the time I spent in the field picking cotton. I think I have fooled a lot of people, even myself.

Growing up, I had a limited vocabulary of about three or four hundred words, and about half of those were cuss words. Country people in the south had their own language that evolved over many years from poor, uneducated ancestors and neighbors. When I would say the correct word for something, I would be accused of trying to talk proper, and that was not well tolerated. A country person who did not speak English correctly was considered not very smart or dumb. I did not realize this until I left home and joined the Navy. I really wanted to speak English the correct way without having to think about it. I did not know how important it was to have an extended vocabulary and the ability to speak English correctly; I still suffer from that even to the present time.

I never considered myself real smart; in fact, I consider myself about average or maybe a little bit above. When I was taking Differential Calculus at Delta State College in Cleveland, Mississippi, I aced the first exam and I thought I must have cheated because I didn't think a high school dropout like me could do that. Also, when I took a couple of courses at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, I would think how in the hell did I ever get here. And when I was on the faculty at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, Maryland, I would wonder if I really belonged there.

The ultimate was the summer I spent at Cambridge University in England as a visiting professor. I felt like I had died and gone to heaven. I was walking in the footsteps of so many famous people who were at Cambridge before me. The list included William Harvey, Stephen Hales - the first person to measure blood pressure and Isaac Newton – who discovered the spectral analysis of light,

formulated the laws of motion, differential and integral calculus, and universal gravitation. Another name that made it into the greats recently was Alan Touring, who broke the enigma code during World War II and was instrumental in the development of the first computer. Also, James Watson and Francis Crick, who won the Nobel Prize for their work on the DNA molecule, and Stephen Hawking, theoretical physicist and cosmologist and author of "A Brief History of Time" are few of the names.

Cambridge University has produced 93 Nobel Prize winners, at least one in every category. Trinity College alone has produced 32. I spent the summer of 2003 at Cambridge University as a visiting professor at Addenbrookes Hospital, working with an Oxford graduate, Dr. Ian Wilkinson, who is a faculty member in Clinical Medicine at Trinity Hall College, Stephen Hawking's alma mater. I hope people do not get the idea that I am in any way comparing myself to these great men because I am not. It’s just amazing to me that so many famous people have spent time there and the enormous impact their research and teachings have had on the world.

I spent almost two years at the Institute of Medical Physics in Utrecht, the Netherlands. An Institute connected to the University of Utrecht, where the Dutch physician Willem Einthoven won the Nobel Prize, in 1924, for developing the electrocardiogram in humans. When I was there, I, along with a colleague, visited University College London, where we met Andrew Huxley, another Nobel Prize winner (1963). His lab was just down the hall from Ernest Starling's lab, the person, along with Otto Frank from Germany, who discovered and explained the law of the heart.

When I was in undergraduate school with my dear friend, Dr. Henry Outlaw, we dreamed of being at Oxford or Cambridge University one day, but we had no idea it would ever come to pass. Before Henry died, he made it to Oxford, and I made it to Cambridge.

I had no financial support or encouragement from my parents for my education. I went to undergraduate school on the G.I. bill and

graduate school on assistantships and fellowships. From time to time, I would have to drop out of school and work for a while because I did not want to go deep into debt financing my education. When I was working full time, I would always enroll in school part-time and take courses in Mathematics, Chemistry, and Biology; also, sometimes, I would teach Mathematics part-time. When I was working at Cape Canaveral, I taught part-time at Brevard Engineering College, which eventually became the Florida Institute of Technology.

In my opinion, one of the essential things in a person's life is their friends, and you cannot have too many. But who is a friend? A friend is a person whom one knows and with whom one has a bond of mutual affection, typically exclusive of sexual or family relations. It's one whom you enjoy being with and doing things with. The more you have in common, the closer the friendship. You can ask a friend to do anything for you, and they will do it. I would never ask a friend to do anything for me that I would not do for them. A friend is someone you love and who loves you, someone you respect and respects you back, someone whom you trust, and they trust you back. A friend is honest and makes you want to be honest, too. A friend is loyal and dependable; friends never lie to each other.

A few words about lying; some people will believe a lie over the fact if it's something they want to believe, especially if it is told over and over several times. Of all the personal traits (or characteristics), I despise the most; lying is number one. If you cannot trust a person to tell the truth, then what other traits can you not trust; a person's integrity is of the utmost importance. Traits are inherited or learned (acquired); examples of inherited traits are eye and hair color, height, dimples, and freckles. These traits are in a person's genetic makeup (or DNA) and cannot be changed. Of course, one can dye or bleach their hair, but when it grows out, it will be its original natural color unless it has turned grey. Examples of learned undesirable traits are lying, bigotry, prejudice, and narcissism. These types of traits are usually learned in the environment within which one grows up. Traits such as these can be changed, especially if the person leaves that

environment. A person should never do anything they have to apologize for. However, this may be difficult at times. It is essential for a person to know themselves; one should know their strengths and weaknesses and how they react under pressure.

