

Autobiography  
By  
Lilah Elaine Peeples  
(Written while a student at Brenau College:1934)

Dedicated to My Mother  
(Ethel Rhodes Peeples)

Introduction

So far as I have been able to discover, my ancestors of many generations back have been illustrious citizens who up righteously upheld the morals and traditions of their homelands in Europe and America. During the early part of the nineteenth century Edward Peeples married Elizabeth McCoy and came from England to America. He purchased a large plantation in lower South Carolina. His grandson, John W. Peeples married Lilah Rhodes. I am the daughter of one of their sons, Stoney Lawton Peeples. Grandmother Lilah's father was one of the signers of the Document of Secession. Her family came from England in the eighteenth century.

My mother, Ethel Lucile Rhodes Peeples, was the daughter of Charles M. Rhodes and Maude Youmans. My parents were only distantly related through the Rhodes family. One of the direct ancestors of my maternal grandmother was Sir John Youmans, early governor of South Carolina. His home was on the site of the present Youmans Hall in Charleston, South Carolina.

I am very proud of my illustrious ancestors and am through them inspired to live a worth while life as one of their posterity.

## Chapter I

### Early Childhood

"Lilah Elaine Peeples arrived at 11:30. Everything fine." This message was sent to my father's people in Estill, South Carolina, thirty minutes after I was born on May 6, 1916, at the home of my grandparents, Mr. And Mrs. C.M. Rhodes, of Batesburg. Dr. L.M. Mitchell and Miss Margaret King attended my mother. I shall always feel grateful to Dr. Mitchell, because a few months later he saved my father's life.

Being an only child, there was every reason that I should be brought up a very spoiled young lady. Besides, I was for nine years the only grandchild of my living grandparents. There was quite a discussion that first night as to what my name would be, but I was soon named Lilah for my father's mother and Elaine for my mother's favorite movie actress, Elaine Dodge, the stage name of Pearle White.

In October of that same year, from my home in Estill, I went back to Batesburg where I was entered in a Baby Show for Saluda, Lexington, and Aiken Counties. In this contest for the most healthy and perfect baby I was given first prize- a diamond ring.

The following July Mother and Daddy spent two weeks at Tybee, a beach resort near Savannah, Georgia. Every afternoon my nurse, Nancy, carried me up to the pavilion, and as the orchestra played, I stood in one corner and danced to the clapping of her big brown hands. There I was, only fourteen months old, hardly able to walk; yet I was wobbling my fat little self in time with the music and those clapping hands. From then on my desire to dance increased in leaps and bounds.

I was exactly one and a half when I was entered in another contest in Hampton County. Again I was given the first prize for being the healthiest baby. This time I won a five dollar gold piece.

One year later, I went with my parents on a house party in Bluffton, South Carolina. This trip cost me quite a bit of sorrow. While motor boat riding one day, the steamer from Savannah passed so near that our boat was upset and my nurse, Nancy, was drowned. For weeks I continued to cry for her, the Nancy who had taught me to dance, the Nancy who bathed me and put me to bed daily. I simply didn't understand why she didn't come when I called; she always had.

## Chapter II My First School Days

The summer just prior to my entering the first grade affected my entire life and later caused me to give up all hope of ever being a famous dancer. Our local doctor advised my mother that it would be necessary to have my tonsils removed before I entered school. Otherwise, there was a serious probability that they would affect my eyes. Consequently, I was immediately taken to St. Joseph's Hospital in Savannah, Georgia. Through the carelessness of the doctors and nurses I was given so much ether (anesthetically) that my heart was weakened. For weeks I was seriously ill in the hospital, and when I was released, the doctor warned me against ever taking any violent exercise. This certainly was a surprise to the family because heretofore I had been such a healthy youngster.

When school opened in September of 1921, I was right there to take my place. I had waited for this time since the winter before, when I made a daring attempt to attend on one occasion.

I was particularly fond of the first grade teacher because every morning, as she passed on her way to school, she would stop and speak to me. One morning as I was waiting for her to pass so that I could yell, "Hey!", she asked me if I would like to come with her for the day. Thrilled beyond words, I snatched a copy of **G**ood Housekeeping from Mother's desk and started out without

changing my little white gown. Much to my sorrow Mother saw me as I opened the front door, and saved the day.

