



Missed Taste of Ginger Ale by Barbara Wright

In 1946 my folks relocated to their birthplace in Erica, Virginia where my Grandma Lettie lived. My grandma became my favorite grand parent. She was loving and I adored being around her. Grandma was tall and had a honey-colored complexion complementing her hazel eyes. She wore sunny colored clothes most all the time. Black was reserved only for funerals. My grandma was the cook and laundress for the Bush family.

Grandma was very resourceful and creative. She recycled everything and even made her own soap. Today's fashion designers could borrow some of her ideas. If one of her dresses got stained or became too tight she had a remedy. The stains were covered with a colorful piece of fabric formed in the shape of a flower. To solve the easement of the garment she inserted a triangular piece of fabric for the underarms.

One sunny day Grandma stopped by our house on her way to work. Grandma asked, "Bobbie, do you want to come with me today?"

"Oh, yes," I answered quickly.

A flutter of happiness came over me because I would get to play with Mrs. Bush's daughter, Shirley. I hurried and put my shoes on and got my straw hat. We took off to the wharf walking on the narrow baking asphalt.

I was strolling behind my grandma who was carrying two bushel baskets of fresh laundry. A pick up- truck drove up beside us and stopped. It was Grandma's neighbor's son, Ray Cupid.

"Hello, Miss Lettie. I'm going to the wharf so get on in out of the sun."

"No thanks, Ray."

Ray tried one more time but couldn't convince her that he wouldn't drive any faster than 5 MPH. I was puzzled why she refused the ride. The sweltering heat had the best of my small frame.

"Grandma, why didn't we get a ride with Ray?"

"That boy just drives too fast and he doesn't have a lick of sense," was her response.

We finally arrived at the wharf. Grandma instructed me to sit while she went inside the general store. When she returned she handed me my favorite orange soda pop. I guzzled it down and we were soon off to the Bush house across the lake.

The boat ride was short. Mrs. Bush's daughter, Shirley, was waiting at the shore for us. We were happy to see each other and took off running along the shoreline. Just as we were completing castles and digging our way to China, Grandma called for us to come in and get cleaned up for lunch. We raced lickety-split and cleaned ourselves up. Down the hall our little arms were twisted and knotted around each other as we waddled and giggled to the dining room. A little senseless, we stumbled into our chairs.

Mrs. Bush stared at us and suddenly said, "Lettie, Barbara is at the table."

Complaining to her mother Shirley retorted, “Mother, why can’t Barbara eat with us?”
“You be quiet, Shirley!” Mrs. Bush exclaimed.

We both began sobbing torrential tears. My body became numb and paralysis set in. Grandma led me into the kitchen.

There on the table was my plate with a mound of fluffy mashed potatoes, yellow squash, candied yams, golden brown fried chicken and a freshly baked roll. Smiling, Grandma placed a glass of bubbly magical white water beside my plate. It was ginger ale! I just gazed at the food. I couldn’t eat or drink. My injury was too deep.

I went home with Grandma to spend the night that evening. We ate dinner by the kerosene lamp. As a special treat for me Grandma made an apple turnover in the big black iron skillet.

As I closed my eyes in bed I thought about the day. The big unanswered question loomed over me. *Why couldn’t I eat with Shirley? Why? Why?* I was six years old. I missed my first opportunity to taste the mystifying bubbles of ginger ale.