One of the worst things a person can do is panic during a stressful situation. I hope the reader does not get the idea that I think I'm an expert in behavioral science because I am not. These are my own ideas I have learned in my life over the past 80 years or so. I am a firm believer in the Golden Rule, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (Matthew 7:12). Also, in my youth, I was a faddist; however, I was always choosy when it came to fads. I only selected to adopt the ones I really liked. My pick was blue suede shoes, both pegged and bell-bottomed pants, one button roll sports jackets, and a ducktail hairstyle.

The Navy uniforms issued to us were too conservative for me, so when I went ashore, I bought tailor-made "Crackerjack" ones. They were made from a material that was lighter weight than the issued ones, and they were much more comfortable. The jumper fit tight with a side zipper making it easy getting on and off. I had red and yellow colored dragons embodied on the inside of the sleeve cuffs, so they were exposed when I turned up the cuffs. The jumper had two secret pockets inside for carrying identification and extra money. The trousers were made from the same material as the jumper; they had the 13-button front flap or "broad fall" and bell bottoms. I hated the shape of the white "Dixie Cup" hat (or cap), so I molded mine into the shape I liked; I would roll down the brim and then soak it overnight in water so that it would stay rolled down. I also had a double-thick sole put on my black dress slippers, and I kept them "spit" shinned. All these modifications were against regulation but were tolerated, at least most of the time.

In my hometown of Baldwyn, Mississippi, and especially Baldwyn High School, a lot of the boys, and some of the men had nicknames. For example, YY was a guy who stuttered, and Blind Jim was a guy who was blind. In school, there were guys with nicknames like Cimmon Head Michaels, Bucket Mouth Morris, Cateye Penny,

Horse Collar Rowen, Snow Shoed Rabbit Murley, Whiskey Carnes, Fooley Duncan, Crowbait McCarley and many, many more. Throughout this book, I will refer to people by their nicknames, because, in most cases, I do not know their real names. Also, there are lots of things in this book you may find hard to believe, but I assure you everything in this book is true, to the best of my recollection.

I am not an intellect and do not pretend to be, I am just an Ole country boy who has learned a lot of stuff. There's an old saying that you can take the boy out of the country, but you cannot take the country out of the boy and, I am living proof of that saying. I have procrastinated for several years about writing this book of my life because I did not want to come across as a bragger since I really do not think very highly of people who brag about themselves. Like the great American poet, Walt Whitman said: "If you done it, it ain't bragging." Dizzy Dean, the famous major league baseball pitcher, used to quote this remark a lot. So, I'll let it go at that. As a first-time non-scientific writer, I found it much easier to write in the first person than the third person, and of course, I cannot write dialog.

Music has always been a vital part of my life since I was little. This will become evident as I take you through the journey of my life. I always wanted to play a musical instrument, and I tried, but I found out I really did not have the talent; I was, however, pretty good at blowing a tune on a leaf a long, long time ago. One of my all-time favorite instruments was the tenor saxophone, and when I was in school at Delta State, I was even in the band for a while. Actually, I joined the band, so I could go on the bus with the Delta Bells and cheerleaders to away football games. The band director eventually found out I really could not play the saxophone, but he still let me help with the band and go on the trips; he made me his assistant. When I was working in Australia, I tried to learn to play the didgeridoo, and I got pretty good, but I never could learn to circular breath. I did, however, go to school and learn to throw the boomerang.

There are certain songs from each year that I have included in various areas of the text of this book. These songs and music are very special to me. They bring back precious memories of times gone by. Some of them touch me deeply; when I listen to some of them and especially if I see the performer/s on video, tears of joy come to my eyes and chills of delight travel through my entire body. I think of my close friends and loved ones; some I have not seen in a long time and others I will never see again. But I remember how they blessed my life, even if it was only briefly.

My likes and dislikes of music completely changed during my stint in the Navy. My music choices started changing the last few months in 1951 before my enlistment in the Navy when I was 16 years old. The early years of my life were devoted entirely to white hillbilly (or shit-kicking) music. The term country music was adopted by the recording industry in 1949 to replace derogatory hillbilly music, the genre that was played on the radio from Nashville, Tennessee, on the Grand Ole Opry and the border blaster stations from Del Rio, Texas. During those years, I did not have the opportunity to listen to the music of my choice. Of course, it was because the radio was under Daddy's control. I started liking and listening to music in 1950, when Hank Snow's recording of "I'm Moving On" and Rose Maddox's recording of "Philadelphia Lawyer" were released that year.