As the school work progressed and became more than the mere cutting of paper dolls and drawing of dogs, cats and cows, my opinion of school changed. However, I am thankful that I never came to the point where I wished to stop, as some of my class actually did. I began to realize that life was very complicated and that to secure an education meant a great deal of study and work. Of course, there were stumbling points, but I refused to be downed and worked harder.

During my early school days a very important event took place. I found Christ, the Savior of the world. I joined the Baptist Church and was baptized. Since then I have constantly strived to live in a way pleasing to God and Christ.

My first school days passed rapidly, leaving only memories of Christmases, a few important events, and summer vacations that passed very rapidly in the mountains of North Carolina and at various beaches. My burning desire to dance increased despite the advice of the physicians against it. I began doing fancy dances in local revues, at wedding receptions, and at parties.

My entering the fifth grade revealed another side of life, the boys. I was just ten years old when I first realized that I cared a great deal about a boy who had paid me some attention. My first love affair with Baily Theus lasted two years. I had just received a new bicycle and through some accident fell on a spiked fence. One spike stuck between my heart and lungs, just missing both,

and saving me from almost certain death. Naturally, all my friends did not realize how serious I was hurt so they laughed, unthoughtfully, I suppose, but it happened that Bailey was one of those who laughed. I was furious. We never made up until the summer of 1934, when we became good friends again.

It was also in the fifth grade that I had the pleasure of going to my first "Night Party". I shall never forget that night. All of my friends were there, feeling exactly as if we were grown. This party of mine was immediately followed by similar parties at which we all had perfectly marvelous times playing different games, especially prom.

I had never fully realized the danger of my continuing in dancing. I enjoyed it so much that I began spending all my spare time in practicing. At every possible affair I gave a fancy dance or danced in a chorus. In May of that same year the Music Club put on a May Day celebration in which I was elected Queen of the Fairies. That night I gave a fancy dance and led the fairy choruses. I was simply thrilled and wished more than ever to continue in dancing.

The summer after I finished the sixth grade was spent in Ashville, North Carolina. I was just old enough to fully appreciate my vacation although I had spent many summers there. During this delightful summer we toured the surrounding country, visiting Sunset Mountain, Chimney Rock and many other places of interest. But the most interesting trip was to an Indian Reservation. At home I still have a little bead basket that I bought as a souvenir of my visit to the first inhabitants of our great country, the Indians.

As I completed the seventh grade and grammar school, I felt that I had completed a great step in my life. At last I was really growing up. Too, I was growing away from that spoiled attitude I had acquired as an only child. At the completion of this important milestone I also began to realize the necessity of accepting the responsibility of living my own life in a manner that would count for the most.

### Chapter III

#### High School Days

My years at Estill High School were by far the most delightful I have thus far experienced. I shall never forget those happy-go-lucky, carefree days. I entered high school with a determination to apply myself and secure all the benefit possible. After finishing I wished very much to attend some college and to study dancing if possible. I appreciated the fact that even to study and teach dancing, some degree of versatility was necessary. So with this thought uppermost I studied and practiced my dancing as much as possible.

These jolly years in high school were filled with parties, dances, trips, and boy fiends. I have always liked the boys, but somehow I could never take them seriously. I enjoyed their friendship and liked them all.

The summer after I completed the ninth grade, my family allowed me to spend the summer in Florida with a very good girl friend of mine. Florida was a

complete change from the mountains of North Carolina, and I enjoyed the trip immensely. Especially did I enjoy swimming in the 'Old Suwannee River". Of course, no trip could ever be complete without a hero. I found a very good pal in one of the Florida lads and had much to tell my girl friends when I returned home.

My junior year in high school was filled with excitement and thrills. I did extra hard work in Home Economics and won a two week trip to Winthrop College. The prize was for making and modeling the best sport dress.

Before I had time to realize I was a junior, we had to get to work preparing for the occasion of the year, the Junior-Senior Reception. I had attended the Receptions in my freshman and sophomore years, but I enjoyed it much more when I felt that I really had a part in it. We used an attractive silver and blue color scheme to decorate the home of Catherine Wyman, my classmate and friend.

