

Sir James M. Barrie said in his book, What Every Woman Knows "(Charm) is a sort of bloom on a woman. If you have it, you don't need to have anything else, and if you don't have it, it doesn't much matter what else you have." Reubie Grissette Holliday Gaston had charm with a capital "C". When she entered a room, people seemed drawn to be near her much as we tend to gather to hear a joyful concert or a delightful play. Where she was was laughter and sparkling wit, and her charismatic personality made it fun to be close by. Her often irreverent remarks about situations and current topics seemed to express exactly how the rest of us felt about the world around us, but were too timid or not bright enough to say it in the way it really was.

Reubie was the third of four daughters and two sons who lived to maturity of George Judson Holliday and his wife, Flora Johnson Holliday. Reubie was named for an uncle, Reuben, and thus is probably one of the few women whose similar first name was not spelled for the precious stone--but whose life glittered and sparkled nevertheless. The Hollidays were a special breed, and, for that matter, still are. They enjoyed people and parties and, in turn, drew others to them. Reubie's father, George Judson Holliday, was born at Gallivant's Ferry, South Carolina, was a farmer, merchant and dealer in real estate, a lawyer who received his L.D. from Centre College even though he never really practiced, and a South Carolina state senator from Horry County. He was the son of Joseph William Holliday and Mary Elizabeth Grissette Holliday. His father's ancestors were English and Welsh while his mother's forebears were Huguenots who came from France and settled on the coast of South Carolina.

Reubie's mother, Flora, was the daughter of Solicitor John Monroe Johnson of Marion, South Carolina, and Flora's father was R.G.W. Grissette, state senator from Horry county. Flora and George Holliday had the following children: Floramay who is still living in Florence, SC and who married Dr. James McLeod; Emma, now dead, who married Harold Collins and lived in North Carolina. The next girl was Reubie, followed by Louise, also now dead, who married John Diefel, followed by Elizabeth who married Dr. Edwin Allen who also now lives in Florence, SC. The two sons who lived were Joseph, now dead, who lived in Gallivants Ferry, and John Monroe who lives in Gallivants Ferry and Myrtle Beach. These six lived colorful and legendary lives. The girls were "belles" in an era of parties, dances, and good times. Several of their husbands became prominent in their fields of work. The sons, Joseph and John Monroe, helped develop the "Grand Strand" area. In addition, they continued and enlarged the Gallivants Ferry Stump Speaking--an occasion no aspiring politician in the Pee Dee area dared miss.

Although these children like their father were taught by governesses and later attended the Marion public schools, the roots of these six were bound to the waters of the Pee Dee that was directly adjacent to "The Ferry" as they referred to the community that was their home. It was there they were baptised in the river, learned to ride horseback, and love the flowers that surrounded their home. However, their tastes were hardly provincial. Most of their wants were satisfied from fashionable stores and places in the nation.

Reubie left this Low Country atmosphere to attend Converse College in Spartanburg (where she was graduated in 1929) under the watchful eye of Miss Gee, the college's dean of women. Always a great reader, Reubie

majored in English and decided to become a librarian. She received that degree from Pratt Institute in New York.

However, Reubie did not make this profession her life's work. David Aiken Gaston, son of Judge Arthur Lee Gaston and his first wife, Virginia Aiken Gaston, persuaded Reubie to be his bride in 1931, and they were married at Gallivant's Ferry.

My first memory of Reubie was when she and David decided to buy "Redbank," the country home of the Eberhardts, several miles out of town just off Pinckney Road. The original large ante-bellum Federal styled two-story home had just burned and was the then property of Malcolm Lovell, a New York Quaker who later married Juanita West. Dave and Reubie were playing bridge with my parents, Nell and Bill Lee Davidson on York Street, when they made the telephone call to Mr. Lovell and agreed on a price for "Redbank". The only then remaining part of the plantation house was the outside kitchen which had been enlarged by adding a tremendous living room, a small bedroom and a bath, and a new kitchen. It was here in 1931 that Reubie and Dave began their marriage.

"Redbank" became one of the centers of hospitality in our area. Reubie and Dave entertained with delight, and the guest book, now cared for by Arthur and Elaine Gaston, reveals a list of local friends, prominent people, and kinfolk galore. Reubie was an expert bridge player, and card tables were often set up spontaneously as well as at clubs and parties.

Reubie had two special loves among her in-laws. They were her father-in-law (called Judge by Reubie) and "Mama Kate", David's aunt, Kate Gaston Davidson, who helped rear David after the early deaths of his mother, Virginia, and his step-mother, "Dolly" Smith Gaston. With Judge Gaston and Kate Davidson there seemed to be a warm and understanding relationship that transcended age and the different approaches to life found in Low Country and Up Country philosophies. Nor did Reubie forget Gus and Mayme Agurs Aiken, also David's relatives, who lived on the corner of York and Foote Streets.

Reubie was a valued member the Violet Sunshine Club and gave of herself and her means for others. She was one of the organizers of The Chester Assembly, and became its first president. She was a member of the Chester Garden Club and The Up-to Date Club, and she contributed much as the latter group studied every sort of subject from The Great Books to current events. I remember Reubie as an inveterate reader--well-informed on almost every subject, a hands-on gardener who delighted in bulbs, plants, and trees and who knew the names of them all--botanical as well as generic, and a thoughtful friend who somehow could find the right words to comfort or praise as the need might be.

Her two children, Virginia and Arthur, were reared at "Redbank", but often took whole summer vacations at the Gaston's summer home at Myrtle Beach, "Chester Place," or at rented homes in Saluda, North Carolina. They were both educated in the Chester public schools with Virginia later graduating from Converse College and Arthur receiving his B.A. from his father's alma mater, USC. Both Virginia and Arthur became attorneys receiving their J.D. from the University of South Carolina. Their lives and the lives of their children reflect the interest of both Reubie and David as Arthur and Virginia and their combined six children have made

their mark in the schools of, their choice.

Arthur married Elaine Bury from Tulsa, Oklahoma, a Phi Beta Kappa who has made him a devoted wife. Their three sons, David, Bennett, and Arthur II and their one daughter, Holly, have excelled exceptionally athletically and academically.

Virginia (called Gina) married Julian Hennig, an attorney and mortgage banker from Columbia whose family was prominent in the financial and cultural life of our state. Julian and Gina's daughter, Helen, and son, "Jay," have also have achieved in scholarship.

Many of you don't remember the Reubie I knew. Her health declined and she was not the vital and dynamic personality that once cared for her family, her church, and her community. But I treasure the memories of her kindness to others and to me, a gangling teen-ager and ^{later} a young wife, who received love and gifts-both tangible and intangible-from a bright and caring personality who will always have a special place in my heart.

Written as a memorial for the Violet Sunshine Club, April 1988 by Ann Callender Davidson Marion, (Mrs. Malcolm Lafayette Marion, Jr.)