In my opinion, there are two kinds of music; music you listen to and music you dance to. Dancing music includes genres such as boogie-woogie, rhythm and blues, rock and roll, rockabilly, and pop that has a beat you can feel. This is usually a backbeat (a rhythmic accentuation on even beats). Some people get it, love it, and know how to use it, while others do not. "I'm Moving On" and "Philadelphia Lawyer" are country songs to listen to. "I'm Moving On" had kind of a chugging beat that some people could dance to, but I could not, and "Philadelphia Lawyer" had a sound that could be slow danced to. Although I could slow dance, it was not my thing.

I liked to move with the music. Also, classical music is music to listen to, and I really love listening to it in my later years. The blues

is black music and falls into the category of listening music; however, some people can dance to it. Other listening music genres are classical, jazz, folk, bluegrass, blues and rap. The blues originated on Southern plantations in the 19th Century. It is now believed the birth of the "blues" was on Dockery's farm in the Mississippi delta between Ruleville, Jimmy Roger's hometown, and Cleveland, where I attended undergraduate college. Its inventors were slaves, ex-slaves, and the descendants of slaves—Black sharecroppers who sang as they toiled in the cotton and vegetable fields in the delta. B.B King, born in Itta Bena, Mississippi, Muddy Waters, born in Rolling Fork, Mississippi, my friend Pat Crawford's hometown, and Robert Johnson born in Hazlehurst, Mississippi are three examples of great blues singers. B.B King was the son of sharecroppers; the B.B King museum is in Indianola, Mississippi. The museum includes part of a cotton gin that B.B worked in when he was a boy growing up outside Indianola. The Great Southern Blues Trail runs through the city and makes a stop at the museum. The trail also runs through Cleveland and Merigold, Mississippi, with stops at Dockery's farm and Po Monkey's juke joint. The juke joint is just outside Merigold, not very far from my friend Henry Outlaw's house. It has no address, no phone number, no Web site, and no road marker. Just head north from Cleveland on highway 61 (aka Blues Highway) and turn left at the Pemble Farms sign just outside Merigold. Then take an immediate left onto a gravel road and go about a mile, and "Po Monkey's" is the shack on the left. The proprietor was Willie Seaberry (aka Po Monkey), who lived on the premises.

The joint was only open on Thursday night, but when it was open, it was really something. It had a fantastic sound system and on occasion had well-known blues bands playing there. My motorcycle group and I were there once when a blues band from Bordeaux, France, was playing. Unfortunately, Willie died July 16, 2016, and Po Monkey's Juke Joint died with him. Another interesting stop on the Trail in Clarksdale, Mississippi is Morgan Freeman's Blues Club "Ground Zero"; it has live music almost every night. The next stop in

Clarksdale is the "Shack Up Inn," with its sparsely furnished sharecropper shacks with bottle trees in the yards.

Robert Johnson was one of the few blues singers to play a juice harp; one myth says he sold his soul to the devil at a crossroads in the Mississippi delta to achieve success. Henry Outlaw showed it to me; it is just outside Merigold, Mississippi. I was never really a lover of blues music. However, there is one white blues singer that I do like. He was from Tippo, Mississippi, and his name is Mose Allison. I thought he was black until a few years ago when me and Arlene visited his hometown. One of his songs is on my favorites list; it is "The Seventh Son"; Mose died November 15, 2016. In 1953, the jump blues guitarist, Sticks McGhee, came along and put some rhythm in the blues with "Whiskey, Women and Loaded Dice" and created a new genre called rhythm and blues (aka R & B). Sticks grew up in Kingsport, Tennessee, and died of lung cancer at the young age of 43.

In the mid-1950s, when I was stationed in San Diego, Earl Bostic, an alto saxophonist, and a pioneer of the post-war American rhythm and blues style music was very popular on the west coast. A good friend of mine, Don Dixon from Laguna Beach, California, turned me on to Earl Bostic, and I really liked his style of music; he was really hip. Country music was predominately performed by whites, while rhythm and blues was performed by blacks. When these two types of music merged in the mid-1950s, the result was a real dancing music genre, rock and roll (aka R & R). Both blacks and whites jumped right in the middle of the trend and became superstars - some almost overnight. Bill Haley and His Comets exploded onto the scene in 1955, and the world went crazy. People were dancing everywhere. Their hit song "Rock Around the Clock" shot to the top of the charts and stayed there for eight weeks.