This delightful year contained one thrill I shall never forget, my first aeroplane ride. One Sunday after we had visited the Saluda Dam on the outskirts of Columbia, South Carolina, my cousin, Robert Peeples, and I took a ride over the city. It was certainly a delightful experience.

And as a climax to the school year, we juniors were allowed to participate in the graduating exercises. Then after a few short months we were ourselves seniors.

Happily, I was allowed to attend the graduating exercises of my cousin, Isadore Peeples, from Bailey Military Academy in Greenwood, South Carolina.



"Boots" had always been a brother to me, since I was unfortunate in not having one. It pleased me to see him receive the reward of his hard work, a reward which I hoped to receive the next year.

During this happy summer I remained at home with the exception of a few weeks at Folly Beach. I had quite a romance this vacation and worried my family quite a bit. They feared that I would take a silly notion and get married without finishing school. Of course, I had no intention of doing such an absurd thing.

When school opened I was a little disappointed that I did not feel dignified as seniors usually are. But it was an eventful year. In fact, I can truthfully say that it was worth more to me than all of my other school years, in education and in my social activities.

Naturally there were many dinners and dances for the senior class. The class as a whole often went on interesting excursions; the most interesting, in my opinion, was a trip to Charleston, South Carolina, during the famous Azalea Festival.

One of the most entertaining trips was to the Furman-G.W.C. May Festival. Catherine Wyman and I went with four boy-friends, L.D. Rhodes, R.W. Rhodes, Robert Peebles and Baily Theus. (It was on this trip that Bailey and I made up.) On the Saturday before we returned we had lunch and a noon dance at Caesar's Head Hotel, out from Greenville. At this dance I met the son of my mother's best childhood friend.

During the Christmas Holidays I attended the most marvelous dances of my life. Especially did I enjoy a Balloon Dance given by R.W. Rhodes. I also had a charming buffet luncheon and dance at midnight on New Year's Eve.

Immediately after Christmas, we began work on our class play, "Kicked Out of College". It was one of the best productions ever staged at home.

Since I had continued my dancing I now began to reap some benefits. My cousin, Robert Peeples, played the piano extraordinarily well, so we decided to get up a class in dancing. We had a class of fifteen boys and girls. Of course, both of us enjoyed the work immensely and accomplished something. We produced a Japanese dance for the Junior-Senior Reception and several choruses for plays.

This Junior-Senior Reception was quite an affair. My escort, Billy Chisholm sent me a lovely corsage of American Beauty Roses. Everyone present had a perfect evening.

Then came one of the happiest and saddest days of my life, Graduation Day. Even with all the flowers, speeches and congratulations it was still sad. The class would be broken apart. But it was necessary. On June 6, 1934, I received my diploma from Estill High School and it was over. The only comfort was the huge pile of gifts I had received from friends and relatives. Still, it was almost unbearable.

## Chapter IV

### College Days

Realizing that high school was completed, I began to consider my next goal. I still wished to continue my dancing, but although my heart was in fine condition, my physician warned that any such violent exercise would surely cause a relapse. Then I was worried. If I could not dance, what could I do?

I spent the summer in Augusta, Georgia, with the exception of a week in Atlanta. During this time I decided to take a business course and go into business. My Father was delighted, but my Mother insisted that I go to college and to Brenau. So we compromised. It was decided that I should attend Brenau College for one year under the A.B. schedule and to begin the business course

the second year. Everyone was pleased, so with much haste and ado, I began to prepare to leave home for college.

Brenau College loomed before me on September 12, 1934. It was to be my home for nine months. Immediately I became desperately home-sick. Then after classes began, I found the work very different from that of high school; it was also difficult. But soon I caught the swing of things, and now everything is perfectly fine. I realize that I must take advantage of my opportunity to attend college; so many girls aren't allowed the privilege.

And so, as I write this final paragraph on my life, I realize that although my life is still before me, I have already spent a large part of it. I trust I have done rightly; I have tried to. But life is a most complicated affair and oftimes we cannot be certain of our position in it. Nevertheless, life is as one sees it, as one makes it. We can only hope to see it fairly and to do, with God's aid, as we are best able.