Other white boys to take the country by storm with their rock and roll (aka Rockabilly) music were Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly, and Carl Perkins, to name a few. The black performers were Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Fats Domino, and Big Joe Turner. I felt like this music was made just for me. Disco was

born on Valentine's Day 1970 when David Manusco opened "The Loft" in New York City, and it rapidly faded in 1980. When the Disco movement peaked in 1978-79, the demographic was predominantly white, heterosexual, urban, and suburban middle class. By this time in my life, I was married with two children, and in a few months, I would receive my PhD degree, and even though my wife and I would dance on special occasions, it was not high on my list of priorities. Although disco and rap genres were OK, they did not appeal to me that much; however, I do like "Uptown Funk."

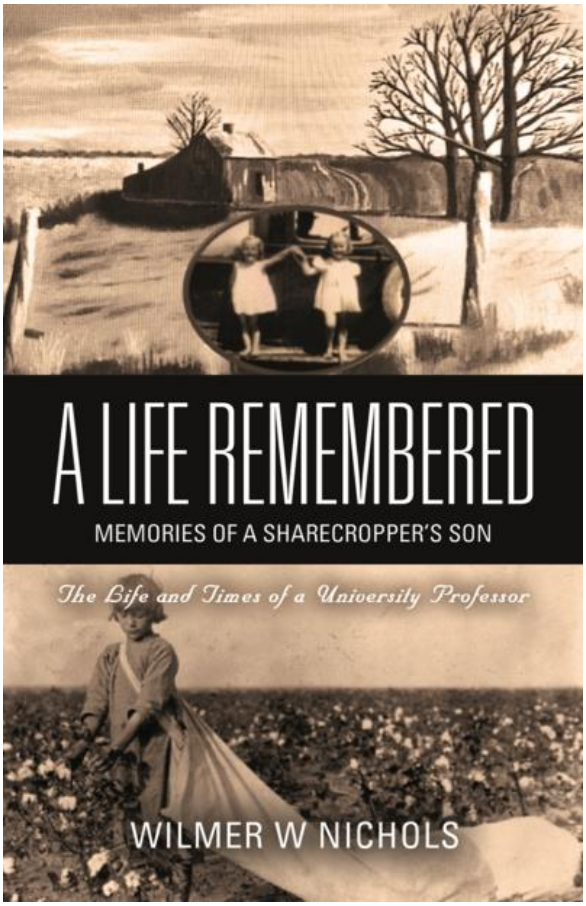
When I was growing up in Baldwyn, blacks in the south were disenfranchised at that time and thus not eligible to vote or serve as jurors. Also, blacks were not allowed to attend white schools, churches, or restaurants or stay in white people's motels and hotels. They could, however, attend movies but had to sit in the balcony. Black men were not allowed to walk on the sidewalk with a white woman, and most blacks were isolated from the main town in some obscure area called "nigger town." It was unlawful in the south for blacks and whites to marry. However, there were a few babies produced by a white man and a black woman; these individuals were called mulattos or high yellers and were considered niggers by the white population.

The Supreme Court legalized interracial marriage in the entire United States in 1967. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, aimed to overcome legal barriers at the state and local levels that prevented blacks from exercising their right to vote as guaranteed under the 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. When blacks were freed after the civil war, most of them left the big plantations in the south and migrated north, thus leaving plantation owners without workers to farm the land.

Somehow the word for labor workers in the delta got to China, and the Chinese people started coming to the Mississippi delta to pick cotton. The Chinese were treated more like blacks than whites, and when they could not survive at picking cotton, they started opening grocery stores with a few attached rooms for living. The

stores were in predominately black neighbors. We did not have any Chinese living in northeast Mississippi, but we did have Jews who came from Germany, Poland, and Ukraine. Almost every town and city in Mississippi had at least one Jewish family that I heard, was assigned there when they arrived at Ellis Island.

We had two Jewish families living in Baldwyn, the Gorden family, and the Chestnut Family. Both the families owned dry-goods stores. The Gorden family's son Phillip was in mine and Bobby's class at Baldwyn High School (BHS). He was one of the smartest students in our class, and both me and Bobby liked him. We always thought he was a great guy. He graduated from BHS in 1953, in a class of 30 students (me and Bobby had left the class two years earlier). After high school, Phil entered Vanderbilt University in the fall and graduated with a BA degree in 1957. In 1961 he graduated from Vanderbilt University School of Medicine with an MD degree and then did an internship and residency at Yale University School of Medicine. From 1976 to 1978, he was visiting professor at the University of Geneva, School of Medicine in Switzerland before becoming the director of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, a bureau of the National Institutes of Health. From time to time, we would see each other at National Scientific meetings. Jews were also discriminated against back then in that part of the country, but not as much as African Americans and Chinese because they looked like the typical white American.



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